

This report prepared by the Management Committee will be presented to the AGM on Saturday, 10 June 2023. Members' comments are welcome at the meeting or any time - secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk

Our priorities for the 2022-2023 season were to build on the previous season's work in recovering from the COVID-19 enforced break, to develop events attractive to younger dancers, increase the number of musicians playing for branch activities and to celebrate the Centenary of the RSCDS in style.

We certainly achieved our Centenary objective with a wonderful afternoon of dance, ceilidh items and cake at London's RSCDS Centenary tea dance in March.

Later that month many London dancers journeyed to Scotland to celebrate again at the RSCDS Centenary Ball in the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms.

We launched the Tuesday Social in September 2022. This monthly dance and social session for people in their 20s and 30s has regularly attracted 2-3 sets with several dancers also joining our weekly classes at Park Walk.

Numbers attending dances have held up well this season, gradually increasing as more people returned to dance post COVID-19. The use of social media has supported wider attendance, drawing dancers in particular to our Open Air dancing in Kensington Gardens, to the Tuesday Social and to our Burns Supper, which attracted 180 attendees.

Our Wednesday afternoon class at St Columba's, Pont Street and our Beginners/Improvers Class in Richmond are both flourishing, and we have introduced live music to the end of term sessions for these classes, in addition to the weekly classes at Park Walk in Chelsea.

However, post COVID-19 changes have affected some aspects of Branch life, not least changes in working patterns meaning fewer people available for classes in town during the week. Venue costs have increased dramatically, making it difficult to find accessible venues at affordable prices for regular classes and all but impossible for more complex events. We have been unable to secure an affordable venue for our day school in October although work continues to find a solution for later in the season.

We are working to widen our appeal to beginners, to continue to support our Park Walk Improvers and technique class members and to provide greater opportunities for more advanced dancers with monthly teaching sessions in accessible locations.

We have, this term run an intermediate Dancing Achievement Award course, and hope to run an advanced course next season. We are also exploring options to provide training for MCs in the London area and have been delighted to see the progress of the 2023 serTA teacher training cohort.

Branch communications play a vital role in keeping members informed, not least *The Reel*, edited by Simon Wales, and the branch website, managed for more than 2 decades by Meryl Thomson. Meryl obtained our domain name and developed the website to the reliable source of information upon which we depend. She has decided to retire at the end of this season and will be greatly missed. We are hugely grateful to Meryl, and to Ian, for all their support over so many years. We are grateful also to Chris Collings who has developed our new website, to be demonstrated at this year's AGM and launched once classes finish at the end of June.

We will continue to use a range of other communication tools, including eUpdates, Facebook, Twitter, MeetUp and of course personal face to face contact, to keep members and friends of RSCDS London informed and to engage interest in Scottish country dancing activities throughout London.

As the 2022-23 season draws to a close, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to make it a success.

Rachel Wilton is stepping down after ten years as Branch President and, on behalf of the branch, I offer heartfelt thanks to her for the warmth and wisdom she brought to the role. She leaves large (metaphorical) shoes to fill, and we are fortunate to have a worthy successor in Andrew Kellett, former Society and Branch Chairman, who will take over as President after the AGM. Jim Cook, who supported the branch magnificently as Chair 2019-21 and Vice Chair 2021-23, will demit at the AGM and committee member Richard Clarke will become Vice Chair in his place. Margaret Moore is unable to continue as classes convenor due to ill health. We wish her a swift and complete recovery. We have a few committee changes, not least welcoming Wendy Morris, who dances at Surbiton and with the Wednesday afternoon class, as committee member. My thanks to Jim, to Margaret and to all the committee members for everything they have done and continue to do. (NB: all appointments pending approval at the AGM).

Finally, thank you to all our teachers, musicians, MCs, caterers, webmaster, organisers, dancers and everyone who does so much to keep us all dancing.