

David James DARBY

1949 –

Grandson of the English poet Percival Charles Darby and son of poet and NSW Parliamentarian E. Douglas Darby (q.v.), David James Darby of Perth should apply his verse skills more often.



David and Joanne

Joanne's Birthday

James Darby, September 2002

This invitation itself does wend
its way to you my special friend
This night your company we choose
our tardiness pray please excuse

Disguise yourself as you would be
perceive yourself as others see
My lady love will be the light
that shines sublime this special night

She's cute, she's gorgeous, sexy, bright
throw on your gear and help ignite
Her thirty years of love and living
(her many years of 'moi' forgiving)

Enjoy her sparkling pulchritude,
with music, dancing and good food
We'll throw away the book of rules
nor fear nor guilt nor envy fools

While 'Govinda's Jazz Beats' the rhythm play
Bacchus will beguile the night away.

Peregrine Falcon
by Tracey Warren





Douglas DARBY

1910-1985

The second son of English poet Percival Charles Darby, Evelyn Douglas Darby first arrived in Australia as a cabin-boy at the age of sixteen, when he resolved to bring his widowed mother Jesse Darby from England. He became a country schoolteacher and

took an Economics degree at Sydney University. He married fellow schoolteacher Esmé Jean McKenzie in 1941 and they had six children, the first in 1945. During the War, Douglas and Esmé formed the British Orphans Adoption society. In 1945 Douglas Darby entered the NSW Parliament as the Member for Manly, serving his constituents for 33 years until 1978. He frequently wrote verse, most notably for his Christmas cards which were treasured by his friends and supporters.



Douglas Darby MLA and Esmé Jean Darby MBE (1962c). Photo by the Manly Daily, kindly contributed by Jill Bowen

Christmas Cards 1957-1965

Douglas Darby

Each year two of the following stanzas appeared together as a separate poem, incorporated in the Darby family Christmas card. These Christmas poems, plus post-1966 poems in a different format, were collected in the book 'Radiance of A Star' ISBN 0 85587 039 7.

1957 CONTENTMENT: some say that it springs from enjoyment
Or devices reducing the hours of employment
Holidays, luxury, gaudy apparel,
Or windfalls of wealth from a lottery barrel.

But Christmas declares that contentment arises
From acts of goodwill, not from spurious prizes;
The treasures of friendship, of greeting and giving,
And faith that our Lord sets a pattern for living.

1958 REFLECTION: A calm word with two or three meanings;
In one sense it tells of a memory's gleanings;
It also implies the display of an image,
Which echoes a failing or else an advantage.

This Christmas, be merry; but save a reflection,
For the Baby who gave us a goal of perfection,
With tidings of joy and the Bethlehem story,
And later inspired us to mirror His glory.

1959 It's YULETIDE: remember the boar's head and holly,
The jesters, the dancing, the choruses jolly;
The feast of midwinter, so characteristic
Of people whose lives are materialistic.

It's CHRISTMAS: remember the babe in the manger!
Now all men are brothers and none is a stranger;
For the tender devotion of motherhood, blesses
The goodwill to man that a Christian expresses.

1960 A FAMILY: some think of the washing and mending,
The sickness, the noise, and expenses unending;
There are others, of course, who regard procreation
As merely the means to preserve population.

But Christmas proclaims that a family possesses
A structure consistent with all our Lord blesses:
Compassion, devotion, goodwill and affection:
The Bethlehem Star shines in one fixed direction.

1961 TOMORROW; What fear and what hope it engenders:
To a turn of the wheel the poor pagan surrenders,
For fate is his fortune; the Christian, enlightened,
Knows that the future with glory is brightened,
In the spirit of Christmas, we send you, our greeting;
The family carol that we are repeating
Is "Tidings of joy, work and pray that tomorrow
Brings peace and goodwill, and dismisses all sorrow".

1962 COMPASSION: revive it, and use it more often

The vogue of today is to harden, not soften,
Promoting self-interest, preserving prestige;
Scant thought of forgiveness or "noblesse oblige".

The message of Christmas is love and forbearance;
The tenderness felt for a babe by the parents.
The greatest of gifts that Christ Jesus did fashion
Is found in the blessing and joy of compassion.

1963 MUSIC from heaven, portrays an emotion;

But fashion, today, discards tune for commotion,
Forgetting that discord disturbs and depresses,
That harmony, peace and contentment, expresses.

Long ago, all the heavens were filled with activity,
As angels with music proclaimed the nativity;
May the carols of Christmas bring melody still,
And ring out the message of peace and goodwill.



Tracy and Mark Connell
as Mary and Joseph at the
St. John's Church Nativity
Play in Geraldton,
Western Australia,
Christmas 2001. Photo:
The Geraldton Guardian

1964 AFFECTION: a kindly and tender emotion

Which glows with the beauty of love and devotion;
It patterns God's blessings, and graciously features
The lovingness latent in all living creatures.

Midwinter in Bethlehem brought a new concept
Of peace and goodwill; and a dynamic precept:
"Give love to thy neighbour, without an exception!"
On His Birth Day we joyfully broadcast affection.

1965 How gratitude shines in the wide constellation

Which annually heralds our Lord's celebration;
When the health of a loved one is rapidly mending,
The joy of our family is surely transcending.

The baby of Bethlehem patterned our firmament
With virtues, whose orbits, like Scriptures, are permanent:
Humility, kindness and every beatitude:
Our brightest, this Christmas, is plain, simple gratitude.

Gallipoli

Douglas Darby, April 1955

Just pause, you will remember, it was forty years ago
That you started planting crosses in a neat and tidy row
And four years later when you'd leashed the dogs of war
You came again to Anzac and we watched you come ashore.
Take heed, you will remember how you laid our bones to rest
And raised the shrine of Helles on a dominating crest
And counted us, nine thousand souls, who once were laughing men
And vowed that cursed warfare would not blight the war again.
War came again, remember, with its glory and its crêpe
And having slain the dragon, see its virile young escape
We watched the dragon's offspring prosper, great and gross and grim
And God denied by millions who had once acknowledged him
Saw slavery come back to earth and justice set aside
Small nations scattered to the wind and the rule of law denied.
And we who stayed at Anzac saw our sons and nephews go
To give their lives as we did; against a crueller foe.
May the Good Lord grant that war shall never come again
Nor inflict upon our grandsons horror, death and pain.

An officer in the Royal Naval Division, New Zealander Bernard Freyberg (1889-1963) served in the defence of Antwerp before earning his first DSO during the landings at Gallipoli, where he put to use his swimming skills (NZ Champion, 1910) in the setting of flares. He served in the Dardanelles until the Allied evacuation.

Commanding the Hood Battalion at the River Ancre in the Somme Offensive, Freyberg led a successful attack on Beaucont, capturing 500 prisoners, then refused to leave his troops although wounded four times. Awarded the VC for this action, Freyberg was promoted to Brigadier at the age of 27. By the Armistice he had been wounded nine times and was commanding a Division.

WWII saw Freyberg placed in command of NZ Mediterranean forces, and he commanded British and Greek troops in Crete in the defeat by the Germans. In a tribute to NZ troops as well as their leader, Wavell wrote that Maj Gen Freyberg had 'produced one of best trained and disciplined and fittest divisions I have ever seen': Freyberg then commanded a Corps in the Eighth Army in North Africa and contributed significantly to the success of the second battle of El Alamein. His final major contribution to WWII was to lead New Zealand troops into Trieste in May 1945, and his fourth DSO came from an action moments before the Armistice.

Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Freyberg VC became Governor-General of New Zealand in 1946. In 1951 King George VI created him Baron of Wellington and Munstead.

The man who was one of the heroes of the Great War, one of the most respected Generals of WWII, and one of the greatest products of New Zealand, died in 1963.



General, The Lord Freyberg, VC, GCMG, KCB, DSO (3 Bars), KStJ, MiD (5), Commander of the Legion of Merit (USA), Gold Cross of Valour (Greece), Grand Commander with Swords of the Royal Order of George I (Greece), First Baron Freyberg of Wellington in New Zealand and Munstead in the County of Surrey.



Photo: Jeff Brandon

Michael DARBY

1945 –

A former Australian Army officer, Michael Darby began taking a serious interest in poetry in 1993. He performs throughout Australia and abroad at conferences, conventions, seminars, and workshops; and in an honorary capacity at schools, nursing homes and retirement villages. Book through: darby@tpg.com.au or 0413 348 843, or write to PO Box 401, Manly NSW 1655. Darby performs several tracks on "Tribute to the Anzacs" CD, produced and sold by Peter Kukura (q.v.) (02 9402 9211). Hear Darby's poetry performances produced by Peter Kukura at michaeldarby.net/Audio.pdf.

Tom and Rachael at "Breenhold", Mount Wilson



Breen's Birthday

Michael Darby, 2002

Mining consultant Thomas Breen and his wife the acclaimed broadcaster and author Dr Rachael Kohn maintain a wonderful nature garden at Mount Wilson west of Sydney.

The happiest relationship that I have ever seen
Is the loving blessed marriage of Rachael and Tom Breen
These two set an example of integrity and truth
Historically associated with Boaz and with Ruth
The Breens together make the world a gracious happy place
So here's to you, *cher Thomas*, and the smile upon your face.

Caffre's Birthday

Michael Darby, 2003

Caffre is a lovely lass, the sweetest in the land
She likes a little sip of wine, and George to hold her hand
She's elegant and lovely in that brilliant shade of red
And her delightful pretty face adorns her clever head.
Caffre we all love you, and on your special day
We raise our glasses to you and shout "Hip! Hip! Hooray!"

'Iris' by John Atkinson
Grimshaw, 1886
from 'Victorian Fairy
Paintings' by Terri
Winding, website of
The Endicott Studio



Caffre's Passing

Michael Darby, 2004

Caffre Mounter passed away on 23 February 2004

Hearts that are quite broken are never quick to mend
I'll tell you now a story which awaits a happy end
Of an honourable man who long ago had lost his wife
And the graceful little fairy who flew into George's life.

The fairy weaved her magic and the fairy cast her spell
And George was very much in love; one glance at him could tell
On life's voyage the two would travel many a happy mile
The fragrance of her laughter made him smile.

The fairy found a family which took her to its heart
George and lovely Caffre so rarely were apart
And everything the fairy did was done with grace and style
The perfume of her dancing made him smile.

A fairy should live for ever, as everybody knows
But Cancer struck our fairy with the cruellest of its blows
It would not stop for courage, nor for medicine's fine arts
Now the fairy lives for always in our hearts.



Macavity by Scott M. Harrison

Cats Cats Cats

Michael Darby, 1998

*Written on 17 Oct 98 in response to a call by a New South
Wales politician for the extinction of Australia's cat population.
Recited on Radio 2UE by Mark Collier on 6 January 1999.*

This local politician has a belfry 'round his bats
He'll save Australia's wildlife by killing off the cats
In each domestic cat, he says, a deadly killer lurks
Birds are getting slaughtered like Armenians by the Turks.

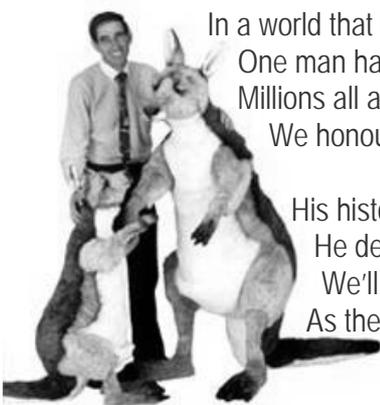
No thought of little children who with their kittens play
Nor of the lonely widow whose pet makes her whole day.
Forget the competitions and the pride in gleaming fur
Forget the comfort broadcast by a moggie's friendly purr.

Yes, let the greenies go out west and chase the ferals there
Sure, sterilise the mongrels and we wouldn't even care.
But what of folk who love their cats and never let them roam?
Let each Australian have the right to offer friends a home.

Chris Bidder

Michael Darby, November 2002

Sydney entrepreneur and philanthropist Christopher A Bidder passed away on 26 November 2002 at the age of 50. Famous as a manufacturer and exporter of wonderful furry Australian toys, Chris is mourned by his wife Christine and his three children. CA Australia in Brookvale – now under the leaderships of Chris's son Scott Bidder, continues to produce the splendid "Christopher Collection" of plush toys.



The late Chris Bidder with two furry friends

In a world that has been blighted by conflict and by strife
One man has brought the children endless joys
Millions all around the world are happier from his life
We honour now the man who made the toys

His history was enterprise and giving
He deserved another forty years on Earth
We'll long remember him among the living
As the happy man who brought the children mirth.

Defending the Gnomes

Michael Darby

This poem was broadcast on ABC Radio 702 around 11pm on 30 December 2003, shortly following a disquietening news report to the effect that in France a gang of kidnappers had seized eighty garden gnomes.

Wombats are always humble and courageous
They never snore in church or cheat at cards
Their way of life is never ostentatious
And they all keep garden gnomes in their front yards.
Those criminals who live in France will rue this dreadful day
They shall be brought to justice with the Wombats on the way.



Dick Smith's Sixtieth

Michael Darby, 2004. *His Honour Ted Egan AO (q.v.) read this poem at Dick Smith's birthday party.*

Young Richard never smoked or drank, nor wasted time with louts
He studied hard and did good deeds, a pillar of the Scouts.
He started off in '68 just trying to make a quid
And insisted upon excellence in everything he did.
If your radio was on the blink he'd fix it good as new
His little business flourished and his reputation grew
His flair for good publicity could always take a trick
He painted on his truck a sign: "The Electronic Dick".
In just a dozen years he built one store into a score
So Woolworths made an offer in the ratio six to four.
Woolies did so well from this, the Directors had no fears
In buying Dick's remaining share after only two short years.
And Woolworths know that buyers trust substance more than myth
So they retained the logo of the smiling Richard Smith.
The transaction freed our Richard to turn his clever eye
On projects that excited him, in land and sea and sky.



Whenever Dick Smith hears the words, "*No, it can't be done!*"
He goes ahead and does it – that's how he gets his fun.
"You can't fly a 'copter round the world!" "You can't land at the Pole!"
"Your balloon will never stay aloft, it's sure to have a hole!"
"Leave geography to those who know!" and "Publishing's too hard!"
But Dick Smith wasn't satisfied exploring his backyard.
"You've been lucky in the past, but the Tasman flight is out!"
Our Richard knew to "*Be Prepared!*" – he'd proved it as a Scout.
He sailed his own hot air balloon across from Kiwi Land
Iluka cheered when he emerged from the surf onto the sand.
Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic; in those days no easy trick
It's just as well Lindbergh's Award was earned by Aussie Dick.
His record of generosity is longer than your arm
Umpteen charities asked the Lord to keep him safe from harm
He became Australian of the Year for the goodness of his life
But the prize that made him proudest is Pip his lovely wife.
You helped us build our Aussie pride and value what we've got
And as for deeds of courage, Dick Smith, you've done the lot.
When lesser men are whingeing or hanging round the bars
Is it true that you are planning a tourist flight to Mars?

East Timor Christmas

Michael Darby, 1996

This poem was performed by the author at Cascais in Portugal on 6 Dec 97, and at Westminster Cathedral in London on 7 Dec 97, at events commemorating the 22nd anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

At Christmastime around the world the children all can play
With parents and grandparents on this their Saviour's Day.
Many children in East Timor face a Christmas Eve of sorrow
Their grandparents and parents will be missing on the morrow.
Do not forget the lessons which from history we've learned
Let the future bring the freedom which the human race has earned.
Jakarta's cruel invaders for years have done their worst
And the guilty politicians shall on Judgement Day be cursed.
For the future of the children the invaders now must leave
Give the people of East Timor the time they need to grieve.
The souls of all the martyrs at last will have their rest
When peace and independence shall come to Timor-Leste.



Map:
United
Nations
2004

Fathers

Michael Darby, 2002

Fathers have their uses, like fixing broken toys,
Teaching judo to their daughters and Rugby to the boys
Searching for the dog that's lost, or saving the pet mouse
Reading bedtime stories and building a tree house.
Mothers all are wonderful; they bring the world to life
But fathers can be helpful, when facing stress or strife
Fathers give encouragement, both in success and failure
So spread the word that we would like more fathers in Australia.

Fatal Friday Night

Michael Darby, 4 February 2001

Girl dies in crash THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, February 4, 2001

A GIRL, 15, was killed when the stolen car she was a passenger in crashed early yesterday at Williamtown, north of Newcastle. The central coast teenager had not been wearing a seatbelt and died at the scene. The driver and three other male passengers, received minor injuries. The driver was charged with offences including dangerous driving causing death and being an unlicensed driver. He was refused bail and will appear in Newcastle Local Court today.

It happened north of Sydney, the girl was just fifteen
The stolen car had crashed and rolled, the passenger died at the scene
The driver was not much older, her boyfriend I suppose
He suffered minor injuries, perhaps a broken nose.
Had she tiptoed from the household to keep her fatal tryst?
Was she driven to her painful end without even being missed?
Or did an apprehensive mother sit anxious through the night
To be hammered by the horror in the morning's early light?
She'll never nurse a baby, have a job or be a wife
He stole a motor vehicle, and then he stole her life
It was one o'clock in the morning, the girl was just fifteen
A tear splashed a constable's notebook. "The passenger died at the scene".

The Fullerton Fire

Michael Darby 1999

In February 1999, 69 grazing properties in the Fullerton district north of Goulburn were burned out.

There's some have died from smoke and some have died from heat
And some have died of terror with the flames around their feet.
When the fire sweeps up the hillside the poor sheep have no defence
There's about a hundred wethers lying trapped against the fence.
And stumbling among them as the smoke blots out the sun
A youngster tends the dying with a bullet from his gun.

His leather soles are smouldering as he gets on with the job
In what used to be the treeline lies another blackened mob.
They fought to save the house but they couldn't save the shed
The dawn is breaking hotly when he falls onto his bed.
A young bloke nearly six feet tall just cries himself to sleep
As across his pillow stagger a thousand blackened sheep.



Carnage in the Upper Scrub.
Photo: National Equestrian Centre

Happy Birthday To Jim & Pat Jones

Michael Darby, 1996

Jim and Pat Jones not only have an idyllic marriage; they also share a birthday.

There's a town out in the Central West which nearly rhymes with 'flounder'
It isn't CAN-O-WIND-RA, it's real name is CAN-OWWN-DRA.
When the dairy farming Thomases moved west from Wollongong
Their very lovely bunch of daughters came along.
In fourth form at the local high, Patricia was a star
A daily source of happiness for mother and for pa.
Her father said "*My daughter, you're really such a joy*
'As a reward, when you turn thirty, you can go out with a boy!'"
Her mother said "*My girlie, you'll be easily misled*
'Protect yourself by rubbing boy repellent on your head.'"

The magic potion failed to work, and to her parents' shock
A long-haired lad named Jimmy Jones came slinking round the block.
They laid out dingo traps for him, and even poison bait
But couldn't save their daughter from the fickle hand of fate.
Their noble plans of protecting Pat were dealt a fatal blow
When the long-hair kissed their daughter at the annual local show.
Pat and Jim got married just as quick as anybody can
They're proud of their fine children, Jennifer and Dan.
So grab your glass and fill it up, and get out of your chair
And laugh and yell and cheer and shout. We'll toast the birthday pair!



Canowindra is the ballooning
capital of Australia.
Photo: Aussie Balloontrek

The Horsekillers

Michael Darby, November 2000

For a powerful treatment of the same event, see "Sky of Death" by Ellis Campbell (q.v.). In the latter part of October 2000, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) decided to cull the wild horses of the Guy Fawkes National Park. The reasons advanced include the claim that a bushfire had destroyed all the grass, and an assertion that the horses were in poor condition. The real reason is that ideologues in the NPWS hate horses as an "introduced species".

The brave animals whose ancestors carried pioneers across the deserts, or who provided the motive power for the coaches which opened up the nation, or who were proudly ridden by the finest soldiers in history, were brutally mown down by gunmen in helicopters. More than six hundred horses died, many after hours or even days of agony.



Photo: Brumby Watch Australia

A storm came over the mountain, a storm of fright and fear
As brumbies wheeled and scattered and I felt my mother near
It swept across the gullies where greenest grew the grass
It raced along the ridgelines and through each mountain pass

A deadly hail amongst us, with never a place to hide
From flying things with roaring wings as horses fell or died.
I saw my mother stagger as she whinnied loud with pain
Then she slumped against a boulder beneath the fatal rain

There's a smell of death in my nostrils and the night feels fearful cold
I'm lying here with a shattered limb, and I'm nearly six weeks old.

Kangaroos

Michael Darby 1993

This poem was written at the request of a Blackall kangaroo shooter during the author's December 1993 walk through north-west Queensland.

I saw this Yankee Sheila declaiming on teevee
That our cuddly marsupial soon extinct will be.
She reckoned each Australian very soon had oughta
Stop wiping out the kangaroos and subjecting them to slaughter.

"How wrong!" she says "Is raising sheep to eat up all the grass
'Starvation of the kangaroos will surely come to pass.
'And selfish folk are breeding cows which devastate the land,
'To abolish livestock raising, that would be something grand."

"Shooting endangered species is a very wicked habit
'It's just like using viruses to kill the native rabbit
'Those rushing motor vehicles give the kangaroos a fright
'Country people should be banned from driving cars at night."

She said we should chomp soya beans instead of kangaroo stew
And eating our national symbol is the worst thing we could do.
To emulate the English is a crime I could not bear.
They've eaten all the lions and unicorns over there.

Coat of Arms of The United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Island



The Kynuna Rotary Lifesaving Carnival

Michael Darby, 1994

It's springtime in the outback and they're stirring in Cloncurry
They're rolling swags in Hughenden and Isa folk must hurry
There's roadtrains passing hourly through Winton full of beer
For the Carnival at Kynuna comes at this time of the year.
They're arriving in their four wheel drives, by 'plane and helicopter
For Kynuna's great Surf Carnival to aid the Flying Doctor.

Kynuna's where the "Banjo" based his very famous poem
When a swaggie made a local billabong his home.
They built the pub "Blue Heeler" a century ago,
And if the life you're living is dragging rather slow
Then drift out to Kynuna and fill yourself with mirth
We'll carnival together at the world's most inland surf.



Photo: Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

Kynuna's strong on zinc cream and the surf reels use barbed wire
There's a tasty half-a-bullock roasting on the fire,
The Kynuna Roadhouse brolgas stroll around the petrol bowsers
And Kynuna's friendly atmosphere has cured several wowsers.
The Diamantina Channels could rarely drown a gnat
But for surf rescue excitement, Kynuna's where it's at.

You'll meet ringers at Kynuna, these men are made of steel
And it takes an outback sheila to bring these coves to heel.
You survive here in the outback by making your own luck
And the truest bluest iron man is a bloke who drives a truck.
If you've hung ten all around the world and there's nothing you can't do
Park your surfboard at Kynuna and dance with a jillaroo.

Lang Hancock

The 50th Anniversary Commemoration

Michael Darby, November 2002

In November 2002, 700 friends and admirers of the late Lang Hancock (q.v.) assembled at the Hancock family home in Perth to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Lang Hancock's flight in the Turner Gorge which alerted him to the presence of iron ore. This led to his discovery of the world's largest iron ore deposit.

The history of Australia as we look back through the years
Has rested on the shoulders of our noble pioneers
Lang Hancock earned his rank among the bravest and the best
When his strength and his persistence opened up the West.
As his little Auster along the Turner gorge did fly
Ferrous oxide staked its claim in the expert miner's eye
"Governments cannot make wealth; they only can consume"
Lifting the iron ore embargo let our whole economy bloom.

Langley George's outlook was magnificent in scope
His ancestry brought him talent and the Good Lord brought him Hope.
Daughter Gina does Lang proud, and we all wish her well
And another generation will have their tale to tell.
Gina, John, Bianca, young Hope and Ginia too
We're admirers of Lang Hancock, and you've felt his pride in you
He stood against the bureaucrats and their governmental might
We must persuade historians to get the story right.

The forward march of humankind is an honourable quest
We honour now the honest man whose work transformed the West
With his vision of an eagle and his heart of a lion
We salute the great Lang Hancock, Australia's Man of Iron.



Train carrying Hamersley Iron Ore in WA. Photo: Phil Knife's Railway Pages.

Ore trains use two diesel-electric locomotives each of 2,600 Kw, pulling around 155 ore cars, each carrying about 100 tons ('Technology in Australia 1788-1888').

The Lights of Longreach

Michael Darby, December 1993

This poem was written during the author's walk across NW Queensland.



Sir James Walker (1913-2004) in his Longreach garden
Photo: ABC Rural

You can see the lights of Longreach from fifteen miles away
"Come and rest your weary bones!" those lights all seem to say.
"In good times and in bad times, our welcome is the same.
'So come and introduce yourself, we'd like to know your name."
The gentle lights of Longreach have a warm and friendly glow
When you've been walking since the dawning and you've fifteen miles to go.

You can see the lights from up the hill. Well, hills aren't much out there,
But those friendly lights of Longreach are lights that seem to care.
The moon may be behind a cloud and the stars may disappear
But the shining lights of Longreach say "You are welcome here!"

There's a red transmission tower and lots of dots of white
The cheerful lights of Longreach are a beacon in the night.
Longreach stands for cattle and Longreach stands for sheep
And Longreach is for tourists who like to eat and sleep.
Longreach's Thomson River has its fair share of mud
And in between the drought times the Thomson likes to flood.

Longreach is near Morella and not far from Ilfracombe
The stockman Sir James Walker has made Longreach his home.
Longreach is full of history and has a famous name
And is known right around the Globe for its Stockman's Hall of Fame.

The Leichhardt Paddle Steamer

Michael Darby, 1994

The author has performed this poem around Australia. In consequence, Mount Isa is often visited by travellers seeking to book passage on the Leichhardt Paddle Steamer.

"Have you just arrived in town, mate?" asked the stranger in the pub.
"Their upstairs restaurant is the best, and they undercharge for grub.
'New Zealand is your home then? And you're here to see the West?
'So welcome to Mount Isa, and I wish you all the best."

"Is this the little woman? And you're on your honeymoon!
'It's a treat to see young lovers who can brighten up the room.
'If you're thinking to impress your bride then I reckon you should give her
'A fortnight's cruise by paddle steamer upon the Leichhardt River."

"From Isa to the Gulf and back, it's seven days each way
'With a cordon bleu from Paris and a roulette wheel to play
'Be sure to bring your camera, for the Kajibbi Canyon walls
'And if we can see 'em through the mist, the Mount Crusader Falls."

"You can dance all night to two bush bands, and drink duty-free all day
'You can gorge on barramundi or concentrate on cray
'Please don't ignore the mud crab and the occasional giant prawn
'There'll be Baileys for your nightcap and Champagne every morn."

"As it happens I'm the agent, since I sold my fleet of trucks
'For first class there's a discount – two for just five hundred bucks.
'The steamer's leaving with the dawn, so you'll have to look alive.
'Board behind McCafferty's at precisely half past five."

Early rose the Kiwis and their companions for the cruise
Five video-camera'd Japanese in shorts and walking shoes
Two lady German backpackers, one Italian and a Finn
And a lonely Melbourne stockbroker with stubble on his chin.

Three apprentices on holidays and two matrons from New York
One blue rinsee with a budgerigar that never ceased to talk.

From Adelaide a teacher whose shirt protects the whale
And a Canberra girl who'd come to save the Leichhardt River Snail.

As the time approached for sunrise they suppressed a weary yawn
And across the Leichhardt River then admired the rising dawn.
No paddle boat awaited; nor did any wharf appear.
They saw the charred remains of fires; and cans that once held beer.

Not a single drop of water lay before them on the sand
For the Leichhardt only ever flows when there's rain upon the land!
There's a former travel agent moved down south and doing fine
Offering high-return investments in eucalyptus wine.

Lyenko Urbančič

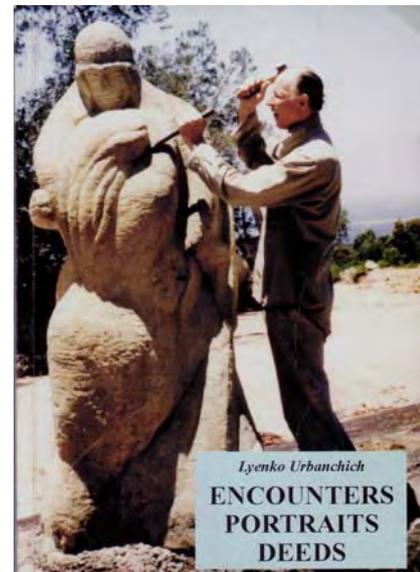
Michael Darby, 2002

Written for the eightieth birthday of the Slovene-Australian author and sculptor. When Slovenia's independence was declared on 26 June 1991, Lyenko Urbančič immediately began manufacturing and distributing National Flags of Free Slovenia, with the distinctive Mount Triglav emblem. In the Slovene language, and in the related Croatian language, 'č' is pronounced like the English 'ch'.

Mount Triglav is the noble symbol of a European state
The birthplace of a patriot we're proud to call our 'mate'.
He's a philosopher, a linguist, an historian and a writer
Whose energy has kept the lamp of freedom burning brighter.

Words like 'honour', 'trust' and 'loyalty' are rarely heard today
But Lyenko in each thought and deed shows us all the way.
We bless the lovely Beverly who became Lyenko's wife
And we wish them all the happiness of long and gracious life.

Lyenko Urbančič is upright, tall and lean
A credit to two nations, a defender of his Queen.
The man we honour here today has lived for eighty years
We applaud him now together and salute him with our cheers.



The cover of a
Lyenko Urbančič
book and the
flag of Slovenia



Lynne Catherine

Michael Darby, 1996

Perhaps because we've been so long together
Our marriage has become a way of life
As natural as the seasons and the weather
Now I must carry on without my wife.
She deserved another thirty years of living
My lovely Lynne whose heart was always kind
Her life was full of caring and of giving
And Lord, she'll always be here, in my mind.

When making tea I find that I've filled two mugs
A joke that she might like comes to my head
Awakening I dream about her gentle hugs
But there's only me upon this lonely bed.
She deserved another thirty years of living
Another like her none could ever find
Her life was full of caring and of giving
And Lord, she'll always be here, in my mind.

The cat's complaining loudly that his dinner's late
I tune the TV to her favourite show
There's an invitation to attend a local fête
I turn to ask her if she'd like to go.
She deserved another thirty years of living
How can I make the ravelled past unwind?
Her life was full of caring and of giving
And Lord, she'll always be here, in my mind.

The Matilda Highway Hijack

Michael Darby 1994

In Cloncurry every springtime the art buffs congregate
To admire and buy from artists on the go

So please pay close attention to the tale I shall relate
How McCafferty's saved Cloncurry's Great Art Show.
Ambitious southern artists like to build their reputation
By hanging where the standards are the best
And since Cloncurry's Art Show is foremost in the nation
They send oils and watercolours, sketches and the rest.

From every corner of the south, to Brisbane comes the art
A veritable cultural gold mine
Secure there in a warehouse close to the city heart
For transport on McCafferty's bus line.
The loading job is supervised by McCafferty's driver Bart
His shift will take him through the Darling Downs
In a 46-seat Denning with its load of folks and art
Through miles of droughted pasture and friendly little towns.

From Roma Street in Brisbane Bart begins the fateful run
At five fifteen, not half a second late
Through the dusk towards Toowoomba into the setting sun
Clearing McCafferty's terminus at twenty short of eight.
They cruise west through Jondaryan, Dalby and Chinchilla
Where the Condamine is mostly trickling mud
To Miles and Roma then to Mitchell, night was never stiller
Ten to four in Charleville, the town that braved the flood.

Some passengers are snoring and one or two are yawning
With the driver dodging red roos in the dark
Through famous Augathella and northward with the dawning
Bart waves to Mrs. Cartwright at the Tambo Caravan Park.
The change of shift's at Blackall at twenty after seven
Bart stops the coach with half a minute spare
And hands over all his charges to fellow driver Kevin
Entrusting travellers and cargo to his colleague's skill and care.

Hosts at Motel Barcaldine are the family of Moloney
Where you turn west along the rail to Ilfracombe
And drought has left the cattle rather down-at-heart and bony
The Wellshot Pub's where Raftery wrote his poem.

The Hall of Fame at Longreach stands proudly on a ridge
Here tourists come to learn about our past.
They cross the Thomson River, fallen well below the bridge
Where sheep can hide from midday's fiery blast.

The video is finished and Kevin hums a song
The girl in seat fifteen plays some guitar
In seventh gear the Denning is running smooth and strong
Past Pianta's Road, and Winton won't be far.
In this story there are bad guys and at Winton one is real
In the café, "Dutchy" Holland sits apart
Ex-Department of Taxation, still with the urge to steal
He plans to make his dough by thieving art.

As the coach pulls into Winton, turning right near the museum
The art thief cracks a grin from ear to ear
He mumbles in his handset "They're on time and I can see 'em"
Then starts his car and slips it into gear.
The site for crime he's chosen is the outback town Kynuna
Where the swagman drowned in eighteen ninety four
In a billabong connected to the dusty Diamantina;
The Kynuna Ampol Roadhouse has a friendly open door.

While driver and his passengers in the Roadhouse take a rest
The criminals plan to steal away their bus
And drive it to the airstrip seven miles to the north west
Then load art aboard their aircraft without fuss.
Twenty miles short of Kynuna, Dutchy stops for his diversion
Where accomplices have left a stolen car
He gives the rear upholstery a gasoline immersion
Soon the rising smokecloud can be seen from near and far.

Entering Kynuna he spots Constable Delandelles leaving
Followed by the firetruck with its willing volunteers
He smirks with wicked pleasure as he feels his plot unfolding
This will be a caper he can boast about for years.
McCafferty's coach arrives and the passengers breathe the air
While broilgas wander round the petrol bowsers
The Roadhouse has delicious meals made by Leanne 'n' Claire
Dutchy's gun is in the pocket of his trousers.

Pretending to be tourists are two of Dutchy's crew
Who answer to the names of "Spud" and "Byers"
If the locals try to call for help they won't be getting through
On the CB or the telephone, for Spud has cut the wires.
When the passengers all are seated and busy with their eating
Driver Kevin starts upon his steak 'n' chips
He's thinking how the tucker will take a lot of beating
When Dutchy puts a whistle to his lips.

"Listen in!" he waves his pistol, "Give me your full attention
'There's gonna be a little change of plan.
'I'm borrowing your vehicle while you're held here in detention
'If you give my boys a hard time then blood will hit the fan."
"My men are armed and vicious, the exits they will cover
'While I go about my business nice and quick
'The lads will join me swiftly and then you will discover
'That we'll all do a disappearing trick."

So he departs, and very soon they hear the coach's rumble
And Kevin heaves a long and soulful sigh
He has to find a way to make the bad guys take a tumble
Whatever the odds a McCafferty's man must try.
Then a respected grazier lady from out near Camooweal
(Her name need not be mentioned I suppose)
Prompted by deepest feelings of true artistic zeal
Creates a great distraction by taking off her clothes.

Graceful women make Spud twitchy, and Byers is eager too
Such artistry they've long ago forgotten
She's down to bra 'n' knickers and their eyes are stuck like glue
On her slender limbs and dainty little bottom.
In partnership with husband Lance (now busy on the firetruck)
Co-owner of the Roadhouse is youthful mum Leanne
She tiptoes from the kitchen and with lots of strength and luck
Knocks out the staring Byers with her heaviest frying pan.

Kevin moves like lightning and with foot upon the throttle
He leaps at Spud while grabbing for the gun
Sister Tabitha O'Grady then swings a well-aimed bottle
And Spud is dreaming of the setting sun.

Kevin now must save his coach with all its precious load
He fishes for Spud's car-keys on the run
Next it's ninety miles per hour upon the McKinlay road
With Burketown's 'Ringer Bill' who has Spud's gun.

Shortly they can see the coach with the aeroplane beside it
The criminals are still busy loading art
The ringer mounts the roof-rack; if there's a steed he'll ride it
And ringers learn their marksmanship by heart.
Startled by Kev's arrival at a speed that would astound
Three robbers see their plot has gone astray
Two scurry for the aircraft, but Dutchy stands his ground
He draws his gun and starts to blaze away.

Three bullets through the windscreen, and Kevin has to duck
Bill takes aim and shoots off Dutchy's hat
"The next one goes right through you! Want to try your luck?"
Dutchy drops his gun and lies down flat.
Kevin parks before the nose; 'planes can't taxi in reverse
And Bill's aim won't let the robbers get away
Dutchy bestows upon the world a comprehensive curse
This simply hasn't been his favourite day.

Kynuna's lawman very soon takes charge of the occasion
With handcuffed baddies filling up his van
And loudly lectures them to their sad consternation
"Don't ever mess with any McCafferty's man."
From the policeman's cottage Kevin phones his boss
In the lockup Mister Holland shouts abuse
The boss is far from pleased to learn the schedule's at a loss
"I hope," he says "You have a good excuse!"

Joshua Ross of Woy Woy
Winner of the 2003 Stawell
Gift and Olympian in 2004
Photo: Sportal



Miller the Poet

Michael Darby, May 2002

Since 30 October 2002, Bobby Miller (q.v.) has been performing to a heavenly audience, but his memory will endure.

The lovely lady Sandy could afford to pick and choose
She was courted by an acrobat and a singer of the blues
She knocked back an Olympic swimmer and two famous opera stars
And told a rich accountant he should go off to Mars.

The suitors lined up at her door, they had to form a queue
The locals sold them fish & chips, to make a quid or two.
She soon employed a chute boss, to keep the mob in order
For the fame of Sandy's beauty had spread across the border.

The hopefuls came from everywhere, by coach and bike and car
Some by chauffeured limo, some by tramping in the tar
She finally called the footie team to give the lot a shove
Saying "*None of this lot measure up to the man I want to love!*"

*"I need a bloke with a shining soul, a man with a noble mind
'A feller full of happiness who leaves my cares behind
'A courageous shining leader more cheerful than the rest
'Who in every kind of contest will prove to meet the test."*

Sandy kept on searching, but her quest was worth the trouble
She found the bravest bloke around and wed him on the double
She's been smiling ever since, and wouldn't you just know it
She married Bobby Miller, the world's most cheerful poet.

Mobile Blues

Michael Darby, 1996

Last night I saw a sorry sight in Cloncurry's favourite pub.
This bloke had barely sipped his beer and he hadn't touched his grub
His shoulders they were shaking; it was clear his heart was breaking
He looked about as lonely as an abandoned dingo cub.
His chain-smoking built around him a scarcely penetrable murk
But being nice to southerners is a job we shouldn't shirk
He quickly justified my fears by bursting into tears
"I cannot hack Cloncurry, because my mobile phone won't work."

Mourning in September

Michael Darby, September 2001

A little girl is praying for her daddy to come home
There's a mother crying softly as she waits beside the phone
The TV flashes images so ghastly to relate
And the cost in lives and suffering is hard to contemplate
We sadly have among us folk who cheer while bodies fall
And laugh with fiendish pleasure at the foulest crime of all
Who seem to teach their children before the age of seven
That killing Jews and Christians is the surest way to Heaven.

What can they say to Johnny who lies crushed and broken there?
And Naomi, burned and lifeless, with her shocked and sightless stare?
There are thousands in the ruins, of every age and every creed
Whose lives have been extinguished by this monstrous vile deed.
They'll never pick the flowers again, nor love or cry or laugh
Hate has scattered their remains as the west wind scatters chaff
Many died as heroes, while they tried to rescue others
And share that harsh entombment with their sisters and their brothers.

We pray there'll be another Neville Bonner
Born before the legend can grow old.
Australia needs another Neville Bonner
We hope God hasn't thrown away the mould.

So many owe so much to Neville Bonner,
You taught us how we ought to meet the test.
You'll always be our hero, Neville Bonner
The little bloke who towered above the rest.
Our hearts go out to Mrs. Heather Bonner
The lovely lady Neville made his wife
And we all want to thank you, Heather Bonner
For the joy you brought to Neville in his life.

We pray there'll be another Neville Bonner
Born before the legend can grow old.
Australia needs another Neville Bonner
We hope God hasn't thrown away the mould.

The Nurses' Protest

Michael Darby, 1995

The Parliament was surrounded by nurses
All with empty wallets and purses
They said: "Pay us more!"
All they heard was a snore
And some faint ministerial curses.

2001 protest by Townsville nurses.
Photo: ABC Western Queensland
www.abc.net.au/westqld/stories



The Odyssey of Gianni-Battista Wombat

Michael Darby, 1993

"Gianni" and "Gian" are Italian Christian name diminutives, similar in pronunciation and the same in meaning as "Johnny" and "John". The hero of this story was named "John the Baptist" after his great-grandfather, the original Gianni-Battista (abbreviated to Gianbattista) Wombat, the padrone of the first Italian canecutting wombat family to settle in the Ingham district. Gianbattista was born and raised in Sydney's Western suburbs where his father Primo worked as a foreman at the Chullora Railway workshops. Gianni's mother, Catherine, is a talented artist best known for her watercolours. Fernberg is the residence of the Governor of Queensland.

Gianbattista Wombat, an adventurous little chap
Went on tour from Strathfield but he didn't have a map
He thought he'd like to get about and see the world a bit
So he tidied up his bedroom and packed his shaving kit.
While walking on the highway he kept company with a dog
Who disappeared while chasing a cat into the fog.

He met a stranded trucker and helped him change a tyre
"Can I offer you a lift, mate?" the trucker did enquire.
Now this trucker drove a Kenworth and Gianbattista thought
To ride upon that fine machine he really rather ought.
Their first stop was at Bowral where the trucker took on fuel
Gianbattista put his mittens on, 'cause Bowral is quite cool.



Kenworth photo: All American Saturday
(Netherlands)

At Albury, Ern the trucker said "It's rather tired I feel
It's time for me to have a nap, you'd better take the wheel."
Gianbattista took the driving seat and proudly shifted gears
He'd hoped to drive a Kenworth ever since his early years.
With his eyes upon the highway and the wheel clutched in his paw
Gianbattista drove on through the night and never broke the law.

A crackle from the C.B. woke Ernie with a fright
He scratched himself and rubbed his eyes and Melbourne was in sight.
They picked up a lone hitch-hiker, a tubby teddy bear
On his way to Ferntree Gully, for the teddy bears picnic there.
They unloaded freight in Dandenong and took on lemonade
A thousand cases of the drink for the folk of Adelaide.
To keep his diet balanced Gian bought greens at a fruit 'barrer'
Then spent a half hour paddling in the waters of the Yarra.

From Melbourne town to Adelaide our truckers headed west
To eat up highways by the mile a Kenworth is the best
In the terminal at Edwardstown they found country music tapes
And Gianbattista ate a pound of Barossa Valley grapes.

The road north to The Alice is dusty hot and long
So they whiled away the driving hours in poetry and song.
Two days in friendly Alice Springs then eastward in a hurry
To collect a load of cattle from the saleyards in Cloncurry
Truckers aren't vegetarians; they like a decent meal
So they each had an enormous steak at the pub in Camooweal.

"My elder sister lives nearby, I think I will surprise her."
So Gianni told his trucker friend "Please leave me in Mt. Isa!"
Gianni's sister is Monique, a really live beauty queen
The prettiest lady wombat the North West has ever seen.
Gianbattista found his sister, at Gunpowder she's abiding
Making money from the tourists, giving lessons in hang-gliding.

"Why not stay a while out here? You can be a copper miner.
'To have my brother close at hand, why nothing could be finer!"
Now a wombat's skill at digging is famous everywhere
A wombat can tunnel half a mile without ruffling his hair
So Gianbattista dug for copper, for him the work was fun
And trucked it off to MIM who bought it by the ton.

A drilling team came by one day and said the boss's daughter
"The drought is hurting farmers and we're off to drill for water."
Gianni cared about the farmers, with their pasture bare and stark
"I'll roll my swag and tag along, as a diviner make my mark!"
He'd walk around, bent sticks in hand and show them where to drill
And then the thirsty cattle would rush to drink their fill.

At Longreach, Boulia and St George and right through all the west
Where e're the land was burning, they put him to the test.
Gianni found water for graziers' sheep and for the farmer's crops
For people who grow cotton and for people who grow hops
Soon the fame of Gianbattista was spreading far and wide
A wombat finding water pure across the country side.

The Queen arrived in Brisbane and the thought soon came upon her
"We shall knight the Queensland resident who most deserves an honour!"



Brian Kinton's 1975 painting of Australian Rules Football legend, Roy Cazaly (1893-1963). In a forty-year career (1910-1950) Roy Cazaly (below) played 393 senior games.



From the website: 'The Fabulous Career of Roy Cazaly'

Said the Governor "There's a wombat whose skill has saved the nation
I hear he's just found water on Augathella Station!"
They sent a 'plane for Gianni; he had never flown before
A brass naval band was playing right at the airport door.

By limousine to Fernberg and Gian knelt before the Queen
"You are the finest wombat whom we have ever seen!"
Said Her Majesty, "Arise, Sir Knight! And know that from now on
When farmers need fresh water they should telephone. . . Sir Gian!"
The rains have come to Queensland and at last the drought has broken
But we remember Gianbattista and with awe his name is spoken.

Outback Kid

Michael Darby 1994

"I'll miss you, Tom" said the soft-voiced man as he hugged his son goodbye
*"Until we get some rain on the place I'll be feeding off the track.
'While I'm away you're the man of the house. I'll be home at the end of the Dry
'Look after your mum. I depend on you. We'll go fishing when I get back."*

Tommy Dawes kept his chin up, as an outback ten-year-old must
For Boulia boys all live and work by the harsh rules of the land.
His stockman dad rode north with the mob in its cloud of travelling dust
Tom stood and waved from the turnoff, his horse's reins in his hand.
The heat burned all the paddocks bare, killed grass under every log
In the furnace of the western sun the waterholes did shrink
Each few gallons of dirty water surrounded by treacherous bog
And the gaunt remaining starving stock risked death for every drink.

Cattle bogged in waterholes is the cruellest part of drought
Tom and his mum with a good strong rope and the ancient four wheel drive
Rescued the struggling live ones, and towed the dead beasts out
That's how Channel Country people fight to keep their stock alive.
They managed to calm the struggles of one bony Brahman cow
Coaxed her out of the sucking mud with a solid low-range pull
"You silly cow! Go find your calf, you're out of trouble now!"
Mary Dawes taking off the sling was charged by an angry bull.

A giant who hated all the world and would make a human pay.
It drove the woman to the ground and gored her through the thigh
Till a snapping dog and a shouting boy drove the stupid beast away
With bitter envy in its brain, foul venom in bloodshot eye.
His mother's wound gaped open, as she unconscious lay
If he allowed the blood to flow, he knew she'd soon be dead
The lad whipped off his leather belt and made a tourniquet.
Then knelt beside his mother and kissed her battered head.

To move an injured woman for a lad is no mean feat
Maybe it was skill and muscle and maybe it was luck
The power of love for a mother gives the heart a stronger beat
And perhaps the Good Lord lent a hand to lift her on the truck.
He trickled water on her lips as she lay there on the tray
The lad worked as the bush kids do, all wise beyond their years
And shielded her from the blazing heat with a tarp and bales of hay.
Tommy let the clutch in gently and shifted through the gears.

Fear for his stricken parent made the youngster's private hell
He set his course for a neighbour's home. They had an airstrip there.
He prayed the Flying Doctor would make his mother well.
The panting dog on the passenger seat tried to share his load of care.
While calling for help on the UHF a turn in the track he missed
And the front end took a sudden drop into a washaway hole
The impact snapped the wheel around and fractured the boy's right wrist
Thomas nearly passed out with the pain, but still regained control.

For twenty miles he soldiered on, his mother's life at stake
Praying an oncoming dust cloud would signal his job was done.
The sight of the speeding rescuers let him stand upon the brake
"You've done well, boy. She's a lucky woman . . . to have you for a son."
"Thank the Lord we've saved your mother, and pretty soon she'll walk.
'Your wrist can stay in plaster till you've knitted up the bone.'
Said the surgeon in Mount Isa when he stopped to have a talk
"And the proudest dad in Queensland is waiting on the phone."

Aboriginal art at Kakadu, photo by
Ludo Kuipers at OzOutback Internet
Services, Oz Outback Website



International Breast Cancer Intervention
Study (IBIS) Chairman Professor John
Forbes with West Australian
philanthropist Gina Rinehart



Professor John Forbes

Michael Darby 2004

In ancient times did myths abound of monsters with foul aims
Who would plot and scheme to take the lives of maidens, women, dames.
For centuries they killed and maimed in the south, north, west and east
And the women cried in anguish for heroes to slay each beast.

The cruel and loathsome Minotaur devoured innocent females
The rotten Dragon did the same while rattling his scales
A swift sword thrust from Theseus gave the Minotaur no chance
The Dragon expired upon the point of Saint George's trusty lance.

Another Monster is among us, who stalks his helpless prey
He tries to kill, or he'll attempt to steal a breast away
Women deserve protection, now as in days of yore
Women need a happier world where breast cancer is no more.

Modern heroes now are striving to bring the Monster down
One champion lives a hundred miles north of Sydney town
John F. Forbes, professor, has dedicated his whole life
To protecting from the Monster each mother, daughter, wife.

We honour now the effort which earned John Forbes his skill
The devoted years of study, the triumph of the will
His noble great ambition, determined to fulfil
A world of women to protect, a Monster for the kill.

We salute him for the endless hours of working through the night
The personal involvement in every patient's fight
The brilliant mind that seems to blend medicine with art
His thoughtfulness and gentleness; the kindness of his heart.

His allies share his vision but resources are too few
Those brave and stalwart fighters need help from me and you
So they can lock the Monster in his lair a shrinking wreck
Please open purse or wallet, or write a generous cheque.

Australian New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group

enquiries@anzbctg.newcastle.edu.au Locked Bag 7, Hunter Region Mail Centre NSW 2310

Professor John Forbes, Professor of Surgical Oncology at the University of Newcastle, Director of Surgical Oncology at the Newcastle Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Director of Hunter Breast Screen, and Medical Director of the BCIA is National Co-ordinator of the ANZ BCTG. The SAC is chaired by Prof Alan Coates, (who is also CEO of the Australian Cancer Society). Prof Forbes and Prof Coates are members of the SAC of the IBCSG. A/Prof John Simes is head of the ANZ BCTG Statistical Centre.

(Source: <http://www.anzbctg.org/pdf/staffvacancies/bciaprofile.pdf>)

Queensland's Outright Defeat

Michael Darby 1995

Us Queensland folk are pretty tough and used to flood and drought
But it's a different question when we can't get Lehmann out.
The rotten thieving neighbour might 'a' stole my bluey bitch
But my heart was really sinking when they bowled out Kasprowicz.

The bull's turned out to be a steer and the diff's gone in the truck
But it's a real disaster when Seccombe scores a duck.
Let the wool be all too wet to shear and the oat crop be a failure
But the sky is really falling in when we lose to South Australia.



Queenslander Michael Kasprowicz, "the premier Pura Cup/Sheffield Shield fast bowler of the past decade" – the Courier-Mail, 20 Oct 2003

Radioactivity

Michael Darby, 1994

The true story of the famous Mary Kathleen Mine

When Herbie was a younger man the money came in fine
Selling beef to feed the workers at the local uranium mine.
The mine was worked on Herbie's place for nearly fifteen years
And Herbie owned the pub where miners bought each other beers.
They closed the mine! So Herbie wrote to the United Nations
Demanding compensation for his nuclear mutations.
And to show he was entitled to a payment quite immense
He illustrated his remarks with photographic evidence.

"Yer scientific fellers better take a Captain Cook
'Them four drumsticks in the photo came from just one single chook.
'Here's a twenty-four-inch cockroach that keeps knockin' off me tea
'And Cavendish bananas growing on me mango tree."
"Here's me pair of lovebirds that keep on having rows
'And me five best Brahman bulls who've lost all interest in the cows
'Them radioactive treestumps cause a most unpleasant itch
'And that black albino wombat was born to m' kelpie bitch.
'My youthful wife has aged so much she's looking like her mother
'Me elder sister Harriette is now me youngest brother
'And to prove these radiations change a natural condition
'The local Member has become . . . a humble politician."



CWA Hall, Mirani, Queensland. Photo:
Assemblies of God Church.

The Country Women's Association was formed in Crookwell NSW in 1922, and the first president was Mrs Grace Munro. CWA halls – often built by volunteers – in hundreds of communities became the focus of community life. CWA halls continue to provide isolated rural women with the opportunity of companionship and moral support; and serve as clinics, libraries, meeting rooms, polling booths, and, of course, dance halls.

Robot Politician

Michael Darby, 2003

*Save us from that politician
With a most peculiar vice
When spouting something banal
He has to say it twice.
We all have heard of Robocop
The machine who'll never tire
In chasing crooks he'll never stop
Till he sets the world on fire
The factory that made that bloke
Has damned us to perdition
With the curse of all the gentle folk
A robot politician.
You charge him up and flick a switch
And he'll go on by the hour
Spouting his political pitch
In the corridors of power*

The front bench vanished in the smog
They'll none of them be missed
The national debt's in a hollow log
And the backbench plays at whist
Kim sank in a yellow submarine
And Joan is going feral
Natasha plays a tambourine
And Gareth's off with Cheryl
Gough is at the barricades
with young Mark's rabble rousers
Malcolm's out of Africa
searching for his trousers
John is drinking tea with George
and Simon's lost the plot
You might as well stay listening
'cause I am all you've got.

We missed the mark like a flash in the pan
And we're left at the starting gate

Where were you when the fur hit the fan
'n the favourite was beat in the straight?
The odds are long and track is slow
The bookies cringe at the plunge
The kiss of death is counting his dough
And the roughie wins by a lunge.
Play both ends against the middle
Clock strikes twelve at the thirteen hour
Emperor Nero tunes his fiddle
And grist for the mill is a bag of flour
The light on the hill is a pillar of cloud
Blown in the wind of the fatal shore
High as kite and standing proud
In the basement of the seventh floor

The cows are giving powdered milk
And the writing's on the wall
The slippery slope is smooth as silk
At the secret policeman's ball
Heads in the sand, snouts in the trough
And the sour grapes under our bed
We sniff 'n' sneeze 'n wheeze and cough
Till we hit the nail on the head
The rolling stone is down on its luck
And the bowels of the earth are blocked
The pig in mud now walks like a duck
And the closet is firmly locked
The chips are down and the die is cast
And the final strumpet sounds
With his broken leg in a plaster cast
Grim Reaper does his rounds

Up the creek without a paddle
The chattering class is long in the tooth
The drover's dog is in the saddle
And out of the woodwork comes the truth

Lost our way on the road less travelled
Step on the gas and stand on the brake
Our bolt is shot and the wool's unravelled
They have no bread so let 'em eat cake.

Tick the box for the fruit of the vine
And the silver spoon is full
Backs to the wall at the end of the line
And charge like a wounded bull.
Dust has settled on the sands of time
In the land of milk and honey

Hemlines up and necklines down, You'll like my policy
And when the election comes around, I want you to vote for me.

The wages of sin are out of time
And they do it for love or money

Drain the swamp, you're up to your neck
In crocs and alligators
The time at last has come to pass
For unscrambling mashed potatoes.
At the end of the day all's said and done
With the clichés flowing fast
You turn your face to the setting sun
And nail your flag to the mast.

Rodeo Clown

Michael Darby, 1994

A courageous man will ride a bull 'though he's destined for a fall
But stockmen call the rodeo clowns the bravest of them all.
Bill Tobin was a rodeo clown, he was fit and fast and fleet
He used to dodge those charging bulls with no boots upon his feet.
When the chute was opened the crowd would rise up for the thrill
Many a cowboy old and young owed his life to Barefoot Bill.

Bill ceased to be a rodeo clown the day he lost his leg
He was careful with his money and he never had to beg
Bill bought a battered ride-on mower to take him up and down
To his little house on Heartbreak Hill which overlooked the town



Mervyn "Bluey" Bostock (q.v.) in
rodeo clown mode

The locals were accustomed to Bill puttering down the street
He liked to stop for a friendly chat or some old mate to greet.

Heading home one Saturday, Bill heard an airhorn screaming shrill
A roadtrain driver had missed a gear on the way down Heartbreak Hill.
The water driller's daughter, dark face and curly hair
Had slipped out through her parents' fence, clutching her teddy bear.
Oblivious to the danger, she sat her toy down on the road
Square in the path of awesome death with its fifty-three ton load.

Bill didn't think of rodeos or his skill that used to be
Nor the vengeful scrubland bull that took his leg above the knee
He only saw a little girl in the wrong place having fun
And like any normal bushman he did what should be done.
Sheer chance just might have saved her, but Bill didn't trust to luck
He swerved his tiny mower across the path of that monster truck.

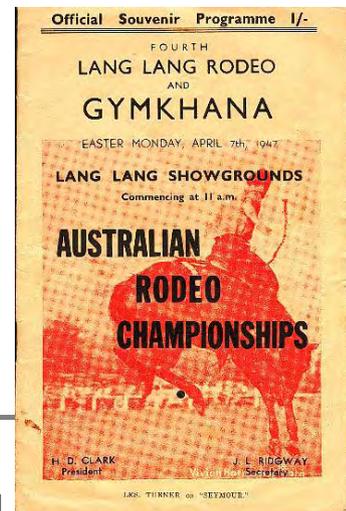
The little girl was startled by the hand that seized her arm
And the powerful diving thrust that projected her from harm
The trembling panting trucker, when he brought his rig to rest
Found Bill lying in the gutter, young Jane sitting on his chest.
The district's favourite hero is a retired rodeo clown.
Bill's new electric scooter may be seen around the town.

Saint Ubique's Fête

Michael Darby, 1996

In Rural Education, there's one universal rule:
Each year we have a monster fête to raise funds for the School.
So annually 'round mid July, since before most folk remember
We start the major planning for the last week in November.
Sister Frances is the guiding hand who allocates the tasks
Few they are who dare refuse when the goodly Sister asks.
In organising volunteers she's the cleverest boss alive
She controls them with her database under Windows '95.

The Craft Stall is the focal point of a well-conducted fête
In charge of ours these thirty years is Violet Agnes Tait.
Her daughters knitted for The Stall; grand-daughters quite a few,



Source: Lang Lang and District Historical Society

The knitter ranks are swelling now with great-grand-daughters too.
English teacher Patsy Brown is in charge of raffle prizes
In extracting donor items she's a mistress of surprises.
She faxes every business house from the border to the coast
For those without a fax machine, begging letters in the post.

The operation's underwritten by the local service clubs
For weeks before the big event there's no-one in the pubs.
They're hammering and nailing and devising better plans
And painting even bigger signs for the tucker caravans.
Students are drawing posters and putting them in shops
The locals' favourite brewery is ordering more hops.
The electricity foreman checks his calendar with a frown
Last year's surge in power demand had blackened out the town.

Father William McInerney looks around the sky again
And has a quiet word with the Lord about the threatening rain.
*"The weatherman says 'Showers tonight', but if it is no trouble
Do keep us dry 'til midnight then the quantity please double!"*
Busy electricians have strung light bulbs in the trees
The temperature has fallen to ninety-two degrees.
The international food stall spreads its fragrance on the air
Face-painted kids are running round with green 'n' purple hair.

There's eleventeen Samanthas and about a dozen Jasons
The Shire Clerk sells them ice-cream donated by the Masons.
The nursing sister's busy and the ambulance as well
The postmaster has ricked his back in trying to ring the bell.
At six pm precisely the Local Member makes a speech
Congratulating parents for producing kids to teach,
And joins the Mayor in carving the roast pig on a spit.
Five aerobics clubbers then demonstrate they're fit.

The beer tent does good business, and there to keep the peace
While serving countless customers is the Sergeant of Police.
Pony rides and hoop-la and 'dunk teacher in the water',
'Best butterfly collection' goes to Jones's seventh daughter.
The lost child supervisor is quietly going crazy,
"I can't remember Daddy's name, but Mummy calls him 'lazy'."

The compère reads out number plates of cars parked in the way
Of the kiddies' favourite ride upon the trailer full of hay.
Santa Claus is fading fast, this Saint who knows no fear
It's ovenland inside that suit and he's praying for a beer.
Bubble gum smeared on his knee by the eighty-seventh brat
The next boy standing in the queue asks "*Why are you so fat?*".

The roll-up's great – all expectations exceeded by the crowd
The Hospital has telephoned to complain the music's loud.
Mister James from the National Bank is toting up the take
The bakery stall has auctioned off its very last Christmas cake.
The raffle prizes are all drawn, the winners take them home
The plant stall has sold out its stock of natural garden loam
Rubbish piles in mountains but the smiles and grins are wide
It's been a bonzer Christmas Fête in Australia's countryside.

Saint Valentine's Day

Michael Darby, 1995

My wife has elegant fingers with manicured fingernails
And one of those serrated knives for removing fishes' scales.
She has a warm infectious grin and a heart that's always true
It takes her just ten minutes to skin a kangaroo.
She's respected 'round the district for her kind and friendly manner
And is magic underneath a car with her birthday shifting spanner
She has long and lovely slender legs and really gorgeous breasts
With her trusty can of flyspray she's death to insect pests.
She cooks marvellous roast dinners and is great with Christmas hams
And is never shy to use her teeth when it comes to marking lambs.
She brightens up the universe with the smile upon her lips
And would rather roll her own than smoke those trendy filter tips.
The twinkle in those soft brown eyes reveals her deep desire
She's great at shooting rabbits and can change a tractor tyre.
She's taken on all comers with her skill at dressage riding
And she's won a handsome trophy for freestyle nude hang-gliding.
On an early winter morning she likes a cup of tea in bed
And she has a very pretty face on the front side of her head.

Salinity

Michael Darby 2001

Australia was made by divinity
The place should exist till infinity

But the poor farmer's life is plagued by Lot's wife
And the blight of the land is salinity.

Shutdown

Michael Darby 1994

On the hands grasping the steering wheel, hard work has left its stain.
Rheumatic lumps on the finger joints squeeze a little gasp of pain
From the cracking lips of a wrinkled mouth which once was creased with smiles
She's been ploughing since before the dawn, for God knows how many miles.
Her husband limps to the fenceline, he's left the ute on the track
For more than a year he's not saddled a horse, since the shearing ruined his back.
A gaunt man seventy two years old, with a face like a faded brick
He shades his good eye from the setting sun and leans on his walking stick.

Near fifty years they have worked the land, grasping the dreams of youth
From hope to disappointment and at last the bitter truth.
They married when he came home from the War; she was only eighteen then.
A cloud of dust hides his wife from view and his heart beats for her again.
Drought and flood they could handle, such disasters come to an end
But officially sanctioned plunder the strongest heart will rend.
Taxes and high interest rates make the farmer's thorny crown,
Governments have bled us dry and they're shutting the country down.

Daughter Jill and her husband Blake hang on by their fingernails
They're keeping the repossessioners off with a contract for the mails.
Young Harry died under a horse at twelve, they still are fighting the tears,
Samantha married some Canberra chap and hasn't written for years.
One good crop might have saved them, or left enough for a flat in town
But the bank has sent the bailiffs and they're shutting the property down.
She reads the anguish in his face, shares the hurt behind his frown
She reaches for the cut-out lever, and shuts the diesel down.

The Stranger

Michael Darby, May 2005

They were singing hymns and praying in that distant country town
All thankful for the end of drought as the rain came pouring down

The little church was nearly full at the corner of the lane
When a stranger softly slipped inside to shelter from the rain
He was small and he was shivering and each boot had sprung a leak
With sore feet and empty wallet he'd been tramping for a week.

They took up a collection for the homeless and the poor
But no-one met the stranger who sat just inside the door.
He was small and he was shivering; he was hungry, he was thin
Caught out in the downpour he'd been soaked right to the skin.

Some of them gave generously and some of them gave more
But that didn't help the stranger, dripping water on the floor.
They'd donated piles of clothing, whatever they could spare
But no-one asked the stranger if he had a coat to wear.

They were singing hymns and praying and their faith in God was real
But no-one asked the stranger when last he'd had a meal
They were singing hymns and smiling and their faith was wide and deep
But no-one asked the stranger if he had a place to sleep

When they reached the Benediction the skies had paused the rain
The lonely traveller prepared to face the road again
The faithful clustered round the porch, their friends to meet and greet
But no-one asked the stranger if he'd like a bite to eat

Not a word to the stranger did anybody say
They never learned the sorrow which had turned his steps their way.
The wind was blowing shrill and cold and the sky was leaden grey
The preacher shook the stranger's hand and then was called away

They served refreshments in the hall and the mood was light and free
But no-one asked the stranger if he'd like a cup of tea.
Not a word to the stranger did anybody speak
They never grasped the burdens which are carried by the weak.

They'd been singing hymns and praying and their faith in God was deep
But no-one asked the stranger if he'd like a place to sleep
They'd been singing hymns and praying at the corner of the lane
The stranger sadly left the Church as the rain came down again.

When Jesus shall return to earth will all the trumpets blare?
Or will He be a stranger, thin and worn from want of care?
They'd been singing hymns and praying, the women and the men
But they hardly saw the stranger, for he wasn't one of them.

Technology

Michael Darby 1994

They're microchipping pussies now in Sydney.
They're databasing every furry thing
And you just try explaining to your pussy
The kind of joy a microchip can bring.

There's no way that you can hide your pussy,
For databasing never ever fails
And if you want to keep intact your pussy,
Be sure you stay away from New South Wales.



Two Prime Ministers

Michael Darby, 17 May 2000

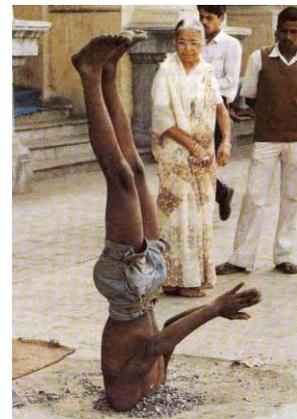
This poem first went to air on the John Kerr program, Radio 2UE, 4BC & 2CC on the morning of Thursday 18 May 2000. It may be reproduced in any form, and slipped under the door of any Malaysian Government building. The first four lines were added on 17 October 2003, the day on which Dr Mahatir told a summit of Islamic leaders in Malaysia: "Jews rule the world by proxy".

Now listen, Doctor Mahatir, you've bucketed the Jews
The World is full of choices, and people get to choose
You've encouraged all the Moslems to tread the path of hate
So change your rotten attitude before it is too late.
Now hear me, Doctor Mahatir, you've sniped at P.M. John
When you attack an Aussie, know who you're taking on.
Some might not even vote for him, when it comes to polling time
But when he's representing us, to kick him is a crime.

He holds his office fair and square, which is more than you can say
For when you face a challenger, you put the coot away.
To lock up your opponents is each dictator's dream
Australians follow honest rules, and keep our fighting clean.
And when I hear you whingeing, I think of all the chaps
Who died there, in your country, trying to save you from the Japs.
Remember the Emergency, when the Commos had your measure
Do you think that chasing old Chin Peng was any sort of pleasure?

And what of Konfrontasi, Sukarno's *Crush Malaysia?*
But for the Aussies and our mates you'd be off the map of Asia.
Your approval for aggression strikes me as something sinister
The liberated Timorese are fans of our Prime Minister.

So who are you to criticise? By crikey, strike me blue
We're proud of our Prime Minister, he's worth a bunch of you.
Now don't go getting paranoid, because you've been outmatched
I'll shout you one free bungee jump, no bloody strings attached.



Bunjee jumper

Viva

Michael Darby, 2003

Delivered at the birthday celebration for two distinguished gentlemen of Italian ancestry, Cav. Antonio Caputo and Mr George Bidder. Mezzanotte is one of the many excellent Italian restaurants at Dee Why Beach.

*Viva Cavaleri Antonio e Viva Signor George
Your friendship is historic, created in the forge
Of history and culture and a liking for fine wine
To celebrate your birthdays we're here to drink and dine
Two men whose mighty efforts made the wheels of commerce turn
Two men who built the district, gave folks a chance to earn.
Mezzanotte's full of bonzer blokes and women of great beauty
We drink the health of two good men. *Buono compleanno! Salute!**

Photojournalist: Mike Larder of
Yamba NSW. lshots@bri.net.au

The Wellshot Pub

Michael Darby, 1993

This poem was composed in December 1993 as the author walked into Ilfracombe from Longreach. The enterprising original founder, Paddy Finn, shifted the pub westward with the advance of the railhead from Rockhampton until the building reached its present location in 1891. There it was named for the local centre of economic activity, Wellshot Station, at that time carrying more sheep than any other grazing property in the world. The Wellshot Hotel, with a rear accommodation section built in 1956, is owned by famous dog and horse trainer Damien Curr, formerly of Dagworth Station.



When the road is a blazing blowtorch aimed right between your toes
And the stench of rotting kangaroo is massaging your nose

When the heat wave in the distance looks and feels like molten glass
And the grasshoppers are throwing dice for the very last blade of grass
When you'd trade your swag for a well-filled glass and a soak in a well-filled tub
You wonder how far you have to trudge to reach the Wellshot pub.
The Wellshot pub serves Bundy Rum and the barmaid's teeth are pearly
The tourists like to stay up late and the temperature rises early.
The Wellshot pub's your other home
It's right in the middle of Ilfracombe.

There's half a dozen wedge-tails up drifting in the blue
If you don't arrive in Ilfracombe they'll be circling for you
The soles of your worn and dusty boots are squelching in the tar
And your fevered brain tastes an icy drink in an air-conditioned bar.
Where a twenty five pound feral cat is stalking a dingo cub
Even if you have to crawl, you'll find the Wellshot pub.
The Wellshot pub has tall bar stools, and horses on the walls
And photos taken by someone sober at local B & S Balls.
The Wellshot Pub's your other home.
It's the cultural centre of Ilfracombe.

While a billion buzzing bushflies make a dreadful deafening sound
But provide the only source of shade that's anywhere to be found
Slowly the horizon grows a lump before your eyes
And out of the shimmering searing heat appears a little rise.
You take a squint with a weary eye. "Is it just a patch of scrub?"
Then a sign beside the highway says "Three clicks to the Wellshot Pub".
The Wellshot pub has Fourex beer and the girls have pearly teeth
And just because we need the rhyme, the barman's name is Keith.
The Wellshot Pub's your other home
It's the throbbing heart of Ilfracombe.



Former *Great Outdoors* reporter Bridget Adams found true love when she went to Ilfracombe in 1997 to write a story about bushman Damien Curr. Damien and Bridget now have a daughter, Madeline, and live on Newstead Station, Ilfracombe. Photo: RM Williams Outback www.outbackmag.com.au, 18 May 2004

The Wombat Miracle

Michael Darby 1999

The bank manager was kindly, but his face severe and grim
*"I know that things are pretty tough, but we'll have to face it, Jim.
You're deep in debt up to your neck, the Bank just can't go on
And prop you up when drought has meant your equity has gone.
The best advice that I can give, I'll tell you as a friend
Cash in all your life insurance, your finances to mend.
That healthy sum will clear your loans and leave money in the bank
Take Josephine on holiday, and you'll have me to thank."*

The old man bristled at the thought. *"I've paid for fifty years
To build an asset off the farm, to spare my wife the tears
Of poverty if I should die, so don't give me advice
I feel like I'm a piece of cheese surrounded by the mice."
"Look here my friend," the banker said, "I really mean no harm
But you good folk are childless, and a farm is just a farm.
You owe it to yourself, you know, and to your loving wife
Get rid of all your burdens, and give yourself a life."*

Jim Passmore quietly left the bank and slowly motored back
It was the last the townsfolk saw of him along that track
A lesser or a younger man might be consumed with rage
But there's no point in getting stressed at eighty years of age.
Then came the shock all farmers dread, when a stable catches fire
Not much left of the hero in his hay-fuelled funeral pyre
A tragic brutal smokecloud above the noonday haze
The old man saved the horses but perished in the blaze.

The widow took it bravely, her jawline firmly set
And the dear old girl was comforted by her new-found wombat pet.
A young and healthy robust male, named 'Jimmy', sleek and strong
Who seemed to grunt in harmony when the widow crooned a song.
The lawyer fellow phoned one day: *"It's the Will I've called about.
Your husband made a strange bequest, of that there is no doubt.
A life estate of course is yours, but when you pass away
The farm becomes a sanctuary for every wombat stray."*

*"I'm supposed to auction off the sheep, all but a hundred head
And let the wombats use the bath, the lounge room and the bed
It's my task to keep the place insured, and painted now and then
But if the house should ever burn, to build it once again.
I'm obliged to mend the fences and make sure the power is on
And keep the whole place running, long after you have gone.
And if there's sign of illness in a wombat or a pet
I should lose no time at all in fetching out the vet."*

*"A wombat sanctuary!" he said, "It's tragic more than funny
'Let's make a challenge to the Will and you can spend the money."
"Relax," the widow told him, "I'll accept my husband's plan,
'I'll leave things be the way they are, and do the best I can."
So soon they granted probate, but the town was filled with gloom
For the widow – at the riverbank – had fallen to her doom
They never found her body, just her handbag and her hat
And some fish that she'd been catching, for feeding to her cat.*

The lawyer fellow did his job, in caring for the farm
Ensuring sheep, dogs, cats and wombat would never come to harm.
It happened that he noticed while visiting one day
That a lively female wombat had proudly come to stay.
Upon the old verandah, in the rocking chair she sat
Attended by two sheep dogs and the widow's tabby cat
She seemed quite fond of Jimmy, they were more than just good friends
With the birth of baby wombats, is how this story ends.

Painting by Bev Irwin

