

A.B.P.A

**Australian Bush Poets Association
Volume 28 No. 2 April/May 2022**



Lest We Forget.....



THE 20TH ANNUAL NANDEWAR POETRY COMPETITION

CONDUCTED BY
NARRABRI & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
SUPPORTED BY
NARRABRI SHIRE COUNCIL

FIRST PRIZE: \$150 AND TROPHY
SECOND PRIZE: \$100
THIRD PRIZE: \$50

Closing Date July 30th

ENTRY FORM

Available from:

Narrabri Shire Visitor Information Centre
Phone : 6799 6760

Or

Narrabri & District Historical Society Inc.
P. O. Box 55
Narrabri 2390

Entry forms to be returned to:
The above address

also available online at www.abpa.org.au



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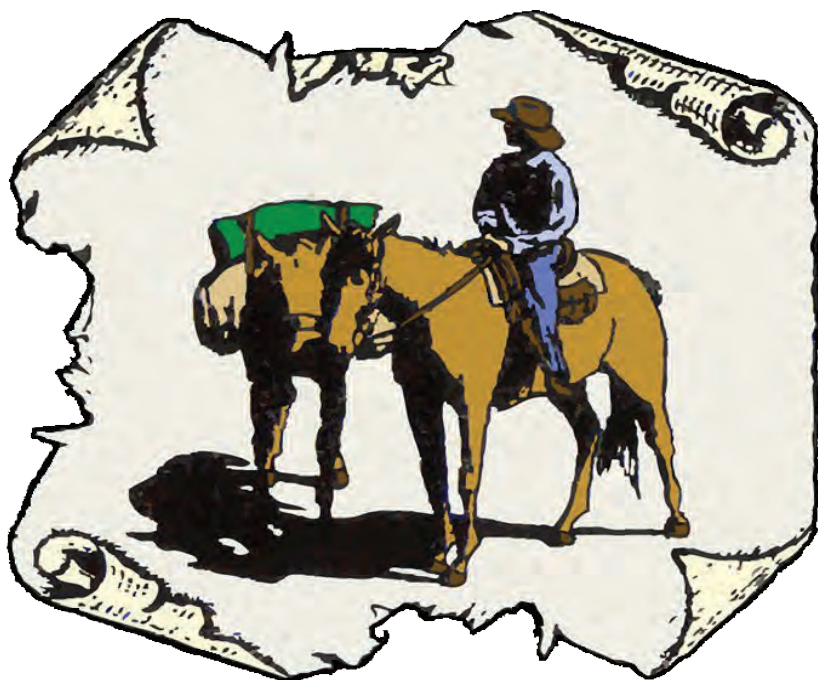


Entries close 30th April 2022

See www.bronzeswagman.weebly.com

Or contact Bronze Swagman Committee

bronzeswagmancompetition@gmail.com



ABPA Committee Members 2022

Executive:

President	-- Tim Sheed	president@abpa.org.au
Vice-President	-- Ray Essery	essery56rm@bigpond.com
Secretary	-- Meg Gordon	meggordon4@bigpond.com
Treasurer	-- Christine Middleton	treasurer@abpa.org.au

Members on Committee:

Manfred Vjars	manfred@rocketfrog.com.au
Tom McLveen	thepoetofoz@gmail.com

State Reps

Peter Frazer (Qld)
Bill Kearns (NSW)
Jan Lewis (Vic)
Irene Conner (WA)

Non Committee Positions

Webmaster	Gregory North	web@abpa.org.au
Magazine Editor	Neil McArthur	macpoet58@gmail.com
Facebook Editor	Jan Lewis	janlewis1@hotmail.com

ABPA Magazine Advertising Rates

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Black and White Ads

Full page \$95
Half Page \$55
Quarter Page or less \$35

Full Colour Ads (Space limited and applicable to Printed Magazine only)

Full Page \$240
Half Page \$140
Quarter Page not available

Poets Calendar and Regular Events free (one or two lines only)

To help offset costs, articles regarding a festival or event would be appreciated if accompanied by a paid Ad. Send all details in plain text, Word or PDF Format to editor@abpa.org.au
All payments to be made within 14 days to

The Treasurer - Christine Middleton

P.O. Box 357 Portarlington
Victoria 3223

treasurer@abpa.org.au

or via Direct Debit to ABPA Account

Bendigo Bank

BSB: 633000

Account: 154842108

Please put your name/club/invoice as reference so Treasurer can identify who the deposit is from.

Ad Payments have been suspended during Covid for all but Personal Merchandising Ads until further notice from the Committee,

Next Magazine Deadline is May 27th 2022

For Magazine Submissions can you all please note.

Articles, Poems, Stories, etc. need to be submitted in either Word (.doc or .docx) format or PDF (.pdf) format. Old Publisher files and .odt and .windat files can not be used due to being outdated.

For Photos, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE send Pics that are of a high quality and most importantly IN FOCUS! A lot of readers tell me 'That photo was a bit blurry!'. But when receiving one photo from an event which has not been captured well, it does not matter what programs, filters etc. you put it through, it cannot miraculously be put in focus.

I appreciate all efforts of those members submitting to the magazine, so they are just a couple of important hints to help me publish your articles and poems with the respect that they deserve.

President's Report

Welcome to the new year. We are all looking forward to better times with festivals and meeting up with old mates.

The Orange Banjo Paterson Poetry Festival is taking place as I write this and hopefully it will be the success we all want it to be.

We know of the cancellations and disappointments of the last couple of years, but they are now definitely behind us.

Over the last two years our membership numbers have increased substantially, which is very pleasing and bodes well for the future of the medium we all love.

I am particularly pleased to note that junior participation is strong in Orange schools and their festival has a separate competition for that purpose. I encourage other competitions to provide opportunities for the younger people to take a meaningful part.

Our organization is on a sound financial footing and the minutes of our AGM and Financial Report are available on our website.

Keep well, keep writing and keep reciting.

Tim Sheed
President ABPA
16/2/2022



The Annual General Meeting of the ABPA was held on the sixteenth of February 2022 via zoom. The committee members were reelected unopposed and the office bearers are as follows;

President	Tim Sheed
Vice President	Ray Essery
Secretary	Meg Gordon
Treasurer	Christine Middleton
Committee	David Stanley, Tom McIlveen and Manfred Vijars
Victorian Rep	Jan Lewis
Qld Rep	Peter Frazer
NSW Rep	Bill Kearns
WA Rep	Irene Connor

I take this opportunity to thank all committee members for their ongoing work on behalf of the organization.

Following the election there was much discussion regarding the increased printing cost of the magazine. It was decided that the membership fee for posted magazines would increase by three dollars from \$45 to \$48.

Single membership with e-magazine is \$35.

It was decided that the Golden Damper Poetry Competition would not go ahead in Tamworth in April, however we are going to go ahead with the much postponed National Championships in Orange in 2023.

We are currently proceeding with the digitization of all ABPA magazines so as to have a secure record and history of our organization for the future. These magazines when digitized will be uploaded onto the ABPA website.

We are looking forward to "The Man from Snowy River Festival" in Corryong from the seventh to the eleventh of April. Hope to see you there.

Tim Sheed
President ABPA

THE 'BETTY OLLE' POETRY AWARD

"WRITTEN COMPETITION"



- For traditional Australian rhyming poetry with an Australian theme.
- Open and Junior (12 years and under) sections.
- Open section - First Prize \$500 plus trophy.
Runner-up \$200 plus certificate.
- Junior section - First Prize \$100 plus trophy.
Runner-up \$50 plus certificate.
- Entry fee - Open \$15 per entry form (2 poems)
- Entry fee - Junior section - free.
- Closing date - 31st August 2022.
- Entry forms and conditions of entry available from the ABPA website - events and results page.
- Conducted by the Kyabram Bush Verse Group in memory of foundation member Betty Olle.

The aim of the Betty Olle Poetry Award is to provide an opportunity for poets to share their work, to encourage the writing of new work, to acknowledge the skills of our junior poets, and to keep the spirit of Bush Poetry alive.

2022 Banjo Paterson Australian Poetry Festival.

This successful festival celebrating all Australian Poets has been going since 2014 and is aligned with Banjo Paterson's birthday on February the 17th in the Orange region.

Although some events were cancelled this year the hard working Orange Rotary Club manage to fill the gaps with a very entertaining program.

A book launch (reprint) of Clement Semmler's book A.B. "Banjo" Paterson started proceedings at 'Buckinbah', the old Paterson homestead on Saturday.

That evening a Poetry Brawl held in the beer garden of Molong's Freemason's Hotel kicked off performance proceedings. Judged by Robyn Sykes, and Mc'd by a couple of very talented ladies, 16 poets entered their one minute poems with David Stanley taking out first place and the people's choice awards.

Sunday saw another 15 poet's line up for an entertaining day of walk-up poetry, yarns and music from 10am to 4pm. Held each year in the shady grounds of Yeoval's Banjo Paterson Museum and Café the day is anchored by Chris McGinty and his Bush Ballads and poetry with Greg North and Robyn Sykes making several appearances.

On Monday morning the first of the Rotary Brekky and Poetry on the Pavers in Orange saw some good old favourites perform. Tuesday morning and the Orange Primary School did an exceptional job of performance poetry, mainly Banjo's, for an hour. Phil McManus warmed them up and I can tell you we were all a bit nervous getting up after these talented youngsters. To all the poets who have coached these kids in years gone by...well done.

We had a change-up on Wednesday with some yarn spinning with Dave Melville taking out the trophy. Then back to poetry on Thursday and Friday morning. A big thank you to Orange Rotary Club for the organisation and cooking breakfast each day.

On Wednesday Janine Keating organised the 32nd presentation of the Blackened Billy verse writing competition. This was a hybrid event combining both in room, at the historic Duntry League Guesthouse, and online attendees. Chaired by Robyn Sykes there were 23 online and a few at Duntry League. Congratulations to Irene and to all the other writers. Full results are available on the ABPA FB page.

That evening saw a walk-up event at Heifer Station Winery. Good tucker and local wines were going down a treat and Debbie Berryman took out the poetry prize.

An original poetry performance for primary and secondary schools was held on Saturday morning and the Rotary Community Market day with open mic finished the festival off on Sunday.

Plenty on, plenty of poetry and on again mid-February next year.



Margaret Ryan



Phil McManus



Sue Bowdel



David Melville

Elegy

© Irene Dalgety Timpone

Winner 2022, Blackened Billy Verse Competition, Orange, NSW

In the golden glow of evening, just before the set of sun,
when the hush of dusk is slowly settling in,
I will often see, in memory, a distant cattle-run
and will struggle not to let the tears begin.
Though the sunset's always beautiful, it heralds death of day
and the coming darkness through another night.
This evokes an innate sense of loss that never goes away,
and a loneliness of soul I dread; but know I cannot fight.

In reflective mood, I often think of folk I used to know,
and relive the times we shared so far from here,
recollect the many places where we often used to go,
find contentment when recalling those once dear.
The remembered scenes, like pixels, drift unbidden, leave the past,
then reform upon the sightscreen of my mind,
and I gain such poignant pleasure, caused by memories that last,
all the treasured ones, I realise, I cannot leave behind.

There is one such precious memory that haunts my mind of late,
a beguiling, most precocious little boy
with a thirst for knowledge proving quite impossible to sate –
and a first-born son, his parents' pride and joy.
As he grew, he learned to love the land, rejoice in Nature's gift:
he revered the dawning day and setting sun.
He would lie and watch the night sky, count the satellites adrift,
and he'd dream of flying far and high when childhood days were done.

He had shown athletic talent, had an active, searching mind,
and he hoped to travel right throughout the world:
so, he joined Australia's Air Force hoping he would surely find
all the ways and means to see his dreams unfurled.
With resolve, he left his roots behind: the time had come to part,
his intention not to work his father's land.
He felt grief and loss surround him, shared their pain within his heart,
as he kissed his weeping mother, shook his father's work-worn hand.

Ten years' military service, then deployment, Middle East,
made a man of him, of that, there was no doubt,
and he thrived on active duty, felt a deep self-worth, at least,
and gave not a moment's thought to 'getting out'.
He enjoyed a life beyond his work, but that took second place
to his designated role in uniform;
but, on overseas assignments, he met danger, face to face,
and then hidden scars and latent fear became the brutal norm.

In the early years, he studied, trained, was always 'on the go',
and his dreams came true in many varied ways;
but the tasks were grim, the impact harsh, and cracks began to show
in the nightmares tensely haunting nights and days.
Losing peace of mind, his closest friends and, finally, his wife,
he no longer could deny the mental stress
that pervaded all his working days, invaded his whole life,
leaving him to struggle bravely, but alone, in his duress.



He remained an Aussie warrior for all his working years,
with retirement the only prescribed choice.
He refused to blot his record, showing weakness, shedding tears,
or with frailty betrayed by trembling voice.
His experience had shown him that his Service curtain-call
would present no chance to argue or protest.
There'd be no rewards for serving well, no empathy at all,
and no kudos for Afghanistan, Iraq, and all the rest.

He had hoped he could remain enlisted – work had been his life:
there was so much more, he knew, that he could share.
He had served with dedication, had no children and no wife –
that he faced an empty future seemed unfair.
He had bought a house in Sydney, such a long, long way from kin.
Looking homeward seemed a loser's way to go,
with the battles that he knew he'd face, those problems deep within,
and the ravages of his own war his loved ones need not know.

He had loved the military life he had so gladly shared
with his mates who'd served beside him since the start.
For a life alone, anonymous, he'd never felt prepared
though his wife and he, for years, had lived apart.
Then, his house became a refuge, though it symbolised success,
worth at least a million dollars, he'd been told;
but the thought of moving somewhere else brought deep and dark distress.
He saw nothing but traumatic loss and anguish if he sold.

On the day his Service ended, he left Base in mindless haste,
with his paper-work unsigned and incomplete.
He was shattered by the notion that his life was senseless waste,
and he feared he'd end up homeless, on the street.
In this state of paranoia, he soon lost the urge to cope
with the severance procedures he'd not met;
and his problems – insurmountable – caused him to give up hope
of a life devoid of horrors that he wished he could forget.

Years of isolation followed till he lost the will to live,
found he thought of self-destruction all the time;
and he agonised because he knew his Dad would not forgive,
and would think his choice of death a mortal crime.
He then studied 'method', day and night, and shuddered at the thought;
but he finally decided, 'time to leave' –
though he went against the purpose of all battles he had fought,
and his Mother would have nothing left to do, in life, but grieve...

*I admit the gloom of present times has made me feel depressed
and afraid to think of what the future holds,
for my way of life has altered, now, in ways I'd never guessed, a
nd I watch with fear as each new change unfolds.
There is comfort in my memories and, there, I often stray
for reminders that my life was one of joy –
not one plagued with darkest torment that can blight both night and day
and the knowledge that my mental strength is useless to employ.*

*I remember, yet, that loving lad who sat outside with me,
on the back steps, facing Western hills and sky,
as we viewed the glowing sunset, brilliant colours bursting free,
then were saddened while we watched the daylight die...
How I pray he sensed my presence at his chosen time to go,
felt my hand in his before that final flight,
and imagined sundown visions with a warm and golden glow
from the heavens as he sought eternal darkness – endless Night.*

GALLIPOLI

© Keith Lethbridge

Winner, 2009 'Bronze Swagman Award for Bush Verse', Winton Queensland

They came from the south and the great nor' west
Where the broilgas dance and the eagles nest,
To scrape their boots on a city mat,
And to warm their skull in an army hat.
They were timber cutters and diggers of wells,
With never a thought for the Dardanelles,
But to join their mates from across the land
And march to the beat of an army band.
They cleaned their rifles and trained to kill
And to carry a pack in an army drill,
To force down rations and not complain
Of the blazing sun or the driving rain.
They came from the farm and the shearing pen,
The wide-eyed boys and the whiskery men,
From the mining camp and the factory floor,
And a prayer went out as they left this shore:
Come back!

Then into a thundering cloud they ran
And the ship was tossed as the storm began,
But the tough old sergeant had trained them well
And they'd follow him straight to the jaws of Hell.
So the gear was stowed in a canvass sack
To be carried up high on a soldier's back,
And the sergeant bellowed: Button your lip!
We didn't come here for a fishing trip!
Then the night grew dark and the moon was gone
And the scuttlebutt said that the fight was on,
So the sergeant issued a sharp command,
To head for the boats and prepare to land.
Then over the edge to the landing craft
To be suddenly rocked from the fore to the aft
And the sergeant muttered: You heard the plan!
Were you hopin' to live forever man?
Let's go!

Then the Turkish armoury roared again
To shatter the lives of a dozen men
And somebody shouted: Be steady now!
As a body went spinning across the bow.
No place to run and no place to hide,
It was on to the shore or over the side,
With blood-soaked bodies and cries of fear
There was never a moment to shed a tear,
Then the beach came up with its sand and rock
And they looked for a leader to ease their shock
The one they followed for months gone past,
But the tough old sergeant had breathed his last.
So now they were left with a leader gone,
And nobody ready to guide them on,
But the battle was fought at a hectic pace
And another man rose to take his place.
Lead on!

So they dug their cover and inched ahead,
With a thousand maimed and a thousand dead,
With the cliffs above and the beach below
And the mid-day sun with its searing glow.
Then the flies descended, as flies will do,
To cover the dead and the living too,
While destruction rained from the cliffs above
In a battle that only a fly could love.
Then many a soldier buried his mate
But prayer and sorrow would have to wait,
For the battle raged and the toil was hard,
To advance for an inch or defend a yard.
Then day after day and night after night,
Bloodied and battered, with no respite,
Though many a wounded comrade fell,
They stuck to the task and performed it well.
Fight on!

Unbearable months of fear and doubt,
Then came the order: We're moving out!
So the walking wounded limped to the shore
And those who could travel went home once more.
Back to the mothers who shed a tear
And the wives who waited in hope and fear,
Back to the lovers, loyal and true,
With the courage to start their lives anew.
But some returned to a different fate,
And the pain of a lover who didn't wait,
With crippled body and tortured mind
And a war that could never be left behind.
Not the cutting of cane in the blazing sun
Nor the loneliest camp of a cattle run,
Could ever erase the pitiful plight
Of a soldier's tears in the dead of night.
She's gone!

You can wrap it in glory, if that's your way,
Or march at the dawn of an ANZAC Day,
You can flash your medals with national pride,
Or preach up a storm on the mountainside,
But all I ask is a moment's thought
For those who suffered and those who fought,
Who left as boys but returned as men
And prayed it would never occur again.
For there's neither triumph nor peace of mind
To think of the thousands left behind,
And for every battle a terrible cost,
Regardless of whether it's won or lost.
Those shearers, labourers, teachers, cooks,
The singers of songs and the writers of books,
They ask no pity and no regret,
Just take good care that you don't forget,
Gallipoli!

WHERE HEROES ABIDE

By Brenda-Joy Pritchard

Winner 2022 Cloncurry 'Spirit Of The Outback' Award

We've left behind the urban sprawl, traversed the rural lands
to reach the realm of emptiness the bushie understands,
and once again, in Nature's space, we feel our spirits start
attuning with the rhythmic pulse of Outback's beating heart.
The Smoke is but a distant blur, a past now left behind,
as each expansive vista brings a greater peace of mind...
the Mitchell grasses, emus running, eagles flying high,
the trackless landscape stretching out to endless cobalt sky.

We sight the gouged meander trail of dried-out, gum-lined creek
as rustic outcrops shelter mystic secrets that they keep.
The underlying gold and copper casts an ochre hue
on quartz-seamed, rich conglomerates. The Curry comes in view!
It warms the heart to near the hub that was our life support
through all our years of station life, the decades that were fraught
with fire, with storms, with dust and flies in soul-destroying drought –
the ravages of climate's wrath that 'sorts the weaklings out'.

Thank God we'd had the radio to help allay our fears,
the legacy of Traegar's team of network pioneers.
Thank God the Flying Doctor service helped us all to bear
our traumas and anxieties – those 'angels of the air'!
The Flynn Place in Cloncurry pays its tribute to the man –
a visionary of his time, a hero who began
a legacy of medicos and pilots who deserve
each breath of thanks that's given from the far-flung world they serve.

Through times when catastrophic flood depleted land and stock
then only town-based networks helped alleviate the shock.
The fledgling, fragile human links prevented deep despair
from constant trials when lack of rain left paddocks dust-bowl bare.
Then on the day when health and age and debt and lack of kin
meant giving up our station life, the townies took us in
providing hospitality in true blue Aussie style –
the helping hand, the open ear, the sun-lined friendly smile.

And in our new environment we came to understand
how those who lived in clusters shared our passion for the land.
Descendants forged of hardy stock, they played essential parts
towards the station way of life that had consumed our hearts.
Where distance is the nemesis, the outback's crucial code
is selfless co-reliance aimed to ease each other's load.
Co-operation's needed for the region to survive
and services have grown and spread to keep the West alive.

It's been a year since we departed from our town abode –
your need for surgical procedures forced us down that road,
but we were strangers in the city, lost within the throng
while aching for the open space where men like you belong.
For men like you share memories of musters in the dawn,
of campfire glow and star-filled nights where mate-ship ties are born,
that special bond with horses, years of caring for your stock –
the mutual respect that reminiscences unlock.

Frugality, simplicity, fulfilling basic needs
the sense of satisfaction long-enduring hardship breeds.
Necessity will mould a man to struggle, toil and strive
so men like you share values that have helped the west survive.
You followed through traditions built by outback pioneers,
by those intrepid souls who lived in formulative years,
the legendary characters who'd go to any length
to challenge the environment with grit and guts and strength.

In coming back we have returned to where ideals reside,
where history is honoured, where the deeds of men abide,
and here within the vast expanse that skirts our little town
immersed in blaze of colours as the sun is sinking down,
in awe-inspiring atmosphere, both reverent and grand
I consecrate your ashes cast to spirit of the land.
Here where the wind of freedom chants its everlasting song
with heroes who have gone before – you're home where you belong.





Award winning
Anzac poems
from the
2020/21 Laura
Literary Awards,
Laura, S.A.

Our Poetry Kids

with Brenda Joy

THE ANZAC

by Jake Upson

Winner 2020 Junior Primary Poetry (5-8 years)

The poppies softly swayed in the breeze
as the injured soldier fell to his knees.
The bullet hole made his leg too weak
and a lonely tear rolled down his cheek.

As he fell to the ground all he could hear
were explosions and men crying in fear.
Planes roared directly above his head
as he wished he were safely
at home in his bed.

The early morning sky turned pink
as the sun began to rise
and he gently wiped the rolling tears
from his eyes.
He reached into the pocket of his coat
and pulled out a crumpled photo and note.

His teary eyes were too blurry
to read what it said
but it didn't matter 'cause he had already
memorised it in his head.
He smiled lovingly as he thought
of his loved ones
back home in Australia under the golden sun.

© 2020 Jack Upson (at age 8)

THE REALITY OF WAR

by Patrick Wei

Winner 2021 Junior Primary Poetry (5-8 years)

POW! A bullet pierced the brave soldier's heart
Soon from this world he would part

As he fell to his doom
He took out a crumpled note to add to his gloom

He stared as death hastily captured his life
With one more wish to see his wife,

To smile brightly just one more time
But the soul reaper cut his line.

© Patrick Wei (at age 8)

THE SOLDIERS OF WWI

by Sebastian Sun

Like hawks, bullets whizzed across the sky
turning the government's believed truth
into the government's lie.
Men died on the battlefield each day.
Poppies grew where their bodies lay.
The soldiers on the battlefield, once brave
Now lay, under the crosses, war's slave.

The men behind the frontline day by day,
Planned attacks to have it their way.
When one family received the telegram
that their son had died,
they wept and despaired
with his picture beside.
And to this day we still remember
the brave men
Who fought for our country
on the battlefield
back then.
-- LEST WE FORGET.

© Sebastian Sun (at age 8)

2021 JUDGE'S COMMENTS

RE THE REALITY OF WAR

Very strong, dark imagery with good scene setting with the opening line.

Judges liked the effect of the last line- cutting the poem or a life short.

RE THE SOLDIERS OF WWI

This poem is smart, succinct with rhythm and rhyme, taking us on a difficult journey. Allows insight into the personal lives of those lost to the machinery of war.



Knox Grammar School is an independent Uniting Church day and boarding school for boys, located in Wahroonga, New South Wales.

Pupils from Knox have been successful in writing competitions around Australia for the last four years which is a tribute to the school's focus on literature and to their co-ordinating teacher, Ann Prentice. *Thankyou Ann.*



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WA



Roger Cracknell



John Hayes



Because there was no Country Music Festival in Boyup Brook this year, the WA Bush Poets decided to celebrate Banjo Paterson's birthday instead. We also had three poets with birthdays to celebrate—Roger Cracknell 13th Feb, Greg Joass 17th Feb and John Hayes 21st Feb.

About 25 poets started to arrive at Northlands, the property of Bill and Meg Gordon in Boyup Brook, on Wednesday 16th Feb. Happy hour, as usual, welcomed everyone as we sat under the grapevines in balmy weather. The brawl lines were handed out and poets started to put thoughts and ideas down on paper. A community meal followed.

We had a couple of Op Shop tragics so a trip to town next day was a must and it wasn't long before there were happy reports of special finds and of course the local coffee shop was well supported.

There were ukulele sessions for those who wished and the poets were generous in their support and singing along where possible.

We were ready to party in earnest by Thursday afternoon (Banjo's birthday) and then well into the evening. The shed had been decorated with beautiful wildflowers from the blossoming gum trees in the sheep yards and appropriate bunting.

The contributions of the many talents coming together with a willingness to encourage and support each other, what more could you ask for? The ukulele girls started with a session of singalongs. Then each poet recited poems by Banjo Paterson. Irma and Lee, the Green Herring Acoustic Duo, provided some more musical entertainment. Dinner was enjoyed around the bbq and under the grapevines, accompanied by suitable beverages and more music, with guitars, a concertina, ukuleles and two poets on spoons.

The whole weekend was a chance to get together with friends and have a laugh, write and recite poetry which was sometimes funny sometimes poignant and we also paid tribute to Dave Proust with a few of his poems and watched his last concert on DVD.

The weather was mostly warm and pleasant but when the heat proved too much we went up the hill to a favourite dam and cooled off, dogs and all. Our nonogenarian, Maxine Richter was not to be left out and was helped over the muddy entrance into the cool water.

The poets went into town on Saturday morning to support a 'shave off' for the Cancer Foundation and assist a local young girl who is receiving treatment for a brain tumour. There were about six game participants including the little girl's grandmother; her great grandmother chose to just have her hair coloured orange, purple, green and blue. It was a great morning and the response from the townsfolk was very generous.

More poetry and music sessions were organised after siestas and quiet moments to work on poems to present on Sunday at the brawl finale which was held in Greenbushes, a village to the north of Bridgetown where there was much devastation due to a severe fire that raged through the area recently. This was at the request of the organisers Green Herring and Acoustic Singers.

We all travelled to a beautiful park in Greenbushes and had a great time with local and visiting musicians who had a variety of instruments including banjos, guitars, ukuleles, mandolin and base. This group has been very welcoming to our poets and the musicians are often commenting on how they enjoy the poetry and marvel at the storytelling abilities of our poets.



above bottom left Greg Joass celebrating with fellow poets

Hilltops Off the Beaten Track

Art and Cultural Trail

Ted Webber and Greg Broderick staged a 'Campfire Yarns' session at Young's Southern Cross Cinema as a prelude to the showing of "The Man from Snowy River" movie. The two seasoned veterans of Bush Poetry kept the audience entertained with a variety of traditional, modern and humorous poetry as a great promotion of their craft and the Wombat Bush Poets.

The movie is part of "The off the Beaten Track Trail" and is the largest ever undertaken in the area featuring the work of artists and artisans of all descriptions in studios, galleries, exhibitions and permanent installations across the Hilltops region.

The Art and Cultural Trail, supported by Hilltops Council, Hilltops Arts Incorporated, Southern Tablelands Arts and Young Society of Artists, consisted of over 30 different venues over a period of two weeks. The trail coincided with other exciting autumn events across the Hilltops such as concerts, theatre presentations, harmony dinner and dance, free cinema screenings, music presentations, Lap the Map Lions Club fun walk, sports carnivals and the launch of the Lambing Flat Writers Competition.



Vale Zillah Williams

It is with great sadness we inform our Bush Poetry Community of the passing of long time Member, Poet and long time contributor Zillah Williams.

We wish to pass on our condolences to her Family. She will be dearly missed

WHEN TWO AUSSIES DICED WITH DEATH

© Noel Stallard OAM September 2020

*In the annals of cave-diving history,
you will find forged indelibly there,
this account of submerged anaesthesia,
in a rescue beyond the compare.*

It was twenty eighteen when it happened, then a soccer team called The Wild Boars, were exploring a cave there in Thailand, unaware in this cave the rain pours. It was then monsoon rains came in downpours, and the flood waters rose in the cave, now the lives of the players were threatened. What before had been safe now was grave. Team officials and parents grew anxious, for they'd traced where the boys then had fled, but without any mobile connection, who's to know who's alive who is dead.

Then the news quickly spread through the nations, and the need for a rescue acute. It was obvious divers were needed, to explore find a rescuing route. And cave-divers descended in dozens, with the British the best of the best, Europeans, Americans also, and the Thai Navy SEALs joined the rest. None was sure if recover or rescue, was the mission they needed to do, but all knew if they didn't act quickly, then recover would be the rescue.

With the cave knowledge Vern Unsworth gathered, having lived in Chaing Rai year by year, he explained where the boys might be standing, but this message he gave very clear. "You will need only world class cave divers, others won't have the skills that you need. Get John Volanthan also Rob Harper and Rick Stanton's the one who should lead." And these divers, that's John and Rick Stanton, found alive the Wild Boars in the cave, but they still had to figure a method, how these thirteen young lives they could save.

There was urgency now for a rescue, as the threat of more flooding arose, and of all of the rescue proposals, a cave dive underwater they chose. But teen boys had no knowledge of diving, and could panic be frantic with fear, they'd have four kil-o-metres of darkness, jagged rock that could rupture their gear. "Anaesthetic", Rick Stanton suggested. "If unconscious the boys will be still, and I know Harry Harris an Aussie, a cave diver and doctor will skill."

Now at first Harry needed convincing, if unconscious, submerged they'd survive, but he saw this the best of the options, and went with the anaesthetised dive. Harry knew fellow doctor Craig Challen, would be needed as part of his scheme, so they flew to Chaing Rai meeting others, who were part of the rescuing team. Then with Rick, Rob and John, Craig and Harry, they agreed to use drug ketamine, a sedation without complications, though repeats they would need down the line.

Chamber Nine was where boys had been stranded, with their coach who was known as Ekk, And with these, four Thai SEALs, one a doctor, he was Pak who kept all these in check. So when Harry and Craig arrived weary, kil-o-metres from where they began, they found everyone healthy and hearty, and expecting a rescuing plan. They explained that next day they'd bring wetsuits, and each boy get a tank and a mask, then sedated, unconscious they'd travel, and get home to their families at last.

It was Harry who carried the burden, to conduct this anaesthetised dive. If it failed he'd be labelled a killer, should have used safer means to survive! But the boys were not told of the dangers, that their rescuers thought could arise, like if waking they'd see only darkness, and this darkness could well mesmerise, causing fear that might then turn to panic, and it's panic for divers that kills; and it's worse with a teenager diver, who's without diving knowledge or skills.

On the fifteenth day of their entrapment, the first rescue procedure began, boys got oxygen, mask and a wetsuit, wrists and ankles restrained was the plan. This was done to prevent lateral movement, snagging tubes on the rocky limestone, then the ketamine drug was injected, and unconscious on backs boys lay prone. Each was ferried feet first by a diver, with instructions that should the boy stir, anaesthetic again would be needed, so that consciousness did not occur.

This successful, unconscious submergence, used to rescue those trapped at Chiang Rai, was a first in cave rescue procedure, a procedure now others could try. All the boys emerged healthy and hearty, after seventeen days in the cave, only then were they told how a diver, lost his life in his efforts to save. He was former Thai Seal Saman Kunan, volunteering to get the boys clear, to the boys Saman's their greatest hero, they will honour Sam year after year.

In events of the Twenty First Century, this is one that is hard to believe, for the odds of success were abysmal, yet against all these odds they'd achieve. They'd achieve the quintessence of rescues, thirteen lives that seemed destined to die, would be saved by heroic endeavour, by a team who believed they should try. And while nations may have disagreements, these dissolved when this crisis was seen, for the best of the best came in hundreds and achieved beyond hope's wildest dream.



"VOTE 1, JOE BLOGGS."

© Peter White

I'm standing for the Council. Yes. It's true, I am.
The time is right for me to have a go.
I'll show the voting locals that I really give a damn.
I'm not in it for the money, don't you know.

And not just for the Council, I want to be the Mayor.
The last incumbent wants another term.
Why I'll never know as he doesn't seem to care.
It's hard to trust that shifty little worm.

As for my experience I'm well known in the town.
I ran a local business for a year.
It's not my fault the business foundered and went down.
We had an Asian virus outbreak here.

My election motto is, "Rubbish, Roads and Rorts".
I'll not be glad-handed by my mates.
Oh dear, my former statement seems a little out of sorts.
Of course I meant, "Rubbish, Roads and Rates".

For the next three years your rates will be the same.
There will be no raises. Rates I'll cap.
Let my opposition try to match that, if he's game.
Other revenue sources I will tap.

Naturally, Developers will be shown the door.
They will not get special deals from me.
I promise you, with your rates, I will do much more.
Our town will be improved. Just wait and see.

In regards to travel junkets, there'll be no more trips
to other States and Countries finding facts.
So when you vote ensure the balance, in my favour, tips.
I'll ensure there's no more low-down acts.

This Council needs a strong hand to bring it into line.
Your Councillors fight like cats and dogs.
When voting on the ballot ensure the name you seek is mine.
For Council honesty, "Vote 1, Joe Bloggs."

o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o

I'd like to thank the voters who put their trust in me.
Rest assured, I won't let you down.
Starting out tomorrow the public's sure to see
improvements to our lovely little town.

o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o



It's great to see so many at my weekly 'meet and greet',
so I can give the answers that you seek.
What's that, Mrs Wilson? There's a pothole in your street!
The repair gang will come before next week.

Yes, Mr Anderson, the Mayoral car's a Bentley.
It's not the Statesman that was used before.
Mr Anderson, I'm trying to let you down gently.
I'm sorry, there's no Holden any more.

What's that you say, Mr Hill? The wheels are off your bin.
That makes no difference to the garbage truck.
Put your bin at the kerb. The truck will tip your rubbish in.
Regarding some new wheels you're out of luck.

I agree, Mr Bond, the Councillors are a sorry lot.
None of them would have been my choice.
It seems that you voters have really lost the plot
giving those misfits a Council voice.

Yes, Mr Donovan, I'm off to Perth in June
representing Council at a Fair.
No, Mr Donovan, I haven't changed my tune.
I'm not finding facts while I am there.

Let's not involve the Triple-C, Mrs Cook.
They will only get in the way.
If you give me your complaint, I will have a look
and see what your Councillor has to say.

No change to rates, Mrs Lloyd, but pet fees have gone up -
two hundred dollars each for your dogs.
Yes, it's expensive. Do you really need a pup?
But thanks again for voting 1, Joe Bloggs.

'Gum Tree Canoe'

From Stephen Whiteside

The Australian folk song, 'Gum Tree Canoe', would appear to have been adapted from an American song of the same name, written by Silas Sexton Steele in 1847. The American version has been recorded by several artists, the most prominent perhaps being the American musician John Hartford, who included it on his 1984 album of the same name.

Mindful that the Australian gum tree, the eucalypt, had not been introduced to the U.S. until the late 19th century, I turned to Quora, a Californian website for asking and answering questions. I received a prompt reply from Ben Waggoner who said that, while he was not familiar with the song, he suspected the tree referred to in the American song was the sweetgum tree, *Liquidambar styraciflua*. To quote Waggoner directly,

This is a native tree to the southeastern United States, and it does exude a sweet gummy sap when cut. My grandmother used to chew the sap instead of chewing gum. The leaves turn an attractive red in the autumn, and the dry spiky fruits are excellent for throwing at people if you are an obnoxious seven-year-old.

He posted an addendum that the song refers to the Tombigbee River, which is very close to where his mother grew up, in the town of Columbus, Mississippi.

I have uploaded onto YouTube a video I took of the Victorian Folk Music Club performing the Australian version of 'Gum Tree Canoe' in 2015, at the annual Wattle Day Festival held in Hurstbridge, Victoria. The musicians are wearing yellow and green, the colours of the Australian wattle. Here is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm5uEi9lQdE>

A performance of the American version of 'Gum Tree Canoe' by John Hartford can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rPME6PcmiQ>

I must admit, I was amazed to discover there was an earlier version of the song that was not about eucalypts at all!

Gumtree Canoe

I'll sing you a ditty a sweet little song
It will just take a moment it won't keep you long
I will sing of the days when our love was so new
And we sailed down the Murray River boys
In a gum tree canoe

Chorus
We rowed we rowed o'er the water so blue
Like a feather we would float along
In a gum tree canoe

My hand on my banjo my toe in my oar
I work all the day and I sing as I go
At night time I turn to my Julia so true
And we sail down Murray River boys
In a gum tree canoe

I once left the river and went on the land
To set myself up as a cocky so grand
But the life didn't suit me it made my heart sore
So I went to the Murray River boys
And my Julia so true



Printed in Gumsuckers' Gazette April 1963 The song was sent to Frank Nicholls of the Billabong Band in Melbourne in 1957. Frank Nicholls wrote "It was sent to us by Mrs J. Wilson, who we met at one of our functions. The song was remembered by members of her family who learned it from Freddie Bolton". The Folk Lore Society of Victoria collected another version from Max Dyer of Benambra. Warren Fahey recorded Jim Cargill singing a version which is on Larrikin record Bush Traditions.

The Six O'Clock Swill

© Ted Logan

Bunyip was a two pub town
One of them up, and one of them down.
One of them the bottom and one the top,
Both of them pleasant places to prop
Either or neither were nothing loath,
One or the other were often in both –
abitués of each as was their wont
Congregating in their favoured haunt.

Six o'clock closing was the law,
The six o'clock swill which we all deplore.
As Shakespeare wrote, "Now more honoured in the breach".
If there was a pub within easy reach.
The bar would be closed on the dot,
Giving fifteen more minutes to consume a lot.
Seasoned drinkers would line up a few,
More than enough made them gag or spew.

To uphold the law, the licensing squad,
Inspector and Sergeant and PC Plod
Would locate a pub that was suspected
Of after hours drinking undetected.
Using their allocated resources,
Unbeknown to the local forces;
Interrogate the publican and any guests
With power to press charges and make arrests.

To exclude local coppers from the loop,
Preventing miscreants from blowing the coop –
Just as well this clause was in vogue
As the country policeman was sometimes a rogue
And with his friends could be found in the bar
After hours at the pub with the door left ajar,
On a Sunday, or through the week after six
And getting up to, who knows, some kind of tricks.

There were exemptions however, listed for four
Exceptions, well crafted to get round the law.
Employees; and guests in the pub overnight;
Folks who'd driven more than twenty miles might;
(An old clause that dated to buggy horse days.)
And diners booked in for dinner-time stays;
The good folk involved in all of these cases,
Were confined to the lounge and dining room spaces.

I turn now to nineteen sixty-four.
I taught school at Longwarry which was just next door
To Bunyip, where I had many friends
From the Lodge, and cricket and teaching trends.
As a special treat I'd booked in for dinner
At the top pub in Bunyip which was always a winner.
My family too, there were children's meals,
Available to patrons as special deals.

We arrived before six, a few in the bar
Enjoying their beer, not going too far.
Andy the constable, Kevin and Jack,
Martin the farmer and a guest from Toorak.
Dinner was scheduled for after six thirty.
Meanwhile in the bar, blokes were still thirsty.
Martin the farmer had delivered a sack
Of red soil potatoes stored out the back.

There were five patrons in the bar still,
When Mrs Dwyer closed and took out the till.
From the road outside there came the faint sound
Of a car pulling up and boots on the ground.
The sound galvanised Andy into furious action,
He took off like a train on maximum traction.
Over the seats and across the floor,
And out through the window in the room next door.

A short time later the doors took a pounding,
Front and back with police whistles sounding
"Stay where you are everyone!" was the order,
Be you licensee, employee, diner or boarder.
Squad members wrote down the names and addresses
And reasons for presence on licensed premises.
Mrs Dwyer the publican was questioned at length
Gave as good as she got, a person of strength.

One precious point, the bar was closed!
And no alcohol was being disposed.
Some sheepish looking patrons with half empty glasses
Quietly waited while the police raid passes.
They all were questioned where it was found,
That the reason for their presence was perfectly sound.
But they should have remained a little warier,
And stayed with other guests in the lounge room area

Except for Martin Breheny the "Potato King,"
I will quote here his questioning.
Inspector: "Mr Breheny, why are you here?"
Mr Breheny: "I've just had one beer,
And before that, I'm never a liar.
I brought some potatoes for Mrs Dwyer."
Inspector: "And in regard to the beer,
At what time did you get it?" Martin said, "Near
Six o'clock, before Mrs Dwyer closed
And her compliance to the law imposed."

Inspector: "Mr Breheny, it's now six fifty –
In drinking your beer, you're more than thrifty,
In fifty minutes you drank just half a glass?
It's barely credible, I cannot let that pass."
Mr Breheny: "Inspector, when Mrs Dwyer poured my beer
She closed the bar, I didn't drink it fast;
I knew it would be the only beer I'd get –
And so I was making it last."

The whole room had heard the exchange,
Erupted in laughter, it was really quite strange,
Both police and patrons appreciated the joke,
And the dead-pan delivery of a humourous bloke.

*Note: Mrs Dwyer engaged the famous and redoubtable Ray
Dunn as her solicitor, who had a briefing session with all
witnesses, which I attended, but as far as I can remember no-
one was ever charged after this raid.*

In 1966 the "Six O'clock Swill Liquor Laws" were finally abandoned and hotel closing hours amended to 10.00pm

"Will You Still Remember Us?"

© Peter Frazer

Standing on the cliff face
Above a moonlight sea
I waited for the dawn to break
Upon Gallipoli

And in the predawn stillness,
I said a silent prayer
For all the fallen soldiers
In wars fought everywhere.

Suddenly a voice spoke,
And addressed himself to me.
"Cobber, can I stand with you
Till the sun does kiss the sea?"

I turned to see a young man
Twenty – three or Twenty-four,
Dressed in faded Khaki
Where no one stood before.

He said his name was Frederick
But I should call him Fred.
"T'was all the same anyway
No matter what folks said."

His distinctive Aussie accent
Came through strong & low.
Much the way my Grandad spoke
Many years ago.

He said he came from Queensland.
From a place they call Paroo.
A land of sheep and cattle
Where the wattle blossom grew.

He said "I've been away a while.
A bit too long, I fear"
"I suppose Aussie's changed a lot
Since I come over here."

Tell me, "Does the wattle still bloom?
In the western spring?
And have you smelt the gidgee smell
That the coming storm doeth bring?"

"Do they still play Two –Up?
When the copper is away?
Oh how I miss an ice cold beer
At the closing of the day."

"We gather here each year", he said
And gestured with his hand.
"Lest we forget" the reason's
"We left our native land."

And standing in the darkness
To the left and right of me.
Stood rows of Khaki- clad soldiers
All staring out to sea.

"From Flanders Field, we come," he said.
"Dunkirk & Normandy"
"From Tobruk and El-Alamein.
To this Gallipoli."

As he paused, a silent tear,
Rolled down his sun tanned cheek,
As with glistening eyes he turned to me
And again began to speak.

"We fight for God & Country
Or so the billboards say.
And how the crowds cheered us,
The day we sailed away."

"But the posters have long faded.
And the cheering crowds have too.
Somehow we've stopped ageing,
In the way men usually do."

"Will folks still remember us?
If we never do go home?
Or will we be forgotten,
Condemned to ever roam?"

As I struggled to reply,
A single bugle blew,
And the sky began to glow
With a dawning hue.

For a moment I stood lost in time
Over a century away,
With those soldiers clad in Khaki
As the hounds of war did bay.

And when at last, I turned to speak
He'd vanished from sight.
He & his fellow soldiers
Had faded with the night.

But in his place, a sea of poppies
Waved to meet the day.
And as I held one in my palm,
I hear the soldier say.

"Wear the poppies to remember us,
With their petals, so blood red.
And take a message to the bush for me".
"Say G'day, from Paroo Fred".

LAWSON COUNTRY, NOW AND THEN

© Kevin Pye

Eurunderee flats are Spring-kissed green with grape vines by the creek and Henry, mate, you'd never know the slopes below Lowe's Peak. The "Blockies" build among the rocks, escapes from city rush, where wallabies come out to dine, when night winds whisper "hush".

The mullock heaps you wrote about, where diggers toiled below are overgrown by scrubby bush, home of the 'roo and crow. Both Golden Gully and your hill have seen investors spend and then dessert the the vineyard scene, sent broke by modern trend.

Across the way at Buckaroo, some verdant vines all thrive as Mitchell, Bill and Sweeney did when they were still alive. Your school of bark and poles long gone, its site again restored to foster new found interest in one of weatherboard.

I've heard discussions of the place where "Tommy" lit the fuse, somewhere along the Stony creek, the words you thought to choose. We've come today to recognise the Inn where two roads meet-- your "Loaded Dog" is legendary, an Aussie tale complete.

Across the Budgee Crown no more, stream mobs of stock again; the droving mates have called it quits, Reserves all locked by chain. B-Doubles gorge their crates all full then surge away from sales; on ribboned roads of asphalt blue, there are no Harry Dales.

The Inn at Pipeclay where you called, was run by Lizzie Roth and as her diary well recalls, 'a flame draws every moth'. The dusty lane up Black Springs way where once you tramped for hours, still bogs and floods the creek beds deep, soon after decent showers.

What would you say of Ross's Farm, the Shanty on the Rise, the sandstone Inn at Cherry Tree, so sad in her demise? Would you reflect when strangers pass the seat that bears your name or raise a glass in Gulgong town and drink to lasting fame?

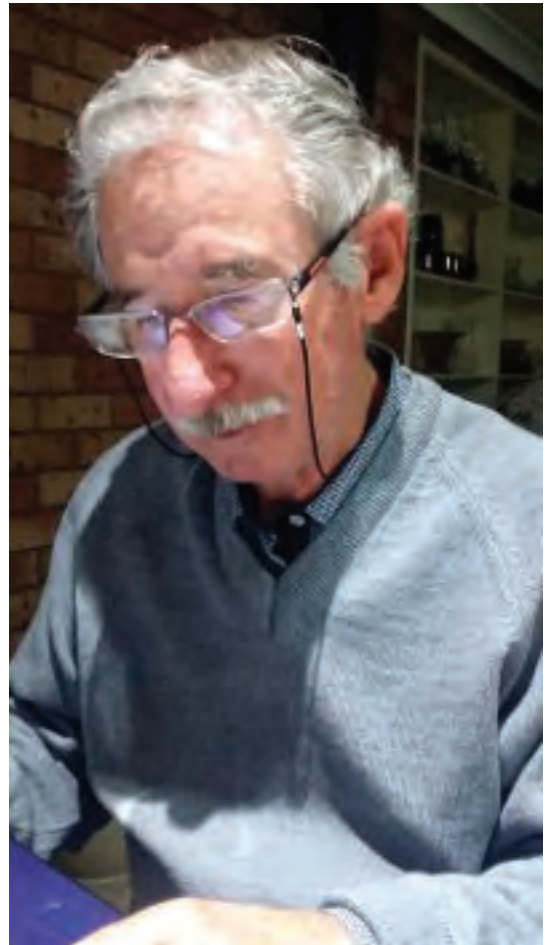
They've built a statue in the park, in pose it could be you, in contemplation waiting there for friends now overdue, like poets who will congregate to pay their fond respects with cadence in their rhymes on stage, revealing intellects.

Inside Mayne Street's Opera House, a vision's known to rise as you come to sit among them, watching, listening, ever wise. The world was wide to your young eyes, despite your lonely days-- we laud today your acumen, expressed in rhythmic ways.

I find it sad that many fail to celebrate your life because of all the wayward tongues that cite your times of strife. I'd rather read your genius and say how much I care that footprints in our nation's dust, like yours we all should share.

The times have changed, I will admit, the scenes you knew are passed, but still I think you'd offer words on how our die is cast. The railway lines are rusting now, there is no sound of steam, nor light that slices night apart with searching headlamp beam.

So, Henry, see I'd taxi you, (I doubt you'd need a map), if you could spend some time up here, a P.C. On your lap. I'd find some characters for you, down mines where they dig coal if someone at The Bulletin will pay the Freeway toll.



Good afternoon Neil,

In recognition of the centenary of Henry Lawson's death on 2nd September, the Mudgee library will host a week of readings. From Monday to Thursday, readers are invited to present a favourite verse or story from 10am each day.

On Friday, 2nd, a bus, sponsored by Moolarban Coal, will tour local sites that gave rise to works like "The Loaded Dog", "The Old Bark School", "His Father's Mate" etc.

I will host each day with planned readings plus the open Mic sessions. One of my tributes to Henry won the Boldrewood Award in 2011 and is attached.

With thanks,
Kevin Pye.

THEY AREN'T COMING

© Maureen Stahl, Elliminyt

Her hair is grey, wrinkles in her face.
A room in aged care, a lonely place.
Mothers Day dawns, a special day.
She looks at her photos on display.

Her children each one of them so dear
Memories of their childhood still so clear.
She remembers good times as they grew.
Pride in their achievements that she knew.

Her delight when life partners they found.
The fun she had with grandkids around.
The nurse comes in with a fine bouquet
Saying, "Look what came for you today!"

She looks and then bursts into tears
These flowers confirming her greatest fears
"Does that mean they aren't coming?" She cries.
The nurse turns away with heavy sighs.

She's seen this situation before.
She knows a long sad day is in store.
Flowers bought on line, just click a key.
Paid for blooms and delivery fee.

"Mum's in the right place," they've all agreed.
"They can cater for her every need.
There's medical care and she's well fed.
In a nice room with a comfy bed.

We're all busy on Mothers Day.
Send flowers we'll all chip in and pay."
The bouquet was big, the flowers bright
But little comfort through the sleepless night.



EASTWOOD/HILLS FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS BOREE LOG AWARD FOR BUSH VERSE 2022

Closing Date: 15th May 2022 (entries postmarked on or before this date)

First Prize ; \$100 plus a trophy and certificate

Entrants are eligible for one award only

Ballads to be in perfect rhyme and metre with max 80 lines and an Australian Bush Theme

Entry Fee" \$8 per entry - Maximum 4 entries per entrant

Cheques or money orders in AUS\$ payable to : FAW

Fees can be sent electronically - details are on the website

Please Note: Entries can now be submitted online.

Each Entry must be accompanied by a separate signed entry form

Conditions of entry and entry forms can be found on the Eastwood-Hills FAW

website: <http://hillsfaw.wordpress.com/>

Eastwood Hills Literary Competition

Enquiries: Frances Moon please email: riaraebeam@gmail.com



AUSTRALIAN BUSH

© Len Banks

The Aussie bush is more than just
our animals and trees.
It's the colours and the sounds and smells,
and things that make you sneeze.

Our bush is such a complex place
from the soil up to the sky;
from the coast to the desert inland;
unique colours catch your eye.

Mountains seen as hazy blue
might seem a little strange;
with yellow sandstone cliffs make up
the Great Dividing Range.

Beyond the mountains on the plains,
a different shade of blue.
Like a dome across the land,
the sky becomes the view.

That blue then turns to vivid red
as the Sun farewells the day;
replaced by a sparkling wonderland –
the brilliant Milky Way.

The shifting desert sands are red
and as each season passes
the colours show that life is there,
with flowers and trees and grasses.

The golden wattle stands up proud -
a feature easily seen.
The grasses mostly yellow ochre.
The trees more bronze than green.

In contrast, there's the Tablelands,
from the tropics to the Snowy,
where all the vegetation's green
and tall and lush and showy.

That is until a lightning strike
before a thunder crack
sets that flammable bush alight.
Then all is turned to black.

But our bush is most resilient,
and after soaking rain
the native plants regenerate
and show their colour again.

If you can escape the city noise,
take the plugs out of your ears
and listen to the sounds of the bush,
a brand new world appears.



The kookaburra's boisterous laugh,
the screeching of galahs
dominate the subtle sounds
you hear when they've flown past.

Like the single ring a bellbird makes
or a lizard rustling leaves
or a buzzing fly in a spider web
and the hum of a swarm of bees.

At night the sounds are amplified
when the air is crisp and clear.
The howl of dingos far away
and mosquitos in your ear.

So, what is it that makes you sneeze?
The dust that blows so fine?
or is it pollen from the trees –
bimble box or pine?

But the calming scent of eucalypts
and a sun shower in September
are the smells of the Australian bush.
The smells we all remember.

The Aussie bush is more than just
the pictures on TV.
It's real; so just get out of town
and set your senses free.

The Power of Kokoda

© Dean Trevaskis

Winner 2008, 'The Blackened Billy Award', Tamworth, NSW.

I'll never know the sickening sound a fifteen-pounder makes
That blows a mate to pieces as the ground around you shakes.
Or how the memories haunt you if you chance to make it back.
I'll never know the price they paid to walk Kokoda Track.

I've slogged across its gruelling, steep, uncompromising grind,
That stretched the outer limits of my body and my mind.
But I wasn't being shot at in surprise attacks at night;
My name's not on a headstone in Bomana's rows of white.

I know about the stifling heat and oozing, rancid mud,
But not the putrid stench of death or rivers running blood.
I went to thank my Granddad and the other Diggers who
Withstood, then beat, the Japanese in nineteen forty two.

My group was drawn from family. My aunts and uncle came,
With cousins and a sister, bearing 'Hec's Mob' as our name.
We walked in Hector's footsteps with humility and pride,
Prepared to conquer challenges with history as our guide.

We spoke about the thirty-ninth and what they'd given here.
They overcame their low morale, malaria and fear
When told to fight until the death, until the job was done,
And fight they did, against the odds, outnumbered, six to one.

I watched my cousin cramp, then spew, three hours along the track,
His pallid face and sunken eyes reflecting an attack
Of crippling dehydration and a lack of self belief;
He focused on the blokes who fought and therein found relief.

He rose above his doubts and pain to redefine his best,
The spirit of the thirty-ninth was beating in his chest.
Their aura, undeniable, profoundly touched us all.
Their stories lifted weary legs each time we hit the wall.

Like Corporal Johnny Metson. On his bandaged hands and knees
He scrabbled on the jungle floor, avoiding Japanese
For weeks with fifty comrades forced to head off track and hide;
With ankles shot to pieces, he refused the stretcher ride.

And brave Lieutenant Bisset. He was leading from the front,
Entrenched at Isuarava when his stomach bore the brunt
Of enemy machine gun fire; the morphine eased the pain.
He died within his brother's arms in drenching Papuan rain.

When Kingsbury turned a charging horde with Bren gun on his hip,
He lost his life and won a cross for selfless leadership.
The ripples of his actions had extended sixty years.
My sister raised the flag as past and present merged in tears.

She'd never travelled overseas, she'd scrimped all year to come.
Her struggle was the stigma of a teenage single Mum.
In that moment she was everything she thought she couldn't be!
With Kingsbury's spirit in her veins she cut her demons free.



My aunts were an inspiration plodding down the back,
They sang to keep their spirits high, they understood the Track!
The rest were fighting stomach bugs, collapsing knees and pain.
They'd say "don't worry, I'll be right" and soldier on again.

Brigade Hill saw us silenced by the mist which rose and cast
A melancholy shadow. Was it ghosts of Diggers past?
The likes of fallen heroes: Langridge, Lambert, Wilson, Nye,
Who went to help their stranded mates, aware that they would die.

My stomach churned for what they gave upon that sacred hill.
I'd not felt more Australian and I doubt I ever will.
Those Diggers are my reference point, a temple in my head.
I don't complain when things get tough, I think of them instead.

Our journey in their footsteps has instilled an attitude,
Of daily viewing ups and downs through eyes of gratitude.
It taught us much about ourselves demanding that we pause
And focus on our core beliefs, our inner strengths and flaws.

We felt a force along the track that pushed us all beyond
Our limits and our breaking points to form a closer bond.
We came back better people for a price those Diggers paid,
I never will forget them or the sacrifice they made.

This Page could have featured your Poem, your Club Events, an Ad for your Book or CD, or an article of interest to share with other members.

But, no.
Instead, all it has now is a
broken Thong.



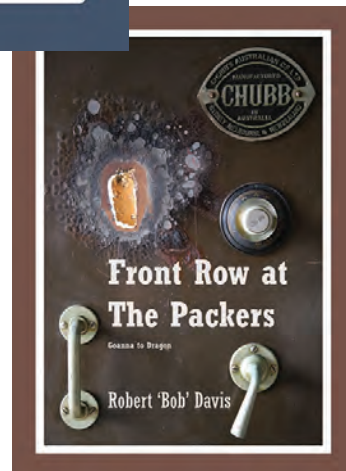
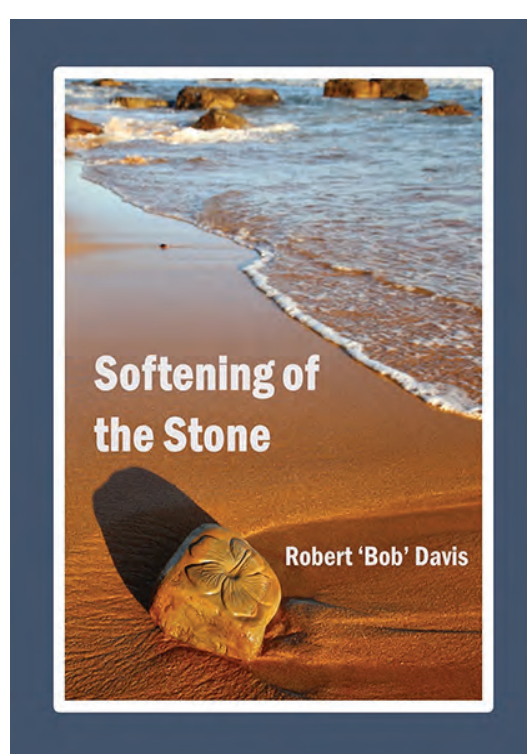
Softening of the Stone

My poetry conveys the idyllic conditions under which we live in Australia extending from the wonderful natural beauty of our varied diverse terrain to the people and native animals which call it home. Covering all the seasons of our exceptional climate and the brutal harshness of natural disasters, which we may endure. Showcased are our amazing and interesting unique birds and animals and their contribution to Australia's mosaic of life. Featured are many activities: adventures, sporting and hobby interests enjoyed during our leisure time. Also covered are many places of interest with unique geographic features. Detailed are varied interesting aspects of our way of life and wistful reflections on bygone ways and days. Recollections on life from childhood, through work and leisure experiences, and later life, colour the width and depth expressed in subjects I have selected. It is with great pride I present my collection of poetry with its strong Aussie flavour.

Robert Davis

Order your copy: Davis2021books@hotmail.com
Include your name and address and
Deposit: \$25 postage included BSB 062 692 Acc 4750 7454

PS: My book 'Front Row at the Packers' is yet to be published, however, those interested follow the above instructions and mention you would like a copy and I will send to you.



New for 2022

KOTR PERFORMANCE BUSH POETRY COMPETITION

A.B.P.A. Rules

Original	1st \$200	2nd \$50	3rd \$30
Non-Original	1st \$200	2nd \$50	3rd \$30

PLUS! Best Performance overall will have their name engraved on a new bronze trophy statue donated by Carol Heuchan

Competition will take place from 7.30am during the Poets' Breakfast Sunday 25th September

Entry \$10 per section Entries close 11th September
Kay Seath (KOTR) 17/28 Deaves Road, Cooranbong 2265

OR scan form and email : kaysie2@hotmail.com Enq: 0416 262399

Fees by Direct Deposit: King of the Ranges Stockman's Challenge Inc
BSB 932-000 A/C 428437 Ref: Name/Poetry
(NB Bank does not accept initials KOTR)

Receipt allows entry to Festival for day of competition only (Sunday 25th)
Performance competition for Adults 18 years and over (A.B.P.A Rules)

Original ☐ Non-Original ☐ TOTAL FEES: ☐
(Traditional or with author's permission)

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....Phone.....

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STOCKMAN'S CHALLENGE & BUSH FESTIVAL
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Regular Monthly Events

NSW

Illawarra Breakfast Poets meet every Wednesday at 7am at Marco Polo facility at Woonona. Ample parking, everyone welcome.

"Laggan Bush Poets." The Laggan Pub, Laggan NSW. The 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 7.30pm. For further details contact Mike or Elaine on (02) 4837 3397

Gosford Bush Poets meet at 7pm the last Wednesday of every month at the Gosford Hotel, crn. Mann and Erina Streets Gosford. All welcome. Contact Vic Jefferies 0425252212 or Peter Mace (02)-4369356

Milton Ulladulla Bush Poets and Yarn Spinners Group First Sunday Every Month at Ex Servos Club Ulladulla 2pm start visitors welcome contact John Davis 02 44552013

Binalong - A Brush with Poetry @ Cafe on Queen, 15 Queen St. In the studio by the Balgalal Creek. Last Sunday of every odd month (except January), 2-4pm Open mic. Contact Robyn Sykes 02 6227 4377

The Queanbeyan Bush Poets meet at 7pm on the fourth Thursday of the month in the Old School House at Christ Church, 39 Rutledge St, Queanbeyan. Enter via Church Lane. Contact Laurie McDonald on 02 6253 9856

Port Macquarie Minstrels , Poets and Balladeers meet fortnightly; 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 1pm in the Pioneer Room, Senior Citizens Hall south end of Munster St, Port Macquarie . Contact Tom Mcilveen 0417 251287

2nd Sunday - 2:00 pm Poetry at the Pub Katoomba Blackburn's Family Hotel. All forms poetry, free entry.

Contact Denis Rice 02 4782 6623 tdrice3@southernphone.com.au

Singleton Bush Poets. Meet at the Albion Hotel, John Street Singleton. 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month.

Contact Neville Briggs 02 65711398.

Wombat Bush Poets meet at 1.30 pm at the Young Hotel for poetry, music and open mic. Last Sunday of even months except December. Contact Ted Webber 0459 707 728

QUEENSLAND

North Pine Bush Poets Group meet at the rear of Coutts Cottage, Old Petrie Town, Dayboro Road Kurwongbah, on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month from nine a.m. to twelve noon. Contact the President Ian on 0427212461 or the Secretary Mal on 0417765226.

Kuripia Poets - last Sunday of the month 2pm to 4.30pm, Croquet Hall, 91 Codelia St. Sth Brisbane.

Contact Marilyn 0458 598 683

Geebung Writers - 9.30 am every 2nd Wednesday of the month at Geebung RSL. Contact Jean (07)32654349

Bundaberg Poets Society Inc. 2nd Saturday of the month. Rum City Silver Band Hall, Targo Street. Contact Jayson (07) 4155 1007 Edna 0428 574 651 or Sandy (07) 41514631.

Beaudesert Bush Bards meet on the **Second** Friday of each month from 9.30am at the Beaudesert Arts & information Centre, Mt.Lindesay H'way, Beaudesert. Phone 07 5541 2662 or 3272 4535.

Russell Island Writers Circle - 2nd Thursday of the month at 9.30 am. St. Peters Church Hall (Next to IGA). \$2 donation.

Contact Trish (07)34091542

Shorncliff "Poets of the Park" "Poets of the Park" meet at St Margaret's Church Hall in Sandgate, beside the primary. every 3rd Tuesday from 5-45 pm contact 042 15 14 555

Toowoomba Bush Poets-meet on the second Saturday of the month at the Toowoomba Library meeting rooms from 10am -12. Contact Peter 0401130636.

Townsville Bush Poetry Mates Inc meet every the first Saturday of every month at 1pm at Aitkenvale Library Meeting Room at 7:00pm. Loads of fun. All welcome. Contact Barry on 0487 195 156

Bribie Island Bush Poets meet at 6.30 pm on the 4th Monday of each month in the Conference Room of the Blue Pacific Hotel, Woorim on Bribie Island. Contact Cay - 07 34083219

Logan Performance Bush Poets - meet 2nd Sunday of every month, 9 to 11am at the Beenleigh Historical Village. 205 Mains Road Beenleigh. All Welcome. Breakfast available Ring Gerry 0499942922..

Victoria

Kyabram Bush Verse Group- First Monday, every second month, namely Feb, April, June, Aug, Oct, Dec. at the Kyabram Baptist Church meeting room, crn Fenaughty Street and Lake Road Kyabram 7.30pm. Contact Mick Coventry 0427-522097

Gippsland Bush Poets meet Monthly, 7.30pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month at the RSL Hall in Hood St. Rosedale

Top of the Murray Poets and Bush Storytellers (TOMPABS) meet Monthly (mostly Tuesdays in Corryong) for writing workshops, Monthly on 3rd Sunday for Music and Poetry at Maurie Foun's 'Poets' Paradise'. Contact Jan Lewis (02) 60774332

Bendigo Goldfields Bush Poets - Third Sunday even numbered months, except December when second Sunday. Bendigo Club, 22 Park St, Strathdale (Bendigo) 1pm to 4pm. Contacts: Geoffrey Graham 0412725470 or Ken Jones 03 5441 5121

Henry Lawson Memorial & Literary Society Inc. - Meet third Saturday each month/except January.

Monastery Hall St. rear St. Francis Church. Lonsdale street. Melbourne. All Welcome. From 1-30pm till 4-00 pm. Contact: Maree Stapledon: 0408 100 896

Mansfield Bush Poets Group - Second Tuesday of the month 1pm - 3pm, Mansfield Library. Contact Val Kirley 0400 654 596

WA

Perth 1st Friday monthly 7-9.30pm The Auditorium, 26 Plantation Drive, Bentley Park. Contact Rodger 0419 666 168 or Sue 0418 941 016

Albany 4th Tuesday monthly. Contact Peter 08 9844 6606

Bunbury 1st Monday even months 7pm. Rose Hotel. Contact Alan 0400 249 243 or Ian 0408 212 636

Geraldton 2nd Tuesday monthly. Beliar Caravan Park. Contact Roger 0427 625 181

Kalgoorlie 1st Wednesday monthly. Kalgoorlie Country Club. Contact Paul Browning 0416 171 809