



THE BOOKLOVERS' CLUB NORTHERN BEACHES INCORPORATED

(Incorporated in NSW under the Associations Act 2009)

No: Y2222011

1395b Pittwater Road, Narrabeen 2101

MEETINGS: 2nd and 4th TUESDAY each month from 10am

Website: <https://tinyurl.com/bookloversnb>

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Jean Nysen, Jill Edey, Beverley Bingham
& Louisa Baker

MARCH 2026

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2025

I was concerned, as were other committee members, about the viability of our club after Covid. A number of our older members did not return to our face to face meetings post Covid. This was not unusual, as other clubs ie. Probus and u3A reported this same effect.

I can happily report that in the past year we have attracted new members and we are keeping pace with our former numbers. I am pleased to report that we, as a club, are flourishing and that our future appears assured.

I think that the fact that we have continued to attract new members is, in part, due to our on-line presence which is beginning to bear fruit. We now have a website and we continue to have a presence in the magazine produced by Northern Beaches Council, The Drift. We have also appointed Chris Horton as our Membership Officer to work on our profile within the community.

I am also proud to report that we have continued to attract new members to assume positions on the Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Wendy McNeilly, Denise Hyland and Fiona Shaw to the committee, as they are performing essential roles within the club. They have put their hands up to work on behalf of us all.

We have also continued our practice of holding a yearly Trivia event in order to fund-raise for a local charity, and we have made increasing donations over the last 3 years to Women & Children First.

We have discontinued awarding life memberships in order to make our club less hierarchical.

Our club was founded in 1953, and one of our aims is to provide a platform for an interest in books, reading, and the discussion about books. Our other function is to provide an opportunity for members to socialize, interact, and foster friendships over our common interest in literature and reading.

*Maria Tomaino
President*

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 62nd Annual General Meeting of the Booklovers Club Northern Beaches Incorporated will be held at Berry Hall at The Tramshed on Tuesday 10th March 2026 at 11am. Please come along and support Booklovers Club. Our club member, Susan Alexander will be the Speaker at the AGM, talking about her book *The Reluctant Camper*.

In order to vote at this meeting, members are advised that their annual subscription of \$40 must be paid before this date.

Nominations Close 24th February 2026
Nominations to be emailed to the Secretary Carolyn Darmanin at
cfdarmanin@bigpond.com

TREASURER'S REPORT 2025

The Treasurer's Report will be presented verbally at the Annual General Meeting and the audited accounts will be sent to members separately.

HEAD LIBRARIAN'S REPORT 2025

Library Usage and Loans:

The Library continues to be a popular resource for many members on Club Day. Overall loans have increased in 2025 to 446. It would be good if there was greater library usage during the week, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Book Discussions:

The following books were discussed during 2025

- *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey
- *Prima Facie* by Suzie Miller
- *The Lost Bookshop* by Evie Woods
- *Limberlost* by Robbie Arnott
- *In the Margins* by Gail Holmes
- *The Bookwoman of Troubleome Creek* by Kim Michelle Robinson
- *100 years of Betty* by Debra Oswald
- *A Great Act of Love* by Heather Rose

In 2025, our Book Discussions remained vital and interesting, introducing members to a broad range of diverse perspectives and authors. This success is a direct result of our volunteer discussion leaders; I thank them for their invaluable contributions throughout the year.

Acknowledgements:

Our Library simply couldn't function without the tireless support of our Assistant Librarians. Thank you for volunteering to keep the Library open. Jennifer Seale continues process all our new books and to help me so much on Club Days. I couldn't do it without her.

Glenys Murray (Head Librarian)

AUTHOR LIAISON'S REPORT 2025

2025/26 year has seen wonderful authors presenting at our Booklovers' Club.

At the last AGM, our own Glenys and Kevin Murray took us on their wonderful adventures to Siberia.

April, Debra Oswald enthralled us with "One Hundred Years of Betty".

May, we were absorbed by Dr Susan Steggall's "To Carve Identity".

June, Nikki Gemmel delighted us with 'Wing'.

July we were enchanted by Helen Signy's 'Maya's Dance'.

August, Emily McGuire captivated us with her novel 'Rapture'.

September we were enchanted by Susan Ackroyd's Rhyme & Reason'.

October, we were spellbound by our own Loretta Bernard's 'Imagining Australia: A History of our Nation through Music, Film, Literature and Art'.

November we were charmed by Aura Parker's children's art work and book 'Bowerbird Blues'.

January this year, we were delighted by Joanna Nell's 'The Funeral Crashers'.

February, our own Nathalie Apouchtine mesmerized us with her family history 'No Way Back: Revolution and Exile. Russia and Beyond'.

AGM March, our own Susan Joy Alexander will captivate us with her new memoir/history work 'A Reluctant Camper'.

Thank you to all these superb authors for their time, expertise and willingness to share their works with us.

Denise Hyland
Author Liaison

SECRETARY'S REPORT 2025

2025 was a great year for welcoming new members.

In December we had a membership of 84 including 3 life members. We are now making up for the reduced membership we had during the Covid years.

We held a successful Morning tea to welcome new members which we will be repeating in April this year.

Our numbers at the meetings have improved and we thank all members for their attendance and participation.

Carolyn Darmanin
Secretary

AUTHOR FOR MARCH AGM – Sue Alexander

Sue Alexander will talk at the AGM about her newest book *The Reluctant Camper*.

As we were approaching retirement in 2007, my Swiss husband Markus Pluss divulged for the first time in over 30 years of marriage that it was his dream to travel in a camper trailer to Cape York, the largest unspoiled wilderness in northern Australia.

I was horrified! Camping was not something I had ever considered to do. However, I discovered by stepping out of my comfort zone and taking the unknown path, magic happened. I learnt new things, met new people, saw new places and tried new experiences.

Writing “The Reluctant Camper” took me a lot longer than I envisaged as I’d kept a journal. I thought it would be a matter of just typing it up with a bit of an edit. Nothing like my first book “A Spanish Love Affair” which had taken ten years. However, it became Topsy that grew from what started out as a light-hearted camping frolic to a lesson in early Australian history requiring lengthy research. It has taken the most part of five years.

AUTHOR FOR FEBRUARY – Nathalie Apouchtine



We were delighted to welcome Nathalie Apouchtine to talk about her book, *No Way Back – Revolution and exile, Russia and beyond*: a history of some of the twentieth century’s most crucial historic events and at the same time a family history.

Her grandparents in Russia came from wealthy circumstances and married during the 1st World War. They lived through the Russian Revolution in February 1917, the Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution October 1917 (which turned into a dictatorship headed by Lenin.) Then there was a civil war with the “Red Army” vs the “White Army” (the red army supported the communists and the white army represented its opponents.)

In 1920 her grandparents escaped from Russia to France. Then came WW11 in 1939: two of her grandfathers had died, then one grandmother in June 1940 as the Germans moved into Paris. In 1942 a mass deportation of Jews began.

Nathalie’s parents, Dimitri and Irene, moved from Paris to Nantes to live and were wed in 1943. Nantes was heavily bombed so they had to move further inland to the countryside.

Nathalie’s parents migrated to Canada on a special passport created for stateless people like them by the League of Nations.

After a powerpoint presentation Nathalie introduced her friend, Lucy Godoroja for a question and answer session. Lucy owns a Button Shop in Newtown, Sydney and she has written a book about this. Nathalie and Lucy met in Canada and they both ended up in Australia. They have known each other for more than 50 years.

Lucy asked Nathalie questions which she answered, for instance:

Q: Why did you decide to write this book?

A: Nathalie said she wondered how people coped with traumatic historical events. She also said that she was troubled by her origins as Russia has “bullied” others throughout history.

She was troubled by her social origins too, as her grandparents were wealthy which was built on of the labour of those working for them. Nathalie discovered diaries and letters written by family, which set out the difficulties and circumstances of their time.

Nathalie travelled to the places that were significant to the family history. There was a great deal of research also about the historic events described, as well as the “migrant experience”. Fortunately Nathalie is able to speak and read Russian and French which was a help in reading the diaries and letters.

Q: How did the family experience the first Revolution?

A: Not as horrific compared to what came later. Nathalie read excerpts from two of the family memoirs.

Q: Does it still have significance for you in the third generation?

A: Nathalie said she once attended the anniversary of the Revolution and she read a piece describing the celebration. Most of the people in Russia had by then turned away from Stalin, but some pictures of him were still carried. She felt uncomfortable attending the celebration as for her relatives, the Revolution had closed the door on their past.

Q: Why did your family go to particular countries?

A: They went to countries that would accept them, such as France. The family hoped that if things were to change they could go back to Russia, but this never happened.

Q: How did the family that stayed in Russia fare?

A: Some spent time in prisons or prison camps, some died there. Those who survived had many restrictions and were not allowed to travel out of the country.

Q: What impact did the Second World War have on your parents?.

A: The bombing in Nantes – Nathalie read an extract written about that time by her father. The war in general had a major impact on them, so they decided to leave Europe. Her parents spoke French so they applied to Canada, as French is an official language there. In five years after they had migrated they received Canadian citizenship.

Some of the Questions from members:

Q: Why did Nathalie come to Australia?

A: She was a young backpacker and when she came to Australia, she loved the climate and the people and stayed.

Q: What language did you use when travelling to places of significance to the family?

A: She speaks Russian and French, so did not have to use an interpreter.

Q: When did you go back to Russia, and how many times did you visit?

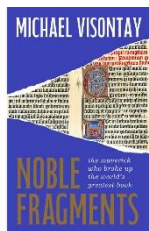
A: Three times, twice under communism and once after. The second time she was sponsored by a Russian family living in Georgia. In 1997 after the collapse of communism she saw there was still great disparity just as before the Revolution; people driving around in big cars while also there was a lot of poverty.

Q: How long did the book take to write?

A: She did the first interviews in the 1990s, then later wrote a PHD thesis, then put it on the backburner. It took several years to adapt it to a book, three years to find a publisher, then another two years to go through the publishing process. It was a long road.

- Q: What treasures did your family take out of Russia?
A: Some jewellery, which they quickly sold to survive, documents and some photos. They could carry very little in the rushed circumstances of their departures.
- Q: How did you find the diaries?
A: From different sources – memoirs and diaries from her grandparents' generation that her parents and other relatives had kept (that she didn't know they had). An uncle died in Paris, and when the family apartment was cleared out unfortunately her grandfather's diaries were disposed of.
- Q: Was Nathalie able to look at the Russian Archives?
A: After the collapse of communism the archives were opened up somewhat but apparently they are now closed again.
- Q: How difficult is it for you to process what is happening in Ukraine ?
A: Nathalie said she is horrified what is happening in Ukraine.
- Q: Who are in the photos on the cover of the book?
A: On the front, her grandmother as a child and the estate of her paternal grandmother's family. On the back cover, her mother as a child with her mother and her father as a child with his three siblings.

AUTHOR FOR APRIL



Our author for April will be Michael Visontay talking about his book *Noble Fragments*.

Michael Visontay has worked as a journalist and senior editor at The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian, and taught journalism at university. He is the author of several nonfiction books, including 'Welcome to Wanderland', 'Who Gave You Permission? (with Manny Waks)', and 'Undies to Equities- the remarkable life of Henri Aram'.

Part detective story and part memoir, *Noble Fragments* is an expedition into the arcane world of book collectors and their eccentric passions, and a journey of discovery about how Wells's gamble set off a chain of events that changed a family's destiny. In 1921, Gabriel Wells, a New York bookseller, scandalised the rare-book world. He committed a crime against history. He broke up the world's greatest book, the Gutenberg Bible, and sold it off in individual pages. The Gutenberg was the first substantial book in Europe to have been printed on a printing press. It represented the democratisation of knowledge and was the Holy Grail of rare books.

Half a century later, Sydney journalist Michael Visontay, stumbled upon a mysterious legal document that linked Wells to his own family. He became obsessed by the Gutenberg's invisible imprint on his life, and set out to track down the pages of the broken bible.

This is the story of an Australian man's hunt for those fragments and his family's debt to an act of literary vandalism.

Denise Hyland

Author Liaison

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY – Library Open from 10am

	March	April
Club Day and Author Talk Open from 10 am. Meeting at 11am	10 th AGM	14 th
Management Committee meeting 12 pm	10 th	---
Book discussion	24 th	28 th

ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS' MARCH 2026

	TUESDAY		THURSDAY
3	Louise Matthews	5	Hilary Macorison
10	Club Day Glenys Murray, Jennifer Seal	12	Chris Horton
17	Wendy Austen	19	Wendy Webb
24	Discussion Glenys Murray, Jennifer Seal	26	Chris Hughes
31	Nerilyn Schooley		

BOOK DISCUSSION

March 24th: *The Wind Knows my Name* by Isabelle Allende presented by Jill Thompson.

April 28th: *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell presented by Kerry Scotland.

May 26th: TBA

June 23rd: *Air* by John Boyne presented by Heather Procter

BOOKS READ BY MEMBERS OVER THE HOLIDAYS

Abulhawa, Susan
Adiga, Aravind
Archer, Jeffrey
Arnott, Robbie
Attwood, Margaret
Austen, Jane
Badallel, E Youngian

Mornings in Jenin
White Tiger
Paths of Glory
Dusk
Hag Seed
Lady Susan
The Lost Bookshop

Bellbrae, Chrissie
Chevalier, Tracy
Dunmore, Helen
Espach, Alison
Evans, Virginia
Everett, Percival
Gardam, Jane
Haddrick, Greg
Hammer, Chris
Harper Jane
Harris Robert
Harris, Robert
Hepworth, Sally
Ishiguru
Jordan, Toni
Keegan Clare
Kieza, Grantlee
Kingsolver, Barbara
Laguna, Sophie
Laurain, Antoine
Litteken, Erin
Mara Andrea
McConaghy, Charlotte
McConaghy, Charlotte
McConaghy, Charlotte
Mytting, Lars
Nichols, David
O'Farrell, Maggie
Oxlade, Boyd
Pacey, A J
Parker, Allie
Rebanks, James
Rose, Heather
Roy, Arundhi
Ryan, Patrick
Shafak, Elif
Shafak, Elif
Stedman, M L
Suman, Defne
Taylor, Kathryn Kressman Taylor
Thompson, Kate
Tostig, Sandi
White, Christian
Williams, Niall
Winder, Robert
Winton, Tim
Wood, Benjamin
Zenin, Gabrielle

The Forentine Quilt
The Glassmaker
Exposure
The Wedding People
The Correspondent
James
Old Filth 2004
The Mushroom Murders
Legacy
Last One Out
Act of Oblivion
Precipice
Mad Mabel
Clara and the Sun
Addition
Small Things Like These
Mary Penfold
The Poisonwood Bible
The Underworld
The President's Hat
The Lost Daughters of Ukraine
Nobody Saw a Thing
The Last Migration
Once There were Wolves
The Wild Dark Sky
The Sixteen Trees of the Somme
You are Here
This Must be the Place
Death in Brunswick
A Fortunate Life
At the Foot of the Cherry Tree
The Place of Tides
A Great Act of Love
Mother Mary Comes to Me
Buckeye
10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World
There are Rivers in the Sky
The Light Between the Oceans
At the Breakfast Table
Address Unknown 1938
The Little Wartime Library
Friends of Dorothy
The Long Night
Year of the Child
Three Rivers
Dirt Music
Seascraper
Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Tomorrow

BOOK DISCUSSION – “The Process of Reading” – presented by Glenys Murray

On Tuesday the 24th February, we had an interesting discussion about the actual process of reading itself. Glenys presented a short video about how reading actually changes the way our brains work. We then considered and discussed a series of questions, mostly derived from ideas raised in the video, and members discussed their experiences of reading printed books, e-books and audio books and the function of Libraries in today’s society.

Everyone really enjoyed the session and a big “thank-you” to Glenys Murray for arranging the talk.

NEW BOOKS FEBRUARY 2026

Ayland, Adrian The Redline

Outback cop Jesse Redpath investigates a suspicious death in a remote Northern Territory community. What looks like a tragic accident quickly unspools into a gritty conspiracy of corporate greed and buried secrets.

Boyne, John Air

Aaron Umber and his teenage son travel from Sydney to Ireland. Suspended thirty thousand feet in the air, Aaron reflects on childhood trauma and his failed marriage, hoping to bridge the emotional distance between himself and his growing son.

Chang, Jung Fly, Wild Swans

This is the sequel to her landmark memoir, *Wild Swans*, the author recounts her life in the West after leaving China in 1978. Moving from the Cultural Revolution to Xi Jinping’s era, Chang explores her evolving relationship with her mother and the personal cost of writing banned history.

Constable, Harriett The Instrumentalist

Reimagines 18th-century Venice through Anna Maria della Pietà. As Antonio Vivaldi’s student and collaborator, Anna Maria’s genius fuels his greatest works. This propulsive historical novel explores female ambition and the cost of fame, reclaiming a lost legacy from the shadows of history.

Evans Virginia, The Correspondent

Follows Sybil Van Antwerp, a prickly, retired lawyer. Through candid letters and emails to family, strangers, and literary icons, the septuagenarian navigates grief, failing eyesight, and long-buried trauma. It’s a witty, moving exploration of finding redemption and connection in the quiet winter of life.

Hepworth Sally, Mad Mabel

Eighty-one, Elsie Fitzpatrick’s quiet life shatters when a neighbour’s death exposes her secret: she’s “Mad Mabel,” Australia’s youngest convicted murderer. As the media storms her Melbourne street, Elsie finally speaks out to reclaim her narrative. This dual-timeline thriller explores whether she’s truly a monster or just a misunderstood victim.

New Books (continued)

Jonasson, Jonas *The Distinctly Competent District Councillor*

Julia Bäck, a councillor in decaying Halstaholm, Sweden, launches a bizarre campaign to lure a German mattress company. Her eccentric tactics, renaming roundabouts for Angela Merkel and turning pools into beerhouses spark a hilarious battle for survival. It's a joyful, quirky tale of small-town desperation.

McEwan, Ian *What Can We Know*

In 2119, on a flooded archipelago, scholar Thomas Metcalfe hunts for a lost 2014 poem, "The Derangement" of our era, shifting from academic detective work to a scandalous mid-century confession. It's an interrogation of memory, climate guilt, and the elusive nature of truth.

Thompson, Kate *The Little Wartime Library*

Inspired by true events, librarian Clara Button builds a sanctuary inside London's Bethnal Green tube station during the Blitz. Despite government pushback and personal grief, Clara and her friend Ruby use literature to foster hope and community underground. It's a poignant tribute to resilience and the life-saving power of books.

Wood, Daisy *The Banned Books of Berlin*

Often told through the eyes of the "ordinary" workers—librarians and assistants—who realized the danger before the rest of the world did. As "un-German" literature is marked for the pyre, they risk everything to smuggle banned volumes to safety. It's a chilling, heart-wrenching tribute to the rebels who fought to keep history's pages turning.

The deadline for the April Bulletin will be 25th March 2026

BOOKS OPEN DOORS