

Monaro Musings

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

www.monarofolk.org.au

www.facebook.com/monaro.folk.society

From the President

I hope that the start of 2021 has been treating you well. It has been good to see a number of the Society's activities (including the Merry Muse) restarting over the last couple of months, and that there has been a good roll-up (including some new faces) at many of them. Hopefully our restart will continue on its upwards trajectory as the year continues.

While we are not yet at the point of recommencing large events, such as those held at the Yarralumla Woolshed, several of our dance groups are now underway again, with more (hopefully) to follow soon. I would encourage you to keep an eye on the website, and on emails from MFS-announce, for the latest updates.

I have also had an encouraging response to the proposed small band combos, and am hopeful that we will have these underway soon. It is worth noting that "band" instruments include voice, and that it seems that singing has been somewhat under-represented in the society's activities in recent years. So if there are any singers out there who would like to be doing more (either in a band format or in some other form of ensemble), please get in touch.

As a Committee, we are still considering ways of promoting greater integration across our various groups, and would welcome further ideas and feedback on this topic from anyone who may wish to provide it.

To continue to build momentum as the restart continues, and if you feel comfortable doing so, I would also encourage you to consider trying out one of the society's groups that you don't normally attend, or haven't attended for a while, and to stick with it for a time even if it is not necessarily a 'perfect fit'. The more people who regularly come to a group, the more vibrant the group will be, to everyone's benefit.

Cheers

David

Whither the Merry Muse Blackboard?

The Merry Muse has been operating a pre-booked system for the blackboard session this year and more people want to perform than we can accommodate. Eileen would like any views members have on the best way to handle this. Should we work on a first come first in basis? Should we give preference to people who missed out the previous month? Should we give preference to regulars or new performers? Should we try and fit everyone in and shorten set length to fit number of performers? Should preference be given to MFS members? Should we ask people to register in advance and select from the list each month to get a balance of styles and repertoires? If you have any views on this or other comments on the operation of the blackboard could you please email Eileen on eileennew23@gmail.com

Bill Arnett (1947–2021)



I met Bill Arnett on Easter Monday in 2000 or maybe it was 2001. It was just after Bill took over running the Merry Muse. I was looking for a venue to run sessions featuring collected Aussie music. Bill welcomed the idea. I started running them on the last Friday of a month, initially early in the evening before the Merry Muse got under way.

A year or so later this once-a-month session expanded to include dance and took up the whole evening, replacing the Merry Muse for that week. This gave Bill a week off to do other things or just go away for a few days. This arrangement continued for a number of years in the Turner Bowling Club and then in the Polish White Eagle Club.

In 2006 I was looking for help to establish Bush Traditions. Bill provided enthusiastic support for the idea and with the help of a few others Bush Traditions was born. Bill's help and support were invaluable. He had experience with the admistrivia of incorporation and the operation of not-for-profit organisations. Bill was an active and supportive part of Bush Traditions throughout the time since.

With his tents and tarps, he provided a canvass home for those who wanted one at the Gatherings at the Old Goulburn Brewery. He did this in his inimitable way, larger than life, setting a tone of conviviality and sharing for those and subsequent Gatherings. One of these Gatherings, memorable for its rain and wild winds, found us huddled in his canvass shelter and Bill up at 3am re-pegging and tying just to hold things together.

Community was important to Bill and he worked in order to be part of and to enjoy his community. A folkie through and through, he set store by his relationships with his like-minded fellow travelers. Not afraid to differ, he contributed in his way to achieve a common good. He valued 'integrity'. For him it was a mixture of things that included truth, honesty, fair dealing and sticking to your word.

At a more personal level Bill could cook and enjoy a hearty meal, enjoy a good ale, often something stronger and a meaningful chat. He would chat about all manner of things; the behaviour of the lorikeets in the bird feeder, the operation of the hydroponic system he built to grow vegies. But these chats usually swung round to solving the world's problems. Such discussions were always cheerful and lighthearted in their progress yet earnest and sincere in their motivation and intent. They invariably ended with an adjournment to allow more time to collect and consider evidence and to shape further argument. Reconvening the discussion was ever an appealing prospect.

Ray Mulligan (March 2021)

Bill Arnett passed away in Moruya in February after a long illness. Through his energy and networks, he played a massive role in bringing high quality live folk music to Canberra. He was the organiser and master of ceremonies of the Merry Muse between 2001 and 2008 and was also a major figure at the National Folk Festival during this period where, among other things, he ran special sessions of the Muse.

Differences with the MFS eventually resulted in Bill resigning from the Merry Muse Coordinator position and severing ties with the organisation - a rift which, sadly was never fully reconciled in subsequent years. However, after parting with the MFS structure, he continued to be involved in live folk in Canberra. He established and ran the Folkus Room which was located at different times in the Italian Club in Forrest and the Serbian Club in Mawson. Following its closure, he moved to the coast but remained strongly involved in Bush Traditions.

Audiences from his Folk Festival and folk club days may well mainly remember him for his often-unorthodox approach and stage persona, including the famous tutu and fairy wings. Underpinning this though was a profound commitment to the notion of a folk community; and a lot of serious thought, purpose, and innovation about making spaces work and the role of the MC in getting audience and musicians together.

Through all this Bill made many friends from all over the world. His philosophy to life and to things folk could be summarised in his admonition that "there are no strangers here - just friends we have not met yet." The wide range of tributes since his passing - not just from his many friends but also former sparring partners and national and international performers - are testimony to this.

Editor

The Lark in the Morning Interview Archive

Simon Kravitz has almost finished inputting the artist interviews Jane and he have played on Lark in the Morning. These are on the Lark YouTube page as videos where anyone can listen to them. They're at

https://www.facebook.com/2XXLark/videos/?ref=page_internal.

Artists so far included are

Ado Barker, Andy Irvine, April Verch, Bernard Carney, Bob Fox, Brian Peters, Catherine Fraser, Catherine Fraser & Sam Leske, Chris While & Julie Matthews, Daori Farrell, Damien Dempsey, Daniel Champagne, Edgelarks, Elsie & Maggie Rigby, Enda Kenny, Eric Bogle, The Fagans, Faith I Branko, Flying Emus, Faustus, Galax Bogtrotters, Gino Lupari, Gordie McKeeman, Irish Mythen & Song 55 Years, James Fagan, Jane Thompson, Jenny M Thomas, Jeremy Kittel, John and Maggie Carty, John Thompson & Nicole Murray (Cloudstreet), Kate Burke & Ruth Hazelton, Keith McKenry, Lily & King, Liz Frencham, London Klezmer Orchestra, Lucy Wise, Luke Plumb, Maire ni Chathasaigh, Mal Webb, Mara Kiek, Martin Carthy, Margret Roadknight, Melisande & Song Le Vin Est Bon, Pekka Mikkola & Juoni Jontenen, Pekka Pentikainen, New Macedon Rangers, Riccardo Tesi, Richard Perso, Rory McLeod, Shane Howard, Soursob Bob, Steven Baamba Albert, Ted Egan, Tom Lewis, Transylvaniacs, Whitetop Mountaineers

English Country Dancing

ECD resumed in February 2021 on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at North Canberra Baptist Church from 7:30pm as usual. Covid-19 restrictions apply and as ECD dances are generally a bit slower, and have less close dancing, we can choose suitable dances while maintaining the general feel, style and technique of dancing from 1650 to modern day.

At the first workshop the group was enhanced by about 10 young and energetic dancers all eager to get back to the dance floor. Having previously attended our Dance for Dancers they quickly picked up the dance moves and added their own energy and improvisations. The assurance to newcomers is that "correct dance steps are optional, broad smiles are mandatory". And most smiles lasted well beyond the end of the class, especially mine.

We were able to do a couple of dances that I introduced at DITP for Valentines day, one 'hard' dance from 1650, and three easier dances to relax and just do it.

Colin Towns



Photos: Jane O'Donohue

The Merry Muse Re-opens

The Muse had a successful re-opening at the Irish Club on 14 February. We were treated to a great set from the featured performer, Ian MacDougall, and there were a number of new faces in the (now pre-booked virtual) blackboard section. The next session on 21 March (as the newsletter is going to print) will feature Baz Cooper.

The Sunday April 11 feature act will be Shortis and Simpson, Canberra's leading musical satirists, Shortis and Simpson, will be casting their satirical eyes over recent events with classics from their repertoire mixed with bang-up-to-date material. Come and join them as they burst the Canberra bubble, relive the joys of COVID apps and lockdowns, and generally regale you with tales of political shenanigans. They're funny, poignant, and topical.

There is a lot of interest in this show, so there will be an honorary booking system. To reserve your place, send an email to Eileen at eileennew23@gmail.com if you want to be sure of entry.



Photos: *Ralph Martin*

TiNMuGs Return to the Irish Club

The Tuesday Night Music Group returned to the Irish Club on 9 February. The group has continued to meet weekly throughout most of the restriction period through use of people's homes and other venues, which will still be used on alternate weeks when the Irish Club is not available. However, the large attendances showed that nothing can quite beat the atmosphere of playing in the club.



Photos: Michael Szabo / Val Carmody



GOOD FOLK

A FOLK EXPERIENCE IN QUEANBEYAN

Saturday 3 April and Sunday 4 April with concerts at venues in Queanbeyan featuring the great performers below at various venues in Queanbeyan. For details of concert times and locations see [Good Folk - National Folk Festival](#). For the free sessions schedules, see page 10.



Kristabelle and the Southern Jubilee Ringers



Kay Proudlove



Alex & Annette Hood 'A Tribute' with Paverty



Kim Yang Trio



Chloe & Jason Roweth



Stiff Gins



Little Quirks



Timothy James Bowen



Omar Musi with Guy and the Fox



Scroggin



Mikangelo and the Black Sea Gentlemen



Lucy Sugerman



1920



FourPlay String Quartet



New Graces



Fanny Lumsden with Montgomery Church



Den Hanrahan & the Rum Runners

The **Good Folk Session Venue** is at **CAMPBELL & GEORGE** (corner of Campbell and George Streets, Queanbeyan. Admission is FREE. You must check in at the main entry on arrival. ID is required. Featuring Lerida pop-up wine bar, damper and stew, Guinness, merchandise and raffle tickets.

SESSION SCHEDULE SATURDAY 3 APRIL



AUSSIE TUNES SATURDAY 3 APRIL 9:30AM - 11:30AM

Session leaders:

**Ray Mulligan & Moir
Holmes**

A selection of dance tunes collected in Australia over the past 70 years.

Sessions will start slow to include beginners and move a bit faster in the second hour.

Sheet music will be available.



ENGLISH SESSION MUSTER SATURDAY 3 APRIL 2:00PM - 5:00PM

Session leaders:

**Jackie Luke & Greg
Wilson**

Dust off those accordions, tubas, & fiddles and enjoy some rollicking English tunes with our popular English session.



SEA SHANTY SESSION SATURDAY 3 APRIL 5:30PM - 6:30PM

This will be a 'demonstration' of Sea Shanty Songs presented by the [Canberra Shanty Club](#).

Come along and tap your feet but sadly, due to COVID, you cannot sing.

This could be your opportunity to consider a Sea Shanty singing career!



OLD TIME SESSION SATURDAY 3 APRIL 7:00PM - 10:00PM

Session organiser:

John Taylor

Session leaders: **The Fiddlers**

The old time session will include some of the region's finest players. So come along and tap your foot and be transported to a simpler time and place with some of the best traditional acoustic music on the circuit.

SESSION SCHEDULE SUNDAY 4 APRIL



AUSSIE TUNES SUNDAY 4 APRIL 9:30AM - 11:30AM

Session leaders:

**Ray Mulligan & Moir
Holmes**

A selection of dance tunes collected in Australia over the past 70 years.

Sessions will start slow to include beginners and move a bit faster in the second hour.

Sheet music will be available.



IRISH SESSION SUNDAY 4 APRIL 2:00PM - 5:00PM

Session leader:

David Game

No explanation needed...



SEA SHANTY SESSION SUNDAY 4 APRIL 5:30PM - 6:30PM

This will be a 'demonstration' of Sea Shanty Songs presented by the [Canberra Shanty Club](#).

Come along and tap your feet but sadly, due to COVID, you cannot sing.

This could be your opportunity to consider a Sea Shanty singing career!



CONTRA SESSION SUNDAY 4 APRIL 7:00PM - 10:00PM

Session leader:

Rob Mahony

Come and play some contra music. We provide the music and lead a session that includes Quebec, Appalachian, New England, and more.

Music (printed dots) provided.

MFS Dance and Music Sessions Contacts

As most sessions are now either in hibernation or operating in ways that are liable to sudden change due to the COVID situation, members interested in joining, should disregard previously advertised session times and get in touch with the contacts listed below.

Monday Dance Workshops	Mark Simmons 0421 814 718
Contra	Linda Aunela 0437 350 254 lindaaunela@yahoo.com.au
English Country Dancing	Colin Towns 0417 020 615
Irish Set Dancing	Christine 0413 168 562
Australian Settlers Music	Ray Mulligan 6247 4725
Tuesday Night Music Group	Julie 6282 3523 or Robert 6291 9135

Other Dance and Music Sessions Contacts

Canberra Celtic Choir	canberraceltticchoir1@gmail.com
Canberra Scottish Fiddlers	markjenner@grapevine.com.au
Canberra Shanty Club	canberrashantyclub@gmail.com
Earthly Delights Historic Dance,	John & Aylwen Gardiner-Garden 0409817623
English Traditional Music Sessions	Jackie Luke 0417 679 139
Folk Dance Canberra	folkdancecanberra@gmail.com
Hoskintown Acoustic Kitchen Jam	Diane Cross 0402 644 450.
Jammalong	Dianne Porter porter32@bigpond.com
Murrumbateman Acoustic Music Club	wal.brewer@gmail.com
Old Time American Jam Session	Donna Vaughan 6258 9485
Queanbeyan Bush Poets	Laurie McDonald 6253 9856 or 0432 488 828.
Saturday Slow Session	Anna at acrab@netspeed.com.au
Surly Griffin Morris	Simon Wall 0404 859 404

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Monaro Folk Society, Inc. 2020-21 Committee

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Appointed Officials

Membership: Christine Gifford - membership@monarofolk.org.au; Merry Muse Coordinator: Vacant; Merry Muse PA Coordinator: Pierre Sibilant; *Monaro Musings* Editor: Keith Ogborn - editor@monarofolk.org.au; Bookkeeper: Linda Aunela - payments@monarofolk.org.au; Web Manager: Neil Glassford - webmaster@monarofolk.org.au