

Wow, what a fantastic weekend of dancing at the Hall Pavilion!

The 14th Annual Canberra Irish Set Dancing weekend may just have been the best ever, with over 130 people attending from the ACT, NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and, of course, Ireland.

We were very fortunate to have Maureen Culleton, Irish Set Dancing Master from County Laois, accept our invitation to teach at this year's event. Maureen has been dancing since she was four years old and is passionate about all forms of Irish traditional dance. She has composed a number of set dances and she taught three of these. An Sean Chistin (The Old Kitchen) celebrates the home Maureen grew up in, which she has developed into a cultural centre and where she runs her own Summer School and Festival of Dance. Seit Bliain na Gaeilge 2018 is dedicated to the Irish Language celebrating 125 years since its revival. The Laois Lancers Set celebrates the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Maureen also taught the Cuchulainn Set, a traditional set from the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth, and two-hand dances.

A highlight for many was Maureen's Sean Nós workshops. She demonstrated beautifully some of the many different steps and gave very clear instructions and descriptive images to help us follow her example. We have a lasting reminder and teaching aide in a video of Maureen dancing and teaching Sean Nós at the weekend (filmed and shared with her permission).

Ellen Grant from the Embassy of Ireland was a surprise guest at the Saturday evening ceili. Although not officially representing the Embassy, she was delighted to meet Maureen and stayed to mingle over supper. The Embassy of Ireland has sponsored the event in each of the past three years, which contributes to both the event's financial viability and its standing in the Irish dancing community.

The Jimmy Mullarkey Ceili Band from Sydney gave us fabulous music to dance to at three ceilis over the weekend. Nothing like live music to get people onto the floor!

At the end of the weekend, Maureen gave us a song in Gaelic and a very gracious thank you for inviting her to Australia and for our wonderful hospitality. In addition to events in Ireland, her teaching schedule for next year includes Germany, Switzerland and Japan.

A big thanks to all those who contributed towards the morning teas and evening suppers. We know people really appreciate home-made, and your donations made a big difference to keeping catering costs down. A big thanks also to Trish Arnold who organised all the catering (food plus hot and cold drinks) and the kitchen over the weekend, ably assisted by Dave Arnold. A huge job well done and very much appreciated. Thanks also to Paul Wayper (MC and sound technician) and Kate Armstrong (registration), and to the very many volunteers who helped make the weekend such a success. And of course, thank you to everyone who came along and made it such great craic!

Thank you to those who hosted and looked after Maureen (and her travelling buddy Kitty) during their visit to Australia - Shane Cridland, Peter Kennedy and Margaret and Bill Winnett. We met up again with Maureen and Kitty for a farewell dinner before they headed home to Ireland - tired, but having loved their visit to Australia.

Below are a selection of the fabulous photos taken by Adam Purcell, MelbourneCeiliCamera, our official photographer for the weekend. You can see all of Adam's photos here:
<https://www.melbourneceilicamera.org/Galleries/Canberra-Irish-Set-Dancing-Weekend/>

Adam is happy for people to download and share photos, provided his watermark remains intact and, if posted to Facebook, @MelbCeiliCamera is tagged. Adam's full Image Usage Policy is at:
<https://www.melbourneceilicamera.org/Website-Assets/n-DwGHLx/Image-Usage-Policy>.