



Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

June 2020

www.olderdykes.org

Wanted Someone to organise Dykes for Dinner for 2020 after the Covid-19 Lockdown.

Rob Plaister (and Gillian on many occasions) have been organising dinners for Dykes on every second Thursday of the month for 6-7 years and would like for someone new to organise the events.

The organisation is very simple and only involves choosing a restaurant, advertising it on Contact and booking for the required number of women. The dinners are enjoyable events and allows you to meet new lesbians and interact in a convivial atmosphere.

You may like to do the organisation by yourself or have someone else to share it with.

Please contact the Coordinating Committee for 10/40 at contact@olderdykes.org to say you are interested

Women's Land – a herstory

Discussion/Presentation via Zoom
Sat 13 June Online, Time: 4PM til 5PM

Contact us if you want to attend and we will send out the link to the Zoom meeting. Email: maude_au@yahoo.com

OUT AND ABOUT

Sunday 7th June at 12pm

Jasmin 1, 116 Marion St
Leichhardt

Email Contact if you want to attend.
contact@olderdykes.org

Follow us on our FaceBook page

[Ten Forty Matrix NSW](https://www.facebook.com/TenFortyMatrixNSW)



Leave home now

Jack - Wollongong

“Leave home now” I pleaded with friends on the phone in January.

“Stay home now” I pleaded in March.

Apart from the strangeness, restrictions have been pretty easy on me. My daily routine includes Pilates, cooking, gardening, walking to the beach, reading, Candy Crush, Facebook, painting, much eating and being the primary carer for Edith, my 95 year old mum.

I miss the library and our local café, where on our last visit, 3 cruise ships sat ominously offshore. My public art piece was installed in Wollongong Mall. It is about connecting the disrespect we show both women and the environment. ECAV training work was cancelled impacting my finances.

Edith is extremely frail and lives in the house behind ours. She had a fall, smashing her head. The ambos who attended said that it was not a good idea to take Edith to the hospital due to the

virus. They did not want to return to the hospital due to lack of PPE and the high numbers of positive Covid19 people requiring ambulances. Their reluctance to return to work was understandable and they hung around with us for 2-3 hours. Weird to think of the hospital as unsafe for both workers and patients. Edith has been stuck in bed for 4 weeks now and needs assistance with almost everything. We have some good laughs and process some heavy & hostile family dynamics.

I am enjoying quiet time with Sand, home more since she cannot go to the Lands or her other outside activities. Luckily, we have lots of space and a lovely garden.

We did have trouble getting toilet paper and after a few 6am line ups at the supermarket with no luck I was starting to lose sleep. I saw a 24 pack brazenly displayed at the local shop and I could hear the incredulity in my voice as I asked, “is that for sale?” “Last one, \$30” he said. As I walked home clutching my purchase, I smiled as I thought to myself, I might get mugged.

Goal posts have been rearranged

Sand- Wollongong

Fascinated and grateful are how I describe these last weeks with COVID-19. Goal posts have been rearranged socially, politically, personally, and globally. The pandemic is catapulting us through change, some of it welcome, some questionable. Much to accept and process. Humanity was already in strife. I have gratitude for my overall good fortune and place in life. Being debt-free and living in a beautiful home and garden of birds, with the loving and stimulating company of Jack, is quality of life. Living in Wollongong allows easy walks to the beach.

Life is much as it was before the pandemic, with more involvement in digital communication, and more neighbourhood noise from children and men. Having lived experience of lesbian feminism, astrology, and yoga helps me manage and make sense of the anxiety, possibilities and impacts of this recalibration.

There are new experiences: online supermarket shopping and delivery; meetings by phone; physical distancing. I usually love the time and space to contemplate life. Often, I spend times of solitude on Women's Land. For a couple of years, I've been working on the art of *Taking My Time*, slowing down and being mindful of changing habits to better suit getting old and being less able. The pandemic is helping with this.

My guts are appreciating staying put. Usually they cause health problems. This slow, healthy, routine-based lifestyle, centred around indulgence, exercise and rest, as well as meals and breaks with Edith – Jack's Mum, 95, frail and in a house at the other end of the garden – is a good pace for now.



Mea Culpa

Maree - Canberra

Writing something for this Newsletter regarding the lock-down and its effect on me in less-than-sunny Canberra. I ask myself, why would anyone be interested in what's happening in downtown Macgregor, and the not unexpected answer was "SFA" to be honest.

So I'll educate you just a little: according to Wikipedia, Macgregor is named after Sir William Macgregor, a one-time Lieutenant-Governor of British New Guinea, also Governor of Newfoundland and Queensland (not conjointly), and was the University of Queensland's first chancellor.

Our streets are named after doctors (I live in Lipscomb Place, which runs off Osburn Drive, which connects at both ends with Florey Drive, so you get the drift). The newest part of Macgregor has been imaginatively named West Macgregor (formerly known as "Grass Fire Flats" by the locals because of, well, frequent grass fires), but is now known by those of us in

"old" Macgregor as "The Firebreak". Our most common religious affiliation is "No Religion" (34.8%) . . . which explains the lack of churches now I think about it. Here I endeth the lesson.

Canberra Day on March 9 was barely done and dusted before the Pandemic shut us and our famous Bubble down. The real plus is we're down our usual crop of politicians, the downside is, for women of a certain orientation, the gorgeous Penny W is not in town.

And while the world may have stopped, the seasons didn't, and there I was enjoying our most perfect of seasons, until I wasn't. The best time to be alive in Canberra was chillingly interrupted by the lowest daytime temperature ever recorded here . . . 6.9 degrees. But there was snow on the Brindabellas, so at least we looked pretty. I had to drag myself out of the garden and into the lounge room, put the heater on, grab a coffee, and read (*City of Girls*, at that point since you ask).

I've also read three Katherine V. Forrest books. This is my first time with the lady Detective and, I have to say, her ethics are

V dodgy indeed. Call me judgemental but sleeping with your primary witness during a murder investigation should be frowned upon. I'm also trying to get through "Off the Road", a book on Neal Cassady (correct spelling) occasional lover to Alan Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, as observed by his wife, but I am struggling tbh. Other books include "Off Key" (Claire McNab), "Too Afraid to Cry" (Ali Cobby Eckermann), "Heavy Gilt" (Dolores Klaich), "Unsheltered" (Barbara Kingsolver), "Cherry Beach" (Laura McPhee-Browne), and my favourite so far, I think, "Tell it to the Bees" (Fiona Shaw).

And yesterday I received three more Elizabeth Gilbert books from Gleebooks, one of which is "inspirational", a genre I usually hate. But this one is funny so I'm up for being inspired. I had a sister-in-law who gave me an "inspirational-type" book every Christmas for longer than I care to remember (with pottery, when she was "potting", often wrapped in a tea-towel, for birthdays). I chose not to read them, they went to Lifeline lickety-split, but she obviously thought I was in need of all the help I could get.

But I digress, when I'm not reading, or waiting for the roofers to replace my corrugated roof (due to the hail damage done back in January), I'm weeding a lot and sort of rearranging the front garden. Some people move furniture around, I move plants around. Remember, I've been self-isolating for some eight weeks at this point, and since I have zero interest in Zooming, and I play just one game online with a friend (mostly just two moves a day), I'm getting a bit done. If I have a lazy day, it will (obviously) have reading and a Sudoku in it, a crossword and music, and the odd phone call or two.

My cooking is neither worse nor better than it usually is, my drinking has not increased (nor decreased tbh), but I did go through four blocks of dark chocolate (but with nuts in, so healthy) in two weeks because someone told me dark chocolate was good for depression. There are only two things wrong with this, the first one being, I don't like chocolate, and the second one is I'm not prone to depression. I am, however out of the tracky dacs and into the jeans, I don't want any nasty surprises regarding weight when I do get to party.



On a final note: I have a very fit, 34 year old niece who has had this Virus, which she caught somewhere between London and Adelaide Airport. She was very ill and in ICU for two weeks, had another couple of weeks out in the ward and then a further month in a hotel being monitored by nurses. She had it in just one lung and said she pitied the aged and unfit who'd contracted it and could understand why they succumbed, so keep up that social distancing folks, you really don't want to get this thing.

And, I have recently been reminded that this is all my fault. Just after the bushfires, the flooding rains, and the hailstorms. I wondered out loud (and obviously there

were witnesses) as to what else the Universe had in store for us in this already interesting year of 2020 (and since “most things come in threes”, I figured I was safe).

So, mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa people, it seems I may have mightily sinned. Please stay safe, stay healthy, keep those spirits up, and just keep on keeping on.



Life in Lockdown

Jean - Melbourne

My life as a 75 year old radical lesbian feminist on the Old Age Pension (financial security) and living in my own house in the inner urban area of Melbourne, albeit in Lockdown, is not nearly as stressful and difficult as it is for those who have lost their jobs, are sleeping rough, working as medicos on the CORVID-19 frontline, had to close their businesses, had their festival gigs cancelled and their art exhibitions postponed and are stuck in the house home-schooling their children.

It's been a gradual process, starting with my disbelief that the PANdemic was anything more than a media beat-up to the stage of realising that as the people who were dying in Italy in particular were over 70 with an underlying medical condition then it was likely that I too would die if I didn't pay attention to the four rules of non-engagement: only leave the safety of your home to shop for food and essential medical supplies as well as for exercise and to go to work and or school.

I was still mourning the loss of the rest of the lesbian films at the cancelled Melbourne Queer Film Festival although I did see *Two of Us* and *T11 Incomplete*, (both highly recommended), the lesbian comedians at the cancelled Comedy Festival and the remainder of La Mama's season of plays, when the National Gallery of Victoria postponed the opening of Destiny Deacon's art show and Ponch Hawkes' 500 Strong naked Womyn over 50 photographic exhibition was also put on hold. All things being equal and the same, which they weren't, obviously, we'd have attended the celebration of a friend's 70th birthday celebrations over the weekend and it looks like any celebration of my own 76 birthday in April will also be a very muted occasion. And perhaps the biggest loss of all, the cancelation of this year's lesbians over 40 gathering.

I made the momentous decision not to visit my three grandchildren who live in the next suburb as I've been doing every week since the first one was born 17 years ago, while we're still in Lockdown. But I did take a box of Easter eggs and lollies and my own

version of a stimulus package to boost their pocket money and stood outside the gate while the whole family were at a safe distance on the veranda and enjoyed catching up with what they'd been doing.

While I might miss sitting at a cafe enjoying one of the delicious cakes on offer as I sip my long black with cold milk on the side I find some satisfaction in knowing that I'm doing my bit to not spread COVID-19, knowing the life I save might well be my own.

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OUT NOW



Here is a list of things I've done to keep myself amused during lockdown:

1. Reading good books and with the libraries closed I'm relying on the new books I've bought with gift vouchers from Readings Bookshop and stockpiled as well as buying books from Spinifex Press and Hares & Hyenas Bookshop to help keep our independent feminist publishers and LGBTIQ bookshops afloat and if this goes on for a lot longer I can always dip into and reread the many lesbian and feminist books in my bookcases.
2. The joy of exercise, which I've never been all that keen on, has been rejuvenating me during this time and as exercising outside the house for some much-needed fresh air and sunshine is allowed I'm allowed taking full advantage and have gained a renewed interest in the gardens of my local neighbourhood.
3. Sitting on the veranda and relaxing over a coffee and cake for arvo tea is a habit that I've enjoyed over the past few years of gradually slowing down and even more so now that I have to stay home anyway.

4. While I'm doing a lot more home cooking and honing my sadly depleted skills in the area, I also like ringing up and ordering a take-away from one of the many local cafes and restaurants that abound in the area before walking down to the business for a no-contact pick up, to add variety and relaxation to the evening meal as well as doing my bit to keep these essential places open albeit in a limited way.
5. It's surprising though how many of my regular habits are still in place, like getting up early to read a book over my first cup of coffee for the day before meditating for an hour then doing 20 minutes of knees, back, arms, pelvic floor and breathing exercises, by which time I'm ready for my muesli and fresh fruit brekky then a shower and am usually at the computer by 10am to do two and a half hours of writing, emailing work before lunch on the veranda at 12.30pmish.

6. It's my writing work, as it has done since I serious started writing my first novel in 1967, that sustains me the most and enables me to be myself, despite my impatience and anger and lapses of good sense, in the best possible way and I'd urge everyone to nurture that part of themselves that is best served by whatever it is that gives them the most satisfaction and joy
7. I can't emphasise enough the importance of community, of staying connected either in person with your lover, and in my case making love regularly, or those lesbians and beloveds in the same household or over the phone and by email or Zoom or however it is we keep our mental and emotional balance.

Keep safe

Update on Rossi's Deniliquin adventure.

On Thursday afternoon 28th May, Rossi made it onto the ferry heading for Devonport. Despite struggling to use just her phone to handle legal negotiations on line, she finally managed to get every detail of her villa purchase arranged, and now owns her Tassie villa.

Now it's quarantine for the next 14 days, and she'll need that time and more, to unpack her stuff and settle in.

And so the adventure continues ..



Breaking the Silence

Sylvia – Burwood

I was delighted to be invited to be on the Generation Women Panel, as part of the annual, *All About Women Festival*, at the Opera House on 8 March. The Festival had many workshops and presentations throughout the day, with thousands of women attending. Generation Women is held every month in Sydney, and invites six women from each generation, 20s to 80s, to talk on a given topic from their personal experiences. The topic for the Opera House was Power-Finding My Voice.

But on 5th March I woke with a twinge of pain in my back. I had had sciatica four years before so was determined to take it easy as I did not want a repeat. The next day the pain increased and I went to see my doctor. Strong Panadol was recommended and I went home and took my medicine. I was really looking forward to the festival opening dinner. The next day, Saturday I woke with increasing pain. I called my physiotherapist. She came after work with her trusty massage

table. It was soon clear a remedial massage was not going to help much, but would I be able to do my presentation the following day?

Bea is a great physio and knows my stubborn personality. She didn't think it was possible for me to be on the panel but helped me prepare anyway. On her advice I purchased a wide support belt, dug out my walking stick and did some gentle exercises – all to help me get on that stage.

A friend who was to meet me at the Opera House promised to bring a strong pain killer she had used for her sciatica recently. How many of us suffer this dreadful complaint? Unable to consider making the trip by train I booked a taxi. I struggled out of the cab with my old lady walking stick. A Staff Security man rushed to help and provided a golf buggy to transport me the short distance to the stage door. Lou's friendly face and welcome drug eased my pain, as I lay in the physio recommended position, in the Green Room, a relaxing hour before the event.

The wonderful organisers, Donna and Brooke, were concerned for my health but understood I wanted to be on that panel. They acquired a wheelchair to get me to the Utzon Room and also found a small foot stool to ease my sitting position. Then I was wheeled all the way to the stage. Our notable panel of women sat in a semi-circle and we didn't have to stand to speak. What a relief!

Sound check done, audience in, almost all women of course, all ages and ethnic backgrounds, it was a full house. Host Alice introduced the event and the panel, and we were off. The talks were timed to just seven minutes. Each speaker gave different but interesting stories from their lives, showing their struggles and successes in regaining their power and finding their voice. Being the oldest on the panel I was last. I am still amazed that I was able to sit so long and cope with the pain. True the strong pain killer was helping a lot, along with my firm belt fitting neatly, hidden under my loose top.

I was nervous, not just because of the pain, but worried if I would get through the talk I had planned. It was a very personal and

difficult topic. I talked about the time in 1971 when at the age of 23, I went back to England to rescue my sisters from my paedophile father. My mother had just died suddenly, my younger sisters were in a vulnerable situation. How do you get your estranged father to let you take your 7 and 10 year old sisters to Australia? Well I was about to find out. It was not easy.

I had a problem and that problem was the shame about the abuse I had suffered that made me hide my childhood secret. I now had to seek help and name the sexual abuse in our family. I found a young female lawyer, I told her everything and she believed me! Basically, we blackmailed my father, into signing over to me official custody of my sisters. We threatened public exposure and court action. It worked, so I was able to rescue my sisters, and they are still living happily today in Australia.

On stage that March day I told my story in the Utzon Room and did not break down, and fortunately, my back held out.

I was amazed at the reception from the audience. Some women stood and clapped a few came up to me to share their own

abused past. I was glad I had come. I was helped home by another friend via the wheelchair, golf buggy and taxi.

Sadly, the pain got worse. The next day I ended up being transported to hospital by ambulance in agony, supported emotionally by Pearl. I was in hospital for three days and well looked after. Then I spent the next five weeks recovering while in social isolation.

It was an effort but I managed to get to the Opera House. I can only tell you how very glad I am that I made it, an effort I couldn't have done without the support of so many good friends.



Covid-19 Experiences

Rob – Rozelle

Week 1 of Covid-19, I sit tight, plenty of jobs around the house to do. By Week 8 I have manicured the garden, cleaned the gutters, washed every cushion and sofa cover in sight, fixed drawers, cleaned out every cupboard, sorted everything in my roof storage, cleaned everything in the house including my winter shoes and silver earrings (all 40 pairs), and washed the dog twice and cut her hair. Her haircut looked terrific in comparison to the one I did on myself. I even culled my 70 T-shirts down to 65. I have now run out of jobs to do!!

Week 2 I wash the vegetables in light soapy water. I hope I do not froth from the mouth and wonder if that would be seen as gauche in a Zoom Meeting.

From 11 Am onwards I think of what soup I am going to cook for lunch and what casserole will I cook for dinner. The decision depends on which vegetable is about to go off and then I work the recipe around using that one. The trouble is I cook for more than one every night and my

freezer soon fills with too many plastic boxes of food - no room for the dog food!

Week 3, I was forced into zooming but haven't looked back. I am now playing 500 on Trickster with two different groups and chatting over Zoom at the same time. I have had my Book group on Zoom, my old Gentle Exercise Group who usually meet once a month for morning tea and exercising their jaws; a Film Group and an old group of friends from the 70's, who used to meet at each other's place every couple of months.

Who knew Zooming would be so much fun? The benefits include not having to cook dinner and angst for several weeks about what vegetarian dish you were going to cook, not having to get dressed up to go out, and not having to move my car and lose my parking spot on a crowded street. Mind you I do believe there is a bit of competition as to what is in your background when you Zoom. Some may choose a backdrop from a Zoom range of bridges or even moving water, others self-decorate with arty objects, erudite books or just some flowers. Me, I just sit in my bedroom at my computer and Zoom viewers get the bed in the background!

Week 4, I look forward to getting out of the house even if it is only to the doctors, but sometimes the doctors don't even want to see you and tell you they will contact you for a tele-health visit. Although there is anticipation about getting out of the house there is also a lot of trepidation. The shopping for food can arouse a lot of tension as donned in mask and gloves, you try to negotiate an aisle in Woolworths only to find a bloke standing in the middle, on a work phone call and totally oblivious to any social distancing. Walking the dog on a footpath where couples or families walk two or more abreast can be frightening as you step out onto the road to get around them - no single file for them. They are living in a bubble.

Week 5, I finally think I should do some exercise. I find my ball and weights in the roof storage and get them out. I wash them because they are filthy and put them in the sitting room and look at them for the next week. I find an old skipping rope and attempt to skip. Once I get past about four skips I am totally out of breath and had never realised that my lungs are stuffed.

I decide I need to keep engaged and look at ways to educate myself. I enrol in a Webinar called "Connecting with Others". At the appointed time, I hit the URL to go to the Webinar - no audio, no matter what I tried!! After 10 minutes I give up. I have just failed Connecting with Others!!

Week 8, I give up with trying to cut my own hair, put a mask on and go to the hairdresser. He can't cut around my ears whilst I am wearing a mask so I take it off. He isn't wearing a mask. I am now going to spend the next 3-10 days wondering if he is Covid positive. My hair has now gone grey from the experience.

Week 9 and I have lost it. Day 1, I get dressed and take the dog for a walk as per usual. Sometime later I go to the toilet and when pulling up my jeans I wonder where my undies are. I forgot to put them on!! Day 2 of Week 9 I think, I just feel like a beef casserole for dinner. I walk to the butchers, 6 blocks away, order the meat and then realise I don't have my wallet with me. Grrr.

Life goes on

Marie – London

Corona virus living is losing its novelty. Six weeks in, my emergency strategies for coping and getting by have become my norm. I cope, of course I do, but my guts are unsettled and my dreams disturbed about what the New Normal means.

Most shocking is the recognition and somehow acceptance of the number of people who have died. The UK reality is more than 31,000 deaths in three months (highest in Europe) It's the reality of more than 50 NHS staff and care home workers who have died treating patients. It's the reality of more than 28 bus drivers who have died. I can cry hearing the news, though its easier to get angry with a government that has been downright negligent. Watching the news (once a day is enough) and reading the paper leaves me with an odd mixture of disbelief, high emotion and acceptance. It's shocking to me how much I have learned to live with.



The other side of my normal is a making do of the virtual world. Sometimes I long to go out because I want to, and miss not seeing the people I know, especially friends.

I do have a full diary of virtual events from dinner dates, yoga and bridge games (I play 3 times a week), And of course we can keep going with the grist of friendship to moan, to groan, and inevitably to compare strategies with; about the best way to get a supermarket delivery slot (so far I have failed), veg boxes, how to avoid careless pedestrians on walks, sourdough recipes, swapping seeds, television series, making masks etc.

As always, we discuss the stuff of everyday life. Enough for now but for how long?

But as I said, life goes on...



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 <http://www.olderdykes.org> encourages national and international connections between older lesbians. Ten Forty is not an organisation you have to join, though members do get some discounts. 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.

Who currently does what?

Events planning: Sylvia, Diann, Wendy

Contact email list: Diann

Hospitality boxes: Sylvia

Archives: Sylvia and Pearlie

Money Management: Loretta

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Diann, Pearlie

Newsletter: editing and layout Pearlie and Diann

Have you got something to say?

What have the COVID days been like for you? Send us your stories and we will share them in the newsletter.

contact@olderdykes.org

