

## **President's Report 2025-Rod Downey**

**General Comments and 3 Year Retrospective:** This will be my final report as president of the Wellington Region RSCDS. Before I review 2025, I would first like to give a general retrospective of the last 3 years.

The last 3 years have seen us come out of Covid, host a Summer School in Wellington City, and have seen many significant anniversaries by many clubs within the region. In particular, in 2024, Lower Hutt celebrated 70 years. Their anniversary essentially celebrates 70 or so years of organized Scottish Country Dancing in the Wellington Region. I believe that these celebrations are a remarkable testimony to the enduring popularity of SCD.

In the last 3 years, the Region Committee has enabled many events and classes, including a number in and around the centenary of the formation of the RSCDS, and the publication of Book 1. Highlights included the joint Centenary Celebration Dance with the Hawkes Bay and Rangitikei Regions, and the Historical Dances Days celebrating historical dances from the Lower North Island, and then Books 1-11.

It's timely to reflect upon of the time and effort given to the support of SCD by the collective tutors and musicians in the region. I am not sure the average dancer thinks about the amount of preparation and time which goes into events and classes. This does not even mention the huge effort of the team who organized Summer School (And what a success that was!) We are so lucky to have so many willing and able (and talented) individuals in our Region.

We have awarded several [Region Appreciation Awards](#) over the three years, including to Elaine Lethbridge, Edith Campbell and Désirée Patterson. Fantastic to acknowledge those who have provided exception contributions to the region.

Sadly, several of our members have passed away in the last 3 years; and I cannot recall 3 years where two currently serving committee members passed away: these were [Edith Campbell](#) and Janice Henson (September 2025 HCH).

**Finally**, I would really like to thank the Region Committee for their amazing efforts in the last 3 years. Thanks also to those not on the committee, but who contribute in lots of ways, including, in no particular order, Lee Miller (website), Lorelee Hyde (website, photos, archival group), Kristin Downey (archival), Philippa Pointon (archival), Kevin Lethbridge (classes helper), James Scott (website). Things cannot function without these people giving of their time. Remember that the region has no income except from events and classes. So, it cannot run without the generosity of such people who do so much work with no remuneration except the satisfaction of seeing things work. Systems are set up, payments collected, gofers and tutors found, musicians organized, classes fed, archival material organized, web sites loaded, articles written; all this is purely voluntary. Thanks, thanks, thanks!

### **2025 General:**

The Wellington Region has had an excellent year for 2025. Many new dancers have joined the SCD family, and there have been many enjoyable dancing events throughout the region. It strikes me that the Region is doing rather well.

## Region Events:

- **Summer Dancing.** As usual, summer dancing took place at the Old Government Building. Chris Totton again organized this. We kept the start time to 7.00. Perfect weather. Very un-Wellington. Thanks to Chris together with Isobel Harris Clark, Diane Bradshaw, and Joy Tracey for taking these classes. We had about 3 sets per week and even some passing spectators joining in!
- **Historical RSCDS Dances.** 12th April. Thanks to Elaine Laidlaw for tutoring and Lynne Scott, Sam Berkahn and Thomas Nikora for this nice class, which attracted three sets. This year the dances were from Books 6-11. [Here](#) is a link where the dances are discussed. We plan to continue this initiative next year, possibly the *MacNab Dances*. This is the call of the incoming committee. *Make suggestions to them!*
- **New Dancers' Celebration.** Many thanks to Linden for also taking on organizing the New Dancers' Celebration, especially after having been heavily involved in the organizing of Summer School. I have heard around 14 sets were there. Greatly appreciated by the Region.
- **Region Classes.** The region offered basics, intermediate and advanced classes in 2024. Unfortunately, the intermediate class had to be cancelled due to low registrations. The Basics and Advanced were quite well attended with at least 3 sets for all. Feedback was good for the classes. Thanks to Melva Waite and Joy Tracey and the musicians organized by Lynne Scott. Thanks to Lesley Campbell, for coordinating, and thanks to gofers and other helpers!
- **Fugues Advanced Class.** 11<sup>th</sup> October. The committee decided to try something new to cater to advanced dancers: a fugues day, where advanced dancers are given the opportunity to try relatively complicated dances which emphasise personal phrasing and teamwork. This was inspired by similar events we had heard of overseas. We managed 6 dances on the day and I only managed to totally confuse people on one, [Stroangassel](#). Great work by all. I will post some information about the dances on the region website.
- **Meet Book 54 Day.** 1<sup>st</sup> November. The Region decided to have an afternoon of dances where we introduce the dances from the new RSCDS Book 54, and the accompanying CD, and give the Region's dancers the opportunity to try out dances from the new book. The Branch have provided some partial support from the Bernice Kelly Fund. Newer dancers may not know of Bernice Kelly. She was a long-time dancer and was also Region President for several years. She generously donated a bequest to the Branch when she passed away. The Book 54 afternoon will be led by Diane Bradshaw. (My President's Report must be posted before the class occurs, but I am sure it will be a success.)

## General 2025:

- **Summer School.** Many thanks to the Wellington Region tutors, dancers and musicians for supporting such a wonderful Summer School. The organizing committee led by Ann Oliver did a grand job. I hope you found time to get to something over the period if not the whole school. Congratulations to Wellington candidates: Chris Totton (Unit 5) and Maureen Sullivan (Unit 3) for passing their teaching exams at the school.

- **Anniversaries.** Two Clubs have had significant years, with Johnsonville enjoying their 70th Anniversary of formation as a Church Group, and Waikanae celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- **Music.** We are amazingly lucky within the region to have so many talented musicians to call upon. I would especially like to thank Lynne Scott (Branch Music Adviser over this period) who is heavily involved in developing new young musicians into playing for Scottish Country Dancing.
- **Archival Project:** This continues with a new material progressively being collected, collated and processed, finally appearing on the [Region Website](#). Many thanks to Lorelee Hyde, Kristin Downey and Philippa Pointon for their efforts.
- **Bereavements.** We were all greatly saddened by the loss of the wonderful Janice Henson, who gave so much to many things, including SCD. Elizabeth Fergusson wrote an article on her in HCH, and also one for the Branch Magazine. Such people make the world richer; a great loss. We also lost Gary Morris (Elaine Laidlaw wrote an obituary in the June HCH) this year. He was someone who devoted his life to Scottish Country Dancing; and had a huge influence on our pastime in Wellington, and indeed New Zealand.

#### **Planning for 2026:**

**Hogmanay.** Chris Totton and Anna Verhaegh have again agreed to organize Hogmanay this year. It is to be held in Crofton Downs School.

**Summer Dancing.** Chris Totton has again agreed to coordinate Summer Dancing in 2026 and details will appear on the [Region Website](#), as usual.

**New Dancers' Celebration.** Ngaio has agreed to organize the 2026 New Dancers' Celebration.

**Classes.** Additionally, we plan and a full range of classes akin to this year's and an event for the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, , possibly based on the MacNab Dances such as [The Earl of Errol's Reel](#) or [Macdonald of Sleat](#) which are very seldom done today, and offer a different challenge to modern dances. This is up to the incoming committee.

**Classes for Advanced Dancers.** Do you want something special? If so, what? Tell the committee. Come to the AGM!

**Other.** Johnsonville will be having a significant anniversary next year, celebrating 60 years as a RSCDS Club. (It will also be 30 years of teaching for me there!)

**Coda.** All in all, it has been a very good year, with many activities. I think we have had more activities in the last 3 years than for quite a long time. Let's keep this up. A final thanks to my committees and good luck to the new one. I will be stepping down.