

Dance Report 2023

This year has been almost back to the numbers we had before Covid. This has been pleasing to see. Dancers again are beginning to feel happy about mixing with other dancers. My thanks go to Robin Simpson who has been of enormous help to me with the Family Dances by taking over the opening of the hall for the months when Stephen and I were away overseas.

Our Children's dance started back in March. This is still a challenge but we are getting some children at the dances every month. I still think it is worthwhile to continue and hopefully by the end of 2023 we will have a core of children attending. Again my thanks go to Robin Simpson who has been a great help with these dances.

We have just had our May Woolshed Ball, with the talented club musicians (Billabong Band) playing. Sadly not many dancers came but those that did enjoyed the varied dances on the programme (compiled by Robin Simpson) and the calling by: Robin Simpson, Norm Ellis, George Ansell, Pauline Barham, Geoff Molloy and Jane Bullock. We had a BYO supper and Jane remembered to get the teapot out of storage so we could have a proper cuppa!

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 – Steven Barham who loves being the 'Door Bitch'!, helping in the kitchen – these have been many dancers and for fear of upsetting anyone I won't try and name you all but your help here has been much appreciated. To all members and friends who have helped out with decorating the hall on our special Wattle Day with special thanks to Norm Ellis for his big help on this particular day, and at our December Christmas dance. To all the callers and musicians who have made each event a success. I have enjoyed very much working with you over the years; your continued support has made the job of Dance co-ordinator easy, many thanks.

We had amazingly a very good Wattle day on Zoom and in person at the hall in 2022 having quite a variety of workshops for musicians, singers and dancers. Our thanks go to the Wattle Day committee, Maree Buttler, Don Fraser and Jane Bullock (not sure if anyone else was involved, it was 2022, however my apologies if there were), workshop conveners and to all the patrons who attended as without your attendance we would not have had such a successful Wattle Day.

I am retiring from being the Dance co-ordinator at the AGM as I have done it for a few years and feel it is someone else's turn now. Many thanks to all who have supported me and the club.

Jane Bullock

Webmaster Report

The membership Join and Renew page on the website has been reworked as well as some behind the scenes processing implemented. This work became necessary when the external provider of the membership form (123 FormBuilder) cut back the functionality of the form we had implemented (using a free subscription to this service).

The new in-house form captures member information (name, address, contact details) etc and calculates the relevant membership payment. An email notification is sent automatically to the treasurer and membership officer.

Credit card payment arrangements have been implemented from late 2022 to enable most payments to the club to be made by credit or debit cards. This includes, membership fees, concert, session and dance admissions and book purchases. We currently have two card readers, one held by Don Fraser and the other by Michael Hassett. We have also switched the online membership payment provider, from Paymate to Square. The reason being that the Square has a simpler proforma compared to Paymate and hence a simpler process for users. The commission however is a little more, 2.1% compared to 1.9% for Paymate.

We have become aware that some VFMC emails from our in-house mailing lists, e.g. VFMC Committee, are being treated as spam/junk by a number of major email programs and service providers. Issues have arisen with Bigpond and Apple mail systems and possibly others. Some adjustments have been made to configuration files within the mailing list software associated with the website. This has so far, ameliorated, but not completely fixed the problem, so efforts will continue.

Other recent developments include

- Ticketing for zoom access to club Round Robin sessions;
- Addition of Begged Borrowed and Stolen and the Waltz Polka Book to the main menu Music Resources.

Steve advises his willingness to continue his role as webmaster, focussing on:

- Continuing the re-structuring (like the home page) to make the site more user friendly on small screens like mobile phones.
- Complete the re-encoding of Fireside Fiddlers to conform to the style of the rest of the site.
- Finish collecting and scanning the old newsletters to add them to the site with the text search function I have developed.
- Implement some very specific database update screens (with security controls) to enable other committee members and convenors to do some of the regular, routine updates.

Steve Bullock and Michael Hassett

Sessions report to the AGM 18/6/23

38 weekly Sessions were held over the year, and during the year we have returned to face to face meetings in the hall again, although numbers overall have been slow to recover from the effects of Covid.

4th Tuesdays which are dedicated to 'All-in' tune and medley playing are progressing well. Due to basic incompatibility with the all-in format online access and the projection of scores has been discontinued on these nights.

The other weeks continue to offer lively playing and singing and social interchange where a wide variety and range of music is presented by the membership each week. Some very good talent is exposed also.

A number of interesting 5th Tuesday theme nights have helped broaden the perspective of folk music by focussing on specific themes such as murder ballads, drinking songs, mirth and merriment, sea songs, yarns etc.

Tuesdays are very much a team effort so much appreciation to all office bearers for their continued assistance in making it happen. Zoom access over the last couple of years has broadened the area of influence and kept the membership in touch. Due to storage limitations at the current venue most resources are now stored electronically on a laptop, and screen projection ensures everyone reads from the same hymn book. This has its limitations but compared to the weekly mess at the previous hall it has been beneficial.

Contributions to the content of each week is entirely a choice of the membership and in general has been very stimulating. There is always something interesting to take away. Much work goes into getting it all together, however, relying heavily on the email service providers and how they filter for scam on mass mail outs. This has been a big headache for some time although appears to be a bit more stable lately.

Thanks to the web team Steve and Michael for helping out here, and Bill Buttler and others for the expertise in setting up the technology for online access and archiving.

The Club has an extensive library of music related books, thanks entirely to the efforts of Wal Tiedemann who maintains the physical copies and has catalogued and made the indexes available. Anyone can borrow these.

Online access to outsiders has expanded the Club's horizon somewhat, although there's a lot of work involved in implementing it. Last year the Committee agreed to review the continuation of this facility in June/July this year, so it may be necessary to rationalise it.

I have been Sessions Convener for over 10 years and would like to take a break from it, other roles in the Club are taking up more time. I would look forward to becoming an ordinary Session participant again so please consider the position vacant.

Don Fraser, Sessions Convener

VFMC AGM 2023 Concerts Report

Looking back on last year's Concert Report we were still having to have quite a few Zoom concerts, due to lockdowns, and restricted numbers when we did have some hall concerts; and of course, setting up chairs 2 metres apart.

How lucky we have been in the last 12 months! We are gradually getting our numbers back to pre-COVID times. Some of our audience is still to return - that's our challenge to get most of our old audience back, but we have had good numbers especially the last few concerts. Martyn Wyndham Read had close to 70 people in the hall and 14 on Zoom in March.

Other main act performers this year have been Nick Charles, Saoirse, Velvetones, Zamponistas, Maggie Carty Band, Bruce Watson (CD launch), Anita George Trio, Kristian Mizzi and Maria Forde.

We have had four support acts this year: Rudy van den Bovenkamp, Rebecca and Marty, Tony Eardley, and Nerida Cuddy. Also four a cappella groups supported the Velvetones on a cappella night. I can't list all the spot acts that we always start the night with, but the standard has continued to be very good.

We have adjusted to the Ringwood Uniting Church Hall well. We've made it look inviting with new lighting, posters on the walls, and a new entry door so that the performers aren't disturbed by late comers.

We have still been providing Zoom for those that can't get to the hall. This is due to be reviewed by the Committee at the end of June.

Michael Hassett has become our expert on Humanitix. It's become a great avenue to get messages across to our audiences as well as being very efficient for selling tickets. People can now buy tickets at the door on the night, but many pre-book their tickets through Humanitix.

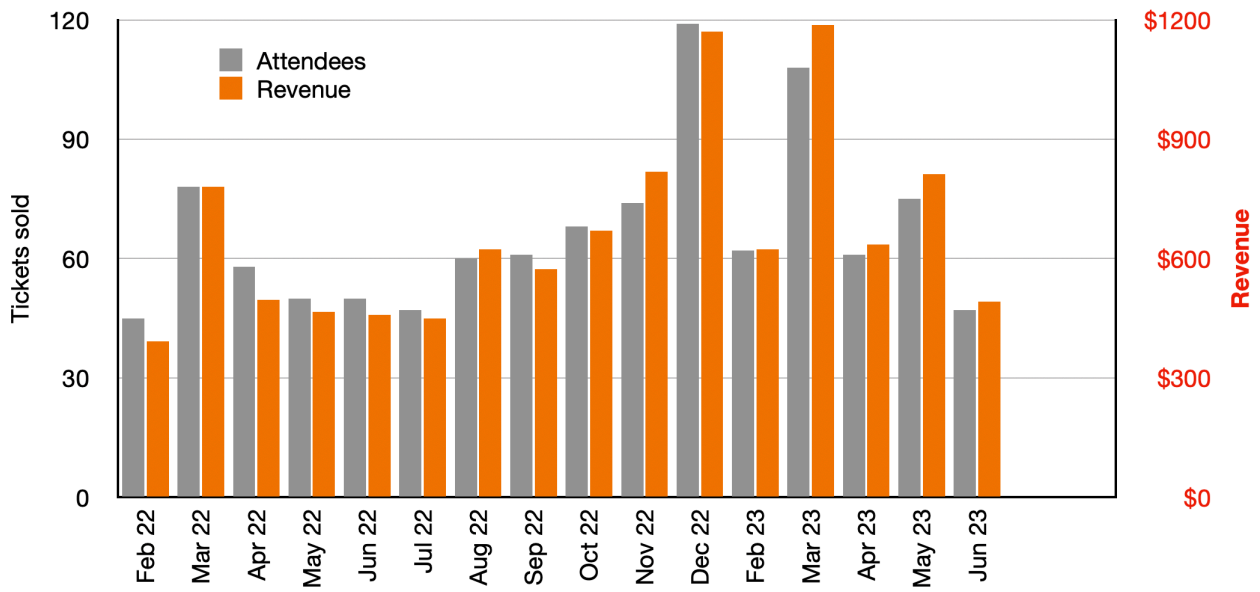
One of the problems we had to address recently was feedback from some of our audience about their difficulty hearing some of our performers. This led us to do a survey of our audiences to gauge the depth of the problem. The survey results will be made public via the the newsletter and website. Following the survey, the Committee decided to provide a suitable level of sound reinforcement for the concerts. At the June concert we provided a microphone and a small bar speaker to boost spoken introductions and the level of lead vocals. Feedback from the audience suggests that this worked well and didn't detract from the acoustic vibe that we've always had.

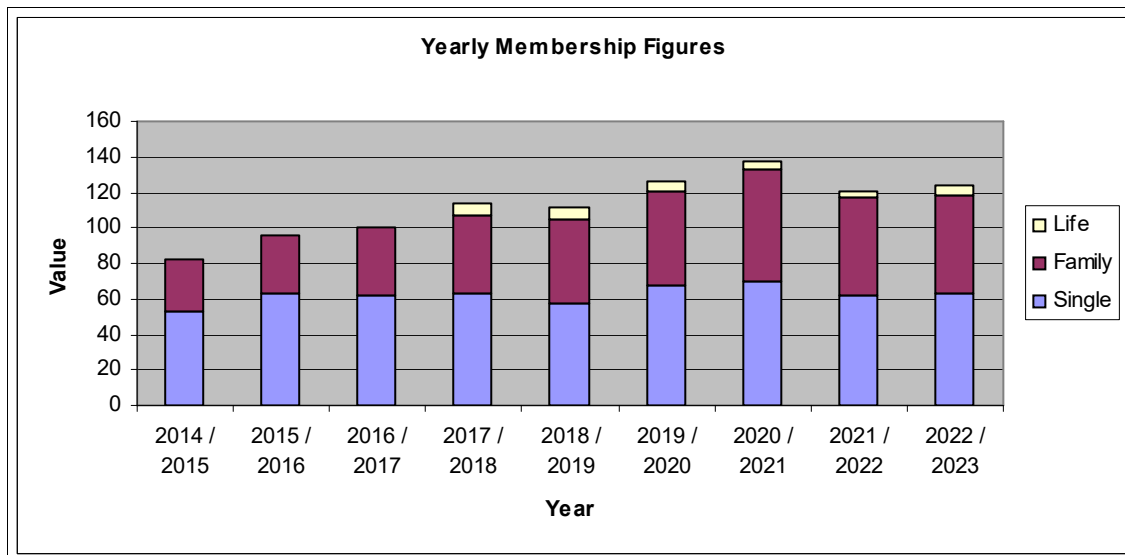
I want to thank the audience and those members that have helped in any way support the Concerts. We never have any trouble getting Main Acts (there are many great performers to choose from). Also we've had some great support acts over the year. I also must mention a thank you to all the Spot Acts that actually start the night off. They have all been great this year.

A big thankyou to the Concert's Sub Committee: Michael Hassett, Tony Kelly, Bill and Maree Buttler. Thanks to all those that help on the concert nights. It takes a lot of people: Bill setting up Zoom and sound, Trevor Voake (Zoom set up, lighting and photography), Don Fraser (advertising and flyers), Colin McLaren (admission table), Alex and Jane and Francesca (Supper) and all those other people that help with supper, set up and clean.

We've just had another great year!

Concert statistics 2022-23





2022 / 2023 Membership - 118 (63 Single & 55 Family)
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) - 6 (but included in the graph)

Total active membership: 118 (current) + 6 (life) = 124

current membership includes those who have paid their fees for 2023/24 and members whose membership expired in March 2023 and are still to renew. (These memberships will be cancelled in Sept 22 unless renewed shortly).

There were 13 new members this financial year, 2 who resigned & 10 from 2022 who haven't renewed their membership, giving an overall increase of 1 member 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.

Publications Report

Sale of VFMC publications continues as a very occasional activity.

The focus on specific publications for the 4th Tuesday sessions has resulted in the sale of several sets of "Collectors' Choice" (at a bargain price as we have considerable stock).

Our "free" download option for "Joy Durst" is proving popular. Income from publication sales is a very small part of our finances, but an important part of our goal of preserving and promoting our folk heritage. We should plan to progressively provide all our publications accessible on-line.

Steve Bullock