

### Overall Summary

The Branch has had a very successful 75th Anniversary year. The actual date of the formation, records having been lost during the war years, was early in 1930.

We continued to bring Scottish Country Dancing to the attention of the wider public and introduced more newcomers to the delights of Scottish dancing in various forms.

We continued to provide education in Scottish Country Dancing to all ages and organised dances enjoyed by many people.

### General

The Branch continued to be successful because of the dedication and hard work of its many members. The Committee is extremely grateful to everyone who gave their time and abilities to the Branch in whatever capacity.

Particular highlights were:

- 1 The varied programme of functions held to celebrate the Anniversary, including the Ball at Hurlingham and the Weekend school held at the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester.
- 2 The ongoing input by Branch members into the RSCDS HQ – Youth Committee and the Management Board.
- 3 The implementation of the Society’s Medal tests for Children.
- 4 The first Branch Awards for outstanding contribution to Helen Brown and Jean Harrison.

### Membership

Branch membership continued to fall as the Long Term subscriptions expire, and Life Members decreased in number. The Annual and Second Branch members are remaining stable. Membership as at 31.03.05: Life 206; Long Term 88; Annual 454; Second Branch 87. Total 835.

### Class Report

London Branch continues to offer classes for dancers with a wide range of abilities.

The elementary classes have proved very popular for those with little or no experience of the pleasures to be gained from Scottish Country Dancing. Some are keen to learn the basics before attending a wedding or a ball, others wish to progress to the Popular Scottish Country Dance Classes and to gain confidence to attend our regular dances.

The numbers attending the Popular classes have increased this year. The disappointment has been the number of dancers wishing to improve their technique. This could be due to the venue. We are actively looking for a more central hall.

The Wednesday afternoon general class

continues to be supported by a group of enthusiastic dancers. The summer Wednesday classes were again well attended, given a train strike or two.

The Ladies’ Step Dancing and Highland classes were supported by a core of keen (and fit) dancers.

In September we held a very successful “New Book” evening. Sixteen dancers joined Rachel Wilton and Angela Young for what can be best described as a Scottish Country Dance version of a Reduced Shakespeare Company production – ten dances in two hours.

The Branch is indebted to the teachers and musicians who arrive for classes with well prepared lessons, music and most importantly, full of enthusiasm.

Class	02/03	03/04	04/05
Elementary	24	18	20
Pop dances	16	18	20
Technical	37	18	12
Wed General	12	12	12
Highland	12	8	6
Ladies’ Step	12	12	12
Summer Gen.	–	31	27
New Book	–	–	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>125</b>
Day School	90	110	85

These figures represent average attendances

### Dance Report

Our 75th Anniversary Season started in September with 150 dancing to Green Ginger to which we welcomed members of the Paris Branch and dancers from all over France. This was a warm up for our Ball at the Hurlingham Club, a glittering evening with 291 attending, starting with a champagne reception, then dancing to Craiggellachie. We had an interval for a three-course dinner and then danced until midnight.

In November it was down to earth with only 55, worse than last year at 66. Should we keep this loss-making event? At the Christmas dance in December, 113 danced to David Hall, another good evening. Our Burns’ Night on the 15th January, with ceilidh dancing to Frank Reid, was again very successful with 191 (one up from last year). Of the people attending 118 were non-members. We are grateful to Denise Haugh, Bill Dell and Bob Harman for their contribution to the success of the evening.

Our March Dance for “Pont Street Participators” proved very successful with 127 attending from the six user groups dancing to Green Ginger. Each group provided their own MCs to recap their chosen dances.

As always a big thank you to all those who helped on the door, with catering, preparing the programme and MCing the dances.

Season	Average attendance
1999/00	110
2000/01	102
2001/02	107
2002/03	118 (to March)
2003/04	130 " "
2004/05	127 " "

### Demonstrations

The team has had another successful year. A well attended class continued to meet on Tuesdays during term time and we are grateful for the inspiring technical tuition and choreography from Angela Young, our new teacher. We are also indebted to our musician Sandra Smith and our class administrator Gaynor Curtis.

We were pleased to welcome newcomers Heather Battson, Elaine Davis, Alice Stainer, Elaine Wilde, Sharon Wright and Andrew Nolan and with the return of Grace Hill, Robyn Kirk and Ian Richards, the current class numbers are 27.

Congratulations are due to Dave and Judy on the birth of Emily Wynne Hall, James and Sam on the birth of Beth Fairbairn (already making her presence felt at Pont Street and beyond) and to Neil and Amanda on the birth of Katharine Anne Esslemont.

The continued commitment of all class members has meant that the team has been able to dance at 27 events during the year, a high proportion of these being publicity or Branch events.

As usual the period around Burns night was particularly busy and teams performed at what have become regular events at the Savoy Hotel, Phyllis Court, Kneller Hall and Founders Hall.

The team’s performances are very much dependent on having good musicians and again we have been fortunate this season that our regular pipers and accordionists, Neil Esslemont, Sandy Walker, Dave Hall and Peter Jenkins, have been available to play.

Recent additions to the costume box include the new ladies’ costumes (our thanks to Anna and Joan) and the men’s branch polos, which have now featured at several venues.

In February, the team once again travelled to Newcastle for their annual festival where we were delighted to be awarded three out of the four cups. Congratulations are due to our Ladies and Mixed teams for their superb performances. Well done! As always this is a most enjoyable occasion and provides the opportunity for the team to renew acquaintances. It was nice to see Alan Bell and also Tom Davy who was sporting his new away strip.

Season	Demonstrations	Team Size
2000/1	33	26
2001/2	30	24
2002/3	31	21
2003/4	23	22
2004/5	27	27

Publicity fliers for the class are being reviewed and the website has been enhanced with recent pictures, improved links and keywords. Our grateful thanks to Meryl, our ever-vigilant Webmistress.

### **Children's Report**

Two Children's Days have been held, starting with a class in the morning followed by lunch for the class attendees and then a dance. Children and Adults enjoyed dancing together and this season, our 75th Anniversary year, at the November dance not quite 75 children enjoyed the spectacle of 75 candles being lit and blown out.

At the March dance we welcomed visiting dancers demonstrating creative dance, street dancing and Highland.

A children's class has been established, Saturday mornings on a monthly basis at St. Columba's. Numbers are gradually rising and adults and children greatly appreciate the teaching and the music. It has also started a new trend of grandparents bringing their grandchildren to the class and then exploring the delights of the area – Harrods, the museums, St. James' Park, etc.

We used the new RSCDS medal tests for the first time and the 50 children who took the tests, achieved a good or very good standard of dancing. Well done and thank you all the teachers and adults who through hard work and commitment, make it possible for children to dance.

### **Bookstall**

This has been a very successful year with the profit up by 65%. The increase in business was partly due to the new Pilling. The bookstall was invited to take the stock down to the Isle of Wight weekend, which resulted in a very good day's sales. The Bookstall made its usual appearances at the Branch Day School and at the Argyll's Day and Weekend schools.

### **Publicity**

The various events marking the Branch's 75th Anniversary were publicised in a number of ways, notably in *The Reel*, on the website and on flyers.

*The Reel's* 250th issue contained two pages of high-quality colour pictures. This was the first use of colour in *The Reel's* 53-year history, and was much appreciated by Branch members and other readers. *The Reel* continues to appear quarterly

with information about events organised by this and other local Branches and articles on various aspects of Scottish Country Dancing.

The London Branch website [www.rscdslondon.co.uk](http://www.rscdslondon.co.uk) also publicises activities by the Branch and other groups throughout southeast England. The page on the Branch demonstration team has been extended and updated. Links to other sites provide easy access to much more information, for example about Scottish Country Dancing in other parts of the world. Added features on the website issue a slideshow of pictures from the Anniversary year and cribs to accompany the Branch dances.

The Branch also publicises each year lists of dances and classes in southeast England and collaborates with other London-based societies in a 'combined societies' calendar of dances.

Open air dances in Kensington Gardens on two September Saturday afternoons is another way we promote dancing to a wider public. We also issue press releases about our events to make the Branch and its activities better known.

## **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

### **Classes**

The Branch will continue to provide high quality teaching for Scottish dancers of all standards and is looking for a way to boost the Technique class by finding a different location.

### **Dances**

We will continue to maintain the number of dances as in the past and looking for a way to make the November dance more appealing.

We start the season with that very popular band from Scotland led by David Cunningham. He will also be down in May to lead a Musician's course at which the assembled company will play for the dance that evening.

Other favourites will be Craigellachie, David Hall and Kafoozalum.

We will continue to welcome and encourage new and less experienced dancers by having a couple of easier programmes.

### **Publicity**

We will exploit all opportunities to promote Scottish Country Dancing to the general public and will run two sessions of open-air dances in Kensington Gardens in September.

Due to the success of our colour issue Reel 250, we will in future have one colour edition during the year.

We will continue to update the website constantly, as this is now a major source of contact with the Branch. We are happy

to provide reciprocal links to other dance groups and sites connected with Scottish dancing and music.

### **Membership**

We are not proposing any changes in the membership subscription rates in London and the Society's will remain the same. We must endeavour to increase the numbers joining the Branch to reverse the trend of recent years.

### **Demonstrations**

The team will continue to publicise Scottish Country Dancing and the Society to as wide an audience as possible and will maintain its range of high quality performances at many varied events.

### **Children**

We shall continue with the Saturday classes, still targeting the local area for young prospective dancers. The Branch is targeting schools as its contribution to the World Day of Dance on April 29th, and hopes to develop contact with those schools.

We shall continue to use the RSCDS medal tests, with the support of the teachers.

We shall explore the possibility of running a workshop for adults who work with children and are interested in teaching them some Scottish Country dancing.

### **Bookstall**

We will continue to offer members and non-members alike a high quality service delivering publications and music worldwide.

### **Support for the Society**

We will continue to play our full part in the strategic developments, which will be implemented over the next few years. We are continuing our liaison with other southeast Branches looking into the possibility of forming a Teachers' Association.

### **The Alex Westwood Bequest**

We will continue to use this prudently, furthering the aims of the Branch and the Society to invest in the funding of capital items. Costs to provide a CD to accompany the book of dances currently proposed will be met from the bequest.

### **The Bill Ireland Memorial**

#### **Fund**

Scholarships awarded from this fund are presently under discussion. The award will be to young dancers interested in attending the Society's Summer and Youth Schools and for the taking of teaching certificates.