**Gerrards Cross & Chalfonts Scottish Country DanceClub**

**Chairman’s Report for AGM December 2020**

**Overview**

1. Clearly the year has been dominated by the Covid crisis and we have been unable to dance since mid-March 2020. However in the 6 months before that we had made some positive progress and remain in as good a position as we can be, both financially and membership-wise, to restart dancing when the situation allows.
2. In February 2020 the Little Chalfont Dance Group, led by Judy Snook, joined with the Gerrards Cross SCD Club to become the merged Gerrards Cross & Chalfonts SCD Club, benefitting both by sharing resources.
3. It looks increasingly likely that we may be able to resume dancing some time in Spring or Summer 2021. We have remained in close contact with our two venues during the suspension to maintain a good relationship and do all we can to make sure we don’t lose them in the longer term.

**Looking Back**

**Weekly Dancing at GX**

1. We danced 22 weeks over the Autumn 2019/Spring 2020 compared with35 weeks in the previous (normal) year.
2. Most weeks we were led by Rose Kreloff, with Ann Higginbottom standing in from time to time. As part of our desire to support budding teachers we were delighted to have Jan Collings lead us one evening.
3. We averaged 22 members and 25 total dancers, compared with 15 and 17 respectively in the previous year. Before lockdown we were getting 3 sets routinely and often 4, one full set more than previously , which makes a big difference.
4. The proportion of new to intermediate and experienced dancers has increased as we welcomed a number of beginners .The change in skill level was reflected in the mix of dances undertaken, with Rose cheerfully juggling the needs of beginners ( 3 to 4 easy dances to start) with the need to practise for the tea dance ( all dances practised 4 or 5 time) .
5. We danced an average of 7 to 8 dances each evening but unfortunately we have no detailed statistics to compare with previous years, due to problems with the website.

**Weekly Dancing at Little Chalfont**

1. We danced 22 weeks over the Autumn 2019/Spring 2020 compared with 36 weeks in the previous full year. The accounts reflect only the period since the clubs merged.
2. Judy led the afternoons until early November when she had the misfortunate to break her shoulder. Suzanne carried on in the interim.
3. We averaged 9 dancers including the leader.
4. We danced an average of 7 dances each afternoon.

**Membership/Recruitment**

1. At GX the increased membership we saw in the Autumn held steady through the year but at Little Chalfont we have lost a couple of long-established members and the numbers are only just viable.
2. Before lockdown the membership of GX stood at 36 ( compared to 24 and 34 in Autumn of 2018 and 2019 respectively). The membership of LCh stood at 11 ( compared with 13 in 2019).
3. Membership fees at GX remained at £6 per night, but at Little Chalfont they increased to £5 per afternoon in September 2019 to reflect decreasing numbers.

**Tea Dances**

1. The January 2020 tea-dance was as enjoyable as ever although for various reasons numbers were a bit down from 81 the previous year to 57 this year. The clash with Maidenhead’s ball was a one-off and is not scheduled to recur.
2. The Summer tea dance was cancelled due to the pandemic.

**Advertising/ Publicity**

1. We undertook no major advertising initiatives this year, but continue to have a presence in a significant number of local magazines and free directories, and ads at local supermarkets.
2. During the year we performed at
   1. Sunrise Beaconsfield ( November 2019)
   2. GX Beavers ( January 2020)
   3. Beaconsfield Guides (February 2020)
3. While the Sunrise and Guides events were both hugely successful, this second recent Beavers event convinced us that they are too young and we will not take future bookings for this sort of thing.
4. Planned attendance at the Chalfont St Peter’s Day celebration was cancelled due to Covid-19.

**Environmental Issues**

1. We have asked RSCDS to submit invoices electronically rather than on paper and they have started to do this.
2. The trial of offering fruit as well as biscuits at the breaks seems to have been well-received and will be continued when we resume if health and safety allows.

**Website content**

1. Unfortunately we have been without much of the website content over the Summer/Autumn.
2. We are now taking the opportunity to build a new website to address the issue of mobile usage and make it easier to view on tablets and smartphones.
3. Going forward we intend to ensure we have better resilience including dual administrators and adequate back-up.

**Committee**

1. We have 3 vacancies on the committee: Less Experienced Dancers’ Representative, Website Co-ordinator and Tea-Dance Co-ordinator. We plan to fill these roles and re-confirm other committee positions prior to resuming dancing.

**Reporting Back on Planned Initiatives (from last year’s AGM)**

**Electronic Music**

1. We successfully introduced Electronic Music to replace CDs and facilitate preparation, in October 2019 at GX and in December 2019 at Little Chalfont, although the latter still has no ‘slower-downer’ software. We are very happy with the outcome, making our system more robust, more compact, more easily transferrable and much more user-friendly.
2. However the GX laptop suffered a terminal failure in February 2020. We were able to share the L CH equipment until a replacement was found, underlining one of the benefits of our sharing arrangements.
3. A replacement laptop complete with music storage and the Amazing Slower Down software was purchased in the week we had to stop dancing.

**Aim to Work More Closely with Local Clubs**

1. There have been 2 developments under this heading, albeit both rather unexpected! Firstly the merger with Little Chalfont was driven by the circumstances of my stepping in to support Judy and realising the opportunity to reduce the vulnerability of that group had benefits for both sides. We reduce the overall financial burden, we reduce dependence on an individual, and have a better guarantee of afternoon dancing continuing in the area.
2. The second development was the launch of a new Herts & Borders RSCDS branch. It is not yet clear what the full benefits will be but it should bring our own club activities to a wider audience. We are pleased to report that we now have a website page on the Herts & Borders website, accessed from the Local Dancing tab.

**Supporting New Dancers and Trainee Teachers**

1. Obviously the abrupt end to the dancing year so soon after our Tea Dance limited our opportunities but this remains an ongoing intention.

**Website Infrastructure**

1. We have made less progress in changing the overall infrastructure arrangements for the website than we had hoped but work on this is now underway with the help and guidance of Chris and Jan Collings.

**Loop Video for Recruitment Events**

1. We have had no time or opportunities to make progress on this but it remains on the plan.

**New Initiatives**

**GX Council Grant**

1. In September, Celia alerted us to the fact that GX Town Council was keen to support local organisations by offering grants to groups which benefit the local community. Up against a tight deadline, the committee put together an application in which Rose clearly pointed out the benefits of Scottish Country Dancing.
2. I am pleased to report that our application was successful and that a grant of £500 will be paid to the club in April or May 2021. This is an important opportunity to raise our profile in the local area and underlines our commitment to putting something back into the local community. Thank you, Celia.

**Zoom Meetings**

1. The Committee have continued to meet by Zoom and we have set up regular ‘chat’ zoom meetings for members in both GX and Little Chalfont.

**The Year Ahead**

1. The year ahead remains uncertain. We have cancelled the tea dance scheduled for January 2021, but mindful of our responsibility to support our musicians have made an ex gratia payment to Barbara Manning.
2. We have made no decision yet about the Summer tea dance.
3. It is likely that when we resume dancing some of our members will have found other replacement activities, and some will remain anxious about what is a close-contact activity. Our strong financial position makes it a viable option to operate at a loss for a period, but we cannot expect to instantly return to running things as before, either for the weekly classes or tea dances. We will discuss options as widely as possible as the situation becomes clearer
4. While we urgently need to raise the advertising around the Little Chalfont group in particular we will only move forward on this when there is a realistic chance of getting new recruits.

**Priorities going forward**

1. Our first priority will be to re-establish ourselves as a vibrant and active club.
2. Meanwhile work to progress our website is ongoing.
3. In addition we hope during the year to prepare a draft constitution for the club for discussion and agreement**.**