



The Reel

rscds
London Branch

Published by the LONDON BRANCH of the ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY
Formed 1930 rscdslondon.org.uk Registered Charity number 1067690

Issue 332

£1.75

JUNE - AUGUST 2025

Scottish country dancing -
For fun, fitness and
friendship



2024 - 25 Winter Warmers

Above: Dancing at the RSCDS Winter School Ball in Blair Castle 20 February 2025

Below: Combined Societies' Dance at St Columba's 1 March 2025



In This Issue

Branch Matters (pp2-5)

Chair's report, AGM notice, membership, dances, classes listings and reports

Music Review (p6)

Cheshire Branch 40th Anniversary and Belfast Branch

Spring Fling (p7)

From the RSCDS Management Board

Update from the Chair, Gary Coull (p7)

On and off the Dance Floor (pp8-9)

In pictures

The Story behind the Dance (pp10-11)

The Duke of Atholl's Reel

Dancing through the Years (p12)

Rena Stewart remembered; finding treasure in South Africa

Lives Remembered (p13)

Clem Wilson, Irene Spooner, Margaret Gunning, Alastair Cuthbertson

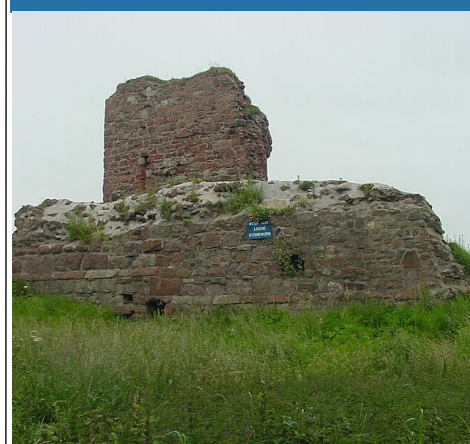
Letters to *The Reel* (p14)

Square set formation, lack of 8x32 strathspeys

Clubs and Societies (pp15-16)

Forthcoming events and listings

Where is This? See p14...



Issue 333 should be with UK based members by 24 August 2025 unless delayed in the post.

Contributions for *Reel* 333 should be sent to arrive by and preferably in advance of 20 July 2025 by email to editor@rscdslondon.org.uk

The opinions expressed by contributors in *The Reel* do not necessarily reflect the official position of the RSCDS, nor of the Branch.

From the Chair: Richard Clarke



As I write, it is the week before Easter 2025, and the world seems a strange place dominated by US politics. Pledges of peace in the middle east and the Ukraine are currently replaced in the headlines by daily changes of trade tariffs, and starvation in the Sudan and Congo is only incidentally referred to in relation to changed budgetary priorities. Uncertainty seems to have become the dominant theme of daily life and news broadcasts something to avoid.

As an antidote to current affairs, Scottish country dancing is difficult to beat but this too has challenges to address. The RSCDS at 12 Coates Crescent is consulting on its five-year strategy and business plan. The initial response rate from members has been low, so I hope you have found a moment to click the buttons (see the link in the report on p7) and share your thoughts on the top priorities and important actions. Also in March, 12 Coates Crescent released the first webinar from its Health Strategy Working Group which you can access from the News & Blog section of the RSCDS website. More is promised later in the year, and it is hoped that this will both encourage the public to take up Scottish country dancing and make the RSCDS more attractive to funders.

Locally we held the Winter Wednesday dance at St Columba's Church on 19 February, marking the half term break for the weekly classes and ten days later, dancers joined the Combined Societies' Dance on 1 March. This year the organisers were the London Highland Club with music by the Dave Hall trio and Catriona Bennett, Murrough Landon, Joanne Lawrence, Davinia Miln, Brian Pearson and Roy Southall as the MCs from each of the participating groups.

Formal notice of our AGM on 14 June was in the last *Reel* and there is more information on this and the End of Season Dance in this edition. As well as discussing the last year with members, there will be elections of the trustees and other posts for the coming year and also (with your support) the adoption of a new constitution. We look forward to seeing many of you there and hearing what you have to say.

In the events section of our website is an opportunity to be a 'guinea pig' at the South East Region Teachers' Association on 7 June (mock exams) and 21 June (finals) at Kings Langley. The venue is close to the M25 with a good train service from Euston. Not only will you receive free tuition but this is a chance to contribute to the next generation of teachers and their students who will be our future dance partners.

With the weather turning from spring to summer, participating in the White Rose Festival in Leeds on 12 July is becoming even more attractive. The first rehearsal of eight dances during a 'meet the others' session took place at the end of March and gave the three teachers (Pat Davoll, Judith Jones and Simon Wales) a chance to allocate dancers to beginners, improvers and demonstration levels. By the time you receive this copy of the *Reel*, the programme of practice classes for the three London sets with the MacLennan Scottish Group will be underway.

Thank you for your role in making Scottish country dancing in London a success. Every time you invite someone on to the dance floor or assist someone in your set, you help our objective of promoting Scottish country dancing in London. We also have the volunteers without whom we could not continue with either our classes or dances - whether co-ordinating events, taking payment, maintaining the membership records and the website, providing refreshments or acting as MC, they make an enormous contribution. If you could help from time to time, then please get in touch.

Branch AGM Notice: Fiona Olson

The Annual Report and Agenda for this year's Annual General Meeting are enclosed with this copy of the *Reel*. The AGM will take place on Saturday 14 June 2025 in the Upper Hall, St Columba's Church, Pont Sreet, London SW1X 0BD at 6.45pm and will be followed by the End of Season Dance.

We hope as many as possible can join us in person on the evening to hear what has been happening in the Branch and also to let us gather your thoughts and opinions, on your experience of being members of the Branch. Anyone who cannot be there in person but who wishes to give us their thoughts is welcome to email: secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk

Some familiar faces are not standing again for the 2025-26 season: David Hall, Adam Brady and Margaret Moore. We thank them for their contribution but understand their work and family commitments must take priority. As there are fewer nominations than committee places available, there will be no requirement for elections at this AGM.

The Officers will remain in post, and Elaine Davies, Joanne Lawrence, Wendy Morris, Thelma-Jane Robb and Margaret Shaw have all agreed to continue in their current committee roles.

The full Committee is as follows:

Chair: Richard Clarke (2022) **Vice Chair:** Vacant
Hon. Secretary: Fiona Olson (2024) **Hon. Treasurer:** Simon Wales (2003)

Committee Members:

Elaine Davies (2009) Joanne Lawrence (2017) Wendy Morris (2023)
Thelma-Jane Robb (2011) Margaret Shaw (2007)

ROYAL
SCOTTISH
COUNTRY
DANCE
SOCIETY



Patron: HM The King

Chair: Gary Coull

HEADQUARTERS

12 Coates Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7AF

Tel: 0131 225 3854

info@rscds.org

rscds.org

LONDON BRANCH

Hon. President
Andrew Kellett

Hon. Vice Presidents

Mary Barker, Margaret Catchick, Jim Cook,
Jenny Greene, Rita Marlow,
Danielle Reinstein, Lindsey Rousseau

Chair

Richard Clarke

7 Chapter Road, London SE17 3ES

Tel: 020 7582 0934

chair@rscdslondon.org.uk

Vice Chair

Vacant

vicechair@rscdslondon.org.uk

Hon. Secretary

Fiona Olson

Tel: 07484 647178

secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk

Hon. Treasurer

Simon Wales

24 Cornwall Close, Maidstone ME15 8HY

Tel: 01622 761753

treasurer@rscdslondon.org.uk

Committee

Joanne Lawrence (Classes Convenor),
Margaret Shaw (Dances Convenor),
Adam Brady, Elaine Davies, Margaret Moore,
Wendy Morris, Thelma-Jane Robb

Non-Executive roles

Hon. Archivist..... Simon Wales
Membership & Subscribers .. Gaynor Curtis
The Reel Edward Bunting, Simon Wales
The Reel Business Editor.... Jeff Robertson
Web Admin Joanne Lawrence
webmaster@rscdslondon.org.uk

rscdslondon.org.uk



facebook.com/RSCDSLONDON



[@LondonRSCDS](https://twitter.com/LondonRSCDS)



YouTube.com/RSCDSLONDONBranch



Objects of London Branch

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

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

London Branch Matters

Membership and *The Reel* Subscription Rates from 1 July 2025

As a member of RSCDS London Branch, you enjoy the following benefits: reduced rates at London Branch classes, dances and events; four issues per year of *The Reel*; 10% discount on items from the RSCDS online shop and two issues per year of the RSCDS magazine *Scottish Country Dancer*. UK Members wishing to pay by direct debit may do so by completing a payment mandate by going to rscdslondon.org.uk/join-us. Overseas members should use the methods outlined below.

Membership may also be purchased by credit/debit card or by cheque payable to RSCDS London Branch by going to the same page. New members should also complete the membership application form here: rscdslondon.org.uk/join-rscds-london.

Membership/subscription enquiries and cheque payments should be addressed to the Membership Secretary, Gaynor Curtis, 60 Bishops Wood, Woking GU21 3QB, 01483 721989, membership@rscdslondon.org.uk. Any reader who receives a paper issue of *The Reel* may send their email address to Gaynor Curtis and receive an electronic copy too at no extra charge. Those receiving an electronic copy are asked not to pass this on, unless it is to someone they feel might like to help support the Branch by becoming a member or subscribing.

The new rates for RSCDS membership through the London Branch are as follows:

Membership category	Junior 12-17 years	Young Adult 18-24 years	Adult 25 years +	Adult Joint (2) 25 years +	2nd Branch	<i>The Reel</i> only (subscription)
Electronic (<i>eReel</i>)	£20	£29	£34	£57	£5	£5
<i>The Reel</i> by post (UK)	£22.50	£31.50	£36.50	£62	£7.50	£7.50
<i>The Reel</i> by post (Europe)	£28.50	£37.50	£42.50	£74	£15	£15
<i>The Reel</i> by post (Rest of the World)	£31.50	£40.50	£45.50	£80	£20	£20

End of Season Dance

Following the Branch AGM

Saturday 14 June 2025

Doors open at 6.15pm

AGM 6.45 - 7.30pm

7.30 - 10.30pm

Upper Hall, St Columba's Church,
Pont Street SW1X 0BD

Adam Brady

Good Hearted Glasgow 8x32 J
Glastonbury Tor..... 8x32 R
Autumn in Appin..... 4x32 S
Waverley/Fergus McIver..... 8x48 J
Staffin Harvest..... 4x32 S
Ray Milbourne..... 4x32 R
The Dancing Master Sq 96 J

Napier's Index 8x40 J
Crossing the Line 6x32 R
Jean Martin of Aberdeen 3x32 S
Ecclefechan Feline 8x32 J
The Tri-Mariner 8x32 R
The Haar on Skye 8x32 S
The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh 8x40 R

Extras:

Johnnie Walker 64 S+64 R
Cumbrae Reel 8x32 R
Village Reel 8x32 S

Admission includes light refreshments
RSCDS Members £17, non-members £20
full time students (with card) and
spectators £10

Children (under 16) free

Tickets available online and on the door
All dances will be recapped

Crib available at rscdslondon.org.uk

The Reel Advertising Rates:

Per column centimetre, three columns per page: Black and white, but including colour logo: £6. Full colour: £8.50
All advertisers receive a copy of *The Reel*.

For adverts and enquiries on pricing contact Jeff Robertson:
businesseditor@rscdslondon.org.uk

Send Forthcoming Events adverts to Willie Lawrence at:
danceads@rscdslondon.org.uk

Day School Dance

This will be our new season dance

Saturday 18 October 2025

6.00 - 9.00pm

Sports Hall with sprung floor
Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

**Day School Musicians led by
Ian Muir (Prestwick)**

Good Hearted Glasgow 8x32 J
The Flowers of Edinburgh 8x32 R
The Birks of Invermay..... 8x32 S
Tribute to the Borders..... 8x32 J
Clutha..... 4x48 R
Autumn in Appin..... 4x32 S
The Chequered Court 8x32 J

Shiftn' Bobbins..... 8x32 R
Slytherin House 8x32 S
Best Set in the Hall..... 8x32 J
Bohemian Reflections..... 8x32 R
Capetown Wedding..... 8x32 S
Bill Clement MBE 8x32 J
Mrs MacLeod 8x32 R

There will also be short ceilidh items -
any offers will be gratefully received!

Admission includes light refreshments

RSCDS Members £17, Non-members £20
full time students (with card) and
spectators £10
Children (under 16) free

Tickets available online and on the door

All dances will be recapped
Crib available at rscdslondon.org.uk

Dates for 2025 - 2026

18 October 2025 - Day School, Musicians' Workshop and Dance
29 October 2025 - Autumn Wednesday Dance
13 December 2025 - Christmas Dance
10 January 2026 - Burns Ceilidh Dance
18 February 2026 - Winter Wednesday Dance
18 April 2026 - Combined Societies' Dance
27 May 2026 - Summer Wednesday Dance
13 June 2026 - End of Season Dance

Membership Rates

The Society element of the membership subscription will be increasing by £1.00 from 1 July 2025 as a result of the decision taken by the RSCDS AGM last November. The new rates are in the table above.

The RSCDS membership year runs from July to June and there are some of our members who pay in June for that new year so direct debit rates will be changed in June - to get in at the old rate, payment must be received by 21 June!

There is also a proposal at our own AGM to increase the London element of the subscription by £1.50 for paper *Reel*, and £1.00 for *eReel* to harmonise them with subscribers and second Branch members. Rising costs of postage and printing of the *Reel* have been absorbed for many years and this position, regrettably, cannot be maintained next year. The subscription has to cover at least the cost of the *Reel*.

Open Air Dancing

Saturdays 16, 23 and 30 August

Join friends, family and dancers from across the world at the London Branch annual open air dancing sessions in Kensington Gardens this summer. The dancing will take place by the bandstand near the Round Pond on Saturdays 16, 23 and 30 August 2025 from 2.00 - 4.00pm when an experienced MC will guide everyone through a programme of Scottish country and ceilidh dances.

Everyone with or without experience of Scottish dancing is very welcome. Bring your family and friends or just bring yourself (and a picnic if you wish) and enjoy dancing to some wonderful music. Admission is free. We look forward to seeing you there! In case of bad weather, please check our website: rscdslondon.org.uk or Facebook page facebook.com/RSCDSLONDON

South-east Dance Diary

The diary is continually updated and all societies in the South-east may submit details of their functions via a form on the website or by email to:

diary@rscdslondon.org.uk

London Branch Classes



Set yourself a fun challenge join a Scottish country dance class

We have classes for...

Term Dates

For regular Wednesday weekly classes:

General Class

Mixed Ability Dance Group

Richmond Beginners & Improvers

Half-term Wednesday 28 May

Summer term: 4, 11, 18 June

**Autumn Term: 24 September -
10 December**

Summer General Class

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Wednesday 7.00-9.00pm
4, 11, 18 June

With guest teachers

**Saskia Frisby, Dave Hall &
Catriona Bennett**
and class musicians

Ian Cutts, Adam Brady & Heather Jeffery

A class to consolidate and build on basic
skills and technique whilst developing a
deeper knowledge of dances

Fee: £8 per class for RSCDS members
£10 per class for non-RSCDS members

Mixed Ability Dance Group

Upper Hall, St Columba's Church,
Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD

Wednesday 2.30 - 4.30pm

With teachers

Pat Davoll and Rose Kreloff

Recorded music on 4, 11 June
and

live music from Barbara Manning on 18 June

A low impact social activity suitable for
dancers with at least some knowledge of
basic steps and formations

Visitors welcome

Fee: £10 per class for RSCDS members
£12 per class for non-RSCDS members
£2 non dancers

Children's Class

We are reviewing our Children's class
options to find a day/time format which
enables interested families to attend
regularly. Check our website for updates:

rscdslondon.org.uk/children

The London Branch runs a large
number of classes throughout the
year.

Some of these are regular classes
during term-time; others are
specialist classes in advanced
technique and classes for young
people.

All classes are now bookable by the term
online, and credit cards are taken on the
door. Check rscdslondon.org.uk for the
most up to date information, or contact
classes@rscdslondon.org.uk for details of
any of our classes.

Beginners and Improvers

Richmond Library Annexe, Quadrant Road,
Richmond TW9 1DH

**teacher Judith Jones with recorded music
live music from Dave Hall on 18 June**

Wednesday

Beginners 7.00 - 9.00pm

Improvers 7.30 - 9.30pm

An introduction to basic steps and
formations for new dancers while supporting
others to develop their technique and
general dancing skills

Fee: £7 per class for RSCDS members
£8 per class for non-RSCDS members

Beginners' Course 2025

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Wednesday 7.00 - 9.00pm
8 October - 3 December

8 week course introducing basic Scottish
country dance steps and formations

**Teaching team led by James Fairbairn with
class musicians**

Fee: £80 per 8 week course for RSCDS
members, £96 for non-RSCDS members

Course includes 8 lessons, entry to Autumn
Wednesday dance and end of term joint
session with General class

Festival Classes

Check Branch website for details of class
dates during the summer term preparing
RSCDS London teams
for the

White Rose Festival, Leeds on 12 July
rscdslondon.org.uk/festival-2025

Monthly Classes

The Tuesday Social

Upper Hall, St Columba's Church,
Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD

Tuesday 17 June 7.00 - 9.30pm

with teacher Judith Jones and live music

**then 30 September, 28 October,
25 November, 16 December**

The Tuesday Social is aimed at people in
their 20s and 30s who love to dance, or
would like to learn. This monthly session
combines live music with some teaching,
lots of dancing and a social break to relax
and chat with a glass of wine or soft drink.

No need to bring a partner, everyone
dances with everyone in this friendly, fun
and sociable way to dance.

Fee: £10 per session for RSCDS members
£12 per session for non-RSCDS members

Fast Paced Social Class

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Tuesday 10 June 7.00 - 9.00pm

**With teacher Mervyn Short and class
musician Adam Brady**

**Then 23 September, 21 October,
18 November, 9 December
with guest teachers**

A lively and sociable class, covering more
advanced formations and complex dances.
The pace will be quick, assuming advanced
knowledge of steps and formations, and
aims to make more complicated dances
feel comfortable and fun.

Fee: £10 per class for RSCDS members
£12 per class for non-RSCDS members

Technique Class

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Tuesday 3 June, Thursday 3 July
7.00 - 9.00pm

**with teacher Pat Davoll
and class musician Heather Jeffery**

**then 30 September, 28 October,
25 November, 16 December**

A technique class for dancers who have a
good working knowledge of the steps and
formations and who are looking to develop
their technique, confidence, style and
enjoyment of the dance.

Fee: £10 per class for RSCDS members
£12 per class for non-RSCDS members

London Branch News

Classes Report: Joanne Lawrence

RSCDS London has enjoyed an active programme of classes during the 2024-25 season. In addition to its regular weekly Wednesday classes at St Columba's, Pont Street (afternoon, mixed ability), Richmond (evening, beginners/improvers) and Maria Fidelis, Euston (evening, General) we ran 2 successful 8 week courses for Beginners and Improvers at Maria Fidelis in the Autumn and Spring terms. Our monthly classes included a Children's class (in cooperation with St Columba's Church), the Technique class (for intermediate and more advanced dancers), Fast Paced Social dance class (for advanced and very advanced dancers) and the Tuesday Social (for dancers in their 20s and 30s). We have also embarked upon a series of 'Festival' classes ahead of taking a team of 30 dancers to the White Rose Festival near Leeds in July. This includes dancers from beginners to very advanced and is a great opportunity for us to dance and socialise in a different setting, and to meet dancers from across the country.

RSCDS London was very well represented at the recent Spring Fling when sixteen of our Tuesday Social dancers headed to Brighton for a weekend of classes, evening dances, walks on the beach and more. (see p7)

We are reviewing the format of some classes in advance of next season, in particular the monthly Children's class which, despite a core of regular attendees and an excellent teacher in Rose Kreloff, has suffered from variable attendance (ranging from 20 to 2) as families juggle conflicting schedules. We will be discussing other methods of supporting children's classes with St Columba's in the coming weeks.



Beginners' and General Class

Whilst demand persists it will continue to underwrite the costs of its classes (the price of central London venues makes it challenging to rely on class fees alone to cover all costs). Our 'new' monthly classes started most encouragingly in 2023 with up to 3 sets per class. They remain popular but can always benefit from more regular attendance. If you haven't been for a while, do come along. We have excellent teachers, great music and an attractive, modern, conveniently located venue.

The Branch is committed to supporting the development of Scottish country dance in London - from finding a suitable format for the Children's Class to promoting the low impact mixed ability class which meets each Wednesday afternoon at St Columba's, and all ages and level of dance in between.



General Class 2 April

As we approach the end of the 2024-2025 season, I would like to thank our teachers and musicians (some regular contributors, others on a more ad hoc basis, all massively appreciated) for their support throughout the year. We know how fortunate we are.

Day School 18 October 2025: Joanne Lawrence

We are greatly looking forward to our day school on 18 October 2025 (put 17 October 2026 into your diary too!) and are delighted that we have secured the services of Graham Donald, Raphaëlle Orgeret and Faye McNeil (Mather) as class teachers, Adam Brady, Heather Jeffery and Barbara Manning as class musicians and Ian Muir of Prestwick leading the Musicians' Workshop. In addition to the morning and afternoon Intermediate, Advanced and Very Advanced classes, optional classes in late afternoon will include Personal Critique (Graham Donald), MacNab dances (Raphaëlle Orgeret) and Dances from the evening Programme (Faye McNeil).

We are returning to Maria Fidelis School, NW1 1LY, for this year's day school and hope that dancers and musicians will be encouraged to attend, not only by the excellence of the teaching staff but also by the ease of travel that this convenient location offers. The school is just a few minutes' walk from Euston and King's Cross stations. This facilitates easy access within London and (as David Queen, one of last year's teachers, demonstrated when he travelled down and back in a day from NW England) puts the day school within reach of dancers and musicians from much further afield. We were also heartened to find last year that on street parking was readily available, allowing several attendees to drive in and park within easy distance of the school.

For our 2022 and 2024 day schools we had kept prices at a similar level to before COVID-19. This year we needed to review prices as the deficit had become unsustainable. Prices have therefore increased but, we believe, still offer considerable value for the excellent teachers, challenging and enjoyable classes, convenient and comfortable venue (2 out of 3 dance classrooms having sprung floors), tea and coffee throughout the day, plus tea and biscuits in the afternoon break and the usual delicious supper during the evening dance. All this and a high energy evening dance with music from Ian Muir and the day school musicians. Tell your dancing friends and check the RSCDS London website for up-to-date information and booking forms.

Day School 2025	RSCDS member	Non member	Student
Full Day (incl dance)	£49	£57	£30
Full Day (classes only)	£35	£40	£20
AM only	£15	£18	£10
PM only	£20	£22	£10
Dance only	£17	£20	£10
Lunch	£16		

Mixed Ability Dance Group: Wendy Morris

We always have a lively and enthusiastic gathering of dancers on a Wednesday afternoon at Pont Street - but our end of term class had some added extras! Fantastic live music from Barbara Manning, a great selection of dances from our teacher Pat Davoll and some tempting tea-time treats. We are described as a low impact social activity for mixed abilities, and we certainly include a variety of dancers, ranging from the very experienced to those just learning the ropes. But it is a hugely sociable and welcoming group and very popular with those who prefer an afternoon class. We have a variety of teachers including Rose Kreloff, Peter Knight and Pat Davoll, together with a dedicated tea team (many thanks to Lena and the two Margarets). We start at 2.30pm, break for tea, biscuits and a chat midway - and are all reeled out by 4.30pm. Ideal if you prefer not to be travelling late at night. Fun, friends and exercise - and you are home for a relaxed recovery in the evening! What is not to like? If you fancy joining our loyal band do come along and try us out!



Mixed Ability Dance Group on 26 March 2025



Music Reviews: Jeremy Hill



RSCDS Cheshire Branch 40th Anniversary: Robert Whitehead and the Danelaw Dance Band CD (£12), book (£10) or CD plus book (£20) available from sales@rscdscheshire.org (plus £2.50 for P&P)

The Lightning Conductor (8x32J), *Barbara White's Diamond Strathspey* (3x32S), *Mr David W Mitchell* (3x32J), *The Cats of Milton Rough* (8x32R), *Tarporley at Forty* (4x32S), *The Cheshire Branch Reel* (4x64R), *The Wyches of Cheshire* (3x32S), *Zoom into Dance* (8x32R),

Chester Cross (4x32S), *Paula Wright's Jig* (8x32J), *Old Pale Hill* (3x32S), *Chairman's Challenge* (8x40J), *The Default Position* (3x32S), *A Reel for Liz* (4x32R), *The Wee Small Hours* (8x32S), *For Those in the Cheap Seats* (8x32R)

After The Rain (RSCDS Belfast Branch): Marian Anderson's Scottish Dance Band CD (£10 plus £1.50 for P&P) from thesundayclass.org.uk/shop.html Booklet free to download from ulster-scots.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/USCN-Country-Dance-ONLINE.pdf

The Lock-in Dance (4x32J), *The Pacemaker Dance* (4x32S), *Wullie McPherson's Reel* (8x3R), *Cardwell Bay* (8x32J), *A Jewel in the Crown* (4x32S), *The Jersey Gals* (8x40J), *Now Wash Your Hands* (80R), *The Giant's Causeway* (3x32S), *Haste to the Royal Wedding* (8x32J), *The Freedom Reel* (8x32R) plus *Home to Whitsome* (3x3S) and *Glenoe* (3x32S)

Two new recordings have come my way, both sponsored by RSCDS Branches and published alongside books of new dances, and featuring popular, experienced bands. Robert Whitehead and pianist Alan Brown have recently celebrated 60 years of playing together, and for the Cheshire Branch their contributions provide the band's familiar, beautifully grounded sound. This is rounded out in the balance by strong contributions from Robert's son, Graham, on second accordion, Gillian Birnie (fiddle) and David Ashbridge (drums).

Only three of the dances in the Cheshire book have designated tunes (one from Ian Muir of Craigellachie, and two by Frank Thomson), which has allowed Robert to range widely across composers. Several well-known are taken as lead tunes, which does mean that several of the tracks may be of value independently. Two particularly enjoyable sets

are *Zoom into Dance*, leading with Graeme Mitchell's classy *Bitter Lemon Reel*, and *Paula Wright's Jig*, starting with Lindsay Ross's *Joe Foster's Jig*.

Throughout, there are attractive combinations of tunes from a wide range of composers from the last 50 years, alongside a handful of traditional tunes. Jimmy Shand Junior gets a full set for *The Lightning Conductor*, and we get three of Angus Fitchet's strathspeys in *Tarporley at Forty*.



The Belfast recording follows the release of a booklet of ten dances in 2020 that was supported by the Ulster-Scots Community Network and the Arts Council for Northern Ireland (and available free). Some of the dance consequently have a COVID-related theme. To these, two further dances have been added to round off the album.

Three of the originals come from the pen of John Campbell, the Branch treasurer, and Marian has provided four of the original tunes, to which she adds a range of her own tunes as alternatives, particularly for the strathspeys. Each attractive in its own right, the fact that all but one of the strathspeys is in slow air/pastoral style does mean there is less variety overall, particularly from a listening perspective.

The quicker dances do bring variation, not to mention some intriguing tune names - there are no doubt good stories attached to *The £35 Weetabix* and *Sam, the Carrot Eating Sealham!* The latter forms part of an excellent 8x40 track for the jig *The Jersey Gal*, with a build-up of the band at the beginning and the reverse at the end.

Tempi differ on these recordings slightly from what we have heard recently from RSCDS recordings: on both recordings, reels and jigs are a notch slower, and Robert Whitehead's recording has the strathspeys a little faster, though, with speed-adjusting software in common use, this can be a matter for local preference.

I did come away from my enjoyment of both recordings wondering "what has happened to the full-length strathspey?" Of the twelve strathspeys on these two recordings, only one is a full eight times through, for three couples in a four-couple set. This seems to match a growing trend for dance programmes to have sometimes only one or two 8x32 strathspeys in an evening. Admittedly, in at least two cases here, the 3x32 version that now seems so popular (seven examples in total) allows a different formation. Given these dances are frequently repeated, resulting in each couple having six times dancing, exactly the same as three couples in a four-couple set, I assume it cannot be for time-saving or resting purposes.

I do consider that the traditional 8x32 form of the dance provides both dancers and musicians with the added fulfilment of continuity and progression, allowing full sets of tunes from the heritage of beautiful strathspey melodies. Perhaps dance devisers might think again about how to adapt and extend the form of the 8x32 strathspey, which can continue to provide full satisfaction to all who love this important part of our tradition.

Somerset Day School: Gary Duffield

On a cold February afternoon in Somerset, sixty dancers gathered for the first day school organised by St Michael's Scottish Country Dancing Club at The Davis Hall in West Camel near Yeovil. Thirty club members were joined by a further thirty dancers from as far afield as Bristol, Weymouth and Exeter and they all enjoyed a very educational and enjoyable session led by Simon Wales who had travelled from Maidstone for the weekend. Music was provided by Ian and Judith Muir who had made the journey to 'The Big Island to the North', from the Isle of Wight.

This was the first day school organised by St Michael's and was the brainchild of the Chair, Maggie Westley. The feedback from the event has been very positive and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the event. After the session, most of the dancers fortified themselves with a delicious meal prepared by Graham and Liz Beckinsale, ably assisted by several club members.

The day finished with an evening dance where music was, once again, provided by Ian and Judith Muir with Andrew White as MC. The Club meets every Thursday evening (except in July and August) and welcomes new and visiting dancers. (see pictures on p10 and contact details on p16)



An enthusiastic class in the Davis Hall, West Camel

Spring Fling in Brighton: Rowena Jackson and Tria Lawrence

This year's Spring Fling took place over a gloriously sunny April weekend in Brighton. We returned for our second Spring Fling and were very proud to be part of a record turnout from London's Tuesday Social class, with sixteen of us in total including six first-time attendees. It was great to have such strong attendance from the London Branch.

The event was exceptionally well organised by the local committee (Katy Davies, Edward Davies, Elaine Davies, Zoe Hill, Sadie Ferguson and Holly Parsons). Their careful planning and attention to detail were evident throughout the weekend.

We stayed at a hostel between the beach and the Pavilion, and started each day with a social breakfast before heading off to classes. Workshops were held across three halls at Brighton Girls School, with dancers rotating between them depending on their chosen classes. On Saturday morning, the London contingent was spread across different levels (intermediate, advanced, and very advanced) with something for everyone. Duncan Brown earned a bit of a reputation as the most challenging teacher of the weekend, but his classes were rewarding (especially when earning his hard-won praise). Then Saturday afternoon workshops were based on preference. Faye McNeil's Birling for Dancers and Gill O'Dell's Dances by the Seaside both had huge amounts of positive feedback from those who went. The music across the weekend was excellent, with Chris Oxtoby and Ann Stonehouse, Andrew Nolan, and Adam Brady playing for our classes.

Both Friday and Saturday night dances were held in the beautiful hall at BHASVIC. Friday's event, with Ian Robertson and his Scottish Dance Band, set a lively and welcoming tone for the weekend. Saturday's ball, with music from Strathallan, kept the energy high and the dance floor full. With warm spring weather, dancers relaxed outside between sets to chat and enjoy the evening air. The lively atmosphere carried through both nights, and a seagull photo booth added a fun, distinctly Brighton, touch. It was a joy to dance with both familiar and new faces and make the most of the social side of the weekend.

Sunday morning's Brighton-themed scavenger hunt was another highlight, providing a chance to stretch out our (very) stiff legs and see more of the city before gathering for the final class. That final class was full of variety, energy and fun. We started with the Hebridean Weaving Lilt, requiring a very energetic running step, tried our hands at some choreography and finished with a game of 'dance when you recognise the music'. It was a great way to wrap up the weekend!

As always, one of the joys of Spring Fling was connecting with young dancers from across the UK and further afield. We caught up with friends from Edinburgh, Bristol, and Portugal and made new connections with dancers from all over including Italy and Denmark.

We are already making plans to attend Spring Fling 2026 in Lyon. If you are under 35 and have not yet been to a Spring Fling, we would highly recommend it. The event is exhausting, but worth it - offering a great balance of challenge, fun, and community that is hard to match elsewhere. (see picture of the Tuesday Social dancers on p9)

From the RSCDS Management Board: Gary Coull, Chair

Five-Year Strategic Plan

The Board has approved a [draft Five-Year Strategic Plan](#) to guide our direction as we enter our second century. This plan replaces the previous one as our working reference, though it remains a draft until member feedback is incorporated which is currently underway. Final decisions will follow this engagement.

Budget 2025-26

The RSCDS continues to face significant financial challenges, operating on a tight budget with rising costs outpacing income. Key issues include:

- A 35% increase in Summer School accommodation costs not passed on to attendees
- Increased employer National Insurance contributions
- Underperformance in shop sales, particularly CDs
- Higher than-expected demand for medal tests and the DAA
- Magazine postage costs have exceeded budget.
- Website maintenance costs are running ahead of budget.

Despite ongoing cost controls, delaying hardware and software updates - especially for the website - risks higher future maintenance expenses. Membership fees and event income, which make up 85% of our revenue, have not kept up with inflation. We are forecasting a £47,000 deficit in 2024-25 and expect this trend to continue unless action is taken.

The Board has approved the 2025-26 budget with a clear directive: we must cut costs and boost income to break even. Immediate cost-saving measures have been identified.

Spending Reductions

Over the past two years, we have reduced expenses across all areas except staffing. Key savings include: Renting out the lower ground floor of our office, scrutinising event budgets more carefully, renegotiating utilities and telecoms contracts, reducing magazine print volumes, replacing paid overtime with time off in lieu, moving Board/Committee meetings online and freezing hardware/software updates.

The Board recognises the Society must live within its means, so further cost cutting is planned. The only area we have not already reduced spending is on staff, and we anticipate having to make redundancies to address our immediate deficit problem.

Legacy Investment

While cost reductions will help in the short term, we need long-term solutions. Thanks to a legacy gift from a long-standing member, we are investing in key areas that aim to increase

income, reduce costs, and modernise our operations.

Website Redevelopment

Our current website is expensive to maintain and poorly rated by users - 65% of respondents in a 2024 survey found it hard to navigate and the content and tone is totally unsuitable for new audiences. The Board has approved a complete redevelopment to: Cut maintenance costs by 66%, improve navigation and user experience, create better member access to resources, build a public-facing site to attract new users and reduce the complexity of the RSCDS ecosystem for Branch administrators, teachers and musicians.

Investing in Fundraising

Fundraising is a key income stream for most non-profits, with an average return on investment (ROI) of 3-4. The Board has approved a two-year investment to develop this function. A modest ROI of 2-3 could turn a £40,000 annual investment into £80,000-£120,000 of additional income, significantly improving our financial health and completely changing the financial picture for the RSCDS.

RSCDS Image and Messaging Update

The RSCDS exists to preserve and promote Scottish Country Dancing and its music. However, our 2024 communications survey identified challenges with the Society's image: 55% of under-50s and 25% of over-60s view the RSCDS as outdated; 60% struggle to explain membership benefits; 60% of non-members perceive the Society as exclusive. These perceptions limit our ability to grow.

A refreshed image - modern, inclusive, and reflective of our heritage - could help us reach new audiences while retaining what our members value. The Board has approved updating the RSCDS image, with member and Branch input. More information to follow.

Event & Class Organisers' Guide: A new guide has been created covering safeguarding, insurance, health and safety, and practical tips. It has been distributed to Branches, teachers, and musicians, and [posted on the website](#).

Membership Working Group: Many Branches (and members) have told us they struggle to communicate the value of membership. The Board has set up a Membership working Group to review the RSCDS membership offering and pricing.

Role of President: The Board has decided not to proceed on reinstating the President role due to current priorities.

AGM 2025 - Glasgow: The 2025 Annual General Meeting and Autumn Gathering will be held at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, selected for its suitability after a thorough venue search.

Out and about...

...on and off the dance floor



Tuesday Social dancers enjoying Spring Fling in Brighton



A packed Davis Hall near Yeovil for the St Michael's Day School in February 2025.



Branch Fast Paced Social Dance class members being put through their Highland paces by Joan Desborough



Steve Oakes and Mariko Harano enjoying a birl at the Combined Societies' Dance



A full house for Spring Fling at BHASVIC 11 April 2025



A smiling Christina Hood, Dave Hall and Angela Young on stage for the Combined Societies' Dance on 1 March 2025



Branch General Class in the studio at Maria Fidelis School, Euston

The Story behind the Dance - The Duke of Atholl's Reel: Meryl Thomson



A series of articles from Meryl Thomson delving behind the history of some of our dances and their music. This time she looks at a tune which became associated with an Highland regiment.

The RSCDS published the dance *The Duke of Atholl's Reel* in Book 16 in 1951. I thought it would be interesting to look further into the origins of the dance and the tune which came to be associated with this.

The RSCDS version of the dance was taken from an original published by Thomas Skillern in his *204 Reels and Country Dances vol 1* printed in London 1789. The RSCDS dance instructions are the same as the original, however - as seen below - the tune printed with the dance is not the tune the RSCDS use and is a reel rather than a jig. The other thing to notice is the Skillern tune is printed as three sections of four

42 Duke of Atholl's Reel

The 1st & 2^d Cu^s foot it 4 and hands across half round ÷ Same back again ÷ first Gent: foot to 2^d Lady & turn her ÷ 1st Lady the same with the 2^d Gent: Crofs over and half figure ÷ Right and Left ÷

bars, each repeated, making a 24 bar dance. The RSCDS version differs in bars 17-32 where it takes eight bars to cross, cast and dance half a figure of eight and then eight bars to dance rights and lefts. The original expected the dancer to cross and half figure in four bars and dance rights and lefts in four bars. In this period, rights and lefts could be interpreted as crossing corners which could be danced more swiftly, in four bars, if both couples moved continuously.

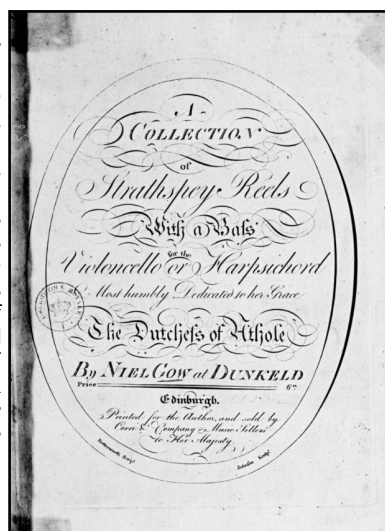
The only other dance I have found so far which mentions The Duke of Athol is *The Duke of Athol's Rant* from John Walsh's *Caledonian Country Dances Book the 2nd* dating from 1737, however the dance and tune are both different from the later Skillern version.

Since the Skillern tune wasn't easily going to fit the RSCDS version of the dance, a decision was made to pick another tune. Book 16 already had four reels and four strathspeys within the twelve dances chosen, so it made sense to pick another jig to join the three other jig time dances. The obvious choice due to its name was *The Atholl Highlanders*.

The origins of this tune are interesting. Commonly known as *The Athol Highlanders Jig*, *Duke of Atholl's March*, *Lord Athlone's March*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Athole Gathering*, among others, Tunearch.org remarks that "the name Athole or Atholl comes from the Gaelic *ath Fodla* which means New Ireland and arises from the first invasion of the northern land by the Irish tribe the Scots in the 7th century". The tune itself was later dedicated to the Duke of Atholl's private army. For more information on the Dukes of Atholl, read the information posted on SCDDb at my.strathspey.org/dd/dance/1786/. The first Atholl Highlanders regiment was raised by John Murray, who was the 4th Duke of Atholl, in December 1777 in Perthshire and was deployed in Ireland and disbanded in 1783. The regiment was reformed by the 6th Duke in 1839. This private army is the only legal one remaining in Europe and, based at Blair Castle, acts ceremonially as the personal bodyguard to the Duke of Atholl.

There is a link between the great fiddler Niel Gow and the Atholl family. Gow played at Dunkeld House in 1745 for Prince Charlie at the behest of William, Marquis of Tullibardine,

brother to James the 2nd Duke of Atholl. Gow received an annuity from the Duke of Atholl and he gave performances at both Dunkeld House and Blair Castle. Gow's first collection of music, printed in 1788, was dedicated to the Duchess of Athole (see right). He also wrote several tunes such as *The Duchess of Athole's Slipper*, used for the RSCDS dance of the same name in Book 9, and *The Athole Volunteers*. In fact the musical links between the Gow family and Dukes of Atholl continued into the nineteenth century.



There seems to be no suggestion that a tune with the name *The Atholl Highlanders* was used by the regiment's musicians in 1777-1783. The earliest version I can find is published by Bland

The Run a way

Hands 3 round on the Ladies side ÷ D^{on} Gent: ÷ side down the middle up again ÷ right and left ÷

and Weller in 1799 in their *Annual Collection of Country Dances for 1799*. The published dance is called *The Run a way* and bears no relation to the Skillern dance, being a standard triple minor form dance of the period. The tune, however is the one we know today

although the quavers are not dotted and it has more of a jig feel than the later pipe march versions. The B music also only has a four bar variation before returning to the A music tune for the last four bars.

70 THE ATHOLE HIGHLANDERS' MARCH.



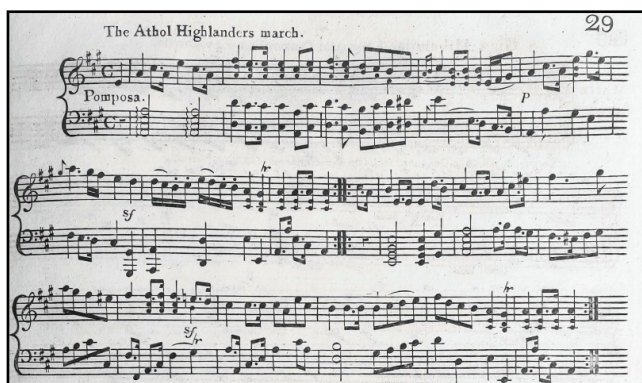
Many people think that the tune, used as a pipe march, was composed by the great Scottish piper William Ross. Born in Knockbain in Rosshire in 1823, Ross joined the 42nd Regiment Royal Highlanders (The Black Watch) in 1839; he later became piper to Queen Victoria in 1854. Ross published *Ross's Collection of Pipe Music* in 1869, dedicated to "Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria". His version, called *The Athole Highlander's March*, has six eight

bar sections and this suggests the tune was used to march to rather than for a dance. For those interested in more biographical information on William Ross and a transcript of an article published in *The Windsor and Eton Express* on 20 June 1891 describing his funeral and with notes about his book of music, visit orchard-gate.com/ross/piper.htm

Ross's version in his 1869 publication was an arrangement for pipes of the previously published tune from 1799, but it appears to be the first to name the tune *The Athole Highlanders March*. How then did the tune come to be called *The Atholl Highlanders*?

In around 1815, Nathaniel Gow published a work in Edinburgh called *A Select Collection of Original Dances, Waltzes, Marches, Minuets & Airs*, dedicated to The Marchioness of Queensbury. Nathaniel Gow also had the Duke of Atholl as his patron, like his father Niel, but frequently dedicated his works to other members of the aristocracy, including Sir Walter Scott Bart (Gow's *Ancient Curious Collection of Scotland*) and The Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt (*The Beauties of Niel Gow*).

On page 29 of this 1815 collection there are two tunes. The first



is called *The Athol Highlanders march* and is a standard 4/4 march tune, marked to be played "Pomposo". The second tune on the page is called *Quick Step* with a smaller note "In Imitation of the Bagpipe" which is essentially the tune we know as *The Atholl Highlanders*. The first sixteen bars of the tune are almost a complete match to the *Run a way* tune first published in Bland and Weller's collection in 1799, albeit with a few flourishes. Gow introduces four bars of variation in the C music before returning to the original tune. He also annotates this C music as "A little Slower" and has a pause in the music on bar eight of the twelve bar C section with a suggestion to play the remaining bars "legato" or smoothly.

I would suggest that since these two tunes were published on the same page and, given that the second tune was only entitled *Quick Step* rather than with its own specific name, this is how the tune came to become associated with the *Atholl Highlanders* name. Gow also appears to be the first person to associate the tune with the bagpipe in print.

I have not been able to find any other sources of the tune between 1799 and 1815. And after 1815 the tune doesn't seem to appear again in print until a version under the name *The Highland Fabrick* is printed in 'The Gentleman Piper' Dudley Colcough's *Tutor for the Irish Pipes*, published around 1840



(see above) and with a handwritten annotation "Athol Quick March". This version seems to use much of the Gow tune with some additional variations.

The tune was eventually used by the 2nd Battalion of the Cameronians, the 90th Light Infantry when pipers were introduced there in 1881. Another collection, *Highland Airs and Quicksteps Vol 1* by Jane Fraser Morison was published in around 1882 where the tune was called *The Duke of Atholl's March* but this appears in the quickstep section. The tune also appears in Kerr's *Merry Melodies Volume 3* (published after 1885) and later in his *Caledonian Collection*, noted as a quickstep, as (*The*) *Athole Highlanders*. A handwritten version was written by Canon James Goodman, Professor of Irish at Trinity College, Dublin in his 4th volume from the late 1880s and called *The Highland Fabric*, being virtually the same as the earlier Colcough version.

The version published by the RSCDS uses the tune as found in Kerr's *Caledonian Collection* with the two eight bar sections, each repeated. William Ross's version is the only one of the above printed versions to include dotted notes throughout and some Scotch snaps.

Perhaps without the lucky circumstance of Nathaniel Gow printing two tunes on the same page in c. 1815, and one seeming to take the name from the other, the tune might not have been associated with *The Athole Highlanders* at all! If anyone knows of an early printed version of the tune I have missed, do let me know.

So the 1951 RSCDS dance came from the 1789 Skillern collection and the tune they chose for it had been used for a dance but became known as a bagpipe tune and regimental march. It is a great and popular tune, much recorded by musicians. Despite this, *The Duke of Atholl's Reel* does not appear very frequently on dance programmes nowadays. Since the music has the feel of a pipe march this works nicely as a contrast to other styles of jigs on a programme. Perhaps it deserves to appear more often - London Branch is including this dance on its Autumn Wednesday dance programme on 29 October 2025 where dancers can enjoy hearing the tune.

See also pictures of the ballroom at his castle on the front page - Ed

Dancing Through the Years

The story of Rena Stewart: Bletchley Park Girl, translator of Hitler's will, BBC pioneer ... and *Reel* reader by Victoria Walsh

What is the secret to getting to 100 years old? There are many, but Scottish dancing might just be one of them. A new biography of *Reel* reader Rena Stewart tells the tale of a long life that was extremely well lived. Not only was Rena a Bletchley Park Girl, but she also went on to translate Hitler's will, to blaze a trail for women at the BBC World Service, and to teach Scottish dancing until she was 90.

Rena was born in Lundin Links, Fife, in 1923 - coincidentally the year that the RSCDS was established. As a child, she loved poetry, which led her to study languages at St Andrews University. Every Saturday, she and her student friends went dancing. She explained to Victoria Walsh (her biographer), "Scottish dancing can vary a great deal, from beautiful footwork to dashing in and having fun. While we were at St Andrews it wasn't conventional dancing; it was more about making a lot of noise!" She was hooked and never looked back.



Young Rena - the keen reader



On graduating, in 1943, Rena decided to "do something about the war" and signed up with the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service). Her German language skills got her selected for Bletchley Park, where she worked on secret German messages. However, she carried on the fancy footwork and dashing in in her spare time, as well as many other hobbies, like hitchhiking and avoiding doing enforced PE!

Coincidentally, Hugh Foss, the first editor of the *Reel*, was also at Bletchley Park. He wrote some fiendishly difficult dances! Staff in different departments did not usually speak to each other (for secrecy reasons) but he may well have danced with Rena.

At the end of the war, Rena and her Bletchley Park friends had not been in the Army long enough to be sent home, so they were shipped off to Germany. There, they worked in an interrogation centre, translating the statements of captured Nazi officers. This was also where Rena and her friend were given an extra, top-secret mission: to translate Hitler's will. They did so with great care. Their work later appeared in the best-selling book *The Last Days of Hitler*, by Hugh Trevor-Roper. Modest Rena felt mildly proud of her contribution!

This was all serious stuff, but it did not stop fun-loving Rena from having a ball in her spare time. She was affectionately nicknamed 'Sergeant McHaggis' by her colleagues, so one can assume that she also danced in Deutschland!

Sergeant McHaggis' second career, with the BBC World Service, was stellar. She rose from being a lowly clerk to being the first woman in a senior position in the newsroom. This was her dream job, and she was very proud of getting there, as a woman.

Rena's rich cultural life continued throughout her BBC years and long into her retirement. Although she lived in England for most of her life (latterly in Ealing), she never forgot her Scottish roots. She loved Scottish dancing (with her Ealing group), culture, cookery etc.

When she died, in 2023, Rena had a fantastic send-off in Ealing, before being conveyed home to Fife. She now rests in peace in Lundin Links, after a hundred healthy years of dashing about and dashing in.

The story of Rena Stewart: Bletchley Park Girl, translator of Hitler's will and BBC pioneer by Victoria Walsh is published by Pan and Sword Books Ltd (30 May 2025) ISBN-10 1036133907

Finding Treasure by Stephen Webb

In mid-November 2024 my old friend, South African born Ron Blaker, now living in Middelburg, came to the UK. His last visit, when we met, was the mid-1980s so for me it was special to see him again and chat over old times. Ron is soon to be 89 and nine years my senior. We were both structural engineers but that was not all we had in common. Ron first came into my life in 1970 when he joined the same consultants in South Africa which I had then recently joined. At the time the company was expanding. Sharing the same office, we hit it off. One Thursday evening he was leaving for home, as I thought, but invited me to join him. We went to the Forsyth Hall above an auctioneer in Church Street in Pietermaritzburg and there I met a lovely welcoming group of dancers. That was my introduction to Scottish country dancing!



Mary and Douglas Sutherland, mid 1980s

Douglas Sutherland, known to all as 'Father' was the teacher and MC. At the time he was managing director of Scottish Cables and coincidentally, I was destined to meet him again in my capacity as an engineer. He and his wife Mary (Mother) became my good friends. At the dance club, affectionately known as 'The Thursday Nighters', I was not allowed to dance 'difficult' dances but was confined to the likes of *Jenny's Bawbee* and *Torryburn Lassies*.

In September 1971 I travelled the 120 miles north to my first weekend dancing school, it was held in Van Reenen summer camp in the Drakensberg, offering dancing workshops, evening dances and walking in the wonderful scenery of SA. The next year I travelled further still to the 51st Club's 21st Anniversary Ball in Johannesburg, wearing a kilt for the first time. There I stayed with leading lights, Margo and Alex Monteith and also met Richard and Jill Ackerley.

At the last dance before leaving SA I was asked what dance would I like to do? This was an honour because Father was strict about the dances we did. I knew the dem team danced *Rob Roy*, Hugh Foss's fugal dance. So much to everyone's surprise I danced it with ease! Well, it seemed like that to me.

On returning to the UK in May 1972 I was determined to go to the St Andrews RSCDS Summer School which I had heard so much about. There in 1973, the Society's Jubilee year, I took my Preliminary Teacher's Certificate but more importantly, I joined the RSCDS and met the indefatigable Jean Milligan, whom I got to know over the next four years. On one occasion she had told me of her latest, March 1977 overseas tour of Branches. My ears pricked up as she mentioned going on from the States to SA. Was she visiting Pietermaritzburg I asked, sadly no! she said, but she was going to Johannesburg and Cape Town? Oh! You must go to Maritzburg I said, but I haven't been invited she replied. I know they would love to welcome you, I added. I'll arrange it. So, with an invitation to stay from Douglas Sutherland it was arranged. On her visit she examined several candidates, two of whom passed the Preliminary Certificate, and soon after PMB became a Branch. I felt I had repaid the kindness shown to me there. I took my Final Certificate in the summer of 1977 when Miss Milligan examined me, and I taught appropriately, *Miss Milligan's Strathspey* with step practice to Miss Milligan's favourite music, on the advice of our lovely pianist, Miss Winifred Carnie, *Sir George Clark of Pennycuik* by Nathaniel Gow (possibly I was her last candidate ever as she passed away the following year).

Joining my local club in Potten End village, I have stayed a member since 1973, becoming president in 1987, and have been an MC at the club for the past 50 or so years. Just like The Thursday Nighters the Berkhamsted Strathspey & Reel Club members, and Robert Bateson in particular, have always been warm and friendly. There is no doubt Scottish country dancing is a very special activity nay, family to be part of!

As for my good friend Ron, 1960 Olympic sailor, pilot, army veteran, five times Comrade's Marathon runner, competitive long-distance swimmer, kayaker, conservationist, and of course dancer. He now, due to arthritis, has hung up his pumps but can be proudly reassured that he has made his mark in this world and will not ever be forgotten by the many he has met on his travels, especially me! I have often wondered whether I would have discovered Scottish country dancing if I had not met Ron! Clearly, I will always be very grateful for his help in finding the treasure, that is Scottish country dancing.

Longstanding and active

from Roger Keeling

Clement Wilson DFC, Ld'H

10 November 1922 - 14 January 2025



Clem Wilson passed away peacefully at his nursing home at the age of 102. He, with his wife Sheila, had been longstanding and active Scottish country dancers, mostly in the south and central London area, for many years.

As a boy he took to sports, notably cricket, to drama and through singing and piano, to music. He volunteered for the RAF in 1941 and became a navigator on Lancaster bombers, flying 56 missions mostly with the Pathfinders 156 squadron. He was awarded the DFC and, later, the French Légion d'Honneur. Following the war, he was posted to Egypt where he met and married Sheila who was serving in the WAAF.

After the RAF he became a schoolteacher for the remainder of his working life.

In the 1950s he and Sheila settled in Wallington and danced in the area. They kept up their dancing on the south coast where they lived in the 1970s before moving back to Carshalton/Bansted. Clem became President of the Epsom Caledonian Society and teacher at Purley URC Scottish dance group in addition to dancing with other local groups. They were both prominent dancers at Pont Street, on Tuesdays during summer and Mondays the rest of the year as well as Saturday evenings. Even after he could no longer dance, Clem manned the door at Summer Tuesdays for a number of years. He was a Trustee of The London Highland Club.

He leaves three children, six grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

A Dedicated Dancer

from Roger Keeling

Irene Spooner

6 October 1932 - 31 January 2025



Irene Spooner passed away at the Croydon University Hospital (Mayday) on Friday 31 January 2025. She was 92. She lived in Mitcham and danced at clubs in the area, including Wimbledon, Surbiton, Croydon and Sanderstead as well as being a regular at Pont Street.

She was a member of Bill Cleghorn's demonstration team, visiting care homes in the 60s/70s, and was President of the former London Reel Club. Even with limited mobility in recent years, she continued to come to dances, latterly as a

The Dancing Seamstress

from Sheena Henderson

Margaret Bennett Gunning

26 May 1938 - 24 December 2024



Margaret was born in Gravesend in Kent to Hilda and William Gordon. With her father in the navy and her mother working as a teacher, Margaret was close to her grandmother from whom she acquired her skills and passion for cooking and dressmaking. The latter took her, on leaving school, to an apprenticeship to become a seamstress with Debenham & Freebody in Wigmore Street, London, where her passion for sewing took her to new heights and showed everyone just how talented she was with a pair of scissors. She continued to use these skills throughout her life, with some of the London Scottish dance community still in possession of curtains that she made.

Margaret began dancing in Kent and it was through this shared interest that she met her husband Ian and her enjoyment of Scottish dance continued throughout her life.

Ian's Home Office career initially took them to Newcastle upon Tyne where daughter Fiona and son Andrew were born but in 1976 the family moved to Bushey Heath, Hertfordshire. Sadly widowed in her early 50s, Margaret joined Watford and West Herts Scottish Society serving on the committee for many years including three terms as President 1998-1999, 1999-2000 and 2005-2006.

Just as Margaret had shared her grandmother's interests, she delighted in passing on her interests to her granddaughters Emily and Hannah, including her love of dance, introducing them to classes at a very young age and she was also a familiar spectator at highland dance competitions as she supported the two girls in their dancing endeavours.

Margaret's funeral service was attended by dancers from Watford, Harrow and Berkhamsted, who all proudly sported the rosettes of Gunning tartan handed out at the start of the service.

Much of this tribute has been taken with thanks from the eulogy prepared by Margaret's son, Andrew.

spectator brought by friends.

She worked as a radiographer. She travelled extensively, including to Antarctica, Israel, South Africa as well as more conventional destinations as well as to dancing holidays in Europe and Britain.

Besides dancing, she was a keen walker and a good photographer. She enjoyed gardening and was still growing fruit and vegetables. She left no family but is missed by many friends in the London dancing community.

A Lovely Man

from Stephen Webb

Alastair Cuthbertson

1 March 1936 - 27 March 2025



Alastair was born in Glasgow, to David and Jean Cuthbertson. He was the youngest of three children, with his older brother Iain and sister Lillas. During the war, the family was evacuated to a village eight miles outside Glasgow. They travelled everywhere by bicycle. In 1945, the family moved to Wardenhill near Aberdeen. At Aberdeen Grammar School, he learned discipline - and Doric poetry! No easy feat for a boy from Glasgow.

He studied agriculture at Aberdeen University, and in 1961 went to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. There, he completed a diploma and began research into pig growth. It was during this time he was headhunted to join what eventually became the Meat and Livestock Commission (MLC) where he stayed until his retirement in 1996. It was in Cambridge through the graduate society that he met his future wife, Carol. She was studying for her teaching qualification - they married in 1963. They moved to Hitchin where Neil and Fiona were born, and subsequently lived in Toddington, before settling in 'Applecross' in Berkhamsted in 1973 and finally, Castle Village.

Alastair was very musical - he enjoyed singing as well as playing piano, clavichord and organ. He joined the Chiltern Chamber Choir after retirement, sang madrigals and was an active member of the Thames Valley Early Music Forum. Scottish dancing was another of his great passions. Both he and Carol had danced as children, and in 1996 they joined the Berkhamsted Strathspey and Reel Club. Alastair served first as Treasurer and then President from 2003 to 2005. A club member, Stuart Anderson, devised *The Applecross Strathspey* for Carol and Alastair on their Golden Wedding Anniversary with music composed to accompany it by Ken Martlew.

Alastair lived retirement with real energy and joy, he and Carol cycled extensively through Europe and the UK. He embraced new experiences at every turn: skiing, waterskiing, parascending, whitewater rafting, and even taking a sailing course at the Rickmansworth reservoirs. He loved a tidy garden, a round of golf, and family holidays to Scotland and the West Country. He showed us all how to live well and how to age well. In 2024, Alastair moved to Kilfillan Nursing Home where he was cared for by excellent staff, with daily visits from his loving wife Carol. His grandchildren - George, Rosie, Fred, and Jess - knew him as warm, cheerful, and always interested in their lives. Even when Parkinson's made speech difficult, he continued to greet the world with a lovely smile. Alastair will always be remembered as a true gentle man with a wry humour and disarming charm with a lovely warm, welcoming smile - in short, a lovely man.

Forming Square Sets

As one of the MCs suggesting that we adopt longwise sets as a preliminary for some square sets, I read Stephen Webb's letter in *Reel* 331 with a wry smile as it raises a good question.

Stephen (he may not be a lone voice) is the first negative comment I have heard about the idea, the comments received have been favourable.

I first encountered the practice in New Zealand at the 2019-20 Summer School and was intrigued. After the pandemic, I also found it was also being adopted in the Cumbria area.

This is not an RSCDS or teacher invention (do we need it to be?) to the best of my knowledge and certainly does not imply dancers are incapable of forming square sets.

The logic is simple: at a larger event (not a class or many Branch/club events) as an MC there is nothing more undignified than watching dancers running around the hall trying to find a set. This frequently results in a set in the middle/top of the hall short of a couple or several couples arriving at the same time.

Why not form lines, count down and then form the circle? Surely having to work out who stands on left or right is not difficult compared to some of our dances. Interdigitating across the floor to make space works in exactly the same way. In this way additional couples are needed at the bottom of the hall as with any other dance.

A grand march does not change as the eight will already have formed, interestingly they will have to work out who takes which position and is on the left and the right. Five and six couple square sets can be counted in the same way before forming, after all as dancers we are required to be able to count to eight and sometimes even ten!

This is not ditching the traditional way but is looking at an alternative for some circumstances to enhance the dignified nature of our dancing and avoid the scrabble of dancers rushing around the floor.

Personally, I think it saves time and is only useful for larger events. I intend (with the agreement of the organiser) to continue this method when privileged to be asked to MC, and I accept that we will not all agree on everything involving our wonderful hobby of Scottish country dancing!

Brian Rose

[Cobtree Scottish Country Dancing Group in Maidstone is another place where this method is practised - Ed.](#)

Where is This?

Answer to 'Where is This?' on p1: Ardrossan Castle. The reel, *Miss Johnstone of Ardrossan*, was dedicated to the musician Muriel Johnstone, who grew up in Ardrossan on the North Ayrshire coast. Muriel has had a long association with the RSCDS and is a Scottish country dancer, teacher, arranger and composer of music. She has also been the Musical Director for the RSCDS. Solo and with her band, Muriel has played and recorded many Scottish country dance tunes.

Ardrossan (Gaelic: 'Aird Rosain') is a town on the North Ayrshire coast in western Scotland. The name Ardrossan describes its physical position - 'ard' from the Gaelic 'aird' meaning 'height', 'ros' a 'promontory' and the diminutive suffix 'an' - 'height of the little promontory'.

Ardrossan's roots can be traced back to the construction of its castle 'Cannon Hill', thought to be in around 1140, by Simon de Morville.

Do you have a dance related photo?

Email: editor@rscdslondon.org.uk

A Concerning Trend

When I look back at RSCDS and other groups' dance programmes, I notice a current trend, which presumably dancers like, and it is that the length of strathspey dances being danced has reduced. An impression is that the three times through has replaced the eight times through. Why is this? Could it be:

1. That dancers tire more easily, a fact that applies more as the dancing demographic ages.
2. Dancers have difficulty with the footwork, often seen to be simply shuffling through.
3. More dances can be accommodated on a programme/more time between dances can be allowed.
4. Encores are more likely with a once through a short dance than a longer one.
5. There are some modern, cleverly choreographed strathspeys that are appealing to dancers.
6. Upholding Scottish traditions is 'old hat'.

There are probably other reasons, and it may well be a mixture of the above. However, I believe it is happening. The usual programme structure is to alternate the different tempi ie reel, strathspey, jig or variations of this, but we see more programmes decreasing the ratio of 1 in 3 dances being strathspeys almost to having a token strathspey in each half of the programme.

Music for jigs and reels can be found in many other dance styles but it is emphasised that the strathspey is quintessentially Scottish. To hear Jean Milligan wax lyrical about the strength yet elegance of this dance form is enough to say to all dancers, "please do not let this dance form wither on the vine, but maintain it through including at least one longer (8x32) strathspey in each half of your dance and ball programmes."

Perhaps with your help this concerning trend of only promoting 3x32 over 8x32 strathspeys can be averted. Or am I alone with these feelings - what do others think?

Stephen Webb

[See also Jeremy Hill's comments on this subject in his music review on p6 - Ed.](#)

Branch Committee: Fiona Olson

Now at the end of the final quarter of the financial year 2024-25, the committee met on 25 March to discuss all the recent activities of the Branch. This followed an officers' and convenors' meeting on 14 March to discuss the budget for next year.

Richard Clarke chaired the meeting with all committee members attending apart from Margaret Shaw, who had sent in apologies. A review of the previous minutes was agreed.

Simon Wales presented the budget for 2025-26, discussing variances in spending and income in this year's figures. He noted that while some areas had exceeded budget expectations, others fell short. The discussion included the proposal to put a motion to the AGM to increase membership fees to cover rising costs associated with printing and distribution of *The Reel*. The proposed budget was agreed.

After a few years' absence, the Branch is planning to take part in the White Rose Festival in Leeds in the summer, and Joanne reported that an initial session had been arranged for the twenty participants to meet, practice and prepare for the event.

Further discussion took place around social activities, especially the Burns Supper which will have outside caterers and where we hope to sell alcohol next year. Day School teachers and musicians are in place, and we are looking forward to this event. The children's class is still ongoing but under constant review. Simon is also assisting with developing materials for teaching people living with dementia. Attention was given to the importance of safeguarding training for committee members and teachers, to ensure compliance and safety in all activities.

Finally, arrangements were confirmed for the Branch AGM which will be held at Pont Street on 14 June followed by the End of Season Dance. The AGM will be livestreamed as in previous years for those unable to attend in person.

Forthcoming Events

RSCDS CROYDON & DISTRICT
BRANCH



Weekend School

Friday 7 - Sunday 9 November 2025
Cumberland Hotel, Grand Parade,
Eastbourne BN21 3YT

Teacher: James Fairbairn

Music: Ian & Judith Muir

Reserve now, pay in October

Contact: Roger Keeling

rscds.croydon.treasurer@gmail.com

rscdscroydon.org.uk

Bands

THE FRANK REID SCOTTISH DANCE BAND

For Scottish country dances, ceilidhs,
weddings and reeling. Any size of band
from one to five. Despite moving to
Scotland, still interested in gigs in the
south, particularly Friday/Saturday
combinations. Tel 07860 104653 or
reel@frankreid.com

CALEDONIAN REELERS

Well established three-piece SCD band,
consisting of accordionist, fiddler and
drummer. Caller/piper can also be
supplied. Available for RSCDS dances,
ceilidhs, weddings, reeling. Anywhere,
anytime for your function. Please
contact Derek Chappell 01206 764232/
Mary Felgate 07866 757401 for further
information or derek_chappell@aol.co.uk

Credits: Many thanks to all who
contributed to this issue of *The Reel*,
including the following for providing
photos: p1: Blair Castle Ball - Willie
Lawrence (WL); Combined Societies' Dance
- Jacmel Dent (JD); Where is This? - Travis
Nygard, [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0
Unported licence](#), p2: Richard Clarke -
Christopher Bowen. p5: General and
Beginners' class - Joanne Lawrence (JL);
General Class - WL; Mixed Ability Dance
Group - JL. p6: Jeremy Hill - from himself;
CD covers - from the bands; Somerset Day
School - Gary Duffield (GD). pp8-9: Spring
Fling - both Elaine Davies; FPS Class - JL;
Combined Societies' Dance - both JD; St
Michael's - GD; Branch General Class - JL.
pp10-11: Meryl Thomson - from herself
(MT); Duke of Athol's Reel (Skillern 204
Reels and Country Dances) - RSCDS
archive; Niel Gow's Collection - from
IMSLP, public domain; The Run a way (from
Bland and Weller Annual Collection of
Country Dances for 1799) - from MT; The
Athole Highlanders' March (from William
Ross Pipe Music 1869) - Glen Collection
public domain; Ross's Collection of Pipe
Music - Glen Collection public domain; The
Athol Highlanders march and Quick Step -
(from Nathaniel Gow's A Select Collection of
Original Dances c. 1815) - from MT; The
Highland Fabrick (from Tutor for the Irish
Pipes by Dudley Colcough) - from
Cambridge University Archive, public
domain. p12: Rena Stewart - all from
Victoria Walsh; The Sutherlands - Stephen
Webb (SJW). p13: Clem Wilson - from
Roger Keeling; Margaret Gunning - SJW;
Alastair Cuthbertson - SJW; Irene Spooner -
Janet Arthurton.

LONDON HIGHLAND CLUB

Summer Dance

Saturday 31 May 2025

7.00 - 10.30pm

Lower Hall, St Columba's Church,
Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD



Strathallan Trio

MC Jim Cook

Programme: Ecclefechan Feline, Miss
Johnstone of Ardrossan, Asilomar Romantic,
The Aviator, Glastonbury Tor, Glenoe,
MacLeod's Fancy, May Yarker's Strathspey,
The Lochalsh Reel, The Rutland Reel,
Broadway, The Flight of the Falcon,
Findlater Castle, Neidpath Castle, City
Lights, Kyle Castle, The Laird of Milton's
Daughter, Da Rain Dancin'

Dances will be recapped

Tickets £20, LHC members £17

Students' concession £10

Pay online, or at the door by card or cash

Includes refreshments & a glass of Pimm's
or a soft drink

For tickets email

tickets@londonhighlandclub.co.uk

or call Roger Keeling 020 8656 7884

Programme and cribs are on our website

londonhighlandclub.co.uk

Forthcoming LHC event

Saturday 11 October 2025

New Season Ball

Colin Dewar & his Scottish Dance Band



BERKHAMSTED STRATHSPEY AND
REEL CLUB

Day School

Sunday 16 November 2025

10.00am - 5.00pm

White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham,
Bucks HP5 1AG

Teachers: Grace Hill & Andrew Nolan

Musicians: Jeremy Hill & Ian Robertson

Registration and welcome coffee 10.00am

Classes 10.30am - 12.30pm

Lunch (BYO) 12.30 - 1.30pm

Afternoon class 1.30 - 3.00pm

Tea & cake 3.00pm

Afternoon Social dance 3.30 - 5.00pm

Tickets £28 full day, £16 half day

Tickets from Simon Cumming

1 Fullers Close, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1LU

01494 782695

booking@berkhamstedreelclub.org

Full details: [berkhamstedreelclub.org/
events/day-school-and-social-dance-2025/](http://berkhamstedreelclub.org/events/day-school-and-social-dance-2025/)

SUMMER TUESDAYS

St Columba's Church, Pont Street
London SW1X 0BD

Superb bands every Tuesday throughout the summer

Tuesday 24 June - Tuesday 9 September
2025

7.30 - 10.30pm

Admission £16 (Payment by Card Only)

Details of bands and programmes can be
found at

summertuesdays.org

For further information, contact:

summertuesdays22@gmail.com

MID SUSSEX SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE
GROUP

Basic Teaching Skills Course

Saturday 21 - Sunday 22 June 2025

10.00am - 5.00pm

Warren Room, East Preston Village Hall, 52
Sea Road, East Preston, Littlehampton
BN16 1LP

Teacher: Mervyn Short

Total cost for the weekend £20

To book a place contact Fran Bramham

franmssd@gmail.com

07833 713969

msscd.org.uk

THISTLE CLUB

Musicians' & Dancers' Workshops and Dance

Saturday 6 September 2025

10.30am - 4.30pm & 7.30 - 10.30pm

Wing Village Hall, LU7 0NN

Teacher: Violaine Eysseric

Musician: Dave Hall

Musician Tutor: Susan MacFadyen

Workshops: Musicians £22, Dancers £20

Evening Dance £13 or £30 for both

Bring your own lunch and shared buffet
contribution

Programme

my.strathspey.org/dd/list/55186/

Hogmanay Dance

Wednesday 31 December 2025

8.00pm - 12.30am

Gt. Brickhill Hall, Rotten Row, MK17 9BA

Chris and Julie Dewhurst

Programme

my.strathspey.org/dd/list/57705/

Tickets Booked in advance £17

Bring and share supper

Contact Jan Jones 07877 153259 or

jangeverybusy@gmail.com

thistleclub.co.uk

The Reel is printed by Kall Kwik,
Hemel Hempstead
kallkwik.co.uk/hemel 01442 247777

Other Scottish Country Dance Organisations

To update your information in Other Scottish Country Dance Organisations contact editor@rscdslondon.org.uk
This is the first issue of the current cycle for *Reel* 332 - 335 and invoices for £30 have been sent and are now due for payment.
If you wish to cancel, please contact treasurer@rscdslondon.org.uk

- ABINGDON SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB** Dancing most Mondays, 7.45-10.00pm, September - June at Northcourt Centre, Abingdon, near Oxford. All welcome. Details: secretary@ascsc.org.uk or abingdonscdc.wordpress.com
- ADDLESTONE & DISTRICT SCOTTISH SOCIETY** Meets Wednesdays 7.30-9.30pm September-May at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Byfleet KT14 7NF. Details: Sue Holmes, 01932 846486 or addlestonscottish.org.uk
- BERKHAMSTED STRATHSPEY & REEL CLUB** Meets in Potten End Village Hall, HP4 2QG. Social dancing: Tuesdays 8.00pm September-May, Saturday: gardens June/July. Classes: Intermediate and Advanced Mondays 8.00pm, Beginners Tuesdays 8.00pm. Details: Jon Mole 07956 572925 or classes@berkhamstedreelclub.org
- BOURNEMOUTH BRANCH RSCDS** Meets at The Scottish Hall, 80/82 Shelbourne Road, Charminster, Bournemouth BH8 8QZ every Wednesday morning, 10.00am-12 noon. Details: Margaret Robson, 01202 698138 or jl.robson@ntlworld.com
- BRIGHTON BRANCH RSCDS** Classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced, country and highland, adults and children. Details: Rod Burrows, 01903 783053 or chair@rscds-brighton.org.uk or rscds-brighton.org.uk
- BRIGHTON & HOVE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB** Meets Thursdays 7.15-10.15pm at Moulsecomb Hall, Brighton. Details: Carol Catterall, 01273 564963 or bhscdc.org.uk
- CAMBERLEY REEL CLUB** Dancing every Tuesday 8.00pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Park Road, Camberley GU15 2SR. Details: Jackie Cresswell, 01252 616289 or info@camberleyreelclub.org.uk
- CAMBRIDGE SCOTTISH SOCIETY** Scottish country dancing and other events. Dance Circle meets every Thursday 8.00pm from September-June. Details: Rachel Schicker, 01223 364557 or camscotsoc.org.uk
- CHELTEMHAM BRANCH RSCDS** General Class/Club Night Mondays 7.30-9.30pm with Beginners' Section fortnightly at St Luke's Church Hall, St Luke's Place, Cheltenham GL53 7HP. Advanced class fortnightly on a Tuesday. Details: Lesley Taylor, 07712 578622 cheltscdssec@gmail.com
- CHISWICK SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB** Meets on Sundays 7.00-9.00pm in the Oddfellows Hall, Parkshot, Richmond TW9 2RG for social dancing. Beginners' courses are offered 6.00-7.00pm, please book in advance to secretary@chiswickscottish.org.uk. Details: Iris Ronayne, 07767 842670 chiswickscottish.org.uk
- CROYDON & DISTRICT BRANCH RSCDS** Branch class in Coulsdon: General, including Beginners with technique Fridays 7.30-10.00pm at Coulsdon Methodist Church, Brighton Road, Coulsdon CR5 2BE. Details: Alison Raisin, 07732 746238 or rscds.croydon.chairman@gmail.com or rscdcroydon.org.uk
- EPHING FOREST SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION** Club nights: Mondays (all year) 8.00-10.00pm at St Barnabas Church, 127 Snakes Lane East, Woodford IG8 7HX; Thursdays (all year) 8.00-10.00pm at St John's Parish Hall, High Road, Buckhurst Hill IG9 5RX. Details: Angela Ross, 020 8504 3376 or angela.ross87@hotmail.com or efsa.org.uk
- FARNHAM SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING CLUB** Dancing every Tuesday at 8.00pm, September-end of April at Memorial Hall, Babbs Mead, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7EE. Details: Anne Lester, 01252 782927 or lesteranne@gmail.com or fscdc.co.uk
- FLEET SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY** Dance in Fleet URC Hall, 25 Kings Road, Fleet GU15 3AF on alternate Saturdays from 7.30-10.00pm, September-May. Details: Anne Lester, 01252 782927 or info.fleetscds@gmail.com or fleetscds.co.uk
- GERRARDS CROSS AND CHALFONTS SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB** Meets at Memorial Centre, East Common Road, Gerrards Cross SL9 7AD on Tuesdays in term time from September-July, 7.30-10.00pm and also in Little Chalfont Methodist Church Hall, Chalfont Avenue, Little Chalfont HP6 6RD on Thursdays from 2.00-4.00pm. Visitors and beginners welcome. Details: Roger Stubbs, 01494 873063
- GREENFORD AND DISTRICT CALEDONIAN ASSOCIATION** Meets at St Thomas the Apostle Church Hall, 182 Boston Road, Hanwell W7 2AD. Tuesdays 8.00-10.00pm. Details: Janet MacPhail, 07787 925022 or janetmacphail54@gmail.com
- GUILDFORD SCDC** Meets at Onslow Village Hall, Wilderness Road, Guildford GU2 7QR most Mondays at 8.00pm from September-June. Details: 01483 414385 or gscdc.org.uk
- HARROW & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY** Classes Wednesdays 8.00-10.00pm, St Albans Church Hall, Norwood Drive (off The Ridgeway), North Harrow. Also a variety of other activities. Details: Sheena Henderson, mail@harrowscottish.org.uk or 07719 985025 or harrowscottish.org.uk
- HERTSMERE & TALLY HO REEL CLUB** Dancing on Thursdays at 8.00pm from September to July in the hall behind Christ Church, 620 High Road, Finchley N12 0NU. Also some Saturdays 7.00pm at Tilbury Hall URC, Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1BZ. Details: Margaret King, 020 8440 3236 or margaret.king4@hotmail.co.uk or hertsmereandtallyhorc.wordpress.com
- LONDON HIGHLAND CLUB** Meets regularly at St Columba's Church, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD. Details: londonhighlandclub.co.uk
- LUCY CLARK SCD CLUB** Meets Thursdays at the Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover HP22 6HF. Beginners' class 6.45-8.00pm, Social Dancing 8.00-10.00pm. Details: Liz Mitchell, 07947 000368 or lucyclarkscottish@gmail.com or lucyclarkscottish.org
- MAIDENHEAD SCOTTISH DANCING CLUB** Meets every Tuesday 8.00pm at St Piran's School, Gringer Hill, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 7LZ. Last Tuesday in the month is Social Dancing evening. Details: Jane Courtier, 01628 628372 or maidenheadscottishdancing.org.uk
- MEDWAY AND DISTRICT CALEDONIAN ASSOCIATION** Dancing Mondays Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst ME7 3JZ, 1.30-3.45pm; Thursdays St Thomas of Canterbury Church Hall, 63 London Road, Rainham, ME8 7RH, 8.00-10.00pm. Beginners welcome. Details: Julian Grayland 07770 380592 or medwaycaledonians.co.uk
- MILTON KEYNES BRANCH RSCDS** Mixed ability class meets Mondays 8.00-10.00pm. Bradwell Village Hall, Milton Keynes. Details: Jan Jones, 01908 378730 or jange@verybusy.co.uk
- NORWICH BRANCH RSCDS** Branch class in Norwich on Mondays from September-May/June. Beginners from 7.00-8.15pm and general dancing 8.20-9.30pm. Details: Sue Petty, 07568 550504 or sec.rscds.norwich@gmail.com
- ORPINGTON & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY** Dancing every Thursday 8.00-10.15pm at Petts Wood Memorial Hall, BR5 1LA. Details: Deirdre Wilden, the_wildens@yahoo.co.uk 07879 860463 or orpingtonscottishdancing.com
- OXFORDSHIRE BRANCH RSCDS** Dancing on Thursdays throughout the year in Oxford. Details: Margaret Spiceley, 07985 962781 or secretary.rscdsxfordshire@gmail.com or rscdsxfordshire.org
- READING ST ANDREW'S SCOTTISH DANCING SOCIETY** Dancing at St Andrew's URC, London Road, Reading RG1 5BD from September-May, Wednesdays 7.30-10.00pm (general), 1st and 2nd Thursdays of each month 8.00-10.00pm (advanced). Details: Duncan Barnett, 0118 956 9289 duncanbarnett@gmail.com or scottishdancingreading.org
- REIGATE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB** Meets most Mondays 8.15-10.15pm, September-May at the Redhill Methodist Church Hall, Gloucester Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1BP. Details: Wendy Mitton, 01737 766244 or wmitton517@btinternet.com
- RICHMOND CALEDONIAN SOCIETY** Meets at the Oddfellows Hall, Parkshot, Richmond, every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm from mid-September to mid-June. Details: 07802 442435 or richmondcaledonian.co.uk
- ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD St Columba's Dancers meet most Mondays from October to May, 7.15-10.00pm. Admission free except for Band Nights when a charge will be made. Details: Willie Lawrence, 07798 640551 or stcolumbasdancers@gmail.com or stcolumbasdancers.org
- ST JOHN'S SDC, WOKINGHAM** Meets every Thursday 8.00-10.15pm September-June at St Sebastian's Hall, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. All standards welcome. Details: Kate Thomson, 0118 986 0681 sec.stjohns.scdc@gmail.com Also Children's Class Saturdays 9.30-11.00am at the Parish Hall, Crowthorne. Details: Deborah Draffin, 01344 776831
- ST MICHAEL'S SCDC, SOMERSET** Meets Thursdays, 7.30-9.30pm, Davis Hall, Howell Hill, West Camel, Yeovil BA22 7QX. Details: Elspeth Wright, 07972 125617 or stmichaelscdcclub.org
- SIDCUP & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN ASSOCIATION** Dancing on Wednesdays from 7.30-9.30pm throughout the year at St John Fisher Hall, Thanet Road, Bexley DA5 1AP. Details: Jenny Gavin, 020 8856 4522
- SOUTH EAST ESSEX SCOTTISH SOCIETY** Dancing Fridays, 7.30-10.15pm, St Peter's Church Hall, Eastbourne Grove, Southend (near hospital). Tuition 7.30-9.00pm. Details: Graham Easton, 01702 587808 or graham.easton@btinternet.com or seess.org.uk
- SURBITON & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY** Dancing every Thursday at 8.00pm from September-June at St Mark's Church Hall, Church Hill Road, Surbiton. Details: Jane McNicholas, secretary@surbitoncaledonian.co.uk
- TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH RSCDS** General ability class on Tuesdays from 7.30-9.30pm at St Augustine's School, Wilman Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9AL. Details: Colin Simpson, 01892 832712 or rscdstunbridgewells.org.uk
- WATFORD & WEST HERTS SCOTTISH SOCIETY** Beginners/Improvers Class at Nascot Wood Recital Hall, Nascot Wood Road, Watford WD17 4YS Mondays from 8.00-9.30pm and General/Beginners Class at All Saints' Church Hall, The Green, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth WD3 3HJ Thursdays from 8.00-10.00pm. Details: Stuart Krelloff reel@watfordscottish.org.uk
- WEYMOUTH SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS** Dancing at Radipole and Southill Community Centre, Radipole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 9SS. Thursdays, 7.00-10.00pm. Details: Graeme Dickson, 07831 819414
- WINCHESTER BRANCH RSCDS** Classes Tuesdays 7.30-9.30pm. Club nights 1st and 3rd Wednesdays 7.30-9.30pm. Both evenings at St Peter's School, Oliver's Battery Road North, Winchester. Details: Wendy Mumford (teacher), 01264 363293 or wendy@mumford.com
- WITHAM & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY** Dancing every Wednesday 8.00-10.00pm. The Labour Party Hall, Witham CM8 2EE. Details: Audrey Kennedy, 01376 513567 or amkenney148@gmail.com



RSCDS London Branch Annual Report 2024-2025



RSCDS London Branch Annual General Meeting

Saturday 14 June 2025 at 6.45pm

This report, prepared by the Management Committee, will be presented to the AGM on Saturday 14 June 2025. Members' comments are welcome at the meeting or any time via secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk.

During the last year we have built on our object of expanding knowledge of traditional Scottish country dancing in the London area by offering events which attract dancers, musicians and teachers. Our 'Dance Scottish in London' programme gives dancers and musicians the opportunity to enhance their existing skills whilst for other participants it is a chance to be introduced to a new activity.

Mostly based on three rhythms to traditional folk music, a myriad of patterns is available by dancing with a partner and (typically) two or three other couples. Unlike some other dance forms conventionally each dance is with a different partner. Scottish country dancing combines physical activity, memory and social interaction which is both healthy and enjoyable.

Since 1997, the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society London Branch has been an autonomous, unincorporated charity operating in the London area that has a commercial contract with a Scottish company based at 12 Coates Crescent Edinburgh - The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (12 CC) with similar but global charitable aims. The licence agreement requires us to collect a membership fee for 12 CC from each of our members, permits us to share branding and encourages the sharing of values. A typical membership includes £28 paid to 12CC and £4 retained by London with members obtaining a discount for each London event (generally £2 or £3), receiving a quarterly digital magazine and regular email updates. Eleven other RSCDS groups operate within the M25 area as well as several unaffiliated Scottish country dance groups.

We deliver our objectives via three main routes - classes, dances and bursaries. All of these are open to members and the general public.

In central London, we continue to use Maria Fidelis School for classes. This is a modern building with an air-conditioned dance studio and excellent access to transport links

across London including half a dozen underground lines, national rail services and over a dozen bus routes. It also has some parking availability for musicians - a rarity for such a central location! All of which makes it ideal for those working at a central London office to visit before travelling home and for London residents to reach. The weekly Wednesday classes include an autumn Beginners course which leads into a spring Improvers' course. In the summer, these dancers can join the General class which runs throughout the academic year from September to June. These are supplemented by a Technique class and a Fast Paced Social class both of which are monthly on Tuesdays and an annual Day School for dancers and musicians one weekend in October.

Also in central London, we teach at St Columba's Church with a Wednesday afternoon mixed ability and social class, a monthly Tuesday evening social class aimed at young adults and a children's class on Sunday in collaboration with the church which is also monthly.

In south west London, the weekly class at the Richmond Library Annexe continues to be a popular which starts with Beginners' material and moves on to more advanced material designed for Improvers on Wednesday evenings.

When possible we pay for a musician at classes as well as the teacher and this, combined with high hall charges in London, results in a deficit from these activities. All the classes contribute directly to our charitable objects, and this is especially true of the day school which is also our most subsidised event.

Our cycle of dances begins with free afternoon dances in Kensington Gardens on several Saturdays in August and continues roughly monthly until the following June with evening events - mainly at St Columba's Church. The pre-Christmas dance in December and a Burns Ceilidh in January are our most popular evenings. All the dances are to live music and again hall charges are substantial resulting in small margins, but the aim is to generate financial resources whilst having an enjoyable time promoting Scottish country dancing.

The bursary programme is designed to assist the development of musicians, teachers and dancers within the M25

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the minutes of 8 June 2024
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Report on the Branch Activities 2024-2025
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. Motions:
 - 10.1 Proposed membership rate increase from £6 to £7.50 for paper Reel (£4 to £5 for digital copy)
 - 10.2 Adoption of revised constitution as per the copy on the website
11. 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.

area. Members and the public can obtain details and application forms on our website.

One of our longstanding challenges is to increase the numbers involved in Scottish country dancing in London and in 2024 we participated in a pilot from 12CC using algorithms on a general social media platform. This did generate significant amounts of interest in a free introductory session which participants enjoyed. However, unlike other piloted locations outside London, they did not return to develop the basic techniques necessary to dance socially. We continue to explore other channels but our most powerful recruitment tool remains recommendations from our members.

Another area where we need your help is running the charity and its activities. We are proud of the fact that we pay our teachers and musicians but everything else is undertaken by volunteers. To continue we need new people to get involved in all aspects of running the charity and its activities!



The Reel is provided as part of the membership benefits of RSCDS London Branch or through a subscription to the magazine.

If you are not already a member or subscriber, please consider joining the Branch or subscribing to the magazine to help support RSCDS London Branch.

Details of membership and subscription options can be found on page 3 of this magazine.

You can subscribe for as little as £5 a year.