



# The Woodlander

## Friends of Ethel Turner



Issue 1: July 2021

### A Garden Party with a Purpose

On Saturday 8 May 2021, a new literary group was launched in Sydney – the **Friends of Ethel Turner Group**. The launch took place at ‘Woodlands’, once called Inglewood, the home where Ethel wrote her first and most successful novel, *Seven Little Australians*.

Thanks to the generous hospitality of Albert and Eva Lim who opened their home, we were able to enjoy a wonderful garden party, with champagne and delicious food. Those who attended were descendants of Ethel Turner, staff from the State Library of NSW (which holds the manuscript of *Seven Little Australians*), staff from Ethel’s school, and representatives of Australian literary societies, such as the Jane Austen Society of Australia, the Australian Brontë Association, the NSW Dickens Society, the Dylan Thomas Society of Australia, and the International Heyer Society. It was such a special occasion.

The Friends of Ethel Turner Group has several aims. We hope to send out a free newsletter twice a year, with information about future events at ‘Woodlands’. We’d love contributions from any of our readers, and hope to encourage you all to read more books by Ethel Turner.

~ Susannah Fullerton, OAM, FRSN



L-R: Julie Sweeten-State Library NSW, Susannah Fullerton, Tracey Fiertl, Mayor of Ku-ring-gai- Jennifer Anderson, Albert Lim, Eva Yao holding Eliza.

On a lovely sunny afternoon a eclectic gathering of about 40 people, from wide and various walks of life met at my home in Werona Avenue, Killara, NSW, all with one shared interest. It was Ethel Turner and her book, *Seven Little Australians*.

Although written nearly 130 years ago, Ethel’s iconic story was etched in the hearts of all who gathered, who came to celebrate the official launch of a group dedicated to her. As the present owner of Woodlands, and someone new to Ethel and her works, I marvelled at the enthusiastic response to this gathering. It is very telling of the influence of Ethel and her works, even after decades of her being in oblivion. Even during my recent visit to the Australian Museum, at the Westpac Long Gallery’s “100 People Who Shaped Australia” exhibit, I observed that Ethel Turner was not on its list.

After Eva & I arrived Australia in August 2015 as first-time Australian residents, we started on a search for an Australian home with character, in which we could raise our family. After two long years, we stumbled upon ‘Woodlands’. We felt a sense of homeliness and an air of joy and comfort to the place. Additionally, we were told that a certain author lived there more than a 100 years ago. As we set out to learn about Ethel Turner and her *Seven Little Australians*, her demeanour and success stood out at such a young age, coupled with being in an era where most aspects of entrepreneurship and publishing were out of reach for a young lady.

We asked around amongst our Australian friends about her, and none seem to know much about her. So we decided to take action.

~ Albert Lim

*Seven Little Australians* was published in 1894. One hundred years later it was the only book by an Australian author to have been continuously in print for a century. It has been filmed and turned into plays and musicals, and for generations it has captured the hearts of readers around the world.

## Albert & Eva, and their Ethel Turner Vision

With a sense of reverence, we took it upon ourselves to go on a campaign to revive the awareness of this author who surely must have had to overcome great obstacles, and yet thrived in a society dominated by men. Even in today's new millennium where women still find it difficult, Ethel's success is proof of her wit, wisdom, long-suffering and passion in achieving her life goals. To bring Ethel back into our modern society would then be akin to letting her be an inspiration to our young girls as a great example of how they, too, can achieve their life dreams despite adverse circumstances and difficult childhoods.

Therefore, little as we know about Ethel, we hope that by having 'Woodlands' as an alluring landmark of sorts, we could see more Australians wanting to know more about her, her struggles and her achievements. We look forward to attracting more talks and discourse about Ethel, so that girls like our own little Eliza can draw inspiration from her and grow into strong young women of whom Australia can be proud.

In order to realise Ethel's relevance in modern life and to cater to all Australians, we knew we would need to open up 'Woodlands' to cater to a wide range of interests, not only in literature or history, but also in architecture, interior design, horticulture, art, music, drama, cinematography and many more. Some of the ideas already in place are talks by Susannah Fullerton, and visits by literary societies to the very place where the famous books were written. Appreciation of the Victorian-Georgian architecture along with its Federation overlay, as well as the interior details and furnishing would appeal to heritage building historians and budding architects. School excursions can be held to learn not only about Ethel Turner and her books, but at the same time to learn about the types of plants that had been meticulously chosen and placed to represent distinct sections of English Formal, English Cottage and Australian Native gardens. School children can also do drawings of the plants and building features, learning the intricate details of that period. Theatrical shows can be held to display local talents with themes of Ethel Turner and her stories. In the same manner, the location can become a set for movie productions telling stories of Ethel's time. Historical festivals by the local council and historical



*Woodlands' exterior in 2021 features the fully restored house sitting in a formal garden.*

groups with visits and talks would interest history buffs. Music festivals playing music and song renditions from Ethel's time such as those in the 1920s to the 1950s can be popular entertainment and an appreciation experience to our younger generation. Fun fairs can be held as the tennis court and the lawn can accommodate many varieties of stalls displaying and offering games or merchandise of Ethel's time. The many artworks on display in the house make up an art gallery showcasing works by well-known Australian artists such as Florence Broadhurst, Constance Tempe Manning, Gladys Mary Owen O.B.E., Ethel Sanders and Margaret Lillian Flockton, all of whom lived in Ethel's time.

Eva and I see ourselves as passing guardians to this magnificent place, notable not only in its unique architecture (the very first Australian hot water heater was installed here), but also in the very special Australian icon whose works influenced many in Australia, New Zealand, Britain and many other parts of the world. Ethel may have, for the last few decades become less known, but with this new group, the **Friends of Ethel Turner**, we hope that she will return to continue to be a beacon to our own little Australians. For if we would not do it, who would?

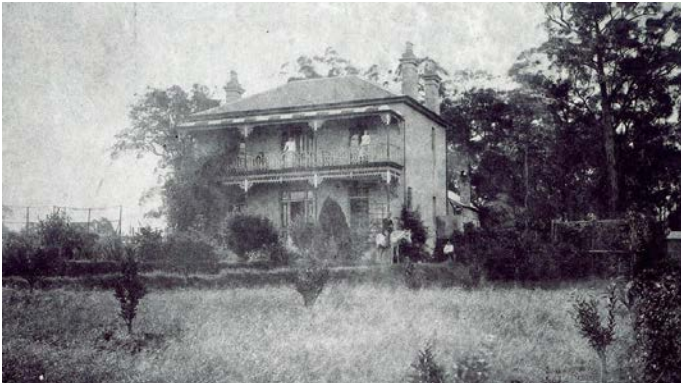
~ Albert Lim

Albert and Eva are committed to opening Woodlands to the community for functions, gatherings and educational experiences, and they welcome approaches from interested groups.

Follow Woodlands and make contact on Facebook @WoodlandsKillara.



## Woodlands - A House that Endured



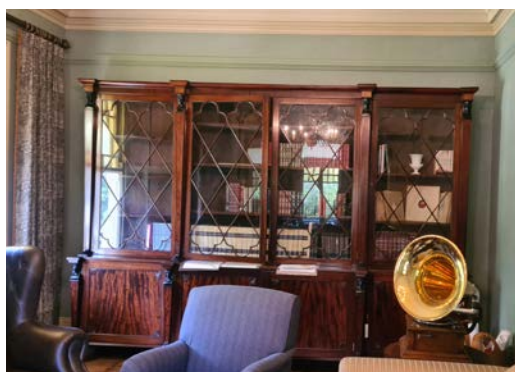
'Woodlands' was built sometime between the years 1884 to 1887 and at the time was considered as 'in the bush' due to its distant location from Sydney and its lack of practical transport options.

To some extent this changed with the opening of the North Shore railway line on the 1st of January 1890 and the completion in 1893 of the Milson Point Railway station which linked the railway with the ferry to cross Sydney Harbour. Together with the appeal of living out of the city - away from disease which was believed to be carried in the 'ether', and the healthy air of the elevated locations of the North Shore, moving to the area became a more attractive proposition.

It is not clear why Ethel Turner's stepfather, Charles Cope and mother, Sarah Jane made the decision to move from the inner-city suburbs of Sydney to Lindfield in 1891. Perhaps it was Cope's position at the Department of Lands at that time, and the mortgage of the property, then owned by William Bickell to Cope that may have been influential in this decision.

Cope's decision to move the family to Inglewood, as it was known at the time, was undoubtedly a turning point in Ethel Turner's literary career. Despite her initial reluctance to move to the 'Sepulchre', her term for Lindfield, she was drawn to the 'pretty square house with honeysuckle and climbing roses and the neglected garden and orchards' visualising the potential for making it beautiful and productive.

Inglewood and its landscape provided Ethel with the inspiration and quietude to explore her literary talents. The house set amidst four acres of gardens and orchards, well back from an unmade road had plenty of room for a few pigs, fowls, ducks and



a cow. In later years reflecting upon her removal from the bustle of Newtown, Ethel recalled that 'it had an effect, like adding half a dozen hours to days that since leaving school had been filled to the very brim...red lonely roads running up a hill and down dale, silent bushland everywhere filled with towering gums and wattles and the songs and flittings of birds: sunrises and sunsets uninterrupted by houses - of course one wrote a book!'

Ethel's most famous publication *Seven Little Australians* was written and published during the time she lived at Lindfield. The local social and environmental landscape were instrumental in developing storylines, settings and characters in this her most published work.

Outwardly, Woodlands has changed in appearance from the time when Ethel was in residence (September 1891 - December 1894). It was constructed in the Victorian filigree design with cast iron fittings, verandah and upper-level balcony with a striped bull-nose roof. The house was substantially altered in the early 1900s consistent with the emerging national identity of the Federation period characterised by distinctive timber fittings and Australian motifs. However, the interior retains some features consistent with the era in which Ethel lived. It is a time capsule where it is not too difficult to conjure up the image of Ethel writing at her roll-top desk or whilst lying on the floor of her bedroom.

Woodlands is indelibly marked with the passage of time - layers of history, each with its own story. But without doubt the most famous story created was that of *Seven Little Australians* and its author, Ethel Turner.

~ Tracey Fiertl

Editor: As a result of Tracey's application to the NSW Heritage Council, 'Woodlands' was successfully listed on the State Heritage Register for its cultural, historical and architectural significance in 2007.

*Below: Current owners, Albert Lim & Eva Yao have meticulously renovated two rooms sympathetic to Ethel Turner's time period.*



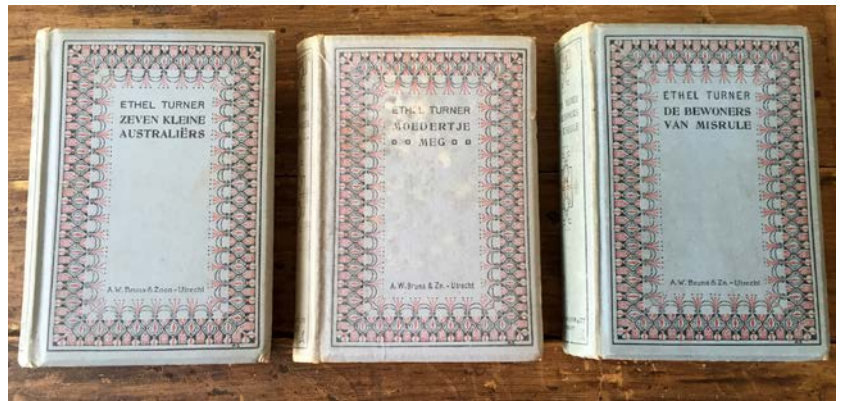
## Seven Little Australians – a Dutch favourite from 1896

Currently living in The Netherlands, I was recently given a wonderful surprise - a set of three books by the beloved Australian author – Ethel S. Turner. These were from the family book collection of my Dutch partner, and were originally Christmas and birthday gifts, given in 1917 and 1918 to his mother when she was 14 and subsequently, given by her, to his older sisters in 1947. This set of books had survived the intense fighting during the Battle of Arnhem in WWII, when the family had sheltered in their cellar for 7 days, unsure how much of their home and belongings would be intact when they emerged. And now, in 2021, just over 100 years since they were first gifted, these three books were given to me as a link to home whilst I cannot get back to Australia.

Translated into Dutch and published in Utrecht by A.W. Bruna & Son, the three books are 3rd editions of *Seven Little Australians* (*Zeven Kleine Australiërs*), *The Family at Misrule* (*De Bewoners van Misrule*) and *Little Mother Meg* (*Moedertje Meg*). The books feature illustrations by A.J. Johnson.



*Seven Little Australians* lists 9 other titles by Ethel S. Turner on the frontispiece, with five titles by her sister Lilian Turner advertised on a back page, all published in Dutch by A.W. Bruna & Son, Utrecht.



*Dutch translations of of Seven Little Australians, The Family at Misrule and Little Mother Meg*

The first edition of *Seven Little Australians* was published in Britain in 1894, and research on second hand-book websites show the first edition published in Dutch in The Netherlands, was in 1896. So only 2 years after her book sold so well in Australia in its first year, it was also popular in Europe.

I asked about the family memories of reading this Dutch version of *Seven Little Australians*. Beautiful, adventurous and a charming story was the reply. And even without having read the book in many years, there was instant recall of Meg meeting a friend in the dark, the character of naughty Bunty (who for some reason is called Bunby in the Dutch version) and of course, oh, the tears of sadness on reading of the death of Judy whilst trying to save her little brother.

One day, eventually, these Dutch copies will find their way home with me to Turrumurra in Sydney – to be only a few kilometres away from Woodlands, in Killara, where Ethel wrote her manuscript in 1893. A full circle.

~ Anne Harbers

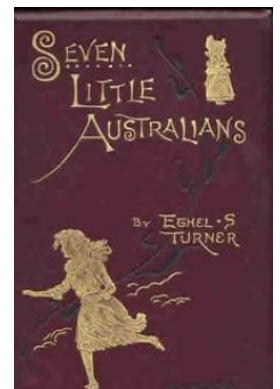
### “Seven L. Aust. – sketched it out.”

On her 21st birthday, Ethel Turner added this note to her diary. That was in 1893. One hundred years later, the book she had dreamed up would be the only book by an Australian author to have been continuously in print for one hundred years.

But who was Ethel Turner really? Why are the lessons in the novel as relevant today as when the book first appeared? Revisit and celebrate this fabulous Australian novel and learn about the remarkable woman who wrote it.

Susannah Fullerton's Video Talk reveals intriguing stories about the author and what prompted her to write this book. She describes the influence that the era, lifestyle and circumstances have on the book's setting. This 60-minute talk is fully illustrated with photographs, paintings, scenes from different film versions and book covers.

Purchase the talk for just \$9 here: <https://susannahfullerton.com.au/seven-little-australians/>



*An early edition*



## Ethel Turner and The Parramatta River

In *Seven Little Australians* we are told that the House of Misrule was situated some distance up the Parramatta River. There was a large wilderness of a garden and two or three paddocks which ran down to the water. The author does not give us a more precise location, nor does she mention any particular suburb. She was familiar with the stretch of the Parramatta River near Five Dock and Abbotsford, knew people who lived in Drummoyne, and had on occasion travelled by boat to picnic on the Lane Cover River.

Ethel Turner records several visits to Five Dock during 1891 in her diary. She was visiting the O'Brien family who were related to Herbert Curlewis on his mother's side. She travelled on the tramline to Abbotsford which had opened in 1891 and thought it took a long time to get there. On the 23rd of May she wrote, "There were such a lot of people there, it's such a nice place, such a lovely old fashioned garden and the river at the bottom of it." On this occasion they let off fireworks and danced. She also spent a considerable amount of time strolling in the garden with Herbert Curlewis and was persuaded to renew her promise of marriage to him. On a further visit in July, they all went out on the river in boats. (*The Diaries of Ethel Turner* compiled by Philippa Poole, 1979, p55-56)



A house in Moss Vale, NSW, provided the exterior shots for the house, 'Misrule', in the 1973 ABC TV Series adaptation

cious riverside house was Ravenscourt (Yarwood, 1994, p53). This house fronted onto Great North Road and had several acres of grounds which went as far as the Blackwall Point Road junction and almost adjoined the local public school at Abbotsford. The house and all its land were subdivided and sold in 1929. There was hope that someone would buy the house for commercial use, but it seems to have been demolished.

There is one reference to a specific location in chapter 12 of *Seven Little Australians* which would seem to confirm the view that Ethel Turner was influenced by her visits to this part of Sydney. Martha has a conversation with her fellow servant Bridget in which she expressed the view '...that she believed them blessed children were in a conspiracy to put her "over the river"'. Ethel steps in as narrator to clarify this for her English readers, 'I should explain to you, perhaps, that "over the river" meant Gladesville, which is Sydney's Colney Hatch.' Here she is referring to the Gladesville Mental Hospital which was located across the river from Abbotsford and the Colney Hatch which was a well known asylum in London.

Before she wrote *Seven Little Australians* in 1893 Ethel Turner had made several visits to the area of the Parramatta River near Five Dock and Abbotsford. The O'Brien's home would have inspired her to place the House of Misrule in an idyllic location on a river bordered by paddocks, gardens, and gum trees. A good place for children to run a little wild and have all sorts of adventures. I hope to do some more research on this topic when we are out of lockdown. I would also appreciate input from other people about the people and homes that Ethel Turner may have known and visited in this area of Sydney.

~ Anne Burns

### A NEW AND SUCCESSFUL AUTHORESS.

Miss Ethel Turner, whose first book, "Seven Little Australians," is such a pronounced success, is a Sydney young lady, who has been determined for some time that she would make her mark in the literary world. She has been a frequent contributor to the press, some of the



brightest sketches that have appeared in "The Daily Telegraph" being from her pen; and if she is not spoiled by too much praise, she will continue to do admirable and still more ambitious work. Miss Turner is a native of Sydney, and resides with her parents in one of the suburbs along the popular Milson's Point railway line.

*Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, NSW/1883 - 1930), Saturday 10 November 1894, page 9. Source: Trove, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/236109006>

A.T. Yarwood in *From A Chair in the Sun*, his biography of Ethel Turner, states that the name of the O'Briens' gra-

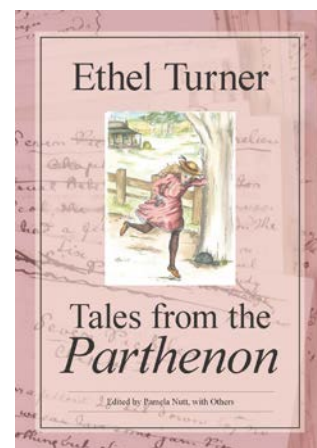
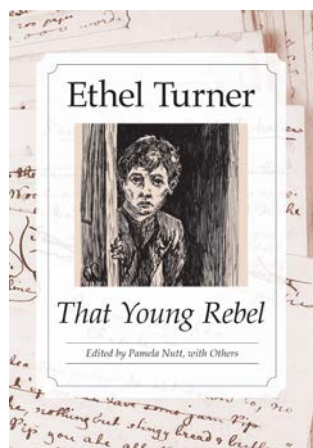
## Ethel Turner and the Juvenilia Press

It was such a pleasure to be invited to the garden party at Woodlands, once the home of Ethel Turner, for the launch of Friends of Ethel Turner on 9 May 2021. I may have been invited as Patron of the Australian Brontë Association, although I suspect it is more likely to have been because I run the international non-profit research and teaching enterprise known as Juvenilia Press, based at UNSW Sydney. We study and edit for modern readers the early writings of talented young authors from all English-speaking countries, including writers like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Emily Brontë, Lewis Carroll, Robert Louis Stevenson, Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Atwood — and Ethel Turner. Juvenilia Press has published two volumes of Ethel Turner's early writings: *Tales from the Parthenon* and *That Young Rebel*.

On 1st January, 1889, in the year after Ethel Turner completed her high school years at Sydney Girls' High School, she and her sister, Lilian, began to publish their own journal, *The Parthenon*. This was a venture they continued to work on for over three years, and it led directly to Ethel's writing her first novel, *Seven Little Australians*. Juvenilia Press has republished significant extracts from *The Parthenon*, with detailed Introductions that describe the growth of the young writer from teenage rebel herself to a young woman ready to take on the world with her published novels.

*Tales from the Parthenon* selects the serials "Gladys and the Fairies" and "A Dreadful Pickle", with a selection from "Bobbie" to represent the emerging, if initially reluctant, writer of fiction for children. Two of these tales link directly to the works that would be published by Ward, Lock & Co. within a decade: Midge, whose "Pickle" is the focus of the tale's title, nearly has her situation reflected in the title of Turner's first published novel as "Six ...", then "Seven Pickles", before the title was finalised as *Seven Little Australians* — a title with far greater iconic potential. And "Bobbie" becomes "A Girl Named Bobbie" in *The Illustrated Sydney News*, and finally *Miss Bobbie*, published in 1897 by Ward, Lock.

The research involved in preparing *Tales from the Parthenon* led to interesting discoveries for lead editor Pamela Nutt and several student editors. How old, for instance, was Ethel Turner when she arrived in Australia on the SS *Durham*? In what ways did she perceive an Australian child



to differ from those presented in English fiction? We also explored an interesting link between stories of Bobbie and of Judy (from *Seven Little Australians*). In 1915, a theatrical performance of *Seven Little Australians* was performed widely in Australia and New Zealand. Although elements of the novel find their way into the play, the main character is actually named "Bobbie", thus avoiding the spectacle of Judy's death from being enacted to matinee audiences of children. A New Zealand review of the performance notes Turner's "deft manner" as she "accurately measured the character of the Australian child". It is this quality that the Juvenilia Press editions present in order to examine a turning-point for fiction written for Australian children.

Our second volume, *That Young Rebel*, is the first complete publication of a fifteen-episode serial that commenced in 1891 in *The Parthenon*. Where "Bobbie" had been a family-centred tale, the serialised "That Young Rebel" takes the child Taffie through the experience of not having a close family to finding one. An urban-centred family tale takes shape as Taffie moves from his school in the Blue Mountains to his long summer holiday in Sydney. Turner's determination to present a recognisable Sydney landscape is evident as her characters take a rail journey, enjoy an escapade in the Botanical Gardens, ride a tram and do their Christmas shopping at Anthony Hordern's Department Store. What is most evident, however, is that the young Turner is learning, if with some difficulty at times, to write an extended narrative in a voice that would appeal to her young readers.

Juvenilia Press aims to bring to light the works of young writers as they move towards maturity. *Tales from the Parthenon* and *That Young Rebel* trace the young Ethel Turner's developing skills, capturing her energy and determination to become a successful writer.

~ Christine Alexander, PhD, FAHA, FRSN.

**Emeritus Scientia Professor UNSW**

JUVENILIA PRESS: <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/juvenilia/>



Juvenilia Press publishes early works by a variety of writers. Its scholarly editions of early writings by children and adolescents (up to the approximate age of twenty) provide a window on the writer's development and engaging glimpses of the young genius at work.



## Seven Little Australians Park, Lindfield

Very close to where I live in Lindfield is a park dedicated to the memory of Ethel Turner who lived in this area in the 1890s and wrote her most famous book 'Seven Little Australians' here.

Originally part of Lindfield Park, an area which was gazetted as public parkland in 1907, renamed Soldiers Memorial Park after the First World War.

This is not a manicured park with level lawns and tidy garden beds, but an area of unspoiled natural bushland with huge blue gums, she-oaks, bunya bunya pines, angophoras and a variety of rainforest plants such as tree ferns.

Small creeks and waterfalls are to be found throughout the park which marks the start of the Two Creeks Walk, a 9.5 kilometre bushwalk which leads down to the shores of Middle Harbour. A shorter 1.4 kilometre loop trail passes the Turner Lookout. Ethel would certainly have appreciated this beautiful location.

There are a series of sandstone paths and steps, the



*Seven Little Australians Park is located at corner Northcote Road and Slade Avenue, Lindfield, NSW.*

stonework having been built during the Great Depression from 1926 to 1938 by labour groups working through the Unemployment Scheme. An impressive example of their work are the sandstone pillars which support a huge rock overhang.

Forty years ago on 1 May 1981 a section of the park west of the Eastern Arterial Road was renamed by Ku-ring-gai Council in honour of Ethel Turner as Seven Little Australians Park, a fitting and permanent recognition of her connection to Lindfield.

~ Catherine Barker OAM



*Sandstone pillars built in the 1930s and timber steps on the path. source: <https://gardendrum.com/2018/06/13/hidden-gem-of-ku-ring-gai-seven-little-australians-park/>*

## Ethel Turner Park, Paddington

You might also like to visit the Ethel Turner Park, which is to be found on Oatley Road in Paddington, Sydney. It is tucked in on the eastern side of the great stone wall enclosing Victoria Barracks (clearly seen in this picture). This is where Judy and Pip leave their little brother, The General, to be found by a very irate father and it is that escapade which has Judy sent off to boarding school.

The Ethel Turner Park has, appropriately for a park named for a children's author, playground equipment, some attractive plantings, and a small sign announcing its name. The playground equipment is suited to the under-fives, all safely fenced in with bright and colourful barriers.

~ Susannah Fullerton



*Ethel Turner Park is located at 47 Oatley Rd, Paddington, NSW.*



## Turner Book Review - *The Little Larrikin*



This was the book that coined the meaning of 'larrikin' for Australians, transforming what had been a threat – the Larrikin Pushes of Sydney's inner city made up of hooligans and thieves – into little rascals in the form of the titular character, Lol, the mischievous youngest of five brothers, who, following the famous opening lines of *Seven Little Australians* is 'not

... really good, for the very excellent reason that Australian children never are.' Lol brings much of Turner's distinctive humour to the story (his name now having an added 21st century aptness), and the older boys experience most of the drama which, together with Turner's clear language, authentic characterisation, and vividly realised settings, formed the winning combination that made her the best selling Australian children's author from the 1890s to the 1920s.

The plot is, as always, centred on family, class, many facets of love, and the competing demands of work and home. The Carruthers family is struggling through genteel poverty, supported by oldest brother Roger, a rising young barrister who is paying for the care and education of Martin studying medicine, Clem and Philip at school, and six year

old Lol running wild in the backstreets.

This is probably Turner's most autobiographical novel and she is not kind to herself. The often-spurned courtship of Herbert Curlewis, who was also a rising young barrister at the time (eventually becoming a judge of the NSW District Court) inspired Roger's relationship with Linley Middleton, who places the pursuit of her ambitions as an artist above his faithful heart. Linley comes across as a self centred snob but earns the wisdom that Ethel did: that her real gift was in children's portraits, and her real place was with Roger. Lol remains cheeky throughout.

This is a fascinating slice of life in 1896 Sydney revealing the specifics of class mobility through scenes of a Government House ball (Ethel was familiar with the setting through her step father's family connections), leave-taking at a railway station, relations of the poor middle class with their servants, and a wedding where bride and groom both wear straw boaters. Once you have seen those people and places through Turner's eyes they become a part of your Sydney forever.

~ Jo Henwood

**The Friends of Ethel Turner** aims to raise awareness of Ethel Turner as a pioneer in Australian literature to all Australians and around the world.

This newsletter is the first of an occasional publication and was prepared by Susannah Fullerton and Cheryl Hill on behalf of the Friends of Ethel Turner. It contains contributions received from interested individuals. Relevant stories are welcomed and can be sent by email to [susannah@susannahfullerton.com.au](mailto:susannah@susannahfullerton.com.au) for consideration in future publications.

Please assist our project by joining the Friends of Ethel Turner at <https://susannahfullerton.com.au/ethel-turner/>. There is no membership fee or commitment.

This newsletter published July 2021.



Cheryl Hill (L) and Susannah Fullerton in the Drawing Room at Woodlands, Killara



Susannah Fullerton welcomes guests at the inaugural Garden Party of the Friends of Ethel Turner at Woodlands on 8 May 2021. L-R: Albert Lim Woodlands owner, Mayor of Ku-ring-gai Jennifer Anderson, Tracey Fieryl, Susannah Fullerton, Julie Sweeten State Library NSW.