

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

Hi everyone

The Society's activities continue apace as we reach the middle of the year, in what is proving so far to be a very mild winter! We have had the autumn colours bush dance, several very well attended Merry Muse events, and good turn outs of musos for our Tuesday Night Music Group gatherings. Our Celtic Choir has been accepted to perform at Floriade in early October, which is exciting for them and is also a great opportunity to bring the Society to the attention of a wider audience.

Reaching July 1 means that it is also time for membership renewals. I am very grateful to Shirley Jorritsma who has agreed to take over the important role of membership secretary from Anna Brown. Please make Shirley welcome, and please bear with her as she tackles membership renewal season for the first time.

We have also locked in a date and venue for the 2026 AGM, which will be held on the evening of Friday August 28 at the Canberra Irish Club. Further information and other details for Society members will follow in due course, but please put it in your diaries now.

The Committee is also giving some thought to potentially organising another whole of Society event again soon (following on from Carnival Day last year). If you are interested in potentially helping to organise and run such an event please get in touch. We are also exploring the possibility of holding a gender-free calling dance as a special event later in the year. Again, please let us know if you would be interested in assisting with this.

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

Cheers

David

Peter Foster's 500th Monday dance calling

March 30th Monday night was a milestone night. Congratulations to Peter Foster, his 500th Monday calling for the Bush Dance Group workshops. Yes 500 ... Given that there are only a limited number of Monday nights in each year, take out holidays, this is an amazing statistic. Even more amazing is Peter's ability to keep records for that long. Monday Bush Dance Group has a dedicated long serving group of musicians, callers and dancers. Well done everyone.



Peter in full voice



Dancing, Bush Dance Group, 30 March 2026

TiNMuGs at Olive Farm

There is an Olive Farm a bit out of Captains Flat which welcomes the TiNMuGs each year for an awesome fun night. Tim asks his friends, relatives, friends of relatives and hangers on, to the farm for a day of picking, pruning and general maintenance. To finish the day, he throws a yum hot pot dinner and a bush dance. The TiNMuGs provide the music in return for a share of the amazing dinner. This year there was venison, roo stew and lots of curries, rice and homemade goodies for pudding. Just pure fun with kids and dogs, oldies and youngies and a very responsive group of dancers. As a musician it is so rewarding to play for such a happy enthusiastic group.



TiNMuGs at Olive Farm



Clare calling dancing at Olive Farm

Radio 2XX turns 50

6 am on Friday 2 July 1976. A cold, frosty, foggy Canberra morning. Something was happening at Kingsley Street Hall, an old World War 2 drill hall on the ANU campus. A new radio station was hitting the airwaves. Radio 2XX.

The Canberra Times reported the next day that about 50 callers had rung up with congratulations and that there had been no problems broadcasting beyond the campus. 2XX's predecessor, Radio ANU had been broadcasting out of Kingsley Street Hall for three years but could only reach as far as halls of residence, the Student Union and University House.

Folk music had been important for Radio ANU and has continued to be important for 2XX for 50 years. Sunday's *Lark in the Morning* has been there since 1976, one of the longest running folk shows in Australian community radio, although it can't match *Come All Ye* on Radio 2MCE in Bathurst, presented by Bruce Cameron since April 1975. There's a program in Adelaide that might have a claim too. *Lark in the Morning* and the program that follows it, *Irish Voice*, combined for an outside broadcast live from this year's National Folk Festival.

2XXs has hosted many outside broadcasts from "the Nash" at Exhibition Park over the years and was heavily involved in the 1984 National at ANU before that. On Easter Monday in 2006, 2XX joined with presenters from other community radio stations to host festival highlights live across the country via CBAA's satellite link. "That's something only community radio could do," long-time *Lark in the Morning* presenter Simon Kravis recalls, "it was one of the highlights of my radio career."

As well as Sunday morning folk in 2XX's early days, there was also Tuesday evening folk. *Traditional Folk* prided itself on presenting the sound of the common folk singing and playing their own music while later in the evening *Progressive Folk*, took a broader tack. *Progressive Folk* presenter Doc Wright thought the history of folk music was "littered with the corpses of critics, writers and broadcasters who have tried to define folk."

Bush dances at Yarralumla Woolshed were big for both 2XX and MFS in the 70s. Indeed, as *Lark in the Morning's* first presenter, Mike Jackson, commented in *The Canberra Times*, "attendances had to be limited for safety reasons after it was noticed that the whole shed was moving backwards and forwards during a 'Brown Jug Polka'."

The music and the grog flowed freely. The floor shook. People danced their way to a new transmitter and other 2XX necessities. In between stripping the willow and heel and toe polkas, dancers tucked into hot damper. Everyone ducked for cover during the women's Morris stick dances. Lucky raffle winners took home vinyl records and musical instruments (a special handmade piccolo by 2XX engineer Terry McGee on one occasion).

2XX combined with MFS for the odd concert. A reviewer in the 2XX newsletter *Communiqué* ('Lynn') described one such gig in 1979: songs "about love, war, despair, political injustices, trains, underdogs, larrikins. And trains." Sunday in the Park at Commonwealth Park was another venue for 2XX to promote both itself and the Canberra folk scene.

The kind of relationship 2XX had and still has with the folk music community is mirrored across the community radio sector. Folk scholar, singer and, back in the day, owner of Larrikin Records, Warren Fahey thought his kind of music "would probably die without the alternative radio stations".

Likewise, Murri singer-songwriter Kev Carmody, when interviewed for 2XX's Saturday morning folk show *Rebel Chorus* in 2020, recalled how his debut album *Pillars of Society* was promoted on community radio and how, even before that, cassettes of him singing live on 4ZZZ in Brisbane were passed from one community radio station to another in a kind of radio version of the bush telegraph.

2XX is celebrating its 50th birthday with an exhibition at Canberra Museum and Gallery, which runs until 6 September. The exhibition includes a recreated 1970s- 80s studio, vibrant original posters by screenprint and photo artists and audio collages bringing you voices from Canberra on 2XX over the years. A range of voices. A slice of Canberra history. Diverse, independent, alternative.

Being a radio station, 2XX is also (surprise, surprise) celebrating 50 years with a radio show, *People Powered 50 Years*. Interviews with the people who have powered 2XX's journey across 5 decades; tracing highs, lows, dramas and great times, all seasoned with some digitised archival audio (Friday mornings 10.30 to 11 am on 98.3FM and livestreaming from www.2xxfm.org.au, also available in podcast form).

Declan O'Connell



Bob McInnes and Dave O'Neill, 2XX Commonwealth Park fundraiser early 1980s. Photo - Brian Buchtmann.



2XX in Commonwealth Park 1977. Photo - Brian Buchtmann.



2XX Stall, Commonwealth Park fundraiser early 1980s. Photo - Brian Buchtmann.



Windborne with 2XXers Simon Kravis, Jane O'Donohue and Declan O'Connell, National Folk Festival, 2026. Photo - Hedda M

Kitty and the Bobcats

Thursday night 11th June was a special night at The Lounge Club, three different groups, three different styles, an evening of laid back musical pleasure. The Lounge Club is an initiative of Canberra's own Springtide, hosted by the wonderful Nigel and Beth at Smiths Alternative in Civic. Using the special small space upstairs by the bar, it provides an opportunity to hear some of our region's talented acoustic musicians in a uniquely gentle space. However, the crowd booking for Thursday needed a move to the larger room next door and they squeezed over 50 of us in. Springtide opened. An unusual mix of tinkling strings grounded by a mellow cello. Three good sets but the Blacktown Jig, a Ray Schoffel tune, was a real highlight. Originally written for a fiddle this Thursday the dulcimer just nailed it ...

Pure Drop Trad are a fiddle/banjo duo from the Monaro. Anna and Kevin, both Irish born, had the good sense to pair up, (independently) with Australians and so found themselves here. Maybe to keep a link with the old home they developed a repertoire of traditional Irish tunes played traditionally. Anna did at one stage say that she felt Irish tunes were at their best played with family and friends. Those of us listening felt that their performance was a pretty good best also.

I personally like the contrast and the synergy between the fiddle and tenor banjo, one sharp one smooth. The Sailor's Bonnet started slow and mournful but as it picked up pace the audience could not stop their feet joining in the fun. You know the music is hitting the spot when Janet starts dancing in the corner. I thought the top piece was the Lonesome Boatman with a lovely eerie high whistle, but then as a wind player myself I may be biased.

I am definitely biased in my views on Kitty and the Bobcats. I have had the CD for 20+ years and for sentimental reasons play it often in the car on long trips. I know all the words and recognise all the harmonies. Maybe I heard it live a very long time ago but don't recall.

The musicality of a CD is by the nature of the animal, a more "produced/professional sound" but a live performance has a quality of relaxation, it's a simple pleasure and in this case just fun. What came across so clearly was the joy the three performers had in revisiting their music. The atmosphere was that of a lounge, we are all friends here.

I was close to the stage in a crowded room, but we were all close. You could see the expressions and went along with and enjoyed the "as you go improvisations." Bob and Peggie's voices just blend, you can hear the years and years of singing together. The Dutchman was sung well, with feeling and a sense of acceptance and peace. Maybe a grounding reflection for the demographic in the room. Peggie's guitar work on 40 Acres and No Mule is a joy. I also really liked her Noah's Ark, it's a great song and I am now waiting for the predicted rain. The set finished with a couple of singalongs. Nice way to go home with music in your ears. And, of course, the fiddle and mandolin were ... awesome.

Moir Holmes



Bob and Peggy (Bob 1 and Kitty)



Rob on fiddle (Bob 2)



Pure Drop Trad



Mellow cello, Springtide

Canberra Celtic Choir

The Canberra Celtic Choir had a busy March with performances at an Irish embassy St Patrick's Day celebration and at the Upstaging festival.

On St Patricks Day, (17 March) the choir sang the Irish and Australian national anthems at the Irish embassy to welcome the new Irish ambassador, Fiona to Australia. About 12 singers gave a confident welcome in Gaelic to the large group of dignitaries. At the same event, 25 Irish music session players played in the embassy gardens.

A few days later (on Saturday 21 March) the same group of 12 Celtic choir singers presented a program of 4 Irish songs, some in Gaelic to an audience of around 100 Chinese & Indian families as part of the Upstaging festival, celebrating music, dance and Chinese opera, at the Ainslie arts centre.

This was a comprehensive all day cultural event, with gaily coloured dancing costumes from the Chinese & Indian cultures & was musical fun for all.

The Canberra Celtic Choir sing Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Gaelic & English folk music in their native languages at musical venues, aged care homes & anywhere we are welcomed.

It is good to see the Canberra Celtic Choir growing in numbers & prepared to sing anywhere in Canberra as part of the active folk music scene here in Canberra.

We welcome new members and we sing at the Irish club on Monday evenings from 7:30-9:00 pm.

Gavin Holmes (Bass, Canberra Celtic Choir)

Ralph McTell at The Street Theatre

I was truly privileged to see English folk legend Ralph McTell at The Street Theatre on Thursday 14 May. It was 50 years since he first toured Australia and it was billed as part of a final farewell tour. Right from the off, introducing his first song, a celebration of London, he had us in the palm of his hand. The stories were as important as the songs. Like how he learned about the blues from an American busker in Paris. Fun fact 1: He was born Ralph May and took on the stage surname McTell in homage to the Georgia bluesman long before Bob Dylan wrote Blind Willie McTell.

He gave us a wide range of songs including the showstoppers we were waiting for at the end: *From Clare to Here* and *Streets of London*. Talking about *From Clare to Here*, he told us how fond he was of Irish songs and of performing with Irish musicians and gave us the good news that he'll have an album of Irish-related songs out late this year. Fun fact 2: *From Clare to Here* is actually listed in a book of traditional Irish songs. Ralph McTell takes this as a great compliment. He wrote it in Croydon (in London) in 1976.

If Ralph had us in the palm of his hand at the start he ended with every single person in the audience on their feet for a standing ovation. A lot of appreciation there.

Declan O'Connell

Don't forget



2026 -2027

Time to renew:-

Single \$25 Concessional Single \$20

Family \$40 Concessional Family \$35

Remote \$8 (Remote rate applies if you do not live in the ACT or in Postcode Area 2582, 2620, or 2621)

- Online renewal
- > log on to the society web page <https://www.monarofolk.org.au>
 - > click the tab to Members (top of the page to the left and below the logo)
 - > click the link to [Become a Member Now!](#)
 - > fill in the form please even if you have been a member for years.
 - > please add additional email addresses for family members wanting to receive copies of the Musings and notices.
 - > Click submit and you are taken to a payment page, pay with either with credit card or bank transfer. If bank transfer include your name as the reference. BSB and Account number are on the bottom of the payment page. (Fewer boxes to fill with bank transfer)

MFS Group Contacts

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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
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