

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society

MINUTES OF 84TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN BELL'S SPORTS CENTRE, PERTH

on Saturday 2 November 2013, at 2.00pm

1 PRESENT

Office Bearers: Dr A MacFadyen, President, Mr J Wilkinson (*Chairman*).

Past Chairmen: Mr S Adam, Miss I Bennett, Mrs L Gaul, Mr A Gray, Mrs J Martin.

In Attendance: Mr J Healy (*Chairman Elect*), Mr W L Whyte (*Treasurer*), Ms D Rooney (*Convenor, Education & Training*), Mr P Whitley (*Convenor, Membership Services*), Mr R Bain (*Convenor, Youth Services*), Mrs E Foster (*Secretary/Executive Officer*).

200 delegates were present, holding 290 votes.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: The Earl of Elgin & Kincardine and The Hon Peregrine Moncreiffe of Moncreiffe (*Honorary Vice Presidents*); Mr A Aitkenhead, Mr A Mair (*Past Chairmen*); and 28 Branches: Bath, Buffalo, Burlington (Ontario), Canberra & District, Carnoustie, Castle Douglas, Cheltenham, Edmonton Caledonian, The Hague District, Hunter Valley/Newcastle, Isle of Islay, John Muir (Wisconsin), Kingston (Ontario), Montreal, New Jersey, Norwich, Orange County, Orlando, Retford & District, Richmond, Rochdale, Sacramento, Saitama, San Diego, Somerset, St Catharines, Stockholm, Stranraer.

3 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

John Wilkinson welcomed delegates to the meeting. After dealing with "housekeeping" issues, he handed over to Dr Alastair MacFadyen to chair the meeting.

4 PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Dr MacFadyen extended a warm welcome to everyone, in particular the dedicated members of the Society to those who would today receive the Scroll of Honour acknowledging their contribution to the work of the Society

worldwide. He was pleased to read a message from Her Majesty The Queen:

5 MESSAGE FROM THE SOCIETY'S PATRON, HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

"Please convey my warm thanks to the Management Board and members of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society for their message of loyal greetings, sent on the occasion of their 84th Annual General Meeting which is being held today in Perth. As your Patron, I was interested to learn of the Annual Conference Weekend and thank you for writing as you did. In return, I send my best wishes and congratulations to you all for a most successful and enjoyable gathering in this, the ninetieth anniversary year of the Society."

Signed: Elizabeth R

6 PRESENTATION OF THE SOCIETY SCROLLS OF HONOUR

John Wilkinson read the citation for a Scroll recipient (*nominating Branch/Committee in brackets*):

- Ann Dix (Berks/Hants/Surrey Border)

He then had the sad task of informing delegates that Ann had passed away the previous evening.

Dr MacFadyen presented Scrolls to the following:

- Keith Bark (*Toronto*)
- Ruth Beattie (*Glasgow*)
- Irene Bennett (*Membership Services*)
- Noeline O'Connor (*New Zealand*)

7 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 3rd NOVEMBER 2012

The motion "To confirm the adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of 3rd November 2012" was proposed by Jim Stott (Nova Scotia) and seconded by Anne Sheach (Isle of Skye).

8 The motion was approved.

9 APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT

Dr MacFadyen handed the chair to John Wilkinson. Mr Wilkinson informed delegates that Dr MacFadyen had indicated that he wished to stand down as President with effect from the end of the meeting. He thanked Dr MacFadyen for all that he had contributed to the Society, and proceeded to give delegates a little of Dr MacFadyen's background history.

10 Dr MacFadyen thanked Mr Wilkinson for his tribute, and expressed the great honour he had felt in holding the office of President of RSCDS. He regretted that he had been unable to carry out the role as he would have liked, due to illness, but he had done his best. He thanked delegates for their patience, and for their continuing membership.

11 APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY VICE PRESIDENTS

The motion "To confirm the appointment of The Hon Peregrine Moncreiffe of Moncreiffe and The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine KT, CD as Honorary Vice Presidents of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society" was proposed by Kaoru Boode-Masaki (Hawaii) and seconded by Lorna Valentine (East Angus).

12 The motion was unanimously approved.

13 RSCDS CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The first topic Mr Wilkinson wished to mention was the Health Strategy. He believed it was one of the best initiatives ever undertaken by the RSCDS. He reminded delegates that it was not a one-off, isolated event; it was begun in the realisation that it was a long-term strategy, and it applied equally throughout the world.

14 As an IT professional, he had not been impressed with IT systems at HQ when he became Chairman Elect. He initially researched alternatives for the membership database, but realised that other systems were in need of review. That review took place over several months and a specification was drawn up for a new website, member database, event management system, shop, and archive facility. After due process, the contract was placed with eCom. They had been working hard with staff to analyse systems and begin the development. Data would have to be transferred from the existing systems, which may not be

straightforward, and system testing would have to be carried out. He was confident that the end result would be systems that worked efficiently and would serve the Society well for a number of years, and hopefully would release staff to perform other functions.

15 Over the year, many members would have heard him issue a challenge to obtain new, especially younger, members. Headquarters could provide strategies and direction to help, but it was up to the branches to carry it out. He appreciated that it was not an easy task.

16 The RSCDS needed to change, and soon. Many of the processes and practices of the last 90 years were no longer relevant. Neither he nor the Management Board had all the answers, but by working together with branches and members some solutions might be found. Mr Wilkinson set another challenge for every branch – to put forward at least one strategy for the future direction of the RSCDS.

17 He concluded by thanking Management Board members, office-bearers and committees for all the time and effort they put into running the organisation – very often a thankless task. He extended a special thanks to HQ staff, who worked very hard with great dedication and commitment, especially during some difficult times in the past year.

18 ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Dr MacFadyen invited Committee Convenors and the Secretary, in her role as Executive Officer, to provide a verbal update on activities since production of the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts.

19 Di Rooney, Convenor of Education & Training Committee, gave her update:

20 She began by thanking her committee, HQ staff, her predecessor Helen Russell and successor Sue Porter, for all their support.

21 The Examiners' Seminar at Summer School 2013 was attended by 19 of the 21 examiners. Examiners worked very hard all year round on the Society's behalf. The Seminar gave rise to some changes in the exam system; not major but significant, the details would be on the website by the end of the year at the latest. The new system, with slightly changed criteria, would

start in July 2014, and the first written exam based on the new Manual would be in October 2014.

22 The revised Manual was finally in print; the intention had not been to change it, rather to clarify it and to reflect what was actually danced. It had been well received so far. She hoped that at some point in the future the Manual would be filmed, as it was exceptionally difficult to describe physical movements in words.

23 The Adjudicators' course to be held in two weeks' time was full, with attendees from all over the UK and also one person from Japan.

24 Medal Tests were expanding. She had been working with TAC to organise a Medal Test Assessor training course, so that Medal Test Assessors would be available in North America and Canada.

25 The children's teaching module was now on the website. 277 copies of the *Jigs & Reels* pack had now been sold.

26 E&T were working on a new Graded Book 3, in conjunction with MS, and it was hoped that it would be ready for Summer School 2014.

27 Winter School 2014 was almost full. The Co-ordinator, Anne Smyth, had arranged an excellent staff of teachers and musicians.

28 E&T had been involved in discussions with a worldwide wheelchair dance organisation, and some members of the committee were attending a national championship wheelchair dance weekend at the end of November.

29 Ms Rooney concluded by again thanking all members of E&T, past and present, who had worked very hard on branches' and members' behalf.

30 **Philip Whitley, Convenor of Membership Services Committee**, gave his update:

31 The remit for MS was enormous, and most people did not realise how much was involved until they joined the committee or became a convenor.

32 After a few years of regular decreases, he was pleased to report that the number of attendees at this year's Annual Conference

Weekend had increased. There had been a major commitment to reverse the decline in attendance, a decrease of approximately 32% between 2003 and 2012. Publicity over the previous six months had emphasised that the weekend was open to all, irrespective of membership and age. There was a need for members and non-members to understand that £16 and £18 was the true cost of dancing in a venue like Bell's Sports Centre. He hoped that all delegates and branches would encourage attendance.

33 Work on Book 48 was well under way. The top 40 scoring dances would be reduced to approximately 12 dances for inclusion in the book, to be published in July 2014. Over 3,500 members from 121 branches worldwide had helped evaluate dances, approximately 30% of the Society's membership. Book 48 had truly been a democratic process. He was pleased to announce that Susan MacFadyen had provisionally agreed to record the accompanying CD, reinforcing the commitment to promoting new talent.

34 Mr Whitley hoped that Book 48 would be the first RSCDS publication to be available simultaneously in physical and electronic format. Making publications available as digital downloads had been a long-standing aim of MS and he hoped that it would happen in the not too distant future. He knew that this would be welcomed, especially by overseas branches.

35 He reminded delegates that the closing date for Book 49 submissions was 10 January 2014. More reels or jigs, especially jigs, would be very helpful.

36 The committee continued to try to reach out to affiliated groups to see how relationships could be improved. Disappointingly, there had been no option but to abandon plans for an umbrella PPL music licence for UK-based groups, it had proved far too costly. Contrary to some comments, the work with affiliated groups worldwide was not about placing these groups on a par with branches, it was simply about strengthening ties with them.

37 Successful workshops for branch secretaries had been held in the past year, and consideration was being given to similar events, and possibly for other office-bearers, in the coming year. It

was clear that the problems and frustrations of branch secretaries and committees were broadly shared. It was appreciated that many overseas branches felt excluded by not being able to attend such workshops, which was far from satisfactory. The possibility of using Skype was not a viable option at present, but solutions would continue to be sought, and he asked overseas branches to bear with the committee in the meantime.

38 Dates for next year's AGM & Conference Weekend were 7th – 9th November 2014, in the same venue. Matthew MacFadyen's band would be playing for the Friday night dance, with a programme provided jointly by Carnoustie, East Angus and Forfar Branches; Nicol McLaren would play for the Saturday night Ball, with a programme devised by Edinburgh Branch, celebrating their 90th anniversary. He challenged delegates to encourage people who had never attended to do so next year.

39 Mr Whitley concluded by thanking Headquarters staff, in particular Moira Thomson, who had worked so hard for the committee, and had dealt with many of the arrangements for this weekend.

40 **Roy Bain, Youth Services Convenor**, gave his update:

41 Unlike the other committees, YS did not have books to publish, manuals to write, CDs to produce, or schools and events to organise. Instead, they had the future of the Society to look after, to nurture and encourage. Young dancers were an essential part of the Society's future.

42 In its first year of operation, the committee had been aware that they were laying the foundations for the future. There had been a Youth Forum at the previous year's Conference Weekend. The committee had reviewed comments and feedback from the Forum and concluded that most of the points had been actioned; anything that had not been dealt with would be taken forward.

43 Spring Fling 2013 in Manchester had been very successful, through the hard work of local organisers Gill Watts and Nicola Waugh. The first continental Spring Fling in Lyon, France would be held in 2014 over the Easter weekend,

and the next would be London in 2015. The Lyon event had about 34 registrations, from France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, USA and the UK.

44 There had been a successful Youth workshop in Glasgow, with 30 young dancers, followed by an evening dance hosted by Glasgow Branch. The next workshop would be held in Cambridge in January 2014, then Aberdeen in October 2014.

45 Teaching skills courses for children were held over the four weeks of Summer School, attended by 40-50 people; many were non-teachers, which was encouraging.

46 Support for the Inter-Varsity Folk Dance Festival (IVFDF) continued, with committee members attending Sheffield this year and being involved with dems and the evening dance. The 2014 event would be in Edinburgh, in February. There would also be a YS presence at Scottish Universities Scottish Country Dance Festival (SUSCDF) in Aberdeen. This was all part of a drive to become more involved with universities and to be more supportive of existing and potential youth groups there.

47 Most of the committee's work this year had been based within Scotland and the UK. Mr Bain was aware that the remit was global, and that was not being ignored. He hoped to begin to talk more with branches and groups around the world to find out about or expand on the youth work that was taking place, and to build relationships with those groups.

48 Information had been requested from branches in order to generate a register of teachers, and he urged members to ensure their branches supplied the necessary details. The register would not now be restricted to those teaching children and young people, but would include all teachers worldwide, whether RSCDS-certificated or not. Contact could be made via either the info@rscds.org address or the committee's email address, ysc@rscds.org.

49 Mr Bain concluded by thanking HQ staff for all the work they did in supporting the committees. He also thanked Di Rooney and Deb Lees for the information and help they supplied when he took on the role of Convenor.

50 **Elizabeth Foster, Executive Officer**, gave her update:

51 There had been a number of events in 2013 to date; these were important not only in terms of providing opportunities for dancers to demonstrate their skills, but also in attracting publicity and increasing public awareness.

52 In June, a group of young dancers performed a specially-devised Olympic fusion dance to launch the first mini-Olympic Games for primary schools in Edinburgh. In July, a private audience with The Queen made news headlines around the world. In August, two RSCDS members launched their personal tribute to tennis star Andy Murray with *The Pride of Dunblane* ceilidh dance.

53 Mrs Foster thanked all members, branches and groups who had directly contributed to the 90th anniversary celebrations, helping to make it a truly memorable year.

54 The Dance Music for the Future competition had been a bold and imaginative approach to taking Scottish country dance music forward whilst retaining the tradition.

55 She was happy to announce the outcome of a successful collaboration between the RSCDS and Girlguiding Scotland. The Scottish Country Dance Challenge Badge, celebrating 90 years of the RSCDS, would be available to Guides the world over.

56 Another ongoing project concerned the RSCDS archives. Whilst the Board had approved a contribution to costs, the bulk of the money was being sought through an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. A successful project would see the organisation of the archives conform to professional standards; contents accessible online; digitisation of music, video and photographic content; and improvements to the physical space in Coates Crescent, for more effective information storage, access and retrieval.

57 During the 12-month period of the proposed project, archival displays would be mounted at Summer School, Winter School and the AGM. Members, branches and affiliated groups were invited to help create a "living memory" for the

archive, by collating recollections and memories and/or by producing a dance trail for their area. Members would be kept informed of progress regarding the grant application.

58 Following the repeat broadcast a year or two ago of an old programme on Scottish country dancing, with a rather disparaging commentary, contact was made with the production company, Hopscotch Films. As a result, with financial backing from the BBC, they were producing a documentary about SCD and the RSCDS in the 21st century. The programme was scheduled for screening before the end of the year. RSCDS had no editorial rights, so responsibility lay with the production team to set the record straight, and to showcase Scottish country dancing as it truly was now.

59 Creative Scotland had commissioned the RSCDS to participate in the annual Get Scotland Dancing (GSD) campaign for the year of the Commonwealth Games. The main aim of the initiative was to get more people regularly participating in dance activity. GSD had commissioned the RSCDS to work in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, in partnership with local dance hubs, to create 3 new dances to reflect various aspects of the Commonwealth Games. Dance development and performance would be led by the branches, and subsequently distributed online to any interested parties.

60 The RSCDS has also been asked to create a 2-hour dance programme, to include the 3 new dances, as well as guidance on how to organise and run what was termed a Commonwealth Ceilidh. This too would be made freely available online. The Commonwealth Ceilidh would be held at 7.30pm local time on 21st June 2014. All members, branches and affiliated groups were asked to consider getting involved. GSD were committed to providing support and advice on marketing, planning, and running an event, free of charge. David Cunningham was producing the materials and co-ordinating the project on behalf of the RSCDS and expected to have the full package available in March.

61 There had been a number of changes in staff over the last three years, but no increase in the staffing complement. Elspeth Gray held primary responsibility for communication with members,

branches and affiliated groups; Moira Thomson held responsibility for all main RSCDS events; Julia Parr was now Administrator for Exams, Medal Tests and Youth Services; Alison Horsley had replaced Shona Coyle in the new post of Finance & Administration Manager; a second new post, Finance & Administration Assistant, had not yet been advertised. Sara Lamont held the post of Product Design & Events Marketing Officer; she had been on maternity leave and expected to return in December. Temporary support had filled the gap in the staffing complement.

62 Two other part-time self-employed workers continued to pursue particular remits: Liz Fraser worked one day a week on Marketing, while David Cunningham had been working up to three days a week developing SCD music traditions.

63 The staff team continued to work to improve communications and day-to-day systems management. The new customer relationship management system (CRM) was of key importance in this. Administration of fees and renewals, events and shop management and access to the website would all be improved. Further possible developments, subject to Management Board approval, were under consideration. Investment in the new systems and website development would benefit everyone – members, branches, affiliated groups and the wider public.

64 Mrs Foster concluded that more people Scottish country dancing around the world, and more members of the RSCDS were the key challenges faced today. She had tried to illustrate how the RSCDS was rising to the challenge and to emphasise how internal collaboration and external partnerships might provide a platform from which the RSCDS could continue to prosper and grow.

65 TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

William Whyte, Treasurer, presented his report.

66 In addition to presenting the annual accounts of the Society, Mr Whyte would also comment on the current year financial outlook, and would update the meeting on progress with the proposed change to the Society's legal status.

67 He began by discussing the 'net worth' of the Society. Net worth defined the size of the Society in financial terms and was the sum of all assets and liabilities. Last year it was £776K; the previous year it was £767K, and previously it had been the highest ever, at £869K in 2010-11.

68 The Society's investments grew last year by £90K. That meant, in effect, because the total size of the Society only grew by approximately £10K, that the aggregated deficit on the funds within the Society had shrunk by £80K.

69 He outlined the various funds that were included in the accounts: the only restricted fund, the Porter Bequest; two designated funds, the JMMF and the Development Fund; and the main operational fund, called the General Fund.

70 Income from the Porter bequest was used to support exam candidates from the Canadian Maritime Provinces to attend Summer School. Income received was very small, so scholarships could now only be offered every few years; 2014 would be one of those years.

71 The JMMF was also in surplus and growing due to investment gains. Although the intention was to spend the money in JMMF on useful projects, there had been few requests for funding in the last two or three years. Branches were encouraged to submit applications for funding that might enable them to undertake new or different activities.

72 Monies were being disbursed from the Development Fund at a steady rate. It was set up 2/3 years previously with £100K, with the aim of spending that money on useful, forward-looking activities for the benefit of the Society.

73 The last fund was the General Fund, which had a deficit of £51K in the last year. The results for this fund had moved up and down in the last four years. There were four key areas in the General Fund that affected results: membership income; contributions from Summer School, and from the shop; and lastly the central costs of running Coates Crescent. There were occasional donations or legacies which boosted the General Fund but they were not planned or budgeted for. In the year just past, membership income had remained roughly the same, but membership

numbers had declined by approximately 2.5-3%; that was due to timing of receipts.

74 Mr Whyte addressed the reported increase in number of Life members. Life membership was withdrawn in 1975, but Life members continued to be supported. Branches were relied on to correctly report the number of Life members, and to ensure their contact details were on the membership database.

75 Summer School contribution, the margin above the direct costs of the School, was slightly disappointing, at £68K. There had been lengthy discussions with St Andrews University up to and beyond Summer School 2013.

76 The shop had been slightly disappointing, which was partly to do with the flow of products and the timing of their release, in addition to accommodating reserves for obsolescence/slow-moving products. Central costs were under control, and were less than last year, at £240K.

77 The combined effect of all these factors in the 2012-13 accounts was that the General Fund showed a deficit of £51K. He reminded delegates that the Board tried to keep it roughly in balance, by plus or minus £20K.

78 Mr Whyte went on to update the meeting on results so far in the current year, concentrating particularly on the General Fund. Subscription income was marginally down on the previous year, but timing made it difficult to give a clear picture at this stage. Summer School 2013 had done well. Bookings for Winter School were ahead of the same stage the previous year. Shop revenue was up to par, and there was every expectation that targets for it would be met. Central costs were under control and under budget. All things being equal, he believed the outcome for the present year would be satisfactory, but he still anticipated a deficit in the General Fund, although probably much less than budgeted.

79 Already in this financial year, around £45K had been received in donations, with £40K coming from one source in the USA; it was now known that the final outcome of the latter should be £250K. Cheques for \$180K were on their way, and it was hoped that all of the funds would be received by the end of the calendar year.

80 As delegates would be aware, the Board had been working towards the legal status of a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) and in particular defining the terms and conditions within what would be the new constitutional document, the Memorandum & Articles of Association. A draft had been approved by the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR); it had been sent to branches for comment, and several branches provided feedback.

81 A second legal opinion had been sought with particular reference to the terminology regarding members and branches, which had created some delay. However, it was now believed that solutions had been found that would satisfy some of the concerns expressed by branches. The document would be amended and re-submitted to OSCR by the end of the year. Assuming that was successful, the revised document would be sent to branches for consultation and comment in the early part of 2014. At AGM 2014, delegates would be asked to agree the change of legal status, ie a conversion to a CLG, to take place on 1st April 2015.

82 Comments or questions were invited from the floor. In response to a question from Keith Bark (Toronto), Mr Whyte confirmed that there were no terms or conditions associated with the major bequest. Given that it had appeared relatively recently, the Board had not yet given consideration to how it should be used.

83 Keith Bark (Toronto) questioned the budgeting for Summer School; he was concerned that it should truly break even, taking staff costs into account, rather than relying on the General Fund to cover any loss. Mr Whyte responded that the question of how events were measured and reported had been discussed before. He had generally resisted calls for more extensive accounting or apportionment of costs. However, he believed it was now time to consider more specific reports, along the lines of a profit and loss statement, for Summer School. The Board would consider this further in the coming year, along with improving the budgeting process.

84 Keith Bark (Toronto) asked why there was no explanation for significant change in several items in the budget for 2014, specifically Board and Committee meeting costs, equipment

leasing, and legal & professional fees. Mr Whyte reiterated that improvements were needed to the budgeting process. Legal fees were budgeted at a high level because the CLG process had been expected to be finalised in a shorter timeframe, bringing legal costs into the current year. He undertook to respond to Mr Bark in writing on the other two points.

85 The Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 was approved on a show of hands by a majority, as proposed by William Whyte (Treasurer) and seconded by Neil Copland (Melbourne & District, and Management Board member).

86 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

The motion "To appoint Alexander Sloan, Chartered Accountants, as Auditor" was proposed by William Whyte (Treasurer) and seconded by Jack Pressley (Queensland, and Management Board member).

87 The motion was approved.

88 ELECTIONS TO MANAGEMENT POSTS

89 Members of Management Board

The following were elected:

3 years - Elizabeth Harry, James Stott

90 Members of Education & Training Committee

The following were elected:

3 years - Helen Brown, Angela Young

91 Members of Membership Services Committee

The following were elected:

3 years - Helen McGinley, Maureen Daniel

92 Members of Youth Services Committee

The following were elected:

3 years - Lindsey Ibbotson, Rachel Shankland

93 MOTION ON MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

94 On behalf of the Management Board, Mr Whyte proposed that the single adult membership fee should increase from £16 to £18, for the membership year beginning July 2014, all other subscription rates to be raised on a pro rata basis.

95 Mr Whyte referred to the chart given to delegates at registration, illustrating the subscription rate over a number of years. The increase from £15 to £16 the previous year had been the first for five years, and the increase to £15 had come after six years of it remaining at £10. A cycle had developed of having no increase for a period followed by a large rise. The previous year's proposal for a £1 increase had been an attempt to implement smaller, more frequent increases when necessary. An increase of £2 would generate £21K in a full year, assuming no additional membership attrition.

96 Also on the chart was a graph showing the General Fund outcome for the same period. Outcomes moved up and down, and in particular in the last few years there had been substantial deficits. The Board had discussed the proposed increase thoroughly, and were aware of the large legacy when the decision was made. New activities and projects, such as website improvements and event management, were development activities but produced recurring costs. It was important to note that most initiatives would benefit all members throughout the world.

97 To sum up, the Board wished regular income from investments, subscriptions and event contributions to match the operational running costs and bring the General Fund into approximate balance. Mr Whyte noted, in conclusion, that even with the increase the RSCDS membership fee would remain one of the lowest of comparable associations. He commended the motion to the meeting.

98 The motion was seconded by Luke Brady (MB member). The proposed rate of £18 was equivalent to £1.50 per month. Members often asked what they got for their money; he believed the answer was a great deal, in terms of events, books, recordings, magazines, an archive, and an office with staff to support the branch network. However, he asked delegates to consider whether supporting the aims and objectives of the RSCDS was worth £18, and he hoped they would agree that it was.

99 Joining the RSCDS had long been considered like joining a club, or even a family, and that was one of the organisation's strongest

attributes. But the Society was not a club. Members had to be provided with benefits and services to justify their investment, but at its core the Society was a charity, attempting to achieve something worthwhile, that its members believed in – to preserve and further the practice of traditional Scottish country dancing.

100 The Royal Scottish National Orchestra was a similar organisation to the RSCDS. They produced a member's magazine twice a year, maintained an office, ran an outreach programme, and a series of concerts. The cost for a supporting member was £35 a year, and with concessions £30.

101 He believed in the RSCDS, believed that the Society needed and deserved support for its aims and objectives, and that it was worth £18 a year, £1.50 a month, for those objectives. He hoped delegates would share that belief and urged them to support the motion.

102 Comments or questions were invited from the floor. Isobel McMillan (Aberdeen) suggested that the Board consider increasing the subscription by £1 every year rather than have this debate every few years. Mr Whyte replied that the Board had considered various options, and the proposal was what the majority had voted for.

103 Mary Orr (New York) stated that New York Branch opposed the motion. There was no exceptional new development to justify an increase. The Society's financial position was healthy, and reserves ample. Her branch was concerned that initiatives benefitting members in the UK and Europe took up much staff time and sometimes ran a deficit; overseas members were alienated by subsidising other members who could take advantage of such activities. Her branch would like to see initiatives that benefited all members, such as making publications available electronically.

104 Andrew Kellett (London) stated that London Branch supported the motion, but he wished to make 3 points. Last year, his branch had requested more notice of increases in subscriptions. Branches also had to plan their spending and prioritise, and would prefer not to present members with an increase in Society subscriptions in the same year that branch fees

were increased. With membership decreasing, he queried whether those members that remained were going to continually be asked to spend more to sustain the many laudable initiatives that Headquarters was undertaking. He was pleased to hear about the Heritage Lottery Fund application and believed the search for other such sources of income was essential. Finally, it was important to get more people dancing, and more members recruited, and it was the branches that had to do that. There was a need to think seriously about the balance of effort in the Society; he looked for transparency, a proper partnership, and a renewed balance.

105 Evelyn Murray (Boston) stated that Boston Branch agreed with New York. Members in her branch had to travel long distances to dance and to support classes. Committee members and officers spent much more than £18, out of their own pockets.

106 Iain Hutchison (Cape Town) reported that Cape Town Branch had mixed views. An item such as the RSCDS subscription was expensive there, and there was no mechanism to allow for the difference in real cost to some branches. Nonetheless, they supported the proposed increase, because they strongly supported the aims of the RSCDS. However, issues such as value for money, efficiency and effectiveness caused some concern. It was also a concern that there was not a single motion from a branch to this AGM and that there were not enough volunteers to fill the vacant committee posts.

107 Keith Bark (Toronto) stated that his branch believed that if Schools and the shop were taken out of the equation, current membership income should cover all other costs, and there was therefore no need for an increase. They would vote against the motion.

108 Andrew Nolan (Edinburgh) asked if any analysis had been conducted on the likely impact on membership numbers of a £2 increase. Mr Whyte responded that even forecasting membership income in the current year was difficult, and with 160 branches of various natures throughout the world, useful analysis was not possible.

109 John Campbell (Belfast) said that Belfast Branch delegates had come with open minds, but

were disappointed in the response to the question concerning budgeting. Insufficient detail had been provided. His branch would oppose the motion.

110 Angela Young (London) noted that if there had been a £1 increase each year from the time of the first subscription mentioned in the handout, it would now be £21 a year. Many members would belong to other organisations such as golf clubs or health clubs, costing hundreds of pounds a year, which benefitted only personal fitness, whereas RSCDS membership ensured that the tradition was still alive and developing. Going forward, budgeting, transparency and the ability to forecast were vital.

111 Alex Gray (London, Ontario) stated that London (Ontario) did not support the motion. As a Past Chairman, he regretted that he agreed with them. Details of recurring costs from developments had not been given. It was a big rise for a small branch in Canada.

112 David Page (Nottingham) summarised the response to the motion from one of his branch's younger members. A £2 increase would not deter people from renewing. However, annual membership was becoming marginal for young members. A student without a job was offered membership of a comparable organisation, through the university, for approximately £6 a year. RSCDS needed to offer some kind of concession to young members. Member recruitment and membership sustainability had to be local. A broad framework of material was required with a consistent, corporate RSCDS identity across the nation and the world, whilst allowing it to be tailored at local level. For this strategy to work and be justified, resources, financial or otherwise, needed to become available at branch level.

113 Mr Whyte noted that there had been a wide expression of views, which were difficult to sum up. More detail had been requested, but he felt there was a limit to how far that could be taken. The budget document was more extensive than in previous years; there was a new budgeting process, involving more people. He believed the essence was that the Society, on its normal operational activities, was running at some level of deficit. It was natural to want to keep revenue

and costs/expenses in balance, and that was the approach that the Board wished to take. They did not wish to be in a situation where reserves were continually being raided to fund current expenditure.

114 The motion was voted on by card vote: 150 in favour, 136 against, 8 abstentions. The motion was therefore carried.

115 VOTE OF THANKS

Keith Evans (Perth & Perthshire) expressed particular thanks to Dr Alastair MacFadyen for his chairing of what transpired to be his last as President. For their work throughout the year and their contribution to the meeting, he thanked John Wilkinson, Jim Healy, William Whyte, Elizabeth Foster, committee Convenors and the staff at Coates Crescent. He thanked the Working Group who organised the weekend, especially Irene Heron and Lorna Ogilvie, and to all who had volunteered over the weekend. The weekend had got off an excellent start with a dance programme by Croydon & District Branch, music from Susan MacFadyen's Band, and MCs Ruby Wilkinson and Bill Zobel. Members could look forward to that evening's Civic Reception from Perth & Kinross Council, followed by dancing to a programme by Winnipeg Branch, music from Alistair Wood's Band, and MCs Jean Martin and Andrew McConnell. Maureen Haynes had coped admirably with technical problems to provide a very enjoyable class, with music by Susan MacFadyen, and the class with Janet Johnston and George Meikle the following day would no doubt be equally good. Thanks were due to David Cunningham for organising the new music competition and to Muriel Johnstone and George Meikle for acting as judges. Finally, he thanked delegates, observers and others who were attending the weekend, and hoped that everyone enjoyed the remainder. He encouraged all to return to the fair city of Perth in 2014 – and to bring a friend!

116 Mr Wilkinson presented a bouquet to Dr MacFadyen.

117 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Saturday 8th November 2014, in Perth.