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Woman of Steele: Getting their jig on



KELLY STEELE, WINDSOR STAR

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June Dey, 84, can't help but smile while reminiscing about the early years of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Windsor Branch.

"At first we didn't have a name and we were just dancing in someone's basement to start," she said, with a laugh. "But as the years went on we joined the Royal Scottish society and became a group."

That was over 35 years ago and Windsor's Dey is still teaching at the club. But instead of meeting in a basement they meet at MacKenzie Hall every Wednesday night from September to May and share their love of dance. The society originated in Edinburgh 50 years ago and Windsor is just one of its chapters.

"We have struggled over the years," she said. "I can remember years ago when we wouldn't put on our shoes because we didn't know if we would have enough for a set. But soon the younger kids started to get interested and it brought a breath of fresh air to the club."



Members of the Royal Country Dance Society perform at Bedford Church Hall Wednesday May 25, 2016. NICK BRANCACCIO / WINDSOR STAR

Lydia Palmer, 25, of Windsor joined the club a year ago and loves getting out and dancing. She's not Scottish, but just came one night with friends and was hooked.

"I was intrigued," she said. "The first class was a little tough just trying to get the foot work right, but after a while it's nice getting the exercise and getting out and meeting people."

The majority of people in the club don't have any Scottish roots even though the Windsor group was started years ago by Scottish immigrants. Scottish country dancing is different from Scottish Highland dancing. Country dancing is similar to square dancing with lots of formations and steps. Once you learn the basic steps, you can do all the dances.

"It's a very social pastime," Dey said. "Some people pick it up quicker than others. For some it takes a while but you are glad to see they persevere, because once they get it, they love it. There is not too many steps, so once you get the foot work there are a lot of formations that make the dance."



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Socializing is one of the big reasons Sandy Morgan, 84, of Leamington joined the Scottish group. He was single and wanted to get involved in something that he didn't need to have a partner. He heard about the Scottish dancing group, and although he's not Scottish, decided to give it a try. That was 30 years ago.

"I enjoy the dance, but love the people," Morgan said. "The nice thing about Scottish country dancing is it's four men, four women and they are not couples. So when I first started, I was single and I could come out and still participate."

The Scottish Country Dance Society is always looking for people to come join them. The new season kicks off on Wednesday, Sept. 7 at 7:30 p.m. For more information check out rcdswindsor.org.

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