



# Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

February 2020

[www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org)

## Dykes for Dinner

6.30pm Thursday 13 February

Doytao Thai Drummoyne  
207-211 Lyons Road, Drummoyne.

RSVP to [robynplaister@yahoo.com.au](mailto:robynplaister@yahoo.com.au)

## 2020 Dinner Discussion Murder and Mayham

6 to 8.30 PM Saturday 1 February 2020  
Mervyn Fletcher Hall  
81 Dalhousie St, cr Dixon St, Haberfield

Pearlie McNeill; writer, tutor, editor, has a fascination for crime fiction. Are you a crime fiction reader too? No previous detection for this discussion is needed but do bring your most wicked laugh, your devilish imagination and be prepared for a hands-on approach. For more information, email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org)

## Friends of Dorothy Camp

Friday 13 March to Sunday 15 March 2020

at Berry NSW

For more information, contact  
Pearlie McNeil [bookwormpjm@gmail.com](mailto:bookwormpjm@gmail.com)  
Sylvia Kinder [skinder@bigpond.net.au](mailto:skinder@bigpond.net.au)

## A day of board games

Friday 21 February

Older Women's Network (OWN)  
8-10 Victoria St Newtown. Near King Street  
and Missenden Road

Board Games are on the third Friday of each month from 11.30 am for at least 2 hours. It is a fun and relaxing afternoon. A range of games provided or BYO games.

This is a regular fundraiser for OWN Newtown so cost is \$5.

Tea and coffee provided.

## 1991 Lesbian Festival

A historical exploration. Coming soon to our website, a slide show and a place to share your stories of the festival.



*Pics by Diann Payne*

**Remember to check [Contact](#) for more what's on that might be of interest to you. The things we put on [Contact](#) are not necessarily organised by us. And information about them comes to us daily.**

## Book Review

### Time to Fly

#### Stories of resilience from Members of Bush Lemons, a Blue Mountains based Lesbian

#### Bushwalking and Outdoor Group.

#### Review by Pearlie McNeill

The inspiration for this book came from the stories lesbians have shared over the years, on bushwalks, Bush Lemons' bushwalks.

Eighteen stories unfold, each one as intimate and compelling as the next. You can read these writers as friends, sitting across from you at the kitchen table, pouring tea, telling you stuff about their lives.

A photograph serves as the frontispiece for each contribution. These are beautiful pictures that deserve to be framed. Isobel Harding is the photographer and her art here is a valuable aspect of the book's appeal.

Isobel's partner, Madeline Shaw, took her own life in distressing circumstances a while back and the book is dedicated to her memory.

We can only imagine the poignant, painful process involved with the production of such a valuable narrative.

Jasmine Moon writes about problems with her vision, a medical condition first diagnosed when she was quite young, but has turned into decades of struggle to see, even a little bit. Sharon Lea Parrish speaks of the pain involved when a relationship goes wrong, at a time when she still hasn't told her mother she's a lesbian. Lissa Smith and Paula Anthony tell the story of Lissa's partner; Helen's cancer diagnosis, her struggle through treatment and the grief of her death, complicated by a legal challenge Lissa had to face, about the will.

I have chosen just three of the contributions to list here but all of these stories have a down to earth honesty; a recognition that vulnerability, once revealed, offers the chance to diminish its power and leave it behind.



*Jude Finch and Isobel Harding launching the book in the Blue Mountains.*

I conclude with the poem that is the last contribution in the book, written by poet Liz Barclay. The title of her poem is Morpho Lesbosio.

Lure me now  
Morph butterfly  
into  
Forest of Lost

to a silvered  
mass of wings  
where I too  
can fly away

Not to be pinned  
beneath glass  
Examined, labelled  
Named by man  
Lesbian Obsoletea

Curled in leaf  
I grow and  
power spin  
my silk cocoon  
into a safety net  
I call Communitittus Braverus

The chrysalis  
hangs protected  
waiting to shed skin  
slowly transform  
into Fiery Ignita  
Power purple Wings  
Soar!

A new Superbutterfly born  
Insignia reads 'PPW

Her sound  
subaudible as she lands  
leaf upon lavender  
Lesbian eggs she spreads  
Across blousing aplenty  
Until she begins  
A new breed  
of  
Morpho Lesbosio!

An indomitable force  
Wounded wings no more  
Nectared up  
It's time  
To fly



*Jocelyn Williams, a leading member of the group, will come and talk at an upcoming Ten Forty dinner discussion evening.*

## Fragments to Wholesome Me Kaye Paton

Apparently my resilience is hanging in, waiting for an opportunity, and then moving forward towards new vistas with hope in my heart.

My parents, second generation 'Anglo-Aussies' with small country town Protestant childhoods, juggled their own parent and sibling conflicts, and their tensions with in-laws. They tried to establish new lives after WWII on the outskirts of Melbourne. Dad was the quite peace maker. Mum was more spontaneous with a caustic tongue and revelled in her new lifestyle of not spending her days in paid work. Her savings were used to buy a very basic 1930's two-bedroom dwelling on a steep sloped quarter-acre block thirty kilometres from Melbourne GPO, one and a half hours by train from the local train station which was twenty minutes brisk walk along a steep track.

Birthing my brother in 1947 was fraught for both. With my birth in 1950 at the local Bush Nursing Home, Mum almost died. Mum's 'insights' during our early childhood were that my brother was sensitive (a left hander) and vulnerable. She tried to 'toughen him up'. Her attitude with me was I 'could be left in any situation and 'cope'. Even from an early age my brother was parent-critical, played elsewhere and offered no conversation at home.

When I could no longer lie straight in the cot, my brother and I briefly shared the back bedroom. About that time, Dad, a LOUD SNORER, had his adenoids removed and suggested returning to the

marital bed. Dad's snoring improved only minimally so he was permanently relegated to the back bedroom with my brother. So, from then, early primary school, I shared Mum's double bed until I left home at eighteen.

Apart from mealtimes my brother and I were in different day worlds. He commuted to a boys' grammar school. I was the ostracised 'tomboy' at the local, very small primary. I was used as the go-between for my parents' communication, and emotional confidant to both of them.

I had no bedroom or space that was mine. At twelve, I presented two proposals to my Dad. One was to partition and mozzie-proof the verandah and the other, to make a room under the house. His sighed response "Discuss it with your mother". I didn't, as she was in poor health and fantasised aloud about 'winning the lottery'.

What my parents did agree on was the importance of a good education. At night I studied and fantasised at the kitchen table, and on the verandah during weekend daylight.

On the last train home from a compulsory evening Chemistry laboratory class in the fourth week of my first year of my Melbourne University BSc (Ed) I was attacked. We were the only passengers still on the train. I fought back – prepared to die – the assailant changed his tactics. "Can't you take a joke?" I stalled for time, until not waiting for the train to stop at my station, jumped from the last carriage.

It was almost midnight and my tired father, who needed to be back at the station by 7:15 am for his train to work, was at the far end of the dimly lit station, waiting to drive me home. As the train moved on with my attacker filling the last open doorway, brazenly waving and saying, "Stay cheery luv", I told my dad, between shaking sobs and gasps, "That man tried to rape me." The station was unstaffed.

At home Dad made a cuppa, Mum grew distressed and I eventually succumbed to fatigue. Dad reported it the next morning at the station, then to the police in the city where he worked. I decided it would be easier to attend that night's Physics lab class than get a doctor's certificate and have to catch up on the lectures.

The male uni student counsellor was hopeless. According to him there was no trauma. I hadn't been raped. He didn't acknowledge that to rape me it would be 'over my dead body' as I had fought back, struggling throughout the length of the noisy, jolting red rattler. I was told 'Don't rehearse that story, be thankful you are alive. Put it behind you and focus on your studies and extra-curricular activities.'

Thanks to Dad pursuing other avenues I was given 'special dispensation' to board with the 'country' female teacher trainees at THE young ladies' student hostel near Toorak, a leafy well-to-do Melbourne suburb. The other residents with boarding-school background hated it, but I loved it. For the next two years I mixed with the variety of women who attended one of three universities or two teachers' colleges. I went home on weekends.

In my third and fourth year of uni, I flatted with three other friends from the hostel. It was the middle of five Brunswick terraces. Our flat was upstairs, two

bedrooms, four single beds, kitchen-lounge, shower, and toilet. Downstairs was similar with three male law students. A weekly cleaner maintained all of them. Any hint of raucous or illegal behaviour meant eviction.

I was twenty-two years old when I finally had my own bedroom, a farmhouse in Beechworth, Victoria with my best buddy from uni, Sally. It was our first posting. It was her first time to live away from home. We bought motor bikes and visited our friends on weekends at their country postings. In 1974 we had a new, dynamic principal. My request to enrol in a Social Biology unit at Melbourne Uni was approved and funded. It was a radical course for its time including information on contraception, discussions on abortion, sociology of other cultures (anthropologist Margaret Mead), ancient Indian Hindu text (Karma Sutra), Masters and Johnston findings on human sexual response, and homosexuality.

The first lesbian I knowingly met had long flowing hair, was big-breasted, sandal-footed and flowing Bali batik-gowned. We were two younger less talkative members of the class with eight other women and two men.

Away from noisier group discussing their heterosexual activities, and unaware of this woman's sexual preference, I asked her quietly 'What do er, aah you do for contraception?'

Her response was "I don't. I live in a women's share house with my girlfriend. I'm a lesbian."

Whaat??

She didn't fit the warped man-hater or evil-weirdo image in tabloid magazines. I glimpsed another

reality must be possible. She pulled out of the course and I never saw her again.

Restless and needing to branch out from my teaching peers' heterosexual small country-town scene, I'd begun bushwalking. I met a short-haired, athletic woman about my age who had been a Catholic nun. It was early days for her adjusting to her dismissal for acting on her love for another nun. I gave her my details if she was ever in my area. Two weekends later she visited. She 'assumed' Sally and I were lovers. I discovered that for almost three years, Sally had been shielding me from the local gossip that I was 'gay', with "Kaye's Kaye. She's OK. She's had some hard times. Let her be." All I knew was that I stood out as a misfit. I felt different.

One weekend visiting home, whilst doing the evening dishes with Mum, I said: "It's a pity Sally isn't a man, my life would be per...." And realised I would be happy to live the rest of my life in her company. Did this mean I was a lesbian? I needed to find out.

Having fulfilled our teacher-training three-year bond, Sally and I resigned. We bought a second-hand campervan and travelled around Australia for twelve months, mostly exploring National Parks. I loved it. Camping fees were cheaper than rent. Fuel was our biggest expense. She then wanted to travel overland to Europe with her boyfriend. I had some familiarity with Adelaide so decided to go back for their Arts Festival, where the flamboyant Don Dunstan was Premier. In reality, I was going to look for lesbians.



In 1976 through Women's Liberation House in Adelaide, I did find lesbians. We were a motley crew. I was the new virgin in town, and on a steep learning curve. Many of the women with whom I socialised were heavily into drinking and smoking dope and were either non-monogamous or serially monogamous. Eventually I was 'wooded'. Barb and I set up a flat.

I came out to my parents in a letter. Mum visited one day. My life appeared sensible and she tried to make sense of it. Barb was a fiery red head. She was angry. To me she seemed to have PMT three weeks of the month. Slowly I discovered she had bigger plans, and apart from paying the rent I was no longer an asset. Both unhappy, we split up at the end of the lease. I moved into a lesbian share house and went home to Melbourne for Christmas.

Dad's first words were 'How could you do this to your mother?' Mum's were 'How could you do this to your father?'

I felt suicidal but listened to a voice in my head saying 'Wait 'til you're thirty'. So in early January 1978 I flew to Athens. I had many solitary adventures, wintered on an Israeli kibbutz, hitched, bussed and boated to arrive in London a month later, cycled England and Scotland, worked FIFO in Iceland, cycled east to west USA, and returned home. I knew I'd changed and wanted to start again. I chose Sydney.

I'm proud I've survived the hard times of being 'out' as a lesbian feminist since age twenty-six. I used to describe myself as glum rather than gay. My life has been a struggle. I have worked as a Naturopath, Herbalist, Remedial Masseuse, Drug and Alcohol

Counsellor in Women's Health, and at an Industrial Arts Comprehensive, then Selective High School in the western suburbs. I have been valued as a social change agent.

Exhausted in 2002, I took two months' sick leave during which my position was deleted. The Education Department medically retired me in 2004. The Government Insurance Office eventually acknowledged fault, but the goal posts kept changing and I had to do the Centrelink dance. To get out of that vicious cycle I paid for my own training and got a local part-time office admin job. With funding cuts to that service. I was again made redundant and back in the 'find-some-work queues'.

At sixty-five I was finally allowed to retire. I was first diagnosed with clinical depression in 1998. Prozac. Magic. Previously various forms of counselling, medication and self-help were of some assistance. Learning to live with medically diagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome has been my daily reality since leaving teaching. I have had spells of three to six months without the medication.

Recently I came to a new understanding of my reality. I cannot deny my family genetics of depression and alcoholism. I need these metabolic balancing pills. I will continue to untangle with the help of the pills, my doc, my psychologist, friends, those who have gone before me, and those on their journey.

I hope future generations have it easier, though the patriarchy continues to bully and divide, determined to rule whatever the cost.

Resilience is a surprise. I am not the only one. I am alive. I have survived. Resilience is always a surprise to me. I will come out wholesome.



## About Ten Forty and Older Dykes

The first national conference of Ten Forty in the mid-eighties attracted politically active feminists of all hues and sexualities. However, over time it became obvious that a huge majority of women attending follow-up meetings and activities in Sydney were lesbian feminists. Today Ten Forty and Older Dykes refer to the same group of women. We enjoy discussion on the issues we face in work, life and at home, and hold regular fun events to keep us in touch with the lighter side of life. Our website [www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org) encourages national and international connections between older lesbians.

Ten Forty is not an organisation you have to join. If you want to receive regular information about our activities and our bi-monthly newsletter, visit our website and put yourself on our email list.

## Newsletter

The newsletter comes out on our email list. If you do not receive it, email us at

[contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org)

The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website

[www.olderdykes.org/about\\_us/newsletters.html](http://www.olderdykes.org/about_us/newsletters.html)

## Who currently does what?

**Events planning:** Sylvia Kinder, Diann Payne, Wendy Freeman

**Contact email list:** Diann Payne, Traci Arkininstall  
**listing in LOTL:** Jan Aitkin

**Utilities box:** Sylvia Kinder

**Money Management:** Loretta Kelly

**Websisters:** Jan Aitkin, Ruth Butler, Diann Payne, Pearlie McNeill, Traci Arkininstall, Barbara Fleming

**Newsletter:** editing and layout Pearlie McNeill and Diann Payne

## A note about Wildlife after the tragic bushfires

### From the Nature Conservation Council and WIRES

**Issue:** While some native species have adaptations that help them survive some fires (or exploit post-fire conditions), most are impacted by fire in some way. For those that do survive, there is likely to be limited food, water and shelter available. Many species also face additional pressures from factors such as land-clearing and climate change and so are especially vulnerable at these times.

### Injured Wildlife

If you can, safely take injured animals to your nearest vet.

Call WIRES to let them know which vet you have taken the animal to.

Do not approach injured snakes, flying-foxes, large macropods, raptors or monitors as these must be rescued by trained specialists. For these species call WIRES first for rescue assistance.

Wildlife Rescue: 1300 094 737

### Actions you can take:

#### 1. Put out water for surviving wildlife

- Leave out multiple shallow bowls of different depths
- Provide sticks for smaller animals to climb out on
- Place near vegetation to provide shelter from feral species
- Regularly refill with fresh water

#### 2. Provide shelter from predators for small animals by leaving fallen logs on the ground

3. Put out food. If you decide to help fauna until the vegetation regenerates you could consider providing food. By feeding them you are making a commitment to support them at least during the initial period of stress and deprivation. For:

- Robins, Flycatchers, Warblers, Thornbill, many Honeyeaters and other small bush birds: small quantities of low-fat, high-protein substitutes such as commercial pet food (with added vitamins and minerals) or mealworms (available from pet shops), as these are readily accepted by many insect eating birds.
- Lorikeets and Honeyeaters: commercially available diet mixes
- Parrots, Honeyeaters, Finches and Possums: fresh soft fruit

#### 4. Make your pool wildlife safe

- Drape something over the edge of your pool so animals can climb out
- Check your pool regularly, including in the skimmer box.

5. Put up nest boxes to replace lost hollows. If available other artificial hollow building techniques such as chainsaw hollows should be investigated as they provide better and longer protection.

**Resources:** [www.wires.org.au/wildlife-info/wildlife-factsheets/bushfire-factsheet](http://www.wires.org.au/wildlife-info/wildlife-factsheets/bushfire-factsheet); [www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin/publications/bushfire-recovery-and-biodiversity](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin/publications/bushfire-recovery-and-biodiversity).

