

RSCDS John Muir Branch (Wisconsin, USA)

Number of years established as a branch: 15

Annual Report (June 2017 - May 2018)

Respectfully submitted by M. J. Wiseman, Secretary

The John Muir Branch of the RSCDS has had an event-filled year. Beginning with the Annual General Meeting in July where continuing Board members were elected, we danced and socialized our way on through the past months. In June we co-sponsored the Midwest Scottish Weekend Dance Workshop held at Wayland Academy, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, which always draws participants from a number of states. In the midst of a hot August, we relaxed with pool party and potluck and watched the musical *Brigadoon*. The group performed in three Madison demonstrations, Mad Gael Fest, Employee Trust Funds Youth Day, and a free dance series sponsored by Friends of Olin Park. In December we held a dance party with music by the father-son duo of Dave and Liam Mullen, followed by a potluck dinner at a member's home. January included a Burns Night Social and dance instruction for the Madison Youth Choirs, in preparation for their trip to Scotland.

Our teachers are working hard to plan our evening dances and to mentor new teacher candidates. A series of September technique classes improved our steps and style. Two of our teachers held classes for children in the fall and they joined us for the first set at the dance party. We also held two classes for adults through our school and community recreation program. Several participants are now dancing with us on our regular dance night. A second class was held for children ending in a social dance evening for all of us. Two of our teachers were invited to instruct international dancers in the strathspey at the popular Madison Folk Ball Weekend. In February, former Madison teacher Todd McCall visited from Nova Scotia and taught the Hebridean Weaving Lilt. For the second year in a row, two of our teachers spent a day with scores of Girl Scouts introducing them to Scottish country dancing.

Our big event every year is our ball, which in 2018 happily coincided with a new Madison Celtic Festival, giving us an opportunity to market ourselves to a wider group. This year's theme was Celtic Shores, a nod to the wonderfully renovated hall overlooking Lake Mendota. The evening before the ball we hosted a piano and fiddle concert by our musicians Susie Petrov and Calum Pasqua, *A Parcel of Rogues*. A workshop focusing on dance form and technique was held on Saturday morning. Dave Mullen, our resident fiddler, joined Susie and Calum for a lively set of tunes at the ball, which was preceded by a tasty served dinner and Grand March, complete with bagpiper. After an evening of delightful dancing, an after-ball party was held at a member's home, as was a Sunday morning brunch. The ball registrations were streamlined using a new web-based ticketing system.

We are happy to report that we regularly have more than 20 dancers at our weekly classes--we may be outgrowing our current hall!