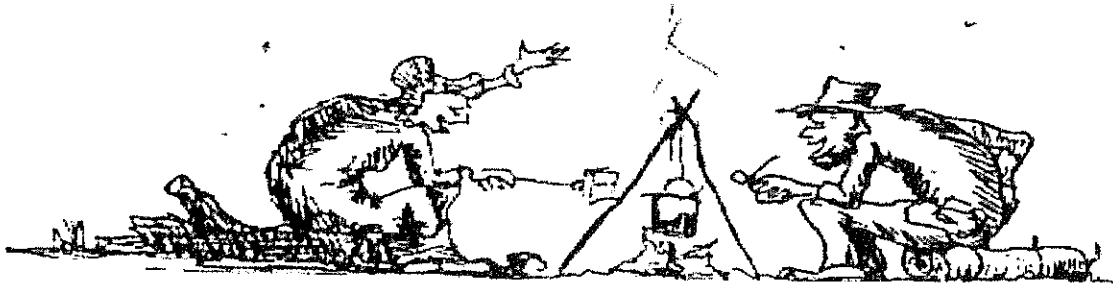


# WA BUSH POETS & YARNSPINNERS



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Newsletter November, 1997

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## **MEET CARMEL RANDLE AT THE BI-CENTENNIAL SHED**

24 Gladstone Road, Armadale (drive in past the left side of the house to park at the rear)  
6.30 TILL LATE - FRIDAY 12TH DECEMBER

Renowned Bush Poet Carmel Randle is visiting us from Queensland in December. Keith Lethbridge is opening up the Bi-Centennial Shed on the evening of Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December for us to provide a warm welcome to Carmel.

Cobber's hospitality is once again extended to members and families. Arrive at 6.30pm to cook your BYO barbeque in the Armadale bush at sunset, then settle in for a pleasant evening of poetry, music and yarnning. The last gathering of Bush Poets at the Bi-Centennial Shed was arranged to meet South Australian Bush Poet Bob Magor and a wonderful time was had by everyone. Cobber's next 'do' on Friday 12th December to meet Carmel Randle promises to be equally enjoyable.

Carmel, who lives on the Queensland Darling Downs, has won several prestigious poetry awards since retiring from teaching. Recent honours include 1994 Ernie Setterfield Shield, 1995 Battered Bugle Award and 1996 Bronze Swagman. Carmel Randle is the current Reserve Champion Lady Performer of the Australian Bush Poets' Association.

Her latest collection of Bush Verse entitled "Gone Bush" was awarded Tamworth 1997 Golden Gumleaf Book of the Year. A companion cassette called "There and Back" has also been produced. No doubt these will both be available from Carmel while she is here. Both would make excellent Christmas presents!

*VICTORIA HALL 179 HIGH STREET, FREMANTLE*

*Bush Poets Brekkie every first Sunday of the month 9-12am. Be there for the fellowship*

*Entry \$10 to save the hall which has heritage listing*

*Make a phone booking to secure tea, toast and snagga brekkie 9335 3384*

## OCTOBER WAS A REWARDING MONTH FOR OUR ASSOCIATION

### **CARMEL RANDLE TO VISIT**

Firstly, during a short visit to Toowoomba (Qld) I met up with Carmel Randle, the grand dame of bush poetry on the east coast, who has an excuse to come to W.A. in December. Carmel will be in our midst for 10 days and I would encourage all interested parties to get to hear her at one or all of the planned events. Not only is she a great writer and performer of bush poetry, with her vast experience and background she is a veritable treasure-house of knowledge at all levels of the art.

### **MELVILLE PERPETUAL TROPHY**

Secondly, secretary Lorelie and self were asked to a meeting with the Mayor of Melville who showed interest in the association's Australia Day event, no doubt prompted by one of our keenest supporters, Jim Baker C.E.O. of the Australia Day Committee. It would appear that the council is desirous of working closer with us. They have offered to donate a perpetual trophy for the Australia Day event. Also the facilities used for the naturalization ceremony in the morning (marquee, stage, etc) will be left in place for our use. After hearing of the Randle visit an interview with Community Arts Officer Jamie Mills - well known to us all - was offered, with a view to obtaining a grant to bring Carmel back at a future date to conduct a series of workshops with writers, performers, teachers etc. I came away with the impression that the Bush Poets are well thought of in Melville.

### **GOOD NEWS FOR COUNTRY COMPETITORS**

To ease the difficulty of finding someone to 'mind the place' twice, that is, when attending a Heat for selection and then again on Australia Day, the committee is now committed to providing a FOURTH Heat prior to the Final on Australia Day. This Heat, which is to be held at midday immediately before the main event, is strictly for folk with a genuine reason for not attending one or more prior Heats. If you think you fit into this category, please contact Secretary Lorelie Tacoma, 16 Gratwick Terrace, Murdoch, 6150 (phone or fax 9310 1500) to discuss registration. Due to time constraints, the number of contestants performing in this Heat may have to be limited, and this matter will be in the hands of the Officials on the day. Therefore it is important to contact Lorelie early to indicate your interest.

So to our far flung members - keep working on your material and keep in touch.

Wireless Hill on Australia Day is very much a 'family day' and our show-piece of the year (about 400 folk turned out last year). Lets make 1998 a day to be enjoyed by all.

Rusty Christensen (The Boss Cocky)

**Short of a Christmas Present? Seek out one of our many published poets at our December gatherings**

*These two gems arrived in my Swagmail, written by old-timer Bunny Bruce of Denham, and are well worth the retelling. Jackaroo will bring a rueful smile to bushie and city-slicker alike, while Sleepercutters is a wonderful verbal picture of the sturdy men who felled the Jarrah forest of the Darling Scarpe (which runs north/south above the coastal plain of Perth). This fine timber paved our streets, laid our rail, built our wharves, floored our homes, weather-boarded our walls, fired our furnaces and our home fires. Plunder of the forest was of no consequence in the rush for economic concerns as Bunny describes so poignantly. Ed.*

JACKAROO Eugene (Bunny) Bruce

He was standing by the stockyards  
Watching horses buck and throw,  
For the stockmen of the station  
See these new chums come and go.

They come up from crowded cities  
For romance out on the track,  
They have read such glowing novels  
Of a wondrous life outback.

With their new stock boots a squeaking,  
Ten gallon hats askew,  
Soon the dust and sweat is seeping  
With a brown instead of blue.

Before the dawn is breaking,  
The Boss hammers on the door,  
"We have to get those horses fed  
To muster cleanskins by the score."

And from his bed so cosy  
To a windy blast so cold,  
This glamour bit is wearing thin,  
Not what those novels told.

Ten hours in the saddle,  
Your rump has turned to lead,  
With the Boss and all his swearing  
Makes you wish that you were dead.

You stagger to the bunkhouse,  
Too tired to have a wash.  
"You haven't fed your flipping horse,  
Now hurry." says the Boss.

The next day is for branding  
Of the cleanskins from the bush,  
And the throwing and the tossing  
With your muscles pulled and pushed.

For the only think you've thrown  
Is a pen behind a desk.  
The Boss shouts, "Grab that steer  
Or by Jove you'll be the next."

Within a week you've bolted,  
And you never stopped to say  
Goodbye or thanks for nothing,  
Not even for your pay.

SLEEPERCUTTERS Eugene (Bunny) Bruce

Axe's are a ringing  
And cross cut saws are singing  
As they fell the mighty Jarrahs  
Down on the forest floor.  
The silence of the ranges  
Felt the throb of all these dangers  
As the strangers to their valleys  
Cut sleepers by the score.

For the flora and the fauna  
Felt the rush of all this trauma,  
As the broadaxe and the adze  
Trimmed sleepers in their hast.  
As though a large explosion  
Had interrupted years of dozing  
As the timber fallers hurried  
Leaving chaos in their wake.

The bushland dwellers pondered  
As their feeding grounds were squandered  
By these men in moleskin trousers  
As they sweated and they strained.  
And then a new sound blowing  
On the wind, of cattle lowing.  
Bullock teams came a lumbering  
And a groaning in their pain.

With leather whips a cracking  
On a bullock that was slacking,  
And the swearing and the yelling  
In this bushland sounded crude.  
What now has man invented  
That makes him so demented?  
As a wagon lost its wheel.  
Well, the words were rather rude.

And as they cut and sawed  
Up the mountain, down the gorge,  
With the wagons cutting swathes  
Towards the distant plain  
The flora took a bashing  
As the Jarrahs came down crashing  
And the fauna fled in terror  
To another place more sane.

**SITUATIONS VACANT**  
**ALL HANDS REQUIRED FOR AUSTRALIA DAY DUTIES**  
*Please contact Secretary Lorelie Tacoma, 16 Gratwick Terrace, Murdoch, 6150*  
*(phone or fax 9310 1500)*

***A TRIP TO THE OLD VICTORIA HALL FOR BREAKFAST***

Fremantle is foreign territory for some of us Armadale blokes, so it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I set out for the Victoria Hall on the first Sunday morning of October. The old van was low on petrol. One tyre looked suspiciously flat and a strange grating noise had joined the usual engine cacophony. It was some comfort to remember the old bushman's adage about vehicles: "When they stop making a noise, that's when you have to start worrying."

So, push on regardless.

This was my first visit to the Victoria Hall. I'd been told it was totally unsuited for the purpose of a Poets' Breakfast, and in any case, very few people ever turned up. True on both counts..... and yet, (now that I've figured out how to get to Fremantle) I can assure you I'll be back again.

The hall is a wonderful old building. With a little re-arranging of tables and chairs, and a few acoustic adjustments, it's really not a bad venue.

The Poets' Breakfast is a great opportunity to meet other radical rhymers, share a yarn and hear some excellent verse. Not necessarily the style of verse designed to keep the applause metre spinning. Plenty of that, but also a broad range and variety of thoughtful, descriptive, truly Australian work.

The ladies were well represented by Val Read and Susannah Thomas. Both gave us some excellent bush verse. Peter Capp, Jeff Swain, Bill McAtce, Leigh Matthews and Stinger Nettleton kept the show rolling. Have I forgotten anyone? Along with their own writings, both Leigh and Stinger gave us some beautiful old traditional verses, including "Said Hanrahan" and the rhyme about "Jake the Spicler". Good stuff, and these yarns remind us of the basic characteristics of rhyme, rhythm and craftsmanship which have stood the test of time.

Mick Vodanovich got out his fiddle and joined us in one of the best impromptu bush bands I've been involved with (and that goes back to a Kimberley bush band in 1963).  
It was a great way to end a most enjoyable morning.

Don't miss future Poets' Breakfasts folks, fellas and females.  
If it's humanly possible, I'll be there.

.....Cobber, October 1997

***next VICTORIA HALL BUSH POETS BREKKIE will be held on SUN. 7<sup>th</sup> Dec.***  
***MASTER OF CEREMONIES for the morning will be RUSTY CHRISTENSEN***

***Catch a bouquet***

*In the raffle at our 2nd Competitive Heat was a pair of quilted Christmas cushions, donated by the Pinjarra Mainstreet crafts-folk. Also raffled that night was a wonderfully decorated boiled fruit cake made by member and performer Joan Macneall. How she made that icing bush homestead and dunny decoration so realistic amazed us all.*

*Thank you Joan, for your efforts.*

## SUCCESS AT OUR FIRST TWO COMPETITIVE HEATS 1997-98 WA BUSH POETS & YARNSPINNERS CHAMPIONSHIP

### FRIDAY OCTOBER 3<sup>RD</sup> 1997

Once again the Riverview Room of the Raffles Hotel at Canning Bridge saw some excellent performances of bush poetry and yarnspinning. It is always a treat to enjoy the wit and skill of Peter Capp, Keith Lethbridge, Leigh Matthews, Roger Montgomery, Peter Nettleton and Co. Equally enjoyable and so encouraging to see some new faces at the podium. Let us hope that they will keep appearing and improving their art. So to Andrew Morley, Clive Rodgers, Joan Macneall and Val Read, 'congratulations' on a job well done. Please don't be put off by the fact that these seasoned performers are so good- they *are* good (and they know it) but they would be the first to help in any way possible.

The four performers that the judges recommended to go on to the final were Peter Capp, Leigh Matthews, Val Read and Bill McAtee. Peter Capp and Keith Lethbridge were the only starters in the yarn section and being of a high standard went straight into the final.

Thanks must go to Roger Montgomery for not only compering the event but for assisting so much with the successful conduct of it. The crowd of 65-70 was too enthralled with the proceedings to realise that we were running with a diminished makeshift crew, Roger with his usual enthusiasm and energy kept the evening moving along for everyone's satisfaction. It was a most enjoyable and entertaining night.

### FRIDAY NOVEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup> 1997

It is difficult to put into mere words the entertainment and atmosphere that prevailed at the 2nd heat in the Riverview Room, Raffles Hotel on Friday Nov. 7th. With compere Kel Watkins setting the tone for the evening in a casual but constrained manner, exhibiting the talent and skills that have earned him the title of Australian Champion Yarnspinner for two consecutive years after a long stint as a professional story and yarnspinner throughout the English speaking world. His string figure work while doing the wide mouth frog story was nothing short of amazing. The audience numbered 100 plus and were treated to a feast of pure talent as exhibited

by the contestants and the other performers on the night, and all for a \$2.00 ticket in the raffle. There couldn't be a better value evening anywhere in Perth.

It is very good to see people coming to grips with what is a yarn, putting something together and giving it a go. Peter Nettleton went into the final of the yarnspinning with one of the longest stories with the shortest punch line, but he does have a certain way of putting it over. The suitably attired Keith Lethbridge tried out a new one about working for the Government. He later gave a splendid rendition of one of his new poems 'The Wungoondi Hall' followed by a special request "Cobber States His Case" a compelling speech explaining why we should all vote COBBER at the next elections.

It was great to see the talented Chris Sadler come all the way from Wongan Hills to show us her potential, also a confident Beth Scott with an outstanding piece about trying to rouse grandfather - a classic - it was good to see so many female performers. Joan Macneall showed great improvement, Val Read did something with much assurance that she had dashed off that morning. Bob Rummery gave us one of the old-timers, Jeff Swain told us of "The Sinking of the Sicilian John" in his inimitable style while 'Rampaging' Roger Montgomery took us on a journey to Earl's Court where he had perfected the 'manly' art of chundering (or was it thundering?) - nuff said Tommy Grey!

All who were lucky enough to attend agreed that the night was one the best so far, maybe it is because the 'girls' are becoming more confident and comfortable working with their male counterparts. In any case they supply a balance to the event, because as has been stated before what we are aspiring to is a 'family' show - one of the reasons for the running of heats - and not a 'bar-room bash'. See you on the 5th Dec. - same time, same place. Oh yes! the heat winners were Peter Nettleton (yarns) Jeff Swain, Joan Macneall, Chris Sadler and Beth Scott going into the poets final.

Rusty Christensen

### DECEMBER DATES

\* 5<sup>TH</sup> Dec. THIRD HEAT \*\* 7<sup>TH</sup> Dec. POETS BREKKIE \*\* 12<sup>TH</sup> Dec. BI-CENTENNIAL SHED \*

### OUR BEGINNINGS

On a wet, cold windy night in July 1996, thirty eight enthusiastic poets, would-be poets and just plain interested folk met in the Tivoli Hall Applecross to discuss the formation of an organisation to be known as the W.A. Bush Poets and Yarnspinners Association.

The group had already conducted two very successful events on Wireless Hill in Ardross and now thought it was time to form into a structured association. They were unanimous in their desire to do so with the only sticking point being the name but after some good discussion the largest percentage voted for BUSH Poets as against merely Poets.

The members of the group came from a variety of backgrounds but at time of writing (Nov.1997) they are a happy homogeneous association and in the accompanying poem that likeable rascal Peter Capp encapsulates the evening very well.

The Boss Cocky

The thirtyeight came down to Applecross after they'd eaten their dinners  
To set up a Western chapter of the Bush Poets and Yarnspinners  
The crew got the meeting under way, determined to fulfil their mission  
To preserve for future generations the great old Aussie tradition  
The convenor for the night was a zany beared old codger  
A proverbial legend in the west, the veteran Montgomery - Roger  
He gave us some strange experiences from the backyard of his brain  
He then introduced the first guest, 'The Inimitable Jeffrey Swain'  
Who is destined to be classified as a living Australian Icon  
He told how a 26 foot crocodile missed a haemorrhoid by a micron  
And how could we not mention the poem of Connie Herbert's  
While Capp's mad yarn was obviously the result of several sherbets  
Keith Lethbridge showed us why he won the cup at Wireless Hill  
And Kel Watkins proved to be an awesome yarner still  
George Duxbury travelled many miles to enthrall us with his tale  
While Abe Shields took us wandering along his mental trail  
Rusty injected his full support, enthusiasm, spirit, and drive  
To keep this uniquely Aussie art form totally and always alive  
The night was an absolute success and enjoyed by one and all  
And the spirits of long-dead yarners totally filled the hall

Peter Capp 1996

**Don't miss the Third Heat of the WA Bush Poets & Yarnspinners Championship**  
**Be there to compete or applaud. Bring your friends.**  
**FRIDAY NIGHT 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 7.30 pm**  
**Upstairs in the Riverview Room, at the Raffles Hotel, Canning Bridge**

**Finalists go forward to compete at the Australia Day Competition at Wireless Hill Park, Ardross**  
**Midday through the afternoon of 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1998**