

Acoustic Routes

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President's annual report (presented to AGM)

Wellington Folk Centre Inc (Acoustic Routes)

Annual Report for the Folk-Year September 2009 - August 2010

A Recap of the Year September 2009 to August 2010

This has been a major year for Acoustic Routes which began with the election of a new committee (Mary Livingston, Col Wright, Peter Denee, Mike Maguire, Jill Brasell, later joined by Kevin Ikin) whose first task was to attend to the questionnaire feedback that we received from you all in September 2009. We have addressed almost every single feedback/request for you, including offering different types of events, changing venues and nights, reducing our subscription rates, introducing a membership card and going electronic with the Balladeer. Most of the feedback that we have received to date has been very favourable and we have been successful in opening the club up to a broader audience by locating ourselves more centrally at Katipo and the Ruby Lounge. I acknowledge there are still a few wrinkles to iron out with the e-Balladeer, largely to do with the mailing lists.

We were really pleased with upping the club's profile at the Acoustic Routes 40th Birthday Wellyfest concert in 2009. The format worked well and had an inclusive feel and we had great feedback from the Festival Committee as well as individuals who were there. This resulted in us putting in another bid this year, and as most of you know, Acoustic Routes is hosting the Welcome Concert on the Friday night. YAY!

Financially we have pulled ahead from last year, which is good news and means that the changes have brought us closer to the target set in the 2009 Strategic Plan to rebuild our reserves back to earlier levels as a buffer against both planned and unexpected turns of events. Being in slightly noisier venues means that sound and equipment has more of a role to play, and we need to be able to afford to maintain or replace things. We also want to ensure that while striving for the best bang for buck for club members at AR events, the musicians who entertain us should get paid at fair rates.

Participatory events, as always, have proved popular and we have seen a number of new (and younger) performers join the club's activities this year as everyone has been getting used to the new venues. We have seen steady attendance at both new venues which is gratifying and I look forward to more feedback at the AGM on the way forward for the next 12 months.

Club concerts and events 2009-10

A summary of the year's club concerts follows:

Month	Main Club Concert	Other significant Events
September	On the Waterfront (Chris Prowse)	Dan Gallagher concert; Levin Folk Club visit; singaround with songbooks
October	Wellington Folk Festival 40 years young concert	Ken Nicol concert at the Paramount cafe
November	Karen Clarke/Mary Livingston & Sarah Duckworth	Phil Garland concert; Songwriter's workshop with Bob Cooper-Grundy
December	None	Farewell to Toi Poneke Christmas party
January	None	Summer break; 1st Katipo session
February	Emily Smith Band	Danny Spooner; Katipo B/B session

Month	Main Club Concert	Other significant Events
March	Her Make Believe Band	Katipo B/B session
April	Paddy Burgin Wooden Box Band	Katipo B/B session
May	Club Showcase Concert	Katipo B/B session
June	Ceilidh with the Jimmies	Katipo B/B session
July	Bob Cooper Grundy	Katipo B/B session
August	Blind date concert	Riverslea retreat, Katipo B/B session

A conscious decision to reduce the number of AR events from weekly to twice a month was made at the end of 2009 to reflect declining numbers, a high maintenance programme, and the increase in complementary regular folkie events such as Mojo Acoustic, Welsh Dragon and others. Rather than compete for audiences, we considered this to be a more pragmatic approach. The Katipo Blackboard sessions aimed to cater for the previous singaround and blackboard sessions held at Toi Poneke, while the Ruby Lounge Concerts replaced the more formal monthly or special concerts. Other events such as the Club Showcase Concert concept introduced in 2008 was retained for 2009 as was the Blind Date concert featuring club members and friends. We also put on a ceilidh and the 40 years young concert at the Wellington Folk Festival featured many acts from the club, including Ron Craig, Andrea Coop, Christine Roseveare, the Morris Dancers, Mary Hubble, Don Franks and Jill Brasell, Murray Kilpatrick, Helen Dorothy, Karen Clarke, Bob Cooper-Grundy, Kate Marshall, Col Wright and Liz Merton. Opportunities for support acts at concerts have been provided for members and other folkies whenever possible, and these have included Rob Joass and Jo Muir, Diana Bastion, Julian Ward, Ang Kidd, Catriona and Alistair Cuthill, Helen Dorothy, Laurie Dameron, Mary Hubble, Celia Briar, Duncan Davidson, Murray Kilpatrick, Sue Rose, Don Franks, Philippa Boy, and Peter Denee these past 12 months.

Many more individuals have contributed songs and items to Katipo sessions and altogether, I think there has been a conscious effort from the committee to profile a wide range of our folks at our events, as well as provide opportunity for new folks and travellers.

A brand new music programme is nearing completion for the coming year, and it is exciting to see such prestigious groups wanting to play for our club, and also be happy with the support acts that we have been providing. Continuing to give people a fair go at opportunities to perform is a high priority. I am also thrilled that there is some flexibility emerging over the Katipo format such that occasionally we put on extra concerts or workshops, feature club members or stay late for a spontaneous jam.

Club Member Activities Many of our members are heavily involved in organising significant acoustic music events outside our folk club, or are involved with other folk clubs that 'up the profile' of folk music in the region, and improve the excitement about the whole folk scene, which in turn feeds back positively to the club. These are positive things and I am amazed at how we all find the time!

Examples include: Laftah Festival, Mojo Acoustic, Welsh dragon, Museum of City and Sea, the Wellington Folk Festival, Strathean, Waiohoanga, House Concerts, Levin Folk Club, Mayfair Acoustic, Pukerua Bay Folk Club, Bluegrass Soc., Lembas, CD/DVD launch events. I am sure there are more and it is a growing, moveable feast. I am really keen to explore opportunities to improve support for each other to ensure that we don't spread ourselves so thin that we end up fragmenting into a thousand unsustainable pieces. I have no idea what this will entail but will be seeking ideas from you.

Heartfelt Thanks

There are many individuals and organisations beyond the Committee who have provided help and direct assistance to the club this year including:

Laura Collins of the Ruby Lounge for taking us on and Dave Hughes the owner of the Katipo Cafe who took us on as a complete unknown! John Burnell (our website Manager), Kay and Tony Larsen of Datastream Instant Printing (who have been printing the Balladeer and other material for us at mates' rates for decades), Sue Ikin (who organised stuffing envelopes and posting the Balladeer), Nik Curry (who continued to support us with Balladeer content, editing and formatting until the start of 2010), Ruth Birnie (for advice and proof reading of the Balladeer), Cathy Dyer for interviewing people for the Balladeer, Jaap Jasperse for helping us in our hour of need re going electronic for the Balladeer; Andrew Bicknell for his advice too; Anne McGregor for running the Riverslea retreat last year; Gerard Hudson for continuing to put

together the monthly update of events in the region and last but by no means least, Catriona and Alistair Cuthill for providing discounts to members of Acoustic Routes.

A BIG hand for the Committee

This year the bouquets go to: Jill Brasell for taking on the Balladeer in February, to Col Wright for being there unfailingly; to Peter Denee for his persistence and drive as Treasurer, to Mike Maguire as Secretary and also for just being there for almost every event, to Kevin Ikin who has taken on publicity and sound master with quiet flair. Every one of us has pulled our weight and worked hard to keep the club vibrant and in touch with its members, develop opportunities for you and keep up with the play. It has been fun working together, and everyone has given a lot of their precious free time and energy to meet the needs of the club. It is important to acknowledge that this is, as always, done on a voluntary basis with no perks at all. We even managed to make some good music together, which was a real bonus!

In Conclusion

So thanks to all our members for continuing to support Acoustic Routes - and to the many of you who have personally thanked me or expressed appreciation and confidence in my and the Committee's efforts this year. I look forward to seeing how things evolve further over the next 12 months.

Here's to the next year for Acoustic Routes.

Mary Livingston, President 2009-10 (prepared 20 August 2010)

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