

**ILT Foundation grant provided to Invercargill Irish Society
\$2,400 on 26 February 2009**

CELTIC HISTORY CONTINUES WITH ILT FOUNDATION FUNDING

Every Monday afternoon Christchurch resident Sean O'Neill teaches Irish dancing. In fact Mr O'Neill teaches most days but it is the location of his classes on a Monday that are exceptional.

He travels down to Invercargill once a week to teach the 12 Invercargill Irish dancing pupils aged 5 to 12 years - who without him would no longer be able to continue their much-loved art.

And it has all been made possible with a grant of \$2400 from the ILT Foundation to the Invercargill Irish Society.

Irish Society committee member Nikki Wallace said there became a need for a teacher after all those in Invercargill left.

"The problem is teachers have to be registered with the Irish commission to be able to compete in competitions."

With the stringent examination only happening every couple of years there was no-one available to take over as teacher.

"To keep it going we had to go further afield," Mrs Wallace said.

Mr O'Neill was the nearest qualified teacher.

One class a week may be seen as a disadvantage but these pupils are committed - practicing on their own at home the rest of the time. The results prove they are just as good as those elsewhere in the country.

"We still have children in the top 10 every year at nationals and are close to having them represent at worlds (competitions)," Mrs Wallace said.

Without the assistance of the ILT Foundation there would be no Irish dancing in the city.

"The tuition costs just wouldn't cover it and although we fundraise between \$100 to \$250 per week we still couldn't cover his expenses."

ILT Foundation chairman Alan Dennis said it was vital for Invercargill children to retain their cultural heritage through dance.

"The ILT Foundation saw this grant as an opportunity to ensure the city's heritage was not lost.

"It is great these children continue to compete at a top national level because of the financial help the Foundation was able to give. We applaud their commitment and look forward to watching their results in the future."