

Monaro Musings

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

www.monarofolk.org.au

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The Prez Says

Hello everyone

Welcome to the second edition of the relaunched *Monaro Musings*. It was great to see all the photos and reviews of various folk events in and around Canberra in the first edition, and I look forward to many more. A big thanks to Declan and Keith for all their efforts on this! if you would like to contribute content for potential inclusion in future editions, please let Declan know.

It feels like this winter has been a pretty cold one here in Canberra. But the wattles are now out in full force, so there is light at the end of the tunnel. I hope that music and dancing have helped you get through it - for me, I know that our Monday night Bush Dance Group / Bush Capital Band workshops have been a welcome burst of energy each week, and I strongly suspect that the new dancers who have been coming along this year feel likewise.

As you would be aware, our 2024 annual general meeting is happening very soon, on Thursday 29 August - 7.30pm at the Irish Club in Weston, and online. A light supper will be served, and there will be a music session afterwards. Those who came last year said that it was a great way to reconnect and catch up with other members, and I would encourage you to do likewise this year. You must be a current Society member to attend and participate.

Part of the business of the AGM is the election of a new MFS management committee for 2024-5. We are, of course, always looking for new people to join the Committee and contribute to the Society's ongoing functioning in that way. The Society cannot continue to operate without people who are willing to help in this respect. If you would like more information about what being on the Committee involves, please let me know (my email is president@monarofolk.org.au).

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM or other society event soon.

David Ball

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

PO BOX 334, MAWSON, ACT 2607

Back in the Day: Political Satire in the 80s

Folk music means lots of different things to different people. For some, it means songs and dance tunes collected “out in the field” from traditional performers. There aren’t many of them left, though we keep finding neglected areas such as children’s songs, which are remarkably enduring.

For others, the focus is on preserving and passing on the traditions of specific cultures. That’s important in a country as diverse as Australia, with traditions tens of thousands of years old, and others that are newly arrived.

But back in the 1960s and 1970s, folk music was most closely associated with the traditions of the political left, mixing elements of Australian bush workers’ music, Irish rebel songs and the American folk revival. The mixture came together at a time of hope, which culminated in the election of the Whitlam government. That hope was short-lived but produced lots of new music.

I fell into this more or less by chance, deciding on a whim to go to what was then the Port Phillip Folk Festival. My expectations were of the US folk revival, but I found so much more. I loved all of it, but most of all political satire, typically in the form of parodies using traditional tunes. The great practitioner of this mode was John Dengate, and the great performer of his work was Declan Affley, who died long before his time of a heart aneurysm.

The very first workshop I attended, (in fact, the first time I heard the word “workshop” used other than in reference to carpentry and metalwork) was devoted to John Dengate’s songs, most memorably *It’s a Long Way to Cunnamulla*. Like many others, it was aimed at Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, a perennial source of material for satirists.

After a while, I followed in John’s footsteps, with some modest success, but never matching the master. My big hit, if such a term is applicable, was *Bobby I Hardly Knew Ye*, targeted at Bob Hawke’s transformation from radical unionist to centrist prime minister.

Among the other contributors to the tradition of political satire, those I remember best were the feminists, who tended to mix a bit of satire with their more serious material. I’m thinking of Glen Tomasetti’s “Don’t be too polite, girls”, a parody of “All among the wool” demanding equal pay for women, Judy Small’s “Festival of Light”, and “The IPD” by the marvellously named Ovarian Sisters.

I drifted away from writing satire during the drab Howard years, and it seems if the genre as it was then, based on parodies of traditional tunes, has largely died. But it’s been ably documented by Warren Fahey in his books *Ratbags & Rabblers* and *The Balls of Bob Menzies*. Both are available on Amazon.’ Politics in the Trump era seems beyond satire. But the folk tradition is always renewing itself and perhaps a new era of political satire is just ahead of us.

John Quiggin



John Dengate [Wikipedia](#)



Declan Affley jam.org.au



John Quiggin
[Wikipedia](#)

Sundown at the Muse, July 2024

The temptation of Gordon Lightfoot songs, songs of my 20s was just too much and I found myself at the Merry Muse on Sunday afternoon in July. It was a varied blackboard, singer songwriters, a bit of blues, Leonard Cohen, a touch of country, a smorgasbord of styles. (all individual male vocalists though, where were the ladies?) Jim Cruttwell, Danny V, Marijan Rupic, Thomas Weaver, Pierre Guenette, Lachlan Irune; Bob Hart and Chris Hood.

A short break to get a drink or order dinner then the main act performing under the name Sundown. Second up was my second favourite Gordon Lightfoot song, Early Morning Rain. Poignant. Reminds me of the year spent travelling in Europe alone, backpacking, when contact with the family was a postcard at poste restante maybe once a month or a very expensive three minute phone call (remember the beeps).

Summertime Dream featured some fancy jazzy bass from George. He had a similar final fling during Sundown at the end of the set.

I enjoyed the chat from the band, in particular the personal reminiscences. A chance meeting on a ferry, the Isle of Innisfree (Ireland to Wales). The Captain, once a young man terrified on Gitchee Gumee when the Edmund Fitzgerald went down. Definitely my favourite Gordon Lightfoot song, easy to sing, tuneful, powerful simplicity. A song I sang with mournful meaning (accompanied by my 3 guitar chords) all through my 20s. A great rendition this Sunday and a nice memory to revisit.

If You Could Read My Mind Love, has a pretty miserable set of lyrics really but in my early twenties when relationships came and went and yet somehow were all so "deep and meaningful!!" it resonated. It still has a place in the heart.

The final few songs, while well presented, did not stir the same feelings for me, maybe I was in a different place when they were first released, maybe the lyrics did not resonate, however they were well worth a listen.

I did enjoy the afternoon. The Merry Muse is a relaxed space, the audience is generous and appreciative of the privilege of experiencing live music. Eileen, Tina and Shona stalwarts on the door. Pierre and Paul on sound. Thank you. As an aside, the society has purchased a new mixer system for the Muse, the sound was great.



Bob Hart



Merry Muse in July



Sundown at the Muse

Irish Set Dancing Group

Irish Set Dancing is dance in a set of four couples, to lively and uplifting music. The Irish Set Dancing Group was formed in 2003 by Paul Wayper and Kate Armstrong. Paul was previously a member of the Melbourne Irish Set Dancers. The Group has well-established links with Irish Set Dancing Groups in Sydney and Melbourne. It maintains an email list to circulate information about Irish Set Dancing and Irish music events around Australia. It

Classes are held on Wednesdays during ACT school terms at the North Canberra Baptist Church Hall, Turner. They are for both new and experienced dancers. You don't need to bring a partner. Experienced dancers are more than happy to partner people new people. It's a great way to get fit, socialise and learn something new.

Classes provide plenty of scope to satisfy both the occasional social dancer and those interested in mastering more advanced stepping and battering. People are encouraged to practice calling and taking on teaching roles. Class format and content are reviewed and modified to suit the interests of attendees.

The Group's annual dance weekend, coming up on 11-13 October 2024 is now in its 18th year (it missed two years due to Covid). Typically, the event attracts over 100 dancers from around Australia (and occasionally, from overseas). Invited teachers are from interstate or, in more recent years, from Ireland.

This year's event features Helen Stonehouse from New Zealand. The two ceilis held over the weekend provide an opportunity to dance to Irish Ceili Bands and showcase musicians who are experienced in music for Irish Set Dancing. Live music for the ceilis will be by the Sydney-based Band, Anne O'Donovan and the Ceili Playboys. Since 2017, the annual event has been supported by the Embassy of Ireland.

Book online by Friday 13 September for 10% early bird discount <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1244469>. For more information, email isdcanberra@gmail.com.

18th Annual Canberra Irish Set Dancing Weekend

Friday 11th – Sunday 13th October 2024
Hall Pavilion Gladstone St Hall ACT 2618

Featuring Helen Stonehouse



Growing up in England, Helen has been involved in traditional dance since a very young age, including learning step dancing to a modest level. She first came across Set Dancing in Perth whilst travelling. An immediate interest in the Sets continued back in the UK, learning sets from many of the main teachers in the UK and Ireland, running weekly classes, and also teaching workshops at UK folk festivals. Now a resident in NZ, she teaches workshops at local folk festivals including the Irish Music festival in Nelson and has just held the second NZ Set Dance weekend in Wellington. Helen loves to get everyone dancing.

Suitable for both new and experienced dancers. Light refreshments included.
Two ceilis with music by Ann O'Donovan & the Ceili Playboys

Session	Ticket Price
All events	\$90
Saturday workshops	\$32
Saturday night ceili	\$28
Sunday morning workshops	\$20
Sunday farewell ceili	\$20

Book online at Trybooking from 1 July 2024.
10% early bird discount for bookings by Friday 13 September 2024.
Tickets are refundable if you are unable to attend.

Option at own expense: Meet up for a meal and dancing to kick off the weekend from 7pm Friday 11 October at the Canberra Irish Club, 6 Parkinson Street, Weston ACT 2611.

isdcanberra@gmail.com
www.monarofolk.org.au



Irish Set Dancing Weekend 2023



Irish Set Dancing Class, 7 August 2024 (Photos: Josie White)



Monaro Folk Society Annual General Meeting Thursday 29th August 2024 Canberra Irish Club, Parkinson St, Weston

7:00pm registration and complimentary welcome drink
7:30pm meeting commencement
8:15pm light supper served
then an open session with the Bush Capital Band,
bring your instrument and join in.

We hope to set up zoom for the meeting,
a link will be advertised to all financial members. .

Membership renewals for 2024/25 are now due

Renew online through the membership section of our web site.
Renew at the commencement of the AGM
Renew at an MFS event

Bush Traditions Spring Gathering

The Small Friendly Festival that keeps on keeping on.

You may have noticed a general mood of gloom and around music festivals as we pick ourselves up after Covid. Some festivals have put up their shutters! Bush Traditions offers a small friendly Gathering; it's one of the best for those who like participating. It's a small festival, usually 60 to 100 attendees, the emphasis is on participation and chat.

Bush Traditions Spring Gathering is a weekend confluence of musicians, reciters, singers and dancers held annually on the NSW Labor Day Long Weekend at the Goulburn Club, right in the center of town. The Club, a music venue run by volunteers in a rather ornate building that once was the exclusive club for the local squattocracy when they came to town, occupies a charming old building on Market Street, Goulburn, with open fires, comfy seats and lots of friendly little spaces.

The 2024 program is still a work in progress but some of the favourites from past years will surely be there:

- Slow sessions in the morning to welcome those who prefer a measured pace and the reassurance of simple tunes and written music.
- Smoko with the poets. For the spoken word enthusiasts. Hear a poem, recite a poem, read one of your own, pinch someone else's and read that. Sometimes there is a poetry choir; other times a play presentation.
- Yarn space encourages you to remember and share those interesting and amusing bits of your past with others.
- Something for the songsters, join the fun around the piano, do a party piece, around the Boree Log, listen and join into a themed vocal workshop.
- Bring an instrument; you can play all day. Most workshops encourage both ear players and music readers. There are so many good tunes, old favourites to revisit, new ones to try. Local composers have the opportunity to show case and share the music they have created over the past year.

It's a fun weekend in convivial company, and at \$40 for the weekend, it's not expensive. The Spring Gathering coincides with Goulburn's Lilac Festival, and the city turns on its charm. Bellmore Park, the main venue for the festival, is right outside. Take a break and wander over the road to look through the craft, art and food stalls.

On Monday morning join in the open session in the rotunda. To get on the mailing list and receive up to date information on program and organizational details send an email to Ray: rmulligan@netspeed.com.au . Check out the web site for more information: <https://www.bushtraditions.org/>.



Singers wanted!

From mid-October, Keith Ogborn is going to be running a U3A folk song course for ukulele players. And – yup – we know what many people in the Folk Society think about ukulele groups and uke music in general. But there is a huge demand for group musical participation out there among the retired population - and uke groups are one of the few possible entry points for people with no or minimal previous experience. Everybody has to start somewhere.

The basic aim of Keith's course is to improve attendees' understanding of how songs work and give them the confidence and tips that they need to play the chords to simple songs by ear and from memory. This involves some talking about how chords work and common progressions but primarily by workshopping and rehearsing a selection of songs designed to be learnt in this way and played acoustically - Carter Family era tunes, early 'soft' blues and some modern folk songs. It is a sort of introduction to jamming.

Keith will contribute to the singing with what is left of his voice but would really like some guest singers who could come once in a while to help. If you think you might be interested, you can contact Keith on ukebyear@gmail.com.au and he can give you more details.

Straight from the Strait

Lots of Australian folkies know all about American railway heroes like John Henry, the steel-driving man who drilled holes in rock so that explosives could be blasted to make a tunnel. But how many Australian folkies know about the Australian railway heroes who shattered world records as they laid down an astonishing 7km of track for the Mount Newman railway in a single day on 8 May 1968, a feat that still stands unchallenged.

I certainly didn't know anything about these 137 Torres Strait Island men until I went along to a panel discussion at the National Library, *Straight from the Strait - in conversation about the Torres Strait Island musical* on 17 July 2024.

Aunty Ruth Ghee, Uncle Luke Captain, Georgia Corowa and Rhianna Patrick explained how these men ended up in WA; the back-breaking work they did on the railway; the traditions they brought with them; the new musical, *Straight from the Strait*, which will celebrate their resilience and heroism and the community consultation involved in writing the musical, which uses Meriam Mir, Kala Lagaw Ya and Torres Strait Creole as well as English.

The discussion ended, most appropriately with a song, *You are the Glory and the Lifter of My Head* from an outdoor church service. *Straight from the Strait* opens in Brisbane but those involved hope to tour it. "Broadway, here we come," somebody said. Let's hope we see *Straight from the Strait* in the national capital soon.

Declan O'Connell

Neil Murray

Neil Murray sang songs from his new album, *Telling*, as well as classics from his Warumpi Band days like *My Island Home* on a cold Canberra night at Smith's Alternative on Friday 5 July. *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* included three demands: constitutional recognition through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, a Treaty and truth-telling.

We know what happened to the constitutional recognition proposals but truth telling is where singer-songwriters can and do make a big contribution. Neil Murray, who has spent a lot of time in outback and Indigenous Australia, has long been a leader in this endeavor and the new album he showcased at Smith's includes powerful songs like *Broken Land*, *No Justice Done* and *Tears of Wybalena*.

It also includes more personal songs of love and loss. He lightened the tone a bit with some wry recitations about lessons he has learned along the way from his immersion in Indigenous and remote Australia. I particularly liked one called *Toyota Dreaming*, where Neil demonstrated his acting chops as well as his poetic skills in a poem about an old Aboriginal man who wants Canberra to know he wants a Toyota.



David Rovics

The day after the Neil Murray gig, US protest singer David Rovics, ably supported by his opening act, Canberra's own Karlo Paasonen, brought his *Bearing Witness* tour to the Polish Club (the Polo) in Turner. Had a strong focus on the situation in Gaza.

David Rovics was wearing a black t-shirt with a Palestinian flag and he had sung at a rally that afternoon. As well as urgent songs about Gaza and a song for Julian Assange, David Rovics took us to some obscure but very interesting highways and byways of history with songs, for example, about his friend Al, who joined the merchant marine and hijacked a ship and about the East Kilbride Rolls Royce workers in Scotland, who refused to service Chile's jet fighters after the 1973 military coup, almost grounding the entire squadron of 29 Hawker Hunters.

Another song, *I Am a Better Anarchist Than You*, satirised comrades who took political correctness too far.

Craig Woodward

If you closed your eyes at Craig Woodward's concert at Smith's Alternative on 24 June, you could almost think you were listening to an Alabama sharecropper or a Cajun fisherman, the sort of artist you'd find in Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Craig does virtuoso old-timey and Cajun music and virtuoso singing to go with it.

He even looked the part in westie shirt, jeans and a cap. Donal Baylor joined Craig on stage (playing banjo when Craig played fiddle) and one upped him sartorially by wearing denim overalls as well. The two played up a storm and by the end of the concert, two more musicians joined them to make a full string band. Great Americana, as it's called

these days and some reminiscences too. Donal remembered the glory days when *The Age* live music guide ran to 8-10 pages and Cajun and Zydeco had its own category. Ska too. "Dance all night with a bottle in your hand/Run around, give the fiddler a dram".



Donal Baylor, Craig Woodward and string band

By a Lonely Prison Wall

Ged Graham and friends brought their show *Seven Drunken Nights: The Story of The Dubliners* to Canberra Theatre on 27 July 2024 but I saw it a week earlier in a converted prison in a Bendigo, not far from one of the alleged birthplaces of the Wild Colonial Boy himself (the Castlemaine in Victoria, not the one in County Kerry). You walked past cells on the way in. Who knows what ghosts lived there?

Seven Drunken Nights was a celebration of the Dubliners' music and of Dublin city itself in the rare old times; there was a nod to Pete St John who wrote about those times and about the fields of Athenry. The set was a kind of replica O'Donoghue's Pub (where The Dubliners were formed in 1962), a loop video behind the stage regularly returned to guys in caps solemnly knocking back pints and the songs were mainly about good times. The band were very good at getting the audience to join in, clapping, singing along, getting into the spirit of things.

If there were about 20 songs from across the Dubliners' catalogue, I knew about 19. Classics like *Weila, Weila, Wailia* (an inexplicably cheerful children's song about infanticide and capital punishment), *I'll Tell My Ma, Monto* (about Dublin's historical red light district) and *Dirty Old Town* to name a few. The Spanish Lady walked passed Napper Tandy's house and Dicey Reilly took to the sup. There was a fine version of producer Phil Coulter's song about his native Derry, *The Town I Loved So Well*, albeit one in which the army was no longer installed by the old gas yard wall. The highlight for me was an almost a capella *Raglan Road* interspersed with verses in praise of Luke Kelly.

The Dubliners themselves played at the Canberra Theatre in 1977 with Canberra's own Paverty Bush Band (then known as Franklyn B Paverty) opening for them. Paverty's Graham Chalker told me that, after the show, Paverty and The Dubliners got together for a mighty session at a house in Hawker. A great time was had by all, some Ben Ean was consumed and Luke Kelly headed off to play golf the next morning without apparently going to sleep.

Declan O'Connell

MFS Group Contacts

Bush Dancing	Mark Simmons 0421 814 718
Contra Dancing	Rob Mahony 6251 1287
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 canberracelticchoir1@gmail.com
End of Month Dance Organising Team	Antonella Salpietro 0413 295 004

Monaro Musings is published by, Monaro Folk Society Inc, PO Box 334, Mawson, ACT 2607. Views expressed by the Editor (Declan O'Connell, editor@monarofolk.org.au) and others in *Monaro Musings* are not necessarily those of the Monaro Folk Society. For general enquiries contact us at info@monarofolk.org.au

Monaro Folk Society, Inc. 2023-24 Committee

President: David Ball - president@monarofolk.org.au

Secretary: Ian Bull - secretary@monarofolk.org.au

Treasurer: Moir Holmes - treasurer@monarofolk.org.au;

Public Officer: Antonella Salpietro - publicofficer@monarofolk.org.au

Committee Members, Rebecca Tarrant, Rita Turnbull, Colin Towns, Matthew Gibbins, Tina Lynam