

The Scottish Country Dance Society of Boston, MA, Inc.
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 5 June 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 p.m. by President Jeremy Thorpe.

Jeremy opened the meeting by reviewing the foci of the Executive Committee for the past year: technological innovation as with the use of Google calendar and on-line payments; documentation of events, such as the Highland Ball, so that the event organizers have reference materials/points when doing their planning; and bringing in new people perhaps with a progressive beginners' class (NY Branch has found success with this method).

Minutes of the SAGM: The minutes of the SAGM, November 7, 2016 were approved as distributed.

Election Results: The newly elected Branch officers include Marsha Byrnes as Vice President, Cathy Crabtree as Treasurer, and Sharon Gilmour and John Salyards as Exec members at-large for three-year terms. The open position on the Nominating Committee has not yet been filled.

Treasurer's Interim Report: At eight months into the fiscal year, Treasurer Cathy Crabtree reported that the total Branch revenue is currently at \$49,929 after having sustained losses in both the November Concert and the recent Highland Ball. There was a decrease of approximately 22% in attendance at the Highland Ball, plus the general liability insurance rate increased and the administrative expenses incurred about \$1011 in Square, Inc. fees (the on-line payment service).

SDCEA: Gregor Trinkaus-Randall, SDCEA President, announced that the SDCEA awarded a total of \$1832.50 in scholarships in 2016 including to dancers attending Pinewoods Scottish Sessions I and II, the Highland Ball, and New Hampshire Highlands. Contributions to the SDCEA are always welcome, and \$2,357.50 was received in 2016 including \$1100 from the Scholarship Dance. These funds are available to dancers and musicians with a demonstrated need. Gregor also announced the winners of the Ed Rawson Fund Class Awards for newer dancers including Cheryl Marceau, Scott Weaver, Mies Boet, and Hanne Eisenfeld from the Cambridge Class; Nina Beckwith from the Brunswick Class; Susan A. Hinchliffe and Karen Gansz from the Fairlee Class; Henrietta Light from the Salem Class; and Sam Bemis, Ruth Dress, and Eleanor Dress from the Albany Class. Congratulations!

Membership: MaryEllen and John Scannell reported that there are 230 Branch members and 21 Associate Members. In addition, there were 30 individuals and 1 associate who did not rejoin. Fifteen classes contain eight or more members listing that class as their location.

Mailing List: Peter Tandy, the Branch Mailing List Coordinator, reported that the list currently has 1481 records, 36 more than last year. The list includes 172 member records, 14 Associate member records (5 less than last year), 55 SDC group representatives (but only 3 e-mail addresses for sending the *Tartan Times*), and 617 Concert records (155 less than large year). Peter expresses his thanks to MaryEllen and John Scannell for their efforts with the memberships so that the mailing database can be kept up-to-date.

Demo Team: Laura DeCesare, Demo Team Coordinator, reported on the Demo Team. The team consists of 18 active members, including four new dancers who performed with the team for the first time at NEFFA this spring and did a wonderful job. Other performances this year included the Fall Concert, BCMFest, Ancient Universities, and NEFFA. For NEFFA, the team introduced new informal costumes. Members bought their own dresses, so the new look was at no cost to the branch. They have also found a new rehearsal space that costs less, has plenty of parking, and is conveniently located on Mass Ave in Lexington. Rehearsal rentals totaled \$910 for the year and income was \$1,300, so the team did clear a profit.

Next weekend, the team will be at Dance for World Community, 12:30 Mass Ave Stage. They will then be on hiatus and look forward to starting up in the fall.

Teaching and Music Committee (TMC): Charles Liu, Chair of the Teaching and Music Committee, reported on the activities of the Committee in the past year.

TMC is responsible for planning and organizing the teaching and music aspects of the Highland Ball and Pinewoods Scottish Sessions. For the Highland Ball, they would like to thank Gregor Trinkaus-Randall and Kat Dutton for devising the program.

For Pinewoods Scottish Sessions, in addition to the electronic camper evaluation started in 2016, they have made changes to the morning class offering for 2017 in response to attendance trends at recent Sessions. They decided, among other things, to split up the Advanced Class into two concurrent classes: Advanced–Technique Focus class and Advanced–Repertoire Focus class. They also incorporated the Easy Dance class into the Beginner Class, which offers newer dancers an opportunity to practice the fundamentals used in the evening dances. Although they spent a lot of time thinking through various options before finalizing the class offerings, they recognize that the schedule may not be perfect. The TMC welcomes your feedback and suggestions to best address the needs of all dancers at Pinewoods.

For the 2018 Pinewoods Scottish Sessions, TMC has confirmed teachers Helen Russell, Linda Henderson and Laura Scott. Susie Petrov will continue to serve as music director.

In addition to the Highland Ball and Pinewoods, TMC has been discussing ideas for workshops. The next workshop will be on the history of Scottish Country Dances led by Jen Schoonover and Susie Petrov in September. TMC has also been working to bring dance workshops to branch members in northern New England. They look forward to your support to make them happen in the coming year.

TMC would also like to recognize and thank the following branch members who took the initiative and organized Scottish Country Dance events at NEFFA this year: Howard Lasnik, Karen Sollins and Cathy Fahey.

TMC continues to welcome your ideas in any areas where they can help others to enjoy more Scottish Country Dancing. They look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Tartan Times: Robert McOwen read Barbara's report. Evelyn is in the UK just now, but she and Barbara were able to produce the latest *Tartan Times* using just email, that is, no physical exchange of materials, which is a milestone. There was a delay due to Evelyn's email breaking down but that has now been fixed. There was another delay getting the

printed copies out, due to technical problems at the printer. The next issue will be slightly tricky also, but they'll try to get an early start. As always, your pictures and articles for the *Tartan Times* are always welcome.

Website: Jeremy Thorpe read the report from the webmasters Meyer, Laura, and Matt Billmers. The webmasters are pleased to report that the redesign of the web site is now complete, up and running on <http://rscdsboston.org>. The new site features a cleaner look with greater integration of photos into the individual pages. Links that open a PDF, or send an email, or leave our site are all clearly identified with icons next to the link. Navigating the site has been simplified by having cascading pull-down menus that allow you to get to any part of the site quickly and easily without the need of a site map. They have responded to requests to make the site mobile-friendly; when a window becomes too small, the design switches to a more compact layout made for finger taps. The photo galleries now have a very different look and feel. Everyone is encouraged to try it out and send any feedback to webmaster@rscdsboson.org. Special thanks goes to Tom Pixton for doing much of the design. Another nice addition this year is the ability to apply online (and in some cases pay online) for Pinewoods sessions, the Highland Ball, and membership in the branch. Oh, the site is now searchable! The search box is at the top right hand corner of each page. The calendar has changed substantially; it now uses Google calendars with a separate calendar for each class or major event. This has led to a major shift in responsibilities. Previously, event organizers would send their dates, fliers, dance notes, and announcement blurbs to the webmaster, who would create the calendar entry on the website, add any attachments, and send out announcements. Using Google calendars, the webmasters do not have access to the individual event calendars, so the organizers have to do that part themselves. They can still send out the text of any email announcements, but the webmaster will not send out email until the calendar entry has been posted. This is to prevent confusion when people see the announcement, go to the calendar to get the flier or dance notes, and don't find the event listed. Please create your calendar entries first! If you encounter difficulties, contact calendar@rscdsboton.org for help. Once again, it's time to nag. Please proofread text, dance notes, fliers and any other content that will go on the web. Too often the webmasters find incorrect dates, mistakes in dance directions, and wrong addresses for events. While the webmaster can correct mistakes once they are discovered, they can't cause people who have already seen the erroneous information to un-see it.

It is also important for event organizers to get information to the webmaster in a timely way. There should be one person for each event who communicates with them; otherwise, if they receive differing and possibly conflicting information, they don't know what to use. When a new event is in the startup phase and event organizers have been chosen, they should reach out to the webmasters so that they know who they are, which person will be communicating with them, and get a date to the webmasters so they can post it and send out a "hold the date" mailing as soon as possible. Now for some numbers: in the past year, they have delivered about 1 million pages. More than half of the page requests come from Google (38%) and rscdsboston.com (20%), which redirects to the .org page. Search queries are for "rscds boston" and "english scottish contra session." Visit the site and make comments. The webmasters look forward to working with all of you again next year.

Equipment: Peter Tandy, Equipment Coordinator, reported that the Boston Branch sound systems are available for use at Branch events and for a reasonable rental fee to

related activities. It is used at most monthly Branch parties where live music is featured. Peter reports that he has to only coordinate with the Cambridge Class Committee for equipment when large bands are using the Branch system for events now that many of our great musicians have their own microphones.

Archives: Gregor Trinkaus-Randall has agreed to take on the role of Branch archivist.

Bookstore: Dawn and Mike Little are the keepers of the Bookstore. Please be sure to contact them if you would like the Bookstore to come to your event.

Pinewoods Camp: Bill Card presented his last report as the RSCDS Boston Branch Representative to the PCI Board. Thank you, Bill, for your hard work over the last six years. Bruce Mabbott has agreed to be Bill's replacement.

Executive Director - The new Executive Director, Carl Mastandrea, has been trained and started work. He is cheerful, organized, patient, and has experience in property management, so he should do well.

Retiring Executive Director, Judy Savage, bought a home in the Six Ponds areas, so she is still a neighbor.

Carl's dog Brady has replaced Sophie as the new security system at camp. He has experience with squirrels and small birds but no prior experience with wild turkeys. A period of adjustment will be expected.

Facilities - Carl reported that there were four major snow storms since the beginning of the year, one that included a power blackout and spectacular lightning, but there was no major damage. Some trees have been removed though due to rot, breakage, or proximity to buildings.

Dining Hall Manager – This year, the Dining Hall manager is a crew position rather than a volunteer from the session. The extra crew member will be housed at Cottey House which will therefore not be used for camper housing. These two changes are experiments, so please provide feedback if you wish.

Calendar 2019 – The summers of 2019 and 2020 will be a challenge. Due to the timing of the holidays in those years, a week is lost in August but gained in June. Program Providers are invited to experiment with new ideas for those weeks. These could be half-weeks, or one-offs, or the pilots for regular sessions in the future. In 2019, it is anticipated that the extra week in June will be used for Centennial activities, but there will be room at camp for other activities as well.

Archives – As the Pinewoods Centennial is approaching, the archives are being organized. The Pinewoods archives are at the University of New Hampshire, Library of Traditional Music and Dance, where they are combined with the archives of other kindred organizations. If you are interested in helping, please speak with Bill.

Summer 2017 – The Cape Breton music and dance session just occurred, and the Green Wood Craft fest will occur next. The Sierra Club trail workers will again be sharing camp with Early Music Week in August. Other sessions for this year have higher enrollments than at the same time last year, so, the summer looks wonderful and PCI will warmly welcome RSCDS Boston back to camp.

Fall Concert 2016: The following letter from the Executive Committee concerning the state of the Fall Concert was sent to the Branch membership.

For twenty-four years, at the National Heritage Museum in Lexington and many years before that at Sanders Theatre in Cambridge, the Boston Branch has sponsored a concert of Scottish music and dance. It was our most important "outward-facing" activity, a way to share Scottish culture with the larger community, whether or not some in the audience were drawn to dancing. We are proud of our history with this event, and we are looking forward to our 2017 concert with Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas, along with the Demo Team and Highland Dance Boston, on November 11, 2017, in Lexington. We hope to see you all there!

However, recent concerts have encountered financial difficulties. Without (inter)national stars like Alasdair and Natalie, the event lost \$3000 in 2015, and even after lengthy discussions, better promotion, fewer schedule conflicts with other events, and a lot of hard work from the demo team and the organizers, the 2016 concert also resulted in a loss (\$5000). We considered many alternatives, including moving the concert to a different venue, but we couldn't come up with a way to make a large-venue concert financially viable for the Branch beyond this year's plans. Finding volunteers was also becoming more difficult.

As a result, the Executive Committee has decided that we should take a break, and we will not attempt to mount a concert in 2018. We invite proposals from the membership as to how we might reconceive the concert on a sounder financial footing in 2019 and beyond. We might work with local bands in a smaller venue or feature the demo team more centrally, for example. We're excited to hear your ideas on how best to carry the tradition forward.

In the meantime, we can look forward to Alasdair and Natalie and the other performers at a stellar show this coming fall!

Pinewoods Benefit Ball 2016: MaryEllen Scannell reports that the Pinewoods Benefit Ball was once again hosted by the Salem Class. Many thanks to all the dancers who enjoyed an evening of dancing in support of Pinewoods Camp, Inc. Even as expenses increased, the net to Pinewoods was \$1200 again this year.

Also to note is that Veronica's Attic Sales at Pinewoods this past year netted a \$1200 donation to camp. Thank you to Veronica for all her efforts to support SCD and PCI!

Highland Ball 2017: Kat Dutton presented this report on behalf of herself, Susie Long, and Diane Lockhart. Socially, the 2017 Ball was a huge success! Comments from dancers were almost universally positive, especially regarding Hannah's beautiful decorations and the excellent work of the MCs at presenting the program. The Branch continues to have a good working relationship with the beautiful Melrose Hall. The caterer used in the past has changed ownership, so a new caterer was used, and an excellent meal was provided by them. The welcome dance was lovely, and the brunch managed to have an entire set of dancers crammed into Ron's living room, despite the rain.

Unfortunately, financially the Ball was not a success. Attendance was much lower than in past years. There were just 108 dancers this year, only 98 of whom attended the dinner as well. This was substantially lower than the numbers expected and used for the budget. Despite coming in under the projected budget in several areas and receiving donations of both time and tickets, the Ball incurred a loss of approximately \$1,400.

This was the first event by the branch to use the new online payments system. It was a very successful experiment, with about two thirds of all attendees signing up online and only a third sending in a paper application.

The Ball Runner's Guide that began creation under last year's ball chairs proved to be a useful first draft. The Ball organizers are going to be adding further information to the guide and continuing to work with Exec and with next year's ball chairs to ensure the event can be its most successful. Kat will attend the next Exec meeting to discuss the best plan moving forward.

Some things to consider –

- Is it beneficial to make personal visits to the classes, i.e. more outreach?
- People don't necessarily want to drive great distances for an evening of dancing.
- Dancers don't seem to travel much to other Branch classes.
- Would it be beneficial to set up a carpool listing on the website?
- If hospitality is available, it should be clearly advertised.
- In general, are we as welcoming as we could be? Do we sit with people other than our own group?

RSCDS AGM 2017: The Headquarters AGM will be in Perth on November 4,2017. We will be once again be represented by Jean Farrington and Evelyn Murray. Thank you!

Class Reports: Class reports were received and placed on file from Brookline, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Newton, Bedford, Salem, and Stow in Massachusetts, from Greenland in New Hampshire, from Belfast, Brunswick and Kennebunk in Maine, and from Fairlee and Burlington in Vermont.

Other Business:

- Postcards advertising the Boston Branch and dance locations are available for distribution. Please ask for some if you know of a location where they could go.
- The Boston Branch is looking for a Publicity person. This person would be the point person for disseminating Branch information, physically, electronically, or otherwise. If interested, please speak to any member of the Executive Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Haines, Secretary