

# *The Scottish Country Dance Teacher*

**TAS Newsletter January 2023**

**Newsletter of the Teachers' Association Scotland (TAS)**

**Recognised as an RSCDS Teachers' Association**

[www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk](http://www.countrydanceteachersofscotland.org.uk)

***Chairman: Oluf Olufsen***

***Secretary: Anne Thorn***

[am\\_thorn@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:am_thorn@hotmail.co.uk)

***Treasurer: George Watt***

***Committee: Deirdre MacCuish Bark, Jane Meikle, Morag Barclay (co-opted)***

***Newsletter Editor: Mary McFarlane***

[marymca@googlemail.com](mailto:marymca@googlemail.com)

## From the Chair

A Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year to all TAS members. All the more wished for, I'm certain, in light of the post-Christmas 'blues' and the current national, and international, gloom. The antidote can only be the return to our classes, dances and balls which afford us all the benefit of good friendship, lilting music and moving rhythmically and purposefully in the spirit of the dance and all that such pleasure entails.

Since the AGM in Dunblane in early autumn, the committee have been meeting regularly on Zoom to conduct committee business and develop the work and activities of TAS. It seems important, indeed essential, for all office bearers and members to be proud of the fact that our organisation, as well as being a forum for the exchange of ideas and a platform for good practice pertaining to the teaching of SCD, is also a body of expertise which can be an influential voice and play an active part in shaping the future direction of effective and successful education of dancers at whatever level they achieve, or seek to achieve, in the pursuit of our enjoyable and uplifting pastime.

One of the projects underway and moving towards fruition will be the publication of the book of dances for young people involved in music festival competitions and displays/concerts. Music is currently being collected, edited and recorded and the end product, which will also be a suitable source of dances for teaching to classes of improving beginners and intermediate dancers, is expected in the coming months, if not weeks. It is envisaged that the book will be in both PDF format and 'hard-copy' traditional 'paper-and-print'. Look out for more information in due course.

2023 sees the Centenary of the RSCDS. Many events are being organised to celebrate this significant milestone in the history of SCD. Hopefully, TAS members will play an active part in many of these experiences and represent all our values and

purpose in promoting the teaching and learning bound up in all levels of SCD activity. While it had been suggested that TAS create a special event of its own, it was felt, after due review and consideration, that adding another event to an already wide-ranging and busy calendar of 'happenings' may prove counter-productive and have a potentially negative effect.

Two important TAS events will take place this year, however, in the form of both our Spring and Autumn Workshops (the latter also, as ever, encompassing the AGM). With regard to trying to visit all areas of Scotland to ensure all SCD teachers, wherever they reside and teach, feel catered for and not overlooked, the dates and locations of these events are:

Spring Workshop – Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (North-east venue tbc)

Autumn Workshop and AGM – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2023  
(Cardross Parish Church Hall, near Helensburgh)

Listening to members ideas and suggestions is always important and, to that end, one of the workshops in 2024 is likely to take a residential weekend format – an idea expressed by a number of TAS members both informally, and formally, at previous AGM discussions. Look out for more information on this later in the year.

Once again my heartfelt felicitations to all members be they all over Scotland, over the borders or overseas with especial thanks to those who work hard on behalf of the organisation and its members – the office bearers and committee (particularly the unstinting efforts of Secretary, Anne Thorn and Treasurer, George Watt), and no less important our Newsletter Editor, Mary McFarlane, and Webmaster, Moira Stephen, and all those members who give readily of their time and efforts to contribute to workshops and their smooth running.

*Oluf*

## From the Editor

This issue has appeared rather later than intended, but the slippage has allowed us to include information about the Spring workshop. This will take place in the North East of Scotland on 29 April 2023. Please note the date now.

My thanks, as always, to those who have provided items for inclusion, particularly Susan Mackay for the Minutes of the 2022 AGM, Rachel Shankland for the summary of the Autumn Workshop, Anne Thorn for the photographs and Oluf for his inspirational piece 'From the Chair'.

## TAS Dates for Your Diary

Spring Workshop - Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (North-east venue tbc)

TAS Autumn Workshop & AGM – Saturday, 26 August 2023  
Venue: Cardross Parish Church Hall, Station Road, Cardross G82 5NL (near Helensburgh)

# **Teachers' Association Scotland**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

**Held on Saturday, 27th August 2022, at 10:45am** in The Victoria Halls, Dunblane

### **Welcome**

The TAS Chairman, Oluf Olufsen, extended a warm welcome to the 38 members in attendance.

### **Present**

Helen Bain, Roy Bain, Margaret Ballantine, Morag Barclay, Judith Borup, Lyn Bryce, Allana Creighton, Linda Cullen, Margaret Fairgrieve, Fiona Fairlie, Ella Greig, Margaret Harris, Gillian Hardstone, Jimmie Hill, Kathryn Lawson, Deb Lees, Susan Mackay, Norma MacLeod, Marjorie MacRae, Debbie McAlees, Margaret McCann, Jean Martin, Jane Meikle, Yvonne Munro, Alice Oliphant, Oluf Olufsen, John Philip, Hugh Porteous, Joyce Porteous, Margo Priestley, Eve Ritchie, Anne Robertson, Lesley Ross, Moira Stephen, Margie Stevenson, Anne Thorn, Lorna Valentine, George Watt.

### **Apologies**

Diana Baillie, Irene Bennett, Marion Bennett, Muriel Bone, Wilma Brown, Jeanie Butler, Ross Colwell, Heather Cowan, Fiona Cummins, Lorraine Dick, Margaret Davidson, Edna Ewen, Linda Gaul, Sheena Gillespie, Martha Harris, Annabel Harrison, Catherine Higgott, Helen Hobson, George Hobson, Pat Houghton, Janet Johnston, Zsofi Jozsef, Janette Kirkpatrick, Les Lambert, Deirdre MacCuish-Bark, Susan MacKenzie, Ian MacLennan, Theresa MacVarish Clark, Kate McArdle, Mary McFarlane, Margaret McGregor, Eileen Meany, Tom McKinlay, Brenda Pattison, Sue Porter, Margaret Pritchard, Jane Rattray, Evelyn Redmond, Jayne Riddett, Alison Robertson, Susan Robertson, Helen Rodger, Margaret Ross, Margaret Rose, Dorothy Scott, Irene Smith, Keith Stacey, Moira Stacey, Anne Taylor, Wendy West, Linda Williamson, William Williamson

### **Minutes of AGM held on 28 August 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th August 2021 had been emailed to members on 15th August 2022. There were no matters arising and the minutes were approved. Proposed by George Watt and seconded by Yvonne Munro.

### **Secretary's Report**

#### **Membership**

The membership as of 26th August 2022 was 105. The membership for 2020-2021 was 128. This is probably due to repercussions from Covid and the period of lockdown with no dancing.

#### **Workshops**

We held our first workshop following the lockdown period on Saturday 28th August 2021 in Broxburn. It was a pleasure to welcome members back for the TAS AGM and workshop. Covid precautions were followed to make the day as safe as possible. The workshop was designed to include dancing to ease us back in gently including dances without taking of hands. It was a real joy to see members back dancing and enjoying themselves. The afternoon session included a very interesting talk from our musician for the day Ewan Galloway on how he had progressed from enjoying the accordion to becoming a professional musician. The afternoon also included a talk and discussion on Core Training for Instructors. The workshop was well attended, and it was good to be back after the long period of no dancing due to Covid.

Our Spring workshop was held in Bridge of Allan on Saturday 23rd April. The workshop was based around the dances of Sir Walter Scott, Heart of Midlothian. Our musician for the day

was Shona MacFadyen. Jimmie Hill led us through dances of the period during the morning session with a huge amount of enthusiasm, explaining the dances of the period as well as some of the social history of the time.

The afternoon included an interesting discussion regarding music of the period and the afternoon concluded with some dances associated with Burns led by Oluf Olufsen. A very enjoyable and interesting workshop with perhaps fewer attendees than we had hoped for, possibly due to ongoing issues with Covid.

#### TAS Committee

The three office bearers on the current TAS committee have been in post for a minimum of three years plus two non-office bearers have also been in post for the same time. This year we tried to encourage members to put forward nominees to fill these posts, but despite forms being compiled and sent out to the whole of the TAS membership, we only received one reply. This is for Deidre MacCuish Bark who has been proposed by Anne Robertson and seconded by Jimmie Hill to join the committee as a non-office bearer.

#### TAS Facebook Group

George Watt has kept the TAS Facebook page updated and has kindly agreed to continue in this role.

Moirra Stephen has managed the TAS Website and kept it updated. Moirra has kindly agreed to continue to manage the website.

#### TAS Newsletters

Mary MacFarlane has continued to produce very informative newsletters. Thank you to all who have contributed to the TAS newsletters. Mary has kindly agreed to continue as editor of the newsletter.

Oluf Olufsen thanked the secretary for the work done over the past four years and for this current report.

### **Treasurer's Report**

A statement of accounts had been previously circulated to the TAS membership.

#### Income

Membership for 2021-22 stood at 128, which included three new members and a further five whose membership had lapsed but who rejoined. Thirteen members did not renew. The decision to encourage renewal, and other payments, by BACS seemed to be well received, with 73 subscription payments by that method, or directly into the bank account, so slightly over 50%, almost all the rest having paid by cheque, just a few in cash.

#### Note on Membership 2022-23, and possible consequences

At 26/08/2022 membership stood at 105, of whom 102 have renewed their subscription, one additional member has renewed after a break, and two are new members. Unfortunately, two members passed away over the last 12 months and the significant number of 24 have not renewed. This has caused a not insignificant drop in membership income. I would recommend that over the course of their next meetings the committee discuss whether an increase needs to be made to the subscription, as well as to remuneration for contributors to workshops.

#### Workshops 2021-22

Autumn workshop: It was decided that there would be no charge for the autumn workshop and AGM, since it was the first in-person event for some time. Expenses covered the musician's fee and travel and the hire of the hall.

Spring workshop: Attendance at the spring workshop was fairly low, understandable given the prevailing state of the pandemic at the time. The teacher for the day, Jimmie Hill, waived his fee, for which we are grateful. The declined fee is entered as a donation on the Balance Sheet, to give a more accurate indication of the cost of a workshop.

#### Expenses

Insurance: The Insurance Company failed to send a reminder about the renewal, and the Treasurer failed to notice this, so unfortunately a payment was missed. It was renewed as soon as the oversight was noticed, but unfortunately there has been a considerable increase in the cost of the premium.

#### Grants

None

#### Update on Banking for 2021-22 into 2022-23

The online banking arrangements have been working well, venues, teachers and musicians have been happy to receive payment by that method, with many members also proving to be willing to use it to pay their subscriptions or for workshops. Most of those who opted to pay by bank transfer have continued to do so for 2022-23, and a few additional members have moved to this method. 67/105 memberships have been paid by this method or by a direct transfer by members' own bank branches.

#### Thanks

The Treasurer thanked her colleague from the Scottish Tourist Guides Association, Joan Dobbie, who examined the accounts again this year, and gave valuable advice on the format and streamlining of the spreadsheet used to keep track of income and expenditure.

Oluf Olufsen thanked the Treasurer for her hard work, for keeping the accounts up to date and for compiling the current report and statement of accounts.

The Treasurer's report was approved. Proposed by Margie Stevenson and seconded by Judith Borup.

### **Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members**

As intimated in the Secretary's Report, nomination forms asking for proposals of nominees to fill three office bearer posts and two non-office bearer posts were emailed to the membership on 24th July 2022 requesting forms to be returned by 7th August 2022.

In the event only one nomination form was returned proposing a non-office bearer committee member.

The committee vacancies have become out of sync, the reason for which is not totally clear. Covid and the fact that the last time there was a vacancy for Treasurer the post was not filled and so this post became out of sync. Oluf Olufsen from the Chair spoke of TAS as a vehicle and platform for sharing good practice and this will thrive on the input of the members. We wish TAS to be an enthusiastic, eager and creative organisation, to thrive and be a strong organisation and this requires people.

It was suggested that some committee members may need to stay on.

Jimmie Hill proposed the following: Post of Treasurer for three years, post of Secretary for two years and post of Chairperson for one year. This proposal was discussed and adopted. Seconded by Alice Oliphant.

The full committee elected at the AGM on 27th August 2022 is:

Chairman	Oluf Olufsen - Oluf agreed to continue for one year
Secretary	Anne Thorn - proposed by Deb Lees, seconded by Helen Bain
Treasurer	George Watt - proposed by Jimmie Hill seconded by Roy Bain

Non-office bearers:

Deirdre MacCuish Bark - proposed by Anne Robertson, seconded by Jimmie Hill  
Jane Meikle - proposed by Margo Priestley, seconded by Gillian Hardstone  
Anne Smyth - 1 year remaining on the committee

It was agreed the Chairman must ensure the committee rolls forward each year.

Jimmie Hill gave a vote of thanks to both the retiring and incoming committee members.

### **Workshop dates and venues for 2023**

Discussion on venues took place including the following issues.

Hall fees can be extremely expensive, the cost needs to be reasonable for TAS. We would like to cover the whole of the country, North and South. Parking and public transport should be taken into consideration when looking at a venue. No reason not to re-visit halls we have already been to. It was suggested it would be a good idea to build a directory of venues. Dumfries, Lockerbie and Strathpeffer were suggested, members in these local areas to find out more about the halls, including costs. Members asked to contact TAS by email, Facebook, website with ideas and suggestions.

Discussion on workshops took place including the following issues.

Currently we hold two workshops per year, Spring and Autumn, do we want a third? TAS has money in the bank, could we have a similar weekend to TAC which would provide a greater scope for those attending, would be more sociable including evening events, attract participants from South and North. A TAS ball was suggested, open to non-members.

After discussion it was decided the autumn workshop should continue to be on the last Saturday in August. The date of the 2023 AGM and workshop will be Saturday 26th August 2023, venue to be decided. As yet no date has been set for the 2023 Spring workshop.

### **TAS Website**

Moira Stephen asked if it would be acceptable to transfer to a different web host. This was agreed and Moira will investigate a new host. Roy Bain will check free web hosts.

### **Use of Technology**

The present Committee have been holding Zoom meetings every six weeks over the past six months. These meetings have proved very useful for discussions rather than only emails. Oluf Olufsen, Chairman, emphasised the need to engage with technology. It had been suggested that we video our workshop today to share with teachers' groups. Although on this occasion this was not possible due to short notice and lack of time, it was agreed that this might be possible in the future.

The Chairman asked all TAS members to make use of TAS Facebook page and the website to make suggestions and ideas.

The meeting closed at 11:45am

## A Review of the TAS Autumn Workshop 2022

By Rachel Shankland

“Involving, enthused and insightful” – the words Oluf Olufsen used in his vote of thanks to Luke Brady and Fiona Mackie for their TAS workshop. I could not agree more. Their workshop on using music in our SCD classes kept us all engaged with the right balance between discussion and dancing. This is exactly the sort of thing to which all SCD teachers should have access in order to help inform and reflect on their own teaching practices.



I was certainly informed at this workshop. The first session discussed how to effectively use a musician in class. We started off with the warm-up looking at how the musician can assist with helping dancers to get warm. Luke showed us how the tune choices assist the class – in the first few repetitions of a warm-up dance when dancers are marching a brisk tune is needed to make the dancers walk at a fast pace then, when dancers begin to dance lightly, the tempo of the music should drop to allow the dancers to dance comfortably. The tune choice is also important – as the warm-up progresses and the teacher wants dancers to swing arms, a more ‘jolly’ tune helps.

The class, directed by Fiona, then moved on to looking at step practice. We were reminded of how to bring in the music – a hark back to Unit 3 for many! Luke then exhibited the importance of different types of tunes to help correct different dancing faults. For example, a strong strathspey tune should be used to help support and emphasise the urge in the first step of strathspey travelling or a softer tune, like the Lea Rig, to look at smoothing off the step – particularly for younger dancers. There was also great discussion about the importance of the correct tempo.





The next session looked at how to use recorded music. When selecting recorded music, Luke suggests a good place to start is the RSCDS collection. Outside this repertoire, Luke's mantra was "variety is important" – but he reminded us to be mindful of the abilities of the class. Luke shared with us the importance of the variety of instruments dancers should be exposed to. As was clear in the discussion, many dancers become familiar with Scottish dance band music and subsequently don't like dancing to other instrumentation. Luke challenged us to use recordings of different instruments in our lessons – he suggested one band track, one piano track and one fiddle track.



The last session looked at programme compiling. Luke recommended that compilers should involve the band in this process by asking for dance suggestions, as bands are often in a position to advise on what dances work well, (for example, both at the beginning and end of programmes) from musical understanding, past experience and gained knowledge. To support bands, Luke challenges all branches to ask a new band they have not invited before to play for them in the next year. This will help support the Scottish dance band community and help it thrive in years to come.





After such a fruitful workshop, I think it is important to reflect upon what we have learnt and relate it to our own teaching practice. Upon reflection, the three 'take-aways' I will try to implement in my own class this term are for warm-ups, I plan on communicating more effectively with my musician and instead of asking for a 4 x 32 march, I am going to try to adopt the variety of tunes and tempos as Luke suggests; I plan on asking for different types of tunes to try and fix faults in step practice and, on the next opportunity I get to devise a programme, I will ask the band for suggestions. I am certain that this workshop allowed all attendees to reflect on their teaching in relation to the music and the musicians and were enabled to take away something to try in teaching their own classes.



### **As others see us...**

I hope you enjoy this snippet that was shared with me anonymously (*Ed*)

*One of the teachers I had was very keen to emphasise the social aspect of dancing, along with teamwork in the sets. We were encouraged to make eye contact with and smile at our partners and everyone else in the set as we progressed through the dance.*

*And then came the day I went to a class in another town. A non-dancing friend with whom I was staying kindly took me to the class and sat on the sidelines watching.*

*On the journey back to her home she commented: "You know, you're a terrible flirt!"*

## Dates for your diary

### RSCDS Helensburgh

Half Day School & Dance, Helensburgh Parish Church: Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023

Class 2pm-5pm – Teacher: Margie Stevenson, Musician: Susan MacFadyen

Dance 7.30pm-10.30pm - Music from Glenraig SCD Band

Forms can be downloaded from Helensburgh Branch website: [www.rscds-helensburgh.org.uk](http://www.rscds-helensburgh.org.uk)

### Argyll & Lochaber Branches

RSCDS Centenary Dance, Corran Halls, Oban: Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2023

6.30pm-11pm

Music from Marian Anderson SCD Band

Wine Reception and Finger Buffet

For more details contact Irene Smith: [helensburghrscds@btinternet.com](mailto:helensburghrscds@btinternet.com) Tel: 01436 810336



## Venue information request

If you would like to suggest a venue for a future TAS meeting or workshop please share details with the Committee. You can complete the form on page 11 or get in touch by e-mail, or via Facebook.

TAS POSSIBLE VENUE DIRECTORY

With a view to planning future TAS workshops, the committee would value any local information re suitable halls and centres which you, as a TAS member, have used or have knowledge of. If you can help in this matter, it would greatly aid the committee in trying to vary our venues the better to cover the whole country and reach out to the entire membership of TAS.

Please copy and complete this form with as much relevant information as you have/can ascertain and return to the TAS Secretary.

NAME OF VENUE

.....

LOCATION/ADDRESS OF VENUE

.....

ACCESS: ROUTES, MILEAGE AND TIMES FOR (a) CAR (b) PUBLIC TRANSPORT (RAIL, BUS, etc.)

.....

CONTACT NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER FOR ENQUIRIES/BOOKING

.....

CARETAKER NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER

.....

FACILITIES AT CENTRE:

NUMBER OF HALLS

.....

APPROXIMATE SIZE OF HALL(S)

.....

TYPE OF FLOOR/AVAILABILITY OF STAGE, PIANO, POWER POINTS

.....

AVAILABILITY OF CHAIRS/TABLES/URNS

.....

AVAILABILITY OF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT (e.g. MICROPHONE, PROJECTOR, SCREEN, etc.)

.....

KITCHEN AVAILABILITY

.....

CAR PARKING CAPACITY

.....

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

.....