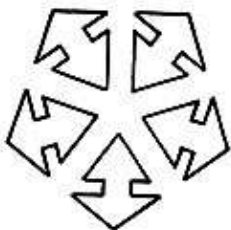


OUR GOLDEN TREE

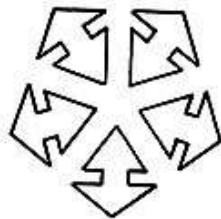
Eleven Australian Poems



Mark Oliver Smith

OUR GOLDEN TREE

Eleven Australian Poems



Mark Oliver Smith

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance by Brian Wilson in the presentation and design of this booklet.

Chris Nelson has also assisted in finding some valuable photographs for this booklet.

Mark Smith

Presented

To

By



Australia's Golden Wattle



Acacia Pycnantha

Introduction

The eleven poems in this sample are presented with the fond hope that will assist, in some way, to bridge the gap between the three streams that enrich Australian cultural life. These streams are the Aboriginal, the white Colonial and the new Multicultural.

Australian English is the dominant language of Australia. This language has absorbed a number of Aboriginal words and names into itself. Some of these names appear in the poems. Place names such as Uluru, Kakadu, Nhulunbuy, Corroboree and Murrumbidgee are evident.

The poem '*A Brite Nue Dae*' looks forward to the day when '*The Uluru Statement from the Heart*' finds agreement between the Aboriginal Stream and the post-Colonial white settlers. The new citizens of the Multicultural stream may find difficulty in understanding the issues which separated the original inhabitants from the white colonial intruders. They will probably have to vote in a referendum on this matter.

The second cultural stream consisting of white Anglo-Saxons has shed much of its insular British dominance. Importantly, they have abandoned their white-Australia policy and implemented processes of reconciliation with the earlier Aboriginal occupants.

The third cultural stream to come to the shores of the Great Southland has been the Multicultural one. It is expected that the cultural impulses from this cohort will mix and generate new cultural expressions.

The Arts give expression to the soul qualities of a nation. They not only contribute to entertainment. They play an important educational role in the cultural life of society. They can expose humbug. They can reveal unsuspected consequences of social policy. Above all they can spread enlightenment and enjoyment in their creativity.

While the non-verbal arts such as painting, sculpture, dance have greater immediacy than the verbal arts there is always place for drama, song, poetry and the novel.

Poetry and song provide an opportunity to give expression to national character. They can explore both inscape and landscape of the cultural setting.

The eleventh poem in this sample is actually a song of welcome to the nation's capital. *'Heart of our Nation'* seeks to provide an invitation to the members of the three cultural streams to unite their diversity into a common dream.

*'One destiny to strive for -
Home of our dreams.'*

My hope is that the poems in this booklet will assist members of the three cultural streams to understand that there can be unity in diversity.

Mark Oliver Smith
Calvary Haydon Retirement Community
Canberra ACT
November 2021

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Golden Wattle



Australia's national floral emblem is the **golden wattle** (*Acacia Pycnantha* Benth). When in flower, the golden wattle displays the national colours, green and gold.

The golden wattle is an evergreen, spreading shrub or small tree. It grows in the under storey of open forest, woodland and in open scrub in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Wattle is ideally suited to withstand Australia's droughts, winds and bushfires. The resilience of wattle represents the spirit of the Australian people.

1.

Our Golden Tree

You may admire the Cooktown orchid
or favour Victoria's pink heath.
Others prefer the scent of boronia
or simply wild flowers in a wreath.

However, I prefer our wattle,
though it blossoms from a spindly tree.
When it wears its mantle of greatness
there's no prettier sight to see.

It's true; the acacia is not stately -
It has to struggle through life - you see.
But when it dons its regalia
it speaks for Australia,

and glows like a golden tree!



Sydney City Lights



*'Sydney stands on beams of light,
A city built on reflections bright'*

2. City Lights

Sydney stands on beams of light,
A city built on reflections bright,
The shafts within those waters driven,
By sweat and toil not freely given.

The shore divides those different orders
A guardian stands along its borders.
A concrete city above the land
Never in daylight looked so grand.

The wonder is that harshness yields
Beauty imaged on watery fields.
Fact and fantasy stand astride,
Let them both within abide.

Australian Natives



*'These natives are jewels
in soil which is poor.
Win beauty from harshness
on our rugged seashore!'*

3.

Australian Flora

Perfumed boronias,
too modest to boast.
Hakeas more daring
brighten our coast.

Adorned right regally
in purple and gold,
hoveas and acacias
dress to be bold.

Banksia, grevilleas,
love this drained soil.
Peppermints, angophoras
dance as they toil.

Wild flowers not scentless
fragrance the breeze.
Bright birds not song-less
sing in the trees.

Adversity brings pleasure
and happiness pain.
Joy mingles with sadness -
each loss has its gain.

These natives are jewels
in soil which is poor.
Win beauty from harshness
on our rugged seashore!

When All the Rivers Run



'Philadelphia' on the Murray River



*'The winding snakes will shed their skins
when all the rivers run!'*

4.

When All the Rivers Run

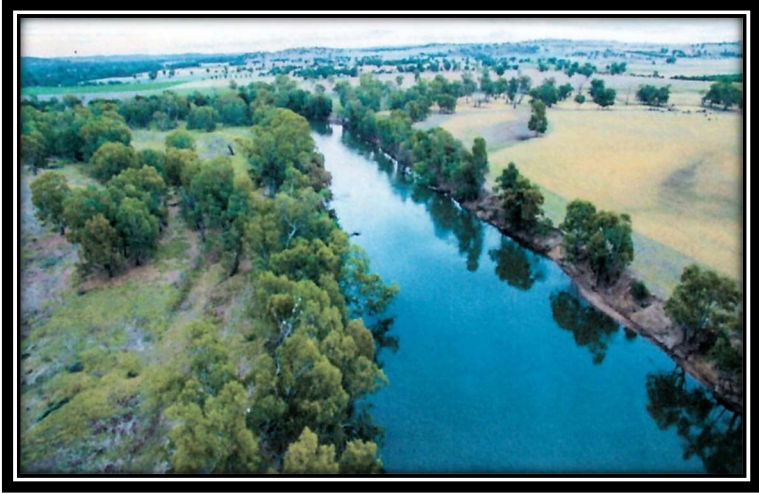
Those inland waters
Though still,
Run not deep.
Their sinuous bodies long
Lie relaxed on tadpole pads
In anabranch and billabong.

Yes, all is serene
In the riverine -
Before the rivers run!

Each sleepy serpent hibernates
Congealed in mud
Until the sun dissolves
High alpine snow
To make the waters westward flow.
The plainsmen wait to ride
The fortunes of that tide-
Life taken at the flood!

Philadelphia then rejoices,
(Now bless the mighty Sun).
The winding snakes will shed their skins
When all the rivers run!

Murrumbidgee Odyssey



Murrumbidgee River



At Wagga Wagga

5. Murrumbidgee Odyssey

My 'bidgie mother whispered to me
when I was only three:
'To run your race in this strange place
adaptive you must be!'

From snowy peaks to western plains
she often changed her roles.
She altered directions more than once
but persisted in her goals.

She found her way to Cooma town
but spurned the coastal rains.
She ran beside the Brindabellas
right by the Limestone Plains.

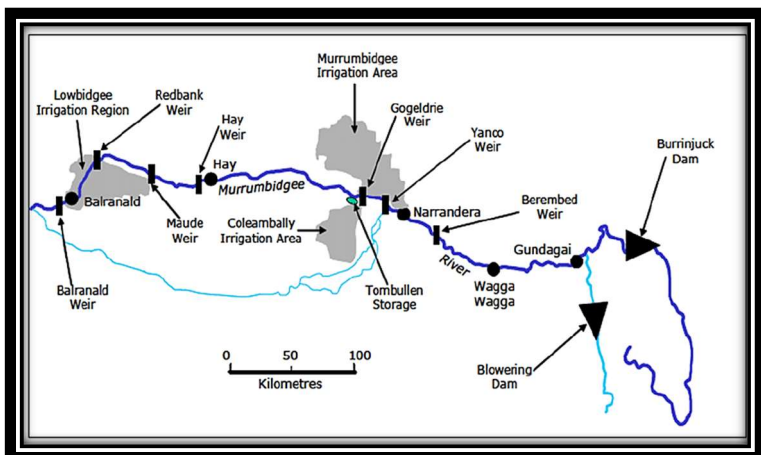
From Jugiong to Gundagai,
to Wagga Wagga she flew.
She loved those River Red Gums
and the outback sky so blue.

Along a stretch to Naranderra
the pace of life slowed down.
She tripped her way along to Hay -
fresh waters for the town.

Near the Oxley reeds she met
a partner to hold her hand!
Proudly now they swept together -
to the edge of never-never land.

As she limped into Balranald
she thought her days were over.
Almost exhausted by the heat
and dry as a thirsty drover.

The long journey of her odyssey -
an example for all to behold.
It taught us how to run our race -
how to wear the green and gold!



The Pioneers Museum Gulgong, NSW



Pioneering Life in the Gulgong District for the Smith and Lawson Families

The Pioneers Museum at Gulgong began in the town's bakery. My father worked in the bakery for a brief period before he joined the railway as a Junior Porter. In the poem I have used the bakery as an allegory for the pioneering work undertaken by my forebears. They labored and struggled in and around the Gulgong region.

The Smith, Bayliss, Ballard and Milton families lived in the area at one time or another. Peter Lawson lived here also. Syd Smith built '**Bugadah**' at the northern end of '**Moreton Bay**'. After moving to **Coolah** he returned to the Gulgong area and ran a dairy. His wife Jessie Maud Bayliss was born at '**Cobbara**' and her father also managed properties at '**Barragun**' '**Tucklan**' and '**Birriwa**' before building '**Rock Linden**' adjacent to '**Moreton Bay**'. Jessie grew up on this property. Later she married Syd Smith in the Gulgong Catholic Church. Her two sons, Ken (my father) and his brother Keith, later attended the Public School at Gulgong. Ken's grandfather, **Joseph Fletcher Bayliss** married on three occasions and in retirement settled in Herbert Street, Gulgong. He and his brother lived in Gulgong. Joe and his father, Richard Bayliss, are both buried in the **Gulgong Cemetery**. Young Fred Bayliss' name appears on the **Gulgong War Memorial**. Fred's brother, Richard Oliver Bayliss' name is there also.

This photograph shows Bill Delves viewing a painting donated by Kenneth John Smith to the Gulgong Pioneers Museum. The museum also contains other memorabilia related to the Smith and Bayliss families.



6.

The Pioneers Museum at Gulgong

Should you ever go to Gulgong
to look in on the town,
you'll see the converted bakery,
a Museum of some renown.
It depicts the life of struggle
endured by our relations,
shows mullocks of social history
from farms and cattle stations.

It's not without a message
that flour was mixed in there.
With fire and heat and kneading,
the bread was baked with care.
In temperatures that went soaring,
on mornings chilled with frost,
it naturalized those settlers –
they truly met the cost.

The yeast is now fermenting,
in the batch that came from there.
It works an all the children
now scattered everywhere.
They're rising to the occasion –
it's there for all to see.
It's amazing what was baked,
in that humble bakery!

Nhulunbuy - Home for Me



Nhulunbuy NT



Nhulunbuy's Beach

7.

Nhulunbuy - Home for Me

Cowri shelled beaches of white,
Lapped by Arafura's sea;
Nestling snugly into the bay-
Nhulunbuy's a haven for me.

Grey stringy barked eucalypts,
Acacias and grevilleas not rare;
Lagoons fringed drably with paper-bark
Water lilies and rushes grow there.

Small palms and pandanus-
Patches of mangrove trees;
Egrets and gulls and ospreys,
Playfully enjoy the breeze.

Salt water creeks with crocodile,
Buffalo near the lagoon;
The day all dazzling with sunshine-
Night under a silvery moon.

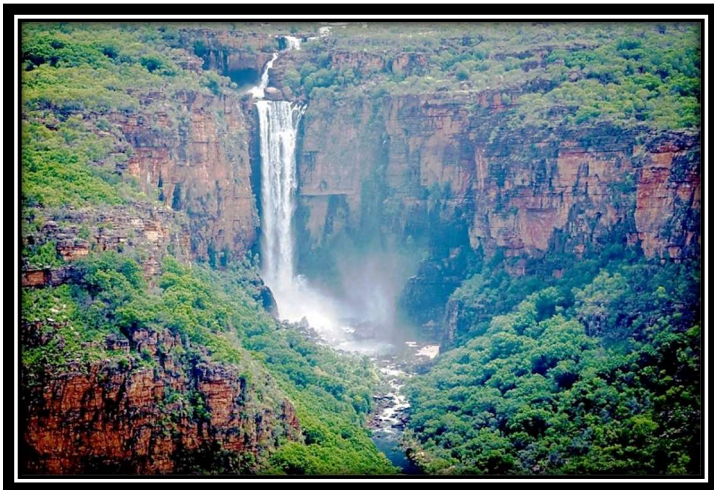
Caledon, Melville and Bradshaw,
Dalywoi Bay's near too;
Trout and Barra are plentiful-
The shore's a beautiful view.

Far cry from the distant city,
There are sacred sites to see;
Mount Saunder's abiding presence-
Nhulunbuy's home for me.

Kakadu - Spirit of Wilderness



Viewing Rock Art – Nourlangi, Kakadu



Jim-Jim Falls, Kakadu National Park

8.

Kakadu - Spirit of Wilderness

Scarping the plateau of Arnhem's high view
Through ages of weathering and wear,
Her gorges and caves are hiding
Paintings and glyphs now rare.
In thunder and storm her rain torrents falling,
I hear the spirit of wilderness calling:

Kakadu, Kakadu,
My Princess so true,
Kakadu, Kakadu, Kakadu!

The lilt in the step of each jabiru,
In the stomping of buffalo herds,
Ballets performed by brolgas dancing
With elegant water birds;
In whistle and honk of sunset's falling
I hear the music of wilderness calling:

Kakadu, Kakadu,
My princess so true,
Kakadu, Kakadu, Kakadu!

When paper-barks willow and their leaves renew
When the grey brown land turns green,
Native gardenias are blooming and scenting,
Hibiscus are colouring the scene,
When rivers run fast and Jim Jim's falling
I hear the spirit of wilderness calling:

Kakadu, Kakadu,
My Princess so true,
Kakadu, Kakadu, Kakadu!

The Cockatoo

'We need to learn the secrets of the Australian cockatoo!'



A Two-Up Game
"Somewhere back of the 'loo"

9.

The Cockatoo

(Anzac Day, Darwin, 1979)

They used to 'head' 'em at Thommo's,
Somewhere back of the 'loo,
Protected by the cunning eye
Of the Australian cockatoo.

He's just a larrikin bird,
Who has a watching brief.
He has to sound a tremulous note,
And he waits just like a thief.

In the bush he's sulphur crested,
Or black with orange spots.
He knows when farmers have gambled -
No rain - to grow their crops!

He's known for his incessant chatter,
And his great big raucous mouth.
He's aped by many a punter
In the cities way down south.

His screech is meant as a warning,
Of a fate that's close nearby.
While others pick up the gleanings
Into the shadows he must fly!

The country cries for protection,
The watchful men are few.
We need to learn the secrets
Of the Australian cockatoo!

A Brite Nue Dae



The Uluru Statement from the Heart



Uluru at the Heart of Australia

10. A Brite Nue Dae

For many long years
While dark clouds sullied the sky,
Uluru worked patiently -
Her aspirations aimed high: -

*“Stand for what’s true,
Strive for what’s right,
Yield not to self-pity
And reach for the new light.”*

Kakadu added his message,
(Supported her words too): -

*“Be generous and fair-minded
Be an Aussie True - Blue!”*

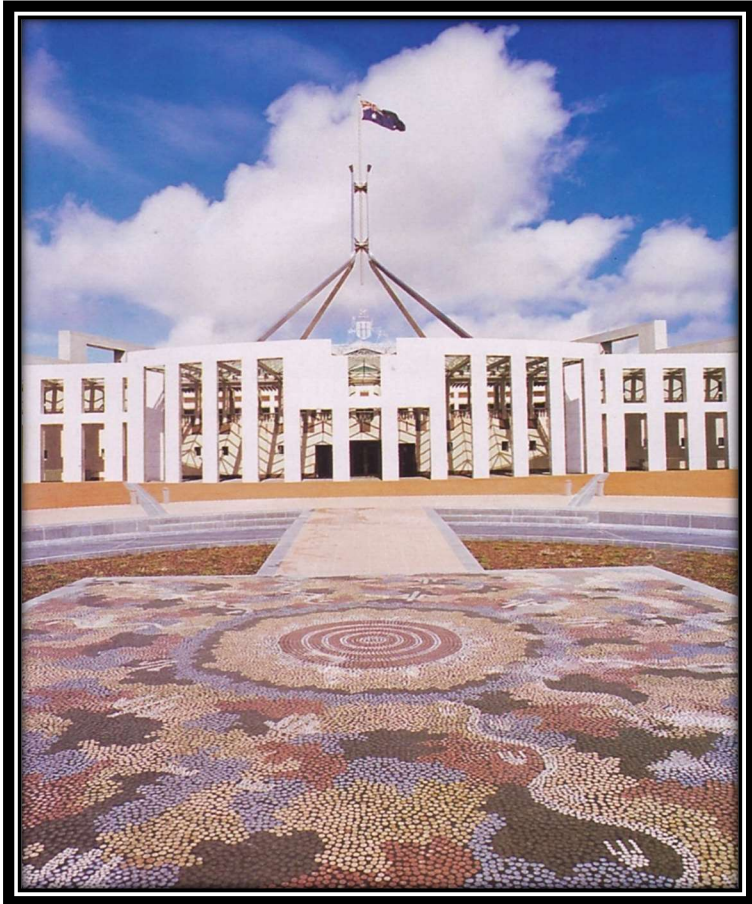
While the years slip by
Bad memories stay long,
We must change them to music
And sing a new song.

Those very dark clouds
Will bless us with rain!
They'll put out old fires -
Refresh us again!

We'll shape a fair future
For me and for you.
We'll dance to that heart-beat
of the same didgeridoo.

Heart of our Nation

Commonwealth Parliament House, Canberra ACT



9 May 1988

*'One people in purpose
An opal that gleams
One destiny to strive for
Home of our dreams!'*

11.

Heart of our Nation A Canberra Welcome

1.

There's a message
whispered softly
through the highlands.
The bogong moth
is stirring on this day.

A Corroboree
is now assembling,
Pass the Brindabellas
on your way.

I shall meet you at the crossing
And I will hold your hand.
Together we shall walk
Across this ancient land.

Chorus

Heart of our nation
So caring is she
Flower of Federation
Open and free.

One people in purpose
An opal that gleams
One destiny that unites us
Home of our dreams!

Cont'd ...

2.

Canberra's Welcome
rings out gladly
from the highlands.
A gentle mist
is rising as we go.

Murrumbidgee
Gurgles friendly greetings.
Pretty bluebells
See how they grow!

We will eat beside the campfire
And swap a yarn or two.
We'll warm our hands together,
Kindle a flame in you!

Chorus

3.

Namadgi's birds
will greet you
from the treetops.
The currawongs
are singing on this day.

Dainty lyrebirds
dancing near a raintree.
Noisy gang-gangs bobbing
as they play.

Paint yourself in white and ochre
Hopping like a 'roo.
Be crazy like an emu.
Or play a didgeridoo!

Chorus

2 Heart of our Nation

13 A D

Pass the Brin - da - bel - las on your way, I shall meet you at the
 Pret - ty blue-bells: see - how they grow! We will eat be - side the

16 G Em Bm A

cros - sing And I will hold your hand. To - geth - er we - shall
 camp - fire And swap a yarn or two. We'll warm our hands - to -

20 D Em G A D

walk - - A - cross this an - cient land. Heart of our
 geth - er, Kin - dle a flame in you!

Heart of our Nation 3

25 G Em A D

na - tion So car - ing is she Flower of Fe de ra - tion Op - en and free. One

32 G Em A D G A

peo - ple in pur - pose An op - al that gleams One des - ti - ny to strive for Home

39 D

of our dreams!

About the Author

Mark Smith had an extensive career in Education. Although trained as an English and History teacher he taught little History and less English.

He began his career in the New South Wales Department of Education. After later training as a District School Counsellor and Guidance Officer, he became a Teachers College Lecturer. He later transferred to the Commonwealth Teaching Service and became a Principal Education Officer. After being compulsorily transferred to the newly created Northern Territory Teaching Service, he was made a *Superintendent of Guidance and Special Services*.

Mark's interest in poetry began when his uncle presented a copy of Henry Lawson's poetry to him in 1950. Now retired in Canberra, he has collected some of his own verses in order to pay tribute and acknowledge his debt to his favourite bush balladist.

In retirement Mark has enjoyed his membership in Probus. He has enjoyed interstate touring, genealogical research and historical studies with U3A. In gathering his poems together, he is seeking to honour an interest that was dormant for a long time.

