

**P**ORT

**P**HILLIP

**F**OLK

**F**OUNDATION



**N**EWSLATTER



## EDITORIAL

At last - another Newsletter.

Much has happened since the last Newsletter was published. The most significant factor, from our point of view, being the resignation of our Editor, and whilst there is a Committee of twelve, the fact that there are about seven active members doesn't leave much scope for a new appointment. Considering the functions the present Committee has promoted, the one thing the lack of a Newsletter doesn't show is inactivity on the part of the Committee.

Canberra has come and gone and if nothing else was significant, it was proved that a relatively small organisation can run a Festival on a National basis (and make a profit!) Considering what the Foundation paid out in expenses to singers it's not surprising they made a profit. The one thing I can't understand is - how come a benefit night was held at Frank Traynor's for a Folk Club in Canberra which was going broke. Surely the organisers of the National Festival in Canberra could assist in some way. Could it be that the proceeds of the National Festivals are being used to boost the funds of individual organisations and not folk music in general.

The 7th National Folk Festival will next year have its venue in Melbourne. Plans are already in progress to make this the most comprehensive Festival to date - your suggestions are welcomed, your assistance is essential!

The Annual General Meeting of the Port Phillip Folk Foundation will be held on Tuesday, 23rd May at Fogarty's Union Hotel, Fenwick St., Carlton, when the election of officers will take place. Your copy of this Newsletter ensures your voting rights - bring it with you.

IVAN MILLIGAN

## AUSTRALIAN BLACK AND WHITE FOLK FESTIVAL - NARIEL CREEK

The majority of visitors to the Festival arrived late Friday night or early on Saturday morning, and spent the daylight hours setting up camp in the paddock by the creek 11 miles from Corryong. There were people from just about every better known town in Victoria and New South Wales, and whilst the aim was to set up camp as quickly as possible, a great deal of time was spent getting to know one another.

The Festival officially opened with an old time dance on Saturday night when about 1,400 people attended, and danced to the music of the Corryong Old Time Dance Band. The Junior Band was indeed an impressive sight with the girls dressed in their black and white gingham and it was a good feeling to take part in traditional dances, at the place where most of them had been collected in recent years.

An excellent supper of biscuits and cakes, baked by the local ladies was served with sandwiches and tea and the dancing continued till 2.00 a.m. Sunday.

Late morning at the camping area found most people lazing around in small groups, singing, talking, swimming and watching - the organisers were preparing the area for the open-air concert.

The banner at the rear of the stage declared the theme for the Festival:

"THE NARIEL CREEK BLACK & WHITE FOLK FESTIVAL - JUST FOR FUN"

By one o'clock hundred had arrived from surrounding caravan parks and other towns, and were kept amused by impromptu singing while waiting for the concert to begin.

About thirty different items made for a long concert, consisting of talks on local aborigines, the history of the Festival, songs from local and visiting singers, poetry, bird and animal calls, a jazz band and many others.

After the concert, an hour's break allowed visitors time to have a meal before the dance that night. Food was available from a stand organised by the Apex Club - at very reasonable prices!'

Next time they have a Festival at Nariel Creek - get there!

PAUL BORG.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIDDLE IN SCOTLAND

The existence of bowed and stringed instruments in Scotland dates from an early period. Early manuscript references and sculpture indicate three distinct types; the "fedyl", the "rebec" and the "croud".

The "fedyl" or "fythel" is believed to have been a two-stringed box shaped instrument, and the "rebec", "rybid" or "rybibe", a four-stringed, pear-shaped instrument resembling a mandolin. It is believed by musical historians that these were brought to Scotland from the east by returning Crusaders. (The Crusades lasted from 1096 to 1291).

The third type of the group was the "croud", also known as the "crot", "cruit" or "gue", it seems to have been peculiar to the Orkneys and Shetlands, Scotland's most northerly island groups. It was a shallow box-like instrument, about two feet long, one foot wide and two inches deep, with two strings. A similar instrument existed in Finland called the "jouhikantele", and in Estonia called the "talharpa". The "croud" was probably brought to the Orkney and Shetland Islands by Norsemen, this theory being supported by the co-existence of similar instruments in Ireland, which was also occupied by Norse invaders.

By about 1560 the fedyl had become basically the four-stringed version which we know today, but was flat in the body, not arched like the modern violin.

Around this time, the "viol" was introduced to the Scottish Court from France, probably as a result of the marriage of King James V to a daughter of the French King. They were mainly instruments of polite society and came (and went) in three sizes; bass, tenor and treble. Though still in use by 1660, they fell from the height of fashion at the time of the

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIDDLE IN SCOTLAND Cont...

1660, they fell from the height of fashion at the time of the Restoration.

The violin as we know it today was perfected in Italy by the Amati family and their successors, who had been in business since the sixteenth century. It probably reached Scotland between 1680 and 1700. Scottish fiddlers quickly discovered that the tone quality and flexibility of the violin were ideally suited to their native music. Scottish fiddle-makers equally quickly adopted the techniques of the European masters, each generally copying the style of a particular master, notably Amati, Stradivari and Stainer. Thus commenced the fiddle-making, or more correctly, "violin-making craft, which flourishes today.

From 1700 to the present time, the "fiddle" has retained its popularity in Scotland. Its particular strongholds are in the Orkney and Shetland Islands and in the mainland's north-eastern area, part of which, the Strathspey district, gave its name to the characteristic of that title. The post-war growth of innumerable fiddlers' clubs will doubtless ensure its popularity.

MATT DICKIE.

## COMMENT ON THE DANCE AT YARRALUMLA

Perhaps from a dancer's point of view, the Canberra Folk Festival Dance held at the Yarralumla Wool Shed was far from a success, but as a social gathering it was most certainly a success.

Held in the biggest available hall within two hundred miles of Canberra, but 8.30 to 9.00 p.m. there must have been eight hundred to nine hundred people crowded in. Which goes to show just how popular folk dancing has become in latter years.

Dancing was to the music of well-known musicians from all over Australia. Compered by Jim Buchanan and Warren Fahey. Starting off with the ever-popular Galopede, we soon progressed to cover most of the popular folk dances such as the Waves of Tory (with almost one hundred and fifty people in each set), to the Brown Jug Polka at about 10.15 when Jim asked us if we could please dance across the building instead of up and down as the building was shifting on its piles.

Shortly after this my partner and I retired whilst still sound in wind (if not limb).

Perhaps the organisers of the 7th National Folk Festival in Melbourne can pick a few more pointers from this, i.e.

Forethought as to the type of hall they use.  
A team of dancers, used to dancing together  
to demonstrate the dances.

A set programme of dances that the musicians  
and demonstrators know.

And a separate area for people to just sit  
and drink.

This was my impression of the Canberra Folk Festival dance and some of my ideas for improving next year's dance.

KEN FARROW.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROFESSIONAL FOLK  
SINGER TO FOLK MUSIC.

The professional folk singer, which term also includes the professional folk musician, is a fortunate person indeed. He is doing something he wants to do and likes doing and is getting paid for it. If enough people like listening to him, then he gets paid enough that he may, if he wishes, give up any other form of employment. The point at which this occurs varies from person to person depending on the differing life-styles each one is content to maintain.

Unfortunately, having reached this stage, some of our professional folk singers tend to become, God help us, experts on "Folk Music", and to act as though they belong to a select mystic brotherhood to whom "all is revealed", so that they alone are competent to judge the worth of any other performer or type of music. I think we are all familiar with the phenomenon whereby a singer's sincerity is judged to be in inverse relationship to his earning power. Their opinions, and I repeat opinions, are frequently delivered with a pontifical air that just automatically brings bulls to mind.

I personally resent this attitude, being on the non-performing public, who after all were perceptive enough to support the clubs and functions from which these folk singers derive their living. I have nothing but admiration for those people who have channeled their interest in and love for folk music into other forms of employment, as well as performing to an audience, because the pickings are mighty slim compared to, say pop music. Unfortunately there is a shortage of all-rounders in this world of ours in most fields.

I knew and loved folk music long before I ever heard a professional folk singer. During my childhood, spent in an isolated country district during the depression prior to World War II, well before the advent of transistors and before records and record players had become common household furniture, entertainment, musical and otherwise was very much a do-it-yourself arrangement. Many of us learned bits and pieces, songs and music from our parents and their friends, our friends and their parents. Our abilities as performers ranged from bloody awful, barely adequate,

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## THOUGHTS ON PROFESSIONAL FOLK SINGERS Cont..

competent to occasionally very good, and I would say that today's audiences at the clubs would fall into the same categories, and let's face it our singers would too.

We have all been spoiled in this day and age. It is easier to pay a few bob and listen to someone else than do it ourselves, but if every professional folk singer were to drop dead, be struck dumb or disappear in a puff of blue smoke, folk music would still exist and go on in the same do-it-yourself style.

I think, and I don't claim it as any more than my own opinion, the only person who IS indispensable to folk music is the song-writer or tune-maker, and he is likely to pop up anywhere. Maybe with just one in his lifetime, or maybe trotted out like shelling peas. Folk songs are pretty much a form of social comment through the ages. The comment is valid at the time of making it and it may not be valid a week later or it may still be valid a century later. There are some songs which are still widely sung although the comment in them has not been valid for many years, simply because the song itself appeals to its hearer. Don't lose sight of the fact that singers presenting songs are not of their own writing were also heard in the first place. I am sure that if the song makers were to retire into this mystic brotherhood of adepts, then folk music would soon cease to grow and be the living thing that it is. Three song makers that come to mind, Harry Robertson, Bernard Bolan and Don Henderson, all work at jobs other than song-writing, but if they were able to just devote their time to song-writing and still be assured of a steady income, I feel that their songs would lose the sincerity and validity that is their most appealing quality. In effect they say to me 'I feel this' or 'I have experienced this' not just 'I have observed this' and I would hate to have them trade that quality of participation to become onlookers.

Folk music has existed for centuries and the folk music that has come down to us is not necessarily that which appealed to the singer alone, because if it didn't appeal to the hearers, it died with the singer. Fortunately for us there has always been a pretty wide variety of opinions as to what was worth preserving, and to keep folk music alive and kicking we cannot have it otherwise.

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THOUGHTS ON PROFESSIONAL FOLK SINGERS Cont..

I conclude with the statement that I personally feel folk music is a damned sight more important to the professional folk singer than the professional folk singer is to folk music, but I still like listening to them.

ONE OF THE WRINKLIES

## THOUGHTS ON LEAVING

### POEM/SONG

The stout I drink is bitter, the glass I hold is cold,  
My mind is melancholy, and there's a curfew on I'm told,  
The more I think the more I drink, but my sorrows I can't  
drown,  
And I tell you John, I won't be long in leaving Belfast  
Town.

There's barricades and burning now, and gunmen walk the  
street,  
There's C.S. Gas from England that hungry kids can eat,  
Our town's an old sand castle and the waves begin to  
pound,  
And I tell you John, I won't be long in leaving Belfast  
Town.

The Army is no comfort, the soldiers are the same,  
Between the two I'll never have a peaceful home again,  
I used to work at making flags, but they burned the  
factory down,  
So I tell you John, I won't be long in leaving Belfast  
Town.

Our house has wooden windows, the doors are charred and  
black,  
The children they throw fire, and get rubber bullets  
back,  
The policemen they are tired there's been many struck  
down,  
And I'm telling you John, I won't be long in leaving  
Belfast Town.

I wish I had some money, but money comes so slow,  
I'd take myself away from here, to where the weary go,  
I never would come back again to rebel or to crown,  
And I tell you John, I won't be long in leaving Belfast  
Town.

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## LETTERS

Dear Sir,

I wonder the interest of readers, or folk music enthusiasts, or folk club members to an attempt to decentralise folk music in Victoria. Could the Foundation run a get-together in country areas for one afternoon, or evening during a weekend once a month. If so would there be any participating interest from folk audiences and or just as important folk singers? Places like Kilmore, Bacchus Marsh, Buxton, Talmalmo, etc., come to mind. Although this venue may possibly be a little beyond the clubs I feel it is not beyond the Foundation. It would put the folk back into folk music, something I have missed for sometime in Melbourne.

(NAME & ADDRESS  
SUPPLIED)

Dear Sir,

What happens to all the people who are able to sing at the National Festival's informal sessions, and then vanish until the next Festival.

(NAME & ADDRESS  
SUPPLIED)

Dear Sir,

When in Folk Clubs I have found that numerous persons still wish to talk regardless of who is singing. Since the organisers only run these for the benefit of the audience for they could never hope to reap financial gain, wouldn't far more be accomplished if the disinterested parties were able to see their folly and reserve their conversations for a more convenient time. Some people do go to Folk Clubs to listen. Both audience and singers could benefit from a new atmosphere missing for so long from the clubs where nowadays the song acts as background music to ceaseless chatter.

(NAME & ADDRESS  
SUPPLIED)