

**Minute of the 85th Annual General Meeting of the Aberdeen
Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.
Held at Beechgrove Church Lounge, Midsocket Road,
Aberdeen on 28th March 2011**

Present were the following 48 members of the Branch:

Brian Anderson, Aileen Appleyard, Sheila Bain, Morag Barclay, Kathleen Bruce, Rosemary Crabb-Wyke, Pam Dignan, John Felton, Anne Findlay, Alastair Forsyth, Moira Forsyth, Sheila Fyfe, Willie Fyfe, David Geddes, Tom Hall, Martha Harris, Ray Inkster, Jackie Keith, Jane Leys, Mary Lillie, Iain Martin, Jean Martin, Lesley Martin, Heather McDonald, Linda McDonald, Fiona McIver, Paul McKnight, Isobel McMillan, Gail Nieman, June Rae, Judith Riddoch, Moira Robertson, Mary Robinson, Irene Shand, Anna Smail, Fiona Spence, James Stott, William Stuart, Walter Sutherland, Evelyn Swanson, Fiona Taylor, Eileen Watson, James Watson, Elizabeth White, Eric White, Fiona Wilson, Lynn Wood, Anne Wood.

1.1 Chairman's Opening Remarks.

Paul McKnight, Chairman, welcomed members to the Aberdeen Branch's 85th AGM and made the following remarks:

It's my honour as chairman to welcome you all as members of the Branch to our 85th Annual General Meeting.

During the past dancing year, we took the difficult decision to reduce the number of our Branch classes as a result of falling numbers attending the classes in the previous year. I'm pleased to say that these classes have been well attended and, as you will have seen in the financial papers, this has had a favourable effect on our finances.

As with previous years I am pleased to report that we have gained some enthusiastic beginners and we hope that they will remain with us in future years. Thanks must be given to all those attending our classes on a regular basis, and I extend these thanks to all our class teachers and musicians who put in a lot of work to make these classes enjoyable to all.

During the year we held our usual Spring and Christmas dances, together with a Ball as the launch event of the RSCDS Headquarters' Initiative of Dance Scottish which received many commendations from those attending from around the country.

Due to the bad weather in November and December, ticket sales for our Christmas dance were down slightly on previous years; however the weather managed to keep clear to allow us to go ahead and for the band to travel up from the central belt. Despite the slightly lower numbers than normal, a great night was had by all and we even managed to make a small surplus from the event. Special thanks to Fiona Spence for all her hard work and effort before

and during the evening.

Looking to the future, the Branch is running a Day of Dance on Saturday 14th May in Ashdale Hall. There are still places available, so we do hope you'll be able to join in the day. Further details of this can be found within your AGM papers and on the Branch website. Last year I reported that the Aberdeen Branch was in early stages of securing the Society AGM's return to Aberdeen. I am pleased to announce that this has now been confirmed for 2012.

As I am now coming to the end of my time as your Chairman, I'd like to say some personal thank you's.

First and foremost to Lynn Wood, a fabulous secretary for the Branch who always kept me in check with several prompts sometimes needed. Along with all the work Lynn does for the Branch, it's hard to see how she has time for a demanding full-time job. Fiona Taylor for always having numbers to hand during meetings and keeping track of tickets sold for various events and always ensuring finances are kept in order throughout the year, which in itself is no mean feat.

My personal thanks go to all those who have served on Committee over the past 2 years. Also retiring from Committee this year are Jean Martin, John Felton and John Tether. John Tether unfortunately had to resign from Committee duties during the year due to ill health, but special thanks to John for all his hard work during the halls fiasco that we had to endure last year.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from the Honorary Vice-Presidents Doris Kinghorn and David Robertson, and 16 other members as follows: - Jean Allan, Joan Anderson, Paul Anderson, Margaret Brown, Rachel Discombe, Margaret Gowans, is it Magdalen Leiper, Dorothy Maitland, Heather McKenna, Nicola McPherson, Gordon McRuvie, Annie Robertson, Alan Smail, Frank Thomson, Angela Young, Doris Young.

1.3 Approval of the Minute of Previous Annual General Meeting
The minute of the Meeting of 30th March 2009 had been circulated beforehand to members. **The minute was unanimously approved and adopted on a proposal by Jim Stott and seconded by Isobel McMillan.**

1.4 Matters arising from the Previous Minutes:
There were no matters arising.

2. Honorary Secretary's Report
The Honorary Secretary's Report had been circulated beforehand to members. The Chairman thanked Jane Leys for her continued hard work as Membership Secretary and for providing the membership figures.

On a proposal by John Felton seconded Rosemary Crabb-Wyke, the Honorary Secretary's Report was unanimously adopted.

3. Honorary Treasurer's Report

Fiona Taylor presented the accounts and spoke of the surplus and loss breakdown for the year for adult and children's classes.

A breakdown of the figures for the individual classes and events had been circulated at the meeting.

After discussion the **Annual Accounts were unanimously adopted on a proposal by Fiona Wilson and seconded by Martha Harris.**

4. Report from Headquarters

As members had regular copies of the Scottish Country Dancer they were familiar with Headquarters' news.

Paul McKnight reiterated that the Society AGM is to be held in Aberdeen in 2012 at the Beach Ballroom, as on previous occasions. He then invited

Isobel McMillan was asked to say a few words about the happenings of the Society as she has recently come off the Management Board at HQ.

Isobel McMillan indicated that she had left the HQ Board in November but found it interesting and fun and would recommend it to anyone. There was some old-fashioned thinking, but she felt that she had brought common sense and a questioning attitude to the meetings. During her term of office she learnt to read Financial reports and she feels that in this regard, HQ have done a lot of good work.

She enjoyed communicating with the 12 overseas branches which she had responsibility for, keeping them "in the loop", and she particularly enjoyed the contact with young people as these are the people to keep dancing going.

5.1 Appointment of Honorary President

The appointment of Lesley Martin, as Honorary President was confirmed.

5.2 Appointment of Honorary Vice-Presidents

The appointments as Honorary Vice-Presidents of Miss Doris Kinghorn and Mr David Robertson were confirmed.

6.1 Election of Chairman Nominee – Fiona Spence

Proposed by James Wilson and seconded by Paul Anderson. There being no other nomination, Fiona Spence was duly elected as Chairman and the chain of office was handed over from Paul McKnight to Fiona Spence.

Fiona made the following remarks:

"Firstly, I would like to thank Paul for his all his work, not only during his time

as an Office-bearer, but also in the preceding years on Committee, especially fostering links with younger dancers and other groups, both locally and nationally. I admire his calm efficiency and his clear thinking. I know that I will have a lot to learn before I can chair Committee meetings as effectively as he did. I am also aware that over his term of office there have been tricky situations in which his wisdom and insight were demonstrated to the benefit of the Branch. I hope that I will be a worthy successor, not only to him, but to preceding Chairmen.

I approach this term of office with some trepidation. I am relatively inexperienced, my knowledge of dancing, its people and its past is limited, and there are considerable challenges ahead for the Branch. These include the significant decline in membership figures over the recent years, the image of the RSCDS and the Branch, whether the negative perceptions of both dancers and non-dancers are justified or not, the practical problems such as venues for classes, complicated by parking charges, and the competition, for instance from other forms of dance, other hobbies, or the general demands made on busy lives.

But I have a passion for Scottish Country Dancing, a vision for RSCDS Aberdeen, and commitment to see things through. My vision for the Branch would involve progress towards a more innovative, inclusive, responsive organisation, where more involvement from the membership is fostered, and with a reputation for offering the very best experiences for dancers, whatever the event.

How will this be achieved? Every organisation has to take stock from time to time and I believe that the time is right for Aberdeen RSCDS to take stock. Simple questions should be considered. Where are we now? Where do we want to get to? How are we going to get there? We need to honestly examine our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, with a boldness to grasp those opportunities, and confidence in our "product". A positive, creative attitude finds ways to make things happen rather than being discouraged by obstacles.

Our Committee is a wonderful resource - committed and hardworking, with varied skills, knowledge and backgrounds, vital to the functioning of this Branch. And I would love people to report that they found Committee membership fulfilling and enjoyable. I hope that we can review our structure and functioning to ensure that we work efficiently and effectively, without wasting precious effort.

So far I have been talking about what I hope the Committee will be reporting on at the next AGM. Now I would like to turn to the membership. The Branch must recognise the wonderful continuing support of its non-dancing members, and we are exploring ways of including them more in the life of the Branch. But I would like to ask for something from our dancing members. What ideas and feedback will you give to me or other Committee members? Whatever other class you attend, which RSCDS class will you belong to next session? And who will you introduce to Scottish country dancing during this

coming year?

This might all seem empty words, but I would like to think that it is a declaration of intent, and I will have to report on progress next year. In the meantime, I look forward to serving the Branch and its Committee to the best of my ability over the year ahead.”

6.2 Election of Vice-Chairman Nominee – **Isobel McMillan**

Proposed by James Stott and seconded by Paul McKnight. There being no other nomination, **Isobel McMillan was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.**

6.3 Election of Honorary Secretary Nominee – **Lynn Wood**

Proposed by Moira Robertson and seconded by George Christie. There being no other nomination, **Lynn Wood was duly elected as Honorary Secretary.**

6.4 Election of Honorary Treasurer. Nominee – **Fiona Taylor**

Proposed by Brian Anderson and seconded by Mary Robinson. There being no other nomination, **Fiona Taylor was duly elected as Honorary Treasurer.**

6.5 Election of Committee Members to replace those retiring.

Nominations received:

Brian Anderson – proposed by Fiona Spence and seconded by Jackie Keith.

Sheila Bain – proposed by Fiona Wilson and seconded by Betty White.

Kathleen Bruce – proposed by Lynn Wood and seconded by Margaret Brown.

As the required number of nominations to fill vacant posts had now been received, Brian Anderson, Sheila Bain and Kathleen Bruce were duly elected to serve on the Committee for three years.

6.6 Election of Delegates to the 2012 Society AGM

Members were reminded that its size entitles the Branch to have up to five AGM delegates, three of which were the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. Nominations were requested from the floor for three other delegates for the AGM in Glasgow in 2011.

Ray Inkster – proposed by Jean Martin and seconded by Linda McDonald.

Alistair Forsythe – proposed by Moira Forsythe and seconded by Isobel McMillan

With no further nominations from the floor, these were elected.

7. Appointment of Honorary Auditor

Frank Thomson, who had expressed his willingness to serve as Honorary Auditor, was proposed by Fiona Taylor and seconded by Isobel McMillan. This appointment was confirmed.

8. Motions

A motion had been received from Jean Martin and seconded by Frank Thomson:

- 1 a) “that for Financial and Secretarial Reports the Aberdeen Branch adopts 31st March as the end of the year”
- b) “that the arrangements for the Annual General Meeting of the Aberdeen Branch are adjusted to accommodate a 31st March end of year date”

Jean Martin informed the meeting that prior to 1999 the Branch financial year ran from April to March with the Annual General Meeting being held in late May. At the 1998 AGM various reasons were given for changing the end of the financial year to December and while the change was made in good faith none of the reasons was actually valid. She noted that under the terms of the Licence from the Society we are required to submit a copy of the Branch Annual report and accounts every year to be recorded at Headquarters. These reports do not form any part of the annual reports of the RSCDS as a whole.

Jean continued to say that Branches are autonomous and OSCR (Office of Scottish Charities Register) does not have fixed dates for accounts. The main point of her argument for reverting to a March end of year was that with the accounts being closed at the end of December, they cut across the dancing year so it was impossible to compare **two** years of dancing without looking at **three** sets of accounts. Another reason for the 1998 change was that attendance at May AGMs had fallen but numbers attending have been more or less static ever since then. With a vibrant Summer Social programme, holding an AGM in late May might even result in an increased attendance. Changing to a March end of year would also bring the Aberdeen Branch into line with other organisations, which would assist with settlement of dues such as those incurred for the use of halls.

She noted that if the change was approved the decision on how that would be implemented would be up to the Committee.

Frank Thomson, although not present, had written the following to endorse the motion:

“There is no doubt whatsoever that an accounting year ending 31st March will reflect a financial year which will give a more balanced statement of the year's activities and finances, and you have explained why in detail. The

purpose of annual accounts is to give an accurate review of the trading year, and what we are doing is joining up two disjointed half years, which just does not give a fair comparison from year to year. Some members will no doubt say 'Why change - we've got quite used to the year end 31st December'. But really, there is no argument for keeping to 31st December, and with the luxury of hindsight it should never have been changed for such flimsy reasoning in 1998.

If the change is agreed, the Committee will have to decide on how best to handle the transition. Perhaps the quickest and least painful way forward would be to prepare accounts for the quarter to 31st March 2011, then start the new accounting year at 1st April 2011. The alternative would be to have a 15-month account period to 31st March 2012, but this would mean comparing those figures with the 12 months accounting period to 31st March 2013 AGM, and thereby prolonging the changeover. I'm not sure what OSCR's role with charities is nowadays, but it may be advisable to check with them before deciding how best to move forward with the change.

As I have previously stated, this motion has my wholehearted support.”

The motion was then opened to the floor for comments.

Sheila Fyfe noted that it had been previously discussed and both the Secretary and Treasurer had felt that it was wrong to change at that time – however the Secretary's report was moved to match the Treasurer's report (January to December).

Rosemary Crabb-Wyke asked what was the minimum attendance at an AGM? In the Branch constitution it is stated that a quarter of the membership or 25, whichever is less, is a quorum.

Jane Leys asked when members would need to pay. Jean Martin replied that the membership year was not related to the financial year. Membership could still be paid at the start of classes in September.

Lesley Martin noted that those attending Summer School should be members, but it was observed that for the last 2 or 3 years, non-members could attend (at a greater price).

The motion was unanimously accepted by the meeting, with no abstentions.

Fiona Spence suggested that the AGM date would be worked out by Committee and checks with OSCR would be made on whether 15 months or 1 year and 3 month accounts would be needed. This approach was accepted by the meeting.

9. **Any other Competent Business.**

Sheila Fyfe queried why the accounts had an OSCR report sheet. Fiona Taylor responded that this was the new declaration that had to be signed by the auditor for OSCR.

Sheila Fyfe asked for a response to her letter to Committee concerning Disclosure Scotland non-communication from HQ. Lynn Wood briefly explained to the members that new rules had been put in place by Disclosure

from 27th February but this information had not been passed to Branches. She continued to say that the Branch had written to HQ and were awaiting a response.

10. Close of Meeting.

There being no other business, Fiona Spence thanked the Committee again for all their hard work, in particular Lynn Wood and Fiona Taylor. She reminded members that an Open Forum would follow. She thanked all those who had attended and wished all members a happy dancing year. The meeting thereafter closed with thanks to the Chair.