

## Information for Organisers

Are you proposing to run a ceilidh, country dance or barn dance? Here are some notes for the inexperienced.

The Occasion Whether or not a ceilidh is an appropriate form of entertainment for your event will depend on the occasion and the anticipated audience. If the occasion is a private function, such as a birthday party or a wedding, then you will probably know the invited audience and have some idea as to whether or not they would appreciate an evening of country dancing. If the occasion is a public event, such as a community fund raiser, then, with suitable publicity, you can expect to attract all the nearby ceilidh goers along with those who will turn up primarily to support the event.

The Venue The venue needs to be an appropriate size for the size of the anticipated audience. Too small for a crowd of enthusiastic dancers will feel cramped and uncomfortable, whereas too large and the audience might not mix and the event might appear to be poorly supported. Think of the dance hall in terms of the maximum number of people that might turn up and that at some time during the evening they might all be up for a dance. Usually, you might have half the audience dancing and the rest sitting so room for tables and chairs should be considered. Other facilities, e.g., food, bar, parking, etc., should be arranged with the venue managers. Also to discuss with the venue manager would be any licensing requirements (music, alcohol,) and any other health and safety issues such as the total number of people permitted. Also consider space in the hall for the band and equipment. A stage is good though not essential but an area of about 5 by 2 metres (minimum) is required – along with safe and accessible power supply and lighting. If it is an outdoor event, consider contingency for wet weather. Unless the weather prospect on the day is absolutely certain then you will not get a band to set up electrical equipment out of doors.

The Audience The audience does not need to consist of regular ceilidh goers for the event to succeed. Our caller will choose dances appropriate for the audience and, as each dance is walked through with instruction before the dance is done to the music, complete beginners can join in right from the start. After a few dances even the most reluctant dancers will be hooked. There might be regular ceilidh goers who will know some of the dances and will energetically execute the right steps, and this can be a little intimidating to the beginners but ceilidhs are generally good natured, friendly affairs that can accommodate all levels of ability and enthusiasm.

The Band The process of booking the band starts with your first contact enquiry – by phone or email. At this point give us all the details, i.e., date, venue, details of the event, organising body (if applicable), your contact details, proposed start and finish times (including breaks for meals, etc.) and food and drink arrangements. Following the first enquiry the band representative will, within a few days, contact you with a definite answer as to the availability of the band for the required date and a fee

quotation. If the proposed fee is acceptable we would finalise the engagement. The band will need at least 1.5 hours before the start to set up and do sound checks. All equipment and instruments are provided by the band so we would not need the venue's PA system. A safe and accessible power supply is essential and we will need adequate lighting for reading music notation.

### The Event

Although we can provide a full evening of dancing you might want breaks for food or another form of entertainment ( we do not recommend mixing ceilidh with disco – in our experience this never works). It is good to have a rough plan for the evening, e.g., 8-9:30 dancing, 9:30-10:30 meal break, 10:30-12 dancing. There might be need for other shorter breaks depending on the occasion, e.g., for announcements, speeches, raffle draws, birthday cakes, etc. and the caller will slip in short rest breaks if the dancers look like they need it. During meal breaks we can provide recorded background music that will complement the traditional style of the dance music. At the end of the evening there will be a tidying away period – stacking furniture, sweeping up, band packing up equipment, etc. – to be allowed for if the times for the booking of the venue need to be strictly upheld.

We hope that these brief notes have been helpful but should you require further information or advice please get in touch.