

# LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 21

**LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 21**, April 2024, is an issue of a mailing comments apazine published by Perry Middlemiss, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, 3122. Produced only for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association). E: perry@middlemiss.org

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## GOINGS ON IN THE GROVE

Not a lot. It's been very dry here in Melbourne for the past 8-10 weeks. I'm writing this on the last day in March and we are now on track (if no rain falls between now and tomorrow morning) to have our driest March on record. Oddly, it hasn't been all that hot.

January was a very wet month with about 110mm of rain (about double the normal January average). And then it all stopped around the Australia Day long-weekend. Since then we've had less than 10mm in two months. Due to the odd weather patterns we had a mild December and January (no hot days at all over 35C) and then a warmer February (as expected) with a few hot days. This was a pattern that continued through February and March. Now as we hot autumn I can only hope we get some rain, if only so I don't have to hand water the bloody garden every couple of days.

On the federal election front (not really due until about this time in 2025) we have a new Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Kooyong, one Amelia Hamer, grandniece of former Victorian Premier Rupert "Dick" Hamer. So Josh Frydenberg (ex Federal Treasurer and long-term Member for Kooyong) has decided not to re-contest the seat which I think is a good move. I'd have to say that Dr Monique Ryan (current independent Federal member for this seat) has the front-running, but I have seen some comments on some forums which have been highly critical of her. I assume they are from some dissatisfied conservative voters who still haven't gotten over the loss in 2022. It will be interesting to see how much money the Libs throw at this seat and when the election advertising starts. I suspect before Christmas this year.



Yes, I'm back with four fanzines in this issue, such is life. If, as I hope, the fanzines are included in alphabetical order then you'll get to this one first, which is a good thing. And, as I also hope, you read this before the others I can tell you that, yes, you have read a lot of ***Small Steps Down a Local Street 2*** before; basically because it's all reprints from previous issues of this title. The introduction to ***Small Steps 2*** will explain all. If not, just ignore it, that's what I intend to do.



And just as I start to despair at the dry state of the garden it rains. In fact it absolutely bucketed down on the night April 1 and 2. Luckily the downpours weren't as heavy or as isolated to cause any flooding here. You may remember my previous flooding problems (or will read about them in

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*Small Steps*) which caused all sorts of trauma on occasion. Nothing of that this time, nor over this summer. And no cat to worry about either.

### Comments on Mailing 337

**DAJA VOO #(HALF) WIT – Derrick Ashby**

Nice layout.

I agree with you regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict currently underway, in that I believe the current Israeli Government is intent on wiping the Palestinians out of Gaza altogether; bulldoze it and then settle it with Israeli housing. And that is in no way an anti-Semitic comment, it's just a comment about a right-wing government hiding behind the skirts of a religion. Unfortunately, it looks like they'll get away with it. Yes, what Hamas did was reprehensible, but the response has been disproportionate. ●

The new house photos look good. I'm glad it is progressing well, and I suspect you are now moved in. If so, many congratulations. ●

Re *Embassytown*: I'm sure David G will have something to say about your review! ●

Re YCTo Christina: From experience I can say that it is possible to partake of a gin tasting without being a drunkard, though it probably helps. Not that being a drunkard is, of itself, necessarily a bad thing; it's what you do when you're drunk that is the key. I tend to fall asleep. ●

Re YCTo me about "Pump It Up": I refrained from printing the lyrics for copyright reasons. You should be able to find them easily enough. ●

**Quoz 93 – Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer**

**Mark** – Re YCTo Leigh: I can say, without fear of contradiction, that I have never sat around a table wearing with anyone else "Hugo Ball-esque cardboard Shaman's costumes, drinking red wine and chanting 'blago bung, blago bung, bosso fataka' at one another in homage to Ball's 'Karawane'." At least not this week. ●

I am impressed with your meticulous record-keeping regarding your travel expenses. I have no intention of following suit. ●

Like you I am surprised about Wikipedia's contention regarding *Detransition, Baby* as Jan Morris's book was shortlisted for the Booker Prize back in 1985, losing out to Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*. I've now added a topic on the Talk Page of the novel's wikipeage regarding this and asking for a clearer statement. I expect a certain amount of push back. ●

I will have to watch *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*. It has some similarities to the Australian Robo-Debt scandal and a lot of us are still waiting for a few heads to properly roll over that one. I'm not holding my breath. ●

Re YCTo Me: I offer in defence of my "nothing radical" phrase the upcoming "major" renovation being undertaken by Julian Warner and Lucy Sussex. The whole back of their house is being demolished and re-built, and they have to move out. Our little re-decorating only meant we had to step around odd bits of furniture and boxes of books for a few weeks. They will be affected for something approaching six months. That, sir, is major. ●

**Claire** – I agree with you on the Naylor novel and am impressed, again, with your the breadth and depth of your reading. And do try to stay upright. ●

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### Straight Into It – Leigh Edmonds

We will certainly keep an eye on Robin Johnson when he is in Glasgow. But I suspect he is so well known that he will have little difficulty in finding someone to have dinner with etc, etc. ●

Re YCTo Me re this title: I can safely say that no numbers were destroyed during the creation of this apazine.

Re YCTo Me re GoodReads: I think you can make your data on the site (books reads, ratings etc) Private or Public. I only ever chose the Public option. You have to add in the books you want to comment on, but you are able to differentiate between those you have “Read” and those you “Want to Read”, it’s just a matter of adding the flag to the book as you prefer.

I find it useful as a database of books and titles, though I also keep details of what I read on a spreadsheet. This sounds like a level of duplication but GoodReads does allow me to see if my view of a book matches others readers’. ●

Re Wikipedia: As I think I’ve indicated previously the online encyclopedia can become a massive time-sink if you are not careful. I’ve decided to restrict myself to Australian literature where I’m one of the few editors. It saves me from arguments and endless discussions. ●

### Rhubarb 104 – John and Diane Fox

**Diane** – We had our house gutters completely flushed out about a year ago and I’ve now resolved to ensure they are done every 12 months or so. I used to get up on the roff myself and clear out the worst of them but those days are now over and I’m not allowed up on the roof anymore. Not that I had an accident, just that I’m trying to avoid one. I’n too old and it’s too bloody dangerous. It’s far better to get a man in to do the work than to suffer the possible fall and injury. ●

I didn’t recognise the name Keith Haring even though you mention that everyone has likely seen some of his art. I googled his name, and yes, I have seen his work. And I think a lot of it over the years. Strange how something so commonplace should be ignored so much. ●

### \*brg\* 134 – Bruce Gillespie

Re Ishiguro’s novels: I think you’ll find that *An Artist of the Floating World* is also set in Japan, along with *A Pale View of Hills*. After that they’re all set in the UK, I think. ●

My wife is a fan of the Pip Williams books, and I really must get to them sometime soon. Not that there are nay other books hanging around waiting to be read! ●

You appear to be reading far more four-star books than me. Maybe you’re more “lenient” with your ratings. For example I gave *The Whole Man* by John Brunner a rating of 3.5/5.0. You might round that up to 4 stars, but I wouldn’t. I would agree with your ratings for *Mr. Mercedes* and *Travels With My Aunt*. ●

That’s an interesting inclusion of *The Guns of Navarone* as one of your 4-star films. Having read the book recently as well as watching the film I’m willing to add this to the “list of films that are better than the book”. The other one on the list that I can think of at this time is *Three Days of the Condor*, based on the book *Six Days of the Condor* – better for the loss of three days there! ●

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### Nellie Grigg Tribute – David Grigg

Excellent piece, and my sympathies for your loss. It was a lovely service. ●

### Frank X Earnest – Jack Herman

I won't get into a discussion of whether Sydney is the best place in Australia to live, only to say that the view from Dover Heights would certainly help Sydney's cause. It's just a matter of whether I could afford it. ●

Regarding your NYE experiences on the Harbour, I suspect staying in a hotel nearby for the night might be a tad expensive? ●

Of the "most beautiful cities" list I have yet to get to Zagreb, but it is on the list. I may have done so in 2021 but a certain pandemic put paid to that. We'll get there, just don't know when. I was in Venice in 1987 and don't think I'll go back. From what I hear the crowds are just over the top. I've been to both Hanoi and Vienna twice and would happily return. Sydney? Bah! ●

ReYCToMe regarding Martin Field: I am hoping that he has more to say about his time in London in the sixties. He seems to have found himself near the heart of the London music scene. ●

Re David Niven: He wrote a second volume of his autobiography titled *Bring on the Empty Horses* which I'm sure I saw around here somewhere recently. His book, *The Moon's a Balloon*, was called one of the best film memoirs ever written by the hosts of Backlisted earlier this year. I have that as well and should re-read it. I thought he did well as the upper-class bomb expert in *Navarone*. ●

I have to agree with your assessment of *Poor Things*. I will have to watch it again at some point. ●

### Gaston J. Feeblehare 34 – Kim Huett

First off I have to note that your publication here shows a rather elevated sense of grumpiness about everything. Because people might have a different point-of-view does not imply that they are making statements as a "means of proving me wrong". ●

ReYCToMe about the John Adams ponzi scheme: I know nothing about it, even though I am an MCC member. ●

### Sketchy 23 – Christina Lake

I was sorry to read about your fall while walking. I can't remember where I warned about the problems of podcasts distracting people while walking; I'd say it was on the podcast. A bit meta, that.

ReYCToMe regarding re-decorating: yes, we were very impressed with the plasterer. And I appreciated the fact that he would do a few hours work and then go away for the day, explaining that it all needed to dry or settle before he could move on to the next phase. This is the approach that I have used when doing something similar, but, typically, it's considered as a means of pushing off to do something else. I've just been looked on as lazy rather than following a decent, logical plan. ●

Re the podcast: Yes, it has taken some time to get used to the idea that we aren't doing it anymore. When we meet over a beer it seems like we're about ready to plan another episode but we have another drink and that feeling soon passes. ●

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### Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay

Line of the mailing: “As cyclones go, Cyclone Kirrily was a wimp,”.

Re your dead tv: sounds like an internal tuner problem. ●

ReYCToMe about travel: I was expecting massive crowds in India, everywhere, but really only encountered them in a few places around Delhi. Our travel bookings for Scotland are now finalised, all of them: flights, hotels, car and ferries. Some of the places we are going to are so small that you have to book in advance to ensure you have somewhere to sleep at night. If we left it too late we might have found ourselves camping on the side of the road. And that’s not something my wife would put up with. Similarly for the ferries. If we have a hotel booked we need to get there on time, not the next day, or the day after. I’ll try to get something together for the next issue of **Perryscope**. ●

### Crash of the Hard Disk 70 – Gary Mason

Your story of the cat that adopted you sounds similar to my own though ours ended rather badly. Hope the rest turns out okay. ●

ReYCToMe re Macquarie Hostel: I believe it was on Macquarie Street, probably behind the Press Club, though I can’t be exactly sure of the location, maybe where the Brassey Hotel is now. I suspect the building was demolished at some point. It wasn’t the best place but it did serve its purpose of giving you somewhere temporary to stay while you figured out where you would live long-term. ●

### MOZ 42 – Murray Moore

ReYCToMe regarding the podcast: Well, we can never say “never” Murray. But if I were a betting man I’d wager it has seen its demise. There may be the odd one here or there but...And who knows? Maybe YOU were THE listener I referred to quite often. ●

I’m glad you seemed to enjoy your trip to Japan. I’ve only been the once but would certainly like to return and see some parts of the country we missed last time. Like you I prefer to read on paper but as I gradually remove books from the house and try not to buy new ones I find myself moving more and more to the ereader. I’m very much used to it now and my new Kindle Paperwhite does, as you say, have the bonus of a back light. So it’s all good. ●

### Mamthom Vol 3 No 6 – Mark Nelson

Thanks for the heads-up about the toilet paper situation in Indonesia. I made sure we were well catered for in that regard in India last year. My wife Robyn kept on “liberating” tissues at meal places but I carried a toilet roll in my day-pack, fixed with a rubber band of course. On a number of occasions I was very glad I came prepared. ●

That Laksa Bihun would do me for breakfast and lunch. The trouble is that I’d need a nap straight afterwards. ●

As you rightly state, the Bayeux Tapestry is actually embroidery and the interesting thing is that is it only about 50cm tall, but is nearly 70 metres long. My wife and I saw it back in 1992, a week after having spent a weekend down around Battle, near Hastings, the site of the actual Norman Invasion. ●

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### Not Falling, Flying! 13 – John Newman

ReYctoMe regarding India: Yes, it is overwhelming but not the point of being debilitating. Thinking of other cities I've been in which were very crowded I come up with: a couple of trains on the Tokyo subway network; Oxford Circus Underground station in London at Christmas time; and exiting the Melbourne Cricket Ground at the same time as the rest of a 100,000 person crowd who all seem to want to walk in the opposite direction to you. They were all tough but all negotiable. ●

### Debussy 29 – Bob and Margaret Riep

I hope that by this time Bob is on the mend from his road accident. My wife drives a Skoda Fabia and loves it, so I am grateful for your comments on its safety features. ●

ReYctoMe regarding renovations: I may well have given the impression that renovations on the house are now over a CERTAIN OTHER PERSON in the household would not agree with that. Stay tuned. ●

That is the first photo of Keith Curtis I have seen in years!

### Ytterbium 151 – Alan Stewart

Picture hanging? Of yes, you mean all those framed things sitting on the floor in various rooms. Yes, must get to that sometime. ●

### Les Chattes Parties 191 – Sally Yeoland

I moved to Canberra in August 1981 straight into Macquarie Hostel and stayed there until January 1982 when I moved into a house in Curtin. And there I remained until I left Canberra in December 1985. I was picked up in an internal recruitment drive by the Australian Taxation Office. I'd started at the ATO in Adelaide in January 1980 just because it was a job and I couldn't find any IT work. The Canberra ATO was happy to have someone with a computing degree who also knew something about how the Tax Office worked. I will need to write about this at some time. Just need to figure out how to do so without revisiting specific relationship problems. ●

**And that's it for mailing 337:** thanks to everyone else for their contributions. Read and enjoyed but no comments.



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