

Tributes: *Australian Folklore* Nos. 1–25

Dear Professor Ryan

As President of The Folklore Society [UK], I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to the editors of *Australian Folklore* on the publication of the silver jubilee 25th annual volume of this distinguished scholarly journal.

1987 was a good year for folklore studies in Australia. The government's Committee of Enquiry into Folklife published its report *Folklife: Our Living Heritage*. The Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education produced its report *Windows Onto Worlds*. And the first volume of *Australian Folklore* was published by the Centre for Australian Studies, Western Australia Institute of Technology, thanks to funding from the Australian Folk Trust. Its first editors were Graham Seal, currently Professor of Folklore at CAS, Curtin University of Technology, and David S. Hulst—both authors of internationally acclaimed publications on Australian folklore.

Since 1993, *Australian Folklore* has been published as the journal of the Australian Folklore Association under the editorship of Professor John S. Ryan, Dept of English, University of New England, who has expertly ensured the journal's continuous high standard of scholarship and wide diversity of subjects covered.

An advertisement for volume 1 of *Australian Folklore* promised that the aims of the journal were to: 'publish research, fieldwork, analysis and other matters relevant to Australian folklore; [...] provide a forum for new work in Australian folklore and [...] provide a focus for the continued development of folklore studies in this country; [and] relate to all aspects of Australian folklore, with a particular emphasis on the folklore process in contemporary Australian experience.' (*Folklore* [UK] vol. 97, 1986). Everything promised then has been delivered, and much more besides. The journal has maintained a consistent engagement with developments in theory, both folkloristic and anthropological, and has fulfilled the primary aims of the Australian Folklore Association: 'to promote the collection, preservation and study of folklore in Australia; to foster the discussion and dissemination of information about folklore in Australia; and to promote understanding and appreciation of the

important social and cultural role of folklore in Australian society’
(<http://members.iinet.net.au/~cknow/AFA.html>)

We wish the editors of *Australian Folklore* every success with the next 25 volumes.

Dr Eddie Cass
President, The Folklore Society [UK]

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Australian Folklore: The First 25 Years

Professor John D. Widdowson
Centre for English Traditional Heritage

The international journal *Australian Folklore* began life in 1987 when the first issue, edited by Graham Seal and David S. Hulst, was published by the Centre for Australian Studies at Curtin University of Technology, Perth. This first issue contained articles on a wide range of subjects, including the folklore of women, well-dressing in Perth, Italian traditional music in Adelaide, and folkloristic and media responses to the disappearances of baby Azaria Chamberlain near Ayers Rock. These articles were followed by reports on the national folklore conference at Sydney in 1986, notes and queries on a variety of topics such as trick-or-treat in the USA (just beginning to be found in the Perth area), early Australian terms of (dis)approval, ‘sick’ jokes, and Cabbage Patch dolls. There were notices of recent and upcoming publications, events, and folklore studies courses, and a notice of intention to publish an ongoing register of both Australian and overseas folklore fieldwork and research.

No. 1 set the tone, style, standard, and pattern for subsequent issues in a total of 147 pages for the modest price of an individual subscription at Aus\$20. In the same year a Bulletin with the same title was also published, which included reviews, notes and queries, etc.

No. 2 comprised mostly unsolicited contributions, showing an encouraging development from No. 1 which had been primarily written by the editors and a small group of scholars and writers. Again we find a very wide range of articles, including those on childlore, the myth of Lemuria, contemporary folklore and racism, the belief that dogs can be deterred from fouling gardens by bottles half-filled with water, and a perceptive overview by Hugh Anderson of the problems faced by folklorists in the collection, conservation, and utilisation of material. A second Bulletin was also published, which was notable for responses by six of the country's leading folklorists to the Inquiry into Folklife in Australia—a theme taken up again in No. 3 along with articles on Irish outlaws, contemporary legend, folklore and ethnic groups in Australia, and the Australian folk club music.

Nos. 4 to 6 were characterised by a similar wide variety of articles in issues of a similar length, which continued to establish the preferred format and consistency of approach. Volume 7 welcomed a new editor, J.S. Ryan, and was published for the Australian Folklore Association by the University of New England, Armidale. The journal acquired a new look, including the now distinctive cover and logo. It was slightly larger than A5 in size, but maintained the broad scope of content, including aboriginal folklore and in this issue predominantly Australian topics, plus a wide range of notes, comments, reviews, etc.

The same format is firmly established in Nos. 8 and 9. No. 9 includes an important editorial statement of the remit of the journal: 'This issue of *Australian Folklore* follows the editorial policy of No. 8 (1993) in endeavouring to publish the work of as wide as possible a range of scholars, collectors and experts in particular aspects of the vast field of Australian folkloric studies'. The issue is dedicated to the eminent historian, Russel Braddock Ward, and differs from its predecessors in grouping contributions by themes such as the Republican Controversy, Perspectives From Overseas, Memory Pieces, and Articles, and is noticeably more substantial, extending to 212 pages.

The editorial in No. 10 reiterates the policy stated in No. 9, but significantly adds: 'As well as both theoretical and field studies by scholars throughout the world'. These policy statements make it clear that the editor fully intends to continue and indeed extend the innovatively holistic approach to the subject advocated by his predecessors. This issue, dedicated to Bill Wannan, is appropriately predominated by contributions from Australia and includes tributes to and letters from the dedicatee. No. 11 (1996) commemorates the folksong collector and performer, Alan Scott, and is dedicated to the

writer Dal Stivens. The celebration of the life and work of distinguished Australians, whether folklorists or those working in related fields, soon became a regular feature of the journal.

No. 12 focuses on bush songs, culture, survival and the global threat, folklore of work, the lore of sport, the charting of Australian folklore, and contemporary film. This issue extends to 320 pages.

The grouping of contributions by theme continues in Nos. 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, each of which incorporates between thirty and forty longer contributions. The modest increase in subscription of Aus\$5 for No. 17 (2002) reflects the increased size and publication costs. The editor invariably acknowledges the support of many Australian organisations and institutions and in particular the Australian Folklore Society. No. 18 includes eight comparative and international essays, and nine Australian essays and studies. Nos. 19 and 20 explore new writing and publishing and ways of transmitting story.

The twenty first anniversary issue in 2006 centres on studies in Australian folklore, including food and foodways, but as usual also features major international theoretical and comparative essays. No. 21 also acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Dr. Robert J. Smith of Southern Cross University in preceding issues of the journal— assistance which is formally recognised by his appointment as Co-editor. No. 22 celebrates the work of eminent Australian folklorists, including an important rallying call by Ann Trindade in support of folklore as an academic discipline. Nine papers follow in the firmly established category of international theoretical and comparative studies, and these are followed by three papers on Australian mining and nine on a variety of aspects of Australian folklore.

No. 23 pays tribute to Ron Edwards and other Australian folklorists and collectors, and includes sections on Australian folklore, both in general and in schools, together with five articles on comparative international perspectives on traditional cultural matters. No. 24 (2009—the year immediately preceding the journal's Silver Anniversary) features folk music and cultural change, with particular emphasis on satire and heritage.

Since taking over the editorship of the journal some eighteen years ago, John Ryan has consolidated and greatly extended the challenging remit of his pioneering predecessors, in developing what is now one of the most substantial and respected journals in the subject area. In addition to broadening the scope of the journal to encompass the widest and most comprehensive range of tradition studies, revealing the relationships between these studies and many

others in the social sciences and humanities, he has moulded the publication not only to draw attention to the rich traditional heritage of Australia, but also to enable it to take its rightful place in the canon of international scholarship in this important field. His vision, erudition, and boundless enthusiasm for the subject are evident in each issue he has edited, not least in his own editorials and in the numerous articles and other contributions he has made to the journal. With the notable assistance in recent years of his Co-editor, Robert Smith, he has steered the journal on a steady and determined course to the benefit of all those with an interest in the study of tradition. Above all he has striven to make Australian folklore accessible to layman and scholar alike—an achievement which is central to the journal's success and to its enviable reputation both at home and abroad. Collectively the journal espouses an essentially humanitarian mission to reveal the social, cultural, political, and personal relevance of tradition and of the study of tradition in the contemporary world.

Over the past twenty five years *Australian Folklore* has firmly established itself as one of the leading international journals in this diverse and diffuse discipline, which in itself is a remarkable achievement. Its adventurous and comprehensive approach, which is amply demonstrated even in this brief overview, has helped to broaden and redefine the boundaries of the subject, linking both tangible and intangible cultural heritage with history, literature, ecology, and worldview. It offers a challenging and innovative model for new and developing journals in this field, and for future teaching, research in, and practical applications of, the study of tradition in all its manifestations. Here's to the next 25 years!

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