

# HARP NOTES

Newsletter of the Australian Therapeutic Harpists Association

## Calendar of Events

### **ATHA Tune a Month**

- Meets online first Tuesday evening of each month.

### **ATHA Discussion Group**

- Meets online third Tuesday evening of each month.

### **Harp at the Port Workshops**

23<sup>rd</sup> September workshop plus concert with Rosemary Hallo (See page 19 for details). Look out for the upcoming November concert with Mary Doumany.

### **ATHA AGM**

7<sup>th</sup> November

### **IHTP**

October - 14th, 21st and 29th

December - 3rd and 9th (See page 21 for details)



Welcome to the 2023 Spring edition of the ATHA newsletter.

Once again, this newsletter is brimming with all sorts of exciting things. There are harping events, state reports, an edition of Brandden's informative "From the Harp Workbench"; and some wonderful and interesting harp related articles. Thanks to all contributors.

A tentative date of the 7th of November has been set for our AGM. With most of us being busy people it was decided by the Committee to couple the AGM to the November 'Tune a Month' gathering.

And our ATHA website is looking wonderful thanks to many hours of work by Christine Middleton. Please take a look. [ATHA Website](#)

If you'd like to contribute to future editions, please contact me at [harptranquility@gmail.com](mailto:harptranquility@gmail.com)

## ATHA State Rep Reports

### ACT

#### **Alison Ware - Canberra News - HarpCare Therapeutic Music services update.**

The Therapeutic Harp program continues across Canberra Health Services with a fourth hospital (Northside Hospital formally Calvary Hospital, Bruce) being added to the program visiting list.

On Friday 15th September at the Oceanic Palliative Care conference, I will be offering a short presentation on the Therapeutic Harp program in Palliative Care. It will be a great opportunity to share stories and talk about the value of music in palliative care.

In the past 12 months, I have been interested in developing new ways to bring the harp and other creative arts to not only patients but healthcare staff. Earlier this year I was approached by the Canberra Health Services Renal Supportive Care Team to design, develop and deliver 3 unique self-care workshops for nursing staff incorporating the harp. The workshops were aimed to increase staff awareness of self-care in the context of caring for clients with life limiting illness. The workshops included:

- 1) Harp and Mind – mindfulness with the harp.
- 2) Harp and Heart – an art process designed to promote awareness and value of each individual staff member working within a team.
- 3) Harp and Hands – hand massage to harp music.



Professional Quality of Life tools were used to self-assess burnout in the participating staff, and templates were provided to implement a self-care plan which were available at each workshop. The artwork from the session has been displayed in the renal unit where the workshops were held.

Feedback and follow up from staff indicated positive benefits. This success has resulted in funding being made available to deliver these workshops throughout the year for staff in all 4 dialysis units across the ACT.

This program was also included in a wider submission by the renal team to this year's National Palliative Care awards. *I am excited to say they are now finalists in the category of outstanding work by a team delivering palliative care.* It is wonderful to continue integrating the harp as part of a wider supportive creative arts program. The awards will be held Thursday 14th September.

**Harp yoga sessions** in the community continue and next year Jo Carroll from 11:11 health and wellbeing and I will be collaborating and offering a wellness retreat near Yass NSW at the end of May 2024. Details coming soon. We have also been contracted by the Cancer Council of the ACT to deliver Harp-Yoga and wellbeing sessions in 2024.



I am still a volunteer with the enrichment team at The **National Zoo and Aquarium** which continues to be a joy. I love watching the animal responses and just “being with” and observing their reactions.

## NSW

**Louise Bell – (IHTP representative) Article**

Can't recall where I saw the name End of Life Angels, but searching online I was delighted to discover it's based here in Bowral! I contacted Patsy, founder and end-of-life doula, and have since played harp as soothing background music at one of her Death Cafés: sessions of "open and insightful discussion about death and dying". (And yes, there is home-made cake!) I also briefly joined the thoughtful and supportive talking circle. Hoping this may be a connection towards playing therapeutically in people's homes.

June to September saw a monthly online IHTP Intensive, a prep course of harp playing and selected Modes: US Summer/AU Winter. Along with our awesome Christina Tourin and Rachel Christensen, I was honoured to participate: in August presenting and guiding Ionian (featuring Tina's arrangement of Suo-Gan) and Locrian Modes. If you'd like a chart and MP3 of my Locrian piece Distant Stars please email me at [music@louisebell.com.au](mailto:music@louisebell.com.au).

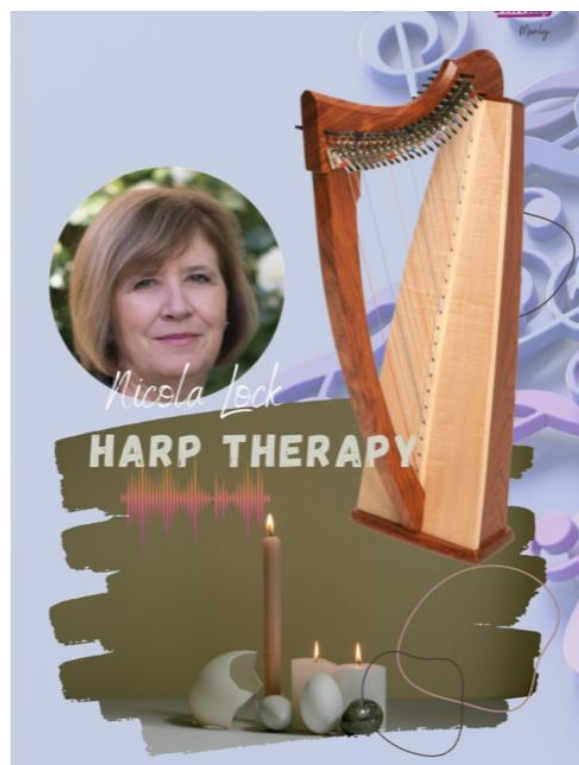
And just this afternoon I was booked to play harp and sing at a local Aged Care Residence. "Entertainment", to which I'll also bring our precious awareness and training! For example, I've asked if there are any residents from diverse cultures so I can prepare appropriate tunes and songs in advance. They've hinted this may lead to specific therapeutic playing ...

Love and blessings to all!

**Nicky Lock – Article****Self-therapy at the dentist with harp therapy!**

Like many in the world, I hate going to the dentist. I even have marked on my dental notes that I am an 'anxious patient' and I have local anaesthesia to have my annual descale and polish! Usually in the 24 hours before my dental appointment, I have a slight nauseous feeling in my stomach and know that during the procedures, my heart is racing and I suspect my blood pressure is sky high. I usually clamber out of the chair feeling slightly shaky. This is despite knowing that I have not experienced any difficult or painful events at the dentist since I was a child.

As a therapist, I have concluded that the painful and difficult experiences I had as a very young child – mainly quite large fillings done with slow speed drills and no anaesthetic – were traumatic for me and my automatic nervous reaction to dental treatment is in fact a form of PTSD whereby my trauma memories are triggered by all that a dental visit comprises. Quelling this reaction is beyond simply reminding myself rationally that dental work doesn't hurt these days.





Facing a program of dental work this year with all those childhood repairs breaking down, I decided I would try something different....

I had an hour-long appointment booked to replace two large old amalgam fillings. I went prepared with 8 hours of relaxing harp and nature music on Youtube on my phone and my earbuds. I plugged in at the beginning of the visit, and all through the time I was in the chair, when I was tempted to focus on the sound and feel of the drill etc, I deliberately directed my attention to the soothing music and ensured I was breathing slowly....

The results were truly amazing – most of the time through the procedure I felt calm and knew that my heart was not racing and my hands were not clenched in my lap. When I walked out, I realised that I did not have that nervous exhaustion feeling that I usually do post a dentist's visit: in fact, I was probably feeling more calm than I would usually.

The verdict, even if it was only placebo effect, which I don't believe it was, is that I will definitely be taking my harp music and earbuds to future appointments!

Jenni Sawell

*Flash back to October 2022...!*

## The Healing Space Weekend Hill End, NSW



An exploration of different healing modalities,  
including harp, voice and sound therapies.



On a beautiful spring weekend in October 2022, 27 harp enthusiasts from all over Australia gathered in the historic and picturesque gold mining town of Hill End, NSW...

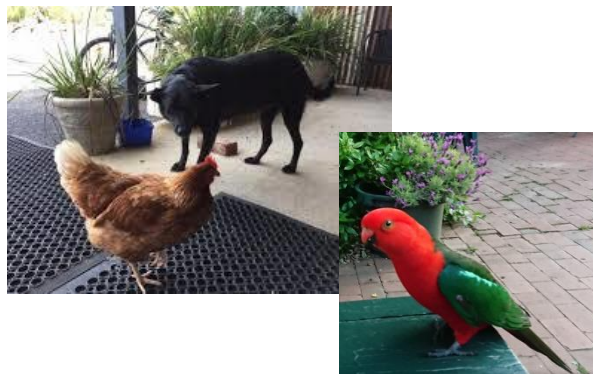




Our venue was the quaint old Hill End Lodge...



Where the friendly locals freely roamed...



We enjoyed workshops and presentations led by Verna Lee Brown, Jenni Sawell, Mary Diggins, Gwenda Davies, Martyn Cook and Peter Swaine (on didgeridoo)



Topics included '1001 ways with one piece' by Verna...





'Lullabies and Laments' with Mary...



'Creating a Healing Space' 'The Power of One' and 'Stories from the Bedside' with Jenni...



'Interactive Music-Making' with Gwenda...

'Soundscapes & Developing a Musical Dialogue' with Martyn and Peter.



The weather was perfect for getting out side...  
workshopping in groups...



and enjoying the haunting sounds of  
Aeolian wind harp....



The Lodge manager John was treated to  
an impromptu harp lesson...



And for the early morning birds, there were  
daily yoga sessions led by Vimukti.



The stunning old Sacred Heart Church...





was the venue where we enjoyed a fabulous concert by local harpist, singer, composer and masterful story-teller Kim Deacon... who vividly painted the lives of our pioneers on the land with her music, songs and visual presentation...



The church was also the ideal venue for showcasing our creative group arrangements...



And a relaxed recital on the final day...



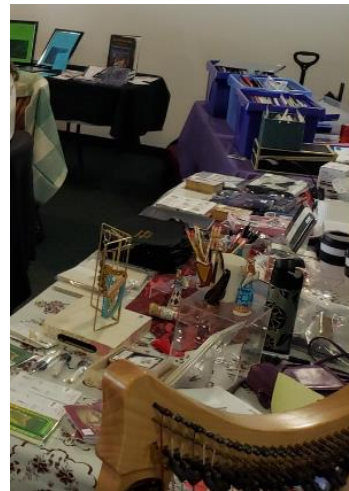
Other highlights of the weekend included a meditative evening labyrinth walk and a relaxing sound bath...



Sightseeing the beautiful countryside...



Lots of harp goodies for sale...



And a personalised tour of Kim's pioneer cottage and La Paloma Pottery workshop...



Not to mention the amazing friendships and fellowship enjoyed by all!



Thank you to everyone who attended and made this gathering such a successful and memorable event. The energy and vibe of the weekend was truly inspiring.

Thank you to my awesome team of helpers... Kim, Verna, Gwenda & Mary. I couldn't have done it without you!

*It must be just about time to organise another one, do you think...? - Jenni*

## South Australia

### Lyn Johnson

I continue to play across all wards in the Flinders Medical Centre within the Arts in Health Department. Staff meditation has recommenced and looking to expand by offering additional sessions. I guide the meditations accompanied with harp music. I also have a regular monthly gig in the Memory Support section in aged care, as well as occasional concerts for residents.

Cheers!

## Tasmania

### Helen Morrison

**St John's Hospital, Hobart - Harp by Helen**

Recent Reflections - some beautiful comments from patients, families and staff:

'You've made my day.' - Theatre Nurse

'You are doing such an important ministry.' - A lady from Melbourne visiting her sister at end of life.



‘Thank you for your beautiful music.’ - A family resting in the waiting room before going back to visit their loved one in palliative care.

And delightful singing from an elderly gentleman in palliative care, joining in with Cockles and Mussels and other Irish tunes.

### **Reverie Harp**

I am proud to be one of three recipients of these beautiful instruments generously funded by a benefactor. Thank you to Peter Roberts for your time and skills. I am enjoying sharing my Reverie Harp with my students and I am experimenting with some different tunings. I look forward to offering more on this instrument as my skills develop.

### **Therapy Harp Training Program (THTP) – [www.therapyharp.com](http://www.therapyharp.com)**

Welcome to new students Clare, Vasudha, Di and Rae. It is exciting to offer a smooth and comprehensive pathway into harp therapy. THTP graduates can be found in many countries, and they bring joy with their music to those in need, for example in aged care, hospitals, veterans’ hospice, yoga centres and cancer support services. THTP is proud to be recognised by ATHA.

Thank you to ATHA for your generosity in supporting the harp therapy community in Australia.

## **Victoria**

### **Carla Whiteley**

From what I can gather there has been a gradual but steady return to Therapeutic Harpers working again in various facilities. I have not had contact with many but I do know that the following folks are actively using their IHTP skills in various health setting.

Christine Middleton is working 3 days a week in hospitals.

Linky Muller is continuing to combine her role as a pastoral care worker with her harp.

Anke Arkensteijn has been working at one or two Aged Care facilities in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Vimukti Warr is continuing to play at Edgar’s Mission, an Animal Shelter in Lancefield Victoria.

I am working an average of 3 afternoons a week at 4 different Aged Care facilities in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Once a month, either in Upwey or Monbulk, a small group of up to eight enthusiastic harpers meet. Some of them are therapeutic harpers, others are beginners and some have been playing for a long time. The group was started more than 20 years ago by Jacquie Spring. It was then taken over by Cath Connelly. Since Cath has become more involved with her work within the Anglican Church, she is no longer leading the evenings and Carla and Anke have been sharing the role. The format is a simple one. We warm up with a round, learn a new tune and then each person plays a piece of their choice. In the USA we would be called a “harp circle” however when the group commenced it was voted to be called “Hill’s Angels” as we gather in the Dandenong Ranges. At the end of the evening,

we share some supper and a chat. Anyone with a love of the harp is welcome to join. Anke Arkensteyn, Carla Whiteley, Gai George, Louise Apps and Shirley Allot, who are part of the group are all graduates of IHTP.

Also from Carla

## Trinity College harp

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Trinity College Harp, Dublin, Ireland

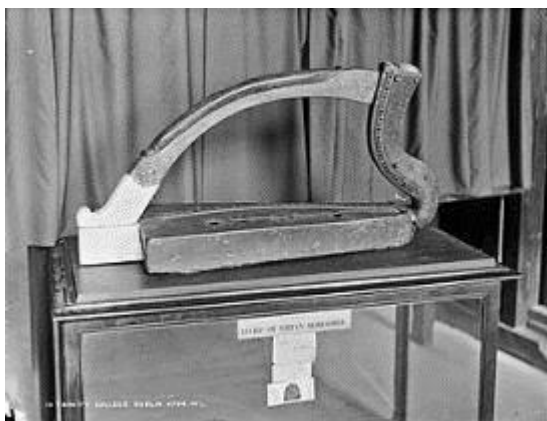


The Trinity College harp (also known as "Brian Boru's harp") is a medieval musical instrument on display in the long room at Trinity College Dublin in Ireland. It is an early Irish harp or wire-strung cláirseach. It is dated to the 14th or 15th century and, along with the Queen Mary Harp and the Lamont Harp, is the oldest[1] of three surviving medieval harps from the region.[2] The harp was used as a model for the coat of arms of Ireland and for the trade-mark of Guinness stout.

### History[edit]

It is uncertain who commissioned the Trinity College harp, although structural evidence suggests it was made in the 15th century. It is similar in construction and design to the Queen Mary Clarsach in Scotland. It is likely, however, that the harp was made for a member of an important family, for it is skilfully constructed and intricately ornamented.





According to Charles Vallancey writing in 1786, it was reputedly once owned by Brian Boru, High King of Ireland.[3] However, this link was dismissed by George Petrie in 1840 as "a clumsy forgery, which will not bear for a moment the test of critical antiquarian examination". Petrie dates its construction "to the fourteenth, or more probably to the early part of the fifteenth century." [4] Joan Rimmer (1969) dated it to "probably from the fourteenth century". [5]

The harp bears the coat of arms of the O'Neills but although there are many theories about its ownership through the centuries, none can be substantiated, with no verifiable evidence remaining to indicate the harp's original owner, or subsequent owners over the next two to three hundred years until it reputedly passed to Henry McMahon of County Clare, and finally to William Conyngham, who presented it to Trinity College in 1782. [6]

The Trinity College harp is the national symbol of Ireland, being depicted on national heraldry, Euro coins and Irish currency. A left-facing image of this instrument was used as the national symbol of Ireland from 1922, and was specifically granted to the State by the Chief Herald of Ireland in 1945. [7] A right-facing image was registered as a trade mark for Guinness in 1876, [8] although it was first used on their labels from 1862. [9] Other Irish businesses have used a similar harp as a logo or trade mark, including Ryanair. The two other surviving Gaelic harps from this period (the Lamont Harp and the Queen Mary Harp) are considered to have been made in Argyll in South West Scotland sometime in the 14th–15th century. [10]

### Appearance[edit]

The harp is of a small low-headed design with brass pins for 29 strings, the longest being c.62 cm. One extra bass pin was added at some point in its playing life. In 1961, the harp was exhibited in London, where it was dismantled, reconstructed by the British Museum into the wider shape it has nowadays, being the playable medieval form, and restrung under the supervision of the British musicologist Joan Rimmer. [11] The earlier heraldic and trade mark designs that were modelled on it were based on a thinner form that was the result of a bad restoration in the 1830s. Visitors are therefore often surprised at how wide the real harp is, compared to the harp on Irish coins.

Further references available

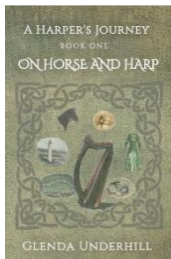
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity\\_College\\_harp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_College_harp) [Access date unknown]



## Glenda Underhill

My work continues in providing therapeutic music to the two Mildura Regis owned aged care facilities. One is a weekly session, the other a once per month.

As probably most of you know, I've written a book called **On Horse and Harp**. (Available at all good bookstores and on Amazon - shameless self-plug 😊)



A couple of weeks back I had the absolute pleasure of being invited as a guest author to present on my book at the **Harpkeepers Book Club**, the host of which is one of our ATHA members, Anne Horton. I had such a wonderful time with these people. I joined earlier this year and have visited a few times now. There is no fee involved.

Anne describes the book club as, “we’re just a bunch of people who play the harp and have love of the harp and music as our points of common interest. A lot of the members are studying to be harp therapists (or are already practising), and our books often link to that field, but not always.”

**Harpkeepers meet once a month** online at 7-30am, Victorian time, which now the weather is warming, is not too bad. I've asked Anne to write an article for the summer edition. I'm sure that will be a most engaging read. If anyone is interested in joining Harpkeepers, drop Anne an email at [annehorton@gmail.com](mailto:annehorton@gmail.com), I'm sure she'll happily put you on the list.

## Harp Workbench

As a service to the subscribers of this newsletter, Brandden Lassells of Harps and Harps will answer questions you may have pertaining to the making, maintenance or repair of harps.

### *My tuning pin is slipping; how can I fix it?*

Tuning pins do tend to slip from time to time, that is they turn back. Usually, it is easily remedied. We have covered this previously but we also keep getting people asking about this, so here it is again.

First off, we need to determine what type of tuning pin is installed on your harp. The majority of harps have a tapered through tuning pin, that is the pin goes all the way through the neck, and this is the type that is easily fixed. The pin is tapered, like a wedge, and it is fitted into a tapered hole. So, the tighter it is wedged into the hole the tighter the pin and no slipping. To do this you need to brace the neck with one hand and with the other using the tuning key, push the pin in further while applying gentle back and forth motion. If you cannot apply enough pressure, you may need to seek the assistance of someone stronger. Here is a link to a video by Steve Moss a well known harp technician demonstrating this technique. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\\_lxIj0OjyQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_lxIj0OjyQ) There can be a number of causes for the slipping tuning pin from the pin getting knocked, becoming loose when removing and installing a string as well as changes in weather. When replacing a string it is advisable to remove the pin and clean the pin of any glazing and blow any dust out of the hole before reinserting the pin and installing the new string.

Another type of though tuning pin is a threaded tuning pin. This looks almost the same as the tapered pin when it is in place and the information that came with your harp should clarify if threaded pins are used. Threaded tuning pins are used by Dusty Strings, Harps and Harps used them on some harps and many harps from Pakistan have the threaded tuning pins. These pins have a fine micro thread. If you attempt to push them in deeper you are likely to strip the threads/wood and make matters worse. A properly installed threaded pin rarely slips, which is one of the advantages of this type of pin. When installing a new string make sure that you unwind the pin a number of turns equal to this existing string windings before installing a new string otherwise the pin will continue to get deeper and deeper causing other problems. You should not totally remove this type of pin and then reinstall it as most likely the threads will be damaged and the pin will slip. If one of these pin types slips, you may need to consult a harp repair person.

Next is the zither pin or piano type of tuning pins. These do not go all the way through the neck but are tuned and have the string wraps all on one side. The tuning key fits on the end of the pin and then there is the string hole and then the string wraps. As with the threaded through pins, you must unwind the pin a number of turns when installing a new string. Likewise, if these pins slip you may need to consult a harp technician.

Sometimes it might be possible to fix a slipping threaded pin yourself. In this case, remove the offending pin completely. Insert a length of string, say a .025 nylon string or the thickest that will work. Reinsert the threaded pin and tighten it. The inserted string may make the hole just enough tighter so that the slipping pin has something to thread into and not slip.

Questions and comments for future "Harp Workbench" column of this newsletter can be addressed to the editor, Glenda Underhill [harptranquility@gmail.com](mailto:harptranquility@gmail.com) or to Brandden Lassells, the proprietor of Harps and Harps, home of the light weight all carbon fibre harps. Brandden can be contacted on (07) 4125 8393, 0419 692 286 or through his website [www.harps.com.au](http://www.harps.com.au)

## Landscape Music: An artist's residency in Ireland

Dr. Gillian Turner

When: 21 June - 2 July 2023

Location: A stone cottage at Cill Rialaig, about 7km from Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry



Cill Rialaig is an artists' 'village' consisting of eight renovated 17th century cottages: six studios with accommodation, a meetinghouse and laundry room. There are no other facilities, and all supplies need to be taken in by the resident artist. Residencies are offered free and are much sought after. There is a small charge for utilities.

Cottage Back door

My cottage was near the cliff edge above the Atlantic Ocean. The sound of waves and ever-present wind provided a gentle and sometimes not so gentle, soundscape for this ancient landscape.

As a visual artist, the wind and rain are gifts that I embrace by creating works impacted by the elements. The breezes and stronger winds also offered Aeolian harp sounds when I placed my harp strategically between the two doors of the cottage, or took it out into the landscape to resonate with stone walls.



Harp Maker showing details of the Harp



Harp in the Landscape

I was offered access to a 35 strings harp made by a local harp maker and musician. The instrument was old, with a rich resonance, and was surprisingly light to move and easy to take outside, but only when there was no chance of rain!

After saying farewell to my beautiful 28 strings Celtic harp in early May when I set off for Europe, I'd not played for over five weeks. Now, finding myself with a larger harp, I needed to allow time for the instrument to introduce itself, to gaze at its form and exquisite decoration. While clearly not traditional Celtic shape, it felt and sounded very much part of the land.

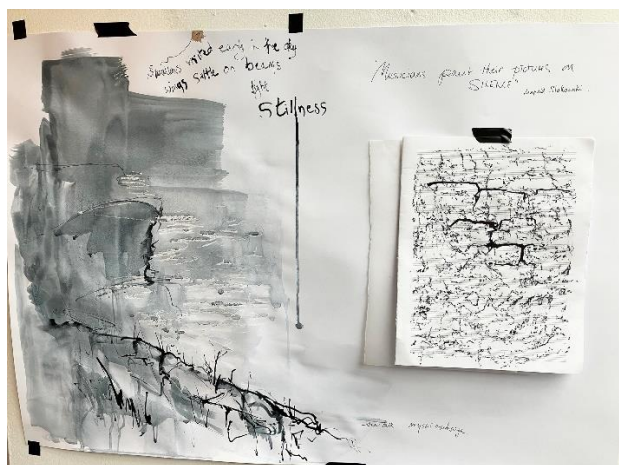
The day I arrived was all sunshine, clear blue skies and a temperature more normal in an Aussie summer: 27c. Being able to have the cottage open so I could enjoy the views was a perfect start to what turned out to be an inspiring and highly successful residency.



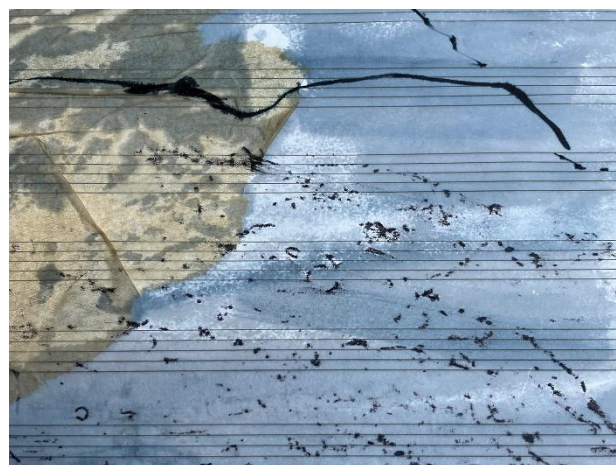
The focus of my work was the natural and heritage environment. Situated close to Bolus Head, considered the most westerly point of mainland Ireland, Cill Rialaig is located in a wild landscape beside the Atlantic. The hillsides above and below the cottage are a vast pattern of stone walls that meander around outcrops and down to the sea edge: a visual legacy of farming over many generations.

Working from sketches and textures obtained from walls and fields, I made a series of works using plain drawing paper and traditional manuscript paper. Techniques I used included surface texture revealed through wax rubbing, and ink drawing with handmade bamboo pen, line drawing on manuscript paper, and watercolour sometimes overlaid with text.

At Cill Rialaig, I worked on *Music in the Stones: Field Walls and Cottage Walls*



Landscape Music



Field Walls 1

Developing soundscapes and improvisations based on manuscript drawings is a process that I began exploring in 2004 for tenor and descant recorders. Now, the harp brings new energy and a sense of deep connection.

I gratefully acknowledge a grant in support of my work at Cill Rialaig.

"This project is supported through the City of Greater Geelong Creative Communities grants program".

From Deirdre Crawley



Photo: Golli. The Híminglæva sculpture by Elín Hansdóttir.

## "Wind Harp" Sculpture Unveiled at Harpa Concert Hall

<https://www.icelandreview.com/culture/wind-harp-sculpture-unveiled-at-harpa-concert-hall/>

## Rosemary Hallo – Medieval Harpist visiting Port Arlington



## HARP WORKSHOP & CONCERT

Treat yourself to a lovely day of Harp, Food and a Wonderful Concert. Learn simple tunes, develop new skills, meet other harpists and share the joy of our chosen instrument. Open to all ages and levels of harp proficiency. Harps are available for hire if required.

Rosemary Hallo is a S.A. Professional Harpist and Teacher and has performed with the Victorian, Tasmanian and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras.

Rosemary has a PhD in Early Harp Musicology and her specialty is Medieval Harp. Rosemary is also a graduate of the IHTP program and ATHA member.

Please direct all Enquiries & Bookings to  
[Christine.mi@bigpond.com](mailto:Christine.mi@bigpond.com)

Mobile 0419 526 550

## HARP WORKSHOP & CONCERT

10am-4.00pm

\$50

(Lunch & Afternoon  
Tea Provided)

SATURDAY

23rd SEPTEMBER

VENUE

(Portarlington  
Uniting Church )

111-113

Newcombe St  
Portarlington

## Six Benefits of Learning the Harp

(Published by Musicmakers [www.harpkit.com](http://www.harpkit.com))

### 1. Relaxation and Stress Reduction

Harp music has been proven to lower heart rates and reduce stress, making it an ideal tool for relaxation. Playing an instrument is good for your emotional and mental health.

### 2. Beautiful Music from the Start

One of the many benefits of learning to play the harp is that it sounds beautiful from the very beginning, unlike other instruments where intonation can take a while to master. Begin playing and enjoy making lovely music from the start. Even the wrong notes sound soothing and beautiful.

### 3. Continued learning and growth

Playing the harp can be a challenge. A welcome challenge, but it requires a certain level of commitment. However, dedication to a new skill leads to opportunities to grow in patience, musical skills, and concentration. Gain these skills from learning a new instrument and then apply them in all areas of your life.

### 4. A way to make new friends

Learning the harp is a fantastic social outlet! You'll get to know your harp teacher and other dedicated and enthusiastic harp learners through various performance opportunities (recitals, volunteer performances, etc.). You will meet other dedicated lifelong learners through your new hobby and become friends for life!

### 5. Good for your body

Playing the harp helps you build fine motor skills and coordination no matter your age. You'll learn to move your body in new ways and your teacher will give you strategies to release tension and build coordination while playing.

### 6. It will make you popular with your family and friends

Playing the harp automatically gives you a new party trick! You will be in demand to play for all your family and friends at social gatherings. Another perk is that it gives you something to make small talk about around the water cooler. People will be fascinated with your unusual and interesting hobby and will want to know more!





## 2023

### October

Saturday 14 ~ Online Open House ~ public

Saturday 21 ~ Online Spring Social & Student Catch Up -  
open to all IHTP students and graduates.

Sunday 29 ~ Intro to the Fundamentals of Therapeutic Harp -  
live gathering at Monbulk Vic.

### December

Sunday 3 ~ Intro to the Fundamentals of Therapeutic Harp -  
live gathering at Guildford Vic.

Saturday 9 ~ Online Open House ~ public

## 2024

### February

Preparing for Therapeutic Harp Training Intensive - 3 days either  
online or live **\*TBA**

Saturday 17 ~ Online Summer Social & Student Catch Up -  
open to all IHTP students and graduates.

**March**                      Module 1 ESM - **\*TBA**



For all enquiries and bookings please call or email

Vimukti directly: 0434 520 351

[vimuktiwarr@gmail.com](mailto:vimuktiwarr@gmail.com)

## “Are You Playing Pain Free?”

By Laurie Riley (Folk Harp Journal Summer 2022 – permission to distribute by the author)

### Article by Christine Middleton

Over the past two years I have been experiencing right shoulder, neck and back pain when playing the harp which threatened to end my harp playing career. In desperation, after numerous Physiotherapy sessions, exercises, heatpaks and many tubes of Fisiocrem resulting in no real long-term improvement, I read an article in the Folk Harp Journal Summer 2022 by American Harpist Laurie Riley titled “Are You Playing Pain Free” with an accompanying free video at [www.LaurieRiley.com](http://www.LaurieRiley.com) on the “Playing Pain Free” page. I subsequently contacted Laurie Riley and organised a 1:1 Zoom Consultation last month....it was an educational life changer for me and by following the recommendations, I am now back on track and pain free less than a month later.

In addition to the useful and practical tips within the Article and the youtube video, Laurie also recommended the following –

- Massage – regular deep tissue massage to the back, neck & shoulders
- Hatha Yoga
- Using a lighter harp
- Exercises such as upper body arm stretches, shoulder shrugs, side to side neck stretches,
- Not playing more than 45 mins at a time and using the next 15 minutes to exercise and move around before recommencing
- Playing harp every second day to allow your body to rest and recover

Here are excerpts from the Folk Harp Journal article by Laurie Riley, reprinted with permission -

“There is a lot of good information available these days regarding ways to sit comfortably with your harp, non-injurious technique, and so on. But there is also a great deal of misinformation and guesswork that can not only be less than helpful but can lead to problems” -

Question 1 – “If your harp is too tall” – an important rule is to adjust your harp to yourself, not yourself to the harp. Check the height of your chair first. Your knees should be slightly lower than your hips when sitting. If the harp is still too tall, you can:

- Get an adjustable stool and sit higher as long as your heels firmly contact the floor
- Leaning your harp back farther is not the answer as it puts more weight on your shoulder and can lead to chronic pain
- Standing up with your harp is fine if it’s tall enough so you can stand comfortably.

Question 2 – “If your harp is too short” – you should never sit lower. Sitting low strains the back muscles and can cause chronic back and hip pain.

- Add legs or a stand to make it taller
- Ensure the stand is sturdy and that it will hold the harp upright by itself so you don’t have to grasp the harp while playing

Question 3 – “If your harp is too heavy to carry” – you should always use a sturdy rolling cart.

- Learn how to move the harp on and off the cart using its balance points so you never lift its weight

Question 4 – “If lifting and carrying your harp without a case”

- Bend your knees, not the back
- Carry the harp by its pillar if it is small and lightweight. If it’s a medium or large harp, put one hand in a sound hole and the other on the pillar and lift

Question 5 – “To lift and carry your harp with a case”

- Bend from your knees – not your back – and get the strap on your shoulder BEFORE you stand up.
- Keep your feet far apart while lifting and be careful not to lean to one side as you stand

Question 6 – “Your Chair”

- Should be sturdy with a cushion seat, approximately the height of a normal dining room chair which is about 17”. If you are tall, add a few inches to the chair height (up to 21”)
- Your knees should be a bit lower than your hips when you sit, your feet should be directly under your knees and your weight should be distributed equally between hips and feet
- Ideally your chair should not have a back to lean on as it can lead to shoulder and neck strain while playing.
- Sit toward the front edge of your chair and keep your back relaxed while sitting upright

Question 7 – “Should a harp lean on your right shoulder”? – No

- A lever harp should lean on your right thigh or knee. It can touch your shoulder, but no weight should be on your shoulder.
- Keep shoulders relaxed while playing, not hunched

Question 8 – “Wrist position & Elbows”

- Keeping the wrists straight is optimal but a slight bend up or down is fine, as long as your wrists do not feel stiff and you are allowing yourself plenty of flexibility.
- Holding your wrists bent at a right angle will stress the tendons in the wrist and hand as well as the muscles of the forearm
- Your elbows should not be held high, but at a 45-degree angle. Arms are heavy and holding them high stresses the back, shoulders and neck.
- The arms and/or wrists should never be used to grasp the harp and never press your elbows to your body while playing





*BIO - Laurie Riley's career spans four decades of dedication to music as a life-changing art.*

*She is a popular instructor with numerous books, videos, CD's, concerts, television and radio appearances to her credit.*

*Laurie founded and co-founded two accredited certifications programs for therapeutic musicians including Harp for Healing.*

*Laurie's work is based on the belief that music is essential to healthy mental, emotion, physical and spiritual development.*

*Her website is [LaurieRiley.com](http://LaurieRiley.com)*

## TUNE-A-MONTH

### By Christine Middleton (Facilitator)

Tune-a-Month commenced in March 2023 and is a free Monthly Zoom Event for all ATHA members that has attracted an average of 10-15 attendees each month.

The aim of Tune-A-Month is to build up a repertoire of simple harp music that could be used in therapeutic settings. Each month there is a different ATHA member presenter and sheet music is distributed during and after each Workshop.

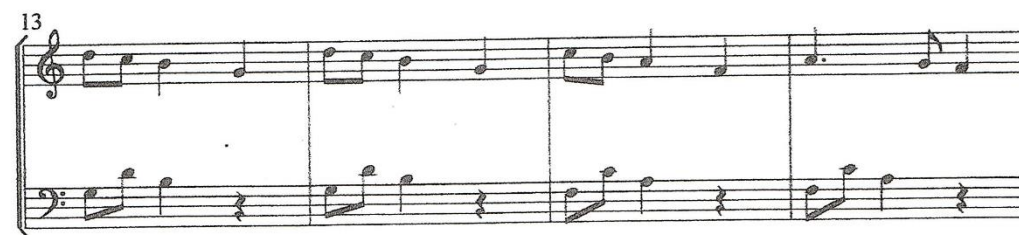
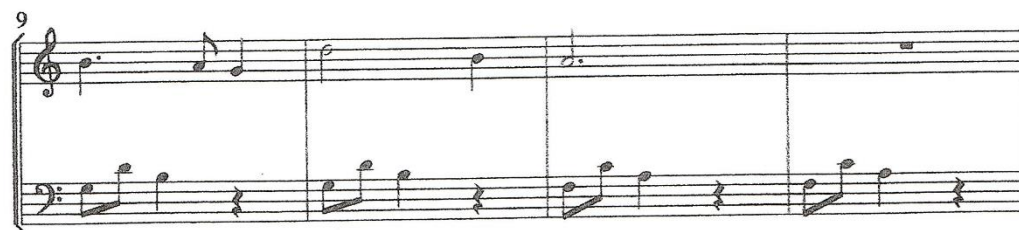
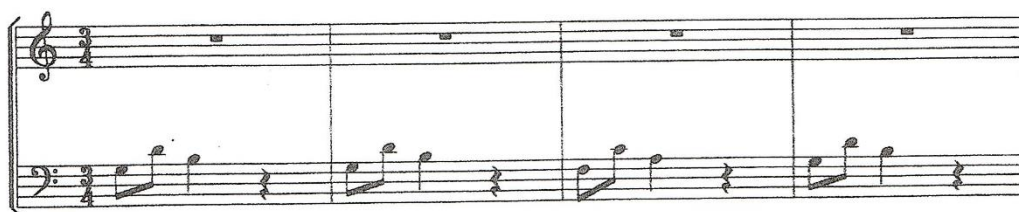
I facilitated the first session in March 2023 with one of my favourite pieces of therapeutic music, "Mixolydian Meditation" by Joanna Mell from her harp music book "Modal Meditations". It's a very simple and beautiful piece of music and Joanna has kindly allowed ATHA members to use this piece for their personal use only.

Thanks to ATHA members Jenni Sawell, Helen Morrison, Helen Punch, Carla Whiteley, Glenda Underhill and Gwenda Davies who have facilitated Tune-A-Month Workshops throughout 2023.

Keep an eye out for future Zoom invites to Tune-A-Month Sessions.

## Mixolydian Meditation

Joanna Mell



Joanna Mell is an accomplished harpist and harp teacher performing and teaching in the Southeastern Pennsylvania area. With over 30 years of experience, Joanna has students from all over the world and they love her innovative and exciting style. She is also a gifted composer and arranger. This song is from her book, *Modal Meditations*, available on [JoannaMell.com](http://JoannaMell.com).

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Summer 2020 ♦ Issue No. 187 ♦ *Folk Harp Journal*

Australian Therapeutic Harpists Association 2023. If you'd like to contribute to future editions,  
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