



Orange County Ceilidh



Newsletter of the Orange County Branch of the RSCDS

Volume 44, No. 2

March/April 2026

Visit our website at www.rscds-oc.org

“For naught can cheer the heart sae weel, As can a canty Highland reel” — Robert Fergusson

Greetings from the Chair

Welcome to Spring! As we head into the warmer spring months (although it's been very warm many days this winter), we are looking forward to the Southern California Interbranch Catalina Workshop and Ball the first weekend in May. The committee has been hard at work making plans for the 135 dancers from near and far planning to attend this fabulous weekend. I know we will all have a great time. For some history of Catalina and the Casino, see Karen's article on page 5.



Since our last newsletter we hosted a memorable Andrew Rankine Memorial Christmas Ball with music by Flindrikin (minus an ailing Ron Wallace who was very much missed). Photos are on page 4. Thanks to the large contingent from San Diego who trekked up to Orange County – you made the dance very fun!

And in January the Los Angeles, San Gabriel Valley and Orange County branches hosted our annual Robert Burns Supper and Ball with music by Andy Imbrie and Caroline McCaskey. It seems everyone had a lovely time and the successful silent auction helped to keep the cost reasonable. Photos for this event are on page 3.

Members of the Orange County Branch will be showcasing our favorite dancing style in February at the Cerritos International Festival of Friendship and in March at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana. In May, we'll be at the annual Scottish Fest at the Orange County Fairgrounds, so in addition to our classes and monthly dances, we will all be very busy. Hope to see you at one or more of our events soon,

Terri Speakman, Chair



Orange County Classes

TUESDAY

Columbus Tustin Recreation Center
17522 Beneta Way, Tustin
Intermediate: 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
Pat Zschoche: swisslassie@hotmail.com

WEDNESDAY

Columbus Tustin Recreation Center
17522 Beneta Way, Tustin
Basics: 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.
Beginner: 8:15-9:30 p.m.
Connie Walker: samanthasem@yahoo.com

FRIDAY

Columbus Tustin Recreation Center
17522 Beneta Way, Tustin
Experienced: 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
Connie Walker: samanthasem@yahoo.com
Pat Zschoche: swisslassie@hotmail.com

Note: Classes require enrollment through Tustin Parks and Recreation (www.tustinca.org)

The Next Big Event
*Catalina Workshop
& Ball*
May 1-3, 2026
Music by
Thistle House
Teachers: Gary Coull
& Jeanne Moody

Calendar of Events

(See branch website rscds-oc.org for flyers of upcoming dances.)

HERE

February 2026

14 Branch Dance, 7:00 p.m., Tustin Senior Center, recorded music

March 2026

14 Branch Dance, 7:00 p.m., Tustin Senior Center, music by the SO-CALedonians

April 2026

11 Branch Beginner Dance, 7:00 p.m., Tustin Senior Center, recorded music

May 2026

1-3 Catalina Workshop and Ball. Teachers Jeanne Moody & Gary Coull, Music by Thistle House. Information & registration form at www.scottishdancecatalinaworkshop.com

23-24 Scottish Fest, Orange County Fairgrounds

THERE

February 2026

21 San Gabriel Valley Branch Ceilidh, 5:00 p.m., St. James Episcopal Church, South Pasadena, music by the SO-CALedonians

28 L.A. Branch Beginner Dance, 7:00 p.m., First Christian Church, Studio City, recorded music

March 2026

28 L.A. Branch Beginner Dance, 7:00 p.m., Torrance Cultural Arts Center, Torrance, recorded music

April 2026

18 San Gabriel Valley Branch Catalina Ball Review Dance (entire Catalina Ball program danced), 4:00 p.m., St. James Episcopal Church, South Pasadena, recorded music

ELSEWHERE

February 2026

15-20 RSCDS Winter School, Pitlochry, Scotland

21 San Francisco Branch Valentine Ball

March 2026

6-8 Atlanta Branch 50th Anniversary Workshop and Ball, Cartersville, GA; <https://rscds-atlanta.org/50th-anniversary/>

April 2026

4 TAC Youth Group North American Scottish Country Dance Festival and Evening Dance, Philadelphia, PA www.tac-rscds.org/NA-Festival

11 Vancouver Island Scottish Country Dance Society workshop and ball, Victoria, BC. More info at viscnds.ca

Minutes of the COM of February 1, 2026

Meeting Highlights:

- **Treasurer's Report:** Current balance in the checking account is \$14,505, of which the Scholarship Fund balance is \$2298. The profit from the Christmas Ball will go in the scholarship fund.
- **Membership:** 2025-2026 membership is 28 members and 35 associate members.
- Beginning in the summer session, the Wednesday class will be one class from 7:30-9:30 covering both basic and beginner levels.
- The Christmas Ball made a profit of \$294, primarily because one musician was ill and had to cancel.
- The Burns Ball was very successful and essentially broke even financially.
- The State Charity registration was completed and back dues for 2020-2025 were paid.
- A sizeable donation from Pete and Line Anderson was received and there was discussion about the best way to use it.

The next Committee of Management meeting will be held on April 26, 2026. Copies of the full minutes of the meeting are available from Recording Secretary Randi Kraemer.



*Wednesday class
Christmas Ceilidh*



2026 Burns Supper and Ball



The presentation of the haggis (L to R): Piper Martin Johnson, Sarah Fox, Norm McCallum, Lisa Hancock, Eric Fisher, David Morgan

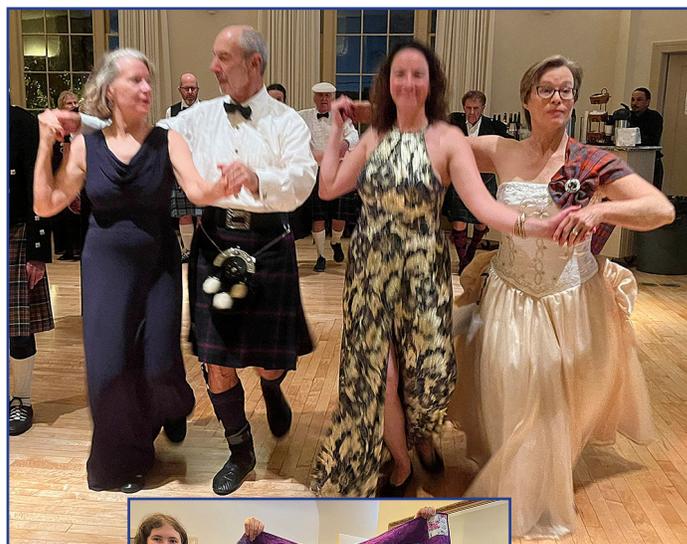


Christopher Bradley (filling in for David Waller) and Anthea Macdonald gave us a lovely salute to the lassies and laddies



Martha Matthews, accompanied by Jennifer Chun on cello, provided an enlightening Immortal Memory of Robert Burns' musical influences.

We danced to the fabulous music of Caroline McCaskey and Andy Imbrie.



Photos by Connie Learn and Terri Speakman

Orange County Ceilidh



Noa Weisberg was the winning bidder for the silent auction quilt.

2025 Andrew Rankine Memorial Christmas Ball



San Diego Branch dancers

Orange County Ceilidh

Catalina Island: A Unique Gem

At least 150 million years ago, a blink in geologic time, an island emerged off the coast of Southern California, the result of two tectonic plates colliding and bulging up a minor mountain range. This natural phenomenon caused the formation of Santa Catalina Island. Part of a string of eight Channel Islands, this gives evidence of this ancient mountain range and proves Catalina was never hitched to the mainland.

About 29 miles from Long Beach, this jewel's landscape is rugged with steep cliffs, canyons and rolling hills. Surprisingly, there are no beaches, except where shelves formed where the canyons meet the sea. Since the island is rich in quartz, those beaches which do exist show a silvery-gray sand, especially on the seaward coast. Always shaped and reshaped by the sea, the coastline also produces sea caves and marine terraces.

Compact at about 75 square miles, the island is 22 miles long and eight miles wide at its greatest width. The half-mile-wide isthmus pinches its narrowest part beside the unincorporated city of Two Harbors. It has always attracted geologists and researchers as well as explorers.

Originally, Native Americans—Tongva group—inhabited the island. They also maintained villages on the mainland and traveled back and forth for trade. They used the entire island with the biggest settlements at the Isthmus and present-day Avalon. Renowned for their mining, working and trading in soapstone, the Tongva also valued Santa Catalina Island as a ceremonial center, connected to *Povuu'nga*.

Over millennia many other inhabitants have come and gone. But it was the Pimungans (or Pimuvit) people, who called the island *Pimu*, who greeted Portuguese explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542. In the name of the King of Spain, Cabrillo named the island "San Salvador" and leisurely explored the coast. Not much interest was shown after this discovery, and the Pimungans were left in peace until 1602. On the eve of St. Catherine of Alexandria's Day, November 24, Sebastián Vizcaíno

rediscovered the island, renaming it Santa Catalina, in honor of the saint.

Spanish colonization brought changes when most of the flourishing population of Pimungans were forced to the mainland to work at the missions and other Spanish establishments. Spain repressed trade and contact with other nations, and a multitude of unknown diseases also arrived, creating a huge cultural shock.

Hunters used Catalina as a base camp for the capture of sea otters and sea lions/seals (1805) and smugglers of leather and tallow from California took advantage of coves, inlets, and bays provided by the landscape, thereby evading mainland taxes. (1820s). By this time, the Pimungans had disappeared.

Meanwhile, New Spain (Mexico) had revolted and become independent in 1820. California, including the Channel Islands, became a province of Mexico. Catalina Island was awarded as a land grant to Thomas Robbins in 1846 as a reward for services to the Mexican government, but it needed to be used. Robbins established a small ranch, but sold it to Don Jose Covarrubias in 1850.

California became part of the U.S. in 1848 after the Mexican American War. Under the American government, land grants were made, but proving them was a lengthy process. Squatters took advantage and laid claim to various sections of the island. Sheep and cattle ranches thrived. Certain areas were purchased by James Lick of San Francisco, who, by 1864, owned the entire island. His estate controlled Catalina for approximately 25 years.

By the end of the 19th century, Catalina was inhabited by sheep and cattle herders. As time passed, those seeking adventure sailed the channel to picnic on the shore and/or escape the central valley heat. Was Santa Catalina Island becoming a vacation destination?

In fact, the next owner, George Shatto, purchased Catalina for \$200,000 from the Lick estate in 1887. He

began a movement to create a tourist destination, planning and building the town of Avalon as a hub for this activity. He built the first hotel and the pier. But after five years his dream went bust. The



land reverted back to the Lick estate, which sold it to the Banning brothers—William, Joseph, and Hancock—sons of Phinneas Banning of San Pedro, in 1891. The Banning brothers fulfilled Shatto’s dream of developing a tourist resort. Infrastructure, hotels, roads to the interior, and other tourist facilities were developed. Stagecoach tours of the land were offered, and specialized access to the Avalon Beach area and Sugarloaf Point were realized. The still-standing pleasure pier was built in 1909. By the way, it was Shatto’s sister-in-law who first suggested the name “Avalon” for the main city.

Sadly, a fire in 1915 wiped out half of Avalon’s buildings, including six hotels and several clubs. Facing a huge debt, the Bannings were forced to sell to a real estate investment group. One of the main investors was William Wrigley, Jr. of chewing gum fame. In 1919 Wrigley bought out nearly every shareholder until he owned controlling interest in the Santa Catalina Island Company. He and his wife, Ada, loved Avalon and the island, and invested millions for needed infrastructure, hotels, restaurants, event venues, and other attractions. This includes the six-bedroom Mount Ada, Wrigley’s hilltop island retreat, now a pricy hotel.

Wrigley also owned the Chicago Cubs professional baseball club, and he moved the spring training headquarters to Las Casitas field on Avalon Canyon Road for 30 years (1921-1951).

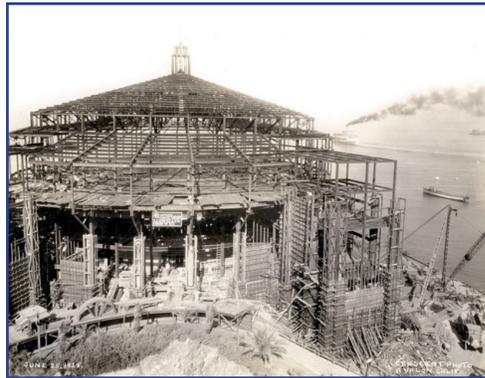
In 1975 the Wrigley heirs deeded 42,000 acres to the Catalina Conservancy. “His heirs are committed to carrying on Wrigley’s vision ‘to create a world class resort.’”

Undoubtedly, the most recognizable landmark on Catalina is the Catalina Island Casino. This was Wrigley’s vision of an entertainment center. And that is exactly what the word “casino” means. There was never any gambling connected with Avalon’s casino. The word itself is given a date of 1744 and defined as a public room for entertainment, music or dancing; a gathering place. It derives from the Italian word “casino”, meaning a little house, lodge, or cottage.

Almost immediately, Wrigley began building. At Sugarloaf Point a graded, empty lot beckoned. Here, in 1919, he constructed Sugarloaf Casino as a dance hall. This served as a ballroom and Avalon’s first high school until it became too small for the growing population. Sugarloaf Casino, and, later, Sugarloaf Rock were blasted away to make room for a larger building.



Sugarloaf Point and the first Casino



casino construction 1928

Working with architect and designer Summer Spaulding and Walter Weber, Wrigley envisioned and realized a magnificent, 12-story round structure in the stunning Art-Deco and Mediterranean Revival styles. It was one of the first circular buildings of its time (1928).

The Avalon Theatre, especially designed for “talkies”, occupies the main floor. Its murals, domed ceiling, 1000 seats, pipe organ, and perfect acoustics grabbed the attention of Hollywood moguls and other celebrities who sailed their yachts here to screen their latest productions.

However, the 20,000 square foot ballroom on the upper floor is the eye-catcher. According to the website <lovecatalina.com>, it is “the largest circular room in the world without supporting pillars.” A promenade wraps around the exterior, providing stunning views of Avalon Bay.

The Catalina Casino opened May 29, 1929, just in time for the summer season. And over the years, many guests came by steamship to Charleston and jitterbug to Big Band era music on the beautiful parquet floor. From 1934 to the 1950s, CBS radio carried live broadcasts, spreading the entertainment even farther.

Now restored to its original condition, the ballroom retains its romantic style—rose-hued walls, 50-foot arched ceiling, Tiffany-style chandeliers, and raised seating around the dance floor. Even though it is difficult to keep an SCD set straight on the circular floor, this is a stunning venue, and we are fortunate to taste its former glory and marvel at the distinctive style presented here.

Santa Catalina Island is a real gem. Natural life, managed by the Catalina Island Conservancy, blends with romantic styles, and a rich history to bring us a true paradise in our own backyard. See you at the Casino in May!

Karen Kerman

Orange County Ceilidh

February Branch Dance

February 14, 2026, Dancing 7:00 p.m., recorded music
Tustin Area Senior Center, 200 C Street, Tustin
Cost: \$15 Members; \$18 Non-Members

Lamb Skinnnet	J B	Book 14
Broadford Bay (New)	R I	Grant/RSCDS Leaflet
Sandy O'er the Lea	B S	MMM II
Farewell to Auchterarder	A J	Hamilton/30 Pop 2
The Compliment (New)	S I	Goldring/12 Dances
The Black Leather Jig	R I	Selling/Del Val Silver
St. Andrew's Fair	J B	Goldring/5 SCD 1982
Tulloch Gorm (New)	S I	Book 8
Elsbeth Gray's Reel	R A	Book 53
The Braes of Tulliemet	S B	Book 7
Quarries' Jig	J I	Book 36
The Barmkin	R B	Goldring/RSCDS Gr 2
Capelthwaite	R I	SF Coll Vol 2
Something in the Air (New)	S A	Book 53
Maitland to Manchester	J I	Thomas/Wallace/San Andreas
Mary Erskine	R B	Goldring/RSCDS Gr 2

March Branch Dance

March 14, 2026, Dancing 7:00 p.m., music
by the SO-CALedonians
Tustin Area Senior Center, 200 C Street, Tustin
Cost: \$18 Members; \$20 Non-Members

Fair Enough	J B	Book 51
Broadford Bay	R I	Grant/RSCDS Leaflet
Something in the Air	S A	Book 53
Davy Nick Nack (New)	R B	Campbell/Glasgow
The Compliment	S I	Goldring/22 Dances
City Lights (New)	J I	Book 52
Crom Allt	R B	Goldring/RSCDS Gr 3
Aberdeenshire Meets		
Argentina	S I	Stott/Argentine Coll
Aird of Coigach (New)	J A	Bayly/Imp Bk Vol 1-3
Dear David (New)	S B	Fogg/Emigrant Scot
Beth Wilson's Delight (New)	R I	Mitchell/Whetherly 3
Alan J. Smith	J B	Book 45
Elsbeth Gray's Reel	R A	Book 53
Invercauld's Reel (New)	S B	Book 11
Maitland to Manchester	J I	Thomas & Wallace/San Andreas
The Black Leather Jig	R I	Selling/Del Val Silver

Orange County Ceilidh

April Branch Beginner Dance

April 11, 2026, Dancing 7:00 p.m., recorded music
Tustin Senior Center, 200 C Street, Tustin
Cost: \$15 Members; \$18 Non-Members

SPECIAL BEGINNER SECTION

The Hospitality Circle	J B	Nus/Let's All Dance 2
Virginia Reel	R B	Collins Little SCD
Circle of Cheer	R B	Hamilton/Let's Dance 2
Fair Enough	J B	Book 51
The Loch Ness Monster	R B	Boyd/Happy to Meet
Bridge of Athlone	R B	Collins Little SCD

EXPERIENCED SECTION

Postie's Jig	J B	Clowes/30 Pop Vol 2
Dear David	S B	Fogg/Emigrant Scot
Davy Nick Nack	R B	Campbell/Glasgow Assy
Tulloch Gorm	S I	Book 8
The One O'Clock Canon	R A	Book 47
Lamb Skinnnet	J B	Book 14
Beth Wilson's Delight	R I	Mitchell/Whetherly 3
Braes of Tulliemet	S B	Book 7
Vintage Simon	J A	Book 47
Toast to the Mousies	R I	Book 53

Flowers of the Forest

It is with true sadness that I report the passing of Mary Ann Sereth on Jan 22, 2026. Mary Ann had played music with many types of bands over the past 5 decades including Jack Rennie's Thistle Band, and most recently with the local Scottish Country Dance band, the SO-CALedonians. She was incredibly versatile and played so many different styles – Scottish, contra, English Country, classical, big band, jazz, Scandinavian, tango – you name it, she mastered it. She played fiddle, stand up bass, piano. And she used to sing with her jazz ensemble (I have recordings if anyone is interested in hearing them). Mary Ann was a friend to all who came across her path. She was an exceptional person, a great musician, hostess, cat lover, quilter, and a loving partner to her husband Walter, who passed away last October 30. She will be dearly missed, and we should all raise a glass to this beautiful soul. Mary Ann, it was an honor to play music with you and I will cherish the time we spent playing those traditional tunes.



Connie Walker

OC BRANCH SCHOLARSHIPS

Revised 2020

The Branch has established a scholarship fund to encourage the development of Scottish Country Dancing teachers, dancers, and musicians in Orange County, and to provide opportunities for Southern California Scottish Country Dancing dancers to experience high quality live music both as listeners and as dancers.



To be eligible for a dance scholarship, the applicant must be a current member or associate member of the Orange County Branch and be presently attending class regularly for at least one year. Preference will be given to applicants interested in pursuing teacher training.

To be eligible for a musician scholarship, the applicant must be a resident of Southern California, have demonstrated an interest in playing Scottish Country Dancing music, and should play an instrument relevant to Scottish Country Dancing, such as accordion, fiddle, keyboard, piano, recorder, etc.

Applications are available on the branch website and at branch dance classes. Applicants must provide information on how the funds will be used and will need to provide documentation of attendance. Requests must be received at least 30 days before the funds are needed. Awards will be limited to a total of \$500 a year. Requests and awards will be confidential. Scholarships will be granted without attention to race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, nationality, ancestry, age, or place of origin.

The dance scholarship is in honor of Orange County Branch founding member and long-time dancer Dorothy Craik. The musician scholarship is in honor of Andrew Rankine, a noted accordionist, composer and renowned Scottish Country Dancing band leader.



If you are interested in applying, send your application to Scholarship Committee, c/o RSCDS-Orange County Branch, 8361 Castilian Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 or email to chair Terri Speakman at tjspeakman@verizon.net.

If not deliverable, return to:

The Orange County Branch of the
Royal Scottish Country Dance Society
8361 Castilian Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92646

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Thanks to all contributors!

**THE ORANGE COUNTY CEILIDH IS
PUBLISHED 6 TIMES PER YEAR.**

Deadline for the May/June *Ceilidh* is
April 1, 2026.