

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – March 2024

This month's meeting: Thursday 21st March: Michael Rhodes

Michael Rhodes's major work is '**Lion Rampant - Duncan Dunbar and the Age of Sail**'. Born in New Zealand, but one would rather describe him as a citizen of the world: educated in Apia, Samoa, then Wellington College, then migrated to Australia in 1966 where he graduated in Law at Sydney University. Then took an interest in writing about Duncan Dunbar, and travelled to the UK, where he was able to get access to some rather rare photos and records in Dunbar's handwriting.



"And who is Duncan Dunbar?" I asked myself, as I am anything but a sailor (I get seasick even on the Broadwater... ☺). So I researched it a bit: Dunbar is one of the most amazing business and shipping tycoons of the 19th Century. The question that immediately sprang to my mind: I wonder if James Clavell, in his world bestseller 'Tai-Pan' series, based his principal protagonist Dirk Struan on this man? I'll need to ask him!

But Michael won't talk much about his book. He will be talking about his valuable insight into the **USA Film industry** and his experiences as the **President/Chairman of a Los Angeles Film company** that specialises in action films. Ah, by the way, his son is a film producer. If there ever was a case where there was an opportunity to get in through a side door... Here is your opportunity!

Last month's meeting:



Megan Norris (left) with fellow author and editor Kellie Cox

OK, so Taylor Swift filled up the MCG in Melbourne... Similarly, at last month's meeting, the "Megan Factor" caused quite an overflow in our room at Helensvale Library.

Our main speaker **Megan Norris** extensively spoke about how to get a publisher to even look at your manuscript.

"Wouldn't that be great!" I hear you say. Well, how about getting a publisher to look just at your "Selling Line" (maximum 12 words) and your synopsis (what you'd have at the back of your cover), and then they tell you "OK, we want to see more". And you haven't even completed your book yet...

Aw, shucks... it's hard to summarize a major topic, presented by an expert in the field, in a few short sentences. May I suggest you avail yourself of a plethora of Writer's Resources on

our website? Navigate to <https://www.helensvalewritersgroup.org/> and tap the Writer's Resources Tab at the top. Our webmaster **Stacey King** has put in so much effort to provide the stuff you need to help yourself/ You don't need to waste time sorting out the wheat from the chaff. There are multiple categories (including on publishing), with links, below which you will find sub-links...

As usual, our convenor **Graham Moore** conducted the 'bragging session' ("Arright, what have ya done last month??"): Notables: **Stacey King**, who teaches a writing course at the University of the 3rd Age (U3A), brought several of her students with her. Our Astrology expert, **Odyle Knight** (she spends half her life, teaching people aboard cruise ships, that the Horoscope you find in the local rag and Astrology are not the same thing!) joined us with her husband Aldi, who has started his first book as well... Our resident Ireland expert **Brian Kennedy**, who on that very day **celebrated his 84th birthday** (congratulations!), brought a visitor from Indiana, USA... **John Griffith**, after writing several short story books, stepped up into the "real stuff" territory and started a full novel, with Burma as the principal region of action... **Grahame Moore**, after writing four novels last year, has already started on another one... **Livia York** returns to her "other love", music... But the cake would have been taken by **Jack Kregas**: he has designed a book cover. Yup. He just doesn't have a book to go with it yet... 😊

And then we went for a cuppa, and the meeting continued...

'Parody, Spoof, Satire' competition:

Sorry peeps, No new entries, so we... gave up. Instead, a new competition is going now:

March 2024 - 100 Word competition

We'll again run another **100 word competition**. The story must be **exactly 100 words**, including the title (if you want to have a title at all), any genre, and **MUST** contain the words

salesman, incongruous, withdraw.

Derivatives (e.g. Saleswoman, incongruity, withdrawal) are permitted. **Submit your story by email to this address, no later than 18th March 2024**. I'll summarize them into one document (without authors' names) and distribute it to the group before the **next meeting on 21st March**. We'll have an open vote - **1st prize gets a nice bottle of red**. And yes, **VE HAF VAIS TO DETECT THAT YOU HAF USED CHAT GPT**. If you did, sorry, your story will be disqualified. And yes, if you want to bring in controversial subjects, that's ok, as long as it is not offensive.



Can you improve on that?

How about this for describing a primaeval forest of the Hawkesbury River region:

Through the doorway of the hut, he could feel the night, huge and damp, flowing in and bringing with it the sounds of its own life: tickings and creakings, small private rustlings, and beyond that the sougning of the forest, mile after mile.

When he got up and stepped out through the doorway, there was no cry, no guard, only the living night. The air moved around him, full of rich dank smells. Trees stood tall over him. A breeze shivered through the leaves, then died, and left only the vast fact of the forest. Kate Grenville 'The Secret River'

I'm not necessarily suggesting that you write a better sentence yourself (if you do have one, please let me have it!) but if you come across a paragraph that you catch yourself re-reading again and again... I'm a sucker for it. Share it! Take a photo with your smartphone and **send your entry as a photo, text, email or doc to helensvalewriters@gmail.com** (or simply reply to the email with which I sent you this newsletter).

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) **Queensland Literary Awards:** There are 12 different competitions on offer. [Click on the link.](#) They all close on 12th April 2024
- b) **Kellie Cox**, who is also the current President of the **Gold Coast Writers Association**, wants you to compete in their **current short story competition** "Make us fall in love with your main character". Max 1000 words. Closes Friday, 31st May 2024.
- c) **The Hope Prize 2024** International competition - 2000 - 5000 words on a theme of hope and resilience. **\$10,000** first prize. **Closes 22nd March.**
- d) **The Creative Writing NZ Short Story Prize 2024** Here is your chance to show the Kiwis how it's done! Any genre - max 3000 words, first prize \$1,000. (This might be NZ dollars...) Closes 30th April 2024.
- e) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](https://www.reedsy.com) – There must be one or two that suit you!

See you at the Helensvale Library on the 21st! Usual place, downstairs meeting room. Start at 10:00 am sharp, please try to be on time, thank you!

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Librarian Love

*I fell for a Librarian
I asked her to be mine
I said "My love for you
is overdue"
And she said "Fine".*

They spent ages trying to work out the meaning of inconsequential, before realising that it wasn't that important.

