

President's Report

This has been another challenging year for the VFMC as we have coped with the continuing fallout of the COVID epidemic. I would like to thank the committee and all the other club members who have contributed so effectively to keep our club functioning.

Although we have, again, made a modest financial loss this year, we should congratulate ourselves, not just for keeping our club functioning while many clubs and small businesses have failed, but for the support we have provided to our members and the broader folk community over the past few years.

Our proactive and innovative use of technology has maintained our engagement with our membership and provided support for many of the performers who support the club.

The financial security that the VFMC has built up over many years has been crucial to our survival. From time to time we are asked why we don't launch projects to make use of this money. It is good to know that we are able to support projects that we feel are important, but also prudent to maintain a financial buffer for the hard times.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is clear that some people remain cautious of participation in social activities. As a club, we will continue to use services such as Zoom to keep all our members involved in our activities. We still face a period increasing costs while our income generating activities continue with reduced attendances. The incoming committee will need to work towards re-building the level of participation while being mindful of containing expenditure.

Again, I thank the committee and all our members for supporting the VFMC and for supporting each other during the hard times. Now let us all move forward with the same positive attitude.

Steve Bullock, President

Treasurer's report to the AGM

The finances have been submitted to Dainbridge Accounting in Ringwood East for checking. Other than the effects of the pandemic there were no outstanding issues, all bills have been paid in a timely manner, and reports have been presented to the Committee each month for their perusal and acceptance.

The finances of the Club are gradually returning to a level of normalcy after the disruptions of the Covid virus.

The total cash balance in the Trading account and the two Term deposits at EOFY is \$60,614, which is \$2,699 less than at the SOFY.

\$2,107 of this deficit can be attributed to one-off Capital Expenses in the purchase of electronic equipment - a laptop, a projector, sound bar etc., plus stage lights for the Concerts. This was required to allow remote participation in the weekly Sessions, the Concerts and the Dances. And the whole system works very well.

Very low bank interest resulted in a low return from the two Term Deposits. Since moving from the old Community Hall in Ringwood East to the Ringwood Uniting Church Hall rent has also increased over the last two years.

If this capital expense is taken into account the nominal deficit would be closer to -\$600 for the year. Likewise if the term deposits paid a half decent rate... well I'm sure it would be close to positive.

After the auditor applies depreciation to stock and equipment, the Total Members Funds will be a little different to those shown on the Income and Expenses sheet but close.

Due to reserves in the bank the Club has been able to weather the challenges well. The financial position being nominally break-even I do not recommend any change to fees for the coming year.

Don Fraser, Treasurer.

Sessions Report

Weekly Sessions were held consistently over the year with Zoom coming to the rescue when hall access was closed due to the Covid restrictions. Electronic access has become a saviour to the continuity of the Club and remains a continuing access method for anyone beyond normal driving distance. Maybe half the participants on any night could be online, and with a little bit of understanding for the deficiencies of the method the on-liners can actively contribute to the varied programme each week. There has been some wonderful music contributed over the year.

Another benefit of the electronic system is the virtual elimination of the need for books, paper, music stands and associated storage requirements. Some form of prepared programme is necessary which does take a lot of work and some loss of spontaneity may result.

Much credit goes to Bill Buttler for getting the comms aspect going. Mike Hassett has also assisted greatly in being able to quickly update the website. Thanks to Maree and Steve for convening, Ray and Joan for song and tune sessions, and all who help with set-up, pack-up etc. The Club now also has a library with a very extensive collection of books, thanks entirely to the efforts of Wal Tiedemann.

Don Fraser, Convener

Webmaster's Report

With the able assistance of Michael Hassett, we have been able to maintain the day to day functionality of the VFMC web site, keeping up to date with routine updates to up-coming events, while continuing to enhance the functionality in many diverse ways.

We currently have several long-term projects where the technology is in place, but sorting out the very large amounts of information involved will require a significant, long-term effort. Examples are:

- the rationalisation of the music files held in "Fireside Fiddlers",
- plans to scan the archive of "Tradition" magazines in a way that they can be searched on-line, and
- adding photos to our photo archive.

The web team may never find time to complete these projects in the spare time they have available. If there is any aspect of the web site that you would like to spend some time on, please contact the web team – we would love to talk to you.

Steve Bullock, Webmaster

Concerts Report

After two years of Zoom concerts at the last AGM (last July) we thought we were past the lockdowns Ha! Bhan Tre performed in the Uniting Church hall last July to a live and Zoom audience but unfortunately that was our last live concert again until November.

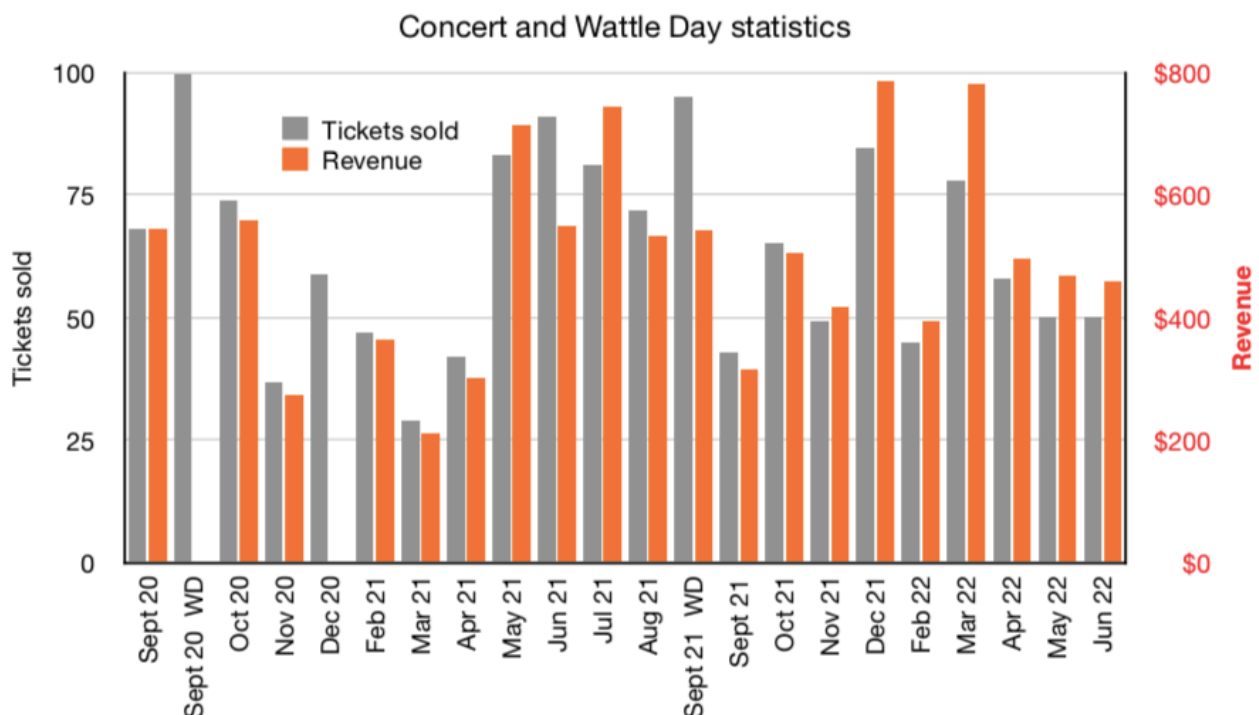
We became very good at short notice at organising great performers to do Zoom concerts in this time: Martin Wyndham Read, Warren Fahey and Enda Kenny. Their internet connections were really good considering one of them only used a mobile phone. These were very successful Zoom concerts.

We've been back in the Ringwood Uniting Church hall since November with restricted numbers but some great nights (AJ Leonard and Jenny Rowlands, Honeyfield's CD lauch, Geoffrey W Graham, Suzette Herft, Pleasant and Delightful, Play it Martha and Gary and Georgia Rose. All these concerts have been top standard.

It is taking a while for our audiences to venture back to the Hall to experience live concerts again. I would like to thank the Concerts Committee, Bill and Maree Buttler, Michael Hassett and Tony Kelly for all their work with organising performers and keeping the concerts going. Special thanks must go to Bill for his expertise with Zooming the concerts. Also Michael has done a great job with Humanitix ticketing and informing us all.

Thanks to all those that help on the concert nights. It takes a lot of people: Don Fraser (advertising and flyers), Trevor Voake (lighting and photography), Steve Bullock (lighting, computer skills), Colin McLaren (door and COVID Monitor), Alex and Jane and Francesca (Supper) and all those that help with set up and clean. Big thank you also to those members that have helped in any way support the Concerts. We never have any trouble getting Main Acts (there are many great performers to choose from). Also we've had some great support acts over the year. I also must mention a thank-you to all the Spot Acts that actually start the night off. They have all been great this year.

Maree Buttler, Concerts Convenor



Concerts

Month	Main Act	Tickets sold	Revenue
Sept 20	Dave Alleway	68	\$544
Sept 20 WD	Wattle Day	100	\$0
Oct 20	Graham Dodsworth	74	\$560
Nov 20	The Brumbies	37	\$273
Dec 20	Dixie Chooks	59	\$0
Feb 21	Dominic	47	\$363
Mar 21	Khristian Mizzi	29	\$210
Apr 21	Dan McKinnon	42	\$304
May 21	Jam Tarts	83	\$716
Jun 21	Bruce Watson	91	\$549
Jul 21	Bhan Tre	81	\$743
Aug 21	Martyn Wyndham Read	72	\$534
Sept 21 WD	Wattle Day	95	\$540
Sept 21	Warren Fahey	43	\$314
Oct 21	Enda Kenny	65	\$506
Nov 21	AJ Leonard \$ Jenny + Billy Dettmer	49	\$417
Dec 21	Honeyfields	85	\$786
Feb 22	Geoffrey Graham	45	\$392
Mar 22	Suzette Herft	78	\$781
Apr 22	Pleasant and Delightful	58	\$497
May 22	Play it Martha	50	\$466
Jun 22	Garry and Georgia Rose	50	\$459
	Average	64	\$452

Membership Report

Current membership includes those who have paid their fees for 2022/23 and members whose membership expired in March 2022 and are still to renew. (These memberships will be cancelled in Sept 22 unless renewed shortly).

There were 9 new members this financial year, 2 who resigned & 17 from 2021 who haven't renewed their membership, an overall decrease of 10 members from last year.

NOTE: - These figures will differ from the membership figures given in the Treasurers report. The Treasurers report will only show memberships that have been renewed (or are new members), whereas this report shows a number of members who are still hopefully going to renew their membership in the near future.

Total active membership: 117 (current) + 4 (life) = 121

2021 / 2022 Membership - 117 (62 Single 55 Family)

2020 / 2021 Membership - 127 (70 Single 63 Family)

2019 / 2020 Membership - 121 (68 Single 53 Family)

2018 / 2019 Membership - 105 (58 single & 47 family)

2017 / 2018 membership - 107 (63 single & 44 family)

2016 / 2017 membership - 100 (62 single & 38 family)

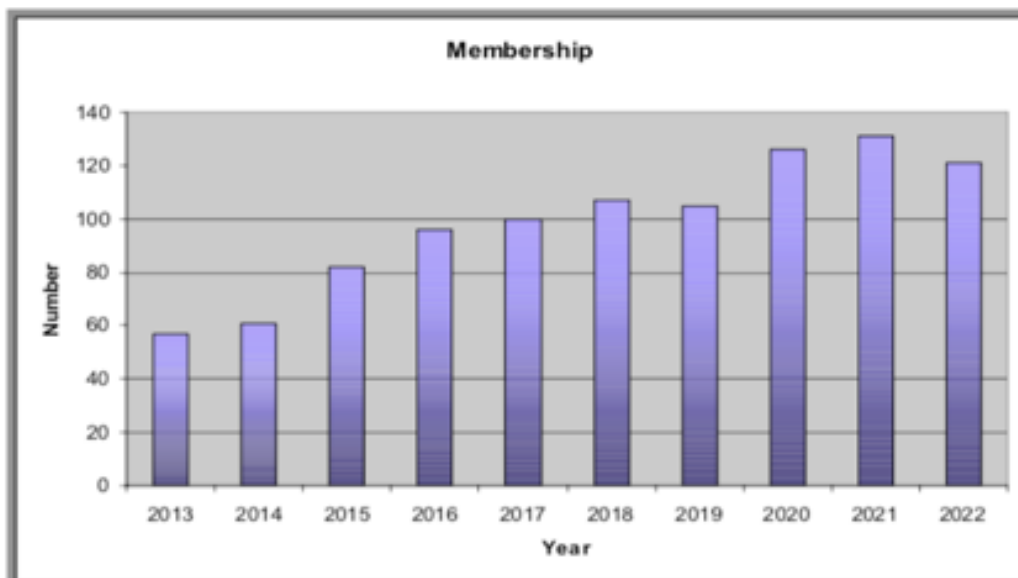
2015 / 2016 Membership - 96 (63 Single & 33 family)

2014 / 2015 Membership - 82 (53 single & 29 Family)

Life Members (not included in the above figures) - 4 (but included in the graph)

VFMC annual membership

04-Jul-22



Dance Report

This year has been unusual again in that we had zoom dances up until November when we started back in the hall. Sadly we had to go via Zoom at the beginning of 2022 but since March we have been live in the hall. We also kept our Zoom only dance going once a month up until Easter when we stopped doing Zoom dances as all clubs were now back to live dancing.

My thanks go to Norm Ellis for his continued support with the Zoom dances and to Stephen Bullock for doing the sound.

Our Children's dance started back in March.

We ran our May Woolshed Ball, with the talented Club musicians playing. We even had a BYO supper.

I would like to thank all the people who have helped with the Saturday dances and the Woolshed ball. These include: being on the door, helping in the kitchen, decorating the hall and the callers and musicians who have made each event a success.

I have been very fortunate in having a core of people who have been very willing to do their bit to make the dances happen; thank you and I sincerely hope you are happy to continue doing your contribution as it has made my task so much easier.

We had amazingly a very good Wattle day on Zoom in 2021 having quite a variety of workshops for musicians, singers and dancers. Our thanks go to the Wattle Day committee, workshop conveners and to all the patrons who attended as without your attendance we would not have had such a successful Wattle Day.

Jane Bullock

Newsletter Report

This past year has been rather challenging in many ways due mostly to the pandemic. The extended lockdowns and travel limits in Melbourne meant that there were at times major hold-ups with the printing of the hard copy version as it was not possible for Trevor Voake to get to Officeworks or other printers. Therefore, VFMC members who only receive the hard copy version had to wait till the lockdowns eased so that they could then receive multiple back copies all at once. Apologies for any inconvenience caused but this was quite unavoidable.

However, on a brighter note, the lockdowns meant that with no posters needed to promote our dances and other events, there was scope for other material to be published in our 16-page monthly newsletters. Stephen Whiteside led the charge with various articles about folk-related matters, such as Burl Ives and his impact on Australian folk music. This in turn encouraged other members to also put on their thinking caps and submit other articles of interest, e.g. about O'Carolan's music (thanks, Trev).

Many thanks to all contributors (especially Don Fraser, Michael Hassett and Bette Martin for the Concert Night reports, Trevor Voake for his great photos, and Jane Bullock for the Dance Pages) and readers over the past year and apologies for any typing or other errors. Thanks also to Bill Buttler who has kindly agreed to step in as editor for the upcoming August issue while I take some long delayed Long Service Leave to travel overseas for a month.

Maggie Somerville

Billabong Band Report

Covid has obviously played a big part in our performances over this last financial year. In early 2021 we had a fairly full program booked for the whole of 2021. But we finished up playing only 2 gigs between July & December 2021. One was a Christmas function for a retirement group and the other was the club dance. All the rest were cancelled.

Things started to look a bit brighter for the start of 2022 with one aged care facility booking us on a six weekly basis right through until December. We played an Australia Day concert for them under very trying circumstances – outdoors, 15 metres away from our audience & no amplification. Due to Covid and staff changes the rest of our gigs for this facility were cancelled.

A number of club members also played at the National Folk Festival in Canberra this Easter, joining forces with the Melbourne Colonial Dance band & the TSDAV to play at the Heritage Ball, Welcome Dance & a number of workshops.

For the second half of this financial year we have played at 2 Melbourne Highland Games festivals (Ringwood & Williamstown), a club dance & the Woolshed Ball.

As restrictions have eased we have started to get a few more bookings in the second half of this year.

Thanks go to all the club members who have played with the band this financial year, Stewart, Steve, Jane, Bill, Maree, Stan, Katy, Selina, Carol, Tony K, Sofie, Regina, Joan, Ray, Denis, Tony O, Margie, Bryce, Franciska, Maggie & Stephen. Who have all played with the Billabong Band at different times throughout the year. Special thanks go to Stewart & Maree for allowing us to use their homes for practices.

Convenors – Trevor Voake, Maree Butler & Stan Ciuchak

Highland Games Report

This is the first year we have included a formal report on the VFMC involvement in the events run by the Committee of the Melbourne (formerly Ringwood) Highland Games and Celtic Festival.

I am a member of the Highland Games Committee, and I am responsible for organising the Folk Music Tent activities at each of the events run by the Games Committee. The Committee regards the Folk Music Tent as one of the 'four pillars' of the Games – the other three being the 'heavy' games (caber tossing etc), the Pipe Bands and the Highland dancing. Our involvement has grown to the point where this is not just another Billabong Band gig – my hope is that the VFMC will gain greater exposure and influence through this partnership, and therefore there should be a formal report back to the VFMC Committee and members at least at the AGM.

The background to our involvement goes back to around 2018. The then Ringwood Games had dwindled in influence and was struggling to maintain interest among the clans and other support groups. Alistair McInnes had visited our Tuesday sessions and saw the VFMC as one way of reviving interest. As a result, I joined the Games Committee and we were involved in two reasonably successful events in the Ringwood area. The Billabong Band were one of the acts in the Folk tent and I sourced and organised the program.

COVID-19 put a halt to further events, and the 2021 Games were postponed until March this year. This year's event was highly successful, thanks in part to brilliant weather and a centrally located new venue, at Eastfield Park in South Croydon. This location is now the headquarters of the Games and will help establish it as a regular local event. The Billabong Band performed well, and we were able to maintain a strong Community focus with several related groups from U3A, Sing Australia etc.

The other event this year was the inaugural Williamstown Highland Gathering and Celtic Festival, at Seaworks Maritime Precinct in July 2022. The event was a modest success financially but artistically very successful, particularly the Folk Music 'tent' in the Pirates' Bar. The Billabong Band was one of four acts for the day, Saoirse being one of the others. The Billabong Band presented a narrative with songs depicting the history of the Celts in Australia – which incidentally could be a candidate for a presentation at the National Folk Festival next year along the lines of some of our previous theme presentations. The VFMC gained great kudos with the Games Committee for our ability to pull in quality folk acts and organise a popular live venue. The Williamstown gig will be on again next year, as will the Croydon Games. The Games Committee has been offered Barassi Park for a Melbourne Games festival, but we will be sticking to two events only for 2023 to avoid straining our volunteer resources.

The Games connection has the potential to be a valuable one for the VFMC. The Games Committee invested \$2,500 in purchasing the Folk Tent Marquee for us this year. The VFMC has been offered storage space at the new building provided by the Maroondah Council at Croydon Park (I will provide details to the VFMC Committee separately). My vision for the future is that we can grow the Folk Music part of the Games to become a mini-Eastern suburbs Folk Festival over time.

Given the level of our involvement, I think there should be a formal report to the VFMC Committee at least twice a year, possibly before and after the March and July events. The VFMC Committee should also consider a modest sponsorship of the events next year to help gain exposure for our Club through signage and media presence. I will approach the VFMC Committee separately in this regard.

Bill Buttler
Folk Tent Coordinator
Melbourne Highland Games and Celtic Festival