



# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

## 9.2 May, 2009

Dear Wordsmiths and Friends,

As usual it has been a busy time since our last letter.

At our first meeting for the year we welcomed Janette back from the workshop at Wollongong and she shared some of her experiences and led us in a most helpful workshop.

In March we had our postponed **Poetry weekend** down at St Andrew's Beach, where we stayed at the home of Robin and Bronwyn Pryor. Eight people stayed overnight and Coby Hill and Ashley Harris joined us for the Sunday. We had a refreshing Quiet Day led by Robin on the Saturday, with the theme "**Landscapes of farewell, landscapes of welcome**" followed by an evening sharing poetry. On Sunday we shared communion in the Labyrinth, followed by lunch and then a poetry workshop led by Philton (formerly Phil Ilton) in the afternoon. Walking the Labyrinth, built by Bronwyn and Robin on their property, was a new experience for several people and one they found rewarding. Bricks are laid in a pattern so that you walk, with many turns towards the centre, meditating as you go and then walk out again, which strangely feels quicker than the journey in.



Because the second Saturday of April was Easter Saturday, we held our meeting on April 4<sup>th</sup> and enjoyed a well attended meeting again.

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

May 9<sup>th</sup> will be held at 493 Elgar Rd as will the June 13<sup>th</sup> and July 11<sup>th</sup>.

Here is a reminder of who will be on duty

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
May	Leigh	Maree S, Lucy, Sue
June	Marlene	Janette, Marguerite, Joy
July	Joan	Sondy, Cam, Louise

### PAST READINGS

Our reading at the **Box Hill Library** went very well. Not a huge crowd, but those who came were very appreciative. Our thanks to Philton for his dramatic rendition of "The Play" from *The Sentimental Bloke* by C.J. Dennis, as well as his presentation of his own work. I sold a couple of books so we were able to make a small contribution to the care of animals affected by the bushfires.

### PCP NEWS



Dominic and I attended the launch of Leigh Hay's *Stick Your Neck Out* on April 26<sup>th</sup> as did Kathryn and Conrad Hamann and Sue Donnelly. It was a very lively affair with a three-piece band playing for most of the time until we came to the launch proper. By 3pm the room at Eltham Library was full and an appreciative audience heard Dr Janet Hall tell what a long and caring relationship she and Leigh had had and how thrilled she was to see the book out. Leigh then spoke about the three stages of the book's development and Brent, (graphic designer) and Andrew McKenzie (artist) also had a few words to say. We then went on partying and Leigh went on signing books till her hand nearly dropped off. Sales were great at the launch and you can buy your copy for \$19.95 securely via credit

card direct from the  
website. [www.stickyourneckout.com.au](http://www.stickyourneckout.com.au)  
Congratulations Leigh on a great little book!!

### Progress on Melbourne book:

Janette has been working her butt off (as she can't use her feet much) in getting so many details finalised for *Reflecting on Melbourne*. Seven weeks ago, while rushing to post mail for PCP, she put her right foot into a hidden pothole and broke her ankle. She's had plaster for six weeks and now has another three weeks in a "moon-boot". As she says, she is very glad it was not her right wrist she broke or none of this vast amount of work would have been done!

We have at this late stage decided to change the title as you can see above, as we think this more clearly expresses what we are doing in the book and because it sounds more immediate and active.

Our marvellous graphic designer at Classic Press, has put together a lovely cover, using a photo by Julian Distefano.



We have decided not to have the launch at the Melbourne Writers' Festival, partly because the numbers there would be so limited, so please pray for us as we work at finding a suitable venue. And continue to pray for the finance we need to pay publication and other costs. **If you can help us by pre-purchasing a copy for only \$42 instead of \$48 RRP**, please do so. Remember, it'll be a marvellous gift for Christmas, so why not stock up your present-box?

### FUTURE EVENTS

**POETRY DAY** at Wellspring, Tues. **May 12<sup>th</sup>**, at 10 Y St, Ashburton. 9.45am-3.15pm

Barbara Rautman \$15/\$20 "The Luminous Sprawl of Gifts, God's hospitality" (Mary Oliver) will be the theme of our day. The poems will be by diverse poets and they will help us recognise, discover and reflect on the luminous sprawl of gifts in our "ordinary" lives.

There will be group discussion of the poems and time for individual reflection/ writing/art. As one who has attended several of these days led by Barbara I can highly recommend it as an experience not to be missed. Ph 9885 0277 to book.

### ORGAN & POETRY CONCERT

On **June 13<sup>th</sup>** following the meeting at 493 Elgar Rd there will be an evening concert at the Augustine Centre in Hawthorn. This will take the form of an organ and poetry concert. Roland Cropley is an excellent organist and the Augustine Centre is a lovely venue. I suggest we buy pizza for tea on the way from one event to the other. There is a kitchen we can use at the Augustine Centre. It would be good if everyone, except those on afternoon tea duty, could bring a plate of goodies for supper so our guests can be refreshed. Do let your friends know about this, as we do not have long to advertise.

Parking is difficult so we will need to reduce the number of cars we take. Please let me know within the next week if you are planning to come as we need to get some publicity out. It is just possible that Judith Hamann may be free to play.

If you would like to read at this event please let us know via the response slip.

### TORQUAY FESTIVAL

On the weekend of **June 20<sup>th</sup>** Maree, Joan Ray and I are planning to go down to Torquay for their second Poetry festival. If anyone else wants to join us please let me know this too so we can organise accommodation in good time.

### LABYRINTH MEDITATION DAY

**Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> July, 10am to 4pm**

Location: 60 Bass Meadows Blvd, St Andrews Beach [Melway map 251 J5] Cost: \$15, unwaged \$12, lunch & drinks provided. Please book with Bronwyn & Robin Pryor on 5988-5257 email

[robbron@pryor.org.au](mailto:robbron@pryor.org.au)

### MEMBER NEWS



### VALE - MARIA LOUISE STEPHENS

We are sad to report the death of Maria-Louise Stephens in March. A very long-standing member of our group, Maria-Louise joined us because she knew me through Poetry Monash. The colourful nature of her early life is portrayed beautifully in her collection, "Songs of my World" published by PCP in 1998. Growing up in Germany in the second world war, she was sent to Prague to study and later also worked in India. She then travelled to England to train as a nurse. There she met and married Godfrey with whom she migrated to Australia to settle in Monbulk in the Dandenongs. It was obvious at her funeral service (which Janette and I attended) that she and Godfrey were well known and loved and had made a great contribution to the life of their community. Her

love of writing was very real and led her to be a member of the Society of Women Writers and to read regularly on local radio as well as joining in Wordsmith readings. The other great loves of her life were her husband and her family. She loved and often cared for her grandchildren. We have missed her at meetings for some time but the fragrance of her gentle presence is a legacy those who knew her will not easily forget.

Congratulations to **Denise Nowakowski** who has just had a new book of hers launched: *Roving the Beaches* **Ailsa Barr** and **Jean Sietzema-Dickson** had poems commended in Studio's Poetry Competition.

**Marlene Marburg** and **Janette Fernando** had poems published in Eureka Street and **Kathryn Hamann** has one travelling around in Moving Galleries

## READING

I never have enough time to read, but somehow, in between PCP work, baby-sitting grandchildren and entertaining visitors I sneak a few minutes here and there. Lately I've been enjoying a couple of marvellous books about Crop Circles, lent to me by Phil Ilton. I'm still not clear how they are formed, but from my reading I have the distinct impression that, in a time of stress, they are messages of hope for us. Certainly some of the geometric designs are stunningly beautiful and just a joy to look at. I'm also reading *The Secret River* by Kate Grenville and have just finished *A City Lost and Found* by Robyn Annear, the story of the work done by Whelan the Wrecker in the city of Melbourne. With a lot of history of past buildings I found it fascinating reading as I have been working on the Melbourne book.

## COMPETITIONS

### Call for entries – Shoalhaven Literary Award.

Closing: 29 May. The award is an initiative of the Shoalhaven Regional branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers and offers a \$1000 prize for the best short story work under 3000 words. The winner also receives a two-week residency at the Arthur Boyd Bundanon Centre at Bundanon on the Shoalhaven River.

[www.fawnswoalhaven.org.au/OurCompetitions.htm](http://www.fawnswoalhaven.org.au/OurCompetitions.htm)

**Blake Poetry Prize.** Closing: 12 June. The NSW Writers' Centre is pleased to be co-hosting the Blake Poetry Prize again this year, with the Blake Society. This year's theme is "Exploring the religious and spiritual through poetry". The prize of \$5000 has been made possible through the generosity of Leichhardt Municipal Council. [www.nswwriterscentre.org.au](http://www.nswwriterscentre.org.au).

**Culturalista callout to all creators.** Closing: 6 June. *Culturalista* is an opportunity for anyone to get their voice heard by a readership of over 5000 throughout Australia, and to be involved in a zine dedicated to making a better world. Submissions can be photography, poems, stories, community projects or

whatever is your preferred medium. The theme for the next issue is "Change" and they welcome all creative responses and interpretations: what does it mean to you, us, the world? Express yourself without restraint and get the opportunity to be published, viewed by thousands – and even win prizes for doing it!

[www.culturalista.org.au](http://www.culturalista.org.au).

**Voiceworks "Postscript" issue submissions.** Closing: Sunday 26 April/Sunday 17 May. Non-fiction pitches close 26 April. Other submissions close 17 May.

*Voiceworks* is a national, quarterly magazine that features new writing by Australian young writers. It is a unique opportunity for those under 25 to publish their short stories, poetry, articles, comics, illustrations, drawings and photos. It is produced entirely by young people and relies on contributions from the readers to make up the content.

[www.expressmedia.org.au/voiceworks.php](http://www.expressmedia.org.au/voiceworks.php).

**Christian Projects, to be published by new imprint, *Even Before Publishing*, for the Christian market:**

\**Even Before You Were Born*: Pregnancy focused, looking for poetry, short stories, artwork and much more. Small gift book. Submissions open until end of June 2009. To be published late 2009.

\**Psalms of Everyday Christians*: Poetry, psalms and songs, plus artwork needed. Small gift book. Submissions open until end of June 2009. To be published late 2009/early 2010.

\**Armour Bearer*: Based on 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, where Jonathon bears David's armour. Short stories, poetry, artwork needed. Open until August 2009. To be published 2010 details [www.wombatbooks.com.au/evenbeforepublishing.html](http://www.wombatbooks.com.au/evenbeforepublishing.html)

**New poets' website.** EXACT Publishing, Footscray, announces the opening of the site

[www.melbournepoets.com](http://www.melbournepoets.com). Poets who are based in the greater Melbourne area and who have had/are having at least one feature in 2008/9 or have published at least one book (independent) or two books (self-published) are invited to submit a 100-word bio, photo, and up to three poems for inclusion on the site. Email [felixnoir@yahoo.com](mailto:felixnoir@yahoo.com).

## DIARY OF EVENTS

**Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>:** meeting of the Wordsmiths at 493 Elgar Rd, Mont Albert Nth, 1.45-5pm.

**Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>** Wellspring Poetry Day, 9.45am – 3.15pm *The Luminous sprawl of Gifts*, at 10 Y St, Ashburton. Ph: 98850277

**Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>:** Wordsmiths meeting at 493 Elgar Rd, Mont Albert Nth, 1.45-5pm. followed by *Organ and Poetry Concert*. Augustine Centre, 2 Minoa St Hawthorn, 7.30pm. Cost \$10/\$7.50

**Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> :** Torquay Froth & Bubble Literary Festival. More details soon.

**Saturday, July 11<sup>th</sup> :** meeting of the Wordsmiths at 493 Elgar Rd, Mont Albert Nth, 1.45-5pm

## POETS' CORNER



### Ours

There are no shoes, no walls or boundaries.  
Hot, black feet stand equally  
on the ashen face of earth,  
where mountain ash last week  
made worship easy. Today

spindly charcoal arms reach  
from embers to a clear blue sky.  
All looks well in Doncaster,  
but thirty minutes north east,  
a fire licks with legion tongues,

feather and fur, possession  
and possessor. It mocks,  
spitting fire four kilometres down wind,  
random as the massacre of Hoddle Street.  
There is nothing to be done but

bare the soles of feet and  
fear the ground of earth and urn,  
listen to its lone and dull voice;  
the cry from somewhere in hot breathless smoke.  
Five persons huddle

in the front seat of a ute, disconnected  
from everything that doesn't matter.  
My God, this country holds the souls of only those  
who can stand in ash and flood;  
who feel chaos draw the deep shared moan.

© Marlene Marburg  
(published in *Eureka Street*)

### no cloth of mercy

stripped  
naked  
outstretched  
nailed to wood  
through wrists and feet  
his precious blood  
drips down  
as he is hoisted up  
and mocked  
I cannot bear to look  
God this is my son  
why God why  
what has he done  
he was clean

clearly spoke your love

I would lift him down  
cradle his dear body in my arm

do something God!  
the world is still waiting  
to be saved  
the ones he loved and healed  
who've turned on him

I can't believe you can abandon him  
like this  
my son oh God my son

mother  
I hear his whispered cry  
here is your son  
he's looking now at John  
my friend here is your mother

even in his agony  
he sees my need  
and thinks of me

© *catherine barnard*

### Wordsmiths

Some write  
converting thoughts to ink –  
their words dance on the page.

Some write  
to change the way we think –  
few words ring down the age.

Some write  
you feel their presence near –  
their words all beat in time.

Some write  
with wild imaginings –  
seek vainly for a rhyme.

Some write  
in search of peace and joy –  
a longing to be free.

God writes!  
His penship Spirit-filled  
remains eternally.

The Word of God  
so strong and true  
longs to live in me and you.

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