

**Introduction**

This report, prepared by the Branch Committee of Management, will be discussed at the AGM on Friday 15 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 priorities.

**Summary**

Another active year has passed; once again it is thanks to the many people who have contributed their skills, their time, their energy, their enthusiasm and their ideas that we have been able to continue 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; we have continued to provide education in Scottish Country Dancing to those of all ages and have run dances that were enjoyed by many dancers.

The Committee of Management has met 6 times; subcommittees have reported to it; the Convenors have met once.

The Branch has also continued to contribute to the work at HQ with Jeff Robertson on the Management Board and Andrew Kellett on the editorial board of ‘The Scottish Country Dancer’.

**Targets from last year’s Report**

- The Branch has participated in the organisation of two successful teachers’ workshops as part of the South East Region Teachers’ Association
- At the Day School 22 people attended a discussion group on the role of the MC at a dance (see *The Reel* 260)
- A dance was held with a walk and talk through of each dance to encourage new dancers
- A 15 week course for those wanting more intensive technique was held, much appreciated by the participants
- the Day School offered a half day for beginners, also much appreciated by participants
- The Family Day and youth Medals Tests were very successful
- Another successful Combined Societies’ dance was held, and will continue as an annual event.

**Membership**

There has been a gradual increase in annual membership but not in pace with the decrease in life and long term membership, so that the total is slightly less than last year – annual: 512 – life: 195 – long term: 36. Total 743 plus second Branch members – 81. The membership form has been updated and is

available on the website and inside copies of *The Reel* made available to non members.

**Bookstall**

The bookstall does a steady trade; Ian Anderson sends off several mailings per week, and has been busy with the Branch 75th Anniversary book and CD. He has paid his annual visits to the Branch Day School and the Argyll Day and Weekend Schools where he always does good business. He regularly updates the list of his goods on the Branch website.

**Dances**

We have held 6 dances this season, aiming to provide something for everyone – non dancers who might like to join our classes, beginners who are taking their first steps at a social dance, and experienced dancers, some of whom have been very supportive of those with less experience. We have had a range of bands who have provided us with splendid music and the attendance at all the dances has been good.

We also had a well attended ceilidh with dancing and performance which brought together participants of all levels at the end of a very successful Day school; at Polesden Lacey, our Garden Dance, the sun was almost TOO hot but all present enjoyed the dancing and meeting friends.

Thanks are due to the different groups of caterers, the people who collect the money, the MCs, the programme devisors, those who put up and take down decorations, those who prepare and clear up after the welcome drink, those who transport and accommodate visiting bands from Scotland. Committee members and volunteers all work hard to contribute towards successful events and their commitment is appreciated.

Season	Average Attendance
2001/2	107
2002/3	118
2003/4	130
2004/5	127
2005/6	125
2006/7	134

Dance Average Attendance at St. Columba’s to March

**Classes Report**

The last year has been a busy one as far as classes are concerned. The branch offers the three Wednesday evening classes – beginners, popular, technique – and a Wednesday afternoon class run by Jeni Rutherford. The Beginners has attracted a large number of potential dancers, and on occasion has had more than 40 in the class, excellently managed by Rachel Wilton. Popular dances has its many regular adherents who, with Lindsay

Rousseau have managed to create a combined class/social event. The Technique class too has its regular attendees and has over the year also had a number of visiting dancers who have appreciated its friendly atmosphere as some of the more technically demanding dances have been attempted under Gaynor Curtis’s guidance.

In addition there are from time to time Ladies Step (under the expert tuition of Joan Desborough) and Highland Classes (Malcolm Ferris Lay). During the past year the Highland Class hall became unavailable and at present we have not found a suitable alternative. It is the Branch’s intention that Highland Classes should be offered and possible alternatives are being investigated.

The Annual Day School was enjoyed by a larger number of dancers and musicians this year; expertly organized by Margaret Catchick

This year, in response to demand a Proficiency Course was set up and its members attended with an impressive regularity. Unfortunately here too the hall was only available on a short term basis. Although the course did not culminate in an assessment, all those participating have, under the guidance of Maureen Campbell, improved their individual standards of dancing and look forward to a future ‘refresher’ course.

Currently the Branch is running an RSCDS Teachers’ Certificate course, regularly attended, where those aiming at Units 2, 3 and 5 of the teaching qualifications appreciate the tuition of Ann Dix.

London Branch is particularly fortunate in having excellent musicians available for the majority of classes. Thanks are due to Jean Harrison (Beginners), Ian Cutts (Popular), Ken Martlew (Technique and Teachers’ Certificate Course), Sandra Smith (Highland and Demonstration Class) Wendy Desborough (Ladies Step Dancing) and Angela Young (Dancing Proficiency Course)

Class	04/05	05/06	06/07
Elementary	20	24	32
Popular SCD	20	24	30
Technique	12	16	13
Wednesday General	12	14	15
Highland	6	6	8
Ladies’ Step	12	8	9
Summer General	27	28	29
Sunday Technique	-	-	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>153</b>
Day School	85	96	116

## Publicity

Last season we introduced car stickers, which were distributed free to all members along with *The Reel*. These met with much acclaim.

The new Branch Business Cards are now in use displaying contact information, and featuring the new Society tartan and logo. Branch Tops and Badges continue to sell steadily.

The quality and the content of *The Reel* continue to improve with every issue. Our sincere thanks go to Wilson for his sterling efforts as Editor. After maintaining our charges for some years, the increased advertising rates are now in force.

The Branch website has been enhanced considerably over the year by Meryl and the Classes and Demonstration Class pages have been extended and reciprocal links installed. Minicribs for all Branch dances are now available for downloading from the website.

We are proposing to repeat the slide show of recent Branch events at the AGM and our thanks must go to Stephen Webb for providing the photographic material. Many of the pictures are also shown on the website.

Meryl continues to produce a splendid range of quality fliers and leaflets for distribution at various events.

The range of event notices has been extended to include Classes and Children etc all with the identifiable Branch style.

I am delighted to announce that Rosalind Zuridis has agreed to take over as Publicity Convenor at the AGM. Rosalind's knowledge and contacts should ensure that the Publicity sub committee develops media opportunities with some success.

I would like to thank the members of the Sub Committee for their hard work, support and encouragement over the year.

## Demonstrations

It has been business as usual for the Demonstration Team. The number of dems and displays (including six Branch functions) was 25 compared to 21 in the previous reporting year and the recent peak of 31 in the 2002/2003 season. Notably, we took part in the Big Dance, some 35 dance groups performing together to the same music in Trafalgar Square on 22 July 2006. The level of enquiry from outside parties is picking up, generated largely by the Branch website, which seems to be well geared to search engines, and we are expecting to maintain at least the current level of activity.

The number of team members has settled at 19, 12 women and seven men. We ran auditions in May 2006, which resulted in the recruitment of three women to the team, and we are planning to repeat

the exercise this year. Two men have been co-opted during the year.

Jeff Robertson had also served as Convenor for several years and has been replaced by James Fairbairn. The class administration is now undertaken by a team of three, Marian Morris, Jan Rudge and Elaine Wilde, who take responsibility for various regular tasks and the organisation of individual dems. This system reduces the work load for each individual and seems to be working reasonably well.

The regular Tuesday class continues at Kensington & Chelsea College in Wornington Road, where we enjoy a proper dance studio with mirrors everywhere reflecting the fact that our feet are not always where they should be, despite reminders and exhortations from Angela Young, who will complete her third year as class teacher in June.

Sandra Smith has again been our stalwart class musician. Neil Esslemont and Roger Huth, both excellent pipers with a feel for the dance, have played for various displays. P/M Sandy Walker who played for the team for many years is now retired and we would here like with gratitude to acknowledge his contribution. We have also enjoyed dancing to music by Peter Jenkins and Rob Dorothy; and Angela Young who frequently plays piano or keyboard for us.

We retained both our trophies at the Slough Festival in May 2006 and, on our return to the Newcastle Festival in February 2007 after a year's absence, the ladies's team won their section and the mixed team were second equal in theirs. We fielded a team of 20 in the display section.

The ladies were equipped in February 2007 with new long white dresses which include an insert in the old Society tartan.

Season	Demonstrations	Team Size
2002/3	31	21
2003/4	23	22
2004/5	27	27
2005/6	21	18
2006/7	25	19

## Young Dancers

Numbers at the monthly children's class have continued to grow steadily, and the Branch provided financial support to a new children's class near Aylesbury. We ran two Family Days at St. Columba's with separate classes for children and adults in the morning and a dance for everyone in the afternoon. The second of these functions, in March, was the best attended event primarily for children that the Branch has organised for several

years. Also in March we hosted an examination day for young dancers to take the RSCDS Medal Tests. 49 candidates came from Milton Keynes, Cambridge, Crowthorne and Bexleyheath and were very successful – all candidates passed, 18 with distinction and 17 with credit. The Branch made funds available to support young adults attending Spring Fling and Summer School.

## Plans for the coming dancing year

- Repeat the dance to encourage new dancers/less experienced dancers, using slightly different format
- Continue to invite a range of bands to play for Branch dances; run an extra dance in June for more experienced dancers
- Run another day for musicians who will then play for the evening dance
- Extend Day School beginners class to a whole day
- Find a way to provide Highland dancing classes for as many dancers as possible
- Welcome all new dancers and provide classes for their needs
- Continue to develop the Branch children's class and other events specifically aimed at young people
- Continue to find more effective ways to use the media
- Continue to look for ways of extending provision for less experienced dancers to develop technically
- Give Meryl every support to continue her excellent work on the website, constantly updating it and thinking of new ways of making our information available to more dancers and prospective dancers

## STOP PRESS

### George Lawson

Members will be saddened to hear of the death of George Lawson of Glasgow Branch. George was Chairman of the Society in 1994/6; he was also an examiner, an adjudicator, tutor and teacher in Glasgow, at Summer School, throughout the UK and overseas. He will be remembered by the Society and many dancers at home and abroad.

An obituary will appear in the next issue of *The Reel*.