

# **A Resident's Guide to Madison, Wisconsin**

An Anthology of Essays Written by the  
Leaders of Madison's Most Well-Respected  
Businesses, Clubs, Organizations, and  
Events

2017

# **Madison Scottish Country Dancers**

Nancy McClements



What is more fun than exercising? What's more social than tango and less stressful than ballet? Scottish Country Dancing! For more than 40 years Madison Scottish Country Dancers (MSCD) have been teaching and enjoying the jigs, reels, and strathspeys of Scotland every Sunday night, and you are invited to join us.

Unlike the showier Highland dancing (fling and sword dance), Scottish Country Dancing emphasizes social interaction. Participants typically dance in sets of six to eight people to lively fiddle, accordion, and piano tunes. Once you learn a few basic steps and formations, you'll be able to do hundreds of dances. Scottish dancing is enjoyed all over the world. No Scottish background is needed, and dancers of all ages are welcome. Our dancers range from age eight to 80! You don't even need a partner to participate because we change partners with every dance. Dance experience is not necessary. We all started off as beginners and we try to make everyone feel welcome. Knowing your right from your left is a good start.

We meet Sundays at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center, 953 Jenifer St., on Madison's near east side. Class begins at 7:00 p.m. with basic instruction then continues with

progressively more challenging dances until 9:30 p.m. A mid-evening break with tea and cookies allows time for announcements and chatting with fellow dancers. Don't have a kilt? Not a problem! We save the tartans and sporrans for our fancy balls, and on Sunday nights, blue jeans and skirts are more typical. Soft-soled shoes or even socks will work best for your feet. There is no charge for first-time attendees. Classes are taught by a rotation of local teachers who go through rigorous training and are certified by international experts.

Although Madison Scottish Country Dancers dance for personal enjoyment, we also occasionally perform at street fairs, international festivals, and private functions. We hold a formal ball each spring, with live musicians who specialize in Scottish music. In the summer, we combine with the Chicago and Milwaukee Scottish dance groups to offer a weekend workshop with nationally-known teachers and musicians. Our members travel to other countries (or just down Interstate 90) to participate in annual balls and workshops.

Our group is a part of a much larger organization—we are the John Muir (Wisconsin) Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS) in Edinburgh, Scotland. Because of the oversight of the RSCDS, Scottish Country Dancing is taught and performed with the same standards and dances throughout the world. Although some of the dances originated in the 18th century, new ones are being devised continually, and number in the thousands. We teach the “old favorites” along with 21st century offerings.

It's often difficult to find entertainment on a Sunday night in a new town. If you'd like to watch instead of dance, you're welcome to enjoy from the side lines, but don't be surprised if

you're invited to the dance floor and find yourself reeling  
before you know it!

**Nancy McClements:** Nancy McClements came to Scottish Country Dancing in 1983 after a semester of ballet found her wanting a more social and energetic activity. She is the Chair of Madison Scottish Country Dancers, and has her preliminary teaching certificate from the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. She would rather dance than teach! You can contact her at [nancymcclements@gmail.com](mailto:nancymcclements@gmail.com). Learn more about MSCD at [madisonscottishcountrydancers.org](http://madisonscottishcountrydancers.org) or at <https://www.facebook.com/scottishdancemadison/>.

**Joshua Perkins:** Josh Perkins has been writing and publishing on a variety of topics, traditional music being one, since he was 12. Now mainly a food writer as part of his job as chef for K-12 food programs, he makes his home with his family in Madison, actively pursuing his hobbies of playing Irish and Scottish music and making wood-fired pizza.

**Justin Schmitz:** Justin Schmitz is co-owner and CEO of Hop Head Tours. Originally from Appleton, WI, he studied Recreation and Business Administration at Western State College of Colorado working as a whitewater rafting and kayaking guide in the summers and a bartender at a local brewery and a mountain resort during the winters. Justin combines his love of travel, recreation, and craft beer into a lifestyle and a business. Feel free to contact him at [Justin@hopheadtours.com](mailto:Justin@hopheadtours.com).

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