

Chairman's Report

Tudor Squares Annual General Meeting

8 November 2018

Tudor Squares is still the biggest square dance club in the UK, but only because of the range of dance programmes we offer and the regular recruitment of new students. We've been able to sustain our position in large part due to the callers who provide their services to the club week by week, calling the various programmes and teaching new dancers.

At the last national count in December the club had 115 members, including the callers. However, since then at least a dozen members have stopped dancing, mainly due to ill health, while a similar number began learning in January. Therefore, the number of members will not be dissimilar at the next count. So, continual recruitment of new dancers is vital.

Therefore, it's great that we have a group of Beginners who will be ready to graduate shortly. While it's disappointing that our latest attempt to recruit new dancers has met with minimal success.

The club is dependent on the membership to enable it, as a whole and each section in particular, to thrive. Members' enthusiasm and the expertise of callers have meant that the club has been able to run and host two public dances, plus club socials and a variety of non-dance activities.

The club held its annual Plus and Mainstream dances, in October and March respectively. The Plus dance with Granville Spencer calling attracted enough dancers for seven squares. Some of the choreography was very challenging, with even the most experience dancers struggling, so that the evening wasn't as enjoyable as anticipated. There were only six squares for Simon & Trudy Fielding calling Mainstream, with attendance badly affected by exceptionally cold, icy conditions. Also, in January, Tudor Squares again supported the Winter extravaganza charity dance in aid of Prostate Cancer UK, making drinks and helping to set up and pack down the hall.

The section representatives were supported by numerous club members in organising these dances, which included Beginners who could only undertake some of the practical tasks, selling tickets and setting out the food, but not participate in the dancing.

Other events included the:

Spring Walk, 21 April – Again Ann Reardon and Grant Thorne volunteered to organise a spring walk, which was centred on Redbourn, finishing at the Chequers, where walkers assembled for lunch. The 28 members who came enjoyed a beautiful spring day and an opportunity to buy bread at Redbourn Mill.

Garden party, 3 June – Although numbers were relatively small, the 28 people present, enjoyed a relaxing, sunny Sunday afternoon, socialising and dancing to Susie & Simon Kelly's calling. We're fortunate to have a community centre with such a lovely setting and

the sun always seems to shine on us when we're there. Members brought their own food with the club providing salads, courtesy of Brian & Pauline O'Ready.

Summer outing, 3 July – 40 members went to Kew Gardens for the day, scattering across the grounds on leaving the coach, with the opportunity to visit the newly reopened Temperate House. They reassembled to travel to Hogsmill Squares for an early evening dance, before returning, exhausted to Hemel. It had been a long, hot day during an exceptionally hot summer. Thanks to Brian O'Ready for arranging a great day out.

The committee plan the club's annual programme, ensure that the club is solvent and organise the sections' dances and club socials, so without them the club wouldn't function. Therefore, I'd like to thank my fellow committee members, past and present, for all their hard work and support. However, the committee can't do everything.

I'd also like to thank members of the club for their readiness to undertake the weekly tasks that enable our sessions to run smoothly, for their willingness to help at events for the benefit of all club members and people's enthusiastic participation in the club's activities.

In addition, may I take this opportunity to thank all the callers for their commitment to sustaining square dancing and to Tudor Squares, for their preparation for weekly club nights and socials to enable members to enjoy their dancing.

I'd like to pay tribute to several dancers and former members who died this year, Mo Moran, Alan Miles, Roger Reuss, Norman Machell and John Carey, who were all memorable in very different ways.

Finally, as this is my last AGM as chairman, I'd like to say a few words about the future. There's a national decline in square dancing with dancers giving up, callers retiring and clubs closing. So, if we want square dancing to continue locally and nationally we need to be advocates for the activity, as being both a great social and physical activity.

We must recruit and retain dancers, encourage dancers continued learning at whatever level, support dancers to take up calling and prompt callers to continually challenge and stimulate dancers with interesting music, stretching pace and innovative choreography. Although dance evenings should be good social events, they also need to be mentally and physically challenging.