

Friends Newsletter September 2023

A Quarterly Newsletter Publication of The Friends of the State
Library of South Australia.
Edited by Jane Walkley.



A Note from the President Professor Rick Sarre

Greetings. I promised in my last column to bring you a photograph of another Scandinavian library that I visited in June; the lovely Bergen City Library in Norway. Here it is. Contrast its voluminous shelves with those at this little French street library in a street in Amboise, near where Leonardo da Vinci spent his last years. Oo la la.



A Note from the President continued...

I went to the Saddleworth Book Fair on the weekend of September 2-3. I was impressed with the number of writers selling their (typically self-published) novels. There must have been twenty or so authors. The buyers were few and far between, sadly, as Saddleworth is not really on the way to anywhere but, say, Burra. I (gulp) made eye contact with too many starved-for-sales authors and ended up buying nine books, so there's my reading and Christmas hampers covered for the rest of this year.

My reading since June has been very enjoyable. If you like stories linked to the Vietnam war and its consequences for those returning from the battlefields, you may enjoy two books from the Moonglow Publishing (Adelaide Hills) stables. The first is a brand new one: *The Dispatch* from Judith Lees, and the second is from a couple of years ago: *Cage of War* by Kerri Weeks. Kerri takes scatological language to a new level, but the swearing (which I am sure is not uncommon in battle) finally wore me down. In contrast, *Punchard* from our own Angela Bannon was a terrific read. It's quirky, given that it is premised on cleverly curated mock interviews. It is, however, rather depressing when the readers find themselves in a post-apocalyptic world in the year 2045, but it is beautifully crafted and cleverly written. I also discovered two new words: gewgaws (showy but useless things) and simulacrum (an unsatisfactory imitation). I cannot wait to pop them both into a conversation soon.

Some of you may have seen a recent program on ABC TV with the journalist Julia Baird reflecting on the subject of awe. If you enjoyed that, you are sure to enjoy *Phosphorescence: On awe, wonder and the things that sustain you when the world goes dark* (Fourth Estate, 2020). This was a really enjoyable and transforming read. She writes, on the subject of powerful lessons, "First, pay attention. Second, do not underestimate the soothing power of the ordinary. Third, seek awe, and nature, daily. Fourth ...: show kindness; practise grace; eschew vanity; be bold; embrace friends, family, faith and doubt, imperfection and mess; and live deliberately. To my delight, I have found a burgeoning body of science that provides a substantial and evidentiary basis for all these principles." (page 13) This sets the tone for the book. It's well worth a slow read.

Finally, let me mention a new book from the young and legally trained writer and, to my mind, wunderkind, Adam Wakeling. *Why the Enlightenment Matters: the shift in our thinking that made the modern world* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2023) should be compulsory reading in all secondary schools. I first met Adam at Writers Week in 2019 and have thoroughly enjoyed the historical scholarship and political nous that he displays in each of the books he has completed since then. I liken Adam's writing to that of two other authors whose works I enjoy; Richard Fidler, whose historical explorations are beautifully narrated with his own personal interpolations (see, for example, *Ghost Empire*, Pegasus 2018), and Bill Bryson. Bill's *A Short History of Nearly Everything* is written in the same style as Adam Wakeling's work: punchy, timely and thoroughly riveting!



Dick Smith's launch of *Under the North Pole*, by Sir Hubert Wilkins

On the of 28th June 2023, The Friends of the State Library hosted a gala event in the Mortlock Library. The large crowd had the rare pleasure of witnessing [Dick Smith AC](#) launch [Australiana Publication's](#) *Under the North Pole: The Wilkins-Ellsworth Submarine Expedition*, by Sir Hubert Wilkins. This republication includes a new extensive Introduction by the SLSA's Carolyn Spooner; with an Afterword by me, on '*The Character and spiritual life of Wilkins*'.

Mark Gilbert and Rick Sarre gave fine introductory speeches about the publication and our 'launcher' Dick Smith. Dick explained the reasons for Sir Hubert's decision to publish a book about an expeditions before it happened. Partly because this 1931 expedition was being planned in the middle of The Great Depression, it became perhaps the most controversial lead up to a polar expedition in history: an attempt to take a WWI submarine (which Wilkins had renamed, the Nautilus), under the Arctic Ocean. Dick's acutely interesting talk, explained the scientific value of the expedition and the risk rationale of Wilkins; asserting that Wilkins was one of the greatest risk managers of all time.

A nail-biting story of one of Dick's own flying experiences made a connection to Wilkins; through such stories, it became clear that only an explorer like Dick Smith can really understand what drives an explorer like Hubert Wilkins. This window into the astoundingly curious world of a living adventurer, enabled the audience to understand at least something of the ever-curious nature and nurture of Wilkins in his own development as an explorer/adventurer – something Wilkins writes about in this book.

The launch was rather magical. Dick is one of those rare and engaging speakers who holds the audience in the palm of his hand, while it becomes silent enough to hear the proverbial pin drop. While we were enlivened and most satisfied, I suspect we all wanted more.



At the end of his talk, Dick announced that he and his wife Pip had decided to gift the car, once owned by Wilkins, to the National Motor Museum in Birdwood, run by the History Trust of South Australia. Dick and Pip had visited the museum earlier in the day and were thrilled with what they saw.

Dick had bought the 1939 Chevrolet 'Woody' Wagon from the Wilkins Estate in the 1980s; restored and kept it in mint condition until its 'right home' became clear. A place where it could be seen as a national treasure, by many Australians.

Wilkins drove his Woody many times from his New York apartment to the farmhouse in Montrose, Philadelphia. Later, in the 1950s he went backwards and forwards from his hotel in Farmington to the farm which he and his wife, Suzanne, named '[Walhalla](#)' after the town where Suzanne was born in Victoria.

Thank you Dick and Pip for coming to launch our book; and for sharing the Wilkins Car with the rest of Australia.

Dr Stephen Carthew



A letter from the Governor of South Australia...

**FRIENDS OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA REPRINT LAUNCH
'UNDER THE NORTH POLE' BY SIR HUBERT WILKINS**

**Congratulations to the Friends of the State Library of South Australia on
launching its reprint of 'Under the North Pole' by Sir Hubert Wilkins.**

**Growing up in South Australia's mid-north, Wilkins was one of the last – and
greatest – explorers. His name deserves greater recognition in our state and
beyond, arguably alongside luminaries such as Sir Douglas Mawson, Sir Ross
and Sir Keith Smith and John McDouall Stuart.**

**In this book, Wilkins recounts his voyage in a tiny submarine beneath the ice
pack in the North Pole in 1931. Recent events remind us of how dangerous sub
nautical pursuits, even in the 21st century, can be.**

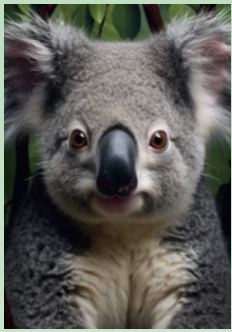
**Although he failed to pass underneath the North Pole itself, Wilkins' efforts
contributed to the establishment of weather stations at both the North and
South Poles which, over time, indicated that climate change was taking place.**

**No doubt South Australian readers will enjoy his reminiscences of growing up
in our state's mid-north, where he developed skills in horsemanship, survival
and resourcefulness, and had a close association with the local Indigenous
people.**

**I thank the Friends of the State Library of South Australia for their
commitment to producing limited edition publications of historic and cultural
relevance to our state. Since 1995 the Friends' Australiana Publications sub-
committee has produced more than thirty high quality titles – an outstanding
achievement.**

**I wish you all a pleasant evening as you celebrate the reprinting of this
extraordinary book by an extraordinary South Australian.**

**Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC
GOVERNOR OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**



Chris Daniels: Books in My Life

July 2023

Wildlife biologist, science communicator and urban ecologist: these are some of the titles Chris Daniels is known by. He spoke to the Friends on 4 July about the many animal books in his life, all things biology and zoology being his main interests from an early age. He was inspired to follow a career in this discipline by people such as Jane Goodall (world expert on Tanzanian chimpanzees), David Attenborough, the naturalist and broadcaster and Dian Fossey (studied the mountain gorillas of Rwanda).

As a young reader, Chris loved books such as *The Overloaded ark* by Gerald Durrell. Other favourites over the years were the female writers, Mary Grant Bruce (children's books about rural life in Australia), Ethel Pedley (*Dot and the Kangaroo*), May Gibbs (*Snugglypot and Cuddlepie*) and Dorothy Wall (*Blinky Bill*) He bemoaned the fact that copyright for *Blinky Bill* has gone forever to the US, and we have Koala Bob instead! Other influential books for him in the world of animal studies are *Flames of extinction: the race to save Australia's threatened wildlife* by John Pickrell, Ishmael by Dan Quinn (on the theme of sustainability and global catastrophe) and *Last child in the woods* by Richard Louv.

Chris Daniels himself has written or co-authored numerous books for children and adults: some of these are: *Guide to urban wildlife, Adelaide – nature of a city, Koala – the young zoologist* and *Fearsome flute players* – a DVD about magpies.

Many, if not most children these days, have what Chris calls “nature deficit disorder” as described by Richard Louv, and spend a high proportion of their lives indoors without developing much of a connection to nature. As a science communicator, Chris has worked in various ways, such as with theatrical performance, comic books, public talks, broadcasting and academic teaching to get messages of conservation and management of feral animals and weeds across to a wide audience.



Rick Sarre (L) with Chris Daniels (R) at the Tuesday Talk July 4 2023

Dr Jane Southwood: Books in My Life August 2023

One book in particular among those recommended by Francophone scholar Jane Southwood suggests both the theme and the spirit of her wonder-filled talk. That is Sarah Bakewell's 2011 biography of the French philosopher Montaigne which as its title asks one big question: How to Live. To which our speaker's answer might be: live your life in French—with French literature, in France, with French writers, in translation.



Dr Southwood, now an honorary research fellow in the School of Humanities at the University of Western Australia, convinced me, at least, of the intellectual adventure, the rewards, the delights, the charms you might say, of a life spent in French, starting from her early research into the love poetry of the 16th century poet Maurice Scève in his 'Délie' sequence and continuing through to a celebration of Marguerite Yourcenar, the 20th century author of *Memoirs of Hadrian* (its title in English) and other classic works who, in 1980, became the first woman to be elected to the French Academy in its long history. Moving closer to home, Jane also spoke of her research on the art and medicine of the expedition of 1800-1804 to 'les terres australes' (the south lands) led by Nicolas Baudin, reminding us of his journal published in translation by the Libraries Board of South Australia in 1974 and republished by the Friends in 2004. She affectionately recalled a book by classicist Gilbert Highet called *Poets in a Landscape* (1957) which, evoking Italy through its poets, brings together travel, literature and the natural world. A love of birds, as part of an appreciation as well as an active concern for humankind's relationship with the environment, saw *What Bird is That?* (1931) by Neville Cayley and *The World of Olegas Truchanas* (1975), photographer of Tasmania's Lake Pedder, added to her list. Jane Southwood's talk abounded with ideas and enthusiasms, learning worn lightly as an engine of life and a joy. She concluded with a generous tribute to the generosity of others who make up, in her words, 'the community or commonwealth of scholars' around the world in which she has flourished. It was a pleasure to share that company with her for an overflowing hour.

Nicholas Jose

Books mentioned by Dr Southwood on 1 August 23

- Louis Bromfield, *The Rains Came*, 1937
- Neville W. Cayley, *What Bird is That?* 1931, A completely revised and updated edition of the classic Australian ornithological work by Terence R. Lindsey, Collins Angus and Robertson, 1990.
- Ken Simpson & Nicolas Day with Peter Trusler, *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, 7th edition, Viking, an imprint of Penguin, 2004.
- Olive and Dunn, *Field Guide to the Small Inconspicuous greeny-brown-grey birds of Australia*. Now with over 100 poorly-focused colour plates of things that are, I don't know, probably some kind of thornbill, maybe
- *Legends of Greece and Rome: Stories of Long Ago*, 3rd edition, 1909
- Gilbert Highet, *Poets in a Landscape*, 1957, re-published with a preface by Michael C.J Putnam, New York Review of Books, Classics, 2010.
- The 'Délie' of Maurice Scève, edited with an introduction and notes by I.D. McFarlane, Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Jane Southwood, 'Les 'contraires seïours': Scève's Use of the Diana Myth in the Délie of 1544', in *Renaissance Poetry and Drama in Context: Essays for Christopher Wortham*, edited Andrew Lynch & Anne M. Scott, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, pp. 175-195.
- Ronald A Hallett, *A Translation with Introduction and Notes of the "Delie" of Maurice Scève Thesis*, Pennsylvania State University, 1973.
- Sarah Bakewell, *How to Live OR A Life of Montaigne in one question and twenty attempts at an answer*, London, Vintage, 2011.
- Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie*, 1589.
- Marguerite Yourcenar, *L'Œuvre au Noir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1968.
- Marguerite Yourcenar, *The Abyss* [English translation of L'Œuvre au Noir], Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976.
- Yvon Bernier, *Inventaire de la Bibliothèque de Marguerite Yourcenar* [Inventory of Marguerite Yourcenar's Library], Clermont-Ferrand, SIEY, 2004. Yourcenariana.org
- Yvon Bernier, *Petite Plaisance Marguerite Yourcenar 1903-1987*. Petite Plaisance Trust, 1994.

Nicholas Jose:

Books in My Life Sept 2023



Nicholas Jose's discussion of books was centred on South Australia. On authors born here – poet, John Shaw Nielson (1872–1942), Rosemary Dobson (1920–2012) and Barbara Hanrahan (1939–1991); on authors who settled here – Pip Williams (1969–), Alison Flett (1965–2023), JM. Coetzee (1940–); or who are connected to the state, as in the case of West Australian writer, Randolph Stow (1935–2010), through his great, great grandfather, responsible for Pilgrim Church in the Adelaide CBD.

Jose also covered his own creative output as writer and editor.

The fascination with the artist/writers Dobson and Hanrahan, with Margaret Preston, who includes Chinese motifs in her artwork, and with Stow, whose style Nick describes as 'luminous and haunting', is unsurprising, given his knowledge of art, his fascination with China, where he has lived and where his great, great grandfather built a church in 1903, mirroring Randolph Stow's ancestor.

The inclusion of contemporary works—Pip Williams', *The Bookbinder of Jericho*, and Jennifer Mills' *Dyschronia*, was rounded out with works from the colonial past, those of Catherine Martin (1847–1937): *An Australian Girl* 1890 and *The Incredible Journey* 1923.

Nicholas Jose's infectious love of Australian literature, fostered by the early gift of Randolph Stow's *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* 1965, and, for his sixteenth birthday, a copy of *The Vital Decade* (Geoffrey Dutton and Max Harris), a literature to which he, too, has significantly contributed, as writer and editor, enthused his audience. We were all beneficiaries of his enthusiasm.

Jane Southwood

10 South Australian Books in My Life mentioned in the talk: (in alpha order by author)

Ken Bolton, *At the Flash & At the Baci* (2006)
J M Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980)
Geoffrey Dutton and Max Harris (eds.), *The Vital Decade* (1968)
Barbara Hanrahan, *Scent of Eucalyptus* (1973)
Catherine Martin, *The Incredible Journey* (1923)
Jennifer Mills, *Dyschronia* (2018)
John Shaw Neilson, *Selected Poems* (1965)
Randolph Stow, *The Merry-go-round in the Sea* (1965)
Shirley Cameron Wilson, *From Shadow to Light: South Australian Women Artists Since Colonisation* (1988)
Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (2006)

And more:

Philip Butterss (ed.), *Adelaide: a literary city* (2013)
Alison Flett, *Where We Are* (2022)
Barbara Hanrahan, *Where the Queens all Strayed* (1978)
Jill Jones, *A Coffee with Ken: Ken Bolton's Adelaide* (2013)
Nicholas Jose, *Black Sheep: Journey to Borroloola* (2002)
Nicholas Jose (ed.), *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature* (2009)
Nicholas Jose, *The Idealist* (2023)
Hannah Kent, *Devotion* (2021)
Pip Williams, *The Bookbinder of Jericho* (2023)

Upcoming Tuesday Talks



Margaret Calder

Tuesday 3 October

[Book here](#)

Margaret Calder was a Senior Lecturer in Education from Flinders University from 1985 – 1998 previously teaching at SA College of Advanced Education with a BA and a MA in Urban and Regional Planning from Adelaide University. Almost of all her academic life was in training teachers and over the years she wrote many books for teachers. She developed a particular interest in teaching about countries of the world, human rights and development issues. Margaret has spoken at state, national and international conferences and has taught in universities in UK, The Philippines, and each year from 1994 to 2012 at Växjö University in Sweden.

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

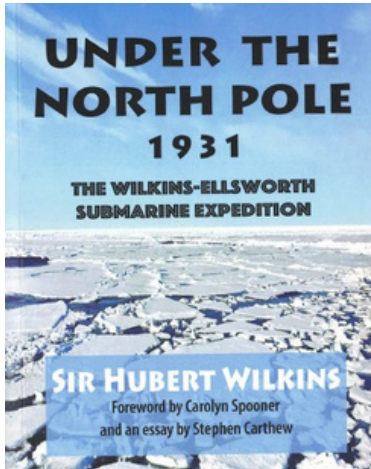
List of Speakers we've enjoyed this year so far:

February 7	Gill Hicks (Disability and peace advocate)
April 4	Lester Saegenschnitter (Lutheran educator)
May 2	Peter Goldsworthy (Medical doctor and writer)
June 6	Kiera Lindsey (History advocate)
July 4	Chris Daniels (Natural scientist)
August 1	Jane Southwood (European languages and culture)
September 5	Nicholas Jose (Literary Writer)
October 3	Margaret Calder (Education and Human Rights)

Tuesday Talks are advertised by email

Christmas is
coming!

AP
AUSTRALIANA PUBLICATIONS
Adelaide



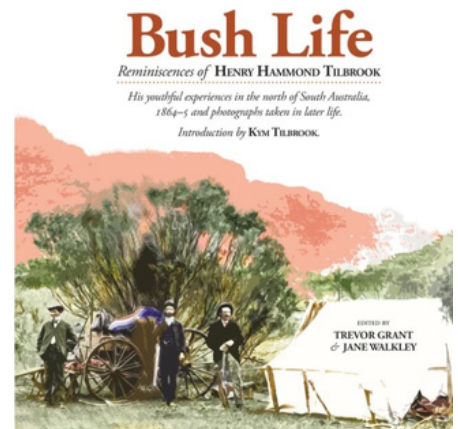
The Friends of the State Library SA have re-published Wilkins' 1931 *Under the North Pole* with additional new material.

This exciting account of his plans to take a submarine under the north polar ice cap contains his reminiscences of growing up in SA's mid-north - learning the skills which served him so well in his amazing life: horsemanship, survival and resourcefulness, even a spiritual aspect from his close association with the local Indigenous people.

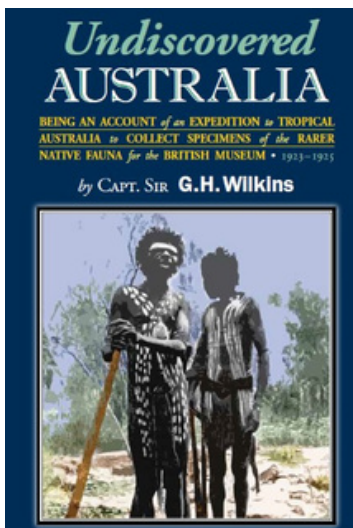
Buy
*Under the
North Pole*
here

Henry Hammond Tilbrook's youthful experiences in the north of South Australia 1864-5, with photographs taken in later life.

He lived from 1848 to 1937 and was a well-known Adelaide photographer from the 1890s onward. His widely-circulated photographs of SA's Mid North are some of his best. Less well-known is the fact that he first saw this country when a naïve youth working on Thomas Elder's properties. The frank, honest diaries of his adventures in the 1860s and written up by him in the 1930s, as held by the State Library, have been painstakingly transcribed, giving fascinating insights into an itinerant worker's life. Tilbrook's closely edited *Reminiscences* are now to be published, complemented with many striking photographs.



[Buy Bush Life here](#)



Undiscovered Australia - An account of an expedition to tropical Australia to collect specimens of the rarer native fauna for the British Museum.

From 1923-25, Sir Hubert Wilkins led a British Museum expedition to collect specimens of endangered species. He also observed the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. This interesting account of his journey contains significant photos from the period.

[Buy Undiscovered Australia here](#)



Mark Gilbert numbering special editions of some Australiana Publications for purchase from the Friends, at the May 2023 book sale.

**Book Donations are
always welcome**

Our annual book sale was a huge success, so we need more books.

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



The Original Book Club

Meets on the second Tuesday of the month, 10am to 12pm Original and different.

We have fun discussing a wide range of books on a chosen topic. There is no pressure and we all just love talking about books.

Get in touch for further information.

**Enquiries: Diana Chessell 0415 052 174
or Audrey Kent 0401 810 622**

"A book is a garden, an orchard, a storehouse, a party, a company by the way, a counselor, a multitude of counselors."

– Charles Baudelaire

Friends

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