

Welcome everyone to our new dancing year.

The dance calendar lists a variety of activities providing for a range of interests and levels. It is hoped that you will support the committee's efforts in delivering successful events. We look forward to saying hello personally at as many functions as possible.

What are the benefits of belonging to Sydney Branch (of Royal Scottish Country Dance Society)? This is a question often asked by our newer dancers.

There are many benefits. In general, a sense of wellbeing from belonging to a wonderful organisation that provides social, mental and physical dance experiences.

Fun, fitness and friendship is the ready answer. Your Branch committee takes care of the delivery.

Often this is followed by the question: Where does the RSCDS fit with my dancing experiences here in Sydney?

The detail of the workings of the RSCDS, HQ based in Edinburgh, Scotland, can be found on <www.rscds.org> local applications may be summarised in the box below.

In other words, the RSCDS strongly influences our enjoyment each week. *To take each of the projects from start to finish incurs considerable cost. That is why we willingly support the RSCDS by forwarding a percentage of our membership fee to HQ. There are many*

SNIB

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more projects and programs that the Society provides for our benefit.

Membership of the Branch/Society is \$45 per annum. This works out at approximately 86 cents a week! In this day and age, this is exceptional value! The strength and growth of the Society depends on the health and vitality of the membership in its Branches, so our support is strongly encouraged.

The RSCDS brand of Scottish country dancing was once described to me in the following way. Scotland, like most countries, has regional differences.

In language, this can prove quite difficult and exclusive if you don't know the local dialect or whatever. Scotland adopted a standardised form of language, Scottish Standard English, to facilitate communication across local groups and internationally.

Similarly, Scottish country dancing has been around for centuries and it too has regional differences that can prove somewhat

anti-social if you don't know the local interpretations and culture.

To counter this situation, a standardised form of Scottish country dancing was introduced in 1923 under the Society's umbrella.

This vision of the potential of the standardised form has facilitated the RSCDS movement's expansion and acceptance worldwide; the RSCDS formula has spread to many, many countries, including our own and continues to evolve through our input.

Finally, with your membership comes the monthly eNews from HQ and The Scottish Country Dancer (a twice yearly magazine) a wonderful read, full of interesting news keeping us in contact with local, national and international happenings.

Thank you to those who recruit new dancers, thank you to everyone who markets our product at every opportunity. Your support over the coming year is welcomed.

Anne Kennedy

Farewell Pat Charlton

What a disappointment that Pat can no longer continue as Branch Secretary. She has done a wonderful job over the last 10 years, but it has become time for her to call it a day.

She has been at the centre of all the Branch activities; the Ball, social events, meetings and much more, keeping us so well informed with monthly information emails and other messages.

In the background, she has been organising our hall bookings, public liability insurance, writing and circulating minutes of all meetings, contact with the RSCDS, Sydney clubs, other Branches, other community groups and much more.

She has been innovative in much of how the Branch is organised and communicating, for example annual badges for each member, the printed Ball programme, the Annual Report Booklet at the AGM, plus many other background items.

Of course, she has been well supported by all the members of the Committee and many other dancers, but they all appreciate her basic organisation of the Branch operations.

Besides this, she has been operating the Katoomba Weekend for many years at the YHA. This event was her idea and, with the support of the Committee, it was started in 2004.

She very much enjoys her dancing; her first Winter School was in 1988 and she was placed in the Advanced Class.

While her husband was doing his Certificate, she was also very helpful and was a "make-up" dancer for the examinations.

—Brian Charlton

How the RSCDS helps at Branch level

Dance books and other publications: The Society has an efficient structure for collecting newly devised dances from around the world. Dances are submitted, and assessed for suitability before being published. Sydney has local teachers whose dances are enjoying worldwide acclaim, courtesy of the RSCDS. Your class teachers may use RSCDS publications regularly when preparing your class program.

Music: The RSCDS has a focus on vibrant music, both live music and recorded music and this allows dancers even in the most remote parts of the world to experience the uplifting rhythms of Scotland. It is likely that when you dance at class, the music has been recorded under RSCDS conditions and has been produced by the Society.

Teacher training programs open to all interested dancers, cover years of preparation and assessment with the involvement of national and overseas examiners, tutors, mentors, workshops etc. all designed to maintain the Society's standards. This ensures everyone is equipped to dance confidently anywhere in the world, to make new friends and enjoy new experiences.

Farewell Margaret Sim

Margaret Sim became interested in Scottish Country Dancing in the late 1950's in Newcastle, NSW from learning to play the bagpipes. Moving to Sydney in 1960 she danced with Sydney Branch, marriage and child rearing permitting.

In 1972, Margaret started a children's class at her local primary school and then in 1973 opened a class at Cheltenham Girls High School, where she was the librarian. This class continued for over thirty-five years during term time meeting each Friday morning.

Her students danced at competitions, Highland Games in Bundanoon each year, as well as many dance presentations at the school. Margaret inaugurated the "Teens and Twenties" socials to cater for this age group, twice a year. She also persuaded the Sydney Branch Committee to lower fees for Branch functions for school students and to sponsor their bus transport to Highland Gatherings.

Gaining her Teacher's Certificate in 1984, Margaret has taught at numerous day, weekend and residential schools in Sydney, Newcastle and New Zealand.

In 1972 Margaret was a founding member of the Teachers' Liaison Group, serving as treasurer, vice-chairman and since 2012 has been chairman of this group. It was Margaret's idea to hold several Easy Dance Socials each year and in 2011 an Easy Dance Ball was held, complete with grand march led by a piper. Margaret almost single handedly organised a second Easy Dance Ball as so many teachers and Branch committee were away at the time. Margaret had to stop selling tickets when the number reached 100 as any more would not have allowed dancing in the hall.

A keen supporter of the Society, Margaret served on the Branch committee then was chairman from 1995-98. Under her leadership the Sydney Branch newsletter was introduced and named SNIB (Sydney News and Information Bulletin)

Margaret also initiated Sydney Branch supporting musicians to attend workshops in Australia and overseas and sponsoring prizes

for musicians at Sydney Eisteddfods, then encouraging them to play for Branch functions.

Margaret supported the Australian Teachers' Alliance, founded in 1994, so in 2003-2006 when it was Sydney's three year term, Margaret became chairman of the group, overseeing incorporation of the association, a residential workshop for teacher training and coordination of the 2006 Society Examination and Teaching Tour.

Over the years, Margaret has attended almost all the Australian Winter Schools. At these schools Margaret is instrumental in encouraging fellow Sydney Branch attendees to participate in the ceilidhs, her sense of humour and script writing bringing out hitherto hidden talents among our dancers.

These attributes have made her a valuable member of committees organising Winter Schools, especially in formulating Social programmes and assessing dancers for class allocation.

In 2007 Margaret was presented with the Sydney Branch Award and Brian Charlton devised the dance "The Mentor" in her honour.

In 2013, Margaret was awarded the Society's Scroll acknowledging her hard work, enthusiasm and most importantly her ideas and inspiration influencing Scottish Country Groups throughout Australia.

It is with deep regret that the Teachers' Liaison Group at its Annual Meeting in February accepted Margaret's resignation as chairman of the group, but is very pleased that Margaret still wishes to be a member, although no longer dancing.

—Morag Napier

Exceptional service

A sincere thank you to Margaret and Pat who have retired from long-term committee service.

Their continuing informal involvement in the Branch is assured and welcomed.

What next for Sydney Branch?

Sydney Branch has a long and proud tradition of planning for the future of Scottish country dancing. The strength of the Branch depends on many teachers being prepared to share their time and talent and we are grateful for their dedication.

However, there is a constant need for new classes, a need for renewal of present practices and a need for replacement when a teacher retires. Where do we find these people?

The Sydney Branch Teachers' Liaison Group is conscious of the importance of this situation and has plans for 2017-2018 (Examination Tour due in 2018).

With the future in mind, the TLG is introducing and promoting the Dancing Achievement Award (DAA), a course over five weeks with an assessment at the end.

The certificate (of international standing) will provide the dancer with useful information about their level of personal dancing which opens many pathways, not all of which lead to a teaching qualification but can go a long way to securing the future of SCD.

Since the inception of the DAA in 2014, previously it was the Dancing Proficiency Award (DPA), 14 branches, including Summer School in St Andrews, have presented candidates for the DAA at all levels.

There are at least 50 people worldwide registered for assessment this year in Sydney, San Francisco, Toronto, Vancouver, St Andrews.

The DAA course may lead to a technique class/advanced class that would—

- support our present candidates as they prepare for Unit 5 examination in 2018;
- inspire dancers to consider teacher training for Units 1, 2, 3 in 2018;
- provide dancers with an opportunity to explore the finer points of technique among like-minded people;
- provide challenges to our more energetic and youthful people, thus retaining their interest and membership;
- retain the standardised model that is essential for growth and social interaction;
- assist realistic placement for Winter/Summer schools when grading classes.

The Advanced Class might only meet for a limited number of sessions in any one year. The aim is to meet the needs of all dancers so that we can develop a balanced social group into 2017 and beyond.

Best wishes to our local candidates; special thanks to Trish Nicholls and Diana Hastie for preparing the dancers.

By supporting this initiative in whatever way you can, you will be making a valuable contribution to the future of Sydney Branch.

The first DAA group of six will be assessed on 30 March 2017.
(Intermediate level)

Further DAA courses will be offered at Advanced and Very Advanced level according to response.

Katoomba Weekend Report: 3rd–5th March 2017

There was a record number of 54 participants, including 15 commuters — for the 14th Katoomba weekend. There were two cancellations due to illness and one no-show commuter. Participants came from Canberra, Newcastle, Gosford, Nowra, Townsville, Narooma, Brunswick Heads, Sydney and the Blue Mountains. The teachers were Rosemary Gardner, Morag Napier and Brian Charlton.

Volunteers helped transport the food and equipment to Katoomba on the Friday. Jeanette Stephan obligingly met the train. Thank you to Jeanette, Jennifer Smith, Alice Cuneo, Tricia Ashley, Lindsay Benaud, Jan McCudden and Pat Charlton for the various salads, quiches, cakes and slices.

Morag Napier made her special recipe muesli as well as strawberry jam, marmalade, and slices. We catered for vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free and low-fat diets. Several dancers also brought a cake or a slice. Friday evening, hosted by Pat and Brian, saw 7 teams “Making Australia Great Again” by constructing our very own Trump Towers with drinking straws, marshmallows and sticky tape. Some were as shaky as Trump’s promises. There were a couple of quiz games to tackle, interspersed with some dancing. The outstanding team was “June and December”.

A misty Saturday morning saw attendees at the class in the St Hilda’s Church hall where Rosemary put us through our paces. Several dances were dedicated to some Sydney members such as Margaret Sim and Morag Napier. The hostel allowed us to use the ballroom for the afternoon session with Morag, with the emphasis on technique which was well received by the less experienced dancers.

Some dancers rested, others explored the delights of Katoomba, went shopping or in search of a good coffee. Several dancers from the Blue Mountains and Sydney joined us for the social at St Hilda’s Church hall. Jeanette, the MC, walked through the dances with the re-caps. The first dance was appropriately

“Katoomba Mist”. Jan McCudden, as her birthday gift to the Katoomba gathering, had arranged at her expense, for Iain Mckenzie to play for the social. Although Happy Birthday was sung, the cake and candles part took place at the hostel where we had supper.

Sunday morning saw the sun still hiding and all trooping down the hill, past the recently burnt down RSL, to the local primary school, which was easy to find for all but one. Brian was very considerate and gently took us through some less taxing (for brains and feet) dances. Soon Sunday lunch was over and everything cleared away.

Volunteers took the train travellers to the station and further as required, others helped clear up and load cars and the sun was trying to shine as we departed.

Thank you for the support of the Branch committee and the volunteers who supplied the salads, cakes and slices. The home-made food is always well received and meeting dancers from other groups is another. Special thanks to Jeanette who helped before and during the weekend and is willing to convene Katoomba 2018.

In spite of rising costs, we may have still managed, with volunteer help, to make a surprisingly large surplus. Greater numbers helped and also the greater proportion of en-suite rooms we were able to use this time.

It was good to see everyone mixing right from the start and the friendly atmosphere was maintained throughout the weekend. It was also pleasing to see a number of new faces but sad that so many regulars missed out by being too slow to apply.

Thank you to those who organised the “Thank you” for Brian and myself: unnecessary but appreciated nevertheless. It is quite sad in some ways that this is the last time with Brian’s support, I will convene the Katoomba Weekend. We could not have done it all these years without your help.

I wish Jeanette well for 2018 and beyond.

—Convenor: Pat Charlton

Katoomba Club news

Bob Reyswood’s 80th Birthday



On the 14th February, the BMSCD Inc celebrated the 80th birthday of their esteemed teacher, Bob Reyswood.

As well as a monumental chocolate cake, the party was treated to a performance by Mr David Hamilton, tenor.

He sang the lovely Scottish songs “Wha’ll

be king but Charlie”, “Ae fond kiss” and the “Piper o’ Dundee”.

Bob has been with the club for 15 years and members often note “No Bob, no club”.

He has been awarded life membership and we wish him many more happy years with the club.

Committee for 2017

President:	Anne Kennedy
Vice President:	Debbie Baker
Secretary:	Janice Ford
Treasurer:	Brian Charlton
Members:	Lindsay Benaud, Alice Cuneo, Debbie Baker
Website:	Anne Kennedy
SNIB:	DianaHastie
Dance Down Under/FB:	Brian Charlton
Bookshop	Morag Napier(P)
Teachers’ Liaison Group:	Bill Unger (VP) Ruth Pike (T)

Thank you to those who have already paid their Branch membership for 2017. We aim to build membership in 2017, as we work towards a vibrant committee designing programs not only for this year, but also for 2018 and beyond.

Coming soon

Saturday 11th February was a very hot day which saw over 70 people come through the door at the Ermington Community Centre. Some came to collect their members name tags, some stayed a short while and others stayed all day.

They ranged from raw beginners through to experienced dancers.

The teachers who accepted the invitation to teach their "pet" dances were Anne Kennedy, Ruth Pike, Debbie Baker and Brian Charlton.

The dances included "Autumn Tidings" and "Goatfell Gallop" (both 8X32 Jigs) by Debbie; "Quarries'

Day of Dance

Jig" (8x32jig), "Barbara's Strathspey" (8x32 s'spey) and "The Midnight Ferry" (4x40 reel in sq set) by Ruth. Brian chose 8x40 reels with "Gold in Sydney" and "Spring in Helensburgh", plus "Farewell to Helensburgh" (8x32 s'spey); and Anne's choice was "Mrs Lillian Mieklejohn" (8x32 reel) and "The Belles of St Mary's" (8x32 s'spey).

There was a break for "bring your own" lunch and copious amounts of water were consumed during the day.

Thank you to Jeanette, who organised the day even though unable to be present and the committee members who provided the light refreshments.

A very special "Thank You" goes to the teachers. It is not easy to cater for such a wide range of dancers and they made it look so easy.

It was pleasing to see the less experienced dancers being helped and encouraged by others.

And even better, to have members pay their annual subscription.

Easy Dance Social

Epping SCD Club is organising this Easy Dance Social, a fun night of dancing to lively music.

No experience is necessary as all dances will be walked through, so come along and bring family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

Experienced dancers are welcome.

James Gastineau-Hills, Sean Valenzuela and the Sydney Scottish Fiddlers will provide the toe-tapping music and a light supper will be included.

29th April

**Epping Community Centre,
9 Oxford Street, Epping 7.00 for 7.30**

Tickets \$20 (\$10 for students).

More information from:

Anne: 9868 3778; [0412 662 327](tel:0412662327)

Jane: 9869 0567; [0408 494 805](tel:0408494805)

Sydney Branch Winter Social

22 July 2017 – Ermington

Welcome to two musicians from UK.

Ian Robertson: Ian plays fiddle and accordion. In recent years he has been a regular at the RSCDS Winter School (Pitlochry, Scotland) and has played for weekend schools and functions across the UK and Europe, as well as visits to Canada.

Jim Lindsay: Jim leads one of the most popular bands for Scottish country dancing in the UK and has performed across Europe, North America, New Zealand and Canada. He has consistently been one of the most respected and "in demand" musicians on the Scottish music scene.

A must for your diary!