



RSCDS HAMILTON BRANCH “THE RANT”
WINTER 2021 EDITION
(a.k.a. Another COVID-19 Edition)

Dear Members,

February, 2021

Let's celebrate the fact that we are all still members of the Hamilton R.S.C.D.S. Branch regardless of the reality that we are not able to be “active” members!

Had we all made predictions about the future back in March of 2020 when the Coronavirus disrupted our lives, no-one would have believed that it would take more than a full year of dancing away from us, that it would prevent us from holding not just one, but two Hamilton Branch balls, and that we'd be approaching the one-year mark of intermittent lockdowns! Nor would we have predicted that we'd be denied spending Christmas with family in person. This will be a time to remember, no doubt. Let's hope to see each other INSIDE and in person before the year's end.

Although I miss many aspects of my pre-COVID life, I must admit that I've enjoyed being forced to relax, to slow the pace and enjoy being home. I was quite productive for the first few months but since the holiday season I've become complacent and accepting of a mundane daily routine. Personally, I'm thankful that the winter weather has not been severe this year. At least we can walk with relative ease. There have been several days in January and February that were actually “spring like” and it feels like the spring season may be just around the corner, and our vaccinations along with it. Once the warm enough weather is here and we can resume some socialization with family and friends outside, we'll all feel better. Brighter days are ahead! But I'm mindful of the fact that when those days are finally here, some of us might look back with regret on these days and wonder why we didn't get more done while we had the opportunity during lockdown. I'm still hoping to accomplish more things that are on my list.

The virtual chats and on-line dance classes continue to be enjoyed by several of our members and all are welcome to join at any time (See “REMINDERS” on page 11 below). We may not have improved our dancing much but I know there are some who can now speak more fluent French and others who can and do knit up a storm! It's apparent to me that strong friendships have been formed and for all that, we can ironically “thank the pandemic”.

Let's look to September, when hopefully we've all had our vaccinations, and let's plan to meet on that dancefloor determined and eager to take up where we left off! So put a big circle on your calendar and let's collectively will it so!

Be well!

Catherine Reid
Branch Chairman



A Wee Bit of Scottish "TREE" History

THE OLDEST KNOWN **TREE** IN SCOTLAND

The **Fortingall Yew** is an ancient European yew (*Taxus baccata*) in the churchyard of the village of **Fortingall** in **Perthshire, Scotland**. It is known for being one of the oldest trees in Britain, with most modern estimates suggesting it to be between 2,000 and 3,000 years old, some suggest the tree could be as old as 5,000 years.



The tree's once massive trunk (52 ft or 16 m in girth when it was first recorded in writing in 1769) with a former head of unknown original height, is split into several separate stems, giving the impression of several smaller trees. The loss of the heartwood rings make it more difficult to establish its true age. The loss of the ancient heartwood is a result of the natural decay, which reduced the centre of the trunk down to ground level by 1770. Other than this, the tree is still in good health, and may last for many more centuries.*

By 1833 it was noted that "large arms" had been removed and even masses of the trunk were carried off, ostensibly to make drinking-cups and other (tourist) curiosities. It is protected by a low wall, erected in 1785 to preserve it, but can still be easily viewed.

Clippings from the tree have been taken to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, to form part of a mile-long hedge. The purpose of this "**Yew Conservation Hedge Project**" is to maintain the DNA of *Taxus baccata* from ancient specimens in the UK as, worldwide, the trees are threatened by felling, disease and tourism.

* Some experts claim this tree will be dead within the next 50 years as a "result of tourist activity".

“AMAZING GRACE”

Memories of Carefree Days, before we had ever heard of “COVID 19”. And Dreams of such activities in the not too distance future – we HOPE!

Story and photos submitted by Charlie Atkinson



Scottish Country Dancing in the Caribbean

My watch was approaching 5pm on Saturday 19 February 2000 as 14 Scottish Country Dancers began assembling on the dock in Freeport, Bahamas, waiting to board a small ship named **the AMAZING GRACE**. Wilma and I and the other dancers from St. Catharines and Buffalo were eager to get settled into our cabins and to begin the first dance scheduled for that evening.

The ship was a converted British lighthouse tender being operated by Windjammer Barefoot Cruises to supply five Windjammer sailing ships but it also carried passengers on its 3300 mile round trip between Freeport, Bahamas and Port of Spain, Trinidad. The ship, 257 feet long with 47 cabins and capacity for 94 passengers, had been built in Scotland in 1955 and named Pharos VIII. It was acquired and refurbished by Windjammer in 1988.

This small ship had spent its early years supplying lighthouses around the British coast, but, most interestingly, it had been fitted with small, well-furnished, quarters for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip so that they could 'get away' by themselves for a few days or a week. The media, always hounding them wherever they went, never realized that this little ship was the Royal retreat as it cruised around the British coast delivering supplies to lighthouses. In the Caribbean it was used to supply the 'tall ships' to avoid having the sailing ships return to major ports for supplies. Instead the Amazing Grace would meet the sailing ships by arrangement and do an overnight restocking.

The other passengers enjoyed watching our spontaneous dances whenever the urge arose and we also put on slightly more formal demonstrations from time to time. Dancing on a rolling deck after a lengthy 'happy hour' in the afternoon created some unusual figures, peculiar phrasing and handing as well as non-traditional pas-de-basque. Gary Hesler, a St. Catharines Branch teacher at the time, was part of our group and had devised a new dance “The Amazing Grace” which figured prominently in our dance programs. (Dance instructions are available). This leisurely Caribbean cruise with dancing friends was a perfect antidote to a Canadian winter with the added interest of meeting the sailing ships in various small ports or spending days on sandy beaches on remote islands while the ship's crew prepared a beach barbeque for our enjoyment. On a couple of occasions we had the opportunity to enjoy an evening BBQ on one of the sailing ships during which we met and mixed with their passengers

We visited 11 ports or islands during the leisurely 2-week cruise south from Freeport to Port of Spain where we arrived on 3 March, just in time for the beginning of Carnival. Restocking the Amazing Grace in Trinidad took a whole day giving us time to explore this colourful city and enjoy the Carnival parades. The return trip north included visits to a different set of 11 ports or islands, one of which was the French island of St. Barts (St. Barthélemy) where a Carnival parade was in full swing. As in the southward cruise, we again spent time docked alongside Tall Ships while supplies were transferred and then, all too soon, our ship arrived back in Freeport. We disembarked on Thursday 16 March 2000 for our flight back to Canada, happily, just in time for the White Cockade dance the following Saturday.



Charlie: Quite a few of the dancers are now deceased but we can name most, if not all, of them.

Gary and Irene Millington; Jim and Leta Rollo; Ken and Joyce Hogg; Hugh and Ellen Martin; Wilma and Charlie Atkinson; Gary and Sheila Hesler; Ron and Marie Mullen.

Additional Notes about the **PHAROS VIII**

Built by Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd, Dundee

Oil engines (2), 2SCSA, each 7-Cyl by British Polar Engines Ltd, Glasgow.

Steel Twin Screw Motorship, 256.9 x 39.4 x 12.6 feet

1712 Gross Tons, 592 Net Tons

1963: Damaged by fire whilst in drydock at Troon

1988: Sold to Windjammer Cruises, Freeport, Bahamas for service as a cruise ship for 80 passengers and mother ship to a flotilla of yachts and renamed ORIENT EXPRESS

1988: Sold to Amazing Grace SA (R.G Garza Inc, managers), Panama and renamed AMAZING GRACE (94 passengers)

1994: Sold to Shower Holding Inc (International Maritime Resources Inc, managers), Malebo

2000: Owners now International Maritime Resources Ltd, registered at Port of Spain, still in service

Editor's Comments:

Charlie told me that this was a spontaneous event. An acquaintance had made the trip in a previous year and talked about it when they returned. Before long quite a few couples were saying, "Me too" during social interludes in weekly classes in St. Catharines. Jim Rollo of the Buffalo branch was instrumental in gathering the names and commitments. Each couple made their own reservations and their own way to the Bahamas and back home again.

This story is indeed a "memory of carefree days and times" that we all hope to see again soon! And in an effort to make us feel better and speed along those lazy, hazy days of travel, talking about organizing trips like these with friends sounds like a wonderful idea! We can dream and plan now – and create wonderful memories when we get there!

PHOTOS

"LAST GLANCE", which was held at Pier 4 park in Hamilton on September 30th, 2020 was the final opportunity in 2020 to get together to dance. We might not have known that for sure at the time, or even wanted to think about it, but everything was pointing toward lockdown for Hamilton.

Photos and narrative provided by Pat Baker

Last Glance was a very windy cold threatening day weather-wise! We started near the band shell and then decided we'd be better in the shelter of the ship! That is where the pictures of Scott and Kate, Joyce and Andy and Pat and Ruby on the bench were taken. Then it was getting colder and windier so we moved up to the shelter of the restaurant near the skating rink. The shots of J'ina and Margaret, John, Hugh and Maureen and the one with Diana were taken there. It was getting darker and Andy went to check the weather - he came back and said we have ten minutes before the rain gets here. Everyone jumped up, packed chairs etc. and headed for the cars. His time estimate was very good, it started to rain just after we got into the cars. We did have just over an hour together.





Some Scottish Countries Dancers enjoyed biking during the summer. ...It was a very hot summer, as evidenced by the ice-cream break!



Bikes were traded for hiking boots when the cold weather arrived.



Practicing "Right hands across"...

Alanna, Maureen & Lynn enjoyed CHRISTMAS BRUNCH IN THE WOODS



There was a beautiful snowfall on Christmas Eve! And we couldn't resist brunch-in-the-woods on Christmas morning. We planned a short hike and dressed more for sitting in the snow than for hiking. We sat and enjoyed the food and the company for over an hour – until we all felt the cold!

We chose the "best table" at the scenic Hermitage House ruins in Dundas Valley Conservation. ...the one covered with snow! We had tarps to sit on, a Christmas table cloth, placemats and napkins. Hot drinks and cold sparkling water – which we drank from champagne glasses so we could toast the season and "pretend" it was champagne... We enjoyed hot food, cold food, fruit – and dessert, of course! And shared a wonderful memory!

JUST FOR FUN

Okay... **one** COVID joke....

Why did the chicken cross the road?

Because the chicken behind it didn't know how to socially distance properly.



QUIZ:

Can you identify these two "Snow Angels"??

Clues:

1. Both are Scottish Country Dancers
2. But both maybe more Irish than Scottish...
3. They have the same first name



"Laughter is the best medicine"

Research has shown that *HUMOUR* and *LAUGHTER* are essential coping tools for surviving tough times.

Who Said That?

The oldest source could be the Bible. Proverbs, Chapter 17, verse 22 reads that "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones".

In the 1300's, Henri de Mondeville, a professor of surgery, was credited with using "humour" as a post-operative therapy.

Made best known in modern times by Comedian Bennett Cerf.

Shared laughter gives us strength in adversity and can help us feel a bit more in control when the future looks uncertain. And laughter literally makes us stronger. Recent studies have found that a good laugh can boost our dopamine levels and even shore up our immune systems. Most importantly, funny jokes — even coronavirus and quarantine jokes — bring us together and help us to feel connected, one pandemic quarantine pod to another. So, while we do need to take COVID-19 very seriously, and follow the recommendations from the CDC and the WHO, we also need to laugh! So let's look more closely for the beauty and humour that surrounds us, and share it!

Did you know...

...The story behind one of our favourite SC dances, Mairi's Wedding?

MAIRI'S WEDDING (R8x40) 3C in a 4C set by James B. Cosh

Source of information and photo taken from the Scottish Country Dancing Dictionary and Wikipedia

Originally written in Gaelic by Johnny Bannerman in 1935 to honour Mary MacNiven for winning the gold medal at the National Mòd (the main festival of Scottish Gaelic literature, song, arts and culture).

Bannerman's song was based on a much older Gaelic song by the Scots poet Duncan Ban MacIntyre (1724 - 1812) as a love-song to his wife Mairi who seems to have been an ideal spouse besides being a fine distiller of whisky! MacIntyre was a simple, illiterate man of the hills; his many poems were written down by the Rev. Donald MacNicol.

In 1936 Sir Hugh Stevenson Robertson (who had collaborated with John R. Bannerman on other songs) wrote the English words for "Mairi's Wedding", which bore little resemblance to Bannerman's original (see below), and presented an original signed copy of his score to Mary MacNiven.

The actual dance was not devised until much later (1959) by James B. Cosh from Glasgow, another prolific dance deviser with over 40 dances to his name.

Mary Connel MacNiven (1905-1997) was born in Portnahaven, isle of Islay, in the Inner Hebrides, Scotland. She moved to Glasgow while young, sang with the St Columba Gaelic church choir, was a member of the Glasgow Musical Association and in 1934 won the gold medal at the National Mod in Oban. Mary married John Campbell, a sea captain from Glendale in Skye in 1940. When John retired they both went to live at Portnahaven.



Portnahaven Bay, Islay

The story behind one of our favourite SC dances, Mairi's Wedding, continued...

It's been a long time since we've danced Mairi's Wedding, so I thought, for those of us with shorter memories, that I'd include the crib and lyrics for Mairi's Weddig. "You're welcome" for the "ear bug"! Enjoy!

Mairi's Wedding Crib

1- 8 1s turn RH and cast to 2nd place, 1s turn LH to face 1st corners
9-16 1s dance ½ diagonal reel of 4 with 1st corners, 1s dance ½ diagonal reel with 2nd corners
17-24 1s dance ½ diagonal reel with 3rd corner (pstns), ½ diagonal reel with 4th corner (pstns)
25-32 1s dance reel of 3 across (Lady with 2s, Man with 3s - LSh to 1st corner)
33-40 2s+1s+3s circle 6H round and back.

Bannerman's Gaelic version, with a literal translation into English by [Anne Lorne Gillies](#),

*Gaol mo chridhe-sa Màiri Bhàn,
Màiri bhòidheach, sgeul mo dhàin,
'S i mo ghaol-sa Màiri bhàn,
'S tha mi dol ga pòsadh.*

*Thuit mi ann an gaol a-raoir,
Tha mo chridh-sa shuas air beinn;
Màiri Bhàn rim thaobh a' seinn,
'S tha mi dol ga pòsadh.*

*Cuailean òir is sùilean tlàth,
Mala chaol is gruaidh an àigh,
Beul as binne sheinneas dân,
'S tha mi dol ga pòsadh.*

*'S ann aig cèilidh aig a' Mhòd
Fhuair mi eòlas air an òigh;
'S ise choisinn am bonn òir,
'S tha mi dol ga pòsadh.*

*Bidh mo ghaol do Mhàiri Bhàn
Dileas, dùrachdach gu bràth;
Seinnidh sinn da chèil' ar gràdh,
'S tha mi dol ga pòsadh.*

Love of my heart, fair-haired Mary,
pretty Mary, theme of my song:
she's my darling, fair-haired Mary
and oh! I'm going to marry her.

Last night I fell in love
and now my heart is soaring high; (lit.
"up on a mountain")
fair-haired Mary singing by my side
and oh! I'm going to marry her!

Golden hair and kindly eyes,
shapely brow and smiling cheeks,
sweetest voice that ever sang
and oh! I'm going to marry her.

It was at a cèilidh at the Mòd
that I got to know the girl:
she was the winner of the gold medal
and oh! I'm going to marry her.

My love for Fair-haired Mary will be
eternally faithful and heartfelt;
we'll sing together of our love
and oh! I'm going to marry her.

Lyrics devised for the dance...that we know and love:

*Step we gaily, on we go,
Heel for heel and toe for toe,
Arm and arm and row on row,
All for Mairi's wedding.*

*Over hill-ways up and down,
Myrtle green and bracken brown,
Past the shielings, through the town;
All for sake o' Mairi.*

*Red her cheeks as rowans are,
Bright her eye as any star,
Fairest o' them a' by far,
Is our darling Mairi.*

*Plenty herring, plenty meal,
Plenty peat to fill her creel,
Plenty bonnie bairns as weel;
That's the toast for Mairi.*



REMINDERS OF AVAILABLE OPTIONS TO ~
HELP STAY CONNECTED,
STAY VIRTUAL, STAY HEALTHY
AND KEEP ACTIVE!

JOIN IN	WHEN	FOR MORE INFO CONTACT
Virtual Chat and Shared R.S.C.D.S. Lesson	Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.	https://www.rscds.org/get-involved/global-dance-listings
Knitters' Chat	Fridays at 7:30 p.m. (You don't have to knit to join in for a visit!)	Diana McKenzie mrs.mck@hotmail.com
French Group Chat	Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. and all levels of French are welcome.	Contact Diana for the links. mrs.mck@hotmail.com
Dance Classes on ZOOM		Alma Smith asmith26@cogeco.ca
Social Class	Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.	Alma Smith asmith26@cogeco.ca
Beginners' Class	Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. and Fridays at 10:00 a.m.	Alma Smith asmith26@cogeco.ca
Introduction to Step Dancing		Alma Smith asmith26@cogeco.ca
R.S.C.D.S. Weekly Classes- "Live"	Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. (Past recorded classes also accessible on the website)	www.rscds.org

QUIZ ANSWER



Maureen Isnor

/

Maureen O'Donnell



Remembering Margaret Carey

Narrative and photo provided by Hugh and Deb Morrison

Margaret Carey was a well-respected, former member of the Hamilton Branch. She passed away on January 7th, 2021 in St. Catharines at the age of 95 years young. Many of our long-standing members will remember her with fondness. As well, they will remember her husband John who was also a member of our Branch. He passed away in 2015. Debra and Hugh Morrison are two of our members who remember the Careys well and they searched the archives to provide us with some information about their involvement in and contribution to our Branch.

Margaret and her husband, John, were active and enthusiastic members of the Hamilton Branch, RSCDS from about 1965 until about 1992. Margaret obtained her Preliminary Teaching Certificate in 1973 and primarily taught or co-taught the Children's and Intermediate Classes in the Hamilton Branch. Margaret served on the Branch COM (Committee of Management). She served as Secretary for the Hamilton Teachers' Council in 1973 and probably in later years. John Carey designed the Hamilton Branch Crest that we have to this day.

In 1967 "following the restoration of Dundurn Castle, a Letter of Invitation was issued to the Hamilton Branch by Brigadier Willis Moogk, Director of Dundurn Castle. His idea was to have summer entertainment on the castle grounds "to enhance its beauty and attractiveness" as it was becoming a popular tourist attraction in the city. Initially begun by Dr. Bob Smith, John and Margaret Carey took over the organizing of this event in 1972 or 1973. As the prime organizers they were responsible for the Dundurn Castle Summer Program and were the contacts for all the groups involved, sending out the invitations and then scheduling the groups for each date in the summer. Remember—this was all before emails. Think of the letters and phone calls, the long distance charges, receipts for expenses and reimbursements that needed to be made! The Summer Schedule generally followed a format on Sunday afternoons comprised of Scottish Country Dancing, interspersed with various other groups including Highland Dancers, Pipers and Pipe Bands, Singers including Margaret's niece, Susan, and one of our own dancers, Barbara McKay, and other people who would provide some "Scottish entertainment or atmosphere". Each Dancing Group generally "took one of the scheduled dates and hosted the day". Notes show dancers from such groups as Hamilton, St. Catharines, Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto, Thornhill, Oakville, Strathcona and Weston took part. The teams were comprised mainly of adults, but sometimes teens and children were invited to participate. Margaret and John were dedicated coordinators of the Sunday Scottish Entertainment until 1985!

On behalf of the Branch, our condolences were expressed to the family and a donation of \$100 was given to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Dundas in Margaret's memory.

The picture below appeared in the Hamilton Spectator from April 6th, 1968 featuring Margaret and John at the Hamilton Ball held at the Sheraton-Connaught Hotel that year. It captures their warmth, enthusiasm, vitality, and love of the Dance.



To the skirl of the bagpipes, Mr. and Mrs. John Carey swing through the intricate steps of a Scottish dance at the annual ball, last evening, in the Sheraton-Connaught Hotel, sponsored by the Hamilton Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.