

## Eastern 8's – Club history

Hello Fellow Square Dancers. It is with pleasure that I would like to introduce "Eastern 8's" square dance club. We are based at Paynesville on the shores of the beautiful Gippsland Lakes, approximately 16km south of Bairnsdale in East Gippsland.

Having retired and settled in Paynesville, I felt it would be nice to introduce people in this area to the joys of square dancing, which has brought me so much pleasure over 30 years.

About three years ago Nancy and I talked to people in our street asking if they would like to give it a try, and so we started about one and a bit squares in our garage. Progress was slow but steady. Soon the word spread and people from Probus and the Yacht Club joined us. Of course then we outgrew our garage and we now dance in the Uniting Church hall in Paynesville regularly each week on Thursday evenings starting at 7.30 pm.

Dancing at a basic level so new comers can join in at any time, through to mainstream. Like a lot of clubs these days, our dancers fall into the more mature age bracket.

During this formative period, Bairnsdale U3A were wanting to start a dance program of some sort, so with the encouragement of some former dancers residing in Bairnsdale and surrounding areas, we started a group in Bairnsdale at St Mary's Hall on a Monday afternoon. More recently the Senior Citizens Club at Lakes Entrance wanted in on the action so we go up there weekly on Monday evenings.

We are quite busy, but as I tell people who ask, "If I didn't enjoy it I wouldn't do it, as we know the key is having fun.

In October last year we had the pleasure of V.S.D.A. President Carmel Sinclair and partner Greg Wight join with us at a Gala Dance run by our members. We were fortunate to snare Brian Hotchkies on his way home to NSW to call for us.

The main purpose of this evening was to formally launch our club. Carmel did the honours in presenting our club badge to members. She also spoke of the workings of the V.S.D.A., and of the functions it brings to dancers.

As we live in a somewhat nautical area (*there are heaps of boats on the Lakes*), the badge takes the form of the eastern cardinal mark (a navigation mark used universally around the globe to depict safe water to the east of the mark), black and gold in colour which is the standard colour of cardinal marks.

Nancy and I are very proud of our little group (now with 2-3 squares attending regularly) and we praise the way they are all so dedicated and enjoy the activity and having fun. We really like the slogan, "Square dancing is friendship set to music"!

In conclusion, I know we are a long way from the other side of the State, but the eastern part of this State has heaps to offer with mountains, sea, and Lakes within easy distance from Bairnsdale.

Nancy & I, together with our members would love to see you. If you are holidaying or travelling in this region, come along and dance with us, you'll be more than welcome.

Max Hodder.

*As reported in "Squares Around Victoria" 2010*