

GAVIN SCHOOL OF DANCING

By Marie Gavin

My name is Marie Gavin and I live in Blackrock, Peterswell. I'm known locally as Marie Gavin, Irish Dancing Teacher. I was born in England and learned Irish dancing, at the young age of 3 years, with the Tyrell School, London and then Maguire O'Shea School, also of London.

In 1978, at 11 years of age, my family moved to Peterswell and took up residence in the village pub, which became known as Gavins. My dancing life continued with many performances in the lounge of our pub for Gort Ceolthas night and with many famous traditional Ceilí bands. I danced as a member of the McCreanor School of dancing with many of the local girls and boys, where I held the Senior Connaught Champion title. I also danced at all Ireland Level.

Over the following years, I married and continued to teach dancing in the local Joe Cooley Memorial Hall, Peterswell. During the early years, when I taught with Ms. Maeve McCreanor, pupils came from local families such as Coleman's, Lahiff's, Fitzgerald's, Keely's, O'Leary's, Mulkerins, Dooley's and Cunningham's. With her help I took my T.C.R.G. examination with An Comhdháil and became a qualified teacher in January 1991 and established the Gavin School of Dancing.

The Gavin School is based in Peterswell and today's families include Caulfield's, Dooley's, Devines, Lynskey's, Cooney's, Mahon's, Keely's, Carr, Gardner's and Farrell's. My other pupils come from Castedaly, Kilbeacanty, Gort, Loughcutra, Derrybrien and Ballyglass. They range from 3-years up to 18 year olds. I love watching their progress as they all work so hard to improve. The Gavin School strives to keep dancing a friendly hobby. I have dancers who come for the social aspect, those who come to have fun, and those who take it extremely seriously. There is room for all.

The Gavin School of dancing takes part in the Connaught Championships and All Ireland International Championships and over the years have held many titles. All my local pupils take part and I am proud of all of them as they work so hard and do so well. The first solo Connaught Championship in the Gavin School was Heather Cooney, Peterswell, when she danced U/9. Heather has held the title U/12, U/13 and U/14 to date.

In 2000 Hazel Doorhy won first U/11, Shauna Fahy first U/12, April Dooley second U/12, Stephanie Broderick first U/13, Heather Cooney first U/14, Louise Fahy third U/14 and Olive Geoghegan U/18.

Every year, both myself and my pupils, put a lot of hard work into our dancing, inventing new displays and often performing at weddings, St. Patrick's Day parades and other important events. I get great pleasure

passing on all my steps, creating new ones, putting teams together for figure dancing and putting on dancing displays.

The school has travelled to England and Scotland for Feiseanna where we gained lots of experience and had a wonderful time. We have travelled to Tralee, for the past three years, to dance for the Galway Rose at the Rose of Tralee Festival. In 2003 students in U.C.G. asked us if they could follow our class and make a documentary and in June 2003 we appeared on screen with a wonderful 25 minutes of "Buckle my Shoe".

To date the highlight of my dancing career would have to be April 2003, when we became all Ireland and International Freestyle Champions with a wonderful creation called "Saved by the Spirit of Celtic Hope". The excitement was fantastic and the people of Peterswell turned out that night to welcome us all home with bonfires, champagne and oceans of good wishes.

Our new freestyle is called "Truth of the Wishing Well". All these creations take a lot of time, thought, hard work and lots of dedication from everyone involved. I appreciate the help and support I receive from all my pupils and their parents and especially my own family who see very little of me during the busy times.

The Gavin School of Dancing would not be what it is today without the help and support of my late mother, Mrs. Margaret Gavin R.I.P. who bought me my first pair of dancing shoes!

I would like to dedicate this article to her memory and to the memories of three of my dancers who sadly passed away in the past three years, Laura Cooney R.I.P., Ciara O'Donnell R.I.P. and Laura Madden R.I.P..

Aireoidh muid uainn sibh.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha.