



THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE NEWSLETTER

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First National Folklore Conference

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Preparations are well under way for the Conference. Although we regret to announce that the pioneering collector of Australian children's folklore, Dr Dorothy Howard, is unable to attend due to ill-health, we are delighted to have as an international guest Professor Kenneth Goldstein. Kenny Goldstein is Chairman of the Graduate School of Folklore and Folklife Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and one of the United States' most noted folklorists. He will address the Conference and take part in a number of sessions.

Some aspects of the programme which will interest Newsletter readers are the two sessions on Children's Folklore and one on Folklore in an educational environment.

In addition, many of Australia's best known folklorists will be present, from Darwin, Townsville, Perth, Alice Springs, Sydney and the rest: Ron Edwards, Danny Spooner, Shirley Andrews, Warren Fahey, Wendy Lowenstein, Alan Scott, Phyl Lobl, Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all ...

As well as individual papers, the Conference will include a forum on Cultural Preservation and Cultural Change, and an important workshop on the Preservation and archiving of collected materials.

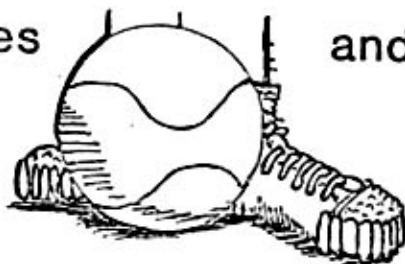
Please note: all subscribers to the ACF Newsletter are eligible for concessional registration for the Conference. See you there!

Gwenda Davey
June Factor

Rebound:

Replies

and



correspondence

More Conkers

I enjoyed the article on 'conkers' but fear that the dreadful error in the first sentence, although written in jest may come to be taken in earnest if not corrected at once. The name 'conker' has nothing whatever to do with William the Conqueror, indeed, as the horse chestnut tree is not native to the British Isles I doubt if many were growing there in Norman times. I have an impression that the game was originally played with hazel nuts but I cannot remember where I got this idea. Hazel is a native of the British Isles and grows freely. In Oxfordshire 'conk' was a slang term for the head, or a blow on the head, and this seems a more likely derivation. Flora Thompson called Fringford in Oxfordshire

Candleford Green because of the white candles of blossom on the horse chestnut trees around the village green in spring. White blossoming trees give good conkers, pink ones are sterile. Girls used to collect conkers and stick pins in them - four for legs, four for the back with a bit of knitting wool wrapped around and you had a dollies chair.

On page 2 re green being an unlucky colour, I have come across this superstition in Yorkshire also. Green is the fairies' colour and if you wear it they have power over you. A dropped knife means a stranger is coming to the house.

I have just remembered that the nearest equivalent to conkers I have seen from a native Australian tree are the flat black beans about 1½ (3cm) across which grow in pods on a tree in the rain forest. I do not know the name of the tree. These beans may be found at places like Mission Beach in North Queensland, I think they are transported by water. Children call them 'Burny beans' because if you rub them on your clothing they can get so hot from friction that they burn the skin of an unsuspecting victim.

Elastics

I read the article in the National Times about children's games, in which you were quoted as saying that "elastics" was a 1970's game.

I first played elastics in 1961, and was introduced to it by an American girl, new to our school at Manly N.S.W., whom I had been assigned to look after. She came, I think, from California.

School populations were very stable in those days, and we were very proud of our new girl and new game, and we certainly played it long after the girl went back to America. I have always thought that this was the origin of the game in Australia, and that I was the first Australian girl to play it.

(from Rosemary St.John
Forest Lodge, N.S.W.)

(Katheen Hunt
North Balwyn)

