

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWENTY

Gosh, that's a milestone, if ever there was! Here we are suddenly in 2015 – the Year of the Sheep – and already I seem to have hit the ground running. Like Christmas for most people, ours was a very busy time and the New Year wizzed around very quickly. It was also a very sad time for me and for many people in the children's book world. My very dear friend, mentor, confidante and occasional travel companion, Maurice Saxby died, so this put a cloud over the whole of December and January. I last saw Maurie at the 2014 CBCA NSW Lady Cutler dinner in Sydney. He was in fine form. We shared a bottle of red wine and lively conversation. On the one hand he was looking forward to various 90th birthday celebrations that were being organised in his honour. His family had organised a big reunion on the actual day, 26 December, but there were additional celebrations in train. On the other hand, in typical fashion, he didn't want any fuss.

Tragically, Maurice died suddenly on 4 December. He was doing his ironing. That's enough incentive for me to permanently give up ironing! Someone said 'if you die suddenly at 90 that shows how full of life you were!'

The funeral was a family celebration of his life. He often talked about his family, but I was surprised how large it is, how many nieces and nephews he had. Several of them told me that they never knew the breadth of the love and respect felt by so many for Maurice.

The CBCA NSW branch organised a Celebration of the Amazing Life of Maurice Saxby. It was held on 19 January at the Great Hall, Sydney University and was a splendid occasion, a fitting tribute to a wonderful man, attended by 300 people. He will be sadly missed but he will not be forgotten. His legacy will live on and the influence he had on Australian children's books will endure.



The Great Hall, 19 January.

## EVENTS @ PINEROLO AND BEYOND

The word seems to be spreading about Pinerolo and the events, courses and open days we offer. It was a pleasure during the Christmas holidays to welcome a group of children from BOOSH (Blackheath out of school hours). They listened intently to a talk about how picture books are made, listened to some stories and then explored the collection of original artwork, discovering favourites, new techniques and media. I like school visits. There's nothing more satisfying than sharing picture books with children.

### PICTURE BOOKS @ PINEROLO

Our program of one-day courses on creating children's picture books has been running now for nine years. They are always fully booked and participants go away inspired and much more knowledgeable about how to realise their dream of a published book. The program for 2015 is coming together and everyone will be given advance notice of courses.

### ILLUSTRATORS IN RESIDENCE @ PINEROLO

An application has gone in to the Copyright Agency for funding for this important and unique program for illustrators. There are several programs for 'Authors in Residence' but none for 'Illustrators in Residence' with a live-in mentor. Every illustrator who has been here in the last three years has gone away with new enthusiasm and commitment to their work.

### FURTHER AFIELD

I'm sure everybody knows I'm heavily involved in the CBCA. As a National Board member I'm now working with the committee for the 12th National Conference, in Sydney in May next year. Not only that, but this year 2015, marks the **70th anniversary of the CBCA**, which was established in Sydney in 1945. There will be national celebrations to mark this outstanding achievement. Also next year, the Conference coincides with the **70th anniversary of the CBCA Children's Book of the Year Awards**. This means that the 70th presentation of the awards will be in Sydney in August 2016. I hope to see you at both these events.



The last photo. Maurie and me at the Lady Cutler Dinner 2014.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO JACKIE FRENCH



Not only is Jackie French doing a fabulous job as Australia's Children's Laureate for two years, she was recently named Senior Australian of the Year. AND she continues to write wonderful books for children, even though she's already written 140 of them! I don't know how she keeps up her busy schedule. She is an incredible ambassador for books and

reading and we should all try to follow her example.

Check out Jackie's 'Share a Story' calendar at:

[http://www.childrenslaureate.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Share-a-Story-Calendar-2015-Australian-Childrens-Laureate\\_Jackie-French.pdf](http://www.childrenslaureate.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Share-a-Story-Calendar-2015-Australian-Childrens-Laureate_Jackie-French.pdf)

## NEW BOOKS

The year has begun with some very interesting parcels landing in our PO Box. To commemorate the centenary of the event, publishers are continuing to feature books about Gallipoli and the First World War. There are new fictional accounts, like Sally Murphy's powerful and evocative AUSTRALIA'S GREAT WAR: 1915. It's part of a series about the war. Other titles are: 1914 by Sophie Masson, 1916 by Alan Tucker, 1917 by Kelly Gardiner and 1918 by Libby Gleeson. What an excellent idea for a series to mark this important anniversary.

Picture books also continue to feature stories of the First World War. Allen & Unwin in particular have produced some spectacular picture books, like 'I Was Only Nineteen' and 'And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda' (see review below). It's also good to see several books by Indigenous creators, an important part of our culture.

A IS FOR AUSTRALIA by Frane Lessac (Walker). This alphabet is a virtual tour around Australia. It takes the reader to many spectacular sites around the country, adding fascinating snippets of information about each. At 48 pages, there's plenty of room for all the places and their relative facts. The rich and colourful gouache illustrations extend the text with native plants and animals and lots of visual details. Recommended.

AND THE BAND PLAYED WALTZING MATILDA by Eric Bogle & Bruce Whatley (Allen & Unwin). Like 'I Was Only Nineteen', this is a very moving treatment of an iconic Australian song. An insightful piece by Eric Bogle says: 'it didn't really matter which war you sang about, since the results of all wars throughout history have remained depressingly similar: bloodshed, death, ruin and heartbreak'. The superb illustrations convey this message strikingly. Highly recommended.

BUDINGE AND THE MIN MIN LIGHTS by Uncle Joe Kirk, Greer Casey & Sandi Harrold (Scholastic). This is an indigenous dreaming story, retold by elder Uncle Joe Kirk, who is passionate about sharing his stories with new generations. Recommended.

FUNNY FAMILIES by Mark Norman (Black Dog). A new title in the series: 'Funny Bums', 'Funny Faces' and 'Funny Homes' – a quirky and entertaining way to impart information to young readers, complete with superb photographs, fact files, glossary and index. Great for learning how to use non-fiction books rather than just googling information.

IF . . . by David J Smith & Steve Adams (New Frontier). This is mind-boggling, fascinating and educational. It reduces the whole history and makeup of our planet to manageable scale. The author believes that understanding scale helps us realise that we are all a small part of a much bigger society, world and universe and the illustrator has added another dimension. Includes useful notes to parents and teachers. Highly recommended.

KNOCKABOUT CRICKET by Neridah McMullin and Ainsley Walters (One Day Hill). The story of Aboriginal Johnny Mullagh (Unaarramin), who became a sporting legend and one of Australia's first international cricket stars. It's an account of his life and his achievements, with lots of factual information. As well as the full colour illustrations there's a fascinating sepia photograph of Aboriginal cricketers in 1867.

THE LAST ANZAC by Gordon Winch & Harriet Bailey (New Frontier). Alec Campbell enlisted in 1915 when he was sixteen. He died in 2002, aged 103. This is his story, told through the eyes of a boy who visited him in 2001 to talk to him about his experience. An inspiring book, in time for Anzac Day. Recommended.

MAGPIE LEARNS A LESSON by Sally Murphy & Ezekiel Kwaymullina (Omnibus). I've seen this mischievous magpie in my back yard frequently and wish he would read this! In this book he plays tricks on his friend Brown Falcon and learns a valuable lesson. The illustrations, done with acrylic paint on oil sketch paper are colourful and beautiful, the texture showing through.

THELMA THE UNICORN by Aaron Blabey (Scholastic). Pig the Pug was hilarious and this book is also very entertaining. Aaron Blabey seems to be able to convey deep and meaningful messages in very simple ways. This is a lesson on how to love yourself.

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT by Margery Williams Bianco & Helene Magisson (New Frontier). This splendid book is a new edition of the classic, first published in 1922. It's a timeless story about the power of love and has been given a whole new treatment with a beautiful design and gentle watercolours by a first-time illustrator. Recommended.

WHAT'S IN MY LUNCH? by Peter Carnavas & Kat Chadwick (New Frontier). Simple, repetitious and easy to read, this is a good book for the beginning of the school year. A boy discovers all sorts of unexpected things in his lunch box. The text is large and clear and the illustrations simple and action-packed.

YAK AND GNU by Juliette MacIver & Cat Chapman (Walker). Two best friends think they are the only ones who can float a boat. They are in for a surprise! They meet many other creatures in some hilarious craft and are soon surrounded. But in all these creatures there's no better friend than the Gnu for Yak and Yak for Gnu. Watercolour illustrations extend the fun of this clever rhyming story.

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you in 2015. Best wishes from me and my mascot Grug.



Margaret Hamilton AM