

# **The Wellington Regional Folk Foundation Inc Presidents Report for the year ended 31 December 2011**

The 2011 Wellington Folk Festival was again a resounding success for most people involved. We have had very positive feedback from all of festival attendees, guests and suppliers.

Firstly my personal thanks to the committee – who worked hard and long – but this year with more sense of stability than last year when many of us were new to this festival and its arrangements. We weren't inventing things as we went, and the systems and ideas we started last year this year ran largely like a well oiled machine..... This doesn't mean we didn't have the occasional breakdown or overheating incident but they were fixed effectively and speedily.

Special thanks to Chih for continuing to support the web site and this year helping us to transition to a new platform which is easier to maintain, more user friendly and secure and can be made more interactive over time. Thanks also to Chih and John Hutton for maintaining our facebook page.

## **Review of the 2011 festival**

The 2010 festival was a great success. As can be seen from the accounts, the festival again made a substantial surplus and it is pleasing to be in a position where we have solid cash reserves to allow us to look at longer term investment to improve the festival, and giving us a contingency reserve to protect against the always high risk of a wash out festival with low registrations.

This year we had the additional challenge of the Rugby World Cup. In early 2011 we got a strong message from a number of festival regulars (and through an online survey of attendees) confirming that attracting or retaining some of our audience would depend on ensuring coverage of the RWC final was available. As a result we made some major changes to the festival. We screened the RWC games in the Fletcher Hall and moved the main concert to Saturday night to avoid the clash with the final on Sunday. Feedback on these changes has been overwhelmingly positive. The changes were a challenge to some who wanted the festival to be a rugby free zone. Certainly the RWC did not reduce our attendance – final registrations increased from 2010.... and the atmosphere in the Fletcher Hall on Sunday night was amazing!

## **Planning for 2012**

As February closes we are well into the performer selection process for the 2012 festival. Applications closed at the end of January and selection will be completed by mid March. After that we will be back into the cycle of planning, booking and publicity with the challenge of making the 2012 festival equally successful to the 2011 and 2010 event.

As always we are aiming not only to choose good quality performers and workshop leaders but to balance the programme between the many musical styles that make up the wide world of "folk" music, and to appeal to a wide audience in as many age groups as possible. We want to take risks so there will be at least one magical discovery for everyone somewhere in the programme. One of the great features of the folk scene is its inclusiveness and this encourages (or delivers.... it's a bit chicken and egg) the close and supportive community which is the heart of our festival.

## **Further future planning**

The 2014 Wellington Folk Festival will be the 50<sup>th</sup>... the committee are already discussing how best to mark this milestone, and make an extra special celebratory festival.

The committee is also working with the board of the Brookfields Outdoor Education Centre looking at options to replace the hired main festival marquee with a permanent building. How this is arranged and financed is still in the early stages of investigation as the Festival will only be one user of such a facility. The Building Reserve that has been identified in the accounts is intended to set aside funds that may be dedicated to this project.

## **Committee**

It has been a pleasure to work with the 2011 festival committee and I am delighted that Sue Ikin, Peter Whiting, Matt Shortis, Ruth Birnie and Jude Madill have all agreed to stand again for committee. I encourage members to support them. Ian Gear and John Hutton had not decided whether to stand again at the time of writing and I encourage them to do so as their practical contribution and wise counsel on site and governance issues have been invaluable. I am happy that even if not on the formal committee, both have confirmed their willingness to be continue being involved with onsite organisation and arrangements over the festival weekend.

We will be sorry to lose Helen Gear and Sue Harkness from the committee – both have worked superbly in their respective roles of Secretary and publicity, fundraising and performer liaison.

We therefore have up to 4 potential vacancies from the current committee of 9 and I encourage members to put their names forward. The committee can have up to 10 members and being involved is rewarding, gives a real opportunity to influence the organisation of the festival and spreads what at times can be a very intense workload.

I again offer myself for re-election as president and if elected I look forward to the challenges of further building the reputation of this great little festival.