

The Balladeer

Monthly newsletter of Acoustic Routes, Wellington's folk music club

Acoustic Routes

www.acousticroutes.org.nz

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NOTE: This newsletter can be printed out from a pdf located on the website
www.acousticroutes.org.nz

1. Phil Drane in Concert



Phil Drane: Singer, guitarist and songwriter, at MEOW, 9 Edward St Wellington, Wednesday 9th Feb 7.30 pm. Door charge \$10 (members), \$15 (public).

Phil returned to folk music and live performance just three years ago and has been delighting audiences everywhere he has played. He has a natural ability to engage easily with any audience, large or small, and loves the spontaneity and interaction of performing live.

Phil's performances are a heady brew of traditional and contemporary folk songs from his own English folk roots and material from other cultures that have influenced his life, along with his own well-crafted compositions such as

the award-winning 'Song for Jackie'.

Phil's guitar work is much admired everywhere he performs, particularly his fulsome use of open tunings, and his playing has been described as 'reminiscent of the very best exponents of finger-style guitar'. An eclectic repertoire of songs, beautifully arranged and presented, smooth vocals and silky guitar, mixed with a soupcon of chat and witty banter and it all adds up to an experience not to be missed.

Phil on the web: www.phildrane.com and www.myspace.com/phildrane

The support act for Phil will feature songs from the newly published, revised and expanded edition of the 1970s *Song of a Young Country* edited by Neil Colquhoun. It is a beautifully illustrated hard-back, with some 20 more NZ songs added to it by the publisher Steele Roberts & Associates Ltd since the first edition. Roger Steele and Robin Brew will be singing some songs from the book, and Neil Colquhoun himself is attending. Neil may even sing a couple of songs himself. The book will be available for purchase at the concert at a discounted rate.

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2. Tim O'Brien Two Oceans Trio concert



Sunday 27 February, The Paramount Theatre, Wellington:
7: 30pm, admission \$45

[Discount of \$5 to Acoustic Routes cardholders. IMPORTANT - please let Peter Denee treasurer@acousticroutes.org.nz know before 6 February if you want a discounted ticket. Acoustic Routes has to pre-book with the event organisers. If you wait until the day you will have to pay full price.]

Bluegrass legend and Grammy award winner Tim O'Brien is coming back to New Zealand shores with the Two Oceans Trio.

With Tim hot off a tour with Mark Knopfler (Dire Straits), the Trio are playing 8 venues around the country, one of which is in Wellington. Their concerts will feature a mix of Tim's songs along with the traditional Americana folk tunes that can be found on the Trio's self-titled album.

Despite the three different continents, with two oceans between them, the musicians in the Two Oceans Trio thrive on the common language of roots, bluegrass, trad and Americana music. Accompanying O'Brien on his second NZ tour are the other two members of the Two Oceans Trio - Trevor Hutchinson on double bass (Waterboys / Lunasa / Eric Bibb) and Gerry Paul on guitar (Grada), both highly respected musicians in their own right.

When asked to comment on how he thought NZ audiences received the band's blend of bluegrass and Americana music, Tim says: 'They have that special combination of being knowledgeable, energetic, and open minded. The Kiwis seem to be up for anything that's real. We just did our thing and the audience filled us up so we could give back more.'

www.timobrien.net

www.myspace.com/twooceanstrio

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3. Note from the president



Happy New Year Everyone! I trust that you are all well rested and recuperated from the on-again, off-again summer that we have been experiencing. January has already seen some Acoustic Routes activity including a very pleasant inaugural home-based singaround at my house (even though I say so myself!) and a fabulous concert by Steve Turner at our potential new concert venue, MEOW at 9 Edward St.

The owner of MEOW is interested in us but a little tentative about our attendance. The place is really a very good venue for us: it's almost like it's got the best aspects of the Ruby Lounge and Katipo combined. It's a retro funky place with a very comfortable and ambient space. It's on street level, and although you cannot park in Edward St (which is a small lane off Victoria St just past Manners St) there is parking close by. The food is tasty with a wider range, and a good selection at the budget end. There is no traffic noise. The beer is great too. So as negotiations continue, we hope that you will support the next concert there on Wednesday 9 February at this critical 'getting established' stage.

Just a wee note about the use of facebook (fb). Many of you are flat-out against fb but then, many others of you use it. In fact there is even an Acoustic Routes fb site (set up by Gerard some 18 months ago). MEOW have asked that we explore use of fb for announcing our concerts. I passed on your likely protests, but there is a young man who really wants to see that we are using modern communication tools for spreading the word. Plus, there are MEOW punters or other fb users who may be interested. So have a look at the sites and exercise a bit of tolerance if you receive stuff you don't want - just hit delete. I am not exactly experienced in setting up events or using fb myself and have not learned the fish-hooks yet. All our other normal avenues for informing you of what is coming up will continue.

Events in February/early March include:

Sunday 6 February, Waitangi Day party from 2pm, Annie and Roy's (21 Gordon Road, Plimmerton), BYO for BBQ around 5pm; bring instruments too. This is a special occasion as Annie and Roy are getting wed that morning and are looking forward to celebrating with us at the party.

Wednesday 9 February, Phil Drane Concert at 7.30pm, MEOW, with a focus on the new edition of *Song of a Young Country* by Neil Colqhoun in the first half.

Sun 20 February Singaround at 7.30pm, Jill and Don's boatshed (details below)

Sunday 27 February, Tim O'Brien Two Oceans concert at 7.30pm, Paramount Theatre. This concert is officially a Wellington Fringe Festival event but the organisers have kindly agreed to give Acoustic Routes members a discount (see details above). So because of the clash of dates and the discount, we have decided to make it our Acoustic Routes event in lieu of our monthly concert.

Thursday 3 March Kieran Halpin concert at 7.30pm, MEOW. Since 1979 Irish songwriter Kieran Halpin has recorded 17 albums, one live DVD and published two songbooks with 50 songs in each book. His albums are always something to look forward to, but it is live on stage where Halpin makes his mark, be it to a small folk club audience or a large festival crowd. He comes highly recommended to us by Enda Kenny and Lindsey Martin who were guests at the 2010 Wellington Folk Festival.

So there we are. Things are slowly falling into place for 2011 after all the shake-ups at the end of last year. The blackboard concert venue has yet to be finalised, but we have narrowed it down to two options and will let you know that outcome as soon as we know. Thanks once again to everyone who has written in or spoken to us with suggestions and ideas.

Best wishes to you all

Mary Livingston

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4. Acoustic Routes singaround

Singaround sessions (where people sit in a circle and take a turn to perform an item) are now officially reinstated. The first home-based session at Mary's house on 12 January went very well indeed, and other volunteer hosts have come forward.

So on Sunday 20 February, this month's club singaround will be at Don and Jill's boatshed on the shore of Porirua Harbour. The address is Boatshed 21, Onepoto Road, Titahi Bay. To get there from Porirua, follow the signs for Titahi Bay but when the road veers away from the water, turn right into Onepoto Road and carry on to the car park at the end. Look for the green boatshed with a parrot and deer antlers.

You are welcome to BYO beer or wine, but please remember to take away any bottles or cans you bring, as there is no rubbish collection from the boatsheds. Also note that there is no toilet in the boatshed itself! But there is a public toilet about a minute's walk away.

The singaround will run from 7.30 to 10pm. There is no door charge but a koha is requested to cover tea/coffee etc.

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5. Other Acoustic Routes opportunities

Are you ready to perform?

Opportunities are available for support acts for many of our monthly concerts. You'll do a 20 to 30 minute spot in the first half of the show, before the main invited guest. It's a great thing to work towards and can stretch you on your

musical journey.

Current Acoustic Routes members will be given priority, but we also welcome non-members. We don't always know who is keen to have a go, so do please tell us if you want to. Talk to a committee member, or drop an email to president@acousticroutes.org.nz. We will also be calling for submissions from you to perform in the Acoustic Routes Showcase Concert in May shortly. If you wish to perform please send one of us a note.

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6. Reviews

There was plenty to keep folkies safety off the streets and in the fields over the post-Christmas New Year break, with three acoustically-focused music festivals and a local concert on offer.

LAFTAH FEST, OTAKI



Peter Dyer was among those who joined the fun and frolics at the gathering closest to home for Wellingtonians. He writes:

I am unable to report with authority on the entire 2010-11 Laftah Fest, having spent only about 48 hours at the six-day gathering. However, I can personally testify that, between early afternoon 30 January and noon on New Year's Day, there was a heap of silliness, good fun and great music.

It took about 45 minutes to crawl the last 5 kilometres from Wellington to Otaki. Crawling may actually have been faster. My wife and I pulled into Bridge Lodge, and, though barely 100 metres from Highway 1, we were instantly in a different world.

It was peaceful. Quiet. Early in the hot afternoon, very few were about. A good lot of the women, it turned out, were at a belly dancing workshop.

There was the occasional man in a skirt strolling by. Most everybody else seemed to be relaxing - napping or chatting or softly jamming in the shade.

What is it, by the way, with men wearing dresses and makeup at New Year's celebrations? And why weren't there any women dressed as men? Inquiring minds need to know.

Fancy dress, in fact, was the theme. There was high tea later that afternoon where the ladies and men got to strut their stuff. Though the suggested mode was 'Great Gatsby', any sort of departure from the norm was accepted. Flappers, cowboys, barely disguised Morris dancers, more men in dresses, women in little black dresses - who says folkies are fashion-challenged?

By the time the New Year's feast got under way, the show was in full swing. Aside from MC Roy McGuinness holding the ladder for sound man Keith and having a look up his dress, everyone pretty much behaved themselves.

Jay Gatsby moved from Long Island, New York to Bourbon St, New Orleans just for the occasion and was greeted with early and elegant jazz standards on piano, sax and bass.

Some of the hardest working 'folk' musicians you'll run into provided serious electric fun for after-dinner dancing, one bunch helped along by an all-girl chorus. Can you say 'Da doo ron ron ron, da doo ron ron?'

Fireworks by the campfire at the stroke of midnight, including the odd horizontal shot into the crowd, set the scene to start off 2011 with truly inspiring late night jamming. The later it got, the better it got.

In true democratic folkie fashion, everybody who wanted a piece of the action got it, whether it was in the kitchen or at the blackboard, building the stage set or performing on it. I reckon a sizeable majority were involved in both work and play.

So thanks go to everybody, but perhaps first and foremost to the committee: Annie McGregor, Roy McGuinness, Peter Denee, Philippa Gander, and Murray and Julie Kilpatrick for doing the hard yards and setting the tone.



I'd write more but the op shop closes in 20 minutes and there was this cute little floral print shift in the window . . .

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THE TUI FARM FESTIVAL, NELSON



Rural reflections from material supplied by Robin Brew:

It's the eighth time that Steve and Carol Rose have hosted this festival on their farm near Tapawera, south-west of Nelson City and there was a full house of almost 300 campers, including a big contingent of Tahora regulars. A highly organised programme, starting on New Year's Eve, that worked well, with concerts in a central marquee and informal sessions at designated campfire areas.

The festival site itself is also well planned and laid out. As an example, there are separate camping areas for the midnight ravers and those who like to get some sleep.

As the website promised, there was a bit of a focus this year on 'hot' Bluegrass, provided by Auckland's Wires and Wood (Michael Young, Dave Warren, Brian Christianson and Lott) and from Dunedin, The Saddle Hill Billies (Hyrarn Ballard, and John Dodd of The Chaps, with Read Hudson and John Egeres). But if you didn't want bluegrass there was plenty more on offer, from the likes of Christchurch trio No Sax or Violins (Dave Hart, Geoff Anders and Dave Lloyd) or Nelson's home-grown Jiggery Folkery.

The Tui festival was a very participatory affair, with a 'blind date' concert, a ukulele orchestra, born out of a workshop run by Mike Gough, a recorder group and magnificent festival choir, nurtured and conducted by Anna Heinz.

The other big plus was the time and space set aside for jamming at campfire sites around the venue and there were some excellent sessions after the evening concerts finished.

Those who came to Tui Farm were fully aware of the terrible loss of a family member that Carol and Steve had suffered from the Pike River disaster, but they followed the wishes of the hosts, who insisted that the gathering should not be a wake.

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WHARE FLAT FOLK FESTIVAL, DUNEDIN

Sue Harkness was born and bred in Dunedin and, according to at least one local folkie, is still considered at least partly a local, despite living elsewhere for the last 24 years. She writes:

Whare Flat is my festival, walking into it felt like coming home. This year the festival seemed a bit smaller than usual, with lots of people off doing other things. They missed a great selection of acts though.

The String Contingent - a young Australian/Scottish trio who I was fortunate to hear again in Wellington early in the New Year - play celtic / jazz / classical crossover, with fire, passion and absolute expertise. They've only been together a couple of years and will be well worth watching in the future. Having heard them in concert only, we all had our socks blown off when they played the second half of the New Year's Eve barn dance. High energy for all.



The Mara Band (pictured) specialise in eastern European songs and dance music, with a particular focus on Bulgarian tunes. The mixture of guitar or bouzouki, percussion, sax and Mara's amazing vocals in the weird and wonderful rhythms was hypnotising. When clarinet player Tony Gorman joined them, it sounded as if there were at least 20 band members, not just 4. I hope more of New Zealand will get to see them sometime in the near future.

Jackie Bristow is from Gore but is now based in Austin Texas where her alt country ballads are making her a name and a living. While I wasn't previously aware of her songs, apparently they

have featured on the soundtracks of a number of TV shows, including *Home and Away*, *Shortland Street* and *Outrageous Fortune*.

Wellingtonians will all be familiar with Dave Murphy, but I haven't had the chance to catch him for some years and it was good to hear him again. Late night jam sessions were enlivened by not only Dave's presence and songs, but also Mike Harding and his deep well of NZ music. Mike took that experience not only to the adults but also to the kids in a concert featuring animal songs (Cows with Guns anyone?).

Other guests included Footspa; BB & Alex - both of whom were guests at Wellyfest last year (this was BB's last NZ gig before heading to her exchange scholarship at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC, USA); Steve McGlone (pictured) - who I have always known as a multi-instrumentalist but sings a nice song or two as well; Hazel Cunliffe, the youth guest, who is shaping up to be a very interesting young songwriter, and Leo LaDell, who runs the annual blues forum at the festival.



Cashy Yates ran a series of dance classes for those wanting to learn something other than barn dances and there was an extensive children's programme as well, featuring instrument making (drums, slide whistles and kazoos), games, a juggler and a fairy.

The weather was the usual feature - sometimes hot, sometimes wet, but mostly pretty kind.

All in all, a great way to end one year and start the next, tempered only by the news late on 30 December that Mark Laws had died in a diving accident. Mark was one of the 'wild young men' of the early festival years; a member of the (in)famous Waipango Billy Lickers - a group of mostly army mates who were a feature of many Whare Flat Festivals - and a stalwart member of the Pioneer Pog 'n Scroggin Bush Band. Mark left his wild days behind him a while ago; gaining a PhD in IT from Otago University where he then taught for a number of years, and more recently leading the development of programmes and support systems for staff and students around information communication technology at Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi, in Whakatane where he was an associate professor. He will be greatly missed; by his family, his people, his colleagues in ICT and his mates amongst the folk scene.

Post script by Kevin Ikin: I would like to share Sue's remarks about Mark's death, which also shook me to the core. I was in the Pog band for a couple of years before moving to Wellington. Mark was one of the original members and I came to regard him as a mentor, as well as a band-mate. I learned a huge amount from him and the other members about performing and what playing in a dance band is all about. He continued to inspire in his university work. His passing is a huge loss. Haere ra, Maaka.

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STEVE TURNER CONCERT AT MEOW, WELLINGTON

At least two committee members found the first concert of the year in the new venue enjoyable. Kevin Ikin writes:

I had seen Steve Turner on his first visit to our shores, so I had a fair idea of what to expect at Acoustic Routes' opening concert of the year. It was a surprise though when he told me that tour had been way back in 1983. How time passes!

He's been a hardy regular on the British folk circuit since the 1960s. I gather from comments he made at the concert that he's no longer performing and touring as a living, but his name has continued to crop up in music mags like *Froots* and *Living Tradition* over the years.

We got to see Steve in Wellington before he headed north for the Auckland Folk Festival at the end of January and a jolly nice preview it was. He's a canny singer of songs mainly from the wider Brit tradition, but not exclusively, and he accompanies them in fine fashion, mainly on concertina and occasionally cittern. He's also a dab hand on the mandolin, with some lively tune sets to break up the songs; a bit of a one-man band, in fact.

He gave us a well-balanced programme but there were two songs that stood out for me, and neither was from his trad repertoire. He did a top-notch version of James K Baxter's 'By the Dry Cardrona', with a concertina arrangement featuring flowing Bach-like arpeggios. And he made an equally fine job of the Paul Metzger's song, 'Peace Descends', reminding us of the musical treasures

that Paul has given us. [Hi Paul - we hope you are fit and well and enjoy the read!]

The night started with spots from Mary Livingston, Carol Shortis, Peter Dyer and me. It's a pity there wasn't a bigger turn-out for an event that generated plenty of warm fuzzies in a new venue, 'MEOW' in Edward Street. It's been running for years under different guises, but in its current form the cafe feels absolutely right as an acoustic music setting. Done out in 60s-70s retro style with comfy sofas as well as dining chairs and tables, and on the stage a china cabinet displaying your mother's best crockery. Lots of positive comments too about the food, coffee and beers on offer.

Acoustic Routes is planning some further concerts there, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we'll get some good attendances and things will work out, after the sad and sudden loss of Katipo and The Ruby Lounge last year.

Slainte, Kevin Ikin.

Musings and purrings by Philippa Gander:

A select few (20-25 in all) were treated to a memorable concert by Steve Turner at MEOW on January 12th. His understated performing style let you be carried away by his consummate musicianship - a beautifully nuanced voice that he accompanied by turns with a very rare Wheatstone English tenor/baritone/bass concertina or with a cittern. In between were several dazzling sets of tunes on the mandolin. This standard of traditional folk performance is a rare treat and I am really looking forward to hearing him again at Auckland Festival.

This was also my first visit to the Meow, which impressed. Rows of comfy couches and chairs can be pulled up to the stage area which sits in an overgrown bay window (floor-to-ceiling) looking out on to the lane behind the BNZ on Victoria Street (Edward Street). The furnishings are unashamedly retro - a few reminders of student flatting decor for some of us. Rain slipping down the myriad little windows later on, with subdued lighting, conjured up images of Victorian London. The menu is inner-city cafe prices but offers a range of cheaper options and everything that came to our table was very good. Cheap beer on Wednesday nights was an added treat. This looks like a great concert venue if the owner can be convinced that we can bring in the numbers to make it worth his while staying open.

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7. About Acoustic Routes

Acoustic Routes (Wellington Folk Centre Incorporated) is a club for people who enjoy playing and listening to folk and acoustic styles of music.

We have two to three main events each month: a blackboard concert (yet to be finalised for 2011), a home-based singaround usually on the second Sunday of the month at 7.30pm, and a concert on the 4th Sunday of the month at 7.30 pm, with featured performers and support acts. Sometimes there are additional concerts and other events.

Membership costs \$25 a year for individuals, \$40 for couples or families, or \$15 for students and beneficiaries. It entitles you to very reasonable door charge discounts at Acoustic Routes events and also at events put on by most other folk clubs. Members get priority access to performance opportunities, and can have input into the club's activities. To join, see Peter Denee, who's usually on the door at club events, or email him at treasurer@acousticroutes.org.nz.

Acoustic Routes publishes this newsletter (The Balladeer) at the start of every month, and also an acoustic gig guide for the Wellington region (Acoustic Routes update) in the middle of every month. To subscribe to either, contact publicity@acousticroutes.org.nz.

Acoustic Routes contacts

President: Mary Livingston president@acousticroutes.org.nz

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Website: www.acousticroutes.org.nz

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8. Other regular folk events & contacts in the region

Pukerua Bay Folk Club

When: 1st Thursday of month, 8 pm

Where: 9 Donlin Rd, Pukerua Bay

Contact: Murray or Julie Kilpatrick, (04)239 995, julmur@paradise.net.nz

Mainly Acoustic Music Club

When: 2nd Tuesday of month, 7.30pm

Where: Mayfair Cafe, 166 Main Street, Upper Hutt

Contact: Kevin & Sue Meehan (04) 970 4008
John & Susan Sutherland (04)528 2016

Wellington Bluegrass Society

When: 3rd Friday of month, 8.30 pm

Where: 54 Richmond Street, Petone

Contact: Andrew Bicknell, (04)477 0069, bluegrass@paradise.net.nz
www.huttcity.com/wellingtonbluegrass
www.myspace.com/thebluegrassclub

Mojo Acoustic

When: 2nd, 3rd and 4th Friday of month, 7pm

Where: Mojo Invincible, Willis Street

Contact: Ruth Birnie 04 905 3838, ruthbirnie@clear.net.nz
Niels Gedge 970 1170, n.gedge@xtra.co.nz

Acoustic Welsh Dragon

When: Last Thursday of month, 7.30pm

Where: Welsh Dragon Bar, Courtenay Place

Contact: Roy McGuinness
Niels Gedge 970 1170, n.gedge@xtra.co.nz

Welsh Dragon Unaccompanied Singing Session

When: Every Tuesday from 8pm

Where: Welsh Dragon Bar, Courtenay Place

Contact: Dave Barnes www.myspace.com/davidbarnesnz/

Morris dancing: Dave Barnes <http://www.morrisdancing.org.nz/>

Kapiti Live Music Club

When: 1st Wednesday of month, unplugged, acoustic rounds: 7:30 till 10pm
3rd Wednesday of month, blackboard, 7.30 pm, guest 8.30

Where: Valhalla Lounge and Garden, Poplar Avenue, Raumati South

Contact: Susan Colien-Reid, enquiry@klmc.org.nz, www.klmc.wellington.net.nz

Ceol Alba Scottish Music Club

When: 2nd and 4th Fridays of month

Contact: Lynne Scott, 565 0164 lynne@scott.gen.nz

Levin Folk Club

When: 2nd Friday of month, 7.30 pm, blackboard concert plus guest artist. \$5 entry includes supper

4th Friday of month, 7.30 pm, acoustic night. \$2
Where: Horowhenua, Scottish Society and Pipe Band hall, cnr Bartholomew Rd and Middlesex St.
Contact: Anne Campbell annemc@ihug.co.nz

Wairarapa Folk Club

When: 2nd Friday of month
Contact: Remco de Ket, or Jenny Fremantle 06 370 1021. Email wairarapafolkclub@paradise.net.nz

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