

COMMITTEE NEWS

Meeting held on 15 December 2008. President Alida Urban opened the meeting at 1:30pm and welcomed two new members—Rev. Pat de Ramos-Bremond and Richard Tate. Apologies were received from Rosemary Kelleher, Nancy Mooney and Bernie Lacock while Brigid Parker who has been in hospital with pneumonia sent Christmas greetings to all.

Correspondence In. **Wilma Eilery** sent a cutting from the *Castlemaine Mail* titled “Lawson’s Prophecy” written by Henry Lawson. **Judith Lancaster** of Perth send two cuttings from the *West Australian* relating to the auction of a handwritten letter to the *Albany Observer* in 1890. **Publishing Solutions and Research Services** have offered to edit *The Lawsonian* for 12 months free of charge and then for \$20 per issue at the expiration of the 12 months. From **St. Francis Hall** advising that the rent of the Hall in 2008 has increased from \$40 to \$50. **Wally Hopskins** advising that he will bring chairs and equipment to the service planned at Footscray Park on Sunday 3 February 2008.

Correspondence Out. Membership receipts sent to **Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival of Arts**, **Rev. Pat de Ramos-Bremond** and also **Wilma Eilery** with a letter thanks for the cuttings. Booking form with dates in 2008 for the hire of the **St. Francis Hall**. **Eric Britton** regarding entertainment for the service at Footscray Park. Eric will take the names of people willing to read at the service.

General Business. **Ed Walker** asked about the Rules of Association and what will happen to the funds if for some reason the Society collapsed. Would it go to Consumer Affairs or could the Society nominate a charity? **Howard Smith** read from his notes. He received a book (“Poems of Henry Lawson” illustrated by the late artist Pro Hart) and two cards from Nancy Robertson, one addressed to members of the Society. Howard thanked Eddie Dalton for the excellent report on the Memorial Picnic which Eddie graciously pointed out that the notes were in fact recorded by the Secretary Marion McLeish. Bryan Kelleher, a former editor, now and again would print something about or written by the Poet Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-70). The same was the case when Howard was editing *The Lawsonian*. Howard and his wife Val went and found Gordon’s gravesite and cleaned it up. Ian “Macca” McNamara played a taped conversation with Val Smith on “Australia All Over” about them attending the grave. They went back recently to visit it and took some photos of it and noticed that adjoining grave of William Trainor was a

friend of Gordon. Howard though it coincidental reading in the December issue of *The Lawsonian* that a person called Julian read some of Gordon’s poems at the November meeting which Howard missed. But the coincidences don’t end there! When Eddie Dalton took *The Lawsonian* to be printed to the Australian Unity, he went to see Beryl Armstrong, Librarian and Keeper of Archives. Beryl showed Eddie a letter which she received out of the blue from John Adams, Secretary of The Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee Inc. Then, on the Saturday at the reading in Federation Square, Eddie happens to meet a John Adams, the very same man!

Entertainment. **Henry Simpson** read from a book by Manning Clark on Henry Lawson. **Jim Cuthbert** sang *Bottle-o* by Banjo Paterson, *Mates* by Henry Lawson and *There’s a New Kid in Town*. **Bill Reiseberg** recited *When You Know You’re Unemployed*. **Rev. de Ramos-Bremond** recited *A Mother’s Wish* who was followed by **Ed Walker’s** reciting his poem *You Should Never Go*

The Fire At Ross’s Farm

Back and C. J. Dennis’ *Washing Day*. **Stan Gray** read a poem about a cockroach by an unknown author. **Stephen Rush** read *A Torch of Light and Play- ing and Play the Game*. **Jessie Smallman** followed with Henry Lawson’s *The Fire at Ross’s Farm*.

The President then declared the meeting closed at 3:35pm. Apologies to Kevin Greece for the typing mistakes in his poem *Midnight Reverie*.

Eddie Dalton

 Compiler.

The next monthly meeting will be on Saturday 16 February 2008. Come along and have a great time!



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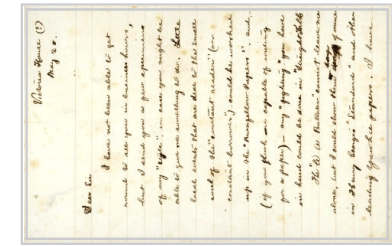
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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE HENRY LAWSON MEMORIAL & LITERARY SOCIETY INC. 1

UNEARTHING A GEM

Henry Lawson’s first visit to the Western Australian colony has been little documented. In 1890, the young Lawson was said to have been sent to Albany by his mother after suspecting that the 23-year-old was having an affair with an older woman. While in the colony, Lawson wrote to the editor of the *Albany Observer* on 20 May requesting a job. Rescued by Dorrit Hunt while researching Lawson’s earliest links to WA, it was one of two letters found in the 1970s that were due to be destroyed. The significance of the letter is due to it being arguably the earliest surviving letter in existence. Indeed, most surviving Lawson letters cover his later life and are held by institutions.

The letter was purchased by the owner of Rare Coin Company, Rob Jackman after a hotly contested auction that saw bidding eclipse its resale price of \$1,900, eventually selling for \$20,000. Jackman would later say that the letter would be for his personal collection and would be displayed publicly. He said that; “A lot of our history has been lost and I think as a society we are maturing and realising that if we don’t preserve it now, it will be lost forever”.



above:
 The letter written by Henry Lawson

In the letter, Lawson tells of songs he has published and work illustrated “by some of the best Sydney artists, in a *Sydney Journal*...you will no doubt perceive that I have not had the advantages of a good education, but, if I could only raise myself from the cursed drudgery of day labor I would soon make up for that”.



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To Harak

Spirit girl to whom 'was given
To revisit scenes of pain,
From the hell I thought was Heaven
You have lifted me again;
Through the world that I inherit,
Where I loved her ere she died,
I am walking with the spirit
Of a dead girl by my side.
Through my old possessions only
For a very little while,
And they say that I am lonely,
And they pity, but I smile:
For the brighter side has won me
By the calmness that it brings,
And the peace that is upon me
Does not come of earthly things.
Spirit girl, the good is in me,
But the flesh you know is weak,
And with no pure soul to win me
I might miss the path I seek;
Lead me by the love you bore me
When you trod the earth with me,
Till the light is clear before me
And my spirit too is free.

Henry Lawson.

Come along and participate in...

Bush Poetry Group Readings in Victoria

Black Hills Hotel, Peel Street, North Ballarat—second Sunday each odd month from 2:00 til 5:00pm. Contact: Ken Prado (03) 5339 4028.

White Horse Hotel, 305 Eaglehawk Road, California Gully, Bendigo—second Sunday each even month from 2:00 til 5:00pm. Contact: Colin Carrington (03) 5433 2427.

Rosedale Hotel, Lyons Street, Rosedale—second Thursday each month from 7:30 til 10:00pm. Contact: Russell Heathcote (03) 5199 2504.

Hear the best poetry from the Bush!

REALIST AND ROMANCER

Brian Kiernan's introduction to the 1984 edition of "Henry Lawson complete works" includes a passage about Lawson, the realist and romancer;

"In his romantic moods, Lawson had looked back to the 'roaring days' of the colonies. He had been born on a goldfield, and remembered the last of the rushes to Gulgong. So he linked his childhood memories with Eureka and, through old Joe Swallow who lived up the road at Eurunderree, with the earlier days of the convicts. Through family memories and stories, he could look even further back, to romantic Gypsy and heroic Viking forebears in the Old World. In his youth he had looked forward to an independent Australia, and egalitarian New World republic. He wrote about miners and selectors, the 'nomad tribe' of shearers, drovers and bush itinerants; and later, with patriotic pride, about the Diggers in the World War. All the elements of what Russell Ward was to define as the 'Australian legend' could be found in his writings by his own and later generations.

The romance of his life also had its darker or realistic aide. As the 'elder son' of a poor selector on a worn-out goldfield he had known the back-breaking, heart-breaking life of the selection districts. In his youth he had experienced the cultural transformation that was occurring in his generation when he moved to the city—a disturbingly different world of anonymous faces in the street, larrikins, streetwalkers, haggard mothers of large families, lonely men in boarding houses. This reality was the obverse of the democratic optimism he proclaimed in some of his early verses, and he became the imaginative historian of these social changes. As realist and romancer, he stirred memories and dreams in his readers, creating the sense of a past both personal and collective, historical and mythic. Part of the personal legend is that the country he identified with betrayed him, left him to wander Sydney in the first decades of this century as a sad, lonely, clowning figure, a frequent inmate of Darlinghurst Gaol and refuges for inebriates".

(Source: Cronin, L (ed.), "Henry Lawson complete works" (1984) piii)

In this three part series, Howard D. Smith looks back at Henry Lawson's ancestors.

THE LARSENS OF FLADEMOEN

The Henry Lawson Society was formed in 1923, just 12 months after Henry died. Lawson reached the hearts and minds of the Australian people and the respect for him and his work is still held to this day. We hear his verse and stories from admirers around the world, but not a lot about his ancestors.

I'll start with telling you that his father was named Niels Hertzberg Larsen who was born and lived in Norway with his family. Niels' father, was named Peder Larsen, and they all resided in the town of Flademoen on the island of Trombooy, opposite Arendal on Norway's south coast. It was an area known as 'The Black Coast' due to the horrific storms, ice, snow and avalanches.

Peder was a farmer, a teacher, and church warden. He married into the Hertzberg family who were high born and of the landed gentry. Peder took the name Hertzberg as part of his family name, and passed it on to his son Niels. Unfortunately, like his grandson Henry, Peder found drink and was unable to give it up and so lost both his position and his dignity.

On one occasion, Peder had received an award from the Church and on receiving it, the church benefactor made an often recalled comment when he said "Once upon a time, they hanged scoundrels from a cross; but I am hanging a cross around the neck of a scoundrel".

Peder's son, Niels, decided to go to sea, where he attained the rank of Mate, but on returning from one of his trips, he found his brother had stolen his fiancée. Niels then decided to make a clean break with Norway and his family and in 1853, he sailed in the ship *Henriette*, arriving in Melbourne in December 1855.

Niels met up with a fellow named William Slee who also arrived in Melbourne on the ship *Pedro Five* from Valparaiso, South America. Together, they jumped their ships and made their way across Victoria to the New South Wales goldfields. Niels now adopted his father's name Peder, or Peter as he became known, and it was on the Guntawang goldfields near Gulgong that he met Louisa Albury who would later become his wife and the mother of Henry Lawson.



above:
Bust of Henry Lawson at
Footscray Hill Park (2008)

THE HENRY LAWSON MEMORIAL

The inspiration of the new design of *The Lawsonian* has been derived from Stanley Hammond's bust of Lawson at Footscray Hill Park. Like the bust of Lawson sitting high on a pedestal, so he overlooks the newsletter bearing his name. It is an interesting fact that even though Henry Lawson spent most of his life in NSW where he was born and died, it was in Footscray where the Henry Lawson Memorial and Literary Society originated.