

BRANCH REPORT FOR 2020-2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has of course impacted on our activities with no dances, classes or family events taking place during this period. However, the committee has continued to function and plan for the future with regular Zoom committee meetings.

The Branch has kept in touch with members throughout the emergency. *The Reel* has continued to be published and the Branch has also hosted Zoom entertainments with music, dance and quizzes. The first of these took place on the occasion of the 2020 Branch AGM followed by events at Christmas, Burns' Night as well as the *Spring from Home* event which took place on the evening when the Combined Societies' Dance would have occurred. These were 'virtually' well attended and enjoyed, as shown by the letters of gratitude which have been received relating to both *The Reel* and these Zoom events.

Turning to membership statistics, at the end of March our membership totalled 435. This breaks down as follows:

- a) 281 Annual members which includes 4 Juniors aged 12-17 and 1 Young Adult aged 18-24,
- b) 66 Life members, and
- c) 88 Second Branch members.

Of these, 200 people have opted to receive *The Reel* electronically and a further 63 receive the electronic link in addition to a paper copy.

Alas there is a continuing trend of declining membership. In 2022, we shall be working to retrieve those members as it is likely that, with no classes and events this last season, a number of people have allowed their membership to lapse. Hopefully, they will re-join once we are able to dance again.

And the clouds appear to be lifting. So, in anticipation that circumstances will indeed allow a resumption of activities after the Branch AGM, our convenors have drawn up plans for a resumption of classes and dances from September 2021.

Lockdown has offered the opportunity for us to think about the future and how to reach out to a broader audience. Our members' survey has suggested areas for change for the future. For example, a future Youth Class is being considered. On the administrative front our Treasurer, Simon Wales, is considering the implications for the Branch to accept payments for classes and dances by credit/debit card, a procedure which many of us have become better acquainted thanks to the pandemic. Watch this space!

Meanwhile, we plan to revive our deferred 90th (cum 91st) Anniversary celebrations starting with the Garden Celebration on 3 July 2021 followed by our Ball on 16 October 2021.

Priorities for the 2021 – 2022 season will therefore be:

- 1) Rebuilding and reinvigorating our membership base
- 2) Celebrating the Branch's 90th anniversary
- 3) Developing classes for younger dancers
- 4) Modernising payment methods
- 5) Digitisation of our archives.

I would like to thank our convenors and supporting committee, for all they have done. Special thanks go to Vice Chair Joanne Lawrence, Secretary Mel Rowland and Treasurer Simon Wales. Thanks also go to those who carry out non-executive roles:

Margaret Catchick, looking after our Day School and 90th Anniversary Events
Meryl Thomson, our webmaster
Gaynor Curtis, looking after Membership and Subscribers
Simon Wales, Willie Lawrence and Edward Bunting, our Reel Editorial Team
Jeff Robertson our Reel Business Editor

Thank you all for keeping our interest alive and for stoically coping with the disappointments of seeing their past planning of events either cancelled or rescheduled thanks to COVID-19.

Ending on a happy note, the Branch is pleased to announce Branch Awards to Joanne Lawrence, Meryl and Ian Thomson and Stephen Webb in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the work of the Branch.

JIM COOK
CHAIR, RSCDS LONDON BRANCH