

ST. COLUMBA'S SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

MINUTES

Monday 11 March 2024

St. Columba's Church, Lower Hall, Pont Street, SW1X0BD

1 Apologies for absence

There were apologies from Thelma-Jane Robb, Peter Knight, Alan Poh, Iain Ross, Caroline Banksy, Gill Lumbus.

2 Minutes of the 2023 AGM

The minutes were accepted by the meeting; proposed by Brian Pierson and seconded by Lindsey Rousseau.

2a Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3 Treasurer's Report

Margaret circulated the accounts. She said that the cash held in hand had now been banked. A letter of thanks had been received from ScotsCare thanking us for the £164 collected at the carols evening.

Approval of the accounts was proposed by Murrough Landon and seconded by Duncan Campbell.

4 Convenor's Report

Season 2023-24 saw a return to more normal attendances at dances following the Covid outbreak. The season has been highly enjoyable; we got off to a good start in October since when we have attracted new dancers with occasional visitors. We regularly host 4-5 sets on social evenings and as many as 7 sets on Band nights. The overall standard of dancing has also improved. Increased attendance has been observed by most clubs and at St Columba's it is attributed to:

- Dancers getting back "into step" following Covid
- A welcoming and positive atmosphere
- Providing varied and balanced programmes

We have gradually introduced new dances this season, a few less familiar but well-established dances and some that are slightly more complicated. Positive comments have been received about the programmes, but we can always do better. It can take a little time for dances to become firmed up in dancers' minds and it is

aimed to repeat new and more challenging dances frequently and in short order (successive weeks) to increase familiarity. It is our target to have dances become knowledge embedded and, in due course, part of our regular trove.

Bands

We have held four band nights so far this season:

- Chris Oxtoby
- Dave Hall
- Frank Reid (Burns Night)
- Ian Robertson (with Ewan Galloway)

Still to come:

- Craigievar

Attendances have been up at Band Nights compared with last season and importantly, the atmosphere at all events has been vibrant. We also enjoyed a cash surplus at events.

Band fees increased this season and this was reflected in the entry price for Band Nights. We can expect a small increase next season.

It is also worth mentioning our annual “Carols, mince pies and Dance” evening at Christmas. This season Fiona Gardener kindly played piano for us and stayed afterwards to enjoy some dancing. We were also able to donate £164, raised that evening to our chosen charity, ScotsCare, to help homeless Scots in London.

Publicity and Promotion

An overarching objective is to attract and retain dancers. Much of the groundwork has been done in settling the dancing base and making St Columba’s Dancers a “go to” destination. Moving forward, we need to do more of the same:

- Continue to produce attractive programmes
- Being welcoming to newcomers, whether they be new to St Columba’s, new to dancing or both
- Constantly promoting St Columba’s Dancers through social media and direct contact
 - Website
 - Email
 - Facebook
 - Twitter (X)
 - Flyers (mainly used electronically)

The website is being refreshed. As part of this, a video page has been included, where selected video recordings of dances will be available.

Finance and Church Donation

It was reported last year that St Columba's Dancers is financially stable and meets its obligations. We are fortunate that do not have to pay for the hall, but we do make an annual donation to the church to help cover running costs. This donation has been stable for some years at £2,000 per annum. It was announced last year that we would like to increase our donation to £2,500, given the inflation that we have witnessed in recent years. Our financial position now allows us to increase our donation to £2,500.

Principal costs other than bands are:

- Promotion (Flyers and advertising in *The Reel*)
- Consumables (Tea, biscuits, Band Night refreshments)

Members of the committee have been unselfishly donating consumables on a weekly basis. This is not a practice that should be assumed will continue.

MCs

I have become more involved with MCing this year. This has opened my eyes even more to the work that the MCs put in to thinking about, planning and constructing programmes, never mind MCing our weekly events. They work as a team and have been wonderful mentors to me. Thank you to the MCs, Lindsey, Roy, Jim, Murrrough and Brian for all that you do.

Committee

St Columba's dancers could not function if we did not have volunteers supporting on a week-by-week basis. The committee, Thelma, Margaret, Lena, Helen, Steve, Sarah and Joan have been a great support and I thank them for all of the hard work that they put in to making things happen. Particular thanks to the team for all of the hard work in the kitchen.

Finally, may I say thank you to you all for coming along here each week and making it such a happy occasion.

5 Election of Officers

Nominations were requested before the meeting for dancers to stand for the committee, but none were received. The meeting unanimously agreed that the current committee remain in place for another term.

6 Fees for Season 2024-25

Given our positive financial position, it was agreed that we hold fees at current levels for next season

- £2 donation for tea and biscuits
- £13 entry fee for Band Nights

- £16 entry fee for Burns Night

Should dancers wish to donate more, this would be welcome.

7 Any other Business

Maureen Campbell asked why there was no band night in April. Willie said consideration would be given to the suggestion. Valerie Strachan said it was always nice to have a band night.

Caroline Allcock thanked Willie and the committee for what they do.