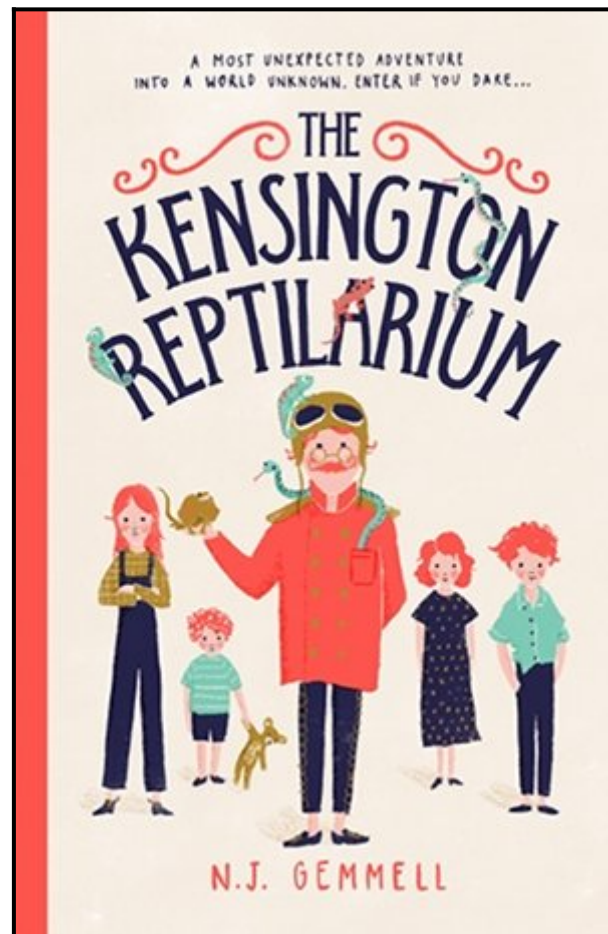


The many faces of Nikki Gemmell



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] F
[/dropcap]ormer ABC journalist and now successful author **Nikki Gemmell** can never be accused of being predictable.

It has been 16 years since Nikki made the leap from journalism into writing with her debut novel, ***Shiver***, and she has since written another four novels, two works of non-fiction and published a collection of her newspaper columns.

Michaelie Clark, from **Warrnambool Books**, has chosen Nikki's latest work as her book for the week and it marks another surprise turn for the author:

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] 'M
[/dropcap]any people will have first become familiar with

Nikki Gemmell's work without knowing she had written what they were reading.

Her first, much-discussed best-seller was ***The Bride Stripped Bare***, a work of literary erotica which takes a confronting look at the secret desire and anguish of a newly married woman. The novel was originally published anonymously, though she was soon outed as the author and her name later appeared on the cover.

Now the well-known journalist and provocative writer has taken a very different turn in her career – she's just released her first book for children.

The Kensington Reptilarium is written under the name 'N. J. Gemmell' and is a fun, feel-good tale that is full of adventure. It follows the story of the Caddy kids, four young Aussies from the bush who find themselves in London in the care of Uncle Basti, a man who loves his house full of snakes – and isn't a fan of kids.

This may be a new genre for Gemmell, but there's no doubt she's a talented writer with a knack for capturing attention and offering fresh perspectives – something that young readers are invariably attracted to."



Nikki Gemmell's latest work sees the author move into another genre. Image courtesy of www.nikkigemmell.com

[box] Keep up to date with new releases and treasured classics from Warrnambool Books on their [Facebook](#) page.[/box]



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[Matt Porter: the lighter side of teaching](#)

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Secrets of an old shoe



[box] Bluestone Magazine recently brought you the story of [the rejuvenation of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool](#). This week, we tell the story of one fascinating find during its restoration.[/box]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A99E90;"] 0
[/dropcap]ld shoes, perhaps more than any other item of clothing, have the power to tell stories.

What is the story behind a single shoe discarded by the roadside? Did it land there by accident, through misfortune, or part of prank?

We throw old shoes over powerlines and tie them to wedding cars, and we refer to shoes in our folklore and our fairytales: “if the shoe fits, wear it”; Cinderella and the famous glass slipper.

Old shoes are personal. They hold an imprint – a literal *footprint* – of their owner that cannot be replicated and makes

them so hard to throw away, especially when they were once worn by a loved one who has also gone.

Some shoes can outlive us, surviving for centuries beneath the dirt and rubble of demolished homes and ruined cities until they are at last unearthed by new activity.



How 222 Timor St, Warrnambool, used to look in 1968.
(Image: J.T. Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.)

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A99E90;"] A [dropcap] shoe that had been hidden for possibly more than 70 years was recently found at my grandmother's former property at 222 Timor St, Warrnambool, opposite Swinton's supermarket. It was the house in which my mother spent a large part of her childhood.

It is also one of the oldest commercial buildings in Warrnambool and is believed to have been built around 1850.

As we wrote about [earlier this month](#), the building recently passed into new hands and its long-hidden secrets are being slowly uncovered: a hidden doorway down to the cellar, shoebox-size windows that had been boarded up and wallpapered over, and a child's single leather boot that had been placed under the floorboards.

The boot is about 18cm long, with tacks around its sole and seven pairs of metal eyelets securing a cloth shoelace.



The old floorboards in 222 Timor have revealed their own secrets. Image courtesy Luke Taylor.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A99E90;"] I [[/dropcap] thought it might have belonged to my now 89-year-old mother, but when I showed her the boot, she suggested it had most likely been hidden under the floorboards by a boot repairer – a Mr Long – who had rented part of the property from her father in the 1930s.

My mother told me she had read an article in the *Reader's Digest* about shoe superstitions, including the placing of a shoe under floorboards for good luck. I couldn't trace the *Reader's Digest* article, but an [online article](#) by British shoe historian June Swann confirmed that in Britain, in particular, it was not uncommon for a shoe to be hidden somewhere in a house to bring stability and good luck to the household.

Hiding a child's shoe – in either a wall, chimney or under the floorboards – was also believed to increase fertility.

Perhaps Mr Long, if he did hide the boot, hoped it would bring prosperity to his business. Or perhaps it wasn't Mr Long at all, but a previous owner of 222 Timor St who stowed the boot away for good luck.

The full story is yet to be revealed and the boot, of course, is holding its tongue.

[box] A version of this story first appeared in the Warrnambool & District Historical Society newsletter, *Warnimble*, April 2013. The new owners of 222 Timor St, Luke and Nat Taylor, plan to hide one of their children's shoes in the restored building...for good luck. [/box]

Colonial oven still makes a crust

When Paul Sanders and his wife moved into an old bakery in Dunkeld, they had no intention of doing anything with the disused, 135-year-old oven that dominated one wall of their bedroom.

A life-changing adventure for Schoolies





[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]he end of the school year for Year 12 students has, unfortunately, become associated with some fairly high-level drinking and partying as part of the traditional “Schoolies” week, but a reader has told us about one Portland school that has turned this tradition on its head.

Bayview College, which overlooks the stunning Portland Bay, will this week run its ***Schoolies with a Cause*** program, where Year 12 students will celebrate the end of their secondary schooling not by heading to the closest beach, but by helping out at a secondary school in Vietnam.

Eighteen students have volunteered to spend 10 days in a disadvantaged community and will work on a number of projects including improving playground areas.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] I
[/dropcap]t is the third year *Schoolies with a Cause* has been held by Bayview College, and each year more students are signing up to be a part of a life-changing experience. The

trip is subsidised by fundraising held during the year and enthusiastic Year 11 students have already started raising money for their trip in 2014.

There are always a lot of people behind such a successful program, but the two names that kept coming up when we investigated the project were **Nicole Reefman**, who works as the Public Relations officer at Bayview, and Portland financial adviser **Rodney Stone**, who has a deep connection with Vietnam through his volunteering stints in the country over the last five years.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work of Nicole and Rodney, in particular, and Bayview College, more broadly, for putting together such a great alternative to “Schoolies”: they are our very worthy Quiet Heroes for the week.

[box] Our Quiet Heroes will each receive a coffee and cake voucher from [The Pickled Pelican, 137 Percy St, Portland](#). Thankyou so much for your support, Pickled Pelican.[/box]



Meet some of our other quiet heroes...

[A winner for Woodford](#)

[United we stand – Wbool Uniting Church](#)

[Gary Webb – Bidding for the arts](#)

[Kylie Thulborn – pushing boundaries](#)

[The Drylies and creating art with kids](#)

[Susie Alexander fights cancer...and aims for a fun run](#)

A long way from Pomonal to Pip

Kate Bouman, from Naringal, has taken the long way round, but she has come back to creating the delicate art she first began to explore as a child.