

New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
December 2008-February 2009

THIS YEAR IN REVIEW

We had a busy year with workshops on poetry, journalism, getting started, the writing gym, polishing for publication, romance writing, writing for children and young adults, creative journal-keeping, and hooks and anchors – structure and plot in the novel.

Thanks to visiting writers **Marele Day**, **David Hallet**, **John Heffernan**, and **Peter Bishop** from Varuna for manuscript assessments. Thanks to **Michael Sharkey**, **Bronwyn Parry**, **Karla Meyer**, **Wendy James**, **Lesley Sly** for their workshops.

It was a bumper year for books published in New England. Congratulations to:

Sophie Masson – three children’s books, *The Case of the Diamond Shadow* (ABC Books, published in Australia), *Thomas Trew & The Flying Huntsman*, *Thomas Trew & The Island of Ghosts* (both published by Hodder, UK and Australia).

John Heffernan – *The Revenge of Dr Von Burpinburger*; and Children’s Book Council awards for *Marty’s Shadow* and *The Boot Thief*.

Wendy James – *The Steele Diaries* – her second novel, published by Vintage. Follow-up to the Ned Kelly Award-winning *Out of Silence*.

Bronwyn Parry – *As Darkness Falls*. Her first novel, published by Hachette Australia, with a second book coming out in 2009. *See our story about Bronwyn in the May-June 2008 newsletter.

Gaynor McGrath – *Lemniscate* – a novel about finding one’s way in life and in the world. Gaynor was one of several members who have been able to advance, in this case to publication, after doing a manuscript assessment with Peter Bishop.

Big Leung – *Traditional Chinese Medicine: the Human Dimension*. *See our story on Big in the January 2008 newsletter.

YOUTH ONLINE FEEDBACK

Great news for our Youth Online project: Blackville Public School student Charlie Gulliver has been awarded the Yvonne Winer Memorial Prize for Literature which is awarded annually by the Murrurundi Historical Society. The portfolio of work included his YOL piece. He will be awarded \$100 prize money at the school’s annual presentation night. NEWC congratulates Charlie on his prize.

Blackville principal, Amanda Maxwell, says of YOL: “All of the children’s writing has benefited from the project over the two years we have been involved. This year’s topic particularly stimulated some really creative pieces. Having expert input into the children’s writing certainly carries more weight than the opinion of their teacher. It has been a wonderful opportunity for them, particularly since they are so isolated.”

The tutor for Blackville and Wongabinda schools was Sue McMichael. Workshops were also held at Ben Venue by Lesley Sly. Teacher at Ben Venue, Mary O’Connell, says: “In the five years I’ve been involved with Youth Online, since the pilot program run at Chandler School when I was principal there, I have seen many children get a great deal of benefit from the project. Not only have they all improved in crafting stories, developing characters, plotting and structure, but their attitude to writing has completely changed, going from reluctant writers to being passionate about it.”

THANKS to our sponsors for this project: Arts NSW, New England Credit Union, CASP – Country Arts Support Program through Regional Arts NSW; and Telstra Countrywide.

What We Did This Year/What You Want Next Year

Please let us know what you did this year with your writing. Did you attend workshops? If so, how did they help? Did you make progress with your work? Did you publish, or win a competition or award? What were the best books you read this year, fiction or non-fiction? (Choose two books or one of each). Please email this info as soon as possible, marked in the subject line: for newsletter.

NEXT YEAR: What sort of workshops would you most like to attend next year? We are expecting to have a focus on family and community history, along with some of our regular workshops. We haven’t yet booked visiting writers for next year. Please email any ideas you want to put forward for writers or workshops, with Ideas: next year, in the subject line.

Annual General Meeting 2009

Our AGM will be held on Friday, February 27, 2009, 5.15pm. Followed by ordinary meeting at 5.30pm, at NEWC. All welcome. If you wish to nominate people for board positions, or wish to become a board member, please let us know.



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NEWS & INFORMATION

Congratulations: Felicity Plunkett, formerly a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts at UNE and participant in poetry events in Armidale, has recently won the Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Prize for an unpublished manuscript. Part of the prize is publication with UQP, which will happen in the middle of 2009.

Local PhD students, Helena Pastor and Janene Carey, both had excerpts from their work-in-progress selected for publication in "Re-Placement: a national anthology of creative writing from universities across Australia" (SCU Press, editor Janie Conway-Herron). The book was launched by Helen Garner in Sydney on Saturday, November 29th. Helena is doing a PhD in Communications at the University of Canberra. Janene is enrolled at CQ University, researching and writing bio-graphical creative non-fiction stories.

Sophie Masson and Ian Irvine have been shortlisted this year's Aurealis Awards 2008 in children's section.

Playing Australia - \$2.9 million funding round announced. Arts Minister Peter Garrett has announced that 19 performing arts companies will enjoy the opportunity to tour live performances across the country, thanks to a \$2.9 million Playing Australia funding round. "Every year funding is provided so that great Australian performances can be toured around the country, giving audiences in regional communities the opportunity to see some of the very best of what our performers have to offer," Mr Garrett said. "One of the benefits of the

Playing Australia program is that as well as mainstream works, it supports aspiring companies who do not have the resources to stage big productions. "Regional touring brings a two-way benefit: small, cutting-edge performance companies have the opportunity to showcase their excellence, and regional audiences have the opportunity to see the sorts of exciting new works that they would have once had to travel to a city theatre to experience.

Aus Lit, the resource for Australian literature, is described as the best source of information about all Australian creative writers and their works. It covers all genres, all ages and all formats. Go to: www.auslit.edu.au

Australian screenwriters are about to start receiving royalties from a new source as a result of the Australian Writers' Guild concluding months of negotiations on their behalf last year.

The royalties are for the simultaneous re-transmission of programs from free-to-air to cable and pay television, government and educational copying and communication. *See complete article in 'Storyline' the newsletter of the Australian Writers Guild. To get your share of the royalties join the AWG – membership is free. Contact Irina Dunn, awgacs@awg.com.au or go to www.awg.com.au*

New Theatre Studies course at UNE: Theatre Studies at the University of New England will be offering a new online Masters degree in Applied Theatre Studies from 2009. This can be studied entirely off campus and part time, and is the equivalent of one year's full-time study. The course is relevant to theatre practitioners (both community-based and those working in the profession), and theatre and drama teachers looking to extend, refresh and update their knowledge and practical skills. The core of the degree is based around the production or performance of a practical theatre project, which can be staged either in Armidale or in the student's home town. The course is divided into four core components, all linked to the practical performance project, and two electives. Contact Professor Adrian Kiernander, (02) 6773 3755 or akiernan@une.edu.au

PRESS RELEASE: Authors are Angry. The Australian Society of Authors (ASA) is extremely disappointed that the terms of reference for the Productivity Commission inquiry into parallel importation provisions for books lack any cultural component. The ASA

has previously made submissions to the Productivity Commission for cultural issues to be part of the terms of reference, but these have fallen on deaf ears.

“The terms are all economic,” said Dr Jeremy Fisher, ASA Executive Director. “This is absurd. Hasn’t the current credit crisis opened the eyes of government to the fact that economic rationalism is just another excuse for what Mr Rudd termed ‘rampant capitalism’. Our literature is an integral part of our culture, and any change to the parallel importation provisions of the Copyright Act will work against Australia’s authors and book illustrators. As it is, our book industry is thriving. We export books. Australian books make up 60% of the titles we read.”

ASA Chair and widely published author, Dr Anita Heiss added: “Authors are very angry that the matter has been raised at all. Our book industry doesn’t depend on government hand-outs or funding breaks like other creative Industries, yet there are moves afoot to destroy it. We support retention of the current provisions and will be very vocal in expressing our view.”

Free ABC literary events: ABC television's First Tuesday Book Club live recordings: February 13, March 20 (double record), April 24, May 8, June 19 (double record), July 17, August 7, August 28, September 25, October 13 (double record), November 13. Contact: First Tuesday Book Club, GPO Box 9994, Sydney, NSW 2001 or (02) 8333 3644 or bookclub@yourabc.net.au

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

LOVING WRITING – BRONWYN PARRY

On a chilly Saturday morning we gathered to discuss writing which might make us feel a little warmer.

Bronwyn’s workshop was informative, well organised and at times hilarious. It was also challenging! Not content to simply discuss the whys and hows of romance writing, Bronwyn made us think about how to convey attraction, complication and character within this genre. Then write it! I certainly left with a new appreciation of the subtlety and control required to write well in the Romance genre, and a conviction that, even though it’s easy to read, romance is hard to write.

Thank you Bronwyn for an inspiring and very honest insight into what’s necessary to craft this kind of story. We wish you all the best with “As Darkness Falls”.

- Anna Thomson

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR

We received this piece from Adam, before receiving the news of his sudden and sad death. He was unfailingly pleasant and polite, with a droll sense of humour. Never someone to allow his disability to stand in the way of a challenge, he completed a university degree at UNE, in a then strange town, which became his home. Adam was also a member of Toastmasters and an excellent public speaker, and continued to hone his writing skills, right up to his passing. He will be missed.

See extract from Adam’s poem ‘The Fullness of Life’ on page six

I attended, and really enjoyed the Hooks and Anchors workshop. It was systematic and comprehensive and its methods applicable to fiction and non fiction.

I’ve had an article published in Link Disability this year. I’ll probably have one published called the Noise Language of Pets. This is based on the noises and tactile body language of my girlfriend Cathy’s pet Staffordshire Milo. I’m also getting an article published in the broadsheet for the Don’t Dis My Ability Programme, the State Government programme for the International Day of People With a Disability. This one’s about romance without sight, which was originally published in Link magazine last year.

Finally, I’ve sent a couple of articles off to a magazine for readers between five and eight called Comet. One is about life with plastic eyes, the other is about how blind people don’t see blackness. One of their themes for next year is blindness related issues, so I’m hoping they’ll go in.

- Adam Thomson

This past year my mother died which was naturally a sad occasion.

However, I was able to visit Varuna for 5 days with four other people who came from the regions and work on my manuscript about my Rhodesian childhood. (a memoir). I have changed the name as suggested by my ex boss to *The Guinea Fowl Girl* which immediately transports one to Africa. As I went to Guinea Fowl School outside Gwero, this I felt was an excellent idea. I haven't told him yet but will do so.

The main thing about Varuna is the atmosphere which encourages writing. The studios are all sunny and the relationship between the writers there was pretty good, though I can see this

might not be so for everyone. Anyway, Peter Bishop gave us all some input and this was helpful (I think). Since returning I have had no interest in updating my memoir, I am just sick of it, but I have sent some chapters to both Text Publishing and Transit Lounge for them to evaluate.

Meanwhile, I have started on a novel which I am enjoying writing. I have finished about four chapters so far. I know how it will end but I am sure it will be a tortuous journey to get there! I would dearly like a workshop on play writing, especially after seeing the *Shorts* at *The Newie* this year. I have submitted an outline of a short one-act play to the Playhouse but am inadequate to the task of putting a play together. Any possibility we can have this workshop next year? Thanks for all your support.

- Val Sherwell

My book *Lemniscate* is being published soon and I will certainly send out an invitation to all at the Writers Centre for the launch. I am now working on three other books and trying to keep at bay all the other ideas I have for books. Very fertile time. I definitely think my writing is improving.

One of the most inspiring books I have read this year is 'Healing Stories For Challenging Behaviours', by Susan Perrow and published by Hawthorn Press. It is meant to help parents and educators with their work with children, but illustrates just how powerful stories are and woke me up to how I am really a story teller, and that is the magic.

- Gaynor McGrath

OPENING HOURS – CHRISTMAS

Closing Tuesday, December 23, 4 pm
Reopening Tuesday, January 13, 1 pm

First Drop-in Group 2009 will be
Thursday, January 29 1.30-3.30 pm

WORK SPACE

FEATURING CRAIG SCHNEIDER

Somebody who attended many of our workshops recently was Craig Schneider so we thought it would be nice to know something about him.



I studied a range of French and German literature while completing a Bachelor of Languages at the University of New England. During my honours dissertation in 2006, I focused on the novel *Bonheur d'Occasion* by French-Canadian author, Gabrielle Roy. I am now at the halfway point of my PhD candidature, also at the University of New England, which deals with the themes of imprisonment and liberty in the works of French author, Marguerite Yourcenar.

I am a writer of poetry and short stories, where I attempt to draw on aspects of nature, dream and reality to portray human nature, interaction and relationships. I am currently writing my first novel, tentatively titled *Over the Fence*. It is a story of an outsider named David Collington, who, while growing up, watches and endures his parents divorce. It is a story that deals with isolation and struggle, rupture and reconciliation.

What I did this year

This year has been an invigorating year for myself as a new writer. The various writers' workshops have nurtured my writing craft, helping me to refine and make the best of the initial raw material, as well as inspiring new material (I have a backlog of ideas to work with now).

Participating in the Getting Started and Writing Gym workshops with Wendy James has given me tools to work with to stimulate creativity and help unblock writer's block, articulate the nuances of expression and ideas, and to keep a storey lively.

While I'm not a freelance journalist, the Freelancing – Writing for Profit workshop with Lesley Sly has helped me to write as slick a cover letter as I can for all my poetry and short stories, so as to spark the interest of potential publishers

The Punctuating Poetry workshop with Michael Sharkey, as well as Hooks and Anchors with Marele Day, both influenced me in a similar fashion. They both have helped me to distill and focus the ideas I treat in both my poetry and prose.

Heads for Tales with John Heffernan highlighted the opportunities for children's and teenage fiction publications. The occasion to workshop literary devices with the participating group was great for stimulating ideas, and for gaining inspiration from the other writers.

- Craig Schneider

IN RESPONSE

The following are more poems we received in response to our invitation to members to share some of their work:

BAD PLACE

Bad place
Papunya
very bad place

The tribes
lying outside
different fences
different directions

The buildings
many-numbered –
1 for this Department:
5 for that
3a for that
lucky 7 for that
9 for that –
same building,
different number
different Department

Children washed,
then clothed,
and the only thing
on the blackboard
"The big rock candy mountain"
and the careless
"they love it" reply
as they take
the clothes away

And the Cook

and the Manager
making off with a gun,
missing
in the Western Desert /.

And the white man
who didn't know
which way the 'seven'
should face
and his half-caste
wife
and the floor
shit-covered from the cats
and the babies
And he
was the one
in charge

And drawled
how the blacks
were worthless.

This time
was before
that teacher came.
The one
who said the people
should paint their stories
on the doors.
(Or wherever) ?

And the penthouses
in New York and Paris
began
to glow

And the teacher
got sent
away

- Susie Dunn

A Poem for Adam Thompson

from his Chinese friend – Big Leung PhD

(Note: Adam sent me many of his writings and photos in these few months. Now I write a Chinese poem composed of seven words in each line, and I translate the poem into English, using seven words, as a tribute to him)

Troubled wind and bitter rain last night;
unable to sleep in the usual way.
Dwelling on past writing to capture memories –
the passions of your short life overflowing.
You are gone, yet your messages remain.

(Thanks A/Professor Michael Sharkey who comments on the English version)

This is a very short extract from a poem by Adam:

THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

Few things could cause more rage and vexation
Than combining Christianity with
reincarnation,
But little effort is required to defeat
The notion that never the twain shall meet.
During the first century of Christendom's reign,
Details of the afterlife were a theorist's game.
Why bother with aspects of the life to come
If one thought, as they did, That Earth's days
would soon be done?
But as expectations of that day receded,
A more substantial explanation was needed.

From the root of vague notions sprouted a
forest of "facts"
To form a definition which was far from exact.
One which indeed requires an apology
As the Christian afterlife was the most confused
of theologies.
But in the fullness of time from this extreme
confusion
Arose some definite and startling conclusions.
A fact which should give rise to much
consternation
Was that one such conclusion was
reincarnation.

- Adam Thomson.

COMPETITIONS

We found this in 'Write Stuff', newsletter of the Northern Rivers Writers' Centre newsletter:

Why you should enter writing competitions

Entering a competition will give you experience with meeting a brief (i.e. writing to a theme and topic, meeting a word limit, editing and meeting a deadline.

Entering competitions will help you stay motivated to write.

Entering a competition will allow you to practice writing in a genre you wouldn't normally write in.

Want to be published? Many competitions offer publication on their site, e-zine or in their magazine as a prize.

It will help to improve your organisational

skills and give you at least one new writing project a month to work on.

Every win is a step up the writer's ladder. Keep a list of your successes – this will come in handy one day.

Of course, if all goes well, you can win some cash too!

Just one last thing, make sure you research the origin of the competition carefully. As a general rule, steer clear of contests that charge an entry fee of more than a few dollars.

Go on, enter a writing competition. You've got nothing to lose and everything to win!

December 31: The Tom Howard prose competition; up to 5000 words; entry \$15. Go to <http://shortstorycontest.Ocatch.com>

January 30: The Josephine Ulrick literature prize and the Josephine Ulrick poetry prize. \$10000 1st prize for 1000 – 3000 word short story or 200 line poem or suite of poems. Go to: <http://www.griffith.edu.au/josephineulrick>

January 31: The Fellowship of Australian Writers Q Inc Lovers of Good Writing short story competition. Cost \$5 per entry, theme open and entries between 1000 and 2500 words. 31 2008. Contact: Susan: svskow@gmail.com

February 7: Crime Writers Association Debut Dagger Competition: 1st prize £500. Entry fee £25. Submit the first three thousand words of your crime-themed novel, plus a 500/1000 word synopsis of the rest of the book. Short-listed entries are made available to all the editors and agents who are members of the Association. For full details and entry form go to <http://www.thecwa.co.uk>.

February 20: Phoenix Park Neighbourhood House, Glenpark Community Centre, Clayton–Clarinda Arts Inc. and Sydenham Neighbourhood House open short story competition, 1500 - 3500 words on any theme, previously unpublished. 1st prize \$250.00; runners up (2) \$75.00 each and publication in a one-off magazine. Contact: Writing Competition, Phoenix Park Neighbourhood House, 22 Rob Roy Road, East Malvern, Victoria 3145 or go to www.phoenixparknh.org.au

February 28: FreeXpresSion magazine literary competition: Short Story to 2500 words; traditional rhyming poetry (prizes \$250, \$150, and \$100); free verse – both to 80 lines; article/essay – 1500 – 2000 words (prizes \$200 and \$100). Contact Peter Dargin, PO Box 4 West

Hoxton, NSW 2171.

March 27: Henry Lawson Arts, Verse and Short Story Competitions. Total prize money \$3725 plus statuettes and medallions in primary sections. Six classes for verse some with Australian themes and four classes in short story, all with any theme. Short stories are limited to 2000 words and verse to 48 lines. Contact: Sally Jackman on (02) 6343 1402, or Verse and Short Story Coordinator, PO Box 77, Grenfell, NSW 2810 or go to www.henrylawsonfestival.asn.au

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

Fake film festival - Returning to the Adelaide Film Festival in 2009 'Fake' taps into the modern filmmakers repertoire by asking aspiring and established directors, editors, animators and digital media practitioners to put together films in three categories: Fake Features: Big ideas, but no budget for your masterpiece? Squeeze that epic into a glorious three minutes trailer style. Fake Ads: Sell a fake product and play with the formulas. Fake Docos: Go behind the scenes where there are no scenes. More info go to <http://www.fakefilmfest.com.au> Deadline: 16th January 2009

Going Down Swinging is inviting submissions of poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, comic and graphic art and spoken word recordings for *Going Down Swinging* No 28 to be released in May. Contact: <http://www.goingdownswinging.org.au/submissions>

Applications are now open for the UTS Graduate Certificate in Screenwriting. This course is offered on a one-year, part-time basis and offers writers an opportunity to develop their screenwriting skills in the new environment of Creative Practices at UTS. Both short and long form screenplays are developed and then workshopped with professional actors, offering students a unique insight into the role of performance in script development. Students may wish to articulate up to the Graduate Diploma in Writing or the Masters in Professional Writing where they can complete a major screenplay under individual supervision. Go to: http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/hss/courses/postgraduate_courses.cfm

Free website for children's books – 20,000 publishers are listed on this website, plus 900,000 children's books and a lot of information about the world of children's book

publishing. Go to <http://www.JacketFlap.com>.

Max Kelly Medal 2009 - Call for Nominations! The History Council of NSW is currently inviting nominations for the 2009 Max Kelly Medal. for more details and information Application form: <http://www.historycouncilnsw.org.au/prizes.html> **Closing: 15 December 2008**

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS

Local Portraits, free until 18 January. Photographer Jim Rolon, working with composer Andrew Ford, (Composer and Presenter of the Music Show on Radio National), has created *Local Portraits*, an exhibition exploring the personal tastes and stories from people who live in two very different suburbs in NSW. Check out the SMH Review or take a look at ABC's interactive exhibition or contact: media@casulapowerhouse.com

Jan Cornall workshops:
New Years in the Tarkine, December 28 – January 3, Tasmania.
Summer Writer's Lab January 7 – 25, Petersham. Workshop meetings every Wednesday and Sunday.
Island Writers' Lab, Fiji, March 7 – 14.
Go to www.writersjourney.com.au or 415921303 or whwn@jancornall.com

Part time Cert IV in Screen Media [CUF40107]. Metro Screen are offering this industry relevant qualification through accredited short courses at your own pace. If you have pre-existing knowledge or industry experience you may also be eligible to fast track through Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL]. Contact: metro@metroscreen.org.au or 02 9356 1818, or go to <http://www.metroscreen.org.au/training.html>

The Australian Writers' Guild National Screenwriters Conference will be held in the Barossa Valley, South Australia, February 25 - 27. Early bird rates will be available. Go to: www.awg.com.au

January, NIDA's Summer Program offers short courses in dramatic writing for adults and young people. Scriptwriting for Film & TV - for 16 yrs+ January 12 – 16. **Cost:** \$525; Develop a Film Treatment - 16 yrs+ January 19 – 23. **Cost:** \$525. Contact: (02) 9697 7626 or open@nida.edu.au

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

I wish to become a member of the New England Writers' Centre (if you don't want to wreck your newsletter, send these details on paper):

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Areas/Interest

.....

New England Writers' Centre - a member of LitLink NSW

Anyone can join. The NEWC is open to anyone of any age, new and established writers, and readers too! It is for people who love reading and writing. Full annual membership including GST is \$28.50, or \$8.00 for students under 18. Send cheque or money order to the New England Writers' Centre, PO Box 1219, Armidale NSW 2350.

CENTRE OPENING HOURS

Tuesday: 1 pm – 4 pm

Wednesday: 10 am – noon

Thursday: 1 pm - 4 pm

Director: Lesley Sly

Office Manager: Janice Burn

Board members: Chairman, Michael Sharkey; Deputy, Kaye Mill; Treasurer, Sue McMichael; Minutes Secretary, Val Sherwell;

Committee: Steve Harris, Karla Muir, Pam Summers.

Associates to the Board: Winifred Belmont (public officer).

Newsletter Editor: Pam Summers. Please mark all email and snail mail items to Pam's attention.

How to contact us:

The NEWC is situated in the Neighbourhood Centre, 129 Rusden St, Armidale (between the Council Building and the Town Hall). Access also via Cinders Lane car park.

Phone/Fax 02 6772 7210

Post: PO Box 1219, Armidale NSW 2350

Email: newc@northnet.com.au

Website: www.northnet.com.au/~newc

Next Newsletter: March

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Provision of
accommodation by the
Armidale/Dumaresq
Council

CASP (Country Arts Support Program) for assistance in
funding our program.



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The Country Arts Support Program of Regional Arts NSW is funded by
the NSW Government through Arts NSW

DROP-IN WORKSHOP

January to November

On the last Thursday of each month from 1.30 – 3.30 pm at NEWC. You can drop in to read your work in progress and get feedback, or listen to and support others. Any style of writing is welcome – poetry, prose, drama – literary or genre. This event is free to members, \$5 per visit to non-members.