



Patrons : Margaret Throsby & Bruce Spence

Balmain

Bookworm

The Newsletter of the Friends of Balmain Library

No. 41 June 2010

Annual
General
Meeting

JACK MUNDEY and the 'Green Bans' Friday 18th June - 7 pm **

Free
Admission

NSW Premier Askin dubbed them "traitors to this country", the *Sydney Morning Herald* called them "only dupes of their leadership", and Norm Gallagher dismissed their support as coming only from "residents, sheilas and poofers". But history has shown that, without the "unholy alliance" between the enlightened working class – as represented by the Builders' Labourers Federation – and the enlightened middle-class – typically "blue stockings", the "blue-rinse set" and the upper echelons of The National Trust – Sydney would have lost a significant slice of its historical past.

At the forefront of this revolutionary period in union history, a young militant by name of Jack Munday identified a need to turn a "bottom of the heap" industrial union plagued by deaths, injury, and low wages and conditions, into an organisation of individuals that could take pride in their place in society. Although poorly educated, Jack's intellect and strong values of social justice and fair play enabled him to not only vastly improve their conditions of work, but also inspire his members to fight against a corrupt government and rapacious developers attempting to destroy much of Sydney's natural and built environment.

Next year marks the 40th Anniversary of "The Battle for Kelly's Bush", the first of many alliances between the BLF and local action groups. *What is the use of higher wages alone, if we have to live in cities devoid of parks, denuded of trees, in an atmosphere poisoned by pollution and vibrating with the noise of hundreds of thousands of units of private transport?* Munday asked his members. From this action to save a remnant of bushland on the Hunter's Hill peninsula, the term "Green Ban" came into being. (There is even evidence to suggest that Petra Kelly, leader of the Greens in Germany, took that name from Australia's Green Bans.) From this first success, the phrase broadened to cover subsequent work bans



that saw feminist history courses begun in universities and a homosexual student, expelled from his residential accommodation, reinstated. But the greatest success must be the saving of Sydney's Rocks area. Cradle of Australia's colonial history, it is almost impossible to imagine that a \$500 million commercial skyscraper development, sanctioned by the government of the day, and owned by wealthy corporate interests, was to completely wipe out such a crucial part of our collective past.

And the list goes on: a huge sports stadium for Centennial Park; a car-park for the Opera House, to be built under the domain with the loss of gigantic Moreton Bay figs; another carpark, this one on the site of the lovely sandstone Pitt St. Congregational Church; and a total re-development of Woolloomooloo – were all halted. In total, 42 green bans were put into place to thwart the efforts of the city's greedy corporate barons!

Jack is still a highly-politicised animal! Still busy with current issues such as "The Hungry Mile" development and the threat of open-cut coal mines in the Upper Hunter, Jack believes strongly that "*unions must get more involved in ecological issues – Labor should be working with the Greens!*" He celebrated his 80th birthday last year but has the demeanour and intellect of a much younger man. I could have stayed listening to inspirational stories of the past for a lot longer, but Jack had to prepare for a meeting with Clover Moore and others on that contentious Barangaroo issue. Fortunately, we will all have the pleasure of his company as our special Guest Speaker at the Friends of Balmain Library AGM – on Friday 18th June. Don't miss it!

– Herma Sieper

**** Meeting Room at Balmain Town Hall
FREE ENTRY - including supper
Book early at the Library to avoid disappointment!**



EX LIBRIS ... with Librarians

Chris Giles, Sarah Wild,

Bruce Carter & Selina Spiteri

Author talks with wine & cheese! – Chris Giles

Balmain Library is hosting a series of monthly author talks in the Balmain Library Meeting Room.

Talks in the past have been well-attended, with Frank Walker on the *Tiger man of Vietnam* in March, and Alex Reed in April on *Breakthrough&Balance*. *Conversations with Dr Zita Weber – Unfaithfully yours* was programmed for May and is all about what happens when married women take on a lover.

More recently at Balmain Library, we had Wendy James, a master of suburban suspense, talking about her book *Where have you been?* – and Julie Macken, a successful Australian property investor and author of *Footloose and Financially Free*, will be speaking on Wednesday 9th June at 6.30pm.

Refugee Week – Bruce Carter Local History Librarian

Refugee Week will be celebrated at Balmain Library on Thursday 24th June at 2 pm. With speakers from *Balmain for Refugees* and *Bridge for Asylum Seekers*, as well as some personal reflections on the issues of resettlement in Australia, this should be an interesting afternoon. Refreshments will be provided, and this event is free.



Oral History

Saving 2.6 is an oral history project designed to explore the experiences of local activists in Balmain who fought to save Ballast Point for community open space. It is anticipated 8 to 10 interviews will be undertaken by a team of experienced oral historians. Council's Local History Librarian Bruce Carter is co-ordinating the project and is keen to hear from anyone with ideas or suggestions on possible interviewees. Please contact Bruce either by e-mail or phone, at brucec@lmc.nsw.gov.au or 9367 9266

Heritage Week – Sarah Wild

2010's Heritage Festival programme was a huge success with a great range of events held in our local area. The Balmain Association's ferry tour of former industrial sites on board the historic *Radar* was a sell-out and accompanied the Association's exhibition *Balmain Locals help to make our Nation* at the Watch House on Darling Street. Former Leichhardt councillor Hall Greenland presented a stirring overview of the life of long-time local activist and Leichhardt alderman Nick Origlass to a packed crowd in the Balmain Town Hall meeting room. Our friends at Heritage Group of Leichhardt District, meanwhile, launched their eagerly-awaited book *Exploring Leichhardt Heritage* at Leichhardt Library.

Also, in Leichhardt our walking tour ARCHITECTUS – held on a breezy Sunday morning – was well-attended, with people coming from as far as Sutherland to discover some of Norton Street's architectural highlights.

This is the entry from the library's Local History blog, which is at <http://localnotes.wordpress.com/> and has more information about Local History events and topics of interest, as well as accompanying pictures.

It was the walking tour that I helped out with this year – myself and Amie Zar led the 24 interested souls around the Leichhardt area. It was a really interesting way to learn more about the history of the area. After the tour we all went back to the library, enjoyed some morning tea and watched a film about Memorial Park, which included striking footage of wheat being grown during WW II in the then cemetery amongst the headstones.

If these sorts of events sound really interesting, and you feel that it is a shame that you missed them, I'm pleased to be able to let you know that in September we have *History Week* coming up! The details of the events and exhibitions for *History Week* will be posted in advance on the Local History blog and there will be brochures available in the library.

Children's activities – Selina Spiteri

The children's area has been very busy over the past couple of months. During the Easter school holidays we had a "paint by numbers" activity for school-aged children which was a huge hit with the kids. Michelle ran the programme, selecting letters of the alphabet, then having the children paint something that starts with the corresponding letter. The more original your painting, the more points you received. Some of these masterpieces have been displayed in the children's area for the past month.

EX LIBRIS – continued ...

Storytimes have been lots of fun, especially with events such as St Patrick's Day, Harmony Day and ANZAC Day providing interesting themes to teach and introduce to children. We were lucky enough to have a special guest author, Suzanne Saad, conduct our storytime on 15th April with her helper Julieanne, to the delight of the children. Recently publishing her first book, *With my imagination*, Suzanne acted out her book whilst Julieanne read to the children, using many different props, a couple of songs, and an awesome wizard hat craft to entertain us all.

Free Computer workshops in the library

Balmain Library has launched a series of basic computer classes. The idea is to familiarise patrons with computers and to get them to the stage where they have basic skills and are confident to turn on and use a computer, and make a start with e-mail and using the internet.

The following classes were held during May and in early June :

Introduction to Computers for Beginners :
Monday 10th May

Internet for Beginners :
Thursday 27th May

E-mail for Beginners :
Thursday 3rd June

The training is provided free by Balmain Library staff who are users of computers rather than experts – but who are able to provide patrons with the essentials.

If you missed out on these particular occasions, do not worry, as more classes will be scheduled regularly. Just ask library staff, check out flyers in the library, or log on to the library website at :

www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au/library

Your library card provides you with 2 hours of free use of the six public PCs in the main section of the library – subject to availability. (There are also two PCs in the children's section, specifically for children and their parents or carers to use.)

Wonderful wireless

Balmain Library also has a free wireless service for those with their own laptops.

Patrons can go onto the internet via a web browser, and a screen from 'I Connect' will prompt for some demographic information. Once the boxes are ticked, access to the internet is automatically effected. The service is called "Unwired" which will appear under the network icon near the date at the bottom right hand corner of your screen.



Actors' Forum

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE AT
AFFORDABLE PRICES

The Actors' Forum is presenting what is probably the most popular and certainly the best-known of J. B. Priestley's eighteen plays, *An Inspector Calls*. Set in 1912, this work gives us a suspense drama which carries with it a lesson in social morality. A three-act play, which observes the classical unities of time, place, and action, it leaves science fiction and detective stories for dead !

Venue : Mayflower Hall

St Andrew's Congregational Church Hall
cnr. Darling St. & Curtis Rd. - Balmain

Date : Sunday 18th July

Time : 2 pm

Price : \$ 20 & \$ 15 (conc.)

Tickets on sale at the door – from 1 pm on the day

Enhancements to our Speaker Events

Next time you arrive at the Meeting Room behind the Town Hall, or FOBL events elsewhere, look out for our new Sandwich Board! *We Are Signs* in Balmain gave us a good discount as we are a not-for-profit community group, and Leichhardt Library offered to pay for half the cost. Both contributions are greatly appreciated !

We have been aware for some time that our audience at events can experience difficulty seeing and hearing guest speakers. Twice in the past – for Geraldine Brooks and, more recently, David Marr – we hired a dais in order to improve this situation. However, this is quite a costly enterprise, so we were delighted when local company *Greg Murphy Scenery* of Mansfield Street Rozelle, offered to make one for us. It has been delivered and stored in close proximity to the Meeting Room and will be brought out for the first time for our AGM speaker, the venerable and esteemed activist Jack Munday.

Balmain Library Opening Hours

Monday :	9.30 am – 5.30 pm
Tuesday :	9.30 am – 8.00 pm
Wednesday :	9.30 am – 8.00 pm
Thursday :	9.30 am – 5.30 pm
Friday :	9.30 am – 5.30 pm
Saturday :	9.30 am – 4.00 pm



A Word from the Chair of FOBL

Mariella Totaro-Genevois

Reporting from Naples, Italy

Unlike on other occasions, when this column has focused on topics strictly related to our local library in Balmain and the work of its Friends, my aim is to invite readers of *Bookworm* to look briefly a bit beyond the boundaries of our attractive and busy peninsula into the wider library world.

FOBL, as I'm sure all of us are aware, is just one of a total of 146 Friends of Libraries (FOL) existing in Australia. Spread all over the national territory this army of book lovers, like busy-bees, hover around their local libraries, constantly intent on a large variety of activities / tasks, all aimed towards adding strength, worth and efficiency to those institutions.

Notwithstanding the physical distance separating these groups of people committed to Australian public libraries, there is an obvious common bond linking them across space and that is – I believe – the shared faith in the value of reading and in the significance of books.

Now, sharing values is of course a wonderful thing. However, there is also a need to translate abstract words into practical actions. But, how to move from our local / parochial concerns to the broader horizons of the wider communities of friends of libraries in Australia? And is there a need for doing so?

My personal answer to the first question is to encourage good contact with the Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA) – www.foa.org.au – the umbrella organisation representing the interest of all Friends groups, via its indefatigable advocacy with and at all levels of government to ensure that public libraries are both adequately funded and made increasingly accessible to all Australians.

As for the second question, I believe that nowadays, with the current technological revolution and a forecast of unpredictable changes in the traditional use of / relationship with books, it is important to co-operate in devising all possible strategies to help libraries maintain their pivotal role in our communities.

In keeping with these views, what I am suggesting is that, because of the powerful common denominator that Australian Friends of Libraries share (often without even knowing each other), it might be helpful – whenever possible – to keep in touch, not just locally, but *also* within the State where we live, as well as on a national scale.

How this can be achieved is through communication: discussing our goals, our concerns, our achievements,

and productive developments in our community work. If we manage to be in touch, interact and communicate well, we will have better chances to learn from each other, benefit from each other's experiences, and explore new possibilities.

"Words, just words..." some sceptical reader might silently comment while reading these remarks, "...but how, realistically, do we go about implementing these ideas?"

Well, it seems to me that this subject might deserve further discussion, but for now I will limit myself to giving an example. The Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA) is organising a seminar / workshop for Friends of Libraries (FOL), in NSW, some time in October. The State Library is offering its premises for what is likely to be a very stimulating day. There will be a guest speaker and some discussion leaders; however, the emphasis will be on *sharing* our experiences, both past and present, as voluntary community workers for our cherished local libraries.

Is there a theme for the day? Yes. It is going to be:

"From grey to green : how to rejuvenate our FOLs teams ?"

Actually, this is just a working title, or core idea, which of course will be expressed in a more elegant / serious / appropriate manner closer to the date of the event. More information will be made available, and reported in *Bookworm*, in the coming months.

But there is one thing I feel sure of – that the Friends of Balmain Library will be well-represented at this most important event !



THE FRIENDS of BALMAIN LIBRARY

Invite you to their

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

@ 7.00 pm Friday 18th June 2010

in The Meeting Room - Rear Balmain Town Hall

With Special Guest Speaker

the inspirational hero of so many

Mr. JACK MUNDEY

Book early, at Balmain Library ...



Have your say Post it ON THE WALL



Letter addressed to
The Friends of Balmain Library:

Does anyone remember the Australian History section in the old Balmain Library? The six imposing volumes of Manning Clark's History of Australia sat on the top shelf and below them were books like Stephen Nicholas's Convict Workers and Portia Robinson's Women of Botany Bay to fill in details unearthed by modern research. Every now and then would appear a book written by a REAL LIVE HISTORIAN to bring us up to date and illuminate another aspect of our past.

In the new library there is a sad little collection of memoirs and reminiscences and other trivia. Someone has added We of the Never Never, The Master Pearler's Daughter and The Shark Net to the history shelves.

Where are all the old treasures? Well, it seems that they were "assessed" and probably sold. Any student working on a project, or anyone interested in real history would be unlikely to find anything useful on the history shelves now.

It is an insult to library users that one section (and probably others) has been "dumbed down" like this, and FOBL'S efforts wasted on trivia.

R. M. Prokhovnik
(FOBL Member)

From the Editor :

Rona's letter has been forwarded to Leichhardt Library Manager, Marilyn Taylor, for comment. My personal view is that there are many works that, due either to their literary or historical value, belong permanently in every Australian library. Melbourne historian Brian Matthews has just won the National Biography Award for his work *Manning Clark: A Life*, suggesting that perhaps there will be a resurgence of interest in Clark's work?

As to fiction, some time ago I tried to borrow one of Amanda Lohrey's early novels (as she had just won a major award for a recent work) and Randolph Stow's *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* (surely part of Australia's literary canon?) – and was dismayed to discover that Ryde Library had "de-accessioned" both. Who knows what other pearls have been thus discarded? Write to *Bookworm* with your own "horror stories" and I will give them space on our new updated "Letters Page".

Letter addressed to
Gillian O'Mulloy
FOBL Secretary and Open Book Group Convenor:

Hello Gillian,

Just wanted to say thank you for your co-ordination of our book group, always keeping us inspired and updated, thereby enabling us to look forward to our next meeting. Many thanks for your kind words about my moderation ... it was a good experience for me! I was delighted with all the contributions that others made, which added to the whole perspective, and it enriched and enhanced my understanding of the book and India. Thank you for your personal input on Tuesday ... it was fascinating. I thoroughly enjoy coming to the discussion group, and look forward to the next month's meeting.

Keep well,
Marg

From the Editor :

Marg Marciniak is referring to the Booker Prize-winning novel *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, last month's choice for FOBL's Open Book Group. Meeting at 1pm on the second Tuesday of each month, in Balmain Library's Meeting Room, this group just goes from strength to strength. No commitment is needed – just read the set book and turn up on the day ready for some stimulating discussion! Selections for June, July, and August are as follows:

8 th June	<i>Purple Hibiscus</i>	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
13 th July	<i>Saturday</i>	Ian McEwan
10 th August	<i>Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All</i>	Christina Thompson



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Both signed or anonymous
contributions accepted

SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL 2010 – IN REVIEW

This was going to be the year that I missed the Sydney Writers' Festival (SWF) in its entirety, but a volcano in Iceland with an unpronounceable name intervened. I was in Singapore en route to Amsterdam in April when all flights to Europe were halted. We waited for some days but when the volcano continued to pour ash into the atmosphere we decided to abort our travels and return to Australia. This was clearly a disappointing decision but one plus is my being able to participate in the 2010 SWF.

The riches on offer this year are wonderful – Colm Tóibín, William Dalrymple and so on and so on. How does one choose, and how does one get to all the free events? The first step for me is the website with the daily schedules. With many concurrent sessions one HAS to make choices, however it's wise to have a back-up or two in case the queue is too long for the first option. The "big names" tend to be ticketed events so early booking is necessary to ensure success. So – choices made and bookings arranged I now proceed to the "My Schedule" of the SWF website. This handy tool allows participants to add their choices to a diary for each day.

Another very necessary "tool" for the SWF is a friend or friends. One has to queue, eat and of course discuss! All difficult to carry out without company. Although, if alone, don't hesitate to attend as the camaraderie is another pleasure of an event where Sydney strangers tend to be a little more relaxed with each other.

A typical day at the festival :

- Up early for a long walk as I'll be inside and sitting down (hopefully) for most of the day.
- Pack my backpack with some food and water – the venues do cater for the hungry but often there is not time for a café visit due to the demands of keeping a place in a queue and the short time between sessions
- 9.00 am walk to the ferry and meet up with like-minded locals
- 9.30 am pick up the shuttle bus outside the MCA to Walsh Bay
- 10.00 am the first talk for my day
- Continue until exhausted!

Some highlights of this year's festival :

Sarah Thornton, author of *Seven Days in the Art World* spoke about investigating the many aspects of the art world, which include the auction house, the collector, the art fair and, of course, the artist.

Lionel Shriver, in conversation with Caroline Baum

I have only read Shriver recently, so two of her books are very fresh in my mind. I found it fascinating to hear how anger about an issue stimulates her to write which, in turn, allows her to clarify her position. She describes anger as "having energy which fires you up" and this would certainly be the case in her most recent publication. Shriver was a good subject and Baum is an exemplary interviewer. Baum was able to elicit information on Shriver's family which demonstrated how much they had been used as the basis for characters.

Creative Memoir – Ali Alizadeh and Rupert Thomson in conversation with Sophie Cunningham

These writers had quite a body of fiction when they came to write family memoirs. Both stated how, in the beginning, writing non-fiction proved "dry" and not engaging. Once they decided to apply their creative abilities to family stories they believed their work came to life. It was agreed that everyone had their own version of a family history so it's difficult to be critical of this process.

The Biblio-chase – a conversation between Nicholas Pounder and Rick Gekoski

These two "book men", who clearly enjoyed each other's company, conversed over the hour in a most interesting and entertaining manner. We heard how they both came to collect and sell books, and how they moved from the second-hand market (and where that sat in the "food chain"!) to dealing in rare and old books.

"No He Can't"

was the title of a panel discussion between Christopher Hitchens, Anne Davies and Don Watson. The moderator, Geoffrey Garrett of the US Studies Centre at Sydney University, attempted to restrict comment to "the big picture of Obama". While there was disagreement on various actions of the president, there was broad consensus that, with health insurance and financial regulation reform, he had achieved significant improvements.

An Evening with Colm Tóibín

Once again the interviewer was the inimitable Caroline Baum who led the writer towards stories of Ireland, writing, and characters. It concluded with Tóibín singing a mournful, off-key primitive-sounding song - which certainly made me pleased that he was a writer and not a singer!

Who's Interviewing Who?

A conversation between former columnist Alan Ramsey and Senator John Faulkner was the final event for me. Attended by a capacity crowd at the Sydney Theatre, both participants explored policies, positions, and performance with some fireworks (mild!) along the way.

Although the SWF has been running for many years now, this is only the second year I've been able to devote so much time to this event. It's certainly worth "soaking up" as much as possible, enjoying hearing favourite writers and having the pleasure of discovering new people. An occupational hazard is to find one's own reading list considerably lengthened, but I guess that's what it's all about – the pleasure of reading and getting to know those that labour to provide us with books.

– Annette Waterworth (FOBL Treasurer)



Sydney Writers' Festival
May 15-23 2010

READ · RETHINK · RESPOND

IN THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

Recently I was condemned to ten days in hospital and some heavy-duty surgery. I had time to prepare for this and was much exercised about what books to take with me – I ended up with more books than clothes! I anticipated such a wonderful slab of reading time. The theory is fine, but actually you don't feel that great and you spend a lot of time being tested, monitored, fed etc. Actual reading time is quite limited.

Anyway, none of the books I took with me appealed at all: one in particular, *Shut Up and Deal* by Jesse May – about the lifestyle of professional poker players – is enough to put you off cards for life. And the three books by Stieg Larsson – *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* series – looked rather daunting. They were donated by my cousin who assured me that I would find them riveting, but they were so big I could hardly lift them and I was aware that they were dark and violent. Not what one needs in hospital.

But my aunt came to the rescue with one of the best books I have read for years: *The Uncommon Reader* by Alan Bennett. He is the most subtle and precise of writers, and in this book he has a quite fabulous plot – and underneath the gentle humour there is plenty to think about. So good I read it twice on the spot.

But the nights caught up with me – massive insomnia – and I finally took to *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. There is no doubt it is a compulsive read. Well-written and translated, with a very carefully-crafted plot line, and some engaging characters offset by awful villains. Unputdownable!

But I did take a break before embarking on the other two: *The Girl who Played with Fire* and *The Girl who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

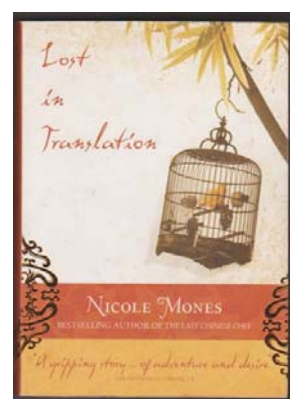
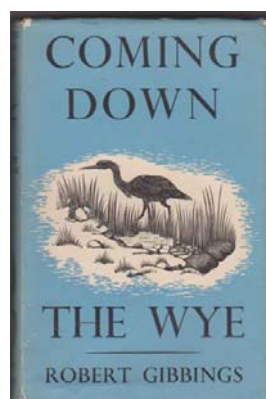
Back at home I wanted a gentle read so returned to an old favourite, the author Robert Gibbings. This time *Coming Down the Wye*, but he has written a series about travelling down rivers – *Lovely is the Lee*, *Sweet Thames run Softly*, *Coming down the Seine*, are a few examples. Part of their charm is the series of illustrations – black and white engravings by Gibbings which are quite beautiful. Definitely worth a look.

And then someone trailed a new author past me: Nicole Mones: *The Last Chinese Chef*, *Lost in Translation* (not the film story)

and *A Cup of Light*. This author spent a long time working in China and has lots of persuasive background detail as well as well-constructed plots. The type of book that makes you hang out for the next one.

And, finally, back to a classic: *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh. Read it and you'll be quite sure that journalism has barely changed in the last eighty years!

– Jan Aitkin, May 2010



Editor's Note:

Jan is recovering well after major surgery and has resumed her involvement in our Committee. As far as I know, her reading habits have returned to normal and we can continue looking forward to Jan's inspiring recommendations.

Riverview Hotel - Hill of Content Book Club

Book lovers in Balmain now have another outstanding event to add to their diaries, with the launch of the Riverview Hotel Hill of Content Book club which shall be hosting a monthly author evening – either a new-release signing, or a book launch.

This book club's inaugural event is being held on **Tuesday 8th June @ 7 pm** – with future events being the first Wednesday of each month. Canapés and finger food will be provided free of charge by The Riverview and, of course, FOBL members shall receive their usual 10% discount on book purchases.

Our first author is Sam Everingham, who wrote *Madam Lash: Gretel Pinniger's scandalous life of sex, art and bondage*.

Gretel, who will be our special guest, first achieved notoriety when she developed her 'Madam Lash' persona as part of a strip act in Kings Cross in the 1970s. While at odds with her true self, her character captured the nation's attention.

Her great love, a wealthy businessman, has supported her lifestyle at a distance for over 25 years, with one condition – anonymity. In *Madam Lash* youth, beauty and creativity bubble over into debauchery, madness and tragedy, revealing something of the psychology of celebrity, of desire and the forces that bind us together.



RSVP : hocsyd@bigpond.com

INTRODUCING Hong Luu

by Herma Sieper

Hong never imagined a library career, choosing to study science at the University of Saigon, and majoring in chemistry. Although she spent the next ten years in this field, Hong also translated technical documents from Vietnamese into English, and worked on the Department of Chemistry's library cataloguing system. Luckily, this work proved to be very enjoyable as a growing allergy to chemicals was suggesting Hong needed to consider a career change.

Fifteen years ago, the family emigrated to Australia. Hong's husband arrived first, followed two years later by Hong and her eight-year-old daughter. From a family of ten children, three are in the United States, one in Australia, a sister is about to move to Canada, with the rest remaining in Vietnam. Although Hong has been back to Vietnam a few times, she is not super fond of travelling – preferring the arrival at the destination over the process – but is conscious of parents ageing and the inevitability of losing touch with her siblings' growing families. This also means that Hong has not seen that much of Australia – just short drives out of Sydney, and some trips to the Gold Coast – but has spent one holiday in the US visiting family.

What she does love is studying. After completing her TAFE Library Technician's qualification, Hong worked first at Marrickville Library next at the NSW Parliamentary Library, and then started working casually at Leichhardt Library. In 2005 Hong became a permanent member of staff at Balmain Library, and now, with Chris Giles, is responsible for the non-fiction collection as well as all community notice-boards, including FOBL's separate board in the library's Reference Section. The best parts of the job to Hong include building the collection, assisting with borrower information enquiries and the contact she has with the public. Still employed at weekends in Marrickville, Hong enjoys its multicultural aspect

– its community language collection covers Vietnam, China, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Spain, and more. Currently Hong has paused midway through her Graduate Diploma in Information Science, as she finds little time in between work, study, and family commitments.



French, Vietnamese and European "fairy" stories and fables were part of her childhood reading experience and, as a young student, detective stories and science fiction were favourite genres, as well as stories about apartheid and the devastation and misery caused by war. Favourites include three titles exploring social and racial issues: *Let The Day Perish* by Gerald Gordon (published in 1952) and *Cry The Beloved Country* by Alan Paton (1948), both set in South Africa; and

Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published a century earlier. Hong also read Tolstoy and Pasternak and Victor Hugo in translation. For the moment, Hong likes reading non-fiction books, especially on medical and spiritual issues, and newspapers and magazines are read on a regular basis.

Hong's admiration of her parents' achievement in sending all ten children to university during a difficult period in Vietnam's history came out in discussion. Proud of her Vietnamese heritage, she misses the country of her birth but does not regret coming to Australia. In the future, when Hong has completed her university studies, she hopes to find more time for the spiritual side of life – to learn more about, and also to become more involved in, Buddhism. Given what she has achieved so far, I feel sure Hong will succeed in this goal.

BALMAIN BOOKWORM:

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Don't forget to recycle your 'Bookworms' by giving them to friends and relatives - and encourage them to become a FOBL member!



www.fobl.org.au