

Annual Report: MFS Irish Set Dancing Group (ISD) 2020

The ISD Group conducted classes, three end of term mini-ceilis and the Canberra annual Irish Set Dancing weekend. These activities produced a small surplus of \$82. (Receipts \$8,128; Payments \$8,046.)

Classes and general activities

Wednesday evening classes were held during ACT School terms at the North Canberra Baptist Church Hall, until all dance events were cancelled until further notice due to COVID-19. The last class was held on 11 March 2020.

Free beginner/refresher classes were offered on request, encouraging new dancers to become regular attendees. Four new dancers came along to classes. Class numbers ranged from 8 to 18 (average of 13.5). MFS members made up 90% or better of those attending.

Ticket prices remained at the same level as the past four years (\$8 for MFS members and \$9 for non-MFS members). There continued to be a very good response to the option to advance purchase 10-class passes which reduces the ticket price per class to \$7 for MFS and \$8 for non-MFS members. Pre-purchased tickets are a convenient option, negating the need to find cash each Wednesday. The first two classes for new attendees are free.

A good pool of people willing to teach and/or call (mix of male and female and ages) created variety in class programs, and stimulated interest from newer attendees in taking on organising and/or calling roles.

ISD dancers were regulars at various festivals (until March 2020). ISD teachers and callers represented and promoted MFS by running workshops or calling at the Bundanoon DanceFest, Yass Irish & Celtic Music Festival, and festivals at Kangaroo Valley, Majors Creek, Cobargo and Trentham.

Annual dance weekend

The 15th annual dance weekend was held at the Hall Pavilion, Hall Village in October 2019. Around 100 people attended from the ACT, NSW, Victoria, Qld, and SA. Teachers were Margaret and Bill Winnett (Sydney) who have decades of teaching experience; and Matt Harriage, a young and enthusiastic emerging teacher from Melbourne. The Friends Ceili Band led by Ian Hayden gave us fabulous music at three ceilis.

As in previous years, the Embassy of Ireland sponsored the dance weekend (grant of of \$800 in 2019). Our now well-established relationship with the Embassy contributed to the ongoing success of the weekend both in profile and financial viability. The financial objective of the weekend was to 'break-even'. A surplus of \$1,256 was achieved.

Some feedback: *'Fantastic weekend of dancing, music and socialising at Hall. Congratulations on a successful and very enjoyed weekend, samlessly and beautifully organised. People made us feel welcome and amongst old friends, as we were.'*

Administration and acknowledgements

Class organisers were David Arnold (to Dec 2019), Paul Wayper and Christine Briton. For the annual dance weekend it was a new team: Bec Tarrant, May Thorp, Julie Clowry and Paul Wayper (plus co-opted partners). A special thanks to May's family (Jacqui, Michael and Chris) who worked tirelessly in the kitchen producing restaurant-quality morning teas and suppers.

The organisers wish to thank all of those who contributed in so many different ways during the year, including teachers, callers, those who did the set-up/pack-down/clean up, those who contributed to suppers and everyone who came along to share the joy of Irish Set Dancing.

Christine Briton, ISD Group Coordinator
September 2020