

Secretary's Report for year to 30th June 2024

Although there was a change in actual Members, our membership remained at 71; being 38 adult single, 24 joint, 2 young adult, 5 Bristol Members (registered with RSCDS HQ elsewhere) and 2 Life Members.

We have continued to hold weekly Thursday evening classes; 7.00-7.30 for beginners and new dancers, 7.30-8.45 General class and 9.00-10.00 for more advanced dancers. The classes take place January – end of June and September until Christmas, with an Easter break as well. Margaret Chambers and Lynn Robinson teach the beginners' class and Graham Coles, Fiona Grant and Maggie Kirkup teach the General Class and more advance dancers in rotation. Throughout the summer there were classes in Marksbury and also classes in Westbury Park for less experienced dancers.

COVID now seems a lifetime away but we have kept our policy of refunding those who buy tickets but cannot attend dances because of illness. This is particularly good for PR, giving a feel-good factor towards Bristol RSCDS.

The July Summer Fling is always enjoyable; it's turn up, pay on the door and dance some of your favourite dances. Graham Coles with Pat Fish organised the music and dances. Tea with delicious homemade scones is also a draw.

As 2023 was the centenary of the RSCDS we held our Centenary Dance in October. This was a great success with many positive comments received: Susan and Shona MacFadyen and Isobelle Hodgson produced wonderful music and were happy to play encores; Maggie, as MC, kept it all moving well. To make it more special, instead of asking people to bring food, we provided sandwiches and there were extra decorations. There were 86 people for supper including 74 dancers; it was lovely to have past members who can no longer dance, enjoy spectating. It was also the first dance since COVID where we had been full.

In November we had a Day School for both Dancers and Musicians and received several messages of thanks. Catherine Livsey started nervously but she and the dancers were pleased by the way it went. The morning class was for beginners and the afternoon for more experienced dancers although everyone benefitted from the morning class. The catering is a huge undertaking for this event but Pat and David Wells, with help from many others, made sure it ran smoothly.

The Musicians' Day School was led by Ian Muir. This also went well; thanks were received and we had messages from people wishing to come again. This day is a two-centre event with the musicians and dancers joining together in the evening. What an evening it was; the dancers' feet forgot how tired they were as the music transported them round the room; the musicians also gained extra energy from the enthusiasm of the dancers – what a joy it was!

Ian Robertson played for us at our end of term Christmas event. His music and Maggie Kirkup's taking of the class made it a really fun evening; we enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine as well.

A group of dancers performed for Burns Night celebrations at Stoke Gifford Retirement Village; the display was enjoyed by all with several joining in with the ceilidh dances.

The Strathallen Trio played for our Newcomers Dance in February. This is always a popular dance, and our MC's, Lynn and Margaret welcomed newer as well as more experienced dancers to St Monica's. We received many positive remarks and it's always a joy to welcome dancers to their first "proper" dance in a friendly and supportive atmosphere with dances walked through.

We returned to Dawlish for our annual weekend in March. Peter Knapman gave us an insight into the history of the dances as well as teaching them to us; Ian Muir of Prestwick is understandably well known for his music and we received positive feedback.

Several times now, we have had a Tea Dance in anticipation of an evening dance, and we arranged one prior to our Summer Dance. Although the numbers were lower than anticipated, it was enjoyed and appreciated by those who attended. It certainly added to the attendees' enjoyment of the evening dance as they were more confident.

Ewan Galloway and Ian Robertson played at our Summer Dance with the MC role being shared by Maggie Kirkup and Graham Coles. The evening was enjoyed by all especially as the music was so good.

We have been very spoilt over many years with George Mickle regularly playing at our last class of the Summer Term; unfortunately he wasn't in the area this year, but we remember his previous visits with pleasure.

In the year I am reporting on, we started to look at a Teachers' Certificate course. Fiona Grant was keen to help several complete their Units 4 and 5 as well as setting others on the path to becoming teachers. The uptake has exceeded all expectation and we hope that, come December, we will have an extra 10 qualified or part-qualified teachers in the area.

It is with a heavy heart that I recall we unexpectedly lost two of our Members during the last year.

Caroline Dunn was a keen dancer, who danced far and wide. She was wise with a listening ear and compassionate heart, but not only that, she was a great administrator having served RSCDS Bristol as both Chairman, Secretary and Dance weekend organiser. She was fun and lived life to the full.

David Bain was interested in many things including Scottish Dancing, cycling and old cars; he played hockey at international level as well as enjoying his work as a lawyer

seeking a fair outcome for his clients. He brought a smile on his face when he came to dancing and was always fun to dance with.

They both had a strong Christian faith and enjoyed the things they were involved with – they would both have said “Seize the Day” and we are the better for having known them. We are pleased that both John and Tacey continue to dance with us and we offer them both all the support we can.

Ruth Davies
November 2024