



## Ash Island

*Barry Maitland*

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Detective Sergeant Harry Belltree, back on the job after a near-fatal confrontation with corrupt colleagues, has become a departmental embarrassment. The solution is a posting away from Sydney and a quiet life in Newcastle.

Or maybe not so quiet. A body's been found buried just offshore on Ash Island; there may be more. There's also Harry's unfinished business. The car crash that killed his parents and blinded his wife happened not far from Newcastle. And Harry knows it was no accident.

The other unfinished business is Jenny's longed-for pregnancy. Which means that now the stakes are higher than ever.

## Ash Island Details

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Author : Barry Maitland

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## **From Reader Review Ash Island for online ebook**

### **Mish says**

This novel is the second book in The Belltree Trilogy, and the reason I gave it 3\* was partly my fault. I got lost along the way.

Ash Island is a direct continuation from Crucifixion Creek. After Harry Belltree's release from hospital, he was strongly advised to relocate from Sydney. Harry decided to move to Newcastle, the location not far from where his parents were killed – or murdered actually – and Harry secret agenda is to find his parents killer. On duty, Harry and his partner Ross Bramley are called to Ash Island where a Chinese immigrant body was buried. The body found leads to another, and then investigation comes full circle to Harry's agenda.

Many people (criminals, officers etc..) start to make an appearance that was directly linked to Crucifixion Creek and I had a real difficult time placing them. I thought I left a long break between books and that's why it wasn't coming to me. Or perhaps not enough background information was outlined for the reader from the previous book. However, by this point, activity intensified greatly and I found myself just enjoying the ride.

Maitland is an amazing crime writer and I like his style. He's got a slight hard edge to his writing; his narration is serious, sharp and to the point. And Mr Maitland is certainly not kind to his protagonist – he goes through hell and back and makes him work.

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### **Peter Anderson says**

TWO DOWN AND ONE TO GO...

Barry Maitland's "Harry Belltree" series is just riveting. The books move along at a fast pace and keep your interest at a high state.

WARNING! Don't read this book unless you have read "Crucifixion Creek" (book 1 of the series) first. "Ash Island" is a very good read but you will get much more enjoyment out of these books if you read them in order and close together in time.

As soon as I finish this review I will start "Slaughter Park" (book 3).

Highly recommend,  
Peter

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### **A Reader's Heaven says**

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

*Detective Sergeant Harry Belltree, back on the job after a near-fatal confrontation with corrupt colleagues, has become a departmental embarrassment. The solution is a posting away from Sydney and a quiet life in Newcastle.*

*Or maybe not so quiet. A body's been found buried just offshore on Ash Island; there may be more. There's also Harry's unfinished business. The car crash that killed his parents and blinded his wife happened not far from Newcastle. And Harry knows it was no accident.*

*The other unfinished business is Jenny's longed-for pregnancy. Which means that now the stakes are higher than ever.*

This is the second Harry Belltree novel and, in some respects, exceed the previous one. It is recommended that you read the previous book before getting stuck into this one, just to gain the background of what is happening as some of the characters from the first book appear in this one, although Harry has been transferred away from the city.

In this story, Harry has a number of cases open before him. Bodies have been discovered on Ash Island and he is there to investigate. Also, Newcastle is close to where his parents were killed and his wife was blinded - so there is a little backstory to delve into here as well. Add to that, the appearance of Kelly Pool, the investigative journalist from the previous book, whose own search for justice brings her to Newcastle. She again shares info with Harry and all the strings of this story get brought together perfectly.

I found the pacing of this book to be better than the first one. Paradoxically, some of the backstory here is repetitive and slows the story up somewhat (but probably not for those who didn't read the first book.) The development of Harry and Kelly as characters has been fascinating to watch (read?) and enjoyed the addition of some new secondary characters.

Another gripping novel in this series and I look forward to the final book of the trilogy.

Paul  
ARH

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## **Craig Sisterson says**

Sydney detective Harry Belltree has been banished to the backblocks after uncovering political and police corruption in Australia's biggest city. But his personal hunt for the truth behind the accident that killed his parents and blinded his wife continues in this action-packed sequel to Crucifixion Creek.

Maitland crafts an entertaining, action-packed read with a distinctive hero, flavored with organized crime, biker gangs, drug rings, corporate skullduggery, and aboriginal land rights. Back-story plays an important role, so readers may enjoy Ash Island on a deeper level if they've read Crucifixion Creek first.

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## **Brenda says**

After the events of Crucifixion Creek Detective Sergeant Harry Belltree was posted to Newcastle – away

from the embarrassment he had caused his Sydney colleagues; Newcastle was the “bush outpost” where nothing much happened – or so they thought. Harry’s wife Jenny and her new dog Felecia accompanied Harry to their new rental in Carrington; a quiet place Jenny was growing to love. With the help of Felecia, she was finding her way around, growing familiar with the area.

The Hunter Valley was also where Harry’s parents had been killed three years previously. Jenny had been badly injured in the accident, losing her sight but not her life. Harry couldn’t let the past go – he was convinced it wasn’t an accident; but finding out more could be difficult...

When the call came in about a body having been found on Ash Island, Harry accompanied his partner, DS Ross Bramley from Newcastle area command to investigate. But was this the beginning of a new horror for DS Harry Belltree? As sinister undertones began to surface and more bodies were found, the danger intensified. Suddenly the race was on and Harry found himself mixed up in multiple issues with no idea who could he trust.

I absolutely loved *Ash Island* by Aussie author Barry Maitland! Second in The Belltree Trilogy, the flow-on from Crucifixion Creek is impeccable. Harry is a wonderful character – he shows a quiet but intense vulnerability when it comes to Jenny. The pace of the story is fast – it flows, gaining momentum until it reaches the crashing (and totally unexpected) finale! Told in the voices of the three main characters; Harry, Jenny and Kelly Poole (journalist), *Ash Island* is a brilliant part of the trilogy and I’m really looking forward to book 3 in September 2016! Highly recommended.

With thanks to Text Publishing for my copy to read and review.

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## **Ron Brown says**

I unfortunately read the Belltree trilogy out of order. 1, 3 and then 2. Ash Island is two. Wrong move. I would strongly suggest that you read them in order, there is much cross referencing.

I live in Newcastle and drive past Ash Island every weekday so I was expecting Maitland to capture the feel and vibe of Newcastle. It's neighbourhood blend of old and new. The timber workingman cottages throughout the inner city with the commercial development of Honeysuckle. The cities reliance on coal. How it is a football playing surfer city with a sizeable young trendy population. This never happens. Maitland is no Ian Rankin and I don't think tourists will be seeking out mentioned sites from this book.

Also, Harry Belltree is no John Rebus. Belltree is a fairly one-dimensional character, a muscular action orientated cop. He has no interests outside of catching the bad guys, except for his blind wife, Jenny. Poor Jenny gets a buffering from the evil doers. She ought to sue the Police Service for all nasty criminals she has to avoid.

This novel reads as one long police report where Harry is the smart insightful guy and his superiors are knuckleheads, boarding on being corrupt.

There are too many contrived events where Harry, Jenny and Kerry Poole (reporter and Harry ally) manage to escape an untimely demise too often. There is a scene where Jenny's guide dog wakes them in the middle of the night to go for a walk. As they are returning to the house it is destroyed in a massive explosion.

A crossdressing, transgender wife basher is introduced in a scene where Harry saves the life of his police partner. If this was Joseph Wambaugh writing we would have a comical cruel character who would add interest to the story. But no Mr Logan McGilvray's LGBTQI status is not mentioned again and Harry uses physical motivation tactics to extract information. Logan disappears from the story to surface later somewhat

dismembered.

There is some good writing in the opening pages.

“The helicopter pilot banks away towards the coast, his last flight for the night, and checks the time 2:16am. Ahead of him he can see the white figure of the lighthouse on Nobby’s Head marking the mouth of the Hunter River and the entrance to the port. To the left are the lights of the city – the city of people, mostly asleep now – while to the right lies the floodlit city of machines that never sleep. Gantries, towers crawling scoops and mumming conveyor belts, all of gigantic size, gathering up the long ridges of coal that the trains have brought from the valley and pumping into the bellies of the ships.”

Unfortunately this type of descriptive writing remains unused throughout the rest of the story.

There is mention of the mysterious Nordland family – the land developing Corleone’s of the story and the death of Harry’s parents surfaces regularly as the story progresses.

The language is mundane, the characters uninteresting and the setting scarcely described all lead to a fairly tedious, unremarkable story and in the crowded world of police crime/murder/mysteries Ash Island does not rank very highly.

I have read better Maitland novels.

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## **LJ says**

First Sentence: On a November night in 2013, two kilometers off the coast of New South Wales, a helicopter rises from the deck of a Chinese bulk carrier ship.

Det. Sgt. Harry Belltree has been reassigned to Newcastle, Australia. With him is his wife, pregnant and blinded from an auto accident which also killed his parents. Yet on the job, a corpse has been found, which turns out to be one of many and, Harry suspect, related to the car accident.

Maitland does provide excellent descriptions and analogies—“The boom of the surf rises up to her like the rhythmic chant of some primeval chorus, the chorus of the dead.”

This is definitely the 2nd of a trilogy, as there are a lot of references to past events. Maitland does try to catch new readers up, but there are times when it is rather frustrating for those who start with this book.

For a cop, Harry certainly plays fast and loose with the law. However, there is some very good suspense.

By far, the female characters are the strength of the story, particularly Harry’s wife, Jenny. The journalist, Kelly, is also interesting, even though she does commit the classic TSTL (too stupid to live) act. Sadly, Harry was a difficult character with whom to connect. And yes, sadly, there is a completely unnecessary portent.

“Ash Island” was an okay read. The dialogue was rather flat, and one felt a bit manipulated knowing it was necessary to read all three books in order to know the full story.

ASH ISLAND (Pol Proc-Sgt. Harry Belltree-Newcastle, Australia-Contemp) – Okay

Maitland, Barry – 2nd of Trilogy

Minotaur Books, Nov 2016

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## Simona says

I can't wait to read bk 3

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## Text Publishing says

**Harry Belltree is back again in another thriller from the pen of hard-boiled crime master Barry Maitland. And the pace hasn't dampened for this Sydney homicide detective who just knows how to court danger.**

This is the second in the Belltree Trilogy after *Crucifixion Creek* (**Shortlisted, Ned Kelly Awards, Best Crime Novel, 2015**), in which Harry went off-grid investigating his brother-in-law Greg's death and things got ugly.

And here life isn't getting any easier for Harry. But there's no point getting down about it, when there's a job that needs doing.

**If you missed the buzz last year, this is what they were saying about *Crucifixion Creek*:**

'A terrifically exciting novel.' *Canberra Times*

'Maitland just gets better, and he's long been, if quietly, one of the very best...the writing is lean and top-knotch as always.' *Weekend Herald*

'*Crucifixion Creek*...takes off at a frantic gallop towards a heart-thumping finale that promises only a brief respite. Be prepared to stay up late.' *Saturday Age*

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## Petra says

Ash Island is the second book in Barry Maitland's Belltree trilogy featuring Sydney homicide Detective Sergeant Harry Belltree. This starts off shortly after the events of *Crucifixion Creek*. They should ideally be read in order as there is a plot line that continues throughout the trilogy.

In *Ash Island*, Harry discovers more information about the road traffic accident that killed his parents and left his wife, Jenny, blind. Following the events in *Crucifixion Creek*, Harry has been transferred to Newcastle, where he isn't exactly made to feel very welcome but he is trying to settle down with Jenny who is expecting their first child. But when a body is discovered on Ash Island, Harry soon finds himself investigating a complex case involving corruption, drugs, smuggling, coal mining and Aboriginal land rights. On top of it, there are connections to past events in *Crucifixion Creek* and the death of Harry's parents. Harry is a really appealing character although he likes to do his own thing and is at times rather unconventional when it comes to police investigations. Though not as suspenseful as the first book, this was another fast-paced, action-packed and enjoyable installment and the shocking ending left me longing to get the final part of the trilogy as soon as possible.

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## **Marianne says**

Ash Island is the second book in The Belltree Trilogy and the fifteenth novel by Scots-born Australian author, architect and urban design expert, Barry Maitland. After the shocking events at Crucifixion Creek deem him an embarrassment to his Sydney station, DS Harry Belltree is sent to Newcastle. While his colleagues there make him less than welcome, he and Jenny, now pregnant, try to settle in. Closer, too, to the site of the car crash that blinded Jenny and killed Justice Danny Belltree and his wife, Mary, Harry hopes he may solve the mystery of their murder.

But the slow pace of his new job gets a jolt when a body turns up on Ash Island. Maybe more than one. And his private investigations have him wondering just how well he knew his parents. Soon enough, events have Harry and Jenny wondering if the evil from Crucifixion Creek has followed them to Newcastle, or if there is a new evil here, threatening their fragile peace. At the same time, reporter Kelly Pool, determined to bring to justice the woman who facilitated her kidnap at Crucifixion Creek, follows her trail to Newcastle. Her research reveals some intriguing connections, and Kelly doesn't believe in coincidence. She once again wants to share information with Harry.

Maitland gives the reader another fast-paced tale with plenty of twists and more than one heart-stopping climax. This wholly believable piece of crime fiction includes a sailors' mission, tattoos in very strange places, drug smuggling, open cut coal mining, an environmental activist, an Aboriginal Land Council, quite a bit of covert surveillance and some explosions.

Maitland's characters are complex and multi-faceted: while some are exactly what they first seem to be, this is certainly not the case for all of the players. Harry is appealing: a tenacious maverick who cares for those close to him but is certainly no saint. Jenny certainly shows her mettle in this instalment. The final chapter's shock development will have readers eager for the third book of the trilogy. Aussie crime fiction at its best.

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## **Pam says**

Harry Belltree's life is pretty messed up; it doesn't get better in this book. But Harry never quits, and that is both good and bad for him. His wife is blind and 4 months pregnant. His parents are dead from the accident that also took his wife's eyesight. And his buddies in Sydney don't want him around anymore after Crucifixion Creek, so they send him to Newcastle. But the past has a funny way of coming back, and events happen that get Harry thinking about his parents, and Jenny's memories are coming back...but there is much more at work here than it seems, yet it all seems tied together. Very fast-paced, good read!

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## **Mark Stewart says**

Well the pace certainly doesn't let up with the second of the Beltree trilogy. This one stands less well on it's own and I certainly wouldn't recommend reading any of this series out of order. Harry Beltree remains unpredictable both for the other characters and the reader as well! As with Crucifixion Creek there's some genuine brutality not found in other Barry Maitland books and the whole tone is coarser and a bit more



desperate than the refined bonsai living DCI Brock. But it's certainly refreshing and having lived in Newcastle, it had moments of delight seeing the city revealed with Maitland's architectural eye carefully and unobtrusively fleshing out the features of the city. Don't expect to get much else done while you're reading these.

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## **Karen says**

The second in the Harry Belltree trilogy, events in *ASH ISLAND* follow closely on from *CRUCIFIXION CREEK*. Short-listed for the 2015 Ned Kelly Awards *CRUCIFIXION CREEK* set up a different character for Maitland to work with in Australian, Indigenous Detective Harry Belltree. There is still, however, that use of a defining geographical location as is always the case in any of Maitland's novels - in this case much of the action centres around Newcastle's Ash Island.

Considerably more action orientated, Belltree is also very different from Maitland's other police characters (Brock and Kolla) in that to call him morally ambiguous is possibly understating the case. He's also well out of his comfort zone having been transferred to Newcastle after final events in the earlier novel very nearly killed him. If you've read *CRUCIFIXION CREEK* already you'll know that this covered a lot of things to do with development, corruption, drugs and bikie gangs, touching briefly on the car crash that killed Belltree's parents and blinded his wife. *ASH ISLAND* however, builds on that aspect considerably whilst also getting stuck into mining, politicians, land rights and, as always, a hefty dose of corruption and nasty goings on.

Having said "if you've read *CRUCIFIXION CREEK*" it is almost mandatory that you do read these two novels in sequence. There's a lot of back story to Belltree, his parents, wife and supporting characters, such as journalist Kelly Pool, that you're just going to have to know to make any sense of what's happening in *ASH ISLAND*, despite some reiteration of background and details.

There's no fudging the fact that whilst *CRUCIFIXION CREEK* was a great series commencement, there are aspects of *ASH ISLAND* that are less successful. Whilst there is advancement of an underlying conspiracy with new plot elements introduced, as well as that backwards concentration on the fatal car accident, there is overall less tension here. Obviously because this is part two of the trilogy you can't expect that everything is going to be resolved in *ASH ISLAND*, but that's not the overwhelming problem. Rather there's a slight sense of wandering, less direction somehow with some hefty personal leaps and bounds that just felt silly contributing overall to a somewhat anti-climactic feeling.

That's not to say that the third book in the series won't be high on the reading list when it comes out, as there's absolutely no doubt that whatever is going to happen to Belltree, he's not going to go down without a bloody good fight.

<http://www.austcrimefiction.org/revie...>

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## **Paromjit says**

This is an Aussie set thriller, a sequel to the wonderful *Crucifixion Creek* which I adored. Indigenous Detective Harry Belltree is back, suffering from trauma as he barely made it out alive in the last book. Seen as an embarrassment, he has now been transferred to Newcastle. Life is not easy here but Harry and his now

pregnant wife, Jenny, are making an effort to settle in. Harry is intending to look into the car crash that killed his parents and left Jenny blind. Kelly Pool, the journalist, has also returned looking for justice.

Out of the blue, a body is discovered on Ash Island and Harry and DS Ross Bramley head out to investigate. More bodies are found and Harry finds himself in a complete quagmire of a case. Kelly's search leads her to Newcastle, and she discovers a number of connections which she wants to bring to Harry's attention. The case takes in corruption, crime, drug smuggling, coal mines and land rights. The past has a great deal with what is happening now. There are links to Crucifixion Creek, the car crash in which Harry's parents died, and events on Ash Island.

This is a fast paced, action driven, and full of twists story. I loved it, finding it both gripping and compelling. Harry is a flawed, but engaging character that you cannot help but root for and like enormously. Barry Maitland is writing one more book to complete this trilogy and I cannot wait to read it. Wonderful book which I highly recommend. Many thanks to Text Publishing for an ARC.

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