

HISTORY OF THE FELLOWSHIP

The FAW was formed in 1928 in Sydney. It came together in response to the neglectful way in which the Australian arts community, including writers, were treated at the time. Although there is some dispute as to who exactly was its founder, in his book *Dream at a Graveside* Len Fox names the founders as Mary Gilmore, Roderic Quinn and Lucy Cassidy. He also includes names such as Steele Rudd, R J Cassidy, John Le Gay Brereton, Fred Broomfield, H M Green S A Rosa, Walter Jago, Arthur Crocker and Marjorie Quinn as important members of the emerging organisation.

The original Fellowship was quite a political body. It had links with the labor movement and other organisations striving for internationalism and world peace. The first meeting was minuted as being 23 November 1928. John Le Gay Brereton was elected President with Mary Gilmore and Arthur Hoey Davis (Steele Rudd) Vice Presidents and Marjorie Quinn, Honorary Secretary. One of its first motions was a fair payment for written work. This fight would go on for another fifty years. However at that time, in the middle of the Depression when work was scarce and money hard to come by, it must have provided quite a challenge. Another feature of this time was the start of a lifelong dedication to writing competitions that continues to this day.

At the end of 1932 there were 290 members including Miles Franklin, Dorothea MacKellar and Frank Clune. However things in the thirties were difficult with the FAW dwindling in influence and numbers. One of the major events however was the first Authors' Week when books were for sale from a variety of authors. It also saw the spread of the Fellowship in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

However in the 1940s another milestone was achieved when Children's Book Week was started under the auspices of Pixie O'Harris one of the most well-known writers and illustrators of children's books.

The Fellowship has always been prominent in the running of literary competitions. Amongst the winners of the 1941 Short Story Competition was Alan Marshall one of Australia's most loved authors. Other writing competitions have included poetry and plays and have been conducted since 1933. In 1985 the Short Story Competition endowed by Marjorie Barnard was started together with the first children's writing competition held in conjunction with the Sydney Morning Herald. Competitions continued to be developed with the Regionals as well. The Walter Stone Award was commenced in 1984 and was won in the first year by Berenice Eastman of Hobart for her book on the life and works of Nan Chauncy.

One of the most important achievements of the Fellowship was the establishment of the Australian Society of Authors or ASA. Below is an extract from the history page of the ASA website:

It all started with the then President of the NSW Federation of Australian Writers, Walter Stone, inviting delegates from all other writers' societies to a meeting in Sydney in October 1962 to discuss the formation of a national organisation to represent professional authors. A series of meetings followed culminating in the formation of the ASA on 15 May 1963, and the acceptance of a provisional constitution on 26 June 1963.

<http://www.asauthors.org/scripts/cgiip.exe/WService=ASP0016/ccms.r?PageId=10014>

This is now the main professional organisation in Australia for writers of literary works.

In the 1970s and 1980s the organisation grew and in 1985 Hilarie Lindsay, the then President, announced that there were nine metropolitan Regionals, 11 in the country areas and the Isolated Writers. Since then the organisation has expanded to incorporate 17 country and 14 metropolitan groups together with the Isolated Writers.

The newest country regional branch was started in the Riverina in 2010.

In 2011 The Fellowship adopted its new constitution a model that will take it into the future stronger and more focussed. It also adopted a new logo.

Dream at a Graveside, Edited by Len Fox, Southwood Press Pty Limited, 1988