

Julie Hynes - Irish Dance

I have been teaching Irish Dance for eight years and my school currently has approximately 70 children, whose ages range from 4 to 16 years. Three years ago I joined the Irish dance organisation - Cumann Rince Naisiunta (known as CRN). This provided the opportunity for my pupils to work through the grades and to compete against pupils in Wales and Ireland. As a child I had attended Irish Dance lessons in Mansfield and had enjoyed competitions, eventually winning open championship titles, and helping my own teacher with the younger pupils in her school. However, when I first started my own school in Pembrokeshire, Wales, I found that I was very much on my own. Joining CRN put me in touch with other teachers and gave me the opportunity to try for my Teachers' Diploma. With knowledge of Irish Dance I already had, my pupils were able to compete in the first two grades - Bung Grad and Ullumchan - and I was very proud of my pupils' achievements. In the first two year's of competitions I had four Regional Champions and three Irish Open Champions. However, without additional training I was unable to take my pupils much further. There were a few opportunities for me to attend workshops in Wales, when a trainer was available from Ireland, but I needed more help before I would be able to sit the first part of my examination and this was when I contacted the Lisa Ullmann Scholarship Fund for some help with my travel expenses, allowing me two flights from Cardiff to Dublin.

Visiting Dublin and travelling around Ireland, I was able to meet with my trainer, Mrs Marianne Quinn, and other qualified teachers and adjudicators, and to tap into their vast knowledge of steps, traditional set and ceili dances.

Finally, over the weekend Friday 27th to Sunday 29th June, I (very nervously) attended the CRN teachers' examination, taking Part 1. The examination was held at Booterstown, Dublin. On the Friday night I attended my interview and sat two written papers - one on music and one on the first 16 ceili dances. On the Saturday I had to dance and teach reels, slip, single, light and double jigs and hornpipes from the first three grades and to demonstrate five traditional set dances. On Sunday I had another practical session, this time teaching parts from 16 ceili dances.

Returning to Wales I had the long wait for the results - however, with 70 eager pupils, four summer shows, two art festivals and four carnivals/events, for my pupils to perform at, I was kept very busy. On Tuesday 29th July the envelope from Ireland arrived - I had passed - obtaining over 80% in each of the five sections! Just Part 2 to study for now - all the steps for the two highest grades, 15 set dances and a further 14 ceili dances.

I would like to extend a big thank you to the Fund for helping me with my travel expenses. Attending the workshops and training sessions, in order to sit this examination, has provided me with so much new work for my pupils, who are so keen and hard working.

Julie Hynes