



# THE COBURG MEDDLER

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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**FREE COPY**

## CROOKED HOUSE



### Demolition by Neglect or Design?

65 The Grove has been in the hands of the same owner, controversial Coburgian millionaire Mr John Poulakis, for almost 18 years. In this time, the heritage protected, Edwardian-style home has sadly sunk into a state of irreversible disrepair.

Mr Poulakis has been in the public eye for being convicted of fraud and avoiding jail time. He had falsified customs documents in order to evade \$1.47m worth of import tax for his fashion company, Harrolds. Most recently in 2018, he faced court for allegations of physical assault against his elderly parents and property damage of their home. He avoided conviction and jail time (again) despite pleading guilty.

Mr Poulakis has applied for a number of permits over the course of his ownership of 65 The Grove, primarily seeking demolition and subdivision of the land.

In 2016, the Moreland Council's decision

to reject Mr Poulakis' application for demolition was appealed to VCAT. At the hearing, which was ultimately unsuccessful for Mr Poulakis, VCAT member Russell Byard commented that he had seen instances where "some owners of land wish to free themselves from the encumbrances and restraints" that heritage building overlays impose, and that "there have been cases where apparently deliberate destruction has been undertaken".

THIS STORY CONTINUES PAGE 3

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*This newspaper was written and developed on Wurundjeri Land of the Kulin Nation. Sovereignty was never ceded. If possible, people should contribute to the Pay the Rent campaign. This initiative funds groups that advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: <https://www.invasionday.org/pay-the-rent-campaigns>*

## ----- COBURG NEWS UPDATES -----

COBURG LIBRARY TRIALS  
NEW START TIME

This month the Moreland Council voted to allow Coburg library to trial a new start time: 9am instead of 10am. What underhanded deals resulted in this victory?

Whatever it was, the Meddler supports this new turn of events, and asks everybody to be on their best behaviour in the library between the hours of 9 and 10am. But only during the trial period, which will end in June. Until then, the Library must, under no circumstances, know what lies beneath.

MELBOURNE QUEER FILM  
FESTIVAL AT THE COBURG  
DRIVE-IN

On 19 February, Madonna: Truth of Dare is being shown at the Coburg Drive-In as part of the Melbourne Queer Film Festival. I know a place where you can get away. It's called the Coburg Drive-In.

## RUBYS RELOADED

Rubys, on the corner of Nicholson St and Munro St, has recently changed hands. The previous staff will be missed. We hope they are happy in their next endeavours, and thank them for their excellent array of sweets and creative dishes. The new management are a friendly, enthusiastic team of people who are dog-lovers, and keen to know the locals and keep up Rubys' good name. We wish them luck!

## CARLISLE STREET UPDATE:

Anyone who knows Carlisle Street in Coburg also knows its problems; the side-road is

extremely narrow, filled with pot-holes and the footpath has so many obstacles that most pedestrians opt for walking on the road. Recently, Moreland Council made plans to update the street, known to some as an alley, with plans to simply mend the pot-holes and smooth surfaces.

In response to this, a group calling itself 'CarlisleSafe' took the opportunity to ask for more action. The original plan was to request that the Moreland Council make Carlisle St inaccessible to through traffic.

A success for the group came in the form of Moreland Council recently agreeing to trial a new 'shared zone' for the street by diverting traffic away from the road with temporary road barriers. Community consultation will continue to take place to gauge the impact on locals.

This seems like a legitimate step in the right direction for Moreland Council's goal of encouraging more walking and bike riding in the area.

## THE MEDDLER IS STRUGGLING

After a year of refusing to ask for money, with our heads hung in shame, we're currently in the process of trying to set up a way to receive donations.

Also, if anyone would like to help us deliver editions in the local area, contact us at thecoburgmeddler@gmail.com.

If you ever fail to receive your Meddler, it's worth checking our distribution box in Dunnes Lane, Coburg. We'll be putting up other distribution boxes in different suburbs soon.

## VOYEURISTIC CHILDREN?

Garrong Park in Brunswick is a new park that was created pursuant to the Parks Close to Home Strategy. Locals have complained that the playground currently only appeals to toddlers and babies, after a big slide was removed due to property owner concerns that their privacy was being invaded by kids at the top of the slide. Moreland Council is now planning on consulting children on what type of equipment they might like to see (or can see best from).

## MEDDLER TURNS ONE!

The Meddler celebrated its 1st Birthday this month. We would like to thank our single acknowledge.

PEDESTRIANS WORRIED  
ABOUT SAFETY UNDER THE  
BRIDGE

Underneath the raised rail of the Upfield line at the intersection of Moreland and Bell Street are pedestrian crossings that locals are complaining are unsafe. Apparently cars are failing to notice the pedestrian lights due to lowered visibility (or maybe they are still getting used to the new horizon).

## STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Byard also added that in this case “[it] is obvious that something is amiss”. He questioned a report completed by a structural engineer claiming that there were no building footings. Byard asked: “is it seriously being suggested that this building, which has apparently stood for approximately a hundred years, has no footings resting on its foundations?”.

More questions abounded in a Moreland Council January meeting. In the agenda notes, there is photo evidence of 4 verandah posts firmly holding the roof line in place in March 2014; less than three months later, all 4 verandah posts are missing and the roof line completely sagged from the lack of support.

In 2018 an independent structural engineer gave a report on 65 The Grove to the Moreland Council. The engineer noted that: “if it were not for the partial collapse of the roof and verandah roof structures, the structure of the dwelling would be typical of dwellings of a similar age...”

Whilst there are laws preventing owners of heritage properties to demolish or destroy their heritage property without a permit, legally there is nothing requiring owners to take care of their properties. Demolition by neglect is a loophole available to owners of properties with heritage overlays to eventually get their desired outcome. In the January Moreland Council meeting to discuss the latest application by Mr Poulakis,

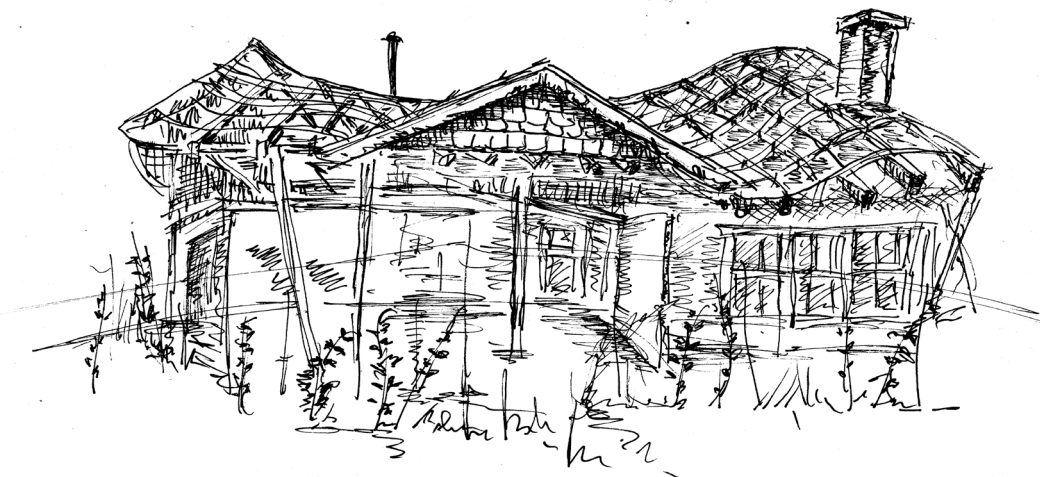
there were suggestions that this was indeed the case for 65 The Grove, and that potentially important structural walls and supports had been willfully removed (no one suggested that Mr Poulakis was responsible for the removal). The Council ultimately decided to reject the latest application despite the likelihood of Mr Poulakis appealing their decision in VCAT.

Heritage overlays exist to preserve historically significant architecture and objects. Protection of old buildings has long been acknowledged as a benefit to the broader community, and Melbourne has a rich history of unionised builders taking a stand against developers having the freedom to knock down old buildings for the sake of profit.

The political context of heritage protection debates in Australia should not be ignored, however. All buildings are erected on land stolen from Aboriginal communities; Aboriginal communities who have struggled and continue to struggle to claim heritage protection for historically significant places. Not everyone has the same nostalgia or concern for colonial buildings.

Perhaps a uniting concern, however, is the ability for developers to side-step laws that average people can't. Even more repugnant is when a developer potentially being rewarded for breaking the rules.

*By Elena Snagge*



## THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FREE SAUSAGE SIZZLE: MORELAND ADOPTS NEW SPONSORSHIP POLICY

Moreland Council has voted in favour of a formal policy enabling private sponsors to fund events and festivals.

Moreland Council has already been accepting private sponsorship for some events, however the February 2021 Council Meeting was an opportunity for the Council to either entrench the practice into formal policy, or take a stand against it.

Labour councillor Lambros Tapinos argued that this would be an opportunity for local businesses to fund local events; however nowhere in the policy is sponsorship limited to small or local business. Whilst the policy disallows sponsorship from industries such as coal, gambling and tobacco, it still allows sponsorship from developers and multinational corporations. This calls into question Lambros' implication that the policy would benefit local busi-

nesses. The policy does state that sponsorship candidates should ideally be based within the municipality, however this is not required. In fact, in the same paragraph of the policy it states that sponsorship candidates can be companies seeking to conduct business in Moreland.

Another issue is that the policy incentivises bigger businesses, not small local businesses, to sponsor events. If a company offers over \$10,000 of investment, then the sponsor can have their logo on all materials related to the event, have a significant presence in the marketing for the event/s and is allowed a major presence at the event in premium positions. If companies contribute less than \$5,000, they are allowed a limited presence in the marketing and are not given an opportunity for a physical presence at the event. For many smaller, local businesses, a contribution to

a local event of over \$5,000 is untenable.

We should be thinking about corporate sponsorship of local government events for what it is; political donations. Allowing this formal policy to be developed gives the bigger private companies an opportunity to gain access to the Council and to weigh in on decision-making.

As Greens councillor James Conlan argued: "seeking money from big business for sponsorship is not the way forward...we might get the Bunnings street food party perhaps with free sausages, but I don't know if that's a path we should be pursuing".

*By SAS & BB*



@prinofour



*Photo: Erik Anderson*

## COUNCIL VOTES TO INVESTIGATE REFUGEE DETENTION CENTRES IN MORELAND

In mid-January this year, 46 men were finally released into the community after spending roughly 8 years in detention for seeking refugee status in Australia. The men were transferred to Melbourne from the offshore detention centre on Manus Island for medical issues under the now-repealed Medevac scheme. The men were forced to remain locked in hotels with minimum access to facilities for over a year. Many of the men reported that these conditions caused a significant decline in their mental health.

Whilst many of the men have been released into the community on 6-month bridging visas, there are still more refugees continuing to be held in Park Hotel, and protests continue.

Concerningly, the use of hotels for detaining refugees – often covertly – is on the rise, with revelations that a Moreland motel was being used as a refugee detention facility coming to light in December last year.

The Australian Border Force confirmed to the City of Moreland that a Fawkner hotel has been secretly used for months for this purpose.

Best Western Fawkner Suites and Serviced Apartments on Sydney Road, holds a number of refugees (including refugees from Nauru) who are locked in self-contained units. The detainees are only able to exercise in the unit courtyards that are roughly 2m<sup>2</sup>. No visitors are allowed and reports suggest that the detainees in separate units are unable to communicate with one another.

Council passed a motion introduced by Cnr Bolton, calling for an investigation into whether the Fawkner hotel had breached its planning permit by operating as a detention facility. The motion also called on the state government to reform planning restrictions so that any use of motels as detention facilities is made illegal.

*By Edwina Snagge*

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

*Updates on political activism within the community*



*Photo: Erik Anderson*

### EVICCTIONS COMING

After 28 March we could see a big spike in evictions and homelessness in Victoria, as the moratorium on evictions for people who can't afford their rent due to COVID-19 will come to an end. We're also currently seeing evictions happening to the homeless people who were housed through the hotel contracts that the government established at the beginning of the pandemic.

As is now plainly obviously, the pandemic was never over in Victoria; we had simply had it under control. The recent announcement of the new and highly virulent strain of COVID-19 in Melbourne highlights the fact that the government acted too soon in its eagerness to cut costs, starting with the more vulnerable communities first.

The newly established Renters and Housing Union have been actively protesting this development, and are running regular meetings and eviction defence training sessions.

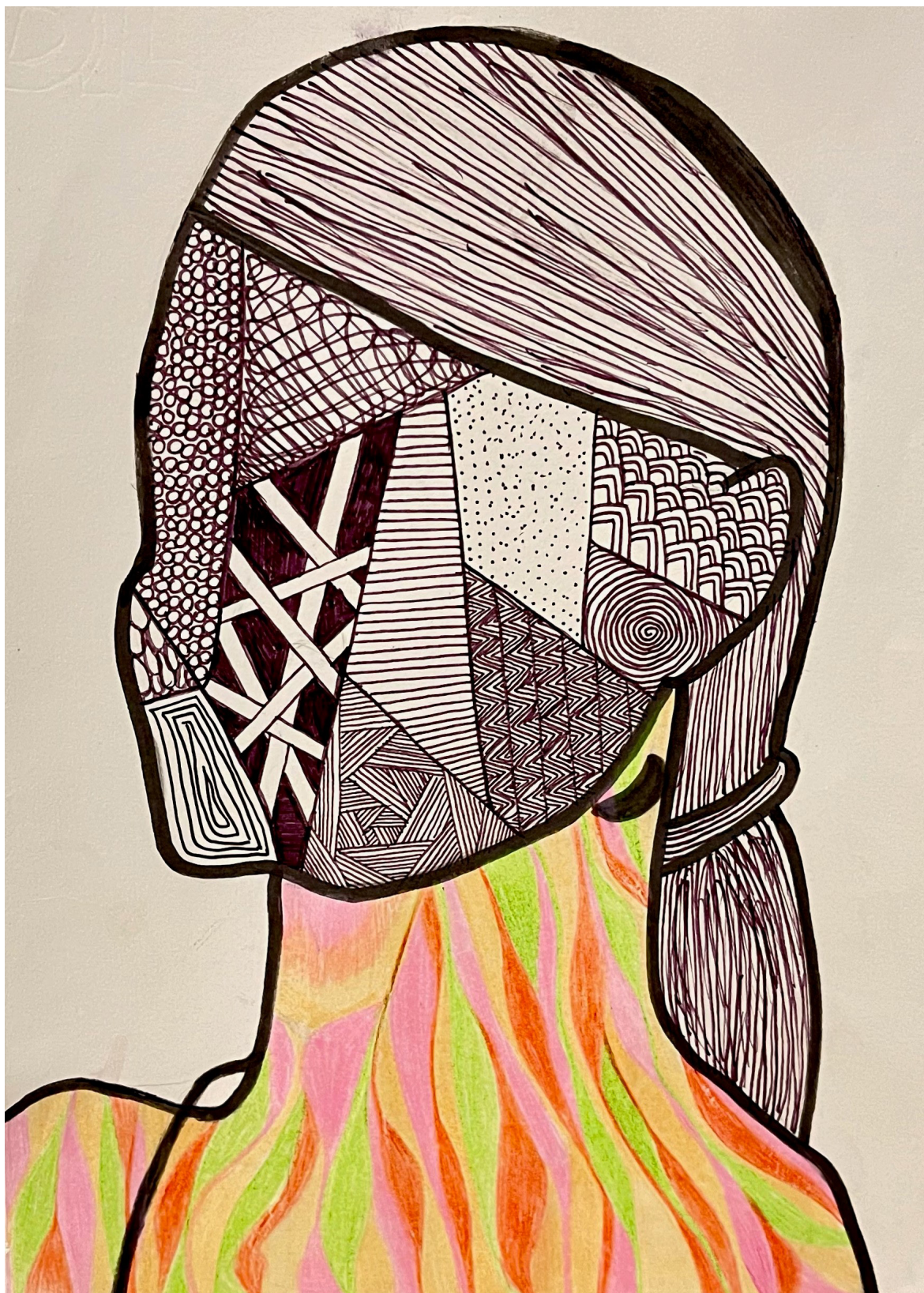
### RECENT THREATS TO ACTIVISM IN VICTORIA

Last year, Refugee Action Collective activist Chris Breen was arrested for his involvement in the protests outside Mantra Hotel in Preston. The protest was organised to support and interrupt the relocation and re-detention of over 60 refugees to a new hotel in Parkville. Breen was arrested for 'incitement', and around 30 others were each given fines of \$1,652 for breaking quarantine measures. Breen is being accused of incitement for allegedly organising a 'solidarity convoy' for the men being transferred.

'Incitement' under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) is an indictable offence. If Breen is successfully convicted, this will be a serious concern for activism in Victoria. Breen's next hearing is on 17 March at the Magistrates' Court in Melbourne.

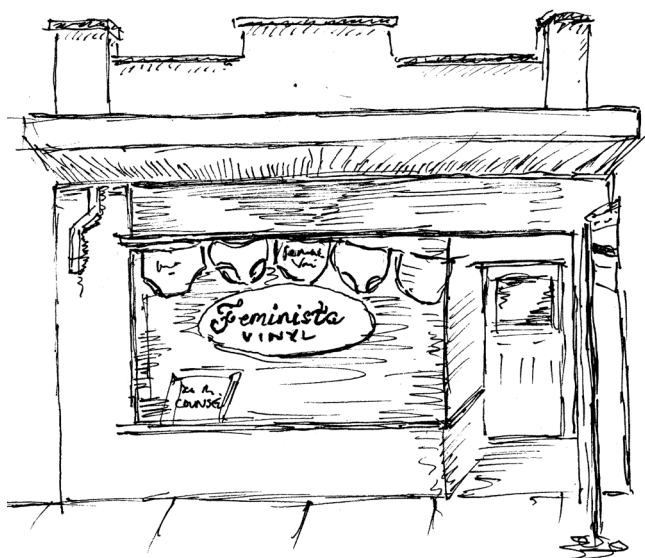
*By SAS & BB*

## ARTIST OF THE MONTH



*Ariana* 2020  
Luca Destito

Luca is a 14 year old artist from Coburg.



## MALL-CONTENTS

*A small collective has started a new multi-use space in Coburg called Feminista Vinyl. The store is a bright, colourful space with a shop front primarily dedicated to vinyls, underwear and art.*

MEDDLER: Can you give us a bit of background?

KIRSTY: Cindy and two others are counsellors who were looking for a space for clients, and then this place just so happened to have a shopfront. It was just a casual 'how cool would it be to open up a record shop?'. So, we're not business people or anything. It's a not-for-profit, so it's more like a hobby. Filling a hole that we recognised. We've had this conversation in the past – but even I've felt intimidated going into record shops... Here, you don't have to sift through all of the crap to find what you're after. It's just really fun. The space can be used for a bunch of other stuff as well. Like, the women's guitar sessions, and we've got an acupuncturist out the back.

CINDY: Three of the counsellors on the lease have all worked together at various places. Working in sexual and reproductive health, and sexual and family violence. We wanted to make this a really safe place to connect with people in the community; with women and non-gender conforming people. And Kirsty has connections from Girls Rock.

MEDDLER: I haven't heard of that...

KIRSTY: It's so great. It's a camp for female and female identifying teenagers. They form a band, write a song, and learn an instrument. It's run out of Brunswick. They also get people from the community to do workshops and lunchtime gigs. So, Courtney Barnett has come along, Jen Cloher, Cable Ties, Georgia Maq, G Flip...they literally just come and chat to the kids and run workshops.

MEDDLER: Are you in a band?

KIRSTY: Not really anymore, but when we were organising a fundraiser for here at the Tote, my old band got back together and we had three rehearsals and then COVID-19 hit. But we're going to try and get something together again.

MEDDLER: You could play here...

CINDY: We've had a few people come in who have seen the instruments set up in the back and asked when we'll be getting things happening!

KIRSTY: Yeah, we'll get there. And even just safe open mic nights for the younger people that don't want anything too overwhelming. And we're even thinking of starting geeky boardgame afternoons. So, this space is just for us to pursue our interests. The fact that it's not-for-profit also removes the pressure.

MEDDLER: How do you choose and source your records?

KIRSTY: We've got new local things coming in from distributors, but then the second hand stuff is fun too. So, you've got the classic Nana Mouskouri and Joan Baers...I think it reflects our age group - you've got the 70s and 80s from our childhood, and then the cool stuff from the 90s, and we're trying to connect to smaller labels like Roolette Records and Psychic Hysteria to get the local bands as well.

MEDDLER: What was here before?

CINDY: It was a florist, and then apparently before that it was a tiler! When we saw the space we had a really good feeling. It felt perfect. You can

have dogs come in.

KIRSTY: If you go to our insta, every time a dog comes in we have to take a photo. We give them so much love.

CINDY: When we see them outside we tell them they can come in!

MEDDLER: What are the flags?

KIRSTY: We've got the rainbow, trans and non-binary flags. We had someone come in and say that they hadn't felt so comfortable in so long. It's not a big deal, but it does make a difference. We're looking out for what else we can run down the track to try and make opportunities for people to feel safe and out.

MEDDLER: Yeah, I felt really comfortable walking into this store. If it had just been records in the shop front, I might not have. But you have undies

hanging up in the window!

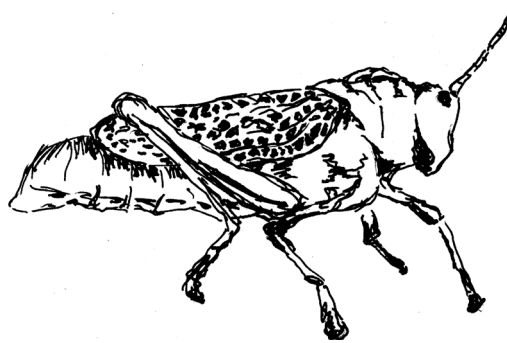
KIRSTY: You know how popular these undies have been? We only have one size left!

MEDDLER: Anything else you'd like us to mention?

CINDY: We have space to advertise for locals.

KIRSTY: If there are plumbers or electricians who are women or gender non-conforming, then we'll happily advertise for them; they just need to get in contact.

*Feminista Vinyl*  
134 Nicholson St, Coburg



## LESSER KNOWN LIMERICKS

There once was a hopeless old locust  
Who didn't know quite how to focus  
He tried doing magic  
But his act was so tragic  
That his hocus was worse than his pocus.

—

There once was a penguin named Steve  
Who didn't know what to believe  
He was through with religion  
So he followed a pigeon  
From Antarctica to Tel Aviv

*By Cheese Dreams*

## DR OKEY DOKEY MD

*Local clown doctor answers your medical questions.*

Q. Is it better to air or cover a wound?

A: When managing a wound, it is always important to know the wound first. Is it a big wound? Or a small wound? Did you suffer the wound from a wizard wielding a wand? Or a whale whirling a whip? Is the wound bound round and round in a torn-off gown? Or splayed, greyed and laid upon a glade? Hmm? What is this wound? Do you even know this wound?! Ask it its name at least, get to KNOW it before covering it up!! Or airing it for all to see!! For heaven's sake.

# BIRDS OF MORELAND



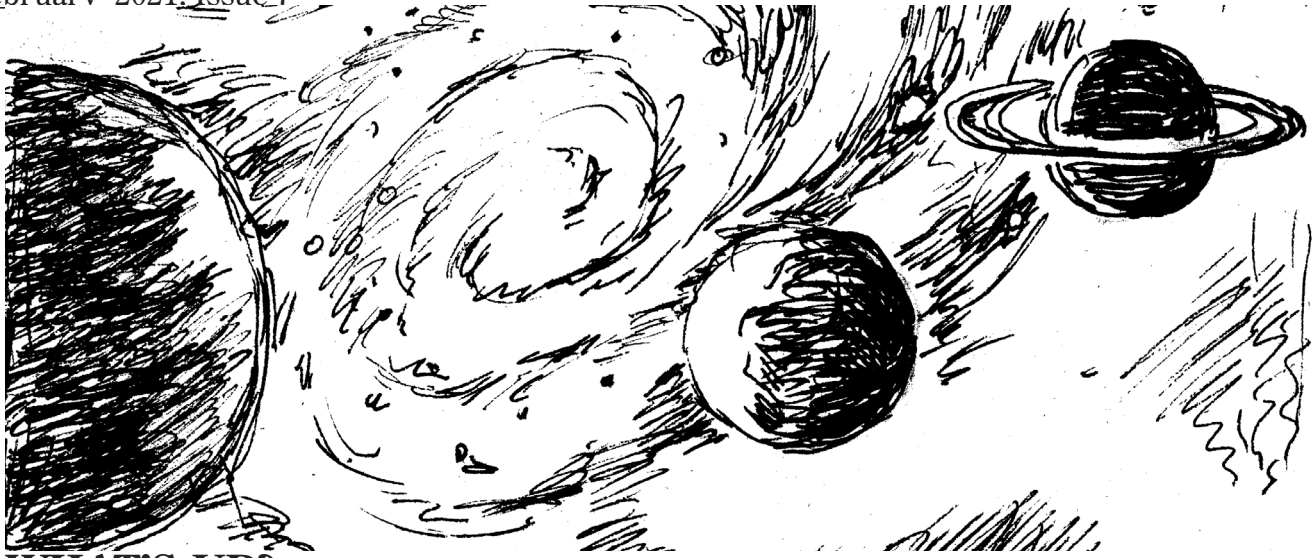
*Eastern Spine Bill*



*Wattle Bird*

Both birds were captured in a front  
yard in Brunswick West

*Photos by GB*



## WHAT'S UP?

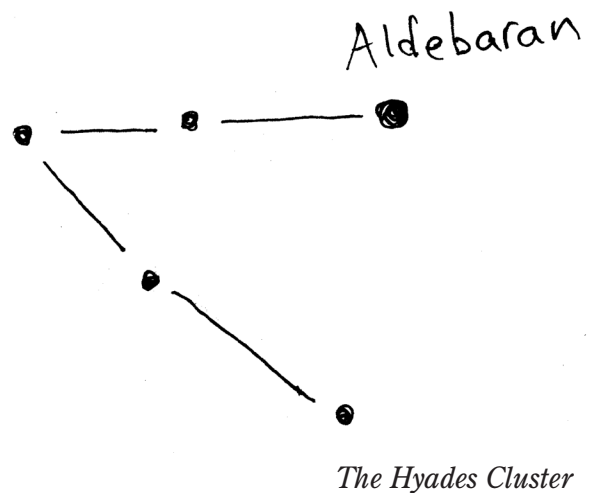
During the first three weeks of February, you may chance to spot an alpha-Centaurid passing through the night sky. The alpha-Centaurids are bits of discarded comet appearing to fall from the region of the two Pointers in Centaurus in the southern sky. While they are not as plentiful as some meteor showers, at no more than 6 sightings per hour, their occasional pyrotechnics are worth a wait: yellow or blue fireballs, sometimes brighter than stars, and with trains lasting up to minutes long. These can be seen at any time of night, but chances of a sighting are best after midnight.

The February dawn sky will reward the planet-spotter. On the 11th, rising at about 6am, Venus and Jupiter will be separated by only  $1^\circ$ , with a thin sliver of New Moon close by in the eastern sky. On the 12th, their separation will only be  $0.5^\circ$ . But you will need good visibility of the eastern horizon for these viewings, as the planets will be still very low before they fade into the morning twilight.

On the 14th, Mercury returns to the morning skies to make a striking quartet of planets with Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn – but this is another difficult viewing, very low on the eastern horizon soon after 6am. Mercury is, as usual, being elusive and making only brief appearances. However, after the 20th, it can be found more easily and viewed for longer in the eastern dawn sky between Jupiter and Saturn.

February evening skies show up the Moon: on the 19th, in First Quarter phase, only  $5^\circ$  from Mars and the Pleiades (Seven Sisters); on the 20th, close to Aldebaran and the Hyades

(who were, in Greek mythology, half-sisters of the Pleiades); on the 23rd, near Castor and Pollux, the twin stars of Gemini.



March provides more spectacular dawn views of planets – including the best of Mercury this year. Look in the east anytime after 5am until twilight (about 6am).

On the 5th & 6th, Mercury and Jupiter are only  $0.5^\circ$  apart, with Saturn above.

On the 10th & 11th, Mercury, Jupiter and Saturn line up, with a very thin waning Moon beside them.

The 2021 Autumn equinox falls on March 20th.

Full Moon, at 5am on March 29th, is a supermoon, i.e., the Moon, in its elliptical orbit around Earth, is relatively close, and typically 30% brighter than at its furthest distance.

*By Vlack*

## FLAVOURS OF COBURG

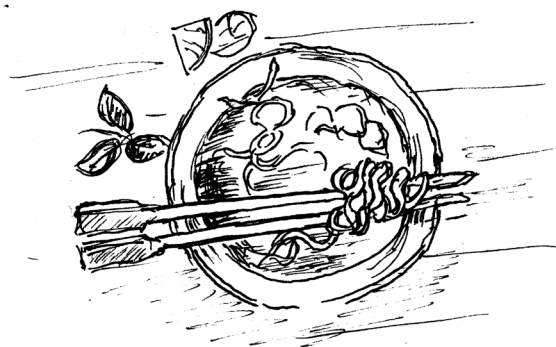
### Un-phở-gettable: Pho My Tho

When ways of life are upended by the whims of a highly contagious virus and concomitant government mandated privations, restaurant dining has a transformed cultural role and enhanced social responsibility. This is a sharp break from an merging societal trend that valorised celebrity chefs and ultra-bespoke cuisine, where food and eating is no longer the primary object of attention but rather the purpose of dining becomes the spectacle and novelty of the experience itself.

Although advertising and marketing is part of any industry, the fundamental shift to emphasise dining as an event subject to the caprice of any customer with a mobile phone has had significant consequences on the nature of dining out and on hospitality as a whole. For instance, this has been evidenced by a string of trends and fads that have popped into being, with many quickly disappearing – like boutique high-end 24-hour donuts (liquidation), share plates (hit and miss), saganaki martinis (weird), brioche burger buns (overrated) and, nouveau meals served on strange objects (very bad). This reviewer can recall eating a deconstructed salad off a garden trowel, which would have made even Jacques Derrida, the implacable inventor of deconstruction, blush.

In contrast to the vagaries of this aforementioned previous era, Vietnamese restaurant Pho My Tho offers an earnest and comprehensive menu that is grounded in quality ingredients, straightforward service and genuine hospitality. Their eponymous phở (\$12.40) is delicate and its depth of flavour is well-rounded. It comes with ample sprouts, fresh chili and herbs. Perhaps the menu has been adjusted for a western palate, in that the proteins used are not unanticipated and the level of spiciness is not sweltering. Yet the sensations of umami are layered and textured, particularly as one savours their generously portioned broth. Also, the vegetarian (and vegan) Phở comes highly praised. With this in mind, Pho My Tho declares itself as a comfortable local restaurant that would be at home on Victoria Street, Richmond or, with a little imagination, on the backstreets of Hanoi.

Although the Phở is a highlight, it was confirmed by the Chef that customers regularly return especially for the Calamari with Special



Sauce (\$16.90), to which many are devoted. This reviewer can also recommend the Vietnamese Noodle Soup in Chicken Broth with Rice or Egg noodles, generously priced at \$12.90 with a broad selection of protein and vegetable selections, including BBQ Pork, Wontons, Vegetables and Seafood. Entrees are well-portioned and include typical Vietnamese specialities including Rice Paper or Spring Rolls (\$9) as well as fried and steamed Wontons or Satay Skewers (all \$9).

The comforts of consistency against the ever-present forces of gentrification on top of our ongoing pandemic restrictions make this restaurant and ones like it extra special. Perhaps it is the sentimentality of this reviewer who recalls too many years working in family businesses, but it remains very easy to be impressed by the two siblings behind the counter, who with politeness and calm wait tables and tend the till with a minimum of fuss. Needless to say, even the most scrutinous would find their current COVID-19 precautions of an excellent standard. Also, depending on your aesthetic persuasion, one is naturally charmed by the handmade posters on front window – including the sign that reminds the takeaway customer to bring their own bag or pay a surcharge (10c). The atmosphere of the restaurant is quiet and with a large pot of Green Tea (\$2.50) to add to your Banana or Pineapple Fritter with Ice-cream (\$5.50) it is very easy to dine, reflect on simple pleasures and feel our current attention-driven culture drift away.

*By Henry Gardener*

#### **Pho My Tho**

136 Sydney Road, Coburg  
9383 1409

EFTPOS minimum \$20 with cash discount of 5%  
Delivery available

## PADDY EGAN'S DOG

*Local writer, Gwendalyn Kneebone, has started documenting her memories of Coburg during the 1950s and 60s. This poem draws from her memories of living two doors up from a warder at Pentridge Prison*

At 5.30 each evening the big man passed by  
and the little girl joined him  
walking the dog.

The man worked at Pentridge – all men worked somewhere.  
The little girl wondered about work.

The neck of the park took them out of the street  
away from the duty of warding the bad  
away from the house where eyes were so sad  
the dog for an amble

The chatter was formal but wound around justice  
Curly Wee from “the Age” our Global defender.  
He fought crime and ignorance and was a great symbol of moral divide.  
The little girl needed to have someone read it.

She wore her apron, embroidered by someone, ready for tea.  
His boots were heavy.  
The dog wore short curls  
and leered and dribbled.

At 6pm as damp rose they parted to dinner and news.

He lead the gardening team on the floral clock –  
leaf fall and petal death, fresh air and punishment  
a piece of string and a thirty year pansy.

His garden at home was plush with dahlias  
and giant tomatoes from vats of compost fearful to fall in.

In the neck of the park  
crashed by the boys with the blunt brainless digits.  
Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Yes it did.

The heat of the dog  
trips against the wide comfort of fur.

I remember Paddy's stick.  
I remember we joked a prisoner escaping would not stay in Coburg.  
We all leave footprints.

The park has replanting by green conscious neighbours.  
The man has left, buried the dog.  
Paddy Egan's Dog

The little girl grew but not changed entirely.  
The blue stone dreams on.

You can buy cells from the plan in the High Street.  
Rising damp is a downside, the chill when life goes.  
The heritage castle now sold by the madmen  
– a ‘natural escape’, an ‘exclusive enclave’.

Poor taste, poor joke.  
Now I write history and will do the life cycle of Pentridge plumbing  
to smell the backdraft to melt new ideas.

I wish I had a picture of the big man, the little girl and the wide dog.

*By Gwendalyn Kneebone*



## BUNNINGS PLANS TO MOVE

In August 2020 residents in Brunswick were informed about plans to bring a Bunnings to 145 Glenlyon Rd. The existing Bunnings Warehouse on Sydney Road is currently up for sale, with Bunnings claiming that the new and larger proposed store will be able to accommodate the increasing needs of Brunswick residents. Over 500 objections were sent to Moreland Council. The concerns were varied. Some opposed the increased traffic to an already congested area, some opposed the long trading areas, decreasing the safety for pedestrians and

cyclists, the chemicals and gases that may be unsettled during excavation of the site, and the 'overshadowing' of close by residential properties.

The Moreland Council agreed with the residents, however Bunnings took the Council's decision to reject the permit to VCAT. Glenlyon Bunnings Action Group is a locally run campaign against the development, and they are running a fundraiser to crowdsource money for the VCAT dispute that will be held on 26 August this year.

*By Elena S*

## SHORT STORY OF THE MONTH

Patrick Brainchime was born in Coburg in 1947, the youngest of two parents, and lived his entire life in the suburb, aside from his first death in 1999-2003. His parents, Belle and Furnace, were recent emigres, having fled the 1932 War of Balwyn, which saw Balwyn and Balwyn North separate into two suburbs. They settled in Coburg and had two children – Patrick and his older brother Paragon.

Mr Brainchime's early life was as initially idyllic as it was later tragic. When he was six, he and Paragon were playing in a field (an idyllic field) when his brother collapsed suddenly. Townsfolk came to their aid, and Paragon was rushed to hospital, where he was quickly pronounced dead. Preliminary reports suggested death was caused by the lightning bolt he was struck by, but doctors decided to keep an open mind due to the bellyful of pistachio shells.

Unfortunately, life became difficult for Patrick after this. His mother, Belle, who held an idealised image of Paragon in her mind, always compared Patrick unfavourably to his brother. She also blamed him for Paragon's death, suggesting he could have pushed him into a rubber thicket, or perhaps used a hand mirror to deflect the bolt.

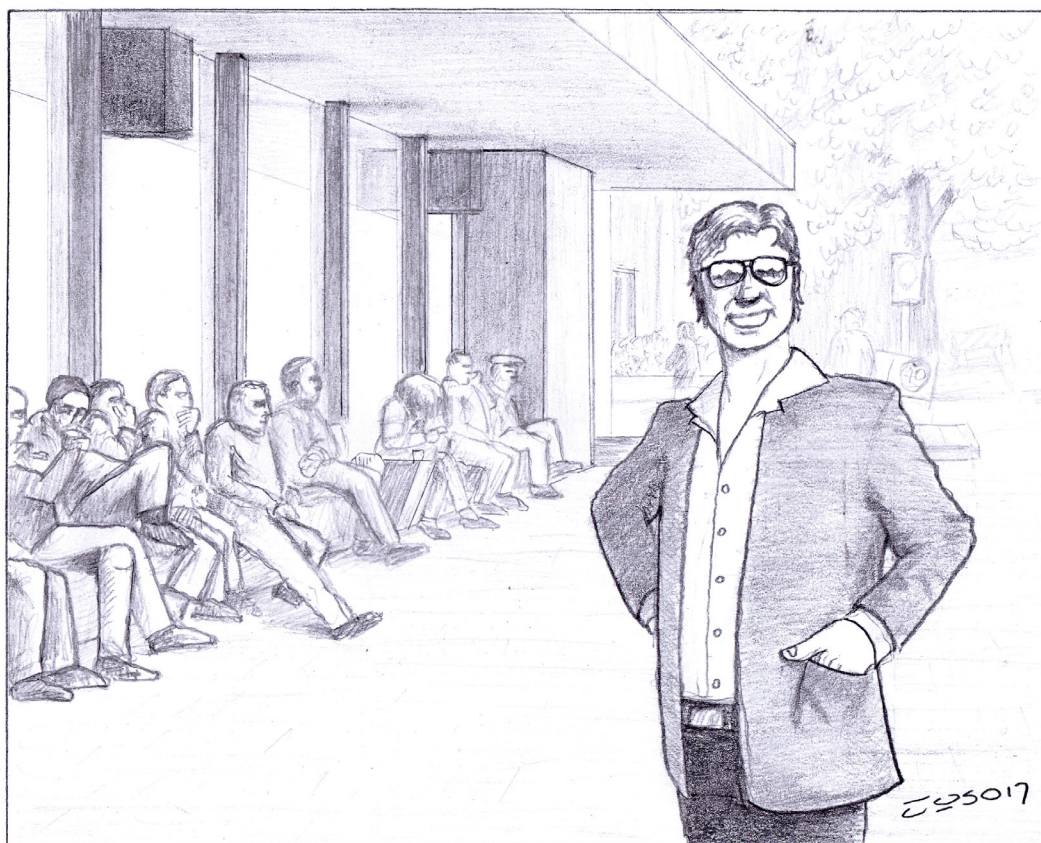
Conversely, Furnace Brainchime had never liked Paragon, but thought that Patrick was too similar to him, and didn't like to be reminded of his least-favourite son. As such, Patrick assumed that role and his father was cold and distant to him from then on.

Like many people in the situation where their older brother has been struck by lightning and their parents dislike them for opposing reasons, Patrick retreated into a world of imagination and fantasy. His creativity led to him being offered a job designing celebrities for the government when he was 15 – this was in the days before celebrity design was automated.

It was here that Patrick flourished, starting off as a junior, designing necks and pelvises of celebrities, before eventually working up to designing his own. For the fans of old Coburgwood out there, you may remember ES Carpmment, the crooner with vertigo, or even Juanita Juan-eater, the bawdy Chilean vaudevillian. Despite his personal success, Patrick struggled with the trauma of his childhood and low self-esteem and made few connections with people at work.

This changed, though, when Patrick fell in love with a shipping clerk named James. Their affair was passionate and developed quickly. Patrick had someone to emotionally open up to and share things with. For James, Patrick provided stability and security, which he had been lacking in his life. Everything was perfect...

...until James was tragically transferred to Bangladesh in the Great Clerk Swap of 1999. At the same time, the government announced that celebrity design would be privatised and automated, so Patrick was also made redundant. With no love, no job, and no connection to the world, Patrick simply faded into non-existence.



*Illustration by Tyson Kalender (TheDrawingDroid on Etsy)*

In 2003, though, an old co-worker in a pub said, “Who was that guy who used to design celebs... Patrick something?” and Patrick found himself back in Coburg, existing again four years later. Having experienced the land of undead phantoms, Patrick resolved not to make the same mistakes twice. Not needing money (people who’ve seen the other side understand that money is just an illusion), he continued to design celebrities for his own enjoyment, and did some of his best work. However, because there was no system to place them, he simply released them into the Coburg community. If you’ve ever met an unusually charismatic and good-looking Coburgian, there’s a good chance they’re a Brainchime Design. He also spent more time among people, sitting outside the Coburg library and smiling at people as they came in. More importantly, though, he forgave his parents for the unfair judgements they made of him and absolved himself of that guilt. Patrick Brainchime died in his sleep in January 2021, smiling because he knew what was to come.

*By Henry Matheson*

*Send us any feedback and criticisms.*

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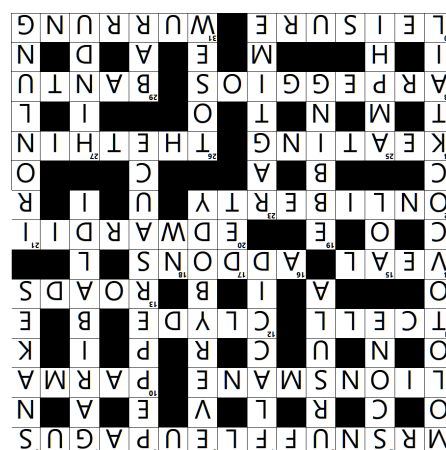
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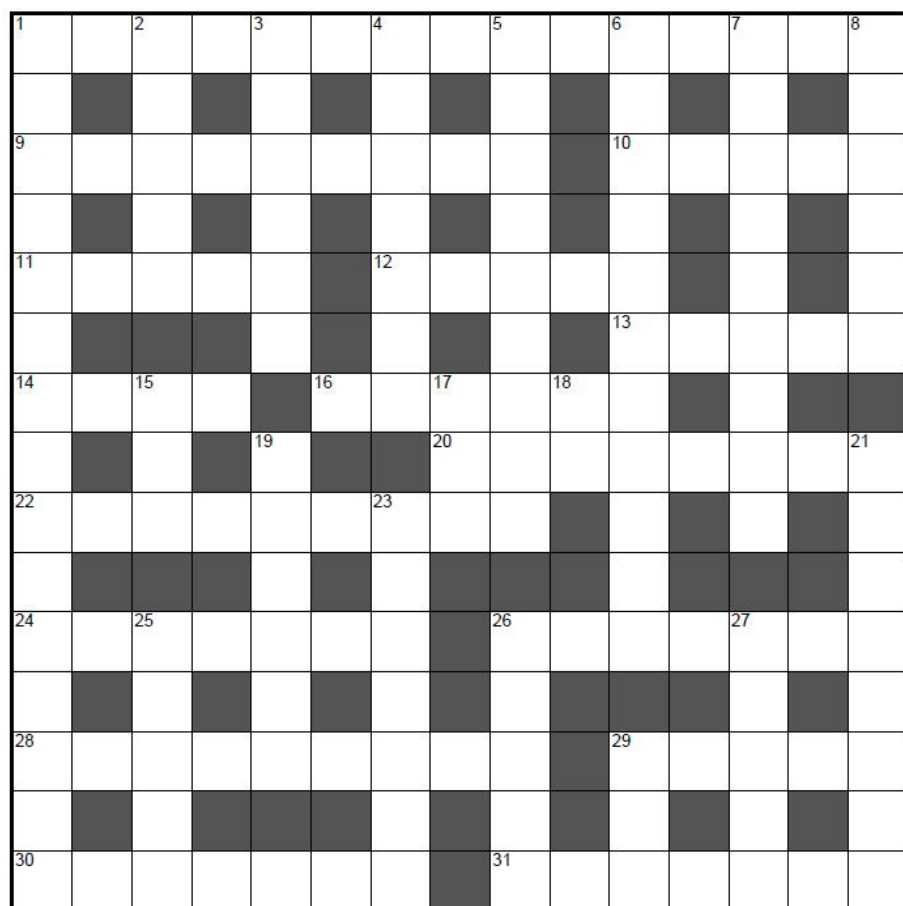
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# GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

By Ross Clark (@redchumpo)



## ACROSS

1. What's the name of Big Bird's hairy best-friend? (2,13)  
 9. Named for a hairy feline in English; which mushroom is used in Chinese medicine and also as a substitute for lobster? (5,4)  
 10. Which Italian city lends its name to a type of cheese, a pub meal, a prosciutto, major dairy multinational and Serie A football team? (5)  
 11. Originating in the bone marrow, which bodily agent binds itself to the coronavirus in order to neutralise it? (1,4)  
 12. Which outer suburb of Melbourne shares its name with the major river of Glasgow? (5)  
 13. According to the saying, all \_\_\_\_ lead to Rome? (5)  
 14. What is the meat from young cattle? (4)  
 16. What is the Firefox equivalent for Chrome's Extensions? (3,3)  
 20. Which English king was defeated by Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314)? (6,2)  
 22. Which influential work by John Stuart Mill proposed basic freedoms of

thought, or taste and to unite with others? (2,7)

24. Which Australian Prime Minister shares his surname with a member of Boyzone? (7)  
 26. Which Terrence Malick film set during World War Two stars Sean Penn, George Clooney Adrien Brody and John Cusack, \_\_\_\_ Red Line? (3,4)  
 28. What are broken chords, where each note is played in an ascending or descending order? (9)  
 29. Which language family contains Swahili, Zulu and Shona, and counts 30% of Africans and 5% of all people in its number of speakers? (5)  
 30. What type of suit did Larry wear, in his eponymous lewd video game series of the late 1980s? (7)  
 31. Which word element meaning 'lip' is common to many southern Victorian First Nations, including the custodians of Port Phillip Bay? (7)

## DOWN

1. Which homemade Finnish weapon was "a drink to go with the food" after USSR's foreign minister claimed Soviet invasion was altruistic? (7,8)  
 2. Which can either be a pastry or the palace at which Macbeth was crowned? (5)  
 3. Which Disney witch was banished from Atlantica by King Triton? (6)  
 4. "Of course, the Rent Boy is looking like a \_\_\_\_ prick in a barrel-load ay fannies" -Sick Boy. Trainspotting, Irvine Welsh (7)  
 5. Who, according to Tears For Fears, wants to rule the world? (9)  
 6. The French 'steak-au-poivre' consists of beef with what accompaniment? (6,5)  
 7. Described by AJP Taylor as "the only wholly admirable figure in modern history", which general's campaigns united Italy in the 1860s? (9)  
 8. Nagini, Kaa, and Dendar are all fictional examples of what? (6)  
 15. Which internet provider merged with Time-Warner in 2000 to complete the biggest merger in US history? (3)  
 17. Abbreviated, who is the employer of all public school teachers in Victoria? (3)  
 18. What abbreviated compass point is also the initialised name of Kim Kardashian's eldest child? (1,1)  
 19. What is the tide doing as it moves away from land? (6)  
 21. My \_\_\_\_, 1990s Radiohead song referring to a metallic artificial respirator (4,4)  
 23. What syncopated Jazz forerunner is associated with Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton? (7)  
 25. Which Greek word element can mean 'both' or 'around'? (5)  
 26. "A time to keep, and a time to throw away; A time to rend (tear), a time to \_\_\_\_" Ecclesiastes, 3:6-7 (3)  
 27. What is a follower of the world's third largest religion? (5)  
 29. What word can follow space, sand or chocolate? (3)

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