



Orange County Ceilidh



Newsletter of the Orange County Branch of the RSCDS

Volume 43, No. 3

May/June 2025

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

I hope everyone is enjoying spring in Southern California. We finally got some rain so the hills are green for a little while.

March saw a lot of dancing opportunities. At our branch dance, the SO-CALedonians played – it’s so nice to dance to live music! The San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles branches also held dances and then the month closed with San Diego’s fabulous 50th anniversary ball and workshop. Those of you who were there can attest to the very interesting dances presented by Linda Henderson at the workshops and to the joyous music provided for both class and ball by Terpsichore. It was an event to remember.

We are now heading into the somewhat quieter part of the dancing year. We will be holding our AGM on June 14th – please join us for the meeting and a dance. The proposed slate of officers for 2025-26 can be found on page 2.

We will be having demonstration dancing at both the Scottish Fest at the Orange County Fairgrounds Memorial Day weekend and the California Celtic Festival in Placentia Father’s Day weekend. This is a great opportunity to showcase our favorite activity; please invite family and friends to come see what we do.

Registration is now open for the 2026 Catalina weekend. See the flyer on page 6. Happy Easter and Passover to all. See you on the dance floor,

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 June AGM & Dance

June 14, 2025,

Potluck 6:00 p.m.

AGM 6:30 p.m.

Dancing 7:00 p.m.

Tustin Senior Center



Calendar of Events

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

HERE

April 2025

No Branch Dance

May 2025

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

24-25 Scottish Fest, Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa

June 2025

14 Branch Potluck, AGM & Dance, Potluck 6:00 p.m., AGM 6:30 p.m., Dancing 7:00 p.m., Tustin Senior Center, recorded music

14-15 California Celtic Fest, Kraemer Park, Placentia

July 2025

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

THERE

April 2025

27 LA Branch Afternoon Dance, 2:00 p.m., El Segundo Woman's Club, recorded music

May 2025

17 San Gabriel Valley Branch AGM & Afternoon Dance, AGM 3:00 p.m., Dancing 4:00 p.m., St. James Episcopal Church, South Pasadena, recorded music

May 2026

1-3 Catalina Workshop and Ball. Teachers Jeanne Moody & Gary Coull, Music by Thistle House. Information & registration form at RSCDS-Interbranch.org

ELSEWHERE

July 2025

4-12 Boston Branch Pinewoods Summer Camp; rscds-boston.org/pinewoods-scottish-sessions.html

July 13-August 10 RSCDS Summer School, St. Andrews, Scotland; rscds.org

August 2025

1-10 TAC Summer School, Bishop's University, Sherbrooke, Quebec; tac-rscds.org



Slate of Officers for 2025-26

Elections will be held at the AGM June 14

Chair	Terri Speakman
Vice-Chair	Karen Kerman
Treasurer	Connie Walker
Corresponding Secretary	Edie Archibald
Recording Secretary	Randi Kraemer
Members at Large	Steve Bryan, Connie Learn, Norm McCallum, Flora Morgan, Pat Zschoche



Orange County Ceilidh

The Celtic Year

Samhain: The End and The Beginning

Originally, for the agricultural early Celts, Samhain (SOW-in) marked the end of the 3rd harvest (1 November), the transitioning of cattle from summer pastures to winter quarters, taking stock of supplies, and feasting and celebrating as one pastoral year closed and another began: an ancient pastoral and agricultural holiday.

The very name itself indicates “summer fun,” “summer end” or “assembly”. Although the origin of the word “Samhain” is not entirely known, one theory suggests it derives from the union of the Gaelic words *sam*, meaning “summer” and *fuin*, meaning “fun”. We ask “summer fun” at the end of October?

However, another interpretation uses the word “assembly” to describe the people gathering to feast and party. If you want to dig deeper, there is archaeological evidence—Gaulish Coligny calendar (2nd Century CE)—to propose the Celts of ancient Gaul celebrated their new year at the end of the summer. (*Histoire du Calendrier Gaulois* by Joseph Monard). Furthermore, the first month of the Gaulish new year was *samonios* in their language. Root *sam-* means summer. Some scholars believe that as the Celts moved westward, the word used today—Samhain—evolved from this *Samonio*, which draws from the same root as *samoni*, meaning “reunion.”

It is easy to see how all this eventually comes together in the ancient Celtic world. There are many spellings for Samhain, depending on which part of the modern Celtic world you are in. This form—Samhain—is the Modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic version.

No matter how it was spelled, Samhain stood halfway between the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice, nature’s signals of two seasonal changes. It divided the year between the lighter and the darker halves. These people knew the days would get shorter and darker, and colder weather was ahead. “We must have one final fling after we prepare for winter,” could have been their logic.

Not much detail is recorded about their escapades, but Medieval Irish manuscripts offer a brief glimpse of these fetes. Irish texts *Serglige Con Culainn* and *Togail Buidne Dá Derga* agree that the festival lasted a week and

it involved great gatherings where the Celts feasted, lit bonfires and held contests. With these cleansing and protective fires came certain rituals, which were thought to mimic the sun and hold back the darkness of winter. For starting anew, all hearth fires were doused and relit from the communal bonfire.



Samhain also grew to become a time to honor ancestors. This may have seemed an appropriate time of year for this since nature was “dying” around them. Food offerings were left on doorsteps, and lighted candles in windows guided the “wandering dead”. Carved gourds—pumpkins and turnips—became candle holders, “likely the origin of the modern-day ‘Jack-o’-Lantern.’”

As the end and beginning of the years met, the division between “this world and the otherworld” was thought to be the thinnest, allowing spirits through. To ward off the evil they felt, people would hide their identity with costumes. This eventually evolved to mumming and guising in more modern history. Noted historian Peter Barresford Ellis describes Samhain “as an intensely spiritual time.” The Celtic mind perceived Samhain to be a dangerous time of year with many rituals viewed as protections.

Several sources indicate Samhain to be *the* most important holiday/season on the Celtic calendar, and much evidence supports the idea that these are the Celtic roots of Hallowe’en.

A “Celtic Revival” during the 19th and 20th centuries created a surge of interest in Samhain, Celtic festivals, and Celtic culture in general. Sir John Rhys wrote, “Samhain was the ‘Celtic New Year’”. Drawing from contemporary Irish and Welsh folklore, he opined it “full of Hallowe’en customs associated with new beginnings.” Rhys also visited the Isle of Man and discovered that the Manx sometimes called 31 October “New Year’s Night” or *Hog-uinnaa*. Could this be a form of the word Hogmanay?

Growing from its pastoral origins, Samhain became Christianized as All Saints and All Souls Days but is still associated with death, evil, and fire. “The year is over, and the sun’s life of the year was done.” Summer has gone to rest. Rather than being morbid occasions, the early Samhain festivals were truly celebrations of community, bounty, and looking to the future.

Karen Kerman

Catalina Island Workshop & Ball

May 1 - 3, 2026



Jeanne Moody of San Diego, CA

Meet Our Teachers:

Jeanne is our local treasure from San Diego. She teaches a popular beginner class and has taught at workshops around the USA & Canada. Her aim is to embody the joy of SCD by making dancing approachable, fun and elegant - "to make the music visible".

Meet Our Musicians:

Thistle House

Renowned for their high-energy and danceable music



David Courret-Knight - fiddle
Dave Wiesler - piano
Dan Emery - pipes, flutes



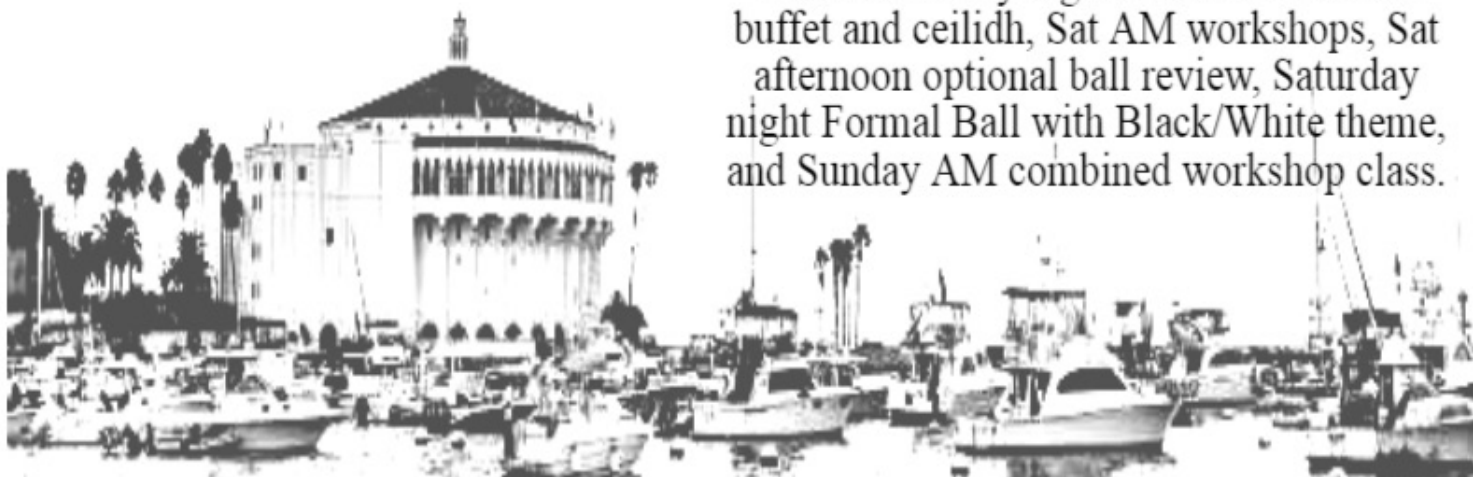
Gary Coull of Aberdeenshire, Scotland
Current Chair of RSCDS

Gary is the current Chair of R.S.C.D.S. He has taught worldwide and is known to be a fun and memorable instructor. He loves a dance with a birl or a strathspey with a poussette, and thinks the most important thing about SCD is having fun!

**Pricing: Workshops, Dinners & Ball \$295
if registered by Jan 31, 2026**

Note: Lodging and Ferry not included.

Includes Friday night Hawaiian themed buffet and ceilidh, Sat AM workshops, Sat afternoon optional ball review, Saturday night Formal Ball with Black/White theme, and Sunday AM combined workshop class.



**Information & Registration Forms can be found at:
www.rscds-interbranch.org**

Sponsored by the four Southern California Branches

May Branch Dance

May 10, 2025, Dancing 7:00 p.m., recorded music
Tustin Senior Center, 200 C Street, Tustin
Cost: \$15 Members; \$18 Non-Members

Fair Enough	J B	Book 51
The Kissing Bridge	R I	Book 47
Ardnahoe	S I	Robertson
Glavya	J A	Drewry, Canadian Bk
Glasgow Lassies	S B	Book 34
Glastonbury Tor	R I	Book 47
Crom Allt	R B	Goldring, RSCDS G&S 3
Scott Meikle	R I	Book 46
Tuolumne Tournee	S A	Saturensky, 50 Yrs LA
Da Rain Dancin'	R I	Wallace, RSCDS 30 Pop 2
Sandy O'er the Lea	S B	MMM II
Welcome to Ayr	J I	Book 47
The Roselath Cross	J I	Book 41
Reel On	R B	Goldring, RSCDS G&S 3
The House Keys of Lisbon	S A	Landon, Woodhall V4
Waverley/Fugal Fergus	J I	Book 15/ Foss Mag '05-'09
Alan J. Smith	J B	Book 45

June Potluck, AGM and Dance

June 14, 2025, Potluck 6:00 p.m., Meeting 6:30 p.m.,
Dancing 7:00 p.m.
Tustin Senior Center, 200 C Street, Tustin
Cost: \$15 Members; \$18 Non-Members

Gloria's Wee Jig	J B	McMurtry, Devil's Q
Da Rain Dancin'	R I	Wallace, RSCDS 30 Pop 2
Tuolumne Tournee	S A	Saturensky, 50 Yrs LA
The Waipu Wanderers	R B	West, Whangarei Book
Aberdeenshire Meets Argentina	S I	Stott, Argentine Coll
Maitland to Manchester	J I	Thomas/Wallace, San Andreas Coll.
Fair Enough	J B	Book 51
The Peat Fire Flame	R A	Drewry, Bon Accord
Sandy O'er the Lea	S B	MMM II
The Two Gray Cats	R I	Walduck, Other Kanga
La Famiglia Graziani	S I	Landon, Woodhall V3
A Trip to the Drakensberg	J I	Book 38
The Pawling Porch	R B	Brunken, Moments
Glavya	J A	Drewry, Canadian Bk
The Glengarry Homestead	S I	Brenchley, Kangaroo Paw
The Roselath Cross	J I	Book 41
The Deil Amang the Tailors	R B	Book 14



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 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

Volume 43, #3, May/June 2025

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Thanks to all contributors!

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

Deadline for the July/August *Ceilidh* is
June 1, 2025.