



Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

April 2020

www.olderdykes.org

Dykes for Dinner

April dinner has been cancelled. Watch Contact for details of when the next one will be organised.

2020 Dinner Discussion

April 4 Dinner Discussion has been CANCELLED

The planned Dinner and Discussion for Older Lesbians to be held on Saturday 4 April will be postponed, due to Covid-19. At this stage it is unknown when gatherings will be safe to hold but keep the following dates in your diary. We hope we can resume our Dinner and Discussions in the near future:

Saturday 13 June 6-8.30pm

Saturday 2 August 6-8.30pm

Saturday 4 October 6-8.30pm

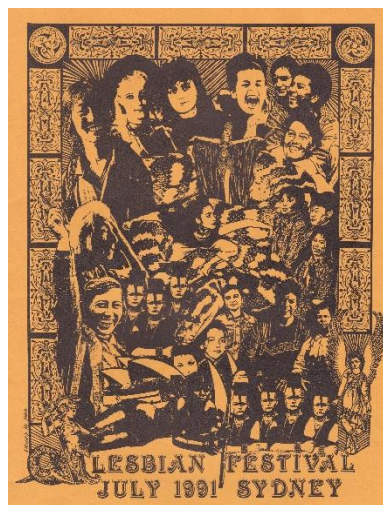
Special Event: Story Telling

Sunday 5 July 2.30-6pm

All events held at Mervyn Fletcher Hall, 81 Dalhousie Street, corner of Dickson Street, Haberfield. Keep safe and well and we look forward to seeing you later this year.

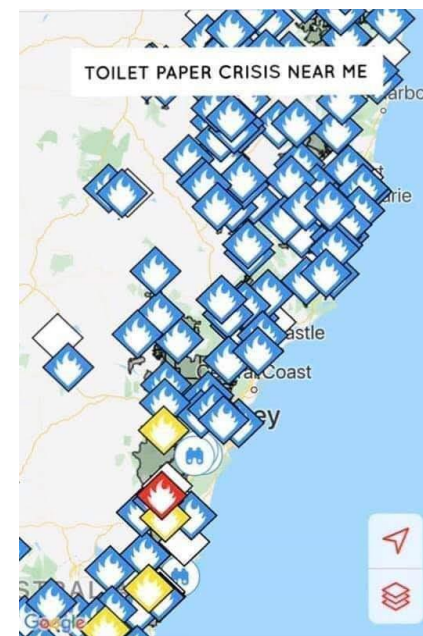
1991 Lesbian Festival

A historical exploration. Do you remember it? We would love your stories of the festival. Send them to Contact.



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. Information about them comes to us regularly.

We welcome other Contributions in this Covid era. A suggestion, if you keep a diary, send us segments for the newsletter. If you have any other ideas to share let us know.



Find us on FaceBook

Ten Forty Matrix NSW

Murder and Mayhem at Haberfield – Exploring Crime Fiction with Pearlie McNeill

Dinner and Discussion report Saturday 1 February 2020

Despite this distressing summer of bushfires, tragedies and extreme heat, 22 women found the energy to come to our newly renovated venue, Mervyn Fletcher Hall in Haberfield, for this event.

Imagine our delight when we found the renovations included air conditioning, a luxury missing in past years. It was a bit noisy, the acoustics are certainly not the best, and no hot water meant no coffee and tea, but after the usual feast provided by everyone, we settled down to hear a professional writing teacher delve into the murky world of crime.

Pearlie has worked as a Creative Writing teacher, book seller, editor and is a writer herself. Moving from a love of literature into the study of literature and writing was an understandable move. She holds a doctorate in Creative Writing and has a wealth of experience.

She started reading crime fiction in the 1990s and shared her knowledge with us. There are nowadays many women crime writers and the genre is extremely popular with women readers.

Structure-

The closed setting, first introduced in a short story by Edgar Alan Poe, is where the victim/s and the possible

murderers are to be found in the one setting. Think of an Agatha Christie location, a train, an ocean liner, a mansion. These are clear examples of a Closed Setting.

An **Open Setting** occurs when an assailant kills a victim in a public place and promptly disappears. How do the police track this perpetrator down? Perhaps they have someone in prison who committed a similar crime? Think of Jodie Foster in *Silence of the Lambs* and you can understand that the challenge is to break down the broad picture by trying to get a hold on the narrative by checking out the victim's past life and contacts say, or the murderer's method of killing, plus any clues left behind.

An Open Setting presents the writer with a bigger challenge, but the credibility of any plot lies in the writer's ability to produce a good story, avoiding coincidence or an easy assembling of clues.

The denouement is usually in the last chapter. That last chapter where all the threads of the investigation are explained and/or resolved. Readers might well judge a writer on how they tie up these threads, or not tie them at all.

Pearlie read two short story beginnings and we had to choose by voting which of these we wanted to work on. This was a hard choice as they both held our interest. Pearlie then gave each of our three groups a task to undertake using the chosen storyline.

The buzz of conversation and debate filled the room as participants lobbied each other to promote their theory of the motive for the crime, who was the perpetrator and what was their character description. When we reconvened and shared our results it was clear that we

all had creative ideas but recognised the difficulty of developing even the main aspects of the genre. It was a lot of fun and enjoyed by all.

Feedback indicated that we were stimulated by the well-prepared presentation. Participants loved the group discussion and audience participation.

We shared some of our favourite crime writers and books. Pearlie asked for participants, and perhaps those reading this report, to send her titles they would like to see included in a crime fiction list that will appear in the newsletter. This was a fabulous start to the year.

Contact Pearlie with your title suggestions on bookwormpjm@gmail.com

Sylvia Kinder February 2020



Books and Authors to look out for ... from Pearlle

Following our Dinner and Discussion night 1st February, I offered to make a list of books and authors you might like to hear about. I'll begin the list here ...

Ta4a French, an Irish writer, has written six books that continue a thread beginning with her first, entitled *IN THE WOODS*. Check out the others, all good. SBS is now showing a TV series based on the first two of French's books. Simple titled *DUBLIN MURDERS*, the series began on 19th February. French has also written a standalone book, *WITCH ELM*, but the narrative is not as compelling as the earlier six books.

Dervla McTiernan, also Irish, moved to Australia some years ago. She wrote a short story to enter the Stiletto short story competition, was shortlisted, and continued work on the story, that became her first novel, *THE RUIN*. Her second novel, *THE SCHOLAR* is equally good. Her third *THE GOOD TURN* has just been published.

Jane Harper has written three books with Australian settings, *THE DRY*, *FORCE OF NATURE* and *THE LOST MAN*. She has had remarkable success with these tales of derring-do and she gets better with each new story told.

Ann Cleves introduced us to Vera and stories from Shetland that we see on TV but her most recent novel, *THE LONG CALL*, is set in North Devon; a new setting and a new detective, a gay man and he's married to his male partner. It's a rollicking story by an established writer who knows her stuff.

Ping has asked me to mention *PEOPLE OF THE BOOK* by **Geraldine Brooks**. Published in 2008 this book was a big hit. Good story line. Look for it in your local library.

The Berry Experience



Meandering down the South Coast, we stopped for morning tea as a way of offering support after the bushfires. We arrived in Berry and I discovered the music shop and multi coloured music stands and enjoyed leaf tea at the Berry Tea Shop. I strolled around Berry and found others who were also there for our camp. Everyone was enjoying coffee or simply strolling around until 5pm check in. At the camp, Jan and Ann were doing front of house check ins and giving us our name tags. Before long Norma and Pru cheerfully whisked our bags to our rooms. The best room service I've ever had.

Our room was basic, clean, with air conditioning we didn't need on this visit. Our floor had a largish breakout room; 3 couches, fridge, sink and tea and coffee facilities. It was good to meet others in a less crowded space. Needing some quiet time, I went there and watched the second half of the women's soccer.

One of my roomies had never been to any our gatherings and found she was welcomed by women she hadn't met. I enjoyed meeting and chatting to women I hadn't seen for ages or women I knew slightly from other groups. Many of these women loved the kayaking, archery and rock climbing despite the wet conditions. Brenda scored a bulls-eye in her first archery session.

It was a privilege to share the memories of Dorothy Cora's contribution to feminists and lesbians and to acknowledge her bequest to partially fund this weekend. Her partner of 30 years Judy visited and also her good friend Kel. We celebrated her generous bequest. We then tucked into gluten free orange and almond cake and for good measure a chocolate cake.

Saturday was filled with various sporty activities, workshops, spontaneous card games, table tennis or conversations. I enjoyed Pearlle's crime writing workshop. It was quite tricky to collaborate as a group on how to script a mystery in half an hour. Each small group shared their very different perspective on 'who dunnit'. I found it a very interesting way of looking at the process of plot and character development. Needing some relaxation, I retreated to our breakout room and did some knitting.

Then came Pru's flirting workshop. This was hilarious after I got over the initial panic of trying to share one's best pick-up line. My mind was a blank. How did I ever manage to that in the past? I'll never know as several of us had to leave early for choir practice.

Our evening concert of comedy skits, solos, pop up choir and readings was warmly supported by the audience. The pop-up choir consisted of three women who said they couldn't sing but would join in anyway, along with women who sang regularly. Afterwards, I enjoyed tapping my feet while learning to play samba (a card game), listening to Norma's great dance music in the room next door.

Jan McCoy's aqua aerobics session on Sunday morning was fun to watch as the women braved the cold. No hearing aids were worn and therefore some women merrily did their own thing for a while. Not wishing to leave out the fully clad, rugged up audience, Jan took them through some sitting down dry aerobic movements.

I liked the idea behind the closing ceremony of tying a knot in a twine, cutting a length and saying one thing about the weekend before passing it on to the next woman in the circle. The idea is based on an old sailor's idea, of the wise woman of the village providing a supply of knots as a symbol of safety and speed. And so the word knots entered our language.

I remember the harmony and the cheerful, friendly, funny women I had the pleasure of sharing some time with over the weekend, and returned home feeling quite uplifted.

Krystyna



More Feedback from the Camp

The camp was held just prior to the beginning of imposed restrictions due to Covid-19 and before anxiety over world-wide problems and its effect on older people. A sudden change in weather from warm and sunny on the Friday to cool and rainy for the Saturday and Sunday affected some participants' enjoyment of outdoor activities but most women reported enjoying these despite the weather. The majority of participants completed a feedback form indicating that the camp was a great success. One of Ten Forty Matrix's main aims was to foster networking amongst isolated older lesbians, improve well-being and provide meaningful, enjoyable physical experiences that could be followed up. Feedback indicated that these aims were achieved:

What did you enjoy most about the camp?

There was lots of mention of the physical activities, women liked: *Kayaking. Table tennis madness. Physical activities. Cards and entertainment. The dance. Pool fun. Archery was fantastic.*

However, the majority said their main enjoyment came from: *Mixing with other feminists, great group of women. Being around lots of other lesbians and casual friendly atmosphere. Sense of belonging and friendliness. Meeting new people, making friends and socialising. Meeting up with friends I haven't seen for years. Conversations. Camaraderie being with like-minded women, the easy pace not regimented. Just being there. Great venue and loved for only women. Break away from carer duties. All the activities and not having to worry about anything.*

BOOK GROUPS - TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

HOW TO START YOUR OWN

- See if any of your friends have a space in their group.
- Check to see if your local library runs any groups
- See if the local library has a notice board where groups can list and interested readers can enquire.
- Open groups: The Women's Library in Newtown has one and so does the SMSA in Pitt Street.
- Try a website – a Facebook page or Meetup.com could be used or use Ten Forty's Contact service.

○ LOCATION AND NUMBERS

- If the group meets at a private home 8 to 10 members is a comfortable number and allows for absences and drop-outs.
- If you use a public location such as a small meeting room at library, local hall or pub or club, then you can cater for larger numbers.
- In general 8-10 members is good for easy discussion – with more than that you really need a group leader/facilitator to make sure everyone gets a chance to contribute.
- Even with small friendship groups it is useful to have one person nominally in charge, so that discussion can be focussed on the books rather than becoming group chat only.

- This person can also be the discussion leader, introducing the book, giving its background (wonders of Wikipedia). Or this task can be given to the person who nominated the book.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

- Most groups seem to meet monthly.
- With longer periods momentum seems to get lost and public holidays etc affect meeting dates. If the period is too short members may have trouble finding/ reading the book.

CHOICE OF BOOKS

- Some groups have a speaker on the day who introduces a favourite book.
- Others work from meeting to meeting nominating or handing out books for the next meeting.
- Some prepare a list for six or even 12 months ahead.
- Some read books only in certain genres: travel, detective stories, prize winners, non-fiction, or may rely on suggestions from members.

SUPPLY OF BOOKS

- Some libraries will supply sets of up to ten books for groups. Some groups have a kitty to buy books to share and then donate to the library.
- Many use library and other ebooks BUT they can't lend them.

PS: To buy online, try local sellers or www.booksandcollectibles.com.au or Ebay

Jan Aitkin (ambrosia@bigpond.com)



GOOD READS FOR BOOK GROUPS

Moshi Moshi: Banana Yoshimoto. Japanese family story. Moshi Moshi is Japanese for the vague noises we make on the phone: yeah yeah, mmm,mmm. Try it on cold call phone calls!

The Museum of Modern Love: Heather Rose. Slightly mad story about an unusual artist.

Red Notice: Bill Browder. Non fiction about a financier's battle with Putin.

Do no Harm: Stories of life, death and brain surgery: Henry Marsh. Non-fiction by a surgeon. Fascinating and you end up knowing lots about the brain!

Eleanor Oliphant is completely fine: Gail Honeyman. Fiction about a woman's unusual life and problems. Very engaging and liked by most.

The Signature of all things: Elizabeth Gilbert. Her latest and best some feel. About mosses?

Teaching A Stone to Talk: Annie Dillard. Unexpected success.

The Erratics: Vicki Lavreau- Harvey. Opinions vary.

The Uncommon Reader: Alan Bennett. Novella. Wonderful plot. Author of Lady in the Van, if you haven't met him.

Present Tense: Natalie Conyer. Detective story set in South Africa. Good debut novel.

Where the Crawdads Sing: Delia Owens. First novel by a USA scientist. Riveting and huge success.

Conclave: Robert Harris. (Also Munich)

Our Souls at night: Kent Haruf. Novella. Moving story of love in old age.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit; Why Be Happy When You Can Be Normal: Jeanette Winterson. Lesbian classics.

The Long Exile: Melanie Griffiths. True story of fate of dispossessed Inuit people.

Crossing to safety: Wallace Stegner. US campus novel – subtle and gentle. Classic.

The Hare with Amber Eyes: Edmund de Waal. True family history – wartime and after. Very engaging.

The Buried: the archaeology of the Egyptian revolution. Peter Hessler. Immersive look at Egyptian politics – long but engaging.

Mothering Sunday: Graham Swift. Novella. Great feminist ending.

Dark Emu: Bruce Pascoe. Must read on aboriginal history. Short and punchy.

The Widows of Malabar Hill: Sujata Massey. Set in India, very feminist, more or less detective with lots of class and religion background.

Harbour View: Glenys Wilson. New Oz novel. Good reviews.

The Godmother: Hannelore Cayre. Trans from French. Detective with a punch. Short read and very funny.

River Town: Two years on the Yangtse. Peter Hessler. Fascinating look at life in China. Hessler won't be going back there...

The Good People: Hannah Kent. Set in Ireland way back. Lovely writing.

The Lone Man: Jane Harper. Excellent detective story. Best of her three books.

Too Much Lip: Melissa Lucashenko. Hard hitting novel about modern life for aboriginal people.

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 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. The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website www.olderdykes.org/about_us/newsletters.html

Who currently does what?

Events planning: Sylvia Kinder, Diann Payne, Wendy Freeman

Contact email list: Diann Payne

listing in LOTL: Jan Aitkin

Utilities box: Sylvia Kinder

Money Management: Loretta Kelly

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

Newsletter: editing and layout Pearlie McNeill and Diann Payne

