

## HENRY LAWSON AT MANLY

Henry Lawson is one of Australia's best known writers of poetry and short stories, but his time in Manly was not a happy one, living first in Whistler Street and then in Darley Road in the second half of 1902. This period saw the collapse of his marriage to Bertha, the mother of his two children. They had just left England where Lawson had hoped to achieve literary recognition but this was not to be.

Despite making an effort to reduce his drinking, he once more embraced this as an avenue of escape from depression and what he saw as the misunderstandings of women. There were also money troubles which eventually required Bertha to seek a legal order for the payment of maintenance.

Lawson wrote a long poem of 19 stanzas entitled "The Bards who lived in Manly", which expressed his feelings for some of the local dignitaries. The 17<sup>th</sup> stanza reads:

They'd grab and grind in Manly,  
Then slander, sneer and flout.  
The shocked of moral Manly!  
They starved my brothers out.  
The miserable village,  
Set in a scene so fair ,  
Were honester and cleaner  
If some of us were there!

It was no surprise that Lawson, while inebriated, went for a walk along the cliffs at Fairy Bower and fell nearly thirty metres to the rocks below. He had a broken ankle and lacerations to the face but otherwise was whole and repaired to Sydney Hospital . But for a few further weeks in Whistler Street, Lawson and Manly parted ways.