

Newsletter March 2024

A Quarterly Newsletter Publication of The Friends of
the State Library of South Australia.

Edited by Jane Walkley.

Friends
STATE LIBRARY
South Australia

A Note from the President, Professor Rick Sarre

Welcome to our first Newsletter of the year. The first "Books in My Life" (February 6) featured Samela Harris. What a delight she is! The rest of the year's speakers are all set to go, and it is a great line-up. Former South Australian Premier Mike Rann is next on April 2.

Writers Week 2024 has begun. I am writing these words, having watched the first two days with huge crowds, clever interlocutors and brilliant sunshine. Louise Adler has constructed a terrific program, not only under the shade cloth and tree branches of the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden, but in the Adelaide Town Hall where ticketed events are regularly sold out. I just wish that I didn't have to stand in line for coffee so long. Indeed, it is quicker to duck up to the SLSA café!



Rick interviews Peter Goers
at Writers' Week. Photo
credit: Bev Clasohm

A Note from the President continued...

I have read some great books since my last contribution to this newsletter. Over Christmas I read *The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder* (Doubleday, 2023). It is the fifth nonfiction book by American journalist David Grann. He tells the true story of the mutiny by the crew of the British ship *The Wager* when it was wrecked in a hurricane on an uninhabited island off South America in 1741. There were 140 survivors, but only 36 of them made it back to England. The book is a superb page-turner. Next was *How to Love Your Daughter* by Hila Blum (Bloomsbury, 2023). Written in Hebrew, the translation by Daniella Zamir is astonishing and captivating. The story is a somewhat harrowing tale of loss (estrangement of a mother from her adult daughter) and alienation, but a most marvellous read! Then came Bernie Shakeshaft's *Back on Track* (Hachette, 2019, as told to James Knight). Bernie had a rough upbringing and turned his life around in 2006 to work with disadvantaged kids. It's a warm-hearted telling of redemption tales. The final book was Richard Flanagan's *Question 7* (Penguin, 2023). It's a melange of stories; part memoir, biography, history, and historical fiction. He links his own past (including a gripping tale of almost losing his life in a canoe accident), his father's story of being a POW, and the tale of how HG Wells' adulterous lover foreshadowed the atom bomb. Richard and I are both males in our sixties, and share the same politics, so I thought I would enjoy this book. But it is as disconnected and absurd as the Chekhov riddle that gives the book its completely obscure name. It contains so much pretentious writing I had trouble finishing it. "What is a writer but a robber and what is the history of literature but a milky way of theft?" he writes. "Our lives are the stories of others and the stories we invent about ourselves." He writes a page without commas, too, ending with "the blessing of everything that lives everything that lives is holy after a time these feelings faded I fell from the sky the commas returned." (sic) In searching Richard's bio, I came across a reference in 2014 to where Les Murray labelled his novel about the Burma railway, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, as a "pretentious and stupid book." So I am not alone in becoming tired of reading affected and self-indulgent prose. I went to hear Richard at Writers Week, and was pleased that he came across as a humble, passionate and sincere storyteller and not the self-serving essayist that I had pictured in my mind.

A Note from the President continued...



Emma Knights performing in the Mortlock wing on 5 March 2024 as part of the Fringe Festival. All the songs were based upon the books that she had read and enjoyed.

Photo credit: Rick Sarre

Each year Writers Week restores my faith in the idea that great scholarship is a quest worth pursuing. Too often I despair that anti-intellectualism has invaded our public spaces and our media. So I was delighted to read the column of David Penberthy in *The Sunday Mail* last October where he praised the ANZAC day speech by Collingwood captain Darcy Moore, which, David wrote, served to “shatter the boofhead stereotype long synonymous with [AFL].”

“The most heartening thing was that so many men loved that speech, almost as if it was a long-awaited show of intellect, by someone who’s decided it is OK to be smart in public.” (October 1, 2023 page 76). To these words I say, “hear, hear!”

Annual book sale

COMING SOON

Friday May 3

Saturday May 4

Sunday May 5

“A Book Sale like no other”

THE POWER OF BOOKS!

PLUS
Poets' Corner
Hundreds of poetry books!
New Poetry, Old Favourites
Come and Read, Recite, Discuss, and Enjoy

History, Australiana and Biography a Speciality
Art, Literature, Collectable, Youth, Militaria
Fiction, Antiquarian, Sociology and more
Proceeds support the State Library of South Australia
All books donated by generous book lovers

BOOKS!
Hold them, read them, own them, share them

Friday May 3rd 10 to 5
Saturday May 4th 12 to 5
Sunday May 5th 12 to 5

INSTITUTE BUILDING, STATE LIBRARY
CNR KINTORE AVE & NORTH TERRACE

HISTORY TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
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Our Survey



What an interesting group our responders are! We enjoyed reading the survey responses and learning about the varied interests of the members. We were so pleased that newer members made up half of the respondents as it is particularly helpful to know what interests them. We also noted that the majority of respondents are retirees.

We were delighted that 92% of those who responded to our survey would be happy to recommend membership of the Friends to others. That is great news!

Members who responded to the question about their reason for joining were very supportive of the work of the State Library and its importance to us all. They also joined because of their interest in history, their love of books and reading and their interest in Friends' events. These members particularly enjoy the newsletter, the Tuesday talks, and the annual Book Sale.

The preferences and initiatives suggested by members in the survey will give us a focus for our planning for the year. Among the suggested activities were more author talks (including some held outside working hours), involvement in Book Week and Writers' Week and involvement in community events.

While the objectives of the Friends Committee were deemed desirable, there was some hesitancy as to whether all of them can be achieved.



Thank you to everyone who found time to respond to the survey. We greatly appreciate the input and your suggestions and preferences will be very helpful for planning the year's program. We also encourage you to recommend membership to your friends so that we can continue to support the State Library and its staff as they cope with limited resources in the year ahead.

Richard Spark is the lucky winner of our survey prize, pictured here receiving his \$100 Dymocks voucher from Friends' Executive Officer, Marianne Gration

Tuesday Talks

Samela Harris - Books in My Life February 2024

Samela was brought up by her parents Yvonne Hutton and Max Harris; her mother was an actress and dancer and a superb story book reader. Her father was a book shop owner which he ran with his long- term friend Mary Martin.

Samela had a very different childhood from most of us in that she grew up in the bookshop and was a prolific reader and her father allowed her to read any book in the shop. She quickly devoured the Children's section and was put in charge of it by her father. She soon started on the rest of the collection. Along with telling us about her favourite books she was also a great story teller herself and had us laughing along with her. She told us about the Angry Penguins and Ern Malley

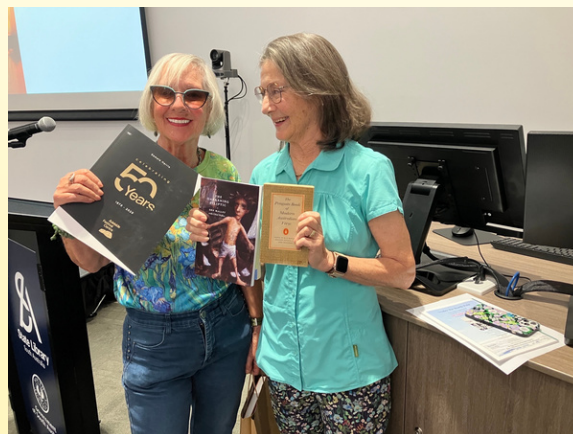
It is no surprise that she became a journalist. She worked in England for many years and developed a wide range of skills. As a freelance journalist she worked for News Ltd and later *The Advertiser* after returning to Adelaide. She was a critic for *The Barefoot Review*, a theatre critic (I always found her reviews to be a highlight in choosing what I should go and see). She was the first woman reporter at both *The News* and *The Advertiser* and the first woman columnist for Australian Rules Football. She now runs *Women in Media*.

Samela provided a talk that was funny, entertaining and knowledgeable. She left us wanting more! Thanks for a great talk, Samela!

Words & Photos by **Allison Murchie**



Samela Harris - mid talk



Samela with Patricia Michell

Samela talking about her favourite childhood book; a reminder of her mother's love of European folklore



Robert Barr Smith & Auchendarroch House: Power, Passion, and Philanthropy

As part of History Month, Cheryl Hoskin, former Barr Smith librarian, will share her research on Robert Barr Smith, one of South Australia's most famous names.



This fascinating talk will be followed by the showing of 'The Magic of Auchendarroch', an award-winning film directed by Caroline Corkindale. It is about the former Barr Smith family home, Auchendarroch in Mount Barker, one of South Australia's landmark houses, currently owned by the Wallis family.

Monday 27 May 6.00 for 6.30 PM

The University of Adelaide Napier Building Lecture Theatre G09

This is a joint event between the Friends of the Barr Smith Library and the Friends of the State Library of SA.

Tickets \$15 incl. GST. Students free. Tickets available through Humanitix in due course.



SOCIAL ISSUES February to May 2024

A new series with Adelaide readers and writers highlighting Social Issues in afternoon talks about books. All sessions will finish with afternoon tea.

Venue: The Effective Living Centre, 26 King William Road, Wayville 5034

Tickets per session: Adults \$15.00, concession \$12.00

Sunday 24th March 2.00pm – 3.30pm - Readers and Writers: 2

Rick Sarre will discuss his various books, including *Life Actually - A feast of 500 word memories* (Moonglow Publishing, 2021) (now in its 3rd edition) and *Crime Prevention: What we know and what we need to do* (forthcoming Palgrave, April 2024). Rick, an Emeritus Professor of Law from UniSA, will highlight techniques for telling your story for maximum impact, including what you might want to say professionally, with tips for those thinking about publishing. Rick's books will be for sale.

[Book here for Rick](#)



Sunday 28th April 2.00pm – 3.30pm - Readers and Writers: 3

Dean Ashenden will discuss *Telling Tennant's Story - the strange career of the great Australian silence* (Back Inc. 2022) After a career in Education, Dean returned to Tennant Creek to try to understand how the story of the two racial groups has been told from the first encounters, the early anthropologists, historians and the courts in landmark cases about land rights and the Stolen Generations, to the continuing controversy in the nation. *Telling Tennant's Story* won the 2022 Australian Political Book of the Year. Dean's book is for sale.

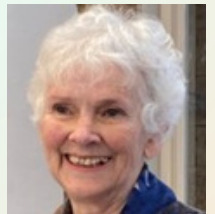
[Book here for Dean](#)



Sunday 26th May 2.00pm – 3.30pm - Readers and Writers: 4

Joelie Hancock –a supporter of ELC and a member of two local book clubs will discuss books that have meant a lot to her. She has spent her life immersed in books, retiring as a Senior Lecturer in Literacy Education at Flinders University in 2000. She was Editor and Publications Manager of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association supporting teachers in their writing about their literacy practices. She is currently finalising a website on the History of the 352 Institutes we had in South Australia, all of which had libraries. See institutessa.com.

[Book here for Joelie](#)



Margaret Calder's session in February was well attended. Book early!

Book adventures in Laos

Lao is an old language that has only existed in written form since the 14th century. Libraries of the sutras or Buddhist teachings were based in the temples, often stored in gilded wooden boxes. The common people could not read these and even now there is not a strong emphasis on literacy, so when I asked to visit a bookshop, the guide looked a little perplexed. “Well, there is a library... and oh yes, see if you can find *Big Brother Mouse*”, he said. We were in Luang Prabang, the second largest city after Vientiane, the capital.

Book tuk tuk, Laos. Photo credit: Jane Walkley



We found the library and had a warm welcome from Annie, a Tasmanian. The German government had helped them acquire a new building and they had just moved in to a roomy old house with a wide verandah for storytelling and quiet reading. There was a book exchange for readers of English, French, German and Spanish.

Nearby there was a Café of Knowledge, also a book exchange, with many European language books.



There is no tradition of fiction writing; stories were, and still are told with song and dance. Children may have some textbooks at school but nothing to read for fun. That's where *Big Brother Mouse* comes in. In the 1980s, Khamla, a bright young boy, was sent as a novice monk to a city temple school to get a better education than was possible in his village. In the city, he saw tourists reading books in their spare time.

He found this strange because he only knew battered boring textbooks which he would never look at when on a break from school. There was a common belief, even up until the early 2000s, that Lao people didn't read. Khamla came to believe books and literacy should be fun and give joy, so he and others got together and wrote some small books for children – stories about animals, for example – which were illustrated by young local artists.

In Laos, you must have government approval to publish anything. The government had never issued a publishing licence before so the process took a long time, but in 2006, under the sign of the mouse, the first 6 Lao language books were on display. There were story sessions for local children, books to read at home, and return to swap them over as well as writing workshops to encourage new Lao writers. Some books were translated into Lao, and some were bilingual, Lao/English. Many young people want to learn English as their second language so *Big Brother Mouse* runs free drop-in sessions 2x daily so anyone can practice English conversation with English speakers volunteering their time.

Staff and friends began to organise book parties, travelling along the Mekong River to remote villages. Playing with, singing and reading to village children, distributing books to schools and teaching others to read aloud to children all helped to foster a love of books. Many children in the country schools had not yet learned to read so there were summer reading programs and eventually parents asked for a school.

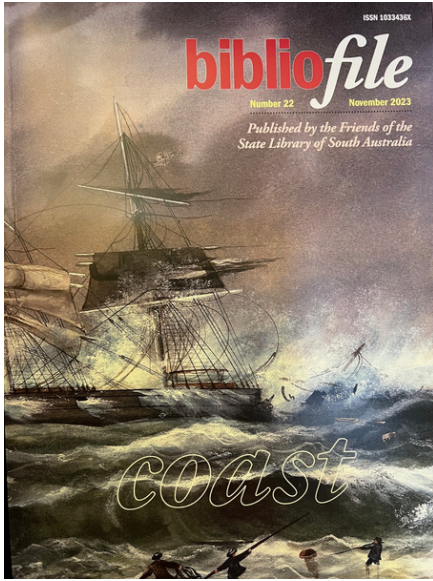
In 2016, on the outskirts of Luang Prabang, *Big Sister Mouse* school was opened. This school's popularity meant that more schools were needed. Innovative teaching methods, no longer just rote learning, were introduced to hold the children's interest. Teachers reported that students were rarely absent from school when they enjoyed learning.

Book boats take book packs to far-flung schools where roads may be poor but the Mekong is wide! All this would not be possible without the help of aid, sponsors and many volunteers.



2 photos above, New public library in Luang Prabang, Laos. Photo credits: Jane Walkley

See the story of *Big Brother Mouse* here: www.BigBrotherMouse.com.



Bibliofile is the annual journal of the Friends of the State Library.

Bibliofile is a long standing tradition of the Friends, with a focus on South Australia, the literature, history and culture. It's produced by volunteers and edited by a committee member - this year Hettie Tinsley. Each member receives a free copy via post, and further copies, or even past editions, can be purchased from the Friends' Bookshop or on our website.

The theme of the 2023 edition is coast.

[Buy
Bibliofile
here](#)

Get involved with Bibliofile 2024

50 Years since the big SA earthquake

This year we mark 50 years since a major earthquake of 5.6 magnitude hit the Adelaide region and beyond. It struck at 3.40 am on 1 March. Were you in our region at this time? Do you have any memories of this major event? Would you like to share a brief anecdote with the readers of the next publication of *Bibliofile*? We are looking for personal contributions of up to 150 words to accompany a detailed article. Photographs are also welcome.

Here is a taster of how contributions will be presented:

I lived in the northern suburbs, though the main earthquake damage was in the city and south, particularly Darlington. I was woken up from a deep sleep to find my bed shaking and a loud rumbling noise. I had no idea what it was but my mother came in and assured me that everything was alright. The house was undamaged but pictures had moved on the walls and objects had tumbled off the shelves. I later learned that the earthquake had caused about £3 million worth of damage- a huge amount to an 8 year old in 1954.

Leigh J. (aged 8)

Please send your contribution to Hettie Tinsley, editor of *Bibliofile*, at hettie.tinsley@gmail.com

New Publication... Pre-order Now!

STONES OF FIRE

by

**MINNIE
BERRINGTON**



From 1926, for over twenty years, Minnie Berrington was an opal mining pioneer in both Coober Pedy and Andamooka.

This fascinating memoir of her life of back-breaking toil in a man's world, published in 1958, has long been out-of-print.

Stones of Fire is now to be re-published in a new modern edition, with a Foreword by Rachel Berrington and an Introduction by Stuart Wattison.

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Adelaide

NEWS

Office Bearers and Board for 2024 as elected at the AGM on 24 November 2023:

President – Rick Sarre
Vice Presidents – Angela Bannon & Patricia Michell
Secretary – Trevor Grant
Treasurer – Patricia Michell

Board (in alphabetical order) :

Roger Andre
Vini Ciccarello
Mark Gilbert
Nicholas Jose
Amanda Macky
Pauline McCarthy
Emma McEwin
Hettie Tinsley
Jane Walkley

Ex-officio - Geoff Stempel and Marianne Gratton

Tuesday Talks - 'Books in My Life' are very popular!

Speakers we have booked for 2024:

SAMELA HARRIS - (Journalist)
MIKE RANN (former Premier)
ROD BUNTEN (former Diplomat, husband of Governor)
RACHEL SPENCER (Legal academic and writer)
JANE TURNER GOLDSMITH (Psychologist and writer)
DAVID FABER (Historian)
ROD WELLS (Palaeontologist)
PETER GOERS (Broadcaster and writer)
JULIE REDMAN (Family lawyer)
PETER MAYER (Politics and economics)

Tuesday
Talks are at
11 am in the
Hetzel
Lecture
Theatre.
Dates are
advertised
by email and
on our
[website](#)



Lester Saegenschnitter
at our April 2023
Tuesday Talk

Book Donations are always welcome

Children's books needed!!

Drop them off during
our opening hours or
ring the office on
7424 6310
to arrange a pick up

Into abeyance: the Friends of the State Library 'Original Book Club'

The 'Original Book Club' of the Friends of the State Library of South Australia went into abeyance on Monday 4 December 2023.

'Our love of books, reading & reviewing' persisted as a shared commonality over many years.

Our History: We started out 'eons ago' as a group who had been Guides at the State Library. Our Monthly 'Reading and reviewing Meetings' has varied recently from Biography, the History of Science, Philosophy, European and Australian History and the story of Shakespeare's son, 'Hamnet'.

All our independently chosen reading and our shared reviewing have been very much enjoyed, but we are now finding the Friends 'Original Book Club' is not viable. Age, illness and the death of Elizabeth Hambly and other key members, has left us with low numbers.

- ** Rick Sarre & Committee - thank you for the interest of the Committee of the Friends of the State Library & thanks to Marianne Gratton for your enthusiastic assistance .
- ** To each individual - Best wishes for your future reading and activities with the Friends of the State Library.

Convenors:

Diana Chessell 0415 052 174 / id.chessell@bigpond.com / diana.chessell@unisa.edu.au
Audrey Kent 040 181 0622 / AudreyKent@icloud.com

Opening hours for the Friends' Bookshop and Office:

Monday - Thursday
10am - 2pm
Not open public holidays

Friends of the State Library of SA - GPO Box 419 Adelaide SA 5001

Level 1, Institute Building, corner North Terrace and Kintore Ave, Adelaide
Ph: 08 7424 6310 – slsafriends@libraries.sa.gov.au

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