



BSRC Annual Report - 2023/24

There is just one month to go in our dancing calendar 2023/24, but still lots to look forward to - another month of sociable, fun club nights and classes and, always a highlight, our Spring Dance. Then, in June and July, we optimistically head outside and swap wooden floor for grass in a series of summer garden dances.

Now, though, it's time to look back over the past year.

With over 100 members, BSRC continues to thrive. The Introduction to Dancing classes have been extremely popular this year, with many people having to be put on a waiting list to start in September (not ideal, as they tend to lose interest, but a review is underway). The Improve Your Dancing and Advance Your Dancing classes were mainly well attended, as was the Dem class. A new concept for this year was Develop Your Dancing (run on Tuesdays once the Introduction classes were over). These classes concentrated on a particular dancing figure and were judged by those who attended as very useful.

All this does not happen without a huge amount of thought and preparation by our teachers - we are lucky to have such strength in depth! Massive thanks to Joan, Gerry, Ken, Deborah, Jane, Jan, Caroline, Cindy and Rose for all their hard work, enthusiasm and expertise.

The same goes for our MCs - who not only have to devise interesting and relevant programmes (bearing in mind upcoming dance events) but also have to time it to perfection, as well as attempt to keep the rest of us in some sort of order! The technology has not always been kind to us this year, but again plans are under way to rectify the occasional hiccups with the computers or microphone. Thank you very much to Andrew, Gerry, Ken, Jeremy, Stephen, Robert, Joan and Jane for their excellent MC-ing!

The dem team, post-Covid, has had diaries chock-a-block with dem dates - mostly in care homes around the area. During the club season, we performed eight dems in care homes (one asking us back for a second performance just weeks later), one at the Wigginton Big Picnic, one for a church group and two Burns Night Suppers. We also were the key entertainment at an event at Lindengate, the charity we have supported this year, celebrating groups coming to the end of their support programmes; they were impressed with the demonstrations but really enjoyed joining in the ceilidh dancing. We are due to perform a medley for you at the Spring Dance on 11 May. Jane Rose puts us through our paces and prepares us for these events during our monthly Advanced/Dem classes, as well as (largely) being MC for the events themselves. As dem secretary, I organise the dates and liaise with the contacts for whom we are performing the display. It's a lot of fun and we enjoy the chance to show off our dances and medleys to a (mostly!) appreciative audience. Many thanks to the pool of dem dancers for giving up their time to entertain à l'écossaise - I should give special mention to Jon for his excellent piping and to Marjorie for adding colour to proceedings with her amusing narrations, which also give us the opportunity for a breather!

A sad note was struck when, shortly before we were due to perform at the care home where she was resident, stalwart of the club and host of many a wonderful garden dance, Janet Ridgway, died. The church in Aldbury, where she had been a minister, was full to bursting for her funeral and indeed overflowed into a couple more venues - many friends watched via a Zoom link too. Jane Rose wrote a very interesting obituary, circulated by Gerry in The Rant.

As if our wonderful Tuesday club nights weren't enough, there are also regular highlights in our dancing calendar - the first of which in the 2023/24 season was the Charity Dance in October. Fabulous live music was provided by Chris Oxtoby and we raised £448.11 for Lindengate. As you know, this is the second year we have supported Lindengate, the charity based in Wendover which focuses on providing activities centred on nature and in the open-air for people suffering from mental health issues.

One of the things I personally enjoy very much about the club is the emphasis on learning and progression - we're encouraged not to stand still, in any sense of the word! The Day School provides an excellent opportunity to hone our skills, and the November event at the White Hill Centre in Chesham was superbly organised and run, with beginners, intermediate and advanced classes on offer, all well attended. Special thanks are due to Jane Rose, who stepped in at the eleventh hour to cover for Antoine Rousseau as teacher of the Advanced Class.

Our very own Ken Martlew provided live music, together with Barbara Manning, for the Nice 'N Easy Dance in early December. The Nice 'N Easy Dance is an ideal opportunity for relatively new learners to dance in a social context with live music, with lots of help being on hand from more experienced dancers, who also really enjoy this occasion. A dem side composed of teachers performed a medley during the evening, to provide inspiration and show how it's done!

It is lovely to have founder member, Robert Bateson, back in our midst on a regular basis. Robert recently celebrated his 90th birthday but is still dancing regularly. For those who may have missed it, there is a video on the members' section of the club website of Robert, suitably attired, performing his own version of "A Scottish Soldier" at the Christmas ceilidh. In addition to the ceilidh, there was a Christmas Party, ably MC'd by Robert Baker-Glenn, a Valentine's Dance presided over by Stephen and the traditional Burns Night shindig, at which Keith gave a stirring address to the haggis, after the "warm, reeking, rich" delicacy was piped in by Jon. Thanks to Ken for providing a piano accompaniment for the dancing when Brian's laptop stopped working and to Dawn, for overseeing the provision, by club members, of the obligatory neeps and tatties.

Of course, THE highlight of the year was the Highland Ball in February. We were back at Ashlyns for the first time since 2020 and it felt very special. The atmosphere and baronial splendour of the Great Hall - decorated with shields and tartan swags in honour of past presidents - is a spectacular setting for the club's flagship event. After a glass of fizz to set the mood, we got down to our 20 dances,

aided and abetted musically by Ewan Galloway and by MCs, Andrew and Gerry. Thanks also to Robert Baker-Glenn and Margaret Catchick for an interesting and very enjoyable programme. Delicious lamb, chicken and vegetarian dishes were served up by Julia's Catering and a convivial time had by all. A huge amount of work goes into ensuring the Ball goes smoothly and there are too many involved to mention them all here, but if you helped in any way or just attended and enjoyed yourself, thank you very much. Let's do it all again next year!

Last but not least came our Tea Dance at Bovingdon. The cake-makers and Sheila and Clare (for organising them) are due our thanks, as are MC, Jeremy, and musicians, Ken and Barbara. It was lovely to have some of our honorary members there and to have time to chat to them. And where else can you work off a slice of Victoria sponge so quickly and enjoyably?

In closing, I would like, on everyone's behalf, to thank the committee for all their hard work in keeping the club thriving, progressing confidently into the future and such fun to be a part of. I've only recently joined the committee and am only just starting to appreciate what goes into making the club tick so robustly! Thank you, Andrew, Anne, Simon, Sheila, Clare, Karen and Trevor. Not forgetting Sally, who did so much work for the committee before her plans to move away from the area caused her to step down.

And thanks to all of you for your enthusiasm for and commitment to Scottish Country Dancing!

Jane Wilde
Secretary