



# Noticeboard

## November 2023

Editor: Karen Aubrey

---

### President's Message



*Jane Van Balen  
History Prize recipient 2023*

The 2023 Lane Cove History Prize was awarded on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October to Jane Van Balen for her Prize-winning essay, '**A Gentle Artist: The Life of H. Leonard Greening (1904-1984)**'. The Award certificate was presented by David Roenfeldt, Deputy Mayor of Lane Cove, while Jane also received prize money of \$1000. Jane gave a lively presentation of the details



*Dr Frances Christie  
President LCHS*

of her grandfather's life. Len Greening emigrated from England to Australia in 1924. Trained originally in England as a machinist, Len had also commenced his studies in art before he left England, and he continued his art studies at the East Sydney Technical College. He found work as a commercial artist with WD and HO Wills. He married in 1932 and he and his wife Jessie, settled in Longueville in 1936. He became friendly with George Lawrence, one of the Northwood Group, a group of painters, who also included Lloyd Rees, Roland Wakelin and John Santry. Len Greening sometimes joined them on their painting excursions around Sydney Harbour.

Len and Jessie had two daughters before the outbreak of the Second World War. Len served in the war, and the war years proved disruptive, affecting Jessie's health. Sadly, she died in 1953. Len later remarried, this time to Helen Molesworth, a resident of Longueville. Len and Helen enjoyed a happy family life, and they moved to Hunters Hill, while retaining their connection with the Lane Cove/Longueville area.

Len's career with WD and HO Wills had prospered over the years, and he became the Art Superintendent in the Advertising Department for Wills by his retirement. Painting remained an important activity throughout Len's life, and in retirement he travelled extensively, producing many paintings. He exhibited quite widely in Sydney, holding exhibitions in Pymble, Hunters Hill and Ashfield, while he also exhibited in galleries in Adelaide and Christchurch, New Zealand. In all, Len Greening remains one of our significant, if lesser known, local painters. He died in 1984, a much-loved father and grandfather.

This Noticeboard is the last for the year and as usual I have a number of people to thank for their contributions this year. Thanks to all committee members and thanks to the many volunteers who came and assisted for the various events held at Carisbrook House, including the open days that Kay Leiper managed all through the year. And now I have a big thank you to a special person who has been a very visible presence at Carisbrook House for many years - our caretaker.

## Thank you to Terry Eakin



*Terry Eakin*

Terry Eakin is retiring from his role as caretaker at Carisbrook Historic House, a role he has held for 25 years. He will vacate his apartment at the house in late December 2023, and will continue to serve the house till the end of January 2024. Terry has been a truly excellent caretaker, and on behalf of the Committee of the LCHS I wish to record our gratitude, respect, and affection for Terry. He has been reliable, generous and supportive in his role at Carisbrook, and has given widely of his skills and resources. Among his many interests, Terry is a very keen gardener and though maintenance of the gardens is not part of his role at Carisbrook (a Council gardener looks after them), he has often been found in the gardens enjoying the plants. He will remain a

member of the Lane Cove Historical Society, and we look forward to seeing him at many events at the house in the coming years.

I wish all members a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Frances Christie  
President



# The artist Len Greening and two of his works



*Terraces at North Sydney*



*The Hero of Waterloo ~ The Rocks*



**Some highlights from the History Prize presentation night with thanks to Alex Mattea for taking the photos.**



*Jane receiving her prize from David Roenfeldt the Deputy Mayor of Lane Cove*





*David Roenfeldt, Jane Van Balen and Frances Christie*



*Jane and some of her family: Holly Ahel and her mother Jill Nicol (Jane's cousin), Jane, her brother Peter Ferrier and Wayne Van Balen.*

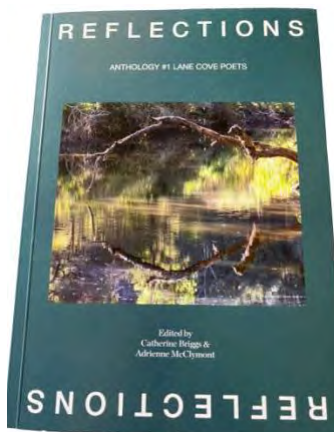


**As always, we thank everyone who attended.**





# The Poets of Lane Cove



Front Cover

The poets of Lane Cove, who include several members of the Lane Cove Historical Society, have produced an anthology of their poems, *Reflections*. The volume was edited by Catherine Briggs and Adrienne McClymont, while the covers were designed by Yolanda Koning. The covers have beautiful photos of the Lane Cove River and of the Powerful Owl, which were taken by Rob Anderson, himself a poet. Two internationally known poets, Paolo Totaro and Mark



Back Cover

O'Connor are represented in the volume, while the other local poets involved have been actively writing for some years. The anthology is a matter of some pride and we congratulate the Lane Cove poets on their achievement. The Anthology will be launched by the Lane Cove library on the 20<sup>th</sup> November from 6.00pm - 7.30pm. Wine and food will be provided, and the book will also be available for purchase for \$26 (cash preferred) on the night. The anthology will also be sold in the Bookery after the launch.

Although this is a free event, you must book a ticket. The Eventbrite link for the Lane Cove Poets Anthology 'Reflections' is:

<https://poetsbooklaunchlanecove20nov.eventbrite.com.au>

## Who started the singing of Christmas carols?



At this time of the year, many people around the world will be singing Christmas carols. What is their history and who started to sing them first? In mid-winter in Europe, even before the coming of Christianity, it was the custom for people to sing in order to keep up their spirits in difficult weather. Carol singing probably emerged from that custom. Communal singing, often

accompanied by dancing, would build a sense of wellbeing, just as many people feel wellbeing today when singing carols. It is said that St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) encouraged the development of nativity plays at Christmas, and he also encouraged people to sing in their native tongues at these events.

It is claimed that the first known Christmas hymn was 'Jesus Refulsit Omnium' ('Jesus, Light of All the Nations'), written by St. Hilary of Poitiers in the fourth century. Hymns

would be sung all the year round, but carols were intended for Christmas. The first Christmas carols in English first appeared in 1426, in a list prepared by a Shropshire chaplain, John Awdlay. He listed 25 'caroles of Cristemas', probably sung by groups of 'wassailers', who went singing from house to house in English towns. The word 'wassail' was a toast and it comes from the Old Norse 'ves heill' meaning 'be well and in good health'. Wassailers were popular for a while, though by the time of the Puritans in seventeenth century England, they were banned, along with all other Christmas celebrations.

It was some time before Christmas carol singing resumed after the Puritans, and it really became a tradition only in 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian England, when Christmas



cakes, trees and cards also became popular. After a good Christmas dinner, the custom was that the family sang carols. Perhaps the most famous of all Christmas carols was 'Silent Night', written in 1816 by a young priest. Others that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were 'We Three Kings of Orient Are' and 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'. The song 'Jingle Bells', which appeared first in the USA, was intended to be sung at Thanksgiving, though in time it also became a Christmas carol.

Christmas carol singing came to Australia, with the convicts on the First Fleet and today people in Australia still sing carols. Among other activities, singing of carols by candlelight is common in all Australian cities. The tradition of singing carols by candlelight started in Melbourne. In 1937 a radio announcer, Norman Banks, had observed an old woman in her home on Christmas eve, singing 'Away in a Manger', which was being played on the radio, while she sat alone by candlelight. It occurred to Norman that it would be good to get a number of people together to sing by candlelight, so he arranged an event in a park in 1938, when 10,000 people came. A tradition was born and today singing carols by candlelight has spread around the world. It is a tradition Australia can be proud of.

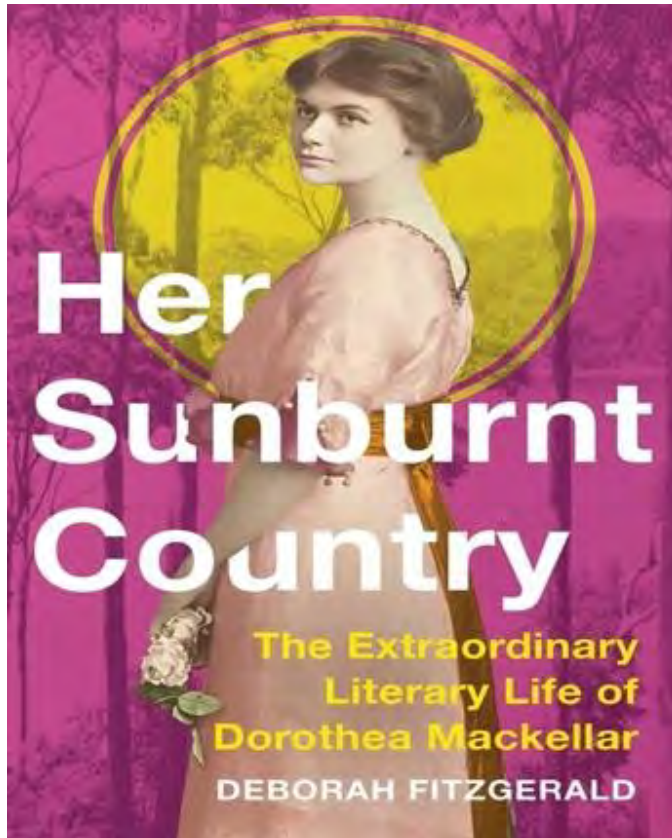
References

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/members-area/members-magazine/podcast-extras/history-of-carols/>

<https://carols.visionaustralia.org/carols/carols/about-us/our-history>

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/discover/the-history-of-christmas-carols>

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/history/art-collections/wassailing-ritual-and-revelry>



**BOOK REVIEW** by  
Frances Christie  
*'Her Sunburnt Country ~ The  
Extraordinary Life of Dorothea  
Mackellar'* Simon and Schuster:  
Sydney

At this time of the year as we move into our usual hot summer, many of us will recall the following stanza from Dorothea Mackellar's poem *My Country*, which we learned to recite at school:

I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,  
Her beauty and her terror -  
The wide brown land for me!

The poem was written in about 1904 and published in England in 1908, under the title *Core of My Heart*. Dorothea, who was Australian born, was visiting England and though she admired much about England, she deeply loved Australia. The stanza in which the words of the original title appeared reads:

Core of my heart, my country!  
Her pitiless blue sky,  
When sick at heart, around us,  
We see the cattle die-  
But then the grey clouds gather,  
And we can bless again  
The drumming of an army,  
The steady, soaking rain.

The poem proved very popular and in time, such was its popularity, it became known as *My Country*. Written as it was in the period in which Australia had become a federated nation (1901), the poem was liked for many reasons, but partly because it appealed to a nationalist spirit among many people.

Deborah Fitzgerald has written an authorised account of Dorothea's life, *Her Sunburnt Country: The Extraordinary Literary Life of Dorothea Mackellar*, and it is a fascinating volume to read. Dorothea was the daughter of a well-known Sydney doctor, who became an influential politician in New South Wales. Hers was a life of privilege, and she travelled overseas a lot, keeping diaries and forming friendships with many literary people. Two of her good friends, for example, were Joseph Conrad and his wife. The family maintained a property at Gunnedah, and though Dorothea liked to travel, she also cherished her times in the country.



Dorothea was proud of the success of her poem *My Country*, but also frustrated that her considerable output of other poetry was not widely recognised. In fact., today she is probably remembered only for the one poem. Yet, so Fitzgerald suggests, Dorothea revealed a very sensitive understanding of the Australian landscape, the nature of the seasons, and the often-dramatic changes in the weather. Moreover, she was very different in her observations of Australia from at least two other poets whose lives overlapped her own: Henry Lawson, who often wrote of hardship among the poor in the bush and city, and Banjo Paterson, who tended to celebrate, even romanticise the bushmen known to him.

Hers was a distinctive voice, and this book by Deborah Fitzgerald may well lead to some much-needed reassessment of Dorothea's work and life. At a time when Australia had very few woman writers, Dorothea made an original contribution.



*The art mural on Gunnedah Maize Mill where Dorothea spent much of her life.*

## 2024 Dates for your diary!

**DEVONSHIRE TEA OPEN WEEKEND AT CARISBROOK**  
**JANUARY 20TH & 21ST**  
**10AM - 4PM**



**General Meeting**  
**Speaker TBA**

**February 27th 2024 @7pm**  
**Lane Cove Library**