



Introduction

This report, prepared by the Branch Committee of Management, will be presented at the AGM on Friday 17th June under agenda item 4. As well as reviewing last year's activities the report looks forward to the coming year and the meeting will have the opportunity to comment on the Committee's plans and spending opportunities.

Summary

Another exceptional year has passed when we were able to enjoy the various 80th Anniversary celebratory events as illustrated in the colour supplement with Reel 275. Once again it is thanks to the many people who have contributed their skills, time, energy, enthusiasm and ideas that has enabled us to bring Scottish Country Dancing to the attention of the wider public. More newcomers have been introduced to the delights of Scottish dancing in its various forms and we have continued to provide education in Scottish Country Dancing to those of all ages and abilities and have run dances that were enjoyed by many.

The committee of management have met five times, sub committees have reported to the main committee; the officers and convenors have met once to review and set budgets.

The Branch has also continued to contribute to the work at HQ with Elaine Wilde on the Management Board, and Andrew Kellett continues as editor of "The Scottish Country Dancer".

Progress from Last Year's Report

As part of the 80th Anniversary celebrations the Weekend School in Derbyshire was an outstanding success and grateful thanks go to our organiser Margaret Catchick. The remaining Anniversary successes are covered elsewhere in the report.

Our thanks to James Fairbairn for organising the four open air dances at Kensington Gardens.

Once again the Branch DSW events were resounding successes attracting many new faces as well as consolidating the existing SCD fraternity. Our grateful thanks to Angela Young and her host of eager helpers who contributed to the success of the initiative

The highland, ladies step and technique classes continue to be supported.

Over 200 dancers attended our Anniversary Ball at Hammersmith Town Hall where our guests included the Society Chairman and Vice Chairman. Our thanks to Rachel Wilton for leading the organisation.

Successful musician's workshops have been held, led by Nicol McLaren at the Weekend School and Ian Robertson at our Day School in London.

The Branch was able to assist younger members attend Society events.

The mid week Winter Wednesday dance continues to be an enjoyable well attended event.

The Committee is exploring the possibility of collecting Branch subscriptions by bank transfer.

Membership

We have seen a drop in membership across all types this year.

The total Membership as at March 2011 is: Annual members 484; Life members 167; Second Branch members 79, Total 730.

84 have taken advantage of the savings on the Headquarters subscription and signed up as joint members.

The membership form is available on the Branch Website.

Bookstall

The Bookstall has had a busy year, due to good days at the Branch Weekend in May 2010 and the Day School in November, and also as members have had to buy Book 46.

Mail order business continues at a steady trickle and is the main source of income.

Any new stock is advertised on the Branch Website and enquiries are invited by telephone or email.

Dances

We ran seven dances at St Columba's during the year. We enjoyed dancing to local bands, Dave Hall in June, Strathallan at Burns and Winter Wednesday, Ian Robertson in March, and the musicians led by Angela Young in May. However in celebration of our Anniversary Year, we also had visiting Scottish bands; Glencraig in September, Ian Cathcart in November and Marian Anderson and her Band at our Christmas dance.

Although average attendance has fallen nominally largely due to a range of external circumstances we are fortunate to be able to offer a mix of dances to suit all levels and these have proved to be most enjoyable events.

Season	Average Attendance
2005/6	125
2006/7	134
2007/8	144
2008/9	123
2009/10	127
2010/11	104

At our summer garden dance we enjoyed the benefit of sun and dancing outdoors by the Bandstand at Kensington Gardens to the music of Liam Stewart and his Scottish Dance Band.

The March dance provided an ideal backdrop for the presentation of our Branch Award to John Mitchell and our thanks to Wilson Nicol for making the presentation.

Our grateful thanks as always go to those Committee members and volunteers who support these events; the MCs, door keepers, refreshment providers, the people who wash up, the programme devisors, those who transport and accommodate visiting bands and provide lunches; their contribution towards the success of these events and their commitment is much appreciated by the dances sub committee.

Classes Report

London Branch has continued to provide a wide range of classes to suit all needs. However the numbers are down on the previous year.

Attendance at the Wednesday evening classes was slow to start with but we have gradually seen an increase in numbers, particularly in the

Beginners Class. It is our intention next dancing year to revert to the traditional classes format of Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. With clearly defined classes it is our hope that we will be able to improve the standard of dancing within each of the three categories which will make the classes more enjoyable for all attending. All of our Wednesday classes have a nucleus of regular dancers as well as many dancers who are on the register but who are unable to attend on a regular basis.

Following the Summer Term at Marlborough School we will again be holding a series of General Classes each with a different teacher and musician. Once again we have a good line-up of teachers and musicians for you. These classes are a very enjoyable end to the dancing year as can be evidenced by the number of people who continue to attend them.

The Wednesday afternoon class at Pont Street has also seen its numbers maintained. This is an invaluable class for those who are unable to attend classes in the evening and is thoroughly enjoyed by all those attending.

Numbers at the Sunday Advanced Technique Classes have also been steady though not huge. This class has always been much enjoyed by those attending and we have, once again, been very fortunate in having excellent teachers and musicians. It is a very good opportunity to be taught technique by teachers who do not regularly take a Branch class.

Class	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Beginners	27	25	20	17
Improve Social Dancing	29	21	19	12
Technique	21	25	23	15
Wed, General	15	17	15	15
Highland	8	10	7	7
Ladies Step	9	8	7	7
Summer General	35	45	33	31
Sunday Technique	12	12	13	11
Day School	146	152	132	107

This year we introduced three one day Highland/Step Workshops to replace the separate Highland and Ladies Step classes which we have held in the past. The number of people attending these classes has not been huge. However the Workshops have been appreciated by those attending and we feel that as a Society we should be offering these specialist classes. By holding a few one day Workshops we are limiting our exposure to financial loss but at the same time providing what we feel is an important service. This is particularly so as there are few places in the south east where one can be taught both Highland and Ladies Step.

The Day School continues to do well although the numbers were down on the previous year. However, it is still an event appreciated and looked forward to by many. The decline in numbers may have been attributed in part to it being held at a new venue. We are, however, hopeful that those who attended last year will have passed the word around that the venue was a very good one with excellent facilities including plenty of

parking, good floors to dance on and an excellent area for refreshments, and that we will consequently see a rise in numbers at this year's event. Once again we have a superb line up of teachers and musicians to make the day a very special one.

Our thanks go to all the teachers and musicians who have taught and played for us over the past year. They really make attending a class an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Thanks also go to all members of the Committee who have helped with the organisation of classes in general over the past year. Without their help and commitment these classes could not take place.

Publicity

Our major means of publicising what we offer and what we do is through the website, and the creative and imaginative way Meryl Thomson sets up the different areas and constantly updates them and rearranges them so that they are always eye catching is something that most of us can only admire – thank you to Meryl and to Ian for their commitment to the Branch. Members should look at it regularly, there is always something new.

Thank you also to Caroline and Graham Hamilton who put so much into setting up and maintaining the South East Dance Diary, and also to Stewart Murray who does the same with the South East Classes list – these are the areas that receive the most regular 'hits' on the website.

The Reel, under the guiding hand of Wilson Nicol, continues to be eagerly awaited by members and subscribers and used constantly as a source of information about what is happening in the South East as well as a wide selection of articles of interest.

The 80th Anniversary events contributed to a wider publicity among dancers and non dancers; four sunny Saturday afternoons in Kensington Gardens attracted many people who all went away with some information about Scottish dancing, but Dance Scottish Week did not follow up this success as well as we had hoped. Our other two 'outreach' events, the St Andrew's Dance in November and the Burns Supper and Ceilidh Dance were again very enjoyable events but the former not as well attended as the latter. However, the two dances for the less experienced – 'Winter Wednesday' and 'Easy and Enjoyable' succeeded in bridging the gap between the comfort zone of classes and the Branch dance and several class members feel more confident about attending a dance.

Finally it is the members who are the major publicity tool – please carry with you some Branch cards to give to colleagues, friends, fellow passengers on the bus, but, most importantly, welcome newcomers to class and dances, dance with them, help them if they require a little support so that our doors are always open for new members.

Demonstration Team

The total number of engagements/events the team performed at for the year 2010/2011 was 27, including 12 Branch events, compared to 28 (including 11 Branch events) in 2009/2010, representing a slight drop in activity again. The level of new enquiries leading to confirmed bookings from outside parties was also slightly down. In order to try to reverse this several strategies are being considered including a more proactive approach.

The team have enjoyed the great variety of engagements undertaken including holding and dancing at two Kensington Palace 'Enchanted Palace' workshops, dancing at the Girl Guides Centenary major event in Bexley Heath Kent, a Highland Games in Richmond, a post wedding party in Sandown, being part of the SE Branches team (under the direction of Angela Young) for the 'On Show' performance at The Royal Albert Hall, dancing for and with students at a London college, a major commercial marketing event in Southwark, a large hotel in West London and competing at the Newcastle Festival. We also greatly enjoyed performing with the London Branch children's team twice this year at Branch events, a joint venture we hopefully look forward to repeating.

Our annual visit to the Newcastle Festival this year broke new ground. In addition to the fantastic result for the team winning both the cup in the ladies section and the cup for the highest score in the competition overall, we were joined by the SE Branches for both the mixed team entry and the display; all under the excellent direction of Angela Young.....and a fantastic time was had by all.

Marjory Reid has continued helping with some of the administration all year and Sin See until last summer, for which we are very grateful. James Fairbairn stepped down as convenor at the AGM last June, with Elaine Wilde then taking up the post. The class continues at Kensington & Chelsea College with Angela Young completing her seventh year as class teacher. We are pleased to announce that Paul Plummer will take up the post of dem class teacher from September. A big thank you must go to Angela Young for seven very successful years as dem class teacher; a very talented young lady. The pianist Sandra Smith continues as the main class musician, with Neil Esslemont on his small

Season	Demonstrations	Team Size
2006/7	25	19
2007/8	26	21
2008/9	36	22
2009/10	28	17
2010/11	27	18

pipes playing at some of the classes. We are also very fortunate to have Neil Esslemont, Peter Jenkins, Roger Huth and Dave Hall playing for us at events; a vast array of talent that is a pleasure to dance to.

Young Dancers

Again attendance at the monthly Branch children's class has continued to grow and the children are preparing for medal tests in London, summer 2011. As well as the core number of dancers who attend regularly, numerous visitors to London have enjoyed Saturday mornings dancing with the children. Thanks are due to the parents who support the class, to Lena Robinson for taking the register and making sure there are refreshments at each class, and to Graham Berry, who has played for the class regularly this year.

The third annual Branch Youth Workshop was held in September as part of Dance Scottish Week, thanks to financial assistance from the Mary Telfer Fund. This event did not have the attendance hoped for, due to conflicting events

around the UK. However those who attended had a thorough afternoon of teaching from David Hall in a lively and enjoyable class.

Two Family Days were held in November and March. There are good numbers of experienced and new dancers at the morning classes, and the standard of dancing at the afternoon dances has seen significant improvement in the last couple of years. The atmosphere and enthusiasm on Family Days show that London Branch is working hard to encourage the dancers of the future.

80th Anniversary

The 80th Anniversary Year proved to be a busy year for all of us as London Branch celebrated in all sorts of ways, in all sorts of places.

From the bustling Burns Supper in January, to the cracking Christmas Dance in December we kept St Columba's busy. The Anniversary Weekend took us out of London while the Day School ventured to a new venue. Visitors to Kensington Gardens were treated to Scottish music and dancing with our 80th Anniversary Picnic followed by the summer outdoor dances, while Hammersmith Town Hall fizzed with champagne and glamour at our October Ball. There was time to reflect over the 80 years with the longer serving Branch members at our Anniversary Tea while our youngest dancers celebrated with lots of fun and cakes at the Family Days.

There's been a wealth of music and dancing – and a lot of work behind the scenes. Thanks are owed to all the people who worked on the Anniversary events as well as to all the teachers, MCs, musicians and bands.

Each event had a unique atmosphere providing opportunities for all members – from the youngest to the oldest – to celebrate 80 years of Scottish Dancing in London, all showing that London Branch is alive, well and looking to the future.

Plans for the Coming Dancing Year

Looking forward to the future, the Management Committee will endeavour at all times to fulfil the Branch and Society aims.

This will include maintaining our participation in Society-led initiatives such as Dance Scottish. In 2011 this will be a month long publicity venture from November to December.

Attention will be particularly focussed on classes with continued Highland/Step workshops and Technique sessions.

Publicity will work strategically to attract new dancers and members, while keeping current members informed of dances. There will also be a specific marketing approach to attract new business for the Demonstration Team.

The Management Committee will investigate how to make collecting Branch subscriptions by bank transfer, and ensure that we are using new technology efficiently and cost effectively.

Branch dances will be arranged for less experienced dancers, with the possibility of further mid week dances for all if demand is sufficient. Support will be given to young dancers attending Society ventures including Summer School, Winter School and Spring Fling.

Additionally links will be maintained and furthered with local dance groups, clubs and with the South East Branches association.