

THE ISLAND FIDDLER



Society members performing during our successful concert at the Basilica Rec. Center.

Newsletter of the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers' Society
No. 2, 1980

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this, my most prominent thought is of the letter I received three years ago from Father Faber MacDonald and Bill MacDonald. They stated that they were interested in putting together a group of fiddlers willing to practice together, learn some new music, and revive some of the older fiddle music. This group would become a non-profit organization with guidelines laid out as to how we should proceed. I would like to make known to all fiddlers what a great joy this has been to me, as I know it has been to others, to see the group grow from a mere handful to what it is today, with over 100 members.

I must not forget those who contributed so much to the group, such as Past President Neil MacCannell, Father Faber, Bill MacDonald, our faithful pianists, and numerous others in their different ways.

I want also to mention the great participation of the Souris group, which I have had the pleasure of practicing with for so long and who have provided us with our annual festival in Rollo Bay. As well, a big thanks to the Summerside group for having entertained us royally on several occasions.

I am also reminded of our trips to the Broad Cove and Gendale festivals, of the enjoyable times we had there, and the terrific music which we all enjoyed so much.

I cannot conclude this report without thanking everyone for the great honour bestowed on me at our annual meeting at St. Margarets, by making me your president. I hope I can be of some assistance, and with your help, I will do my best.

My one request is that you will encourage others to join us, especially the young people.

—Ernie Poole

ODDS AND SODS

OBITUARY: It is with profound sympathy that we add our condolence to the families and friends of our members who passed away since our first newsletter: Lea Crane, Keith LeLacheur, and Bennett Crane.

BIRTHDAYS:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------------|---------|
| Roland Jay | Sept. 27 | John D. MacPherson . . | Nov. 7 |
| Fr. Faber MacDonald . . | Jan. 20 | Fred McCullough . . . | Dec. 24 |
| Leonard MacDonald . . . | Feb. 23 | Stephen Toole | Dec. 3 |
| John MacKinnon | Nov. 2 | John Weyman | Nov. 18 |
| Margaret MacKinnon . . . | Jan. 25 | Harry Wood | Oct. 2 |

WEDDING

ANNIVERSARIES:

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|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Shirley & Claude Barrett . . . | Nov. 7, 1945 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Gay | Feb. 8, 1933 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Merlin Longaphie . . | Nov. 20, |
| Mr. & Mrs. John MacKinnon . . . | Oct. 10, 1959 |
| Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Poole | Sep. 28, |
| Mr. & Mrs. Cecil Trainor | Nov. 29, |
| Mr. & Mrs. Harry Wood | Sep. 18, 1934 |

—Joan Campbell

FIDDLERS NOTES

The Society's Nov. 18 concert at the Basilica Rec. Center in Charlottetown was a great success. Fiddlers from all groups performed, there were several pleasant vocal selections, and our Cape Breton guests persevered valiantly to make their valuable contributions. Attendance was about capacity in the large hall, comments were heard about the excellent sound system. . . . The Skye Collection, that wonderful 1887 compilation of Scottish Music, is now available in a reprint edition. It is newly indexed, and spiral bound for playing convenience. The cost is \$14.95. It can be ordered from Skye Collection, P.O. Box 30, Whitney Pier P.S., Sydney, NS, B1N 3B1. . . . Our faithful Queen's Co. piano player, Margaret MacKinnon, was honored recently in Ottawa by being invested into the Order of St. John. The award is for volunteer service with the St. John Ambulance. Governor-General and Mrs. Schreyer made the presentation (a picture of which appeared in the Journal-Pioneer). . . . That same Summerside paper scooped the Guardian-Patriot by reporting on Fr. Faber's address to Charlottetown Rotary on Dec. 3, in which he advocated the founding of a college to actively support and document the Island's Celtic heritage. Fr. MacDonald, Stan Webster, John D. MacPherson, Bill MacDonald, and Joan Campbell performed several numbers with Margaret MacKinnon, and the J-P reported that "all toes were tapping". . . . Kenny, Peter and Kevin Chaisson are the Island's representatives on a forthcoming CBC recording of "Atlantic Fiddlers" that will be out around the end of February. Also included are fiddlers from Cape Breton, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and mainland Nova Scotia. . . . Peter Chaisson reported that "The Chaisson Brothers of PEI" record has sold very well. Anyone who has not yet acquired a copy of this fine recording should do so soon, as there are no plans to re-order after the last few copies are sold. Besides the fine music it contains, the LP itself may become a collectors' item. . . . John MacDougall Cape Breton fiddler, teacher and composer, is planning to issue a book of some of the more than 600 tunes he has made, so keep an eye out for that. . . . Speaking of which, Dan Hugh MacEachern reports that his "MacEachern Collection" of compositions has nearly sold out its first printing, which indicates the high esteem in which his tunes are held. . . . The Celtic Music Store in Antigonish now has available upon request a list of all fiddle records available there. . . . A tip of the bow goes out to Stan Webster, Fr. Faber MacDonald, and John D. MacPherson for the wonderful job in putting out new groups of tunes for the Society. Anyone who has not received the new music can write The Island Fiddler to request it. . . . Also, anyone interested in learning piano accompaniment for our music should write this newsletter and say so. If sufficient numbers are interested, we will try to arrange lessons for those interested. . . . A bunch of fiddlers have begun meeting at The Kingsway, Poole's Corner on Wednesday evenings, and all are welcome to join the fun. . . . All members please note: 1980 membership dues must be paid for each year or part of a year. They can be sent to the treasurer, Cecil Trainor, 9 Centennial Drive, Sherwood. This newsletter and all other services of the Society depend upon your support and in future it will be mailed only to paid-up members. . . . Just as we were going to press we learned of Fr. Faber's appointment as Bishop of the Diocese of Grand Falls, Newfoundland. Fr. MacDonald is the first Island priest to receive such an appointment in over 40 years. To him we send our sincere congratulations, mixed with knowledge that Newfoundland's gain is our loss. Fr. Faber is the founder of our Society, and has been responsible in no small way for whatever progress we have made. He will be missed. More on him next issue.

In this section of the newsletter we would like to publish original or lesser known tunes. Try this one.

COMPOSED BY WEATHERBIE'S-JIG ARRANGED BY
GEO WEATHERBIE R GAY

EDITORIAL: SHARING

"If you have knowledge let others light their candle at it."

We are told that sharing means "suffering or enjoying something in common" and many times our attitude to a situation determines whether we shall suffer or enjoy the activity in which we are engaged. As we look over our group we see a rich diversity of talents and skills—gifts with which we have been entrusted, not only for our own benefit, but also that we may share them with others. We must make a sincere effort to develop the potential within each individual in order that each talent may be used as a cohesive rather than as a competitive force.

This attitude gives added vitality to a group as each member is able to use his or her special talent, thereby increasing the harmony and unity in the group as a whole.

Good communication within a group is a most essential element. In sharing our ideas as well as our talents we develop appreciation and understanding of each other, and strengthen the bonds of fellowship within the group.

As we begin a new year and a new decade let us each resolve to develop our talents and share them for the benefit of others. In doing this we celebrate the goodness of life ourselves while preserving the music enjoyed by our forefathers for the pleasure of future generations.

—Margaret (Ross) MacKinnon

QUEEN'S COUNTY NEWS

The members of the group within our Society meet every Thursday evening at the Lion's Club in Parkdale from 7:30-10:00 p.m. The primary reason for this meeting is to support each other and to build each other up. This has done a great deal to inspire others to learn to play the fiddle and thus keep this music alive. The fellowship of the group is enhanced by a social period at each meeting.

From time to time some of us visit Senior Citizens Homes to entertain the elderly. Others have found time to go out to the Sleepy Hollow Correctional Centre to play for the inmates. Many feel that services such as these are important. In addition members are often invited to play for various organizations, social functions, and benefits.

Some recent appearances were: November 30, 1979, annual St. Andrew's Day dinner sponsored by the Caledonia Club. Fiddlers were Stan Webster and Fr. Faber MacDonald. Accompanist was Margaret MacKinnon. December 3, 1979, Charlottetown Rotary Club non luncheon. Guest speaker was Fr. Faber MacDonald. Other fiddlers present were Bill MacDonald, Stan Webster, John D. MacPherson and Joan Campbell. Accompanist was Margaret MacKinnon.

Some people have expressed interest in learning to read music, and beginners violin lessons. Kathryn Schmidt and Stan Webster have offered to teach. Weekly sessions began January 9, 1980. They are held at the Basilica Recreation Center, Monday, 7-8 p.m. All those who are interested are invited to attend. New members are welcome!

—Joan Campbell

PRINCE COUNTY NEWS

John Gauthier, who has made such an outstanding contribution to the PEI Fiddlers' Society, has gone back into the forces and is now stationed in Debert, NS. John has made his musical presence felt already as he is not only teaching violin but has also formed a Debert and Area Fiddlers' Assoc. John still maintains his home in PEI and travels back home on weekends. John also put out the first issue of the Island Fiddler.

Wayne Friars has started teaching violin classes. Classes are Tuesday and Friday, 7-9 p.m., at the airforce wing in Summerside. Aspiring fiddlers can contact Wayne at 436-6750 for further information.

The Prince County fiddlers have been quite busy playing at concerts, socials, etc. Listed here are a few of their recent engagements: In December Ivan Day, Austin Paynter, and John Gauthier played at a concert in Oxford, NS and then played at a house party at the officers mess at CFB Debert. Before leaving Oxford they made a visit to the home of Jim MacCleave, a well-known area violin maker. The group then proceeded to Moncton, met up with Pete Doiron and taped a segment of the ATV Christmas Daddies Program. December 13, 1979, the group played for the Kinsmen Christmas party for the handicapped in Summerside. In December the group played for a Christmas party for the blind at the Lion's Club in Kensington. On December 1 and 15, 1979, the group played for senior citizens of Summerside at Park View Manor.

—Ivan Day & J.W.

No report was received from King's County this time. We hope to get some news for the next issue.

REPORT FROM ANNUAL MEETING

The second annual meeting of the PEI Fiddlers' Society was held at St. Margaret's church hall on October 14, 1979. The president called the meeting to order at 2:45 p.m. with 35-40 members present.

The minutes of the previous meeting, October 15, 1978, were read by Wayne Friars on request of secretary John Gauthier. It was moved by Peter Chaisson and seconded by Cecil Trainor that the minutes be adopted as read.

The resignation speech was read by the president who read some appropriate poetry, "The Old Violin".

The treasurer's report was delivered by Bill MacDonald. It was moved by Fr. Faber MacDonald and seconded by James Halliday that the report be adopted as read. Carried.

Reports were read from the groups from King's County, Joe Chaisson; Queen's County, Fr. Faber MacDonald; and Prince County, Wayne Friars.

It was proposed that the Society enter into a contract with the Caledonia Club with the possibility of making a record. The new executive will pursue this further at a later date with approval of members present. A vote of thanks was given to Neil MacCannell on behalf on the group delivered by Fr. Faber MacDonald on the terrific job he has done in the past. It was suggested by Fr. Faber MacDonald that a guidelines committee be formed to review and refine the Society guidelines as they are now and up-date them. This was approved. It was also suggested by Fr. Faber MacDonald that the new executive form a fellowship committee to record all important events in each area by a volunteer from each group and possibly a lead historian from the Charlottetown group. This was also approved.

There is a motion on the floor by Bill MacDonald that dues became due at the beginning of each calendar year and that they remain at \$5 no matter when you join. Motion carried.

It was suggested by Neil MacCannell that it may be possible to standardize the piano accompaniment throughout the Society. A motion was made to place an ad in the paper for persons interested in old-time piano accompaniment with standardization in mind by Hugh MacPhee. This seconded by Fr. Faber.

EXECUTIVE OF THE PEI FIDDLERS' SOCIETY

PRESIDENTErnest Poole
 1st VICE PRESIDENT . . .Wayne Friars
 2nd VICE PRESIDENT . . .Roddie Chaisson
 SECRETARYShirley Barrett
 SOCIAL COMMITTEEEarle Hughes, Frank O'Connor, & Stan Webster
 NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE . .John Weyman & Jim Hornby

EXECUTIVE OF THE QUEEN'S COUNTY GROUP

PRESIDENTGeorge MacIntyre
 VICE PRESIDENTJohn Dan MacPherson
 SECRETARYStephen Toole
 TREASURER & SPOKESMAN . .Neil MacCannell
 NEWS CORRESPONDENT . . .Joan Campbell

Shirley Barrett

RECORD REVIEW

Topic 353 -- Volume I -- Gaelic Tradition in Cape Breton
 Topic 354 -- Volume II -- Cape Breton Scottish Fiddle

These two records were recorded as companion volumes by Topic records of London, England. They represent an effort by Topic (via John Shaw and Rosemary Hutchinson) to show the vigorous Gaelic singing and fiddle tradition of Cape Breton.

They were recorded in 1976 at various concerts throughout Cape Breton. As with all "live" recordings, they suffer somewhat in sound quality. Fortunately this does not negate the spirited playing on both albums.

Volume I features a variety of singing and playing. Nine cuts feature beautiful Gaelic singing both solo and group. Three cuts feature violin and piano, one cut is a harmonica and piano duet and one is a pleasant mandolin duet with piano. Volume II is strictly devoted to violin and piano (twelve cuts in all).

The violin music ranges from compositions by Gow, Skinner, and Marshall to Cape Breton compositions by MacQuarrie, MacEacheran and MacDonald. The medleys include large numbers of strathspeys and reels, some marches and jigs and, sadly, only two slow airs.

Some of the tunes are exceptionally nice. In volume II Theresa MacLellan and her sister Marie play a lively dance strathspey called "The Sow's Tail". This is a tune that I know as the "Glenora Falls Strathspey". The "Sow's Tail" as found in one of Gow's collections has no less than six variations.

"Calum Breugach" strathspey as played by Alex Francis MacKay is outstanding. This wonderfully talented fiddler really brings out the character of the classic strathspeys. His sets are among the best on the records.

"Tulloch Gorm" as played by Mary MacDonald (a fiddler in her 80's) is certainly unique and interesting. Her playing has a very different feel and is an obvious link with an older generation of fiddle style. Also, John Willie Campbell plays an exciting set using the high bass tuning.

One major thing that bothered me is that on most cuts the selection begins very abruptly and in other cases fades out before the tune is finished.

All fiddlers play their tunes with a great deal of spirit and drive. The piano accompaniment is excellent throughout and not overbearing.

The record jackets unfortunately sport tourist-bureau type pictures on the front rather than pictures of the musicians. This is regrettable indeed and there is no reason why suitable pictures of the singers and fiddlers could not have been used. However, the booklets accompanying each record provide extensive and informative notes, and even includes some pictures of the performers.

A thing to keep in mind when considering these records is that they are imports and as such are somewhat expensive (in the \$10 range) but both records are recommended.

---J.W.

The Island Fiddler
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