

Settlers' Dreams

As decades fly and stories fade about our country's past,
the journeys on our outback roads leave memories that last.
To those who came before us in a time of tough extremes,
we recognise tenacity in search of daring dreams.

Some came in ships from distant shores bound down by chains of steel,
across the oceans of the world with no rights of appeal.
Those seven years of servitude for stealing loaves of bread
prepared our convict forebears for the challenges ahead.

Their dreams were motivation, it was also in their genes
to face that life of challenge and to know what hardship means.
There was no help from government, no handouts if they fail
in places that were far away from where they'd first set sail.

A place of vast horizons in an ancient timeless land
where tumult and then tragedy can both go hand in hand.
There is unbounded beauty in the realm of nature's roles,
which camouflage the dangers for unwary convict souls.

From mountains, hills and valleys to our dusty outback plains,
reminders of that era gone are seen in what remains.
A lonesome hut of wood and mud decays beyond repair
and left by settlers as it was to try again elsewhere.

The stonework footings of the hut are part of what remains,
not far from where the windmill fell with broken frames and vanes.
A mouldboard plough has rusted near a knotted dying tree,
not far from where the horse's yard and shelter used to be.

Unlike the settlers moving on, the chimney is still there
with sheets of steel and stone above a hearth now black and bare.
The J hooks for the billy-bar no longer can be found
where bull-ants use the chimney wall to build another mound.

The clanging and the chattering are sounds no longer heard,
just plaintive cries of Bush Curlews, that mournful sounding bird.
A Boobook owl sends eerie sounds as daylight turns to dark
when working dogs on distant farms can then be heard to bark.

The bush becomes a silhouette as stars light up the sky
before the moonlight dances on the stream that flows nearby.
Nocturnal creatures soon emerge from where they spend the day
and scamper through the undergrowth to find or be the prey.

Serenity consumes us midst the perils of the past,
the flickers of our fire are like things that never last.
And as we gaze in wonderment beneath the Milky Way,
we hear the sounds of sunrise that announce another day.

A Kookaburra laughs to break the silence of the night
which echoes through the hills suggesting things will be alright.
Galahs fly in from where they roost for breakfast on the ground
and chatter with each other over what they may have found.

Some Emus and a mob o' 'roos come in to have a peek
before they get to water down along the stony creek.
Corellas screech from lookouts from atop a River Gum
where bees have started harvesting with their relentless hum.

And as we leave this sacred site we shed a silent tear,
reminded by the gravestones of the souls that linger here.
They are eternal guardians we feel we may have met,
a special place for all of us and one we won't forget.

So if you see a crumbling hut, remember who was there,
respecting those who built it midst the hardship and despair.
They were the pioneers who came to realise a dream,
reminding us that sometimes, dreams are harder than they seem.