

## 2010 VICTORIAN OPEN BUSH POETRY & SONG CHAMPIONSHIPS REPORT

Report by Jan Lewis

Male Champion Russell Heathcote with Female Champion Betty Walton

Men's Original Performance 1st Maurie Foun, 2nd Russell Heathcote, 3rd Jack O'Connor  
Women's Original 1st Jan Lewis, 2nd Betty Walton, 3rd Bette Shiels.

Men's Contemporary 1st Tom O'Connor, 2nd Noel Bull, 3rd Russell Heathcote  
Women's Contemporary 1st Kathy Vallance, 2nd Carol Reffold, 3rd Betty Walton

Men's Traditional 1st Jack O'Connor, 2nd Russell Heathcote, 3rd Tom O'Connor  
Women's Traditional 1st Betty Walton, 2nd Carol Reffold, 3rd Kathy Vallance.

Novice Original Performance 1st Russell Heathcote,  
Novice Contemporary 1st Russell Heathcote.  
Novice Traditional 1st Russell Heathcote

Intermediate Performance Bette Shiels.

Yarn Spinning Champion Betty Walton 2nd Russell Heathcote 3rd Ken Jones

Open Written Ellis Campbell, 2nd Jan Lewis, 3rd Zondrae King.

Eucalyptus Theme Poem. Equal First John Peel – Bernie Keleher, 2nd Stephen Whiteside.

Novice Written Will Williams, 2nd Barb Lanagan, 3rd Yvonne Harper  
Junior Written K-3 Justin Webster  
Junior Written 3-6 Sarah Thompson  
Junior Written 7-12 Sarah Webster

Betty Walton and Russell Heathcote are the Victorian Champion Bush Poets for 2010/2011 and have won complimentary season ticket to the National Folk Festival at Easter in Canberra.

The Victorian Open Bush Poetry & Song Championships were held over the weekend of 15 - 17 October 2010. Poets and songsters travelled long distances, but the shocking weather conditions affected attendance.

The weekend began with an intimate Friday afternoon concert for a small audience from the Charlton Planned Activities Group followed by a Yarn-spinning competition interspersed with musical items. Betty Walton from Tintalra was the winner, Russell Heathcote from Sale second and Ken Jones from Bendigo third. Thanks to our judges Robina & Rob, from local arts group 'Warts n All'.

Saturday morning kicked off with a poets' breakfast, hosted by Colin Driscoll. Geoffrey Graham as a very capable MC for the competition and first was the Traditional Poem section. The judges, Michael Darby, Helen Begley and John Peel, were impressed with the quality of the performances all weekend. Lawson reigned in this section for Jack O'Connor from Shepparton as the winner in the Men's, with his performance of "Outback". Betty Walton was the winner of the Women's with, "The First Surveyor". Russell Heathcote was the Novice winner, with Graham Jenkin's "The Bushman's Club".

After the lunch break, competition resumed with a sprinkling of newcomers contesting The Song section. Jeff Mifsud from Taylors' Lakes was winner of the 'Other Song' section with Joe Paolacci's "The Southern Cross is Calling Me". Neil Higgins won both the 'Original Song' with "Shearing the Rams" and his "Endless Dreams (Burke & Wills) song won the Eucalyptus Theme song. Neil was named the overall with Michael Whittle as the runner-up. Kerry Dobbin was another strong performer.

In the Original Poem section Corryong reigned with Maurie Foun winning the Men's with "A Man's Gotta Do what a Man's Gotta do..." and Jan Lewis with "The Interview" taking out the Women's. Russell Heathcote again was the Novice winner, with "The Champ from Jackson's Track".

After an excellent dinner provided by the Wedderburn hosts, a concert starring the hard working judges was held on Saturday night. It was a chance for the competitors to see that the judges know their stuff when it comes to performing. Maggie Murphy and Jill Meehan joined Geoffrey, Helen, Michael and John in presenting top entertainment.

Sunday morning's poets' breakfast was a relaxed affair with Stephen Whiteside adding to the performers. The poets' breakfasts on both days were both good, no-pressure affairs for budding poets to get up and perform.

The Contemporary section of the competition had a great selection of modern poems were performed and as with the previous sections, to a very high standard. The Women's winner was Kathy Vallance from St Arnaud with the poem, "The Perfect Man" by Louise Dean. Tom O'Connor from Swan Hill was thrilled with his winning performance of Ellis Campbell's "Remembering Chubby". The Novice prize in this section (& hat-trick) went to Russell Heathcote for "Green and Gold Malaria" by Rupert McCall.

After lunch, competition resumed with the junior sections. The winner of the primary school section (Kindergarten to Year 6) was Crispin Smythe who recited his own poem "The Dig Tree". The winner of the secondary school section (Year 7 to Year 12 and Under 19) was Naomi Frederick with her original "Anguish of the Anzacs" and James Jowzy (Bette's grandson) as runnerup.

Russell Heathcote was the overall Men's Champion, Jack O'Connor 2nd and Maurie Foun 3rd, with Betty Walton winning the Women's Champion and Carol Reffold 2nd & Jan Lewis 3rd . Ken Prato won the Ross Noble Encouragement Award.

Geoffrey Graham did a great job of keeping the competitions moving and keeping the audience entertained between performers while the judges were finalising their scoring. Bette Shiels from Bundaberg won the Intermediate performance prize.

Poems in the Open Written section came from all over Australia and judge Michael Darby commented on the high standard. In the open section, Ellis Campbell of Dubbo won with "Moonlight Muster" and Jan Lewis 2nd with "I'm Ready to Go".

Eucalyptus theme section had equal winners: John Peel from Batlow "A Scent of Eucalyptus" & Bernie Keleher from Alice Springs "Old Man Gum". Novice prize was won by Will Williams from Queanbeyan with "Eucalyptus Globus."

Junior Written poems: Kindergarten to Year 3 section was won by Justen Webster, "Too Many Sausages". In the Year 3 to Year 6 section, the winner was Sarah Thompson with "The Bush". Sarah Webster's winning poem, "A Sudden Switch" won the Year 7 to Year 12 section.

All in all, a great competition rising above difficult issues – new venue, less entrants, bad weather, etc but the standard was great, so everyone please take a bow – judges, entrants, MCs and helpers are all to be congratulated. Special thanks to Ken Prato, who made the fence trophies and Jim Brown for donating the engraved plates. Special thanks also to Wedderburn Tourism Inc, Wedderburn Lions Club, Wedderburn businesses and Neighbourhood House and Inglewood & District branch of Bendigo Bank.

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