



WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

22.3. 2022

2022 denotes a commemorative year for two of Australia's well-known poets. 2022 commemorates the 150th anniversary of John Shaw Neilson's birth in 1872 at Penola in South Australia. This year also commemorates a century since the death of Henry Lawson in Sydney in 1922. Both Neilson and Lawson were largely untrained and only basically educated. Slightly built, Neilson worked as a labourer for most of his life. Lawson was born on the goldfields at Grenfell, NSW and at 9 years of age began to lose his hearing as a result of illness. He attended Eurunderee PS but as family finances were meagre, he too laboured and worked for his father Niels Larsen, a Norwegian immigrant.

On the face of it, neither of these men could have been predicted to become poets of renown. And yet Neilson became known as one of Australia's finest lyric poets, writing much about the natural world and the beauty in it. His work is sensitive and poignant. Lawson, on the other hand, wrote of the bush, life's hardships and social discrimination. Lawson was a realist and in favour of a republic. Despite deafness, depression and alcoholism, Lawson wrote prolifically until his death. Both he and Neilson were largely self-taught in the techniques of poetry. Neilson is described as having a face that suggested kindness, refinement and innate beauty of character. Lawson will always be remembered as 'the people's poet'.

Despite lack of education, material comfort and adequate finance, Neilson and Lawson felt compelled to write. Both men spent much of their lives in tents or cheap boarding houses and yet their contribution to Australian poetry is hugely significant, with selections of their work set to music or performed for theatre. A bronze sculpture of Neilson resides in the Footscray Library. A bronze sculpture of Lawson resides in Footscray Park. Despite humble beginnings, two giants of Australian literature will be celebrated this year.

Leigh Hay

MEETINGS

Jean Sietzema-Dickson led the May meeting, attended in person by 8 poets (with 4 attending on Zoom). Jean featured Mary MacDonald, a past member of Wordsmiths. Born in India of missionary parents, Mary spent her holidays going to the hills area in Northern India for the cooler climate. She trained as a Maths/Science teacher and taught in Bendigo for some time. Mary was particularly strong in her faith, and had been a member of the Wattle Valley Christian poetry group before she joined Wordsmiths. Jean read *In Everything Give Thanks*, *The Word Made Flesh*, *City*, *Husband*, *Saturday*, and a short poem that Mary had written for one of PCP's bookmarks. Mary is remembered by those Wordsmiths who knew her for her quirky sense of humour, which came through in her delightful poetry.

Greg Burns led the June meeting, attended by 11 Wordsmiths on Zoom. Greg introduced the group to the poetry of John S McCullough, born in 1978 and now a lecturer at the University of Brighton UK. His poetry, often published on Twitter, is quirky and includes queer sub-culture poetry, and Greg read four poems from McCullough's latest book *Panic Response : Quantum, Error Garden, Glass Men and Jay*.

Leigh Hay led the July meeting, attended by 8 Wordsmiths. As Zoom could not be provided, there were also 7 apologies. Leigh talked about the poetry of Jordie Albiston, a Melbourne-based poet who died in February of this year. Jordie's work was widely published and anthologised and translated into several languages. In her life she received some major prizes and awards including the Mary Gilmore Award (for her book *Nervous Arcs*) and the NSW Premier's Literary Award. Her work includes 13 poetry collections, three books of children's poetry and a substantial handbook on poetic form. Leigh read *Playing Snap with God*, *Poet's Ark*, and *School Report (1928)*.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Given ongoing Covid transmission, the August meeting on Saturday, 13th will be Zoom only.

If you plan to attend via Zoom, please email Carolyn Vimpani the poem you wish to workshop by Friday 11 August. We hope the rest of the meetings can be face-to-face or hybrid meetings and we'll let you know by email of any changes.

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
August 13th	Florence	Zoom
September 10th	Carolyn	Peter W, Jean, Cath
October 8th	Cath	Peter B, Maree N, Florence

MEMBER NEWS



REMEMBERING JANNY BROUWER

We were sad to hear of the death of **Janny Brouwer** recently. She and her dear friend Coby Hill were original members of The Wordsmiths, when the

group first met as the Wattle Valley poets in Oakleigh and she continued coming to meetings when they moved to Box Hill. Janny migrated from Holland with her husband and two young children in 1955 and settled into her new life in Australia with enthusiasm. She had many friends and worked tirelessly for her family, her church and, with Coby, pioneered the biennial National Christian Reformed Church Women's Conferences, an event still held nowadays. She and Coby went to TAFE to study writing together and had many poems published, including some on the cards, bookmarks and books produced by Poetica Christi Press. We offer our condolences to her family and also to Coby, as they miss her presence.

MEMBER NEWS

We send our congratulations and God's blessings on **Jean Sietzema** for her **90th birthday** on August 8th. Jean is the one who started this group over thirty years ago, as well as its publishing arm Poetica Christi Press. We're very grateful for this and for all she has done for us.

Cam Semmens has recently published a new book titled **10 Poems I like**. Poems on Birth and Death, Astronomy, Animals, The Forest and Intimate Love are included in this small volume and the poems sing of a deep awareness of the cycles of life and the three-fold powers of Nature, Love and Words. Copies are available for \$18 through Cam's website : <https://www.webcameron.com/shop>



Graeme Turner was recently the feature poet at the Cherry Tree Hotel, Cremorne on July 3st.

Xiaoli Yang has accepted an exciting offer to spend nine months at the Overseas Ministries Studies Centre at Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA, so we wish her God's blessing in this move.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership fees of \$25 or \$20 concession are now due. (Fees have been reduced due to Zoom meetings). Direct transfers can be made - Name : Poetica Christi Press, BSB: 633-000 Acc: 118162593. Please see the attached reply slip for details.

POETICA CHRISTI PRESS NEWS

The results are in for this year's PCP Poetry Competition on the theme of *Transformation*, so Congratulations to:

1st Place: Melinda Kallasmae, *Graceful and gentle*

2nd Place: David Terelinck, *Benediction*

Wordsmiths whose poems were also chosen by the judge to be included in the anthology are Florence Lisner, Margaret Campbell, Jennifer Chrystie and Xiaoli Yang.

NEW BOOK FROM POETICA CHRISTI PRESS

Poetica Christi Press is pleased to announce the publication of its latest title: *Surprised by Jack – A Poetic Response to CS Lewis* plus *A Handful of Quietness – poems inspired by the Blue Mountains* by Dr Peter Stiles (author of *Trumped by Grace*.) If you wish to buy a copy for \$20, please email poetica@iprimus.com.au.

SURPRISED BY JACK

a poetic response to CS Lewis
Peter Stiles

and
A HANDFUL OF QUIETNESS
poems inspired by
The Blue Mountains



'These lovingly crafted poems are about people and places, memories and emotions, and the art of poetry which understands the importance of the well-loved pen from which words and metaphors flow. They are also deeply Christian, though never intrusively

so...Peter Stiles has a beautifully deft and gentle way with words and rhythms, his poems catching moments and memories – places in time.' (*The Rev Canon Professor David Jasper DD FRSE*)

MELBOURNE WRITERS FESTIVAL POETRY EVENTS

Embracing your Poetic Licence Workshop :
Friday, September 9th, 2.30 pm, at The Wheeler Centre, 176 Lonsdale St, Melbourne:

No matter what you're writing, renowned poet Claire G Coleman believes poetry can help you write it better. Discover how to embed lyricism and musicality into your creative work. \$140.

This Song we sing: New Voices in First Nations Poetry: Sunday, September 9th, 1.30 pm, at The Wheeler Centre, 176 Lonsdale St, Melbourne:

A showcase of emerging First Nations writers, poets and lyricists deliver readings of their powerful poems. Featuring Susie Anderson, Dakota Fairer, Declan Fry, Maya Hodge, Brooke Scobie and Alice Skye. \$25 (\$20 concession)

Peter Steele Lecture: Whistling in the Dark, Sunday, September 11th, 4.30 pm, at the Village Roadshow Theatre, State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston St, Melbourne:

Award-winning poet, editor and critic Sarah Holland-Batt delivers this year's lecture on how poetry may reconcile us to the world. \$20 (\$15 concession).

To book for these events, go to mwf.com.au.

EVENTS AT WELLSRING CENTRE

The Poetics of Contemplation with Joel McKerrow –

Date: Saturday 27 August, 9.30am - 1pm in-person at WellSpring. Joel will be exploring with us how creativity might just draw us deeper into both ourselves, the divine and the world around us. This

is a workshop for anyone with a creative heart, you don't have to be a writer or have any kind of skill level.

<https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au>

KARDIA FORMATION 2022

Kardia Formation extends an invitation to explore ways to develop your spiritual self. On Saturday 17 September, 11am-12pm on Zoom, there will be a Zoom session to experience what it means to develop heart wisdom through the many programs offered at Kardia, including the Heart Wisdom formation program for spiritual directors and Grace Upon Grace formation for spiritual directors in giving the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. To register and receive a Zoom link : email bernadette.miles@kardia.com.au

COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Australian Poetry Journal 12.1

Submissions opened on 12 July for APJ 12.1 – theme of 'divergence, relevance'. Entries close on 12 August. For more information :

<https://www.australianpoetry.org/competitions>

Power of Words Writing Competition

Run by La Trobe City libraries, writing to one of a selection of photographs of Latrobe City. Entries close 26 August. For more information :

<https://writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions>

Short Stories Unlimited : Four Seasons Project

Writing and poetry competition bases on each of the four seasons. Each season has its own competition. Entries are now closed for Summer and Autumn, but Winter poetry comp closes September 15, Spring short story on October 31, and Poetry comp on November 15. For more information :

<https://writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions>

Woorilla Poetry Competition

Judith Rodriguez Open Section for poetry.

50 lines, entry fee \$15. Closing date 1 September 2022. For more information :

<https://www.woorilla.org.au>



POET'S CORNER

Thankfulness is a team of huskies

In this arctic heartscape
one *thank*
is not enough
to pull me up
and on.

The tattered sleigh of my soul,
held together with ad hoc hope
and fraying dreams,
so quickly
settles into deep ruts.

It takes *a whole team* of thanks
to draw me on –
a muscly, bustling throng of thanks
straining at their ropes,
hungry for the future,
yelping with delight.

Only by harnessing
the wild energy
of dogged thankfulness
am I able to keep moving
through this barren,
chilling
touch

-less

-ness.

And as another huge drift of snow
looms ahead of me
I see
that *all* is drift:

snow over snow,

storm over sea,

stars over sky,

earth around sun,

heart around love...

Mush! Mush!

Thankfulness
draws me on.

Mush! Mush!

Dogged thankfulness
draws me on.

© Cam Semmens

Lent in the Blue Mountains

Every day now
the lengthening shadow lines of lent.
The trees here are tinged with amber,
silence their best companion.
We are entering a winsome world,
where, a russet sadness renders every scene,
coolness clings to every plan
and timber is stacked
beside the house for wood fires.

In the evenings we draw a blanket up,
and read into the darkening hours,
conscious of the journey that is coming.

Every year we map these shortening days,
this bruised beauty before our hearts,
strolling through quiet streets ablaze
with the colours of grace,
banners for a life that banished death.

© Peter Stiles (from *Surprised by Jack*)

When...then

When
He cried
It is finished
Life began
for me

© Janny Brouwer

Send any news for the November 2022
newsletter to treehousepoet318@gmail.com by
October 15 2022. Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay
and Janette Fernando.