

# The Clunes Booktown Festival



# BIG OWL

**2017**

A collection of writing emerging from the  
2017 Clunes Booktown Festival  
Magazine in a Weekend Program

The people at Booktown would like to express out huge thanks to Barb Curzon-Siggers, Andrew Masterson and all the magazine staff from *PEN Melbourne*, *The Big Issue*, *Fead*, *Voiceworks*, *The Lifted Brow* and *Kill Your Darlings* who held the space and helped the budding writers do their thing.

Special mention also to Maria from Staughton College, Melton South.

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# The Magazine in a Weekend Program

## The Pitch:

The Big Owl 2017 is about

- giving people who want to write a chance to get their work out into the world in an environment that is structured, focused and supportive in terms of both information and connection with others taking on the same challenge
- using the power of a collective of creative and engaged people and of digital publishing to capture some of the multitude of small and large moments, spaces and interactions that make up the Clunes Booktown Festival weekend
- creating a largely open platform that celebrates the diversity of perspectives that exist at our festival
- creating something within the confines of a very short window, turning it around without having time to be held back or slowed down by too much fear, doubt, writer's block, other homework or housework or workwork.
- getting to the end of the weekend and having something to look at, marvel over and show to our friends, family and potential employers

## The Guidelines:

1. It must be 300 words, give or take 30 words, or a photo or artwork you create this weekend.
2. It must be about something you see, feel or think about during the 2017 Clunes Booktown Festival weekend.
3. To be pedantic, but clear: it has to be by you; it can't be some awesome piece of writing, art or photography by someone else that they own the copyrights to and wouldn't want you giving to us.
4. It can't be offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic, slanderous, libelous etc. You get the picture.
5. Make sure it's good. (Hint: go to the workshops and/or spend time talking with the people in the Magazine in a Weekend Hub at the Festival - in The Warehouse, Fraser St, Clunes.)
6. Have it loaded into this Google.doc before 3pm on Sunday May 7th.
7. Accept that after 3pm on Sunday May 7th, the good people of Booktown will send this work into the wider world by publishing it for free online. It will be published digitally in the first instance and will be available to anyone to download, print and send it to their grandmother so she can read it. You have to be okay with that.

# Upon Arrival

by Niamh Dabner, age 10



The smell of smoke gave me an itch. An itch to sneeze. I held it in, feeling my guts want to let out a cough or a sneeze. Maybe even a rumble. Was I hungry? We came here for the so called “workshop” which, to say truthfully, I thought would be boring. I had some good questions though, ones like, ‘If you were to make another magazine, what would be the genre?’.

The man dressed as a waiter came walking up, an accent toned so beautiful and different he made me smile. ‘No children are allowed,’ he said, juggling some soft white, what would they be called, things. ‘Just kidding, go ahead!’ We laughed, our voiced echoing through the crowd behind us.

## **10 minutes later.**

It wasn’t long before the workshop was on. ‘Up in the glass building,’ my mother had said. Through the glass doors and up the stairs into a medium sized room, would be more specific. When we had eventually got into the building, there were stairs and a ramp. Which one? How confused could you be? Ramp or stairs?

‘Go up the stairs to the workshop,’ said the lady at the desk.

‘Thanks,’ my mother said.

The stairs took me an effort. I had many stairs who had killed me at some point during my life and this was another death of me. A long wait until the whole workshop thing started. Then I noticed it. The books all looked adulty and not of children type. ‘Everyone take their seats,’ said the man, ‘My name is Tim,’ I couldn’t even remember a word he said before introducing his friend, whose name didn’t come to mind. But he worked for The Age. This was for adults and these were my first thoughts.





## Writing from the Redhead

by **Orlando Dabner**

True magic can be hard to find but at things like Booktown you get to appreciate the real meaning of magic. Today I've met some of the authors and editors at the Clunes Booktown Festival and talked to them about getting into the writing industry.

'It's very hard to get published because of all the online bookstores,' Dave Sinclair, 45, explained to me earlier. Dave was promoting his book *The Barista's Guide to Espionage*. 'I had to work with a publisher in the UK.'

But with magazines such as *Voiceworks*, it's easy for young writers to get out there. They publish under 25-year-old fiction, non-fiction, poetry and art, allowing young writers to get publishing gigs.

There are other writers I've talked to who have helped me understand getting inspired in their work.

One magazine, *The Lifted Brow*, one of the editors Zoe Dzunko, 31, explained that she could get inspired by things that move her emotionally. While Justin Woolley, 33, writer of *A Town Called Dust* was inspired by his high-school students to write. You can see there are lots of diverse ways to get inspired and write or edit for magazines or novels.

If you're considering getting into the writing business some advice I've heard lots today is read as much as you can in all areas of reading, to also write as much as you can, and finish what you're writing before moving on to the next piece.

Booktown has been a success so far except for some blustery weather, although that didn't deter book fans, with many books being sold at multiple pop-up bookstores. Live music fills the air, sharing it with chatty voices and sausage sizzles.

Today I've learnt a lot from editors and authors about life in the writing business. I now know about how to publish and express yourself as well as inspiration, publishing and getting out there. My time spent here shows some of the true magic of books and magazines, and how to get to be a part of it.

# BEST BUY IN BOOKTOWN

by Helen Patrice

Saturday afternoon, and the rain arrived.

The book seller rushed out to gather in her secondhand books. The eight people browsing her stall swept up books as though panic-buying, and took them inside her tent.

She gasped her thank-yous as we piled handfuls of hardback books, mostly about gardening into untidy stacks. We drowned out the War table with flowers, shrubs, and worm farming.

"Honey," a woman said, loudly, "let's look at the books in here."

Everyone chuckled. Yes, let's all look at the books in here in minute detail, until the rain eases.

A lot of looking, a little buying by a man swooning over some early Biggles.

"What's HE doing out there?" a woman demanded, at the opening of the tent. "That's not a book!"

She pointed to an older gentleman, with white bushy beard, and straggly grey-white hair hanging from beneath a battered brown hat. He swung a rusty milk pail from one hand as he sauntered past the tent opening.

The woman, her husband, and another couple knew the man. Husband of the woman dashed out to admire the milk pail.

It was old, dull silver on one side, and a thin patina of rust on the other. The two men turned the pail this way and that, slavering over the rust.

"I've come back three times to look at this," said Farmer Santa.

Husband nodded. He could see why. What a prize!

The women gathered around.

"What's it for?" put a dampener on the milk pail fan club.

Nevertheless, Farmer Santa went on his way, more pleased with his purchase than any book buyer along the whole of the main drag.

We turned our attention to secondhand books. They seemed a little duller in the rain-filled light. Not one had the shine of an old milk pail. Not even Biggles.

## My report on Clunes Booktown

by Akira Richardson (age 13)

The moment I walked over to Clunes Booktown, my first thought was: "Woah!" I was entirely impressed! The way the cardboard entrance was so cautiously folded and placed... It looked absolutely amazing!

I felt a rush of excitement as the woman handed me a Booktown badge. There were so many places to go and so many things to see. I honestly didn't know where to begin.

My group and I first stopped at a few book stalls. It's really nice to have such intriguing books for such cheap prices! We wandered around for a little while and came across a woman who creates cartoon sketches of people. Most of the Staughton group had a drawing done.

I now refuse to forget about the bluestone church and the intricate carvings in the books and the miniscule books containing miniscule pictures... so many creations that I never knew were possible.

The students of Staughton college met up with the teachers every now and then to check up on us and see if we were safe. Lunch was nice, even though I had to eat quickly because I was in the middle of having my face sketched on to paper when we had to meet the teachers for lunch.

After lunch, the group walked back down the street to Clunes Booktown from the park and browsed for a few minutes. There were some really nice finds. After that day, we were just exhausted!

By the time we were about to leave, I had decided that Clunes Booktown had set a fantastic reputation for my group and I.

I thoroughly enjoyed my weekend in Creswick and hope to return with my grandparents they would love it! (who wouldn't love it?!).

I learned a lot in this past two and a half days. Clunes gave me the time of my life! The other 10 students and I are extremely lucky to be here in Clunes today.



## Going to Clunes Booktown

by **Kristina Myakala (Year 8, Staughton College, Melton South)**

Today I was woken up by the excitement and blissful yet faint aroma of novels galore. All treasured as an opus, aging in antiquity. I cherished my every step, as I know that these stories will forever be kept. As I travelled my way through Fraser street, I felt a slight chill, of all stories coming alive

I took a short break, my heart was vastly overwhelmed from all the books my pupil had vision of. Although today wasn't just about the novels and stories I discovered, it was about how many splendid and wonderful moments I captured with my two friends Renee and Georgia. It was great to find out that we all had something precisely in common; our passion for authors and illustrators who create happiness and romance, and most importantly the peace that brings family and friends together.

Along the way we had met an inspiring lady by the name of Irene. She sketched our portraits almost as if we emerged into the paper, and had shown our true formation. I especially enjoyed this experience of visiting Clunes Book-town, as it brought me an essence and deeper meaning of what books are truly all about.

I saw humans of every race and gender all exploring this same town for one thing in particular; stories, stories people were so eager to share. While I was at Clunes Book-town I observed old books, new books, sad books, blue books and all kinds of books; around me were every type of book I could imagine.

This was my very first time travelling to Clunes Book-town, and if I'm truly honest it's one of those memories and experiences that I will appreciate for a long time.



# My experience at Clunes Booktown

by **Georgia Keighley (year 8 staughton college, Melton)**



I step out of the car into the cold yet inviting breeze of Clunes I stretch my legs and start to walk towards the main street, once we arrive the teachers give us a badge and show us around the wonderful place Kristina, Renee and I start to walk around and we discover books of all genres vintage, fiction, gardening and so many more.

We purchase a few books we walk to this one book store it was in the mechanics I walk in and the smell of new and old books finds its way into my senses I look around and I see one out of the corner of my eye it is extraordinary the colours and the way they put it together I pick it up the blurb was so catching it feels like the book was written just for my enjoyment we end up getting an extraordinary 16 books between us.

We went back to the beautiful park for lunch I had a sandwich a muffin and a drink it was lovely then we went back and went into the beautifully built bluestone church there was the most spectacular artefacts I have ever witnessed we all look around and see some incredible things after that we walked over to the shed to participate in a work shop that consists of writing a story about our experience in Clunes then Kristina, Renee and I headed over to the cartoon sketches by Irene she did an amazing job I got a drawing of me dancing and Kristina got herself wearing a fancy dress and Renee got herself riding a dragon I really enjoyed my experience in Clunes and I would definitely go back.



# A DAY AT THE CLUNES FESTIVAL

by **Renee Williams**

year 8, Staughton College Melton

We arrived at Clunes on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2017 with our school, Staughton College. When we first arrived at the Clunes festival, we were shaken by our surroundings, where do we start? Where do we go? There were so many questions waiting to be answered that were soon found. I was in a group with my two friends Georgia and Kristina, we first stopped off at this one book store that had a variety of different books, from the 1800's to the present, from tiny words to substantial words, my friends and I were looking at books for a while but there was one store that caught our eye, the mechanic across from the opening of the festival was selling books for 1 dollar each and heaps of people were in on the excitement. Georgia bought 16 books, Kristina bought 6 and I bought 7 in the whole day of being at the festival, all the books for an insanely great price!

When done buying all our books we saw a place that did sketches for free, we put our name down on the list to get our faces sketched and had to wait a few hours due to the line-up. In those few hours we looked around some more since there was so much to do, we listened to a band such as the brass band who were utterly incredible. After walking around after a long day at the festival we headed back to the sketcher 'Irene' who would do our sketching's, they were superb and my friends and I thank her very much for the amazing masterpieces.

The streets were constantly full of atmosphere all day and you could tell there was so much life because it just liberated throughout the town, it was such a joy to be around, it was over whelming! Shops were usually so full of people and the cashiers were always smiling, I would definitely go back to Clunes, buying books, meeting friendly people, seeing the amazing shops the community have tried so hard to put together, it makes me smile to see such a great community such as Clunes. Meeting the Clunes community made me instantly fall into the pages of the town and I'm happy I have gotten a chance to experience this with everyone in the town and my friends.

# The Word Junkie

by **Gail Chrisfield**

OMG! I am going to get into so much trouble! I'm supposed to be meeting my friends for lunch, comparing book bargains, sharing experiences of Clunes Booktown Festival. And what am I doing? Sitting at a computer and writing a story for The Big Owl 2017 Magazine in a Weekend project.

I'm a word junkie. I can't get enough of them. I enjoy reading and listening to them but my biggest kick comes from writing them. I am addicted.

When a friend suggested we catch up at Clunes, she had no idea the chain of events she was setting in motion. It's Sunday. My day of rest. And after spending all Saturday at the keyboard, I promised my partner no writing today. And yet, here I am.

We arrived on time after the two-hour drive from Torquay but there was no sign of the others at our designated meeting point near the Town Hall. Despite the crap mobile coverage, eventually we managed to find each other near the Readings Bookshop.

After a coffee and a chat, we agreed to meet up at the Petanque stage at 1.30pm for lunch. I left the others, completed a quick lap of the street, scouting the stalls and shops, before my feet led me here. I didn't argue with them.

I've spent the last hour waiting to jump on a computer and now here I am, binging on words. Getting my fix for the day. It's well after 2pm. I know my friends are waiting for me, wondering where I am. They're probably trying to text me to ask me where I am. The mobile coverage is crap here. For once, I am happy about that.

I'm a word junkie. I've had my fix for the day. Now I can go – but OMG! I already know I'm in big trouble for falling off the wagon again.



**FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS**

COME TO CLUNES and discover some of the most beautiful and rare books in Victoria, get access to heritage buildings, eat some great local food, enjoy a coffee or a wine, join a workshop, and listen to some brilliant Australian authors.  
Featuring **Clementine Ford, The Hon. Tim Fischer AC, Hannah Kent, A.S. Patric, Kate Grenville, Annie Raser-Rowland, Libby Angel** and more.

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**BOOKTOWN**  
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**FESTIVAL 2017**

**6-7 MAY**

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