



NEWPORT
FIDDLE & FOLK CLUB

Annual Report 2023



NEWPORT FIDDLE AND FOLK CLUB INC.

AOO52294Z

ABN 11 515 884 899



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A

Aim of the Report

This report reviews the activities of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club for 2023. This was our 19th year of creating spaces for music making, storytelling and sharing poetry in Newport and in Hobsons Bay. We have created a range of activities and initiatives that continue to address the needs of our members, and this in turn serves and enriches our local and broader community.

The report will describe the club's activities for 2023 and assess how the aims of the club can best be met through our range of activities. The club aims to:

- Provide a venue for those interested in locally produced music
- Provide opportunities for amateur musicians to get together, play and learn from each other with an emphasis on, but not restricted to, folk music.
- Provide opportunities for non- musicians to join the club and participate in and enjoy the arts through listening, singing, and dancing.
- Provide opportunities that challenge our members to refine and develop their performance and presentation skills.

Beyond the monthly gatherings of the NFFC, the club has a role to play in the development of young and older musicians through workshops and other planned musical gatherings. The NFFC aims to develop links with sponsors of the Arts to source funding for professional musicians who will be able to provide both musical leadership and inspiration for developing musicians within the club.

This report will assess the extent to which the club is meeting these aims and identify goals that we can work towards in 2024 that will maintain the vitality of the club.

B

Introduction

The Annual Report has become a discipline of the club. There are reports going back to 2005 – just 12 months after the club was founded – and these have served the club well. They challenge the leaders of each of our groups to restate (and sometimes reexamine) their aims, to review how the aims have been achieved during the past 12 months, and then to imagine (and plan) how these aims will continue to be achieved in the year ahead. The process of collating the report is now a very interesting process. It **also serves to** reminds the committee of all that we have achieved, of all the leaders and volunteers who make things happen, and of the ways that the club has connected our members to each other, and connected the club to our community. As we enter our 20th year of making music, telling stories and building our community, I invite you to read the report and enjoy reviewing the club's past 12 months, and begin to imagine how you will contribute to the continued health and creativity of the Newport Fiddle & Folk Club. We need all the help we can get!!



Groups and Activities

In 2023 the club now has 10 active groups and sessions. This sections provides a report of each of these groups. Many thanks to the leaders of the groups for their contribution to the club and to this report.

1. BEGINNER PLAYALONG

The Beginners Playalong Group had a very successful year in 2023. Building on the successes of the previous year, attendances were up on last year from an average attendance of 25 to 35 per session. In all 11 Sessions were conducted throughout the year on the third Saturday of the month at the Newport Scout Hall. There were over 450 attendees combined at these sessions.

The levels of attendees were many and varied from absolute beginners dusting off their old ukelele or guitar and taking the plunge to play and sing to experienced musicians who enhanced the experience for all with their playing and singing.

The types of instruments that we saw brought to the group including, guitars, ukuleles, Double Bass, Harmonica, Violin, Viola, piano accordion to name a few. This year we were fortunate to have a saxophone section and a dedicated drummer who tapped out and kept the beat going for the group.

We also had a dedicated vocal group that included, Sheilagh, Cheryl, Maryanne, Barbara and Paul who really flourished this year with his powerful voice as well as pure novices who got up and had a go at singing.

Danny in his second year as group leader, also spiced up the sessions by introducing dedicated theme nights with dress ups for each theme and prizes for the best presented.

There was a Cowboy Night performing songs from artists such as Glen Campbell, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson etc as well as a 50s, 60s Rock and Roll Night covering artists like Bill Hailey and the Comets, Elvis, Beatles, Chuck Berry and other artists.

These proved very popular and successful with people really getting into the theme of the night. More are planned for next year.

Prizes were awarded to the best dressed and presented on the nights. At the December sessions, the group performed a number of Christmas Carols and after, we all had a meal together from food and drinks provided by attendees.

The Group practiced hard and performed at two major events throughout the year acquitting themselves extremely well and raising the profile the group and the club in general.

These events were:

- Newport Folk Festival
- Newport Fiddle & Folk Club Showcase Evening

In total, 58 new songs were covered during the year and some of these were performed at the concerts mentioned above. It was pleasing to note that we had quite a few attendees exploring the other groups within the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club and taking the opportunity to broaden their musical horizons.

An active newspaper media campaign was adopted that no doubt helped attendance reach such promising numbers and a Sandwich Board promoting the group purchased which was used at beginner play along nights and club nights and events.

continued over...

Groups and Activities

As in the previous year, the committee provided invaluable support to the group. Michael Stewart was very active in attendance and support for the group. Thanks to the committee to their ongoing support.

The group will take a short break in January 2024 but be back in February 2024.

More theme nights are planned for next year and after consultation with group members, we will have an 80s theme night as well as other special events to complement the experience.

A big thanks to the those who helped throughout the year: Shameema, Gavin, Barbara, Michael, Cheryl, Sheilagh, Colin, David, Jeremy Emily and Lizzie to name a few. We're looking forward to a bright and exciting Beginner Playalong sessions in 2024.

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Dan Clivito



Groups and Activities

2. BUSH ORCHESTRA

It has been my great pleasure to lead the Newport Bush Orchestra during 2023 and see the vast progress we have made both individually and collectively. There is clearly much enthusiasm for what we are doing and our plans for the future.

It continues to be my goal to help us become a tight community musical group who can entertain through public performances and bush dances using our rich Anglo/ Celtic musical heritage as the medium and to share my love of this genre and professional experience with others.

The Newport Bush Orchestra and indeed the wider Newport Fiddle and Folk Club and any of its ten diverse affiliated musical entities have become an important activity for many people who may face social and emotional isolation. These groups provides the vehicle needed for them to participate at whatever level they wish and the social “glue” which can give a sense of belonging within a community group and a feeling of being needed while having fun and developing their musical skills.

The Newport Bush Orchestra has been busily growing during the year with many performances including the annual Newport Lakes Bush Dance, the Newport Folk Festival, The NFFC “Showcase”, a family bush dance for Barwon Heads Fine Music, The Highland Celtic Gathering at Seaworks, Daylesford Show, Williamstown Trader’s Christmas Festival , as well as self arranged performances at the Williamstown Band Rotunda which has inspired the Hobson’s Bay Council to get other groups from NFFC to play there from early next year.

I am fortunate to have the very able assistance of Leon Conway who is keen and supportive of our endeavours and is invaluable with his “behind the scenes” assistance and suggestions.

One of the many events we are looking forward to in 2024 is a music camp which I proposed for Bush Orchestra but is now open to all groups within the NFFC is going ahead at Cave Hill Creek near Beaufort during the first weekend of May 2024 .

This promises to be a fabulous weekend of music, song, dance ,story and workshops and an outlet for many of the various musical genres within our club to participate in and for the groups to bond over a weekend of diverse musical activities.

None of this would be possible without the ongoing support and enthusiasm of our President Michael Stewart, the NFFC Committee, leaders of the various groups and the earlier work done over many years by the former leader of Bush Orchestra, Greg O’Leary who has had his own major life challenges recently.

I look forward to a new year of musical richness with all of my fellow colleagues who are lucky enough to be part of this amazing well of musical depth.

Dave Isom



Groups and Activities

3. CELTIC SESSION

2023 was the year of many new faces at the Celtic Session. Both new locals and those from further afield dropped by to join the session and enjoy the friendly vibe. Many have stayed on to become 'part of the furniture' so to speak. This has meant our session tunes repertoire has evolved and expanded considerably whilst we still love playing the golden oldies we know so well. New members have included those with considerable instrumental virtuosity, something that enriches everyone's playing and helps make our sessions really rock!

Our venue at the back of the Newport Bowls Club was renovated later in the year, however for 2024 and beyond we have decided to move to a room at the Newport Community Hub where seating arrangements are more suitable to our style of playing.

The aim of our Celtic session group is to enable lovers of traditional Celtic tunes and song to play the music together, learn new material, and enjoy the company. We play a wide variety of tunes at a range of tempos to give everyone the opportunity to join in no matter what their level of skill. We have an etiquette guide (posted on our Club webpage) which emphasises inclusiveness, courtesy and mutual appreciation. The basic requirement for anyone wishing to play at our sessions is to learn to play tunes before joining in so you don't put off the other players around you. This means spending some preparation time at home. Our regular sessioners will have lots of tips and advice on the best ways to do this to share with you over the tea break. In 2024 we'll be trying something a bit different - devoting the first half of the evening to the slower and moderately paced tunes, with the after-supper period given over to the up-tempo tunes.

Our numbers throughout the year were consistently around 15-18 at each session. Highlights of the year were our combined session with the Storytellers' group in May (especially Ira's rendition of Lannigan's Ball), our session during the Newport Folk Festival in July, and performing a bracket of tunes at the club showcase concert in November.

Sheet music and lyrics will continue to be available for download on our club webpage, which is in the process of being updated. We look forward to playing again at the club's mini Festival in June, the highlight of our musical year.

My huge thanks again go to Alison Dew for assisting in so many ways, including collecting the session fees, room set up and pack up, and all manner of other things. Thanks also to those session members who have stepped in to run the session when I haven't been able to from time to time (especially during the ski season). And of course to all our regulars and newbies from near and far for coming along, sharing your music and enthusiasm, exchanging tips and ideas, being supportive of one another and making these sessions such a lovely part of our musical lives.

Simon Leverton



Groups and Activities

4. COMMUNITY CHOIR

This was a busy year for the choir, with 9 performances in all. We sang at both Theme Nights, a World Storytelling Day event organised by Newport Storytellers, the Club Showcase and at a musical afternoon run by the Friends of Williamstown Botanical Gardens.

A couple of highlights were joining together with other western suburbs choirs for a 'choir jam' organised by Community Music Victoria, and singing for a giant hairy snail at the top of the Hundred Steps in Altona, as part of a theatre project – a unique experience! The choir passed a milestone this year – 15 years of singing together. Some of the singers who attended the very first rehearsal on 15 October 2008 are still singing with the choir. We started off rehearsing in the childcare room at Outlets Neighbourhood House, then moved across the road to the Baptist Church, then to the Mechanics Hall, to the Scout Hall during the Community Hub rebuilding, to Williamstown Town Hall Supper Room and Newport Lakes Park during the Covid restrictions... now we're glad to be back at the Mechanics Hall, where the natural reverb suits us very well!

We learned some new songs during the year, including a lively South African song called Pigogo, a Civil Rights anthem from the USA called Ain't Gonna Let Nobody, and the Beatles classic Because. We also revived some old favourites including John Brown's Body and Sinéad O'Connor's beautiful In This Heart.

The choir always welcomes new members, including those who think they "can't sing". We often see new members start out very tentatively and then after a few rehearsals they're singing out confidently with everyone else. It's always great to see people develop their confidence and skills in the supportive environment of the choir.

Alan Davies



Groups and Activities

5. DRUMMERS

The aim of Newport Drummers is to connect our community through weekly sessions and live performance, always with an invite to join our group. Aim to introduce larger rhythms structures actualized, as member numbers and attendance have been consistent.

Exposure of Newport Drummers to community, both in service and promotion, were achieved with the following performances: Monthly performance at the Cherry Lake Cultural Series Accessible Movement Concert, Jungle Warehouse Party, May 2023 Anzac Day 2023 Australia Day 2023 Newport Folk Festival, Bush Dance 2023 Memorial Service 2023 Community feeling in Newport Drummers, achieved through drums sessions/jams in various outdoor settings in the Western Suburbs. Using WhatsApp, members were able to connect independently of formal sessions to play together. Advanced rhythm structures, with multiple parts, were able to be introduced as a result of consistent attendance of members.

In addition to the above aims, we are planning a recording session, costuming for Newport Drummers in collaboration with a local tailor (promoting local business), and creating banners for our performances. These initiatives are from members of the group, illustrating connectedness and passion for Newport Drummers' offering to community.

The activities: regular session and any other planned events. Our sessions will continue on Thursdays, from 7:30pm-9:00pm at Mechanics Hall in the Newport Community Hub. Doors open at 7:00pm for a variety of reasons, including free one-on-one training for new students and a community mental wellness check-in for members. Newport Drummers will continue their monthly performance at the Cherry Lake Cultural Series. Willing members will also be attending the annual Djembe Camp hosted by African Drumming. Newport Drummers will perform at the request of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club to raise awareness of our group throughout the year. Dinners out on the town, or celebratory gatherings in a students' home are held 2-4 times a year, to solidify comradery and mental wellness amongst members.

Festival June: Newport Drummers will be performing on Saturday, June 29th, 2024, 11:00am, at the Newport Community Hub. Market Group Social media, both with images and created videos showcasing the group, brought much success to Newport Drummers. Facebook and Instagram were our media outlets of choice.

Performances for Cherry Lake Cultural Series, Newport Fiddle and Folk Club, and other functions added to community cognizance of our group. Having a dedicated media officer is a high commendation for other groups.

Creation of a WhatsApp chat room for members resulted in numerous, impromptu outdoor performances throughout the Western Suburbs, increasing awareness of the group. Our group also has a healthy relationship with each other and can speak frankly about mental wellness. By coming in a half hour early, and doing "wellness checks" (calls to members who have not been attending), we have created a healthy supportive environment that transcends the traditional drum instruction course.

List of dates for performances Cherry Lake Cultural Series: 1st Sunday of every month, excepting January. Lions Club International Concert, 24th of June, 2024, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. Newport Folk Festival, 29th of June, 2024. Newport, Australia.

Martin Case



Groups and Activities

6. OLD TIMEY SESSION



The Newport Old Timey Session was set up in 2019 to meet the interests of anyone interested in Old Timey and Bluegrass music and song. It is hosted by Bruce Williams and Noel Landry. The group meets in the Newport Hub on the 3rd Monday of each month except for school holidays. A song/tune book is available from the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club website under the 'Events' heading. A small fee of \$3.00 is charged to cover costs.

The group had its first meeting for 2023 on Monday the 20th February. This was attended by approximately 15 people and it was a great success. The format for each meeting is that each attendee has the opportunity to perform a song or tune of their choice and teach it to others. There is also a chance to learn tips on fiddle, mandolin, guitar, banjo, and any other relevant instrument. Given that old time music is primarily driven by fiddles and banjos, it was heartening to see an increase in the number of both fiddle and banjo players in attendance this year. Particular mention must go to Val Williams who taught the group some very authentic old time fiddle tunes that she had learnt first-hand from her teacher in the US. Overall, the group met 8 times in 2023 and performed a very successful set of old timey songs and tunes at the end of year Club Showcase.

Sessions for 2024 will take place in the Newport Hub as in the past. The first session will take place at 7.30 pm on Monday 19th February 2024. A notice will go onto the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club Calendar Web Page. Email and Club Newsletter reminders will also be sent to folk club members.

Bruce and Noel thank all those who attended the 2023 sessions, and we look forward to a successful 2024.

Bruce Williams & Noel Landry

7. OPEN STAGE

2023 was another successful year for Newport Open Stage (NOS). We continued with in-person performance at the Newport Community Hub. Dharma Picking and Alan Davies again helped with setup and refreshments – and MC'ing when I was absent. Attendance, as always, varied from month to month but it was always a very enjoyable evening. NOS continued to advance the Club's aims by providing a venue and encouragement for local performers (and some from further away). It also provided connection and musical camaraderie for our recently released from lock-down community.



I continue to be delighted by the enthusiasm and quality of the performances and the warmth of the audience. In the coming year the team aims to continue doing what we're doing.

Greg Jenkins

Groups and Activities

8. STORYTELLERS

Aims

The aim of the storytelling gatherings is create an open-hearted and inclusive space for people who want to learn to craft true tales, traditional stories, tall tales, yarns and stories for children. We also welcome people who just want to read and share and musicians wanting to practice their patter and we love a song with a story.

We subscribe to the Newport Folk and Fiddle Club's aim to make all our events inclusive and welcoming to everyone, regardless of gender, age, race, disability or sexual orientation.

Public Profile and Communication

- A Facebook Page
- A Google email group

We have a general page on the NFFC website where you can find links to our activities and social media <https://www.nffc.org.au/storytellers>

We conducted a survey to gather info from our story community about things we might do to improve our events and we look forward to implementing some new ideas.

Events during 2023

ZOOM/Live hybrid monthly session (Feb – Nov)

World Storytelling Day: two sessions – adults and children's. Hybrid Zooming in guests from overseas and interstate and other invited storytellers from around Melbourne. Also featured the Newport Community Choir. This event was recorded and edited by Adrian Newington and is available on the NFFC YouTube channel.

- Evening with the Celtic Sessions
- Evening with the Bush Orchestra
- Newport Folk Festival Breakfast Session
- Newport Folk Festival Children's Session

Plans and Dreams for 2024

- Monthly gatherings, 3rd Friday of the month Feb-Nov excluding April.
- Friday March 17: World Storytelling Day Building Bridges.
- Children's Storytelling event to celebrate World Storytelling Day (TBC)
- Evening with Bush Orchestra (TBC)
- EoI for Folk Festival (TBC)

Thank you's

- The NFFC committee who keep the club wheels greased and turning.
- The Newport Community HUB

Jackie Kerin



Groups and Activities

9. NEWPORT STRINGS

Our first performance in 2023 was on April Fool's Day, Saturday 1 st April at 11:30am. We performed a standard repertoire to start off the year made topical for the day by the program notes produce by Richard MacNeill. In his notes, Richard wrote about musical tricks and jokes by composers and performed by musicians over the centuries. Richard has been producing our performance notes for several years now and always makes a quality commentary on the performance of the day. I would like to thank Richard for his ongoing efforts and always look forward to the notes he produces.

Our second performance was The Festival concert performance at the end of June. Quite a lot of planning, preparation and rehearsal always goes into this annual performance which we all look forward to. We had several guest players join us increasing our numbers to 22 including Bruce Williams on mandolin who joined us performing the Billy Miller and Gary Adams song 'Footscray". It all came together well and was again well received. Our 3rd and 4th performances were our standard library performances on 2nd September and 18th November. Of note in performance 3, we were joined by MU composition student, Georgie Palmer who very generously allowed us to perform two of her own compositions. She was very pleased to have her works performed in public and joined us as conductor.

Performance 4 was notable because Michael Stewart finally organised the council to get the sliding windows on the park-side of Program Room 2 open and being a beautiful morning, we had one open which attracted passers-by to stop, listen and enjoy our performance from outside. In 2023, we were again very pleased to welcome some new player, Carol, Chris, Emma, Natalie and Tilly on violin and Oliver on cello. We are actively on the lookout for viola players and would happily welcome at least two more. Gaining new players always lifts the group and augers well for the future of Newport Strings. In 2024 we will actively continue to market ourselves through social media as that has certainly paid dividends.

Our core audience continues to support us and with a few new initiatives, including The Newport Strings Facebook Group and the open park-side doors we are looking to consolidate and expand our player numbers and audience. It is very pleasing to see Newport Strings continue to mature as a competent string chamber orchestra now with quite a few years' experience playing together. Our 2024 program is in place with both rehearsal and performance dates set. With our new members, we are really looking forward to 2024 and what it might offer. Our first performance for 2024 is on Saturday 23rd March at 11.30 ... hope to see you there!

Warwick Dawson



Groups and Activities

10. TUES BLUES

The aim of Tues Blues + remains the same:

- To facilitate an enjoyable playing environment for the blues and other genres with like-minded people
- To help participants increase their instrument & vocal skills
- To help participants understand and implement arrangement principles
- To afford participants the opportunity to learn some stagecraft
- To encourage participants to get involved in performing, whatever level they are at

We achieved our aim:

- By welcoming all comers and accepting their level and choice of music
- By facilitating a social aspect
- By mixing jamming with learning set songs, some of which have 'parts'
- By encouraging them to bring songs and apply their own ideas of arrangement, while encouraging others to contribute to arrangement ideas too
- By encouraging anyone who wants, to sing lead, or join in the choruses
- By organising a few performances across the year.....and practising these on stage with sound equipment beforehand

Next year we plan to:

- Continue working towards our next stage show for the decades following the 1920s & 30s Speakeasy show ie. the 40s (wartime) and 50s (post-war)
- Apply for the Folk Festival at least, and maybe organise one other performance later in the year
- Organise some skills development workshops - including encouraging participants to attend the Club camp.

Gaëlle Horsley



1. BUSH DANCE

Newport Lakes Bush Dance
Held 19th March 2023
At the Amphitheatre at Newport Lakes

Once again many families came along to enjoy this wonderful afternoon of music and dancing. This event relies on the skills and repertoire of the Newport Bush Orchestra to provide the dance music. Jennie Simpson once again did a terrific job of encouraging people to join in the fun of learning the various dances.

The Amphitheatre was the perfect setting for the Newport Drummers to bring the sounds of West Africa to the bushland setting of Newport Lakes.

Also performing was Dharma, Bruce and Ken, a recently formed group of very talented musicians who we look forward to seeing more of.

Doing a great job on sound were Clive Bourne and Lindsay Templeton. Many thanks to you both, your work on the day was most appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who participated and made the day a success.

Children were able to join in craft activities: stained glass stars, paper plate weaving and colouring.

Our thanks to:

- Hobsons Bay City Council for their continued financial support for the Bush Dance.
- The team who volunteered their time; Ann Carey, Aneta Graham, Bea Jones, Michael Stewart, Deb Supriyono and Ashley Thompson.
- The Newport Community HUB

Sue Davies



2. CAROLS

Presented by the Newport Fiddle & Folk Club and supported by a \$3,000.00 Hobsons Bay City Council 'Make it Happen Grant', Newport Carols on the Green 2023 was scheduled for the evening of Saturday 09 December 2023 in Paine Reserve. Newport Carols on the Green 2023 was curated by a team of three; Sue Davis, Deborah Supriyono and Aneta Graham. The intent was to provide an opportunity for the community, friends, and family to gather at Paine Reserve and to celebrate the festive season. Providing fun, family-friendly entertainment for everyone to sing along to their favourite Christmas Carols. Attendees were encouraged to enjoy a BYO picnic in the park or purchase food from their local vendors.

A refreshed program was developed showcasing local talent such as the Ukulele Dolls, The Inklings and Jen Hawley, with 90 children scheduled to perform from the Newport Lakes Primary School. Underpinning and supporting all the performances would be the Newport Choir led by Alan Stewart and the Newport Carols Orchestra led by Michael Stewart.

The Newport Carols on the Green 2023 was expected to be a success with a high level of anticipated attendance from the local community however due to extreme weather on the day the event had to be cancelled. Consideration was given to other venues however this was not viable due to the anticipated volume of performers and attendees, and it was not possible to move the carols to another date due to scheduling conflicts and logistics.

With respect to the 2024 carols the risk of an extreme weather event will be reassessed, and a decision made as to the suitability of an indoor venue versus an outdoor venue.

The full budget of \$3,000.00 was utilised for the event and where required performers, suppliers and the sound engineer were paid.

It is the teams view that the same template can be used for the 2024 carols with minimal modifications.

Aneta Graham

3. THEME NIGHTS

2023 was another rewarding year for the Live@Newport Theme Nights. The team (Andrea McGlashan, Dharma Picking and I) again ran two theme nights at the Newport Bowls Club:

We got got astronomical and anatomical with the Heavenly Bodies theme night on Saturday 13th May then waxed meteorological with Bring the Weather With You on Saturday 7th October. In both programs numerous acts showed great talent and creativity to full - and enthusiastic – houses. David Lord has now joined the "Theme Team" and we plan to run three theme nights this year to provide local performers with even more opportunities to play and our audiences with an extra great night out.

Greg Jenkins



4. FOLK FESTIVAL

The 2023 Newport Folk Festival was the return of our first full festival since 2019. The shorter format – Friday and Saturday – was introduced to decrease the workload on the committee. This also had the effect of creating a more sustainable event that is less likely to burn out the committee, and potentially providing other club members with the enthusiasm to support the event as a future committee member. The festival was certainly much less work, and the committee were satisfied with the length and quality of the event, and were very pleased to be able to relax the day after (notwithstanding the Sunday morning clean up).

The event also served the aims of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club (as per the introduction to this Annual Report)

The committee prepared an internal report to capture the key learnings from this event which will be used as a starting point for the 2024 festival committee.

2023 Festival Committee

Committee Michael Stewart - Festival Director, Promotions and Marketing Coordinator

Sue Davies - Festival Manager, Festival Treasurer, Volunteer Coordinator

Aneta Graham - Performer Liaison Manager

Clive Bourne - Technical Coordinator

Tristan Bunner - Safety Coordinator

Deb Supriyono - Staging, General Veronica Hughes - Staging, General committee member.

Many thanks to the committee for all their hard work and I look forward to working with them on the 2024 Newport Folk Festival next year.

Michael Stewart
Artistic Director





Events

5. 'LOUISE' MICROPHONE WORKSHOP

Around 20 people gathered at the Bowls Club on 29 September for a workshop on how to use the club's 'Louise' microphone.

Louise is made by Ear Trumpet Labs in the US. Because she has a name rather than a model number, we tend to talk about Louise as a person – in fact she is a spring-suspended large-diaphragm condenser microphone.

Louise is used in a completely different way to normal microphones. She is designed to be used by a whole band, who cluster around and move closer when it's their turn to take a solo. This takes a bit of getting used to, especially if you're used to the usual setup where everyone has their own mike or pickup.

That's why we decided to run a workshop to give performers a chance to experiment and get the best out of Louise.

Everyone had the chance to get up on stage and try out different stage positioning and combinations of performers. With lots of help from the attentive audience, each group was able to fine-tune their stage act for the best possible sound. When it works well, it's almost like a dance performance too, as the musicians co-ordinate their movement around the stage to get the right angle and distance from the microphone.

Many of the performers who attended the workshop were very glad of this opportunity to get to know Louise when she was centre-stage at the Theme Night the following week.





Our organisation

1. OUR COMMITTEE

Many thanks to our committee for all of their time, their work and their creativity to managing the club so that we continue to achieve our aims. The committee meets each month from February to December, and our meetings are open, purposeful and provide scope for wide ranging discussions where required. Many thanks to Kerry and Lorraine Duke for hosting our meeting in 2023 – the tea, bikkies and Kerry’s Anzac biscuits provided nourishment and kept the energy levels up.

Thanks to each of the committee members:

Alan DaviesVice President
Rick SidgwickSecretary
Neil Brydges.....Treasurer

Ordinary Members

Alison Dew, Greg Jenkins, Kerry Duke, Adrian Newington, Danny Civitico, **Deb Supriyono**

It is important to note that Alison Dew and Rick Sidgwick are both inaugural committee members, and so special thanks to them for their contributions to the club over the years.

I look forward to working with the committee in 2024. This will be our 20th year and I look forward to our celebration of our past, and the creative process of imagining how we will work towards a continued and sustainable future for the club.

Michael Stewart, President

2. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Club finished the year in a sound financial position with available funds, after allowing for known liabilities of \$24,096 (\$20,785 in 2022). Apart from the cash balance the only significant assets of the Club – apart from its name and reputation – are its depreciating equipment assets.

Lying beneath the cash balance is the regular cash inflows and outflows which each amount to more than \$70,000 in a year. Like last year much of the available funds is earmarked for our commitments to run the festival, our regular activities, new initiatives, a buffer for a “rainy day”. Some of these require up front expenditure before the receipts on the day. Our cash buffer allows the Club to manage those requirements.

2023 represented the first full year of face-to-face activities after the COVID-19 years and the numbers attending activities. With Australia moving to a cashless society, the Club now has Square readers at most activities to allow attendees the option of paying with ‘tap and go’.

More detailed financial reports are prepared for submission to Victorian Consumer Affairs.

Neil Brydges, Treasurer



Our organisation

3. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

At the end of 2023, the Newport Fiddle & Folk Club had 257 members. This is 13 up from 244 in 2022 when members fell for the first time in several years.

Particularly pleasing is the increase being driven by family members.

There are 3 types of memberships – Individual, Family (counting as two members), and Organisation. The table below shows the number of each type of membership with the number for 2022 in (brackets).

Type	Members
Individual	86 (87)
Family	170 (156)
Organisation	1 (1)
TOTAL	257 (244)

4. OUR FUTURE

In about 1995 when the Substation was a wasteland, it seemed like Newport would be a great place for a folk festival. The name was already famous (where Bob Dylan went electric) and there were five buildings neatly situated together – Newport Bowls Club, Newport Scout Hall, Newport RSL, the Substation and the Newport Mechanics Hall. However, like many good ideas, it would take some time – and plenty of work – to realise the dream.

Gradually the buildings each underwent some refurbishments (the RSL is on the way) but we needed an organisation to draw people in, build a community, and develop skills in our chosen areas of creative interest. The Newport Fiddle and Folk Club was created in August 2004 with a meeting at the Mechanics Hall on the last Friday of the month – the 27th. My memory is that 5 people came (two of them I never saw before or since!). However gradually people heard about this session where people were invited to perform, and people would listen! Many years later I learnt that the session is called a ‘Folk Circle’.

From this first night the sessions got bigger. At first I wondered what would happen if we kept on going, and kept attracting more people. We got up to a maximum of about 55 people at one stage before our future became clear. Other sessions started up – as the club’s timeline shows. The club has always supported member initiatives (the Bush Orchestra was suggested by Greg O’Leary, Alan Davies developed the Choir from our first festival) and we were always keen to connect with our community. We put on a Mick Thomas show ‘The Tank’ in 2005. It tanked **financially**, but we learnt a lot - most importantly that together we have the skills to make things happen). The Bush Dance was our first Hobsons Bay City Council grant assisted event and the event, and the HBCC support through grants, has continued to this day – and hopefully for many years to come.

Our monthly club night – the Folk Circle – is no longer part of our program as our 10 regular activities now satisfy the initial need to get together and play. Each of these have its own focus, leader and leadership group, banner, and a vision for the future. These are what makes this report so interesting. Our leaders are telling us the future of the club! Already there are plans underway for the next group (a Craft Circle) that will provide another avenue for people to come together, connect, share their interests, and build their skills. We wish the group every success.

Our organisation

And so it goes. By keeping doing what we do, remaining true to our aims, the club is about to reach our 20 year milestone with 250 members. 2024 will be a year for us to look back and savour the journey we have travelled. We are celebrating with our 20 Year T-shirt (order yours on our website!) and with our 20th Birthday Dinner Celebration at the Newport Bowls Club in August. Having reached this significant age, it is also time for us to take a breath and begin the journey afresh. The Committee could consider reviewing our aims – not to change them, but to make them more inclusive. This could provide a starting point for their discussions:

- Provide venues for those interested in locally produced music, dance, storytelling, craft, and other artistic pursuits
- Provide opportunities for musicians, storyteller, artists and others to get together, play and learn from each other
- Provide opportunities for non- musicians to join the club and participate in and enjoy the arts through listening, singing, and dancing
- Provide opportunities that challenge our members to refine and develop their performance and presentation skills.

I look forward to having these discussion with the Committee over the next 12 months. However as long as we keep on keeping on, guided by the enthusiasm and energy of our members, and the governance of our committee, I am confident that the club is in good hands.

I look forward to celebrating our 20th year, and enjoying the many creative years that will follow.

Michael Stewart
Club President
2024 - 2023



NEWPORT
 FIDDLE & FOLK CLUB



Club History and Timeline

- 2004 First: Monthly Meeting (Friday 27 August)
- 2005 First: Committee Formed
First Event: 'The Tank'
- 2006 First: Newport Lakes Bush Dance, Music on Mason,
Newport Bush Orchestra
- 2007 First: 'Music at Breizoz'
- 2008 First: Newport Folk Festival
- 2009 First: Carols at the Substation, Workshop Series,
Newport Community Choir, Newport Strings,
NFFC Incorporated
- 2010 First: Open Stage, Incredibly Supportive Songwriting Group formed
- 2011 First: Celtic Session (Bowls Club), Newport Bush Orchestra plays
at the National Folk Festival
- 2012 Breizoz transforms to 'Live@Newport'
- 2014 10 Year Celebration of NFFC
- 2015 First: Tues Blues
- 2016 First: Family Jam Session
10 Years: Newport Bush Orchestra
- 2018 10 Years: Newport Community Choir
Music on Mason – revived
- 2020 First: Newport Old Timey Session

COVID COMES - NFFC GOES ZOOM!

Established Groups/Sessions:
Beginner Jam, Newport Bush Orchestra, Celtic Session, Newport Community Choir,
Newport Storytellers, Newport Strings, Tues Blues

Regular Activities:
Club Night, Theme Night, Newport Lakes Bush Dance,
Newport Folk Festival (online 2020), Open Stage
(Carols at The Substation – COVID Break)
- 2021 Newport Drummers, Redesign of Website, Songwriting Program,
Desktop Audio Workshop Project
- 2022 Newport Folk Festival
Greg O'Leary Retirement Dinner, Retired Club Night (original session)
- 2023 *Established Groups/Sessions:*
Beginner Jam, Bush Orchestra, Celtic Session, Community Choir, Drummers,
Old Timey Session, Open Stage, Storytellers, Strings, Tues Blues+

Regular Activities:
Theme Nights, Newport Lakes Bush Dance, Newport Folk Festival
Carols in the Park (washed out)