

shook our heads. Pointing his pencil at the letters, that second drunk recited, "Anthony Armstrong-Jones over Princess Margaret minus contraceptive equals *ONE MORE POMMIE BAHSTAD!!!*"

That first drunk was Bluey Morgan's Mate, and we spent the next several hours talking about him. Bluey exemplified good-natured alcoholics everywhere. He was a man with his own brand of friendliness and sensitivity. When we came away we felt as if we'd known him for years.

Bluey thought we were Canadians: "Canadians, are ye?"

"Sorry. Americans."

"Ah -- ye get over here and y'start to talk like us.
There's one thing that's got me crook, mate.
Y'said something like as if yer ashamed of bein' American!"

"No -- that's not it. But -- some Australians. . ."

"Ahh -- we're not all good mates either, I'll tell ye!"

"Well -- there are more than 200 million Americans, and -- they're not all alike."

"Nor the Australians!"

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The Karrie Tree Limerick

A New Australian carelessly
Slept beneath a karri tree
It dropped a limb
And buried him
Prolonging his nap indefinitely.

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Bluey Morgan's Mate

In 1969, in the isolated town of Wyndham in northwestern Australia, Dan and I met the gentleman that we judged to be a prototype of the Australian inebriate. His name, of course, was Bluey Morgan, his hangout was the Wyndham Pub, and his hobby was conversing with whoever would listen. Whoever would listen became Bluey Morgan's mate, and Bluey's mate(s) could hear streams of stories and opinions that were nothing less than Australian classic. What follows below is a narrative from Bluey's visit with Dan and me. Bluey's words needed almost no changing, not even to make the rhymes and the rhythms work together. Months after our visit to Wyndham and Bluey Morgan, at an appropriate moment in an entirely different part of the Australian continent, I said out loud for the first time a Bluey Morgan line that I had used by him long ago in Wyndham. Ahead of me with his distant collecting equipment, Dan suddenly turned and stared at me. He eventually explained that, despite the time lapse and the difference in the local geography, he had instantly remembered Bluey's words.

Bluey Morgan's Mate was sitting in the Wyndham Pub
And Bluey sat beside him and he gave his eye a rub
For Bluey's eyes were brimming full, as often was their fate
When Bluey on the grog would ponder Bluey Morgan's fate.

"Well, they got Ned Kelly, that's sad but it's true
Mind where you're steppin' or they'll soon be gettin' you
It's a sad life we're forced to lead, a bloody cruel fate!"
Said Bluey, staring at his beer and Bluey Morgan's Mate.

"A man's got a right to go broke, ain't he? It's a man's right!"

Bluey's Mate was buying and not drawing any strife
While Bluey looked disconsolate as he talked about his wife
"She'd always bring me steak and eggs, she'd never make me wait . . ."
And gave the poor bloke little else, thought Bluey Morgan's Mate.

*"I'm a Christian Brothers boy meself, and they teach us, y'know, to -- ahh, but -- I've been with near every
old gin from here to Perth . . ."*

Bluey'd had three months in gaol that left a bitter taste
The prison pall still showed amongst the freckles on his face
"Ohh, yaaa, it's automatic if you drive on grog three times
And a few of my good friends up there, they swore it on the line!"

"Ahh, the flies, the flies! Get away, get away! Hey!"

Bluey sat and watched his beer and brushed away the flies
But then his mate could see there came some grief into his eyes
"Do y'know the ones called policeman flies? They swoop down bloody low,
And carry off poor innercents, only mindin' their own show!"

"Hooray! Oh, my God! It's another load they're takin' off to the Meatworks!"

A road train rumbling by the pub brought Bluey to his feet
"There goes a load of bullocks they'll be makin' into meat!
Ah, there they go, they're beauties! The bally and the mean!
Ah, Jesus Bloody Christ, it's to the bloody guillotine!"

*"Those little bullocks, they smell the blood, y'know, and they hear the others cryin', and they get frightened.
And you have to tell 'em they have to go anyway. They have to go. They have to go . . ."*

When Bluey turned back to his chair his eyes were full again
"I used to push the bullocks for old Tom and Teddy Crane
They get just like yer maytes, you know, when you ring 'em up every night
Then they pay you muckin' quids to slit their throats just bloody right!"

"The black eye? Ahh -- I was tryin' to screw me mayte's best -- me best mayte's wife . . ."

*"Ahh! Lookit old Billy over there! He's sittin' up tryin' to hear! He'd like to hear! Y'cawn't hear, eh,
Billy? Ah-ha!"*

"Hello! What is it with you over there, mate? Aye? Aye? Yer timin's off -- here! She's comin' now -- the one in blue! Hey! She's got somethin' now, that one!"

"Ahh, look at me! Forty-three, me teeth is brown, and I'm all broken down from the grog!"

The Wyndham Pub is crowded almost every afternoon
The music box is belting out some good Slim Dusty tune
I'd like to see 'em crowdin' in for beer and dinner plate
And hear Old Bluey laugh and cry and yarn for Bluey's Mate.

Well, they got Ned Kelly, that's sad but it's true.
Mind where you're steppin' or they'll soon be gettin' you!
"It's a sad life we're forced to lead, a bloody cruel fate!"
Said Bluey staring at his beer and Bluey Morgan's Mate.

"Ahh -- yeaaa -- they got Ned Kelly -- but"

All of the language is right in this ballad, and Bluey Morgan could have said it all. "On the grog" means boozed up. A "mate" is a good old buddy. Steak and eggs is the Australian hot dog or cheeseburger equivalent, except lots better, especially at 98 cents for the meal in 1968-9. Bullocks is the word for calves or steers destined to become beef, and "ringing 'em up" is the equivalent of a round-up in the United States. Christian Brothers is a Catholic school for boys. "Gin" is an out-of-date and unflattering word for an Aboriginal woman. A quid is a dollar nowadays; it used to be a pound.

And there really are flies called policeman flies. We can ponder the fact, in relation to Australia having been one of England's prison "islands," that elsewhere in the world flies in that same family are called robber flies. Many Australians, their forbears having originally been derived in some significant portion from convicts exiled from England, are said to have an inherited hatred for the police. This assertion is not weakened by the realization that the flies we call "Robber Flies" in the United States are called "Policeman Flies" by the Australians! These are the flies that, in Bluey Morgan's metaphor, "swoop down and carry off poor innercents only mindin' their own show!" To me, Slim Dusty seemed to some extent the Australian equivalent of Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Johnny Cash, and Tex Ritter all rolled into one. The day we were in Wyndham (and in many other places) the locals in the pub were playing his songs, "The Mount Isa Rodeo" and "Road Trains." For the edification of Americans and others, Australians use the name "road train" for those long, intimidating, multiple-trailer trucks that roar along the outback tracks of rural Australia at breakneck speeds, jiggling and meandering and whipping back and forth like enormous nervous snakes, and carrying more cattle than I know how to count, to meatworks at places like Wyndham.



Road Train at Fitzroy

Bluey Morgan's Mate

Blu - ey Mor-gan's Mate was sit - ting in the Wyn - dom Pub. And
 Blu - ey sat be - side him and he gave his eye a rub. For
 Blu - ey's eyes were brim - min full, as of - ten was their state when
 Blu - ey on the grog would pon-der Blu - ey Mor - gan's fate. Well, they
 got Ned Kel - ly, that's sad but it's true, mind
 where you're step - in' or they'll soon be get - tin you. It's a sad
 fate we're forced to lead, a blo - ody cruel fate, says Blu - ey,
 star - in' at his beer and Blu - ey Mor-gan's mate

Ned Kelly, the Jesse James of Australia

Ned Kelly is the Jesse James of Australia, a folk hero whose significance to a very large number of Australians can scarcely be over-estimated. Some people have believed that he was on the verge of converting enough rural people to his side, during the time that he was officially declared an outlaw, to initiate a revolution. Many Australians have worshipped his memory and still consider that he was grievously wronged by the law. Newspapers and magazines continue to carry reviews of his escapades, and symposia purporting to get at the real truth, or reveal new evidence, were still being arranged and published when we were in Australia in 1968-69. There are stories to the effect that he was not involved in the horse-stealings and other early crimes that set the law on him, and that the first man he shot was a corrupt law officer who had dragged Ned Kelly across a street by his genitals after Ned had fought having handcuffs placed on his wrists for a walk to his trial on a minor charge. No one doubts that early Australian versions of law involved almost incredible corruption, or that early Australians had much reason to fear and dislike