

# Sleepless in Castletown

Lucina Tretti

**A**FTER QUITE A LONG TIME, I REALISED THAT IT was finally time to venture writing a few lines for Set Dancing News, the magazine which always helps my partner Paolo Moretti and myself feel closer to Ireland, set dancing and our Irish friends we love so much. I'd like to write about the Half-Door Set Dancing Festival in Castletown, Co Laois, because for me it really is a special weekend.

It was the sixth time for me and the fourth time for Paolo, and again we had a great time there and hopefully will go back again and again and again . . .

We were looking forward to leaving and doing a countdown in Padua, Italy, where we live. One year without being in Ireland—this was the first time we had been away from Ireland for so long since we started set dancing!

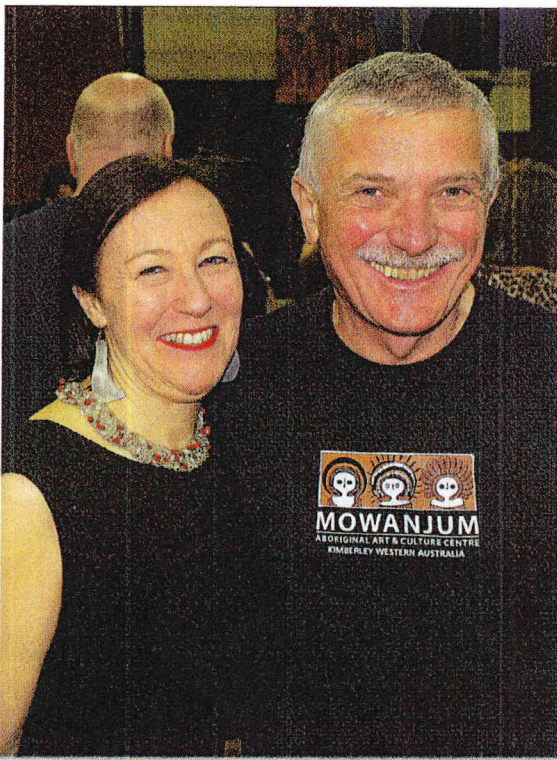
As soon as we arrived in Ireland, we felt at ease, as usual, and were quickly able to leave behind the stress and worries of everyday life. After a lovely day in the company of our friend Moira who welcomed us warmly to her house in Maynooth, we left together for Castletown where we were able to enjoy three wonderful sleepless days full of great music and dancing, valuable workshops with Pat Murphy, and exciting and moving sessions at night, and even more warmth and friendship.

All the bands played very well, but in particular we were so happy on Sunday to listen and dance to (after a long time) the music of Brian Ború and also to meet my dear friend Teresa. Later the exciting

music played by dear John, Ger, Andy and Robert of the incomparable Abbey recharged our batteries and made our feet move by themselves effortlessly again after so many other hours of dancing and despite staying up till the early morning the nights before.

Last but not least, this weekend is not just about the ceilis and workshops, because the night sessions in the Pastoral Centre are so special that we suspect

Lucina and Paolo.



that the Irish friend is right who once told us that it is the best Irish session. Taking turns till morning, songs sung by various individuals or all together, accompanied by local and visiting musicians, great selections of reels blasted out that lead you to dance again despite being tired, exhilarating stories where the difficulty for us to understand all the words is compensated by the beautiful mime in reciting them, and the unmissable sean nós demonstration by dear Peter of Manchester. Music of great quality and wonderful voices thanks to Andy, Eddie, Louise, Michael and Billy, as well as others, but most of all we love the very special atmosphere there.

Unfortunately, the shortage of flights to Italy did not permit us to enjoy the poetry walk with Andy and the last ceili on Monday afternoon because we had to leave early in the morning after only a couple of hours of sleep, tired but happy.

We needed some time to recover on our return, but actually we missed Ireland, dancing and the Irish friends we are sincerely fond of after so many years, as soon as we landed in Italy!

Thank you very much, Micheál and John for organizing a weekend with such a special atmosphere and to all set dancing and musician friends for making us feel so much at home.

And thank you Pat and Bill for the photos, like the one here. They serve as a reminder of all the fun we had and preserve our precious memories.

*Lucina Tretti, Padua, Italy*