



The Town Crier



VILLAGE GREEN ENGLISH
COUNTRY DANCERS
April, 2009

English Country Dancing is friendship set to music

VILLAGE GREEN CALENDAR 2008/09
2009

Apr. 25 Spring Ball, Fort Gibraltar
Apr. 29 Last class
May 3 Challenge class wind up
May 6 Annual General Meeting, Harrow United



VILLAGE GREEN EXECUTIVE 2008/09

President Anne Morton	284-2235
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Secretary Sheldon McLeod	261-1682
Treasurer* Terry Armstrong	475-6591
Publicist Susan Greenhill	453-0153
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Member-at-large Arlene Cutts	837-5049
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Teachers' Rep. Jeannie Gilbert	269-6012
Town Crier Editor Liz Goossen	489-2752
Dem Coordinator Maureen McIntosh	783-1488

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website address <http://www.villagegreenenglishcountrydancing.org/>

Thank you to Anne, Frances, Marion and Delayne for their contributions to this newsletter

President's Musings

When you get an e-mail saying “Your bum roll is under way”, it must be the season for the ball! I can hardly wait to wear my splendiferous costume. I hope everybody else will enjoy it too, though you won't get to see the bum roll, which is actually worn out of sight around the waist and helps to drape the garment.

It seems that everybody from the Ball Committee to individual members is working hard to get ready for the ball. Let's hope that by April 25th the snow and ice will finally have gone but if they haven't (and in Manitoba, who knows?), we'll still have a good time. Despite all the snow, around two dozen dancers turned out for class on March 25th. Early arrivals had some anxious moments as we wondered if the teacher, or any teacher, would make it, and how we would cope without one. But Sue arrived and we had a great evening. Thanks to Len Matiation for shoveling a path to the church door.

Unfortunately, I missed a couple of this winter's events, the February workshop and the Scottish/English social. I did get to the February social, which was a lot of fun, and very well attended. This was encouraging as in recent years this social hasn't been drawing a crowd. The Scottish/English social in March was also well attended, and was able to make a contribution of \$200 to Winnipeg Harvest.

It has been the tradition for Village Green and the Winnipeg Branch of the RSCDS to take it in turns to host and organize the joint social. In recent years it's been getting increasingly difficult for the Scottish dancers, who have several events at that time of year, to take on this task. They have decided not to continue with it. Their decision was discussed at the Village Green executive meeting on March 18th. The upshot was that Village Green would host this event every year, instead of alternate years only. The Scottish dancers would be invited and perhaps MIFDA as well. In this way dance will continue to be celebrated and John Trevenen's memory honoured.

Speaking of the executive, by now Marion Tetrault may have spoken to every member of Village Green in her quest to fill upcoming vacancies. Being on the executive does require a commitment of time and energy. Nobody would claim it is as *much* fun as dancing but there is still fun and friendship to be had – and there won't be any dancing without people to run the organization. So, if you haven't considered being on the executive, think about it; if you've rejected the idea, think again!

For myself, the only year I have *not* been on the executive is the first year I belonged to Village Green, so I am looking forward to committing the presidency to Marion's more than capable hands and taking a break from meetings.

See you on the dance floor,
Anne Morton

Highlights of January 18, 2009 Executive Meeting

Scottish/English Social – The Royal Scottish Country Dancers have let us know that they are withdrawing from any future formal involvement in the social due to the difficulty they have experienced in getting Scottish dancers out to organize and join in the social. Liz expressed a desire that VG should continue to host an annual Scottish/English social, to continue with the tradition that honours the memory of John Trevenen. The executive agreed that VG would continue to host an annual Scottish/English social, with an open invitation to the Scottish dancers and MIFDA.

Town Crier – It was agreed that articles for the Town Crier be submitted to the editor a month prior to publication date. Next season, the publication dates will be set at the beginning of the dancing season.

Workshop 2010 – Discussions are underway with the Flying Romanos, a trio of musicians from New York. Virginia, Mary Louise and Liz danced to their playing when they were in New York last November. Extra expenses that would be incurred if they come to play for the dance workshop would be approximately \$ 3000.00. Some fundraising ideas are; raising social prices; “service” auction; approaching MIFDA about sharing cost if a contra dance is held; house concerts

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

**Annual General Meeting will be held on May 6th, 2009
At Harrow United Church
7:30 PM**

Report of Nominating Committee

The members, listed below have let their name stand for the following positions:

Joan Cormie - Vice-President

Carolyn Mosher - Social Convenor

The following members, elected last year, will be completing their 2 year term

Marion Tetrault, moving from Vice President to President

Sheldon McLeod - Secretary

Terry Armstrong - Treasurer

Susan Greenhill - Publicist

Terry Armstrong – Archivist

The Teachers’ Representative is appointed by the Teachers’ Committee

Other Working Positions on the committee are:

Member-at-Large/Hall Convenor - Arlene Cutts

Member-at-Large/Membership - Lorraine Leo De Jong

Demonstration Co-ordinator - TBA

Newsletter Editor –Elizabeth Goossen

Decoration Co-ordinator - Frances Harris

Dancing (and dancing, and dancing) in the Streets

When we take hands four in a longways set we are expecting a dance in which the ones progress down the set while the twos move up. But a dance can progress in another way – by literally covering ground. In the Furry Dance, a centuries-old spring ritual practised in Helston, Cornwall, each group of two couples stays together until the end of the dance. And the end of the dance does not come after a mere seven or so repetitions – oh no, it comes about two hours later, after dancing up and down the streets, and sometimes in and out of shops and houses. The same people, the same simple dance, the same tune, played over – and over – and over. If you want to see and hear the dance, go to YouTube



and search Helston Flora Day. The repetitive music may drive you mad or you may love it. It must stir my Cornish blood, for I love it so much that I now own a DVD of the 2008 Flora Day – *Invitation to the Dance* (www.prime-productions.co.uk).

The name “furry dance” may come from the word ‘fer’ or ‘fair’. Helston Flora Day takes place on or near May 8, which is a feast day of St Michael, the Protector of Cornwall. There are actually four dances: the first is

the early morning dance, which begins at seven. It’s for a youngish crowd, with the men in white shirts and grey flannels and the women in knee-length party frocks. The children’s dance starts at ten, the children all in white and looking adorable. They follow a shorter route. The Midday dance (pictured here) is perhaps the most famous, as the couples dress as if attending Ascot or a society wedding. In 2008, 140 couples took part in the Midday dance. The final dance, starting at five, is danced by the same people as in the early morning dance. The dancers all wear sprigs of lily of the valley. In the morning there is also a roving mummers’ play, the Hal an Tow, with St George and the Dragon and St Michael and the Devil. It is definitely a good day to own a pub in Helston – 20,000 pints of beer were consumed last year.

The survival of the Furry Dance owes a lot to a desire to nurture a sense of community and Cornish identity. But I wonder what it must be like to dance along streets where you normally walk or drive for all those everyday activities such as going to work, shopping, banking, etc.. Afterwards, do the dancers see their town with different eyes? According to *Invitation to the Dance*, when Flora Day ends, “There is not an unhappy face to be seen.”

Anne Morton

A Costume Library?

Over the years I wonder how many costumes have been lost to the garbage, Canadian Diabetes or left to dissolve in cupboards from lack of use.

Village Greeners happily lend out their extra costumes to others when times call for their generosity, but I have had another thought over the years.

Is someone willing to be “a costume librarian”? This member would store and keep track off all our ‘no longer used or don’t fit anymore’ costumes? This way they would all be in one place, sized, named to who had given them etc. A small fee could be charged for the use of them to keep them mended and tidied.

I, for one, have every intention of donating my costumes to Village Green when I get to bounce off the face of the physical earth. It would be great to know the pleasure it will bring to others after my ‘disappearance.’

What do the rest of you think? We need input on this and action behind it, and NO I do not want to be the librarian. But I do already have two dresses and petticoats that can be donated.

Delayne Groen.

Update on the “Pride and Prejudice Tour”

In the last Town Crier, there was a notice about a Pride and Prejudice Tour arranged by Ken McFarland. Graham, from Hawk Green, picked up on this, took the information to Hawk Green’s AGM. The Hawk Green membership agreed that Graham would make and keep in contact with Ken to make some arrangements.

Graham noted that one of the later enroute visits is to "Pemberley" the ancestral home of no less a person than Mr Darcy. In real life this means that the tourists will be visiting Lyme Hall which is very near Stockport and well within Cheshire, it's also a National Trust property. Lyme Hall is approx 4 miles from the Hawk Green Reading Rooms, even by our standards that's pretty darn close, I felt too close to ignore.

Hawk green are hoping to host the P&P tourists in a social get together and dance somewhere nearby.

When some of the Hawk Green members joined Adlington FDC for their Playford Spring Ball, they discovered that Reg Battle, chairman of AFDC had also been in contact with Ken McFarland.

One of the tourists early visits is to "Netherfield Hall" including a P&P Ball with "The Pemberley Players" (English) making the music. Reg asked if we were interested in attending we answered almost without thinking "YES please".

The P&P tour are inviting 20 English dancers to join in with them at Netherfield Hall to dance in the ballroom where Miss Elizabeth Bennet first danced with Mr Darcy.

It felt like a once in a lifetime unmissable event

Talking of meetings

Two Hawk Green members, Pat & Dave Whitehurst, are arranging a grand 2 month tour of the USA & Canada soon. Part of their tour takes "The Canadian" a train which goes east - west, or is it the other way? **Hot news** though is they have a stop over in Winnipeg. Once we know when they will be here, we hope to arrange a dance. We will keep you posted via email and/or phone tree.

Thanks to Graham for his email keeping us up-to-date.

The Gibraltar Gala Village Green Spring Ball 2009 Saturday, April 25, 2009

The Gala is fast approaching, costumes are being sewn, dances rehearsed, and music practiced. For your information, to help get into the mood of the period, here is some historical information about life during this time

Weddings in Assiniboia

“Weddings became a primary source of entertainment at the settlement. Custom dictated that the ceremony would take place on Wednesdays before noon, followed by three full days of dancing and celebration. On Sunday, the newlyweds would go to church together.

In the earliest days of the settlement, everyone would be invited to the wedding. The father of the bride went from house to house spreading word of the celebration. Feasts were planned, with roast beef, roast mutton, boiled potatoes and plum pudding considered standard fare. Neighbours usually gave over their homes, cheerfully filling all their rooms with guests until the weekend ended.

At weddings in Old Kildonan, the dancing traditionally went on until dawn. But when Reverend Black arrived, the Presbyterian faithful thought he might not approve. Dr. Bunn and Dr. Cowan happened to be guests at one dour, musicless, danceless wedding and eventually one of them said to the other: “I’ll get a fiddler, and do you have partners ready for the two of us.” Soon the cry went up: “The Doctors are dancing!” and then everybody joined in. There was never another Kildonan wedding where they didn’t dance til dawn, and if the Rev. Black disapproved, he never said so.”

A History of Manitoba, Volume I

Excerpts from a letter from Robert Clouston, an employee of HBC

“...I shall now try to give you some idea of our amusements in this part of the world – the first party to which I was invited was to a Mr. Bird’s. Mr. Lane and I went together – in company with about a dozen others – ladies and gentlemen. Our dinner was very good indeed but I forget the dishes. Shortly after dinner a whole batch of young ladies arrived and a large room was cleared out and we commenced dancing...”

“...Our next turnout was to a Wedding at the White Horse Plains... We reached Mr. Grant’s about 12 o’clock and found them dancing, and Mr. G. himself, in that happy state, which is sometimes called glorious: we had something to eat, and then joined the dance...”

Excerpt from a letter from Daniel Williams Harmon, May 27, 1805

“...Last evening Mr. Chaboillez invited the people of the other two Forts to a Dance & we had a real North West Ball, for when three fourths of the People were so much intoxicated as not to be able to walk strieght, the other fourth put an end to the Ball or rather Bawl! And this morning we were invited to breakfast at the Hudson’s Bay House with a Mr. McKay & in the evening to a Ball, which however ended in a more decent manner than the one we had the preceding evening at our House – not that all were sober, but we had no fighting...”

Bright Golden Hayes

3 couple longways

‘Ramblings of a London Gentlemen’ Chris Turner

- A1: Couples set forward and back, Middle couple initiate heys across the dance, 2W with the first couple and 2M with the 3rd couple. **This is a hey half way**
- A2: couples set foward and back, Middle couple initiate heys on sides of the dance, giving right shoulder to dancer on the right. (Now in order 3 2 1, all improper). **This is a hey half way**
- B1: circle 6 half round, back to back with partner
- B2: first couple cross and cast (2s dance up), 1s cross and cast again to finish in 3rd place, 3s dance up

NOTE: Please replace the instructions for ‘Bright Golden Hayes’ published in the last Town Crier with the above. The instructions in **bold** show the correction.

Turn of the Tide – Victoria ECD Ball

Liz Goosen and I attended the Victoria English Country Dance Society Spring Ball on Saturday March 7th. The caller was internationally renowned dance leader Gene Murrow. The theme of the Ball was Turn of Tide, and all the dances all alluded, one way or another, to the sea, ponds or lakes.

This nautical theme seemed highly appropriate in Victoria, which is, of course, situated beautifully on the Juan de Fuca Strait. Fishing boats and seagulls abound, setting just the right tone.

We started with a casual Friday night dance called by Gene, and at least 70 dancers attended. There were participants from Washington State, Vancouver, the Gulf Islands, and, of course, two from Winnipeg! The energy level was high, the quality of the calling very good, and the music, by the Dance Hall Players, exemplary! The members of the Victoria group were very welcoming, and willing partners abounded. Just as at Village Green, there are all levels of dancers, and their enthusiasm and pleasure in the dance were infectious.

We turned up bright and early for the Saturday morning workshop, held in a large gym and filled to capacity with eager dancers. Among others, we danced Turn of Tide, Long Pond, Cockle Shells, Bournemouth Waves, Stepping Stones, Waters of Holland, and the more familiar Dublin Bay and Severn Bore.

Gene's teaching was very relaxed and he often entertained us with stories about the dances or their creators. It was a treat to realize that one of my partners was Brooke Friendly, whose "Impropriety" we had danced at a Challenge class earlier this year.

The workshop was followed by a delicious lunch, and the break gave us a chance to get to talk to many of the other dancers without having to worry about what our feet were supposed to be doing! Following lunch was a "nautical entertainment", with a Gilbert and Sullivan take-off, a solo hornpipe, and a fun quiz. I was lucky enough to win a prize in the quiz for knowing the origins of a nautical expression to do with cold weather and brass monkeys (it's a long story!).

After a relatively relaxing afternoon, Liz and I returned for the ball itself, to find the hall decorated with nets, seagulls, fish and all things nautical (hmmm...do I feel a theme coming on?). The costumes were varied and wonderful, with one member of the Victoria Society resplendent in Marie Antoinette-style pompadour and panniers.

We felt well rehearsed, and the dancing was wonderful. Gene got well into the spirit of things by dressing in naval uniform – commodore, at least! We danced late into the night, and were sorry when it came time to head home. Another lovely Victoria Ball to look back on with delight.

Frances Harris