

The Balladeer

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

Acoustic Routes

www.acousticroutes.org.nz

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This newsletter can be printed out from a pdf located on the website <http://acousticroutes.org.nz/news/the-balladeer/>



RIP Tony

Recently we've had the sad news that we've lost a great musician, friend, and long-term member of the Wellington folk music community, Tony Hillyard. Tony had been unwell for some months and slipped away on 18 March.

Much more could and will be said, but for now, it seems fitting to quote the man himself about his love for music – "The music still makes me laugh; still makes me cry. What more could you ask for?" [NZ Folkies](http://NZFolkies.com) * [Tony Hillyard \(folksong.org.nz\)](http://TonyHillyard.com)

1. AR monthly concert featuring Karen Clarke, and Al Witham, Roseneath School Hall, Thursday 18 April, 7:30 pm



Photo by Gerard Hudson

Karen Clarke has been lurking backstage in the provincial acoustic scene refining her feels for the last 25 years. With an active live performance schedule, two albums under her belt and another release due next month, collaborating with Wellington-based producer and kiwi blues legend Darren Watson, she's well and truly earned her piece of the heartland acoustic music stage.

Starting out in folk Karen finds herself now firmly rooted where RnB and Alt-Country collide - you'll detect a dalliance with jazz too. She has an eclectic repertoire of self-penned material dealing with themes of belonging, love lost and trying to figure out life's riddles.

On stage Karen's power-packed performance is strong. Grounded. Built. Warm.

Emotionally direct with interpretations and song feels that move your waters.

Based in Taranaki, Karen runs an occasional acoustic venue called The Sound Shed with husband Mike Self and is the chair of the Taranaki Singer Songwriter Development Trust. Karen still holds a strong connection back to her former home base on the Kapiti Coast where she convened the Kapiti Live Music club for a while and played in Kapiti groups GingerJam and Mynimo; and Hard Candy.

<https://open.spotify.com/track/6XRBraM21JeuogqW3x1EnY?si=25f044a7a54e4acb>
<https://open.spotify.com/artist/1zlwRIFC5ilWGi3YUzOQq?si=wBb0V71sSCKuQWPeRqx9AQ>

Al Witham started out with nothing and still has most of it left. As a youngster in the 80s he inflicted himself on folk club audiences who were kind enough not to lock him out. A youthful obsession with Bob Dylan led him to explore the weird byways of early American folk, blues, jazz, and country music. Somewhere via Mississippi John Hurt, Johnny Cash, John Lee Hooker, Charlie Christian, and Tony Joe White he began writing songs, plugged in an electric guitar, and stumbled onto his own anachronistic way of expressing this temporary existence.



Entry: \$15/\$10 for AR members. Cash only (no eftpos facilities).

Parking on site or catch the number 14 bus to the school gate.

2. Open Mic, Plimmerton Boating Club, 10 Moana Road Plimmerton, Wednesday 10 April, 7pm

Second Wednesday of the month. Spread the word.

Same Ole MC.
Roy McGuinness 021433878



3. Newtown Open Mic upstairs at The Office, 124 Riddiford Street Newtown, Sundays 14 & 28 April, 5:15 – 8pm



Newtown Acoustic Sound's "Open Mic", upstairs at The Office Bar in Riddiford Street, Newtown.

Contact: kevin.ikin@supermail.co.nz, or newtownacousticsound@gmail.com

4. AR monthly singaround, Rimu Room, Johnsonville Community Hub, 33 Johnsonville Road, Monday 15 April, 7:30 pm



Bring songs, tunes or poems to share, or just come to join in. Go into the main room and the Rimu room is on the left.

Tea and coffee provided. Entry \$4. Third Monday of every month.

5. Review—March concert: Jon Sanders, opened by Annette Esquenet with Jo Moir

by Helen Dorothy

When you have guests staying with you on the same date as an Acoustic Routes concert, you hope it's an artist you are keen to expose your non-folky overnighters to! I couldn't have been prouder to bring my sister and brother-in-law, visiting from the UK, along to the club at Roseneath on the 28th, not only because I knew we had a high-quality international instrumentalist, but also one of my favourite local singer/songwriters performing.

This was the kind of concert that held you firmly in the present moment from the first mellow chord of Annette's piano to the final shimmering strum of Jon's guizouki. Two artists who engaged us fully with their carefully structured sets, their musicianship, delightful stage presence, and both generously giving in their performances—Annette inviting the talented Jo Moir to accompany her through her five-song set, and Jon providing excellent sound engineering for the entire evening.

Whatever Annette sings, it's always a winner in my book: well-constructed melodies with strong hooks and tender lyrics gently inviting you into her world... "we all learn to fly as we fall", "let the sound of the ocean bring you to me" ... her piano and soft guitar work (strumming over the frets to bring extra warmth to the sound) supporting clear vocals, and the extra layers of Jo's sensitive violin and almost ethereal harmonies adding texture. Beautiful.

Described as a one-man WOMAD, Jon Sanders kicked off his rich and diverse set on a tenor ukelele, mastered upside-down (he's left-handed) without being restrung, with some pedal effects creating a stadium sound that excited me greatly. Not only hinting at his recent India meets Ireland tour, there also followed musical journeys fusing Irish with Mexican (Gringo Jig), Celtic with Afro funk (a Rift Valley Reel), and bossa nova with bluegrass, with an Eastern-influenced finale. Three different instruments and an unexpected variety of genres, keeping us completely engaged.

Jon's sound was full and rich, the (Davy Stewart-made) guizouki with deep bass notes and crisp trebles. A sporadic use of reverb varied the sound of the all-important 'space' within compositions. He even pulled out a few acrobatics—rapid capo shifts mid-piece on a DADGAD-tuned guitar, some fast finger work on the fret board—but never in a self-indulgent way as it can seem with some guitarists, and ventured into a little singing (solo, and with our help on a Woody Guthrie number).



*Jon Sanders
photo by Gerard Hudson*

Initial distraction with fluorescent lighting above stage—sensing the set was going to demand an atmosphere the audience could really lose themselves in—didn't last long as I was intently listening, and watching, the music. In a well-lit hall you see just how much others are focused too, although I rarely looked away from the stage. From a performer's point of view, a lit-up audience can be a distraction, but in this case, I believe it allowed the evening's intimacy to evolve as Jon relaxed into banter (onstage and by the tea urn) as if we were all long-time old friends.

It was unfortunate that our March concert fell on the eve of the Easter w/e—many folkies were away, so the modest audience were asked to shuffle forward to fill the front seats. However,



*Annette and Jo
Photo by Gerard Hudson*

the lucky folk who were able to attend were treated to an intimate evening of superb music that seemed to pass so fast it left us all hanging out for more; the best artists always seem to know how to do this. Hopefully these two acts felt pleased about making their long respective road trips down to our club to fill us up with their lingering sounds. I understand the energy that goes into putting a performance together, even an opening set, and how artists evaluate themselves after the event, especially after shows that aren't hugely attended. Jon, Annette, and Jo should know in our household, reflections on the evening were well and truly glowing! :-)

6. Could you help rewrite the Acoustic Routes Constitution?

Calling all legal brains! The revocation of the 1908 Incorporated Societies Act means that all organisations currently registered have to produce a new constitution to be able to continue under the new Act. It's a fairly leisurely timeframe and MBIE has kindly provided a template to work to. Mary Hubble's agreed to help with the process but if anyone out there is dead keen to help set the template up, please get in touch with either Sue Ikin treasurer@acousticroutes.org.nz or Ruth Birnie president@acousticroutes.org.nz. Once we have a draft, the template can then be circulated around current members for comment, additions, or alterations. We'd like to have it ready for the AGM in August 2024.

7. Balladeer music noticeboard

Where you can advertise your music-related items—lessons, instruments, gigs, band members wanted, etc.

a) Songwriters Showcase, The Moon Bar, 167 Riddiford Street, Newtown

Doors open from 5:30pm, Music from 6:30pm. \$12 from Eventfinda or \$15 at the door. Songs6021@gmail.com Follow us at Songs6021 on Facebook and Instagram

- 7 April: Danger Boy, Rob Heyes, Rob Whelan and the Heartstrings, Eigenface
- 21 April: Luca Joass, Wandering Thyme, MJ Kennedy, The Divorcees
- 25 April: Jake Bergstrom, Dakota Lorillo, Bill Lake. Gracie and Sarah.

b) Up Close and Personal Plimmerton presents Krissy & Peter Jackson, 21 Gordon Road Plimmerton, Saturday 13th April 7:30pm



Described as "*an extraordinary musician and heartfelt performer,*" Krissy's music dances with melody and tone. Through her voice and fiddle, she connects deeply with her audience, creating compelling music that transcends genre and stylistic boundaries.

Keyboardist, harmony singer and husband Peter Jackson is described as a player "*whose quiet brilliance and intuition hold things together beautifully and sensitively.*"

As a duo, their ability to read the room and adjust their setlist accordingly makes for more than just entertainment but an experience that engages the audience right up until the final note. Songs, tunes, and harmonies that fill the soul and are performed with first-class musicianship.

\$20.00 per person. BYO and a small plate to share for supper. Feel free to arrive from 6:30 to mix and mingle. To book, text Annie 027 459 9376.

**c) Irish Set Dancing Weekend, Saturday 13 & 14 April, Wellington
Thistle Hall**

With set dance teacher Helen Stonehouse and the Round The House Ceili Band, this event is open to all, from beginners to experienced dancers.



Saturday 13 April

Workshops 10 am-12 pm, 2-4 pm
Ceili 7:30-10:30 pm

Sunday 14 April

Workshop 11:20 am-1:30 pm

	Early Bird Price Before 1 March	Full Price From 1 March	Unwaged Early Bird	Unwaged Full Price
Full weekend, 3 workshops + ceili	\$95	\$110	\$65	\$75
3 workshops	\$75	\$85	\$50	\$55
Ceili only	\$20	\$25	\$15	\$20

Tickets at Eventfinder, search for Irish Set Dancing Weekend, Wellington. Booking is recommended as numbers are limited. Contact Helen Stonehouse for more details: helenstonehouse62@gmail.com

d) Penny Plain, created by and featuring Rachel Dawick, Friday 3 May, 7pm

St Hilda’s Church, 311 The Parade (plenty of parking along the street and in the church car park), Island Bay 6023, Wellington

Also featuring Rachel’s dad on voice and slide show, and Susan Grant from Christchurch on slide guitar.

Jack Black - the Queen's Rat Catcher, a 14-year-old Mudlark, the Ballast Wives, the Punch & Judy Man and many more will burst out of the pages of Henry Mayhew’s book, *London labour and the London poor*, 1851, brought to life in Rachel’s signature performance approach, marrying theatre and music, great song-writing and authentic words and experiences from Mayhew’s extraordinary interviews with working-class Londoners living in the east end in the 1840s.



Rachel has been called a magician, and her works engrossing, a charming window into a previously unsung time in history. You may have heard her tales of pioneer women in New Zealand in the 1800s in the Boundary Riders, finalist for the NZ Folk Album of the Year in 2015, now find out about what life was like for those who stayed behind in Blighty – in this “picture of human life so wonderful, so awful ... so exciting and terrible...”

Tickets \$25/20 Acoustic Routes members; Door Sales or book in advance through [Rachel's website](#) (but only two weeks before the event) or email Rachel on rdawick@me.com for reservations.

The booklet including CD will be available for purchase for \$30.00.

e) Want to be a Guest at Auckland Folk Festival 2025?



Keen to apply to perform at the 2025 Auckland Folk Festival? [Here's your chance!](#) Applications will be open until the **end of June**. We receive a huge number of applications every year, so we respectfully ask that you do not chase us concerning the status of your application. We will contact you if your application is successful.

7. Want to perform?

The AR Committee would like to hear from you if you are interested in performing at our events, including support acts for our monthly concerts. Contact us at performers@acousticroutes.org.nz.



8. About AcousticRoutes

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

The fourth Thursday of the month generally features a concert, usually with a visiting artist and support acts from amongst our membership. Check the website or the Balladeer for updates about the venue. Members get priority access to performance opportunities and can have input into the club's activities. To join, email 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). You can [subscribe online](#), or contact publicity@acousticroutes.org.nz.

9. Acoustic Routes contacts

President: Ruth Birnie president@acousticroutes.org.nz

Correspondence: Anne McGregor secretary@acousticroutes.org.nz

Treasurer/Membership: Sue Ikin treasurer@acousticroutes.org.nz

Balladeer: editor Philippa Boy balladeer@acousticroutes.org.nz

Acoustic Routes update email: Anne McGregor

secretary@acousticroutes.org.nz **Performance opportunities:**

performers@acousticroutes.org.nz

Postal address: PO Box 27-191 Marion Square, Wellington, New Zealand.

Website: www.acousticroutes.org.nz

10. Other regular folk events/contacts in the region – please check websites or email for updates

Ceol Alba Scottish Music Club

When: 4th Friday of the month, 7.30 - 9.30pm. A club for playing and/or listening to (mostly) traditional Scottish music. Sheet music supplied or downloadable
Where: Lower Hutt
Cost: \$5 per night
Contact: Lynne Scott, 04 565 0164 lynne@scott.gen.nz

Levin Folk Music Club

When: 2nd Friday of the month, 7.30pm, blackboard concert plus guest artist.
Entry: Members \$5, Non-Members \$10, Children \$3 (includes supper)
Club Night: 4th Friday of month, 7.30 pm \$2 Kōha.
Where: Horowhenua Scottish Society Hall, cnr Bartholomew Rd and Middlesex St.
Website: www.levin-folk-music-club.org.nz

Mainly Acoustic Music Club

When: (Mostly) every 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm
Where: Mayfair Cafe, 116 Main Street, Upper Hutt
Contact: Mary Khalil 021 02314505 mary.khalil@xtra.co.nz
Club committee email: info@mainlyacoustic.co.nz
Website: http://mainlyacoustic.co.nz/coming_attractions/

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

Poneke Shanty Club

When: 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month 7-9pm
Where: The Welsh Dragon Bar, 10a Cambridge Terrace, Wellington
<https://www.facebook.com/PonekeShantyClub/>

Pukerua Bay Folk Club

When: 1st Thursday of the month, 8pm (no club night in January)
Where: 9 Donlin Rd, Pukerua Bay
Contact: Murray or Julie Kilpatrick, (04) 239 9951, musicianmurray@gmail.com

Trad Singing Session with Dave Barnes hosting

When: 2nd and 4th Monday of the month, from about 6.45pm
Where: The Welsh Dragon Bar, Wellington. This session celebrates unaccompanied singing in traditional style. Fine beer and food to be had at the bar.
Contact: Dave Barnes david.barnes@xtra.co.nz

Wellington Bluegrass Society

When: 3rd Friday of the month, 8pm
Where: 54 Richmond Street, Petone
Contact: Andrew Bicknell, (04) 477 0069, bluegrass@xtra.co.nz
<http://wellingtonbluegrass.net.nz/>

Wellington Scottish Fiddle Club

When: Varies, but mostly monthly around the first Sunday
Where: Depends on who is hosting it this time! A club for learning tunes in the traditional "by ear" style, it welcomes fiddlers of all levels.
Cost: Mostly free
Contact: Iain Matcham 04 568 8635, email iain@jumbletree.com