RSCDS John Muir Branch (Wisconsin, USA)

Number of years established as a branch: 10

Annual Report (June 2012 - May 2013)

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 June where some new and some continuing Board members were elected, we danced and socialized our way on through the past months. We are a co-sponsor of the Midwest Scottish Weekend Dance Workshop held at Beloit College (due to scheduling issues at the college it was held not in June as normal but May 18 - 20, 2012) which always draws a number of our members. In the midst of a hot August, we relaxed with an ice cream social and danced twice in public in the early fall; once at the Dane County Farmers’ Market, the other in a beautifully refurbished barn in a City Park.

Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas played a concert at the University of Wisconsin in November. We purchased a block of tickets and hosted an information table about Scottish Dancing in the lobby. In early December, trying to avoid the winter snow storms, we held a dance party with live music followed by a potluck dinner. January included a Burns Night Social and another social dance was held in April.

Our teachers are working hard to plan our evening dances, including technique practice. Each evening ends with the opportunity to request dances. One of our teachers held a class for children at an elementary school in the fall. We purchased the newly available Alasdair Fraser/Muriel Johnstone live CD set to enhance our weekly class music.

Our big event every year is our ball. This year’s theme was A Dash of Saltire. For the first time in many years we brought in outside musicians. Our goal was to attract a strong regional attendance and we succeeded in having the highest attendance of any ball in the Upper Midwest. Calum Pasqua, fiddler, and Susie Petrov, pianist and teacher, joined us for the weekend. On Friday evening as A Parcel of Rogues duo they presented a house concert at which we also performed so people could see what we do – and hopefully be tempted to join us. To publicize the concert, we joined the Madison Folk Music Society. Susie taught a dance workshop on Saturday morning and Calum offered a music workshop on Saturday afternoon, attracting a number of outside musicians. The ball was preceded by a tasty served dinner and Grand March. After an evening of delightful dancing an after-ball party was held at the home of Chuck Snowdon and Ann Lindsey. Sunday morning Mike and Norma Briggs opened their country home for a brunch.

Also to increase our visibility we developed a new brochure and business card with contact information and our web address. We are averaging 14 dancers each evening and have several new members. A special treat has been dancers from around the US and foreign countries who walk through the door for a night or more.