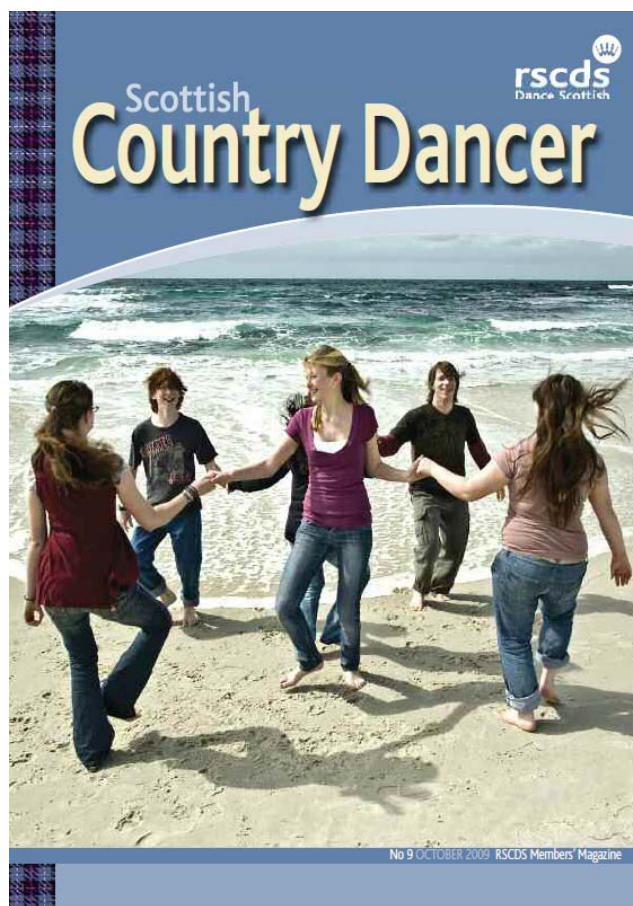
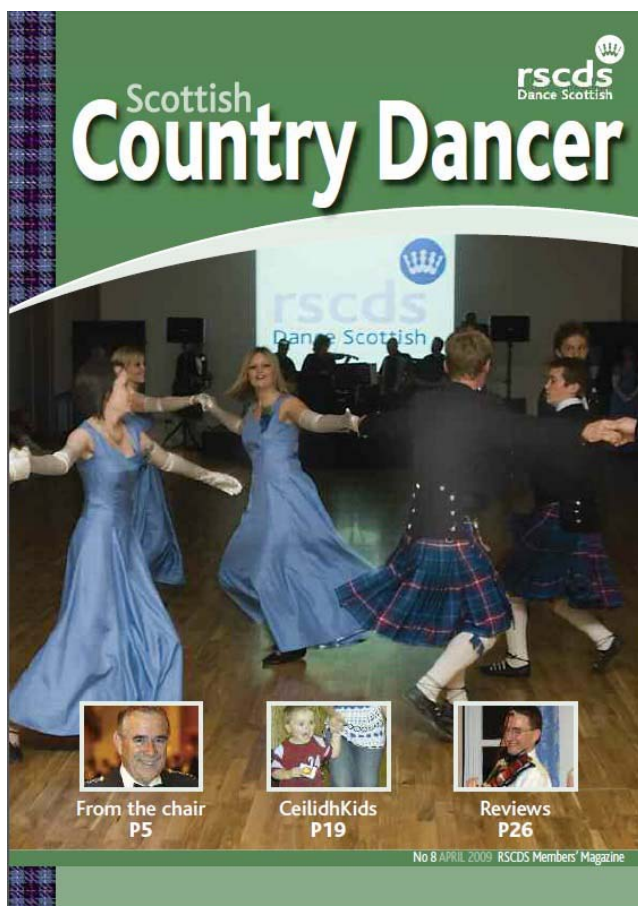


RSCDS Scottish Country Dancer Magazine 2009 Strategy Articles

Tom Halpenny, 21 December 2015

I perused past Scottish Country Dancer magazine editions and found articles in the 2009 issues 8 and 9, related to the previous strategic plan, that might stimulate ideas for the current effort. We are considering many of the same issues that were discussed six years ago. What progress has been made? We can continue with methods that were successful, while less-successful methods might suggest considering new options for improvement.



How can we improve?

Survey of Society Members analysed by Katharine Hoskyn.

Background

A survey was included with the previous edition of the magazine seeking members' views on the Society and its activities. In total 1847 responses were received, which is 12% of the membership of the RSCDS in 2008. 1037 responses (56%) were received online and 810 (44%) by post. Responses came from the following geographical areas:

	RSCDS Membership %	Survey responses %
United Kingdom & Ireland	51	45
Europe	4	5
North America	27	27
Africa, Asia, Japan, and South America	6	5
Australasia	13	17
No answer		1
Total	100	100

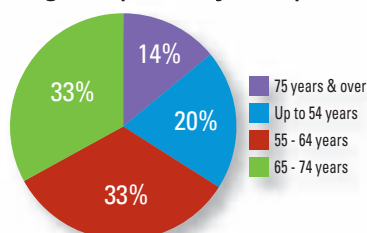
The proportion of survey participants from each geographical area is fairly similar to the breakdown of RSCDS membership for 2008. A summary of some of the results is given in this article. Greater analysis will be in a report on the website, including discussion about the implications of the response rate.

Profile of dancers who completed the survey:

Dancers were asked to give details about themselves and their interest in dancing. This is being used to indicate the needs and interests of different groups of dancers.

30% of the responses were from males and 70% from females. The average age of the survey participants is 62 years, with a breakdown of age groups as follows:

Age Group of Survey Participants



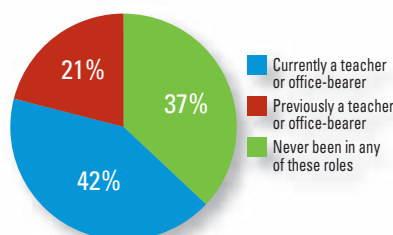
The majority of the people completing the survey had been dancing a long time - on average 27 years, with the average Society membership being 20 years.

In general, a large number of those in the survey had belonged to the Society for most

of the time they had been dancing (on average 77% of their dancing years). 69% showed an equal interest in social dancing and dancing with good technique, with 17% mainly or only interested in social dancing and 10% mainly or only interested in improving technique or dancing to a high standard. The interest in both social dancing and dancing with good technique was further reflected in some of the open-ended comments in which dancers expressed an opinion that social dancing and technique could not be separated.

Survey participants tended to be involved in the running of their local group with the majority (69%) currently or previously holding a role such as teacher or office-bearer.

Involvement with SCD



Typically, survey participants had attended a wide range of dancing activities in the past year:

	%
Dancing at a local class or group	94
Informal balls, social or dances	83
Formal balls, socials or dances	65
Local AGM	53
Classes organised by other groups	50
Day school/s	37
Weekend school/s or short residential courses	36
Summer or winter school in any country (a week or longer)	21
RSCDS AGM	12

Note: with this question allowing multiple response it is not possible to add together any of the above figures.

The survey participants attended on average 4 - 5 of the above types of events.

Reasons for joining the RSCDS:

Most survey participants had 2 - 3 reasons for joining the Society. In total the reasons for joining the Society are almost equally split between wanting to support the organisation and doing so in order to go to classes/schools.

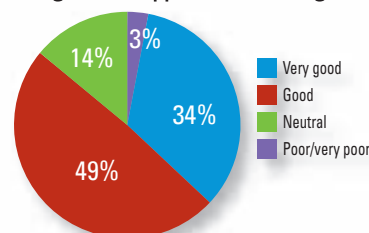
Reasons for joining the RSCDS were as follows:

	All Reasons %	Main Reason %
To support the worldwide organisation for SCD	60	25
To be able to attend schools and classes	58	28
Because the Society does a great deal to support SCD	48	13
It is strongly encouraged by my dance group	32	9
In order to receive the magazine	23	2
To gain other individual benefits	17	2
It is compulsory in my dancing group	15	8
Other	17	9

Rating of support that the RSCDS gives to Scottish country dancing:

The majority 83% of survey participants rated the Society support for Scottish country dancing as good or very good, with 17% rating the Society support as neutral or poor.

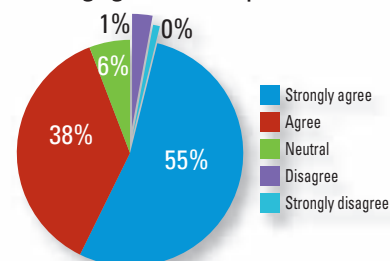
Rating of the Support the RSCDS gives SCD



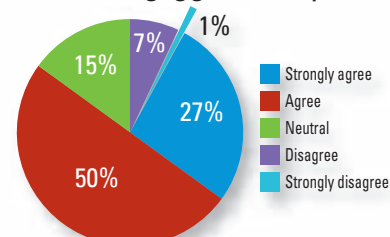
Expectations of the Society:

The majority of survey participants feels that the Society should be both promoting and encouraging good technique and the social aspects of dancing. The level of agreement for the encouragement of social dancing is very strong.

Main focus should be on promoting and encouraging the social aspects of dancing



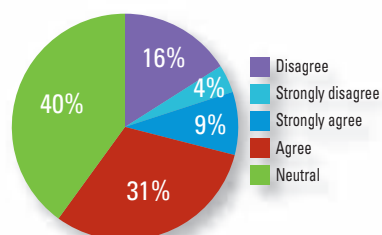
Main focus should be on promoting and encouraging good technique



Opportunity for members to have input into direction:

There is a wide range of opinion about whether the Society gives its members sufficient opportunity to have input into its direction. 40% show some level of agreement that this is the case, 40% are neutral and 20% disagree.

RSCDS gives its members sufficient opportunity to have input into its direction



Activities currently undertaken:

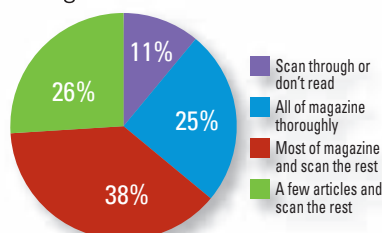
The questionnaire listed 22 activities that the Society currently undertakes and asked the survey participants which activities they personally felt should continue.

	%
Teaching examinations	84
Training for new teachers	84
Publish booklets of dances	82
Maintain an archive of historical information and old dances	77
Summer School at St Andrews	75
Website	74
Produce and distribute the magazine	71
Training for existing teachers	69
Training for people wishing to train SCD teachers	67
Resources for teaching young people	65
Record and sell CDs of music	67
Courses for musicians	66
Advice about SCD and dances	66
Shops from which dancers can buy books and recordings	65
Examination tours for overseas branches	56
Promotional activities such as Dance Scottish Week	50
Scrolls to honour dancers who have contributed to the Society	46
Winter School in Scotland	45
Produce publications such as core dances	45
Medal tests for young dancers	42
Branch awards to honour dancers who have contributed to the branch	41
Dancing proficiency tests	35

Note: with this question allowing multiple response it is not possible to add together any of the above figures.

Magazine:

The feedback on the magazine is positive. Most survey participants read all or most of the magazine.



85% believe the magazine is the right length.

Survey participants were asked to give three sections of particular interest. A number of survey participants (especially those completing the paper questionnaire) commented that they found it hard to select three sections of particular interest – they were interested in many more sections. The questionnaire also asked for any sections that were of no interest or not read. The responses to these two questions were:

	%	%
News from Coates Crescent	21	15
Articles about events	18	9
Information about future events	19	7
Articles about history and cultural background of SCD	47	4
Articles about SCD technique	42	7
Articles about music	14	11
Reviews of CDs or videos	11	18
Interviews with well-known people	18	11
Articles about or tributes to well-known personalities	11	12
Reports from around the world	29	10
Members' letters	23	6
Sections of most interest (Each respondent was asked to give three sections)		
Sections not read or of no interest		

Note: with this question allowing multiple response it is not possible to add together any of the above figures.

The high level of interest in the content of the magazine can be seen from the number of people (41%) who could not name any sections that were of little or no interest. No sections stand out as being uninteresting to readers.

Open-ended questions:

The survey included two open-ended questions: suggestions for anything else the Society could do and any other comments that members wanted to make. Comments and suggestions for other activities were extremely wide-ranging and a full list will be in the report on the website. They fall into the following broad groupings:

- Comments about the need to be more

inclusive, less elitist, with a more outward focus

- Suggestions for promotion of Scottish country dancing or requests for more promotion
- Comments about costs, fees or finances
- Comments relating to overseas branches – isolation, inability to take part in activities, UK focus of some activity
- Suggestions about teaching examinations and standards. Some comments suggested that these needed to be more relaxed and others that standards needed to be maintained
- Suggestions relating to the encouragement of young people
- Request for annual dance books to be re-introduced
- Website/web-based suggestions

What happens next:

The Management Board and Membership Services Committee thank all those who took part in the survey for doing so, and for the thought and effort that went into consideration of their answers, particularly for the open-ended questions. A more detailed report will be available on the website and from Headquarters once the Management Board have had the opportunity to discuss it in depth. It will give fuller details and a breakdown of some questions by geographical area and/or by dancer profile. In the meantime, the Board make the following brief comments:

- The rating of the support given by the Society to SCD is encouraging, with most respondents this as good or very good
- The survey shows that the Society is expected to provide a wide range of services, some of which are more highly valued than others. The Board will not necessarily discontinue activities or services that did not receive a high level of overall support, as they may still be highly valued by specific groups.
- There was a wide range of response regarding the extent to which members had opportunity for input to the Society's direction. We will be looking for ways to improve this input.
- The strong indication from dancers of a high level of interest in both improving technique and social dancing is interesting and must continue to be borne in mind.
- The magazine is obviously well-rated by survey participants, which is consistent with comments made at the Members' Forum on Communication at the 2008 Conference Weekend. Nevertheless a close look at sections of interest will be undertaken.
- The Management Board will give careful consideration to the results, in particular the suggestions for future activity given in the open-ended responses.

From the Chair



Alex Gray, *Chairman*

Since the last issue I have been meeting members from all over the world. It has made me very aware of the wide geographical spread of our membership and the diversity of reasons you have for participating in and enjoying Scottish country dancing, the common ground on which we meet. I have been struck by the goodwill the membership has towards the RSCDS and the encouragement it gives the Management Board as we seek to address the difficulties facing the Society. As most of you are aware the RSCDS is going through a very challenging time, but most of the members I have met support the actions the Board is taking. This encouragement makes me believe we will come through this difficult period as a stronger, more united Society. As always in any organisation, there are many different opinions as to how we can move the Society forward. The Management Board's task is to hear as many opinions as we can and then determine the best way forward to meet members' aspirations. Three key issues have emerged from last

year's Conference, the members' survey, the Branch survey in May and views expressed to me at regional meetings, the St. Andrews and TAC Summer Schools, Kaleidoscope and branch events. Communication has to be improved. We also need to improve financial control and not be continually asking members for a subscription increase every time we have a financial problem. It is clear that members want to know how subscription money is spent and be reassured that it is mainly used on furthering the aims of the Society across all its geographical areas and not just on projects and events that benefit only a small number of members. The third major concern is the trend of falling membership. The Board must help branches in the battle to retain members and recruit new ones.

These three issues are all hard challenges and will not be solved quickly, but we have to face up to them. Liz Foster, our Executive Officer, and the Management Board are currently updating our strategic plan. This will be available on the website and will be used by the Board to determine priorities. It will be regularly updated so that members can follow progress.

No clear consensus emerged from the Branch survey on the membership

structure. Most branches that responded felt that the status quo was the best option. However a significant minority want us to look further into the membership structure and find ways to address falling membership. We have already asked some branches to set up local groups to discuss this issue and come back to the Board with further ideas.

Improving communication is being addressed. In addition to the replacement of IT equipment, Liz Foster and the HQ team have been working to improve office procedures. The next step will be to develop the website; tenders are currently being considered. These changes on their own will not solve the communication problems, but we must ensure that new equipment and procedures support the Society's work effectively.

Our financial situation is now much healthier as we have managed to end the year with a surplus. However we will need to monitor finances closely if we are to maintain this situation.

On the brighter side it has been great to get out and help our members celebrate special events such as the Dunfermline 80th anniversary, the South Wales 40th anniversary and the Tokyo 25th anniversary. Kate and I have enjoyed meeting members wherever we go and joining you on the dance floor.

From the Management Committees



General Purposes & Finance Committee by William Whyte, Convenor

Last issue I said we were hoping to publish the accounts even earlier than before, to allow members and branches time to study them before the AGM. This we did in July, and even more pleasingly the accounts showed a surplus. Making the schools meet their indirect as well as direct costs, better overall budgeting, various economy measures, increased membership subscriptions and more profitable merchandising all played a part to produce a surplus in the operational activities. The Jean Milligan Memorial Fund spent more

than its income (deliberately and knowingly) but the combined total result was still a surplus of £2,777, compared with the previous year's deficit of £123,867. The Management Board therefore exceeded its target of a break-even result.

Our investments fell in value, as they did almost everywhere, and, as our year-end of 31 March coincided with the worst stage of the present financial crisis, our total net worth fell as measured by the accounts. Since then, however, financial markets have recovered very strongly and much of these 'paper losses'

have now disappeared, leaving the Society's reserves and assets position even more comfortable than it was before. Recently we changed our investment manager, and hope that this change will bring our investment policies and performance more into line with future needs.

After three years of deficits we need to consolidate this improved financial control, and for this reason we are presenting a two-year budget to the AGM. This puts a very evident stake in the ground and allows members to see how the Board is planning our finances over the next two years.

The accounts are accessible to all on the website under "Money Matters" and any questions concerning the accounts may be directed to treasurer@rscds.org



Education & Training Committee by Helen Russell, Convenor

As dancers we are very fortunate to have so many expert musicians playing for RSCDS classes, schools and balls. Playing for Scottish country dancing is a disciplined and rather rigorous undertaking.

Dancers need to have a steady, yet "danceable" tempo, with lift, expression and spirit... not easy for the musician to achieve. Many musicians also spend a lot of time researching and matching alternative tunes. This is a process requiring great skill if there

is not to be a significant mis-match between types of tune. I marvel at the dexterity and fluency of playing and the expression given to the music by many of the musicians who play and record for the RSCDS. To encourage new musicians to play in the SCD style, the RSCDS has decided to sponsor a new class at the National Accordion and

continued on page 6

Overheard on the Web



Regular contributor Chris Ronald (New York) shares two hot topics from the Strathspey List with readers of Scottish Country Dancer.

Sharing videos

Most likely you've heard of the phenomenon called YouTube, even if you don't use a computer. YouTube came into existence just four years ago, as a way to post videos on the internet, without cost, so that millions of people can see it within a few minutes, or so that just one's friends can see it. By December 2007, it was being used by Buckingham Palace to broadcast the Queen's Christmas message. Meanwhile, of course, Scottish country dancers have been using it, and there are already some gems out there. All you need do is go to the YouTube site (www.youtube.com) and search for Scottish country dancing. If



you enter 'scottish dance newcastle 2009', for example, you'll see some terrific dancing and brilliant choreography from the Newcastle Festival earlier this year. Another popular item is the 'Sound of Music' performance by the Edinburgh University New Scotland team at the International Varsity Folk Dance Festival in 2007: 'scottish dance ivfd' will get you there.

The quality of the videos on YouTube does vary a great deal, as they are mostly home videos. Sometimes the music is not quite synchronized with the dancing, which can be disconcerting. But there's undoubtedly educational value in the YouTube postings. One can search for a dance by name, say Polharrow Burn, and see it being performed (not always exactly how the deviser wrote it, however!)

YouTube is no longer the only place videos can be shared on the web. Facebook is another popular place to post videos. On Facebook, videos can be seen by one's friends or friends of friends. (On Facebook, just about anyone you know can be your "friend".) Facebook also has 'groups' so that people with common interests (such as Scottish dancing in general, or the members of a Scottish dance club, or attendees at a summer school) can communicate with each other and share pictures and videos.

Whither the RSCDS?

Now for our regular update on what dancers have been saying on the Strathspey

list. The liveliest discussion in recent months was prompted by a questionnaire from headquarters seeking the branches' views on various RSCDS membership options. This survey, in turn, was in response to a motion at the last annual general meeting put forward by the New Zealand Branch, which would allow Branch members to choose whether to belong to the RSCDS or not. After commenting on the questionnaire itself the discussion turned to whether the Society offers value for money, particularly for dancers in overseas branches. Some people expressed the fear that, were the NZ motion to be approved, the Society's finances would be undermined. It was clear that no-one wished for such an outcome, yet at the same time, the status quo was not felt to be sustainable either.

Several contributions are reflected in the words of one subscriber: "If the Society collects money from all of its members, it should spend it on things that all can identify with. In his view, Scotland had been receiving favoured treatment, not only in terms of the schools and the AGM, which were much more accessible to Scottish members than those farther afield, but also in relation to Homecoming 2009, initiatives in schools and the Scottish Branches Conferences. In response, it was pointed out that the latter events did not receive any financial contribution from the RSCDS.

Another subscriber noted that "dancers with the desire and wherewithal to travel widely to attend SCD events experience the value-added of the RSCDS in providing international standards for SCD. But what is the value for those dancers who don't have the desire or means or both to travel widely to indulge their hobby and are not interested in becoming teachers?" This subscriber felt that the Teacher's Association of Canada (TAC) and their outreach programme, which is publicized on the TAC website, offered something of real value to local SCD groups, while nothing similar could be seen on the RSCDS website.

No-one questioned the extraordinary role that the RSCDS had played in creating SCD as we know it, and bringing about its worldwide popularity. But it had become a victim of its own success. One subscriber

argued passionately that "the Society needs to wake up to the fact that much of the creative buzz in SCD these days originates from outside Scotland. Exciting new musical recordings come from the USA (even though the Society only seems to record Scottish bands), great new dances are invented, dance books published, and tunes written all over the world. Events like SCD Kaleidoscope show us that people all over the world are thinking innovatively about how to practise and teach SCD, and SCD organisations in places as far away as America, Australia, or New Zealand put on residential week-long schools." He continued: "I don't fear for SCD as a pastime - it has been around much longer than the Society, and it will keep going in some form no matter what the Society does, but I like the idea of an organisation like the Society that ties it all together." Yet he was apprehensive about whether the Society could adapt, given the current AGM voting arrangements. Asking for change was, he felt, like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas. Others, however, cited examples to suggest that change was possible.

So, are there things you'd like to change? Will you be the one to make it happen? The future of the RSCDS may depend on it.



Shopping

Buying goods on the web has been popular for some time, of course, and recently it's become possible to purchase Scottish country dance books and CDs on the internet. A major seller of such items is the Teachers Association of Canada (TAC), an affiliate of the RSCDS. You can buy a wide variety of items, produced by the RSCDS and many others, from TACsound or TACbooks over the internet, using a credit card or Paypal. RSCDS headquarters has announced that it will also introduce an on-line payment option in the near future.

www.tac-rscds.org/



Dancers, teachers and musicians from around the world at Kaleidoscope.

Previous editions of *Scottish Country Dancer* alerted members to Kaleidoscope, a world-wide seminar on Scottish country dancing for dancers, teachers and musicians, especially those outside Scotland. The event was sponsored by the RSCDS Management Board and was held in Geneva over the first weekend in July. We asked some of the participants how the seminar came about and what they gained from it.

Where did the idea for Kaleidoscope come from?

Susi Mayr (Austria): The general concept has lurked at the back of my mind ever since I went to a workshop organised by the Scottish Dance Archives in Liverpool in 1978, which turned out to be not the usual kind of weekend school but a unique opportunity to learn more about many aspects of dancing and music, even dance composition, from people such as Ian Hall and Derek Haynes. It was a fascinating experience.

About 25 years later, the RSCDS Management Board Working Group on "Issues Outside Scotland", of which I was a member, was considering ways to support teachers, dancers and musicians outside Scotland, perhaps in isolated locations and without easy (or even any) access to an RSCDS branch or other established dance groups to help with questions and problems.

One suggestion was an event that would allow participants to meet in an informal setting, share their experiences and hear about a variety of topics connected to Scottish country dancing, and – of course – dance, all within the scope of a residential weekend. This concept was developed

further to bring together teachers, dancers and musicians of repute from all over the world and provide an opportunity for informal communication and networking among participants.

What were the main challenges and how did you address them?

Jerry Reinstein (France): We tried to find a venue that would be easy to reach and a date that wouldn't clash with any established events – not an easy thing to do! We were fortunate in having friends in the Geneva area who helped us find the hotel and the hall for the Saturday night dance.

A major challenge was convincing the Management Board of what we were trying to do. We were dealing with a completely new concept and communicating that in an effective way was difficult and time-consuming, and probably added a good six months to the planning. Once we got the backing of the MB things could start to roll.

We had a wish-list of people to speak at the conference, and had to convince them to come even though they would have to pay a large proportion of their own expenses. It turned out that they all bought into the

concept, and convincing them turned out to be less of a problem than the credit crunch, which made travel unaffordable for some. However, several of those who couldn't be at the conference in person agreed to submit written contributions for publication, and in the end the printed programme included a total of 19 papers.

Where did the name 'Kaleidoscope' and the logo come from?

Susi Mayr: One of the ideas behind the event was to take a fresh look at the changing world of Scottish country dancing, and a kaleidoscope (from the Greek καλός (kalos), "beautiful" + εἶδος (eidos), "shape" + σκοπέω (scopeo), "to look at, to examine": "looking at beautiful forms") seemed to convey this rather nicely.

Interestingly, although already known to the ancient Greeks, the kaleidoscope was reinvented and patented in 1817 by Sir David Brewster, a Scottish physicist, mathematician, scientist, inventor, and writer.

I also thought one might be able to turn a photograph of the RSCDS tartan into a kaleidoscopic pattern to use as a logo, which Pia Walker did very successfully.

Finances are always a tricky issue - how did you calculate the budget?

Jerry Reinstein: We looked at what we thought were our most critical expenses and got prices from the hotel, the hall where the ball was to be, coach transport from the hotel to the hall, contribution to the speakers' expenses etc. and calculated our overall fixed costs. We based the individual cost per participant on what we thought would be a realistic attendance, although in the event the number was just slightly below that.

We were also fortunate in being able to attract sponsorship from several RSCDS branches and companies. In addition to being one of the major sponsors, the Società di Danza also organised a trip to Switzerland for 100 of its members, who joined the conference participants at the dance on Saturday night, which made a big difference in the final budget and made the atmosphere of the Ball really delightful.

From the outset we wanted to break even if at all possible, although the Management Board had agreed to cover up to £1000 of loss. In the event, Kaleidoscope was wholly self-financing, thanks to the participants, the sponsors and the personal contributions from all the speakers and the musicians.

Were there any particular problems associated with the event?

Jerry Reinstein: We didn't take into account that some people would have wanted to attend the conference but make their own accommodation arrangements. The package organised by the hotel assumed that everyone would be staying there and it wasn't possible to offer other options.

Susi Mayr: It was always going to be difficult to organise and sell a completely new kind of event, but doing this at a location approximately 500 miles from where the (nearest) organiser lived made the challenge even greater. It wouldn't have been possible at all without the support of the local dancers and the hotel staff.

What did you think of the conference?

Rosemary Coupe (Canada): Kaleidoscope was a brilliant success. I liked the structure, with its movement between the theoretical and the practical sessions including dancing, all of which had more interesting content than a typical workshop class. The Saturday night dance had fabulous music and was enhanced by busloads of young dancers who'd come up from Italy. My only complaint was that the conference was too short. All participants owe a huge debt of gratitude to the organizers.

Carol Blake (UK): Interesting to hear that so many of our concerns were brought to the fore by dancers and teachers from all over the world. There was much food for thought and some helpful solutions offered.

Martin McWilliam (Germany): An amazing experience having so many interesting speakers condensed into the short space of time. Getting impressions from that many teachers would have taken years otherwise.

Pia Walker (UK): I felt that the participants really wanted to talk in depth about various issues, they wanted to share something they felt deeply about. The ingenuity with regards to making people understand their point of view was out of this world. And the good humour from all was lovely. There were people there from all over the world, from 16 countries on 4 continents.

With hindsight, what could be done differently next time?

Bruce Hamilton (USA): I think one of the goals is for HQ to hear what the constituents think. Not much of that seemed to happen, despite Anselm Lingnau and David Hall making the point very clearly. Maybe having the HQ folks present their stuff earlier on, for instance on Friday night, and letting people formulate questions before their panel session would make the discussion more useful.

Kaleidoscope was an outstanding concept, but people are not used to a conference (as opposed to a dance weekend). I imagine that attendees at the next one will be less impatient with non-dancing sessions. My own

belief is that the world has plenty of dance events, and you add the most value per hour of your time by not trying to do another.

Anselm Lingnau (Germany): I thoroughly enjoyed the conference – if only there had been more time! Some presentations would really have benefited from being longer and the discussions had to be curtailed in many cases. Also more breaks for informal conversations would have been nice.

And finally, will there be a 'K2'?

Martina Müller-Franz (Germany): I thoroughly enjoyed this well organized weekend. An excellent venue and lots of interesting topics, but I would have loved more time for discussions. I hope there will be a Kaleidoscope 2.

Deirdre Maccuish Bark (Canada): A fabulous weekend – super to meet people from all over the world who are involved in SCD. We all seem to have the same problems – let's solve them together.

George Flett (UK): I found most of the weekend to be stimulating and interesting. I am all for openness and moving with the times – within the broad framework of the RSCDS.

The committee that organised Kaleidoscope are looking at ways to make the video material recorded at the conference and the papers submitted for publication more widely available. Please visit the Kaleidoscope website at <http://scdkaleidoscope1.strathspey.org> for more information.

Dancers from Italy join conference participants at the Kaleidoscope ball. Photo by Bruce Hamilton.

