

ST. COLUMBA'S SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 9 March 2026

at 8.15pm

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

1. Apologies for absence

Lindsay Jenkins, Lindsey Rousseau, Daniel Reinstein, Lesley Hall, Valerie Strachan, Steve Oakes, Duncan Campbell, Thelma-Jane Robb, Peter Knight, Annette Hughes

2. Minutes of the 2025 AGM

- a. There were no matters arising.

The minutes were accepted by the meeting: Proposed by Hugh Stephenson and seconded by Caroline Banzsky.

3. Treasurer's Report

Margaret Shaw presented the accounts (appended) which are for the calendar year 2025 (not the dancing season 2024-25).

It was reported that the Bank Balance on 1 January 2025 was £3,084.33 and as of 31 December 2025 was £2,677.3. There was a loss of £406.97 over the year which was attributed to slightly higher Band prices, an increased donation to the church and a payment of £249.74 to Wix for the domain fee. The latter was a reduction on the expected fee of ca. £450 as advantage was taken of an offer. The Wix domain fee will not recur until 2028. We also purchased Public Liability Insurance in 2025 at a price of £83.57 as we found that we were not fully indemnified by the Church's insurance. This will be a recurring cost. We made a surplus on all events except one Band Night when a small loss was incurred (£35.80).

The accounts were audited by Duncan Campbell and Margaret Shaw thanked him.

Acceptance of the Treasurer's report was proposed by Brian Pierson and seconded by Rona Black.

4. Convenor's Report

Thank you all so much for a very enjoyable first half of the season. The number of dancers has once again remained stable, with around four sets on regular dance evenings and 5-6 sets on Band Nights.

We continue to attract occasional new dancers to St Columba's. It is a delight to see this and they make a valuable contribution to our dance evenings. Nonetheless, we are still experiencing challenges retaining new dancers to St Columba's notwithstanding considerable effort being expended to promote our Club. We also receive dancers visiting St Columba's, frequently while passing through London. May I use this occasion to thank you for making them feel so welcome.

MCs

I have expressed my thanks and admiration to our MCs on several occasions and will do so once again. Our MCs have considerable knowledge and they impart that knowledge and give their time selflessly to make our evenings a success. Occasionally, as a group, we don't prepare programmes

quite as we would like which occurs despite considerable effort being made not to have repeating figures or perhaps not dance less well-known dances often enough in successive weeks. Nonetheless, being part of that group, I am grateful to the MCs for their time, dedication and wisdom.

Last season (2024-25) we danced:

Number of times a dance was repeated	Different Dances 2023-24	Different Dances 2024-25	Total Dances 2023-24	Total Dances 2024-25
1	75	61	75	61
2	36	37	72	74
3	33	36	99	108
4	16	19	64	76
5	18	8	90	40
6	3	2	18	12
7		2	0	14
8		3	0	24
9		1	0	9
Total	181	170	418	418

Analysis of dances danced over the past couple of seasons demonstrates that we are dancing the same number of dances in total, but that we repeated dances more often in season 2024-25 compared with the previous season. I would also add that it appears to be the case that dancers appear more knowledgeable and are retaining information on dances.

Bands

We have held three band nights so far this season:

- Ian Robertson
- Dave Hall
- Frank Reid (Burns Night)

Still to come:

- Chris Oxtoby
- Keith Smith & Anne-Laure Latour

Attendances at Band Nights have been similar to last season and we have been fortunate to enjoy atmospheric events.

Band fees remained stable this season, with our total outlay on bands expected to be about £2,150 which is similar to last season. The total cost has increased steadily since 22-23 when our outlay was £1,745 an increase of 23% over the period. As ever, when looking at numbers we need to be careful as this is not a straight inflationary effect – there is the impact of “mix” (which bands) as well.

Our Burns Night this season had pared down catering. If you recall, a request was made for volunteers to manage the preparation for a full Burns supper meal. There were several dancers who volunteered to help with setting up and clearing away, but not to plan and prepare the meal. Hence the pared down “haggis sausages in a bun with condiments”, which worked well and I thank Lena, Margaret, Sarah and Peter for making this happen so successfully.

We enjoyed a successful Carols, Mince Pies and Dancing evening when Fiona Gardener kindly accompanied us on the piano. We raised £170 for our chosen charity, Scotscare, for homeless Scots in London. Thank you to all who contributed so generously.

Publicity & Promotion

I said on previous occasions that an overarching objective is to attract and retain new dancers. We continue with this objective by

- Producing 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
 - Flyers (mainly used electronically)
 - Advertising (*The Reel*)
 - We may also start using a new promotion tool “Meetup”. This will take some time as training and familiarisation will be required.

Combined Societies 2027

It will be St Columba’s turn to host the Combined Societies dance in 2027 and it is proposed that the dance be held on one of our Band Nights. The evening proposed is Monday 22 March 2027 (to be confirmed). The other members of the Combined Societies are RSCDS London, London Highland Club, Gay Gordons and Summer Tuesdays. (Little Ship Club is closing so they will not participate in 2027.)

5. Proposed time change for social evenings

A request was received suggesting that we consider changing the time of our social evenings to 7 – 9.30pm rather than 7.15 – 9.50pm.

The arguments for the proposed changes are, in no particular order:

- Some dancers tend to drift off after the break, which adversely affects vibrancy and atmosphere. This is particularly noticeable (and understandable) on colder evenings.
- The introduction of an earlier finish time with Band Nights (10pm rather than 10.30pm) was well received. Significantly more dancers now stay for the full second half, making the evening much more pleasurable and atmospheric.
- There appears to be a general view that a 9.30pm finish would be more acceptable to many dancers on social evenings. This would enable dancers to get home at a more reasonable time, which is particularly welcome in winter.

Conversations about the teaching slot produced a range of opinions.

- Some feel that it is worthwhile, particularly when we have new or unfamiliar dances.
- Others believe that since we walk through most dances and they are also available on video, there is ample opportunity for dancers to assimilate even new dances.
- Many dancers do not arrive until after the current 7.15 practice, possibly because they have little interest in the practice session.

Counsel from the committee and MCs was taken before sending out a note requesting the views of members. I am pleased to say that I received 41 responses and the summary of these is:

Time Change to 7-9.30pm			Teaching Slot (To Eliminate)		
For	Against	Neutral	For	Against	Neutral
36	1	4	33	2	6

Having gone through the consultation process, it was proposed that we change the timing to 7.00-9.30pm. Please note that the timing of Band Nights will remain the same as currently, i.e. 7.30-10.00pm. This will allow the bands free parking and time to set up.

Brian Pierson proposed the motion, and it was seconded by Gill Lumbus

A vote was taken with only 1 dancer not in favour.

6. Election of Committee

The committee, along with the MCs, continue to ensure that dance evenings run smoothly.

The committee is up for re-election this year, for a further 2 years. Dancers were asked in one of the weekly notes if anyone would like to stand for election to the committee. There were no volunteers.

In the event, the current members of the committee were prepared to stand for a further 2 years:

Willie Lawrence
Margaret Shaw
Joan Rogers
Steve Oaks
Thelma-Jane Robb
Lena Robinson
Sarah Shaw

This was taken as block vote proposed by Gill Lumbus and seconded by Rowena Jackson

7. Church Donation

Last season (2024-25) we made a donation to the church of £2,500. We remain financially stable and the committee has agreed that we will again make a donation of £2,500 (2025-26).

We continue to benefit from not having to pay for the hall at St Columba's. However, as I indicated at the last AGM, the church has costs including that of the caretaker as well as power (heat and light) in addition to the investment in audio systems.

This was agreed and proposed by Joan Blake and seconded by Rona Black.

8. Fees for season 2026-27

Fees increased in 2025-26 viz:

- £2.50 as a donation for tea and biscuits -
- Band Nights £14
- Burns Night £17

We continued to benefit from certain committee members generously donating tea, milk and biscuits on a weekly basis but, it should not be assumed that this will continue.

9. AOB

The new Dance season 2026-27 will start on Monday 28th September 2026 and will end on Monday 29th May 2027. The last dance before Christmas will be on Monday 7 December. The church has a booking on Monday 14th, so we have had to change our dates to accommodate. This means that there will be 29 dance evenings next season rather than the usual 30.

Thank you all for continuing to make Monday evenings such a pleasure. Should you feel that there is anything that we can do to improve the enjoyment of our Monday evenings, including attendances, please let me know.

Caroline Alcock and Brian Pierson thanked the Committee for all the work that they do.

Appendix 1

Band Nights	Band		Income	Expenses	Balance
January 17th	Frank Reid	(54)	864.00	(805.88)	58.12
March 24th	Ian Robertson	(40)	514.00	(478.70)	35.30
May 19th	Craigievar	(46)	598.00	(633.80)	(35.80)
October 27th	Ian Robertson	(44)	616.00	(489.32)	126.68
December 1st	Dave Hall	(43)	610.92	(244.00)	366.92
			3,202.92	(2,651.70)	551.22
Recorded Music					
Jan/Dec	25 Evenings		1,792.31		1,792.31
	Cash Donations				80
	Bank Transfer				100
				Total Income	2,523.53
	Misc. Expenditure/Donations				
	Reel Advert		78.00		
	St Columba's Church		2,500.00		
	Insurance		83.57		
	Website (Wix.com)		249.74		
	Website Domain		19.19		
			<u>2,930.50</u>		
				Total Expenses	(2,930.50)
				Balance	(406.97)
	Bank Balance 01/01/2025		3,084.33		
	Bank Balance 31/12/2025		2,677.36		