

# MULGA WIRE

JUNE 1977



A BUSH MUSIC CLUB PUBLICATION

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EDITORIAL

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The editors are proud to present - with a clash from the lagerphone and the boom of the bush bass - the very first edition of MULGA WIRE. We hope in the ensuing months to present a magazine consisting of an interesting mixture of folklore and news, viewpoints and current events, in a format and manner that will stimulate..... or just plain stir.

As a news reporter, MULGA WIRE will bring you up to date on all those things going on in town and country which affect Australian bush music. In addition we will publish each month, details of coming events both Australian and foreign, in which readers may be interested.

Both members and non-members are invited to contribute freely, with articles and information which may be of interest to readers. Letters to the editor are welcome on any subject, provided they are not libellous or indecent. We think its time that bush music had a voice, so that we can all join in the chorus.

In researching material for MULGA WIRE, the editors have been dumbfounded and angry at the attitude of the media to our cherished heritage. As an example, from Tony Stephens' review of Ron Edwards' monumental "The Big Book of Australian Folk Songs":- "...Up to now, the study of Australian folklore has been the study of Aboriginal folklore.....". The inference that this is the first ever collection could surely do nothing but mislead. We would like to know how it is possible, that the person assigned to review such a major work, by the Sunday Telegraph, can be so completely ignorant and uninformed of the work of our collecting pioneers, and those who have followed. Ron Edwards certainly gives them credit. Didn't Tony Stephens read the book?

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MULGA WIRE

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Mulga Wire appears each even month at the B.M.C. Beer and Cheese night. Contributions must be with the editors by the workshop night on the odd month, or post to MULGA WIRE, GPO BOX 433, SYDNEY, 2001.

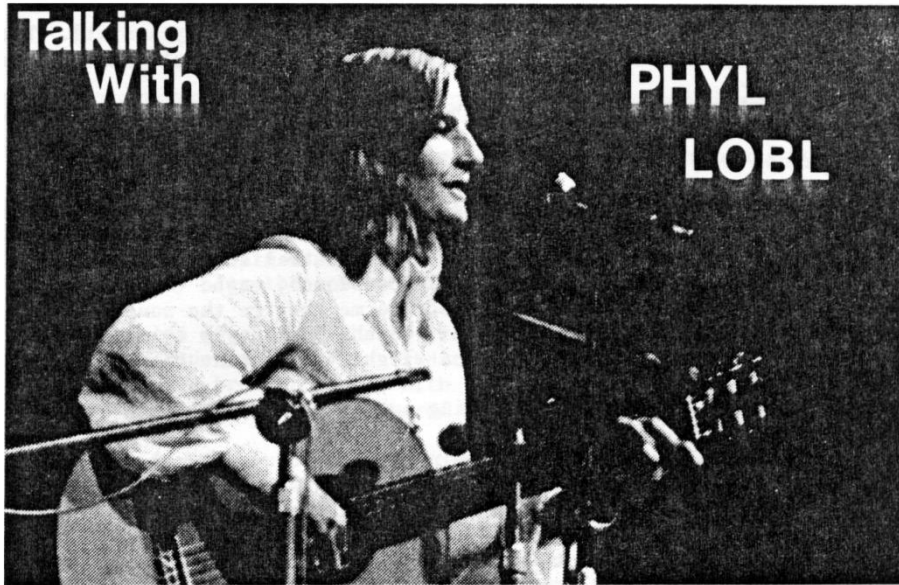
Mulga Wire is free to members of the Bush Music Club, and 30c to non-members subscription is \$3.00 per annum, including postage, for six issues.

Views expressed herein are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Bush Music Club or the editors.

Publishing committee consists of Bob Bolton, Ralph Pride, and Dave Johnson.

ADVERTISING

Full Page.....\$5                      Half Page.....\$3                      Quarter Page....\$2  
Classified advertisements..... 20<sup>c</sup> per line. Business Cards.....\$1  
Copy is to be on quarto and ready for reproduction by the times given above.



PHYL LOBL has delighted us for years with her beautiful renditions of both traditional and contemporary folksongs. In recent years her Australian style and content have become more pronounced. She is about to release two L.P.'s and a songbook. These are partly an exploration of the influences at work in her style and in Australian Folksong in our contemporary society.

The first L.P. is called "On My Selection" and will be released soon on Warren Fahey's "Larrikin" label. On the jacket Phyl says "on our selection these days, the new chums come from all over the world but the ones that influence our songs the most come from Britain and America."

We talked with Phyl about her records, her songbook and her influences. Some small part of our conversation is reproduced below.

BMC "Do you think that you'll come out with another record of other people's songs?"

PHYL "I'm interested in doing a children's record. I'm interested in doing an Australian one and I'm interested in doing one of other people's songs.. ..there's a lot of Australian (material) lying around in songs that isn't getting to people. I mean, how long have we been singing these songs.... and "Weevils In The Flour" is known...."Girls In Our Town" is known.... "Sometime Loving" was known but it's been forgotten by a lot of people.

From now on I reckon I'll mostly be singing Australian stuff. I've just about given up on the traditional....not because I don't like it, but because my nationalism is coming to the fore."

BMC "What about Australian traditional material?"

PHYL "Oh, yes....Australian traditional....I'm not just sold on contemporary... ..but Australian. I'm really getting a bit sick of these people at festivals

.... the ones that say nothing is good unless it's 500 years old. That part of traditionalists annoys me but....Australian music isn't happening enough....  
....I prefer contemporary, in a way, because I'm a writer, I suppose."

BMC "Do you aim consciously for an Australian style?"

PHYL "I kept thinking "I'm not right; I'm too posh sounding on some words and too broad on others" and then I tried not to think about it. I tried to just be myself....I don't know where the Australian style is anymore.... "Weevils In The Flour" and "Girls In Our Town", maybe "Sometime Loving" although it's slightly americanised; to me they're the songs our future songs are going to be like....a bit of the Bush style thing is still coming in but it's going to have a slightly different flavour...."

BMC "....There are very few songs coming out of our industries."

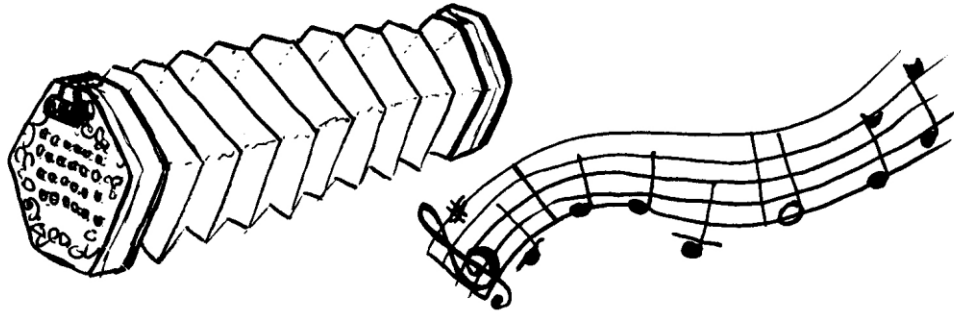
PHYL "I think, actually, what we are going to have to do is get out into the industries and let people know that they can write songs....everybody can talk about their job....anyone who is talkative."

Phyl's second L.P. will be called "Bronzewing", as will the songbook and the publishing imprint being established by Phyl and her husband. The name refers to the Colonial distinction between the Silvertails (squatters &c.) and the Bronzewings....the rest of us. Both L.P. and book will be made up entirely of songs to which Phyl has written words and/or music. These include her beautiful setting of Lawson's "Past Carin'" and many others well known around the folk music scene. Illustrations in the songbook are drawn by Phyl.

Phyl and her husband Geri are publishing both L.P.'s and songbook at their own expense. To do this they have formed a company which will publish under the "Bronzewing" imprint. As well as further records by Phyl they expect to produce other records of Australian, proletarian music. We can expect many more interesting publications from "Bronzewing" in the future.

We wish Phyl and Geri every success with this venture. If the quality of Phyl's performance and writing can be the determining factors, then they will be the success they deserve to be.

R.B.



RATTLING YOUR BONES ...with Frank Maher

If everyone would like to sit down and be shoosh, I'll try and explain how bones work. I've been playing them along with the largerphone and tea-chest bass in bush bands since about 1960. Hardly anyone plays the bones anymore, theres not many play the spoons either.

As far as I can ascertain, theres two sources of bones playing. In England and Ireland, bones playing was traditional, and no doubt the early settlers picked it up and brought it out with them. American Negro Minstrels who came over here in traveling shows, played rhythm bones about 100 years ago.

If you want to try your own set of bones, go to the butcher and just ask for rib bones. Nine times out of ten, the butcher will be so fascinated, he will probably chop you off a dozen sets. I find it better to get the flat ones rather than the round ones, with a bit of width and thickness and not too curved. Mine are not too far off dead straight. Always ask for them to be longer than you need them and trim them yourself later. If your've got half a dozen sets, just pick out the two you like the best. Dry them, then scrape or grind them down with sandpaper or a file, to make them smooth and clean.

Playing bones is just a knack - I dont think there are any books on the subject. The late Dud Mills of Mudgee wrote an article in Singabout "How to Rattle Your Bones" Heres how he describes it:-

...."Place the first bone between the index and second fingers, dip facing the thumb, top protruding a scant half inch, and brace firmly against the palm of the hand with the second and third fingers, the thumb lightly meeting the middle of the index finger. This bone must be held absolutely rigid. Next, insert the second bone between the little and third fingers, and squeeze with enough force to give a springy tension. The bones curve away from each other. Load the left hand in the same way.

....The roll or shake. Keep the first bone in each hand with its edge pressed firmly against the palm, flex the wrists to and fro with a rocking motion parallel to the chest, causing the second bone to oscillate under governed tension, making a clicking sound as it meets the bone held under pressure. Do not snap them with the little fingers like castinets....."

QUESTION: How do you flick them with the hands?

FRANK: It's really nothing to do with the hands. Everyone gets them and thinks that it's all wrists and hands, but it's not. It's just throwing them from side to side with the arm.

QUESTION: When you throw it backwards, do you flick the bottom one up?

FRANK: No. I don't flick it. I just throw it. It's only a matter of practising a lot till you pick up the knack. Just keep throwing them backwards and forwards.

REMEMBER IT'S JUST A KNACK

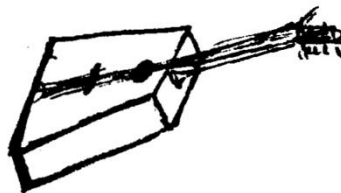
INSTRUMENT BUILDING AND AUSTRALIAN TIMBERS

Undertaking the construction of a guitar or any other stringed instrument need not involve the expense and problems of using imported timbers. Luthiers from many countries and of many generations have established the use of such timbers as brazilian rosewood and mahogany. These are not grown in Australia, and hence they are difficult to procure and expensive when they are available. Clearly, here in Australia with our wide range of climates and tree-types, there should exist timbers at least equally suitable for instrument construction. Gradually by trial and error, a knowledge of Australian timbers has been and is being developed.

For instance, in the construction of a guitar, the following timbers were suggested by The Guitar Factory at Gladesville. A fine grained piece of King William Pine can be used in lieu of the imported Spruce. (The Guitar factory has some blocks large enough for two guitar faces with about 30 grain rings at a price of \$15.) Queensland Maple is a good light timber for shaping the neck and head instead of mahogany. Jacaranda has the appropriate density for reflecting and transmitting sound and hence is a good replacement for mahogany or Brazilian rose-wood, in the construction of the sides and back as well as being suitable for the shaping of the bridge.

Of course there is no need to stop at the use of Australian materials in your instrument construction. Why not experiment with body shapes and string numbers, string arrangement, and tonal ranges? Perhaps you will produce an instrument that is uniquely Australian.....D.J.

Reference: The Steel String Guitar - Its Construction, Origin and Design,  
by Donald Brosnac (Panjandrum Press, San Fransisco, 1975.)



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BOOK REVIEWS

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The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes the tin whistle (flageolet to the masses) as a wind instrument, for musical use, in which the sound is produced by blowing with the human lungs (depends who's playing, Ed). An eddy formation is produced when the wind issuing from a slit, strikes a solid edge cut in the wall of the instrument, and open to its interior. The eddies forming alternately above and below the edge, set up a rapid pressure oscillation which causes the air in the instrument to vibrate in a sound emitting stationary wave. The pitch depends on the length of the air column and may be altered by uncovering fingerholes to make a basic scale. By increasing wind speed (overblowing) the air column can be induced to vibrate in half and other fractional lengths, the scale then sounding at harmonic frequencies at the octave and the fifth and others.

The above description is included as an example of the complexity in which a simple instrument like the tin whistle can become involved. Note that there is no mention of how one learns to play.

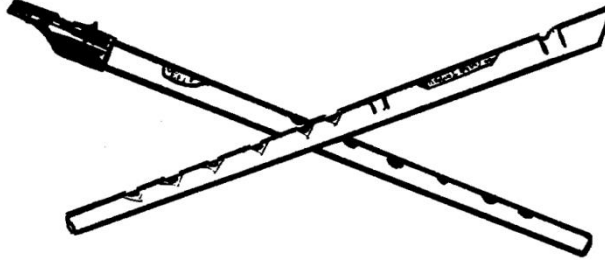
Very fortunately the humble flageolet is a lot easier to play than its scientific description would seem to suggest. But, as they say "many have tried and tried in vain, many have tried and tried again". For those poor individuals, at last succour is at hand.

Jamie Carlin, well known folk musician and president of the Bush Music Club has compiled, under the auspices of the Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, his "A SIMPLE TUTOR FOR TIN WHISTLE"

For many years now Jamie's concertina music has been an outstanding attraction wherever it has been heard. But not many may be aware of the fact that Jamie played the tin whistle expertly long before he fumbled his first struggling notes from the concertina. He learnt the hard way - by ear - without the doubtfull benefit of those funny squiggles and lines which some people call music. He understands the trials and tribulations which accompany the efforts of aspiring whistlers, and has reflected his experience in the tutor.

Beginners are taken through simple exercises in stages picking up techniques as they progress. Reading scales and music is rendered easy by the expedient of a finger notation designed to give familiarity with the instrument. Tunes in the tutor are well known so the student isnt bamboozled by too much too new too soon. Those who have never played a note before in their lives can take to the whistle in perfect confidence.

As yet publication is rather limited, but copies are readily available from the author by contacting the Bush Music Club or the Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann.



A BIG BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN FOLK SONG

by Ron Edwards (Rigby)

Although there may never be a complete book of Australian folk song, this book will doubtless earn that reputation. Big, it is. Here is no pocket songster for glove-box or camping trip. It would be well employed as a step to help in reaching for all the pocket size song-books at the top of your bookcase, but on the other hand you probably wont need them any more.

The songs, a monumental 308 of them, have been selected from a broad spectrum of subjects and are presented legibly in an uncramped style. The music comes complete with guitar chords. Explanatory notes clarify and assist interpretation, detailing the derivations of each song. References to the contents page will be reduced since the songs are all arranged in alphabetic order. The author is well known for his excellent line drawings which cant fail to inspire any reader of this volume.

Ron Edwards could easily have finished his work at Zogob-Pe (P-414) and comfortably relaxed with a remarkable achievement and a best seller. Fortunately for us he did no such thing. The included revised INDEX OF AUSTRALIAN FOLK SONGS would make this book indispensable on the shelves of any serious folk addict. It lists 1800 songs, along with publication history, collector, arrangers, copyright and a wealth of detail that certainly boggles my feeble brain.

To any person with even a passing interest in Australian folk music, I would strongly suggest they grab a copy of this book pretty soon. The trouble with books like this is that they disappear from sellers shelves all too soon. A culturally valueless novel will sell for year after year, but an ageless and irreplaceable book of folk songs is gone seemingly, in a day or two.

.....R.P.





Why on Earth do we bother exhuming the old songs and dances of our grandfathers' days? Wouldn't it be better, easier for us to shut-up, and settle back in front of the television as normal people do? Don't you believe it. The Bush Music Club has been in business for a long long time, not because of some misguided religious dogmatism, and not because modern entertainment isn't good, but because before the days of packaged performances and universal mass media, the old timers really new how to enjoy themselves effectively and creatively. It's a sad thing to see a society wallowing in the habit of a force fed, fast sell, cultural vacuum. It would be so easy to ignore the situation entirely, and stagnate. But we have to live in this world too. However, it would seem that we are witnessing something of a reaction in the underworld. Enough people are becoming curious about their history, for the publishers, producers and company directors, to sit up and take notice. Interest in folk culture is increasing, and there seem to be more folk music groups performing more actively than ever, with a significant proportion of Australian material. On the club Scene we are seeing a considerable number of individuals, interested in active participation in entertainment with an authentic bush flavour. So it is that we introduce the formation of the new B.M.C. concert party.

#### THE NEW CONCERT PARTY

The Bush Music Club is embarking on an ambitious new project - an active performing group of it's own. For many years, a concert party was a popular feature of the club. It gave shows at festivals, charity functions, civic ceremonies and at the drop of a hat. Many of the longer standing members can tell endless tales of the good times had just by showing Australia how to enjoy itself. Keeping in mind the successes of the old concert party, a new generation of "Bushwackers" is keen to re-establish this worthwhile club activity - eager to show what bush music is all about - by getting up and doing it.

Most members will have been aware of our NEW WORKSHOP, which is catering for the needs of aspiring bush musicians of all varieties. The new concert party venture is to become an offshoot of this workshop. You can attend the workshop, learn how it is done, and then do it after the lesson by practising with the concert party. This is the best way to learn, with your peers, in the time hooured way, in a most enjoyable sing-song.

The monthly practise session will be conducted by the concert party leader, who will organise arrangements for rehearsal, with due consideration to the capabilities of participants. Opportunity will be given for individuals to try out their own ideas and to see how they sound in the flesh.

Performances will be attended by those taking part in the practice session who are available for the occasion. Band membership won't be restricted in any way, so that anybody who fancies can give it a go. Each band performance will see a change in membership, in order that inexperienced players and singers can benefit from the skill and insight of the experienced. When you boil it all down, what the club is doing is making up a training band, to fulfill the dual roles of instruction for participants , and entertainment bush style for the audience. Remember you dont have to be a virtuoso to enjoy yourself.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 5th April, after a quorum was not found for the scheduled A.G.M. on Tuesday 1st March. An amendment to the Constitution, previously notified, was put to the meeting and carried. This now specified that the committee should consist of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Master of Ceremonies and not more than four other members.

All positions were declared vacant and nominations taken. The following persons were the only nominations for the respective positions and were declared elected unopposed.

PRESIDENT	Jamie Carlin	OTHER MEMBERS	Ralph Pride
VICE PRESIDENT	Dave Johnson		Margaret Stock
TREASURER	Ronda Carlin		
SECRETARY	Bob Bolton		
MASTER OF CEREMONIES	Barry Collerson		

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#### THE BUSH MUSIC CLUB

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The Bush Music Club is a group of people informally performing and enjoying our Australian heritage of songs, dances, yarns and recitations. The Club acts as a centre for collecting and sharing traditional and contemporary folk lore. Interaction between professional and amateur performers is stimulated by participation in club activities such as workshops, Beer & Cheese nights, Singabouts, festivals, campfires, publishing and public performances.

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**SINGERS  
PLAYERS  
BUSH DANCING  
COMMUNITY SINGING**

**THE BUSH MUSIC CLUB**

# **SINGABOUT**

**SATURDAY NIGHT 8 pm**  
**25th JUNE '77**

2nd FL. BWIU HALL, 535 GEORGE ST. CITY

Admission \$1.00 incl. supper Members \$0.00  
Phone 02 433 4362

ALL ENQUIRIES TO SEC. BOX 433 GPO SYDNEY

# BILLBOARD

## NEWCASTLE FOLK FESTIVAL.

Queen's Birthday Weekend, June 10th to 13th.

ACCOMMODATION - Billeting as usual - arranged at the reception on Friday night.

TICKETS - \$6.00 Weekend Ticket (\$5.00 students, folk club members and doleos )

or \$2.50 for Ceilidh or Concert,  
\$0.50 per workshop.

KIDS - Child-minding facilities plus kids' programme, including Concert and workshops. ( Free if parent has a weekend ticket, otherwise \$0.50 )

GROG & GRUB - Available at the Tech Union, all weekend.

PROGRAMME - Friday 10th Reception, Newcastle Tech. College Union,  
Saturday 11th Morning & afternoon workshops,  
8.00 pm Ceilidh, Tech. College Union Hall,

Sunday 12th Morning & afternoon workshops,  
Barbeque Lunch,  
8.00 pm Concert, Griffith Duncan Theatre,  
Newcastle CAE Rankin Dve,  
Shortland.

Monday 13th 11 am Accordion Workshop,  
1.00 pm Farewell, Orient Hotel, Watt St.,  
Newcastle.

MAIN VENUE : Newcastle Technical College, Maitland Rd., Tighes Hill.

INFORMATION : Ring Phil Bates - 049 - 525809.

RADIO FOLK : We can't always vouch for the contents, but at least they're playing some of our songs.

2 ABC FM ( 92.9 MHz ) FOLK ON WEDNESDAY, 10.00 pm to midnight.

2 MBS FM (102.5 MHz) BURN THE CANDLE SLOWLY (very) midnight to 6 am

## CHEIFTAINS CONCERT

They're back again! Sydney Celtophiles and Celts get their fixes of Irish music at the Regent Theatre, on June 17th.

### SPACE AVAILABLE

OTHER CLUBS' ACTIVITIES  
(FOLK TYPES)

UPCOMING EVENTS, GROUPS  
ETC. (NOT ADS)

GAB AN EDITOR.

OUR  
WORKSHOP  
NEEDS  
YOU!

C A L E N D A R   N O T E S

- JUNE Tues. 21st WORKSHOP      Our newly revived Workshop Sessions are reviewed elsewhere in MULGA WIRE....a must for anyone not content just to sit around and watch.
- Sat. 25th SINGABOUT      8.00 pm., B.W.I.U. Hall, 535 George St., Sydney. A beaut night for all: Singing, Dancing, Guest Artists and whatever else we can arrange. Supper provided in traditional Bush Dance style. \$1 Admission, 50¢ Members, Pensioners & Kids free.
- JULY Tues. 5th BEER & CHEESE Songs Of The Shearers.  
Our popular Beer & Cheese Nights start with a set theme and if that dries up we just keep going with our favourites. Bring along your own drinks ( a limited number of Vegemite jars available to drink from ) and bring some food to go into the general pool. Good fun for all.
- Tues. 19th WORKSHOP      Gather up your Bones ( playing type ), Tin Whistles, Squeeze Boxes or even things that go plunk and twang....and head around to our Workshop Session.
- AUGUST Tues. 2nd BEER & CHEESE The Poets.  
A chance to hear from some of the poets, known and unknown, who contributed to the Australian Tradition we love. We've already heard from Henry Lawson's work ( he gets a solo stint ), so we'd like to hear from the rest, this time round.
- Tues. 16th WORKSHOP      Basic instruction in traditional Australian instruments....development of group playing techniques....Concert Party practice....form your own group....fame may be yours!

BEER & CHEESE Nights & WORKSHOPS are held in BURWOOD COUNCIL HALL, Hornsey St., Burwood (off Conder St.) and run from 8.00 pm to 11.45 pm, See You There!

