



# Get-together at Burg Waldeck

Andrew C Podzorski

At Burg Waldeck in Germany there's a hostel *left*, plenty of hills and forest *centre*, and a ruined castle *right*. Photographs by Andrew C Podzorski.

Every year the dancers and musicians of the Irish Set Dancers Frankfurt get together at Burg Waldeck for a long weekend in mid April. The ruined castle (burg) stands at the edge of a steep valley an hour and a half south of Cologne and half an hour north of Hahn airport. The nearby hostels, well known to musicians in Germany, are nestled in a clearing of beech, oak and wild cherry woodlands covering a landscape dissected by deep valleys. At this time of year, wood anemone, fumitory and periwinkle carpet the woods, while cinquefoil, cowslip and stitchwort reflect the sun in the surrounding lawns.

In Frankfurt, a group of two or three sets led by Roland Hess, plus a small group of musicians, meet every Monday evening to experience the joy of set dancing and leave the cares of work behind. As a part of the university sports union, many young people come along to see what all the laughing and music is about, and of course to learn set dancing. Few realise quite how energetic it is!

To bring such a mobile group closer together, Vito Bilello organises the Burg Waldeck weekends, with help from many of us. There is no primary focus, unless you count being together as a focus. We cook for ourselves to keep costs down, and generally work together. Friday night is a fusion of Mediterranean and Asian dishes, while Saturday sees an Indian buffet with more than enough to fill the corners in the most hungry carnivore or vegetarian! Everyone gives a helping hand. A couple cook, some lay tables, others wash up, stories are told and laughter rings around the tables.

We started with fifteen people in the small hostel, and were up to 25 participants last year. The dance floor in the small hostel was cramped and left no option but to keep the sets tight. Looking enviously at the dance floor in the main hostel last year, we decided to hire it this year. Two strokes of luck came our way. Birgit Eder from our group is friends with Annie and Bert Moran from Schull, Co Cork, and had told them about our group. They had been kind enough to come over to Frankfurt for a mini-workshop last November. We enjoyed that and learned so much from Annie and Bert that we asked them if they would consider coming over for Burg Waldeck, even although it wasn't a formal workshop. They were interested and luckily for us, agreed to come.

In Frankfurt we have one problem—too many men, or too few ladies, depending on your point of view! It has even been known for men to dance as ladies to make a set complete. At the set dancing weekend in Karlsruhe last autumn, we chatted to some of the Jagst Valley Irish Set Dancers, and they have too few men. We invited them and seven came to join us with Annie and Bert. All in all, 39 of us were there over the weekend.

On Friday evening we had a fight with a giant gas stove, and finally managed to serve an apparently very passable meal, although rather later than intended. The musicians retired outside for a session and a group of dancers were taken under the wings of Annie and Bert. To warm up we started with the lively Ballyvourney Jig Set. Although often taught with the square danced with the lady and gent progressing side by side, Annie and Bert showed us how it was taught to them in West Cork, with the couple in waltz hold, sliding to the side and stepping back to the opposite. In the fourth figure our gents had been turning the lady before progressing to the next, and again Annie explained that although it is sometimes danced this way, the usual way is just to move directly on to the next lady.

The Black Valley Square Jig Set was next. Bert related how the Black Valley, a deep, steep-sided valley like those around Burg Waldeck, had once been a bustling community, but now is reduced to about sixty houses. A couple of simple two-hand dances allowed us to relax a little. To conclude the evening we practiced the body and first figure of the High-Cauled Cap. As interesting as the patterns are in this figure dance, we felt that the rest of it was better left to the next day so we could do it justice.

Dancing at an end for the evening, we sat around and chatted about set dancing in Ireland, the many ceilis, workshops and informal meetings. In the background, music from the group sitting outside wafted up through the clear evening air. A pause in the playing inspired Bert to bring out his accordion and treat us to some tunes. Only when he stopped did the music outside start again.

Saturday started early for those preparing breakfast. Tables had to be laid, the buffet laid out, mountains of fruit turned into fruit salad, and Scottish-Polish scrambled eggs (stiffly beaten with double cream, butter and chives) made in batches.

Coffee and tea were in high demand. When no one could eat another morsel, some went off to walk through the valleys under a blue, sunny sky, and some went onto the dance floor to learn more from Annie and Bert.

The Newport Set kept us occupied with its three figures for a good part of the morning. We took Bert's friendly advice of holding our caps behind our backs in the hornpipe figure! Annie and Bert practiced some steps with us to improve our techniques.

A cold buffet lunch was laid out and many went outside to the trestle tables to soak up the warmth. The cooks went off to start the preparation for the Indian buffet. Annie and Bert took the dancers through all the intricacies of the High-Cauled Cap. The Haymakers Jig gave the dancers a mental pause and a chance to let off some steam.

A buffet of Cantonese soup, beef shahi korma, chicken with cream, assorted vegetarian dishes and raitas, popadoms and fresh parathas greeted everyone promptly at 7PM. After dinner, most of us went up for a small ceili with our musicians. A lively Ballyvourney Reel Set started us off, and just to make sure that our feet didn't get cold, it was followed by the Clare Lancers. Annie and Bert called the Labasheeda Set to give us a welcome variation. The Cashel Set completed our set dancing for the evening. We rounded off the dancing with the Chapeloise and Circassian Circle, two dances that all our novices and visitors find relaxing after learning new sets.

While we had been dancing, others had built a glowing bonfire to which we all retired. Allowed at last a cool Chardonnay, warming Tempranillo or tot of Uisge Beathe, we contemplated the day's events, tried to remember old songs, were absorbed by the cloudless, starlit night, and thoughts of days gone by when the world was much younger.

After a slow Sunday breakfast, it was time for the five figures of the Williamstown Set. Under the expert guidance of Annie, we managed to dance a very enjoyable set to close the weekend.

Everyone in the Frankfurt group and from the Jagst Valley would like to thank Annie and Bert for all their efforts in making Burg Waldeck a weekend to remember.

Andrew C Podzorski,  
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Annie and Bert Moran demonstrate a two hand dance in their workshop *left*. Some of the participants at the weekend pose with the teachers *right*.





The active dancing club in Zagreb, Croatia, dance indoors and out. Fifteen of the group will visit Ireland in July. Photos courtesy of Paul O'Grady.

for participants at the Grand Bal. Meals are served on site for reasonable prices.

Contact Le Grand Bal de l'Europe or see [gennetines.org](http://gennetines.org) on the Internet.

**Rencontre Musicale Irlandaise, Tocane St Apre, Dordogne, France**

22–25 July

Four days of music and dance workshops take place in this village in southern France. Classes are daily Sunday to Wednesday from 10AM to 4.30PM and are held in a local school. There are nightly sessions in a restaurant and a concert on the final evening. Contact Philippe and H el ene Giraud.

**7 Letn  Skola Irsk ch Tancu, Z rubova Elementary School, Prague 4, Czech Republic**

18–24 August, 3000 CzK

This is the seventh annual Irish dancing summer school held in the Czech capital Prague. The workshops concentrate on modern step dancing, but Joe and Janet O'Hara from Berkshire in England broaden the students' repertoire in daily set dancing classes. There's more dancing at evening ceilis with live and recorded music. Contact V clav Bernard.

**The Craic on the Cruise**

16–23 September, from  1194,  763

Set dancing has come a long way when you can ceili your way around the Mediterranean on a cruise liner. The second annual Craic on the Cruise features a new ship called the MSC Musica which starts and finishes sailing in Genoa, Italy, with stops along the way in Italy, Tunisia, Spain and France. With all the Irish entertainment on board you'd be forgiven if you never got off the ship. Set dancers will enjoy the music of the Glenside, Four Courts and Copperplate ceili bands, plus Danny Webster and Eddie Lee and Catriona O'Sullivan. The many country and western bands include P J Murrihy and Seamus Shannon, so expect plenty of ballroom dancing. Workshops will also be included in the programme. Contact Gerry Flynn.

**Irish Charter Cruise, Rome, Italy**

18–25 September, \$1764–\$3288

Gertrude Byrne operates annual Irish-themed cruises in

the Caribbean, and now for the first time offers a week's cruise in the Mediterranean. Set dancers are very well catered for in the entertainment line-up, with the Kilfenora Ceili Band, the Tulla Ceili Band, Miche al Sexton and Pat Walsh and Pete Kelly. Tony Ryan is also on board as the dance master. Dozens of other Irish entertainers are also participating. The cruise begins and ends in Rome and makes stops in Monaco, St Tropez, Marseille, Tunisia and Naples. The price shown above includes the cruise, port charges and taxes and varies with the type of accommodation chosen; there's a \$300 discount if booked by 31 December. Flights to Rome are additional. Contact Gertie for more info.

**Workshop weekend, Hotel Scheid, Talstrasse 176, 69198 Schriesheim, Germany**

5–7 October,  60

The tenth Heidelberg weekend promises to be a special one! It's relocated to a new venue, a country hotel situated in the hills and forest north of Heidelberg. In honour of the occasion two bands are visiting from Ireland—the Abbey Ceili Band and Miche al Sexton and Pat Walsh. Four ceilis fill the weekend—Miche al and Pat play on Friday, 9PM–1AM, and Saturday afternoon, 2.30–6.30PM, while the Abbey round out the programme on Saturday night, 9PM–1AM, and Sunday afternoon, 1–5PM. Jim Monaghan handles the workshop from 10AM to 1PM on Saturday morning. Contact Andrea and Henning Brouwer.

**Fleadh Portugal, Hotel Montechoro, Albufiera, Algarve, Portugal**

4–18 October,  1079,  739

Warm, sunny seaside resorts have become the favourite holiday locations for many set dancers thanks to the popular Enjoy Travel holiday packages. Portugal is a popular destination where there participants can spend one or two weeks dancing to traditional and country music. The setting is a ten-storey hotel on the Algarve coast; set dancing ceilis are on the tenth floor, ballroom dancing is on the ground and the Algarve coast is just outside.

The dancing lasts all day, with morning and afternoon workshops and afternoon and night ceilis; Gerard Butler is one of the workshop tutors. Participating ceili bands include the Copperplate Ceili Band, Danny Webster and

Eddie Lee and Catriona O'Sullivan. There are even more entertainers catering for ballroom dancing.

The price shown is for two weeks' shared accommodation, breakfast, supper, fights and entertainment; insurance is additional. Flights are available from three airports in Ireland and four in Britain. The one week package costs  784 and  529. Contact Gerry Flynn.

**Workshop weekend, Anne-Frank-Haus, Moltkestrasse 20, 76133 Karlsruhe, Germany**

1–2 December,  55

This is the eighth annual set dancing workshop in Karlsruhe with Patrick O'Dea. Classes are on Saturday from 10.30AM to 5PM and Sunday from 10.30AM to 1PM. The weekend's two ceilis feature the music of Taylor's Cross Ceili Band from west Limerick. The Saturday ceili begins at 8.30PM and dancing is from 3 to 5.30PM on Sunday afternoon. Contact Ursula Metz and Enrico Oberl ander.

**New Year's Eve Dance Event, Gwatt Zentrum am Thunersee, 3645 Gwatt, Thun, Switzerland**

28 December–1 January

Celebrate the new year in style at this lake and mountain-side location in Switzerland. Lake Thun is near the ancient town of Thun, located south of Bern. Pat Murphy is the resident dance master who will offer workshops for beginners and advanced dancers with instruction in basic and more elaborate steps for sets. Music for the nightly ceilis is by the Swaree Ceili Band. Contact Bernhard Horlacher and Manuela Morel.

**Aarburg Irish Set Dancing Workshop, Gasthaus B ren, Aarburg, Switzerland**

18–20 January

The ninth weekend of dancing in the Swiss town of Aarburg features workshops by Patrick O'Dea. He offers a workshop for beginners on Friday from 8 to 9.30PM, while more experienced dancers get together from 9PM. Saturday's workshops take place between 10AM and 4.30PM, and from 11AM to 12.30PM on Sunday. The local band called Irish Connection plays for ceilis at 8PM on Saturday night and from 2 to 4.30PM on Sunday afternoon. The hotel benefits from an elegant ballroom with a balcony. Contact Andrea B chtold and Corinne Thor-Wernli.

Bert and Annie Moran's workshop in Burg Waldeck, Germany. Photos by Andrew C Podzorski.

