

HARP NOTES

Newsletter of the Australian Therapeutic Harpists Association

Calendar of Events

ATHA Tune a Month

- Meets online first Tuesday evening of each month – will resume in 2026.

ATHA Discussion Group

- Meets online third Tuesday evening of each month – will resume in 2026.

Note to Graduates

- As graduates from accredited programs, to maintain your accreditation you are required to achieve a number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Both of the above groups are eligible for inclusion into CEU submissions

Membership continues to rise.

- ATHA now has more than 50 members, made up of graduates (full members), friends and associates.



Welcome to the last edition of Harp Notes for 2025. I'd like to thank all contributors. Once more this edition is coming out later than I would have liked, but sometimes life just gets in the way.

Included in this edition are words and reflections by members, a flyer advertising a not to be missed upcoming concert from the wonderful Josh Layne, another useful, informative article from the "Harp Workbench" by Brandden, and hopefully I'll be excused for a tiny bit of self-promotion.

I hope you find this edition inspiring and engaging. If you'd like to contribute to future editions, please contact me at harptranquility@gmail.com

With only a couple of days left in this year, I'd personally like to wish you all the very best.

Go well.
Glenda Underhill

President's Report 2025

Catherine Lyons-Nash

ATHA continued to run its Tune-a-Month and Discussion Groups on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month via Zoom. Thank you to Tune-a-Month presenters Louise Bell, Anke Arkesteyn, Christine Middleton, Carla Whiteley, Jenni Sawell, Helen Morrison and Helen Punch, and Discussion Group presenters Rae-Lloyd Jones, Clare Steward, Helen Morrison, Christine Middleton, Carla Whiteley, Gwenda Davies and Carol Booth. A big thank you to Carol Booth for facilitating the Discussion Group sessions this year. You have done a fantastic job of finding fascinating topics for us to learn and talk about.

In June, ATHA held a Harp Gathering at Belgrave in Victoria. On Thursday the 12th, participants met at the Masonic Hall for a catch-up and a jam. On Friday, workshops were presented by Louise Bell, Verna Lee, and me. In the evening, we watched the documentary, 'From Music into Silence' at the Cameo Theatre. The documentary's subject, Peter Roberts, and the Director, Farshid Akhlaghi held a Q&A session after the film. Thank you, Peter and Farshid, for making it such a special night! On Saturday, workshops were presented by Jenni Sawell, Helen Punch, Glenda Underhill and Gwenda Davies. Over 40 harpists participated in the Gathering, and seven new members joined ATHA during the event. Thank you to the committee for putting it all together and a special thank you to Christine Middleton and Jennifer Burchill for doing a lot of the leg work in finding a location with a hall, a cinema, and accommodation, and for organising those facilities. Your hard work is greatly appreciated.

I'd like to thank the committee for their work over the last year. Everyone has brought something special to the group. Thank you as well to our newest member, Jennifer Burchill. It has been great to have you in the team this year. And following our AGM held in November, Alison Paisley put her hand up as a general member. Thank you, Alison. Personally, and from all the committee, we look forward to serving the therapeutic harp community again in the coming year.

News from our Members

From ACT

Alison Ware

Canberra news

The Therapeutic Harp Program continues across Canberra Health Services. Alongside patient visits new programs such as group relaxation sessions in Oncology have been going well.

In the community sector I continue to collaborate and offer programs such as Harp Yoga and day retreats for the Cancer Council of the ACT. Below are some photos of a recent retreat held near Yass.



Harp visits to the zoo continue and I look forward to visiting Sri Lanka with other zoo members exploring animal conservation areas and world heritage sites next year.

I love the diversity of work and the different opportunities that can be created with the Harp.

I am also exploring Substack to share some of my experiences. I am offering free subscriptions to readers. I am still finding my “voice” but enjoying sharing ideas

[Playing with Spirit](#)

Below is a recent post:

The older I become the more I look for beauty in life. I find beauty in nature, music and of course my harp.

I work with the harp in healthcare, and it may be said that beauty is hard to find in a big hospital.....

However, when I look closer beauty is there waiting for me to notice.

There is beauty in the gentle touch of a wife tending/ministering to her dying husband.

It's in the smile of a new mum gazing down at her newborn – both nestling, bonding and cocooned in a quiet room at the end of a busy ward.

Beauty is seen in relationships; it's in the care a sister provides as she sits with her brother while he is having chemotherapy.

I go to another hospital ward and beauty is present again as I observe a nurse tending to an elderly patient, carefully brushing her hair after a shower, applying her favourite lip balm, laying out a fresh nightie speaking in a soft reassuring tone.

The more I look the more I see as elderly grandparents contemplate finger paintings lovingly crafted by a grandchild, and smile when they notice grandma is spelt with an extra a. I notice eyes linger on photos of beloved family members, friends, pets and places they hold dear.

I hear of the beauty of places visited as music, and conversation transport patients back to a time and place. These simple treasures become beautiful reminders and touchstones of life outside the hospital.

In illness they begin to hold new meaning and appreciated anew.

Beauty can be observed in nature's colours as they change with the seasons in the hospital's external courtyards. The seasons reminding us that nothing stays the same and change is the only constant,

An instrument such as the harp can bring a certain aesthetic to a clinical environment. As I play people comment on the beauty of the music saying:

Thankyou the music is inexplicably beautiful. I can't describe it. It fills me with joy and takes me to a place of blessing and beauty.

I see it stir something deep within them – carefully chosen music can uplift, soothe, and envelop listeners in a soft pillow of sound.

Another patient I visited in palliative care worked as an artist. She was aware that her health was deteriorating, and most treatment options had been tried.

She spoke of while not being afraid to die and would not necessarily miss the everyday encounters of life. However, she would miss the beauty of music, seeing the harp, the experience of "exquisite" art, vibrancy of the colours in flowers, the change in nature's seasons and feeling the flow of the creative spirit moving within her.

We spent her last few weeks exploring beauty through music, silence, discussions around art and time spent in the courtyard garden. We planned her funeral music, and I played at her funeral. It remains a privilege to have this continuity of care.

Beauty is everywhere if we take the time to notice

Where do you seek beauty?

Please don't hesitate to contact me in regard to any of my programs

Best Wishes to all.

info@harpcare.com.au

www.harpcare.com.au

from New South Wales

Nicky Lock

Prayer Labyrinth Walking

“Some of you know that I have been enjoying prayer labyrinth walking both online and in person for the last few years. The US organisation Veriditas trains people as labyrinth facilitators and runs an annual online fundraising auction. I decided to offer an hour’s online harp therapy session and the successful bidder paid \$60US for the session. She contacted me this week and wants me to play for a retreat group she is running in April 2026 while they are walking a labyrinth in Virginia. We’ve been in touch to set up a time that works with different time zones. I’ll let you know how it goes!”

Clare Steward

ICU Small Acts of Kindness, Nepean Hospital

Hi All ☺,

I'd like to share with you a link to another interview and video that NSW Health has produced about my work, this time at Nepean Hospital within the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). This is part of the NSW Health initiative 'Small Acts of Kindness' - a Health-wide movement focussed on kindness and its impact on staff, patients and all who interact with the health system.

I have shared this video on both the ATHA and THTP FaceBook pages. You can also view it on my own FaceBook page: Lyrebird Therapeutic Harp. However, not everyone connects with the FaceBook platform and the ATHA newsletter provides an excellent alternative forum for sharing our ideas and experiences. Thankyou Glenda for your work ☺.

As I say in the interview, I had wanted to visit the ICU for quite some time. Serendipitously, the place I choose to warm-up within the hospital backs onto the ICU (unbeknownst to me) and many of the staff, including the Director of Intensive Care, would often walk past me as I played here.

Quite out of the blue, I received an email from the hospital one day, explaining that the Director of ICU wanted to reach out to me about a critically ill patient for whom he thought my harp music would be really helpful - would I talk with him?

Wow!

From this first conversation, a really wonderful relationship has grown between the ICU team and myself.

I have been playing for their patients - and for staff - for about 5 months now and absolutely love this work.

I feel honoured and privileged every time I step through the ICU doors, every time I walk into a patient's room, every time I sit down beside a bed to begin playing. The team have been incredibly welcoming and their feedback moves me deeply.

The ICU is, by necessity, a profoundly clinical space. Patients and loved ones who find themselves here are challenged on every level, in every way and from every direction. I sit with those in the midst of suffering, fear, uncertainty, grief, pain, anguish, loss, survival, triumph, change and challenge. The gentle voice of the harp creates an environment of healing, a place to retreat from all that is clinical and frightening and overwhelming.

For clinicians – who provide exemplary care at the highest level - the harp can be an unexpectedly comforting, restorative companion, just as healing and supportive for them as it is for patients and families. They deliver care with compassion and humanity, but often within challenging, stressful and traumatic circumstances.

It humbles me beyond measure to bring something into the midst of these experiences that comforts, transcends or soothes the wounds of those around me.

My gratitude to this team is deep – for their welcome, for all that I am learning, for all that I have the opportunity to offer in this space.

I hope that you will click the link and enjoy this (very brief) video...

[Facebook video](#)

clare.steward29@gmail.com

from Tasmania

Helen Morrison

Inscape arts program in healthcare settings

I am excited to have been invited to join the Inscape group of musicians and artists who work regularly across various facilities in southern Tasmania: including the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH), the Whittle Ward and the Roy Fagan Centre. Importantly, all the artists and musicians at Inscape are funded through benefactors, government grants and fundraising efforts.

As part of the program, I have enjoyed playing harp at the brand new K Block foyer atrium at the RHH. Another Inscape harpist, Tiff, played my harp while I tested out the distance the sound travelled. The resonance of the harp carries right through to the cafe at the Campbell Street entrance - some 100 metres away, and around a corner. An Inscape staff member notes data such as numbers of people and any interactions with the musician at each session. It is estimated that approximately one thousand people walk past the harp in K Block every hour.

This doesn't include others who are touched by the harp's sound as they head out through the main entrance at Liverpool Street, or along into other parts of the hospital.

I recently attended Inscape's very special 10 year anniversary held at the Henry Jones Art Hotel at the Hobart waterfront. This was a terrific showcase of the work involved by this talented group of creative people. Musicians played, artists shared their work, and even the garden trolley - 'nature on wheels' made an appearance. Artists and musicians generously offered gifts of their work in a very popular silent auction.

More information on the work of Inscape may be found at their website:

<https://www.inscape.org.au/> Inscape – art transforming lives

DonateLife Remembrance Service

DonateLife is based at the Royal Hobart Hospital and coordinates all organ and tissue donation in Tasmania. They support families at an intense time in their lives. The beautiful remembrance service was held in Hobart at the Wellington Room at the Wrest Point Casino this year, and I was honoured to be asked back to play throughout the moving and insightful service. This was a time for families to reflect on the generosity of their loved ones, as well as recipients and living donors to speak of their journey. The harp music I chose had a gentle Celtic theme, and alongside the soothing, soulful music of singer Michael and guitarist John, a peaceful atmosphere was created for the one hundred or so people attending.



My next visit to K Block of the RHH as an Inscape musician was in the week after the Remembrance Service and I was excited to be able to invite the DonateLife team to hear me play. This was an opportunity for the team to have some well-deserved 'time out' as part of their scheduled wellbeing day.

Therapy Harp Training Program

The Therapy Harp Training Program (THTP) continues to be an important and worthwhile course in the harp therapy training landscape. With an Australian base, and graduates from around the world, THTP offers personalised support for each student. The course is structured across four distinct and comprehensive units, culminating in practical and research project assessments. Graduates of THTP are working in various community sectors including hospitals, hospice, aged care, allied health, education and more.

I am excited to announce the latest graduates of THTP:

Eliza Sydney from the US, Anne Horton from NSW, and Sarah Gamble from the UK.

Congratulations and I wish them all the best.

To find out more about THTP, email helen@therapyharp.com or check out the website www.therapyharp.com/



from Victoria

Cathryn Chee (IHTP Student)

Sharing reflections from my IHTP (M2 ESM) training

I feel very blessed, honoured, and grateful for the opportunity to learn various tools in Module 2 of the IHTP ESM program. The main highlight has been learning how to identify a person's Resonant Tone, enabling us as harp therapy practitioners to support our patients and clients more effectively, providing comfort, relaxation, and healing through music that resonates with their innate vibrations.

I am particularly thankful to Vimukti Warr and Louise Bell, who, after discussions with Christina Tourin, offered to teach the IHTP Module 2 ESM. Their dedication ensured we gained valuable knowledge and tools essential for our professional growth as practitioners.

Throughout the week, our daily activities included various workshops, discussions, and hands-on experiences aimed at enhancing our understanding and skills as harp therapy practitioners.

The concept of Inclusive Attention was particularly transformative. This principle encompasses sensitivity training and deep listening — not only to our own somatic, emotional, and cognitive experiences but also to those of our clients.

By practicing inclusive attention, we create a meditative space, allowing us to use touch, breath, grounding, movement, and sound effectively. It taught me that the healing journey is as much about observation and connection as it is about the music itself.

Learning to find the Resonant Tone of individuals was another highlight. This skill is crucial, as it involves closely observing and responding to the unique vibrational patterns of each client. The role-playing exercises were particularly beneficial, allowing us to practice this skill in a supportive environment.

This foundational understanding was further enhanced during our dedicated experience at Edgar's Mission in Lancefield, where I engaged directly with animals and deepened my understanding of harp therapeutic practices in a unique environment.



At Edgar's Mission, I had the profound opportunity to connect with various rescued animals, immersing myself in their stories and the care they receive. Each rescued animal has its own unique story, personality, and fundamental right to exist free from harm. What captivated me most was the sanctuary's approach. Here, animals are seen not as resources but for their individuality and capacity to feel, connect, and thrive. As I walked through the paddocks, I noticed how the animals approached with curiosity rather than fear — a testament to the trust they have developed, feeling safe and sheltered in the sanctuary's nurturing environment.

My experience at the sanctuary illuminated the critical importance of empathy, trust, and connection in therapeutic settings, deepening my understanding of how to engage effectively with animals in a healing context.

I feel grateful to Vimukti for organizing a live training session with rescued animals at Edgar's Mission in Lancefield and for the advice on how to work effectively with them, as well as to Edgar's Mission for providing the opportunity for this invaluable experiential training. This unique experience not only reinforced the principles I studied but also allowed me to learn how to entrain and create a holistic cradle of sounds for the rescued animals who had experienced trauma and distress.

It became evident that whether I am working with animals or humans, the fundamentals of Inclusive Attention, finding the appropriate Resonant Tone, tempo, and rhythm remain consistent. Through this process, I have embraced the importance of being curious, listening deeply, connecting through observation and understanding, and learning to trust the process and the journey.

The lessons learned during the five-day training have been significant. Each moment spent engaging with the materials, tools, and concepts will undoubtedly contribute to my growth as a harp therapy practitioner.

As I move forward, I am excited to integrate these insights into my practice, always aiming to foster an environment of healing by applying trust, connection, inclusive attention, and resonant tone toward a holistic approach to enhancing patient and client comfort, relaxation, healing, and overall well-being.

From the 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.

I often get questions about why harps need to be played to improve their voice and how to tune them.

Harps, especially new ones, need to be played regularly, and the more they are played, the better they will sound.

A simplified explanation is that harps are made from timber, and most of the components in the harp still think they are a tree in the forest. It takes time for the harp to learn how to move (resonate) freely instead of standing solidly in the forest. The more it's played, the faster it understands that it is now a musical instrument instead of a rigid tree.

Additionally, the cells in the timber tend to be naturally arranged in a random pattern; however, when the harp is played, the vibration causes them to align, allowing them to vibrate more freely and produce an improved sound.

To get the most out of your harp, play it regularly. A bonus is that the more it is tuned and played, the more it will stay in tune.

Harps need to be tuned or at least checked for pitch every time it is used. It is easy to tune a harp; it only takes a few minutes, and there are several methods: using an electronic tuner, tuning to another stringed instrument and tuning to a pitch fork or by ear using the circle of fifths. Using an electronic chromatic tuner is probably the easiest and does not require developing the skill to match pitch with your ear. I will write this for total novices, so experienced harp players, please bear with us.

Electronic chromatic tuners can be obtained from virtually any music store. Be sure you are purchasing a chromatic tuner (\$29.00 up to over a \$1,000.00) because electronic guitar tuners may not have the range necessary for a harp. When purchasing a tuner, it is a good idea to take your harp with you to be sure it will work for your harp, especially in the upper and lower ranges. I recommend a tuner that has a note indicator that tells you the note you have played and a meter with a needle that tells you if the note is flat or sharp. Once the tuner is turned on, a microphone receives sound from the harp. Tuners have electronic filters inside which allow them to identify a single frequency (note) and screen out all other noise.

The filters are made to select the strongest vibration or signal and block out everything else but sometimes they filter out the tone you want, if so, you will need to pluck harder/softer or dampen other strings. An accessory you should seriously consider, is a pick-up clip for your tuner. The pick-up then amplifies the vibration as you pluck and tune each individual string and will block out all other ambient sounds. To use the pickup, one end plugs into your tuner; the other end is a clip-on device that picks up the vibrations. It can be clipped on to a tuning pin or one of the sound cut outs on the back of the soundbox.

If you have a harp without levers or pedals or if you are a novice, you will be tuning your harp to the key of C, a do-re-mi diatonic scale starting with C (the red strings). I suggest starting in the bass. The notes you will be tuning to in ascending order from C are D, E, F, G, A, B, and then another C. The scale then repeats itself. Then go back and double check all the strings.

So, let's start tuning your harp. Before you begin, all the strings must be in the open position. If you have levers, that is when all levers are open or disengaged, and all pedals of a pedal harp are in the uppermost slot.

1. Turn on your tuner and either locate it close to your harp so that the microphone can pick up a good signal or attach the pick-up clip to the harp.
2. Pluck the lowest note; we will assume that it is a C. The indicator lights and/or needle on your tuner will show you what note the string is producing. If your harp is out of tune, it will read something other than the designated string, C. In most cases, your harp is going to be flat. The string is low, and you will raise the pitch by tightening the string until the indicator light reads C. Place your tuning key on the C tuning pin and turn it to tighten the string. Ensure that when the tuner reaches C, the "sharp" light does not come on. C sharp is higher than C. If you have never tuned a harp before, you will be surprised at how little you need to turn the tuning pin, especially at the upper end, to achieve a significant change in the note, so be gentle. In fact, be very, very gentle as an over-tightened string is sure to break.
3. Once the indicator light reads C look at the meter again. If the needle reads left of centre, it means that the C is low or flat, and you need to tighten the string slightly. If the needle reads right of centre, the C is high and you need to loosen the string a little until the needle is in the centre.
4. Caution--be careful when tuning that you place the tuning key on the same tuning pin as the string that you are plucking. This caution may sound unnecessary, but with all the strings on the harp, this can and does happen! You end up plucking the string and turning the tuning key on the string next to the intended one. The pitch doesn't change, so you turn the key again, and next thing you know, "bong", the string breaks.
5. Now pluck the D string (the following shorter string to C) and repeat steps 1, 2, & 3.
6. Repeat the process with the other strings. Tuning the harp for the first few times may take a while, but after you get accustomed to it, you will be tuning the harp up in a very short time.

7. Especially with a young harp or a new string, it is often wise to go through the entire tuning process more than once. You will find that by tuning up all the strings, the ones you did first may be flat again because the tightening of the others raised the soundboard just enough to reduce the tension on the original strings just slightly.

Questions and comments for future "Harp Workbench" column of this newsletter can be addressed to the editor, Glenda Underhill harptranquility@gmail.com or to Brandden. 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

A concert not to be missed!!



HARP CONCERT

Treat yourself to a lovely day of Harp, Food and a Wonderful Concert. Learn a simple tune, develop new skills, meet other harpists and share the joy of our chosen instrument. Open to all ages and levels of harp proficiency.

Josh Layne is a Canadian Harpist/Composer and International Touring and Recording Artist. Josh combines his love of the outdoors in the story-telling style series "Harpist in the Wild"

"A SPECIAL EVENT not to be missed"

BOOKINGS

HARP CONCERT

10am – 4.00pm
\$55
(BYO Lunch & afternoon
tea Plate to Share)

SATURDAY
11th April 2026

VENUE
(TECOMA Uniting
Church)
1566 Burwood
Highway TECOMA.
Victoria

Enquiries:

Carla Whiteley

0409 389 529

Glenda Underhill*A teensy bit of self-promotion*

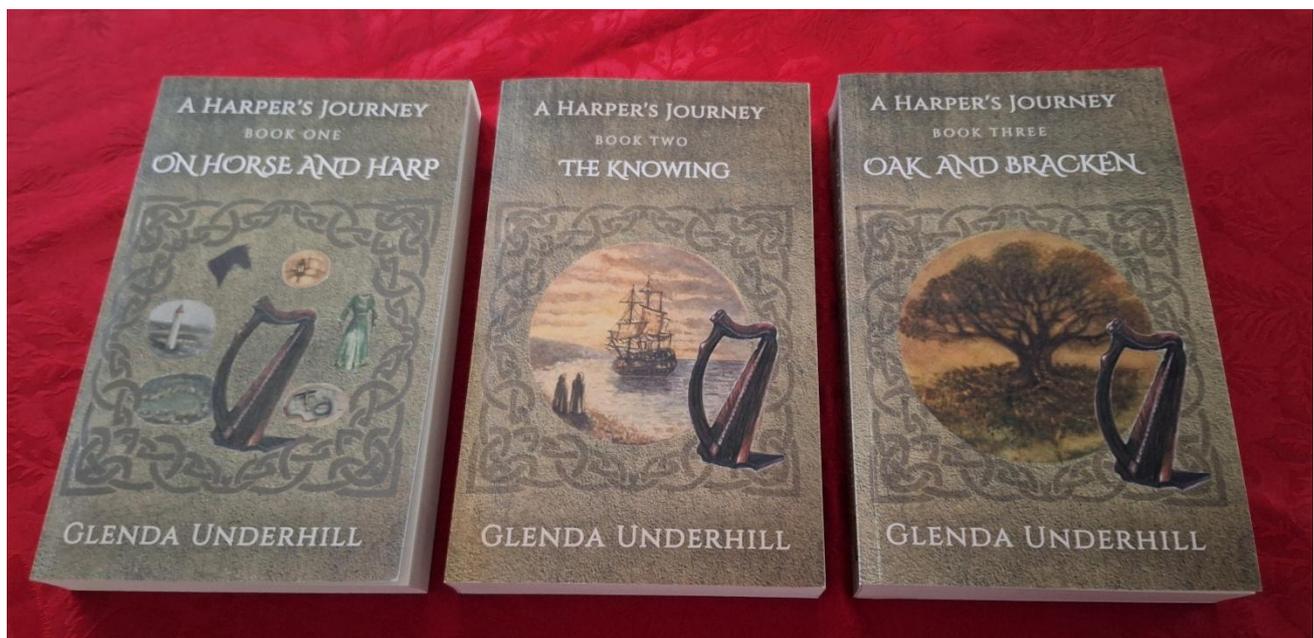
After a bit of a slog and quite a few interruptions, I'm happy (and a little bit proud) to have finished the third book in my "Harper's Journey" series. I know some of you have purchased it...thank you so much! Although my books are fiction and set back in time (17th century Ireland), I have endeavoured always, to make my writing not only a source of entertainment and escapism, but also educational, drawing on my own experiences as a harper, and life in general. Book Three has only one review so far (please write a review), an Amazon reader from America, who actually reviewed my book before I even received my own author copy, which I found wonderfully amusing... the wonders of technology! I thought I'd share it, as it would appear, at least for one person, I have successfully conveyed my values.

★★★★★ The power of music, family and home

Reviewed in the United States on 3 December 2025

Format: Kindle | **Verified Purchase**

Only a Therapeutic Harper could have written this beautiful book. Glenda Underhill's ability to capture the language and feel for the time and place of the story is remarkable. I'm hoping there is a fourth book planned for this series soon.



Australian Therapeutic Harpists Association 2023. If you'd like to contribute to future editions, please send to glenda at harptranquility@gmail.com

And to close out the
year compliments of Clare Steward

