

PUTTING THE PAST IN PRINT

This article by Colleen O'Sullivan appeared in the *Mudgee Guardian* on 23 November 2015.

Right now I am working to a deadline – to get a book to a publisher. I just don't have time to research and write an article about the history of Kandos and Surrounds. So I have dug around in my files for something that might interest you.

My mother often said to me, 'Life is so interesting I could write a book. Why don't you write a book Colleen?'

I think that urge to write a book is in many of us. So I give you a list of the books that have helped me write.

How to Write History that People Want to Read, Anne Curthoys and Ann McGrath, UNSW Press, 2009.

Good practical advice for writers of history. It covers such areas as the reader, research, sources, writer's block, editing and much more. A book I often dip into.

The Family History Writing Book, Noeline Kyle, Allen and Unwin, 1993. (find an updated version)

Noeline Kyle has written a number of books on family history. This one focuses on collecting and interpreting family history material, ways of presenting and shaping your story, and advice on getting it into book form. A bit dry but some good tips.

Writing the Memoir, Judith Barrington, Eighth Mountain Press, 1997.

Memoir is a personal account of some aspect of your life, whereas an autobiography covers your whole life. This book is a practical, lively read with plenty of useful exercises for the writer of memoir. She helps us consider the challenges, pitfalls and ethical dilemmas; encourages fictional techniques, sensory details; shows how to depict character and place. 'One hears on every page the voice of an intelligent and responsive teacher'.

Writing Your Life, Patti Miller, Allen and Unwin, 1994.

This was the first book about writing memoir/autobiography that I bought and it has proved very useful. In part 1 Miller helps us consider the pitfalls and satisfactions of the task. Part 2 covers the nitty-gritty: getting started, sources, memory, finding your voice, crafting your story etc. Explanation is matter-of-fact, there are interesting examples and a range of writing exercises. This section could keep you busy for years. Part 3 is an anthology of writings.

The Last One Who Remembers, Patti Miller, Allen and Unwin, 1997.

Part memoir, part family history, part essay, part fiction. Through this blend Miller explores the importance of story in our lives.

Writing the Story of Your Life, Carmel Bird, Fourth Estate, 2007.

This book is particularly good in showing how to capture your life: through memory, the imagination, journaling, practice, objects, dreams. Lots of practical explanation, exercises and examples. If you are just starting out with memoir this will help you.

The Little Red Writing Book, Mark Tredinnick, UNSW Press, 2006.

An inspiring book to improve the technical side of your writing. Tredinnick covers the mechanical aspects of writing, but not in a boring and banal way. It is tuition that is clear, convincing and stimulating. He demonstrates how good writing is poetic, musical and transforming; involves courage and hard work; requires sensitivity and honesty. He encourages us to achieve the very best in our writing.

Round Table Magic, a Workbook for Writers' Groups, Julie Simpson, Fran Barnes, Eve Gray, Pencil Orchids Writing group, Wollombi NSW, 2002.

If you are in a writing group you will get lots of ideas/exercises for writing and learning together. If you want to start a writing group this will also give practical advice. I hope it is still available.

Zen in the Art of Writing, Ray Bradbury, Joshua Odell, 1994.

No writing exercises, grammar explanations or stylistic advice. Plenty of inspiration about the creativity of writing. Lively and philosophical about the pleasures of writing. Go to this book if you want to be a writer as opposed to wanting to write a single book.

Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers, Commonwealth of Australia, John Wiley and Sons Australia, 2011.

Before you go to print you need access to one of these. 'Provides guidance and recommendations for preparing material for publication.' Yes it is big, thick and technical but it tells you the 'right' way.

Roget's Thesaurus, Penguin.

I couldn't write without my thesaurus. *Word Thesaurus* is helpful at times but I reach for this book when I am struggling for just the right word. Many times a day! Put a thesaurus on your phone.

Macquarie Dictionary.

Again a much-used tome, especially to check Australian spelling and usage. Put one on your phone.

Guide to Book Production, Bruce Welch, Hale and Iremonger, 2003. Not sure if this book is still available. It gives important information about what is involved in printing a book and how to prepare a book for publication. [Bruce is doing the design and typesetting of my current book]

Here are some of my favourite memoirs:

(in no particular order)

The Hare with the Amber Eyes, Edmund de Waal

So This is Life, Anne Manne

A Mother's Disgrace, Robert Dessaix

True Stories, Helen Garner

Tiger's Eye, Inga Clendinnen

In My father's House, Miranda Seymour

The Truth about my Fathers, Gaby Naher

Too Close to the Falls, Catherine Gildiner

Searching for Charmian, Suzanne Chick

A Simpler Time, Peter Fitzsimons

Foreign Correspondence, Geraldine Brooks

A Fine and Private Place, Brian Matthews

And some favourite historical books:

Searching for the Secret River, Kate Grenville

The Dig Tree, Sarah Murgatroyd

Black Kettle and Full Moon, Geoffrey Blainey

Australia Through Time, Random House

The Singing Line, Alice Thomson

I hope you will be interested in my next book. It is called *Streetwise: Finding History on the Streets of Kandos*. Just as Sam Paine did many interesting articles about the naming of streets in Mudgee I have been researching and writing about the forty streets, twenty five parks and eighteen subdivisions of Kandos. It will be launched early next year.

WRITING THE STORY
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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE



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— by the end the memoirist in you has simply
nowhere left to hide.'

ROBERT DESSAIX

CARMEL BIRD