

RSCDS John Muir Branch (Wisconsin, USA)

Number of years established as a branch: 17

Annual Report (July 2019 - June 2020)

Respectfully submitted by Ian Stuart Gaylor, Secretary

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

Up until March 2020, when the world was turned upside down by the coronavirus, Madison Scottish Country Dancers (MSCD)/John Muir Branch of the RSCDS was experiencing yet another event-filled year. We often had 20 or more dancers showing up for our weekly Sunday dance sessions. We gained one new member, but lost six others, so our official membership dropped from 33 to 28. Milwaukee/Madison dual members Terry, Rebecca, and John helped out our local teachers Chuck, Janice, Kate, and Nancy again this year by teaching classes on many Sundays.

We danced and socialized our way through the year. In July, the Annual General Meeting was held. The board officers stayed the same this year. At summer's end, we relaxed with a pool party/potluck and watched the movie *Rob Roy* at Ann and Chuck's lovely home. In September, the group performed as part of a free dance series sponsored by the Friends of Olin Park. Live music was provided by the Mullens. September included technique lessons taught by our teachers at the beginning of Sunday evening dances. A guest teacher, Rod Downey from New Zealand, taught on two September Sundays. During the fall months, our teachers taught a beginning Scottish country dance class through the Madison School and Community Recreation (MSCR) program.

Sadly, [Michael Briggs](#), one of our most beloved and loyal members, died in August. Several members were planning on performing dances at Michael's upcoming 85th birthday party. Instead, they danced in October at Michael's memorial service at the Unitarian Meeting House. One of the dances, *Grandpa Squeezebox*, was devised by Chicago dancer Sue McKinnell in his honor. *The Muirland Briggses*, a dance created by Chuck Snowdon to honor Michael and Norma, was also performed. For years and years, Michael provided our dance group with live music and good natured levity. His presence will be missed. Other losses this year include [Gregor Trinkaus-Randall](#), our group's co-founder and first teacher, and [Charlie Pruett](#), a kind dancer and past treasurer.

The highlight of the year was the group's return to a beautifully refurbished Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center. For several months, the group had to leave Wil-Mar and dance at the James Reeb Unitarian Meeting House on East Johnson Street. On October 27th, we triumphantly returned to Wil-Mar. Improvements included a brand new wood floor, new lighting, new sound system, new heating/air conditioning, a renovated bathroom, new paint and spiffy decorations. Best of all, a big post that was in the middle of the dance floor was removed! We are thrilled with the changes.

On November 3rd, we hosted a graduation party with live music for the dancers who participated in the fall MSCR dance class. On December 7th we held our [annual winter dance party](#) at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center, with music provided by the talented Mullen and Deck families and followed by a potluck dinner. January brought forth our second annual Open House. It was once again a successful and fun event! We had about 30-35 dancers, including lots of newbies. Our teachers continued to work hard in planning our Sunday evening dances. The teachers also started to teach a spring Scottish country dance class through MSCR before it was cancelled due to the virus.

Our main event each year is the annual ball. The board members put a lot of time and effort into planning the ball. This year's theme was The Roaring and Reeling 20s. Unfortunately, the ball had to be cancelled. Sunday evening classes also came to a screeching halt in March due to the relentless march of the coronavirus. Our 11th annual Midwest Scottish Weekend at Wayland Academy in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, co-produced with the Milwaukee and Chicago dance groups, also had to be scratched.

Some members have adapted by participating in the Zoom Scottish country dance classes offered by the RSCDS. Our teacher Rebecca Winnie made a big technological leap and has been teaching quite successfully via the Milwaukee group's FaceBook site. Many of our members have been participating in biweekly [MSCD Zoom chat sessions](#) just to keep in touch whilst dancing is suspended. We especially enjoy "seeing" our former members who have moved out of state. We are all looking forward to safely getting back on the dance floor some day .