

RSCDS Branch: Madison Scottish Country Dancers (Wisconsin, USA)

Number of years established as a branch: 20

Annual Report (July 2022 - June 2023)

Respectfully submitted by Ian Stuart Gaylor, Secretary

We should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once.

-F. Nietzsche

Madison Scottish Country Dancers (MSCD) has had yet another event-filled year. We often had about 20 or more enthusiastic dancers showing up for our weekly Sunday dance sessions.

Membership: The big, exciting news is that we gained many new members this year. Our official membership climbed from 24 to 35 this past year!

MSCR Classes: Much of the gain in membership can be attributed to Beginner Scottish Country Dance classes taught through the Madison School and Community Recreation program. Several participants from the Fall and Spring sessions have joined up and have been regularly dancing at our Sunday evening classes. Thanks to NancyMcClements, Chuck Snowdon and Janice Lacock for providing enthusiastic and able instruction to beginning dancers.

Teachers: Two of our Milwaukee/Madison dual teachers earned their full teacher certifications! Congrats to both Terry Garner and Rebecca Renee Winnie. Sadly, we now have one less teacher. Professor Chuck Snowdon, a longtime member and teacher, died unexpectedly in January of 2023. We are still mourning the loss of one of our most experienced, gung ho and sociable dancers.

Bagpipes in the Glen: Our dancers were invited to perform at an annual fundraising event entitled "Bagpipes in the Glen." It was held on July 9th in the countryside at Durward's Glen and Retreat Center near Baraboo, Wisconsin. We performed outdoors in front of several hundred people and also did a few audience participation dances. The weather cooperated and a good time was had by one and all. We brought along our own piper, Andrew SeEVERS. The other pipers were mightily impressed by Andrew's skillful playing. In lieu of payment, we stayed overnight in their quaint lodge and had an impromptu ceilidh with other performers.

Pool Party: In August, Ann and Chuck once again hosted a pool party and potluck at their lovely home on the west side of Madison. This year we watched the movie *Wild Rose*, about a Glaswegian country western singer.

Dance Parties: On December 10 we held our annual Winter Dance Party at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center. We had live music provided by the Mullen family and about 25 dancers attended. On January 22 we had an Open House, again with live music. There was a great turnout of 30, with several brand new participants.

Technology: In January we completely revamped our music system, moving from the outdated Ghillie Track software on a PC to a MacBook Air. We transferred our entire music catalog to the new laptop. Missing and requested songs and albums were purchased and added.

St. Andrew's Society of Madison: The St. Andrew's Society of Madison has undergone a renaissance of sorts. Under new leadership, the organization has become much bigger and much more active. MSCD teamed up with the Society at two different events. We performed a couple of dances and led several audience participation dances at their Burns Night event in January. Many in the crowd of about 75 attendees eagerly joined the dancing. At Burns Night, the Society graciously presented our President-for-Life, Nancy McClements, with an award for all that she has done for MSCD and the wider Scottish community. This was the first annual "Chuck Snowdon Meritorious Service Award."

The Society also held a well-attended ceilidh dance at a local watering hole in April. Janice Lacock taught several dances to a very enthusiastic crowd of revelers. Everyone had fun and no one got seriously injured. MSCD looks forward to working together with the Society in the future.

Annual Ball: Our big event every year is our ball. This year's theme was the RSCDS Centennial. The evening before the ball we hosted a piano and fiddle concert by our musicians Neil and Ed Pearlman. Highland dance students added to the evening by performing dances mid-concert. A workshop on Cape Breton Step Dancing was taught by Neil. Despite a surprise spring snowstorm of eleven inches (!) the weekend's events were all a success. Dave Mullen, our resident fiddler, joined Neil and Ed for a lively set of tunes at the ball, which was preceded by toasts, dinner and a grand march. After an evening of delightful dancing, a party was held at a member's home, as was a Sunday morning brunch. Dancers from several states attended the ball with a total of about 65, including 8 from the MSCR class. After three consecutive years of canceled balls due to COVID, everyone was thrilled to once again dance and socialize at the beautiful Great Hall in the University of Wisconsin's Memorial Union.

Midwest Scottish Weekend: In June of 2023, we co-sponsored the 12th annual Midwest Scottish Weekend at Ripon College in Ripon, Wisconsin. The Milwaukee and Chicago dance groups were the other sponsors. A total of about 60 dancers joined us for a fun-filled weekend of dance, instruction, great food, ceilidh acts, and camaraderie. Beautiful music for the dances and classes was provided by Laura Risk, Nicholas Williams and Ralph Gordon. Dance instruction was provided by Marjorie McLaughlin and Geoffrey Selling.

In conclusion, The MSCD members are thrilled to have a full year of dancing and socializing with each other after years of COVID isolation and limitations. We look forward to another full and fun year of dancing together!