



# Oceanside Rant

## Oceanside Scottish Country Dancers Newsletter

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#### **Basic Class**

Each Wednesday 6.30 pm

#### **Intermediate Class**

Each Wednesday 8.00 pm

All classes are held at:

Qualicum Beach  
Community Hall, Corner of  
Memorial Ave &  
Veterans Way,  
Qualicum Beach

#### **Web sites:**

<http://www.oceansidescd.net>  
<http://nanaimoscd.com/cms/>

## President's Rant

Thank you to Dawn for stepping in to Anne's shoes!!!!

As spring finally blooms at Oceanside, we can reflect back on a great year we have had. We started off with fun Dancing in Rath Trevor Park and a well attended Open House. Some of our members enjoy dancing with the Nanaimo Club and attend their traditional New Year's Eve Party and January Ball. Socials were also enjoyed in Port Alberni and Courtenay. It has been wonderful to see the continued interest from Courtenay/Comox and Port Alberni dancers at our Club on a weekly basis.

Our Old Fashioned Social in February with 50 dancers from the Central Island had rave reviews. Dancing to old favorites; the \$5.00 admission; plus good food made it a 'hit'. Dancers have asked for the event again and perhaps it should be in the Fall with most dances and the Nanaimo Workshop in the New Year.

The Spring Gala, traditionally the first Saturday of April, although lower in numbers was a wonderful evening from start to finish. One of the roles of V.P. is to chair the Spring Gala committee and I want to thank everyone who helped to make this evening so successful. Read ahead to Keith Horton's great summaries of the two latter events.

What would we do without our dedicated teachers, Janetta and Rita, who work so hard to prepare us for the various socials. How lovely that they could spell each other off to get a well deserved break in the spring.

Our AGM is on Wednesday, April 27th where we will elect a new President, Vice President, Social Convenor and Treasurer. Thank you to those members of the Executive who have agreed to stay on: Pauline as Secretary, Daphne as Member at Large, Dorothy as Newsletter Editor and Keith as Webmaster. Our gratitude goes to the outgoing Executive as we welcome and cheer on our new Executive.

The end of our OSCD 2010-2011 is coming soon at our Windup Potluck, May 4th. This will be a fun evening as members are invited to take a turn to lead a dance.

Wishing you all a joyful, safe summer ahead and we'll look forward to seeing you back at dancing in September. Bring a friend to help our Club grow.

*Dawn Stubbs*

Vice President

# "Won't You Join the Dance?"

## Technique Tips

With over 13,000 published dances (according to Keith Napier) and more coming every day, increasingly more people want to learn that next new formation or clever bit of choreography, rather than focus on dance fundamentals.

Yet when danced with good technique and attention to the nuances of the formation, even a simple movement like set and cross over can become the occasion for beautiful and fun dancing.

The following are some tips to make those simple movements just as exciting as that new formation or intriguing dance.

Advance and Retire: All too often the lines are wavy and the hands joined erratically, with the dancing couple almost dragging their neighbours forward.

If the dancing couple stand a little behind the supporting dancers rather than in a straight line, they can "lead" the others in and out with fully extended arms and upward palms. This not only makes the supporting couples feel included but also gives structure to the formation and looks very grand!

Lead Down the Middle and Up: Often dancers "attach" themselves to their partner by the right hand and head down the middle, side by side, as if their partner were merely a prop.

As you curve in to join hands, make eye contact at the start and from time to time during the entire movement (avoid the tendency to stare at your partner for the full eight bars). Additionally, if the leading hand is fully extended it draws the dancers forward so that the movement gains a little "urgency" that makes the formation more fun and exciting.

Dancing Down or Up the Set: In shorter movements when the dancers will separate, we usually give inner (nearer) hands. Frequently as the dancers separate, they push away from each other with those nearer hands, and the hands go well above the shoulders in what almost appears like a "throwing" movement. Not pretty!

Strive to keep the hands at shoulder height throughout these partings and the movement looks social as well as gracious.

Hands Across and Back: Many dancers stick their hands into the middle and make a messy pile of fingers which feels so unsatisfying: (often referred to as "sausages"). Try always to take the diagonally opposite hand in a "hand-shake" grip. This unifies the movement, gives everyone someone to hold onto and make the formation actually look like "Hands Across".

Set and Cast: All too often, dancers "over-anticipate" by setting for one bar and whipping their body around on the next.

When casting off, the man must anticipate slightly to prepare his right foot for the cast. Similarly, the woman must anticipate when casting up. The movement gains elegance and social spirit when one maintains eye-contact with a partner for the whole two bars, even as the lower body begins a slight turn to anticipate the cast.

Stepping Up and Down: All too often this is either forgotten or resembles a kind of shuffling movement to get out of the way in the nick of time.

Make stepping up (or down) part of the dance. Catch your partner's eye just before the movement, then rise to the balls of the feet and step up right on the beats of the music. Keep your body parallel to your partner's and suddenly, stepping up becomes social and elegant, even in quick time!

To sum up:

None of these technique points are about footwork but rather about phrasing, handing and upper body control. Even the less athletic and newer dancers can learn these nuances that will improve their dancing. By paying attention to the more frequently danced and ordinary movements, our beloved Scottish country dancing can be even more fun.

*Rita Gibson*

paraphrased from the RSCDS "Scottish Dancer"

## Phrasing and formations

Scottish country dances are made up of figures of varying length, to suit the phrasing of Scottish country dance tunes. For the most part, figures are 2, 4, or 8 bars of music long; there has been some experimentation going on with unusually phrased music (e.g., 6-bar or 10-bar phrases) but this remains highly unusual.

There are various kinds of figures ranging from the very simple (like a couple changing places across the set giving right hands) to fairly intricate evolutions involving three or four couples at the same time. These figures are combined to form a

sequence of (normally) 32 bars---there are dances which are as short as 16 bars or as long as 64 bars. This sequence is then repeated several (often 8) times to form the complete dance. Dances of much longer than 64 bars exist, but are only danced through once.

Dances are described by their music type, length and number of repetitions. A 32 bar strathspey danced 8 times will be described as "an eight by thirty-two Strathspey", and this will often be shortened to 8x32 S, to fit on a dance card or programme .

Excerpted from Wikipedia

## Steps and Technique

Unlike [céilidh](#) dancing or [English country dancing](#), which are mostly done using simple steps, Scottish country dancing calls for special footwork according to a dance's choreography. Travelling steps include the skip-change of step in quick-time dances and the Strathspey travelling step in strathspey time, while setting steps include the pas de basque in quick time and the common schottische or Strathspey setting step in strathspey time. Some dances also involve special setting steps from [Highland dancing](#), such as the rocking step, high cuts, or Highland schottische. In quick time, there is also the slip step for quick sideways movement, e.g., in circles.

In SCD, there is often a certain focus on "correct technique", and this applies especially to footwork and the positions of the feet at various points during the steps. While well-executed steps do look quite impressive, their mastery involves some time and dedication and also a certain level of physical fitness---but with SCD being an inclusive type of pastime, the dance community does not discriminate against those who do not match the highest standards. In fact, in many places the main object of SCD is having fun, and while for many dancers "proper" footwork is an important part of that, others can apparently do without perfection in this respect.

A much more important aspect of good SCD technique than footwork has to do with space and time, i.e., ensuring that one is at the proper location at the proper time. It is vital not to stand in other dancers' way as well as to be in place in time for the various formations involving several dancers or couples. "Phrasing" means to execute a figure appropriately timed to the music, while "covering" means for several dancers to move in unison, forming split-second lines, squares etc. Many SCD groups like putting on "demonstrations" showing near-to-perfect dancing involving all aspects of technique.

Finally, SCD is [social dancing](#). Hence interaction with one's partner and the other dancers, such as smiling and giving hands, is an essential part of SCD. SCD is very much a team effort, and attempts at self-glorification through unconsidered "embellishments" are often frowned upon by others. The general feeling is that "extras" are fine when the time and place are right, but should be left out when less experienced dancers in the set might be confused, or during classes.

Excerpted from Wikipedia

## Rest and Be Thankful

I have been a widow for almost 10 years, but never forget the happy times and fun times I had with my husband, and I often reminisce about these moments.

I would like to share one with you and even although some of you have heard about it at David's Celebration of Life, I am going to risk telling it again.

Encouraged by the sister of my close friend I became a member of the Scottish Youth Hostel Association (SYHA) at 13 years old, after the death of my mother. Being an only child it was the best thing I ever did. Everyone was so friendly, as we all cooked and tidied up together and then did chores before we were allowed to leave the hostel. The entertainment in the evening was either singing or doing Scottish Country dances, then lights out at 11 pm.

Later, as a student, a friend and I would go occasionally for the weekend to our favourite hostel at Kinlochard, 25 miles from Glasgow. We would often meet the same people, and there was a young man I hoped I would meet again. We always chatted to each other, and months later, when we went to another hostel in Arrochar, at the head of Loch Long, lo and behold, he was there! This time he had his motorbike and asked me if I'd like to go for a run. I agreed, and when asked if I'd been on a bike before, I lied, and immediately said "of course!"

David gave me goggles which were the ex-RAF kind with leather rims. I looked as if I was ready to fly over the Atlantic!

We went over a famous road in Scotland called The Rest and be Thankful. This road no longer exists, but it had many bends and hills and beautiful views of the valley below. When we stopped at the end to stretch our legs, my eyes were streaming and David couldn't stop laughing. Unknown to me I had the goggles on upside down! I had to tell the truth now and never lied again!

Our friendship blossomed, and we made many journeys on the bike and I progressed to my own leather helmet and goggles. We married in 1952.

If you walk along the beach at Qualicum going northwards, our bench to David is the last one and it says Rest and Be Thankful.

Another reference to Rest and Be Thankful was when Wes Clindinning devised the program for the Nanaimo Tea Dance and always finished with the phrase "Rest and Be Thankful". However, as it is the name of a dance, I taught it one year thinking it was part of the program!

*Janetta Begg*

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## Ghillies

At the 2010 Filberg craft fair in Comox one of the booths was Soul Comfort from Duncan. They had a sign posted saying they make custom fitted ghillies. They specialize in Sheepskin and Sheep Wool and make all kinds of slippers so I guess have added dance slippers to the mix.

I picked up one of their cards as I thought it might be worth mentioning in the newsletter.

Soul Comfort  
190 Fourth Street  
Duncan, BC  
1-800-404-0622  
[www.soulcomfortsheepskin.com](http://www.soulcomfortsheepskin.com)

Submitted by *Ellen Coates*

## Old Fashioned Social

For the first time in many years, the Oceanside club held an Old Fashioned Social. It was a big hit with dancers, of whom 50 attended from all over the central island. The event was held at St. Stephen's Church in Qualicum Beach which is the same venue that was used some years ago when the club conducted socials rather than dinner/dances. It was an excellent venue for the event.

In the tradition of socials, this was designed to be just a whole lot of fun... and it was. We had a few small door prizes, and lots of great snacks after the dancing... thanks to all our members who provided such delicious treats!

The main theme of the event was having a great time, dancing to many of our favourite dances. Included in the program were St. John River, Bratach

Bana, Monymusk, Tribute to the Borders, The Irish Rover, Seton's Ceildih Band, and Maxwell's Rant and several others that we have come to enjoy over the years.

Maybe it was the great selection of dances that brought dancers to the event. Or perhaps it was the old fashioned price of \$5.00. Or maybe it was both. To a person, we received rave reviews from our guests, many of whom commented that they hoped we would do this again. And the good news is that there are lots more of the old favourites to select from for next year.

Our thanks to Rita and Janetta for putting together the outstanding dance program and for briefing the dances at the event.

Submitted by *Keith Horton*

## Spring Gala 2011

The Oceanside club held the Spring Gala at the traditional time of the first Saturday in April. We had a total of 53 attendees this year, 46 were dancers.

The evening began with our guests enjoying a glass of wine before dinner, compliments of our members. Our caterer was again D & H Catering of Port Alberni who provided several salads and hot dishes, including chicken cordon bleu.

We danced the night away to the wonderful music of Mary Ross. Mary has been providing the music for our Spring Gala for several years. Not only is her music great for dancing, but Mary herself is always lots of fun. We were not disappointed.

Several of the dances were new to many of us, but we had lots of opportunity in the weeks preceding the event to practice each of them. And what a great selection of dances they turned out to be. We heard many comments from our guests on how much they enjoyed the program.

We had an ample supply of door prizes. Our members provided donations for 6 bountiful baskets of goodies and Annette generously donated several

gorgeous potted Primulas. For the second year, there was a basket just "for the lads" which was won by Brian McFadden this year.

We had our traditional raffle. Two of these prizes were attractive brooches provided to the club by Dennis and Barbara Giesbrecht. The pick of the prizes was most certainly another lovely painting by Rita Gibson. Clearly there were several people who really hoped to win this painting, however, there could only be one winner and that lucky person was David Booz. David is Barbara Eagles' son and teaches in Toronto. What a generous club we are to give away our best prizes to out of town guests!!

The evening ended with a luscious spread of sweet and savoury dishes provided by members. There were not too many of these left at the end of the night, a telling comment on how good they were!

Lots of people contributed to the smooth functioning of this event and our thanks go to everyone.

Submitted by *Keith Horton*

# DANCING FEEDBACK

Sometimes it is good to ask new dancers what gives them the most trouble and what they would like more instruction on. After one such conversation it occurred to me that the simple things are often what we ignore.

For example:

What's the difference between jigs, reels and strathspeys?

Why do most people dancing keep looking at their feet?

How much "eye contact" should I give my partner and other dancers?

I will briefly try to answer these questions.

**Jigs** are written in 6/8 time and the suggested speed for this music is 112 Metronome or 34 seconds for 32 bars. In jigs you can say "jiggitty, jig-gitty, jig", to the music or some other rhyme. If the music is too fast then the dancers cannot maintain a proper form in the dance and start to throw themselves and other dancers around to get the pattern of the dance done. If the music is too slow then the dance becomes laborious.

**Reels** are in 4/4 time and the same speed of 34 seconds for 34 bars is suggested. Reels have a more even beat and you can count 1,2,3,4 to the music.

**Strathspeys** are danced at a much slower pace – metronome 60 or 64 seconds for 32 bars. Strathspey music was danced much faster 50-60 years ago and so older recordings are often faster. Some strathspeys are danced to song tunes rather than tunes with a strong surge to them and this is a controversial point.

Regardless of the type of music, I have a strong opinion that all of the tunes should be in the tradition of Scotland, not musicals adapted for us to dance to or other popular tunes. After all if we don't dance to Scottish music why call it Scottish Country Dancing!

## Looking at your feet

When you first start to dance you look at your feet to see what they are doing but once you are dancing your feet should no longer be where your eyes are. It is best to start looking at your partner and the other dancers. This does not mean that you can do just anything with your feet but the steps are to be felt, not watched! Think about feeling the contact into 3<sup>rd</sup> position in skip change and strathspey steps and look up!

## Eye Contact (e.g. smiling)

Remember you are dancing with your partner and your eye contact should be a spontaneous recognition of this. It should not be contrived and it should not be done grudgingly! It should be part of the joy and fun of dancing. Looking at other dancers in a spontaneous and natural way adds to everyone's enjoyment and should not make anyone feel embarrassed or underappreciated.

So, enjoy the music, look at your partner and smile!

*Hazel MacDonald*

Dancing teacher in Nanaimo

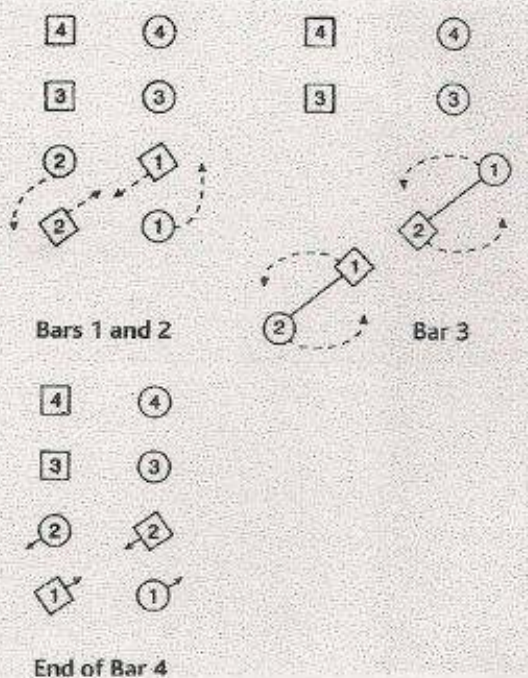
Excerpted, with permission, from the Nanaimo Newsletter, The Thistle

### Ladies' Chain

Over the last few years the prescribed method of doing Ladies' Chain has changed. Originally it was described in "Won't You Join the Dance" with the men casting on the sidelines before turning the lady. This of course is no longer the method (unless the dance instructions specify a cast) and indeed the pattern for the ladies has changed also. The turn with the left hand is no longer done on the sidelines but according to the "Manual" is done with the ladies remaining in the middle of the dance and a diagonal line is created prior to the left hand turn. (See below). Many people find these subtle changes hard to make as they are so familiar with the pattern they learned (and we are undoubtedly creatures of habit).

Ladies' Chain always starts with the man having a lady on his right (whether this is his partner or not). The description is as follows:

The women give right hands to cross over while the men curve to the right and dance towards the adjacent women place. The diagram shows that the women are in the middle of the set to start the left hand turn. Eight skip change of steps are required. This chain movement allows for good handing and eye contact. Hands are given at shoulder height and at no point should the right and left hands be joined at the same time. This phrasing gives opportunity for "light and shade" with variations in the length of steps for both men and women.



### Ladies' chain

This formation is danced by two couples. The starting position may vary, but the women always stand on the right of the men.

Steps 8 travelling steps

No of bars 8

Hands The hands are given at shoulder height with a shake-hand hold.

Bars

1-2

1st and 2nd women, giving right hands, cross over to pass each other. At the same time, curving out to their right, 1st and 2nd men dance towards the woman's place.

3-4

Giving left hands, 1st and 2nd women turn their partners. The women finish diagonally opposite their starting place and the men finish back where they started, facing out.

5-6

Repeat bars 1 and 2.

7-8

Giving left hands, 1st woman turns 2nd man and 2nd woman turns 1st man. All finish in their starting positions.

**Note**

1st and 2nd men finish the final turn by pulling back the left shoulder (polite turn).

*Hazel MacDonald*

Dancing teacher in Nanaimo

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Newsletter, The Thistle