

BACK TO CAMOOWEAL

Although there was plenty of country music and bush poetry in Camooweal leading up to the annual 2017 Drovers' Camp Festival, to truly open festivities the road to the Northern Territory was closed off for the Friday night activities outside the Post Office Hotel. These included 'The Last Great Mail Race' and the iconic fund raising street auction (the latter seeing, amongst many treasures, the last of the stockyard models going for \$2,000). The street concert music from Balladeers Bruce Lavender and Jeff Brown and 'rockers' the Runaway Dixies helped to allay the unseasonable cold evening air.

Throughout the year, the Droving Heritage Centre one kilometre east of Camooweal displays a wonderful selection of historical memorabilia from this important era of the region and beyond. 'The Shed', as is usual, became the hub this year for the 35 drovers who made the journey out to share their invite-only luncheon and their reminiscences and tales (tall and true) from their own experiences. Sadly there were some moving services for those who had gone to other tracks during the year and the number of drovers (and festival attendees) was well down on past years, primarily due to a 'flu epidemic hitting Mt Isa and beyond in the preceding weeks. But the shed still displayed its stalls and art and craft exhibits and the grounds of the camp housed authentic outback activities such as bronco branding and camp oven cooking demonstrations.

During the weekend there was a great line up of country music and ballads from the busy organiser and MC, Tommy Maxwell, along with Jeff Brown, Bruce Lavender and Peter Coad and the Coad Sisters. There was also a moving segment from the Lake Nash Gospel Band and a non-denominational church service.

Saturday afternoon saw the Camooweal country race meeting with five races, a fashion parade and a Calcutta. This was well attended by elegantly attired station, town and visiting spectators.

For the Bush Poets and Yarn Spinners there was the Sunday Bush Poets' Breakfast and the annual *Drovers Camp Talent Award* for performance of poems, yarns and songs MC'd and run by Brenda Joy and judged by Hal Pritchard. It was sad that due to illness, drover John Lloyd and Carmel were unable to come this year but Rhyl Graham of the Townsville Bush Poetry Mates gave a very welcome hand as scrutineer. There were 20 entries across the three categories and results were close. (See the winner's list below.) Throughout both of these segments poems written by drover Bruce Simpson and by Ian Michaels (who died in December 2016) were presented.

Also below are the results of the top six placegetters in the Post Office *Bronze Spur Award* for written verse judged from sixty-six entries. This prestigious competition with its coveted hand-crafted bronze spur award, has run every year since 1997 and was again co-ordinated by the tireless Drovers' Camp Treasurer Ellen Finlay. Both Ellen and her husband Paul who manage the site all year, deserve great applause for their non-stop efforts throughout the weekend and they in turn thank "...our many sponsors and volunteers who make it all happen..."

The Camooweal Drovers' Camp Festival will be on again in 2018 over the fourth weekend (24th – 26th) August. This will be the 22nd year of its running. Tony Anderson, President DCAE, and the organisers of the festival invite you to "...Take some time in the outback and take the opportunity to meet and talk with real drovers who have travelled far and wide to celebrate this unique way of life." We hope you can plan your programs to join in this very special tribute festival to some of Australia's last remaining 'pioneers'.

Brenda Joy

RESULTS FROM CAMOOWEAL

WRITTEN COMPETITION

POST OFFICE *Bronze Spur Award* for original bush verse

1st Winner	Donald Crane	Qld.	<i>A Bovine World</i>
2nd Place	Terry Piggott	WA	<i>The Love of her Life</i>
3rd Place	Tom McIlveen	NSW	<i>Pappinbarra Dreaming</i>
Highly Commended	Terry Piggott	WA	<i>The Bushman and the Warrigal</i>
Commended	Terry Piggott	WA	<i>Torbay Dreaming</i>
Commended	Helen Harvey	NSW	<i>When a Handshake was our Word</i>

PERFORMANCE COMPETITION

Drovers' Camp Talent Award

YARN SPINNING SECTION

1st	Barry Graham	Queensland
2 nd	Jingo March	SA
3rd	Bill Poynton	Victoria

BUSH POETRY SECTION

1st	Barry Graham	Queensland
2nd	Deena Smith	Queensland
3rd	Larry Robinson	NSW

BALLAD/SONG SECTION

1st	Wayne Martin	Queensland
2nd	Larry Robinson	NSW
3rd	Kelvin Ladd	NT

OVERALL WINNERS OF DCTA (best from two sections)

1st	(for Yarn and Poem)	Barry Graham
2nd	(for Poem and Song)	Larry Robinson
3rd	(for Yarn and Poem)	Jingo March