

Club supports new musician - *Lynne Scott – NZ Branch Music Adviser*

This year has seen a new initiative in the Wellington Region. The Island Bay Club has been actively supporting the development of a new musician, to the delight of everyone concerned.

It started with an Introduction to SCD Music Workshop in Lower Hutt in 2015. Among the attendees was Heather Elder, a fiddler with only a little Scottish background but enthusiasm plus! So after some exploratory sessions with a local pianist (who decided not to proceed), Heather and I approached the Island Bay SCD Club to see if we (with me on piano) might play a little for them. The Club, and its 2016 tutor Catherine McCutcheon, welcomed us warmly.

To start with, we just played marches and waltzes for the warmups. Once confidence was established on both sides, we started to play for one dance each week. In consultation with Catherine, I was careful to select dances with relatively easy lead tunes that could be played with a minimum of stress. Davy Nick Nack/Violynne, some easy hornpipes and Two-steppy jigs made for a good start. As the weeks went by, Heather has been able to prepare and play for more than one dance, and has been expanding her repertoire into more complex tunes, traditional strathspeys and faster reels. We precede each dance evening with a practice session in which we explore fiddle technique and the Scottish idiom, as well as rehearsing this week's tunes.

The Club has played its part magnificently. It has welcomed Heather with interest and congratulated her genuinely, showing her the warmth that is endemic to the SCD community. From the start, Catherine has provided good feedback and has used Heather for step and formation practice; she has also included in each dance evening at least one simple dance for Heather to try (scheduled to *not* immediately precede dancing!). Heather is now looking forward to attending a beginners' class, possibly with her family, next year.

Could this example be a model for your club? It takes a long time for SCD dancers and tutors to become proficient, but we all had to start somewhere. Extending the warmth and inclusiveness of the community to involve new musicians will strengthen the whole SCD community.