

Johnsonville Scottish Country Dance Club



Kristin Downey: Commendation for Honorary Life Membership

Kristin joined Johnsonville Club at the beginning of 1991, having first started Scottish Country Dancing sometime between 1983-85 when she and Rod lived in Singapore. She had always loved dancing of any sort, and things Scottish—the pipes, the music, the song and dance—so Scottish Country Dancing was a natural choice of activity. Once she began, Kristin was hooked, loving the sheer joy of dancing, of working hard physically, of learning new things and how to do them well.

Along with her love of the dance, the music and the laughter and the spirit that is Scottish Country Dancing, Kristin has dedicated many years of service to the Club. She was Acting Secretary in her early years, served as Secretary for three years, Treasurer for three years and President since 2009.

Over her terms as President, Kristin has kept the Club aim of 'fun, fitness and friendship' to the fore while implementing innovative and appealing activities that help build Club membership and community spirit. And it is important to note that at all times, Kristin credits the committed teams working with her (including the tutor, office bearers, committee members, supper team and many other volunteers) for the success of a wide range of endeavours.

Significant achievements during Kristin's tenure include:

- Planning and running a hugely successful *50 Golden Years Celebration* in 2016—which included arranging a pre-dance dinner for members, a grand dance with 150 attendees and then a members' brunch the following day. The considerable work involved:
 - Organising a suitable venue and catering for the dance and dinner
 - Promoting the event
 - Piecing together some of the Club's early history
 - Searching Club archives to identify and track down many of Johnsonville's past tutors and office bearers and inviting them to attend
 - Recognising those who had contributed to the Club over the previous 50 years
 - Compiling a master list of membership spanning more than 50 years, and
 - Developing a video display of archival photos as a history of memories from Club, Region and Branch events.
- Initiating the development of the club website in 2016—with the aims of providing
 - Easy access to information about the Club and the benefits of Scottish Country Dancing
 - Promoting events in an easily maintained calendar
 - Motivating participation in Club and Wellington Region events, and
 - Ensuring the Club has a historical record of activities, photos and our history.
 - In the last 12 months, there were over 6,500 visits to the website—an outstanding result for a small membership organisation.
- Introducing a range of other annual social events to complement our regular Tartan Nights, with the aim of enabling members to get to know each other off the dance floor—our summer ceilidh started in 2014, themed midwinter dinner and dance in 2015 and a Samhain/Halloween celebration and pre-Christmas lunch in 2016.
- Developing easy-to-use online registration forms for Annual Membership, Summer Ceilidh, Pre-Winter Dinner and Annual Dance Volunteer Sign-up to reduce the time previously spent by Committee members collating and manually entering data from handwritten forms.

- Working together with Capital City Club to run the first ever joint Annual Dance in 2018. Months of planning brought about a superbly organised evening filled with fun and laughter—this combined event continued this year.
- A new strategy this year to increase members' participation at the Annual Dance (both that of newer dancers and the more experienced) was providing vital information about the dance in an appealing and easy-to-read format via occasional MailChimp e-newsletters. The response to all the preparation was a great turnout of new dancers, happy faces on the dance floor, and positive comments from both new and experienced dancers.
- This year also saw an emphasis on showcasing the opportunities to dance that exist regionally, nationally and internationally by sharing first-hand accounts of members' experiences in the *Out and About* section of the newsletter and on the website.
- And most recently, investigating every possible option in the Northern suburbs for a new club venue from 2020, as the Club now needs to leave Johnsonville School Hall after 49 years.

In her 2018 paper, [Recruitment and Retention of New Dancers at Johnsonville](#) (which has been viewed 150 times on our website) Kristin detailed an extensive array of strategies she and the Committee and tutor put in place in 2012 to counteract a significant drop in membership. These included:

- A commitment to actively recruit new dancers each year as new members are the lifeblood of any club
- Running four beginners classes in February each year to increase dancer numbers
- Implementing an integrated and wide-ranging advertising campaign to promote the beginners' classes, advertising in around 20 different forums, both paid and free
- In 2018, taking the plunge to advertise on Facebook to promote Scottish Country Dancing to a wider demographic—a strategy that produced great results
- Encouraging new dancers to dance at more than one club, to attend Region classes and the New Dancers' Celebration
- Sharing the excitement of dancing to live music by inviting local Scottish Country Dance musicians to play at Tartan Nights.

Results speak for themselves—the Club has increased membership from 23 dancers in 2012 to 78 this year.

Johnsonville Club's underlying philosophy is one of good humour, having fun, and increasing participation with a goal of building an inclusive community of dancers.

Kristin's significant contributions have helped ensure the Club community spirit continues to shine through, growing stronger every year. Thank you, Kristin for the great impact you have made.