

THE SCOTTISH FIDDLER



www.tellingtales.net

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February 2007

Happy New Year one and all!

Fàilte!

Welcome to 2007!

The year Ahead – thoughts from your Director

Agenda for February 2007 meeting

- 12.30 *Committee meeting*
- 2.00 *All fiddlers together with JT – the year to come;
Shetland tunes part 1 and revision of The Kings house
and Dr Morrison's Seven Thistles*
- 3.00 *Afternoon tea BRING SOMETHING TO
SHARE!!*
- 4.00 *Fiddlers together with matt – Shetland tunes part 2*
- 5.00 *End*

Hello all and welcome to a year of changes. Love em!

As you are mostly aware I think, I shifted jobs in January and am now working at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Federation Square. It's exciting and different and very very challenging.

At the same time Neil and I are selling our house and making the big move – a sea change if you will! – to South Melbourne (in early April). So what better time than to think up a whole new scheme for the Fiddle Club, to make life even more exciting?

Matt (your President) and I think that 2007 should be a year of learning more than a year of performing, in contrast to 2005 and 2006, which were full on with making money and touring and performing.

We think a year of consolidation is in order. Maybe we are just getting old! Whatever, the expected arrival in June of our young friends from Swingin Fiddles, gives us the impetus to plan a focus on Shetland and island tunes for the first half of the year. Some other things Matt and I agree on:

1. We will be cutting back the concert requirements and beefing up the tune learning.
2. We will also be looking for a place to hold a regular session – again – probably around South Melbourne where pubs are thick on the ground. Watch this space. So playing, playing, learning, learning. Several members have been asked to hunt out tunes from Shetland and the islands to teach between Feb and June. We are looking to add between 6 and 8 new items to our performing repertoire in that time, and hoping to focus also on cello and viola a bit.
3. We would like to bring Julian Thomas down from Canberra/Sydney wherever he is currently, to do a weekend of cello classes. We need to hear from all our cellists as to the best time of year.

4. We are hoping to hold another Mansfield camp, with Chris Duncan and us all, and the NESSIE people, later in the year, with a mega concert again to end it.
5. We think that a new skill for the club members this year might be some singing, as the links between singing and playing are so strong and often ignored by us instrumentalists. Following his success at the Celtic Summer School (more on that elsewhere by some of our many participants) Ron McCoy has agreed to spend some time at a few meetings (commencing March) helping us to learn a couple of gaelic songs – and maybe we will do a set of tunes with fiddle and mouth music, too.

We hope you will all enjoy a more restful year, focused on your playing, and that at the end of it we will be ready to start gearing up for another OS or interstate tour.

SHSSF

Don't forget that the club is offering to pay the return airfare for one club member who would like to go to this great school in New Zealand, from 15th - 22nd April 2007.

Teachers this year are Laura Risk, Catherine Fraser and Iain Fraser. Let Matt know if you would like to be the one. If we have more than one person wanting to go, we will make a selection..... ask Jack Wilson or David Anderson if you are humming and hating – they have both been.

New name needed for "the small group"

Our concerts this year will fall into two categories:

- a) the whole group – Melbourne Scottish Fiddle Club – in June with Swingin fiddles, in August in Ballarat and (to be confirmed) in late September or early October in Mansfield;
- b) the small group – any of the members – which will be convened by Pria and will respond to smaller queries that come in all the time. Matt recommends that this group finds itself a band name – something Scottish and with a resonance..... all ideas gratefully accepted by Matt.

Swingin Fiddles coming our way! Fantastic young group – teaching playing and sessioning with us June 14-27 2007

Laura Maggie and Astryd who Judy and Gus met and had some great sessions with at NAFCO 2006 will be heading to Oz in the middle of the year- sadly just too late to do the Celtic festival. However we are looking at a weekend of music with the girls, culminating in a concert, and including workshops and masterclasses in Shetland fiddling. They've been playing since before they could walk, pretty much, and are really fun girls to boot. Laura (the older one) will be staying on in Oz

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for a few weeks and looking for some fun in Melbourne- we have promised to help her out!

DIARY DATE!

Keep a note in your diaries of the 15 - 17 June and the 22 - 24 June – not sure yet which of these weekends they will be with us.

<http://www.swinginfiddles.com/>

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Messages from our travellers

1) Gus Downing – Feb 07.

Hi Judy! How're you going?

I'm back in London after my Lyon semester. It was hard saying goodbye to everyone, and the last couple of weeks were so full-on with tying off loose ends and going to 'going-away parties' that it seemed very chaotic, but London's giving me the time to think it all through. Really looking forward to seeing all my Melbourne friends again too!

It's snowing here right now. I should be able to get some cool London photos today if I can make myself go outside to take them..

I'm not sure what I'll be doing on the 22nd of March, but are you still recruiting for that gig? If yes, you can put me down as a "hopefully yes". I guess it just depends on work, but I should be able to give you an answer fairly shortly after I get back.

I hope you're all well. Please say hi to everyone for me. See you soon!

Gus D

2) Oliver Jowsey – Feb 07.

Hi Judy,

Just to let you know that Oliver Jowsey who started in the chairs in the front when he was 11 years old and worked his tall self to be that very tall lad at the back of the group is leaving Australia for pastures new. He has opted to head off to Dunedin to Otago University and enjoy the lovely weather, drink Speights beer and study Arts/Law. He is moving into Knox College and is taking a fiddle and a pile of tune books so he can hopefully keep in practice. Thank you to all at the MSFC for the fun and experiences that Ollie had whilst joining in with the fiddling folk.

Linda Jowsey and family.

Celtic Southern Cross Music Not under the Mountains at Campaspe downs and/or other names

Your roving MSFC reporter Jean McConnachie fills you in on all the goss from the recent Fest at Campaspe Downs...

I'd like to thank the MSFC for sending me on a great expedition to the Music (not) Under the Mountains. There certainly were no mountains, but there was a big dry hole that should have been a lake. By the time we finished 'tho there was a bit more water in it — I don't know if that's as a result of our playing our little hearts out day and night or not.

One of the best things for me was to be in an environment where all that you need to think about is playing fiddle. You didn't have to think about what to do or what to cook or when to do anything — it was all taken care of. Wake up, have breakfast, play music, have lunch, play music, have dinner, play music, sleep, and do it all again.

I was lucky to be in the Scottish fiddle class but there was also Celtic and Irish fiddle, harp, whistle, Gaelic singing, keyboards and pipes. The poor pipers spent the week adjusting their reeds for the hot dry weather, then having to perform on a cooler humid day. The tuning was rather interesting.

In fact we had extremes of weather during the week. On the hottest day this drove us to the toilets. Because it was cooler in there. But a bit cramped. And very loud.

In the Scottish group we learned 7 tunes by ear. I did have to resort to putting some dots down before the end when Chris gave them out. Some were quite difficult but I enjoyed having something to keep working on at home after the camp. I think I've almost learned them now. As Chris pointed out, he has been working on these tunes for 6 months or so to perfect them, so we shouldn't feel we have to be able to play them perfectly after just one week (although some of our group were pretty good).

On the last day — the Friday, each group performed for everyone which was a great way for us to share what we had been doing during the week. Then it was off home to practice practice practice!

This is a great camp for all levels of players and a great way to socialise with other musos from all over Australia. I've put my name down for next year.

(Tunes taught were Princess Beatrice, Miss Douglass's Strathspey, 250 to Vigo, Miss Hannagh's Jig, Neil Gow's Lament for Jas. Moray, Esq., of Abercairney, The Southwest Bridge Reel and The Camembert Waltz)

Jean McC

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Jean suggested that we should call these two pics "Music Under the Cisterns". What a fiddler will do for a good tune. See text for explanations



Did you ever see such a bunch of likely suspects?



What's the collective noun for a bunch of Celtophiles? A slew of Celts? FYI "sluagh" pronounces sloo-a means a group of people in Gaelic...



Well, the fiddlers "slew them anyway..."



Uncle Dave at the Celtic Banjo...seriously – Dave was the surprise Campaspe Downs “Superstar”. He can sing, play and proved himself to be a master accompanist of singers and instruments... I think he established a whole new fan base...



This is Zac from the Brisbane fiddle superstars “Fiddlesticks”. The Fiddlesticks group with knew all the Scottish tunes from the tunebooks off by heart and held their own in all of the sessions. Take note those club members who haven’t yet memorised them – there’s plenty out there who can step in and take your place...!

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**Gaelic singing at Celtic Southern Cross Music
Not under the Mountains at Campaspe
downs..etc**

I had the opportunity to teach Gaelic songs this year at the music school, and I must say, I was amazed at how quickly people picked up the tunes.

I was lucky in my class to have 5 singers, all women, and all of them with previous music experience, and only one with some singing experience. I decided to call the all girl Celtic group “The Vocables” (google “Gaelic vocables” if you don’t understand).

We spent a lot of time exploring a wide range of Gaelic songs and settled on performing two songs with harp and some mouth music. We learned one mouth music song called Meal do bhrogan, which means “enjoy your shoes”!

I had an email last weekend from Emma Nixon, one of the class who is teaching in a school and is teaching her school choir

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the mouth music song, and all the kids love it. It’s wonderful to think how music spreads.

We had the opportunity to work with Dave Alleway and his harp class, which was an awesome experience.

The students performed – without my assistance in the concert – Chì mi (The Mist Covered mountains) and Oran na mhaighdeann mhàra which is a song all about the selkies (if you don’t know about them, I might right about them in future issues). Alasdair Fraser recorded this last tune on Return to Kintail with Tony McManus.

As all of the students were female, I decided to sit out the concert because the blend of women’s voices was a really beautiful sound with the harps, and I must say, I really enjoyed their wonderful performance.

The group said that they went away with a much expanded knowledge of Gaelic songs, and have an idea of pronunciation now. In fact, some of them were reading Gaelic pretty well after just one week – much faster than I ever learned!

It’s really hard to get an audience for Gaelic songs in Australia, mainly because of the language barriers, but groups like the Melbourne Scottish Fiddle Club, Celtic Southern Cross, and people like Judy Turner, Chris Duncan and Beth and Mike really do understand the importance of the Gaelic — so a big thanks to all of these fantastic people for promoting the cause!

I’m writing out some arrangements which I’m posting off to the group which I might put in a later edition of the newsletter, but what I learned most, is that musicians – and three of the class singers were fiddlers – not only pick up tunes quickly, they picked up the language much faster than nonmusicians.

This has given us a lot of ideas for the fiddle club!

Mòran taing airson an cothrom orain a theagaisg agus meal do bhrogan!

Ronald



Meet “The Vocables” Hu, bha, ho, ro and he! The singers from the Gaelic singing class rehearsing for the concert. Tapadh leibh airson deagh spòrs!

From beyond the Sales Desk

by Shirl Dwyer

Meet the Sales Executives and their ever-willing helpers, members who loom ominously in dingy foyers and dark hallways. We are always on the look out for a sales opportunity, whether it be raffle tickets, CD's, tunebooks or mugs.

Our motto:

We go that extra mile with a smile. 😊

NB This month's column is a bit longer than normal, but we are talking about two people...

Welcome to Auntie Shirl's "Family Feud".

This month's contestants are **Janet and Darron Crick**, valuable members of the MSFC Sales Executive Team. They both generously give their time to the club, sometimes making the long trip from Ballarat twice (or more) a week.



The Cricks...down on the farm!

Shirl: Let's start by asking about the family business...and what you like about it

Darron: Our chook farm has a capacity of 40,000 which is larger than average for free range. The average is around 25,000. But far smaller than modern cage farms which average around 250,000 birds. We produce around 2,500 dozen eggs per day. All our eggs are delivered ungraded to Farm Pride for packing and distribution around Victoria. We concentrate on production and leave sales up to Farm Pride.

I work as little as possible, probably 50 hours a week, unless something is going wrong or we are changing sheds over where the hours can really blow out, unfortunately them's the breaks.

Our poultry enterprise is part of a 1,800-acre family farm. We run the chooks and my brother and father run the rest, being potatoes, beef cattle, and cropping.

The operations are too large for us to help each other very much, plus we would all end up killing each other if we had to work together regularly. We do work together during crises, which is to everyone's benefit.

We are true multicultural employers with staff from Australia, the Phillipines, India, and sometimes Iran. At our recent staff family Christmas party held at a local indoor cricket venue we had over 40 show up and, even there, Australia whipped India on the field!

The advantage of living near work is the 1-minute it takes to get to work (on the 4-wheel motorbike). Probably 4 minutes on foot but I'm not sure as I never do that) and the ability to keep an eye out for 2 legged foxes snooping around.

Janet: It's big. Ask Darron how many eggs- too much adding up for me. I'm the relief worker over there now, which is a couple of days a year- still too much sometimes. (hey, I married the man, not the job!

Advantages- eggs! Luckily we like them! (Not Phillip, though.)

Shirl: Sounds like an ideal job. Any disadvantages?

Darron: People just turning up at any time day or night to get their dozen eggs because they know that there is always someone around.

Janet: Phone calls from chook buyers at 6:30am or 10:50 at night. (Yes, we've had both. How do you say p off in Maltese??) – editor's note: can anyone help?***

Shirl: Now for the big question - How did you meet?

Darron: Janet and I met on a bus going to a Peter Gabriel concert in 1994. That just goes to show that we both have impeccable tastes in music (editor's interjection: hmmm). I must admit, though, that poor old Pete has lost his edge of late along with another of my all time favourites Joe Jackson. They are all getting too old.

Janet: We met at the Peter Gabriel concert in 1994. I'd seen PG in Adelaide a year and was bragging a bit about it in the minibus we all travelled in, so I suppose it wasn't hard to notice me! (I'm glad he did.)

Shirl: OK, so your taste in music is.... (ummm)... consistent. Do you have any hobbies?

Darron: I have been a sailor for many years but with all the local lakes drying up, me and the mates have taken up landsailing at the local airport runway. Huge fun - check out www.blokart.com for action pixs. The boys won't go as they are too wussy (editor's note – perhaps they know better).

Janet: I've still got 4 Welsh ponies, who are quite happy living as nature intended.

Shirl: *All seriousness aside, tell us about something that you wish you'd had never eaten*

Darron: *I wish I had never eaten the chocolate-coated dog biscuits offered up by my boss in Sydney (many years ago). The foreman next to me had two mouthfuls before he realized something was wrong. I realized something was wrong as the chocolate tasted like bacon fat. The boss reckoned it just proved we were greedy pigs - we said we already knew that so the joke was on him, he didn't see it that way and he still laughs about it.*

Janet: *I wish I had never eaten anchovies on the night I met Darron. Next time I want to throw up all night I'll just eat a handful of salt and save money*

Shirl: *Yum!! So what do you really like?*

Darron: *I really like mum's self-saucing chocolate pudding.*

Janet: *I really like dark chocolate and potatoes in most forms. I like my boys when they're behaving nicely, too.*

Shirl: *and that's most of the time too! So, if you were on a desert island what would you like to have with you? And what if you won a million bucks?*

Darron: *If I had a million dollars I wouldn't have any chooks.*

Janet: *If I was on a desert island I would like to have a beacon system so I could call someone to come and get me! I don't even like swimming*

Shirl: *Surely you don't mean that Darron. So if you could do one thing over again, what would it be?*

Darron: *I am not sure what I would do over again, most things seem to work themselves out in the end and if you look at the damage that can be done by messing with the past as seen in the historical documentary "Back To The Future" with Michael J.Fox, the past is best left alone!*

Janet: *If I could do one thing over again, it would be go back to Disneyland again. You don't need to be a kid to have fun there!*

Shirl: *And lastly, what is your favourite time of the day?*

Both in unison: *after the boys have gone to bed!*

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MSFC Newsletter

Send all contributions to Ronald McCoy on
rmccoy@ocean.com.au

or ring 03 9527 1375 or

mob: 0407 318 911

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Contacting NESSIE?

NESSIE (North East Scottish Strings Including Elbow pipes) meets on the 1st Sunday of every month. SO if you're in the area on drop in and join in the fun! For more information contact Claire on tel: 5963 3277 or Kristen on tel: 03 5766 6282.

MSFC members especially welcome!

MSFC CLUB CONTACTS

The Melbourne Scottish Fiddle Club (MSFC) meets at 2.00 PM on the third Sunday of the month at St Aidan's church hall in Duggan St, North Balwyn.

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