

Unravelling a tale of love in Port Fairy



Port Fairy glass artists Freya Marriott and Robert Gatt are behind an exhibition being prepared for Whale Bone Gallery on the fantastical lives of Peregrine Devereux and Katherine Wakefield.

A love story quite unlike any other will be captured in a new exhibition at Port Fairy's Whale Bone Gallery next month.

The romantic story of 19th century English scientist Peregrine Devereaux and his adventurous lover, Katherine (Kitty) Wakefield, an English explorer, is being slowly pieced together by Port Fairy artists **Robert Gatt** and **Freya Marriott** who have become entranced by the couple – and they are not alone.

People are invited to follow the unfolding story around the couple on [Facebook under the page Project_R1000](#), which Robert also used to document progress on his installation, *Alien Crash Site!*, that he created and exhibited with his son, **Hugh**, on Port Fairy's Civic Green late last year.

Then, as now, Robert has immersed his latest project in mystery and intrigue, and the full story will only be revealed when *The Third Expedition of Kitty Wakefield* opens at the Whale Bone Gallery on the weekend of September 5-7.

The exhibition will feature a range of artefacts that Robert and Freya already have in their possession which relate to Peregrine and Kitty's story, in particular to events in the early 1880s when the couple was exploring and travelling through Africa.

"The idea is to take (the viewer) on a journey...and to explore the idea of storytelling," says Robert.

"It looks at where we get our information from and the facts we gather to tell a story," he adds.



A pocket-sized brass travelling

microscope is one of the artefacts that will appear in the exhibition next month.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] A [/dropcap]t the time of writing, Robert had six more Kitty and Peregrine artefacts to photograph and post on the Project_R1000 page, to add to the three that have already been revealed.

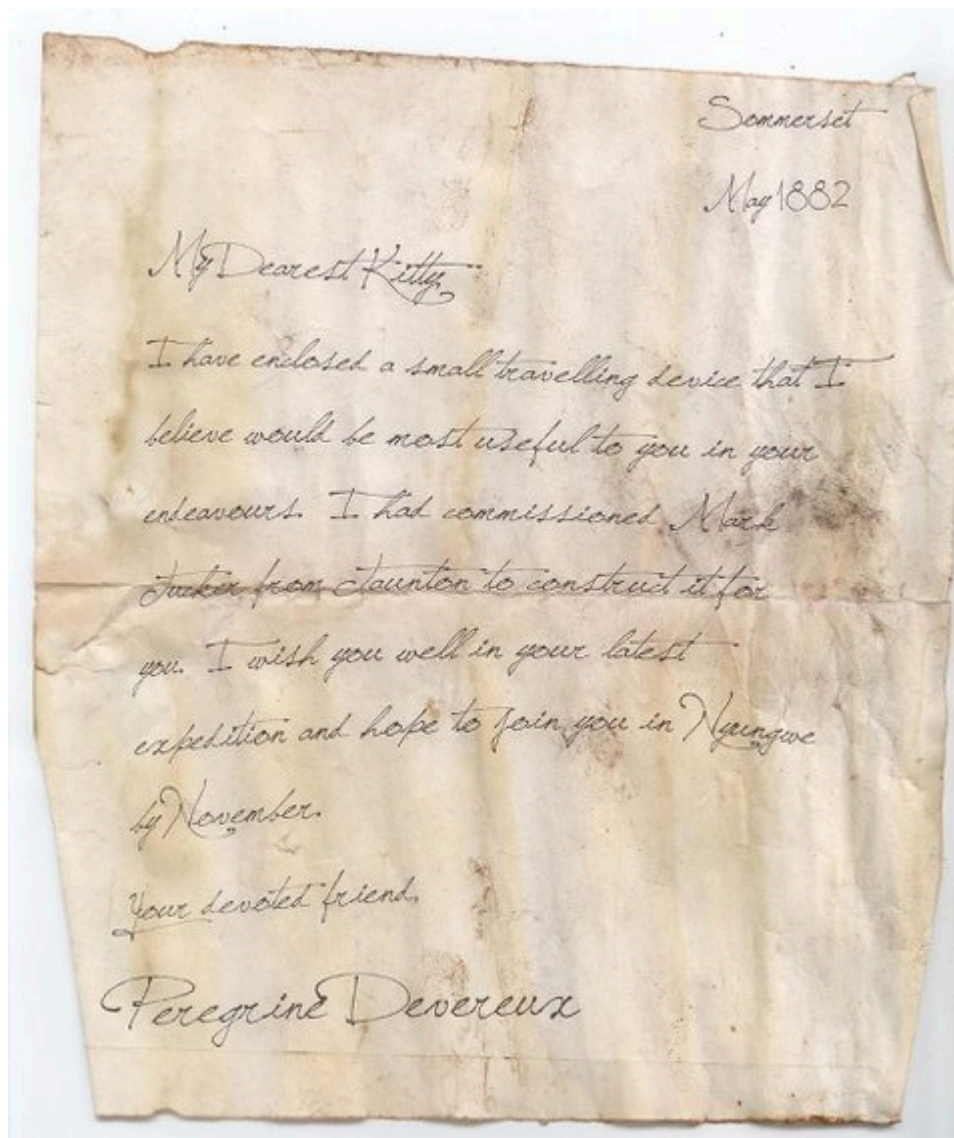
These include a gorgeous antique travelling microscope, made of brass, that is only 10cm tall and perfect for the pocket of an explorer like Kitty who, in Robert's mind, represents all of the early female explorers whose names have been lost to time.

Another artefact is a beautifully hand-crafted and romantic letter from Peregrine to Kitty, dated May 1882, that was stuffed inside the barrel of the microscope and reveals that the instrument was gift between the pair.

Robert has also posted an image of a marriage certificate detailing the union between Peregrine, at the age of 36, and Kitty, aged 31, on October 26, 1887. The certificate, which Robert describes as "gold to me", came about as a result of his spending many hours on his computer.

By the time the exhibition opens, Robert and Freya will have accumulated more artefacts, including three sets of glass objects from Kitty's collection, and a rather unusual piece linked to Peregrine, called a "plasmic resonance detector" that, as a scientist, he was keen to test in the field.

What a plasmic resonance detector looks like – and if it worked – will be one of many intriguing elements revealed next month. In the meantime, you can follow the project's progress on the [Facebook page here.](#)



[box] **The Whale Bone Gallery is at 39a Bank St, Port Fairy.**
Ph: (03) 5568 2855[/box]

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Why am I running? Roy Reekie ALP



Labor candidate Roy Reekie will be aiming for the swinging voter when he takes on Dr Denis Napthine for the seat of South West Coast at the November state election.

[box] Roy Reekie has chosen a Q&A style for his piece. The questions were selected by an interested observer, not *Bluestone Magazine*. [/box]

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] R [/dropcap]oy, the margin of the Liberal Party in South West Coast is nearly 12%. No-one else seems to have been interested in running for the Labor Party in this election. Why are you running?

When I first ran in 1999, it was about getting a few key issues on the agenda – logging of native forests in the Otways and the impact of pokies. We had a win in getting logging stopped in the Otways, but pokies are still the scourge they were.

When I ran again in 2002, it was about building some momentum to make the South West marginal. We got awfully close (well under 1%) but couldn't quite get there.

I knew that was about as close as we might ever get, but felt honour-bound to run again in 2006. That was about making Dr Napthine accountable for the things he had promised in 2002 and trying to squeeze as much as we could out of our seat's marginal status. We got a huge amount for South West Healthcare and multi-millions for Portland Hospital and schools in Warrnambool, Portland and Port Fairy. We got Port Fairy its public swimming pool and got funding for Stage 2 of South West TAFE's infrastructure project. We got Warrnambool's new courthouse built.

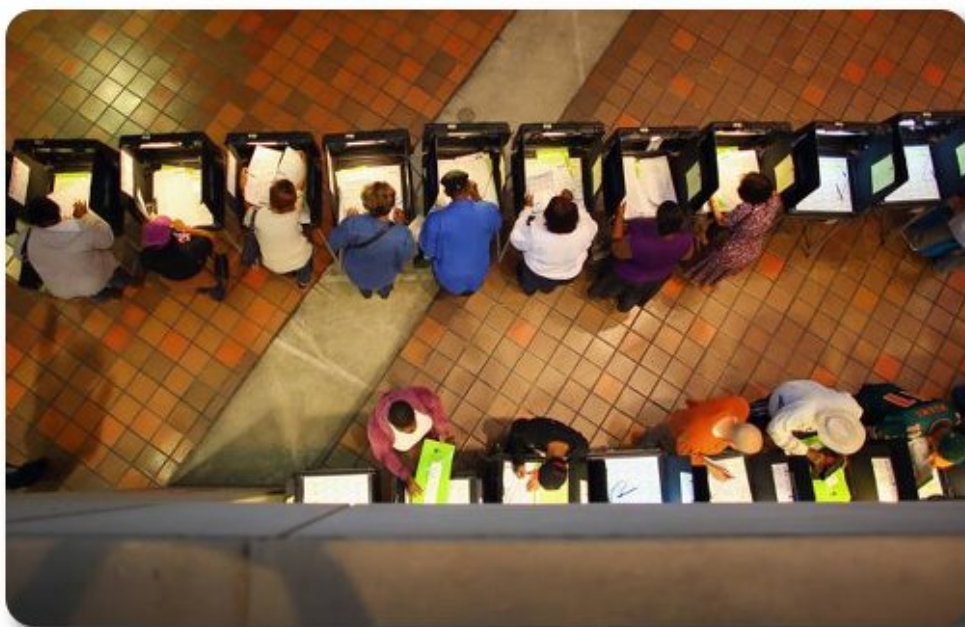
I left the region at the end of 2006 to live and work overseas, returning to Australia in 2009 to work in Melbourne, so I missed the 2010 State election down here.

Now that I'm back home, I feel that I have something to offer to get our region back into marginal territory.

This is largely about encouraging – enabling – people to think carefully about how they vote and why they vote a certain way

and what it might take for them to change the way they vote, to make their vote count and to make it work towards our region becoming relevant to both parties by being marginal. People down here tend to vote blindly the way their parents did. I want them to think about it.

I want both major parties to be forced to think about how they represent and support our region. I want them to fight for our votes. I look at Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo and what they get each budget and think 'why not the South West?' We need a strong voice for the South West that is listened to because both parties have to pay attention. I can help achieve that.



Mobilising voters to think about their vote and make the seat of South West Coast marginal again is at least part of Roy Reekie's motivation for running.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] Y [/dropcap] **ou said you were overseas. Where were you?**

I spent about five years in total in Scotland. I was working on addressing anti-social behaviour – neighbour disputes, vandalism, community issues, youth crime, family violence – of which there is a lot in Glasgow. I learnt a helluva lot doing

that work, and living in that environment – about myself and about what makes communities tick. I came back with a new set of skills and a renewed enthusiasm for community and an admiration for the power of community-based action. I'm keen to apply those skills here now.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] W[/dropcap]**hat's your vision for the South West then?**

Having travelled in the UK and Europe – and lived recently in Melbourne, I can honestly say that the South West is a special place with unlimited potential. I can sense that it has changed, matured. It really has amazing potential – mainly in food production, but also in renewable energy generation and tourism.

As a young person, I left Warrnambool to go to uni and to start my career. I returned to raise my children here and now they've all left for work and career advancement. Having been away and returned again, I've noticed that a lot of people my age are returning, like migrating whales.

My vision for the South West is that we have an economy, supported by social infrastructure (for health, education and transport), that makes it possible for our young people to either stay here for their education and careers or to return quicker. We need to keep our best and brightest connected to the South West and support them and welcome them when they return, and we need to provide those who prefer to stay with opportunities to advance their careers. This will help us to achieve our region's potential. I want to be part of that.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] W [/dropcap]**hat are your chances of winning?**

Let's be realistic – not good. But let's also have a red hot go at getting the seat as close as possible, and some fun in the process.

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Reviving classic Australian furniture by hand



Take a seat: Meg Jarrett and partner Jack van Roo are the creative force behind Be Seated, in Portland, where they revive classic mid-century Australian furniture.

A warning: by the end of this story, you will probably remember all of the stunning Australian-made furniture that you either threw away, saw poking out of a skip, or gave to a flatmate in the 1980s, and may end up in tears.

Despite working all day surrounded by chairs, stools and couches in various states of repair and disrepair, **Jack van Roo** and partner **Meg Jarrett** rarely have time to put their feet up.

Since opening their two-person business – Be Seated – early last year, the pair has been tapping into the huge demand for original, mid-century Australian furniture (1950s and 60s) that has been restored to its beautiful, retro glory.

Names like [Fred Lowen](#) (Tessa and Fler brands), Grant and Mary [Featherston](#), [Fred Ward](#) and [Clement Meadmore](#) have become the ultimate in collectable cool – not to mention quality – and

their original furniture pieces have become hotly sought after both nationally and internationally.

It seems more than a little odd, then, to find Jack and Meg operating not from a high-profile shop in inner-suburban Melbourne, where they used to live, but a shed in the Portland industrial estate, half way between the port and the aluminium smelter.

“It started with our own house,” is how Jack explains it.

“We bought Meg’s grandparents house about 10 years ago, supposedly for holidays, and we decided we liked it so much that we would move into it,” he says.



It began with a house: the Tag Walter’s designed 1960s house that Meg’s grandmother owned in Portland and which she and Jack moved into 10

years ago.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] T [/dropcap]he Portland house is a 1960s original designed by legendary Warrnambool architect **"Tag" (William) Walter** with the long clean lines, large windows and open fireplaces surrounded by stone that became his hallmark.

Jack and Meg couldn't help but slowly fill the place with furniture from the era and so began their love affair with mid-century design and designers.

It wasn't until early last year, however, that they combined their skills to open a furniture restoration business that can cater for all eras, but specialises in mid-century pieces.

"There is nothing made of timber, in my view, that can't be fixed," says Jack, who has spent most of his life working in and around the furnishing and upholstery industry.

"We had one lady who brought a chair in and an arm dropped off in transit, so we replaced the arm and it was impossible to tell the original from the replacement," he says by way of example.

Meg has a background in interior design and fashion retail and uses her skills and contacts to source and select top quality, natural fabrics from around Australia to use for re-covering.

Between them, they have created a slice of *Mad Men* heaven, with a shed full of classic pieces that have been either found in their travels, or brought in by others to be reupholstered, re-stitched, re-stained, or whatever other painstaking method is required to bring it back to life.



Jack with a work in progress – an early colonial chair – which, like with all of his work, is painstakingly restored by hand.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] T[dropcap]heir clients, similarly, come from far and wide, and include some of Melbourne's top architecture and design academics, but also local graziers.

"We have seen some very, very tired furniture that has been dragged out of the shearing shed or wherever and brought in here, sometimes literally in pieces," Meg says.

"And it is not just about how much a piece might be worth, but how much people love it. If they love it, they want to see it brought back to life."

All of Jack and Meg's work is done by hand – they don't use acid dips or harsh machinery to take short-cuts – and one piece can take many, many hours to complete.

"It can be very dirty and it is very time consuming, but it is also incredibly rewarding," Meg says.



Meg comes from a background in interior design during which she developed a knowledge and love of quality fabrics.



A pile of ugly wooden school chairs – destined for the tip – have been given a new splash of colourful life.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] J[/dropcap]ack has handled hundreds of pieces of furniture, but admires the simplicity of the classic Australian designs – Clement Meadmore and Featherston are among his favourites.

Unfortunately to own an original, pristine Featherston lounge suite could cost around \$20,000 compared to several hundred pounds when they were first sold.

Perhaps Jack and Meg might stumble across a wad of cash hidden in the springs of a secondhand chair picked up at an auction?

“I’ve never come across anything like that so far,” Jack says with a laugh.

“The best I can offer are two rings that look like they come from a member of a bkie gang.”

[box type="bio"] Be Seated is at 22 George St, Portland. Ph: Meg 0419 579 896. Follow them on [Facebook here](#). [/box]

The twists and turns of textiles: Ruby Richardson



Textile artist Ruby Richardson at home in her Warrnambool studio which is a calm place full of fabric and creativity.

[dropcap style="color: #8f9f59;"] T [/dropcap>extile artist Ruby Richardson has had a life full of twists and turns, but joining a circus was perhaps the least expected.

It was while Ruby, from Warrnambool, was studying costume design at Swinburne University in the late 1990s that she secured a work placement with [The Women's Circus](#), based in Footscray, and not only created some of their wonderful outfits, but ended up being part of the show.

"I learnt to do static trapeze, which is where you do various swings around the trapeze but don't leap from it, and acrobalance," she explains.

"I was so strong back then!"



Members of the Women's Circus demonstrate the art of acrobalance as part of their show, Out of the Box, using a combination of strength, poise and balance.
Image: [Women's Circus](#).

[dropcap style="color: #8f9f59;"] A[/dropcap] circus was the perfect – if unpaid – world for Ruby, who was entranced by “the sheer visual spectacle” of costume design and human movement that allowed for so much more experimentation than mainstream fashion.

“One of my lecturers at the time used to ban the ‘f’ word and say, ‘we make outfits for characters – not for the masses!’”, Ruby recalls with a laugh.

During her course, Ruby learnt the tricks of the costume trade – from millinery to creating “fat suits” – and also tried her hand at screen-printing for the first time.

Despite her love for the field, however, the opportunities for paid work were (and remain) limited, so Ruby also became a personal care worker for the City of Yarra, before deciding to return to south-west Victoria in 2002.

It was here that all the threads of her past and present life began to combine.



Screenprinting is one of many of Ruby's skills and she now teaches others at TAFE and occasionally at The Artery, Warrnambool.

A child growing up in Woolsthorpe, Ruby had always been a "good drawer" at school but hated sewing classes, until she decided to try her hand at sewing her own clothes at home.

Her father, a shearer, had a sewing machine in the house to make the calico bags he used to store fresh meat: it was not unusual for old-time farmers to know how to use a needle and thread.

"I bumped him off the machine and yeah, there was a fair bit of swearing about that," Ruby laughs.

Ruby began to make and wear her own clothes; shirts without collars, skirts without hems, a kind of rustic chic .

"It was very rough, but also quite fashionable at the time, so

I could get away with it," she says.

Ruby went on to study art and design at TAFE, before completing a Bachelor of Fine Art at Deakin University, during which refined her drawing and design skills and began to explore printmaking.

After returning from Melbourne, Ruby re-enrolled at TAFE to study screenprinting under the guidance of **Donna Dixon** and, a year later, began her own label, Pattern & Print, that combined her printing and sewing skills.

"I decided to start making things from what I was printing, little bags, cushion covers, that sort of thing," she explains.



The raw and the complete: some of Ruby's collection of fabrics, including many sourced in Japan, a printmaking cut-out and a completed, hand-stitched felt bag.

[dropcap style="color: #8f9f59;"] A [/dropcap] decade on

and Pattern & Print is well known for its bold, geometric designs and colours that are inspired by Ruby's deep love of the natural world.

"I can spend hours just looking at a plant, examining it and looking at its structures and colours," she says.

"If you look closely, you can see how all the tiny pieces of a plant form into one piece and this is repeated over and over: I love that."

Retro images from the 1950s are another common theme and, again, Ruby uses bold, monochromatic colours and repetition to create her own unique "look".

These days Ruby has also moved from being the pupil to the teacher, and, three years ago, replaced Donna Dixon as the screenprinting lecturer at TAFE. She also continues to work in personal care, at Lyndoch, where she is known by her first name of Alison (Ruby is one of two middle names).

Like any artist, her work continues to evolve and Ruby is currently working on her first ever collaboration, with ceramacist [Clare \(Claybody\) Fennessy](#), that will lead to an exhibition of "Prints and Clay" at TAFE on October 20.

"I am loving the process of working with Clare, who's work I have always admired, and experimenting with different techniques to see what works and what doesn't," she says.

Ruby is also keen to produce larger wall hangings of her work, where the print is viewed as a work of art in itself, rather than as part of a functional object such as a cushion or bag.

"I see it as part of a natural evolution, working through processes, trying different things and not really knowing how it may end up: that is the exciting and enjoyable part."



The eye-catching simplicity of Ruby's designs are captured in this backdrop that reflects patterns and images that were popular in the 1950s.

[box] Ruby's work is available at the Warrnambool Art Gallery gift shop, The Artery gift shop, the Little Yellow Owl hair salon, W'bool, and at her home by appointment. Commissions upon request. e: ruby.rich@yahoo.com.au [/box]

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Spring picnic for Fletcher Jones gardens

The Fletcher Jones gardens spring picnic celebration is on this Sunday, September 14: find all the details here...