

Coffs Harbour Writers' Group

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PO Box 1953, Coffs Harbour 2450 www.coffsharbourwriters.com



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Committee Members

President:	Lorraine Penn (formerly Mouafi) 6653 3256 Improject@bigpond.com
Vice-President:	Roger Harris rogerch@tpg.com.au
Secretary:	Rosalie Skinner 6652 2919 roseiswriting@gmail.com
Treasurer/Membership Secretary:	Suzanne Tainsh 6658 8859 jstainsh@bigpond.com
Social Secretaries:	Janice Terry alistair.terry@bigpond.com / Yvonne Kachel Yvonne.kachel@bigpond.com
Newsletter Editor and Publicity:	Leonie Henschke 0412668315 leonie@henschke.net.au

Greetings

It's been a romantic month with the lovely scents of spring in the air and longer days and warmer mornings...and the gala Romance Writers of Australia (RWA) Conference in Melbourne attended by several of our members including Margaret Penhall-Jones and Michael Burlace (one of only about six men at the conference and 400 women!) and local authors Fiona McArthur and Annie Seaton. Any of you who are 'friends' with Di Curran, President of Nambucca Writers' Group, on Facebook will have been dazzled by her pictures from the event, even one of Di with a good-looking, bare-chested man on each arm! Never know what they get up to at these 'romantic' affairs. Di was a very worthy recipient of the RWA Lynne Wilding Award for her services to the association. (See Margaret's report later in the Newsletter.)

As reported last month members of the Writers' Group, Robyn Veugen, Rosalie Skinner, and myself, Leonie Henschke, have been active working with the Toormina High School Year 8 Class on a writing

project and with the Year 12 Extension English students. It was great to work with the students sharing our knowledge and experience as individuals but also show what the Writers' Group can contribute to the community. Our work culminated in a judging day where we circulated the room, examining videos, Power Point presentations, posters and dioramas all explaining why the groups had chosen a particular genre of writing as their preferred type of book. Needless to say fantasy and horror were top of the list with some students even dressing up to highlight their presentation! Our Writers' Group had a lovely letter from Julie Roberts, Head Teacher, Teaching & Learning, at Toormina High School:

Hi Lorraine, I wanted to thank your Writer's group as a whole for your interest in our Project Based Learning. It has been wonderful for us to have Leonie, Robyn and Rosalie involved with the English project and the students have really appreciated their time and input. Today was our presentation day and the three ladies were wonderful judges, spending time with each group and really showing their interest. Please convey my gratitude and that of our students to your members.

Another member, Lisa Reily, currently in Greece, has some good news (see travel tales from Lisa and Ion later in the Newsletter). *The Curse*, her feature screenplay, has recently been selected as a finalist in the *Reel Writers Screenwriting Contest*, a U.S. screenwriting competition. *The Curse* is a mythological adventure/drama, based on the book, *The Curse of the Minotaur: A Tale of Ancient Greece*, by Tom Stone. This is its third competition success to date. *Regards Leonie*

What's on in September/October?

Wednesday 2 September, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm Monthly Meeting Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Coffs Harbour Ex Services Club. Guest speaker: Kim Hodges on 'Getting Published'.

Thursday, 16 September, 10.00 pm – 12 noon Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Social Morning, Chill Out Café, Coffs Harbour Community Village.

Wednesday 7 October, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm Monthly Meeting Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Coffs Harbour Ex Services Club.

Thursday, 21 October, 10.00 pm – 12 noon Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Social Morning, Chill Out Café, Coffs Harbour Community Village.

President's Report

Guest Speaker at South West Rocks Creative Writing Group

Being invited to attend as a guest speaker/chair for South West Creative Writing Groups' August monthly meeting was a pleasure, thanks to the invitation of their active member, Desley Polmear. The attendees also included three visiting members from the newly formed Port Writing Inc group.

The purpose of my attendance was to discuss how our monthly meetings are conducted including decisions on the type of workshops and guest speaker events we choose and schedule during the year.

After our coffee break I challenged everyone to join in a 200 words icebreaker on the topic 'if you had the opportunity of living somewhere other than South West Rocks, where would it be?'

The creative storytelling from the members and visitors on this topic was amazing, including a story on my dream location of Tuscany.

In the coming months, members from South West Rocks group will visit one of our meetings.

30th Year Anthology Contributions

It is encouraging to find that we have already received a 700-word story from one of our members, Yvonne Kachel, contribution to next year's 30th year anthology book. Thanks Yvonne and safe travels for your overseas adventure.

Hopefully others have already commenced their contributions too, remember that the key word 'beach' must feature in your story or poems.

Christmas Party Location

Yes, it is that time again when we must decide and book a location for our annual Christmas Party Lunch Wednesday 2nd December from 11 am to 3 pm.

Members have mentioned some locations: Yacht Club, Park Beach Surf Club, the newly managed Deep Sea Fishing Club (should be operating in October) and the Chill Out Café. At this stage, none of these locations have been approached as to what they can do for us.

Submitting for CeX Club Grant 2016

We need to apply for our annual Club Grant for 2016 in the coming weeks to maintain our monthly meeting location.

Regards Lorraine

Members write...

Travels with Lisa Reily and Ion Corcos

An Excerpt from Ion's Newsletter

On Writing

In June, I finally got to attend my first face-to-face poetry course with Helen Mort in Loutro, Crete. I arrived to beautiful Loutro, to find that there were only three other participants, from England and Ireland. We met for a pleasant welcome dinner on the first night.

The following morning, we met at a café, to analyse and discuss a few poems selected by Helen. We then spent some time writing and sharing our poetry, based on prompts Helen gave us. The small group was great, as we bonded well. It was inspiring to hear each other's work. This format continued for the week.

In the evenings, we would gather again to read our poems and discuss other aspects of poetry. Overall, the course was extremely rewarding and well worth the time and energy. Helen was an amazing teacher and a wonderful person. I have also written quite a few poems as a result of this course, which was an added bonus.

In addition to the course, Lisa and I enjoyed the company of the group for dinner and drinks. We had free time each day to do as we pleased - write, swim or rest – and I had numerous siestas!

On the final night, we took a boat to the next bay, enjoying dinner and a full session of poetry readings. We also sang a few songs of the sixties, accompanying Stewart, the course organiser, who played guitar. This was enjoyed by the patrons of the whole taverna!

On Publishing

I have had a poem accepted for publication in a new journal, [These Fragile Lilacs](#). The poem, *Easter in Chania*, was written recently as part of the Iowa course [How Writers Write Poetry](#).

On Travelling

Lisa and I spent ten days in Loutro. It is a very idyllic town, composed almost entirely of blue and white buildings in a small bay. There are no cars or mopeds, so it is quiet during the day. Only the hum of diners along the waterfront each evening, as well as the roar of some boats, reminds you that you are not alone!

Loutro is located in the region of Sfakia, known for its rebellious men and women, especially in the recent past. This area used to have a lot of blood feuds and vendettas.

Although we really enjoyed our stay, we felt that the isolation of Loutro impacted on some aspects of the usual Greek *filoxenia* (hospitality and generosity) we have normally experienced. As you can only get to Loutro by boat, this means that you are at the mercy of the shop owners and restaurateurs. Prices were higher and portions were smaller. This may have also been the influence of high season.

After Loutro, Lisa and I went to Platania, four kilometres west of Rethymnon. We have been to Rethymnon before, but as we are currently following budget-priced hotels (as it is the beginning of high season), we ended up in the tourist area of Platania this time.

Platania is generally attractive and much of its surrounds are still rural. However, we also found some non-attractive aspects. For instance, a dry creek running to the sea looked very similar to some of those in Lovina, Bali. The creek was overgrown and rubbish was dumped in it. The main strip of tavernas and tourist shops has sections which are dusty, overloaded with signs and noisy with traffic.

Another example was our hotel. Although our room was clean, simple and comfortable, we were frequently disturbed by other guests. The bar area was open till 1am, without any noise restrictions, and patrons continued through until 3 or 4am each night. Is this summer in Greece? We will find out shortly.

Till next month, live authentically and write with integrity. *Ion*

Tips for writing your short story for the anthology

Writing short stories means beginning as close to the climax as possible — everything else is a distraction. A novel can take a more meandering path, but should still start with a scene that sets the

tone for the whole book. A short story conserves characters and scenes, typically by focusing on just one conflict, and drives towards a sudden, unexpected revelation. Go easy on the exposition and backstory — your reader doesn't need to know everything that you know about your characters.

Critiquing Group

Don't forget we have an evening Critiquing Group (giving and receiving feedback on your writing projects) meeting on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 7 pm at the Coffs Harbour Hotel. More information from convenor, Robyn Veugen, at robyn.veugen@gmail.com.

More from Ion Corcos and Lisa Reily - Personal Experiences of Greece

(In response to the Editor's request for our thoughts about Greece and the crisis)

We have noticed a number of changes. In some places, the crisis is not noticeable and life and tourism seem to be going on as usual. But in other ways, it is clear that people are struggling.

There are numerous empty buildings and many restaurants, which would normally cater for larger numbers, are virtually empty. Prices are higher and can sometimes be more expensive than in Australia. Many Greeks cannot manage these increases.

We have heard first-hand of some Greeks who, without their own vegetable gardens, would be unable to feed themselves. As a result, it is now common to find 'bins' for food donations in Greek supermarkets. It has been like this since we came to Greece back in 2011.

We have noticed that many Greeks have capital (e.g.: family land), but cannot sell it. They have no cash flow. There is also a strain on some islands who, due to their proximity to Turkey, have a huge influx of refugees. This puts an added strain on a basically bankrupt country. Nonetheless, we have met some wonderful Greek people who are helping the refugees.

The Greeks have had enough of the 'financial crisis', but with all the agreements and bailout plans, there is no clear ending in sight. Part of Greece's struggle is because many Greeks want to remain in the Euro. Perhaps this view will need to change, in order for things to improve.

When we talked to people in Greece, they expressed that they are under constant financial pressure. Their pensions have been substantially cut. The GST has been significantly increased. Access to their own money has been severely restricted. Their lives are not the same.

When we recently left Greece, we felt a real sense of relief being away from it all. We must not forget that this debt is a government debt that has already taken a huge toll on its people. But unlike us, the Greeks cannot escape it.

Romance Writers Gather in Melbourne

The annual Romance Writers of Australia conference is a lavish, fun event. This year it was held in the sumptuous Park Hyatt in Melbourne. Featured events are a cocktail evening, costumes ranging from the outrageous to the quirky and the annual Gala Awards Dinner.

Local authors including Annie Seaton and Nambucca Writers' Group President Diane Curran were amongst the four hundred women and five men who attended.

For everyone who is writing romance or has a work of fiction or memoir which includes romantic elements, the conference workshops offer excellent information on developing your writing technique, improving your craft and the practicalities of promoting your finished work. Delegates are friendly and supportive.

Romance Writers of Australia members receive monthly newsletters with a wealth of information about writing technique. More information here: <http://www.romanceaustralia.com/p/1/Home>

Margaret Penhall-Jones

Writing and Competition Deadlines *(From Margaret Penhall-Jones)*

30 September: 2015 Stella Prize

The Stella Prize is now taking entries. The \$50,000 cash prize will be presented for the best work of literature, fiction or non-fiction, published in 2015 by an Australian woman. The judging panel will be author and academic Brenda Walker (chair); writer and social commentator Emily Maguire; award-winning writer and essayist Alice Pung; literary critic and author Geordie Williamson; and bookseller and founder of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation Suzy Wilson. For more information <http://thestellaprize.com.au/the-stella-prize/2016-2/>

30 September: Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award

Applications are now open for the Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award, offered each year for the development of a play or other approved performing arts project. The Award is intended for those needing income and support during the writing or development of a project or to assist with costs of production, workshops, restaging, publishing or touring. It is not intended as a prize for a finished work. For details and application forms, click <http://www.sbwfoundation.com/rodney-seaborn-playwrights-award.html>

31 October: Positive Words Magazine Short Story & Poetry End-of-Year Competition.

Submissions are now open for the Positive Words Magazine Competition. It is open theme and is accepting short stories of up to 500 words and poems of up to 32 lines. First prize is awarded \$100, second prize will receive a twelve-month (12 issues) subscription to Positive Words Magazine. <https://positivewordsmagazine.wordpress.com/>

Incorporate our Group or not?

We will be discussing the pros and cons of incorporation of our Group at the October meeting. More information will be supplied at the discussions but you might also like to look at the help sheet at:

https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/management/view_help_sheet.do?articleid=17

That's all for now. Don't forget, contributions please. Your own stories, book or film reviews, writing exercises...whatever takes your fancy. Leonie