

ILLUSTRATED  
MAINLY BY  
DUFFY

## BRIAN O'KEEFE



# **WE'RE ONLY HUMAN!**

By  
**BRIAN O'KEEFE**

Published 1991

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## ALLAN JOHN DUFFY

**"DUFFY"** — Ex-tent show wrestler, ex-coalminer, satirist, columnist, poet and cartoonist, Allan John Duffy is best known for his landscape paintings of the Australian outback.

A big man (in every sense of the word) he is equally at home riding a camel along a hot dry creek bed, looking for subject matter for his paintings, as he is sitting at the solid wooden table in the kitchen of his cosy Collingwood home enjoying a few bottles of wine whilst sharing yarns with friends and strangers alike.



Here's to you, as good as you are.  
Here's to me as bad as I am.  
As good as you are and as bad as I am,  
I'm as good as you are as bad as I am.

*Irish toast*





## BRIAN O'KEEFE

Brian O'Keefe was born on 2.2.44 in Woking, England, whilst his mother was evacuated from London during the Second World War. In 1955 his parents dragged him out to Australia where, in 1966, he decided to retire from full-time employment and make life a working holiday.

Attempting to ward off starvation in various parts of the world he found employment as a stage hand, envelope licker, ski lift operator, dishwasher, house-painter, farm hand, gardener, musician, pickle jar filler, babysitter, busker, timber mill worker, housekeeper and zinc plater. He has sold books of his poetry (with little success) to tourists in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Australia, England and America, and has put on one-man shows of Australiana.

During this period Brian did have a few notable successes including being rejected for national service in both Australia and America; rejected as a prospective monk at a monastery in the Highlands of Scotland; was made redundant as a dishwasher in Montreal; survived a night of arak drinking in Sri Lanka; escaped Big Anna in Fiji; barely escaped marrying into a Sumatran Royal Family; escaped Briagolong.



May the grass grow long on the road to hell for want of use

*Irish toast*

# PREFACE

I was hitch-hiking from Melbourne to Queensland in 1979 when I stopped off to say goodbye to a few friends who had gone to live in the bush near a small town called Briagolong (or Bringyourgroga-long, as it is known locally). That visit ended up lasting ten years.

In this book I have selected some of the more light-hearted aspects of bush life that appealed to me during that time, all of which is, of course, the truth . . . although some parts may be more truthful than others!

Some of the yarns relate to local happenings, others are traditional, whilst a few I wrote myself, or embellished. I wrote the 'Dunny' and 'Dust Cocky' verse whilst living in a hut by the banks of the Freestone Creek about 12 kilometres north of Briagolong. This hut is featured in another book 'Tales From The Wonderment'.

Wherever possible I have acknowledged the authors of the other poems — which I consider to be masterpieces of bush verse. I sincerely apologise if I have not credited anyone who deserves recognition for a poem, or yarn. Unfortunately, a lot of bush verse is only known to be written by 'Anonymous'. The same goes for most yarns. I would love to have known the people who wrote, or gave birth to orally, so much of what is now part of white Australia's folklore and heritage.

I also apologise to the author of 'The Springing Shearer'. A friend of mine passed it on to me but couldn't remember the author's name, or whether that was, in fact, the title. From inquiries I have made it is possible that a Mack Cormack, McCormack, or Mac Cormack from Meetung might be the author. I have read a yarn with the same theme so I don't know whether the yarn or the poem came first. Anyway, it is one of my favourites.

Whilst I am apologising I must also apologise to the author of 'A Gentle Hint' Edward Harrington (who is, unfortunately, no longer with us) for using a bit of poetic licence in altering a few of the locations and terms used in his poem. Wherever he is now humping his swag I hope he excuses me.

I am indebted to Robert (Fred) McHenry, of Llowalong, for some of the yarns, and also to Jesse Morley of Munro and Charles Lindenwood for a few others.

I hope that no-one takes offence at any name used in this book, they were used fondly.

Brian O'Keefe.



# AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

**O**ne of the most wonderful experiences in life must surely be to sit by a campfire at night, after a hard day's work, and enjoy a few cups of billy tea whilst listening to men, who have lived their lives in the bush, tell yarns, usually with a fair amount of good-natured one-upmanship.

Some of these people are masters of the art of storytelling and could make you believe that the biggest lie was gospel truth, then have you wondering whether or not the truth might have been a lie. In the end it doesn't really matter, all that matters is in the telling.

The yarn-tellers' stage is the bush; their footlights the campfire's flames; their audience a few battered faces (and whatever watches from the dark beyond the fire); their source the humour, dreams and memories of all those who battle their way through life, accepting no master or servant; their script, imagination.

Unfortunately it is a dying part of the Australian heritage. Sadly, nowadays, it is too easy to press a button for 'entertainment' and switch off our imagination.

"Did I tell you about the bloke who was mustering some straggler bullocks up on the high plains and broke his leg 50 kilometres from any help?" asked Dingo, not caring whether or not the others had heard his story because he was going to tell it anyway. "He was a tough old coot. Charlie McInnes was his name" he continued without waiting for an answer. "What happened was this. There's some rugged country up there and Charlie's horse had just cleared a fallen log when it trod in a wombat hole and fell, throwing the old bloke pretty heavily to the ground and knocking him out.

"When he regained consciousness he found that he had a broken leg and his poor old horse was dead with a broken neck so, seeing how the night was closing in, he decided to lie alongside the dead horse and wait 'till morning. Anyway, he dozed off to sleep. When he woke up the next morning Charlie was horrified to see that dingoes had eaten most of the flesh from off of the horse, but it gave him an idea . . ."

"What was that?" interrupted Bluey.



"I was just going to tell you if you'd give me a chance" replied Dingo. Not one to be hurried he picked a burning twig from out of the fire and relit his pipe before resuming the story. "He reckoned he could make a bit of a splint out of the ribs so he broke a couple off, found a piece of rope amongst his gear, and splinted his leg.

"He hobbled for fifty agonising kilometres before he reached the Dargo Bush Nursing Hospital and then, just outside the door, he fainted from the pain. When he regained consciousness next day he was in bed with a doctor standing over him, so old Charlie slowly rolls a smoke — he's feeling pretty pleased with himself you see — then he looks up at the doctor and says: 'Well, Doc, what d'ya think of the first aid job I did on meself?' 'Not bad. Not bad at all' replied the doctor. 'Only one thing wrong though'. 'And what's that?' asks Charlie. 'Well' the doctor said, 'you splinted the wrong leg!' "

"They breed 'em tough up there" commented Jesse, rolling a cigarette.

Everyone agreed.

"D'you know what Charlie said when the doctor asked him if he was married?" queried Dingo, turning to look in the direction of a horse whinnying beyond the firelight. "He said 'No Doc, I always reckoned I'd sooner want something I didn't have than have something I didn't want.' "

"Too bloody right" piped up one of the others gathered around the fire.

"Talking of marriage" said Fred, "me and Trevor Bowman were leaving for Adelaide one day. Trevor had a sheep job on a boat and I was going to drive across with him. At any rate, as we're leaving his place, his wife calls out 'Cheerio Darling' and Trevor leans out the car window and says: 'Hey, while I'm away make sure you keep both legs in the one stocking!' "

"He's a card" remarked Jack getting up and going to his swag to get a bottle of rum.

"Yeah" agreed Fred, "and, while we're driving, naturally we get into a bit of sex talk and I said to Trevor: 'Wouldn't you reckon that probably the best sensation in life is when you actually get someone different into bed and open up a new account?' and he said: 'Nope', so I said: 'What do you reckon the best sensation is then?' and Trevor says: 'The sound of a good dog working in the bush on a frosty morning.' "

Everyone cracked up. After they've finished laughing and wiping the tears from their eyes Cooge says:

"There's a real bushman for you!" Then he turned to Bluey and asked: "How's your Missus, Blue? I haven't seen her for quite a while."

"Oh, she's alright but I'm not too popular with her at the moment."

"How come?"

"Aw" said Bluey, stirring a stick in the fire and watching sparks rise into the night. "Her brother was down from Melbourne and I was telling him how great the fishing is at Mallacoota when she jumps up and says: 'You and your fishing. You think so much of it that I bet you can't remember the day we were married?' And like a bloody idiot I said: 'Yes I can dear. It was the day I caught ten bream in twenty minutes at dawn on the Mitchell River, near the Wy Yung bridge.' "

"What was wrong with saying that?"

"Blowed if I know but she didn't appreciate it."

"Maybe she's never forgiven you for the day you caught that big salmon off the Ninety Mile Beach and it got tangled in a clump of seaweed while you were reeling it in."

"That was the biggest salmon I ever hooked" sighed Bluey.

"Yeh" responded Cooge, "but Beryl didn't appreciate it when you told her to hop in and free the line before the sharks got him."

"I was fishing from the jetty down at Paynesville not long ago" reminisced Jack, "when this magnificent luxury launch cruised by. On board was a really stunning, absolutely fantastic blonde in a skimpy bikini. Well, that's alright, then she starts waving at me so I wave back, then she stops the launch and asks if I want to come aboard."

"You're kidding" said Ross, wide-eyed with jealousy.

"No. True dinks. Anyway, she asks me if I've caught any fish and I says yeh, I got a few. Then she suggests I come aboard for a cruise while she cooks 'em. I knew then that I had it made. So I grabs me gear and jumps aboard — I didn't have to be asked twice. She cooks the fish and serves 'em with a bottle of chilled wine. It was a bloody delicious meal and when we'd finished she says: 'You look a bit tired, why don't you lie down on the bunk while I clear up?' So I stretched out on the bunk and a few minutes later this beautiful woman says: 'Move over, darling' and starts to get onto the bunk with me. So, of course, I roll over, and rolled right off the pier into the water. Gave me a nasty shock!"

Jack poured some rum into his mug then passed the bottle to Dingo.

"I saw old Frank Doyle the other day" remarked Fred, as he kicked a smouldering log back into the fire.

"Who's he when he's home?" asked Jesse.

"You remember Frank, he's the bloke with the screwed-up face and the foghorn voice. . . Funny as a play, in fact he's been certified."

"Can't recall him."

"Anyway, he was the biggest cattle punter around these parts for years, used to take incredible risks. Back in the early seventies it came in dry and he had about 3000 cattle around his neck. It was when the

cattle job really collapsed and everyone was saying 'the job's very sick and we can't see any light in the tunnel for about eight or nine years, but then we could be wrong'. Anyway, it got too much for old Frank."

"What happened to him?" enquired Jesse, reaching for the bottle and pouring some rum into his mug of tea.

"Well", continued Fred, "he used to take a few orders for different people. Say you wanted 30 or 40 heifers, it was a lot easier to give Frank the order to buy them on the market for you than to go and buy them yourself because it would save the competition. Say he had orders to buy 400 head of cattle it would mean there were ten less people in the market to bid against, so it was actually cheaper to get him to buy your cattle than to buy them yourself.

"Anyway, he went to Omeo this day — it was the big Omeo/Benambra calf sales and there's 7000 head of cattle lined up and, bang, they start to sell. Bom, goes the auctioneer. 'Frank Doyle, Frankie Doyle, F.D. Doyle, Frank D. Doyle'. This is going on and old Frank's throwing his hands in the air. 'Frank Doyle, Frankie Daley Doyle, F.D. Doyle, Frank D. Doyle again. How many d'ya want? There's three hundred of these Cobungra calves. You c'n take a truck load or you c'n take two truck loads. What d'ya need Frank? . . . Take the lot? Thanks Frank.'

"At the end of the sale they've sold 7000 head of cattle and Frank's bought 5000 of them. That's alright. People are saying: 'Aw, I admire his fortitude. We reckon the job's stuffed but Frankie reckons it's gonna come good.'

"What happened was he'd had a mental breakdown a day or two beforehand and he'd had orders, regardless of whether or not the job was stuffed, to buy 500 head of cattle from different ones around the district. Y'know, they said: 'We'll take a punt. We'll buy a few of those Omeo cattle and run them on' and old Frank had gone and put a nought on everyone's order!"

"Blimey, what a mess" said Cooge.

"It gets worse" commented Fred, "y'see, they all get delivered. You can imagine, say you've ordered about forty steers and suddenly there's ten semi-trailers come whistling up your drive with 400 on board, you'd start yelling: 'What the bloody hell's going on?' wouldn't you?"

"Too bloody right."

"Blood oath."

"You're not kidding."

"What d'you reckon!"



"So he ended up delivering 4,500 cattle that hadn't been ordered!" laughed Fred.

"What happened to them?" asked Jesse.

"They were delivered back to Frank's place and, because he wasn't the full quid at the time, he was put into a psychiatric hospital for a bit of a rest. Anyway, the old boy ended up losing about \$500,000 on the whole transaction, poor bludger. Seeing as how he's been certified he can't buy again, but he's still as smart as ever."

A cricket started chirruping from out of the night. Another answered. Fred poured himself a cup of well-brewed tea before continuing:

"When he was a big punter he had a lot of paddocks around Sale. Holding paddocks where, if you'd bought cattle out of Bairnsdale to give 'em a fly in Sale the following day, you had a paddock to give 'em a chew in overnight. Anyway, I was doing a bit of punting myself at the time and I was using Frank's paddocks to hold a few old chopper cows, a lot of cows and calves, and a few joined cows. That was alright, Frank was always on the ball. He'd come around every morning checking on the cattle and then he'd give you a ring to tell you how they were.

"I had to go to Joe Staley's funeral in Maffra. Funny thing how there seems to be blokes dying now that never died before. Anyhow, Joe was a very popular feller so there was a huge crowd at the church. I was about two rows behind old Frank at the mass and the priest said: 'Let us pray.' There's dead silence as we all start to bow our heads when suddenly Frank spins around and says: 'Hey, Fred, one of those bell-titted old cows of yours calved last night. Good calf. Make about sixty dollars!' Of course the whole church broke up. This was a funeral, mind. Anyway, towards the end of the service everyone had settled down, they say: 'Peace, peace' and the congregation start shaking hands. Frank spins around again and says: 'Shake hands and come out fighting' you know, the old boxing term. Of course everyone cracks up again!"

The moon rose higher whilst whips of cloud brushed past its distant brow. A night-bird called distantly from within the night. Flames flickered from the campfire and shadows danced upon the weather-beaten faces sitting around the fire. The bush is dark and mysterious beyond the firelight. Ross reached for the rum and takes a swig. Suddenly the crickets stopped chirruping — Jesse had taken off his boots.

"Ah, that's better" he sighed with pleasure and relief, whilst the others protested.



"Geez, Jesse" complained Ross, "your feet remind me of an old rouseabout I used to know out back of Korumburra. His feet stank so much that they repelled the blowflies, and I doubt he'd had a wash since the day he was born. In fact a few of us were so sickened by his stench we decided to strip him and throw him in the dam."

"We should do that with Jesse's socks" gasped Bluey.

"Just you try it" growled Jesse, aggressively.

"Did you throw the rousie in the dam?" enquired Jack.

"Too bloody right we did" replied Ross, "but not before we'd peeled off a few layers of his putrid clothing, with the old feller screaming out blue murder, and noticed a strange lump on his back. It wasn't until we'd stripped off a few more layers of disintegrating singlets and fouled flannels that we realised the lump was the old bludger's schoolbag!"

"Aaarrggghh. Dirty old bugger" said Cooge, with feeling. "Still, at least you had a dam to wash in. Where I came from it was so dry it was the only place in Australia where the trees used to follow the dogs around. In fact, you remember how in the bible it rained for forty days and forty nights? Well, we only got one drop. I tell a lie, we actually got two drops but one fell on a cow cocky's head and he was that surprised he fainted and we had to throw three buckets of dust on him to bring him around. Even worse than that, it was so hot the beer used to evaporate before you could get it into your mouth, and the mirages had all dried up. The only way we knew when a drought had ended was when we had enough water to put in our tea."

"You know how you reckoned there's blokes dying now that never died before" said Jesse to Fred, changing the subject from socks and water. "Well, d'you know that no person living in Briagolong is allowed to be buried in the Briag cemetery?"

"Why's that?" asked Jack.

"Because" replied Jesse, with a straight face and stroking his beard, "they're not dead yet!"

The moon rose higher and a light mist began descending. A few more logs were thrown on the fire and the conversation drifted from one subject to another as the campfire's smoke drifted up into the night.

Dingo snapped off a few leafy twigs from a Manuka bush and threw them into the flames. There was silence for a while as everyone watched the brief firework display. Then, for no other reason than that it happened to cross his mind at the time, Dingo said:

"I've got it on good authority why men snore."

Those gathered around the campfire, being no different to other men were, of course, snorers of varying intensity, so they were inter-

ested to know the reason why they were cursed by this irritating phenomenon.

"I've done quite a bit of research on the subject" said Dingo, "and apparently it goes back to the prehistoric days when there were brontosauruses, dinosaurs, sabre-tooth dingoes, giant emus and all sorts of dangerous animals. In those days people used to sleep in caves for safety — on beds of straw, or ferns, or lilos or something. Anyway, this precaution didn't always stop a horrible monster from sneaking in and carting off some member of the family. I mean, it'd give you a nasty turn if you were curled up all comfy in bed, and probably dreaming of inventing a wheel or something that would make you rich, then suddenly you wake up and find yourself being ripped to pieces by some terrordactyl or goreasaurus."

"Struth, it'd give you a bit of a shock alright," agreed Bluey.

"Too right" said Dingo. "Well, it seems that one particular evening, after a hard day's hunting, some prehistoric men were sitting around a campfire, boiling the billy and having a bit of a yarn while their wives cooked them up nice big feeds of barbecued Mammoth steaks and fried onions, or whatever vegies they used to eat back then. Naturally the conversation got around to their fear of being ripped to pieces in their sleep, in fact they used to talk about little else.

"Now, as fate would have it, one of the wives had been startled awake the previous night by a strange noise her husband had made in his sleep. She mentioned this to them as she helped to serve up the meal and said that it was such a frightening sound she doubted any animal would come near the cave if they heard it. The men were intrigued, so they decided to bring their families and spend the night in the woman's cave in the hope that they too might hear the sound her husband made, who's name, by the way, was Snaw.

"Before it got dark all the men, women and children crammed into the cave and waited for Snaw to go to sleep. Of course, with everyone watching, this took him quite a while but eventually he drifted off. Nothing happened for a long time and everyone was getting restless and wishing they were back in their own caves trying to get a good night's rest. Some of the babies started crying and their mothers gave them bones to suck so they didn't wake Snaw up. Suddenly a strange and terrifying sound was heard. It was quite soft at first, but grew in intensity until it filled the cave. The sound was coming from Snaw.

"The kids began screaming and wailing . . . in fact a few of them rushed out into the night and were eaten by terrordactyls. Their parents just sat and stared, wide-eyed with wonder until the commotion woke Snaw up. 'What happened? What happened?', he wanted to know — he was sure some catastrophe had taken place. He was told of the strange sounds he had made, and all the men wanted to know

how he did it. Of course Snaw didn't have a clue because he was always asleep when he made them so from that night on, for about a month, one or another of the prehistoric men stayed with Snaw and practised the sound while he slept, which became known as Snaw's sound, or snoring as we now call it. They all agreed that Snaw's missus was right, the sound was sure to frighten away bloodthirsty beasts and stop them from tearing members of their families to pieces. Eventually all the men learnt how to snore and their loved-ones weren't bothered any more whilst they were asleep — at least not by wild bloodthirsty animals. Unfortunately though the snorers' families never really got a good night's sleep again because of the noise.

"Apparently the loudest snorer was widely respected and usually made into a king, or whatever they had back then. Each of these kings were named after the first man to snore. There was Snaw the First, Snaw the Second etc up until the greatest snorer of them all, a bloke called Snaw the Eighth Again. He was called this because prehistoric man could only count up to as many fingers and toes as they had. Of course those who'd had a foot or an arm taken by a wild animal could only count up to fifteen. When they reached Snaw the Twentieth they went back to Snaw the First and so on, over and over again so that no-one knows how many King Snaws there actually were.

"Anyway, this Snaw the Eight Again came to a bad end, as did many members of his family. What happened was this. Ever since the first man snored women began getting fed up with never getting a good night's sleep but they put up with it for the sake of their families' safety, which is fair enough. However, one afternoon, probably a thousand years down the track, a mob of women went to a hen's party for the Queen's daughter and while they were there the King decides to get out of the way and have a bit of a snooze. Of course, as soon as he's asleep he starts snoring, and his was a bloody mighty snore. It would probably have put the snoring of all you blokes together to shame.

"His snoring is so loud that the women find they can't hear each other talk, so they can't have a bit of a gossip — which pees them off somewhat. Anyway, to cut a long story short, they have to go and sit outside the cave to make themselves heard. Now this was probably at the beginning of the ice age because it's pretty nippy outside the cave and there's a bit of snow and sleet about, in fact conditions were miserable, which made the women even more grumpy, so they don't exactly enjoy their hen's party.

"When it was finished the Queen sat fuming in a corner of the cave until her husband woke up. 'D'you have a good time dear?' he asked in all innocence. 'Don't you dare talk to me about a good time!' she replied, getting her back up. 'If you don't stop that damn snawing I swear I'll bloodywell brain you!' The King probably thought it was

the wrong time of the month because he just smiled and said: 'Yes dear.'

"That night, while her husband was asleep and snoring up a storm, the Queen's mind must have snapped because she went to where she kept a dirty great rock she used for tenderising Mammoth steaks and bashed her husband's head in with it. Naturally, after a few gurgles, the snoring stopped. Outside the cave a hungry, man-eating wombat-aurus waited, afraid to raid the cave in case the snoring started again.

"The Queen made up a comfortable bed for herself in one of the antecaves where some of her children were sleeping and settled down for the best night's sleep she ever had. Unfortunatley it was also the last night's sleep she ever had because just before dawn the wombat-aurus, having heard no sound of snoring for about seven or eight hours, plucked up the courage to enter the cave and tore everyone inside to pieces.

"For some reason or another reverence of snoring seems to have gone into a bit of a decline from about that period on" ruminated Dingo, staring into the flames. "Maybe the ice-age had something to do with it because most of the man-eating prehistoric creatures were wiped out, so there wasn't much necessity to snore any more. It's unfortunate that snoring is not held in high esteem by women, because it's just the natural instinct of men trying to protect their loved ones."

"My father told me a story about snoring" said Jesse, after taking a sip of rum-laced tea from his mug. "You know, my old man used to have bullock and horse teams back in the days when they were digging the irrigation channels around Maffra and Newry and all 'round that part of Gippsland. Well, one evening he gets trapped with a team of horses on the opposite side of a flooded creek to where he wants to be. He can't do anything about it and decides that he's going to have to spend a miserable night or two camped out until the water goes down enough to let him cross.

"He's just about to set up a makeshift camp when he hears voices drifting out of the bush. Going to investigate he finds a few huts in a clearing and some timber cutters sitting around a fire. Cooking up a bit of tucker they were. My Dad goes over to them and says g'day. They say g'day back and ask Dad if he wants some tucker. He says thanks very much and joins them.

"After the meal he asks if he can camp in one of their huts for the night and one of these timber cutters replied that he's welcome to but the only hut with a spare bed in it also contains a swaggie who sleeps for most of the time and is about the worst snorer in the world. 'There's no way known that you'll get any sleep' he tells my old man. 'That's no problem' says Dad, and asks which hut it is. 'It's that one

over there' the bloke replies, pointing to a ramshackle structure on the far edge of the clearing.

"The old man's feeling a bit weary so he says goodnight and goes back to pick up his swag, then wanders over to the hut. Meanwhile he can hear these blokes laughing and joking about what a terrible night's sleep he's in for.

"The next morning Dad has a bit of a lay in and, by the time he gets up, the timber cutters are boiling the billy and preparing breakfast. As the old man wanders over one of them calls out: 'Bet the swaggies' snoring kept you awake most of the night!' Dad just smiled and walked up to the fire. 'As a matter of fact' he says, 'that was one of the best night's sleep I've ever had in me life.' Of course the other blokes find this a bit difficult to believe so they ask him how come. 'Well' replied the old man, warming his hands by the fire. 'I'm a pretty good snorer meself, so I did what a feller did to me one night after complaining about me snoring.' The timber cutters were intrigued, so Dad kept them in suspense for a while and turns to warm his backside by the fire, then he says: 'As soon as I walked into the hut I went over to the cot where the swaggie was lying, looking like he's just about ready to drift off to sleep, leant over him, gave him a big sloppy kiss on the cheek and whispered: 'Good night, Darling'. I reckon the poor bludger would have been too afraid to go to sleep and probably stayed awake all night."

A possum scurried up a tree not far from where the men were sitting and peered down as Jack poured the dregs from the billy into his mug. He took a sip, screwed up his face, then tossed the billy's contents into the fire.

"Christ!" he said, "a sip of that would make a rabbit spit in a brown dog's eye. Where's the rum?"

Ross passed over the bottle, which only had about a couple of fingers remaining in the bottom. Jack looked accusingly at Ross but didn't say anything, he just necked the bottle.

"You know Henry Lawson once said something very profound about the grog," said Ross.

"What was that?" asked Cooge.

"He reckoned that drink made you feel the way you should feel, without it!"

"Isn't that the truth" agreed Jack. "In fact, you know how they reckon drink's a terrible thing? Well, there's one thing worse than that."

"What is it?" asked Jess.

"Thirst" replied Jack, "and someone had better put the billy back on or that's what we're all going to die from seeing as how someone drank most of the rum." He looked accusingly at Ross again but Ross

ignored the look, picked up the billy and went down to the creek for some more water.

"You know" said Jack, rolling a smoke as Ross returned with a full billy which he put in the side of the fire. "Talking of drink reminds me of a poem, one of the best I've ever heard, in fact there's a copy of it tacked up on the wall of the bar in the Dargo Pub."

Jack cleared his throat. "It's called The Tragedy," he said, then stared dreamily out into the night and recited with feeling:

"I grabbed her by her slender neck  
She could not call or scream.  
I took her to my darkened tent  
Where we would not be seen.

I tore from her her flimsy wrap,  
I gazed upon her form...  
She was so frightfully cold and damp  
And I so delightfully warm.

I pressed my feverish lips to hers  
She gave me every drop.  
I took from her her very soul  
She could not make me stop.

Through me she's like she is today  
That's why she's lying here  
Just another empty bottle  
That once was full of beer."



"That's a beauty," responded Cooge. "It reminds me of another one." And he also stared into the night, as if some poetic spark awaited out in the dark to ignite the muse within his heart, then recited:

"The wonderful love of a beautiful maid  
The love of a staunch, true man  
The love of a baby, unafraid  
Have existed since life began.  
But the greatest love  
The love of loves  
Even greater than that of a Mother  
Is the passionate, tender, and infinite love  
Of one drunken bum for another."

Cooge finished the poem, nodded his head to whatever may have inspired him, then enjoyed the applause of his mates. Everyone lapsed into thought for a while, as steam began to rise from beneath the

billy's lid. Fred grabbed a stick, lifted the lid, threw in a handful of tea and let it bubble briefly before taking the billy out of the fire and leaving it to brew, away from the flames, then he turned to Dingo and said:

"I was at the Royal Show last September  
And I hazily remember  
As I staggered up and down in drunken pride  
That me legs went all a'stutter  
And I fell down in the gutter  
And a pig came up and lay down by me side.  
As I lay there in the gutter  
Thinking thoughts I couldn't utter  
I thought I heard a passing woman say:  
'You can tell someone that boozes  
By the company he chooses.'  
With that the pig got up and walked away."

"That happened to me once" said Jesse, "before I started courting Cynthia."

"Tell us about it" asked Bluey.

"Naw, I can't, she'd kill me if she knew" replied Jesse. "Tell you what though, I'll sing you a song. This is a really good version of Galway Bay. You know that old Irish song? Let me see, how does it go? Ah yeh, I remember."

Jesse tilted the brim of his battered old hat over his eyebrows, looked up, then sang in a voice that resembled the mating of a Queensland cane toad with a walrus:

"Maybe some day I'll go back again to Ireland  
If my old wife would only pass away.  
She nearly has my heart broke with her naggin'  
She's got a mouth as big as Galway Bay.

See her drinking down at the Paynesville Hotel/Motel  
And when the barman says 'My dear, it's time to go'  
She doesn't try to speak to him in Gaelic  
But in a language that the clergy do not know.

See her drinking sixteen pots of Foster's Lager  
And then she can walk home without a sway.  
If the sea was beer instead of salty water  
She'd live and die in Galway Bay.



On her chest she has tattooed a map of Ireland  
And when she takes her bath on Saturday  
She rubs the Sunlight soap around by Claudagh  
Just to feel the suds flow down to Galway Bay."

"Good one Jesse."

"Beauty."

"I didn't realise you could sing" smirked Bluey.

"Give us another one."

"Sing Danny Boy."

Jesse, a bit surprised that he'd actually sung in public, wasn't sure how to take the accolades, so he refused to give any further renditions and instead said:

"What's the difference between a Scotsman and a coconut?"

No-one knew the answer, so Jesse said, with satisfaction:

"You can get a drink from a coconut!"

"What's the difference between an Aussie wedding and an Aussie funeral?" asked Jack, not to be outdone. "One less drunk!"

"I'll tell you one" said Cooge. "There were two blokes having a drink over the border in a NSW pub. One of them turned to the other and said: 'I can't stand Victoria. It's full of footballers and tarts.' Suddenly the barman, a giant of a man leant over the bar and grabs the bloke who spoke by the throat. 'I'll have you know that my wife



comes from Victoria' he bellowed into the poor chap's face. 'What position does she play?' came the timid reply."

By then Jesse had put his boots back on and the crickets had begun to sing to each other again. Resin from a piece of black wattle that someone had thrown into the fire dripped out and sizzled in the flames. A kookaburra chuckled briefly. The men sipped at mugs of tea.

"Talking of the Treasures" one of them said as if awakening from his own thoughts, because no-one had mentioned the Treasure family. "Reminds me of a meeting I went to up at Dargo not long ago. There'd been a fair bit of controversy over steel versus rubber-jawed dingo traps. The RSPCA reckoned steel-jawed traps were too cruel so they were trying to introduce rubber-jawed ones, and snares, and that sort of stuff. Anyway, the actress, Lynda Stoner had come to this here seminar thing as the RSPCA's official representative and was eloquently putting her case that rubber-jawed dingo traps be introduced, and that when a dingo was trapped he should be anaesthetised, humanely castrated and then let go. Whereupon Jack Treasure flew to his feet and said: 'For God's sake woman, the dingoes are killing the sheep, not screwing 'em!' "

After everyone had finished cracking up Bluey said:

"There's some funny blokes around alright. Remember old Clarrie out at Briagolong? He's dead now."

"Yeh" replied Jesse. "He always used to sit in the same chair near the door of the public bar. Nice fella."

"Well" continued Bluey, "he was sitting in that chair one afternoon, sipping a whisky as usual, when a beautiful Bentley car pulls up outside and a chauffeur in a flash grey uniform and cap gets out and walks into the bar. You can imagine the interest that caused."

"Too right" agreed Fred. "Chauffeurs are as common as rum at a teetotallers' picnic out there."

"Of course, they found out later that he'd just driven Susan Peacock — this was back in the days when she was Andrew's wife — out to a friend's property and while they were boiling the billy he decided that he had enough time to sneak down to the pub for a quick beer."

"Wise man" commented Ross.

"Anyway" Bluey went on, "this chauffeur bloke walks up to the bar — all starched and pressed like he wouldn't have been out of place in the member's enclosure at the Melbourne Cup — and Clarrie looks up slowly from his whisky, casts a critical glance over this fellow and asks him, in that droll way of his, 'Up fer th' rabbitin' are ya mate?' "



"I was in the Briag pub one afternoon" reminisced Jesse. "Lesley Hocken was pulling the beers. There was only the two of us there and we was just having a quiet chat when the door opens and in walks this bloke. He was obviously from Queensland because he had a dirty great big cane toad sitting on top of his head. He walks up to the bar and Lesley said: 'Cripes, what happened to you?' and the toad replied: 'I don't know. It only started off as a wart on me bum!'"

"Pull the other one Jesse" scoffed Fred and then asked: "D'you remember Geordie Baker and that rundown patch of dirt out Moe way he called a turkey farm?"

"Yeh" answered Cooge. "He tried to sell it to me once, silly old coot."

"He wasn't so silly" said Fred. "In fact he was downright cunning."

"You must be talking about someone else" replied Cooge, scornfully. "I heard he went to a mindreader once and she gave him his money back."

"Anyway, as I was saying" said Fred. "for ages he'd been trying to palm that place of his off to some unsuspecting dill and then, one day, he was struck by a brilliant idea."

"Wonder his brain withstood the strain" butted in Cooge.

Fred ignored him. "He bought some bran and pollard to try and fatten the turkeys up for Christmas. About the same time he also bought some alluvial gold from an old miner who'd been panning for years up in the hills behind Geordie's place."

"Stole it more likely."

Fred continued ignoring Cooge. "Geordie had a deal to sell the turkeys to the local publican for Christmas dinner so, just before he delivers them, he mixes some gold in with the feed and gives it to them. Of course when the publican prepares the turkeys, what does he find inside 'em but this gold, so he puts two and two together and comes up with the idea that the birds must have scratched it out of the soil over at old Geordie's place. He rushed over, pretending to be full of Christmas spirit, and offers Geordie a bloody good price for the useless dump. Of course the old fellow accepted the money then promptly left the district. I heard the publican wasn't too impressed when he didn't find any gold on the land, and to make matters worse his wife said that she didn't want to have anything to do with a rundown turkey farm on top of trying to look after a pub so she left him and shot through."

"How did you know that he'd salted the feed?" queried Cooge, doubtful of the veracity of the tale.

"As it happened" said Fred, "the publican's missus was quite pally with my wife and she sent her a postcard from Surfer's Paradise telling Dulcie what had happened and that she'd run off with old Geordie."

"You wouldn't know it to look at me now" ruminated Jesse, scratching his beard, "but I made a fortune once."

"How'd you do that Jesse?" asked Ross, intrigued.

"Aw, I went up into the hills around the old goldmining town of Walhalla, collected all the disused mine shafts, cut them up and sold 'em for post holes to the cow cockies in South Gippsland."

"What a great idea" said Jack.

Ross laughed and then asked: "Well then, how do you brainwash a cow cocky?"

No-one knew the answer.

"Fill his gumboots up with water!"

"Bewdy" responded Jack. "Talking of gold, Charlie McNamara was telling me that old Harry Watson and his brother had real nice watch guards they'd made in plaited leather with lovely gold mountings. Charlie's uncle Jim asked 'em once if it was Mt Eliot gold — that was in the days of the gold rushes at Kiandra, Toolong and Mt Eliot. 'No' Harry said. 'It was the old man's inlays.' Apparently Harry's father kept his coffin as a bookcase for years and when the old feller finally kicked the bucket his sons ratted the gold from his teeth before nailing him up in his coffin."

"Geez, that was a bit rough" said Bluey, disgusted.

"That's what Charlie's uncle thought, and said so. Harry Watson said 'No fear. Gold's too bloody hard to dig out of the earth without bloody well burying it again!'"

"That's true enough" agreed Ross.

"I suppose so. It's still a bit rank but" commented Bluey. "Talking of that area reminds me of the time I was bringing some cattle down from Mt Eliot. One night, while I was asleep, something spooked 'em and they took off into the dark. 'Course they woke me up so, not even bothering to pull on me boots, I jammed me hat on me head, grabbed a nighthorse and, bare-back, set off hell-for-leather after the mob. We were going flat out in the pitch darkness over some pretty rough country when, without warning, we came to a creek, steep-sided and running a banker it was. Suddenly the horse propped and I zoomed like a bullet over its head — right across the stream. On the other side was a big old Stringybark tree so I grabbed it as I flew past and clung onto it like mad with both arms wrapped around the trunk. Now, believe it or not, but I hugged that tree so tight that, as I slid down, I ringbarked it all the way to the ground!"

"Aw, that's nothing" said Dingo, not to be outdone. "A good many years ago I was driving a mob of cattle outback of Orbost. It was a tough job as well, I can tell you, 'cos in some places the scrub was so thick a dog couldn't bark in it. Anyway, I'm slowly making a bit of headway when suddenly everything went dark. I was a bit concerned, and the cattle were fair spooked, bellowing and carrying on they were, but me and the dogs kept 'em moving - in fact the going was much easier because there wasn't so much scrub about. We kept

going for nigh on three days with hardly a break and I was beginning to feel a bit knackered when suddenly it started getting light again. It was then I realised I'd been droving the mob through one of those dirty great big hollow logs they've got out there!"

"Did I ever tell you of the time a tree saved my life?" asked Jesse. The others couldn't recall being told about it.

"It was a few years back now, when I was a bit fitter. I was bringing a mob down to the Bairnsdale saleyards and just riding along minding me own business when a ferocious, great brute of a bull burst out of the bush and charged straight at me with its head down, its mad eyes gleaming, and horns two metres wide. To make matters worse the horse bucked and threw me off.

"What did you do?" enquired Cooge.

"There wasn't much I could do. I just took off for the nearest tree, a big old dead one it was with only one branch and that was about 10 metres from the ground. I reached the tree with no more than a metre to spare then gathered myself for the leap of a lifetime — just as the bull took a swipe at me with its ruddy great horns."

"Did he get you?" asked Dingo.

"He didn't quite get me, just tore the seat out of me pants, but he scared me so much I missed the branch!"

"Bloody hell!" muttered Dingo, caught up in the tale.

"What happened then?" asked Cooge.

"Aw" replied Jesse, leaning over to pick a burning twig from the fire, using it to light his cigarette. "I managed to grab it on the way down!"

"There's the story about a bloke who's now in the Orbost Hospital" said Fred. "He used to be a famous horse-breaker around here called Rudy Cranburgh. Years ago his mother had the Bellbird pub and Rudy used to come down to Orbost to pick up the mail.

"We had a pub at Orbost and Rudy always stayed there on Sunday night and waited for the mail cart to arrive on Monday. While he was waiting he'd normally go down and throw a charge into the Snowy River and get himself a feed of fish. Anyway, he came down this Sunday and my old man said to him: 'Rudy, I'd go a bit easy tomorrow, there's a fisheries bloke been in the pub here since about Friday waiting for you to come in. He reckons he's going to nail you, so I'd cancel my fishing for this week if I were you'. So that's alright.

"Rudy's sitting in the bar on Monday morning at 10 o'clock when this fisheries bloke sidles up to him and says: 'I've been here for a couple of days trying to catch some fish. Do you know any secrets?' Rudy said: 'Yes. If you come with me I can show you how to catch 'em.' So they both grab their gear and go down to the Snowy, just before the old bridge. Rudy's got a bit of a primitive raft, a couple of 44 gallon drums with a plank across them. These two blokes climb aboard and paddle out into the middle of the river then Rudy gets out



**"We've still got our pride, mate."**

a charge of dynamite and pretends he's having trouble with the matches. He says to the fisheries bloke: 'Here, hang on to this for a minute' and hands him the dynamite. So he hangs on to it and Rudy lights the fuse. Naturally the fisheries bloke gets a bit concerned and says: 'What the hell will I do with it?' Rudy answers: 'I suppose you'll have to throw it in the water if you don't want to blow your hand off!' Case dismissed.

"But Rudy was a great character. A batchelor. Used to travel around in a wagon. He could do anything. If a motor blew up he could make up parts for it in the camp fire. He always used to go to the Melbourne Show, and there's one time he went down and was walking up Elizabeth Street, with his bandy legs, riding breeches, and a battered old hat on his head. A couple of yahoos approached Rudy and as they passed one of them said: 'Smell the gum leaves.' Rudy spun around and dropped both of them in their tracks, saying: 'Feel the branches!'"

"Serves 'em right" said Jesse, content in his visualisation of the scene.

"Yeh" agreed Fred. "Hey Jack, tell Jesse about that time you were at the saleyards with Sammy Grantiri."

"Aw, yeh" said Jack, remembering. "That was a laugh." Turning to Jesse he said: "There's some really funny Italians out Mt Taylor way

and I met one of them, Sammy, in Bairnsdale where Peter McCallum was selling his cattle for him. The sale begins and Peter says: 'Righto, boys, we've got a decent pen of heifers here. They're all on the job ready to calve. What do I have to start 'em. \$340. 340?' A few of them were a bit backward and didn't look like they was in calf. Sammy's there so McCallum turns to him and says: 'Hey, Sam, are all these heifers joined?' Sammy replied: 'I a-not know if they are a-joined but they all a-been a-screwed by the bulls.' Livened the sale up a bit."

"Talking of Italians" said Jesse, "reminds me of the time I was in the Club Hotel in Sale a fair while back. It was in the days when there was a cockatoo in a big cage in a corner of the public bar. Now this cockatoo was a bit limited in his vocabulary. All he could say was: 'You dirty Dago bastard'. Gawd knows where he learnt to say that. Anyway it used to be stuck in the corner there, glowering at the customers, and on the rare occasion that he did speak that's all he would say."

"One afternoon some mates and meself had knocked off early from hay carting, and were standing in the bar having a few drinks, when a Greek feller walks in and stands near us. We start yarning with him and apparently he's just got off the train from Melbourne to work on a farm between Sale and Maffra and was waiting for his boss to pick him up. Suddenly this old cocky pipes up. 'You dirty Dago bastard!' it says. Of course me mates and I have heard it before so we don't take much notice of it but this Greek gentleman gets quite irate. He's looking up and down the bar trying to figure out who said it when the cocky pipes up again: 'You dirty Dago bastard!' The Greek bloke swings around but there's no-one behind him, just the cocky. He's a bit puzzled — they probably don't have cockatoos in Greece — and stares at the cocky for a while. Then the bird sticks its chest out, pulls back its head, puts up its crest, and with a really evil gleam in its black beady eyes, again says, with real feeling: 'You dirty Dago bastard!'"

"The Greek's fuming by this time, and his anger's taken over his common-sense, so he rushes up to the cocky's cage and starts shaking it, saying: 'I not a Dago. I a Greek!' Meanwhile the bar's in uproar, blokes are laughing so much they're spilling their beer. The Greek's anger is only spurring the cocky on. 'You dirty Dago bastard! You dirty Dago bastard!' it keeps repeating, swaying from side to side on its perch. Finally the Greek sticks his fingers into the cage — probably intends to throttle the bird if he can grab hold of it. Of course this is a bad move because the cocky nips a chunk out of the end of a finger."

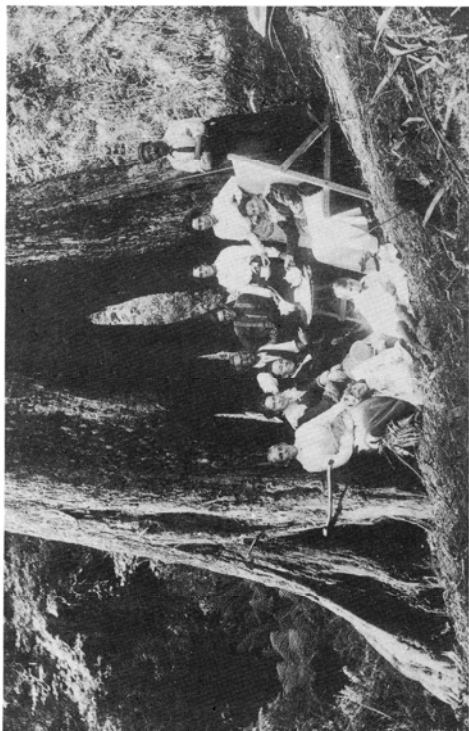
"The poor Greek's eyes are popping out and he's almost turned blue with anger. He's jumping up and down, shouting in Greek, blood's splattering around the bar and the blokes with me are just about wetting themselves. Then he starts trying to rip the cage apart and the cocky retreats as far away as possible and fluffs up his feathers

but doesn't make a sound . . . but if looks could kill I'd hate to have those black eyes looking at me the way they looked at the Greek.

"Eventually the barman came out and restrained him, in fact he had to throw the irate gentleman to the floor and sit on top of him. Fortunately the Greek's boss arrived and pacified him a bit then led him out of the bar. The cocky still didn't say a word, until just before the bar door closed behind the Greek and his boss, then it screeched out, louder than ever before: 'You dirty Dago bastard!' The Greek tried to get back in the bar but his boss dragged him off. We never saw him again. The funniest thing was though, a few weeks later I was in the same bar. This time the cocky never stopped talking. He kept calling out to everyone that passed his cage: 'You dirty Greek bastard! You dirty Greek bastard!'"







"One lump or two?"

# HARD-LUCK JOE

**T**here was a bloke who used to struggle to make a living from a worthless piece of land out Heyfield way. He was known locally as Hard-Luck Joe and was probably the ugliest man in a region that had more than its fair share of ugly men. It's said that when he was born he was so ugly that besides slapping the baby the doctor had to slap everyone else in the delivery room.

Apparently, when he was a kid, Hard-Luck's parents used to tie chop bones around his neck in what proved to be a futile effort to get the family mongrel to play with him, but the poor old dog just used to scamper off whining, with its tail between its legs, and hide under the ramshackle farm-house whenever Joe approached him.

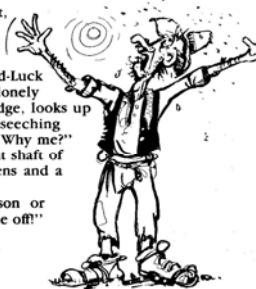
Eventually, like most other things on the farm, Hard-Luck's parents withered up and died, leaving Joe to try and carry on. Joe fared no better than his parents, and to make matters worse he married a puny, sickly woman almost as ugly as himself who unfortunately turned out to be the most fertile thing on the place because she gave birth to six or eight scrawny, useless brats of kids.

Well, somehow, between droughts, floods, illness and the ravages of cockatoos, kangaroos and rabbits, poor Hard-Luck managed to scratch off enough of a living to struggle from day to day until one day he hooks up his old, age-weary horse to the beaten-up plough and furrows about twenty feet when the plough gets caught on a root, startling the horse who has a heart attack and drops dead, breaking the plough.

Unable to take any more, Hard-Luck drops the reins, stands there as lonely as a bandicoot on a burnt-out ridge, looks up at the sky in despair and in a beseeching voice cries out: "Why me, Lord? Why me?"

Then the sky opens up, a great shaft of light shines out from the Heavens and a voice booms out:

"Because Joe, for some reason or another, you just seem to ping me off!"



# TIME, GENTLEMEN

It was about 9 o'clock at night, in the days of 6 o'clock closing, and the bar of the Briagolong Hotel was packed with enthusiastic drinkers, even the local police officer (still in uniform) was enjoying a drink, when someone had the bright idea of auctioning the policeman for a bit of fun...you had to make your own fun in those days.

The amiably-inebriated officer-of-the-law thought it was a great idea, as long as the proceeds went to charity. So he climbed up onto the bar and the auction proceeded, with the enthusiastic patrons screaming and yelling out bids whilst trying not to spill any beer.

To keep tally of the bidders the officer took his pencil and pad from out of his pocket then, suddenly, the bar door was flung open and three members of the vice squad pushed their way in, determined to enforce the 6 o'clock closing law and prosecute the lawbreakers. Of course they were a bit startled to see the local constable standing on the bar above the happy throng and one of the 'vicers' demanded to know what he was doing.

Fortunately, even though he had imbibed in a rather large quantity of the brew, the peacekeeper still had his wits about him and continued writing in his notebook as he informed the intruders that he was doing his duty and booking the out-of-hours drinkers, and that the reason he was standing on the bar was so that he could get a better look at the offenders.



One Sunday, before the days of ten o'clock closing, old Lawrie Cameron from over at Valencia Creek and some of his mates were in Melbourne for the first time. They'd all booked into Young and Jackson's hotel as bona fide travellers so that they could get a drink.

After they'd had a round they decided to go for a walk over Princes Bridge and back. Old Lawrie looked around at the tall buildings, trams and Flinders St Station then turned to Kevin, one of his mates, and exclaimed:

"By heck. I'll bet you it gets busy here of a Friday!"

# BLIND FAITH

**T**he recent floods in eastern Australia bring to mind one of my favorite yarns . . . maybe it is the truth, although it is too soon for me to be able to verify this.

The floodwaters had risen rapidly throughout the countryside and many people found themselves trapped. One of these, a man who was a devout Christian, had complete faith that God would look after his welfare so, even when he was forced to escape the swirling water by standing on the roof of his farmhouse he was not particularly worried.

After he'd been standing on the rusty corrugated iron sheeting for some time, watching the bloated corpses of his stock float past, one of his neighbours rowed up in a dingy.

"Hop aboard, Joe" he said, pulling up next to the chimney, onto which Joe was clinging. "I'll take you over to One Tree Hill, there's some dry land there."

"No thank you" said Joe. "I will be alright. The Lord will save me."

"Have it your way" replied the neighbour, who had always doubted whether Joe was the full quid . . . now he was sure that he wasn't.

The water continued to rise, forcing Joe to climb up on top of his chimney. Whilst he was perched there like a shag on a rock, praying, a State Emergency Service motor boat came racing towards him.

"You'll be right now, mate" called out one of the crew. "Looks like we got here just in time. Jump in and we'll take you to safety."

"Thank you very much for your trouble" Joe called back, "but I will be alright. I'm waiting for the Lord to save me."

"YOU'RE WHAT!" said the S.E.S. rescuer, in disbelief.

"I said I'm waiting for the Lord to save me" replied Joe, patiently.

"He'd better hurry up or it'll be too late" commented the would-be rescuer, believing that he'd heard everything now. "If that's the way you want it then far be it for us to interfere in the mysterious ways of the Lord." So off they went.

Logs, branches, bush animals, reptiles, refuse and various pieces of dreams floated past the believer as he waited for Divine intervention to get him out of his predicament. Eventually the water rose to a level where it reached his chest. Just then a helicopter flew up and hovered overhead. A rope was lowered while a voice called out through a loudspeaker:

"Tie the rope under your armpits and we'll haul you to safety. You'll have to get a wriggle on, but. There isn't much time."

"Will you please go away" yelled out Joe, getting a bit exasperated by all the attempts to save him. "I am placing my trust in the Lord and

He will not desert me in my hour of need."

"We've got a right one here" called out a crew member to the pilot.

"You're not kidding" replied the pilot. "Anyway, we can't hang around wasting time trying to convince him of the seriousness of the situation. We don't have much fuel left."

So away they went also, leaving Joe with nothing but his faith, and the rising floodwaters to test it. He was a determined man and though, finally, he stood on tippytoes on top of the chimney, with the water lapping first at his lips and then at his nostrils, he still believed that he was about to be saved. Even when the water rose over his head and with a bit of spluttering and gurgling he farewelled this life he still found it impossible to believe that he wouldn't be saved.

Apparently time doesn't mean anything when you're dead so this probably doesn't make any sense but some time later Joe found himself standing, drenched, outside the pearly gates of Heaven. He stood there for what seemed like ages but no-one came to let him in. After a while he started getting a bit peeved and was annoyed that God hadn't let a true believer like him in so that he could at least dry himself off and get a change of clothes. Eventually, impatience got the better of him and he began pounding on the gates.

"Is anyone home?" he called out. "It's me, your son, Joe, and I've just been drowned waiting to be saved from a flood."

After a while St Peter appeared on the other side of the gates and wanted to know what all the racket was about.

"It's me, Joe" replied the drowned man, "and I want to be let in."

"Why should you be let in when you didn't have enough faith to believe in God even though he sent two boats and a helicopter to rescue you?" replied St Peter. Then he turned and walked away, leaving Joe locked out.



# MICKETTY MULGA

T. Rankin

He worked with us at Wantigong  
Old Micketty Mulga Jim.  
We'd all a'gone blue mouldy  
If it hadn't been for him.  
He'd keep us yarning at the fire  
And laughing by the hour  
At his amusing anecdotes —  
By God he had a power.

He told us that up in Queensland  
(Where he'd never go again)  
He came upon a waterhole  
Upon a ten mile plain.  
Now, the tank was dry and Jim was dry  
But by a happy thought  
When he wrung out his empty waterbag  
He still got about a quart.

He didn't have a stick of wood  
To boil the billy by  
So he struck a match into the grass  
Which then was pretty dry.  
He held the billy to the flame  
With a piece of fencing wire  
But had to run to follow it  
So rapid went the fire.

Five miles across that flaming plain  
He raced that fire, did he  
And when at last the billy boiled  
He found he'd forgotten the bloody tea!



# MISTAKEN IDENTITY

**O**ld Lenny Gibbs has been known to have the occasional drink at the Briagolong Hotel and on one occasion, for some obscure reason he had a few too many. Now it happened that just before this occurrence Len, and his lovely, kindhearted wife Zeela, who live on a farm about three kilometres from the pub, had bought a pregnant sow called Lucy from Jimmy Millar who lived down the road, and were keen to start a piggery. Thoughtful Zeela had even started knitting colourful little coats for the expected piglets to keep them warm on cold nights.

On this particular night, after the pub closed, Len wandered off home. He's staggering a fair bit so that by the time he arrives at the farm he has travelled a greater distance than he normally would and is feeling rather tired. Len must have decided to check on Lucy before going to bed and make sure that she was safe and well, so he wanders over to the pigpen and goes to where the expectant mother is lying snug on a bed of straw that Zeela makes up for her every evening, sits down and has a rather one-sided chat with the sow.

He tells her how lucky he is to have Zeela for a wife, and that Ben Webster's father is buried next to Jack Riley who was supposed to be the real Man From Snowy River whom Banjo Patterson based his poem on. He tells her about the time a steer broke loose from the mob Jesse Morley was helping drove down from the High Plains and how it ran into the pub with Jesse chasing it on horseback down the corridor whilst Bill Gillio sat in the Liar's Corner having a drink and didn't bat an eyelid. He told Lucy things he hadn't thought of for ages until, weary from the walk and yarnning, he lay down beside her.

It's so comfortable there on the straw that Len thinks he's in bed and starts rubbing the sow's stomach. Up and down he gently rubs her stomach whilst she lies contentedly beside him. After a while, in a drowsy state, he whispers softly in her ear. . . still rubbing her stomach: "Zeela" he whispers, "how come you've sewn all them buttons on your nightgown?"

## A BARREN WISH

**Y**ears ago the English cricket team used to come to Gippsland and play a match against Maffra because they had turf wickets there, and old Ruby Foster, who lived at the farm on Foster's Hill between Boisdale and Maffra, often played hostess to the visitors — this was in the days when an expatriate Swiss gentleman, Sigund Malmo, was the local vet.

One day, whilst Sigund was working by himself at the Foster's farm, spaying some cattle, an aristocratic member of the English team happened to stroll up. He stood there for a while, watching in silence, before piping up in a toffy-voiced way:

"I say old boy, but you're doing it all wrong."

Sigund turned his head slightly towards the intruder, surveyed him for a moment, and said, in his Swiss accent:

"Nick off and let me get on with my work." Then he continued with what he was doing before the interruption.

The Englishman had never been spoken to in that manner before and was rather put out.

"Don't speak to me like that" he said, self-righteously. "I'll have you know that my father was a baron."

Whereupon, without bothering to look up, the vet replied:

"It is a pity your mother was not a barren too!"





# STORM DAMAGE

**A** couple of years ago a severe storm ripped through Len and Zeela's farm, tearing part of the roof from the house, knocking over a few fruit trees. . . generally doing a fair bit of damage. It even blew all the feathers off their rooster. Tender-hearted Zeela felt sorry for the naked rooster so she made him a pair of overalls. Very smart they were too, with a Ban the Bomb patch on the backside and frills around the legs. It was a real treat to watch him proudly scratching around the farmyard.

Eventually, after Len and Zeela had just about given up hope of getting any government assistance, an official turned up at the farm to estimate the amount of damage that had been done. She was a nice woman and went around checking what repairs were needed. After she'd finished her inspection this lady was sitting on the verandah having a cup of tea and a bit of a chat with Len and Zeela when the rooster wandered out from behind some bushes and started scratching and pecking about.

"By golly" exclaimed the government lady in surprise. "I've seen everything now!"

"No you aint, lady" said Len. "You just wait 'til a hen struts by here and he takes off after her on one leg whilst he tries to get them overalls off with the other. Then you've seen everything."



# CAUGHT SHORT

**A**bout ten years ago two Catholic nuns from a Sale convent were driving along the Princes Highway on their way to Bairnsdale when they ran out of petrol just outside the town of Stratford. Deciding to walk back to the closest service station for enough petrol to enable them to drive back and fill up the tank they rummaged through the car for a container. The only receptacle they could find was a chamber pot they kept in the boot in case one of them felt the need to answer a sudden call of nature while they were travelling through the bush.

Although feeling embarrassed, the nuns summoned up enough courage to get the pot filled and return to their car — much to the amusement of a busload of elderly citizens who passed them whilst they were carefully carrying the pot back, fearful of spilling any of the precious liquid.

As it happened, the Northern Ireland politician and Protestant Minister, Ian Paisley, was visiting Australia at the time and was also driving to Bairnsdale when he noticed the nuns pouring the contents of the chamber pot into the fuel tank of their car. During his stay in Australia he had seen many unusual things but never had he witnessed anything like the scene before him. Pulling up alongside the nuns, he wound down his car's passenger window and said: "By Heaven, Sisters. I hate your religion but I certainly admire your faith."



There was a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister fishing off Port Albert. With them they had their dogs, the Catholic's 'Spot' and the Protestant's 'Rastus'. After fishing for some time the ministers realize that they've run out of sandworms. "Not to worry" said the priest, "I'll send Spot back for some". So he picks up the plastic bucket and gives it to Spot, who without hesitation leaps over the side of the boat and swims to shore. He digs up some sandworms, puts them in the bucket, picks it up, then swims back to the boat.

A while later the sandworms that Spot brought back are used up so the Protestant minister says that he'll send Rastus back for some this

time. He gives the bucket to Rastus, who jumps overboard but instead of swimming the dog walks to shore, tippytoeing on its hind legs. After digging up some more worms Rastus hooks his front paw through the bucket handle and walks upon the water back to the boat.

After his dog has climbed aboard and given him the bucket the minister asks the priest: "Did you notice anything unusual about my dog?" "Yes" replied the priest. "He can't swim."



Four children were sitting one behind the other, with the smallest at the rear and the biggest at the front, riding their old grey mare to the bush school when they happened to pass the local parish priest.

"Good morning, children" he called out.

"Good morning, Father" replied the children dutifully.

For a joke the priest asked: "Do you have room for one more up there?"

The child at the rear turned lazily, lifted up the horse's tail, and answered: "Yes, Father, just hop in the boot."



# FISHIN' FABLES

**H**ere are a few fishing yarns I heard one afternoon in the Briagolong Hotel.

"There used to be some monster sharks in Bass Strait before it became so polluted" said Bill 'The Sharkman' Sledge, wistfully. "I caught a huge one once, off of Seaspray. I had to fight it for hours and it wasn't until just before sunset that I finally managed to beach it with the help of a big wave, right at the peak of high tide.

"I propped its jaws open a bit with a railway sleeper I borrowed from the caravan park and got my wife to take some photos of it so that you wouldn't think I was bulling when I told youse of it. Unfortunately, Helen forgot to take the lens cover off. Just as she finished taking the photos a gust of wind blew my hat off — right into the shark's open mouth. It was my favourite old hat so I stuck my head inside to look for it but it was so dark in there that I could hardly see a thing.

"I went to my car, found a torch, then went back and shone it inside the shark's jaws, but still couldn't see my hat, so I climbed in and started searching. I'd been wandering around for a while, without success, when suddenly, to my surprise, the torchlight fell on a swaggie who was having a quiet smoke of his pipe in a tunnel that was probably part of the shark's digestive system. 'G'day mate' he said. 'What're you doing here?' I told him I was looking for my hat. 'You've got no hope' he replied. 'There's a drover in here somewhere who's bin lookin' fer a mob of cattle fer about a week now!'"



A local fishing club was on an outing in Bass Strait when the weather blew up a bit rough and one member was so ill he lost his false teeth while having a chuckle over the side of the boat.

Eventually, the anglers moved back to shelter and started cleaning their catch. For a joke one of the clubmen removed his own false teeth and gave them to the bloke next to him, who pretended to find them in the stomach of a large schnapper he was cleaning. He showed them to the fisherman who had been so badly seasick, and who was in fact still a bit green around the gills, and said: "Fancy that big schnapper swallowing your teeth."

The man who had been ill took the teeth and studied them carefully. "They're not mine" he said and tossed them overboard. "Some other poor bugger must have lost them."

"Lee and me" said Pinchy, "were out in our boat off Cape Conran one day when I caught a small whiting. I almost had it in the boat when a barracouta flashed along the surface and grabbed it, then dived — straight into the mouth of a giant flathead.

"As the flathead was gulping down the 'couta a huge schnapper grabbed the lot. Whilst the schnapper was trying to digest what he'd caught a mighty white pointer shark swam up and devoured it. I fought that shark for hours, until I reckoned I just about had him beat, when that rotten little whiting spat out the bait and I lost the lot."



"What'll you have?" said the waiter, complacently picking his nose.

"Two boiled eggs you bludger. You can't put your fingers in those!"



Reflect a while, dear friends, upon the silent servitude of sheep who give us wool to wear while they go in the nude.



For some reason shearers were not always regarded very highly. This news item about a car accident was reported on the ABC radio a few years ago. "Two people and a shearer were killed in the accident."



Two caterpillars were crawling along a log when one happened to look up and saw a butterfly fluttering past overhead.

"You'll never get me up in one of those things" said the caterpillar.

# GRANDFATHER'S ASHES

**A** few years back I was working as a groundsman at Korowa Girls' Grammar School, Glen Iris. One day, at knock off time, a friend of mine, Diane, met me and asked if I would do her a favour and accompany her up into the hills, where she intended to scatter her Grandfather's ashes and have a few drinks to his memory. I agreed, so off we went.

Diane drove to the Dandenong Ranges, eventually finding a pretty fern gully which she thought suitable as the old boy's final resting place. We parked the car, unloaded a cardboard box containing the ashes, a bottle of gin, a bottle of tonic and some glasses (apparently gin and tonic had been Grandpa's favourite drink) and then walked to the edge of the gully, where we sat down and poured a couple of drinks.

It was a beautiful evening and Diane reminisced about the better aspects of her Grandfather. A gentle breeze carressed the fern fronds that appeared to wave in a welcoming gesture to us (or maybe they were welcoming the anticipated nourishment from the old man's ashes!). The sun was slowly setting behind gold-fringed banks of clouds, and bush perfumes drifted into our nostrils — as Grandfather was later to do.

We had a few more drinks and then decided the time had come to scatter the ashes and bid the old man farewell, so we topped up our glasses, stood up, and took the lid off the box. We were quite moved at the solemnity of the occasion and drank a toast to Grandfather's memory, then called out 'Bon Voyage' as Diane flung the ashes out into the gully.

Unfortunately, the gentle breeze chose that time to turn into a gust of wind that blew the scattered ashes back into our faces, up our noses and into our mouths. We both felt a bit nauseous as we brushed Grandfather's remains off and gulped down mouthfulls of his favourite drink — not to toast the old boy with this time but to wash his ashes down our throats. I never drank gin and tonic again.



Here's a health to your enemies' enemies!

*Irish toast*

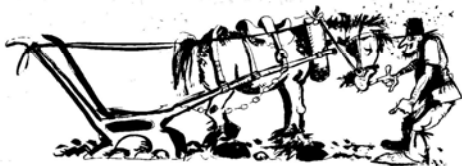
## BE WARNED!

**B**efore he lost heart and moved away from the district a Quaker farmer used to live near Maffra, a gentle, God-fearing soul who had a useless old Clydesdale horse which he attempted to use in an effort to help plough his paddocks after his tractor had finally given up the ghost. Unfortunately the horse was just about the laziest in the district and was a constant source of consternation to the poor farmer. Quakers, as you probably know, are the folks who say 'thee' and 'thou'.

One day a friend of mine, Lin Patrick, a great lover of animals' rights (I am proud to say) happened to be in the vicinity of the Quaker's farm and decided to drive over and see whether he had any free-range eggs for sale.

She pulled into his driveway, and was almost licked to death by the old guard-dog as she got out of the car. After knocking on the farmhouse flywire door, and getting no answer, Lin wandered down the back amongst the sheds and outbuildings. There were chooks, ducks, geese and a few lambs, pecking and nibbling contentedly amongst the weeds growing amidst the rusting, discarded bits of machinery. As she rounded a corner of the barn she saw the farmer not far away, on the edge of a paddock, berating the Clydesdale. The horse appeared to be taking no notice of him and was just resting contentedly in the shafts of the plough whilst gazing dreamily at some equine thing in the middle distance. Lin, unnoticed by the Quaker, walked closer and overheard the frustrated farmer say:

"Horse, thou knowest I cannot curse thee, and thou knowest I cannot beat thee, but what thou doth not knowest is that I can sell thee to a Baptist. . . and he will beat the hell out of thee!"



# FROM "WHOA" TO WOE

**I**n the early years of this century there lived, up the Marathon Rd, north of Briagolong, a skinny, 6'3" tall Quaker chap who had the magnificent name of De'Courcy O'Donovan. There are numerous stories told about this man — here are a couple of them.

An official from the Melbourne Museum was in Gippsland collecting various bits and pieces, and he asked De'Courcy if he knew where there were some kookaburra eggs. De'Courcy knew of a nest in an old gum tree so he told the city bloke that he would take him to it and find out whether it contained any eggs.

De'Courcy always used to travel by horse and cart so they set off in this and eventually arrived at the tree with the kookaburra nest. Now this nest is high up and difficult to reach so De'Courcy takes a long rope from the back of the cart, ties one end to the cart, throws the rope up over the limb with the nest, then secures the other end beneath his armpits.

Thus prepared he tells the horse to walk away and is slowly hoisted up towards the nest, probably admiring the view as he is raised higher and higher. When he reaches the limb he calls out:

"Whoa!"

The horse stops, turns to look back at his master, and gets such a shock when he sees him hanging way up in the sky that it bolts. Of course De'Courcy is in rather a helpless situation and is flipped over the limb and dragged through the air before plunging back down to earth.

The state of his health after landing, or whether he eventually collected any kookaburra eggs has not been recorded, although he must have survived to feature in many more stories before eventually being killed when his horse bolted one night on the Marathon Rd and he was thrown from the cart.

One day De'Courcy was seen walking through Briagolong, beside his horse and cart, whilst carrying a large bag of chaff upon his shoulders. To see the Quaker walking beside an empty cart whilst carrying such a load came as a bit of a surprise to one of the locals standing beside the road, so he asked De'Courcy why he didn't put the bag of chaff in the cart and let the horse take it home.

"'Tis not the horse's fault" came the reply. "I forgot to get the chaff when we were in the town earlier today so I must carry it home."



# BE PREPARED

**J**esse Morley's auntie Gracey, who used to work as a nurse at the Maffra Hospital many years ago, told him of the time that one of De'Courcy's relations was being admitted to the hospital for an operation.

Apparently she was an aged lady and arrived at the reception desk carrying a suitcase containing her nightdress, toiletries and a change of clothing in one hand whilst the other hand firmly gripped an ancient chamber pot by its handle. The nurse on duty was somewhat bemused at the sight of this strange article of luggage so she asked the old lady why she had brought it.

"I have brought it because I did not know what thy facilities consisted of" came the reply.

Of course, in the early days, if you were injured in the bush and needed urgent medical assistance there were no hospitals within reach so you just had to try and make do with whatever was at hand.

De'Courcy O'Donovan's father, although an old man at the time, was fond of playing marbles and would often join the local kids in a game. One day, while awaiting his turn in a game being played in the dirt outside his house by his grandchildren and some of the town kids, the old boy made the mistake of attempting to answer a question whilst licking the dust from off his favourite allie. He swallowed the marble and fell to the ground, writhing and choking in agony . . . with his eyes popping out.

The poor bugger's doing contortions and going blue in the face; the kids are running, panic-stricken, around in circles, screaming and yelling and blaming each other; dogs are yelping and barking and snapping at heels; chooks are squarking . . . in fact it's bedlam.

Fortunately his wife pokes her head out of the kitchen door to tell them all to shut up when she sees what's happening. Quick as a flash she runs back inside, puts the poker on the fire, then dashes back outside and gives her stricken husband a few hefty thumps on the back, attempting to dislodge the marble.

Seeing as how this doesn't have the desired effect she undoes his braces, pulls down his trousers, unbuttons the flap of his longjohns, rushes back inside, grabs the red-hot poker from out of the fire, runs back outside and jabs it against one of the wrinkled cheeks of the poor old fellow's flabby bum, causing him to react so violently to the pain that he coughed up the marble. However, the old man never played marbles again because the kids would always taunt him and want to see the scar on his backside.

## IN THE BAR

**T**he scene is a country pub and two oldtimers who haven't seen each other for quite a while happen to meet in the bar.

"G'day Bill."

"G'day Mick."

"What's new?"

"Nothin' much. What's new with you?"

"Aw, nothin' much... 'cept me brother Jim died last week."

"You don't say — he was such a health fanatic as well."

"Yeh. He was always on me back about me smoking, drinking and womanising. At least I can enjoy meself in peace now."

"He always reckoned your bad habits would lead you to an early grave."

"Shows how much he knew. After the pub closed I went and saw him laid out in the funeral parlour."

"How'd he look?"

"Bloody surprised!"

"I bet!"

"Y'know, Jim and me had it pretty tough when we were kids. Our family used to live in a one-room bark hut. We had hessian bags for blankets and the only thing we had to eat, if we were lucky, was rabbit and galah. Then along came the depression and things really started to get tough."

Bill nods in agreement and points in disgust at some local children he can see through the window, lounging around outside the old weatherboard general store on the opposite corner.

"Just look at them no-hopers, Mick" he says. "They don't know when they're well off, but you can't tell 'em. Why, when I was their age, we were so poor that we couldn't afford shirts so me old mum used to paint buttons on our chests when we were going to church."

"Geez, you were lucky" replies Mick. "My mum used to sew them on my chest!"

"Yeh. I know" says Bill, without any interest. "You told me before". Then he has a sip of beer before continuing. "It was a hard life alright, but I really used to look forward to Christmas dinner because, for a treat, Mum'd make us some soup."

"Soup!" splutters Mick, almost choking on his beer at the mention of such luxury. "Stone the crows Bill, how'd she do that?"

"Well, she'd fill a four-gallon kerosene tin with water and then boil it down to one gallon to make it strong."

"No wonder you're so healthy."

"Yeh. Even though times were tough I still prefer some of the old-fashioned ways — maybe that's why I didn't think much of that lavatory brush thing your missus bought."

"Me neither. Give me good old-fashioned toilet paper any day. Talking of old-fashioned things" muses Mick, staring into his beer, "reminds me of old Paddy from out Crooked River way."

"Have you seen him lately?" asks Bill, nursing his own beer, hoping that Mick will finish his first and get the next round.

"No, but I heard he was down at Len and Zeela's place the other day, and d'you know what happened?"

"No. What?"

"Well, you know how Paddy's a bit slow?"

"Yeh."

"Well, he wanted to visit Frank Noble while he was down this way and he asked Len if he could use the phone to see if Frank was home. Len says 'No worries Paddy. Go for your life.' So Paddy dials Frank's number and says 'Hullo Frank. Paddy here.....Righto' then he puts down the phone. Len asks 'What happened Paddy?' Paddy says 'Oh, Frank said that he's not at home.' 'Stone the crows' replied Len. 'Frank wouldn't say that to you Paddy.' 'Yep' said Paddy. 'He did.' 'Ring him up again' says Len. 'He'd love to see you.' So Paddy rings up again. 'Hullo Frank. Paddy here.....Righto' and then he hangs up again. 'Nope. He still says he's not home.' Len asks 'What's his bloody number, Paddy? I'll give him a ring for you.' When Len phones up an answering service comes on the line. 'Hullo, this is Frank Noble. I'm currently not at home...' Paddy had never struck one of those answering machines before."

Bill laughs quietly and is relieved when he notices Mick finish off his beer and order two more. Alf, the bartender, fills up the glasses then goes back to reading the Sporting Guide.

"I saw Paddy's mate Starchy the other day" says Bill when he has a fresh beer safely in his hand.

"Not Starchy who used to play for Maffra?" enquires Mick.

"Did you know him?"

"Not very well. How's he going?"

"Aw, good. Real good. We got to talking about the time he was playing in the Grand Final against Orbost, when Maffra were a goal behind and he had the last kick of the match. Remember it?"

"No. I might have been away droving up north at the time."

"Geez, you must have heard of it," say Bill in disbelief.

"Nope" replies Mick. "What happened?"

"Well" continues Bill, pleased to have a yarn that Mick hadn't heard. "Maffra were playing off in the Grand Final and it was in the time-on period, when the ball comes down to where Starchy's playing

at centre half back, so he takes a leap and flies up — probably about 50 or 60 feet into the air — and takes a spectacular one-handed mark."

"I used to be a pretty good mark meself once" butts in Mick, to Bill's annoyance. He looks at him cynically and then continues.

"Yeh. Well, anyway, the siren goes and, as you know, in the rules of football when the siren goes you're still entitled to your kick, and the others say to Starchy 'Look, you may as well have the kick but if you do happen to fluke the goal it means we'll have to come back next week and play again'. Well, as it happened, Starchy was supposed to be getting married the next weekend and he didn't reckon his missus-to-be would be very impressed if he played footy instead of getting married so he says 'Tell ya what I'll do, I'll do one of me special kicks'. So he goes back and winds up — everyone's screaming out 'chewy on ya boot' — then lets fly. The footy looks like going the distance when, about twenty yards out from the posts, the ball bursts and the footy goes through the goal posts while the bladder goes through the point posts. So Maffra got a goal and a point and won the Grand Final by a point."

"You're kidding!" says Mick in disbelief.

"No, that's a fair dinkum. I wouldn't have believed it meself if I hadn't seen it with me own eyes" replies Bill, solemnly, tossing down his beer and putting the empty glass down, unthinkingly, on the bar.

"Thanks Bill. Don't mind if I do" says Mick, draining his glass and putting it next to Bill's.

"Oh" mumbles Bill and procrastinates about ordering. Fortunately 'Bags' Handley and 'Nifty' Mathews, walk over and Bags asks the old boys if he can buy them a drink.

"Too right" replies Bill, relief pouring through his veins.

Bags orders the beers and, while pouring them, Alf asks Nifty if he ran his horse in the Sale Cup.

"Yeh" answers Nifty, unenthusiastically.

"How'd it go?"

"No bloody good. The bludger came in so far behind the others he almost won the next race."

"What are you going to do with him? Put him out to stud I suppose?"

"No way" replies Nifty, in a voice tinged with disgust. "I wouldn't give him the satisfaction."

"Old Greg Lee, over at Bushy Park" says Bill, "used to race a few horses, and one of 'em, Brandy Balloon, won the A J Liston Stakes — it's a sprint race and leads up to the Melbourne Cup. Anyway, Jack Elliott, the Melbourne Sun's sports journalist at the time, came up to interview Greg and they're sitting on the verandah having a cup of tea...there's a few chooks running around...and while Jack's taking

notes he says to Greg: 'Brandy's chances in the Melbourne Cup, Greg. Will he make the distance?' Greg replied: 'By hell, he'd definitely make the distance but I wouldn't like to say how long it'd take him!' Jack Elliott had a bit of a chuckle over that."

"I remember when Bill Peach was here doing that show of his for television" says Mick. "I can't recall the name of it."

"Peach's Australia, I think it was" answers Bags.

"That's it. Anyway, he was filming at Bushy Park and he's interviewing old Greg. 'Have you been here all your life?' he asked him. Greg replied: 'Not quite. I've got a little bit left to go.' "

"He's a droll bloke" comments Bill.

"Yeh" agrees Mick. "Matter of fact, I was out at his place one day helping old Greg and his son, young Greg, to build a yard. Young Greg was scratching around, digging a hole near the original white settler, Angus McMillan's, homestead when he comes across an old cow bone. For a joke he turned to old Greg and says: 'Look Dad, an aboriginal bone!' To which old Greg replied: 'Could be too son. Keep digging, keep digging, he might have had his wallet on him'."

Bags notices Fred and Bluey around the other corner of the bar and invites them over for a drink. When they arrive Fred asks Bags what he's been up to lately.

"I've been down at Holland's Landing for the Syme Community Newspapers versus Truth newspaper fishfest" answers Bags.

"Do any good?" asks Bluey, who is a keen fisherman.

"No. Even the liars weren't catching anything."

"Does anyone know the Fisherman's Prayer?" Bluey asks those gathered around.

No-one did.

"Lord, grant me the good fortune to catch a fish so big that even I, when telling of it, will not have to lie."

"That'd have to be some fish, Blue" comments Nifty.

"Yeh" agrees Bluey, "although it wouldn't have to be too much *bigger than the giant schnapper I caught once that was so big I couldn't fit it all in the one photograph.*"

"Pull the other one, Blue" says Bill, scornfully. "Tell you what. I was at Shaw's Creek many years ago. I was on my way to visit old Doc who lived up Licola way. I stopped to give me horse a drink but he couldn't put his head near the water because the fish were that keen they'd jump out and chew the chaff off of his whiskers!"

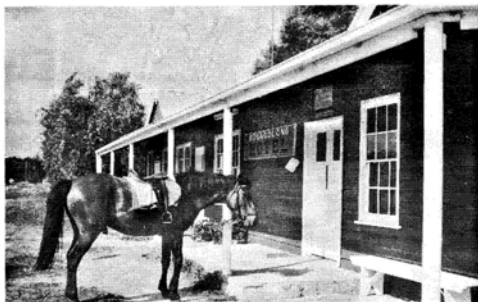
"There used to be some big fish around alright" reminisces Bluey, wistfully. "Before the Latrobe River became polluted the fish there were so big and hungry that you had to hide behind a gum tree to bait your hook".

"Talking of old Doc" says Mick, "brings to mind a time I was doing some work near Licola with him and a few other blokes. We were

doing a bit of scrub clearing. Well, old Doc's spent all his life in the bush and even though he talks about the war he was never in it. Anyrate, we're all 'round the fire, boiling the billy and yarning before we head off to work, when Doc starts complaining. 'Oooohhh, I'm not feeling too good this morning' he says. 'y'know I got a crook hip from when I was in the bloody war'.

Mick, noticing that he has the attention of those around him, pauses for a moment and has a sip of his beer before continuing. "One of the blokes working there with us who didn't really know Doc pipes up and asks how it happened, which was just what the old bugger was waiting for of course, so he says: 'Aw, we were all up in this plane high over Paris, France...that's a place in Europe...when the engine failed and we all had to bail out, but there wasn't enough parachutes to go around so we quickly drew straws and I got the short one, so I had to jump without a parachute! I was doing alright 'til I saw I was heading straight for the Eiffel Tower...That's a bloody great tall metal contraption. I started to get a bit worried then and flapped me arms around, hoping to gain a bit of height, but it didn't do me any good and the point of the bloody tower collected me fair on the hip, then I bounced down, all the way to the ground. It smarted a bit when I landed I can tell youse. Me hip's played up ever since!'"

When the others finish laughing Mick takes another sip of his beer and says: "Apparently Doc and a few other blokes were sitting around a campfire up in the hills one frosty, winter morning. They were trying to find a bit of enthusiasm to start work but weren't having any success. Doc stands up and starts stamping his feet. 'By the living ghost, it's cold' he moaned. 'Have any of you jokers got a spare coat with youse? The only bludger I got is me old army great coat and it's no flippin' good. It won't keep out the cold'. 'Why not?' asked some innocent. 'There's too many flamin' bullet holes in it from where I was shot during the war!' replied Doc. He was a real dag"



## BLUNT ADVICE

**T**here was an English family enjoying their first Australian summer's day by the beach at Frankston. The kids were splashing in the shallows and Mum and Dad were paddling. Mum had her dress tucked into her bloomers whilst Dad had his thick tweed trousers rolled up to the knees.

Suddenly a siren sounded and people started rushing from the water. Mum asked Dad what was happening and Dad replied that he didn't know so he went up to the lifeguard on duty at the time and asked him what was going on.

The lifeguard looked the Englishman up and down and tried to suppress a smirk.

"Are you a Pommie?" he asked.

"Yes" replied Dad proudly.

"Well" continued the lifeguard, "as you've probably noticed, us Aussies are very friendly, thoughtful people and when the sea gets too crowded we sound that siren so that everyone comes ashore and gives the sharks a chance to have a decent swim."

Dad looked at the lifeguard dubiously, not sure whether he was being had or not.

"Well" he asked, "What should I do if a shark attacked me?"

"The best thing to do is to hit it with a blunt object."

"Where would I get a blunt object from?" queried Dad.

"You could try hitting it with the stump of an arm he's probably just taken off."



# THE SWIFT'S CREEK CUP

**E**ach year, at various isolated locations on the Gippsland High Plains, is held the annual Mountain Cattlemen's Cup weekend. It's a real piece of Australian and attracts up to 3000 people from the city and bush. There are various events including whipcracking, pack horse races, and the Cattlemen's Cup, which can be compared to parts of The Man From Snowy River's ride.

On Saturday night a band performs, speeches are given, and rather a large quantity of alcohol is consumed. But one of the things I enjoy most about these weekends is to sit beside a campfire and listen to some of the oldtimers spin yarns, tell jokes, recite a bit of bush verse and, probably more than anything else, tell lies.

I was sitting by a campfire one night. On one side there were some old bushmen, and on the other side a few drunken young bucks who were skiting and carrying on about what great horses they had and what fantastic horsemen they were. I could see that the old chaps were getting fed up with the young blokes and eventually one of them stood up and said:

"Fair dinkum, it makes me sick and tired  
To hear you talk of the horses of today.  
Why yer Phar Laps, Tullochs and Galilees  
Were only good hacks in their way.

Now this happened out east, before records were taken  
So it's not in the Sporting Guide  
But it's honest God's truth and I can't be mistaken  
'Cos it happened that I had the ride.

'Twas the Swift's Creek Cup, and our mare, Flying Kate  
Was allotted eleven stone two.  
The race was two miles so you'll agree with me mates  
It was asking her something to do.



She was heavy in foal, but the owner and me  
Decided to give her a spin —  
'Twas the end of a spree, we were right on the rocks,  
So we needed a bit of a win.

I saddled her up and went down with the rest —  
Her movements were bulgy and slow.  
The starter to get us in line did his best  
Then, swishing his flag, he said: 'Go!'

The field jumped away, but our mare seemed asleep  
And I thought to meself 'we've been sold!'  
Then I heard something queer, and I felt I could weep,  
For I'm blown if the mare hadn't foaled!

The field by this time had gone half a mile  
But I knew what the old girl could do,  
So I gave her a cut of the whip — you can smile —  
And the game little beast simply flew.

'Twas then that she showed 'em her wonderful speed  
And she mowed the field down one by one.  
With a furlong to go she'd taken the lead,  
All prepared for the short final run.

Then something came at us, right on the outside,  
And we barely just scraped past the pole.  
When I had a good look I damn nearly died  
For I'm blown if it wasn't the foal!"

*A COCKY AS AN  
UNSUSPECTING CHILD.*





**Dedicated to God,  
just in case she's up there.**

## **THE DUST COCKY'S PRAYER**

**Brian O'Keefe**

**L**ord, you know I never asked for much, nor took a thing for granted, but there's one thing that we've needed here since the first seed that you planted. We don't need no more Pommies, we've got enough of those, and we don't need no more blowies, politicians, rabbits or crows. No, there's just one forlorn prayer Lord that pleads within my brain, don't give us any more children God, just give us some bloody rain!

I remember when last it rained down here, I was just a billy lid, and my old man reckoned it was the best thing you ever did. "Son, take a look at that," he said as tears welled in his eyes, "that's the stuff they wash in up there in Paradise." But that must have been about the time Ben Hur won 'The Cup' and Jesus was in training for the thirds at Kooweerup.

The cows are walking skeletons, just like my old great aunt who's spent a lifetime in her garden looking for a plant. The blowies have heat exhaustion and drop out of the sky then they buzz around in agony 'til they frizzle up and die. And what about the crickets, Lord, innocent victims of your weather? They start a fire and self-ignite when they rub their legs together.

The crows are sucking stones, Lord, and the snakes have got sun-stroke, even the bloody rabbits reckon it's gone beyond a joke. Old Granny did a rain-dance, 'round the house the other night 'til Grandpa hit her with a shovel . . . served her bloody right. So won't you heed this Cocky's Prayer mate, don't let me plead in vain, have a bloody heart God and send us down some bloody rain.

Grandpas' got a faded photograph of a thunderstorm he took while he was courting Granny beind the sheds at Tullarook. Sometimes from their bedroom, deep in the dead of night can he heard the lustful groanings of nostalgia and delight as they gaze upon the picture of so long ago when the dams were full of water and the old creeks used to flow.



Sometimes, in my dreams God, I hear the sweet refrain of that thunderstorm rap-tapping 'pon a dusty window pane. Down that rain keeps falling 'til the tanks are overflowing and out there in the paddocks the grass just can't stop growing. But when I wake up disappointed to another day of drought I stay inside and belt the Missus — there's no point in going out.

How I long to wear the gumboots Father gave me for a joke, and shelter from some driving rain to puff a soggy smoke. I long to feel a droning mossie gently sting me once again . . . I'd love that little bludger Lord, I wouldn't pulverise his brain. So, come on now, fair dinkum God, give us a bloody go before I get real stropky like and tell you where to go.

There's a mob or aboriginals camped down by the creek and they've been driving us mad now for the best part of a week. Night and day they sit there chanting incantations and praying in their own strange way to your black relations. Well, if you don't want to make it rain and put an end to my frustration, I'll have to go out and join them Lord, just out of desperation.

There's been a constant rumour God, although I'm sure it's wrong, that someone saw a raindrop fall out at Briagolong. They reckon that it fell out of a balmy, moonlit night and when it found out where it was the poor thing died of fright. It wasn't because it was terrified of sizzling down in hell but it almost hit Jack Elliot outside of Hocken's hotel.



**A Wet Dream**

Poor Mother's washing out the clothes in buckets full of dust while me, I sit here dreaming of good, old-fashioned rust. The chooks are constipated and lay their eggs hard-boiled while a sea of scrawny rabbits breed in this land we toiled. Maybe if I had married the Missus and given the kids a name you would have found it in your heart to give us some bloody rain.

Christ I long to see my tractor bogged, right up to the seat. If that happened, and Granny died, my joy would be complete. I long to see old Daisy quietly chewing on her cud whilst sitting down contentedly in about a foot of mud. But I must agree with Granny (although her I'd never tell) she reckons you're preparing us for an eternity in Hell.

The ducks have all gone troppo and are paddling in the sand, while the sun's a burning orb of fire scorching all the land. The old dunny's a fearful oven full of stifling heat where we only go when we're desperate 'cos our bums get burnt on the seat! So come on God, take pity please and ease us of our pain, fill up the sky with clouds now and send us down some bloody rain.

I've heard it told that the city folk have it pouring out of hoses and they reckon it's a flaming drought if they can't drown their roses. Well, the only Rose that we have here works at the local pub and she needs more than a watering, she needs a decent scrub. The surest way for us to tell when a drought is here is by the sour look on the landlord's face, 'cos he can't water down his beer.

The missus is getting cranky, Granny's on the blink, and the old dog's going to kark it if he doesn't get a drink. The 'roos have all gone walkabout out on the Birdsville track 'cos someone saw a blade of grass somewhere there outback. Meanwhile, Darkie Martin keeps raving about snow . . . if it wasn't for the local pub he'd have been dead long ago.

The winds have blown my topsoil over the hills and far away, and if I wasn't born here I'd have left before today but I'm an oldtime Cocky, Lord, and can't admit defeat 'though my paddocks are bare and baking 'neath a shimmering haze of heat. What is it that I've done Lord that you leave me here to burn? Was it that night with Rose the barmaid or have you seen my tax return?

I suppose it's raining in bloody England where the Pommie bludgers lived before they came out here with their rabbits for ten measly bloody quid. I suppose they've got grass as well, and rapid flowing streams — just like we see on telly Lord, or in our favourite dreams. But what I can't understand is; why do they have to come out here? Maybe it's so they don't have to wash, and can drink good Aussie beer.

Lord, even the mirages have gone and all dried up and we haven't had a proper bath since Moses was a pup, and the Missus nearly had a fit when the priest baptised our daughter 'cos he did it with dry



**"I name thee McWilliam's Sherry."**

sherry, he'd run out of holy water. But worse than that I tell you mate the most poignant sight I've ever seen was Paddy Murphy on St Patrick's Day, looking for something green.

The shade from the old gums is wilting, our shadows are cracked and dry and we haven't perspired in years Lord, 'cos we're too dehydrated, that's why! A swaggie's boiling his best tawny port to make some billy tea down the track a little way, where the old creek used to be. He uses metho to moisten his damper, then bakes it in the dust, and although it's always exploding he can still get drunk on the crust.

Auntie called in the other day to have an argument, when something sacred fell upon her, something heaven-sent. She went running 'round in circles screaming "The Lord be praised. Our prayers have all been answered." And ecstatic was her gaze. 'Round and 'round the house she ran, and amazing was her speed — just like a mangy mongrel that from a chain had just been freed.

'Round and 'round the house she ran, squarking like a cockatoo, 'til Grandpa dropped her in her tracks with a bit of four be two. But we didn't have the heart to tell her as she lay there nearly dead that it wasn't a drop of rain she felt falling on her head. No, it wasn't a drop of rain at all, heaven-sent by God, but a maggie that pooped upon her . . . the filthy, dirty sod.

God, I wish someone would help me out and give to me a sign, just so I know whether or not I'm wasting my bloody time. I was told by

our local Labour man, who lives in a humpy down the track, that Bob Hawke had no use for you and had given you the sack, so it would be no good me going on praying for rain abundant to someone up there like myself who's been made redundant.

Poor Albert the ringer died not long ago, surrendering his soul to the sun, 'cos the sheep had all died from exhaustion and no more would he be a gun. The last man to see him alive God said he took a long look at the pen then turned and walked into the sunlight, never to call for the tarboy again. He lay his lead on a pile of old crutchings, took one last smell of the dags, and finally found a way as he died Lord to give up smoking the fags.

The shearers all came from far and wide to show their respects for the dead. They sent Wacka out for a barrel of beer and stuck Albert under the shed. Well, as you know, he never cared much about his personal cleanliness, now (with him being dead as well) he cared about it even less, and while these mourners skited and drank through the floorslats arose a smell that even those shearers thought was distinctly on the nose.

Well, they reckoned the time must have arrived to show their respects for his soul so, cursing him, they finished their drinks then went out to dig him a hole. But the ground was hard and the day was hot so one crafty fellow said: "I've got a better idea mates, let's cremate the bugger instead". They tied Albert up to an old fence post then rushed back to the barrel to pray, letting the sun cremate him as they drank and the wind blow his ashes away.

Now, I doubt that Albert's up there with you 'cos he wasn't the right faith but I hate to think of him wandering the sky like a forlorn homeless waif or, worse of all, stuck down in hell serving pommies cups of tea, without any grog to comfort him for the rest of eternity. So I was wondering, if you could see your way and I'm not asking too much, if you could find him a sheep or two to shear — or at least some angels to crutch?







**"She'll rain real soon!"**

A stock agent dropped by the other day, driving his flash new car and trying to look like a brother cocky whilst done up like a movie star. He stood before us in all his glory, like he was the second coming, wearing a patent smile all over his face — I reckon there's a dollar in slumming. With his check sports coat and moleskins from an exclusive menswear store he bored us with the same dirty jokes we'd all heard before.

He came and stood on the verandah, kicked a dying chook out of the way, and talked about a change in the weather before he made his play. He looked out at the parched and tortured soil, then looked up at the blazing sky, and for a moment I must have hallucinated 'cos I thought I saw remorse in his eye. He said it was sure to rain real soon and a fortune I could reap if I took advantage of the situation and bought a mob of sheep.

He painted a wondrous picture for me of paddocks full of grass with wool cheques forever rolling in, and my bank account full of brass. He looked out at the useless country as if he believed it himself and he couldn't understand how I wouldn't see I was on the verge of instant wealth. With his thumb he tilted his trilby back and leaned against the rail, while it struck me as bloody amazing how he'd kept himself out of jail.



### Granny's Revenge

He said I could get all the sheep I wanted for only ten dollars a head, while I was wondering if I cut his throat whether he would have bled. "She'll be right mate, she'll be apples" he kept repeating to me. "You mark my words, she'll rain real soon, just you wait and see!" But I knew what would have happened whether it did or didn't rain — he'd take all the flaming credit while I got the bloody blame.

On and on that con merchant rambled as if on a sacred mission but I knew the foremost thing in his mind was the size of his commission. On and on he ranted and raved, enjoying the sound of his tongue, 'til Granny reckoned that she'd had enough and bit him fair on the bum. God you should have seen that joker run, squeeling about rabies whilst questioning the legitimacy of our Granny's babies.

I think Granny must have hurt his feelings Lord by the way that he shot through, and she didn't even have her false teeth in so give the old girl her due. Even Grandpa reckons she was bloody good-oh so he gave her a slap on the back — breaking three ribs and a vertebrae with a sickening crack. Anyway, I doubt we'll see the likes of him around this way for a while, and I reckon Grandpa would have stopped running before that agent gets back his smile.

I long to go and face the managers of our local banks and kneel before them in the rain to offer you our thanks. I long to splash

through lovely puddles with my old heart full of song to where the frogs are croaking down by the billabong. I'd stand and listen to that symphony with my face wreathed in silly smiles and for a while I'd forget the agony of my farmer bloody Giles.

Is your son feeling any better God, or is he still a bit sore? Tell him to let bygones be bygones, we're not crook on him anymore. D'you remember the party he went to and turned water into wine? Well, do you reckon he'd come down here again and do the reverse for us this time? 'Cos Grandpa's got enough plonk in the cellar to water me farm for a year . . . he says that it helps him forget that he's married and keeps him off the beer.

Before I slip this mortal coil Lord, and freeze gratefully in hell, there is one thing I'd like to know that only you can tell. Why do you let it rain in England where they don't need the bloody stuff, while us poor buggers over here can never get enough? Is it Heavenly retribution Lord for something that we've done that makes you let us pray for rain while you stoke up the sun?

I've heard tell that our scientists reckon they're pretty hot and they can wipe us out, quick as a wink, whether we like it or not. In fact I've heard tell they reckon they're even better than you, 'cos it took you six days to make a world they can destroy in an hour or two. But I tell you what they can't do mate, no matter how big their brains, they can't stop themselves from dying, or make us some bloody rain.

God, this world is in a state that's downright bloody crook — if you haven't noticed mate then just have a butcher's hook! Now me, I've got a great idea, how's this for a lark, you drown the sinners in a mighty flood right after I've built an ark. We don't have any cypress wood so petrol drums will have to do. I'll just weld them all together God, if that's alright by you?

Then, onto that mighty raft, I'll load them two by two, some emus and goannas and even kangabloodyroos. We'll have tiger snakes and taipans, mossies, ticks and leeches, even some mighty crocodiles from off of the northern beaches. But I won't take any rabbits Lord, them we just can't use, nor pommies, or politicians, or cockabloodytoos.

But if you used the same technique you used with Noah, long ago, and kept the rain pelting down for forty days or so you wouldn't have a hope in Hell of drowning anyone 'cos you've made this land too flaming dry after so much bloody sun, and forty days and nights of rain wouldn't end the greed and lust — in fact to tell you the truth old mate, it wouldn't even settle the dust.

Now if you let it rain for a year or more you wouldn't quite have a flood but at least the dams would be filling, and the dust would have turned into mud. Then you might see something Lord that hasn't been seen here for ages — the cockies putting oilskins on and checking their rain gauges. You might even hear Mother singing again, a rusty



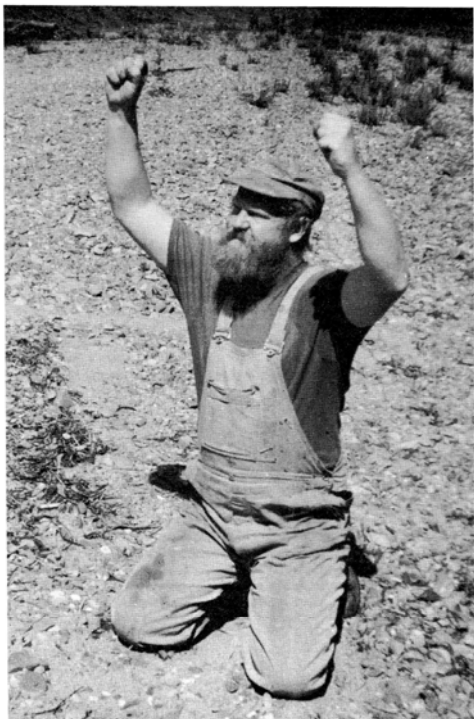
### Old Mates

old love song, but don't worry Lord, she smokes too much to sing for very long.

The pubs would be chock full of cockies and the Queen would be forced to blink when they unlocked and opened their wallets to buy each other a drink. They'd all be old mates together again, forgetting the knives in their backs, and relate to each other their exploits whilst forgetting the actual facts. I suppose you'd think it quite funny Lord to see them unknowingly smile, whilst way back up in the hills there the dreaded floodwaters you pile.

For a while they'll all be in Heaven, 'though the waters continued to rise, 'cos they've been so long without rain Lord they wouldn't believe their eyes. But you know that sooner or later they'd look up at the soaking sky and begin to remember with fondness the days of the long, hot dry. But you wouldn't have gained any ground Lord until every single one had fallen upon his muddy knees to pray for some bloody sun.

There could be a flaw in this plan God, of which you may not be aware, this world could be chockful of sinners with not a solitary saint anywhere, and if the sinners were sent to damnation by way of a watery grave there'd be no point in me building an ark — there wouldn't be any bludger to save. So hang on to your taxi fare God, we'll just stay the way we are, 'cos we're already burning in Hell mate, my bloody oath we are!



**An adult cocky on the verge of becoming an Atheist.**

Now my prayer is almost over God, and I must admit it's true that it's been a long and trying time since last I spoke to you. In fact it must have been that night the rouseabout shot through and the Missus came and told me that she was overdue. I hope you didn't get me wrong then mate when I said the things I did, it's just that I was a bit cheesed off, and couldn't afford another kid.

Well, Lord, I've done all I can do, it's no good me getting sore (although I can't but help keep wondering what it's all been for) but if it should come to pass that I may die tomorrow please grant to me one dying wish then end my life of sorrow. Please heed this cocky's plea dear God, pray don't let me down, just drop me into our water tank — and therein let me drown!

AMEN



# GLOSSARY FOR DUST COCKIES' CHILDREN

**Banks** . . . Institutions invented by the rich to keep themselves that way.

**Ben Hur** . . . Champion horseman of Ancient Rome.

**Briagolong** . . . Semi-mythical town in Gippsland, Victoria.

**Courting** . . . An intricate tribal ritual of deception and lust that does nothing to help the participants prepare for the worst mistake of their lives.

**Delight** . . . Divorce.

**Ecstatic** . . . A state of mind experienced by parents when their children get married.

**England** . . . A place whose inhabitants can't wait to leave, then can't wait to get back to without actually having to go.

**Farmer Giles** . . . Rhyming slang for an apparently most unpleasant affliction concentrated around the orifice in the nether region of one's anatomy. A friend of mine once said: "There's only two types of people in this world, those with piles and those that are going to get them."

**Four by two** . . . A useful piece of wood with religious connotations. Popularly used for abruptly terminating arguments and undesirable actions by bothersome persons or animals. Most effectively administered when used in conjunction with a fierce swinging motion to the back of the offender's head.

**God** . . . Junior minister in Bob Hawke's Cabinet whose portfolio as minister for miracles is in serious jeopardy.

**Grog** . . . A wondrous and popular (hence highly taxed) liquid that if taken internally in sufficient quantity can promote a euphoric sense of well-being, even under the most adverse conditions and, as Henry Lawson said "makes you feel the way you should feel without it". Unfortunately, because God does not deem it desirable that mortals should actually enjoy life for any length of time, and so lose their longing for a mythical Heaven, she has devised the most cruel of punishments for this simple form of pleasure, refer to the dictionary for definition of hangover.

**Heavenly retribution** . . . Taxes, hangovers, rabbits, marriage, children, cockatoos, droughts and Joh Bjelke Peterson.

**Holy Water** . . . See Irish dictionary under alcohol.

**Jesus** . . . Noted wine maker and optimist.

**Lust** . . . A deep desire for something that you are not supposed to have and which usually turns into deep regret after you've had it.

**Miracle** . . . Rain, or drop thereof, grass, politicians admitting a mistake, being praised behind your back. Also refers to being shouted a beer by a Cocky.

**Noah** . . . An idiot who saved two blowflies, two rabbits and two cockatoos.

**Nostalgia** . . . A kind of wistful yearning for something that was never as good as it seems in retrospect.

**Paradise** . . . Possibly mythical place where human beings are rewarded for being unnatural.

**Politicians** . . . Definition deleted by Censor.

**Raft** . . . The surname of an actor. Also a construction that floats on miracles.

**Rain** . . . Condensed moisture of atmosphere that falls visibly in drops everywhere but where it's most needed.

**Raindrop** . . . A miracle.

**Seed** . . . Unit of reproduction that has been known to grow into grass



but which unfortunately in other circumstances usually grows into children.

**Singing** . . . A sound similar to that made by politicians when they receive their superannuation cheques.

**Smile** . . . A facial expression employed by stock agents, bank managers, car salesman etc. to instil confidence in their unsuspecting victims.

**Snow** . . . A frozen droplet of a miracle.

**Tax return** . . . A fiendish reprisal by God for voting in the governments we deserve.

**Wash** . . . Cleanse, esp. oneself or one's clothes, with liquid. Pommies please refer to dictionary for definition of torture.

**Water** . . . Popularly used to add strength to English beer.



# THE MUD COCKY'S PRAYER

Brian O'Keefe

**L**ord, I don't want to seem ungrateful in what I'm about to say but don't you think you've overcompensated in answering the prayer I prayed? 'Cos what was once a miracle has turned into a curse, and the only consolation is things can't get any worse!

Gee, I pity those poor Pommies now, fair dinkum, God, I do — I never, ever realised all that they went through. No wonder they're always whingeing, it'd make a saint complain if all you had to look forward to was another day of rain.

I suppose a man ought to be grateful that his sheep died in the drought, because now it'd break my heart t'see their woolly corpses floating all about, but you'll be pleased to know the rabbits have adapted very well, in fact they've grown webbed feet, learnt to quack... and lay flaming eggs as well!

Old Granny's thinking naughty thoughts so's you'll send her down to Hell 'cos she thinks there's a warm fire down there, and most of her friends as well. But I'm afraid she'll be disappointed because, when you ended the drought, I reckon you sent down so much rain it must have put those hell-fires out.

We've got tadpoles in the bathtub and leeches crawling up the walls, whilst cascading from the leaking roof is our private Niagara Falls. The Missus took a nasty turn when she tried to belt young Jack because, as he paddled out the door, he abused her with a quack!

You'll be pleased to know my tanks have burst and Grandpa's got trench feet. Granny's got footrot up to her knees and can scarcely raise a bleat, and over our pyjamas, as we splash off to bed, we wear mouldy, tattered oilskins... and sou'westers on our heads.

Did I tell you that the stock agent called again, wearing a 'Cardin' Drizabone, and he tried to cheat us out of the swamp that we now call our home? With his shifty eyes he proudly stood at the helm of his cabin cruiser, trying to pretend he was Heaven-sent to help a battling loser.

I must admit I was tempted, Lord, when I saw that Drizabone, his Fletcher Jones waders and Akubra sou'wester, I almost begged for a

loan. But, boy, did Granny crack a darkie — geez, you should've seen her — when the agent said if we put up the money he'd turn our farm into a boat marina!

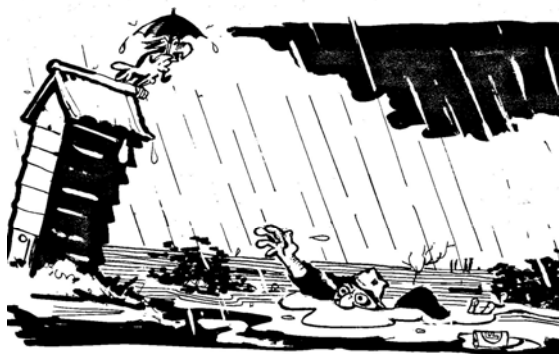
When the Missus went into labor, God, I knew things had gone beyond a joke 'cos, after a while, from the bedroom, came a distinctly nasty croak. When the doctor emerged from behind the door, with a grin like a sly, mongrel dog, he said to me: "Congratulations, Dad. You're the father of a frog."

To make matters worse he turned and sniggered, as he sailed off down the road: "Considering who the father was you should be thankful it isn't a toad!"

Oh, God, how I long for those balmy days when the earth would scorch my feet and my farm would bask contentedly 'neath a shimmering haze of heat. I dream of the gentle zephyrs that blew my soil away — whilst like a bloody idiot for rain I used to pray.

You'll have to excuse me now, God, I've been caught short you see, so I'd better put my flippers on and swim out to where we've moored the dunny.

AMEN



# THE SPRINGING SHEARER

There was a ringer of sheds  
Who'd come to the end of his run,  
He let out a yell and threw down his blades  
When the last of his pen was done.  
Then he went to the office and asked for his cheque,  
The manager paid him in cash.  
He rolled up his blankets and started for home  
'Ere he gambled at cards and got rash.

He camped that night in some trees by the road,  
Away from the cold and the damp,  
When a swagman came out of the evening dusk  
And started to make his camp.  
"Come and join me oldtimer," the shearer said,  
"I've got enough tucker for two."  
"Well, me tucker bag's light," the old fellow said,  
"Thanks mate, don't mind if I do."

When the meal was over they started to talk —  
The way that travellers do.  
The old man said "You bin travellin' long  
Yer swag and yer blankets look new?"  
"Naw, I'm not on the track," the shearer said,  
"I'm just a shearer finished me run  
And I've got \$500 in this here purse  
To prove that me job's been done."

"Ah, \$500," the old man said.  
"That's a lot of money me son,  
There's many a man been murdered for less  
And buried some place on the run!"  
Then he went to his bag and took out a knife  
And also a sharpening stone,  
As he sharpened the edge, he looked up and said,  
"Yer should never have travelled alone!"

The shearer thought what a fool he'd been  
To open his mouth so wide.  
He was sure the old man'd wait 'til he slept  
Then bury the knife in his side.  
So he lay in his blankets and waited to hear  
The sound that the swagman slept.  
When he heard the first snore he slipped out of bed  
And into the darkness he crept.

He hadn't gone far when he thought he could hear  
Footsteps not far at his back  
So he quickened his pace from a walk to a trot  
But those feet kept pounding the track.  
At last he was running, flat out in the dark,  
With fear he was almost blind,  
But the faster he went the faster they came,  
Those footsteps pounding behind.

Then he stumbled and fell with a terrible thud  
Over a log on the track.  
As he lay there gasping he fancied he felt  
The point of a knife in his back.  
Fair he trembled with energy spent, he knew  
That his race had just been run  
When the swagman fell over the log at his side  
And whispered: "Who's after us son?"

The shearer heaved a great sigh of relief  
And said: "No-one's after us, Dad."  
"Well, if no-one's after us," the swagman said,  
"What the hell are we running for lad?"



**They also serve who only  
stand and wait.**



*Abandon hope all of ye  
who have to enter here  
after drinking too much  
of our home-made beer.*

# THE DUNNY POEMS

Brian O'Keefe

I hope the following verses bring back a few fond memories to those readers fortunate enough to have spent some precious time in their past pondering life whilst perched above a 'long-drop' in an Australian bush toilet, or 'dunny' as it is more commonly known.

It saddens me to realise that the majority of our children will go to their graves without ever having had the character-building adventure of answering the call of nature in a bush dunny . . . especially at night when there was only the light from a candle between you and the terrors of your imagination.

Oh, the joy that would fill our young hearts when, whilst peacefully perched upon a well-worn wooden seat one warm country morning, we heard it, distantly at first, a sound that we had waited for all winter. A mellow, droning sound that slowly came closer and closer until, eventually, the warbling of magpies, the cawing of crows and the shrieking of cockatoos were drowned out as the air inside the dunny became filled with the buzzing of that harbinger of joyous, balmy days ahead, of school holidays, fishing in the billabong, swimming in the dam: A time when it was easy to imagine that life would always be a wonderful adventure with you as its hero or heroine. Although I'm sitting in a room deep in the dreary heart of a barren suburb I can hear it still, rising defiantly above the ceaseless noise of traffic rushing past in the street outside, a sound that stirs my heart with nostalgia, a reminder of those cosy days of long ago when dunnies waited 'down the back' . . . the sound of the Bush Canary, the first blowfly of spring.

Considering the vitally important role that the old country dunny has played in the development of 'white' Australia I was disappointed to find that no mention was made of it during the 1988 Australian Bicentennial celebrations. In a small way I would like to attempt to rectify part of that oversight now by paying a tribute, in the following verses, to that much-maligned part of our country's history.



*I reckon Adolf Hitler  
first thought of World War Two  
whilst morally constipated  
in a sterile German Loo.*



# YOU'RE JOKING!

**O**ne night, after I had finished reciting a few 'dunny' poems and other assorted 'cultural offerings' to members of a senior citizens' retirement village, a well-dressed, dignified gentleman approached me and asked if he might have a word. I thought he was going to castigate me for being crass in front of a genteel audience. However, thankfully, this was not the case — he only wanted to share some of his own dunny experiences.

One of the incidents he related was of a time when he had been a young lad working as a rouseabout on a sheep station in outback New South Wales. This was apparently back in the days when dunnies were made large enough to accommodate a number of shearers at the one 'sitting'. Often the dunny was a hut built over a long pit, and the seating arrangements consisted of planks with up to seven holes cut in them. There were no cubicles, or partitions for privacy, and it must have been hell in there on hot summer mornings after the shearers had gone out on a binge the night before.

"The lunch gong had been rung," the elderly gentleman said as he continued his story, "so I headed off to the dunny to answer a call of nature before having a cup of tea and something to eat. It was a beautiful, peaceful day outside the shed. A flock of finches took wing from out of a peppercorn tree and whirled past while a butterfly fluttered between the old fence rails, and two dragonflies flew in front of me in what appeared to be a courting ritual . . . which sent my thoughts flying back to the previous Saturday and a girl I had met at the local dance. It was a day made for appreciating life — which, in a way, was a bit unfortunate because it didn't prepare me for the shock that awaited me inside the dunny.

"I was feeling so joyful that I would have skipped down the track if I hadn't been conscious of the fact that shearers are, by nature, nosey buggers and someone was bound to see and give me a hard time for being so carefree.

"When I reached the dunny I opened the door (still thinking blissful thoughts of love and nature) and was confronted by one of the most horrible sights I have ever had the misfortune of witnessing. What I saw before me appeared to be the pallid, hairy face of a ghastly Cyclops staring me directly in the eye. I almost screamed out in fright before realising that what I beheld was not a nightmare but the naked rear end of someone crouched over one of the seats . . . I think that was the moment I found religion. The Lord does indeed work in mysterious ways.

"Cautiously I edged past that posterior, through frantic blowflies that appeared to be attempting to commit hari kari by bashing their brains out against the dunny walls, then realised that the backside belonged to one of the shearers — and I must admit that at the time I felt a great surge of sympathy for his unfortunate wife. He was bent over the seat, muttering and cursing to himself whilst reaching so far down the dunny hole that his head rested on the planks.

"Overcoming my shock I enquired as to what the hell he was doing. Without looking up he said: 'Aw, I took my bloody jacket off and put it alongside me while I did me business' (actually he used rather more descriptive language than that) 'then, like a bloody dill, somehow I managed to knock it down the hole as I stood up to wipe meself.' 'Geez, you wouldn't want it back after it's been down the dunny' I said. 'No bloody fear' he replied, 'I don't care about the bloody jacket, I'm just trying to rescue me sandwiches . . . they're in the bloody pocket!'"



# THE SANITARY MAN

**W**hen my family arrived in Melbourne in 1955 our house had an outside toilet where a can was placed beneath the seat to collect the 'night soil'. Each week the full can would be exchanged for an empty one by the sanitary (or dunny) man — a solitary, mysterious figure who drove a horse and cart and whom we rarely saw when we were kids because he usually called before we awoke.

We used to hate going out to the dunny in summer because the 'night soil' would have large maggots writhing on the top and it was a frightening, stomach-turning experience to lower your vulnerable, naked bum onto the seat — especially if the can was nearly full. Country dunnies were a far healthier proposition (if they weren't inhabited by snakes or red back spiders) because phenyl, ashes or lime could be poured down the pit to cover the 'soldiers'.

Mum told me of a time when she had to answer a call of nature early one morning and was sitting in the dunny when, suddenly, the little trapdoor at the back opened as the sanitary man prepared to exchange our can. "Morning Missus" he said cheerfully. "No need to hurry. I'll wait 'til you finish yer business". Naturally Mum gave a shriek and leapt up, far too embarrassed to finish what she had started.

Being a sanitary man could be a dangerous occupation because he often had to work while it was still dark. Besides the usual problems of attacks by savage dogs, and obstacles, such as children's toys, scooters and bicycles left lying on the path, clotheslines could pose a problem for the unwary sanno man as he went back to his cart with a full can upon his head because the rope was usually strung across the yard at just the right height to knock the can off, scattering its contents across the yard. Another problem was rusting cans which have been known to empty their contents over the poor sanno man when the bottom caved in after he'd lifted one onto his head.

The following are two examples of verse printed on cards that were left upon dunny seats by sanitary men at Christmas time, in the hope that a present (usually a packet of cigarettes or a bottle of beer) would be waiting for them when next they called to fulfill their odious task of replacing a full outhouse toilet can with an empty one. Woe betide any person who, either through recalcitrance or forgetfulness, didn't leave a present, because then their sanno man would be more than likely to forget to change the can when next he was due to make a call.



### THE PIPES OF PAN

The early Greeks have told you  
About the 'Pipes of Pan'  
A guy from their mythology  
Who's partly beast and man.

Now this is all a mystery,  
It's flamin' Greek to me,  
For these can't be together  
— That's plain as plain can be.

You've either got the pipes laid  
Or use a bloomin' pan,  
And this, of course, is serviced  
By me — your Sanno Man.

So here's the season's greetings  
From one you rarely see,  
And a Happy New Year also  
From us, my mates and me.

### THE SAN-MEN

Again it's the festive season  
And the end of the year is nigh  
So we have every reason  
To heave a heavy sigh.

It's the last year of our contract  
And soon we'll down our load.  
No more along your garden track  
We'll stagger to the road.

We wish you a Happy Christmas  
With loads of fun and cheer.  
We've served you very faithfully  
Throughout the dying year.

If you have a little something  
To help our Christmas treat  
We thank you very kindly —  
Just leave it on the seat.



Many a thoughtful sit was had  
by Wellington on his loo,  
whilst working out his strategy  
for the Battle of Waterloo.

# THE DUNNY AT NIGHT

When we were just kids and had to go out  
Alone to the old dunny at night  
We'd imagine all kinds of terrible things  
Beyond the glow of the candlelight.  
You'd get real scared, and in the dark  
The dunny seemed so far away —  
It's strange how it never seemed so far  
When you went there in the day!



We'd measure the distance in our minds,  
Take a wary look around.  
Then step by cautious step we'd creep  
Not daring to make a sound.  
Ever so slowly we'd move along  
Always on the lookout for ghosts —  
Of all the creepy things out there  
It was them that scared you the most.

But the one thing you must never do  
If you had to go 'down the back'  
You must never, ever, under threat of death,  
Step off of that track  
'Cos if you weren't careful and did step off  
Something awful would happen to you —  
Though we never knew quite what it was  
We knew that it was true.

You would have your scout knife in your hand  
And always be prepared  
'Cos "The Thing" would jump out and kill you  
If it knew that you were scared.  
But worse than that, behind the lemon tree,  
Waited an ugly bogie man  
Who would not touch you if you walked  
But would eat you if you ran.



Yes, when we were kids and had to go out  
Alone to the old dunny at night  
We'd imagine all kinds of terrible things  
Beyond the glow of the candlelight.  
The dingoes would turn into werewolves  
And howl from out of the hills  
With their fangs all bloody and dripping  
From the flesh of their latest kills.

The moths would turn into vampire bats  
That swooped around your head  
Waiting to give you a bite on the neck  
Then drink from where you bled.  
The cats would become hungry tigers  
With their evil eyes shining bright  
And they'd stalk you right down to the dunny  
While you shivered and shook in your fright.

The bushes would reach out and touch you  
And tell all the night you were there —  
Even if you'd tried to run and hide  
You wouldn't have been safe anywhere.  
The possums would turn into panthers  
Waiting to leap from the trees  
And every sharp sound in the undergrowth  
Would make you stop, and freeze.



The wombats would become great gorillas  
Crashing through the brush  
Thumping their chests whilst looking around  
For little children to crush,  
And then, when you got close to the dunny  
You'd have to duck your head  
Because horrible man-eating spiders  
Lurked at the edge of their webs.

When it was dark the wild morning glory  
Looked like dense jungle vines  
And we knew that somewhere inside it  
Deadly snakes were waiting entwined  
So we had to jump the last few feet  
Thought it scared you half to death  
Because if one of them cruel things got you  
It would choke you from your breath.

The smell at night wasn't nearly as bad  
As it was in the heat of the day  
But we'd take a deep breath just in case  
Then a little prayer we'd pray  
Because although we were afraid of the dunny  
We were too scared to stay outside  
And if we hadn't been tough country kids  
I reckon we would have cried.

Slowly we'd reach for the rusty old handle  
Then we'd give it a gentle push  
While all the wild things went quiet  
And watched from out of the bush.  
The door creaked and groaned as it opened  
Just like a coffin lid,  
At least that's what it sounded like  
When you were just a kid.

Ever so carefully we'd peek inside  
to see if the coast was clear.  
Then in we'd step, busting to go,  
While our hearts thumped loud in fear  
And though we tried hard not to think of it  
And acted sort of brave  
Going into that old dunny at night  
Was like walking into a grave.

Strange shadows jumped and leapt about  
In the candle's scary flicker  
While the thought of what was down the hole  
Made our hearts beat even quicker.  
In the daytime we knew what was down there  
And everything would be alright  
But what didn't worry you when the sun shone  
Could terrify you at night.

You had to have courage to lift up the lid  
(You had to be desperate as well!)  
'Cos you knew that waiting down in the dark  
Were all the horrors of hell,  
And when you started to lift the lid  
You had to do it real slow  
Just so you could drop it down quickly again  
If something tried to escape from below.







You'd drop your daks as quick as you could  
Over the pit you'd position your bum  
And the thought of what waited down below  
Was enough to give you the runs.  
You didn't have time to sit and dream  
You had to be bloody quick  
'Cos, if you weren't, something might grab you  
And drag you down to meet old Nick.

But if the wind blew out the candle  
Your terror would be complete  
'Cos the slimy monsters could get out  
From beneath the dunny seat.  
There'd be an almighty commotion  
As you tried to get out of the door  
With your pants around your ankles  
And demons all over the floor.

You didn't care about man-eating spiders  
You didn't care about vampire bats  
You didn't care about snakes and gorillas  
Or ferocious tiger cats,  
You didn't care if the bogie man got you  
And the terrible "thing" as well  
Just as long as you could get away alive  
From the evil horrors of hell.

Your shrieks would bring mother our of the house,  
And the old man would come too,  
(Though he was likely to give you a belting  
When he saw where you'd done your pooh)  
And while mother tried to comfort you  
You'd swear inside your soul  
That the sun would have to be bloody bright  
Before you next confronted that hole!



# THE ANSWER

I had a thought the other day  
While sitting on our loo  
Which, if you've got a moment,  
I'd like to pass on to you.  
It may not seem momentous  
Or a thought profound  
But as far as I'm concerned  
The reasoning seems quite sound.

As I settled down upon the loo  
to quietly meditate  
I got to thinking about our world  
And its dreadful state.  
Now the reason for this situation  
As far as I could see  
Was too many greedy leaders  
And too little honesty.

As I sat and wondered to myself  
Just what we could do  
I was rudely interrupted  
By the arrival of a pooh.  
Now that wasn't such a bad thing  
'Cos it helped to clear my mind  
And made me find the answer  
To which I had been blind.

And this solution to the problem  
That had been troubling me  
Struck as in a blinding flash  
Of brilliant simplicity.  
What if all our nations' leaders  
Had to drop their pants  
And bare their bums when they told a lie? —  
The truth might stand a chance!





**Sweet revenge**



# HEAVEN



I suppose Heaven's full of old dunnies  
Shaded by peppercorn trees  
Where I could sit in quiet contemplation  
For a dozen eternities.  
Yes, I reckon I could sit there forever,  
Or at least for as long as I pleased,  
With the tired old family jewels  
Caressed by a heavenly breeze.

There'll be not a soul to disturb me  
In fact there'll be dunnies to spare  
'Cos I doubt that any of you lot  
Are likely to make it up there,  
And I suppose it must get quite lonely for God  
With most of his kids down in hell  
So he probably drops by for a smoke and a chat,  
Maybe a cold tinny as well.

Ah, it'll be very pleasant to sit there  
Gazing out at that vast expanse  
Without any fear of the boss catching you  
Or bullants sneaking into your pants,  
And there's no need to stand on the seat up there  
You can do as you bloody well please  
'Cos they won't allow anyone in Heaven  
Who's got that sort of disease.

My personal dunny will be strategically placed  
With my name engraved on it,  
And such sweet revenge will be my joy  
For as long as I care to sit  
'Cos every long drop will go directly to Hell,  
And my reward will be complete  
When all my enemies are placed at the bottom  
While I'm up the top, on the seat.



There'll be plenty of Playboy magazines  
And Cleos for the ladies,  
That's if there's any women left  
Who haven't been sent down to Hades,  
And there'll be no need for anyone to worry  
If sobriety is their fear  
'Cos within easy reach of each cherrywood seat  
Will be an esky full of beer.

The night shirts that God makes you wear  
Will take some getting used to  
And if a bloke wore one of them down here  
You'd reckon he was a sheila.  
Still, I suppose they must serve their purpose  
Although they look bloody funny  
At least they won't be hanging 'round your feet  
If you're always on the dunny.

And I bet I know what's down in Hell,  
There's a solitary broken-down loo  
With the devil inside, constipated,  
And you sinners outside, in a queue.  
But that wouldn't be the worst of it  
There'll be more than that to fear  
'Cos old Nick'll be in there forever  
And you will all have diarrhoea.



# WHEN IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO

When it's time for me to go  
And my life's flushed down the drain  
I don't want it to be in a hospital  
Where doctors pull the chain,  
I want it to be where wattles bloom  
And eucalypts proudly grow,  
Where the sun shines bright in an Aussie sky  
And gentle breezes blow.

Yes, when it's time for me to go  
And my last penny's spent  
It wouldn't matter where I was  
When I finally went  
As long as I'm in my country home  
When I step off of life's track  
Secure in the comforting knowledge  
That the old dunny's out the back.



But I don't want to be planted in a fancy box  
Of polished pine and the rest  
With my relations all gawking down at me  
Stretched out in my Sunday best,  
No, I want to be buried sitting down  
With my long johns 'round my knees  
Inside my old country dunny  
With a bush canary for company.



And there my body will gratefully sit  
In a pose that suits it the best  
While my soul ascends into Heaven  
Where it's sure to be blessed.  
At peace my body will finally be  
With neither worry nor regret  
'Cos there'll be no bludger yelling out  
"Are you finished in there yet?"



"Hurry up in there."

# THE NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

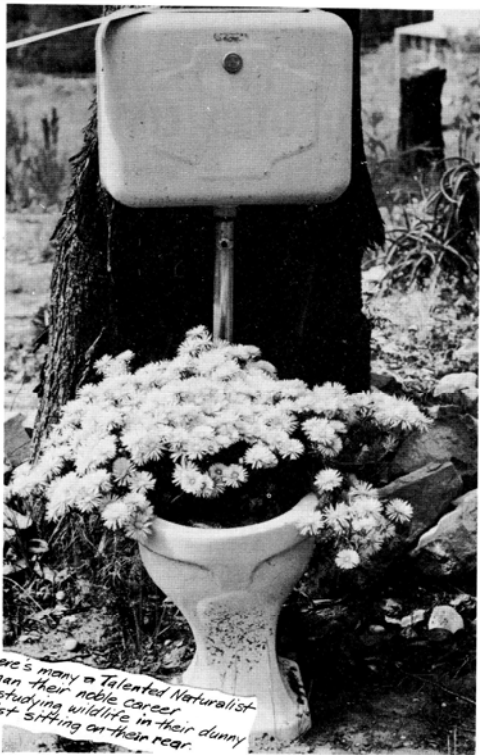
I suppose I'm going to seem common  
In what I'm about to say  
Yet I don't really know how to put it  
In any other way.  
But it strikes me as rather amazing  
In fact it seems bloody absurd  
That in every New Years Honours List  
We invariably honour some turds.

Now if I was the King of England  
I wouldn't tell them all to arise  
After I'd finished knighting them  
For telling a pack of lies.  
No, they wouldn't get any satisfaction  
'Cos I wouldn't dub them 'sir'  
But there'd be much more honesty  
In the title I'd confer.

I'd direct them all to the throne room  
And say politely "after you"  
Then solemnly knight each one of them  
As I flushed them down the loo.  
Though this may seem unkind to you  
You'd all be much better off  
'Cos this world has never needed anyone  
Who thinks they're a bloody toff.







*There's many a Talented Naturalist  
began their noble career  
by studying wildlife in their dunny  
whilst sitting on their rear.*

# JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE

Old Two-bottle Charlie was fond of a drink  
And never reckoned that he'd had enough  
'Til he couldn't pick himself up from the floor  
To pour another glass of the stuff.  
He never brought more than two bottles with him  
Whenever he paid us a call  
Still, that's more than some folk I know  
Who never bring any at all.

And he had a strange set of dentures  
That were a sort of family heirloom  
They'd belonged to his father, his grandfather too  
And his grandfather's father before him.  
It was easy to see he was proud of those teeth  
Of that there couldn't be any doubt  
'Cos he'd only wear them just for show  
And to eat he'd take them out.

But those choppers were much too big for him  
And would click and clatter about  
And whenever he started arguing  
They were in danger of falling out,  
And he was so skinny that the bush flies,  
Who found him irresistible  
Had trouble finding a place to land  
So more often than not they missed him.

I've never met a man who could drink like him  
And I doubt that I ever shall  
Although I've met some mighty heavy drinkers  
Along the thirsty road to hell.  
I reckon he would have drunk anything  
As long as it was alcoholic  
And if Bacchus is the God of booze  
Then to him Charlie was apostolic.

But our old man didn't like Charlie at all  
'Cos he reminded him of his dad,  
So Charlie always used to call him son  
Just to make him mad.  
But when they looked like coming to blows  
Mum would put on the charm  
In case Charlie tried to kick us out  
'Cos we were sharefarming his farm.

Now dad had a brother. The black sheep of the family  
Who'd stayed in England after the war  
'Cos he was wanted by the police over here  
'Though we didn't know what for,  
And every Christmas, out of brotherly hatred  
Dad would send his homesick nipper  
An empty bottle that had once contained  
Glorious Victoria bitter.

So his brother, seeking revenge one year,  
Went into his local bank  
Where he withdrew all his life's savings  
To invest in a cruel prank.  
How he must have longed to be a fly on the wall  
When our old man opened the mail  
'Cos what he'd sent dad was that foulest of brews  
A bottle of English light ale.

Now dad wasn't what you'd call a worldly man —  
In fact he was a bit of a dill —  
So, without thinking, he drank from that bottle  
Which of course made him violently ill,  
And we had to rush him straight to hospital  
After he'd only had one suck  
Where they transplanted his kidneys, pumped out his stomach,  
And gave him an enema just for luck.

It was touch and go as the weeks went by  
That the old man would ever recover  
But what he was going through wouldn't be wasted  
As Charlie was soon to discover  
'Cos while dad was hovering twix life and death  
In that dingy hospital bed  
A diabolical scheme was being formed  
Inside his tortured head.

The doctors were just about at their wits' end  
To find that poison's antidote  
When they heard a feeble and desperate croak  
Forced from the old man's throat.  
It took them a while to work out what he'd said  
Because his voice wasn't very clear  
Then one of the smarter ones said: "Of course  
Dr Foster's amber panacea!"

"We've tried everything else," another replied  
"So we may as well give it a go"  
And when they raised a bottle to the old man's lips  
His eyes began to glow.  
Some might have said he made a miraculous recovery  
For a man in his death throes  
But mum and us kids just sort of smiled  
As like Lazarus he slowly arose.

We took him home and tried to put him to bed  
So that he could recuperate  
But he said: "It's not bloody bed I'm needing  
But a drink with my old mate."  
Then he took a bottle of beer from the fridge  
Emptied it down the sink  
And told us kids to go and get Charlie  
So they could have a celebratory drink.

While we were away getting the old bludger  
Dad was at work on his plan  
But what he had in mind should never be done  
To an Aussie drinking man.  
Though mum had thrown away that English muck  
And we didn't have any more of the stuff  
While he was in hospital dad had reckoned  
That dishwater would be close enough.

So he filled up that empty bottle  
With the slops from the kitchen sink  
And when we finally arrived with old Charlie  
It was that bottle dad gave him to drink.  
Now Charlie wasn't one for formalities  
When he had a drink in his hand  
So he threw back his head, gulped down the lot  
And was trapped by dad's devious plan.

If the look upon old Charlie's face  
Reflected what was happening inside him  
Then that water must have been a dreadful shock  
To his unsuspecting plumbing,  
And every cell in that tortured body  
Must have wished it had never been born  
As poor Charlie rushed out to the dunny  
Where he had a long and noisy yawn.

After he'd got rid of as much as he could  
And lost his teeth in the process  
He tried to crawl back to the house  
But got lost in mum's rambling roses,  
And while he was lying there like a poisoned dog,  
Wishing that he were dead  
Unfortunately for himself he vowed revenge  
After he heard what the old man said.

'Cos after a while mum started to worry  
And pretended that she'd call the police  
If the rest of what Charlie hadn't thrown up  
Wasn't still in one piece.  
The old man knew she was joking  
But decided it best that he went  
'Cos he was in the mood for something  
She wouldn't give him after an argument.

He wasn't sure whether to run to the dunny  
Or walk with a measured stride  
So he stood and rolled a cigarette  
While he tried to decide.  
By the time he'd finished his cigarette  
He still wasn't sure what to do  
So he rolled himself another one  
And then he procrastinated too.

Thinking it was probably safe by now  
To attempt to help old Charlie  
Dad put out his cigarette, rolled another  
Then sauntered down to the dunny.  
He softly tapped on the door just in case  
Someone was in there before him,  
Which was something he'd never done before —  
He'd usually barge straight in.

When he went inside and looked around  
His face broke into a grin  
'Cos although he couldn't see Charlie  
He could see what had happened to him.  
He sat on the seat for a moment or two  
Trying to control himself  
But he must have been too overcome  
By Charlie's drastic loss of health.

'Cos we heard a great roar of laughter  
Erupting from out of the dunny  
Which struck us as strange, it had been years  
Since dad had found anything funny.  
We rushed to the window to see what had happened  
Not prepared for what we saw  
'Cos after the old man finished laughing  
He burst out of the dunny door.

Then like a whirling dervish he danced  
'Round and 'round the yard  
'Til mum tried to surl the dogs on him —  
She was taking it rather hard —  
But the dogs knew what was good for them  
And hid under the verandah  
While the old man went back into the dunny  
To have another gander.

When next his ugly face appeared  
It was beaming from ear to ear,  
Even mum for a moment was stuck for words  
'Cos something seemed very queer.  
Then dad tried to regain his composure,  
Strode back down the path,  
And with every step he took it seemed  
He was trying hard not to laugh.

Light was his step as he entered the kitchen,  
He even gave mum a peck on the cheek,  
Which later she told us he hadn't done  
Since their courting days down by the creek.  
"You'll never guess what's happened," he said  
As he picked mum up from the floor  
With a rare attempt at gentleness  
That we hadn't seen before.



"You'll never guess what's happened," he smirked  
As he danced her around the room  
In a gallant and noble effort  
To disguise his heartfelt gloom.  
Then, wiping away tears of laughter, he said  
"You'd better go out and buy Charlie a wreath  
'Cos the bugger's fallen down the dunny  
And all that's left is his bloody false teeth!"

"What a terrible way to go," he chuckled,  
Barely able to control his grief  
At the thought of Charlie's tragic fate  
And what he was buried beneath.  
Then the old man made a rude remark  
Which mum thought was rather unfair,  
"There'd be no point in getting him out  
'Cos he'll feel more at home down there!"

Suddenly dad had a terrible thought  
That filled his heart with a deep despair  
As he reflected on the awful tragedy  
That had taken place down there.  
He turned to mum with tears in his eyes  
And, with an anguish that was terrible to see  
Said, "You know what that rotten bludger has done  
He's polluted the bloody dunny!"

Mum put an arm around dad's waist  
And ran her fingers through his hair  
Just like she used to do with old Charlie  
Whenever dad wasn't there.

"Don't worry love," mum tenderly said,  
Remembering that kiss on the cheek,  
"If we throw a bag of lime down there  
It should be alright within a week!"

Now two-bottle Charlie knew that our dad  
Would go for a squat the next morning  
So he managed to drag himself from death's door  
To get to the dunny before him.  
With the hook we kept the newspaper on  
He fished his teeth from the pit  
And was pleased when he put them back in his mouth  
'Cos they seemed a much better fit.

During Charlie's last moments upon this earth  
Our dad seemed quite happy to me  
And was whistling a carefree sort of tune  
As he sauntered down to the dunny.  
In fact he was totally unprepared  
For the shock Charlie had in store  
Down the track just a little way  
Inside that dunny door.

When dad reached his destination  
The last thing he expected to meet  
Was what he said he thought was Charlie's ghost  
Sitting on the dunny seat.  
To say the old man got a bit of a fright  
Would have been the understatement of the year  
In fact, as he told the jury at his trial,  
He was nearly paralysed with fear.

Then he did something he told the judge  
Was caused by a reflex action,  
Though later he had to admit to mum  
It had given him great satisfaction.  
What he did, without thinking he reckons,  
Was stuff Charlie down the hole  
Then sit on the lid while he said a prayer  
For his victim's mortal soul.

It was only when mum came to call him for lunch  
That he dared to look underneath  
And the only sign of old two-bottle Charlie  
Was the poor bugger's false teeth!  
"It must have been a ghost," they said at dad's trial  
'Cos the false teeth hadn't been moved  
And as the jury weren't sure what to believe  
Dad's guilt could never be proved.

Though the prosecution wanted to know  
Why the hook was in such a filthy state,  
As it had some sort of bearing  
Upon old Charlie's fate  
But the jury out of misguided compassion for mum  
Thought it best to decide  
That if Charlie's death wasn't an accident  
Then it was justifiable homicide.





## **GROUNDWORKS FOR DIVORCE**

Our dear old mum, God rest her soul,  
Once planted climbing roses  
To hide the dunny from our view  
And protect our tender noses.  
A wondrous sight it was indeed  
To see those roses bloom  
And even in the little house  
You could smell their sweet perfume,  
But sometimes, out of the noblest deeds  
Can dark tragedy be born  
Because while mum saw only the roses  
The old man felt the thorns.

It was on a warm and moonlit night  
In the dying of the year  
That our dad came home from the races  
Reeking of cigarettes and beer.  
How the old bludger found his way home  
Whenever he got so blind  
Was a baffling mystery whose answer  
We were never able to find,  
But it was easy to see by his scowling face  
That he hadn't backed a winner  
And mum made him even madder still  
'Cos she'd given the dog his dinner.

He acted as if it was the old dear's fault  
That he'd had so much to drink  
Then he staggered off out the back  
In search of a quiet think.  
Well, it wasn't exactly a stagger  
More like a frantic grope,  
And to get to his destination  
You wouldn't have reckoned he had a hope  
But we had to admire the old man,  
Credit where credit's due  
'Cos some ancient instinct drove him on  
In the direction of the loo.

His grip on reality was feeble  
And he kept on missing the track  
Although, with a sort of weaving lurch  
He'd somehow make it back.  
Once he even did a pirouette  
But fell with a mighty crash  
(Though we had to hand it to him  
He did it with a certain panache)  
But he courageously picked himself up  
Though we thought he'd be there to stay  
Then like a crippled orang utan  
he continued on his way.



In the Moon's strange ethereal glow  
It made a truly remarkable scene  
And I doubt even Robert Helpmann  
Could have choreographed dad's routine  
But although his footwork was bloody amazing  
And would have dazzled Fred Astaire  
When the old man arrived at the dunny door  
He found that it wasn't there,  
For at the most vital and critical moment  
Dad's sense of direction had failed  
And tangled in mum's climbing roses  
He was to find himself cruelly impaled.

It took a while for his poor drunken senses  
To register the pain  
Through the alcoholic haze  
That had almost numbed his brain  
But when the message did arrive  
He didn't take it very kindly  
But bellowed out obscenities  
And thrashed around quite blindly.  
That this would do him no good at all  
Was plain for us to see  
But his pain only goaded him on  
To further misery.

The first strangled words to reach us  
Were strange to a kid like me  
'Cos the old man was swearing that someone  
Had moved the bloody dunny.  
His poor brain must have been befuddled  
By that overdose of beer

Because what had him in its thorny grip  
to the rest of us was clear,  
But his next words decided mum and us kids  
To remain silent in our fear  
'Cos he swore "I'll kill the flaming bugger  
Who planted blackberries out here!"

Then dad, mad with pain and bent on revenge,  
managed to tear himself free.  
Like a demon he ran to the machinery shed  
Then rushed back again with glee.  
He lowered an awesome weapon to the ground  
Then, with a wrenching action,  
Ripped the monster into life, first go —  
Which gave him immense satisfaction,  
Although I think he was a little bit startled  
When he heard the chainsaw roar  
Because never in its temperamental life  
Had it started first time before.

But it didn't take him long to recover his senses,  
What there was of them left,  
Then the old man wreaked a terrible revenge  
That was to leave our poor mother bereft.  
With a maniacal laugh he cut and he thrust  
He slashed, he hacked and he parried,  
Never caring that his wanton destruction was breaking  
The heart of the poor woman he'd married.  
Like a madman he attacked those innocent plants  
But the saddest thing I have to tell  
Is that not only did he slaughter the roses  
But he cut down the dunny as well.



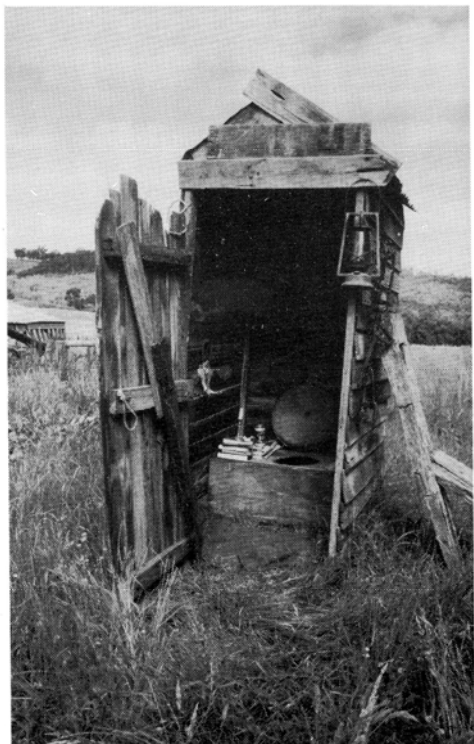
Then for the very first time in our lives  
We heard our dear mother swear,  
And the words she said made it clear to us  
That she'd taken all she could bear.  
The old girl reckoned that she'd had enough  
And without a pang of remorse  
The next day dragged us kids to the city  
Where she sued the old man for divorce.  
When finally the case came up for trial  
And mum told her sorry tale  
Of dad's drinking and brutality  
Even the lawyers turned a little pale.

But the judge was partial to a drink or two  
Or three, or four, or five,  
In fact he reckoned that drinking  
Was all that kept a man alive.  
So he was never known to grant a divorce  
On the grounds of drunkenness  
'Though he'd happily grant one to his wife  
For anything, more or less,  
'Cos to him, marriage without drinking  
Was like a wig without any hair  
And the thought of wedded sobriety  
Filled his soul with a deep despair.

But he was also a country man at heart  
Who'd been too long in the city  
And when he heard of our old dunny's fate  
He looked upon us all with great pity,  
'Cos from somewhere deep within his jaded past  
Fond memories came flooding back  
Of a happier time in his distant youth  
Spent dreaming 'out the back'.  
So he said "Plaintiff, the divorce is granted  
On the grounds of brutality —  
Not for what your husband did to you and the children  
But for what the bastard did to your dunny!"



There's many a Slippery Customer  
had the brilliant notion  
to become a politician  
whilst passing a Morning Motion



**Old Faithfull**

# BUSH TEA

Allan John Duffy

It seems quite logical to me  
Why bushmen never stir their tea  
But swing the billy 'round their heads  
— 3 times bush lore recommends.

They shun not twigs, nor gum leaf specks,  
And to a few black ants they'll not object  
But experience has taught the trick  
Of never stirring tea with sticks.

The reason's simple to understand  
For bushmen are a cautious band,  
And tourists — and others of their class —  
Use random sticks to wipe their arse.





There's too many people in this world  
reckon they're better than me and you  
and act as if they know much more  
than they really do.  
They spend their lives pretending  
they're what they will never be,  
while the most useful parts of themselves  
they flush out to the sea.



# MY OLD COUNTRY DUNNY

No matter where we may travel  
No matter where we may roam,  
Though a mansion we may dwell in  
Or a humpy be our home,  
No matter what our colour  
Our breeding, sex or creed  
Daily we're all bound to have  
The same old basic need.

But you can keep your fancy houses  
Where the toilets come ensuite  
And your very exclusive urinals  
Where gentlemen like to meet.  
'Cos I prefer the comfort  
Of a simple bush retreat  
Where blowies buzz contentedly  
'Round a worn old wooden seat.

When nature calls and you must go  
And do what you must do  
There's no better place to do it  
Than in a cosy country loo.  
I like to sit there in the morning best  
Thinking thoughts profound  
Whilst perched above a long-drop  
That's the envy of miles around.

Yes, I love to sit there in the morning  
Quietly gazing at the trees  
With my bony elbows resting  
On my naked knobbly knees.  
It's then I know that nothing  
Can compare to times like these,  
That is unless you've got farmer Giles  
Or a painful social disease.

Now our old dunny never had a design  
Nor was it exactly planned  
In fact it was made from anything  
That happened to come to hand,  
And it's hardly a majestic construction  
Nor is it likely to inspire  
But for years it's served its purpose  
With the help of some fencing wire.

It has a rusty galvanised iron roof,  
A sand and cow manure floor,  
There's timber off-cuts for the walls  
And a star cut above the door.  
The cracks used to be plugged with clay  
But that has long since gone  
And in the wall there's a four-inch nail  
To hang your coat upon.

There's an Arnotts biscuit tin of ashes  
In the corner near the seat  
That you have to sprinkle down the hole  
When your job's complete.  
For toilet paper we use the pages  
Torn from a telephone book  
Or pieces of old newspapers  
Stuck on a wire hook.

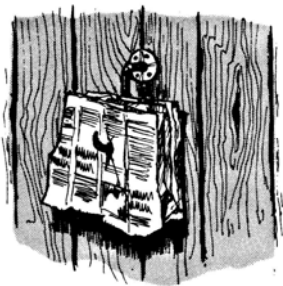
It's shaded by a peppercorn tree  
That helps keep the flies away  
And makes the heat quite tolerable  
On a hot summer's day,  
But the piece de resistance  
Is that old dunny's seat  
And to sit on that smooth textured wood  
Is a truly memorable treat.

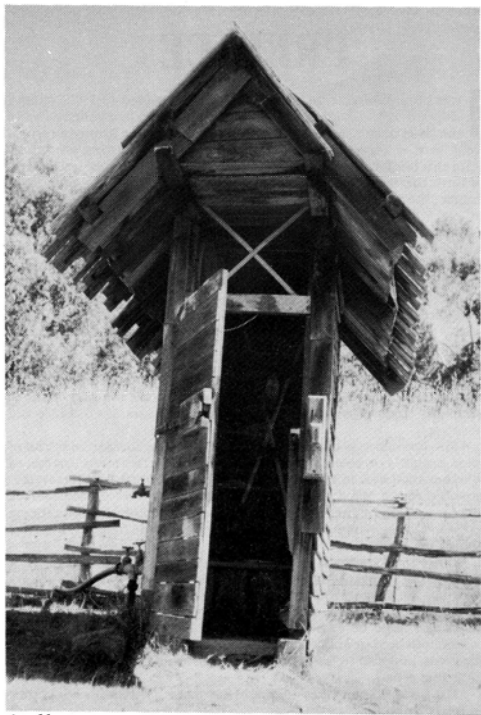
It's kept spotlessly clean with sand-soap  
And lemon juice by mum  
With the help of constant polishing  
By good honest country bums.  
The lid is made from a packing case,  
There's a jam tin for the candle  
And nailed to the creaky ancient door  
There's a bit of rope for a handle.

There's some folk reckon it's primitive  
And for neither love nor money  
Would they ever go back in there again  
Once they've seen our dunny.  
But I can't imagine a better way  
To go and pass my time  
Than to sit upon the well-worn altar  
Of that sacred shrine.

So you can keep your antiseptic cells  
Where you squat in haste and worry,  
They wouldn't be any good to me  
Unless I was in a desperate hurry.  
You can keep your fancy porcelains  
And your ultra-modern tiles —  
Just give to me my old dunny seat  
And a view that stretches for miles.

'Cos when I hear the Kookaburra's call  
And the bush birds' chorus of song  
Just outside that rickety door  
Then I know I'm where I belong,  
And it fills my heart with joy to know  
That this rural exultation  
Hasn't yet been made a victim  
Of greedy government taxation.





**A noble structure**

# ALL THINGS MUST PASS

Well, my old dunny, I can't honestly say  
That there's a tear in my eye  
As I make this farewell pilgrimage  
To bid you a sad goodbye,  
But you've served me well throughout the years  
And 'though I've lived too long to cry  
I have to tell you my faithful friend  
I leave you with a heartfelt sigh.

At least the family will be happier now  
And so they bloodywell oughter  
'Cos it cost a fortune to put in something  
That's just a waste of water,  
But the romance seems to have gone out of life  
And the excitement too  
Now that we've installed a septic tank  
And a sterile plastic loo.

On its wall there's a picture of Switzerland  
And 'though it might be home to the Swiss  
It makes me feel like a foreigner  
When I go for a hit and miss,  
And fair dinkum mate I swear it makes me  
Even more homesick for you  
And I reckon I'll live to rue the day  
I was forced into getting that loo.

How I miss reading the scraps of paper  
That were stuck upon your hook  
Before we'd committed them to the deep  
After we'd had a look,  
And the wife said to say she misses the sound  
Of the bell-birds' dainty tinkle  
She used to hear when she came out here  
To enjoy a quiet twinkle.

Do you remember those nights I used to complain  
When the weather was inclement  
And how I used to whinge all the time  
Until my penny was spent?  
Well, now I remember with fondness  
Those wild winter nights we shared  
When the wind used to blow around your hole  
and freeze the bum I bared.

And do you remember those days so long ago  
When I was just a kid  
And the old man would get real cranky  
If I didn't close the lid?  
Still, you couldn't blame the poor fellow  
'Cos the way those blowflies bred  
Would have made even St Peter say  
The things the old man said.

You know, everyone tells me that times must change  
And we can't stop progression  
But the older I get the more it seems  
Like just another form of repression,  
And what's often done in the name of progress  
Is such a bloody disgrace  
That it sometimes makes me feel ashamed  
To be a part of the human race.

Everything seems to be getting faster  
While I keep slowing down  
And people don't seem to smile so much —  
It's more usual for them to frown.  
Oh I wish things were the way they used to be  
When we didn't have to rush  
And folk had dunnies to ponder upon  
Not plastic septs to flush.

Ah well old friend, all things must pass  
As I'm sure you're well aware,  
No more will you hear our sighs and groans  
No more our problems share,  
No more will you feel our fingers' grip  
Tighten on your seat,  
No more will you see us stagger off  
When our job's complete.



Like brassieres and the horse and cart  
Your era has come to an end  
But with nostalgia do I remember you  
Whenever my knees I bend,  
So don't be surprised if some dark night  
When the family are asleep  
You see me sneaking back out here  
A nostalgic rendezvous to keep.

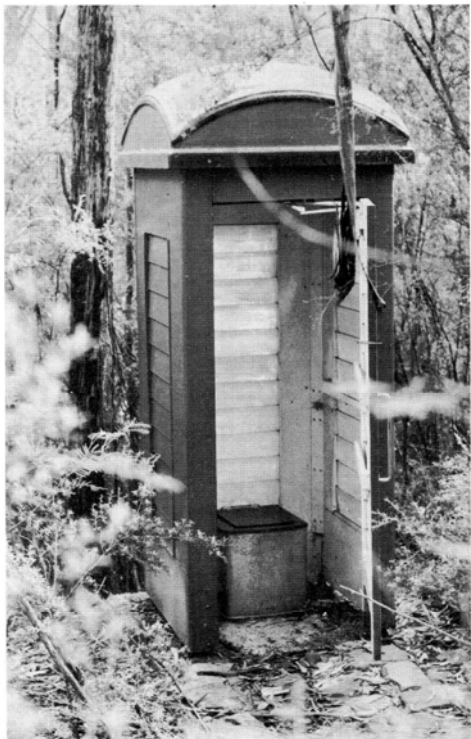
My friend, you're a victim of progress  
And had to be superseded.  
Like most of us you've just been used  
Until you're no longer needed,  
But I tell you mate, the time will come  
When history will recall your worth  
And no longer will you be the butt  
Of mankind's cruel mirth.

Still, I hope I never live to see the day  
When the septic's superseded  
'Cos I reckon that will be the time  
When our bums are no longer needed.  
And if our bums are no longer of any use  
What would we use to sit on?  
I hope old mate when that day comes  
We'll both have been long gone.

*I remember once we nearly lost  
my Little Nipper Jim,  
'cos the dunny hole was much too big  
and he nearly fell right in.  
As mother grabbed him by the foot  
she let out an almighty shriek  
and gave the blowies such a fright  
they wouldn't come back for a week*







**A long distance drop**

# THE NEW LOO

Farewell my old dunny, farewell and adieu,  
'Cos we've got a septic and it's better than you.  
I'm sorry my old friend that you've fallen from favour  
But a new plastic seat my old bum will soon savour,  
And no more will I sit here fighting blowies away —  
I'll soon kill them all with an aerosol spray.

Now we've got a toilet that we're able to flush  
And it lets in the water with a whoosh and a rush.  
The plumbing and decor have all been designed  
So that even the tissues are colour combined.  
Oh, it'll be such a joy to sit over that bowl  
Without having to worry about what's down the hole.

We'll have in the neighbours for afternoon tea  
And feel so proud when they go for a pee.  
We'll have cucumber sandwiches and put on the style  
'Cos we've got a septic with bright shiny tiles.  
When the guests have all gone and we've cleaned out the loo  
With Jiff, or new Ajax, then we'll use it too.

We'll have super-soft tissues and a cute little doll  
That Mum's making up to disguise the roll.  
In the top of the cistern we'll put Harpic Blue  
That will look so pretty as it swirls 'round the loo,  
Or maybe we'll use teabags then, after a wee,  
It'll look like we're flushing with Lanchoo tea.

We won't have to worry about the unpleasant smells  
We'll just use some chemicals that makes them dispel.  
So farewell my old dunny, I must bid you adieu  
'Cos we've got a septic that's brand spanking new,  
But maybe in the future, when you're not so full,  
Just for old time's sake I'll pay you a call.

Whilst snowed in on the Russian front,  
Napoleon longed to retreat  
to the comfort and security  
of his Froggy Dunny Seat.



## Here are some reminiscences of Donna Scattini, of Kalgoorlie, W.A.

**T**he old dunny is now so covered with creeper that you can scarcely recognise it. The front door is permanently propped open by an old lounge chair with all the stuffing missing, this being a dog's bed — which is what the dunny has been used for during the past 15 years. I suppose it's only a matter of time before it is pulled down.

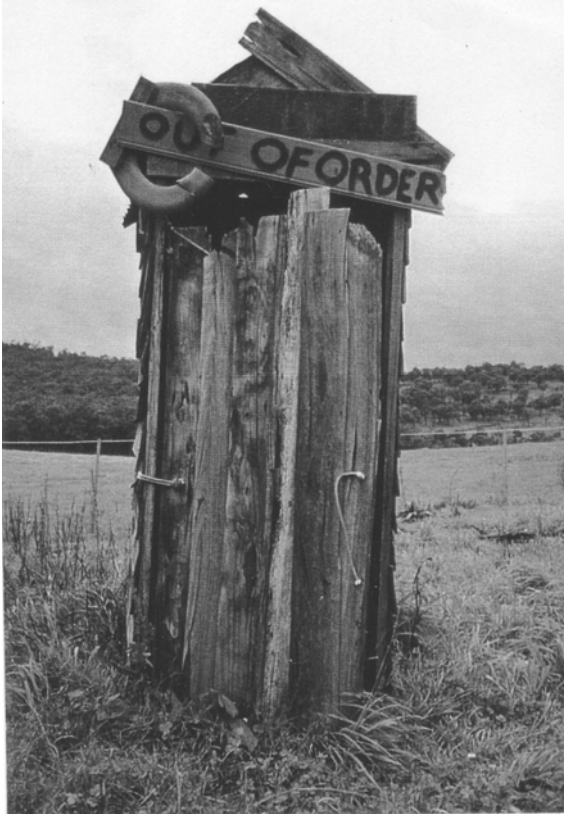
Many childhood memories revolve around that old dunny, like at Christmas time when Nanna would visit. She was always embarrassing dad by leaving the dunny door open. Like most of us she was afraid of spiders. The fact was though the back door of the house opened to reveal an unrestricted view to the dunny only 50 metres or so away directly in line.

As children, with a child's obsession for toilets and bodily functions, it was always the current 'dare' to peek through the little hole near the front door to see who was in residence — the hole being left for the purpose of letting some light into the windowless building.

Dad used to empty the pan once a fortnight or so depending upon the demand. We were admonished to only use the dunny when absolutely necessary and to go behind a bush if only 'spending a penny'. Just as well we lived in the bush! This was especially important at peak use times when visitors were present. We would delight in giving Dad progress reports on the 'level', especially after we observed a mishap one day when the contents (the can being full) slopped on dad as he was 'burying the policeman!' Not that we were permitted to observe the ritual but, being kids, we would manage to find any excuse to be outside at the appropriate moment.

In our small imaginations nocturnal visits to the dunny were likened to a trip to a haunted house. The spiders seemed more prolific and the torch was always shone under the rim of the hole to check for lurking nasties. No one went at night unless accompanied by an adult, especially in winter when the rain threatened to act as a bidet to your bum! Hence the idea of planting the creeper to insulate and weatherproof the building to a certain degree. Now the creeper is home for many small birds, who regularly nest in the tangled mass, and the flowers feed a myriad of bees and insects.

In a way the old dunny was an education in itself. Even now, the all-pervading smell of phenyl still conjures up memories of hot sunny days, sitting inside with the blowflies buzzing at the door. I wonder if times will change to the extent that some day in the future people may well reminisce about the 'old-fashioned' flush toilets of today? The mind boggles.





## MOSSIES

**A** lot of work is being done in an attempt to eradicate the mosquitoes of Loch Sport, a popular area, especially with retired people, between the Ninety Mile Beach and Lake Victoria. I hope the effort is meeting with some success because when I played there with the Briagolong Bush Band, at an open-air dance in the recreation reserve, it was with great difficulty that we played more than a few notes without desperately wanting to flatten the bludgers as they pierced deep into our flesh and gorged themselves on blood. Still they were a great excuse for playing bum notes.

During one of our breaks we wandered over to the fire, upon which one hopeful person was throwing lumps of dry cow dung in what turned out to be a vain effort to discourage the bloodthirsty beasts. As we stood clustered amidst the dung smoke I had a chat with one of the locals, who told me the following.

"One night my mate and I were out duck shooting and, while I was boiling the billy, my mate went off into the bush to answer the call of nature. Sometime later I heard a great deal of splashing going on down at the lake, not far from our camp. 'Ducks' I thought, so I grabbed my gun and quietly snuck off down to the water's edge.

"I saw dark shapes on the lake, took aim and fired off both barrels. I hit a couple of the ducks and the rest flew off into the dark so I took off my strides and waded out to retrieve what I'd shot. I got a bloody big shock, I can tell you, because what I'd shot turned out to be dirty great mosquitoes from a mob that had attacked my mate and dragged him into the water while he was washing his hands after doing his business. In fact he was almost drowned by the time I got him ashore, and the mossies had sucked that much blood out of him he was about four sizes too small for his clothes.

"I took him to the Sale Hospital and, even though his was a common sort, the doctors had to pump so much blood back into him that they exhausted their stocks of his blood type."

"I tell you mate" he continued, "the best way to escape mossies around here is to have handy a 44 gallon drum with a lid. Leave a sharp knife and a hammer inside it then, when the mossies attack, you jump into the drum, pull on the lid and wait 'til they dive-bomb you.

When the attack starts and they pierce the drum you hammer their stingers over so they can't escape, then quickly leap out and cut their throats — otherwise they're likely to carry the drum off with you inside it".

## THE MISSING WILLY

**O**ne night I was babysitting my niece and nephew, Stacy and Shannon (aged approximately 5 and 6 respectively). We were skylarking around when one of them noticed a hole in my jumper and enquired as to how it came to be there.

"That's where I was shot during the war!" I replied.

Shannon lifted up his pyjama top, revealing his navel, and said:

"That's where I was shot during the war."

Quick as a flash, little Stacy pulled down her pyjama pants and cried:

"Someone must have shot my willy off in the war!"



If my brothers, sisters and I complained about the weather when we were kids our Mum used to say:

"Whether the weather be cold or whether the weather be hot we'll weather the weather, whatever the weather, whether we like it or not."

Do you know why God changes the weather? To make poor people think they are travelling.

If one of us bigger kids picked on someone smaller Mum would say: "Who am damn think you am? Think you everybody self? Pick on your own one big enough and then agologise."

My Mum and Dad were battlers so they often had difficulty in getting enough food to keep their tribe of kids happy. This is a little thank you prayer we said after we'd eaten and before we started fighting over who was going to do the dishes.

"Thank you Lord for what we've had. For a little more we would be glad, but seeing as times are very bad we'll just make do with what we've had. Amen."

# THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD NEWS

**M**any years ago, even before Michael Tuck played for Hawthorn, Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, written on great slabs of stone.

Whilst they'd been waiting for him to return, the multitude gathered at the bottom of the mountain had grown tired of praying so they'd decided to have a bit of a party. By the time Moses got back they were having a mighty old time; cracking tinnies, kicking footies around, playing two-up and placing bets on the mid-week chariot races with their local S.P. bookie. Quite a few blokes and sheilas were necking in the olive groves, whilst others were dancing, or feasting on Big Macs. In fact, if Moses hadn't returned when he did the party might have degenerated into an orgy.

Moses, shagged out from carting around The Commandments, was a bit peed off when he saw what was happening so he bellowed:

"Right-o you jokers. Knock it off and listen to me for a minute. I've got something very important to say."

Most of the multitude had a lot of respect for old Moses because he could read and count, and talked to God — besides, he was as strong as about ten men and those gathered below knew that he could have belted the living daylights out of any one of them if he had a mind to — so they calmed down a bit.

"As you know" he continued, majestically, "I've been up on top of this mountain having a bit of a chat with God, and he told me to tell you lot that he's bloody well fed up with your disgusting behaviour, so he gave me some commandments to bring back for youse to follow . . . and they're bloody heavy so if I see anyone not taking notice of what I'm saying so help me I'll throw the bloody things at you!"

There was complete silence. Moses looked around sternly.

"Now" he said, "there's a lot of stuff in these commandments that you're not going to be too happy about, but it won't do youse any good wingeing because God reckons that if you don't follow these commandments then He's going to send you to Hell, where you'll spend all of eternity in misery."

"Where's Hell?" one of the multitude called out.

"I'm not sure" replied Moses. "God didn't elaborate too much because he reckoned it was too awful to contemplate but from what



he did say I gathered that it's a place where you have to drink warm, flat beer and become known as a Pommie. Anyway, it doesn't sound very pleasant so you'd better do what He says. Now, I've got some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is that I managed to knock him down to just Ten Commandments."

A great roar of joy went up from the multitude and they all started screaming and yelling.

"Yaay."

"You little ripper."

"Bewdy, Moses."

"Good on ya mate."

"Bonzer."

"Three cheers for Moses. Hip. Hip."

The multitude gave Moses three rousing cheers and then started singing 'For He's A Jolly Good Fellow'.

Moses was fed up with carrying the tablets so he put them down, breathed a sigh of relief, then lifted his arms above his head and called out:

"Alright. Alright. Calm down you lot. I haven't finished yet. I've still got to tell youse the bad news."

Slowly the singing and cheering died down and a hush spread over the multitude as it noticed that Moses seemed very sad. In fact he was weeping. Tears of sorrow rolled down his cheeks and were lost in his whiskers.

"Unfortunately" he said in a grave voice, to those gathered before him, "the bad news is very bad. He kept adultery in!"



When Adam, day by day, awoke in Paradise  
He always used to say: "Geeze, this is very nice!"  
But Eve, from scenes of bliss, transported him for life.  
The more I think of this the more I beat my wife.  
*A.E. Houseman*

# THE VORACIOUS VAGRANT

**T**here's a tiny lock-up behind the Briagolong police station and once upon a time, in the distant past when the local lads hoisted the visiting parson's jinker up into the limbs of a gum tree, or swapped around babies that had been left in prams outside the hall whilst their unsuspecting parents were inside kicking up their heels at a dance, a vagrant was incarcerated there for some trifling offence. The sergeant in charge of the police station at the time told the vagrant that he would have to stay a few days until the magistrate came around on the court circuit and tried him.

Figuring that he could make use of the prisoner the sergeant asked his wife if there was anything she needed done in the garden. As it happened she'd just bought a swag of onion seedlings and told her husband that it would be a great help if the prisoner would plant them out for her . . . and so it came to pass.

The vagrant must have had some gardening experience way back in his seedy past because he turned, weeded and harrowed the soil, then planted the seedlings out in as pleasant rows of beds as the sergeant's wife had ever seen. She was so pleased that, seeing as her husband was rather partial to onions, she went into Sale and bought some more. She took these back and gave them to the vagrant to plant out also. Once again he prepared the beds beautifully and planted the onions in professional rows — in fact half of the back garden seemed to be full of onion seedlings, which made the policeman and his wife very happy.

The next day the circuit judge came to Maffra, where the prisoner was taken, and let off with a reprimand because the sergeant had put in such a glowing report of what a great job he had done with the onion seedlings.

The day after that the sergeant's wife became a bit concerned when she went into her garden to check on the seedlings because they were all lying flat on the ground, not looking very healthy at all. So she watered them, thinking that they might just be thirsty.

The next day she went into the garden again to check on the onions but, sadly, their condition seemed to be getting worse — not only were they limp but were beginning to shrivel. She didn't want to say anything to her husband in case he became angry, seeing as how he was looking forward to a good feed of home-grown onions, but on the following day he went to check them for himself.

So great was his disappointment when he saw their state that he bellowed out a curse . . . which brought his wife running from the house.

"What's wrong with the onions?" grumpily enquired the husband of the wife. "Haven't you been watering them?"

"Of course I have" she replied.

"I reckon they're bloody-well dead" stated the policeman, bending down to pull up one of the onions so he could inspect it more closely, and hopefully diagnose the problem. As he gently pulled it from the soil he found that there was no bulb on the bottom. He checked one after the other for a while in a methodical way until, becoming red-faced with anger, he began tearing handfuls of them from the ground and flinging them aside in disgust.

"There's not a bulb on any of the bastards!" he cried out passionately. Sure enough there wasn't a bulb left on any of the bastards.

A vagrant was probably wandering along a bush track to anywhere, smiling to himself, content in the knowledge that he'd eaten his fill of tender onion seedling bulbs and only planted what was left of his feast.



# THE PIE

Brian O'Keefe

Now don't get me wrong, this isn't the song  
Of some ungrateful immigrant.  
But I have to relate how the finger of fate  
Upon my destruction was bent.

I came to this land for the price of ten pounds  
Hoping to better my station,  
And, 'though I'd only one shilling, my spirit was willing  
To assist in the growth of this nation.

So, with my solitary bob, I searched for a job  
But my luck was running to form  
'Cos I searched high and low with nothing to show  
But corns on the corns of my corns.

My feet they were aching, my heart almost breaking,  
And my stomach was hungry as death  
When I spied a pie stand, and said to the man:  
"A pie sir." "With sauce?" "Of course!"

But if I'd known then what I know now  
I'd have chucked that deener away.  
I'd have thrown it so far it would have resembled a star  
And I'd have gone my innocent way.

Now, I've eaten pies you wouldn't feed to flies,  
Nor your wife, 'though you wished she were dead,  
But when I took a bite I got such a fright  
My eyes near fell out of my head.

That revolting matter dripped out and splattered  
Cruel, brown, sticky and red.  
It contaminated my shirt and polluted the dirt;  
And the devil wouldn't repeat what I said.

I tore at my hair in sudden despair  
While my stomach erupted in pain,  
And from the corner of my eye I saw the rest of that pie  
Sneak off down the drain.

"I'm done for," thought I "on account of a pie  
And the greed of wicked men."  
"In the prime of my life I've come to such strife . . .  
And I'll never see my Mother again!"

But somehow or other I managed to recover,  
'Though I'll never be the same,  
Because every time I see someone with a pie  
Something snaps inside my brain.

Likely as not I'll be off like a shot,  
'Though sometimes I just break down and cry.  
But sometimes I scream, and then can be seen  
Madness gleam in my eye.

And so help me God if I catch that damn sod  
Who sold me that accursed Aussie pie  
He'll wish that his Dad had turned queer as a lad  
And that his mother intact did die.



## A QUICK LOOK

**S**mall country towns usually have their fair share of characters. One of these was a chap called Billy who was so skinny that he had to stand out in the blazing sun for about half an hour before he cast a shadow.

Poor Billy was a bit slow, probably a few sandwiches short of a picnic, and usually used to wander around with his brain at half mast and a blank expression on his face. One day he was out Boisdale way when he happened to walk into the local Blacksmith's. George, a burly, red-faced man who sweated profusely, was making up some horseshoes and Billy just stood watching him for a while before asking, in his slow, adenoidal drawl:

"What's them?"

"They're horseshoes, Bill" replied the blacksmith.

"I didn't know horses wore shoes" drawled Billy, with a quizzical expression on his normally vacant face.

"Of course they do" said George. "Just like you and me horses wear shoes." Then he turned, winked at his apprentice, picked up one of the horseshoes with a pair of tongs (seeing as they were so hot) passed the 'shoe to Billy and said: "Here Bill, have a look at one."

Billy takes hold of the horseshoe but, because it was hot, drops it straight away.

"What's the matter, Bill, was it too hot for you?" smirked the blacksmith.

"Nope" replied Billy, jumping up and down whilst waving his arm around in an attempt to cool his hand. "It just doesn't take me long to look at horses' shoes."

The same bloke was a real hoarder, he was always collecting bits and pieces. One day he was walking through town, dragging a length of chain behind him, when the local policeman walked up to him and asked:

"What are you dragging that piece of chain along for, Billy?"

"Have you ever tried to push one?" replied Billy.

Maybe he wasn't so silly after all.

# THE DREAM

I had a dream one night, one of those vivid dreams that you swear are actually happening. I dreamt that I was at Flinder's Street Station in Melbourne and had to get down to Station Pier at Port Melbourne as soon as possible because, after all these years, my ship had finally come in.

I stood outside the station for quite a while, getting more and more agitated waiting for a Port Melbourne tram to come by, fearing that my ship would leave without me if I didn't get down to meet it soon. Tram after tram went by with neither drivers, passengers or conductors until, eventually, one came along that was all lit up with coloured lights and had a large sign at the front proclaiming that it was going to Station Pier.

I leapt aboard, and the fact that this tram also had neither driver, conductor nor passengers did not dampen my excitement and anticipation of the good fortune that awaited me at the end of the line, although I was very toey because the tram did not seem to be going fast enough and I kept trying to urge it faster in my mind. However, eventually, we arrived and I jumped off, rushing eagerly towards the pier. Just as I was about to set foot upon it two huge wrought iron gates were slammed in my face and, as I stood there pushing and pulling at the gates, I saw a magnificent, shining white liner pull away from the pier and steam off into the dark.

'That's it' I thought. 'My ship finally came in but I couldn't reach it'. Needless to say I stood there feeling quite depressed. Then the dream ended.

The next night I had exactly the same dream, except this time the gates did not slam in my face and I was able to reach the end of the pier without any problem. I stood there in awe of the beauty of my ship that awaited me and wondered to what magical destinations it would take me, and what happiness I was about to embark on. Suddenly a hooter blasted through the night and I was just about to rush up the gangway for fear the ship would leave without me when I happened to look up at the bow and saw the name. It was the Titanic!

# WASTE NOT

**A** few years back I met a couple at the Eastern Beach Caravan Park in Lakes Entrance. I think their names were Lyn and Red. They were down from Whitfield in the Ovens Valley, where Lyn was a nurse at the local hospital. Whilst we were sharing a few stubbies and swapping yarns Lyn told us about an old bloke, one of the local characters, who'd been admitted to the hospital for a hip replacement job.

"He lives alone out in the bush" she said. "A funny old fellow with a wild mop of white hair. When he came out of the anaesthetic after the operation the first thing he wanted to know was what had become of the part of his body that had been replaced.

"I asked him why he wanted to know and he said that he didn't want a good bit of bone going to waste so he'd decided to feed it to his dog. Naturally this surprised me so, for a joke, I told him that I'd already taken it home and given it to my dog. The old bloke nearly had a fit, yelling and carrying on and that it was his bone and that I'd no right to steal it.

"I finally managed to pacify the old coot by promising to buy his dog a nice, big, juicy bone from the butchers but the funny thing was that a few months later, after he'd been discharged and sent home, I received a call to go to the emergency ward. Lo and behold, there was the same old fellow lying on a stretcher. He had broken a leg and his other hip had been dislocated. You'll never guess what happened.

"Apparently he'd come across a cow lying by the side of the road. It had been killed after being hit by a car, or truck, or something. Not being one to waste a good bit of meat for his dog the old boy went home and got his block and tackle, and a chainsaw, then went back, hoisted the cow up to the limb of a gum tree and began to chainsaw it up. Unfortunately the limb snapped and the cow fell on him, causing the injuries that had brought him back to hospital.

"I decided to play a trick on the cantankerous old coot so I went to the butchers and bought a bit of sheep hip-bone, which I wrapped up in gift paper and took with me when I went to visit the old boy after his operation. Recognising me when he came out of his latest anaesthetic he immediately started having a go at me, saying he supposed the doctors had taken his other flaming hip out and that I'd probably stolen that for my dog as well.

"This time I was prepared and gave him the bit of sheep hip-bone wrapped in gift paper and done up with a fancy bow. 'There you are' I



said. 'One of the doctors wanted it for his dog but I managed to save it for you.' He was quite moved and thanked me so sincerely that I felt guilty and told him what I had done. 'No matter' he said. 'A bone's a bone. Me old dog won't know the difference.' Then he drifted off back to sleep, clutching the parcel against his chest as if fearing someone would try and steal it.

"The trouble was" Lyn concluded, "when he woke up again he still wanted to know what had become of his own piece of hip. Fortunately I was transferred to another ward. I'd had about as much of hip bones and silly old coots as I could take."

## OUR BESS

When the first faint stars come peeping out  
As the summer sun goes down  
I meet my Bess at the pasture gate,  
Afar from the busy town.

She stands where the white-fringed daisies bloom  
At the crest of a grassy rise;  
With the golden light on her pretty face  
And a welcome in her eyes.

She's always there to greet me  
In fair or stormy weather,  
And side by side in the gathering dusk  
We wander home together.

'Tis only a month since first we met,  
On a dewy morn in May,  
But I'll never sell her while she gives  
Eight quarts of milk a day.

# THE SWAGLESS SWAGGIE

Edward Harrington

Now, this happened many years ago, before the bush was cleared  
When every man was six foot high and wore a flowing beard.  
One very hot and windy day, along the old coach road,  
Towards Joe Murphy's halfway house a bearded bushman strode.

He was a huge and hairy man, well over six foot high,  
An old slouch hat was on his head and murder in his eye.  
No billycan was in his hand, no heavy swag he bore  
But deep and awful were the oaths that swagless swaggie swore.

At last he reached the shanty door, into the bar he burst,  
He dumped his hat upon the floor and cursed and cursed and cursed.  
A neighbouring shed had just cut out so the bar was nearly full  
Of shearers and of bullockies who'd come to cast the wool.

They were a rough and ready lot the bushmen gathered there  
But every man was stricken dumb to hear that swaggie swear.  
He cursed the bush, he cursed mankind — the whole wide universe!  
It froze their very blood to hear that swagless swaggie curse.

Joe Murphy seized an empty pot and filled it brimming full.  
The stranger raised it to his lips and took a mighty pull.  
This seemed to cool him down a bit, he finished off the ale  
And to the crowd around the bar he told his awful tale.

"I met the Ben Hall gang" he said. "The bastards stuck me up.  
They pinched me billy, pinched me swag, they pinched me flaming  
pup.  
They turned me pockets inside out and took me only quid.  
I never thought they'd pinch me pipe . . . but so help me God, they  
did!

"I spoke to 'em as man to man, I said I'd fight 'em all.  
I would've broke O'Meally's neck and tanned the hide of Hall.  
They only laughed and said goodbye and rode away to brag  
Of how they stuck a swaggie up and robbed him of his swag.

"I never done 'em any harm, I thought 'em decent chaps,  
But now I wouldn't raise a hand to save 'em from the traps.  
I'm finished with the bush for good, I'm off to Wagga town  
Where they won't stick a swaggie up or take a swaggie down."

The bushmen were a decent lot, as bushmen mostly are,  
They filled the stranger up with beer; the hat went 'round the bar.  
The shearers threw some blankets in to make another swag;  
The rousers gave a billy can, and brand new water bag.

Joe Murphy gave a meerschaum pipe that he hadn't smoked for years.  
The stranger was too full for words, his eyes were dim with tears.  
The ringer shouted drinks all 'round and then, to top it up,  
The babbling brook, the shearers' cook, gave him a kelpie pup.

Next day, an hour before the dawn, the stranger took the track  
Complete with pup and billycan, his swag upon his back.  
Along the most forsaken roads, intent on dodging graft,  
He headed for the great north-west and he laughed, and he laughed,  
and he laughed.



# BLUEY BRINK

There once was a shearer by name Bluey Brink,  
A devil for work and a terror for drink.  
He could shear his two hundred each day without fear  
And drink without winking four gallons of beer.

Now Jimmy the barman who served out the drinks  
Hated the sight of this 'ere Bluey Brink,  
For he stayed much too late and he came much too soon  
At evening, at morning, at night and at noon.

One morning as Jimmy was cleaning the bar  
With sulphuric acid he kept in a jar.  
Along comes old Bluey a'screaming with thirst  
Crying 'Whatever you got Jimmy, just give me the first'.

Now it ain't down in history and it ain't down in print  
But that shearer drank acid with never a wink,  
Saying 'That's the stuff Jimmy, why strike me stone dead  
It'll make me the ringer of Stephenson's shed'.

All that long day as he served out the beer  
Poor Jim was a'shaking and trembling with fear.  
Too worried to argue, too anxious to fight  
Seeing that shearer a corpse in his fright.

Early next morning as he opened the bar  
In came old Bluey a'howling for more,  
With his eyebrows all singed and his whiskers deranged  
And holes in his hide like a dog with the mange.

Says Jimmy to Bluey "How'd you like the new stuff?"  
Says Bluey "It's fine but I ain't had enough.  
It gives me great courage to shear and to fight,  
But why does that stuff set me whiskers alight?"

"I thought I knew drink but I must have been wrong  
'Cos that stuff that you gave me was proper and strong,  
It sets me to coughing, and you know I'm no liar  
Each bloody cough sets me whiskers on fire!"



# OLD BLUEY'S JIM JAMS

Brian O'Keefe

It was early in the morning down at 'The Farmer's Arms  
In the Gippsland town of Newry where a barman known as Franz  
Was polishing the glasses behind an empty bar when  
Through the door there came a sight he'd never seen before  
It was Old Bluey's Jim Jam's his faithful old d.t's  
They followed him night and day around the counterree  
They followed him from Camoowal and down through old Moree  
But when they reached The Farmer's Arms Bluey could not be seen

It was early in the morning down at The Farmer's Arms  
In the Gippsland town of Newry where a barman known as Franz  
Was polishing the glasses behind an empty bar  
When through the door there came a sight he'd never seen before.

It was old Bluey's jim jams, his faithful old d.t's.  
They followed him night and day around this counterree.  
They'd followed him from Camoowal and down through old Moree  
But when they reached The Farmer's Arms Bluey could not be seen.

First there came an orange emu, spotty white with burning eyes  
Followed by a purple 'roo wearing polka-dotted ties.  
Next came a red goanna with fur upon its belly  
Who wore its boots back to front (they being made of jelly).

A mighty, mangy dingo next entered through the door  
At the sight the barman trembled and a drink began to pour  
For on its head it wore a hat of angry red-back spiders.  
It had a taipan for a tail and tiger snakes for garters.

Last there came a gang of cockies skating on Tombolas,  
Cigars dangling from their beaks, their crests done up in rollers.  
Together they all lined up and danced the 'Waves Of Tory'  
While the barman quietly shot himself and sent his soul to glory.

Down came the boss of that hotel, disturbed from out his slumber.  
He began to curse, he began to swear while his brow grew black as thunder.

"You bloody fools" he bellowed as he kicked those jim jams out.  
"You're much too bloody early, old Bluey ain't here yet!"



# THE BOOZER'S DREAM

Brian O'Keefe



Now this may be a rumour or it may be a lie  
But I've heard tell of a place in the sky  
Where Himself pours the porter from barrels of water  
And no man ever goes dry  
Lord, no man ever goes dry.

The apostles sing out all the best-loved songs  
While everyone up there they sing right along.  
There's Peter on the lute and Paul on the flute  
And Barrabas is a'cracking the bones  
Lord, Barrabas is a'cracking the bones.

A fiddler appears and he strikes up a tune  
And leads such a dance that the angels all swoon.  
Then with a shout old Bacchus leaps out  
and dances a jig 'round the moon  
Lord, he dances a jig 'round the moon.

There's Moses with a jug directing the band  
While Eve's sipping cider and holding his hand.  
Mary Magdalen winks as she pours out the drinks  
To the Popes, who think it's all grand  
Lord, to the Popes who think it's all grand.



But the best news of all I'm anxious to tell  
Is that all the teetotallers are sent down to Hell  
Where they slave night and day with fire as their pay  
And fire for a bonus as well  
Hell, yes fire for a bonus as well.

So I'll just lay me down and await Gabriel's call  
For my glass is as empty as it was once full.  
I'll just close my eyes and be ready to rise  
And I'll laugh at this life after all  
Lord, I'll laugh at this life after all.



# **THE NEW CHUM CRUTCHER**

**Brian O'Keefe**

**(Sung to the tune of The Gallant Forty Twa)**

There's a story that I have to tell and I'll tell it straight to you  
Though you may not believe me every painful word is true.  
I'd have a go at any job (for me name is Anton Teese)  
But the work I did at 'Homelands' fair brought me to me knees.

Chorus: Oh, I'll never be a ringer 'though rings around me lie,  
I'll just be a new chum crutcher until the day I die.

Doug Treasure was the boss's name, from down old Stratford way.  
He said I could earn quick money with work that was child's play.  
"Come around tomorrow," he said, with a twinkle in his eyes,  
"You can crutch a mob or two for me and discourage the damn  
blowflies."

Well, I turned up that next morning and begged the frightened sheep  
To come and lay down quietly at my quaking feet,  
But for all the good it did me I might as well have begged the Gaffer  
For a bottle of Johnny Walker and a billy of tobacco.

Well, I shore the crawling maggots and I cut the bloody sheep  
While the dags were slowly piling up around my aching feet.  
With sweaty blades I desexed the ewes and terrified rams alike  
Whilst the condemned were cringing in their pens and soiling  
themselves in fright.

I could imagine the ringers blowing their trumpets loud and hard  
While I stared in desolation out across the woolly yards.  
They'd tell of mighty shearers, Jackie Howe and Roaring Dunn,  
Who could shear two dozen cobblers whilst I was crutching one.

Oh, it's times like these I wonder from my soul in abject pity  
What madness brought me to this place and took me from the city.  
But I pray that when the Gaffer dies he ends up down in Hell  
Crutching politicians until the truth they tell!

# HOW M'DOUGAL TOPPED THE SCORE

Thomas E. Spencer

A peaceful spot is Piper's Flat, and the folks that live around  
They keep themselves by keeping sheep and turning up the ground.  
But the climate is erratic; and the consequences are  
The struggle with the elements is an everlasting war.  
We plough, and hoe, and harrow — then sit down and pray for rain;  
Then we all get flooded out, and have to start again.  
But the folks are now rejoicing as they ne'er rejoiced before  
For we played Molongo cricket, and M'Dougal topped the score.

Molongo had a head on it and challenged us to play  
A single innings match for lunch — the losing team to pay.  
We weren't great guns at cricket but we couldn't well say no  
So we started in to practice and we let the reaping go.  
We scoured the flat for miles around to muster up our men  
But when the list was totalled we could only number 10.  
Then up spoke big Tim Brady, he was always slow to speak,  
And he said: "What price M'Dougal, who lives down at Cooper's  
Creek?"

So we sent for old M'Dougal, and he stated in reply  
That he'd never played at cricket, but he'd half a mind to try.  
He couldn't come to practice — he was getting in his hay —  
But he guessed he'd show the beggars from Molongo how to play.  
Now M'Dougal was a Scotsman, and a canny one at that,  
So he started in to practice, with a paling for a bat.  
He got Mrs Mac to bowl to him, but she couldn't run at all  
So he trained his sheepdog, Pincher, how to scout and fetch the ball.

Now Pincher was no puppy, he was old and worn and grey,  
But he understood M'Dougal, and was accustomed to obey —  
When M'Dougal cried out "Fetch it" he would fetch it in a trice'  
But until the word was "Drop it" he would grip it like a vice.  
Each succeeding night they played until the light grew dim  
Sometimes M'Dougal struck the ball — sometimes the ball struck  
him!

Each time he struck, the ball would plough a furrow in the ground  
And when he missed, the impetus would turn him three times  
'round.

The fatal day at last arrived — the day that was to see  
Molongo bite the dust, or Piper's Flat knocked up a tree!  
Molongo's captain won the toss and sent his men to bat,  
And they gave some leather-hunting to the men of Piper's Flat.  
When the ball sped where M'Dougal stood, firm planted in his track,  
He shut his eyes, and turned him 'round, and stopped it — with his  
back!

The highest score was twenty-two, the total sixty-six,  
When Brady sent a yorker down that scattered Johnson's sticks.

Then Piper's Flat went in to bat, for glory and renown  
But, like to grass before the scythe, our wickets tumbled down.  
"Nine wickets down for seventeen, with fifty more to win!"  
Our captain heaved a heavy sight — and sent M'Dougal in.  
"Ten pounds to one you lose!" cried a barracker from town.  
But M'Dougal said "I'll take it mon!" and plonked the money down.  
Then he girded up his moleskins in a self-reliant style,  
Threw off his hat and boots, and faced the bowler with a smile.

He held the bat the wrong side out, and Johnson with a grin,  
Stepped lightly to the bowling crease and sent a 'wobbler' in.  
M'Dougal spooned it softly back, and Johnson waited there,  
But M'Dougal, crying "Fetch it" started running like a hare.  
Molongo shouted "Victory, he's out as sure as eggs"  
When Pincher started through the crowd and ran through Johnson's  
legs.

He seized the ball like lightning; then he ran behind a log,  
And M'Dougal kept on running, while Molongo chased the dog.  
They chased him up, they chased him down, they chased him 'round  
and then

He darted through a slip-rail as the scorer shouted "Ten".  
M'Dougal puffed; Molongo swore; excitement was intense;  
As the scorer marked down "20" Pincher cleared a barbed wire  
fence.

"Let's head him!" shrieked Molongo, "Brain the mongrel with a bat!"  
"Run it out! Good Old M'Dougal!" yelled the men of Piper's Flat.  
And M'Dougal kept on jogging, and then Pincher doubled back  
And the scorer counted "40" as they raced across the track.

M'Dougal's legs were going fast, Molongo's breath was gone —  
But while Molongo chased the dog, M'Dougal struggled on.  
When the scorer shouted "50" then they knew the chase could  
cease;  
And M'Dougal gasped out "Drop it" as he dropped within his crease.  
Then Pincher dropped the ball and, as instinctively he knew  
Discretion was the wiser plan, he disappeared from view.  
And, as Molongo's beaten men exhausted lay around,  
We raised M'Dougal shoulder-high and we bore him from the  
ground.

We bore him to M'Ginnis', where lunch was ready laid,  
And we filled him up with whisky-punch, for which Molongo paid.  
We drank his health in bumpers, and we cheered him three times  
three  
And when Molongo got its breath, Molongo joined the spree.  
And the critics say they never saw a cricket match like that  
When M'Dougal broke the record in the game at Piper's Flat,  
And the folks were jubilating, as they never were before;  
For we played Molongo cricket, and M'Dougal topped the score.

## A WIND-UP

**S**tarchy, and his mate Quoit, were timber cutters and Starchy used  
to leave his watch on a log while out cutting posts. It came in  
pretty wet one year and they don't manage to get a hell of a lot of  
posts cut before they're forced to leave and go back to civilisation, but  
Starchy forgot he'd left his watch on a log.

It was about twelve months later before they got back to the same  
area and, much to Starchy's surprise, his watch was still sitting on the  
log. Even more surprising was the fact that it had kept perfect time.

Quoit scratched his head and wondered aloud how a watch could  
keep perfect time when it hadn't been wound for a long time.

Starchy scratched his head as well, then looked around and had a  
bit of a think before answering.

"I reckon what happened was this" he said. "You see that lizard  
sitting on the end of the log? Well, every time he runs along the log his  
tail probably rubs against the watch and winds it."

# A GENTLE HINT

E. Harrington

The old man sat upon his swag, his eyes were red and bleared.  
I doubt he'd had a wash for weeks, or even combed his beard.  
He cadged me pouch and filled his pipe, and calmly blew a cloud.  
"Some blokes 'aint got no pride" he said, "but I was always proud".  
"I minds one time I humped me swag along the Thompson side,  
A blazing drought was on the land and all the stock had died.  
One night, a good bit after dark, I reached old Heyfield town,  
Pulls up outside the local hall and flings me bluey down.

"A dance was going on within, a crowd was on the floor,  
I hitches up me pants a bit and mooches in the door.  
Some tarts are taking round the grub, thinks I 'I'm just in time  
A cup of tea will do me good, and them sandwiches look prime'.  
Then all at once a sawmill hand, a great big hulking brute  
Jumps right across the floor at me and landed me a beaut.  
He never said what made him narked, or what he done it for  
He simply hits me good and hard and knocks me out the door.

"I landed fair upon me back, I got a nasty jar.  
'That ain't very perlite' thinks I, 'I wonder who he are?'  
But perhaps he don't mean any harm, so I hitches up me pants  
And made me mind up, come what may, I'd take another chance.  
I mooches in the door again, they're passing round the sweets,  
Cream puffs, and buns, and rainbow cakes, and other fancy eats.  
I'm just a'reaching out me duke, when strike me blue and blind  
One feller grabs me from the front, and another from behind.

"They swings me like a bag of chaff and shouted 'One, two, three,'  
Then they laughs and hollers 'go', and go it was for me.  
I hurtled out into the night, and lands upon a stump.  
Just put yer hand behind me ear, ye still can feel the lump.  
That settled me, my oath it did, they'd hurt me in me pride,  
And I decided there and then that I wouldn't go inside.  
I knew I wasn't welcomed there, I saw it clear as print.  
Some blokes ain't got no pride at all, but I can take a hint."

# GOOD OLD AUSSIE BEER

Brian O'Keefe



LET THE POM-MY SIP HIS WARM FLAT PINT, AND PAT HIS IR-ISH POR-TER COM- PAR-ED TO OUR  
WONDROUS BREW THEY MAY AS WELL DRINK WA-T-ER LET THE FROGGY DRINK HIS WINE AND JOCK HIS NATIVE WHISKY  
ME, I'M HAPPY AS A PIG IN .... WITH COLD FOSTERS IN MY ESKY

CHORUS

OH FOSTERS, DOONEYS, TOOTH'S + RESCHIES, COOPERS AND FOUR X  
ABBOTT'S, BOAGS AND GOOD OLD VIC OUR AUSSIE BEER IS BEST. EMU, SOUTHWARK, COURAGE SWAN  
WE'VE BEEN CURSED AND BLESSED, 'COS WE'VE GOT GOOD OLD AUSSIE BEER TO HELL WITH ALL THE REST.

(First verse spoken)

Now the reasons for drinking are many, of that I'm sure you're aware  
And there's many an ignorant foreigner by his homeland brew will swear

But from Tassie to the Top End, from Sydney across to Perth  
Our beer is the finest brew ever drunk on this earth.

Let the Pommie sip his warm, flat pint and Pat his Irish porter  
Compared to our wondrous brew they may as well drink water.  
'Though the Froggy drinks his wine and Jock his native whisky  
Me, I'm happy as a pig in . . . with cold Foster's in my esky.

CHORUS:

Oh, Foster's, Tooheys, Tooths and Resches. Coopers and Four X.  
Abbotts, Boags and good old Vic, our Aussie beer is best.  
Emu, Southwark, Courage, Swan, we've been cursed and blessed  
'Cos we've got good old Aussie beer, to hell with all the rest.

While the world is worried sick about overpopulation  
We've found the answer over here to save our lovely nation.  
Our women don't have to worry with the pill or with the loop  
We drink enough good Aussie beer to all get brewer's droop.

If your're lying crook in bed, with an attack of 'Fosters Flop',  
And the Missus is getting amorous, don't let your bundle drop.  
Just say to her politely (as she's often said before)  
"Sweetheart, I've got a headache", then pass out with a snore.

Let the preachers from their pulpits pray and rant and rave  
Their tongues'll be put in traction before my soul they save.  
I took the pledge then took to drink when I was only seven  
Now every morning I wake in Hell . . . but every night I'm up in  
Heaven.

If you're feeling lonely in some outback town  
Go into the local pub and lay your money down.  
Turn to the nearest bloke and tell him it's your 'shout'.  
As long as you keep 'shouting' you've a mate without a doubt.



Have you heard the one about the Irishman who built a bridge over  
the Nullabor Plain (or the long paddock as it's known over that way)?  
It had to be pulled down because too many Aussies were fishing from  
it.



# THE FROZEN FLAME

**T**here's many a tale told of the extreme cold encountered on the High Plains of Victoria, where bushmen's conversation has been known to freeze as soon as the words leave the comparative warmth of the speakers' mouths so that it had to be warmed up in a frying pan (if the fire hadn't already frozen) before it could be heard — although understanding it was difficult because all the words tended to become jumbled up together when thawed.

People who have never been in the bush on such occasions have been known to scoff when told of these incredible feats of nature. I also found them difficult to believe . . . at least I did until something happened to me one night whilst camped by the banks of the Avon River, at Wombat, that banished my doubts forever because a severe cold snap almost cost me my life.

It was a pleasant evening so I hadn't bothered gathering much firewood, and let the campfire burn down to its embers while enjoying one last mug of tea, and a bit of a blow on my harmonica, before getting ready for bed.

The crickets were chirping and the river tumbling and gurgling over pebbles and rocks. A wombat grazed, unconcerned, not far away and the world and I were at peace with each other as I blew a few last notes from the harmonica out into the encroaching night, then I went into my tent, lit the candle that I'd stuck in a bottle beside the bed, and started getting undressed.

I was just about to step out of my trousers, which were around my ankles, when the temperature dropped rapidly and a bitter wind, that felt as if it came straight from the Antarctic, whipped through the tent flap and nearly caused a severe case of frostbite where it would have been least welcome.

The wind was so cold that I felt as if the marrow in my bones was being frozen. Frantically, with my teeth chattering like a pair of castanets, I pulled up my trousers and put on all the spare clothing I could find, yet still the cold seemed to reach into my being . . . for my very soul! . . . while the wind whistled through the guy ropes and howled through the trees like a banshee from Hell, yet, strangely, the candle hadn't blown out.

I was getting a bit desperate and decided that I'd have to find some more wood and build up the fire before I froze to death, but it was dark outside and I didn't have a torch. Then I noticed that the candle flame wasn't flickering and all the shadows were still. Of course, this

struck me as peculiar — considering the wind that blew through the tent — so I took a closer look at the candle and found, to my amazement, that the flame had frozen. I touched its tip with my finger and found that it had turned to ice! I wouldn't blame you for doubting this phenomenon, in fact if I hadn't been there I would have had difficulty in believing it myself. Yet there I was with a flame glowing against my finger without feeling the slightest bit of warmth!

Even in my desperation I soon realised that what had happened was actually a piece of good fortune because it meant that I could take the candle outside and use it as a torch in my search for more wood before I froze to death. So, huddled in my coat, I pointed the candle into the dark and set off. Checking the fire as I passed I found, to my dismay, that it too had frozen! There was nothing I could do but go back to bed and somehow try to get through the night without freezing.

I put the candle back beside my bed and snuggled into the blankets as best I could, prepared for a miserable night, but found that the light from the candle was making sleep even more difficult to come by so I draped a towel over it to shade the glow. Eventually I managed to drift off into a restless sleep.

Sometime later a brighter light awoke me and I thought that it must be dawn already, amazed that I could have slept for so long through the bitter cold. Suddenly I realised that it wasn't sunrise but my tent on fire! I rushed outside and threw the remnants of the billy tea into the flames but all that fell into the inferno was a lump of ice, so I ran towards the river, which I could see glistening beyond the fire's light, and attempted to refill the billy but it just clunked against the icy surface . . . the river too had frozen. There was nothing I could do but stand and watch my belongings burn. At least I was warm.

While I was standing there I tried to piece together what had happened. The only conclusion I could come to was that the wind had dropped as quickly as it had begun and the cold snap passed, thawing the candle flame, setting the towel alight which in turn set fire to the tent. I learnt a lesson that night — it was the last time I ever hung a towel on a frozen candle flame.

*There was a young man from Meerlieu  
Who found something foul on his shoe,  
But to make matters worse  
He yelled out with a curse  
When he found it on the other one too!*

# EPITAPHS

**A** few years back, whilst living in a little wattle and daub hut at Paddy Melon Gully, by the banks of the Freestone Creek, north of Briagolong, I began writing epitaphs. At the time I had a plan to put out a book of epitaphs that bereaved people could consult and, hopefully, find an appropriate one to put on their departed loved-one's tombstone. Nothing came of this, however I will include a few here.

*Beneath this stone there lies a box  
Full of my mortal bones.  
It was wild desire that put them there  
— and the husband of Myrtle Jones.*

*I'm lying here all dead and mouldy  
Whilst you are roaming free.  
I wouldn't feel quite so bad  
If I was you instead of me!*

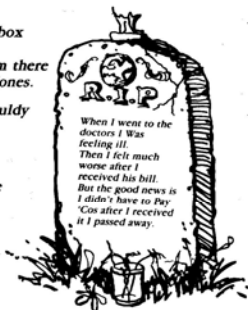
*I wouldn't be lying in this hole  
All mouldy, dead and rotten  
If Dad has used protection  
On the night I was begotten.*

*Ah, my darling Norma  
How well I loved your touch.  
Unfortunately for my heart  
Your touch was just too much.*

*The sands of time must run out  
For everyone 'tis said,  
And when they do it's safe to say  
You'll probably be dead.*

*'Twas said no good would come of me  
And neither should it have oughter,  
But it wasn't sin that finished me  
But an ocean full of water.*

*Here lies a stranded tourist  
But it wasn't God who put him here.  
It was a holiday in England,  
Pork pies and British beer.*



*When I went to the  
doctors I Was  
feeling ill.  
Then I felt much  
worse after I  
received his bill.  
But the good news is  
I didn't have to Pay  
'Cos after I received  
it I passed away.*

*Oh woe is me, I am undone  
Oh cruel fate and unfair.  
I was killed in an accident  
And hadn't changed my underwear.*

*If you're stopping at the pub  
On your way to hell,  
Would you have a drink for me  
And one for yourself as well.*

*Here lies a woman I used to love  
Untill the day we wed,  
Maybe I'll love her yet again  
Now that she is dead.*

*So, at last it's come to pass  
That I have passed away.  
Not that it bothers me  
'Cos I never expected to stay.*

*If I could have but one last wish  
I'd wish that you were here,  
And I was in Briagolong  
Drinking Hocken's beer.*

*Within this sacred ground I lay  
Clothed in a wooden box.  
What killed me wasn't in God's plan  
... It was a terminal case of pox.*

*Here lies a man named Flaherty  
Who would fondle his anatomy ...  
Not for pleasure midst idle leisure  
But just to break the monotony.*

*Here lies a poor sheep cocky  
Who suddenly went insane  
When, after a lifetime of drought,  
He was struck by a drop of rain.*

*Here lies Sister Margaret  
Who believed it was in God's plan  
That she should give the worms  
What she never gave a man.*



# ASHES TO ASHES

It's unusual for Irish people to request that they be cremated, however that was the wish of Grandfather Patrick Doyle. In the fullness of time his wish was granted — inflicting some slight damage to the crematorium furnace when residual alcohol in his body caused a minor explosion.

After the ceremony a small urn containing what was left of Paddy Doyle's mortal remains was reverently placed on the mantelpiece of his parlour, where members of his family and a few dodderly old friends had gathered to continue the wake that had begun days before.

As the evening wore on (and the guests became progressively more inebriated) some of those who were smokers forgot about Paddy's remains and began using the urn as an ashtray.

Some time later a member of the dearly departed's family noticed what was happening and remonstrated with the smokers about their lack of respect. To which one of the mourners replied: "T' be sure, the ol' heathen doesn't appear to mind. In fact it must be quite happy in Hell he be 'cos he's putting on weight."



## "GO TO HELL"

A newly married couple from Australia (who were pampered offspring of wealthy grazing families) had just finished visiting Ireland during their honeymoon and were sitting in a bus travelling through Dublin on their way to the airport.

"Well, Dahling" asked the husband, "what did you think of Ireland?"

"Oh, it was very quaint my sweet," replied the wife, "and wonderfully inexpensive due to the poverty of the natives. The only trouble is it's so frightfully cold and full of Catholics."

An indignant voice from the seat behind them piped up: "Well, ye c'n go t' Hell then, bejasus. It's hot and full of Protestants!"

Well, that's all folks. As that grand Irishman,  
Sean Cantwell, would say:

**MAY YOU BE IN  
HEAVEN AN HOUR  
BEFORE THE DEVIL  
KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD!**



May you die in bed at 100 years of age  
Shot by a jealous husband (or wife)

*Irish toast*

And never forget . . .





May you live as long as you want  
And never want as long as you live

*Irish toast*





**BRIAN O'KEEFE**, poet, songwriter, author, musician and bushman is a whimsical man with a touch of the Siannachaigh\* about him.

His extraordinary gift for expression and inherent Celtic wit are displayed in his latest work **"WE'RE ONLY HUMAN!"** — a collection of original and traditional yarns and humorous bush verse.

O'Keefe introduces us to his heroes — the hard luck cockies, the rouseabout, the ringer, the shearer and the knock-abouts that inhabit his chosen world of the Australian bush. It is a world of the stock-route and the pub, the bush dunny and the shack.

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So don't just stand there reading  
the cover — do something  
Australian and shout yourself  
a copy — **Allan John Duffy**

*\*pro. Shanakee: An itinerant Irish  
storyteller, much respected as a guest.*

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