



The Balladeer

Acoustic Routes Newsletter

August 2026 — Aotearoa New Zealand

Celebrating community, music, & the joy of playing together

www.acousticroutes.org.nz | Johnsonville Club, 1 Norman Lane, Johnsonville



Welcome / Nau mai, haere mai

Kia ora everyone,

A warm welcome to this month's newsletter. Here's what's been happening in our folk community, what's coming up, and a few stories from the people who make our sessions special.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Last chance to get your applications in for Acoustic Routes' Joan Prior Award. We're really keen to help a younger creative or musician on their folk music journey. Applications close midnight Sunday 9 August. Please pass it on.

Inside: Upcoming AR events and news, **notice of AR AGM coming up on 16 August**, and the Music Noticeboard with upcoming events across the wider motu..

JOAN PRIOR AWARD

\$500 award for Wellington folk creatives & musicians
aged 18 to 25

***Now seeking applications for the 2026 award,
closing 9 August 2026***

- Supporting younger musicians and folk enthusiasts to share the benefits of folk music
 - Keeping the traditions alive

See the webpage for more info and the application process.

Subs are due for the 2026-2027 year. We'd love to have you join us for the new year. Please pay online if possible, it avoids a queue on the door on concert nights.

AR Monthly Concert: A concert of two halves, featuring Owen Hugh and Laldy

Johnsonville Club, 1 Norman Lane, Monday 17 August, 7:30pm

Entry: \$20/\$15 for AR members. Cash only (no EFTPOS facilities)

Laldy



Wellington-based fiddle player Rachel James and guitarist Donald James combine forces for one mission: to play folk and “gie i' laldy”, meaning to do something with gusto or great enthusiasm. With Welsh and Scottish roots, they are inspired by Scottish, Irish and Scandinavian music traditions.

Laldy brings to the stage a set which weaves together contemporary and traditional folk tunes and songs with original writing and arrangement. Playing a selection of sweet songs, modal grooves and traditional bangers, Laldy are a lively and danceable offering to the New Zealand folk and festival scene.

Owen Hugh



Scottish with a Welsh name, living in NZ and having a permanent hunger for curry, Owen describes himself as confused. He has been writing songs since he was 16 though it took him 3 years of trying before writing a decent one. He has just remastered all his albums and they are available on sites such as YouTube, Spotify and Apple music.

His music always touches the soul and contains Celtic, Rock Folk and Blues influences. He cut his teeth at folk clubs in NZ and the UK in the 90's and has

played Edinburgh Fringe Festival 4 yrs in a row as well as several festivals in UK. Once described in the American Press as a cross between “Billy Connolly and James Taylor”, be prepared to laugh and cry possibly at the same time. After a period of writer's block he is now recording and road-testing new material.

🎵 More Acoustic Routes Events

📅 **Acoustic Routes Monthly Sing-around** - Monday 11 August 7pm, upstairs at the Johnsonville Club, 1 Norman Lane. Come along and share your latest musical learnings, finds, creations, or favourites with a listening audience. Monthly second Mondays.

📅 **AR Plimmerton Open Mic** - Thursday 13 August 7pm, Plimmerton Boating Club, 10 Moana Road. Hosted by Roy McGuinness. No pre-booked spots – put your name up when you get there. Spread the word. Monthly second Thursdays.

📅 **Acoustic Routes Social Club** - Wednesday 19 August, 1:30pm, Upstairs in the Johnsonville Club, 1 Norman Lane. Monthly third Wednesdays. Featuring **Deb and Jenni Harding**.



As a coal miner's granddaughter Deb had the good fortune to grow up in Staffordshire in the UK. This industrial landscape is rich in folk songs and traditions. Deb and daughter Jenni will share songs to celebrate this heritage including some well-known singalongs. Deb and Jenni's gig had to be cancelled due to illness back in March, so we're delighted to have them this month.

In the second half, we'll go around the circle and you're welcome to lead a song or tune if you wish. All welcome; bring instruments and voices. \$5 charge for the musicians.

📅 **Newtown Acoustic Sound's Open Mic** - Sunday 30 August 5:15 – 8pm, Upstairs at The Office Bar, 124 Riddiford Street. Held on the last Sunday of each month, in association with Acoustic Routes, organized by Janine Mitchell with back-up from Kevin Ikin.

Contact: janinemitchell04@gmail.com, kevin.ikin@supermail.co.nz, or newtownacousticsound@gmail.com.



📅 **ACOUSTIC ROUTES AGM 16TH AUGUST - CALL FOR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Kia ora Acoustic Routes members

The Acoustic Routes AGM will be held on 16th August at 2.30 pm, upstairs at the Johnsonville Club, 1 Norman Lane, Johnsonville. Please do come along if you can – the club needs your presence, support, interest and input.

As you know, the main point of the AGM is to elect members of the committee, and this year, that will be more crucial than ever. Constitutionally, our president is required to step down after six consecutive years in the role, which means, sadly, that Ruth Birnie has to step down from the committee at this time, and a new president must be

elected. Ruth is committed to the club and will be available to support the new incumbent and help with their transition into the role, as will others who have been involved in the longer term.

This year we also need a new secretary and some new members on the committee.

As we've said in previous issues, these days it's not a huge a time commitment – we meet once a month to plan activities. We currently have three main events each month, which need to be publicised and which require at least one committee member (at least two for the main concert) to be present to set up, host and run. Club members who are not on the committee often help.

Possible Tasks - Helping on the desk to meet and greet members and take money at the Concert nights so the performers can be paid. Compering at a concert. Assisting the set up and pack down with help from the audience at Concert nights, sing-around sessions and social club daytime sessions. Promotion of Acoustic Routes events through any media or networks available to you. Help with other activities such as the Joan Prior Award.

Please note that all of these tasks can be learned "on the job". Your enthusiasm for and interest in folk music, energy and ideas are what's most needed.

Please contact the Committee if you would like more information – contact details on page 7.

Janette Munneke for AR Committee

 **Acoustic Routes subscriptions for the year 2026-2027** are due for renewal from 1 July. Please deposit the appropriate amount in the club's bank account. If there has been any change to your physical address, phone number or email address please notify the Treasurer. More info at <https://acousticroutes.org.nz/join-us/>

Community Stories – concert reviews

Review of 20 July AR Concert

I'll sum up, at the start, by saying this was a great show from go to whoa. A mix of music that warmed up a close to full house on a chilly winter's night and sent us home with a glow from head to toe.

The opening acts – Stan Antonio (Phoebe Smith and Alex Howie) and Princess and the Pea (Michael Muggeridge and Cara Brasted), certainly warmed the cockles of this aging heart. All four have grown up in well-known folkie families with the music that they are keeping alive and revitalized.

I first heard Phoebe and Alex in a band called Ratproof. Cara was part of that line-up too. In their Stan Antonio duo they have continued to develop a nice blend of vocals, underpinned by Alex's banjo and Phoebe's guitar and are composing their own songs as well. They opened the concert with a couple of American songs, before inviting Cara

and Michael to join them for two animal-themed originals, the *Pony Song*, written by Phoebe and *Dogs*, written by Alex.



Michael Muggeridge (guitar, mandolin, vocals) and Cara Brasted (fiddle, vocals) need no introduction to folk audiences. They are members of Wellington band Butter Wouldn't Melt, amongst other acts, and it's wonderful to hear them combining their instrumental wizardry in this new duo, Princess and the Pea. Their set was mostly of American origin, but they started with a New Zealand song, *The Ballad of Minnie Dean*. After a rip-roaring instrumental they returned the favour by getting Alex and Phoebe to join them for a Steve Earl song, *The Texas Eagle*, and *Salty Dog Blues*.

Black Eyed Susie have been performing as a well-established Kapiti Coast based duo for some years, with Susan Colien-Reid on violin and acoustic guitar and Ramon Oza on electric guitar, with both sharing vocals. They are now a trio with Nick Brown on keyboards, adding more layers to an already rich and dynamic sound. The band has developed its own rock-edged style, using an array of foot pedals to great effect on Celtic and other material, as well as their own compositions. They started with their unique arrangement of a traditional Irish tune, underpinned by haunting keyboard, followed by a border ballad, *Raggle Taggle Gypsy*, which has had many versions and titles over the years. Most of the set were originals by Susan and Ramon, all top notch and often with a pertinent message or two. They included Ramon's *Himalayan Boy*, his reminiscences of going to school in the mountains, and Susan's haunting narrative of a slave auction. They ended with the sublime *Slip Away*, another Susan composition that sent us replenished and rewarded into the night.

A big thank you too, to the sound guy, Wayne Rowland, who did a great job of mixing the sophisticated sound (harmonizing mics and all!).

Kevin Ikin

Review Acoustic Routes Social Club meeting 15 July

For his first time performing at Acoustic Routes, Tony Fuell's set included a very pleasing mix of old favourites (for me anyway) like *Fire and Rain* (James Taylor), *Stardust* (Joni Mitchell), and *The Leaving of Liverpool*. He also introduced me to a couple of artists I hadn't heard before. He sang a song by quirky Scottish indie pop band Belle and Sebastian called *Nobody's Empire*, from their album *Girls in peacetime want to dance*, and a cool number by Canadian David Francey, *Torn Screen Door*.

Janette Munneke

Useful Resources

Notice: ANZFA Folk Music Awards 2026 – Album Submissions Open

Submissions are now underway for the 2026 ANZFA Folk Music Awards, celebrating the breadth and diversity of New Zealand folk music. Artists have until **midnight, 31 August 2026** to submit albums released between **1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026**.

Albums may be commercially released via streaming, download or physical media, and can range from home-grown bedroom recordings to professionally produced

independent label releases. Kiwi artists living overseas are also eligible (terms and conditions apply).

Five awards will be presented:

- Best Traditional Album
- Best Original Album
- Best Kiwiana Album
- Best Americana Album
- Overall Best Folk Album 2026 (voted by ANZFA members)

For more info and details on how to enter, go to <https://anzfa.org.nz/fma>

Notice: The Wellington Sea Shanty Showdown - for high school students

Pōneke Shanty Club and The Walker Traditional Folk Music Trust invite you to enter, the first ever Wellington Sea Shanty Showdown! Gather a crew of fellow Wellington Region-based high school students and record (video) yourselves singing TWO sea shanties unaccompanied (a capella). Instruments are not permitted; the judges are looking for the group singing energy that kept a ship's crew working together in the days of old.

Final date for entries is October 1, 2026.

For more info and details on how to enter, go to <https://www.walkertradtrust.co.nz/>



About Acoustic Routes

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

To find more information about the club, and get notifications of the latest news and events, go to the website, <https://acousticroutes.org.nz/>, follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/wellingtonfolkclub>, and/or join our Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/347362439094076>. Members of the Facebook Group can post their own events and comment on posts.

Our main monthly event is every third Monday except in January, October and December. It generally features a concert, usually with a visiting artist and support acts from amongst our membership.

Other regular (monthly) events include an informal Social Club with a booked guest, held on the third Wednesday of most months in the afternoon, and a Sing-around on the second Monday evening of most months where attendees can participate. We also support two Open Mic Gigs: Newtown Acoustic Sound Open Mic at the Office Pub in Newtown, the last Sunday of each month, and the Open Mic at the Plimmerton Boat Club, on the second Thursday of the month.

Our venue for the third Monday event, Social Club and Sing-around is the Johnsonville Club, 1 Norman Lane, Johnsonville, Wellington, which has parking and a bar, and a lift for wheelchair access. (If you need the lift, it might pay to phone the venue to find out if it is operating.)



The restaurant is not open on Monday nights when we usually meet but you can order bar snacks and drinks at the bar. If you want an alcoholic drink and are not a member of the Johnsonville Club, you will need to get a member to sign you in as a guest. You may need to press the doorbell to access the building.

Membership

Members get discounted entry and a say in the club's activities.

The membership year is from July to June. If you haven't already joined for the year July 2026-June 2027, **subs are now due**. You can join and pay your sub online to prevent having a queue at the door on concert nights. To join, go to <https://acousticroutes.org.nz/join-us/>. Payment online is appreciated.

Acoustic Routes publishes this newsletter (The Balladeer) at the start of every month, and an email update about acoustic gigs in the region later in the month. You can subscribe online on this webpage - <https://acousticroutes.org.nz/news/> or contact publicity@acousticroutes.org.nz.

Want to perform?

The Acoustic Routes 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.

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: Anna Macfarlane balladeer@acousticroutes.org.nz
- Acoustic Routes updates: 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

Balladeer Music Events Noticeboard

Where you can advertise your music-related items—lessons, instruments, gigs, band members wanted, etc. To place a notice, please email balladeer@acousticroutes.org.nz

🎵 **Nick Herbison Album Release Tour**, with folk artist Joe Cole, Moon, 167 Riddiford Street, Sunday 2 August, 7pm

🎵 **Andrew Kerr**, Thunderbird Cafe, Featherston St, Friday 7 August, 5.30-7.30pm

🎵 **Kelburn Viaduct Municipal Ensemble Jug Band**, The Undercurrent, 118 Tory Street, Saturday 8 August, 7pm

🎵 **Burgin, Kerr and Norman**, The Shed, 46A Victoria St, Alicetown, Saturday 8 August, 7.30pm

🎵 **The Shenanigans**, Days Bay Pavilion, Sunday 9 August, 6-8pm

🎵 **Mainly Acoustic Music Club**, Mayfair Café, 116 Main Street, Upper Hutt, Tuesday 11 August, 7:30-10pm Julie Bevan opens, Main acts; The Faustians, & Frank John and Erin Manu. For more information - www.mainlyacoustic.co.nz/contact-us

- NOTE: Lift generously offered to Acoustic Routes members/supporters to attend monthly Mainly Acoustic concerts from Ngaio (or nearby) to and from Mayfair Cafe, Upper Hutt. Call Bill Dashfield 0221 923 326

🎵 **Carter Parker Trio**, Thunderbird Cafe, 154 Featherston St, Wellington, Friday 14 August, 5.30-7.30pm

🎵 **"Still not dead", Rachel McAlpine with Andrew and Kirsten London**, The Undercurrent, 118 Tory Street, Saturday 15 August, 5.30pm

🎵 **Adam McGrath with his latest album 'Wrecker Songs'**

At Hilltop, Upland Road, Kelburn, **Saturday 15 August** 7pm, Teas, coffee & snacks provided. BYO.

Note this gig is now on a week earlier than originally scheduled. Please adjust your calendars!

www.hilltophouseconcerts.co.nz/upcoming-gigs/



🎵 **Hobnail**, Days Bay Pavilion, Sunday 16 August, 6-8pm

🎵 **Salty Hearts**, Thunderbird Cafe, 154 Featherston St, Wellington, Friday 21 August 5.30-7.30pm

🎵 **The Zimmermans**, St Peters Hall, Beach Road, Paekakariki, Sunday 23 August, 7.30pm

🎵 **Wellington Bluegrass Society Night** (featuring **Banjo Ben and the Breeze**, at the Abandoned Taproom, Petone, Thursday 27 August 7.30pm, See the Wellington Bluegrass Society's website for more details. www.wellingtonbluegrass.net.nz/event-detail/

🎵 **Phonic Fever**, Thunderbird Cafe, 154 Featherston St, Wellington, Friday 28 August 5.30-7.30pm

🎵 **Wellington Sea Shanty Society with "Never Mind the Rowlocks"**, Abandoned Taproom, Petone, Friday 28 August

🎵 **Blair Morgan and Luca Joass**, The Undercurrent, 118 Tory Street, Saturday 29 August, 3.30pm. Folk, Americana, Indie.

🎵 **The Wooden Box Band**, Days Bay Pavilion, 611B Marine Drive, Sunday 30 August 6-8pm

🎸 **Regular Folk Music Events Noticeboard**

Look out for these events – they're probably on even if we haven't been advised of the particulars for the month in question. Check using the contact details to be sure.

To place a notice, please email balladeer@acousticroutes.org.nz

🎵 **Wellington Traditional Tunes Session**, The Welsh Dragon Bar, 10a Cambridge Terrace, Wellington

- Every Tuesday from 7.30pm
- Fine beer and food to be had at the bar. 1st Tuesday slow session aimed at beginners, followed by regular session.
- Contact: <https://wellingtonslowsession.wordpress.com/>

🎵 **Moon Jam Nites**, 167 Riddiford St, Newtown, Regular ... Every Tuesday night from 7.30pm. The evening starts off open mic, then moves into a full on jam towards the end. Sign up with your time slot. You can call upon many talented musicians to help play your slot. A full stage with electric guitar, bass, keyboard, drums, mics, lights and full support from our sound tech. Bring your own songs, poems, and friends (and make some new ones too)

🎵 **Morris dancing**, David Barnes <https://sites.google.com/site/nzmorrisdancing/>

🎵 **Mainly Acoustic Music Club**, Mayfair Cafe, 116 Main Street, Upper Hutt

- (Mostly) every 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm - 10pm
- Contact: Fiona Armstrong-McIntosh 0211205961 fionastrongmc@gmail.com
Club committee email: info@mainlyacoustic.co.nz
Website: https://mainlyacoustic.co.nz/coming_attractions/

🎵 **Wellington Calling Open Mic**, The Undercurrent, 118 Tory Street, Te Aro, Check with them direct for days and dates scheduled, as they're not held on set days nor monthly. Six minutes each with microphone, guitar and piano provided.

🎵 **Pukerua Bay Folk Club Sing-around**, 9 Donlin Rd, Pukerua Bay,

- 1st Thursday of the month, 8pm. For details, please contact musicianmurray@gmail.com

🎵 **Pōneke Shanty Club**, The Welsh Dragon Bar, 10a Cambridge Terrace, Wellington

- 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, 7-9pm

🎵 **Wellington Bluegrass Society**

- **WBS Society Nights** – Abandoned Taproom, Petone. Fourth Thursday each month, 7pm. See the Wellington Bluegrass Society website for more details <https://wellingtonbluegrass.net.nz/>

- **Old Time and Bluegrass Music Sessions** – Memelink Artspace, 223 The Esplanade, Petone. Second Sunday each month. Contact: Andrew Bicknell, (04) 477 0069, <https://wellingtonbluegrass.net.nz/>

🎵 **Levin Folk Music Club**, Horowhenua Scottish Society Hall, cnr Bartholomew Rd and Middlesex St.

- 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 the month, 7.30pm, \$2 koha

🎵 **Ceol Alba Scottish Music Club**, Lower Hutt

- 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.
- Cost: \$5 per night
- Contact: Lynne Scott, 04 565 0164 lynne@scott.gen.nz

🎵 **Wellington Irish Society**, Wilton Bowling Club, last Friday of the month 7pm
Wellington Irish Society will be headquartered at the Wilton Bowling Club with a regular "Irish Night" on the last Friday of each month, celebrating its music, culture, stories, and community spirit. <https://www.wellingtonirish.nz/>

🎵 **Acoustic Music Evenings**, Niom Bistro, 169 Riddiford St, Newtown, Saturdays at 6-8pm

🎵 **The Hanging Ditch**, 14 Leeds St, Te Aro, third Sunday of the month 4 – 6pm, hosts a gig where you can listen to professional Irish music for free with some tasty cocktails and snacks. A closed invite session with the guests changing every week. If intermediate players would like to give playing a try, contact Em Griffiths at: emceltic2@gmail.com Gigs held **3rd Sunday monthly**.

🎵 **Songwriters Showcase at Moon**, 167 Riddiford St, Newtown, third Sunday of the month, 4-10pm. Open Mic from 4pm, show starts 7pm. For more info, see the Facebook page *6021 Songs* or email a query to 6021songs@gmail.com

💖 Closing Note

Thanks for being part of our musical whānau. Whether you come along to perform or simply to listen and enjoy, your presence makes our community richer. See you at the next event.

Ngā mihi nui

Your Acoustic Routes Committee