

## **THE GUARDIAN OF LINVILLE by Damian Bathersby**

As the dawn fog slowly lifted and a winter sun broke through  
The old man sat in silence on the hill  
His worldly gaze swept along the valley far below  
And came to settle on his dear Linville.

He'd sat there for millenniums; his features set in stone  
Watching as the world turned through its seasons  
Generations come and go; with their heartbreaks, joys and pains  
He neither judged nor understood the reasons.

He'd sat there when his ancient people went in search of food  
Chasing roos along the valley floor  
Through wise eyes on a weathered face he'd watched the white man come  
And clear the land to turn it into more.

He'd watched the powerful river carve a path between the hills  
Sweeping all before it t'ward the sea  
And as the valley's mighty forests fell to axe and saw  
He pondered what man's future plans might be.

The valley grew and prospered; cattle men arrived  
More people, shops and pubs; the mighty trains  
And still the old man sat and watched from high above the town  
His old heart full of pride for Linville's gains.

He watched the valley's families send their finest off to wars  
And cried for those who died on foreign soil  
He watched the people who he loved - their families and friends  
Work hard and prosper from their toil.

He watched the seasons come and go; the rich times and the lean  
He saw the droughts and rains; the booms and busts  
School fetes, village dances; wild nights at the pub  
Campdrafts, weddings, race meets, fires and floods.

The timber slowed; the cattle too - the railway line closed down  
For many years Linville's flame burned low  
But then the rail trail lived again and where its tracks once ran  
Cyclists, walkers, campers came to know.

The old man nodded wisely as the town took on new life  
For he always knew its spirit would come through  
And still he sits up there today, watching life go on below  
As the valley that he loves is born anew.

As yet another dawn fog fades and winter sun breaks through  
Like he's seen countless times before  
The old man's craggy features break into a smile  
As he proudly looks down on the valley floor.

"Your heart is beating strong," he says, "like I always knew it would  
"Good times come and go, that much is true  
"But whatever happens from this day - the joy, the pain, the tears  
"Linville, I'll be watching over you."