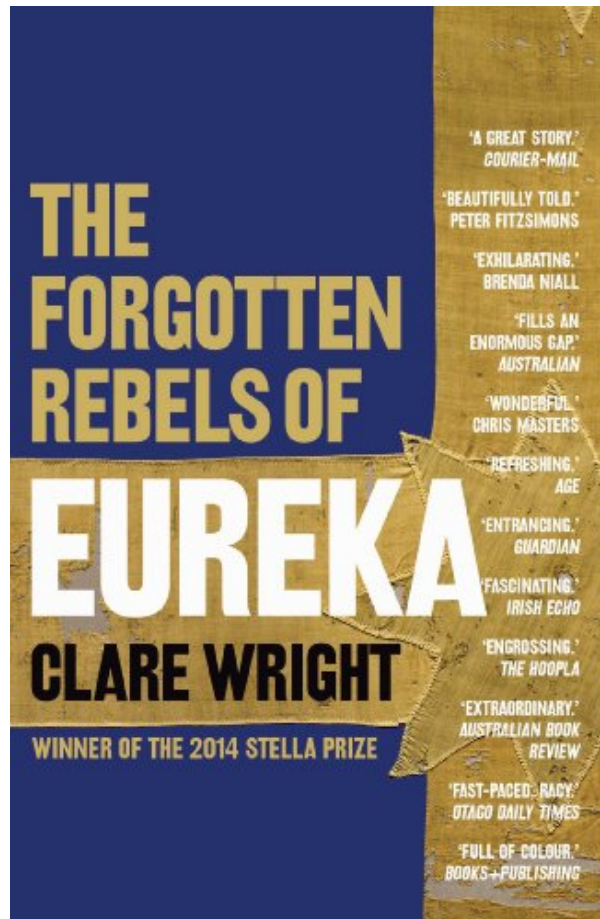
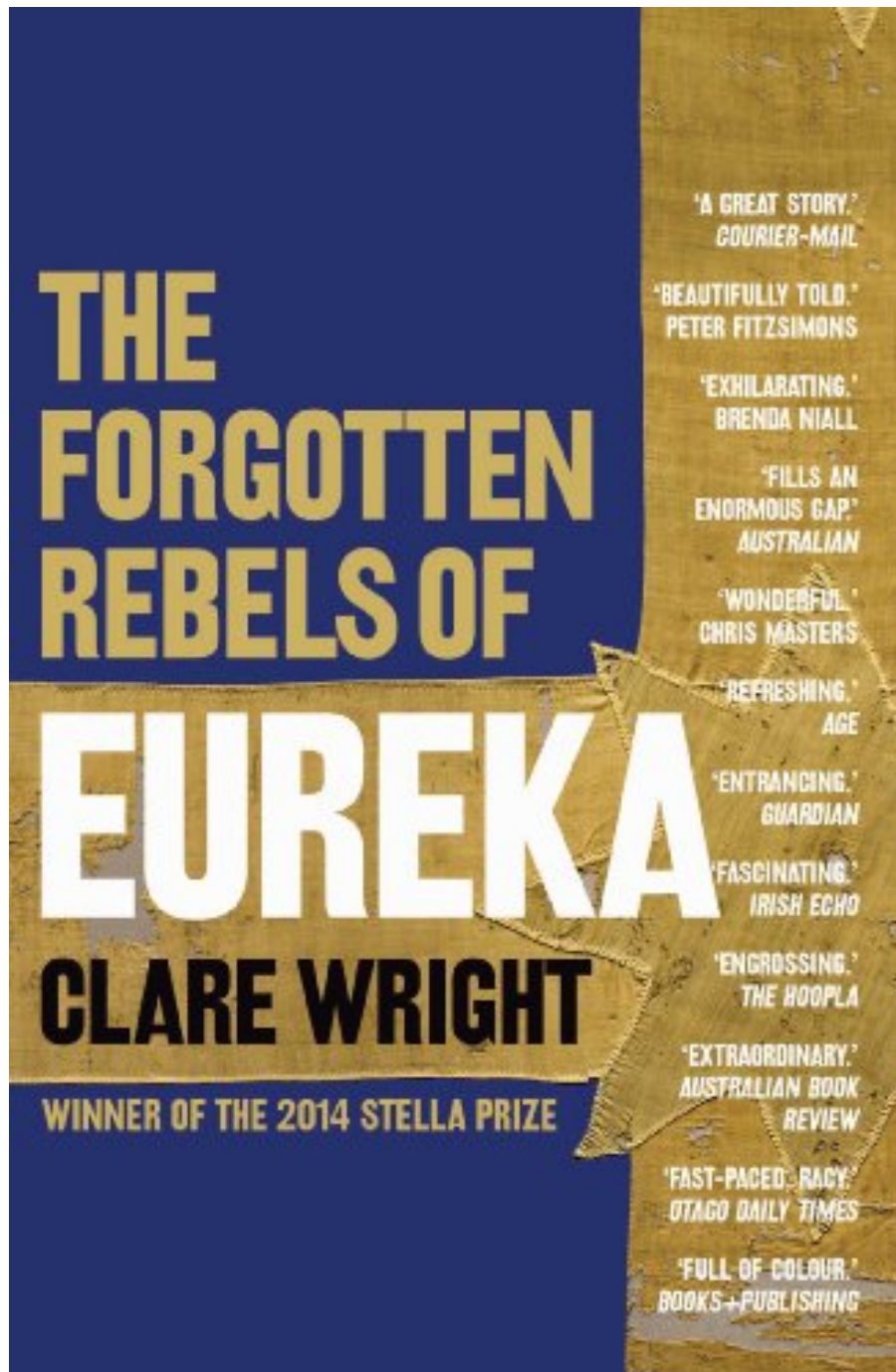


THE FORGOTTEN REBELS OF EUREKA BY CLARE WRIGHT



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Review

'A book with as much verve, energy and indomitable spirit as the digger women themselves.' The Independent

About the Author

Clare Wright is an historian who has worked as a political speechwriter, university lecturer, historical consultant and radio and television broadcaster. She researched, wrote and presented the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Commission] television documentary Utopia Girls and is currently writing a four-part series to commemorate the centenary of WWI for ABC1. She lives in Melbourne with her husband and three children. Visit: clarewright.com.au

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THE FORGOTTEN REBELS OF EUREKA BY CLARE WRIGHT PDF

Winner of the Stella Prize, 2014.

The Eureka Stockade. The story is one of Australia's foundation legends, but until now it has been told as though only half the participants were there.

What if the hot-tempered, free-wheeling gold miners we learnt about in school were actually husbands and fathers, brothers and sons? And what if there were women and children inside the Eureka Stockade, defending their rights while defending themselves against a barrage of bullets?

As Clare Wright reveals, there were thousands of women on the goldfields and many of them were active in pivotal roles. The stories of how they arrived there, why they came and how they sustained themselves make for fascinating reading in their own right. But it is in the rebellion itself that the unbiddable women of Ballarat come into their own.

Groundbreaking, absorbing, crucially important, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* is the uncut story of the day the Australian people found their voice.

Clare Wright is an historian who has worked as a political speechwriter, university lecturer, historical consultant and radio and television broadcaster. Her first book, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australia's Female Publicans*, garnered both critical and popular acclaim. She researched, wrote and presented the ABC television documentary *Utopia Girls* and is currently writing a four-part series to commemorate the centenary of WWI for ABC1. She lives in Melbourne with her husband and three children.

'Lively, incisive and timely, Clare Wright's account of the role of women in the Eureka Stockade is an engrossing read. Assembling a tapestry of voices that vividly illuminate the hardscrabble lives endured on Ballarat's muddy goldfields, this excellent book reveals a concealed facet of one of Australia's most famous incidences of colonial rebellion. For once, Peter Lalor isn't the hero: it's the women who are placed front and centre...*The Forgotten Rebels* links the actions of its heroines to the later fight for female suffrage, and will be of strong relevance to a contemporary female audience. Comprehensive and full of colour, this book will also be essential reading for devotees of Australian history.' Bookseller and Publisher

'This is a wonderful book. At last an Australian foundation story where women are not only found, but are found to have played a fundamental role.' Chris Masters

'Brilliantly researched and fun to read. An exhilarating new take on a story we thought we knew.' Brenda Niall

'Fascinating revelations. Beautifully told.' Peter FitzSimons

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History that leaps off the page.

By bookbuzz

Eureka (yoo-ree-kuh) from the Greek, literally means 'I have found it!' – exactly what Clare Wright has done in her Australian history book, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*; Dr. Wright has not only found it, she has found them; the women and girls who lived, worked and died beside their husbands, brothers and fathers in the 1850's on Australia's Ballarat goldfields.

Women, until recently, left out of history books which describe Australia's nineteenth century goldfields and *The Eureka Stockade*, a foundation event in a then young English colony, *The Forgotten Rebels Of Eureka* sets the record straight – women were not only around in significant numbers they made a huge contribution to the shanty towns that grew up around the diggings. Engaged not just in traditional roles they were top of the bill actresses, teachers, writers and publicans.

The Ballarat gold-rush is typically represented as having a cast list of mostly unattached badly behaved young men who lived in lawless, chaotic tent-cities while they mined rich gold seams. Ten years in the researching and writing, Clare Wright's book refutes this view of a community dominated by ruffians and con-men; revealing the Ballarat goldfields of the 1850s as a reasonably law-abiding community of men, women and children, most of whom had travelled a long way to seek, if not fortune, at least a livable financial reward for their hard work.

In 1854, the lure of gold, mined for the price of a pick-axe and a tent, caused Ballarat's population to increase rapidly. Twenty five percent of the community, female, most of them young and newly married, it's no surprise there was a baby boom. In 1854-55, breast pumps were sold in stores and childcare was organised for dances and balls. The picture painted in *The Forgotten Rebels Of Eureka* of goldfields domesticity – women who cared for children, cooked meals and worked beside their men, despite the noise, dirt, lack of water, primitive sanitary conditions and domestic violence is a fascinating look at the social history of the time.

A seminal event in the establishment of an Australian national identity, the incidents that led to *The Eureka Stockade* where miners rebelled against local authorities, began as a series of protests against the licence fees charged by the colonial government, which were enforced by poorly trained, brutal and often crooked police.

Miners had to pay a fee each month to renew their licence, whether or not they had found gold. Gold seams depleted, in November 1854, tensions increased, a hotel was burned down and three miners were arrested – 10,000 thousand miners met to demand the release of the prisoners, abolition of licence fees and the right to vote. Demands refused, the miners held a meeting at the Eureka diggings (named after a deep seam of gold). They built a fort, which they named the Eureka Stockade.

On Sunday, 3rd December, several hundred soldiers and police attacked the stockade. Better equipped, government troops outnumbered the diggers; the battle short, accounts vary, but it is thought 22 diggers and 5 soldiers were killed.

Women of the goldfields who were caught up in the miner's fight for a 'fair go' for all, not just the ruling elite, have never been mentioned in official government reports or the accounts of the Eureka Stockade written by male historians. This extraordinary oversight, in keeping with Australia's male dominated historical records has been remedied by *The Forgotten Rebels Of Eureka* – women were there; their work and suffering every bit as heroic and inspiring as the men they helped to turn a fledgling colony into the modern state of Victoria.

Historian, public commentator and university lecturer, Clare Wright through letters, newspapers and research of the period (included is an extensive bibliography) has written a realistic, exciting, sometimes humorous and at times sad account of truly remarkable women; Sarah Hanmer, theatrical entrepreneur and founder of one of Ballarat's first theatres, the Adephi, was a great supporter of miner's rights and the fight to change the iniquitous government licencing system, Sarah helped a young American miner, James Mc Gill, who had been part of the rebel force that challenged the authorities at the Eureka Stockade, escape punishment by providing and helping him dress in women's clothes, Catherine Bentley, publican, who with her husband, James, ran the Eureka Hotel, a popular goldfields hotel where large numbers of working people congregated to drink, gamble and dance. Unhappily the hotel was burned down by an angry mob after Catherine and James were suspected of playing a part in the death of a young miner; James was imprisoned and Catherine, in her early twenties, became a single mother, the sole support of her children. Catherine Mc Lister, a twenty-eight-year-old Irish women, who bravely brought a complaint of sexual impropriety against a police captain; literate and undismayed, Catherine stood before a board of inquiry and stated her case, she replied to cross examination and herself, cross examined witnesses. Despite the charge being dismissed as vexatious (Catherine's husband having been previously arrested by the police officer charged, the board decided her action was retaliatory), she acquitted herself well, a woman prepared to risk her reputation and take drastic action against the sexual advances of a police officer who preyed on women who worked alone in their homes on the goldfields.

The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka has many true stories of women, often newly arrived immigrants, who faced life on the goldfields, undeterred by hard work, childbirth, illness, poverty and errant husbands, they survived harsh weather and lack of housing with courageous optimism. Clare Wright's intimate writing style breathes life into these women; often dying young, they lived, loved and worked in what, for most of them, would have been an environment of extreme hardship. I particularly loved the glimpses of life in the nineteenth century gained from letters of women who welcomed the chance to escape the conventions of the time for the freedom of a brand new country. Matter of fact, I can't remember a chapter that wasn't an absorbing page turner.

Listen up: Nicole and Naomi; there are so many wonderful women's stories in *The Forgotten Rebels Of Eureka* that beg to tell the true story of Australia's gold-rush – all of them perfect for the big screen.

Great book for anyone who wants to know what really happened in the Australian Gold Rush.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

'The women of Eureka have always been there.'

By Jennifer Cameron-Smith

This book is focussed on the period between the discovery of gold at Ballarat in 1851 until the aftermath of the Eureka Stockade in 1854. Dr Wright also provides a domestic and international context for the events in Ballarat as well as referencing other instances where women became politically mobilised (such as during the French Revolution). When I first learned about Eureka at school almost half a century ago, the only names used were male, the only pronouns masculine. The events at the Eureka Stockade were, we were told, the beginning of Australian democracy, a recognition that there should be no taxation without representation. The Eureka Stockade is the only Australian example of an armed rebellion leading to reform of unfair laws. The term 'digger' was later adopted by the ANZAC soldiers in World War I. The wording of the resolution passed by the diggers on the 11th of November 1854 still echoes in my memory: that it was 'the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called on to obey, that taxation without representation is tyranny.' It didn't occur to me then to wonder where the women were.

'Women were there. They mined for gold and much else of economic value besides. They paid taxes. They fought for their rights. And they were killed in the crossfire of a nascent new world order.'

Dr Wright's research led her to discover there were 5165 women in Ballarat in December 1854, and 6356 children. And at least one of those women died during the Stockade.

This book provides an engrossing account of the events leading up to, and immediately after, the Eureka Stockade. The accounts of lives lived (and lost) on the muddy goldfields. Women as agitators, fund-raisers and petitioners. Women as wives and mothers. Women conducting business and mining for gold. A number of women become the book's main characters. Those women include: Martha Clendenning, the storekeeper and doctor's wife; Margaret Johnston, the young wife of Assistant Gold Commissioner James Johnston; actress and theatre-manager Sarah Hamner; and Clara Seekamp, who acted as publisher of the Ballarat Times.

I found this book fascinating: it made me think about aspects of the Eureka Stockade I'd never before considered (including the role of women and the dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants). It also reminded me of the relative recency of representative democracy in Australia, and the continuing struggles over land ownership and use. I'd recommend this book to anyone seeking to look at the Eureka Stockade from another perspective.

'It's what happened after the surrender that really matters.'

Dr Clare Wright won the 2014 Stella Prize for this book.

Jennifer Cameron-Smith

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

This is a thoroughly researched and extremely readable account of ...

By Timbo

This is a thoroughly researched and extremely readable account of Eureka, one of Australia's most significant events. The attention to the lesser role that has been neglected until this publication is most welcome in our attempts to gain a full and accurate picture of the Eureka events. The women were certainly present and had a significant role as the events unfolded.

Clare has restored women to history and demonstrated that history has not always been in the male hands at times the male was seen running from conflict whilst women stood and fought.

The book is, however, more than an insistence on restoring women to a positive role in the Eureka history. It gives a detailed account of the events in one of Australia's most significant stands against authoritarianism and privilege. Would that there were more of it today.

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