

New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
February – April 2011

EVENTS COMING UP ...



Biographer – Anne Pender

Our 2011 program begins with a great workshop on biography and a talk at Armidale Library by **Anne Pender** about **Barry Humphries**, the subject of her new book. (See interview page 4, workshop details page 2).

Acclaimed author **Jane Goodall** is visiting end of April to run two workshops on crime-writing and performance writing. She will also give a talk at Armidale Library.

If you are hoping to be published soon or even some time later, **Jeremy Fisher's** workshop on the business of writing in June is a must - just about everything you need to know about the world of publishing, and more.

There will be two **Writers Reading** workshops in April and May. And in April we are sponsoring a workshop in the first **Bellingen Readers and Writers Festival**.

See page 2 and 3 (and our website) for details of these workshops. More events are being planned.

YOUTH ONLINE

The program has doubled in size this year, with more than 40 primary and high schools enrolled across NSW.

The program has been funded by CAL – Copyright Agency Ltd; with support from New England Community Mutual and Arts NSW.

We will be using both video conferencing and smartboards to deliver 45-minute workshops with sound and vision both ways as well as computer interactivity with the smartboards.

Tutors include **Linda Jaivin, John Heffernan, Sophie Masson, Miles Merrill, Michael Sharkey, Cecilia Dart-Thornton, Lesley Sly**, and illustrator **Fiona McDonald**.

The full program of workshops will be on the website by end of February, the program will run from May to September.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM is on Friday, February 25, at 5.15pm, at New England Writers Centre. It will be followed by an ordinary meeting at 5.45pm. If you wish to nominate someone for the Board or stand yourself, please let us know. All welcome, to both meetings.



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2011 PROGRAM

- January to June

JANUARY

The secret behind writing fiction, non-fiction and for media – a Q&A session with **Valerie Parv**, Armidale Dumaresq's Australia Day Ambassador. She has published 70 books and is still a prolific writer with a new book coming out this year. This free event isn't a workshop, it's a questions and answers session.

DATE: Tuesday, January 25, 11am to 12:45 pm
VENUE: Quality Hotel Powerhouse

MARCH

Barry Humphries' Empire of Burlesque - a talk at Armidale Dumaresq Library by biographer, Anne Pender.

DATE: Friday, March 25, 4pm

COST: \$3, no need to book, pay at the door

Interpreting A Life: writing biography workshop.

This workshop is designed for anyone who is planning to write a biography and for those who are already in the process of writing a biography. Participants will work on the problems of interpreting a life, on shaping the 'story' of a life, developing interviewing techniques, assessing sources, tackling problems with materials, structuring the biography and refining a unique approach and style of writing appropriate to the biographical subject.

DATE: Saturday, March 26, 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$65/\$55 members

* Dr Anne Pender is Senior Lecturer in English and Theatre Studies at UNE. She is the author of the following biographical works: *One Man Show: The Stages of Barry Humphries*, *Christina Stead: Satirist* and *Nick Enright: An Actor's Playwright*.

APRIL/MAY

There will be two workshops and a talk at the library with Jane Goodall, see page 3. There will also be two Writers Reading workshops postponed from last year, by Anne Pender and Jeremy Fisher. These two-hour Saturday afternoon workshops are about reading – analysing great writing in order to improve your own reading and writing. The tutors have selected favourite examples of great writing and will bring copies of these extracts for participants.

WRITERS READING – with Jeremy Fisher.
The book for this session is *Our Father Who Wasn't There* by **David Carlin**, published by Scribe.

DATE: Saturday April 2, 2-4pm

COST: \$10/\$5 members

WRITERS READING – with Anne Pender.

The topic for this session will be biography.

VENUE: NEWC

DATE: Saturday, May 28, 2-4pm

Cost: \$10/\$5 members

JUNE

The Business Of Being A Successful Author – What You Don't See But Need To Know.

A one-day workshop with **Jeremy Fisher** on everything to do with getting published. These are things you need to know well in advance of even trying to get published! The workshop will look at the business side of writing. Some of the issues to be covered will include:

- * Understanding the market and opportunities for survival as a professional writer
- * Some suggested work methods to establish consistent writing practices
- * Record keeping and basic business practices
- * Writing as a business – extending your options
- * Legal and ethical issues related to earning income as a writer (copyright, defamation, contracts, rights, use of third party material)
- * Practices in publishing houses and how to interpret and understand them
- * What are legitimate expenses involved in earning income from writing and how they can be claimed
- * Marketing yourself as a professional writer
- * Embracing the digital universe
- * Getting up when you get knocked down again: Surviving rejection
- * Persisting

DATE: Saturday, June 11. 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$65/\$55 members

About the tutor:

Jeremy Fisher worked as an editor and publishing manager for nearly 30 years before moving into rights management and advocacy roles. He was president of the Society of Editors (NSW) in 1996 and a member of the Board of the Australian Publishers' Association from 1998-2000.

In 1984 he was awarded the inaugural Gold Medal of the Australian Society of Indexers (AusSI) for his indexing of *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, 4th edition.

As a writer, Jeremy was first published in 1974. His writing encompasses fiction, poetry, prose, reviews and critical articles. He has been published in India and Vietnam. In 2004, Fisher was appointed executive director of the Australian Society of Authors and in 2009 he took up the position of Senior Lecturer in Writing at UNE. His most recent book is *Music from another Country*, a novel about the humility of survival.

There will be more events from July to November, with more visiting writers.

MORE WORKSHOPS

The first workshops – on crime and performance writing - in our visiting author program this year are with Jane Goodall (pictured below). Her visit will also include a talk at Armidale Library.

Jane is the author of several books, from crime fiction to the performing arts. The most recent, *Stage Presence* (Routledge, 2008), was shortlisted for the 2009 Theatre Book prize in London. Her novels *The Walker*, *The Visitor* and *The Calling* (all published by Hachette) have sold widely in Australia and have been translated into German, Russian and Spanish. In 2009 she was joint winner of the Calibre Essay prize, awarded by Australian Book Review and the Copyright Council.



WHAT'S THE DETECTIVE UP TO?

- crime-writing workshop

One of the fascinations of crime writing is that it puts the writer in the position of detective, as the person in quest of a solution to some sinister human mystery. The challenge is to map the stages of the quest. This workshop takes the form of a mapping exercise, starting from a shared scenario from which each participant, in the role of investigator, will decide on a succession of moves to advance the plot.

DATE: Saturday, April 30, 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$70/\$65 members

WRITING THE HERE AND NOW

- performance writing workshop

This workshop focuses on the challenge of writing for performers appearing live before an audience. Starting with the exercise of creating a dramatic monologue or dialogue, we will explore how the spoken word can be in

dynamic relationship with unfolding time and surrounding space.

DATE: Sunday, May 1, 2pm to 5pm

COST: \$30/25 members

VENUE: NEWC

* Workshops must be booked.

WHERE STORIES ARE BORN - a talk at Armidale Library

Jane Goodall will give a talk on the sense of place in fiction.

VENUE: Upstairs at the library.

DATE: Friday, April 29, starts 4pm.

COST: \$3, pay at the door, no need to book.

Q&A - JANE GOODALL

Lesley Sly has a long distance chat with Jane while she's in transit to various places:

What led you to writing - a gradual process or an epiphany?

A bit of both. I read a lot as a child, and was deeply drawn into stories. When I finished university, I had the idea I'd like to just spend my time writing - all kinds of things. My father gave me a small Olivetti typewriter as a graduation present, and I bashed out fragments of this and that on it, but then I had to go and get a real job, which was something of a distraction. When I got a university job in my late twenties, my aim was to bring the job and the writing ambitions into line, though they remained in tension, until it got to the point where the job had to go. But it took me about 15 years between making that decision and being able to get out, financially.

Your work has an unusual span, from crime-writing to non-fiction books and essays and performance writing. Crime fiction is taken a lot more seriously these days but is still thought of as genre or not literary, what are your thoughts about this, and do you take it as seriously as the other writing you do?

I think part of my problem earlier on was taking the writing thing too seriously. It was this burning vocation, and I was kind of over-pitching in the first book I wrote, which was a study of the French writer Antonin Artaud. (A pretty intense character himself).

My second book, about popular entertainment and popular understandings of science in the Darwin era, was a lot more fun to write and research. And aside from those books, I was diversifying in shorter pieces I wrote - lots of stuff on contemporary arts, current ideas. I've never wanted to stay in one channel.

The crime writing adventure was just that - great fun in the first instance, then stressful as I had publisher's

deadlines to meet, and people staring at the books can figures all the time. Crime fiction can be a pretty serious enterprise - Peter Temple, for example, achieves an extraordinary kind of social realism in some of his books. Part of the appeal of it for me though is that you can stretch the realism, and play on the edge of fantasy. Sense of place matters to me most of all, I think. Stories are born from places, and you must have a serious connection to those places. You have to let them enter you, so you are kind of channelling them.

Tell us about some books that have inspired you, why you love them.

I loved Noel Streatfield's novels when I was a child. (I wonder why? - all about ambitious little girls desperate to go on stage). When I was in high school I had a craze for J.D Salinger - but NOT *Catcher in the Rye*, which I don't even like. The Glass family stories - *Franny and Zooey*, especially. I went back to them recently, to write a piece for ABR when Salinger died, and I still think they are like nothing else. Annie Dillard is an ongoing favourite writer. For the Time Being is the most incredible collection of thematic writings.

What are you working on now, or planning to start?

I'm nearly finished a novel. Maybe it is finished. I am totally neurotic about stuff that isn't out yet, so have to cross fingers and turn widdershins before I even mention it. But it comes out of an engagement with some of the troubles of Eastern Europe in the last couple of decades. There are two main characters, one is from Kosovo and the other from Bucharest in Romania. Though the story is set in Australia.

Thanks to Armidale Dumaresq Library and Dymocks of Armidale for supporting our visiting authors program.

NEW FESTIVAL

New England Writers Centre is sponsoring a freelance journalism workshop, *Write to Live* by Lesley Sly, on Thursday, April 7, 10.30am to 4pm, in the brand new Bellingen Readers and Writers Festival. For details of the festival, see page 5.

WORK SPACE

What we did last year

Early in 2010 I edited many chapters of a novel and read *Mrs Dalloway*. With diabetes in the family I commenced reading nutrition information on food

packages to make better choices for meals. David Reiter's workshop on Digital Publishing impressed me. Kindle and other technologies will be major players in the future it seems. The Drop-in workshop gave me support with poetry and prose. At POWERtalk I spoke about Mary MacKillop, treating her as a Current Affair subject. Two biographies about her, one by William Modystock and another by Paul Gardiner, were telling reading.

- **Richard McLennan**

I've had three novels published, *Fallout*, *The Cattleman's Runaway Bride* and *Operation Summer Storm*. I also have a rural lit title coming out with Allen & Unwin in April. This success stemming from the workshop I did last October, with Wendy James.

- **Karlene Blakemore-Mowle**

I've been trying to find a publisher for my book *Reluctant Heroes*. I'm currently reading Armidale's Bronwyn (Clark) Parry's two books, *As Darkness Falls*, and *Dark Country*. I'm impressed with Bronwyn's writing. I always read the *Magpies* magazine with great interest and the November issue had an article about Tove Jansson and the Moomin stories that she wrote 65 years ago. The writer suggested that these stories should be read three times in one's life - as a child, as an adult, and again as a senior citizen. I found the books on the family shelves, thinking I couldn't remember a thing but as I started reading, each adventure came back to me. These books really do stand the test of time - gentle stories, lovely writing, appealing characters.

- **Helen Evans**

Spotlight on Anne Pender

To give you some background into how Anne's latest book, a biography of Barry Humphries, came about, Pam Summers put some questions to her:

Why did you choose to write about Barry Humphries?

I have always been fascinated by what drives this comedian, actor, writer. I was also interested in how he had been performing characters for more than half a century, and causing such polarised reactions to them in Australia and overseas. Why is he so popular? How does he create and perform the characters for different audiences? It seemed to me that no one had attempted to document and explain

the artist and his work and that became my obsession.

Did Barry Humphries authorise the book and was he directly involved?

The question of authorisation is a complex one. He was involved to the extent that he answered a lot of questions and met with me to discuss his life and work at various times. He also read through the entire manuscript and we discussed it. He generously gave me access to people and resources. But it is not authorised in the normal sense of the word.

Did you have any preconceived ideas of what he would be like, and what was the reality?

I had thought he would be charming and mercurial. This turned out to be true. And I knew that he was very concerned about a biography being written about him. This was also true. He was very anxious about the whole project. I hadn't quite realised just how chaotically creative and energetic he is. I couldn't keep up with him in so many ways – he is always working on so many projects at once. This I found astounding. His passion for painting, sculpture and music impressed me.

Were there things that shocked, delighted or surprised you?

His capacity to see different points of view surprised me, and his intensity, charm and volatile personality shocked (at times) and delighted me. His generosity surprised and delighted me as well.

Have you had any feedback from Barry?

Well, he read the whole manuscript and we discussed it at length at his home in London in June last year. He told me the book was 'remarkable' but hasn't said much more.

Is this an academic or secular book, and which members of the reading public would it appeal to?

It is a biography that attempts to speak to both the general reader who is interested in the life of an extraordinary Australian, and to readers with a particular interest in Australian theatre over the last few decades. So it attempts to bridge that gap and to reach readers with both general and specialist interests.

Why is Humphries important to Australia in terms of international perspective when his characters portray such negative stereotypes in comedy?

I don't agree that his characters always portray negative stereotypes. I think his characters do much more. They are important because they celebrate and satirise Australian speech, prejudices,

idiosyncrasies etc. They have helped us to understand and to resist the cultural cringe. They have also allowed us to laugh at ourselves and to imagine and appreciate ourselves in the world. A character like Edna Everage has evolved over more than 50 years and has reflected the mindset of Australians across that time period. Now Edna can discuss gender with the likes of kd lang – that is where the brilliance of the character can be seen and enjoyed.

What writing projects do you have planned for 2011?

I am working on a book that explores Australian writers who have spent substantial periods of their writing lives in Britain. I'm looking at the lives and work of some 80 authors going back as far as 1830 when the first Australian writer became an expatriate.

Achievements

If you have anything published, receive an award or mentorship, perhaps get a place in a competition, let us know as this inspires others.

We would also like you to send in micro stories, book reviews (up to 500 words) or short poems for the newsletter.



New England Community Mutual

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NEW ENGLAND WRITERS' CENTRE

Phone: 132 067
www.necu.com.au

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Bellingen Readers and Writers Festival, Australia's newest literary festival will take place between April 8 -10. Located on the spectacular Waterfall Way between the ocean beaches of the NSW mid-north coast and the ancient Gondwana rainforest, the Bellingen area has been the inspiration for many Australian writers including Peter Carey and Robert Gray. The festival is a celebration of Australian writing in all its forms and will feature many established and emerging Australian writers. Three days of events including readings, panels, forums and feasts, workshops, multimedia, theatre and spoken word performances will take place amidst the magnificent natural environs of the Bellinger River, Coffs Coast and Dorrigo National Park. Earlybird Festival tickets are now on sale at a discounted rate of \$95 for a single adult weekend pass. Bookings and details through www.brwf.com.au

The Future of Books

Barry Jones, chairman of the Book Industry Strategy Group, has undertaken research into whether paper books will eventually be superseded by electronic versions. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, he questioned why the electronic format was becoming so popular. An electronic reader (eReader) costs some hundreds of dollars so the initial outlay is high. The cost of the ebook is much lower than its paper counterpart but Jones says it is about more than cost. Convenience seems to be the big attraction with the Kindle and iPad equipped with wireless connectivity to Amazon or Apple stores. If you buy your book using your iPhone the capability is there to download it to your Kindle or iPad later and the device will open it on the page you were reading. School children will be able to access all their textbooks electronically and not have to carry heavy paper editions. Public libraries are looking to offer ebooks and Armidale Dumaresq Library is working with other northern regional counterparts to make this service available. Thirty years ago there was talk of the paperless office, now it's paperless books. The avalanche of office paper, including junk mail, continues

unabated – will books as we know them really disappear soon?

Sophie Masson sent us a great website, 'the loveliest idea ever!' (her words): <http://publishingperspectives.com/2011/01/inside-the-ministry-of-stories/> This is about what is described as London's most unusual literary institution. Children's writers could find it quite inspirational. Share your favourite writer's website with us.

Irina Dunn's website offers help and advice on: how to approach a publisher, self publishing and how to improve your manuscript. Go to: www.irinadunn.com.au

If you google *smh.com.au Saturday edition, literary*, the search finds some 70 items, one of which is *Ink-stinct: Writing a book worth reading* by Jane Sullivan. There are some really useful suggestions but the one she quoted from Richard Ford was daunting. It is 'Get your life right first'. If there is anybody out there who has met this criteria, could they please let us know how it is done?

New member, Janet Hobbs, came in to the Centre and told us about a series in the *Spectrum* supplement of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. There is a series on writing by Sue Woolfe, who teaches creative writing at Sydney University, which contains lots of great ideas. Armidale Dumaresq Library has some back copies.

A Decent Proposal, by Rhonda Whitton and Sheila Hollingworth introduces the techniques required to develop a successful book proposal to submit to an Australian publisher or literary agent. Published by Keesing Press, it is available from the Australian Society of Authors: www.asauthors.org or PO Box 1566, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2010 or (02) 9318 0877.

COMPETITIONS

March 1: The Two Fires Poetry Competition, for a poem up to 30 lines. Prizes of \$1000 and \$300. Go to: www.twofiresfestival.com.au or (02) 48461075.

November 18: Short story (500 word maximum) and poetry (maximum 20 lines) competition on the theme of Inner City Life organised by the Australian Writers Network and sponsored by Gleebooks. Entries received before June 30 go into a draw for a copy of the 2011-2012 Australian Writers' Marketplace. Prizes: 1st \$300 cash, 2nd

\$200 cash and Gleebooks vouchers: 1st \$150, 2nd \$100 and 3rd \$50, and publication on the AWN website. Winners and any commended entrants will be invited to read their entries at Gleebooks (upstairs), 49 Glebe Point Road, Glebe at 6 pm on December 2. Further details: iranadid@ozemail.com.au or www.irinadunn.com.au

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

The *Australian Book Review* Sidney Myer Fund Editorial Internship. Applications are invited for an editorial intern to help edit and produce their magazine. This is a unique opportunity for recent graduates seeking an entrée into publishing. The Internship – worth \$20,000 and supported by the Sidney Myer Fund – is currently the only intensive, paid editorial training program of its kind in Australian publishing. It reflects *ABR*'s long-standing commitment to fostering new editorial talent, and extends the magazine's established volunteer intern program; widely regarded as a 'finishing school' for editing and publishing graduates. Complete details available at: <http://www.australianbookreview.com.au/internships/sidney-myer-fund-internship>

Closes: **February 18.**

Valued at \$20,000, the NSW Writer's Fellowship has been awarded annually since 1982. It is intended to assist the writing of new literary work, with the fellowship funds supplementing the successful applicant's income during work on the nominated project. The fellowship is open to applications from novelists, poets, scriptwriters, playwrights or other writers of fiction or literary non-fiction who are living in NSW. Guidelines and application forms: www.arts.nsw.gov.au or (02) 9228 5533, fax (02) 9228 4722 or artsfunding@communities.nsw.gov.au or Arts NSW, Level 9, St James Centre, 111 Elizabeth St, Sydney, NSW, 2000, or PO Box A226, Sydney South, NSW, 1235

Closing: **March 21.**

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS

NSW Writers Centre Courses:
Seminar: The Business Of Being a Writer – an insight into the legal and financial aspects; copyright, contracts and finances and how to promote yourself. Saturday, March 5, 10am – 5pm.

Details: www.nswwriterscentre.org.au

National Screenwriters Conference 2011
'Just Shoot Me – Getting The Script On The Screen' runs from February 16 – 18, Phillip Island' Victoria. Details: <http://www.awg.com.au/nsc/register.html>

The 2011 Colin Simpson Memorial Lecture will be delivered after the AGM of the Australian Society of Authors on March 19. Titled *The Power of Story*, this free event will be presented by Arnold Zable, writer, educator and human rights advocate. Venue: the State Library of Victoria. Contact: asa@asauthors.org

Two Fires Festival of Arts & Activism, Braidwood NSW April 1- 3. Inquiries 020 48461075.

Writing in Paradise, a week's writing retreat in Fiji – *A dream with a pen in its hand* with Mark Tredinnick, June 11 – 18; and Manuscript Mentoring with Rosie Scott, September 24 – October 1. Contact: susan@paradisecourses.com or go to www.paradisecourse.com or Flightbiz, 13 Tobruk Ave, Cremorne 2090 or (02) 8094 1613.

Queensland Poetry Fest August 26 – 28, Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. If you are interested in performing at this event, expressions of interest should be lodged by February 24. Go to: www.queenslandpoetryfestival.com

Metro Screen describes itself as working across all aspects of film, TV, online and portable media. They say they offer a creative environment for skills development and invaluable hands-on experience for new, emerging and professional talent. Metro Screen is the NSW members of Screen Development Australia (SDA). Go to www.Metroscreen.org.au.

Update your details

If you have been receiving the newsletter by snailmail and now have an email address please update our records. Email saves the planet and postage (which can be spent on more workshops) and you receive information on events and offers which may become available in between newsletters.

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):

Name.....

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Areas/Interest

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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 \$30. For tertiary students - \$20; for students under 18 - \$15.

CENTRE OPENING HOURS

Tuesday: 1 pm – 4 pm
Wednesday: 10 am – noon
Thursday: 1 pm - 4 pm

Director: Lesley Sly

Office manager: Sue McMichael

Board members: Chairman, Michael Sharkey;
Treasurer, Brian Neville;

Minutes secretary, Kaye Mill;

Committee: Pam Summers, Ingrid Kalf, Jane

O'Sullivan, Jeremy Fisher.

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). Best access via Cinders Lane car park.

Phone/Fax 02 6772 7210

Post: PO Box 1219, Armidale NSW 2350

Email: newc44@dodo.com.au

Website: <http://members.dodo.com.au/~newc44>

Next newsletter: April

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT

<http://members.dodo.com.au/~newc44>

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The Writers Centre is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.



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Provision of accommodation by the Armidale/Dumaresq Council

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

REGIONAL ARTS
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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.