

REELING

“Once the preserve of the Highland aristocracy and the military elite, Scottish reeling is now a mainstay of the British social calendar.”

Reeling sits somewhere between Scottish Country Dancing, salsa and swing. The women are twirled and untwirled with barely controlled abandon as couples set and clap in their own individual styles, dancing Scottish Country Dances to Scottish Country Dance sets of music, but creating an excitement usually reserved for our younger dancers.

The Schiehallion Ceilidh Band (Lynne and James Scott, John Jowett, Alastair McCarthy, Iain Matcham, Liz Langham and Duncan and Mary McDonald) was thrown into this netherworld, booked to play in the Martinborough Town Hall and the ballroom at Larnach Castle in Dunedin, in February.

The programme for each of the two nights was the same, starting with *The Dashing White Sergeant* and concluding with *The Reel of the 51st Division*. Lynne put a lot of effort into assembling suitable new sets of music which the band spent many hours practicing. The website www.londonreels.co.uk was a useful source for information, as were the hosts Lilia and Johnny Bell.

The dancers were a group of mainly Scots (with Americans, Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders added to the mix), who travel to such Gatherings in various countries, generally where Reeling is unknown. A familiar face at the Martinborough event was John Munro (ex Johnsonville Club, now living in the Wairarapa), who had a great time, along with some 80 others. Usually the dances are not even briefed (there are not a huge number to learn) but at the Martinborough event Mary walked a couple through each dance, as there were quite a few who were new to it.

The following Saturday night, the band reassembled in Dunedin, and were included in the sit down dinner preceding the black tie ball. The ladies looked elegant in their ballgowns, and there were just too many kilts to count. On this occasion there were no dance briefings, as most of the attendees knew the dances or had been to the classes to learn them. The dancing carried on till after 1am, when the evening concluded with Auld Lang Syne.

Before returning to Wellington, Duncan and Mary, entrusted with all the band gear in their car, were able to dance at the Ceilidh SCD Club in Dunedin (tutored by Quentin Currall and Janet Favel) and the Scottish Society SCD Club in Christchurch. They arrived back in Wellington in time to dance at their own Tawa SCD Club, thus re-establishing the techniques of Scottish Country Dancing in their minds, ready for the new dancing year.

By Mary McDonald