

# MONARO FOLK SOCIETY AGM 2017

## President's Report

2016 – 17 has been a fairly steady year for MFS. Most subgroups reported a profit and there has been an overall financial gain. Membership renewals are down slightly so we need to do some follow up on this. It is mostly due to our aging population of folkies, and is a trend in other places such as Sydney and Melbourne, however it does show how much we need to work on increasing our membership by a younger group. This year we have begun some initiatives that have promise in terms of putting the society in the public view as well as looking to the future: the first of these was the National Folk Festival.

In years gone by the Merry Muse ran a blackboard event at the festival and this was well patronised: unfortunately, due to politics, this opportunity was withdrawn by the NFF and our only participation was then by our dance groups doing performances or music groups playing for dances or running workshops and sessions. This year we reached an agreement with the NFF whereby we supplied the PA for the Central Park stage, organised the sound people to run it and Eileen also ran a Merry Muse blackboard event on the stage in the evenings. The NFF agreed to our setting up our MFS marquee there as a centre for distribution of promotional material and to give MFS members a home/operations base at the NFF. This was quite successful, considering it was a new initiative, and the NFF has agreed that we do it again next year. We have drawn up a very comprehensive management plan based on lessons learned this year. It was quite a lot of work for a few people, but an enjoyable cooperative experience which is certainly worth it. A few people put in a lot of work in preparing, installing and running the stand throughout the festival. In particular, my thanks to John, Claude, Veronique, Bob, Pierre and Rita in making this endeavour successful and thanks to those members who dropped in and gave some time to promote the society – we hope to find a few more folk to assist next year and spread the load. It is a great opportunity as many Canberra people attend the festival.

Another initiative has been the establishment of a series of more frequent Kids' bush dances by the Bush Dance Group (each second month): the response to the first two has been very good so we will continue the project. I am also hoping to get young musicians involved in playing at these dances - we need to encourage them to experience and play our kind of music.

We have been saddened this year by the passing of a number of members and people from the larger folk scene. Mike Paterson's death was a shock to us all, and Mike's concertina playing and dry sense of humour will be sadly missed at Monday Bush dance workshops. However, it does highlight our need to pass on traditions to a younger generation of musicians.

With regard to promotion, MFS also participated at the annual CAP Expo at the Old Bus Depot with an information stand displaying musical instruments, which led to many discussions with passers-by. Those who play instruments were happy to hear that we have open sessions that they are welcome to attend, while others expressed interest in our dance workshops. Many thanks to the members who came and spent some time on the stand chatting with these folks. We also had a time slot on the dance stage with a join in by the public - thanks to Mark for the calling and the dancers who turned up to make it a success.

The new website [www.monarofolk.org.au](http://www.monarofolk.org.au) is now accessible with a fair amount of information already uploaded. Material will gradually be moved from the wiki which will only continue to function for the rest of this year. I invite you to take a look at it and offer constructive criticism as to whether you find it attractive and easier to navigate. We realise there is still a lot of information to go up, however we are more than happy to have your feedback on what you want to see up there – this can help guide our priorities as there is a huge amount of material on the wiki, some of it superfluous and some rather outdated. We have established a member login system so I ask you all to register on the site for access to the Members Portal.

Finally, my thanks to the committee for their support over the year in ongoing administration of the society and in particular the new initiatives which help breathe new life into what we do.

Geoff Kell

MFS President 2016-17