



The Reel

Published by the LONDON BRANCH of the ROYAL SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY
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Winter Wednesday in St Columba's Lower Hall 18 February 2026



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Issue 337 should be with UK based members by 29 August 2026 unless delayed in the post.

Contributions for *Reel* 337 should be sent to arrive by and preferably in advance of 19 July 2026 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



On the morning I started to draft this message, a ceasefire started in the Middle East. The protagonists' approach to peace negotiations seems to be aggressive statements, rejecting all compromises with their only shared belief being they are the winner. There is still a ceasefire as I send this to the editor of *The Reel* for publication which encourages me to hope (if not believe) there might be peace by the time you read this.

Meanwhile in London, we are scheduled to join with the London Highland Club, The Little Ship Club, St Columba's Dancers, Summer Tuesdays and the Gay Gordons at the Combined Society Dance in April proving that sometimes there are genuine win-win situations from working together. I hope you were able to attend and had a fantastic evening dancing with old colleagues and making new friends with the music from Susan MacFayden and her band.

Coming up, is our Summer Wednesday dance with Chris Oxtoby on 27 May 2026 together with the Scottish country dance classes in London and our AGM and End of Season dance a few weeks later, on 13 June 2026. Apart from learning about what our charity has achieved in the last year it is also your opportunity to contribute to our future by sharing your ideas and voting for the committee members who are our charity's trustees. Although nominations for election at the meeting will have closed by the time you read this, we will still have space to co-opt individuals or welcome your contribution less formally on specific projects. There is no shortage of tasks to keep the charity running and fulfil our mission of promoting Scottish country dancing in London.

Branch AGM Notice

The Annual General Meeting of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society London Branch (Registered Charity 1067690) will take place on Saturday 13 June 2026 in the Upper Hall, St Columba's Church, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD from 18.45 followed by our End of Season Dance at 19.30 to music by Adam Brady. All members and friends are welcome to attend both the AGM and the dance but only London Branch members can vote. We plan to live stream the event. However, as in previous years there will be no online voting facility.

We hope as many as possible will join us in person to hear what has been happening in the London Branch and give us your thoughts and opinions. Anyone who cannot be there in person can email their contribution to the discussion before 12 June to secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk

Standing for re-election are:

Office Bearers

Chair: Richard Clarke (2022)
Hon. Treasurer: Simon Wales (2003)
(There are no nominations for Vice Chair or Secretary)

Committee Members (maximum eight)

Elaine Davies (2009)	Joanne Lawrence (2017) Classes Convenor
Thelma-Jane Robb (2011)	Melanie Rowland (2025)
Margaret Shaw (2007) Dances Convenor	

In addition, nominations to join the committee have been received for:
Cecil Cox, Rowena Jackson and Heather Jeffrey

Fiona Olsen and Wendy Morris are not standing for election this year; we appreciate their contributions to the success of the London Branch

The planned order of business is:

1. Approval of Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting and any business arising;
2. Report on the year's working of the London Branch;
3. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts (available at the meeting and in advance on the website - see AGM page in the 'About Us' section)
4. Confirmation/appointment of Honorary President and Honorary Vice Presidents
5. Appointment of Office Bearers and Committee Members (listed above)
6. Confirmation the Committee may appoint delegates from the membership of the London Branch to the Society's Annual General Meeting (details not yet available)
7. Appointment of Independent Examiner
8. Any motions accepted by the Secretary before 23 May 2026
9. Any other competent business

ROYAL
SCOTTISH
COUNTRY
DANCE
SOCIETY



Patron: HM The King

Chair: Gary Coull

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Hon. Treasurer

Simon Wales

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treasurer@rscdslondon.org.uk

Committee

Joanne Lawrence (Classes Convenor),
Margaret Shaw (Dances Convenor),
Elaine Davies, Wendy Morris,
Thelma-Jane Robb, Mel Rowland

Non-Executive roles

Hon. Archivist..... Simon Wales
Membership & Subscribers .. Gaynor Curtis
The Reel Editor Simon Wales
The Reel Business Editor.... Jeff Robertson
Web Admin Joanne Lawrence

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RSCDSLONDONBranch](https://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:

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

London Branch Matters

Membership and *The Reel* Subscription Rates from 1 July 2026

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

As a member of RSCDS London Branch, you enjoy the following benefits: reduced rates at London Branch classes, dances and events; three 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, and check the Europe or Worldwide postal rate with the Membership Secretary.

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>)	£21	£29	£35	£62	£5	£5
<i>The Reel</i> by post (UK)	£23.50	£31.50	£37.50	£67	£7.50	£7.50

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.

End of Season Dance

Following the Branch AGM

Saturday 13 June 2026

Doors open at 6.15pm

AGM 6.45 - 7.30pm

Dance 7.30 - 10.30pm

St Columba's Church, Pont Street
SW1X 0BD

Adam Brady

Hooper's Jig..... 8x32 J
The Flowers of Edinburgh..... 8x32 R
Gang the Same Gate..... 8x32 S
The Snake Pass..... 8x32 J
The Minister on the Loch..... 3x32 S
The Music Makars..... 8x32 R
The New Rigged Ship..... 8x48 J

Miss Hadden's Reel..... 8x32 J
The Saltire Society Reel..... 8x32 R
Anna Holden's Strathspey..... 8x32 S
Les Remparts de Séville..... 8x32 J
John of Bon Accord..... 8x32 R
Miss Eleanor..... 3x32 S
Sleepy Maggie..... 8x32 R

Extras:

Johnnie Walker..... Sq.64 S+64 J
The Cumbræ Reel..... 8x32 R
Village Reel..... 8x32 S

Admission includes light refreshments
RSCDS Members £18, Non-members £21
full time students and
spectators £11
Children (under 16) free

Tickets available online and on the door

All dances will be recapped/walked through
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 17 October 2026

6.00 - 9.00pm

Sports Hall with sprung floor

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Day School Musicians led by
Ian Robertson

The Laird of Milton's Daughter..... 8x32 J
Maxwell's Rant..... 8x32 R
Miss Gibson's Strathspey..... 8x32 S
Miss Allie Anderson..... 8x32 J
Red House..... 8x40 R
The Minister on the Loch..... 3x32 S
Waverley..... 8x48 J

The Montgomeries' Rant..... 8x32 R
The Orchards of Co. Armagh..... 3x32 S
Gaelforce Wind..... 8x32 J
The Saltire Society Reel..... 8x32 R
The Silver Tassie..... 8x32 S
The Starry Eyed Lassie..... 8x32 J
The Deil among the Tailors..... 8x32 R

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

Admission includes light refreshments

RSCDS Members £18, Non-members £21
full time students (with card) and
spectators £11
Children (under 16) free

Tickets available online and on the door

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

Future Editions of *The Reel*

For some years *The Reel* has run at an increasing deficit, with the Membership Subscription not even covering the cost of production and distribution. Reluctantly, we have decided to print three issues a year to save a quarter of the costs. Advertisers who will continue to pay £30 for their back page adverts will also have access to our website. It is anticipated that there will be issues in early April, end of July and end of November.

It was felt that this was preferable to making it electronic only.

Membership Rates

The Society element of the membership subscription will be increasing by £1.00 from 1 July 2026 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!

Open Air Dancing

Saturdays 15, 22 and 29 August

music from Craigievar

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 15, 22 and 29 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

Future Dates

13 June 2026 - AGM & End of Season Dance
15,22,29 August - Kensington Gardens
17 October 2026 - Day School/Musicians Workshop
17 October 2026 - New Season Dance
28 October 2026 - Autumn Wednesday Dance
19 December 2026 - Christmas Dance
9 January 2027 - Burns Supper & Ceilidh
2 June 2027 - Summer Wednesday Dance
12 June 2027 - AGM & End of Season Dance

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 27 May

Summer term: 3, 10, 17 June

Autumn term: 23 Sept - 9 December

Summer General Class

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Wednesday 7.00 - 9.00pm
3, 10, 17 June

With guest teachers

**Armaiti Bedford, Jan Collings &
Catriona Bennett**
and class musicians

**Ian Cutts, Adam Brady &
Antonia McClintock**

A class to consolidate and build on basic
skills and technique

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

Teachers

Pat Davoll and Roy Southall

Recorded music on 3, 10 June and
live music from **Barbara Manning** on 17 June

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

Visitors welcome

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

Children's Class

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

With teacher Gill O'Dell

Sunday 14 June 1pm - 2.15pm then

11 October, 8 November, 13 December

Check 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

**With teacher Judith Jones
and recorded music**

live music from Dave Hall on 17 June

Wednesday class

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 2026

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Wednesday 7.00 - 9.00pm
7 October - 2 December

8 week course introducing basic Scottish
country dance steps and formations

RSCDS teacher and 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 plus 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 11 July

rscdslondon.org.uk/festival-2026

Monthly Classes

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

The Tuesday Social

Aimed at people in their 20s and 30s who
love to dance, or would like to learn

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

Tuesday 16 June

**with teacher Judith Jones
and class musician Adam Brady
then**

**29 September, 20 October,
24 November, 15 December**

7.00 - 9.30pm

This monthly session combines live music
with some teaching, lots of dancing and a
social break to relax and chat

COMING SOON

The Thursday Social - same idea as the
Tuesday Social but open to all ages

Monthly from 17 September - check

rscdslondon.org.uk/classes

Fast Paced Social Class

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

Tuesday 9 June 7.00 - 9.00pm

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

**22 September, 13 October,
17 November, 8 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

Technique Class

Maria Fidelis School, Drummond Crescent,
London NW1 1LY

7.00 - 9.00pm

Tuesday 2 June with Saskia Frisby

**Thursday 2 July with Lindsey Ibbotson
and class musician Heather Jeffery
then**

6 October, 3 November, 1 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

London Branch Classes

Classes Round-up: Joanne Lawrence



The Thursday Social

As explained in the Little Ship article (see p9), the London Scottish country dance community is witnessing the end of an era as the Little Ship Club, founded more than 50 years ago by Peter Knight, held its final session on 14 May 2026. Whilst the reasons for its closure made sense, it seemed sad that this monthly tradition, part social dance, part supper club, could be wholly lost. And then an idea occurred.

The Tuesday Social was launched in 2022 with the objective of promoting Scottish dance to younger dancers (in their 20s and 30s), at the time severely under-represented in London classes and events, by providing an evening of sociable dancing, welcoming beginners and more experienced dancers alike. It continues to flourish thanks to teachers Gill O'Dell and Judith Jones, musician Adam Brady, and the administrative team of Rowena Jackson and Tria Lawrence. But could we do more? We had been asked if we could increase the number of Tuesday Social sessions, and also if we could make similar sessions available to a wider age range.

After some thought, we propose to launch The Thursday Social, from autumn 2026. Like The Tuesday Social, it will be a monthly session combining live music with a little teaching and a lot of dancing, plus a social break to relax and chat. However, it will be open to all ages, and we are currently working on how best to incorporate the convivial supper club aspect which made the Little Ship such an enduring institution. The group will be led by some excellent RSCDS teachers, and we hope that it will prove popular with a wide range of dancers, including current Tuesday Social dancers, Little Ship Club alumni who would like to continue their long established dancing tradition and any London dancers who are looking for a sociable way to extend their dancing beyond regular classes and clubs. There will be more detail shared as plans progress. Check website for updates.

White Rose Festival

We are delighted that our team for the 2026 White Rose Festival in Leeds is beginning its training sessions. We are looking forward to introducing some new members of the team to the joys of this lovely outdoor festival on 11 July - and keeping fingers crossed that the weather will be kind. For update, check rscdslondon.org.uk/festival-2026.



Improvers' Course

Following its successful launch last season, we have continued with running an eight week Beginners' Course in the autumn, followed by an Improvers' Course in the spring. After these two courses, under the expert guidance of James Fairbairn, many new dancers have been emboldened to attend the summer term General Class as well as the Autumn and Winter Wednesday dances!



Children's class

RSCDS London's most recent iteration of children's classes began in early 2024, following a request from a St Columba's Sunday school parent. Classes started slowly but have built up momentum and we now typically welcome 20 plus children aged 4-12 to each monthly class. Thanks to teachers Rose Kreloff, who began the class, and Gill O'Dell who took over in January, the children are making progress, and each class involves high energy, a lot of concentration - and liberal supplies of shortbread.



Day School 2026: Joanne Lawrence

Our 2026 Day School is scheduled for Saturday 17 October 2026 (put 16 October 2027 into your diary too!) and we have a great line-up of teachers and musicians including teachers RSCDS Chair Gary Coull, Mathias Ferber (Paris) and Jan Collings (Wendover). Ian Robertson will lead the Musicians' Workshop and Barbara Manning, Adam Brady and Jeremy Hill will accompany the classes. In addition to the morning and afternoon Intermediate, Advanced and Very Advanced classes, optional classes in late afternoon will include a Boozy Afternoon (Gary Coull), All Kinds of Poussettes (Mathias Ferber) and Dances from the Evening Programme (Jan Collings).

Maria Fidelis School, NW1 1LY, which has become a valuable base for many of RSCDS London's weekly and monthly classes, has hosted our day school since 2024. Those of you who have attended classes there already will know that it has great facilities as well as being very conveniently located for buses, tubes and mainline train stations, particularly Euston and King's Cross. As attendees have found in previous years too, on street parking is readily available within easy distance of the school.

Prices are as detailed below. We believe these 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 cakes 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 Robertson and the day school musicians. The evening will be punctuated with some ceilidh items, so if you have a song, a dance or recitation, or another hidden talent, then please let us know! Tell your dancing friends and check the RSCDS London website for up-to-date information and booking forms.

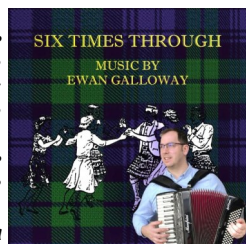
Day School 2026	RSCDS member	Non member	Student
Full Day (incl dance)	£49	£57	£30
Full Day (classes only)	£35	£40	£20
AM only	£15	£18	£10
PM only	£20	£22	£10
Dance only	£17	£20	£10



Music Review: Jeremy Hill

Six Times Through: Ewan Galloway (multi tracked) CD (£15 + £3.50 P&P for UK and N Ireland) available from ewan-galloway.sumupstore.com/

The Duke of Atholl's Reel, The Linton Ploughman, The Happy Meeting, Haste to the Wedding (all 6x32J), The Wee Cooper O'Fife (6x40J - ten-bar phrases), Rothesay Country Dance (6x48J), Petronella, The Clansman, Roxburgh Castle, Loch Leven Castle (all 6x32R), Red House (6x40R), The Wishing Well, Seann Truibhas Willichan, Alltshellach, The Lea Rig, Anna Holden's Strathspey (all 6x32S)



In Honour of Volume 4: Ewan Galloway (multi tracked) Book and CD (£10) available as above

Oor Fred (8x32R), Faye's Umbrella Assessment (4x32S), Horne Express (5x32J), Sutherland Accordion and Fiddle Club Reel (3x32R), Dunnideer Castle (3x32S), Crichton Linn (4x32J)

In their original form, sets for longwise progressive dances would have been for 'as many as will', with musicians playing a potentially arbitrary but large number

of times through, to give all dancers their chance to dance from the top. It is an approach still seen today in reeling circles, where 20x through dances are not uncommon (and then repeated).

For Scottish country dancing, the establishment of the four-couple set as a standard was very much part of the regularisation in the first part of the 20th century by the Society. As an approach, its advantages are that it: emphasises the progressive form of the dance; supports teaching (without taking up half the evening); allows a consistent approach to the music - 8x through giving everyone equal turns; adapts to social dancing with uneven numbers and uses hall space efficiently.

For the common traditional form of dances for two couples, of course this means top couple dancing three times consecutively, and alternating all four couples and then middle couples dancing. There is a lot of pleasure to be had in that symmetry, and the potential for covering, but it can be tiring, particularly for the more vigorous dances.

Campbell Tyler's analysis of most frequent dances on dance programmes (available at rscds-ib.org/index.php?page=13) demonstrates there has been a notable dropping off in programming frequency: *The Duke of Atholl's Reel* has retained its position as most frequent two-couple dance in the last eight years, but down from no. 66 to no. 79; *Anna Holden's Strathspey* has remained as most popular strathspey in this form (at no. 99); others such as *Petronella* (down 82 places to 316) and *The Wee Cooper o' Fife* (down 133 at no. 387) are clearly no longer as popular.

It would be very sad to lose such dances from our programmes, so encouragement to continue dancing these dances is therefore to be applauded. Though I've not seen it at dances I have attended recently, in some areas three-couple sets are becoming common for these dances, and this recording from Ewan Galloway sets down six times through tracks for some of the more popular.

He has recorded lead accordion, second accordion, piano and even drum parts himself, creating the full sound of a band - and doing so very effectively. With all the elements under his control, the balance is excellent, tempo spot on, with plenty of interest to catch the ear. Perhaps it misses somewhat the spontaneous and natural interaction of different players in a regular band set-up, but, overall, it is a really enjoyable listen.

I think we would miss the progressive flow that comes in dancing such as *The Happy Meeting* in four-couple sets - the build-up to beautifully covered turns for four couples - but I can see this as an invaluable tool to promote these dances and keep them alive,

Winter School Director: Ian Robertson



For the last two years it has been my privilege to be the Director for the RSCDS Winter School. Held in mid-February each year in Pitlochry, Winter School has had a special place in my heart for many years. But what makes it so special? Here are just a few personal reflections on the past two years.

First, there is the chance to work with a selection of the very best teachers in the Scottish country dance world. There are four classes at Winter School, and each class has a different teacher and musician each day. It is a real pleasure to experience the different styles that these teachers bring to their craft. Such a wealth of knowledge which they share in their own ways.

Second (or perhaps equal first!) is a week of indulgence in the finest of musical company. All the musicians who play at Winter School need to be experts at playing for class and equally expert as band members in various combinations in the evening. I have been blessed with two years of music with friends whose professionalism and positivity have made it a joy to work together.

One of the challenges for the Director is to arrange a programme of optional afternoon activities which catch the fancy of the participants. There is always a popular whisky tasting, and over the last two years we have enjoyed learning the Quadrilles, listening to a musically illustrated talk about the Gow family and an equally fascinating talk about the history of tartan. But a particular highlight this year was playing fiddle alongside Màrtainn Skene on cello for a session we called 'Dance to the Old Sounds' - an opportunity to re-create the dancing sound of the early 19th century. The room was full to overflowing for the session which was led by Muriel Johnstone.



Winter School 2026 line up at Blair Castle L-R: Màrtainn Skene (accordion), Stuart Oswald (drummer for the Ball), David Oswald (accordion), Mo Rutherford (piano), Gary Coull (RSCDS Chair), Raphaëlle Orgeret (teacher), Alasdair Brown (teacher), Kirsty Bernard (RSCDS Events Manager), Samuele Graziani (teacher), Rachel Shankland (teacher), Ian Robertson (Winter School Director)

The climax is surely the Ball at Blair Castle on the final night. A stunning venue, a piper to greet guests and lead the Grand March, dancers in their finery and a full 5-piece band. Memorable indeed!

And then there is the Atholl Palace Hotel, sitting grand and imposing high above Pitlochry. And the scenery. And the potential for picturesque snow. And the company of dancers from all across the globe. And ... well, you get the picture!

If you have not tried it, I encourage you to do so. It will undoubtedly create a host of memories. I will certainly go back again when the opportunity arises!

particularly in classes, where making up three-couple sets may be the more practical solution.

Using the same recording technique, and with the same excellent outcome, Ewan has also published a fourth volume of dances celebrating the people and places that inspire us, devised by Robert Atkinson, Sarah Horne, Isla Henderson, William Williamson and Gary Coull.

Etiquette

I recall reading Joanne Lawrence's article expressing the Branch Committee's views on etiquette in *The Reel* 334, but unfortunately, I did not have time to leave a comment. However, when I saw Mr Carswell's comment in the last issue, I decided I had to reply.

Joanne is right that Scottish country dance (SCD) is a traditional dance genre, but to thrive, it must embrace current trends. The RSCDS was entirely right to publish the Etiquette Guide in 2023, and I am glad to see it being adopted. Regarding men dancing with men, it is not a new phenomenon. In the book *Dance with Your Soul* by Alastair MacFadyen and Florence H. Adams, on page 56, four men are illustrated dancing *The Foursome Reel* or *The Reel of Tulloch*. Furthermore, *The Reel of the 51st Division* was meant to be performed by men.

Women have become accustomed to dancing together, partly out of necessity due to the absence of men, especially following World War I; consequently, the need for men to dance together has very rarely arisen. I have been participating in SCD for nearly fifty years, and until recently, if two men were 'left over', it was very rare for them to dance together, as two women dancing together would split and partner the men. The fact that two men might want to dance together was never considered. I would like to point out that this has nothing to do with sexual orientation; why should a man not ask another man to dance in the same way that women ask each other to dance? When I was teaching in Germany over ten years ago, I was both surprised and pleased that men and women were no longer adopting traditional binary roles when choosing a partner. Joanne requests that if two men are dancing together, they should NOT be split up, and I fully support this.

Beyond SCD, in recent years, societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ acceptance have shifted significantly. This transformation includes milestones such as the equalisation of the age of consent, the normalisation of LGBTQ+ identities, and the legalisation of same-sex marriage. In the world of entertainment, it has been 30 years since Matthew Bourne premiered his version of *Swan Lake*, one of the first dance works to depict two men dancing together. Although Bourne's *Swan Lake* was groundbreaking and received rave reviews, some traditionalists found it upsetting. The dance piece is widely recognised as the longest-running and most successful dance-theatre show in West End and Broadway history.

The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre points out that for a tradition to survive, it must adapt to modern tastes. If it becomes inflexible and fails to adapt, it starts to die. This has happened to SCD. It is a tradition that has not changed for decades; SCD is seen as too formal and outdated for younger audiences. Fortunately, the RSCDS is taking steps to refresh its image and promote a Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 focused on equality, diversity, and inclusivity. Embracing change is essential to SCD's future and its relevance in today's world.

Mervyn Short

Hands: how necessary?

I think we would all agree that hands are important in dancing. The dance *Chased Lovers* however, avoids the first couple giving hands showing that hands are not really necessary; but one dance is not a correct characterisation. In general, most dances require hands to be given: but they do need to be *helpful* hands.

Recently, I have again been acutely aware of hands 'outstaying their welcome'. Trying to shake off such a dogmatic hand can be problematic as its owner seems to seek safety by holding on and on; it is either misguided safety or lacking any sensitivity for others that is the cause. Of course, there is the all too familiar floppy hand or over-rigid one, often cold and damp, that seems to have disowned its owner and is no help at all. I call these the disembodied hand. The vice grip hand hold can sometimes also be encountered, and this can be quite painful especially, if the recipient has any arthritis. Tight two bar hand turns can be painful with arthritis and dancers should be open to adopting the alternative elbow grip if asked. Then, there is the hand that releases too soon leaving one with an unfinished feeling.

Although remedies exist for most of these unacceptable deviations, there is no remedy for the established builder's hand which, being quite rough to the touch, can be most unpleasant. A nicely presented dancer giving such a hand seems a contradiction in terms. Personally, out of consideration of my fellow dancers I always use hand cream to ensure a soft welcoming feeling and avoid rough jobs without protective gloves.

So, whilst we should all know about handing - raised in a flowing movement as we dance forward with our leading leg in time with the music and at shoulder height with the arm in a curve, being firm but not too tight and released in good time. A nice smile with eye contact when giving hands goes a long way to improve the dancers' enjoyment.

As dancers we are, or should be, aware of the many aspects concerning the value of *helpful* hands, we owe it to our fellow dancers to use our hands to improve the standard of dancing and not to the contrary. However, am I alone with these thoughts?

Stephen Webb

Declining membership

Membership of the RSCDS is in decline. I think the reason for this is the increasing complexity of our dancing. When I started Scottish country dancing fifty years ago, there existed a few hundred dances and now there are many thousands. This must be off putting to beginners, especially as many start either when they retire or when their children leave home. I have known a newcomer (who was Scottish!) to be so put off by the first dance she got up for, which was new and complicated and consequently broke down in chaos, that she did not come again.

I think that the solution adopted by Wimbledon Reels may be a way forward. They have a limited repertoire of dances, take a flexible approach to the programme and ensure that the less experienced dancers are not all in one set. This group is thriving and has many young members.

I used to MC for another local group and gave up devising a programme in advance. Instead, I put on dances which I knew and for which the music was available.

Experienced dancers should do all they can to help beginners, but the beginners should reciprocate by sitting out when requested to do so. The experienced dancers deserve the occasional complicated dance to themselves.

Elizabeth Bennett

Where is This?

Answer to 'Where is This?' on p1:

This is the Harp Rock on the Isle of Lunga, the largest of the Treshnish Isles, an uninhabited archipelago lying to the west of the Isle of Mull in the Inner Hebrides. The island is famous for colonies of puffin, guillemot, razorbill, fulmar, shag, kittiwake and other seabirds.

The harp, or *clarsach* in Gaelic, is memorialised in our jig, reel and strathspey dances including *The Sixty String Harp* (8x32 reel for 3 couples in 4 couple set), *The Clarsach* (Ryer an 8x32 strathspey 3C in 4C set) and *The Clarsach* (Blaschke a 4x32 jig 4C). They can be found in the RSCDS dictionary - the last two also have videos.

The 15th century Queen Mary harp can be seen in the National Museum of Scotland.

With thanks to Ivor Frank.

Email: editor@rscdslondon.org.uk with any dance related photos.

Round and About

KASS Workshop: Helen Cole

A huge thank you to RSCDS teacher Simon Wales, who led the recent KASS Dance Workshop on Saturday 21 February, at Lenham Community Centre.

Dancers from groups across Kent arrived for registration at 1.30pm and were warmly welcomed by the KASS Committee. The workshop brought together around 40 dancers, representing a wide range of experience - from enthusiastic beginners to seasoned Scottish country dancers.

Simon guided the group through two lively sessions, focusing on formations such as the *allemande*, *advance & retire*, *rondel*, *strathspey poussette*, *six hands round & back*, *promenade*, *hello-goodbye setting*, and *petronella turns*. He also reminded everyone of the importance of teamwork - dancing as a set, smiling, and engaging with partners and fellow dancers.

Dances during the afternoon included *Miss Hadden's Reel*, *The Sauchie Haugh*, and *The College Hornpipe*, all of which were enjoyed with great enthusiasm.

After a well-earned tea break, dancers returned refreshed for more energetic teaching and light-hearted fun. The atmosphere throughout the afternoon was warm and welcoming, with many new faces attending the workshop for the first time. Thank you, Simon, for a wonderful afternoon of dancing, learning, fun and friendship.

For more information about KASS and Scottish groups across Kent, including social dances, visit kass.org.uk or follow us on Facebook: KASS - Kent Association of Scottish Societies.



Orpington and District: Ginny Colenbrander

And Now for Something Completely Different!

I always knew there was a good reason for having an Orpington & District Caledonian Society website, but until Wednesday 15 October 2025 I just thought this was to inform members of our Thursday dance programme, advertise our Saturday dances and be a source of information for those looking for a new hobby. However, on one particular Wednesday evening I was contacted, via our website, by a TV producer working in association with Channel 4. He explained that in collaboration with Sainsbury's Christmas food, three short, funny and entertaining 10-minute films had been commissioned called 'Chris Ramsey's Alternative Christmas Guide'.

The brief was to show comedian Chris Ramsey taking on the ultimate festive challenge of hosting three big Christmas get-togethers. A Christmas eve meal for Santa and his elves titled 'A Work Party for Santa'; a Christmas day event called 'Panto Christmas Lunch' featuring the cast of a local pantomime; and lastly a Boxing Day Bash where Chris entertained some lovely old people from the community.

That's where we came in! The Director had seen some lovely pictures of our members dancing the night away looking fit, sprightly and fun while also fitting the brief of representing older members of society. Don Ward and Angela Campbell starred in the episode with Don's piano skills being particularly impressive helping to land the punchline with Chris Ramsey at the end of the episode. Ginny and Ben's brief appearance in the proceedings was a result of Ginny looking slightly too young to fit their description of old! We had a wonderful day being a part of a different world of Lights, Camera, Action! (continued next column)

Isle of Wight Weekend: Judy Valvona

International Scottish Country Dancing returns to Shanklin

The annual Isle of Wight Scottish Country Dancing Weekend School, held at the Shanklin Hotel on the clifftops in Shanklin from Friday 13 to Sunday 15 February 2026, was yet another capacity weekend, with 115 people coming from many different European countries. This very successful weekend was organised by Catherine Packwood-Bluett, Aileen Napper, Ian & Judith Muir with assistance from Frankie Bluett-Burgess and IOW Tours. The Shanklin Hotel provided a good value weekend with excellent service from good humoured friendly staff, and good food.

The teachers this year were the world renowned Raphaëlle Orgeret from Lyon in France and Eric Finley from North Ayrshire in Scotland, who both emphasised the fun to be had doing Scottish country dancing, whilst teaching challenging and creative dances.

Fabulous music for the whole weekend was provided by a 4-piece Craigellachie Band from the south of England, Ian & Judith Muir (now IOW residents), John Browne and Ali McCan. There were dances on Friday & Saturday nights until late, with many dances being encored as the music was so lively, and Scottish dance classes on Saturday and Sunday mornings, accompanied by Ian, Judith and Ali. One of the local teachers, Janette Baxter, offered a walk-through of the Saturday evening dances, but for those who wanted to venture out the weather was kind and the visitors had wall to wall sunshine in the afternoon of Valentine's Day to explore the island.

Many guests, including islanders, attended just for the social dances (or as non-dancers) in order to keep in touch with the friends they have made through Scottish country dancing over the years. The atmosphere was electric.

Next year, the Isle of Wight Weekend School will again be at the Shanklin Hotel Friday 19 to Sunday 21 February 2027 with Eric Finley and Alice Stainer teaching, accompanied by Ian Muir and the Craigellachie Band. Do not miss it! Save the date!



Left to right: Eric Finley, Raphaëlle Orgeret, John Browne, Ali McCan, Catherine Packwood-Bluett, Ian Muir, Frankie Bluett-Burgess, Judith Muir and front Janette Baxter, Aileen Napper

If you would like to see our episode here is the link: youtube.com/watch?v=P5K0z0LZbE

However, back to down to earth, the hard truth is that the producer had found our website whilst looking for old people! It is a stark reminder that for Scottish country dancing to survive we must continue to endeavour to recruit younger people so that hopefully the next time a producer looks at our website they will find dancers for the follow up episode 'Chris Ramsey entertains the Youth from the Community'!



Don Ward and Angela Campbell

Round and About

Newcastle Festival: Mel Rowland and Peta Webb

We arrived at Newcastle on the evening of Friday 12 February, feeling excited but also rather apprehensive. It was going to be the first time that we had taken part in a dance festival and danced in front of a judge and a large audience. But we need not have worried, the whole Newcastle weekend was an amazing experience and only helped to confirm why we enjoy Scottish country dancing so much.

A few months before the festival, Elaine Davies (London Branch Committee member and class secretary at the Richmond class) had suggested forming a team of dancers to take part in the non-competitive section at the Newcastle Festival. This would be a way to give us, less experienced dancers, an introduction to festival dancing and experience the magic of Newcastle. Due to various unforeseen factors, only two of us from the Richmond class were able to attend Newcastle but this meant we were joined in our set by highly experienced London Branch dancers who supported us throughout the weekend.



Left to right: Peta Webb, Simon Wales, Mel Rowland, Andrew Nolan, Elaine Davies, Edward Davies, Liz Douglas and Garry Robertson

We all met up on Friday evening at the Premier Inn, near Newcastle airport and enjoyed meeting our fellow dancers over a meal and a few bevies. The next morning, we just had time to eat a delicious, cooked breakfast, then it was into ubers to head to the festival venue at Kenton Academy. That is when the nerves and excitement really kicked in as we went to change into our demonstration outfits and mingled with other competitors backstage. We then went and sat in the hall and watched the teams take part in the morning competition which was judged by Patrick Chamoin. The dancing was amazing! We had never seen such beautiful footwork, perfect covering and all the other things, Judith Jones our teacher at Richmond, is always reminding us about. We were delighted that several members of London Branch won their competitive sections - Ladies' Open and Men's Open.



Peta and Mel covering beautifully with their partners Simon and Andrew, likewise Edward and Elaine across the set in the reel of three in *Catch the Wind*

Then suddenly, it was our time to take centre stage on the floor. With our nerves running high, we lined up with our set and walked gracefully onto the dance floor. The music started and we were off. We danced two of our favourite dances: *Seann Truibhas' Willichan* and *Catch the Wind*. The performance was over in a flash, and we walked off the dance floor to the sound of supportive clapping. We had danced in front of an audience for the first time and had survived! The written feedback from our judge, Helen Russell, was really encouraging. Taking part had definitely pushed us out of our comfort zones and but has given us a new sense of confidence in dancing.

Now that our performance was over, we could relax and really enjoy the afternoon dancing which was the turn of the display teams. We watched some amazing team dances, with creative choreography and colourful costumes. This year the International Team won with their interpretation of *Les Misérables*.

It was then time for everyone to refuel on pizza, before changing out of costumes and dressing for the evening dance. The evening dance was so enjoyable, with fantastic music provided by David Oswald and his band. The energy and enthusiasm of some of the younger dancers was infectious. Then it was back to the hotel for a celebratory drink and a wind down while catching up on the events of the day.

After another cooked breakfast on Sunday, we said our thanks and goodbyes. We had had such a fun and wonderful time, and we left Newcastle feeling inspired and motivated to continue improving our dance skills. Will we be returning to Newcastle next year? We'll see!

We want to give a special thanks to the London Branch dancers who danced with us in the non-competitive section and offered much support and encouragement - Simon Wales, Andrew Nolan, Elaine Davies, Edward Davies, Garry Robertson and Liz Douglas.

Little Ship Club: Peter Knight

I started the Little Ship Club Scottish country dancing in 1972 at the Little Ship Club, a sailing club in the City of London. The idea was to widen the repertoire of the Wandsworth Reels, now the London Reels, from the eight or so dances that they did then; *Mairi's Wedding* and *Postie's Jig* have remained on their list since I introduced them. It started as invitation only, then widened as friends of friends came, but they had to phone me first so that I could balance the numbers. As the hall was free, we had to have a buffet supper provided by the Club for £1 a head including fresh crab!

In 1980 we moved to Holy Trinity Church Hall, Brompton as the Little Ship Club building was being redeveloped. As a buffet could not be provided, we each took our own picnic, wine being included in the price of £2; this still happens today, but the price has gone up to £10.

When a mezzanine was added to the church hall it was too claustrophobic, so we moved on to the Mothers' Union in Tufton Street for a couple of years before our final move to St Columba's Church, Pont Street.

When pressure of work meant that I did not have the time to do all the administration, friends started to help in the development of a committee. At our height we had 80+ every month with an annual ball, first at Crosby Hall for a few years then Wandsworth Town Hall. In May 2023, I decided to retire from teaching/MCing and was given a fantastic party; such a shame that every month was not like that!

Iain Ross was then MC from September 2023 until the end of 2024 using the Upper Hall instead of the larger Lower Hall; the committee then decided to have a rota of Davinia Miln, Willie Lawrence and myself taking it in turns to MC.

Sadly, the numbers have become so low that the decision was taken to have a last dance and party in May 2026, in the Lower Hall to be funded by whatever money is left in the account.

See p4 for details of the exciting development of the Thursday Social, taking up the mantle of this Thursday evening slot with the aim of broadening the age range of the Tuesday Social.

Out and about...

...on and off the dance floor



Spring Fling and Fringe in Lyon



Combined Societies' Dance



Winter Wednesday dance



Winter School band - L to R: David Oswald, Stewart Oswald, Ian Robertson, Mo Rutherford and Màrtainn Skene



Combined Societies' line-up of MC'S - L to R: Jim Cook, Willie Lawrence, Catriona Bennett, Roy Southall, Joanne Lawrence, and Murrough Landon, with Shona MacFadyan, Graham Hamilton and Susan MacFadyan on stage



Combined Societies' Dance at St Columba's - 18 April 2026

The Story behind the Dance - 19th Century Dance Manuals in Scotland: Meryl Thomson



A series of articles from Meryl Thomson delving behind the history of some of our dances and their music. On this occasion she takes a look at some Scottish published Victorian era sources for many of the RSCDS early book dances.

When RSCDS Book 1 was published in 1924, the twelve dances were chosen by the committee. The minutes from 26 November 1923 state one of the new Society's aims, "To publish from time to time, descriptions of Country dances with music and diagrams in simple form and at a moderate price" - and the chairman "invited suggestions from those present as to reviving Scottish country dances. Major Stewart suggested that endeavours might be made to have a few such dances included in ball programmes."

The dances included in Book 1 were *Petronella*, *The Triumph*, *Circassian Circle*, *The Nut*, *Meg Merrilees*, *Flowers of Edinburgh*, *Strip the Willow*, *Duke of Perth*, *Rory O'More*, *Fight about the Fireside*, *Cumberland Reel* and *Merry Lads of Ayr*. All of these dances had been popular in the nineteenth century and appeared in the dance manuals of the time. Of these manuals, many were published in Scotland and the Society sourced many of their early book dances from them. What were these dance manuals, their purpose and the dancing masters behind them?

Boulogne - The first Scottish-based manual to take a look at is *The Ball-Room or the Juvenile Pupil's Assistant* by Monsieur J.P. Boulogne who describes himself as "French Teacher of Dancing, Royal Saloon, Queen Street, Glasgow. His dance academy catered to some of the first families in Glasgow. The manual was printed in 1827. In his address to the reader at the front of the publication Mr Boulogne states, "I have

43	
PETRONELLE.	Bars.
1. The first couple perform the figure of a diamond to their right, setting at the four corners,	16
2. Down the middle and up again,	8
3. Pousette,	8

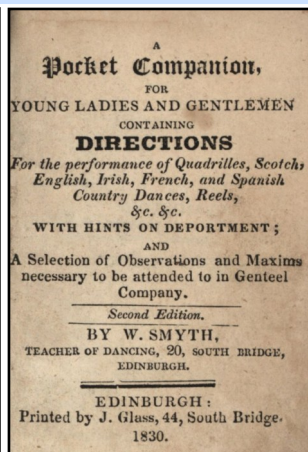
been careful to select those Dances that are just now the most admired in these great Circles of Fashion and Taste, London and Paris." Mr Boulogne describes himself as a "native of France" and says he has "frequent communications with Paris", although not all was at it seems. Paul Cooper writes in detail of the background of Mr Boulogne or John Peter Bologna. For those wanting to read further about Boulogne's life and links with comic theatre and his curious Gymnastic Morris Dance with Sticks, see Paul's research paper at regencydances.org/paper067.php

Boulogne interestingly includes *Petronelle* three times in his guide - as an English Quadrille, an Hungarian Waltz and an English Country Dance. *The Nut*, *Meg Merrilees* and *The Triumph* are in the English Country Dance section while *Duke of Perth* and *Merry Lads of Ayr* are under Scottish Dances. There are 6 of the RSCDS Book 1 dances and 26 RSCDS dances in total in his collection.

Lowe - Another publication, this time published in Edinburgh, was *Lowe's Ball-Conductor and Assembly Guide*, originally published in 1822 but with a third updated edition in 1831. The four Lowe brothers, Robert, John, Joseph and James all contributed to this volume which contains *The Triumph*, *Petronella*, *The Nut*, *Meg Merrilees* and *Fight about the Fireside* from Book 1 and 21 other Society dances. Read more about the Lowe brothers here - www.regencydances.org/paper024.php

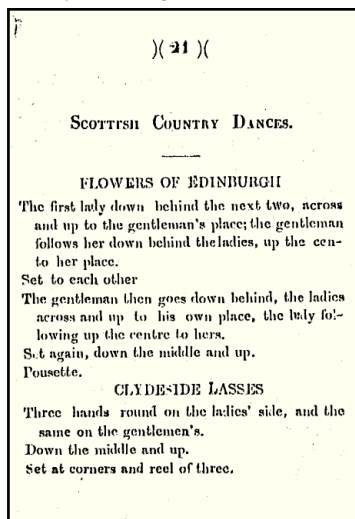


Smyth - W. Smyth wrote his *A Pocket Companion for Young Ladies and Gentlemen* in around 1830 and this was published in Edinburgh.

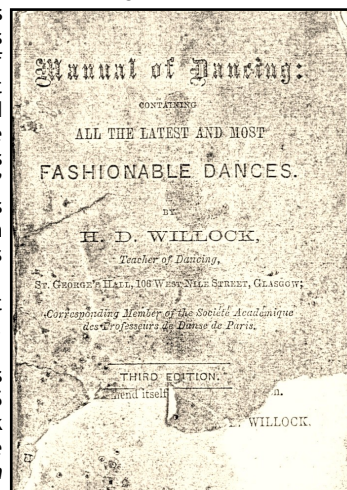


He describes himself as a teacher of dancing living in South Bridge Edinburgh and gives, "A Selection of Observations and Maxims necessary to be attended to in Genteel Company." One of these points out that "A Gentleman's breeding is observed more in conducting his partner down a dance ... and it would certainly be only civil and polite if Gentlemen would pay due attention to their partners' mode of stepping, and by no means drag them along as by force." His book includes *The Triumph* and *Meg Merrilees* from Book 1 and a total of 8 RSCDS dances.

Reid - The next manual is perhaps the most interesting - *The Ball-Room Companion* by W.P. Reid, Professor of Dancing, Trades' Hall, Glasgow. The subtitle states, "Containing the Figures of the Favourite Quadrilles, Country Dances, etc as practised at the Public and Private Assemblies, Malta 1859." Reid appears to have been working in Glasgow from 1856 to around 1874 as a teacher and then professor of dancing. He is listed in the Glasgow Postal directories during this period, mostly teaching from the Trades' Hall, Glassford Street. The only known copy was discovered bound within another book in the Royal Malta Library. What is unclear to me is Reid's connection with Malta, or how his work ended up in the library there. His *Companion* includes all the popular quadrilles such as *First Set*, *The Caledonians* and *Hart's Lancers*. He has a section on Scottish Country Dances with 19 dances, an English Country Dances section with 17 dances and an Irish Country Dances section with 6 dances. He also has a miscellaneous dances section which includes dances such as *La Russe*, *Circassian Circle*, *La Tempête* and *Scotch Reels*. His work includes all the dances in Book 1 apart from *Rory O'More* and in total has 35 RSCDS dances.



Willock - I suspect Reid's work might have influenced the next publisher, H.D. Willock. His *Manual of Dancing* was published in 1866 with a subsequent revised edition adding more dances in 1868. His foreword states that "his work is containing all that is practised by the élite of society". Mr Willock adds that "having been appointed corresponding member of the Société Académique des Professeurs de Danse de Paris" he is "prepared to issue copies of the Theory ... together with the music of all the new dances published by the Society". Willock was based at St George's Hall, West Nile Street, Glasgow from 1862 until 1877. Willock's book has 9 dances from Book 1 and 21 RSCDS dances in total. Willock incidentally also includes for the first time the *New Caledonian Quadrilles* where alternate quadrilles in the set are specified to be danced in strathspey rhythm with strathspey steps. This mix of English and Scottish styles is a new feature in a quadrille.



Wallace - Another certified and corresponding member of the Société Académique des Professeurs de Danse de Paris was James F



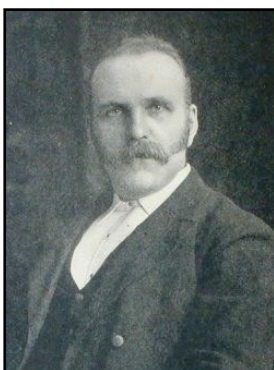
Wallace who ran a dance academy at Wellington Rooms, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. The Glasgow Postal Directory shows him working as a professor of dancing and callisthenics from 1867 and as teacher of dancing at Blythswood Assembly Rooms and then Rosemount Institute from 1872 - 1904. During some of this period he was helped by a Florence Wallace.

Wallace published his *The Excelsior Manual of Dancing* in 1872 both in Glasgow and Edinburgh and his *Ball Room Guide* in 1900. He too says he wants to give "an accurate description of the most popular dances." He also includes the *New Caledonian*

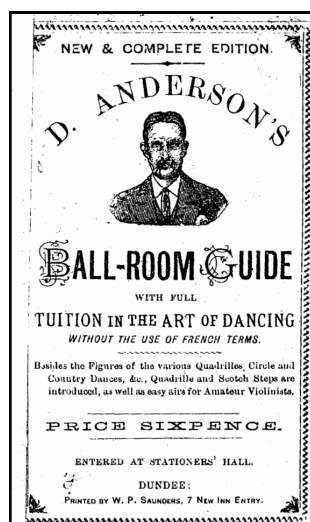
Quadrilles. His Country Dances section states that these dances are the most frequently danced, among many. His book has 9 Book 1 dances and 30 RSCDS dances in total.

Daniel - *The Ball-Room Companion or Dancing Taught without a Master* was published by J Daniel and Son in 1879 in Aberdeen. This contained instructions for most of the popular quadrilles, but does have 6 country dances with one RSCDS Book 1 dance - *The Triumph*.

Mozart Allan - produced his *Allan's Reference Guide to the Ball-Room*, with editions published in Glasgow from before 1880 to after 1900. He includes 10 of the Book 1 dances and 43 RSCDS dances in total. His father taught dancing too and his grandparents had been music teachers. His sister Euphemia composed the well-known piano beginners' tune *The Chop Waltz* commonly known as *Chopsticks*. A newspaper ad mentions Allan, saying, "To those who are looking around for something really excellent, cheap and popular in the way of music, let me commend the publications of Mr Mozart Allan, Glasgow. For popular music his 'Ball-Room Companion' is *facile princeps* amongst books prepared to meet the needs of Scottish domestic and popular assembly purposes." In his guide Allan states, "As the figures of the Dances are apt to be forgotten, I offer the following selection as an assistant to the memory."



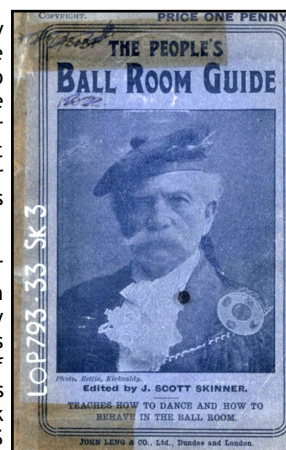
Anderson - David Anderson - professor of dancing, was publishing in Dundee and the first edition of his *Ball-Room Guide* dates from around 1886. In his preface he says that parents, "make a serious mistake in not sending their families to a Dancing School while young, as it makes them more robust, active, attentive, healthy and graceful and also counteracts the many rude attitudes and habits which they are inclined to adopt." As this is later in the century, his guide contains a larger number of Country Dances and is probably responsible for the change of *The Dashing White Sergeant* from the dance known in earlier guides to the one we dance today (for a detailed explanation see my video from the Burns Night at Home 2021 [here](#)). Anderson's book contains 10 RSCDS Book 1 dances and 40 RSCDS dances in total. His 1890 Guide does not have *Rory O'More*, but his 1897 Guide does. To give an idea of the popularity of these guides, the title page of his 1897 edition says 15th thousand sold and cost is sixpence. He promotes it by saying "Quadrille and Scotch Steps explained so simply that a child may understand them."



Scott Skinner - James Scott Skinner also based in Dundee, published his *The People's Ball Room Guide* in 1898. He remarks that, "Some dances popular with our grandparents have passed away. Changes in taste and fashion are mainly responsible for this. A few dances have lived on from their time to ours, but those have had their ups and downs in the

matter of popularity." While he only has 5 of the Book 1 dances, he is the only person other than Anderson to include *Rory O' More*. This begs the question whether the dance was better known in the Dundee area but not around Glasgow and Edinburgh. Skinner has 8 RSCDS dances in total in his Guide.

McEwen - There were two other Victorian dance manuals published in Glasgow. Firstly, *The Ballroom* by James B McEwen from 1900 which says it contains "an exhaustive Summary of all the latest Dances". A copy of this resides in the RSCDS archive - his work has 5 Book 1 dances and 10 RSCDS dances in total.



Robertson - Secondly, at the back of James Kerr's *Collection of Reels and Strathspeys* c. 1880-1890 there is a section on Country Dances by James Orr Robertson, Honorary Member of the British Association of Teachers of Dancing and another member of the Société Académique des Professeurs de Danse de Paris. From 1878 to 1908 Robertson was working at Gordon Halls, 316 Paisley Road as a teacher of dancing. James S Kerr, the music publisher, was living at 322 and later 314 Paisley Road as a music seller, pianoforte tuner and music publisher. Therefore, given their near vicinity it is hardly surprising they collaborated in this volume. Robertson also gives very clear instructions on steps and dance positions and this is the only guide to include music for the dances. He has 7 Book 1 dances and 19 RSCDS dances in total.

What do we learn from these manuals?

The dances chosen for RSCDS Book 1 did seem to be ones that kept their popularity in the Scottish ballroom in the 70 or so years these dance manuals were being published. Dances such as *Petronella*, *Meg Merrilees* and *The Nut* all seem to be going strong. The Fletts in their *Traditional Dancing in Scotland* go into detail about the dances being taught by itinerant dancing masters and at dance academies in Scotland during the 1870s onwards and many of the Book 1 dances feature in the dancing masters' repertoire.

What is interesting is the number of dance academies in Glasgow and Edinburgh in particular. Having studied the postal directories I discovered that Wallace and Reid were running dance classes about a mile from each other, while Willock and Wallace were also about a mile from each other's premises. They were all active within the same 30 year period. This shows there must have been a good deal of interest in dancing for all these teachers to make a living. Their publications contain a similar selection of dances and they were obviously in competition with each other. People wanted concise, easy to read and understandable instructions and these guides provided this for an inexpensive price, while providing a handy revenue stream for their authors. Mozart Allan, for example, comments on the fact that "rapid sale of the previous editions has induced me to issue this New and Enlarged Reference Guide."

Which sources did the RSCDS use for their Book 1 dances? The original 1924 publication does not mention sources. Many of the dances appear in all of these ballroom guides with some differences. Several of these manuals were readily available when Book 1 was compiled, but it is hard to pinpoint whether the dances were taken from these or from oral sources.

The purpose of all these guides was to bring dances to the public eye and provide helpful hints on steps, behaviour in the ballroom and an aide-memoire of dances. Surely this aligns with some of the aims of the RSCDS as mentioned in the minutes of their first meetings:

- 1) To practise and preserve Country Dances as danced in Scotland
- 2) To provide or assist in providing special education or instruction in the practice of Scottish Country dances

Perhaps I should end with the words of Scott Skinner: "Learn to dance. Begin young. Get the best instruction you can so that the foundations may be well laid. Set a high standard of attainment before you, and practise assiduously. Aim at being as good a dancer as you can, and put life and spirit into your dancing. It is a glad exercise. Let the joy of it fill your spirit to the brim. Dance with all your heart!"

While the popularity of quadrilles and waltzes in the ballroom increased during the nineteenth century, these manuals helped to also keep country dancing in the minds of the Scottish people. They provided an invaluable resource.

London Branch Young Dancers

The Tuesday Social

London Branch's monthly social event for younger dancers has gone from strength to strength over the past year. Many regulars were at Spring Fling, and they are attending more and more Branch events - dances and the White Rose Festival in Leeds. Photos below, show some of the lively classes taught by Gill O'Dell and Judith Jones.

Being a regular attendee of the Tuesday Social since summer of 2024, I have appreciated the evolving community that has been created as a central network for young Scottish country dancers. The monthly class allows us to *pas-de-basque* with greater energy than we find at regular classes, also providing a collective for dancers to discuss events occurring within the greater Scottish dancing scene in London.

It is encouraging to see a healthy future for the capital's Branch, as despite the loss of a few regular faces, attendance remains strong and growing, aided by the Branch's excellent social media presence advertising the Tuesday Social.

With such a unique hobby, the class provides an easy outlet for new dancers to *jetée* themselves into a welcoming circle.

David O'Donoghue

The Tuesday Social has been a wonderful way to dance in London. I recently took up Scottish country dancing, after several years away from the hobby. I do most of my dancing at St Columba's Monday dances and with the Gay Gordons, but I particularly look forward to the Tuesday Social every month.

On a technical level, I enjoy the opportunity to work on the basics. Like most of my dance education, my knowledge of Scottish country dance is somewhat piecemeal, so I appreciate the extra time spent going over more basic figures. It makes the other classes and dances that I go to much easier for me! The social (for lack of a better word) aspect of the Tuesday Social is also lovely. I have enjoyed getting to meet and learning from people who are older than me at other events, but it is nice to dance with people roughly my own age. It reminds me of learning Scottish country dancing while I was at university. A number of my friends danced too, and I loved partnering with them and commiserating about a difficult dance together. The same sorts of conversations happen at the Tuesday Social. I had met a few regulars before attending, but have found it easy to go up to and start chatting with people during breaks.

If anyone in the age group for the Tuesday Social is on the fence about attending, I would encourage them to come and give it a try!

Cyril L. Hamilton



RSCDS Teaching Qualification Units 2 and 3: Beth Fairbairn

On 28 March 2025, I flew out to Cologne, Germany to spend the next seven days training to take Units 2 and 3 of my RSCDS Teaching Certificate. I travelled from the UK with my long-suffering friend William Thomson (with whom I had to attempt self-check bag drop, which I cannot say was a great success), while the other candidates were all old friends from Germany and Hungary.

We were taught by Patrick Chamoin, whose patience, expertise, wisdom and encouragement were boundless. We also had live music from Silke Grosholz, who not only played wonderful tunes, but became an excellent wingwoman when we started to make attempts at teaching that were perhaps not as successful as we had anticipated.

The Kutsche family very kindly hosted us in their house in the countryside, and they even had a cat who provided emotional support cuddles when required. Wolfgang also became everyone's dad for the week, making hot chocolates on demand and thrashing everyone at Mario kart during our down time! Being in Germany, the week was very structured. Every morning, we rose early, scoffed a breakfast that for me mostly consisted of chocolate spread, and then hopped into the VW bus for the long journey into central Cologne. We trained for 4.5 hours each morning, fuelled by tins of sweets that were luckily bottomless! Then we headed back to Lommersum for lunch, and a break in which most of us had a nap, before we began our evening session at 4pm. We then did either 2 or 4 more hours of work, and then headed home for dinner, homework and if there was any energy left, some games. Seven days, rinse and repeat: I think the word intense barely

covers it! But the experience was absolutely golden, with immense quantities of fun and laughter packed in, and a healthy chunk of bonding over struggles with making lesson plans on google sheets at unsociable hours along the way.

The highlight of the course for me was the afternoon when I got to run the warm-up, and I decided that it was paramount we begin with the hokey cokey. Not wanting to let them catch a break, I flung the group straight into a six-couple version of *The Flying Scotsman*. After all that, we were definitely warm! However, the highlight of time spent outside the training room was undoubtedly when, at the end of the penultimate day, Wolfgang unveiled a chocolate fountain at the dinner table. I don't think I have ever been so excited about anything ever!

The week culminated with mock exams, for which local dancers from the Bonn group kindly stooged. It was very exciting to have real dancers to teach, having taught each other all week. Everyone taught brilliantly and was rewarded with a party ring (elite bastion of British biscuits) after their turn.

In late April, we headed back out to Germany to sit our exams at the Obelethe Course. I had been busy practising my dancing and teaching at my local class in Oxford, and fortunately it paid off! My whole cohort passed with flying colours. I am immensely grateful to the London Branch, Oxford Branch and the Youth Branch for financially supporting me in this endeavour. It has been some of the most fun I have ever had, and I cannot wait to embark on a hopefully illustrious teaching career!

London Branch Young Dancers at Spring Fling in Lyon

Reports from some of the 35 strong London contingent at Spring Fling and Fringe this year. Regular Tuesday Social dancers, David O'Donoghue and Christoph Ulshoefer, report below, and alongside, Heather Jeffery, who received a travel grant from London Branch legacy funds.

Spring Fling 2026, the RSCDS's annual weekend for young people, was held in Lyon and proved a fantastic experience. Organised by and for dancers aged 35 and under, this year's edition drew an impressive turnout. Lyon Branch turned up, joined by dancers particularly this year from across Europe, including German and Italian delegations. One couple even travelled from Boston! London was out in force with nearly 20 dancers attending Fringe and Fling.

Saturday morning featured advanced and very advanced classes, taught by Mathias Ferber and Antoine Rousseau respectively. Both proved cheerful, helpful, and encouraging us to maintain loose and relaxed while remaining focused on good technique within the flow of the live music. Despite the southern French heat, the classes remained popular and jovial. Mercifully, Saturday's rain cooled things down, leaving us energised for the evening's dance. Making the most of the day before the dance, we attended additional afternoon workshops on Highland (sadly with tape not swords) and walkthroughs for the evening dances. A contingent of us indulged in a glass or two of white prior to the dance, an unofficial but appreciated addition.



Massed ranks of London dancers attending Spring Fling and Fringe - for those still young at heart!

Sunday morning brought a creative challenge: devising dances within ten minutes, themed around Harry Potter, Titanic, and Pirates of the Caribbean; a marvellous test of quick thinking.

Beyond dancing, organisation was seamless, transportation ran smoothly, the hotel was spotless, and a Saturday pre-dance supper was a highlight with truly outstanding desserts. Some of us even found time to frequent a boulangerie or two for a pastry or two! After the weekend, we spent an extra day exploring the Lyonnais bouchons and the cathedral.

Spring Fling 2026 was a joyful weekend of dance, food, and friendship. Certainly, we are looking forward to Oxford in 2027.

David O'Donoghue and Christoph Ulshoefer (pictured below)



The dance floor of Lyon



The sun had not yet peeped over the horizon, but it was time to get moving - a flight to Lyon awaited! I was welcomed by bright sunshine and warm weather for a few hours of sightseeing around the old town and region of Fourvière where there were very impressive buildings - the Cathédrale Saint-Jean Baptiste, the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière and the Ancient Theatre of Fourvière, a well-preserved Roman amphitheatre. The walk up the hill to the latter two was a good warm up for what was to come!

The dancing commenced on the Friday night, with a ball at the Festival Hall, where around eighteen 4-couple sets congregated. The stage was equally busy with a clarinet, four violins, a cello, and three pianists playing in rotation plus the MC, with musicians having travelled from around France, Scotland, Portugal and the US! They played very uplifting music, keeping the dance floor busy through to the end of both evenings and playing particularly good tunes for *Midsummer Common* and *Take Ten*.

For the classes on the Saturday morning, we danced to the joyful music of Tim Macdonald on violin and Andy Imbrie on piano. Antoine Rousseau kept the energy up for the class, particularly challenging us with doing a *tourbillon* in reel time!

In the afternoon Scottish country dance class Antoine introduced further complex formations which were fun to give a go (though need some practice before anything like perfection would be achieved!) These included a highland schottische poussette which was surprisingly stable in a couple, small circles on the sides with useful instructions of who should be leading, and a dance about the French and English fighting which involved two three-couple sets next to each other interacting within the dance.

The evening dances involved more *tourbillons* and *promenades* than I have done in a long time! It was particularly interesting that the programmes had a lot of dances that I do not regularly come across and some interesting variations for example *Marjoram and Mint* which was reminiscent of *Domino Five* but with a solo part while the others circled and swapping the *reels* for *double triangles*. The Saturday night programme also featured only female dance choreographers!

Sunday morning saw us choreographing dances along to Harry Potter, Titanic and Pirates of the Caribbean - much spell casting and swashbuckling ensued with our magic wand and sword props!

It was only a weekend, but it felt like we did so much, and it was a great opportunity to get to know the other London under 35 dancers better, as well as to reconnect with various dancers I have met at Spring Fling and other dances throughout the years.

Thank you very much to the London Branch for supporting my attendance with a bursary.

Heather Jeffery



Heather Jeffery (far right) with the Tuesday Social dancers at Spring Fling

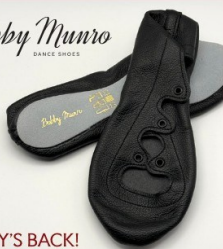
Branch Committee Report: Richard Clarke

Since the last *Reel* went to press, we have had two committee meetings and a Convenors' meeting. At the latter, the Dances Convenor, Class Convenor, Treasurer and Chair agreed on a proposal for the financial framework for the year from 1 April 2026. This continues our strategy of investing in dancing in London by running a deficit on most classes and the day school. High hall charges, paying teachers and in most cases using live musicians rather than recorded music makes a financial loss on many classes inevitable. The deficit is partially financed from reserves, but we have a policy of at least breaking even on dances and where possible making a surplus. For example, the Burns Ceilidh attracts capacity numbers and our move to offering a paid bar rather than a 'bring your own bottle' added to the surplus. A combination of some visible events such as the ceilidh and our dance afternoons in Kensington Gardens coupled with investing in the classes, contributes to the recruitment and retention of new dancers which offsets the inevitable reductions in our older demographic.

Another area of discussion was the future of *The Reel*. Not so long ago this attracted commercial advertising, but this has been replaced by online channels, so this income has shrunk whilst the costs continue to increase - particularly postage. We believe publication contributes to our objective of promoting knowledge of Scottish country dancing and whilst not always read cover to cover, many members appreciate it. Electronic subscriptions are not feasible for all our members, and the intention is to contain the deficit by moving to a term-based publication cycle of three editions each year. The regular e-Updates (which do not suffer from post delays) will continue providing instant diary information and stop press headlines.

Counter intuitively, the introduction of charges for the monthly children's class has increased regular numbers. Hopefully some of these dancers will carry on dancing as they progress through life and return to us in London or recommend us to friends! One incidental consequence is a decision by the committee to redesign our generic safeguarding policy.

You will find the formal notice about the AGM on 13 June on p2.



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RSCDS Management Board: Debbie McAlees



Management Board Meeting Highlights Saturday 28 February 2026

Branding and Digital Developments

The Board approved the new RSCDS branding, marking a significant step forward in modernising the Society's image. A new website with public and member only sections is also well underway. A launch event for the new brand and website is planned for May, with the rollout of branded toolkits and marketing materials for Branches to follow ahead of the start of the next dance season.

The Carnforth Collection will be the first publication to feature the new look. A new CRM membership system will also be introduced in stages to support improved administration and member engagement.

Teacher Training Review

A comprehensive review of the Teacher Training programme is underway, with the aim of creating a more flexible and accessible pathway. Proposals include a modular two-level structure covering teaching skills, music, steps and formations, supported by mentoring, video assessment and elements of online learning. Further updates will be provided following the April Board meeting.

Membership Structure

Work continues on developing options to modernise the membership structure. Costings are now being developed, with proposals expected to be shared with Branches for consultation later in the spring ahead of any AGM consideration.

UNESCO Living Heritage Application

The Board agreed to proceed with a full submission to the UK Living Heritage Inventory to recognise Scottish Country Dancing as part of the UK's living cultural heritage. A draft application will be reviewed by the Board prior to submission.

Membership and Finance

Membership currently stands at 9,392 worldwide, and we anticipate the final membership number for the year will be just over 9,500. This represents a small decline on last year, and growth remains a key priority. Financially, the Society remains stable: the 2025 Autumn Gathering broke even, central costs have reduced due to staffing changes, and investment income remains steady. The Board approved the 2026-27 budget, noting that income from shop sales continues to be an important but variable factor.

To support long-term sustainability, Caroline Sexton has been appointed as Head of Fundraising. The Board noted the importance of clearly communicating how this role contributes to strengthening overall income.

Debbie McAlees is the Board member with responsibility for liaison with RSCDS London Branch. Contact: debra.mcalees@rscds.org

A Fresh Start for the Autumn Gathering

For some time now, members have told us the same thing: the Autumn Gathering weekend has been becoming too expensive to attend. While the RSCDS has always worked hard to keep ticket prices as low as possible, rising venue and event costs in Glasgow and Edinburgh have made this increasingly difficult. Accommodation has added to the challenge. With hotel prices in both cities continuing to climb, the overall cost of the weekend has put it out of reach for too many of our members. We have listened – and this year, we are making a change.

Welcome to Dumfries

We are delighted to announce that this year's Autumn Gathering will take place in Dumfries, at the Loreburn Hall – a move that allows us to create a more affordable and accessible weekend for everyone.

Dumfries offers excellent transport links. It is well connected by rail, with regular services to Glasgow and Carlisle, and the station is just a five-minute walk from the venue. The town is also easily reached by car via the A75, A76 and M74, with convenient parking nearby.

One of Dumfries' biggest advantages is the availability of reasonably priced accommodation, all within easy walking distance of the venue. Average accommodation prices are 15% lower in Dumfries than Glasgow and there is a wide range of hotels and guest houses within a 10 minute walk of Loreburn Hall.

Lower Costs

By reducing our running costs, we are able to pass those savings on to you. Ticket prices are expected to be around 20% lower than last year and we are also pleased to be bringing back a Sunday morning class and additional activities. We hope this new location will make it easier for more members to join us - and we look forward to welcoming you to Dumfries for a fantastic weekend of dancing, music, and community.

Save the Date

Autumn Gathering 2026 will run from 6 - 8 November. Full details will be available soon.

Lives Remembered

A prodigious talent

from Robert Carlin and Simon Wales

Sandra Smith

19 September 1943 - 28 January 2026



Sandra was brought up in Inverness (although born in Bromley when her father was posted to London with the bank) where she was introduced to Scottish country dancing by her parents who were both keen dancers. Her mother, an amateur pianist, collected the RSCDS books which inspired Sandra to play Scottish music. She continued dancing and playing during her time at school, attending a class before she went to university.

She graduated with a BMus from the University of Edinburgh and was awarded the coveted Bucher Scholarship to study abroad. She entered the *Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst* in Vienna where she gained diplomas in Vocal and Instrumental Accompaniment and Harpsichord. Sandra then joined the staff as a répétiteur and later moved to France to an appointment at the *Théâtre des Arts* in Rennes, where, among many others, she coached Jose Carreras. Back in the UK, she coached, accompanied and taught piano, including pop star, Mika, as a child; he is now a judge on the TV Show, *The Piano*, which Sandra took some pride in.

On her return to the UK, she settled in London where her connection with dancing resumed. She was approached by Mary Stoker who was looking for a pianist as Phyllis Draper was retiring. Sandra played for Mary's classes in Pinner and her Monday night classes in London for many years. Her contribution to the society is as class pianist and Demonstration Class pianist. She has also played for numerous Day Schools, and with various instrumentalists and bands, most notably with *Kafoozalum Scottish Country Dance Band* for many years.

Sandra could play most things at sight, but she already had vast experience and a wide repertoire. Even so, she was diligent in working on a piece to make sure it was all it could be. Her preparation was meticulous, and she had extremely high standards. Although she was on stage often, Sandra was not naturally suited to being in the limelight; she hated the attention. She would always be nervous beforehand, needing to be told all the details of what was going to happen, before she felt confident enough to walk out. We never managed to persuade her to say anything by way of introduction, though that may not be unusual amongst accompanists. Her preferred environment was in rehearsal, one-to-one, or within a small group, where she was not on show, and more in control of the situation.

After her time in hospital in 2020, with her diagnosis of long-covid, she arrived home very tired and lethargic and did not touch the piano for months. She played in one final concert, but was still experiencing 'brain-fog,' she explained later, causing memory lapses and misreadings of things she had played hundreds of times. Far better it is to look back at the many successful years of concerts many of us shared, remembering all the music-making, the fun, the adventure and the reward of rehearsals and performances together with Sandra.

In her last years, Sandra was helped enormously by a handful of people - carers, who came in every day and especially her neighbour, who got her flat ready for her when she came out of hospital, still in great need, and did so much to keep her going.

Everyone has their own stories of working with Sandra and we are all lamenting the fact that we will never get that chance again. When she was relaxed after a concert, with all the anxieties of rehearsal and performance gone - and a wee dram - perhaps, Sandra would let her guard down and be tremendous fun, with her dry wit and wry comments; she would join in and enjoy herself.

Sandra deserved a better final chapter; she had earned her rest and reward, a comfortable, enjoyable retirement; but, perhaps the reward was already in all those years of performing, and in all the joy of music she brought to those she accompanied, supported, taught, and carried, and to all those who listened and shared in each experience.

A great welcomer

from Jacquie Davis

Peter Luke

28 April 1937 - 4 March 2026



Peter was born in Helston in Cornwall in 1937 to Richard and Florence Luke. He had a big sister called Shirley and a little brother called Michael. The family moved to Carbis Bay near St Ives when the business was later sold. Peter attended the Penzance Grammar School for Boys after passing his 11+ and went on to pass the Civil Service entrance exam after passing all his 'o' levels.

He moved to Reading to live with his aunt and uncle in Wantage Road so that he could work for the Intervention Board in the Ministry of Agriculture. He used to travel to Brussels to help negotiate food prices. Peter made many fondly remembered friends there before he retired. After several years of renting flats, he bought his flat at Petworth Court where he stayed for most of the rest of his life.

It was in Reading that his passion for Scottish country dancing flourished. It all started at the tender age of 21 and in the late 1960's he joined a group called *The Reivers*. Exactly where he earned the nickname 'Pete the Feet' we do not know but as he was so involved with so many fellow dancers it must have just evolved naturally. He was a member of The Reading St. Andrew's Scottish Dancing Society where he kept himself really busy with various committee roles such as treasurer and chair. He danced in the Club's demonstration team and would always be the one to encourage people to get up and try a simple dance. He danced with The London Demonstration Team for many years and was a member of both the London Branch and the Berks/Hants/Surrey Branch. He loved visiting different countries to dance with the MacLennan Scottish Group and often shared his tales and photos of his trips with the family, remembering names of fellow dancers and places fondly right up to the end of his life. He was wonderful at welcoming and encouraging new and inexperienced.

Although Peter did not have children of his own he cared about and loved his sister's three children (Jacquie, Suzanne and Paul) who lived near Reading and his brother's four boys (Ian, Anthony, Stephen and Christopher) who lived in Cornwall. Everybody's birthday was remembered with a card written in his tiny writing on exactly the right date, often with a cheque which seemed to get bigger as we all grew older. Visits to Cornwall had to include a trip to the beach and some fish and chips. If he could, he would indulge himself in some Cornish ice cream and always loved a pasty whether it had come from Cornwall or Reading. He made sure that the family would all learn about family history by researching the family tree. Anyone who was interested could learn about the history of Reading too, with wanders around bits of old Reading - a real curator of memories and something that is really valued.

He shared the same love of cheese as the rest of the family and took strolls down to Waitrose to buy fancy cheese for Christmas presents such as Cornish Yarg wrapped in nettles. He was given a lot of crackers as presents as lots of people seemed to recognise this taste for cheese and biscuits. Whilst sitting in his favourite chair looking out at the trees round Petworth Court he would compose his annual newsletter to fill us all in on his antics for the year. It was important to him to keep in touch with everyone at least once a year as he valued everyone he knew.

So many friends and acquaintances (and there were many) have told us how they remember him. He was the life and soul of everything and would always strike up a conversation with anyone. His friends say he was kind and encouraging and incredibly passionate about his dancing, as he was with anything or anyone he was interested in.

Peter was to the end a proud Cornishman, a proud Luke and a proud Readingian whom we will all always remember dancing enthusiastically in his Luke tartan kilt with a huge smile on his face. A little man with a huge heart whom we will all miss enormously.

Lives Remembered

A sparkling stalwart

from Sarah Hughes

Jean Valerie Guano

31 August 1939 - 22 February 2026



Jean danced wherever and whenever the opportunity arose, at clubs from Wembley to Wimbledon, Chiswick, Richmond, Pont Street and social dances, balls, charity events and parties.

Jean was absolutely the sparkling life and soul of the party, a natural entertaining storyteller, likewise a dancer with easy grace as well as a kind and reliable guide on the dance floor. Fifty Scottish dancing friends attended her funeral on 18 March and three sets performed *The Sparkling Stalwart* (devised by Murrough Landon). That evening, the Richmond Caledonian Society and the Chiswick Scottish Country Dance Society jointly sponsored a celebration of her life and love of Scottish Country Dancing.

Jean was a London girl. She grew up in Marylebone and attended the City of London School for Girls on a full scholarship. On leaving school, she joined the family hairdressing business but then contracted tuberculosis and spent two years in hospital. She eventually recovered fully, showing the same determination and *joie de vivre* that would define the rest of her life.

She met her husband John, a Frenchman living in London, and they settled in Wembley. They had a son, Jason, then twins, Joanna and Nicola. It was a family life filled with fun, DIY, holidays in Sussex, travel and home-made wine. In the thirty happy years Jean and John were together until John's sudden death from cancer, they spent only one night apart.

Jean, being the resilient, independent woman she was, rebuilt her life with travel, yoga, sailing, learning to play bridge and time with her six grandchildren. At a 'Bring and Buy' sale one day, over a conversation about a tartan tea-cosy, Jean's friend Sheila Cottrell invited Jean to the Wembley and District Scottish Association Dance class.

Dancing soon became her greatest passion, bringing her countless hours of enjoyment and many great friendships. Jean often said that it felt like being part of a big extended family where everyone looked out for each other, and she felt incredibly privileged to be part of that group.

Then suddenly in October last year Jean received her brain tumour diagnosis. To many of us, Jean seemed invincible, and we feel honoured to have been included in her orbit. She lives on in our hearts and in our dances.

With grateful thanks for the contributions from Jean's daughter Joanne and Jean's many many dancing friends.

A very special lady

from Jeannie Harrison, Philip Crawford and Meg Hooper

Rosemary (Ros) Elizabeth Crawford née Ellis

23 July 1933 - 2 January 2026



It is with much sadness that we share our loss of our mother, Ros Crawford, an Honorary Life Member of the Berkhamsted Strathspey and Reel Club. Ros was on the committee for 33 of the 44 years between 1966 and 2010, including two stints as President, one as Vice-President, and one as Secretary. Ros was also one of the MCs for many years at club nights and garden dances. In the early years she was children's class teacher and also part of the BSRC demonstration team. On her retirement as an MC, when she was over 80, the club presented her with a *Luckenbooth Brooch* in recognition of her favourite dance.

Rosemary Crawford, known to everybody as Ros, was born in the village of Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire. At the beginning of the second world war, she and her brother were evacuated to stay with distant American cousins in Pennsylvania. They lived there for two years before returning to the UK. After school she went to University College London to study engineering for one year before working in her father's patent agency. During her time at UCL she joined the Scottish country dancing club where she met Mike Crawford. One summer the club toured Europe and Germany with other European dance groups, a trip they hugely enjoyed.

For many years, Ros was local organiser for Berkhamsted WRVS running the local Meals on Wheels service. During this time, *The Times* newspaper ran a competition asking people to present a 'socially useful' way to use the new 'personal computers'. Ros entered the competition and won the SE England prize, a BBC Micro computer! Her son Philip then developed the idea into a working program which was used country wide for the Meals on Wheels service. Ros was interested in all aspects of British wildlife, both flora and fauna. She was particularly interested in birds, collected bird feathers and counted birds for the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden BirdWatch. She and Mike were also part of the local Deer Society contributing to their annual count. Orchids were another joint interest, both in the UK and in France where they holidayed each year in their caravan.

Ros is perhaps best remembered locally for travelling around the town on her bicycle towing a trailer full of shopping with a safety flag for extra visibility in traffic!

She will also be remembered by many Scottish country dancers for her practical help and kindness. In 2008 the dance was devised entitled *Mr & Mrs Crawford's Strathspey* by Stuart Anderson and this can be found on Strathspey Server. Ros will be missed both by her family and the many people who knew her in the local Berkhamsted community.

A bell-ringing dancer

from Quentin Armitage and Stephen Webb

Jean Mary Lefroy, née Henderson

13 April 1930 - 11 February 2026



Jean was born in Horley, Surrey. She left school at age 16 to become a secretary and in the next six years she became bilingual, living and working in Paris, then the family moved to Redhill. Jean then married Neville Armitage, with whom she had two children Quentin and Fiona, but she later separated from Neville and subsequently married Patrick Lefroy.

In 1960 she moved from Battersea to Amersham-on-the-Hill. In 1969 Jean took up a teaching post at The Beacon School in Chesham Bois as Head of the pre-prep department, remaining there until retiring in 1990.

Jean then, with spare time, turned to a great hobby of her son's (from 1976) - bell ringing at St Mary's the Virgin in Amersham, becoming a well-respected ringer for five years herself. In fact, mourners at Jean's funeral were greeted on their arrival with Stedman and Grandsire Triples being rung.

Jean also took up Scottish country dancing and joined the Berkhamsted Strathspey & Reel Club, which brought her much enjoyment through the friendships she formed. And she only hung up her shoes when COVID-19 appeared in 2019. Jean, with her humour and repartee, was a well-liked member and will be greatly missed.

Note: Jean can be seen in a video on BSRC website dancing *Mr & Mrs Crawford's Strathspey* in 2008.



Berkhamsted Strathspey & Reel Club's newly elected president, Trevor Clarke, receives the specially made clan buckle and strap plaque from past president and maker, Stephen Webb, at the club AGM on 28 April 2026

Lives Remembered

A dancing diplomat

from Margaret-Anne Robertson

Henry Macloskie Robertson
‘Harry’

10 October 1941 - 14 March 2026

Born in Edinburgh on 10 October 1941, Harry moved to London in 1960 on joining the foreign office. His career meant postings abroad from 1964 to 2003 and when working in Barbados we met and I became his second wife, marrying in the UK in 1989.



On retiring in 2003 he devoted time to his many hobbies, including Scottish country dancing, family history and gardening.

He learnt Scottish country dancing in Kuala Lumpur, becoming an excellent dancer and teacher, remembering a huge dance repertoire. We went on dance holidays in Europe and around the UK and regularly attended dances in Kent and London. We were always welcomed back on our winter visits to Barbados at its Scottish dance group.

Medway Caledonian was his home club. Harry was president from 1993 to 1995, a meticulous organiser of events, streamlining council business and leading and inspiring the demonstration team for over 25 years with his innovative choice of dances. As well as countless fêtes, social group demonstrations and ceilidhs, to much acclaim he staged and directed two public events with Gillingham Male Voice Choir and a full team of our dancers, first in the St George's Centre then the Brook Theatre in Chatham.

He taught Medway's beginners' dance class for 20 years, organised ceilidhs, was a great MC at innumerable big dances, including for the Kent Association of Scottish Societies (KASS), and supported me coaching my junior class through their exams whenever needed. He introduced Medway's day schools, which ran successfully through the 1990s.

He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2023 and gradually and sadly gave up his knowledge and dancing, and his last event with Medway Caledonians was our 100th Anniversary Ball in April 2024.

He had exacting standards which usually paid off! Scores of members learnt their first steps from him and for many years he was indeed the dancing master.

With thanks to Alan Mills for his contribution.



Forthcoming Events

SUMMER TUESDAYS

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

Superb bands every Tuesday throughout the summer

Tuesday 23 June - Tuesday 8 September 2026

7.30 - 10.15pm

Admission £18 (Payment by Card Only)

Details of Bands and Programmes can be found at

summertuesdays.org

For further information, contact:

summertuesdays22@gmail.com

ORPINGTON & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY

Summer Dance

Saturday 6 June 2026

7.30 - 11.00pm

Petts Wood Memorial Hall BR5 1LA

Ian Robertson

Programme: orpingtonscottishdancing.com

Tickets £13.00

Bring and share supper

Tea/coffee provided but please bring a mug

Contact Roger Randall 07925 008283

roger.randall7@btinternet.com

Credits: Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue of *The Reel*, including the following for providing photos: p1: Winter Wednesday Dance - Willie Lawrence; Where is This? - Ivor Frank. p2: Richard Clarke - Christopher Bowen. p5: Joanne Lawrence - from herself; Classes pictures - Joanne Lawrence (JL). p6: CD covers - Ewan Galloway; Ian Robertson - from himself; Winter School Band - Jo Angus; Winter School line-up - Charlotte Davies Photography. p8: KASS workshop - from Helen Cole; IoW Weekend - Frankie Bluett-Burgess; Don Ward and Angela Campbell - Ginny Colenbrander. p9: Newcastle Festival - Michael Nolan. pp10-11: Spring Fling - RSCDS photographer; Combined Societies' Dance - Simon Wales (SDW); Winter Wednesday Dance - JL; p12: Meryl Thomson - from herself (MT); The Ballroom - from MT; Lowe's Ball Conductor - Library of Dance; The Pocket Companion - Library of Dance; The Ballroom Companion W.P. Reid - from MT; Willock Manual of Dancing - from MT; The Excelsior Manual - Google Books online; Mozart Allan - online; D Anderson's Ball-Room Guide - RSCDS Archive; The People's Ball-Room Guide - courtesy of Aberdeen City Libraries - (NB permission granted 15/12/2025). p14: The Tuesday Social - Rowena Jackson. p15: Spring Fling - all from the authors. p16: Debbie McAlees - from herself. p17: Sandra Smith - from herself in Branch archives; Peter Luke - SDW. p18: Jean Guano - Jacmel Dent; Rosemary Crawford - Stephen Webb (SJW); Jean Lefroy - SJW; Berkhamsted president - Gerry Elliott. p19: Harry Robertson - both from Margaret-Anne Robertson.

BERKHAMSTED STRATHSPEY & REEL CLUB

Day School

Sunday 15 November 2026

10.00am - 5.00pm

White Hill Centre, Chesham HP5 1AG

Parking available, nearest station Chesham (Metropolitan Line)

Teachers: Paul Plummer & William Williamson

Musicians: Jeremy Hill, Ken Martlew & Barbara Manning

Tickets: Whole day £30, morning or afternoon £16.00

Tea, coffee and cold drinks provided, bring your own lunch

Applications and bookings

Contact: Simon Cumming,
1 Fullers Close, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1LU

01494 782695

bookings@berkhamstedreelclub.org
berkhamstedreelclub.org

THISTLE CLUB

Musicians' & Dancers' Workshops and Dance

Saturday 5 September 2026

10.30am - 4.30pm & 7.30 - 10.30pm

Wing Village Hall, LU7 0NN

Teacher: Florence Burgy

Musician: Ian Robertson

Musician Tutor: Jim Lindsay

Workshops: Musicians £23, Dancers £20
Evening Dance £14 or £32 for both

Bring your own lunch and shared buffet contribution

Programme

my.strathspey.org/dd/list/63533/

Hogmanay Dance

Thursday 31 December 2026

8.00pm - 12.30am

Gt. Brickhill Hall, Rotten Row, MK17 9BA

Craigievar

Tickets in advance £17

Programme to follow

Bring and share supper

Contact Jan Jones 07877 153259 or
jangeverybusy@gmail.com

thistleclub.co.uk/events

RSCDS CROYDON & DISTRICT

Weekend School

Friday 13 - Sunday 15
November 2026

Cumberland Hotel, Grand Parade,
Eastbourne BN21 3YT

Teacher: Joan Desborough

Music: Ian & Judith Muir

Reserve now, pay in October

Contact: Roger Keeling

rscds.croydon.treasurer@gmail.com
rscdscroydon.org.uk



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 336 - 338 and payment of £30 for this cycle is now due.
If you wish to cancel for the next cycle, please contact treasurer@rscdslondon.org.uk

ABINGDON SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE CLUB Dancing most Mondays, 7.45-10.00pm, September - June at Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon OX14 1NS. All welcome. Details: secretary@ascdc.org.uk or Abingdonscottish.wixsite.com/abingdon

ADDLESTONE & DISTRICT SCOTTISH SOCIETY Meets Wednesdays 7.30-9.30pm September-May at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Byfleet KT14 7NF. Details: Brenda Walton, 01483 829097 or 07747 025175 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 7.45-10.15pm 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

CHELTENHAM 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

EPPING 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 angelaross87@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@ymail.com or fscdc.co.uk

FLEET SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY Dance in Fleet URC Hall, 25 Kings Road, Fleet GU51 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 Tuesdays 7.30-10.00pm in the Gerrards Cross Memorial Centre SL9 7AD and Thursdays 2.00-4.00pm in Little Chalfont Methodist Church Hall, HP6 6RD. Beginners and visitors welcome. Details: Suzanne, 01923 283730 or gxchscottish.org

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 Social dancing from 8-10pm every Thursday at Wendover Memorial Hall, Wharf Road, Wendover HP22 6HF. Separate beginner and intermediate classes run from 6.45-8.00pm. 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 secretary@maidenheadscottishdancing.org.uk or maidenheadscottish.wixsite.com/maidenhead

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

ORPINGTON & DISTRICT CALEDONIAN SOCIETY Dancing every Thursday 8.00-10.15pm at Petts Wood Memorial Hall, BR5 1LA. Details: Ginny Colenbrander 07751 303610 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 duncanbarnet@gmail.com or scottishdancingreading.org

RICHMOND CALEDONIAN SOCIETY Wednesdays 8-10pm with beginners' classes from 7pm during term time. Oddfellows Hall, Parkshot, Richmond TW9 2RG. Details: Iris Ronayne, 07767 842670 or richmondcaledonian.co.uk

ST COLUMBA'S DANCERS Meet most Mondays October - May, 7.15-10.00pm in St Columba's Church, Pont Street, London SW1X 0BD. 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: Alan Ip, 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 amkennedy148@gmail.com

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

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



RSCDS London Branch Annual Report 2025-2026



RSCDS London Branch Annual General Meeting

Saturday 13 June 2026 at 6.45pm

This report, prepared by the Management Committee, will be presented to the AGM on Saturday 13 June 2026. Members' comments are welcome at the meeting or any time via secretary@rscdslondon.org.uk.

Over the last year, we continued to pursue 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 join in a new activity.

Most Scottish country dancing is based on three rhythms to traditional folk music. A myriad of dances are available by dancing with a partner together with (typically) two or three other couples. Conventionally, every dance is with a different partner and combines social interaction with physical activity and the challenge of remembering the dances. As a result, Scottish country dancing 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. Under the agreement, we collect a membership fee for 12 CC from each of our members, can share branding and are encouraged to share values. A typical membership includes £29 paid to 12CC and £7.50 retained by London. Members obtain a discount for each London event (generally £3), receive a digital magazine and regular email updates. Seven 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 use Maria Fidelis School for most of our classes including the annual day school for dancers and musicians in October. 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. Unusually in central London, it also has some on street parking availability for musicians with their equipment. This

makes it ideal for those working in London to visit before travelling home, and also for most 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.

Also in central London, we teach at St Columba's Church with a Wednesday afternoon Mixed Ability social class and a monthly Tuesday evening social class aimed at dancers in their 20s and 30s. The monthly Children's class is at the church on Sundays, and this has now established a regular attendance.

In south-west London, the weekly class at the Richmond Library Annexe, starts with Beginners' material and moves on to more advanced material designed for Improvers. This class, on Wednesday evenings, is popular and fills the hall.

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 financial deficit from these activities. 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 dance events starts 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 (which mainly attracts members) and a Burns Ceilidh in January (which is attractive to non-members) 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.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the minutes of 14 June 2025 and matters arising
3. Report on the Branch Activities 2025-2026
4. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts
5. Confirmation/Appointment of Honorary President and Honorary Vice Presidents
6. Appointment of Officers and Committee of Management
7. Appointment of Branch proxy delegates to the Society AGM
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner
9. Motions received in advance
10. Any Other Competent Business

Note: As the number of nominations does not exceed the number of places available, there will not be an election under item 6. Nominations for the appointments at items 5 and 8 will be taken from the floor at the meeting.

The bursary programme is designed to assist the development of musicians, teachers and dancers within the M25 area. Members and the public can obtain details and application forms on our website - rscdslondon.org.uk/branch-support

A longstanding challenge is to increase the numbers involved in Scottish country dancing in London where we compete with other leisure opportunities which often require less of a learning commitment. Once dancers have established their basic skill set, they often continue to be involved for many years, but a continuous stream of new recruits is needed to offset those who are no longer active. We have a presence on most social media platforms, but our most powerful recruitment tool remains recommendations from our members, reinforced by a welcoming social environment. Increased numbers contribute to our charitable object of expanding knowledge and also sustain our financial situation where our long-term strategy is to finance our investment in classes using surpluses on dance events, with the bursary programme sustained mainly by donations.

We are proud of the fact that we pay our teachers and musicians but we rely heavily on volunteers to run the charity as well as organise the classes and dances. If you can help Scottish country dancing continue in London, then please let us know.



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.