



# NEWSLETTER

## JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

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### OUR TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON

Our Annual Fundraising Luncheon, celebrating the Library's 20th birthday, was held on Monday 21 September. It was an enormous success with 363 booked to attend, filling to overflowing the Strangers Dining Room in Parliament House. A total of 16 schools sent students and teachers and 12 organisations were represented. There was an air of great excitement as people took their seats.

**Marie Muir, Vice-Chair** and convenor, acknowledged the traditional owners of the land, thanked our co-hosts, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and the Hon Robyn Parker and welcomed the guests. She apologised for the difficulties many of the guests experienced in finding their places, owing to an unexpected rearrangement to the seating that morning. This, however, had done little to dampen people's spirits.



The Library had launched its Capital Investment Fund in May this year. The Fund aims to reach a total of \$500,000, after which the Library will draw on the interest for its operating costs. Marie urged guests to donate generously. Six people responded, making donations totalling \$5480.

**Jozefa Sobski, Chair**, then introduced the guest speaker, **award-winning journalist Adele Horin** and outlined her career. Adele took as her topic, 'Do Newspapers have a Future and Who Cares?'

Here are some extracts from Adele's interesting and informative talk.

*I am deeply anxious about a future without newspapers because newspapers still set the daily news agenda that is regularly followed by radio and television in 30 second soundbites. Newspapers with their staffs of 200 or so are able to do a job no-one else can, except for a few ABC radio and TV programs—scrutinise local, state and federal government, uncover corruption and government waste, highlight social maladies on a regular basis, cover long court cases. By their size and reach, newspapers are a watchdog that governments cannot ignore.*

*If I were to tell you that it's in perhaps **Ten Years, Tops** that the last daily newspaper may be sliding off the presses in Australia, you may be surprised. But that's what **American, Professor Jeffrey Cole**, a media expert, told a recent Fairfax strategy meeting. As someone who always*

*wanted to be a print journalist and has never changed careers, it saddens me to continually read the obituary of newspapers.*

*The profits for both News Corporation and Fairfax, publishers of most Australian newspapers, plummeted in the 2008 to 2009 financial year and large numbers of journalists have been made redundant. Overseas bureaus have been shut, and The Age and the Sydney Morning Herald have merged their Canberra bureaus.*

*Why are newspapers in trouble? The problem is not that Australians are abandoning them. Yes, since the early '90s, readership has fallen, but in the last*

*continued on page 2*

### JSNWL FUNCTIONS

#### Lunch-Hour Talks

**Venue:** Seminar Room 2, Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Road, Ultimo

**Date and Time:** Third Thursday in the month from 12 noon to 1.30 pm

**Entry:** \$15 (JSNWL members) \$20 (non-members)

**To Book:** Phone (02) 9571 5359 or email [info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](mailto:info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au)  
Light refreshments served

#### Sydney

**NOVEMBER—Thursday 19th**

**Dr Jennifer Byrne—The Road Less**

**Travelled: Career Paths for Women in Science**

Jennifer speaks about her own career in science—what sparked her initial interest in science, the early influences which affected her choice to become a cancer researcher, and the subsequent challenges and rewards of combining scientific research with family life. Jennifer also discusses issues affecting career paths for women in science and, most importantly, what can now be done to ensure that these paths don't continue to be 'roads less travelled'.

**FEBRUARY 2010—Thursday 18th**

**Mahboba Rawi—Mahboba's Promise: A Journey of Hope**

Mahboba had to flee Afghanistan in 1984, living for two years in a Pakistani refugee camp, before settling in Australia. Afghanistan is a poverty-stricken country where huge numbers of the children suffer from malnutrition, are orphans, and do not go to school; it has the highest proportion of widows in the world. In Australia Mahboba founded Mahboba's Promise, an organisation dedicated to raising money to help the women and children of Afghanistan. Mahboba Rawi talks about her life and about the work she is doing.

#### Canberra

**NOVEMBER—Thursday 26th**

**Amelia Fielden—Traditional Poetry, a Popular Pastime in Japan**

Amelia Fielden is a professional Japanese translator and an internationally recognised poet, with an MA in Japanese Literature from the University of Newcastle. She talks on the modern Japanese poetry form of tanka. To date, 14 books of her translations of modern tanka have been published, as well as a book of collaborative tanka.

For further details relating to venue and bookings, see page 4.

### CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The Library will close on **Friday 11 December, 2009**  
and reopen on **Monday 11 January, 2010**

We wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

The Library is open to the public  
Monday to Friday, 10 am to 3 pm

*Australia's national women's library is a specialist library with its focus on collecting and preserving the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.*

### Aims

- to heighten awareness of women's issues
- to preserve documents on women's lives and activities
- to support the field of women's history
- to highlight women's contribution to this country's development

### Borrowing Policy

The public may borrow items on interlibrary loan. A loan collection is available to financial members.

**Location:** Ultimo Community Centre  
523-525 Harris Street, Ultimo

### Public Transport Services

**Trains** Central Station or Town Hall Station

**Bus** No. 501 from Railway Square (Central Station) or from George Street (opp Town Hall Station)

### GETTING TO THE LIBRARY

**Location** We are situated in the Ultimo Community Centre on the corner of Harris Street and William Henry Street, directly opposite the new Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre.

**Entry** Main entrance is at 523-525 Harris Street (just beyond convenience store). Ring the bell for admittance. The Library is up a flight of stairs. The other entrance is in Bulwara Road. We are on the level, directly across the courtyard.

### How to Reach Us

#### By Bus from the city

Catch the No 501 bus in George Street opposite the Cathedral or at Railway Square near Central Station. It runs every 20 minutes and it's a 5 minute trip to the Library. The stop for the Library is opposite the Powerhouse Museum in Harris Street.

#### By Train

Get off at Central Station. To catch the bus at Railway Square, walk through the Devonshire Tunnel and up the escalator on the left.

#### By Foot from Central Station

From Railway Square, walk along Broadway, turn right into Harris Street and continue to William Henry (takes about 15-20 minutes). For a slightly shorter route, walk to the end of the Devonshire Tunnel, along the open space with the tram lines, down the lane beside the ABC building, left along Ultimo Road, and right into Harris Street.

*continued from page 1*

*eight to nine years circulation has held up remarkably well here. Twenty million copies of newspapers are bought in Australia each week. The problem is with advertising. It was advertising that subsidised journalism and made the whole enterprise possible, especially those tiny ads for jobs and cars and houses at the back of the paper. Newspapers were the means by which people bought and sold things.*

*When a large slice of those classified advertisements moved to the internet, it nearly broke the commercial back of newspapers. No-one has yet found an alternative funding source to subsidise journalism. As well, newspapers cannibalised their own product by shifting their journalism to the net and giving their stories away for free. For news companies the move to the web has so far been a commercial failure. The number of advertisements you can display online brings in only a fraction of the necessary newspaper revenue. Yet journalism will survive, even if newspapers go under. People want information.*

*I want to reflect on the role of newspapers in popularising the women's movement. After the publication of*

Michele Ginswick gave the vote of thanks to Adele for her most informative talk and presented her with a gift.

Beverley Sodbinow, who recently retired from her position as JSNWL archivist, gave a short talk about the archives, the importance of collecting women's papers to preserve their history and the background to the September exhibition 'Remembering Pine Gap'.

After the talk came the drawing of the raffle. Students from ten of the schools present were asked to draw the winners.

A record number of 16 schools attended this year, several of them newcomers to the event. The 16 were: Abbotsleigh, Burwood Girls High School; Cheltenham Girls High School; Kincoppal; Liverpool Girls High School; Methodist Ladies College (MLC); Mosman High School; Mt View High School (Cessnock); Queenwood; Randwick Girls High School; Riverside Girls High School; Rooty Hill High School; St Catherines School Waverley; Sydney Girls High School; Sydney Secondary College, Leichhardt; and Wenona.

Our grateful thanks to all those who helped to make the event such a success: the dining-room staff for their quiet and efficient service; Marie Muir, our MC; the Luncheon Committee and all volunteers who worked tirelessly for months beforehand to ensure the function ran so smoothly; photographers Nik Trevallyn-Jones who took stills and Jan Wood who made a video recording.

*seminal books by Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer and Anne Summers that changed the lives of a vanguard of women, and all the grass roots women's liberation groups took off in the '70s, the media finally got on board to give the issues wide exposure. The Women's Electoral Lobby's form guide to women-friendly MPs in the 1972 elections was published by the broadsheet dailies. The old-type women's pages, with their cooking, social and fashion items, gradually disappeared and issues such as childcare, maternity leave and domestic violence became mainstream political issues. In today's fragmented online world, for all its wonderful diversity, no single site, no half a dozen sites, could popularise a cause the way that a few newspapers—and the ABC—did back then.*

*I can't see the future any better than the next person. Maybe all the pundits are wrong, and newspapers will limp through this current crisis, and keep arriving on lawns for much longer than anticipated. On one thing everyone agrees—good journalism is an essential bulwark of democracy, and a way will be found to ensure it survives somewhere.*

### RAFFLE WINNERS

1st Prize Dora Meeson Coates framed poster 'Trust the Women'  
Maureen Humphrey (Ticket 0056)

2nd Prize Dymocks book token for \$200  
donated by Penny Street  
Marie Muir (Ticket 3047)

3rd Prize 12 bottles of wine donated by  
Jozefa Sobski  
Pauline Holbrook (Ticket 0069)

4th Prize Voucher for \$50 donated by  
The Feminist Bookshop  
Jill Cartwright (Ticket 1311)

5th to 10th prizes consisted each of two  
bottles of wine produced by students of  
Mount View High School, Cessnock, and  
donated by NSW Teachers Federation  
5th Wendy Harris (Ticket 0999)  
6th Joan Patrick (Ticket 0853)  
7th Myra Keay (Ticket 1397)  
8th Robin Porter (Ticket 0792)  
9th Jennifer Furness (Ticket 0184)  
10th Hanne Marks (Ticket 2008)

### SILENT AUCTION

Ruby's Mat, made by artist  
Ruby Malwirrdja from Arnhem Land  
Highest bid, Lesley Lynch, \$400

Framed poster of Bronte Country  
Highest bid, Janet Peadon, \$100

We also thank all our guests and look forward to seeing them again at our Annual Fundraising Luncheon in 2010.

## LIBRARY NEWS

### Reorganisation of Shelving Space

We have sold our wooden card catalogue cabinet on e-bay and in its place will put in two extra bookcases. This will allow us more space for the Research Collection. Culling of the Loan Collection has also freed up shelving space for more the books from the Research Collection. Certain areas—300s and 800s (Social Sciences and Literature)—had become so tightly pressed it was impossible to shelve any further books in those sections.

We have also bought a DVD/CD storage tower holding up to 180 disks. This will hold the 44 disks relating to the poster digitisation, as well as other CDs and DVDs that have been donated.

We have now had steel shelving installed in the workroom area to house the quarto-sized books and the theses and are busy reshelving this material.

### Poster Collection Poster Digitisation

UTS Digital Imaging Services has finalised the digitisation of our 450 posters and sent us contact sheets and 44 CDs of the images. The contact sheets are of extremely high quality and will give viewers an excellent idea of this section of our poster collection. The images will be put up on the website at a later date.

### Unprocessed Posters

An archives student who was interested in indexing a further 800 or so of our unprocessed posters, now finds herself unable to undertake this project. We are looking for another student who may be able to take on this work as a university project.

### Project Application

We were unsuccessful in our application to Shopfront for a student to carry out a project for us. This was a request to create a manual for updating the Library's website. We are looking into this matter now from another angle.

### The Website

Since the resignation of our website manager, there have been few updates to the site and many mistakes in the contact details have not been rectified. This situation is now being addressed, thanks to a volunteer who nobly stepped into the breach on a temporary basis. We apologise to all those who have been frustrated in their attempts to contact us.

The website itself is in the stages of being totally reorganised to better present the face of the Library, its collections and its activities. This will necessarily take some time.

### Can Anyone Help?

Many of the senior school students design and manage their own websites. We would like to hear from any of our members who have a daughter or granddaughter who would be interested in managing the JSNWL website by updating the information about scheduled functions and other events. This process should take only a few hours once a month and can be done from home.

Please call (02) 9571 5359 or email [info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](mailto:info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au) if you feel you can help.

*Jane Pollard*  
Honorary Librarian

## ARCHIVES NEWS

### 'Remembering Pine Gap' Exhibition Closes

Jan Burnswoods, Bridget McKern and I went to Parliament House many times during the four weeks the 'Remembering Pine Gap' exhibition was on display. We talked to visitors, answered any questions they had and handed out promotional material. We were pleased that so many people came to view it, including teachers with school groups, and that they were so enthusiastic about what they saw. The response has been most gratifying.

The exhibition closed on 24 September. Since then the three of us have still been busy. With help from Parliament staff, we took all the material down and have brought it back to the Library. The story boards, posters, banners, photographs and documentary material have all been carefully packed and are now safely in storage. We have formally thanked the many people who donated material and helped with the exhibition.

We would like to give special thanks to Arts NSW for a grant which enabled us to mount this exhibition, to the National Library of Australia for several earlier grants to conserve the Pine Gap material, and to Art Scene of West Ryde, Sydney, who took a personal interest in the framing of our photographic exhibits.

I am now gratefully accessioning the new material given to the Library's Pine Gap archives collection by Pauline Ahern, Lenore Coltheart, Shirley Fitzgerald, Barbara Holloway and Lizzie Landers.

## RED STICKER ON YOUR NEWSLETTER LABEL

The date on your newsletter name label tells you the last financial year for which you subscribed.

A RED STICKER on the label indicates that your subscription is overdue.

If you have Dec-08 on your name label, we would be grateful if you would pay your 2009 subscription now. It would save time and money if you also paid your 2010 subscription at the same time



Because the 'Remembering Pine Gap' exhibition has aroused so much interest, we will be applying to Visions Australia for funding for a travelling exhibition next year.

*Beverley Sodbinow*  
Honorary Archivist

## DONATIONS OF MATERIAL

We thank the following people and organisations who have so generously donated material to the Library.

Adele Horin  
Sybil Jack  
Daphne Kingston  
Helen L'Orange  
Carolyn Lowry  
Jean McKendrick  
Helen Reddy  
Margaret Watts

Clouston & Hall  
Fellowship of Australian Writers, Tasmania  
Footprints Books  
Fremantle Press  
Hobart Women's Centre  
New Holland Publishers  
Older Women's Network  
RRR Network News  
Simon & Schuster  
Tasmanian Women in Agriculture  
The Country Woman Transcribe Newsletter  
Wakefield Press

## WISH LIST

Have any members copies of the following books by Marilyn French that they are willing to donate to JSNWL?

*Beyond Power: Women, Men & Morals* (1985)  
*From Eve to Dawn: A History of Women* (2002)

The Feminist Bookshop (02) 9810 2666 has this four-volume work in stock at the moment. Perhaps four members would like to get together and order a volume each.

*Beyond Power* is a much earlier work. If a member has a copy on her shelves, or knows where she can obtain a secondhand copy to donate, we would be grateful. The Feminist Bookshop is also inquiring into the matter.

**AWARD PRESENTATION  
for  
WOMEN'S STORY COMPETITION**

On Tuesday 6 October, Amanda Hodder, who was awarded second prize in the joint Inner Wheel/JSNWL women's story competition, came into the Library to receive her prize. Representatives of Inner Wheel, Chris Kirby, Jennifer Furness and Margaret Alberts, were there, with Shirley Jones representing the Library. Jennifer Furness, Secretary of Inner Wheel District 51, presented Amanda with her prize, a \$200 book token donated by The Constant Reader Bookshop. After this very short ceremony, everyone sat down to morning tea and discussion. Amanda wanted to know about Inner Wheel and also about the Library and Jessie Street. She was told how members of the two organisations are interacting, that Chris has become a life member of the Library and that both Jennifer and Margaret are volunteers.



*l to r: Jennifer Furness, Amanda Hodder,  
Shirley Jones  
(Photo by Chris Kirby)*

After morning tea Amanda was shown the Library collections—the books, the posters, the serials and the archives. She was extremely impressed with the scope of the collections and the fact that the Library has been self-funding for its 20 years of existence.

Amanda intends to join the Library and to do what she can to promote it. She is a professional pianist, a skill she thinks is inherited from her European grandmother, about whom she wrote in her award-winning essay. She has agreed to give a lunch-hour talk next year and suggested that she also put on a fundraising concert for the Library. We are already considering possible venues.

Unfortunately Michelle Brock from Queanbeyan, who won first prize in the competition, was unable to come to Sydney in October and a tentative date has been set in November for her to receive her award.

**VISIT FROM RYDE LADIES  
PROBUS CLUB**

On 17 August, 18 women from the Ryde Ladies Probud Club visited the Library as one of their monthly outings. They had become interested through a talk given to them the previous year on the collections the Library holds, particularly the archival and book collections.

After a convivial cup of tea and biscuits, Shirley Jones gave a brief talk on the purpose of the Library and the importance of maintaining its collection. Then the group divided into two, one group to hear Beverley Sodbinow talk about the archival collection and the items from it that were on display, and the other to hear Shirley Jones talk about the Research Collection and show books from it, both fiction and non-fiction. The talks and displays created a lot of interest, with many members spending a lot of time afterwards looking at the material on display. Some took written notes of the items.

The visit was highly successful. It raised awareness of the collections and of the importance of preserving women's history. The members of the group took away promotional material, including flyers for the Pine Gap Exhibition; some declared their interest in joining the Library and one or two in becoming volunteers.

**CANBERRA NEWS**

**NOVEMBER LUNCH-HOUR TALK**  
**SPEAKER: DR AMELIA FIELDEN**  
*Traditional Poetry: A Popular Pastime in Japan*

**Date:** Thursday 26 November  
**Where:** Reception Room, ACT Legislative Assembly Building, Civic Square  
**Time:** 12:15 for 12:30  
**Entry:** Small note donation (suggested \$5 members/concessions and \$10 others)  
**To Book:** You can book either by emailing: [jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au) or by calling Janet on 0448 348 559

**GRANT APPLICATION**

In September we submitted a grant application to FAHCSIA, (the NSW government department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs). The grant is for the provision of small equipment. The Library is asking for a heavy duty shredder, three flat screen monitors and a combined printer/fax/scanner.

**PORTRAIT OF JESSIE STREET**

The Spring 2009 issue of the National Portrait Gallery's journal contains an article on Jessie Street, with a reproduction of the 1929 Jerrold Nathan portrait of her. Jessie Street National Women's Library, who owns the portrait and loaned it to the gallery for two years, has agreed to extend the loan to three years.

The Gallery has had many thousands of visitors through it since its opening in December 2008 and the members of the Library who have visited it have commented admiringly on the portrait and on its placement and the description given of it. We urge members to visit the Gallery when next they are in Canberra.

**WOMEN'S MAP PROJECT**

A small committee of JSNWL members including Sybil Jack, Beverley Kingston and Jozefa Sobski, together with Lisa Murray, Acting City of Sydney Historian, and Emma Grahame (City of Sydney Dictionary) have for the last 18 months been working on a project to produce a walking guide to sites of significance to women in the city centre. This will take the form of a map, with the sites numbered and marked, with a brief statement of their importance and, in a number of cases, illustrations. It includes such people as: Lucy Osburn, 19th century founder of modern nursing in Australia; Millicent Preston Stanley, the first NSW woman parliamentarian, elected in 1925; Bertha McNamara 'mother of the Labour movement'; and various women's institutions such as the Chinese Women's Association set up in 1954 by Phyllis Wang. Jessie Street, in whose honour the Library has been named, is commemorated at her desk in Challis House. The finished map will be available, free, at Sydney information centres and should stimulate interest in the Library and in women's history.

The project has reached the stage of graphic design and the layout will be ready by the end of December. The map will be launched by Councillor Di Tornai at a reception at the Museum of Contemporary Art on 6 January. The reception is part of the 2010 Conference of Women's Education Worldwide called *Empowering Women: The Economic Imperative*, which is being held at Women's College in Carillon Avenue, Newtown, a college of the University of Sydney. JSNWL members may also be involved in taking conference participants on a tour around the city to women's sites.

*Sybil Jack  
Board Member*

## JUNE LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKER: ANNA VOLSKA**  
*Ritual and My Life in the Theatre*

*On Thursday 18 June, Anna Volska, consummate actor and a founder member of the Bell Shakespeare Company, shared with a rapt audience some reflections on the significance of ritual for connection and meaning both in life and in the theatre.*

The idea of connecting ritual with my life came to me recently when I was sorting out photographs. Pictures of other people's weddings reminded me that I have no photos of my own.

John and I married in England in 1965 at St. Gregory's Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. A young friend wanted to be Best Man. We said we didn't need a Best Man. 'But what about organising the limousines?' We said we weren't having limousines. He did insist on taking the wedding ring to present at the right moment. I bought it at a secondhand shop, thinking it must be at least 50 years old with some romantic history, but when I asked about its hallmark, the jeweller said, 'Made in Birmingham six years ago'. So much for romance.

The night before the wedding, this young man took the ring and my husband-to-be to the pub to celebrate the last of his freedom. John was feeling decidedly seedy the next day and on the bus to the church sat by the window in case he threw up. Our Best Man was late, having slept in. The priest couldn't wait and blessed another ring I happened to be wearing. Our witnesses were two dear friends who lived next door to the church. They gave me flowers to hold—red and white carnations, colours of the Polish flag. After the wedding they asked us in for a cup of hot chocolate. Then John went off to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre to do a matinee and evening performance of *Hamlet*. He got home about midnight—*Hamlet* is a very long play. And that was that. No photographs.

Apart from very little money, there were reasons for our wedding day to be 'no frills'. I come from a fractured family. I was born in Warsaw towards the end of World War II. My father was in hiding with the Polish Resistance; after the birth he disappeared. My mother thought he was shot in retaliation for the death of some SS soldiers, but recently, before she died, wondered if he hadn't just walked away to start a new life. All I have of him are four photos of a young man about 25 years old with dark curly hair, playing with two black dogs.

My uncle, my mother's only sibling, was in the Polish Army based in Scotland. After the war, he sponsored my mother and me to migrate to England. Together

we flew to London by military plane in 1946. My mother married again—disastrously; had another daughter; then left, taking me with her. In 1952 my uncle, my mother and I, with another stepfather in tow, emigrated to Australia.

This new stepfather was a lovely man. As a research scientist he worked with the CSIRO for 25 years. On retirement he went blissfully to Sydney University to study Anthropology. My mother got a job on David Jones' sixth floor—in those days, incredibly posh. Later, she worked with Sydney's top architects and designers, supplying fabrics for Government House and various other National Trust properties. She was unfortunately a terrible wife to my poor stepfather—restless, critical, generally difficult.

They had very little social life and kept almost no traditions from their homeland. I remember roast pork with baked potatoes and baked apples, served with red cabbage at Christmas, though my mother lamented that it wasn't goose. Actually, memories of food were important to my mother—memories of starving during the war and vowing with Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* that she'd never be hungry again. She had a couple of Polish cookbooks and would make wonderful dishes with cabbage, dried mushrooms and potatoes. Whenever I smell dill it takes me back to my childhood.

So at 17, meeting my husband's family was a culture shock. They were staunch, unquestioning Catholics with an unadulterated Irish background: five siblings including John, one set of grandparents, two aunts, an uncle and many close cousins. Christmas meant puddings and cakes and paper hats and party games. Birthdays always brought Nana's exquisitely iced and decorated cakes. Whenever John went home to Maitland, he always came back with a big tin of Anzac biscuits and clean handkerchiefs.

It was my inexperience with rituals and social obligations, and John's overburdening with them, that led us to do that dreadful thing—marry in England and tell our parents afterwards. In fact they read it in the paper before we could tell them. In those days a phone call was £1 a minute and we were earning £12 a week; we'd written to them instead. We didn't realise how much it would hurt John's mother. Mine was delighted that I was an honest woman at last.

How odd then that we've spent our lives pursuing that most ritualistic of art



forms—theatre. They say theatre began with people coming back from hunting, relating adventures imitating the animal being hunted, in order to get closer unobserved. Cherokee Indians would wear a wildcat mask when stalking turkey—a turkey stalked by a man disguised as a wildcat, imitating a turkey, reminiscent of Shakespearean heroines played by a boy actor playing a girl disguised as a boy.

Theatre is highly ritualistic. Everyone comes together at a prescribed time to sit in a darkened space while people act out a story, generally pretending that no one is watching. The audience may laugh and cry, but otherwise must remain silent until the end, when expected to make much noise showing appreciation.

My parents took me to see Katherine Hepburn and Robert Helpmann in *The Taming of the Shrew* when I was 10 or 11. But the Shakespeare bug didn't bite until I was 13 going with my school to see Lawrence Olivier's film, *Henry the Fifth*. The power of the language got me, the colour and panache of the production too: its sheer theatricality. During my long walk from bus stop to school, I'd learn and recite to myself chunks of Shakespeare, just for the thrill of rolling those words around in my mind. I was 14 when the National Institute of Dramatic Art opened at the University of New South Wales and in the Christmas holidays went to a summer school there.

I had sat the Leaving Certificate very young and at under 16 I auditioned for NIDA and was accepted. It's a haven where you learn methodology and discipline—that is, to act when people are watching and judging, and when you don't feel like it. The NIDA team opened a little theatre, the Old Tote, now the Fig Tree Theatre near Randwick Racecourse. Two of us final year students were asked to join that new company. Actually my very first job on leaving drama school was an ABC television play when television was live and not recorded. In that cast were the wonderful Gordon Chater—the worst giggler I have ever met—and a young Olympic gold medalist, Murray Rose. The Director said my name was too long: Anne Doprovolkska, anglicised from Hanna Maria Jadwiga Dobrowoklska. He suggested Anna Volska.

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## JULY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: SUZANNE FALKINER

### *Joan in India*

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*On Thursday 16th July, Suzanne Falkiner raised an immense amount of interest and of curiosity when she spoke of her recently published book. She talked about the family member central to the book and the problems she encountered in the actual writing of it.*

This book has had a long gestation. It's been about 15 years since I first travelled to India to visit the region in Gujarat where Joan lived, but the motivation goes back much further than that. When I was a child I had vaguely heard family stories of a distant cousin who'd married a prince, but I never really understood why no one talked about her much. But it seemed to me even then that behind every story that people talked about publicly, or in front of the children, there was always another and more interesting one.

Another idea I wanted to explore was the idea of fantasy. Children listen to fairy tales about commoners who marry princes and live happily ever after and people still dream of these fairy-tale marriages. But what actually happens when you marry a prince? The book also gave me an opportunity to look at a political leader, a Muslim ruler of a Hindu state, who had managed to maintain a peaceful coexistence between his kingdom's two main religions for many decades, until Independence. Then there was Joan herself. I had no idea what sort of person she would turn out to be. Was she a spoilt young girl with ambitions, or a woman of her time doing the best she could with the cards dealt out to her at birth? I had a fair idea she wouldn't turn out to be a feminist heroine.

Joan was born in the Riverina in 1917 and grew up on a sheep station. She and her sister were educated by governesses and sent to boarding school in England, before returning to a privileged life in Melbourne. Then, in 1939, aged 21, she ran away by sea to Bombay and married the ruler of a small Indian state. His Highness Taley Muhammed Khan, the Nawab of Palanpur, was 30 years older than she, a Muslim, and already had a wife his own age. The gossip pages in Melbourne had a field day. It also caused a political reverberation, because even as India approached Independence, the British were anxious to discourage mixed race marriages, and particularly royal ones. If these unions produced a potential heir to an Indian throne who was partly of another race, and possibly of another religion, this could be quite unacceptable to a ruler's subjects. Joan converted to

Islam, but I suspect it was probably a symbolic thing. They also signed an agreement that any children they might have would not be in line to the throne.'

Suzanne then read an extract from her book, explaining the Australian family's response to Joan's proposed marriage. Here is a summary:

*Suzanne's curiosity had been re-awakened by a letter from her grandmother Ethel, in Sydney, to a sister-in-law in the Riverina, written in May 1944 while World War II raged in the Pacific. It said: 'I wonder how the Rajah's [sic] wife is faring in India? Bea's daughter I mean....' Later, Suzanne talked to another elderly cousin, Lawre. According to Lawre, Joan and her sister and her mother Beatrice, during their prewar travels in Europe, had probably met the Nawab in a hotel in Switzerland or Germany. Beatrice, then still in her early forties and a great beauty, thought it was her own charms that caused the Nawab—who was nearer her own age—to cultivate the little party of Australians. She didn't realise it was her daughter that the Nawab was courting, and was most piqued when she found out. On their return to Australia, Joan continued to correspond with the Nawab. Lawre, who was staying with a family friend in India, was asked by an aide-de-camp to deliver 'a most enormous solitaire diamond engagement ring' to Joan in Melbourne.*

*When Joan announced she was going to India, according to another family member, Joan's father told her he'd pay her fare to India and there she might decide if she wished to marry the man. If she did not, he would pay her passage home and the subject would never be mentioned again. If Joan went ahead, however, she would be disinherited. Again, Lawre had a slightly different story: while Joan's mother was angry at the marriage, her father was concerned for Joan's safety, and was worried that she might disappear into purdah and be badly treated. 'I cannot imagine that she will ever marry that black man', wrote another aunt in September 1939, and cabled to Joan advising her to come home immediately. However, Joan wrote politely back explaining that she could not do so as she was already married and very happy. The Nawab and his entourage had met her in Bombay and she had been married in the early hours of September 14, less than a day after she reached Palanpur—where she lived very happily, as far as her Australian family knew.*



Suzanne continued her talk by saying: After her husband died in the mid fifties, Joan lived a very secluded life. She did not want attention drawn to her: at this stage she was starting to lose her memory, and I think she didn't wanted anyone to realise this. But I tracked her down in the South of France and she agreed to see me. She didn't want to talk to me about the marriage, but during our conversations, things would come back to her and she'd forget that she'd decided not to talk to me about them. This put me in a bit of a quandary, because I felt almost as if I was taking advantage of her. So this is something else I've dealt with in the book. How far are you justified in tracking people down and hounding them, if they don't really want to talk to you? I had promised her family members in Australia that I wouldn't publish anything about her while she was still alive, in return for their co-operation, and I conveyed this (as tactfully as I could) to her as well. I liked her. When we had lunch together, she drank me under the table!

This book also nearly got me arrested twice. Once at Nice airport, when I had entirely forgotten that it was necessary to get a visa to go to France. The other time was in India itself. The palace in Palanpur where Joan had lived was now the local court house and police station, and so when a friend and I got up early to avoid the 40 degree heat, and wandered into this apparently deserted palace at six or seven in the morning, we inadvertently went into a restricted area and were marched off to be interviewed by the Second in Command of Police. I felt, too, that it would be interesting to trace the journey that Taley's ancestors had made down from Afghanistan, through the Thar Desert and into Gujarat. So we also spent four days camping out in the desert. One of my friends had the foresight to bring a bottle of duty free whisky, and I got ringworm from one of our camels!

In answer to questions, Suzanne said: Joan did have a daughter, but this also caused complications. Because the Nawab had been married by arrangement in his youth and already had an heir, their agreement that any further children would not be in line for the throne was intended to remove any objection the British might have to the second union. But the British said, 'Well, if the offspring aren't legitimate heirs, then the marriage isn't legitimate, and therefore she's only a concubine.' As a result, they

*continued on page 10*

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## AWARD LUNCHEON TALK

**SPEAKER: LIBBY GLEESON**

### *The Importance of Women's Story Telling*

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*On 17 June, at the Award Luncheon for the 'Weaving Women's Stories' competition, Libby Gleeson gave a talk on the importance in her own life of hearing family stories from her mother and the tremendous importance overall of women's story telling. Here is an abbreviated version of Libby's talk.*

I consider myself someone who lives her life in story, writing and publishing fiction for young people of all ages from babies and toddlers up to young adults, so I spend a lot of my time thinking about what we do when we create a story, when we tell a story, when we read a story or when we hear one.

I happen to believe very strongly that story-making is an essential part of our being human. We use language to create narrative, to tell stories, so making story, telling story is a pretty fundamental part of who we are as human beings. And what is this business of creating a narrative? Two years ago I published a work called *Writing Like A Writer*. It came about because many in the teaching profession believed that there has been a loss of emphasis on the writing of story, the making up of story, the creation of narrative. So, after months of research the findings were very interesting. Here is a quote from Barbara Hardy, Former Professor of English at London University. '*Narrative ... is a primary act of mind transferred to art from life. For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order really to live we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future.*' That to me is a pretty strong statement about what story is and what goes on inside us with story. One of the most interesting pieces of research was done in the USA concerning pre-schoolers. It discovered that most four-year olds come to school already able to construct a story, with a beginning a middle and an end, with a dramatic climax and a resolution of sorts. It's as if we are hard wired for it and I find that quite wonderful.

Let's think about being a reader. Why do some of us immerse ourselves in books? I read because I want to experience lives other than my own. I cannot live in Tudor England, in revolutionary France, in the America of the Civil War or in early settlement Australia. But reading can take me there. When reading I am touched by the power of words to give me the emotion, the feeling, the thoughts, the

lives of other human beings. Reading other people's stories gives it to me. By writing I discover it for myself and I hope I give it to others. This is from C.S.Lewis. Through literature, he wrote, '*I become a thousand other people and yet remain myself.*'

Some books I read for simple pleasure. Crime fiction exerts a particular fascination. There is delight in the ideas, the plot and the language or humour. But other books leave me with the feeling of 'this is a great truth, why didn't I know this?' The last time it happened so profoundly was with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, a story set in the aftermath of the American Civil War. It follows the fortunes of a freed slave. I had, in the past, studied American history, I had read accounts of slavery and post-Civil War America. But nothing prepared me for this novel, this sweeping, startling, rhythmic, poetic story that made me see what that time was like for a black woman. Not every black woman, but this one, who could be anyone. The story, the imagery, the language was at times unbearable. I believe I was allowed greater knowledge, more than a glimpse into that world, by the power of that story.

But what about the oral tradition, the told story? I grew up in a house where telling stories was an essential part of living and acknowledged as such. One of my strongest memories is coming home from school and there would be my Mum, sitting by the wood stove, probably with a friend, and they'd be drinking cups of tea and talking. Often the talk was of something to do with the life my mother and her forebears had led in Northern NSW. From her I heard the tales of my great-grandmother who was the first non-indigenous child born west of the Blue Mountains, of that woman's subsequent moving to the Hunter Valley, of her adult life as a farmer and the mother of 11 children, two of them twins born at home with only her older children to help and so on. There were stories too of my grandmother—the death of one of her sons in an accident when he was only eight, the near death of my own mother, in utero because her Mum was thrown from a sulky on the track that led from their farm. The detail that my grandfather liked to buy old racehorses for his farm horses added a certain frisson to that story.

I know so much about my mother's family from her telling of those stories and I know so little about my father's



family. They too were settlers in this country from the mid-19th century and I know vague details about settlement in Southern Queensland and Northern NSW, but little of the richness, the drama of their lives. Anything I do know came to me from my own mother passing on things she learned from marrying into that family. From this wealth of story I know where I come from. I know a good deal about the lives and the culture of my forebears. I know who I am and I have great empathy with the lives that went before me. It is women who largely carry this culture on, who pass on the stories of family, who give stability to family history.

I find it ironic that for many of us as students of history we learnt so much of the lives of male settlers in this country—and we are not unique—and so little of the lives of the women. Some early writers wrote of them—Eve Pownell—but really it wasn't until women such as Anne Summers and Miriam Dixon wrote their books that the history of women's lives became more accessible.

When I began my career as a novelist I did have a strong motivation of telling the lives of strong girl characters. I had done a project in my university days on representations of girls in children's fiction and I felt I wanted to redress some of the imbalance. In the books leading up to that study in the early '70s the girls in our fiction were overwhelmingly in need of male protection and saving whenever they got into difficult situations. Or they had to suffer if they represented a rebellious or an alternative view of femininity. Think Judy being killed by a tree, Katy being bedridden after her accident and the only active girl in Enid Blyton's work was really a surrogate boy, George.

My book *Eleanor Elizabeth* was published in 1984. Since then I've created a number of female characters who, I feel, have developed active lives and I wanted to share one of those with you today. Some of you may have been at the JSNWL lunch-hour talk I gave at the beginning of last year, before the publication of *Mahtab's Story*. It was launched in May 2008 by the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir.

*continued on page 10*

**IIAV CHANGES ITS NAME**

The International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV) in the Netherlands has changed its name. It is now known as Aletta, Institute for Women's History. Through the name change the organisation hopes to gain greater visibility, both in its home country and internationally. 'Aletta' refers to Aletta Jacobs, who was one of the most famous Dutch feminists of the 19th and early 20th centuries, an inspiring woman, who founded the IIAV.

Aletta has completely overhauled its website, so that there is now one single googlian search function, giving immediate access to articles, images, book titles, archival documents etc that the organisation holds. Have a look at their new website at [www.aletta.nu](http://www.aletta.nu). It is still a work in progress and they ask you to excuse any errors you may find.

Aletta is keeping the 'Mapping the World' database up-to-date. This comprehensive database contains women's information services: libraries, documentation centres, archives and other institutions where reserachers etc can go for information on the position of women. JSNWL has sent in its up-to-date information for inclusion in this database and we will be putting a link to it on our website.

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**NEWS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN**

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IAW representatives have been doing good work on the Human Rights Council, the European Women's Lobby and the Council of the EU. Their information sheet tells us the good news that Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg has been elected 65th President of the United Nationals (ECOSOC), the second woman to lead the Council.

**Acid Attacks against Women and Girls**

Acid attacks on women and girls are common in a number of Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Cambodia. Enlightened Imams have established the Movement for Women's Rights Network, and 140 Imams are taking initiatives to make followers aware of the problems inherent in Early Marriage, Domestic Violence, Sexual Abuse, and Girls and Children Trafficking. They are raising awareness among men and women through weekly speeches at the mosques and community-based religious gatherings. The messages are reaching about 100,000 people every week.

**AIDS Orphans**

It is estimated that worldwide, more than 15 million children under 18 have been orphaned as a result of AIDS. About 11.6 million of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa. In countries like Zambia and Botswana, which have been badly affected by the epidemic, about 20% of children under 17 are orphans—most of whom have lost one or both parents to AIDS. For more information go to [www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm](http://www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm).

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**JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY NEEDS A FELINE FRIEND!**

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We recently received a cutting from Anne Haskell in the US. It was headed '**Library Cat Gets \$1.25 Million Book Deal.**' The cutting was about Dewey Readmore Books, the live-in mascot of the Spencer Public Library in Iowa. Dewey, who put the little town of Spencer on the map, died aged 19 in 2006. Such was his fame, which spread worldwide, that Grand Central Publishing signed a \$US1.25 million book deal for Dewey's life story. Vicki Myron, the Director of the library, has co-authored the biography.

Dewey joined the staff after being rescued by Vicki from the library drop box, where he had been abandoned as a kitten one bitterly cold January night. When rescued, his paws were frostbitten. He survived, was adopted by the library staff and made the library his home. He was an intelligent and lovable animal who made friends with the library users and in so doing welded the town into a community. His fame spread as tourists discovered him and as articles appeared in US publications. Dewey starred on Library Friends' fundraising postcards, cat-themed calendars, and in the 1997 documentary film *Puss in Books: Adventures of the Library Cat*. When he died, his obituary appeared in more than 250 publications, including national newspapers.

Grand Central Publisher, Jamie Raab said in *The New York Times* 'To me [the book] was about how animals can bring out the humanity in us, and I loved that.' A book review says ...'a true account of how an abandoned kitten ... helped transform the library and its struggling Iowa farm town. As word of Dewey's 'library cat' status spread, so did his fame. [This book] is a fitting tribute to a gallant and gentle feline soul.'

*Dewey*, published in 2008, was on the US Best Seller list for 14 weeks. It is now on bookshop shelves in Australia. It is a heartwarming story and at the end will have you dewey-eyed. Do read it!

**NEW MEMBERS**

A warm welcome to our new members

Anne Bates  
Kathleen Gilbert  
Heather Holloway  
Deborah Nance  
Gwen Nicholls  
Mary O'Sullivan  
Anne Spencer  
Jennifer Weldon

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**MONETARY DONATIONS**

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We thank all those who have made generous financial donations, usually when renewing subscriptions. These donations help pay for the day-to-day running costs of the Library.

Anne Deveson  
Jean Gledhill  
Ardyce M Harris  
Verna Morgan  
Janice Nash  
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Jane Pollard  
Jill Roe

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

*The following extract re women Trade Commissioners was taken from a Minute Paper (Commonwealth of Australia). It was sent by one A.R. Taysom to 'The Director'. It is dated March 1963.*

In countries where publicity media is well developed, such as North America and England and where there are no other major drawbacks such as the Islamic attitude towards women, a relatively young, attractive woman could operate with some effectiveness, in a subordinate capacity. As she would probably be the only woman Assistant Trade Commissioner in the whole area, as other countries employ women in this capacity hardly at all, she could attract a measure of interest and publicity.





## IMPORTANT NOTICES

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

**SATURDAY 10 APRIL, 2010**

Seminar Room 1  
Ultimo Community Centre, Ultimo  
corner Harris and William Henry Streets  
(enter via Bulwara Road)

#### Notice of Motion

We remind members that notice of any motion to be presented at the AGM must be received by the Secretary no later than Wednesday 24 February 2010.

The rules governing AGM procedures are strict and no motions or amendments can be accepted from the floor.

#### Postal Voting

Members are given the opportunity to register a postal vote. A voting form can be obtained from the Library on request.

Members are reminded that only those who are financial are eligible to vote.

#### Nominations

Nominations for election to the Board must be received by the Returning Officer by Tuesday 23 March. Nomination forms may be obtained from the Library on request. Returned forms should be accompanied by a short biography of the nominee.

We regret that we are unable at present to offer downloads of postal voting or nomination forms from the website. However, we may be able to do so early next year, so keep watching!

### FROM OUR RESEARCH COLLECTION

*Here is a fable from the book Feminist Fables by Suniti Namjoshi*

*Suniti Namjoshi was born in India and taught in universities in India and Canada. She has published prolifically—books, poems, fables, and journal articles. She now lives in England.*

Once there was a child who sprouted wings. They sprang from her shoulder blades, and at first they were vestigial. But they grew rapidly, and in no time at all she had a sizable wing span. The neighbours were horrified. 'You must have them cut' they said to her parents. 'Why?' said her parents. 'Well, it's obvious' said the neighbours. 'No,' said the parents, and this seemed so final that the neighbours left. But a few weeks later the neighbours were back. 'If you won't have them cut, at least have them clipped.' 'Why?' said the parents. 'Well, at least it shows you're doing something.' 'No' said the parents, and the neighbours left. Then for the third time the neighbours appeared. 'On at least two

### OUR CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND

**AIM** To raise \$500,000, the interest from which will provide for the Library's future operating costs.

We have enclosed a donation form in this newsletter.

Please contribute generously. The greater your donation, the more quickly we reach our goal.

Donations are tax deductible.

**If you have already donated, please pass the form on to a friend.**



#### The CIF Gauge

We hope you noticed the Capital Investment Fund Gauge which was on display at the Annual Fundraising Luncheon at Parliament House.

It has been much admired. It was designed and handmade by Board member, Christine Lees. It is distinctive and looks most attractive on display in the Library.

The Gauge indicates that we have now raised \$38,000 of the \$500,000 aimed at.

occasions you have sent us away,' they informed the parents, 'but think of that child. What are you doing to the poor little thing?' 'We are teaching her to fly,' said the parents quietly.

*Feminist Fables* is published by Virago Press, London, 1994.

## UNA ELLIS (1926-2009)

We were saddened to learn of the death of Una Ellis, who died at her home on 4 October, aged 83.

Much of Una's career was with the United Nations in Vienna and she also spent time with the UN in New York. After she had retired and returned to Sydney, she became a volunteer with Jessie Street National Women's Library. Una, with Lenore Coltheart, Jennifer Crew and Shirley Jones, was one of the early group who worked hard to establish the Library. She was a member of the Board for many years and when the Library was accommodated in a room in the NSW Teachers Federation building in Sussex Street, she helped librarian Noel Gray with the acquisition and cataloguing of our books.

For her work with JSNWL, Una was made an Honorary Life Member.

## NOTES & QUOTES

### Unusual Classified Advertisements

Lost: small apricot poodle. Reward. Neutered. Like one of the family.

Dinner Special—Turkey \$2.35; Chicken or Beef \$2.25; Children \$2.00

For sale: Four-poster bed, 101 years old. Perfect for antique lover.

Now is your chance to have your ears pierced and get an extra pair to take home, too.

We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.

Stock up and save. Limit: one.

From *Staying Positive*, No. 1, 2000

## CHANGING OUR WEBSITE

We are instituting changes to our website. These are desperately needed. At present we rely on the Council IT staff to carry out any updating changes. With Council staff so busy, it takes time before these changes are made. We ask those accessing the website please to be patient.

We are looking into the matter of hosting the site ourselves. We would then be directly responsible for the updating, which could be done more quickly and on a regular basis.



In the cast also was an old actor, Charles Parkinson, who took boarders in his lovely old Randwick house. I moved in and met a young man living downstairs who, like Charles, was also in the Old Tote's first production, *The Cherry Orchard*. His name was John Bell. Charles, John and I would walk down the road to rehearsal together.

In the '60s it was mandatory that young actors go to London. John got a scholarship to the Bristol Old Vic Drama School (he'd never had formal acting training), and then joined the Royal Shakespeare Company. I followed him, auditioned, and was accepted. We spent nearly five years with the Company, both at Stratford-upon-Avon (where our two daughters were born) and at the Aldwych Theatre, London, for winter seasons.

At the end of that decade we decided our children should have an Australian childhood and we didn't want to turn ourselves into English actors. Also, John itched to direct as well as act—to be more in control, to be proactive rather than passively wait to be employed. In January 1970, with no money, and fares paid by the Australian Government, we returned, John to Head of Acting at NIDA and me to play at the Old Tote again.

Soon, an old university friend asked would we help convert an old garage into a theatre. In 1972 we opened the Nimrod Theatre in Nimrod Street, Kings Cross. Now The Stables Theatre, it has air conditioned comfort. Then, it had one toilet—none for actors. Woe to any actor with nerves! No heating, no cooling under that tin roof and the show stopped during hard rain because no one could hear us. John was first to have a full time salary as theatre director. I acted and made costumes.

A year later I started work in a television series, *The Godfather*, the story of a young single mother of Eastern European origin confined to a wheelchair, bringing up a young son. In order to make ends meet she takes in three boarders who become godfathers. That ran 18 months. I filmed during the day, performed in Nimrod at night and had two young children—a tough time.

In 1974 a theatre lover offered us an old factory on Belvoir Street, Surry Hills. We needed a bigger space and the architect, who designed the Wharf for the Sydney Theatre Company, built us a theatre. We worked there for 10 years until exhaustion and government parsimony overtook us. The theatre, bought by a consortium, became the Belvoir.

After a few years freelancing, Tony Gilbert asked John how he could promote more Shakespeare: what about a series of

lectures? 'No!' said John, 'the best way to enjoy Shakespeare is to see it and hear it spoken. You should start a theatre company.' 'No!' said Tony, 'you should start a theatre company!' So in 1989, during Australia's last recession, John started raising money to supplement Tony's funds. In 1990 the Bell Shakespeare Company was launched with a season of *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Next year will be Bell Shakespeare's 20th anniversary.

Our younger daughter got married just before Christmas. I'm not sure why, as she and James have been together 14 years and have three children, but I guess they wanted to formalise their relationship, making a public declaration in a beautiful setting. It took place in our house near the water on the Central Coast. John led the procession, winding through the garden, beating a large Tibetan gong, followed by eight children skipping along to music played by my older daughter and her husband on ukuleles. Then came the bridal couple, wearing ivy wreaths and stephanotis from the garden, followed by the rest of us. We arrived at the appointed place on the lower deck of the big cool verandah framed with jasmine and overlooking the bay. The children had hung hearts everywhere and read out poems of love they had written. Funny songs were sung. We wept and laughed. Lucy and James signed the official documents and we went upstairs to eat and cut cake. The invented ritual, full of meaning for everyone, had been lovingly put together by Lucy and James. Many, many photographs were taken. A beautiful and special day.

I thought of our wedding, 44 years earlier, and that missed opportunity. Through ignorance, it was a selfish and excluding act. I've come to understand that ritual is an important way of reminding us of what has gone before in the way of old traditions, of sharing what is important and of connecting to those you love.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby  
Abbreviated version by Margot Simington*

FALKINER, continued from page 6

refused to recognise her title, which meant that her position was severely circumscribed until Mountbatten intervened with the King to force her acceptance. When Joan came on the scene, the Nawab was in his fifties and his first wife was in ill health and lived in seclusion in another part of the palace by choice. They still had a very good relationship, but not one of a husband and wife.

The ruling families are private citizens now, and have no power at all, although they still have personal prestige among their old subjects. One of the interesting

things about this book for me was to research the political organisation of the states and how they worked. The Nawab was a very sophisticated and progressive ruler, and he could see that after Independence the princes weren't going to survive the way they had before, as sometimes benevolent—and in some cases incompetent—autocrats. He was trying to modernise his state and increase the democratic participation of his subjects when Independence came, and then he was overtaken by the tide of events.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby  
Abbreviated version by Kris Clarke*

GLEESON, continued from page 7

The story is of a family from Herat in Afghanistan who escape the Taliban and endure the privations, the fear, and the suffering that comes from a hazardous journey across their country, a long period of waiting in Pakistan, separation, and finally the trip to Australia that results in incarceration in a detention centre. I met the family through their daughter Nahid, and I am grateful that they gave me permission to spend time with her and allowed so much of their story to be woven into my fiction. Incidentally, Nahid was present at the launch and spoke of what the experience of the writing the book meant to her.

Some would call the passing on of these stories gossip, but I reject any idea that gossip carries connotations of time-wasting and of passing on snippets of uninteresting things. Gossip is the story of our lives in daily episodes. And growing up in a house full of gossip is a great training ground for a novelist. It is no coincidence that my first novel included lots of flashbacks to a life lived in a former time that were taken almost directly from those stories I heard almost at my mother's knee.

*Notes provided by Libby Gleeson  
Abbreviated version by Shirley Jones*



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**At October 2009 = \$38,000**



**MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL / DONATION FORM**

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- I would like to help the Library by becoming a volunteer  
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The membership year runs from January to December.  
 Members joining after 1st October are financial until December of the following year.

Please forward the completed form to:  
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