

Port Fairy bookclub review: *Eyrie*

[box] Bluestone recently profiled the [Last Thursday Book Club](#) in Port Fairy and invited members of the group to tell us about their book of the month. This month, **BRIGID FOARD**, is in the chair: [/box]



Brigid Foard (right), who is a member of The Last Thursday Book Club, in Port Fairy, gives us the rundown on Tim Winton's latest novel.

[quote]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]im Winton's ***Eyrie*** commanded much discussion between the members of The Last Thursday book club, in Port Fairy this month.

The mark of a good read can often be the ripple effects of

discussion when there are no easy answers, no comfortable resolutions of character or motive. The ambiguous elements of *Eyrie* are its strength, with Winton going to great lengths to avoid sentimentality and cliché.

Our discussion ranged from what really was the stain on the carpet at the start of the text, to was Tom Keely trying to save himself by helping Kai?

Eyrie is a thought provoking work dealing with themes such as redemption, class and the future of Australian society (more specifically, WA).

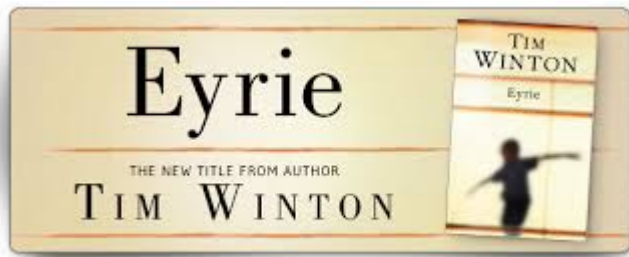
Most agreed that this is the most thrilling of Winton's books in that it had that page turning effect on most of us.

I felt that Keely's mother Doris was one of Winton's more convincing female characterisations to date. The humour in the novel was something we all remarked upon. There are some hauntingly beautiful images in the novel which I will remember for years to come (surely testament once again to the work's quality).

Winton has once again structured his writing around a few motifs: in 'Eyrie' they are birds, flight, falling; in 'Breath' – breathing, resuscitation, water.

This structural formula serves as both a functional and aesthetic framework, (including the title) and in my opinion solidifies the work as a classic.

Eyrie is one of those works that stays with your consciousness and makes you really think."



[box type="bio"] Have you read Eyrie? What did you think?[/box]



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From a cupcake copper to a farmer's wife



Within the space of about a fortnight, Jo O'Keefe went from being a police officer in Portland to running her own cafe in Port Fairy, The Farmer's Wife Harvest Cafe.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] A [/dropcap]t the risk of using a bad pun, a new alleyway café in the heart of Port Fairy is quite arresting – not least because it is run by a former police officer.

The Farmer's Wife Harvest Cafe, tucked at the end of a gorgeous bluestone and rubble walled lane off Sackville St, is the latest venture for local **Jo O'Keefe** who has had what can only be described as a varied career.

Until last November, Jo was Senior Constable O'Keefe based at the Portland police station as part of a 10-year career with the thin blue line.

Prior to joining the force, however, she had spent most of her life in hospitality, including working in kitchens while studying – and completing – a Fine Art degree at Deakin

University in Warrnambool in the early 1990s.

“Everyone used to call me the Cupcake Copper because I was better known for my scones and cupcakes that I would bring into work, than for any actual policing,” Jo laughs.

“I have always had a background in hospitality though and, since I was 18, worked in Lorne, Apollo Bay, Warrnambool and up at the snow fields.”



An earlier life in hospitality has seen Jo turn full circle and live her dream of opening her own place.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] A [/dropcap]fter the birth of her son, Tex, in 2000, Jo decided to scratch an itch that she had harboured since she was 12 years old, after one of the police horses visited her school in Melbourne.

“That horse, ‘Gendarme’, had me completely hooked and I was

determined to join the force one day...I finally did, just before I turned 40," Jo explains.

"I am not sure why, but I thought it might also be better for me as a single Mum, which I was at the time, but I didn't factor in the night shifts," she laughs.

As a result, Tex was "raised by the village" of Port Fairy with various friends chipping in to help when Jo moved there in 2006.

It has made Tex a well-adjusted kid, who now helps out making smoothies and juices in the café during school holidays, says Jo.



Some of the tasty treats on offer: the brownies sold by the tray-full during the peak summer season.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] F
[/dropcap]our years ago, life took another turn when Jo married local farmer **Scott Moore** – hence the inspiration for

the name of her café.

“I had been thinking about getting out of the force and I always wanted to run my own café, then this place came up and I jumped at it,” Jo says.

“I finished up work in November and, two weeks later, opened up the café in December.”

The café, which offers simple healthy lunches, coffees, cakes, fresh juices and a range of gluten-free products, hit the ground running and Jo found herself making 5.30am starts to keep on top of the summer rush.

“I knew it was going to be full on for those first couple of months, but it was great fun,” she says.

Part of the café’s appeal is that it is tucked well away from the main street and provides a safe place for kids who are kept entertained by the plastic farm animals that are provided by Jo and can be hidden into the nooks and crannies of the sandstone wall.

“I am not sure if we have found them all again yet,” she smiles.



Some of the local patrons that help to keep the kids happy...

[box] The Farmer's Wife Harvest Cafe is at 47a Sackville St, Port Fairy, and is open 9am-3pm seven days. You can find it on Facebook [here](#). [/box]



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Last Thursday a first priority for book club



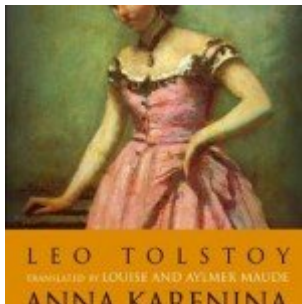
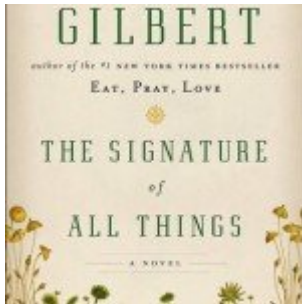
Catherine Ryan, left, and Brigid Foard are among the members of The Last Thursday Book Club, in Port Fairy, that provides a place for women to enjoy stimulating conversations about books.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] W
[/dropcap]hile there are infinite joys about becoming a mother, the loss of stimulating conversation or intellectual discussion can prove challenging for women who enjoyed such things before becoming a parent.

Brigid Foard, who lives in Port Fairy and teaches English at Emmanuel College, Warrnambool, remembers when growing up that her mother, **Sylvia Jones**, was part of a local book club for about 20 years and how it became a “staple of her life”.

When Brigid had the first of her two daughters, she tried to find a similar club to meet other women who enjoyed reading and talking about books, but without success.

“I remember feeling quite envious of what Mum had, because I was unable to find anything similar,” she said.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]hat changed around September last year when two local women, **Lucy Abbott** and **Meg Higgins**, started **The Last Thursday Book Club** in Port Fairy. The group is aimed at women with or without children who are looking for a place to indulge their love of books.

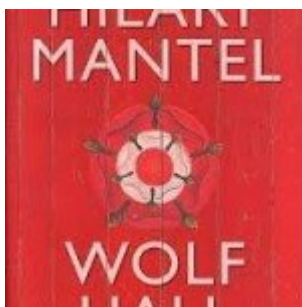
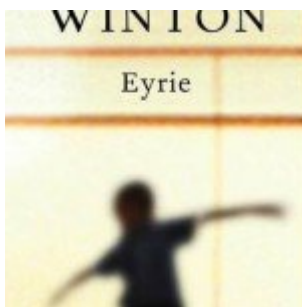
The group now has about seven members who all meet monthly at a local cafe or restaurant and, over coffee, dessert or a glass of wine, spend a couple of hours dissecting the book that has been chosen for that month.

“I had been reading all these fantastic books, but I didn’t really have anyone to communicate my thoughts or frustrations to about what I was reading, now I have met this great group of like-minded women and we share all of our ideas,” said one member, **Kelly Wynne**, who has two young children and works part-time as a heritage consultant.

"It has also really broadened the types of books and authors that I now read," Kelly added.

Catherine Ryan, who has an infant son and also teaches English at Emmanuel College, agreed and said the group gave her an important social outlet that was not work-related, yet stimulating.

"Teaching English is working, whereas this is relaxing...it's something I do for myself," she said.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] A [dropcap] to how it works, well each member of the club gets to choose a book, which is then either bought, borrowed or shared among the members who have a month to read it.

The books chosen so far have ranged from Tim Winton's new release, *Eyrie*, to the somewhat more hefty tome by Booker Prize winner Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*. Tolstoy's classic *Anna Karenina* and the Elizabeth Gilbert's new book, *The Signature of all Things*, are also on the list.

"We trust each other's tastes: there hasn't been a bad choice so far," laughed Brigid.

And all three women laughed as they described how their

monthly Thursday night meetings had become “sacrosanct” and their respective partners – and children – had learned to accommodate the club.

“The regularity of it is really important to me,” said Brigid, “because once you become a mother, it is very easy to be defined only as a mother and to be trapped into talking about teething when, really, you might want to be talking about literature.”

“We are just really fortunate to have something like this in a rural area.”

[box type="bio"] Bluestone Magazine will check in each month with The Last Thursday Book Club to see what they have been reading...and what they thought of it! **[/box]**



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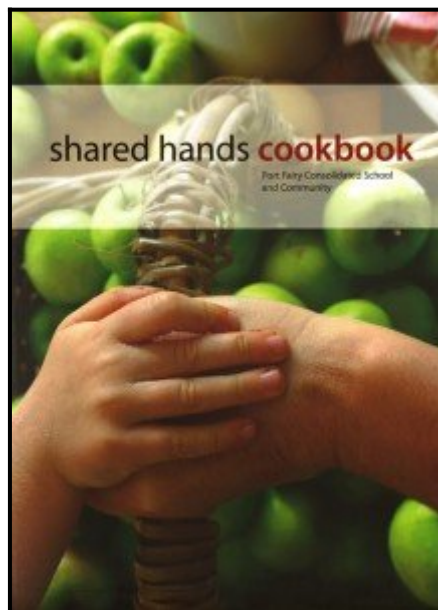
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A spotlight on creators this Christmas

At last – a cookbook you can use!



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] H
[/dropcap]ow many times have you been lured into buying a sumptuous-looking cookbook, only to find that the fine print includes ingredients that you have either never heard of, or which are almost impossible to buy? (Fresh bamboo sticks, dried banana leaf, mud crab...)

And we all own at least one cookbook that has such convoluted, complex recipes that even if you source the ingredients, you

haven't got time to devote an entire day to making dinner.

There are no such problems with this week's choice for Bookmarks, which is a collection of recipes from the Port Fairy Consolidated School and Community.

This is what **Michaelie Clark**, from Warrnambool Books, has to say about her selection:

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] 'T
[/dropcap]his book was released by the Port Fairy Consolidated School and Community last year and is very impressive (deviates greatly from the old binders you used to get with photocopies of Mum's yo-yo recipe, etc)!

It has been a consistent seller since its release.

In 2007, the Port Fairy Consolidated School made a successful application to join the [Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program](#), which gave the students the tools and support to grow, harvest, prepare and share food, with a strong focus on the value of local produce.

An important result of the program is the **Shared Hands Cookbook**, a beautiful collection of recipes from the school and its associates, the local culinary community, and others they are inspired by. The book includes high quality, full-colour photos of most of the dishes, plus lots of images from the garden, the school and around the town.

The recipes are easy to follow, diverse and incredibly tempting (the 'Baked Zucchini Stuffed with Spicy Rice' and the 'Quince and White Chocolate Muffins' would be pretty hard to pass up), but best of all is the book's wonderful local flavour.'

Yum!

[box] You can keep up with new releases at Warrnambool Books via its [Facebook page](#).[/box]



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