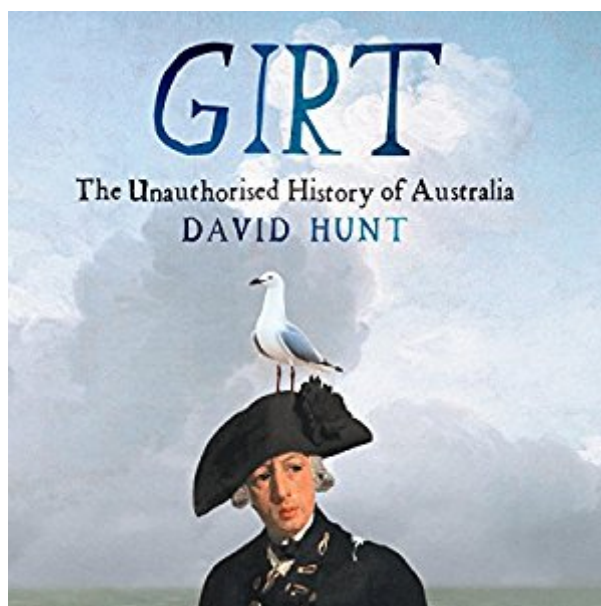


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Girt: The Unauthorised History Of Australia



Synopsis

Girt. No word could better capture the essence of Australia.... In this hilarious history, David Hunt reveals the truth of Australia's past, from megafauna to Macquarie - the cock-ups and curiosities, the forgotten eccentrics and Eureka moments that have made us who we are. Girt introduces forgotten heroes like Mary McLoghlin, transported for the crime of "felony of sock", and Trim the cat, who beat a French monkey to become the first animal to circumnavigate Australia. It recounts the misfortunes of the escaped Irish convicts who set out to walk from Sydney to China, guided only by a hand-drawn paper compass, and explains the role of the coconut in Australia's only military coup. Our nation's beginnings are steeped in the strange, the ridiculous, and the frankly bizarre. Girt proudly reclaims these stories for all of us. Not to listen to it would be un-Australian.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David Hunt takes the title of his volume on Australian history from the national anthem's line "our home is Girt by sea." This word, Girt, is a bit odd, and the story of Australia he tells is filled with similarly unusual words, characters, and events. This tongue-in-cheek history begins with the first Europeans to see the island and presents mistakes, questionable decisions, hilarious personalities, and poor judgement that led a small convict colony at the ends of the earth to develop its own successful rum-based economy and freewheeling society in the 19th century. Hunt presents the foibles of the country's biggest founding names in a witty narrative and mostly understandable Aussie slang. While we were traveling in Australia it was fun to learn the peculiar

stories behind some of the names: Mrs. Macquarie's design and construction of a hospital without bathrooms now used as NSW parliament, Flinders sailing around the island with cat and possible male love interest in tow. As a non-Australian, I think I understood most of the jokes, but some certainly were over my head. The short history of Australia is not particularly compelling on its own, but Girt was a solid read, particularly while we were on location.

As a lover history I found this recount of the 'discovery' of Australia informative and hilarious. The author depicts Aussie icons - warts and all (well syphilis and all). Forget what you thought about the first settlers, you'll never look at Australian history in the same way again - The foot notes had me laugh out loud.

Hilarious book, well read. Audiobooks are rarely cheap, so I didn't have great hopes for this one, if I'm being honest, but it surprised me. Quite funny, full of the sort of facts that would've made me enjoy history class, and keeps such a good pace that I could listen for hours. Found it great to drive to, and found myself laughing as I listened. I'm sure it would be enjoyable to read, but the narration of the story (done with different voices to designate when a quote is being read) is an amazing layer that you wouldn't want to miss out on. I didn't realize Australia would be this interesting!

Hunt prefaces his Introduction with a quote from Homer Simpson: "It's funny because it's true." Both the substance and source of the quote identify the tone of "Girt." Putting it more directly in his Acknowledgements, Hunt says he "wondered whether I could write an Australian history that was both accurate and amusing." Although it is evident that not all readers agree, I think he managed both pretty well. I learned some new things, obtained a better appreciation of some things that I thought I knew, and laughed a lot along the way. I am not a scholar of Australian history, but have read several serious treatments of the early days covered by this Volume 1 (which roughly concludes with Macquarie's demise in 1824), and Hunt appears scrupulously accurate on the facts. He also adds a good deal not included in standard histories that is not only amusing but sometimes quite telling in its particulars. Of course, what Hunt makes of the facts is another matter. A blurb on the jacket rightly refers to this as "hilarious history." Readers might be forgiven if they occasionally feel awash in puns, clever innuendos and satirical claims. So, probably you should not make this your exclusive source for the history of the persons and period treated! But either as an antidote to drier treatments or simply for a good deal of fun, I am happy to recommend "Girt" --- and I look forward to Volume 2.

I finished Girt last night. It's a darkly hilarious and historically accurate satire of Australian history. If Terry Pratchett was a historian, rather than a fantasy author, he'd have produced work like this. You'd like this if Python, Adams, Pratchett or Bryson are up your thing.

I needed a good book on Aussie history to help me with a fiction series, and this book was not only educational but downright hilarious! Hunt makes liberal use of irony and sarcasm, so it's easy to see how someone could take his chapter on Aussie native cultures the wrong way. But it was all in good fun and entirely consistent with his scathing roast of historical figures and European cultures throughout the book. I learned, I laughed, and I plan on reading it again. It was recommended to me by an Australian, and I had more fun reading it than any other book I bought last year.

Five stars? That's reserved for classics such as "To Kill A Mockingbird", so how can this get five stars? Well, because it's brilliant! It should be noted that you ought to know something about Australia's history - you don't need to be a Historian, but familiarity with the basic story is helpful. It is also helpful to not be concerned about the destruction of "sacred cows". And whatever you do, read the footnotes! They are plentiful, and quite brilliant. Strictly speaking they are more commentary than reference, but the unorthodoxy is simply part of the style of the author. Not sure if everything is true, but I love the adventure.

This was a fantastic book, I have been looking around for something written in a similar style, but there is nothing like it. As a life long lover of history, one thing that has always been challenging is the dry nature of some history writing. David Hunt challenges this convention with his humorous and cheeky take on early Australian history. This book frequently made me laugh out loud, which made me really popular in the Sydney Trains Quiet carriage. This book traces history from the First Australians all the way through to the end of Governor Macquarie, describing the characters the way you would read about them if they were still around today, warts and all; rather than the clinical, lofty figures that stare at us from statues, paintings, and books, we are told about Gov Macquarie's corruption, Macarthur's Clive Palmer like behaviour, and how much of a bastard that Governor Bligh really was. Cannot recommend this book enough!

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