

# **Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Gardens Dancers**

***Held on 7th September 2009 at 7.30pm in the hall of St. Thomas-Junction Road, Leith.***

25 persons were present for all or part of the meeting.

## ***Apologies for absence***

Apologies for absence were received from 9 people.

## ***Opening remarks from the Chair***

In her opening remarks Margaret Burns (chairperson) briefly reviewed the programme which had just come to an end. As in previous years, the committee had decided on financial grounds to organise a mixture of indoor and outdoor events. Accordingly dancing in the Gardens had been planned for 10 Monday evenings spread over 11 weeks from 25 May to 4 August. One of these was cancelled on the day because of bad weather. In addition there had been 11 Tuesday evenings of dancing at St. George's West between 26th May and 4th August and 4 Monday evenings at St Thomas-Junction Road from 10 to 31st August.

Because of the financial situation the committee decided to increase the entrance fee to £3.50 and to seek sponsorship and donations. The resulting donations exceeded our expectations and allowed us to proceed with confidence. She paid tribute to those of the committee who had worked hard on obtaining such donations and in negotiating with the Council for favourable rates for using the Ross Bandstand.

Overall the average attendances were reduced compared with last year. Several things may have contributed to this. The weather may have contributed to the decrease in numbers in the Gardens, as there had been several occasions when dancing went ahead although the weather earlier may have been off-putting to some. There was some evidence that people did use the web-site to check whether we intended to proceed or not (and many got their programmes from the site too). The increase in entrance fee may have put some people off, and the general disruption to transport due to the tramworks may have taken its toll too.

## ***Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting***

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Monday 1st September 2008 were circulated and reviewed. Margaret Harris proposed and Chris Sydserf seconded that they be accepted as a correct record. This was agreed.

## ***Matters Arising from the minutes***

Most would be brought up as agenda items. However Margaret Burns noted the following points :-

- (min 7) that John Nuttall had agreed to act as Treasurer
- (min 8) the committee had drawn a blank in finding a venue to replace St. Georges West on account of the high temperatures in that hall. This would be re-investigated for 2010.
- (min10) various demands on the time of the committee members had prevented following up the suggestion of a children's demonstration team for one of the evenings.

## ***Treasurer's report***

John Nuttall gave his treasurers report.

He noted that in the absence of donations, gate money is our only source of income, and that an average attendance of over 160 is necessary if the events in the Gardens are to recoup their costs. Average attendance in the Gardens on nights when dancing took place (i.e. had been planned and had not been cancelled due to rain) was 131 in 2009 compared with 152 in 2008. Hence the outdoor events were operated at a loss in both years. We look to the indoor events to offset that loss, as they are less costly to run. Average attendance was down from the 2008 levels in the indoor events too. Not all invoices have been presented yet, but the expected outcome of income from the dances minus the expenditure of running them is £37 for 2009 compared with £673 in 2008.

The reserves in the bank account at the end of 2008 was £3598 while for 2009 this is expected to stand at £6444 once the invoices for use of the Bandstand have been received and paid. The increase of these reserves between 2008 and 2009 is almost entirely due to the donations which we have received. As we can only embark on each season if we have sufficient funds to cover the committed expenditure, the level of reserve is not excessive.

Agnes Reed proposed that the report be accepted. This was seconded by Rosemary Wylie and agreed by the meeting.

## ***Election of Office Bearers***

Sandra Wallace asked to stand down from the committee. Jenny MacDonald was proposed by Sandra Wallace to replace her. This was seconded by Helen Cook and agreed by the meeting. Margaret Burns thanked Sandra for her work in the last year. The committee is otherwise unchanged.

## ***General Discussion***

A general discussion was held concerning the season just past, and looking forward to 2010.

As part of the dicussion Margaret Burns said that the committee had begun to organise the programme for 2010 on a similar pattern to this year. Tentative dates were Mondays in Princes Street Gardens from 31 May to 26th July inclusive (9 nights) and corresponding Tuesdays in a hall (1st June to 27th July). There would also be dances for 5 nights in August, probably 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th.

All this depended on availability of the venues, and possibly on comments invited in this discussion.

The overall arrangements for 2009 appeared to have worked satisfactorily. There was a perception that the weather had not been kind to us, with several days when dancing had been possible (and took place) in the evening after a day of poor weather which discouraged several potential participants.

Several halls were suggested for investigation as possible venues in 2010. These included St Phillips, Sacred Heart, the Salvation Army Hall, a University hall at the Pleasance, Polwarth Parish Church, Murrayfield Parish Church, Greenside Parish Church and the South Side Community Centre. The committee will add these to the list of places to be considered.

It is not possible to discover what nights of the week are optimal for our events without extensive market research which we cannot undertake, but the point was made that for some people it would be better not to hold our dances on adjacent evenings.

The discussion also revealed a certain amount of tension concerning the complexity and standards of the dancing we undertake. Relatively novice dancers may find the programmes daunting, while the experienced dancers can experience some frustration if too many people in the set are uncertain, or if the dances are too simple. There was a suggestion that given the mix of dancers we have, it is actually desirable, or even necessary, to walk each dance once through at our indoor sessions. Some callers were thought to review the dances too rapidly for the instructions to be followed by those walking them. Occasionally the calling has been too rapid (when the dances are not walked) even for the experienced dancers to follow the review. There was an expression of disappointment from the floor that on one occasion the caller had refused the request from some dancers that a particular dance should be walked once. A balance may need to be struck between the time needed to review or walk the dance and the number of dances included on a programme. The committee intends to give further thought to how to reconcile these conflicting pressures when we plan our next season.

Margaret Burns thanked all who had attended the meeting for their interest and support