



Over The Water

WINTER 2000-2001

A JOINT NEWSLETTER OF THE NO.VA./WASHINGTON, D.C.
BRANCHES OF THE ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY



Not too long ago, **Richard** Goss wrote, "The problem of myths of any provenance is that they are not very susceptible to reality checks," to which **Harry** Ways, in his own words, was prompted "to offer the following comments about a myth long prevalent in Scottish Dance circles which is susceptible to a reality check, and also a brief history of the 51st Highland Division in WW II.

"Most Scottish Country dancers have heard the story of the creation of 'The Reel of the 51st Highland Division,' devised in a German prisoner of war camp by members of the division captured early in World War II at St. Valerie en Caux. Frequently the tale includes the claim that they had been captured after fighting a rear-guard action to protect the Allied troops being evacuated at Dunkirk. There were several such references in response to a recent request on this server for background information on that dance. But this never happened, and the myth should be discredited, if only to provide credit where credit is due.

"The 51st was far away from Dunkirk between May 27th and June 4th, 1940, when the evacuations took place, and was under orders to stay in place and not participate in that operation. But two other Scottish units of the 2nd Division were there, and contributed significantly to the success of Operation Dynamo, the code name for the evacuation 1st Battalion, Queens Own Cameron Highlanders and 1st Battalion, Royal Scots, fought valiantly defending the Dunkirk perimeter, and paid a heavy price. Fewer than 100 men from these two units made it back to Britain, as most became casualties or were captured.

"This discussion is in no way intended to diminish the brilliant fighting record of the 51st throughout W.W.II. At the time of the Dunkirk evacuations, the Division was about 80 miles away, south of the Somme near Abbeville, defending against the German onslaught toward Paris. They had been assigned to the 10th French Army and were under the overall command of General Maxime Weygand. When the other elements of the British Expeditionary Force were allowed to escape, the 51st was ordered to stay in place and continue fighting, in a futile effort to convince the French to do so also. That order is generally attributed to Winston Churchill, who desperately wanted to prevent a French surrender.

"When the commanders of the 51st saw that the French Armies were collapsing, and the situation was hopeless, they decided to fight their way to the coast, contrary to the orders of the General Weygand and the War Office. Their hope was that it was not too late for them to be evacuated. Cut



off from Le Havre, their original destination, and battling stiff resistance from Panzer Divisions, they made it to the coast at St. Valerie En Caux, a site that had been used for evacuating wounded. An armada was hastily assembled, with little practical assistance from the British High Command, and was on the way to rescue them, but before it arrived the situation became critical. Five German Divisions under General Erwin Rommel had surrounded the town, gained the high ground and had heavy artillery shelling the town. They were in place to dominate the town and annihilate any attempts to get across the beach to the boats .

"Faced with an ultimatum to surrender, or face all out bombardment and the destruction of both the town and his troops, the division commander, Major General Victor Fortune at first refused. He organized an attempt to regain the high ground, but soon realized there was little chance of success, as the Highlanders were nearly out of ammunition and equipment and greatly outnumbered. General Fort tine reluctantly surrendered his 10,000 men to German General Erwin Rommel on June 12th, 1940. About 1000 had been captured earlier, and the division had suffered over 1000 fatal casualties and nearly 4000 wounded.

"Years later the Duke of Argyll, who as Captain Ian Campbell had been General Fortune's Intelligence Officer in 1940, wrote; 'It has always been abundantly clear to me that no division has ever been more uselessly sacrificed. It could have got away a good week before, but the powers that be--owing I think to faulty information--had come to the conclusion that there was a capacity for resistance in France which was not actually there.

"The Division was reconstituted soon after St. Valerie, and fought with distinction throughout the balance of the war in the armies commanded by Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery. They fought with Monty in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Some units went ashore in the D-Day landings. They fought their way across the Rhine and into Germany in 1945. . Their significant involvement in the defeat of Rommel's Afrika Korps at the battle of El Alemein must have been a particularly sweet moment, especially to those members who had escaped from the prison camps and rejoined their regiments. (in less than a year, 134 members of the Division had escaped and returned to Britain.) From El Alemein to the Rhine crossing and beyond, the 51st Division suffered over 15,000 casualties .

"As the allied advance through France neared St. Valerie, General Montgomery changed his order of battle to allow the 51st to liberate the town from the Germans They were led into town on September 2nd, 1944 by the Division Commander, Major General Thomas Rennie, an escapee who had been a major in 1940. Lt. Col. Bill Bradford, captured as a captain in 1940, led the 5th Black Watch. Addressing his troops, Gen. Rennie remembered his comrades: 'That magnificent Division was sacrificed to keep the French in the war. True to Highland tradition, the Division remained to the last with the remnants of our French Allies, although it was in their capacity to withdraw and embark at Le Harve. ' Rennie was later killed in action leading his division during the crossing of the Rhine in March of 1945. There is a granite memorial to those who died in 1940 on the cliff overlooking St. Valerie."





DANCERS NEEDED FOR DAYTIME DEMONSTRATIONS

The "**Daytime Demo Dancers**" are an informal group of Northern Virginia and Washington Branch dancers with flexible schedules who can get together during the middle of the day for demos at nursing homes, senior citizen meetings, etc. The group performs the same program at each demo, so no one has to learn new dances. Instead of formal rehearsals, dancers just meet at the site a half hour before the performance for a walk-through.

The dances on the program are a mix of traditional and modern ones that were chosen because they frequently appear on party programs and are familiar to *most* dancers

Espie McNabb 321/3

The Montgomerie's Rant 32R/3

Seann Truibhas Willichan 32S/2

The Wild Geese 32J/3

Neidpath Castle 32S/3

Catch the Wind 32H/3

The Round Reel of Eight 88R/4

If you're interested in participating in these daytime demos, please call Carol Porter at (703) 379-5779.

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS OF TIDEWATER

Annet Harris is the Scottish country dance teacher in the southeastern part of Virginia, and the group has been "*out of the loop*" for a couple of years due to the sabbatical of the Hampton Roads Highland Games. The group encourages all to participate in their Spring dance on April 28, 2001 Scottish Country Dancers of Tidewater (SCDoT) Spring Dance, 7:30pm, w/Terpsichore, in Chesapeake, V A. Contact: Annette Harris, 757-587-4126, Aharrisscd@aol.com for directions

CONTACTS

Official web site for RSCDS New York Branch is <<http://www.rscdsnewyork.org>> They are holding a New York Branch Teachers' Workshop March 24, 2001. All candidate teachers are invited.

St. Columbia's class contacts: Janet Simmon, 301/977-1757 or Jenise Williamson, 301/441-1331

Northern Virginia class contacts: Ellie Briscoe, 703/461-7383, mail@briscoecom. Publicity should go to Eva Lanyi, Secretary; 5373 Harbor Court Dr, Alexandria, VA 22315-3919 or email lanyi@erols.com.

Strathspey ListServe. Jim Healy posted a report on the doings at the RSCDS annual general meeting. Pia Walker posted a statement that RSCDS has put out a questionnaire asking for members responses. To contact Pia, email piawalker@sol.co.uk.



For foot care go to <http://www.sofsole.com/pages/rnainl/html>. Special Note: They do not carry a little oval pad to place just in back of the neuroma spot. Spenco's should help. The gist is to take care of the foot all the time, not just when dancing or when hurting. Ice ten minutes every day and wear pad in all shoes.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA IS MOVING ITS CLASSES

Northern Virginia is moving its classes from the Durant Center to Jefferson-Houston Elementary School (next door to the Durant Center) starting January 2001 due to renovation of the Durant Center. The renovation project is expected to take about one year .

**CELEBRATED FIDDLER HANNEKE CASSEL
PLAYS FOR ST. COLUMBA'S**

Many of us got to know the high-spirited Hanneke Cassel and her high-spirited fiddling at Pinewoods 1999-2000. We're lucky that she has agreed to play for St. Columbia's regular Tuesday night class in Greenbelt, Maryland, with other members other ensemble. Rather than holding class, of course, St. C's is hosting a special social dance. Check the date of January 23 in the Event Calendar!

CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT DESCRIPTION
Jan 7, 2001 (Sunday)	Washington Branch Reel Millennium Dance, 2:00 p.m. Venue: Whitby Gym, National Cathedral School. Musicians: Findhorn Trio (Steve Hickman, fiddle, Marty Taylor, flute/concertina, Liz Donaldson, piano) with Ralph Gordon, bass. Contact: Blaine Feet 301-942-283, blpeet@juno.com or Kay Hoffman, or khoffman@dc.net.
Jan. 14, 2001	Harrisburg SCD Tea Dance, 2:00 p.m. Silver Spring Presbyterian Church, Mechanicsburg, P A. Findhorn Trio (Steve Hickman, fiddle, Marty Taylor, flute/concertina, Liz Donaldson, piano) with piper Dan Emery. Contact Ian Miller, imiller@aesc.com.
Jan. 19, 2001	Washington Branch Advanced Social Dance Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Teacher. David Gilliam
Jan. 20, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1 :00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Stooges are needed for this class. Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461- 7383, or mail@briscoe.com
Jan. 23, 2001	Social Night of Dancing at St. Columba's! 8:00-10:30 p.m. Musicians HaLaLi (Hanneke Cassel, Lissa Scheckenburger, Laura Cortese) with Liz Donaldson, piano. Greenbelt Community Center, Greenbelt, MD. Suggested contribution between \$5-7 in addition to class fee (\$3), Contact Janet Simmon, (301) 977-1757.
Jan. 24, 2001	Northern Virginia Burns Night Dance, 8:00 p.m. Jefferson-Houston Elementary School, Alexandria, V A Musicians Becky Ross fiddle, Liz Donaldson, piano.



DATE	EVENT DESCRIPTION
Jan 27, 2001	Burns Night Celebration, Charlottesville, VA Prepaid reservations only. Contact Celia and Bob Belton, 804-979-0939, or trout@aol.com.
Feb. 2, 2001	Washington Branch Experienced Technique Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Teacher: Mary Ann Williamson
Feb 3, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1 :00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Stooges are needed <i>for</i> this class Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461-7383, or mail@briscoe.com.
Feb. 10, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Stooges are needed for this class. Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461-7383, or mail@briscoe.com.
Feb 13, 2001	St Columba's Valentines Dance, 8:00 -11:00 p.m. Venue: Greenbelt Community Center, gym. Open band led by Liz Donaldson, piano and Steve Hickman, fiddle. Jim Copess is chair.
Feb. 16, 2001	Washington Branch Advanced Social Dance Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD, Teacher' Jenn Sawin.
Feb. 17, 2001	Swarthmore English Scottish Ball, 8 p.m. Swarthmore, PA. Musicians Marty Taylor, flute/concertina, Liz Donaldson, piano, with Swarthmore students. Contact: Jennier Tyson, jet@,sccs .swarthmore .edu
Feb. 24, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461-7383, or mail@briscoe.com .
Feb. 25, 2001	BandAid , ensemble playing workshop. Liz Donaldson, (301) 986-1291, liz@us.net. Date TBA.
Mar. 2, 2001	Washington Branch Experienced Technique Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Teacher Blaine Peet
Mar. 10, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461-7383, or mail@briscoe.com
Mar. 10, 2001	St. Patrick's Dance, 8:00 p.m. Sponsored by Northern Virginia Branch of the RSCDS, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Arlington, V A, Musicians David Knight and Becky Ross, fiddle, Liz Donaldson, piano. Contact David Chase, David E. Chase@HUD.GOV.
Mar. 16, 2001	Washington Branch Advanced Social Dance Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Teacher. John MacLeod



DATE	EVENT DESCRIPTION
Mar. 17, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461-7383, or mail@briscoe.com.
March 18, 2001	St. Patrick's Scottish Country Dance, 2 p.m. Richmond Branch. Musicians Waverly Station (David Knight, fiddle, Liz Donaldson. piano. Contact Stella StellaF@workdnet.com.
Mar. 24, 2001	Teachers' Candidates Class, 1:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Contact Ellie Briscoe, (703) 461-7383, or mail@briscoe.com.
March 31, 2001	Pittsburgh Scottish Country Ball and Workshop Pittsburgh SCD. Musicians Tally-Ho! (David Knight, fiddle, Matty Metcalfe, accordian, Liz Donaldson, piano. Workshop Teacher Blaine Peet. Contact Jean Picone, piconejm@msx.upmc.edu.
Apr. 6-8, 2001	Capital Weekend Sponsored by the Washington Branch of the RSCDS. Teachers Marianne Taylor (Boston Branch) and Sinclair Barbour (Durnfriesshire Scotland). Musicians Friday Tally-Ho! (Liz Donaldson, David Knight, & Matty Metcalfe); Saturday Full Findhom (Steve Hickman, Alexander Mitchell, Marty Taylor, Liz Donaldson, & Ralph Gordon). National Cathedral School, Washington D.C. Denise Feet, 301-942-2831 ternpesst@juno.com. website: www.geocities.com/paris/parc/1297/capitalweekend.
Apr. 20, 2001	Washington Branch Advanced Social Dance Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD Teacher Denise Feet.
April 22, 2001	Baltimore SCD Tea Dance 2:00 p.m. Church of the Redeemer. Musicians Findhom Trio (Steve Hickman, fiddle, Marty Taylor, flute/concertina, Liz Donaldson, piano). Contact Fred Eustis, (410) 922-6369.
May 4, 2001	Washington Branch Experienced Technique Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Teacher: Blaine Peet.
May 5, 2001	The Boston Highland Ball at Nevins Hall, Framingham, MA. Music is by The Sprig of Ivy led by Terry Traub with guests Elke Baker and Larry Unger. For details, call Elizabeth Bell (617)-244-0311.
May 18, 2001	Washington Branch Advanced Social Dance Class, 8:00 p.m. NIH Aerobics Center, Bethesda, MD. Teacher: Ralph Stoddard.
May 20, 2001	Basic Tea Dance, 2:30 p.m. Trinity Presbyterian Church, Arlington, V A Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Branch of the RSCDS. Musicians Terpsichore (Elke Baker, fiddle, Liz Donaldson, piano). David Chase, David_E_Chase@HUD.GOV.
June 9-10, 2001	Potomac Celtic Festival Leesburg, V A

Special thanks to Jay Andrews who faithfully submits the calendar. and prints and distributes this newsletter! Please send your contribution5. to c.jenise@.moose-mail.com Deadline for the Spring issue is February 15th for early March publication. Thanks!