

## the 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference Terrigal, September 2009

A report of the 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference for *Five Bells* Vol 17 Nos 1&2, 2010 by convenor, Beverley George

together . . .  
the way wind moves  
over water

*Vanessa Proctor*

One of the features that distinguishes haiku from some other poetic genres is its sociable nature, which often includes the sharing of its creation, and interactive linking. Originally the starting verse (hokku) of renga, a writing game, established time, place and season. This opening poem was given individual status by Bashō in the 17th century and renamed haiku by Shiki and friends around 1900. Haiku are often written on a communal walk (ginko) and pasted up for anonymous peer-judging (kukai).

Describing haiku, John Bird wrote recently:

‘A haiku is a brief poem, built on sensory images from the environment. It evokes an insight into our world and its peoples.’

Most of the 57 full-time delegates of the 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference poets who gathered at The Clan Lakeside, Terrigal, on the 22nd September for the welcome night, knew each other by name and reputation, but had not met in person. They included the founder of the first Haiku Pacific Rim conference at Long Beach, California, Mr Jerry Ball, the convenor of the second at Ogaki, Japan, Yoshimura Ikuyo, and the convenor of the third at Matsuyama, Japan, Noma Minako. The 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference was the first international conference in Australia to celebrate this diminutive genre.

Registration had been prepaid, so on arrival at the welcome function the delegates had only to pick up their name badges, each of which had one of their own signature haiku on it thanks to David Terelinck, and start mingling. The hubbub was instantaneous, and further complemented by two Australian singers, known as That’s That, who had not only written a song especially for the conference, titled *Wind over Water*, but who generously gave a CD copy to each delegate.

Further generosity was evidenced by the gift from the Shiki Memorial Museum, Matsuyama, Japan of 60 copies of *If someone asks...Masaoka Shiki’s Life and Haiku*, and a personal gift from Noma, Shuji and Noma Minako of shikishi, traditional boards on which to write and illustrate haiku. Each delegate also received a copy of the conference poetry anthology, *Wind over Water*: an

anthology of haiku and tanka by delegates of the 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference. I think everyone went to bed happy.

On the morning of the 23rd we awoke to an orange dust-storm sky, the worst in 70 years. Nevertheless it was difficult to convince overseas visitors that it wasn't a regular phenomenon. Fearing a drop in spirits, I quickly set a breakfast challenge. 'Write a haiku about the dust- storm.' This was judged by two full-time but live-out Kiwi delegates, Nola Borrell and Karen Butterworth, and won by Greg Piko from the ACT :

rising early  
to taste the morning  
amber dust

By the time we reached the Gosford/Edogawa Commemorative Gardens and Regional Gallery, face masks were on hand as were the cheerful volunteer guides, arranged by Gallery curator, Tim Braham. The poets set off to begin writing haiku.

dust storm –  
the sun too  
wears a white mask

*Michael Thorley*

Gosford City Council Mayor, Cllr. Chris Holstein, played an active role in welcoming overseas delegates. The Consul-General and Vice-Consul of the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney arrived promptly to take part in the brief opening formalities, and stayed a further four hours to participate in further events, which included ikebana demonstrations, arranged by Ms Margaret Hardy of Multi-Arts Confederation, under whose auspices the Conference was held.

During lunch, delegates' haiku were pasted up in the tea hut for anonymous judging by all poets who had submitted one. The winner was Martin Lucas from England with a one-line haiku.

in and out of wisteria dust on the wind

*Martin Lucas*

Second Place was:

in the stone lantern  
light  
of azaleas

*Michael Thorley*

Runners-up were:

moon viewing window  
a white koi rises  
in the pond

*Graham Nunn*

spring storm  
only the sound of waves  
through ochre fog

*Cynthia Rowe*

just for a moment  
the curve of the bridge  
lifts her spirit

*Greg Piko*

This event was also attended by members of the public. The programme included an announcement and readings by kukai winners and a bilingual reading of haiku with Tokyo tanka poet, Kitakubo Mariko. Mariko had kindly translated a haiku sequence, 'White Pebbles', I wrote in the Gardens some time ago and we read it in English and Japanese. The session concluded with 'open mike' led by experienced emcee, and secretary of the Australian Haiku Society (HaikuOz), Graham Nunn.

Intra-conference bus travel for this day was sponsored by the Society of Women Writers NSW Inc., to whom thanks.

On the 24th we were joined by pre-registered day delegates for the presentation of papers, so nearly eighty of us took part. International poetry editors included: Uzawa Kozue, editor of *Gusts: tanka Canada*; Martin Lucas, editor of the long running and highly regarded haiku journal *Presence* [UK]; Yoshimura, Ikuyo, Professor at Gifu University; Cyril Childs who has edited

several haiku anthologies in New Zealand and Sandra Simpson, who edits the haiku pages for the New Zealand Poetry Society; Katherine Samuelowicz, editor of the haiku journal *paper wasp*; Yuhki Aya, editor of the *Tanka Journal* [Japan]; Beverley George editor of *Eucalypt: a Tanka Journal* and past editor of *Yellow Moon* and of the Society of Women Writers newsletter; Janice M Bostok who has edited many publications including *paper wasp* served as senior haiku adviser for *Yellow Moon*, and until recently was editor for *Stylus*. Publisher and editor for Pardalote Press, Lyn Reeves, was a speaker as was Vanessa Proctor who has studied and taught haiku in England, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

Noma Minako, who has worked as a volunteer English translator for the Matsuyama Municipal Shiki-Kinen Museum gave a fascinating paper, and Linda Galloway from the Yukei Teiki haiku group in USA taught us how to sign a haiku for those who cannot hear. All the papers were well received but the one most commented on since was a thoughtful and challenging presentation by Martin Lucas with Stuart Quine [UK]: *Haiku as Poetic Spirit*. All delegates received a substantial bound copy of the conference papers edited by Carmel Summers, and copies have been donated to several libraries.

An award from Haiku Dreaming Australia ( <http://haikudreamingaustralia.info/>) for a haiku on an Australian theme went to:

the farmer calls  
his kelpie home . . .  
flame trees darken

*Sharon Elyse Dean*

A highlight of the day was an opening performance by pupils of Terrigal Public School and the Japanese Saturday School. Dressed in kimono and yukata they sang an animal action song in Japanese in which the last sound of an animal's name is the same as the first sound of the next. eg kitsune (fox) becomes neko (cat) and the song gets faster as it goes on. They then threw off their yukata to reveal boardies and teeshirts while they sang Give me a home among the gum trees, also with actions. Another highlight was a delicious packed lunch with the conference logo on the box served lakeside from a little marquee.

The official conference dinner was a courtesy bus ride away at The Cowrie and entertainment was provided by outstanding classical guitarist, Giuseppe Zangari, of the Newcastle Conservatorium. One table of enthusiasts wrote renga (linked verse) for him which he appreciated greatly.

On the 25th we headed for the Australian Reptile Park, and a behind the scenes tour, calculated to keep everyone on their toes in close encounters with spiders, snakes and alligators. Later the haiku this stimulated were pasted up in the Pearl Beach Village Hall. Results were:

First Place

pulse racing  
in my palm  
the alligator's throat

*Graham Nunn*

Second Place

funnelweb –  
the sudden urge  
to stomp

*Julie Thorndyke*

After that we headed to the Pearl Beach Native Arboretum where volunteer guides led the poets in small groups while they enjoyed the local ambience and wrote more poems. The poems, plus those from the Reptile Park, were placed on either side of specially decorated boards, in the Pearl Beach Village Hall and all those who had taken part could vote. We also had a People's Choice vote in which everyone who hadn't written a poem, could vote for their favourite. Between courses of a delicious lunch, poets cast their votes, resulting in the Reptile Park ones quoted above and these following, from the Pearl Beach walks:

First Place

driftwood  
the smooth curve  
of your back

*David Terelinck*

## Second Place

crack  
of a whipbird  
leaves scarcely rustle

*Carmel Summers*

## People's Choice Award

blackened rust  
of angophora bark –  
fire meets water

*Anne Benjamin*

A grant from Gosford City Council Cultural Funding greatly assisted be enabling us to provide the delegates with a high standard of audiovisual support and quality printing, integral to the success of an international conference.

The splendid outcome from the 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference Wind Over Water Conference, was how readily and harmoniously all the delegates interacted throughout the three days, and how many have let me know that they have stayed in touch with each other since.

*Beverley George*

Convenor: 4th Haiku Pacific Rim Conference

President: Australian Haiku Society ([www.haikuoz.org](http://www.haikuoz.org)) 2006-2010