

Monaro Musings

Volume 32, Number 3 – December 2025

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

www.monarofolk.org.au

www.facebook.com/monaro.folk.society



The Prez Says

Hi everyone

As we approach the end of 2025, I am delighted by the continued vibrancy of the Society. The Irish Set Dance weekend was a great success yet again, and we have had plenty of new dancers and musicians coming along to our events. Our membership numbers are back up over 200, which is about where they were before Covid arrived. Our Society Christmas party was held last Saturday - getting in early 😊 - and we are looking forward to the 2025/26 season of Dancing in the Park from 8 December.

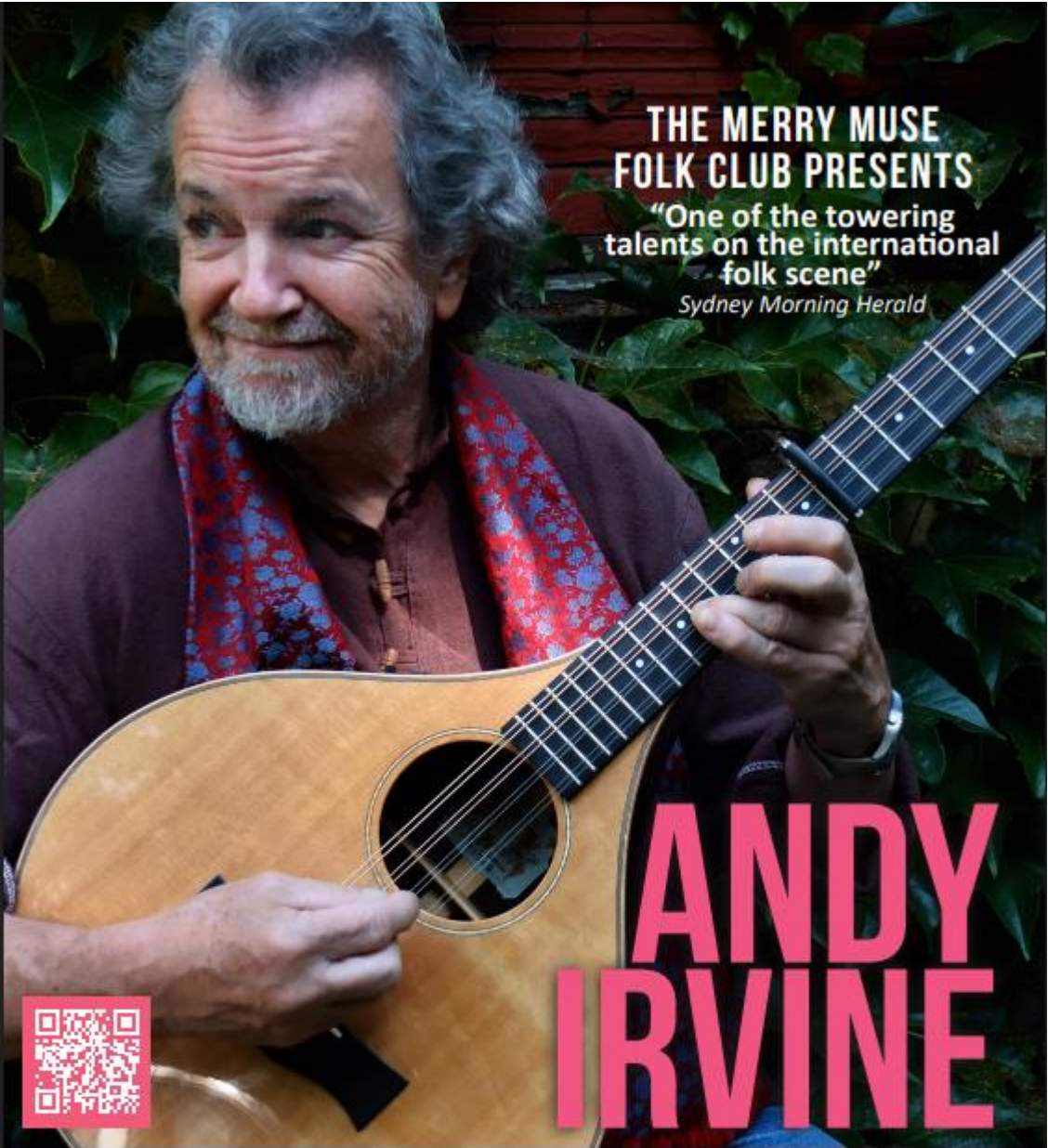
On the membership front, Anna Brown (our Membership Secretary) has informed the Committee that she is unable to continue in the role for personal reasons. We would like to thank Anna for taking over this important role a couple of years ago now, and we wish her well. We therefore now need to find a new Membership Secretary. Managing our membership records, and the membership renewal process, is a key behind the scenes role without which the Society would not be able to function properly. If you would be willing and able to contribute to the Society in this way, please get in touch as soon as possible. We would also still like to find someone to take on the role of Publicity Officer for the Society.

After our AGM in August, the 25/26 Committee includes myself (President); Ian Bull (Secretary); Moir Holmes (Treasurer); Gabrielle Mackey (Public Officer); Tina Lynam, Colin Towns, Rebecca Tarrant and Rita Turnbull. I would like to thank Gabrielle for taking on the role of Public Officer, and Antonelle Salpietro for her contribution in that role in recent years.

I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas, and I look forward to seeing you at a Society event soon. Kind regards.

David

MFS POSTAL ADDRESS PO BOX 334, MAWSON, ACT 2607

A photograph of Andy Irvine, an older man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a brown shirt and a red and blue patterned scarf. He is playing a light-colored acoustic guitar. The background is dark with green foliage.

**THE MERRY MUSE
FOLK CLUB PRESENTS**

**"One of the towering
talents on the international
folk scene"**

Sydney Morning Herald

**ANDY
IRVINE**



**CANBERRA IRISH CLUB
4PM, SUNDAY 18 JANUARY 2026
TICKETS \$45/\$30**

4pm Doors | 4.15 Support: Shanagolden | 5.15 – 7pm Andy Irvine

Andy Irvine

Andy Irvine hardly needs an introduction but I'll give him one anyway. He's sung from Connemara to Katmandu, from Abocurragh (in County Fermanagh) to Parachilna (in outback South Australia), in village halls, skid row bars, session bars, other drinking emporiums, boxing stadiums, opera houses, theatres, TV stations, camp and salubrious venues like the Bowlo, the Budawang, the Canberra Irish Club and Smith's Alternative here in Canberra.

He was in the big Irish bands: Sweeney's Men (the daddy of them all), Planxty and Patrick Street. He set up his own multinational Irish/Bulgarian/American old timey/Dutch supergroup, Mozaik. In England, Ashley Hutchins invited him to join the original Steeleye Span. Ashley's previous band, folk-rockers Fairport Convention, were huge Sweeney fans.

Andy was into what later was labelled "world music" before anyone heard of Peter Gabriel or WOMAD. He made the bouzouki a traditional Irish instrument and gave Irish jigs and reels a Balkan verve.

He's been a lifelong admirer of Woody Guthrie, writing a teenage fan letter addressed "Woody Guthrie, America" to the Dust Bowl balladeer (and getting a reply) and, later, stalking Woody's disciple and comrade Ramblin' Jack Elliott in London for songs and stories.

He walked into a Dublin pub, O'Donoghue's, in August 1962 and he has been making music and entertaining audiences ever since, channelling the spirit of Woody Guthrie. He never tires of the road, never tires of the rolling wheel, never tires of the ways of the world. Best of all, he loves Canberra so much he has kept coming back. It'll be a great gig at the Canberra Irish Club on 18 January.

New Year's Eve Dance

What better way to see the New Year in than to dance it in? And where better to dance the New Year in than at the historic Yarralumla Woolshed at Cotter Road? Celebrate the end of the year with family and friends at the Society's New Year's Eve bush dance. Be there on Wednesday 31 December 2025 – from 8:00 pm until 2026 gets welcomed in. No dance experience needed.

Live music by the great Stringfiddle Band led by Bob McInnes and fun dances taught by respected Sydney caller Don Richmond, a team well known to and much appreciated by dancers around Australia.

No need to book but tickets are available at Try Booking (fees apply)

<https://www.trybooking.com/DHOKB> or at the door: \$35 general, with discounts for MFS members, groups and students, under 18 free.

50 Years ago

The Society's New Year's Eve Dance has a proud history. *A Score and a Half of Folk: Thirty Years of the Monaro Folk Society Inc.* by David Meyers and edited by Kevin Frawley (2004) tells the story and the National Library's online Trove collection has treasures like old copies of *The Canberra Times* with further background,

50 years ago, the Monaro Folk Music Society as it was then called, hired a lone piper to pipe in the New Year and its musicians played Irish, Scottish and Australian dances for a thousand revellers in Petrie Plaza, the first ever open-air public entertainment for a Canberra New Year's Eve.

The next year, it seems, Petrie Plaza had "accidentally" been double-booked by 2CA and the Monaro folk dance was relocated to Civic Square. 2CA, it was said, won the battle of the decibels but it was about dance not decibels and there were lots of happy feet on Civic Square, which became the regular venue for the Society's New Year Dance for several years. Now, we go to the Woolshed.

Traditional New Year

Petrie Plaza was crowded last night when about 1,000 people, many of them young children, sang and danced into the New Year to the sounds of traditional folk music.

Musicians from the Monaro Folk Music Society played Irish, Scottish and Australian dances.

In other parts of Canberra, and especially in the newer suburbs, streets were closed as residents held neighbourhood street parties.

MONARO FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE

Civic Square
(outside Canberra Theatre)
8.30-1.00

Do you find New Year's Eve parties dull, repetitive? Same thing, year after year?

This year, why not see in the New Year in Traditional Style?

DANCING
MUSIC
SINGING

— All dances instructed —

If you can't stay all night, drop in and say "hello"

Canberra Times, 01/01/1976

Canberra Times, 31/12/1976

Merry Muse at Major's Creek

The Merry Muse Folk Club took itself off to the Major's Creek Festival just beyond Braidwood on the weekend of 8-10 November. A good time was had by all at Sam's Caravan ... listening to the likes of Humbug, Banksi Sisters, Daisy Chain, Danny V and Pierre Guenette.



Humbug



Banksi Sisters



Daisy Chain



Dave O'Neill and Pierre Guenette



Danny V

Photos: Shona Lee

***Ebb and Flow* launch**

Irish-born Melbourne singer and banjophonist Maggie Carty took her *Ebb and Flow* album launch tour to Smith's Alternative in Civic on 28 August. *Ebb and Flow* has a fine mixture of well known and not so well known Irish songs and tunes and the odd left field choice like a lovely version of the Neil Murray song *My Island Home*.

Migration is a theme for much of the material and Maggie told us interesting stories to introduce the songs highlighting her own family's connections between Ireland and Australia – and explaining how she was pleased to discover *Far Away in Australia* as an appropriate song for a family occasion back in Ireland.

She acknowledged the Irish performers whose records had inspired her including Traveller singer and banjo player Margaret Barry (1917-1989), Connemara sean nós singer Joe Heaney (1919-1984) and Dublin balladeer Frank Harte (1933-2005).

As Altan fiddler and singer Mairead Ní Mhaonaigh puts it in the *Ebb and Flow* liner notes:

“Maggie Carty seems to effortlessly play tunes on her banjo and sing her songs with total ease, captivating the listener to appreciate every ebb and tide of her playful notes!”



Maggie Carty

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 0422 636 442
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. 2024-25 Committee

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

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

Public Officer: Gabrielle Mackey - publicofficer@monarofolk.org.au

Committee Members: Rebecca Tarrant, Rita Turnbull, Colin Towns, Tina Lynam