

New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
May - July 2011

YOUTHONLINE



Fantasy novelist, Cecilia Dart-Thornton

The 2011 Youth Online program started with two primary school workshops by Lesley Sly and John Heffernan on May 9. So far there are 19 schools enrolled, primary and secondary, and the program will be taking creative writing and illustration workshops to around 950 children and teenagers in mostly isolated areas.

YOL has been funded by CAL – Copyright Agency Ltd; with support from New England Community Mutual and Arts NSW. We are 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 via laptop.

The tutors are writers **Linda Jaivin, John Heffernan, Sophie Masson, Miles Merrill, Michael Sharkey, Cecilia Dart-Thornton, Lesley Sly**, and illustrator **Fiona McDonald**.

Full details of the schedule, workshop descriptions, and tutor biogs are on our website.

Teacher, Lisa Cousins, from **Nulkaba Public School** sent us this response after the first two workshops:

“Thank you, all the students and myself enjoyed the presentations and are looking forward to the next workshops. The students were going home to expand on their ideas from today. Here are some comments from the children:

- * learnt interesting techniques about writing stories
- * gave a lot of information about writing a good story
- * there is a lot more to writing an interesting story
- * a lot of options to include when writing a story
- * enjoyed the presenters’ personalities.”

EVENTS COMING UP ...

There are still two events to run in our February to June program. We’re currently finalising an exciting program for July to November.

Details of some author visits are still being confirmed and there will information about them in the July newsletter.

We will be collaborating on three exciting projects with Poetzinc, New England Regional Art Museum, and a writer and two artists in a fabulous multimedia project.

Program details on page 2



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WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

All events will be held at NEWC unless otherwise stated. Members have first preference for bookings for the two weeks after events are announced. See website for more details.

May 28: *Writers Reading*, biography with Anne Pender.

DATE: Saturday, 2-5pm.

COST: \$10/\$5 members.

June 25: *The Business of Being A Successful Author* – with Jeremy Fisher. What you don't see but need to know about the publishing world, and much more.

DATE: Saturday, 10am to 4pm.

COST: \$65/\$55.

*Note: change of date from June 11 to June 25.



Jane O'Sullivan

August 13: *Writers Reading - Textual Interventions: pathways between reading and writing*, with Jane O'Sullivan.

This session will discuss and explore some of the ways in which you can use your reading experiences to feed your writing and visa versa. We will look at Rob Pope's notion of writing 'textual interventions' as a means of really engaging with an existing text (novel or short story) and also as a way of exploring new writing possibilities.

Participants are asked to bring along one or two novels or short stories that they are quite familiar with and really enjoy.

DATE: Saturday, 2-4pm.

COST: \$10/\$5.

* Jane is an academic in the School of Arts at UNE, teaching and writing about narrative representation in film, television drama, and prose fiction. Her PhD thesis focused on the novels of the twentieth-century British writer, John Fowles.

September 10: *Creating A Digital Comic* - one-day multimedia workshop with author Sophie Masson and artists Fiona McDonald and David Allan.

This workshop is about the process of creating a web comic/graphic novel, based on the creation of the exciting multimedia web comic/online graphic novel for children and young adults, *The Secret Army: Order of the Vampire* which local writer Sophie Masson and two local artist/illustrators, David Allan (also a web designer) and Fiona McDonald, as well as young musician Bevis Masson-Leach (Armidale in origin but now living in Sydney) are at present engaged in creating. Learn how to make your own comic. Learn ways to incorporate multimedia in a digital project. Get the opportunity to explore an exciting area of creativity. Participants should bring pen, paper, pencils, Texas.

Some free places will be offered to teenagers, but it is not just a youth project. Anyone interested in learning about new media could benefit from this. We are offering limited places to people over 18, at a very low price for members, and so people wanting to do the workshop should book soon to secure a place before these places are offered to the general public.

DATE: Saturday, 10am to 4pm.

COST: \$55/\$35

November 6: in partnership with Poetzinc, we are bringing poet **Felicity Plunkett** to Armidale to do a one-day writing workshop as well as a public event, and workshops in schools. More details soon.

August to December: *1000 Words* is an exciting collaboration between NEWC and NERAM (New England Regional Art Museum).

We'll be inviting people (of any age and any stage of writing, beginners to advanced) to write poems or short prose based on a painting they choose from a viewing at the gallery. Stories and poems will be selected by a panel for an exhibition with the paintings opening November 18. The project will conclude with writers featured in the exhibition reading their work or having it read at *Readings In The Café*, on Sunday, December 4, 2-4pm

The dates for viewing paintings at NERAM are: Wednesday, August 3, 2-4pm; Saturday, August 6, 2-4pm.

Deadline for submission of poems or stories (up to 450 words) is October 14. Entry fee is \$10, or \$5 for school students.

Contact NERAM on 6772 5255 or office@neram.com.au to book your viewing appointment. Submit your stories/poems to NERAM, PO Box 508, Armidale NSW 2350, or 106-114 Kentucky St, Armidale. **Q & A with**

Fiona McDonald



Your mix of art forms is unusual; what drew you to figurative soft sculpture?

The sculpture grew out of my love of dolls and toy making and wanting to use the skills I had learnt at the Julian Ashton School of Art in Sydney. I showed some cloth dolls at a gallery in Katoomba and some of the other exhibiting artists were intrigued. Reinis Zusters asked if I couldn't get them to hold poses and that is pretty much where it started.

I was commissioned, during the 90s, to make three life-size puppets for a play called *True Sex*, written by my brother Bill McDonald and performed at UNE. I was then asked to make a couple of large figures for a gallery in Sydney and then I made some for myself. One of these, *The Whore of Babylon*, was selected for the touring Blake exhibition in 2002.

Your workshop for Youth Online targets children. However, a 'Galleries' page of your website includes pictures for more mature tastes. What percentage of your work provides for this audience?

I think of myself as an artist who likes making toys rather than a just a toy-maker. I do like to provide things for children that will stimulate their imagination and make them go 'wow' but I also have adult tastes and like to cater to them. I like being naughty and scary and sometimes morbid and revolting (never seriously). I love the bizarre and

would like to do some more art in this vein. I do work well with children and I think this is because I remember very clearly and with deep affection my own childhood. I like to challenge children and get them to look at things in a different way to how they are often taught to see things.

You have published two knitting books: 'Babes in the Wool' and 'Knitted Aliens', soon to be followed by 'Knitted Fairies' and 'Knitted Vampires'. What inspired you to modernise a fading art?

It comes back to the dolls and toys, it always does. I felt like making dolls for children again, simplifying and making something companionable for them. I had bought a book on knitting teddy bears that had a classic quality about it that I loved. I did knit a bear from that book and then wanted to keep knitting. I always like to invent my own thing though and so I began the dolls. My daughter was emphatic that they be stylish and not the kind of lumpy things that can be found at fete stalls or in charity shops. She wanted me to bring sophistication to the dolls in the way I had with the cloth ones.

The YOL workshop will walk students through the illustration of fairy tales. What's the creative agenda here?

My idea behind this workshop is to free children from thinking that they must illustrate a story from one aspect or one perspective only. It does not have to be a photorealistic drawing. I want the children to see how to use up all the space and that it is acceptable for figures to be repeated and drawn from different viewpoints and out of scale with other elements of the drawing.

This method is also a way of eliminating a fear of a blank page. 'What should I draw?' 'I can't draw' 'This is stupid' and 'I hate drawing' are common things that people, not just children say and it is an attitude that I hope to change with my approach. Above all, it will be great fun.

From fantasy to fact, your first non-fiction book, 'Textiles: a History' is to be published in June. What took you in this direction?

My agent, Isabel Atherton, of Creative Authors, responded to my call for more book deals by asking if I'd like to put in a proposal for the book that was being offered by Remember When (imprint of Pen & Sword UK). I ummed and ahed about it and then took the plunge, the publisher liked the proposal and then I sat and wrote it. I enjoyed the research and the process so much that I was then signed up by the same publisher for a book on 1920s Britain.

I have just signed a contract with the History Press

UK to do a book on Highwaymen and women.

Where to from there? Another new trajectory?
You bet! Having achieved a manuscript of 80,000 plus words for textiles I decided to put in a proposal to do a PhD in Creative Practice at UNE. I want to write a novel and this project will be for a young adult audience. In the meantime I am finishing the knitting for a book of knitted vampires (don't worry, the novel will not even mention them).

- Pam Summers

Since this interview, Fiona has received approval to do a PhD in Creative Practice, the main part of which will be a novel.

FEEDBACK

Barry Humphries: Interpreting a Life Anne Pender

The workshop was great and I feel everyone else enjoyed it and our presenter involved everyone. I felt it was a very good group of participants each writing/interested in something different and many good ideas came from the workshop. Our presenter was very informative with plenty of expertise and was willing to share her information and knowledge, with us all. Many thanks again for offering members of the NEWC, this workshop.

- Mandi Choice

What's the detective up to? - Jane Goodall

This was a wonderful workshop, full of good clues of how to move a story forward. Jane was very encouraging and had great ideas about how to pick up an idea and embroider it. It was fascinating to hear how one idea could be developed into so many permutations. Thanks to everyone.

- Miriam Verbeek

A well-structured and relaxed workshop which was my ideal way into the genre. Practical writing was guided. Thank you.

- Carol Myers

It was a really good workshop! There was a good mix of generally applicable information and specific pointers. Also, plenty of time to write, receive feedback and then incorporate it. Very knowledgeable presenter – very encouraging and useful comments on individual participant's writing.

- Jane O'Sullivan

Informative, with useful technical information. Good practical opportunities. Useful exercise to go for 'the detective walk'. Great idea to start with a back story to enable an instant launch. First exercise was a good opener – observations on the way here!

- Liz Horne

Recognition For Our Writers

Its early in the year but already some of our writers have been enjoying success. Sophie Masson's book *The Hunt for Ned Kelly* has been shortlisted for this year's Patricia Wrightson Award in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Also shortlisted is John Heffernan's book, *Where There's Smoke*.

WORK SPACE

Sophie Masson has a new blog: A la mode frangourou, subtitled A French Australian take on food (frangourou in French, frangaroo in English, is her own coining for a French Australian!). It's a mixture of memoir, recipes, anecdotes and more, with a literary touch. Go to: www.alamodefrangourou.blogspot.com

Helen Evan's new book, *Reluctant Heroes* is now available at Dymocks. The book is a war story about the POWs who were sent to Borneo, and also gives a fascinating account of life in Armidale at the time, based on Helen's family.



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Reluctant Heroes was launched at the Evans family gallery, Chaucer on Bridge Street, in Uralla on Saturday May 7th.

New member Amanda (Mandy) Choice came in and told us about her book *Polocrosse: A practical guide*. In fact, this is also a source of information for any horse sport. She is working on a book about her beloved companion Bree, a champion show dog, which includes pointers on nutrition and physical and mental fitness for the show scene.

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Don't miss the Armidale Drama & Musical Society's production of the Mel Brooks' musical comedy, *The Producers*, 8 pm, May 27 and 28; June 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11; matinees 2pm, June 5 and 11 at Lazenby, UNE. Tickets: Dymocks, 6771 4558

Little People Power

The Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Award, which was to lose its funding has been saved by primary school children. Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor presented a petition from the pupils of Tamworth Public School to Parliament and achieved the re-instatement of this important poetry award for the next three years.

Children's Books Lead The Way

In face of the collapse of the RED group, the owner of the Angus and Robertson and Border chains, it is comforting to hear that independent booksellers like Gleebooks, Shearers in Leichhardt, and Pages are surviving. Especially in light of the fact that it is these groups that publishers contact to introduce new writers.

In an article in the Sydney Morning Herald of March 14, Linda Morris quotes Pages as saying that the take-up of e-books will be rapid. 'However, one sector that is proving resilient is children's books. It is hard to replicate the experience of reading a child to sleep with an e-reader. Children's books – sold in store and to school libraries – now comprise one fifth of Shearers' sales'.

The Sydney Story Factory

Founded by *Sydney Morning Herald* journalists Catherine Keenan and Tim Dick, the Sydney Story Factory will be launched from 4 – 5 pm on Sunday, May 22 at the Sydney Dance Company. This creative writing centre targets children aged from seven to 17. Volunteers will provide help to young people through workshops and tutoring.

Seaview Press has sent us a copy of their 2011 catalogue for anybody interested in self publishing. It goes through the whole process, including cost and advice. Information is also available at: www.seaviewpress.com.au or (08) 83567313 or PO Box 7339, West Lakes, South Australia, 5021, or seaview@seaviewpress.com.au

COMPETITIONS

In an article in the Northern Rivers Writers' Centre newsletter *Northerly*, Tristan Bancks gives his golden rules of short story writing: Keep it simple. Tell one story. Establish characters quickly. Contain it in space and time. Show, don't tell. Get in late and out early. The iceberg principle. Don't tell us everything. Suggest a world beyond the frame.

May 20: Peter Cowan 600 short story competition; 1st prize \$200, 2nd \$100, 3rd \$50, four highly commended certificates and four commended certificates; open theme. Go to: www.pcwc.org.au or cowan05@bigpond.com the receiving officer, Peter Cowan 600 short story competition, Peter Cowan Writers Centre Inc, PO Box 239, Joondalup WA 6919.

May 20: Bundy Bush Poetry Muster. Entry forms: PO Box 4281, Bundaberg South, Qld. 4670.

May 31: Boree Log Award for Bush Verse, traditional rhyming bush verse, 80 lines maximum \$100 and trophy. Entry forms: <http://hillsfaw.webs.com> or (02) 9869 2715.

May 31: Eastwood Hills FAW Annual Literary Competition, short story – max 3,000 words. Prizes: 1st \$200, 2nd \$100. Free verse poetry – max 80 lines per poem. Prizes 1st \$150, 2nd \$50. Traditional poetry – max 80 lines per poem. Prizes: 1st \$150, 2nd \$50. Memoir – max 1,500 words. Prizes 1st \$150, 2nd \$50. Pauline Walsh Award for short short story – max 800 words. Prizes: 1st \$100, 2nd \$50. Entry forms: <http://hillsfaw.webs.com> or (02) 9869 2715.

June 3: 2011 Blake poetry prize: theme is religious or spiritual; prize \$5000. Contact: Project Officer, NSW Writers' Centre, PO Box 1056, Rozelle, NSW, 2039 or (02) 9555 9757, fax: (02) 9818, or sasher@nswwc.org.au or www.nswwriterscentre.org.au

June 30: Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards; suggested theme *Making Pictures*. Offers financial prizes and certificates to a huge range of age

groups, including special education and a certificate for every child entered. Go to: www.dorothea.com.au or contact (02) 67421200 or dorothea.mackellar@bigpond.com

June 30: The Australian Book Review Elizabeth Jolley short story prize. 1st prize \$5000, three shortlisted stories \$1000 plus publication. Contact: Peter Rose, editor, *Australian Book Review* (03) 9429 6700 or editor@australianbookreview.com.au or go to www.australianbookreview.com.au

June 30: The PressPress Chapbook Award is for an unpublished chapbook-length manuscript of poems. The winning manuscript will receive \$600 and chapbook publication with PressPress. The Award will be announced in August 2011 on the PressPress site. Contact: PressPress at Well Sprung Productions, info@wellsprungproductions.com.au or go to: http://www.wellsprungproductions.com.au/Trio_site/Newsletter_6.html

July 8: North Pine Bush Poets' Camp Oven Festival. Forms: 12 Herbert Street, Scarborough, Qld. 4020.

September 16: 2011 Rolf Boldrewood Literary Awards. Fiction or family history memoir, max words 3000, Australian theme. Poetry in any form or style, max. 80 lines, Australian theme. Entry forms: Macquarie Regional Library, (02) 6801 4501 or go to: www.mrl.nsw.gov.au

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

Australia Council for the Arts fellowships – literature valued at \$100,000, paid in three instalments over two years. Requirement: Five major works published or performed and who have achieved substantial critical recognition in the genre of their intended project. Go to: http://www.australiancouncil.gov.au/grants/grants/fellowships_-_literature.

Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, \$230,000 prize pool. Information: www.literaryawards.qld.gov.au

banQuetPress. banQuetPress describe themselves as 'an independent, Australian queer publisher'. They are calling for submissions for their 2012 anthologies of queer writing from Australian men and women. Briefly, guidelines are: original,

unpublished pieces of writing that are not under consideration elsewhere, up to 5000 words. They are willing to look at a small number of visual art pieces. Contact: Matthew Lang, admin@banquetpress.com, or go to <http://banquetpress.com/guidelines.html>

Deadline June 3.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS

The Tiny Stadiums festival runs for two weeks from May 2 – 15. It is held among the streets, shops and parks of Erskinville. It showcases : video, performance, live art and installation. Details go to www.pact.net.au.

NSW Writers' Centre Workshops (all courses held at the NSW Writers' Centre, Rozelle):

Writers' Toolkit: The Elements of Fiction with Emily Maguire, Sunday, May 29, 10am – 4pm.
Perfect Crime with P.M. Newton, Saturday, June 4, 10am – 4pm.
Start Writing for the Stage with Verity Laughton, June 11 & 18, 10am – 4pm. Go to: www.nswwriterscentre.org.au or (02) 9555 9757 or PO Box 1056, Rozelle NSW 2039

Sydney Writers' Festival - May 16-22, go to: www.swf.org.au/

Varuna - Sydney Writers' Festival: Blue Mountains Program: Monday May 16 and Tuesday May 17, two full days of conversations, readings and discussions with a mix of award-winning Australian and International authors. The diverse and ever popular AA Gill and acclaimed Palestinian author Izzeldin Abuelaish will feature among the international guests, alongside multi award winner Aminatta Forna and fresh new talent from the Commonwealth Writers Prize, Katrina Best, Craig Cliff and Cynthia Jele. Also new Australian writers Fiona McGregor, Jesse Blackadder and celebrated poet Judy Johnson. As well there is a full day's program for children, young adults and families on Sunday, May 15 - including the much loved Morris Gleitzman and local talents Steven Herrick and Catherine Jinks. Also a Special Event Workshop with Tristan Bancks. Full program and bookings: Varuna Sydney Writers' Festival Blue Mountains Program or Varuna@varuna.com.au

Asian Children's Publishers Symposium, Singapore May 27 – 30. Described as being for publishers,

writers, illustrators, printers, librarians, literary agents, distributors and retailers. Contact: National Book Development Council of Singapore, info@bookcouncil.sg or go to: www.afcc.com.sg

Dungog Film Festival, described as ‘The world’s biggest festival of Australian films’, Go to: www.dff.org.au/

Editing in Paradise is a masterclass editing retreat, May 23-29, Kangaroo Valley. Go to www.editinginparadise.com

Faber Academy at Allen & Unwin: Getting Published. Insiders reveal how to get your foot in the door, Saturday, July 23, 10am-5pm. Writing the Past: History and the Writer’s Imagination, August 19 – 21, 10am-5pm, techniques for writing historical fiction. Go to: www.allenandunwin.com/faberacademy

Byron Bay Writers’ Festival, August 5-7. Events include Kamal performing poems of passion; Paul Kelly live in concert; James Redfield on the *Celestine Prophecies*, Louis de Bernieres reflecting on films and fiction, and Bill Leak’s hard-hitting cartoons. These are just a few of the writers, performers, musicians and wordsmiths appearing at the festival’s 15th birthday bash from August 5 - 7 this year. Ticket sales for 2011 are off to a flying start, with the first few weeks of sales breaking all previous records. Festival director Candida Baker is confident that the array of talent on the guest list will have people flocking to Byron Bay for what has arguably become Australia’s most loved literary festival.

“2011 will be a year of breaking new ground for the festival,” said Baker. “As well as the new *In Search of Soul* segments, this year for the first time we have on site a circus tent that will serve as a performance space for the wonderful array of live word-based performers.”

Early Bird 3-day pass includes entry to the North Beach festival site from Friday 5 – Sunday 7. Cost: \$190 or \$165 students.

Youth pass for Sunday, August 7, 9.00am-4.30pm. Cost: \$35. Each youth pass accommodates one accompanying adult allowing access to youth sessions only. Go to: <http://www.byronbaywritersfestival.com.au/v2/> or 1300 368 552

Monthly evening poetry: *Word in Hand*, first Tuesday of every month, Friend in Hand Hotel, 58 Cowper Street, Glebe, 2037. Contact: Miles Merrill, miles.merrill@yahoo.com

Our Civic Life masterclass - Metro Screen and Balcony Productions partnership, with support from the British Council. Joe Lawlor will be sharing his experience over the past seven years of working with communities and the challenges and issues it presents. He will workshop approaches and participants' ideas for short films inspired by ideas of place, community and identity. Metro Screen, metro@metroscreen.org.au or go to: <http://civiclefitiongbahru.com/>

Bellingen Writers & Readers Festival

NEWC sponsored a workshop in the first Bellingen Writers & Readers Festival in April – *Write For Profit*, by director, **Lesley Sly**. Our chairman **Michael Sharkey** and deputy chair **Sophie Masson** also gave workshops.

Feedback on the *Write For Profit* workshop:

“Thanks for the workshop. Given that I already had background in writing articles to a particular niche market, it was interesting to get perspective on broadening options and using the same material to create a story with a different angle for a variety of different publications. My main objective in coming along to the workshop had been to gain some insight into tackling a wider audience, and I left feeling I had tools to explore this further.”

– **Anne Tillet**

Michael gave talks to more than 100 students on writing poetry, and was part of the Paddle With a Poet canoe trip, giving readings of poems on river themes. Along with MTC Cronin and Judith Beveridge, he read to a large audience of around 100 in Bellingen Community Hall.

Sophie did talks in schools and was on several panels. Her new novel, *My Father’s War* (Scholastic) was launched at the festival. Committee member, **Jeremy Fisher**, chaired a session on the business of writing.

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

When you discover great or at least interesting books, please share this with us with a short review in email for the newsletter.

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; Deputy Chair, Sophie Masson; 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: July

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<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.



Communities
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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.