

## **Wildlife Fun Camp**

**2-4 October 2009**

Amid cries of recession, depression and lack of funds from all sources, Elaine Lethbridge offered to organise the seventh JAM Camp on behalf of the Wellington Region. The first (and only other Camp held in the Wellington area) was in 1997. Elaine gathered together a very diverse committee of different personalities who might not normally come together socially, but each had their own talents, and put them to good use.

The major questions were: can we do it, how can we get the funds, and what venue? Wairarapa College was checked out and found to have everything we were looking for – kitchen staff on hand, large dining room, common room, games room, good dormitories, sufficient halls/rooms for classes and a large gym for evening functions.

The next major hurdle was fund-raising. The cost of accommodation and food was \$95 per person and we did not want to charge any more than this. The committee, dancers and every adult helper attending the Camp paid this cost, but funds had to be raised to meet the expenses of the tutors, examiners, musicians, hall rentals and the many administration expenses.

Bronwyn took on the soul destroying task of applying for grants. After spending heaps of hours filling in all the application forms, then receiving many refusals, a grant of \$500 was finally received from Pelorus Trust.

The theme of the Wildlife Fun Camp was adopted because of the nearness to the Mt Bruce Sanctuary. The pukeko was adopted as the Camp symbol and this appeared on all communications, the kit bag, badges, Tee shirts and the mugs given as gifts to the tutors, musicians and examiners. The classes were named Kiwi, Tuatara, Weta and Tui.

As the months, weeks and days went by we were quietly confident that everything was going according to plan. There were no major hic-ups at the last minute, and Friday 2nd October dawned fine.

Some of the Committee were able to get to the College early that morning to sort out all the dormitories, class rooms, to put up all the information signs and to set up the registration desk. There was a buzz in the dining room for the first meal as old friends met up again and new dancers to Camp soon found they were not strangers any more.

Despite the last minute nerves every organiser faces, Elaine was cool, calm and collected, friendly and welcoming with everyone. Everything fell into place. All the parent helpers were willing to help wherever and whenever needed. The dancers did what was asked of them and enjoyed the whole experience.

The accommodation and bathrooms were excellent, the kitchen staff and caretaker were fantastic and went out of their way to meet our needs. The tutors and musicians fitted in with the programme and

adapted to class needs.

The Camp really got under way with the Friday night social which was a great way for everyone to get to know each other.

The four classes were made up by dancing ability, rather than like previous camps where they were based on age. This proved to be very worthwhile as each dancer received the best tuition at their own level. The standard of dancing was amazing. Everyone enjoyed their classes and feedback from Tutors was extremely pleasing.

Medals Tests, due to having all six levels, were held over two days. The lower levels were held on the Friday afternoon before Camp started, and the other three levels were held on the Saturday afternoon during activity time.

Dancers entered into the Saturday afternoon activities with great enthusiasm. There were outdoor games, newspaper dress-ups and mask making. There were some wonderful creations both on and off the field! The Masked Ball that evening was a huge success, with everyone entering into the spirit of the evening.

There were some clever and innovative masks. Beverley compiled a great programme to involve the new and experienced dancers. The Committee were grateful to Roger and Glen who did a brilliant job of decorating the hall, and to Carterton Club who prepared and served the supper.

Despite the appalling weather on Sunday afternoon, with hail, sleet and freezing temperatures, the Ceilidh was a buzz. Everyone enjoyed the fun dances and items, especially the Pukeko Dance from the Milford Group, doing "what Pukekos do", and little Sara singing several verses of Morning Town Ride.

A huge thank you to the Tutors: Debbie and Gordon Tonks, Beverley Young and Kathryn Deroles; Examiners Noeline O'Connor and Katharine Hoskyn; Musicians Peter Elmes, John Smith and Lynne Scott; and all the parent helpers who worked so well together to make the Camp such a resounding success.

To the committee, consisting of Bronwyn, Jeanette, Adelle, Alison, Philippa, Diane, Damon and Gaye, many, many thanks for all the ideas, hard work and support that went into organising the camp. Also our gofers Ian Taylforth and Kevin who did all the fetching and carrying and were at everyone's beck and call whenever needed.

One interesting fact noticed at camp, it was not only the Juniors who caught up with friends from previous camps, but also adults who met up with people they had either previously worked with, or stayed in the same hostel, or had known from years earlier.

**Roll on the next JAM Camp.**

## Wildlife Fun Camp

### Fundraising

The Camp committee was grateful to receive funds from the now closed Mana Juniors and Whitby Group. This money was used to open the bank account for the Camp.

Damon and Gaye took on the task of fundraising by the committee, and came up with the idea of delivering money boxes to Clubs to put out each club night, with the idea that dancers would drop in their small change. The generosity of dancers was totally mind-boggling.

Many clubs also ran raffles at their formal dances with the proceeds going towards the camp.

### Ceilidhs

Newtown Juniors started the ball rolling by holding a Ceilidh Dance in May. With the help and support of Peter Elmes and John Smith, the evening was a huge success. Seatoun Club donated a large basket of goodies to be raffled during the evening.

The Juniors danced two simple dances to show the people what the fundraising money was going towards.

Mary McDonald, who had a Family Celtic Evening on the same night at Plimmerton, gave a generous donation towards funding musicians at Camp.

### Quiz Night

This idea of Damon and Gaye's enabled non-dancing family members and friends to be part of a fun filled evening.

Gaye pleaded and cajoled and gathered together some fantastic prizes. Damon was MC. Catherine McCutcheon, the quiz expert, was assisted by Dean Christie as score co-ordinator. Philippa and Peter organised the bar. The committee gave good support by making sure there were plenty of nibbles and food throughout the evening. People are still talking about this fantastic event.

### CD

James Scott kindly offered to make a CD by recording Peter Elmes and Friends playing at the Opotiki Weekend School. The CD was titled 'A Whale of a Time' and the proceeds were a great help to Camp funds.

The committee appreciated all the support given by clubs, dancers and others in raising funds for the JAM Camp. Many thanks for all your efforts.



Friday Social



Mask making



Masked Ball



To all Dancers within the Wellington Region, a huge big THANK YOU for the wonderful support given toward the JAM Camp.

All the fundraising, plus baking, so willingly given, was really appreciated and helped towards making the Camp a great success.

Many many thanks for all your efforts.

**From Elaine and the Camp Committee.**