

Carol Baxter, *Captain Thunderbolt & His Lady: the true story of bushrangers Frederick Ward & Mary Ann Bugg*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2011, ISBN: 978 1 74237 287 7, \$40.00 including postage, 364pp, paperback.

I first met Carol a couple of years ago when we both participated at an [Unlock the Past](#) (UTP) writing history seminar in Adelaide. Earlier this year we were both speakers on the UTP genealogy cruise and we got to know each other more and shared our common enthusiasm for getting family historians to write up their stories more. Carol's book *Writing Interesting Family Histories* is the springboard for people interested in writing their own family history.

However *Captain Thunderbolt & His Lady* is not a family history. In the author's own words her style of writing history is under the umbrella of narrative or literary or creative non-fiction where she allows the participants to live their own stories where possible by recounting their own statements found in government documents, personal papers, newspapers and so on.

I was already familiar with Captain Thunderbolt's history as a bushranger but was unaware of his early background and his long time relationship with Mary Ann. I found Carol's book a fascinating read as she easily drew me into the saga of their lives. I found myself feeling sorry for Mary Ann and yet proud of the way she stood up to authorities time and time again. Fred was a bushranger but I still felt that he had community support while at the same time I could feel the frustration of the police as they tried to capture him and his gang.

It is this emotional involvement with the various people in the book that helps to make it a great read and an interesting insight into Australia's bushranging years. I much prefer this approach than some of the more academic histories that don't always allow us to get to know the people who were actually making history.

At the beginning of the book there is a very useful cast of characters followed by maps of Queensland and New South Wales so that it is easy to see where the action took place and just how far Fred and Mary Ann travelled during the various stages of their life together.

There is an extensive bibliography and the author has been thorough in her range of government archival sources and newspapers of the time. Secondary sources consulted are also extensive and provide a good reading list if you want to learn more about this period in Australia's history. The book is indexed and includes names, crimes and important subjects. More detailed information is also available on [Carol Baxter's website](#) and the book can be ordered online.

Carol has two other books *Breaking the Bank: an extraordinary colonial robbery* and *An Irresistible Temptation: the true story of Jane New and a colonial scandal* also published by Allen & Unwin. As I enjoyed reading *Captain Thunderbolt & His Lady* so much, I'm now going to seek these books out. Sadly they are not in my local council library so I need to make an interlibrary loan request. Patience is not one of my strong points but I'm sure the wait will be worthwhile!

Shauna Hicks

[www.shaunahicks.com.au](http://www.shaunahicks.com.au)