

W'bool wakes up and smells the coffee



Henry Bird has started his own small cafe, Rough Diamond, in a 1970s building that inspired the name.

Words and photos Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] B [/dropcap]luestone took a short winter's break recently and when we returned, we found not one, but *two* fabulous and funky new cafes had sprung up in Warrnambool.

Both – **Graze**, and **Rough Diamond** – have slotted in to what is fast becoming the most vibrant and interesting part of the CBD, around Kepler, Koroit and Fairy streets, where the historic shopfronts are being restored, long-empty buildings are slowly filling and, perhaps most importantly for small businesses, the rents are much cheaper than in the city centre.

This combination was irresistible to **Henry Bird**, a familiar face around the Warrnambool cafe scene since his early involvement in **Brightbird Espresso** (which also serves some of the best coffee in town), who together with his wife, Katherine, is behind Rough Diamond.

Henry and Katherine have gutted and refitted what was surely one of the most uninspiring buildings in Koroit St; a dark, 1970s, low-profile brick place opposite the former Warrnambool Standard building that has had many incarnations, most recently as a Coca Cola office.



Henry and Katherine Bird have brought their individual talents to their new cafe.

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[/dropcap]he Birds have give the building an entirely new look and feel with recycled timber furnishings (made by Port Fairy craftsman **Jordan Small** using timber salvaged from renovations on Henry and Katherine's home), plenty of natural light pouring in, and a cute patio area with fake grass and milk crate tables.

“That’s where the name of the cafe from, actually, because this place was such a rough diamond,” Henry explains.

“It was perfect for us, though, because we wanted to be off Liebig St, not only because it is more affordable, but because of what is happening around Fairy St and Kepler St.

“There are a lot of people putting themselves out there and giving things a go, which is creating a whole new feel to this area.”

Such is Henry’s reputation for knowing what “works” with a cafe, Rough Diamond featured in The Age Good Food section just three days after opening, ([you can read the review here](#)), all of which adds to the sense that Warrnambool’s cafe culture is gathering cred.



Moria Aberline and Paul Riley have relocated back to Warrnambool from the UK to open Graze.

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[/dropcap]ust an espresso shot away from Rough Diamond is

Graze, a combination cafe and gourmet deli that replaced the long-standing Lozzar's in Kepler St.

"This is something we have wanted to do for a long time, to have our own business and to run our own cafe," says owner **Moira Aberline**, who recently returned to Warrnambool after 10 years in the UK, where she met partner **Paul Riley**.

Both Moira and Paul worked in hospitality, with Paul a former chef's consultant in several fine dining restaurants that were known for their "rosettes" as opposed to the "chef's hat" system used in Australia.

Like so many other ex-pats of her generation, Moira felt the time was right to return home and the pair wasted no time in applying what they had learnt overseas to Warrnambool. The completely remodelled cafe is both cosy and modern and, even on a mid-Winter's day, busy.

"It has been fabulous: we have been really overwhelmed by the support we have received and to be part of the buzz that is happening around here," Moira said.



Day Kitty remains one of the most popular cafes in the Kepler St strip, with Victoria Carey, left and Rebekah Conheady keeping the coffee flowing.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] A [/dropcap] lot of that buzz can be traced to **Day Kitty**, right next door to Graze, which about 18 months ago moved into the tired shop once occupied by Flaherty's chocolates and turned it into a gorgeous space of marine ply and white tile.

The purely organic focus of the cafe became its very appealing point of difference and owner **Victoria Carey** is in the process of taking that one step further by offering organic groceries and fresh food.

With the pioneering **Wyton's** across the road and **Bohemia**, another early arrival, a little further along toward the highway, Kepler St is barely recognisable from the days when pretty much the only cafe on offer was the quaint Kepler Kettle.

"Oh, I used to love the Kepler Kettle! It was just gorgeous," Moira says with a laugh.

Now, however, it's the espresso machines that are giving Kepler St and its surrounds a full head of steam.

[box]You can find Rough Diamond (M-F, 7-2) [on Facebook here](#). Find Graze Urban Cafe and Deli, (M-F, 7-5; Sat 7-3) on [the web here](#). Day Kitty is on Facebook [here](#) and [Bohemia Cafe and Bar here](#).**[/box]**

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