



RSCDS London Branch Annual Report 2021-22



RSCDS London Branch Annual General Meeting Saturday 11 June 2022 at 6.45pm

The Annual General Meeting of the London Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society will take place on Saturday 11 June 2022 in the Upper Hall, St Columba's Church, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD from 6.45-7.30pm, followed by our End of Season Dance.

All members and friends of the Branch are invited to attend both the AGM and the End of Season social, although only members may vote at the AGM. Building upon lessons learned during lockdown we hope to live stream the AGM for those unable to attend in person. us02web.zoom.us/j/81688700490?pwd=UJZZWVh3VFpSYmNEbFJPMjFld2paQT09

Please join us for this short (45 minutes) meeting, learn about what London Branch has been doing and be part of its plans for the future.

Share your thoughts and ideas: the Branch Committee welcomes your thoughts on the running of the Branch, throughout the year as well as during the AGM discussions. Please email secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk

There will be a number of changes to the Branch management committee for the 2022-23 season. We were greatly saddened by the loss of George Potts, a longstanding Committee member and former Secretary, who died in March of this year. Jenny Kendrick, our Classes Convenor and Committee member since 2015 has decided to step down.

Following the call for nominations, which closed on 31 March 2022, fewer nominations were received than committee places available. There will therefore be no election in 2022 and the RSCDS London Branch management welcomes new members, Adam Brady, Richard Clarke, and David Hall. Joanne Lawrence, Jim Cook, Simon Wales and Mel Rowland will continue in their roles of Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Margaret Moore will take over the role of Classes Convenor. Margaret Shaw, Elaine Davies and Thelma-Jane Robb have all agreed to continue in their current Committee roles.

Chair: Joanne Lawrence (2017) Vice Chair: Jim Cook (2019)
Treasurer: Simon Wales (2003) Secretary: Mel Rowland (2019)

Committee members

Margaret Shaw (2007) Elaine Davies (2009) Thelma-Jane Robb (2011)
Margaret Moore (2020) Adam Brady (2022) Richard Clarke (2022)
David Hall (2022)

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of 12 June 2021
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Report on the Branch Activities 2021-2022
5. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts
6. Confirmation/Appointment of Honorary President and Honorary Vice Presidents
7. Appointment of Officers and Committee of Management
8. Appointment of Account Checker
9. Appointment of Branch proxy delegates to the Society AGM
10. Any Other Business

Note: As the number of nominations does not exceed the number of places available, there will not be an election under item 7. Nominations for the appointments at items 6, and 9 will be taken from the floor at the meeting.

Objects of London Branch

To advance the education of the public in the London area in traditional Scottish country dancing, in particular by:

- a) preserving and furthering the practice of traditional Scottish country dances;
- b) providing or assisting in providing instruction in the dancing of Scottish country dances;
- c) promoting the enjoyment and appreciation of Scottish country dancing and music by any suitable means.

From the Chair: Joanne Lawrence



This report, prepared by the Management Committee will be presented to the AGM on Saturday, 11 June 2022. Members' comments are welcome at the meeting or any time via secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk.

Our priorities for the 2021-2022 season focused on rebuilding after the COVID-19 enforced break, delivering

the rescheduled 90th anniversary events, developing classes for younger dancers, modernising payment methods and digitising our archives.

The Branch COVID-19 Safety Guidelines, developed in consultations with other groups in and around London, were a vital first step before resuming branch activity. The guidelines, which detailed the Branch's commitment to reduce infection risks at branch events and set out its expectations from attendees, have been kept up to date

as conditions changed. We introduced card payment machines, in addition to existing direct debit and bank transfer payment options, which proved popular and enabled us to reduce cash handling and associated infection risks whilst meeting our objective of modernising payment methods.

The return to dancing began, tentatively, with the pre-season open air dances in Kensington Gardens. These became joyful reunions as we met and danced together after months apart, and the live music attracted

many of the park visitors to join in. We were delighted when several subsequently joined London Branch classes.

The new season was formally launched with the traditional dance on 18 September. Dave Hall and his SCD band played and the lower hall at St Columba's, if not quite as full as in pre COVID-19 days, was still filled with dancers keen to pick up where they left off in 2020. Once launched, the season proceeded at pace with classes, dances, anniversary events and Day School all following in quick succession.

Classes restarted in Park Walk and Richmond with more people turning up each week, particularly after the Park Walk Beginners Class resumed in November.

Our much postponed 90th Anniversary celebrations finally happened. First, the successful completion of the 90th Anniversary dance devising competition, co-ordinated by Stephen Webb, with *London Nine O*, by Lizzy Conder, the winning entry. Then came the 90th Anniversary Grand Ball, a wonderful evening of music, dance, reunion, and rejoicing. It was worth the wait and a great tribute to the hard work and determination of the organising committee: Margaret Catchick, Rachel Wilton, George Ferrier, Jim Cook and Simon Wales.



90th Anniversary Ball at Allum Manor Hall 16 October 2021

The 2021 Day School, the last to be organised by Margaret Catchick after almost 20 years of high-quality events, was well attended, attracting dancers and musicians from a wide area.

As the season progressed, dance attendances remained slightly below pre COVID-19 levels, but it has been heartening to see more old faces returning and new faces joining each event. We have enjoyed a great programme of dances with Autumn Wednesday, Christmas dances and class parties all providing much cause for celebration. The advent of Omicron reduced the momentum temporarily, influencing the postponement of the farewell party for Jeni Rutherford, who has retired as Mixed Ability class teacher after 20 years, and the cancellation of the

Burns Ceilidh. However, the Winter Wednesday dance went well, as did the Combined Societies' dance, hosted this year by the London Highland Club, and we still have the Summer Wednesday and End of Season dances to come.



Combined Societies' Dance at St Columba's Church 2 April 2022

Although the pre COVID-19 decline in membership numbers continued, in part relating to the loss of long standing and much missed members, as detailed in the *Lives Remembered* section of *The Reel*, much of this was due to subscription renewal being the last thing on many people's minds during the period of no dancing. End of March figures showed 266 Annual, 53 Second Branch and 83 Life Members. We have recently contacted those members whose subscription lapsed during the COVID-19 months and have been encouraged by the alacrity with which many have renewed their membership. Equally encouraging has been the advent of new members, particularly those from the Richmond and Park Walk beginners' classes.

We were well represented at the RSCDS AGM and Winter School and have a substantial number of new and more established dancers heading for St Andrews for the first RSCDS Summer School in three years.

In October 2021 we held a very informative focus group, moderated by Alexandra Cran-McGreehin, attended by dancers and musicians in the late teens to mid 30s age group. Building on this, we hope to launch a monthly session attractive to younger dancers from Autumn 2022. We are also working, via contact with university clubs, major London employers, Scottish institutions in London and social media, to promote the range of existing Scottish dance activities available in central London to people of all ages moving to London after university or for new job opportunities.

As the 2021-22 season draws to a close, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to make it a success. I am grateful to Jeni Rutherford and Margaret Catchick, whose decades of service to the Branch have enriched the lives of many members.

London classes are flourishing, thanks to our wonderful teachers and musicians. Judith Jones, Davinia Miln, Simon Wales, Pat Davoll, Maureen Campbell, Jane Rose and Roy Southall at regular weekly classes plus Mervyn Short and Joan Desborough at the Very Advanced Technique classes. Musicians Adam Brady, Ian Cutts, Yvonne McGuinness and Dave Hall have provided inspiration throughout the year.

We could not function without the talent and commitment of our many volunteers, including Webmaster Meryl Thomson, Membership secretary Gaynor Curtis, *Reel* Editor Simon Wales, Jeff Robertson our *Reel* Business Editor and Lena Robinson our ubiquitous and massively appreciated support at Branch classes, dances and so much more.

My heartfelt thanks go to our Convenors and supporting Committee, for all they have done. Vice Chair Jim Cook, Secretary Mel Rowland and Treasurer Simon Wales form an unbeatable team of efficient, supportive, and innovative colleagues. I am grateful for the substantial contribution made by Jenny Kendrick who is retiring from the committee and passing the role of Classes Convenor to Margaret Moore. Margaret Shaw, as Dances Convenor, created a welcoming and reassuring environment at dances with a delicious and innovative response to COVID-19 safe catering needs. Elaine Davies has provided great support to class development and Thelma-Jane Robb ensures that London Branch presents a professional visual image to the world. The loss of George Potts, a long-standing committee member and past Branch secretary, leaves a big gap on the Committee. We will miss his organisational memory, humour, kindness, scones and so much more.

Looking to the future, I am delighted to welcome, Adam Brady, Richard Clarke and Dave Hall to the London Branch Committee. All bring valuable skills and experience, and we are fortunate to have them working with us.

We have had a wonderful return to dance in 2021-22 and there is much to look forward to in 2022-23, not least the Centenary of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

Objectives for 2022-23

1. Continuing post COVID-19 recovery of membership numbers and boosting attendance at Branch events
2. Developing events attractive to younger dancers
3. Increasing the number of musicians playing for classes and dances
4. Celebrating the Centenary of the RSCDS in style