

DRAFT

COBTREE SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE GROUP

Minutes of the AGM held at Grove Green on 10 May 2023 at 8 pm

- 1. Welcome:-** Dick welcomed everyone present, 28 voting Members.
- 2. Apologies for absence:-** Ian and Cynthia McIntosh, John Todman, David How, Linda Kitson and Sarah Lavender
- 3. Minutes of the AGM held on 25 May 2022.** Sandy proposed and Esther seconded that the Minutes were a true record of the AGM and this was carried unanimously.
- 4. Matters arising-** There were no matters arising.
- 5. Chairman's Report:-** Dick said that this year had been quite a good one for Cobtree. We have managed to dance on 49 Wednesday evenings since the 2022 AGM out of 51 possible Wednesdays. We were not planning on dancing on 28 December and the conditions underfoot on 14 December also prevented us from dancing. During that period we have managed to have an average attendance of 22 dancers with the lowest attendance being 11 and the highest 31. We have managed 219 different dances, with the most frequently included ones being City of Belfast for strathspeys, Trip to Bavaria and Scott Meikle for reels, and Pelorus Jack and St Andrew's Fair for jigs. It has been a mixture between better known dances and others which were a "bit of a challenge". We enjoyed a Christmas Party Dance on Wednesday 21 December as well as a very successful No Haggis Tea Dance on Sunday 19 February. Dick mentioned the enjoyment so many people get from simply dancing with friends in a friendly atmosphere and enjoying superb music whether it be recorded or live. He thanked the 8 MCs who have made excellent use of 182 CDS to cover the 200+ dances mentioned before. He believes Cobtree is now planning to move into the 21st Century with the use of a computer. He remembered that when he first MC'd at Cobtree Hall in the 1960s LP and EP records were being used on an enormous record player, ably managed by Peter Green. After that tapes were used and currently we are burning CDs. He has burnt on average just over 55 CDs each year for the past 12+ years. Something he is looking forward to NOT DOING!
Dick wanted to thank the Committee who have met to arrange the Christmas Party on 21 December and the No Haggis Dance on 19th February. They have successfully steered us through our first tea dance and are now preparing for Cobtree's 50th Anniversary on 24 June. Unfortunately some of the Committee Members are not seeking re-election this year, namely Pam and Esther. This is the second time Pam has served on the Committee as she was Secretary for some years and then returned as a Committee member. Esther has also been a Committee Member and Ticket Secretary for some years. Dick then presented both ladies with a bouquet of flowers as a gift from himself on behalf of the Club with grateful thanks.
He then said, as many of us are aware, he is stepping down as Chairman this year after some 12 years in the post. He will still be active in the Club looking after things like the MC rota, poster and ticket design as well as trying to walk or dance on weekly

Club nights. Due to health issues he is not able to do as much dancing and take other responsibilities as he has previously been able to. He wished the new Committee who will be elected tonight every possible success in the future.

Finally he wanted to thank all the Members of our wonderful Club and hoped weekly numbers will increase as it is extremely difficult to work with numbers as low as 11, as this allows either one 3 couple set and 5 people left over, or one 4 couple set and 3 people left over, or one 5 couple set and 1 person left over. Social dancing is the main aim of the Club and it is wonderful to dance with a friendly group in the set. Footwork, though important, can be flexible in precision, the important thing is to be in the right place at the right time ready to do the next figure, and to keep this going for as many times as is necessary to complete the dance.

Dick said he looked forward to seeing many of us during the next dancing period, that is between this AGM and the one that will be held in 2024.

Helen presented Dick with a picture from everyone at the Club and expressed their grateful thanks for all the hard work he has done over the years, for which we are very grateful.

- 6. Treasurer's Report:-** Full Report and Accounts attached to the Minutes. Brian said that his Report should be considered in the context of the reduction in the number of dancers and Members we have after the pandemic. This is the first year where everything reported is representative of the present and the future. The number of Members and dancers has been declining for ten years or more and is now roughly half what we expected ten years ago. This year the total income has exceeded the expenditure by £307. That is after our normal operating costs, mostly rent for the Hall. The Summer Dance, Christmas Party and February Dance all made a contribution to our income. We donated £1,800 to Maidstone Mencap. This was a little more than the Hall costs.

Money is tight at the moment. We are feeling the effect of higher prices for everything from food to fuel and this is just as true for Charities like Mencap as it is for us. Our rent at Grove Green rose this year and has just increased again. Thankfully the Hall Management Committee is keeping the increases as small as possible, so we will see an increase of around £120 in our rent this coming year. That is less than one extra dancer per night.

We have always tried to be inclusive. No one should have to limit their dancing because of the cost of their subs. We have also proudly supported Maidstone Mencap for the whole of our existence.

Brian said he has thought hard about the subs, membership and donations to Maidstone Mencap for the coming year. We have reserves of almost £7,000, which is more than we are required to hold by the Constitution. On this basis Brian proposed that membership, weekly subs and our donations to Mencap all remain unchanged. This may result in a loss on the year, but we have the funds to support that. If Members wish to support Mencap further he recommended they donate to them

directly. This donation can then be gift aided and will increase the benefit to the Charity compared to a payment coming through the Club.

Esther said that the £302 “donations from demonstrations etc” should go to Mencap, and Brian pointed out that it is part of the £1,800. £25 also comes from U3A whenever Dick does a demonstration there.

Brian then proposed a vote on his proposal. This was seconded by Peter Farrow and carried unanimously.

Brian asked for guidance as to whether we should pay for our Christmas Party now it is held on an extended Club night rather than on a Saturday. It was unanimously agreed that we should carry on paying for the Christmas Party.

Prior to his departure to Scotland Ian McIntosh had been asked if he would continue his role of Accounts Checker to which he agreed, and this was unanimously agreed.

- 7. Alteration to Rules, 5,7, 10 and 15 of the 2018 Constitution:-** Rule 5 now to read “The management of the Club is vested in a Committee consisting of a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary and up to 6 other Members. Proposed by Helen Knell and seconded by Esther Barford. Carried unanimously.

Rule 7 to now read “Four Committee Members shall form a quorum”. Proposed by Dick Barford and seconded by Helen Knell.

Rule 10 to now read “The Committee must call an Annual General Meeting to be held in April/May. A Special General Meeting must also be called at the request, made in writing, of a minimum of 10% of fully paid-up Members. 25% of fully paid-up Members to form a quorum for all General Meetings.” Proposed by Esther Barford and seconded by Helen Knell. Carried unanimously.

Rule 15 to now read “Withdrawals from the Club’s bank or other accounts, and any other expenditure over £30, must be authorised by the Treasurer and at least one other Committee Member. Ongoing payments, for example hall rent, may be authorized for up to one year. A record of the authorisations must be kept with the Club Accounts”. Proposed by Brian Knell and seconded by Dick Barford. Carried unanimously.

The Constitution will be replaced.

- 8. Election of Officers and Committee Members for the period 10 May 2023 to the AGM 2024:-**

Officers:-

Chair: Helen Knell. Proposed by Esther Barford and seconded by Sandy Catterall. Carried unanimously

Treasurer: Brian Knell. Proposed by Sandy Catterall and seconded by Dick Barford. Carried unanimously.

Secretary: Eileen Stener. Proposed by Esther Barford and seconded by Brian Knell. Carried unanimously.

Committee Members:-

John Todman. Proposed by Dick Barford and seconded by Sue Jones. Carried unanimously.

Sandy Catterall. Proposed by Helen Knell and seconded by Esther Barford. Carried unanimously.

- 9. Election of KASS Representatives** – Jess Hunt is happy to continue as non-voting representative. Proposed by Brian Knell and seconded by Sandy Catterall. Carried unanimously.

Dick no longer wants to be voting representative so Brian Knell said that as he attends KASS Meetings as Website Manager he would be happy to take over the role of voting representative. Proposed by Jess Hunt and seconded by Sandy Catterall. Carried unanimously.

10. Any Other Business:-

Janet Amini read out a note from Alan Nightingale as he has difficulty speaking at length. Alan thanked the Committee for their work over the recent years. Before Covid the Club enjoyed a refreshment break which he felt should be reinstated as it formed an important part of Club night when people could chat to one another. He thinks that Cobtree is the only Club locally that do not provide refreshments. He would be happy to join in a rota. Helen pointed out that as Club members have dwindled recently it would mean people making tea and coffee, if this were decided upon, very frequently. Jane Whittington said she thought it was important to re-introduce the provision of refreshments. After some discussion it was agreed that the Club will provide the “makings” for those people who want tea or coffee, and Mary Wheeler said she will provide the milk each week and make the tea and coffee as she is unable to dance at present.

Jane Whittington said she felt there were far too many four couple dances being danced as a three couple set due to low numbers on some club evenings. It seemed that by dancing as a three couple set most people could dance. However this sometimes spoils the enjoyment of the dance as it can be a scramble to get back to first place and find your way back into the dance. It then messes up the dance completely for the next couple. It is also very tiring when there is no chance to have a rest in between bars. Jane suggested that four couple sets could be danced as a five couple dance with the last two couples sharing, or that the music could be put on again to enable the fifth couple to have their turn. Some dancers like to sit out a dance and are happy to miss one or two dances during the evening.

No decision was made.

Brian said we would have to take out a quarter of an hour of dancing time for a tea break. We pay for three hours' use of the Hall, so do we want to dance for longer? He suggested starting at 7.45pm instead of 8pm. 22 votes for and one against.

The Meeting closed at 9.25pm.