

2018 'BLACKENED BILLY AWARD' FOR WRITTEN BUSH VERSE – TAMWORTH NSW JUDGE'S COMMENTS RE OVERALL COMPETITION:-

Thank you to Jan Morris, co-ordinator of the 2018 *Blackened Billy Verse* and to the Tamworth Poetry Reading Group and the Australian Bush Poets Association for their support of this iconic written competition.

What a wonderful selection of poems this year. There was such a variety of subjects and styles. There were poems of nostalgia and regrets for past or passing eras. There were poems of the bush and about the 'true blue' characters who reside or travel there. There were stories of war. There were stories about our relationships with other species (especially dogs and horses). Then there were poems of life as it is in city, coastal, country or outback locations, highlighting the concerns and issues faced by Australians today.

So many 'stories' to make you laugh, cry, think or marvel!

It is a shame that many of these stories were marred in the telling by technical glitches. Perhaps there is a need throughout the competition world, for more Novice categories and for developing poets to seek critiques to iron out those (often minor) flaws which are impeding the flow of their poetry.

The writers whose poems made it through to the final selection, fulfilled the challenge of our *genre*. They combined application of skills with effective use of language and imagery and they showed originality of subject or approach. They displayed that special quality which touched the reader on many dimensions and made their poems stand out as excellent examples of our demanding but exciting craft. Congratulations to these poets on their well-earned success.

Not all can be winners and some poems that have not succeeded in this competition may well do so in another. The important thing is that all entrants are to be thanked and congratulated for their endeavours and for their willingness to expose and share the outflow and expressions of their hearts and minds.

Please keep writing!
For the love of poetry...

Brenda Joy
ABPA Judge

RESULTS:-

PLACE GETTERS

1 st	and winner of the Blackened Billy Trophy	
	Catherine Lee	<i>And did those Hooves</i>
2 nd	Tom McIlveen	<i>Pappinbarra Dreamtime</i>
3 rd	Shelley Hansen	<i>On the Brink</i>

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Donald Adams	<i>Horse Sense</i>
Tom McIlveen	<i>Bluey</i>
Val Wallace	<i>A Parcel from Home</i>

COMMENDED

Terry Piggott	<i>Top Camp – Up in the Devil's Lair</i>
Terry Piggott	<i>The Love of her Life 2</i>
Tom McIlveen	<i>Pappinbarra Burning</i>
Shelley Hansen	<i>Communication Breakdown</i>
Terry Piggott	<i>The Poverty Tin</i>
Terry Piggott	<i>The Ruins</i>
Helen Harvey	<i>Her Place</i>

JUDGE'S COMMENTS RE TOP 3 POEMS:

1st Place

Winner of the 2018 *Blackened Billy*

And Did Those Hooves...

© Catherine Lee

This is a powerful, descriptive poem that skilfully portrays both the brutality of war and the depth of mateship between Man and Horse.

Told in the first person, the poem gives a sense of authenticity to the scenes of horror and to the relationship of love and camaraderie. In expressing what the beloved horse could have felt, the poet clearly proclaims the view of the nonsensical futility of embattlement. Man's eventual heartrending betrayal of trust contrasts poignantly with the Horse's loyalty and unconditional love and the poet expresses the pathos of this event and its internal aftermath with the intensity of language that pervades the whole poem.

This version of an historical lamentation, propels the reader through many dimensions of emotional response.

A truly beautiful poem and a worthy winner of the 2018 *Blackened Billy*... thank you.

2nd Place Getter – runner up

Pappinbarra Dreamtime

© Tom McIlveen

There is a special feeling of mystery and mystique in this poem which draws the reader into an idealised Dreamtime and evokes a sense of the Aboriginal belief of oneness with the land. At the same time, it juxtaposes the poet's impression that this relationship between Man and Nature has been sadly negated by unthoughtful intrusion.

All the technical aspects which allow a poem to flow unimpeded are skilfully employed. The poet uses our *genre* with great control.

3rd Place Getter

On the Brink?

© Shelley Hansen

This poet uses expertise and accuracy to demonstrate, via example, how application of the precepts and principles of the craft we call Bush Poetry, allow a poem to flow, unimpeded by glitches, from beginning to end. The poem speaks for itself.

Beautifully executed, this is a forceful appeal for contemporary writers to take on and keep up the challenge and excitement of continuing to preserve the high standards of the unique, poetic culture we have inherited.

The perspective presented is both compelling and timely. Thank you to the author for your forthright views towards our shared, worthwhile, literary purpose.
