

# Monaro Musings

Volume 31, Number 1 – June 2024



The Newsletter of the Monaro Folk Society Inc., Reg No A 00208

[www.monarofolk.org.au](http://www.monarofolk.org.au)

[www.facebook.com/monaro.folk.society](http://www.facebook.com/monaro.folk.society)

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## The Prez Says

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Hello everyone

Welcome to the first edition of the relaunched Monaro Musings. Many thanks to Declan O'Connell for taking on the editorial role, and to former editor Keith Ogborn for helping with the layout. I am sure that many of us will appreciate their efforts. The aim at this stage is to put out around four editions each year, which will be distributed to members by email and also made available on the Society's website.

I am also pleased to let everybody know that Anna Brown has taken on the important role of membership secretary for the Society, replacing Christine Gifford. Anna is a longtime coordinator of the Society's Canberra Celtic Choir, and a familiar face around the folk scene here in Canberra. We look forward to her settling into the role as this year's membership renewal process gets underway soon. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Christine for all her hard and often unseen efforts over many years in keeping our membership records in order. It has been greatly appreciated.

As we head towards the middle of 2024, it has struck me again recently how fortunate we are to have such a diverse range of regular community-based folk music, dance and singing activities under the Society's umbrella here on Canberra. At a time when larger-scale music events are struggling, we should not take what we have for granted.

I am very pleased to see that many of our regular activities are returning to pre Covid levels and are attracting new participants. I would encourage everyone to choose at least one group to commit to as a regular participant - the more people who come along, the better the vibe, and the greater the likelihood of further growth (ie a snowball effect).

Finally, just a quick heads up: we expect that our annual general meeting will be happening a little earlier this year, in late August. Further details will be provided in due course.

I look forward to seeing you at a Society event soon ...

David Ball

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**\*\*THE MFS HAS A NEW POSTAL ADDRESS\*\***

PO BOX 334, MAWSON, ACT 2607

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# New Editor's G'dday

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For my sins (coz no one else put their hands up) I am your new Monaro Musings editor. Thanks to Keith Ogborn for showing me the ropes.

I sing out of tune, can't play any instrument and don't dance much these days but I am a long-term MFS member and music has been a hugely important part of my life ever since I was fascinated by an impromptu session on the boat between Galway and the Aran Islands as a child.

I have been to over 30 Nationals, love going to live gigs, have occasionally worked on the door at the Merry Muse, have done some MCing, am an obsessive CD collector and present two shows on Radio 2XX: Rebel Chorus ("folk music with a political edge") and Irish Voice.

I'm planning around four issues of Monaro Musings a year for now and hoping you can all help me with photos, reviews, what's on information and contributions to a column called Back in the Day (see Moir's 1984 Monaro Red in this edition) Declan O'Connell ([editor@monarofolk.org.au](mailto:editor@monarofolk.org.au))

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## Memories: National Folk Festival 2024

*Photos by Josie White*



Harry Manx



New Zealand Americana duo Kerryn Fields and Michale Joe Gow



Shortis and Simpson and Worldly Goods Choir



Festival Knitting

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## 2XX at the National

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Radio 2XX had a substantial presence at this year's National Folk Festival through an outside broadcast of *Lark in the Morning* and *Irish Voice* from the Festival site on Easter Sunday morning. Ably supported by master tech Nev Blyth and studio anchors Adrian Gibbs and Jane O'Donohue, both programs featured music, interviews and poetry from artists appearing at the Festival, some recorded on previous days.

Live guests Coral Reid, Andy Rigby, Bruce Cameron, Pete & Sue McMahon, Lizz Murphy and Paul Cheeseman also graced the 2XX stall and presenters Simon Kravis, Greg Wilson (doubling as a musician playing Irish music), Bruce Lemin and Declan O'Connell kept things flowing.

Jane O'Donohue and Simon Kravis recorded many more interviews with artists than could be aired from the Festival (including Sydney Women's Vocal Orchestra, Matthias Thedens (Gangar), Harry Manx, Catherine Fraser, Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse, Grace Petrie, Penelope Swales. Josh Bennett and The Cashews) and a few items from Saturday's Poets Breakfast.

These will be played on 2XX (FM 98.3 and streaming at [2xxfm.org.au](http://2xxfm.org.au)) during Lark in The Morning (8-10 am Sunday) over coming months and will end up on the 2XX Lark Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/2XXLark/videos>). The Broadcasters' Forum (facilitated by Bruce Cameron from 2MCE Bathurst) allowed community radio broadcasters from around the country to exchange ideas about their respective programs and stations.

Simon Kravis



Bruce Cameron, *Come All Ye*, 2MCE Bathurst with Greg Wilson and Simon Kravis, *Lark in the Morning*, 2XXFM, Canberra at the National. *Come All Ye* and *Lark in the Morning* believed to be the two longest running folk programs on community radio in Australia. Photo: Hedda M.

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# Irish Legends Return to Canberra

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2024 saw the welcome return of two Irish legends who regularly visited Canberra back in BC (Before Covid): Luka Bloom (8 March at The Street Theatre) and Eleanor McEvoy (27 April at Canberra Irish Club). Both had a new album to promote (Luka's *Out of the Blue* and Eleanor's *Gimme Some Wine*) and a story to tell.

Luka told us that Covid lockdowns had led to him renewing his love affair with the guitar and then something he never dreamed he'd do – an instrumental album, *Out of the Blue*, with eleven tunes, all on guitar, including a couple of Turlough O'Carolan harp tunes.

Eleanor told us about splitting up with her partner of 23 years after finding out that he had another woman in another country all along, which explained a couple of songs on her new album (especially *Scarlet Angels* – celebrating support from friends – and *Found Out by Fate*, the latter cowritten with another Irish legend, Paul Brady).

As well as his new instrumental stuff, Luka ranged widely across his career remembering a song he duetted with the late Sinéad O'Connor (*Song for Christine Noble*, an Irish charity worker in Vietnam) and springing the odd total surprise like *Gangster's Paradise*.

Eleanor's wonderfully eclectic setlist included a couple of songs written by Thomas Moore (1779-1852), reels on the fiddle and covers of songs by artists as diverse as Edith Piaf, Daft Punk and Barry Maguire (Eleanor commented that his classic 60s one hit wonder *Eve of Destruction* was still all too applicable).

Eleanor did mention that she would have liked to sing at the National Folk Festival. But, as someone said, the National's loss was the Merry Muse's gain. The Merry Muse concert was the perfect prelude



Eleanor McEvoy at the Merry Muse.  
Photo: Josie White

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## Irish Set Dancing

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*Interested in learning to dance to uplifting music? Enjoy socialising with people who love to dance? Want to have fun while getting great exercise? Come along to Irish Set Dancing classes Wednesday evenings (7.30-9.30pm) every week during ACT school terms at North Canberra Baptist Church Hall, 17 Condamine St, Turner.*

All welcome. No experience or partner required. We have lots of lovely dancers who are happy to partner new dancers. All dances are taught and called, and classes are tailored to suit the mix of new and experienced dancers. Ask us about dedicated beginner sessions which are available on request (FREE). First two classes for new dancers are FREE. Thereafter: \$8 MFS members / \$9 Non-MFS, or purchase a 10-class pass for \$70 (MFS) / \$80 (Non-MFS). Pass remains valid until all 10 classes are used (ie no time limit). Contact: [isdcanberra@gmail.com](mailto:isdcanberra@gmail.com).

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# The Poetry Song and Lies Club, CCAE, mid 1970s

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The 1970s were heady days at the CCAE (now the University of Canberra). The politics of the era included

- Sacking of Gough Whitlam,
- Aboriginal Tent Embassy
- Indonesian Invasion of East Timour
- People for Nuclear Disarmament
- Pedal Power etc

Radio 2XX showed ongoing and welcome support in all of these protests. An outlet for many students was the joyous assembly of THE POETRY SONG AND LIES CLUB. Meeting, sometimes weekly, in the Orange Room of the Refractory of CCAE. With inspiring performances of Song, disinhibited Verse and generally untrue Story Telling. These activities were well supported by the Student Union at that time.

A memorable protest concert was held outside the Canberra School of Music at the time because they refused to teach anything other than Classical music. Also, a huge Pedal Power demo/concert outside old Parliament House. SongS and poems were often written for these events.

The touring arm of the PSL. club was THE CULTURE AND ANARCHY GREEN SOCIETY. Performance Poet, Geoff Shera founded both PSL and CAGS. Managing tours to Armidale, Wagga Wagga and Brisbane. Geoff Shera's fantastic contribution managed to inspire great support from artists, helpers, and Brisbane Community Radio 4ZZZ. The tours were not without personal cost. Bjelke Peterson's police force, at that time had endeavoured to ban Rock 'n' Roll in Queensland. Their harassment was frightening.

Miraculously a collection of old recordings, mainly done by Giles Cortis and Rob Parnell, of some of the rich and wonderful performances has survived. After 10 ten years of well-meaning curation by Pete and Sue McMahon, this fascinating snapshot of that era's artistic and social fabric, is close to being available to the public at a re-union concert and CD launch, which will be held in Canberra in 2025'

Please contact Pete McMahon on 0414319588 if you have any memorabilia or questions. Watch this space for further updates.

Pete McMahon



Pete and Sue McMahon

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# Bundanoon Dance Fest: King's Birthday Weekend: 7-10 June

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The Bundanoon DanceFest has an international and Australia-wide reputation as a major event in the social dance calendar. With its broad range of dance styles and the amazing standard of dance teaching and the unswerving commitment to live music, it is quite remarkable.

This year's lineup includes Canberra callers: Katherine Tamaro, Paul and Leslie Carr, Kira Dowling, Colin Towns, Peter Foster, and Jim & Ingrid Rehle-Williams. As well as: Keith Wood, Margaret and Bill Winnett, Madis and Tiina Alvre, David Potter, Arthur Kingsland, Cathy Grylls, Don Richmond, Norm Ellis, and Heather Rowe

The styles include English, Scottish, Contra, Australian, Irish, Bordonian, European, and this year a taste of line-dancing. Music is in preparation for download by our team of enthusiastic musicians. Tickets and further information from [bushtraditions.org](http://bushtraditions.org). See you there!



**An intensive weekend of dancing**  
including Workshops and Dances with live music in  
**Traditional and Contemporary Australian**  
plus **Irish, Scottish, Contra, Old Time Dance, European and More**  
featuring Dance Callers and Musicians  
from Sydney, Canberra, Illawarra and Interstate  
**Kings Birthday Weekend 2024**  
**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> to Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June**

*Accommodation* is available in  
Bundanoon Hotel, Motel, and B&Bs

- You need to arrange your own
- **Book early to avoid disappointment**

*Camping* for the frost hardy at  
Bundanoon Pony Club and Morton  
National Park

*Bushwalks* in Morton National Park,  
and Glow Worm Glen

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ticket Sales</li><li>• Programme Details</li><li>• Music Downloads</li></ul> |
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[bushtraditions.org](http://bushtraditions.org)

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## Monday Evening Bush Dancing

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Every Monday, except for ACT public holidays, through to the end of November 2024. These Bush Dancing Evenings provide an opportunity for dancers to learn and practice bush dancing. It is also a chance for musicians to join in (no entry charge for musicians) and learn traditional bush dance music, and for callers to practice their calling. Live music by the Bush Capital Band.

Time: doors open at 6.00pm, dance 6.15pm to 7.45pm. Where: North Canberra Baptist Church Hall, Condamine Street, Turner. Cost: \$7, or \$5 for MFS Members and Groups. Full-time adult students half price, Under 18's free. Payment by cash or tap and pay using your Credit or Debit Card. More information at: [bushdance@monarofolk.org.au](mailto:bushdance@monarofolk.org.au).

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## Settlers Session

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Ray Mulligan leads a weekly session of Australian Bush tunes collected from traditional players, tunes from the dance halls and verandahs of the 1800s to mid-1900s. Tunes are played at pace and written music is available. Settlers meets most Thursdays at the Irish Club at 2pm, but sometimes we are all out of town so watch MFS announce and if in doubt contact Ray 0422 636 442 or Moir 0423129 272. Get the music at [https://www.bushtraditions.org/music/books4free/Settlers\\_Sessions\\_tablet.pdf](https://www.bushtraditions.org/music/books4free/Settlers_Sessions_tablet.pdf)

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# Back in the Day: 1984 Monaro Red

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While hunting through the wine cupboard a few weeks ago, looking for something to accompany a nice lamb dinner, I came across the last bottle of 1984 Monaro Red.

As Easter was approaching. I got it out and Gavin and I had a wonderful half hour remembering. 40 years ago, the Monaro Folk Society ran the 18th National Folk Festival. Back then the society held a wine bottling to raise a thousand dollars odd, to grub stake the festival. It was a fun afternoon, hot, in the garden outside the Downer Community Centre, which at that time the Folk Society managed.

Syphoning the wine through plastic tubes into the bottles, the fumes and the tasting required to check quality put everyone in a relaxed and happy humour. There was a running set dance going. Musicians played a bit, everyone syphoned a bit, corked and labelled bottles a bit, and ate some BBQ sausage. We bottled hundreds, red, white and port.

Festivals were different back then. No paid employees, though the MFS festival director did take a week's leave from work just before Easter. The only volunteers were from the MFS. No organized camping, single standalone venues across the ANU and Civic. Each year, the festival moved. It was run by local folk clubs or small interest groups.

MFS ran two festivals to my recall, one made a profit, one a loss. The loss making one had some issues but the weather was not kind ... and that tipped the balance. It became obvious that the model where a new group of people had to reinvent the festival every year was failing. There was no opportunity for experience, wisdom, or property transfer, and the small local groups had less and less appetite for significant financial risk. Was the festival doomed?????

No, it re-emerged phoenix like, and became the festival we have had in Canberra for the last twenty plus years. I have been part of the NFF for most of those years and it is a joy for me. This year was no different. However large music festivals are folding everywhere. I do hope that this year's Nash was a financial success. But ... it is expensive to attend. For a couple, camping, food and a couple of drinks each night, well over \$1000. If you travel to get here add hundreds extra. It's a lot ... and there is only so much you can fit into 4-5 days. What is the future? I won't be gloomy. I have to accept that things change. It may well be up to those of us who love the festival to wake the phoenix and help the Nash evolve once again.

And the wine? Remarkable for a 40 year old cheap red, the cork was fine if a bit fragile to remove, the flavour was light, but it was smooth, definitely not sour and we enjoyed it. Here's to the NFFs of the past and also to those of the future.

Moir Holmes



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*Have you got MFS memories from back in the day? If so, please send to Declan O'Connell at [edi-tor@monarofolk.org.au](mailto:edi-tor@monarofolk.org.au) for the next Musings*

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# Afghanistan, Bougainville and Belconnen in the One Concert

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"What are your influences?" is always a great question to ask a musician. Jimmy Rabbitte had the right idea in *The Commitments* recruiting for a 1980s Dublin soul band. John Shortis and Moya Simpson have the right idea too for their *Under the Influence* shows: get a singer, perform with them and a backing band and knit it all together with a script. In what was, sadly for me, billed as the last in their *Under the Influence* series (I wish I'd seen the others), they joined Fred Smith at the friendly Belconnen Arts Centre on 4 May.

John and Moya opened the evening with their *Under the Influence* theme song which combined the grittiness of Tom Waits with the wit of Noel Coward. Fred's musical and life-story tour took us to Belconnen (Melba, Cook), boarding school, the Gypsy Bar and David Branson cultural events in 90s Civic and overseas to the likes of Hawaii, the Philippines (where he learned flamenco) and Bougainville and Afghanistan, where he became a singer-songwriter-diplomat.

And what were Fred's influences? Apart from *The Mickey Mouse Club*, you mightn't be surprised. The Beatles, Dylan, Cohen, John Schumann, Kev Carmody. *Rocky Raccoon* (not the most obvious Beatles choice), *Farewell, Angelina* (both Fred and Moya prefer Joan Baez singing Dylan to Dylan singing Dylan), *Famous Blue Raincoat* (a Mexican socialist workmate on a Hawaiian ship told the young Fred about L Cohen), *I Was Only 19* and *Droving Woman* (my favourite). We had Fred Smith classics too: *Open Country* and *Find Me a Lover*. There was a great backing band: Dave O'Neill (fiddle and guitar), Matt Nightingale (double bass) and Mitch Preston (drums). And a fascinating Power Point display. A very enjoyable evening on a coldish Canberra night.

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## Seven Drunken Nights

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The show *Seven Drunken Nights: The Story of The Dubliners* is coming to the Canberra Theatre Centre on 27 July 2024. It all started for The Dubliners back in 1962 - *Seven Drunken Nights* tells the story of a career spanning 50 years and invokes the spirit of Ronnie Drew, Luke Kelly, Barney McKenna, John Sheahan, Ciaran Bourke and Jim McCann.

Writer and director Ged Graham's guides the audience through the life of the group in between performances of celebrated classics like *The Irish Rover*, *The Leaving of Liverpool*, *Belle of Belfast City*, *Dirty Old Town*, *The Banks of the Roses*, *Star of the County Down* and *The Town I Love So Well*. More information at <https://sevendrunkennights.live>.



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# TiNMuGs

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The Tuesday Night Music Group had a busy second week of May, playing twice to audiences of over 40 people from quite different age groups. First, for an older audience, came its annual concert for Spiral in Curtin. This was followed on the Saturday night by another annual event—a bush dance for a much younger crowd at the Guy’s Cross Olive Farm on Captains Flat Road—where the dances were called by Claire Stoneman.



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The MFS beginner to intermediate music session meets Tuesday evenings, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday at the Irish Club, starting at 7:30pm. On the other weeks we meet in various locations around town. We play from written music (available for download from the web) across a range of styles but loosely “folk”, at a pace which encourages joining in. The group has been meeting for over 30 years, it is friendly, accepting and a great place to get started playing with others.

Get the music [https://1drv.ms/u/s!At65xvOFzB49pE\\_HwdNoWt6AT2Ip?e=RsSBc3](https://1drv.ms/u/s!At65xvOFzB49pE_HwdNoWt6AT2Ip?e=RsSBc3) . Contact Julie 0414407658 or Robert 0419464598.

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## MFS Group Contacts

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Bush Dancing	Mark Simmons 0421 814 718
Contra Dancing	Rob Mahony 6251 128
English Country Dancing	Colin Towns 0417 020 615
Irish Set Dancing	Christine Briton 0413 168 562
Australian Settlers Music Session	Ray Mulligan 6247 4725
Tuesday Night Music Group	Julie Szabo 0414 407 658
Merry Muse Folk Club	Eileen Newmarch 0412 127 882
Canberra Celtic Choir	Anna Brown <a href="mailto:canberracelticchoir1@gmail.com">canberracelticchoir1@gmail.com</a>

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### **Monaro Folk Society, Inc. 2023-24 Committee**

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