



The Tari-Kākā/Khandallah Literary Review

(Kākā design by Michelle Carlton Wilderness Collection)

April 2024

Welcome to the April edition of our monthly newsletter. Our newsletter can also be found online by following this pathway: wcl.govt.nz >About >Locations >Khandallah.

We'll review library items which appeal to us. Contributions come from library members and staff (basically, anyone who tells us about a book, movie or CD they like)

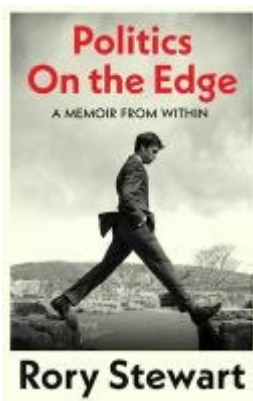
Khandallah Library Literary Quiz

We had great fun with our inaugural quiz in April, so much so, that we are doing it again!

Please join us on Friday the 17th of May at 11.00 - 12.00 for more literary questions with our friendly group of bibliophiles.

Queen Camilla celebrates new literary study at Clarence House. “*Books are good for us*”. The Queen said there is a link between reading more fiction and better mental health, concentration, and social connectedness.

[Politics on the Edge: A Memoir from Within](#) by Rory Stewart (Non-Fiction)

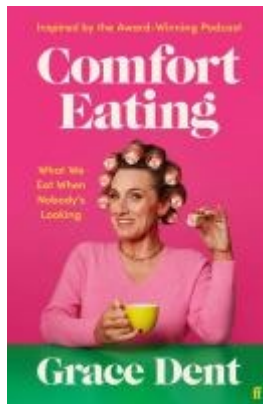


This absorbing account of a time in British politics reads more like a political thriller, with misinformation, obstruction, and outright betrayal seemingly a daily occurrence. Rory Stewart was first elected as a Member of Parliament for Penrith in 2010 and ran for Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party in 2019. Along the way he was Minister for Prisons, Africa, Development, Environment Minister and Secretary of State for economic Development. He recounts the challenges to be selected as a candidate, campaigning and the day-to-day difficulties of trying to achieve something worthwhile as an M.P.

Brexit was the major issue of his political life, and the manoeuvring by different factions is afforded considerable space. Stewart is never cynical or sardonic about the people and events, rather he seems bemused by their actions. He certainly has an eye and memory for detail and a nice turn of phrase. He observes that the habits on modern MPs “*had evolved to survive the demands of the dominant party members, just as much as the unsanitary habits of wrinkle-lipped free-tailed bats were formed by their long years in deep Bornean caves*”. David Cameron is described as out of touch, Lis Truss whose advice to him was “*Never be Interesting*” as more interested in “*not truth and reason but power and manipulation*”.

To Theresa May who he served under in his ministerial posts he is kinder, someone who “*retained a private personality, someone who might be capable of being hurt and capable of being serious*”. Boris Johnson, among his many faults is depicted as an “*egotistical chancer*”. A fascinating peek behind the curtain of British politics, although not one to inspire much hope for the future. Greg

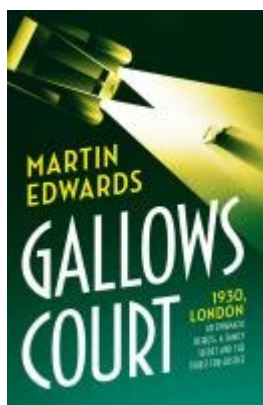
Comfort Eating: What We Eat When Nobody's Looking by Grace Dent (Non-Fiction)



What is one of the most intimate questions we can ask someone? Comedian, Podcaster, Restaurant Critic and Author Grace Dent says it's "What do you eat when nobody's watching?" Her popular podcast and this book explore what food people turn to for comfort when tired, sad, emotionally exhausted, or just because..... She defines comfort food as the guilty pleasure, it's food that acts as therapy and may remind us of home or happier times. For some people it's salty and savoury food, for some it's sweet, but there is something deliciously shameful in it as food rules are broken by the excesses of the stack of buttery toast, the tuna bake with the potato chip topping, the Dairy Milk and Guinness! (Just some of the celebrity examples!) Her rules for comfort food include that it's eaten alone and that it's only real comfort food if you blush and begin making excuses before revealing it to someone. She says that if you offered it to Gwyneth Paltrow, she would cry more than when she accepted her Academy Award.

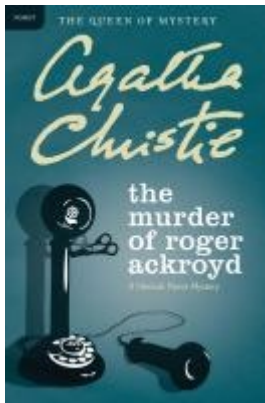
The book explores our relationship with food and is a touching and funny memoir of the author's friends and family and the power that food has to evoke memories. It's also a refreshing change from the celebrity memoirs that praise fasting and broccoli smoothies with its tantalisingly intimate glimpses of what people *really* do in the privacy of their own kitchens. David

[Gallows Court](#) by Martin Edwards (Mystery)



I loved the art deco style cover of this book set in 1930s London, although there are also elements of the Victorian era with its sooty fogs and dead women in the streets. Rachel Savernake, heiress to a rotten dynasty, with a taste for Jazz has a penchant for solving crimes. Jacob Flint, young reporter trying to make a name for himself, suspects she is not as innocent or law-abiding as she seems. Theatre performers, fantastical acts and magic tricks, violent deaths and a decadent secret club all feature in a dazzling chess game orchestrated by a masterful hand. All paths lead to the aptly named Gallows Court. Tightly written with a delightfully devious plot, this is an excellent start to a new series for the author. Greg

[The Murder of Roger Ackroyd](#) by Agatha Christie (Detective Fiction)



Never have I finished a detective novel and wanted to laugh out loud at the sheer audacity of the author. And yet I did when I finished *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. It is exquisitely written – great storytelling, fantastic plot and excellent characters (the gossiping sister Caroline has been much copied). It has a lightness and wit to it that I hadn't associated with Agatha Christie until now. She seems to be having fun - not at the expense of the reader but a type of fun I associate with experienced authors at the top of their game and yet this was only her third novel and the one that propelled her to fame.

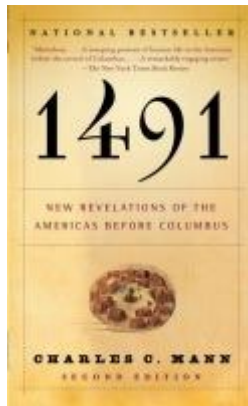
Yes, I am late to the party in reading this classic Agatha Christie novel, despite starting to read Agatha Christie at 12 when I came across *The Body in the Library* in my school library. My excuse is that I am typically a Miss Marple fan and have rediscovered Hercule Poirot through the recent Kenneth Branagh films. This novel though is a classic and has had such an enduring influence on the genre. The detective novel tropes still used in books today are all here - red herrings, a quaint rural village setting, a quirky detective, a big stately home at the heart of the plot and a plot twist. Hercule Poirot has retired to a quiet English village only to come across the murder of local industrialist Roger Ackroyd, stabbed to death in his own study. It seems an open and shut case, but Poirot uses his legendary little grey cells to discover that not all is as it seems. The British Crime Writers' Association voted *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* as the best crime novel ever. What more do you need to recommend it? Fiona

[The Long Game](#) by Simon Rowell (Mystery)



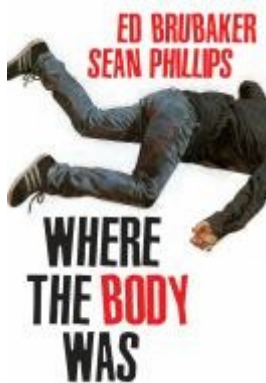
This is an enthralling murder mystery by yet another good Australian author. Detective Zoe Mayer is back at work after a traumatic event (what that was is revealed piecemeal throughout the story) and now has a service dog, Harry, to support her. A brutal murder in a beachside suburb on the outskirts of Melbourne is her first case, a seemingly straight forward case of friends falling out. Zoe's instincts, and some insights from Harry, however, lead her in unexpected directions. Rowell's clean crisp style of writing, a great character and an original plot make for an exciting page turner and great debut novel. And of course there's the dog. Greg

[1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus](#) by Charles C. Mann



This was one of those books that left me absolutely gobsmacked, and I have talked about it to almost everybody I know. It is an account of what is now known about the civilisations of the Americas prior to European contact, and the devastation that was wrought after the Europeans arrived. The title refers to the year before Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas. The author explores all of the current research and brings this to life with a lot of personal anecdotes and experiences. The extent and sophistication of the civilisations of the Americas is still being uncovered, and I was amazed to learn the details of this and how much has been lost. Although it is a work of non-fiction, it is written in a lively and accessible style, and I would highly recommend it to anyone who is at all interested in history and how our world has developed. Nick

[Where The Body Was](#) by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips (Adult Graphic Novel)



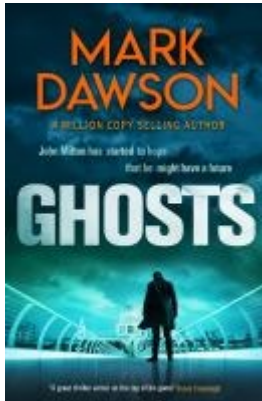
Intriguing multi-layered story set in 1984 of a mysterious death in a suburban cul-de-sac, narrated in the present, with insights from the participants in later life looking back. Those involved include the son of a policeman, still living in his father's shadow, a neglected and bored wife, a homeless vet, a teenage runaway and the private detective looking for her. A noir tale in bright colours that is cynical, knowing and tragic. Greg

Les Visiteurs (Movie)



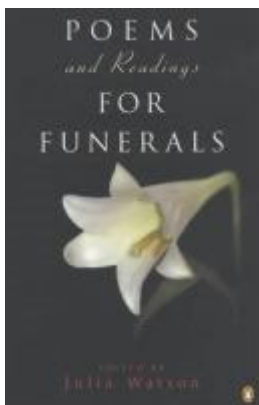
I recently watched "The Visitors" 106 mins, a French movie on Kanopy. The blurb on the cover goes..."In 1122 a brave soldier and his right-hand man are sent to the future by a sinister witch and an absent-minded wizard. Hilarity ensues as they try to find their way back to their own time while dealing with the confusion and chaos of 21st century France. Highly recommended if you want a laugh out loud French movie. Very funny indeed. Jill

[Ghosts](#) by Mark Dawson (Thriller)



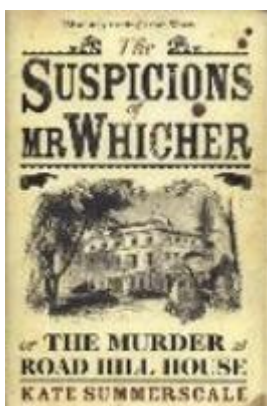
John Milton is a retired assassin on the run from his former organisation and trying to do penance for his many misdeeds. This is the fourth in the series by the self-publishing guru, and it's on a par with the others. Dawson is a competent writer who tells a straightforward story in a fast-paced style. Flashbacks are used to flesh out the plot of how Milton is dragooned into a plot by Russia to bring down his former control officer. It's formulaic but entertaining enough to keep me reading the series. Greg

[Poems and Readings for Funerals](#) by Julie Watson



Eclectic range of poems ancient and modern, some are forever and eternal, all of them are beautiful and tender! Includes: "Remember Me" by Christina Rossetti - Bold, determined, and deeply committed to the relationship(s) she cherishes. "Remember me when I am gone away, Gone far away into the silent land; When you can no more hold me by the hand,," Andy

[The Suspicions of Mr Whicher](#) by Kate Summerscale



I read this thinking that it was a Victorian murder mystery but was surprised to find that it is actually a factual account of a sensational murder case that occurred in England in the 1850s. Mr Whicher was actually one of the original detectives of the Metropolitan police in London, and the book provides an extensive background about the development of the detective force, as well as a fascinating and detailed account of the murder that engrossed the popular press at the time. The author explores how the newly created detective force was perceived by the British public, and how it was portrayed in literature by authors such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. It is a fascinating read and recommended for anyone who is interested in detective mysteries or in the world of Victorian England. Nick

[Dune Part One: The Photography](#) by Chiabella James



Stunning book of exquisite images. These are more than just photos, they are portals into dual universes – yes the movie itself and its compelling narrative, but also to the orbit of the creative world that brought the film to life. Fantastic book. “Photographs give us the opportunity to pore over the details, keeping a record for posterity but also giving us a window to explore these worlds and dive into new cultures.” (p11) “.. a collaboration between direction and design ..” (p140) Andy

[Uproar](#) (New Zealand DVD)



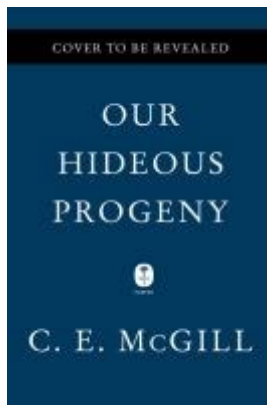
A warm hearted and feelgood movie set against the backdrop of the divisive Springbok tour of 1981. Julian Dennison is Josh Waaka, doing his best to fit in at an elite boy’s school. Not easy when his solo mum (Minnie Driver) is the school cleaner and he’s on a scholarship thanks to older brother (James Rolleston), an injured former star rugby player for the school, now assistant coach. Josh is bullied for his mixed race and lack of rugby ability and knows little about his whanau or heritage. Rhys Darby, doing his usual schtick, encourages his acting talent. How Josh finds his feet and courage to finally make a stand produces an uplifting film with quite a few laughs. Greg

[Wolf Girl](#) by Anh Do (Junior Fiction)



This multi-volume series for young readers is a wonderful story about a girl who has to survive on her own. with new friends, her animals. There’s no explanation as to what caused the crisis that resulted in the other humans disappearing, but this actually heightens the tension and allows the story to unfold in a first person POV. My youngest daughter devoured this excellent series. Andy

[Our Hideous Progeny](#) by C.E. McGill (Fiction)



Those of us who are obsessed with Mary Shelley long for a continuation of the Frankensteinian mythos but are entirely surrounded by the frozen ice of bastardised pop-culture Franken-weeny clones, cheap imitations, and satirical exploitations of ‘the offspring of happy days. Our situation is somewhat dangerous, especially as we are compassed round by a very thick fog of classical illiteracy and ignorance.

I hear many of my Shelley aficionados groaning and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted my attention, and diverted my solicitude from my own situation.

I perceived a new release 400-page novel displaying a fossil-mirrored stitched-up illustration on a lustrous black cover flowing with the words ‘Our Hideous Progeny’. The ‘Our’ hinted at a collective appetite and ambition. Little did I know at the time that this story would be of gigantic stature. This appearance excited my unqualified wonder, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light I saw the dull yellow pages of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated my limbs. I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul.

“Everything about it was alternatively curved and pointed, delicate and piercing. Calligraphy made flesh.” (p267)

C.E. McGill would be worthy of a personalised invitation to join company with those romantics at Villa Diodati, for the author has dared to play ‘god’ by attempting to manufacture with alchemistic artistry that which is of the same DNA of Shelley’s unique species but having its own original and unique identity. They have done it! They have managed to galvanise the electric current that raced through the brain waves of the grandmother of gothic science fiction and brought to life the most unnatural beautiful demon. I have been its reader, but it is my master. I obey! Andy