

# The heartache of saying goodbye

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John Sycopoulis, one of Glenn's extraordinary carers, with Glenn and I, in January 2013.

## SHORT THOUGHTS – Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] I [dropcap]t has been a very tough week at *Bluestone* because we have lost two very important parts of our lives, and while these moments are normally kept private and hidden from readers, I want to share them with you, because you have been part of the journey.

You may remember that in October last year,

*Bluestone* recognised the generosity of the **Western Victoria Holden Car Club** by naming them as our Quiet Heroes. We did this because the car club [kindly organised to have several cars turn up](#) for the 50th birthday of my older brother, **Glenn**, who had Down's Syndrome.

Because of his condition, Glenn was expected to have a shorter life span than what most of us take for granted and so his 50th birthday celebration was an even more important milestone than usual. Even then, his body was not as strong and capable as it used to be – he needed to be lifted into the car – but that day was one of the happiest in his life.

Last Monday, April 7, Glenn passed away peacefully, with myself and three of his extraordinary carers by his bedside. Warrnambool has some of the most kind, capable and wonderful carers: people who do the things that I know I would be unable to do.

And they do it with love and laughter and a generosity of spirit that is increasingly hard to find in the world. Each one of them is a Quiet Hero.



Glenn with members of the Western District Holden Car Club who helped him celebrate his 50th birthday.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] J  
[/dropcap]ust two days after losing Glenn, we said goodbye to one of our *Bluestone Magazine* cocker spaniels, Peggy, who has been a part of our family for 13 years.

And just like Glenn, Peggy's body was no longer strong and capable – each day that passed, she was getting smaller and smaller in the world.

It may seem odd to write about the loss of a beloved brother and the loss of a beloved pet in the same piece, but both Glenn and Peggy taught me so much and gave me so much, despite having so little to give – in terms of how we normally measure such things.

They reminded me of the value of time. Of non-judgmental love. Of caring for someone because of who they are, not for how they earn a living, or what they own.

Of appreciating the precious gift of good health and a body that moves freely, without pain.

Of not getting lost in the small troubles of life such as whether you have more 'likes' on Facebook this week, or what is 'trending' on Twitter.

To hug often.

These are the gifts they have given me and what I now cling to as we say goodbye.

I hope that I never forget these things, just as I will never forget them.

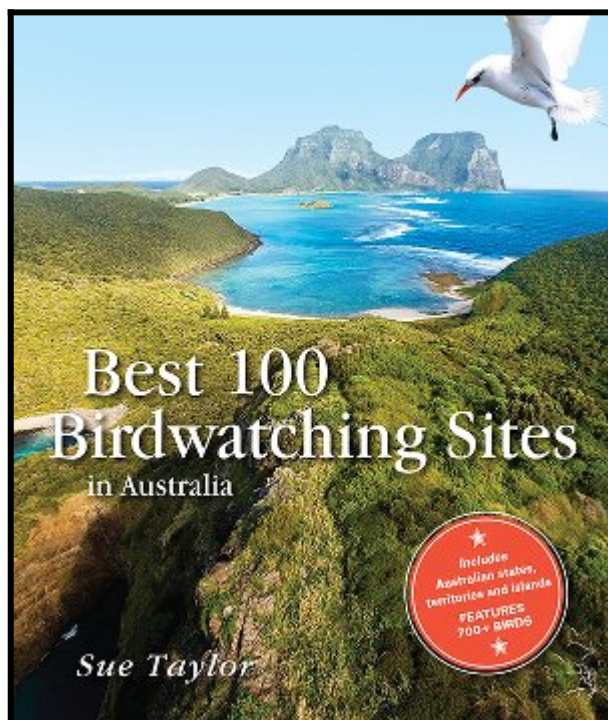


Peggy – one of the Bluestone Magazine cocker spaniels.

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# Bird lovers can scratch that twitch



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] I  
[/dropcap]f you are a regular reader of *Bluestone*, you will know that we love birds.

We are not alone, as one of most popular stories that we ran via our Facebook page was about our quest to save a hooded plover's nest on the banks of the Hopkins River from being trampled. Our followers were glued to the progress reports on "Pip" and her two eggs. (You can [catch up on that story here](#).)

This week's Bookmarks selection from **Warrnambool Books** is sure to have bird lovers running for the binoculars as it selects 100 of the best birdwatching sites in Australia and, best of all, some of them are right here in South-West Victoria. Of course!

It also answers that nagging question that we know has kept

people awake at night: where can you spot the Bar-tailed Godwit?

**Michaelie Clark**, from Warrnambool Books, explains more:

Best 100 Birdwatching Sites in Australia, by Sue Taylor, is the ultimate guide for avid twitchers.

Fully illustrated and featuring more than 700 birds, the book will direct you to the best locations for observing nesting Noddies, spotting Siberia-bound Bar-tailed Godwits, and hearing the high-pitched whistle of the male Musk Duck.

The chapters are divided by locations in Australia's states, territories and islands, so birdwatchers can easily find the section relevant to the area they live in or are visiting. The guide features more than 20 locations throughout Victoria, including Port Fairy and Koroit.'

[box] You can keep up with new releases and classics from Warrnambool Books via their [Facebook page](#).[/box]



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## **The simple joy of baking – French style**

Bridie West makes magnificent macaroons as part of her Port Fairy bakery, and the story behind how she came to cook such French delicacies is inspirational...

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## **Framlingham gears up for 150th anniversary**



Much-loved musician Archie Roach, who was born at Framlingham, will be among the headline acts at this weekend's 150th anniversary event. Image: [www.blackarmband.com.au](http://www.blackarmband.com.au)

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] D  
[ /dropcap]espite being less than 30km from Warrnambool, the **Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve** has often seemed like a million miles away to many south-west Victorians who have never visited the area.

This week there is a significant opportunity to reverse that trend, when the reserve marks its 150th anniversary with an open invitation to visit the reserve and celebrate aboriginal culture as it exists today, and as it has done for the past 50,000 years.

The 150th anniversary will be celebrated with an all-day, free event on **Saturday (April 12) from 10am to 6pm** and include music by much-loved local musicians Archie Roach (who was born at Framlingham) and Shane Howard, plus performances by Kutcha



Edwards, Lee Sonny Boy Morgan, Johnny Lovett and comedian Denise McGuinness among others.

The day will also feature historical talks and displays, plus a range of hands-on activities for kids and adults, including the tricky art of eel-trapping.



Aboriginal men and boys at the newly established Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve in 1867. This image has been reproduced from *A Distant Field of Murder*, written by historian Jan Critchett (1990).

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T  
[/dropcap]he Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve has a long, rich and complex history, beginning with its early days as an Anglican mission set up to “protect” the local Aboriginal people from the devastating impact of white settlement in the

area in the 1830s.

At that time, about 1800ha of land was set aside, but was never actually owned by the indigenous people in the European sense of land ownership.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the Framlingham community – by then living on a much smaller area of land than was originally designated – was granted control of 237ha via the Aboriginal Lands Act. The community later campaigned to regain rights to the Framlingham Forest and, after a long and hard-fought battle, won control over a further 457ha in 1987.

Although the history of the Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve is one that is ultimately traced back to the devastating impact of white settlement on indigenous Australia, the anniversary celebrations are all about honouring a proud community that has, against all the odds, kept its culture alive.

**[box] The Framlingham Aboriginal Community is 20 mins north of Warrnambool. Gates will open at 10am on Sat April 12, with an opening ceremony at 11am. Free entry.[/box]**



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# Having a year of your life back

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Prep class, March 17, 1970, East Warrnambool Primary School. Now where did those 44 years go??

## SHORT THOUGHTS

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] T  
[/dropcap]he end of daylight saving caught me by surprise this

year and when I learnt, after waking at 8am, that it was really only 7am, I realised that I had an hour of my life back.

And it felt delicious.

It was as if I had been given the most extraordinary gift, even though daylight saving is, of course, an entirely manufactured concept, as is the measuring of time itself.

While thinking about all of the ways I could spend my “extra” hour, I also thought about how ridiculously fast our lives have become. I did not meet one person this week, or last week, or even the week before that, who wasn’t “busy”, and that includes myself.

“How are you?”

“Ohhh, you know, so busy!”

**All of the time-saving devices we now have that our parents (read: mothers) used to dream about have not freed up our lives at all: we just cram more in.**

I can remember, and I laugh about it now, learning in first-year Sociology way back in 1983 how we would all have so much leisure time on our hands by the year 2000 that sociologists were worried about how we would keep ourselves busy.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"]  
W[/dropcap]ell here we are in 2014 – 14 years after we were all supposed to be sitting poolside – and there is not a minute, it seems, when we don't have anything to do. Worse, the arrival of mobile technology has given us a 24-hour "on" button, together with an expectation that we are always available.

It is absolutely exhausting and makes us all feel frazzled.

**So I began to ponder what it would be like if we didn't just get an hour "back", but a whole year. Imagine that. Even better, imagine if you got to *choose* which year you could have all over again.**

I would choose a year when my faithful old dog was still young instead of in her last days – as she is now – and when my father was still alive and my older brother too, because even though they have both been gone a long time, I still miss them like it was yesterday.

Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.

They all seem to speed by. Except for today. Today the world,

or at least our corner of it, slowed down by one exquisite hour.

How I wish I could make that happen every day.