

New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
December 2011/February 2012

THIS YEAR/NEXT YEAR

This was a big year for New England writers – winning awards, getting published, and for many members there were great developments in their work through the broad range of workshops we ran this year.

The long list of achievements by writers in this region begins with Glittering Prizes and meanders over to the next page!

We had a big program with workshops - from writers toolkit, a great place for beginners to start, to workshops on biography, the business of being an author, crime and performance writing, writing from life, children's writing, creating a digital comic.

We collaborated on projects with NERAM, for 1000 Words, and with local organisations to bring Afghan writer, **Malalai Joya** to Armidale. Our visiting writers also included **Arnold Zable**, **Felicity Plunkett**, and **Jane Goodall**.



Malalai Joya (centre) with from left: Fran Stahlut, Maxine Ross, NEWC director Lesley Sly, with event coordinator Bea Bleile on the far right.

We had a successful Youth Online program taking workshops to more than 950 children and youth in 20 schools. with tutors:

Linda Jaivin, Miles Merrill, Sophie Masson, John Heffernan, Cecilia Dart-Thornton, Felicity Plunkett, Michael Sharkey, Lesley Sly.

Next year: Our program in 2012 will run from April to November. There will be a major Youth Online program, funded by ConnectEd, and we are currently negotiating to develop our Visiting Writers program. There will be more news about the program in our February newsletter.

We would like to hear from you – what workshops would you like next year.

Festive closing: We will be closed from Christmas Eve to January 17.

Drop-In workshop: will resume last Thursday in February, there will be no workshop in January.

Annual General Meeting: will be held February 24, 5.15pm, followed by ordinary meeting, at NEWC. All welcome. If you wish to stand for the Board or nominate someone, please let us know.

What You Did This Year: If you haven't already contributed, please send us a paragraph or so about what you did this year with writing, and tell us your two favourite books of the year.

Thank you – to our sponsors, the Board, to Pam Summers for her work on the newsletter, Ingrid Kalf for her work on the website, Paul Prenter who has been running our office since August, and Fiona McDonald, the new coordinator of Drop-In workshop.

Best wishes for a happy festive season.

Lesley Sly
Director

GLITTERING PRIZES



George Souris, MP presenting Sophie Masson with the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature.

Sophie Masson: *The Hunt for Ned Kelly* winner of Patricia Wrightson Award in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Blog: A la mode frangourou: A French Australian look at food; unpublished spy thriller set in 1910 in Paris, *Wild Card*, was shortlisted for the Text Young Adult Fiction Prize, one of only five books to be on the shortlist out of an entry field of 300 (the novels had to be unpublished).

Helen Evans: *Reluctant Heroes*, a war story about the POWs who were sent to Borneo, and an account of life in Armidale at the time, based on Helen's family.

Jeremy Fisher: Convened a symposium: *Where do you think you are?* With Sophie Masson and other authors (not local), at UNE on November 15.

NEWC sponsored a workshop at the first Bellingen Writers and Readers Festival, and several members took workshops or featured on panels: Sophie Masson, Lesley Sly, Jeremy Fisher, Michael Sharkey.

John Heffernan: *Harry's War*, young adult novel about a boy searching for the secret which surrounds his father's death; *Where There's Smoke*, young adults novel with a theme of bushfires, dedicated to the survivors of Black Saturday, shortlisted for the Patricia Wrightson Award in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Wendy James: *The Mistake*, coming out in March 2012, crime/domestic drama; she also hosted panels for Sisters in Crime for their *shekilda* Women Crime Writers' convention in October.

Helena Pastor: memoir manuscript, *Yahztee and the Art of Happiness* was shortlisted for the Finch Memoir Prize; memoir manuscript, *Iron Men: Alchemy at Work*, attracted an Australian Society of Authors mentorship with Judith Lukin-Amundsen, and also a 2010/2011 Varuna HarperCollins Manuscript Development Award. In April Helena went to Varuna for the residential component of the award and met with Anne Collins, the HarperCollins editor who is helping bring Helena's memoir to a publishable standard. www.helenapastor.com records the progress of reworking the memoir for HarperCollins

Michael Sharkey: Discussion for Remembrance Day, World War One poetry of Australian women, held at Armidale Dumaresq Memorial Library; convened the 1000 Words reading by writers who had poems or stories published in the exhibition.

Nicole Alexander: *A Changing Land*, novel about four generations of a rural family.

Carol Baxter: *Captain Thunderbolt and His Lady*, the story of Fred Ward and Mary Ann Bugg.

Adam Blakester, Rex Kearns and Norman Williams: *The Ponsenby Journals*, novel: collection of comic adventures.

Stephen Foster: *A Private Empire* traces the history of the Macpherson family from Culloden to Keera Station near Bingara.

Rick Hutton, of Bingara, wrote a play - *The Playing Fields of Eden*, based on the true story of Lois and Frederick Ball; Lois tried to poison Frederick who shot her. He was subsequently convicted and hanged at Armidale.

Stephen Jackson & Karl Vernes: *Kangaroo: Portrait of an extraordinary Marsupial*. Described as a lively, informative book ... one that touches upon the many diverse reasons, both cultural and biological, why we find kangaroos so fascinating.

Kevin Smith, retired academic UNE: *Stories from Sandakan* – stories of the experiences and fate of soldiers imprisoned at Sandakan in northern Borneo.

Keaton, Brylan, Taphyl & Gerwood Stewart, short film project, *The Hoarders*.

Dugald Williamson: *Australian Documentary: History, Practices and Genres*. Dr Williamson is an Associate Professor in the University of New England's School of Arts.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING for New England Writers Centre

Friday, February 24, at 5.15pm at NEWC
129 Rusden St or Cinders Lane carpark entrance,
followed by ordinary meeting at 5.30pm.

ALL WELCOME

****NEWC will be closed from Christmas Eve to
January 17. Wendy James**



Wendy has a new book, *The Mistake*, coming out in March. Published by Penguin this time, she describes it as 'sort of crime, sort of domestic drama' – look out for it in a book shop near you! She has been busy also, hosting panels for Sisters in Crime for their *shekilda* Women Crime Writers' convention in October.

Janene Carey

Janene is still balancing two hats on her head, an academic one and an Armidale Express one. In 2011, she enjoyed writing profiles of Fiona Simson, the first female chief of the NSW Farmers' Association; Susanne James, the newly appointed director of the New England Conservatorium of Music; Kim McConville, founder of community arts organisation Beyond Empathy; and Emma Buzo, manager of the TAS Hoskins Centre. Janene also covered visits to Armidale by Prime Minister Julia Gillard (launching the National Broadband Network), shadow treasurer Joe Hockey (delivering the Earle Page College Politics lecture) and eminent journalist David Marr (discussing post-Tampa policies on asylum seekers). Some of her newspaper and magazine articles, (plus reflections on the writing of them) have managed to circumvent their fishwrap destiny by being reproduced on her blog, In Medias Res.

Janene's creative arts PhD thesis, comprising a book manuscript and scholarly exegesis, was examined earlier this year and she's graduating at a ceremony in Sydney on December 7.

She's just returned from giving a talk at the annual conference of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs, held in rainy Byron Bay. The theme of the conference - ethical concerns and their implications in literature and in writing - was an excellent fit with a key aspect of her PhD project: the ethical tensions involved in using other people's lives as fodder for creative nonfiction stories which need to be vivid, engaging and animated by the writer's personal voice.



Three of the five Armidale speakers at the Byron Bay conference: Dr Jeremy Fisher, Dr Janene Carey and PhD student James Vicars. Associate Professor Dugald Williamson and Dr Rose Williamson also attended and presented papers.

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR

Read lots of books. I loved *The Lacuna* by Barbara Kingsolver.

-Val Sherwell

I had a good year. My writing mentor always tells me, 'Apply for everything', so I do. The following successes were interspersed between many rejections. My memoir manuscript, 'Yahztee and the Art of Happiness', was shortlisted for the Finch Memoir Prize; my second memoir manuscript, 'Iron Men: Alchemy at Work', attracted an Australian Society of Authors mentorship with Judith Lukin-Amundsen, and also a 2010/2011 Varuna HarperCollins Manuscript Development Award. In April I went to Varuna for the residential component of the award and met with Anne Collins, the HarperCollins editor who is helping me bring my memoir to a publishable standard.

www.helenapastor.com records the progress of reworking the memoir for HarperCollins.

I enjoyed two self-organised Evans Head Writing Retreats with Edwina Shaw, a Brisbane writer. Although I haven't yet finished my PhD in Creative Research Practice at UNE, I've started tutoring in writing units in the School of Arts. I continue to apply for everything. The best book I read was *The Happiest Refugee* by Anh Do.

-Helena Pastor

Jeremy Fisher's shared discussion of *Our Father Who Wasn't There* by David Carlin, prompted me to think about the value of creative nonfiction. The workshops by Jeremy Fisher, Michael Sharkey, Arnold Zable, and Felicity Plunkett, were very helpful. I enjoyed reading Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South*, Diane Armstrong's, and Helen Evans's *Reluctant Heroes*. Again, I was supported with prose by the Drop-In Workshop. At POWEWRtalk

I spoke about migrants, asking the question, Is Tolerance of Migrants Enough?

-Richard McLennan

Did some writing and a lot of research. My favourite books this year: *The House At Riverton* by Kate Morton, impressive debut from Australian author, now a huge international success with sales of six million copies of her first three novels; *The Case For God* by Karen Armstrong, talking book, a massive and erudite work.

-Lesley Sly

Major achievement this year was to launch my historical novel, *Reluctant Heroes*, in May. I am pleased with the sales and particularly pleased by the feedback I've had from those who have read it. It is now available to borrow from the town library and some copies are still available from Dymocks. Every month I write an e-zine for parents of young children, and that keeps my writing brain working. I am still spending four mornings a week telling stories at the early childhood centres in Armidale and often create new stories for those groups. In September I organised an exhibition of quilts and textiles at the family gallery in Uralla and held a pantomime in the gallery garden to raise money for the Koala Foundation.

I have read quite a few books with historical themes including two by Carol Baxter and have begun reading her recently published third book *Thunderbolt and His Lady*. I have found Carol's books very interesting. I read Shirley Walker's *A ghost at the Wedding*, another fine book, and Peter Fitzsimon's *Nancy Wake* and *A Simpler Time*. For lighter reading I can't go past Alexander McCall Smith's books. I read the newest volume in the Number One Ladies' Detective series, and in his Philosophy Club series I read *The Right Attitude to Rain* and *The Lost Art of Gratitude*. I also much enjoyed Gwen Friend's book *My Brother Donald*.

- Helen Evans

*Helen's web site: www.helenevanswriter.com.au

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Writers Toolkit Michael Sharkey

I found the workshop very constructive and informative. It was great to get feedback and ideas on my own work and read others. Information on writers of interest was also very appreciated.

-Sharen Dussart

It was lovely to meet with like-minded people. The success of this style of workshop relies upon the

participants engaging and contributing and I feel this was achieved quite successfully. I certainly gained some great ideas and inspiration.

-Sue Singleton

Writing for Children- Sophie Masson

A very useful workshop – a good balance between factual presentation, how to approach characters and plot, and practical exercises, getting us to write our own short pieces, great to get us thinking creatively.

-Gina Dillon

I thoroughly enjoyed this workshop. The presentation and the format was excellent. I left feeling inspired.

-Margherita Berry

Writing From Life - Arnold Zable

Arnold Zable gave us a comfortable and enriching workshop. He was a very good listener, eager to teach and share. He pointed out the possibilities of issues that attendees presented. I was so pleased I attended.

- Richard McLennan

Arnold is an inspiring storyteller and a superb mentor. He provided just the help I needed, especially about 'texture' and 'being totally there' in terms of storywriting

-Robin Jones

A very skilled presentation of writing craft which had something to give everyone individually but which conveyed wisdom for all.

-James Vicars

Burning the Peripherals Felicity Plunkett

This was an exhilarating workshop – Felicity had many insights to offer – about poetry in general and the writing produced/presented by the workshop participants, encouraging and enabling! A really good group of participants ranging from those new to poetry to those with an impressive track record

-Jane O'Sullivan

Felicity Plunkett has given us MOST RICHLY of her poetic/literary insights in her *Burning the Peripherals* workshop. I have really appreciated the way she has brought all participants into discussions. It was a great opportunity to share.

-Yve Louis

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

February 24, 5.15 followed by ordinary meeting 5.30.

ALL WELCOME

If you wish to nominate for the board please contact us.

NEWS & INFORMATION

Not-to-be-missed Local Production

Rockin Robin and the Hoods, described as a pre Christmas panto, is presented by the Saturday Magic Theatre Troupe. Barbara Albury directs a group of disabled people and their friends. There will be two performances at the Hoskins Theatre Tas on December 17 & 18 at 2.30 pm.

The performances are free but you can donate.

Writing tips by Richard Harland, a free 145 page guide to writing from this award-winning author. Go to: <http://www.writingtips.com.au>

The Australian Poetry website offers more than 42,000 Australian poems by 217 poets. Just google New Australian Poetry.

Screen Australia is the Federal Government's main funding body for film and screen content. For information on funding programs go to <<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au>> It features a useful free PDF publication for beginning writers: *I've got a Great Idea for a Film; Suggested Script Layout; and What is a Synopsis? An Outline? A Treatment.*

Varuna, The Writers House in the Blue Mountains has a *Writer a Day* project which will eventually become an Australia Council funded App for mobile devices like phones and iPads. Recordings of writers reading from their work have been posted on the Varuna blog on a daily basis. Find them also on Facebook and Twitter. Go to: www.varuna.com.au for more information, including masterclasses, residencies, retreats and events.

You have an iPad or an iPhone and want to use it to get creative? *Storyist* is an App which will help you undertake a project providing a novel template, which creates a manuscript in the standard format for publishers, and a screenplay template to help you with your film script. It is possible to import existing work, and another App, called *Dropbox* enables you to save your work across platforms.

If you are interested in creating a multi-media comic, Sophie Masson walks you through her experience in her post *Writing a Digital Multi Media Comic*. Go to: <http://writerunboxed.com/2011/11/16/writing-a-digital-multimedia-comic/#more-11194>

Bank Rescue

Often news about banks is all bad so it is nice to have something good to report. The Ubud Writers and Readers Festival, which was held in Bali in October, was in danger of folding because they had lost their main sponsor. With a host of international authors committed to the event, director, Janet de Neefe was finding it difficult to pay for printing of programs. Rescue came in the shape of the ANZ Bank and the event will now be known as the ANZ Ubud Writers and Readers Festival.

the
community mutual
group



New England Community Mutual

At the heart of our community

Proud sponsors of the
**NEW ENGLAND WRITERS'
CENTRE**

Phone: 132 067
www.necu.com.au

Book Review Captain Thunderbolt and his Lady Carol Baxter – Allen & Unwin

Allen & Unwin us centre this book and I came to read it with no preconceived ideas because, I think, I would be classified as an outsider. I lay no claim to Thunderbolt, unlike many locals, who look upon him as a hero. Frederick Ward, aka Thunderbolt, is described as a gentleman bushranger – he took your money with a smile. When all is said and done, he was a horse thief, equate that with having your car stolen and the taking of money at gun-point as your being mugged on the way to the supermarket.

Would you look upon someone who did that as a hero, even if he bought you a drink with your money? Stripping down to the bare essentials tends to remove the glamour. Thunderbolt's descendent, Barry Sinclair, was extremely scathing about the book and challenged the veracity of some of the facts. The book contains an extensive bibliography and includes references to state and library records and as well, Ms Baxter is an adjunct lecturer at UNE so the credentials are rock solid. One thing is absolutely certain, Mary Ann Bugg was an extraordinary woman, way ahead of her time. I very much enjoyed the story – it certainly was a good yarn – add it to your holiday reading.

- Pam Summers

Exciting Times Ahead

The public meeting held on November 17 at the Armidale Town Hall delivered an exciting vision of the future for the performing arts in Armidale. The Armidale Dumaresq Civic Precinct is an ambitious project with a price tag of more than \$19m. It is good to see interested parties working together to come up with this plan to meet not only the needs of the many performing groups but also: the library, the council and the RSL. With a first stage costing in excess of \$11m, it is going to need some pretty lively fundraising. The excellent attendance on the night, together with the strong support of Richard Torbay, UNE, the RSL and the Armidale Dumaresq Council augers well for this initiative.

-Pam Summers

For our more immediate enjoyment is the prospect of the TAS Hoskins Centre 2012 season featuring the Sydney Theatre Company. The program includes four touring professional productions, indigenous theatre, *Treasure Island*, a comedy and shows by the Armidale Drama and Musical Society.

COMPETITIONS

December 16: East Gippsland Art Gallery Short Story Award, first prize \$1000 for a short story of up to 2500 words. Open theme. Go to: eastgippslandartgallery.org.au.

December 18: Stringybark Short Story Award, open-themed (although your story must have some link to Australia); 1400 words. Over A\$500 in prizes (cash and books) available, plus publication for first places and highly commended stories. Entry fee \$9.50 (discounts for multiple entries). Details: www.stringybarkstories.net

December 31: The Aurealis Awards, described as Australia's premier awards for speculative fiction, are for works written by an Australian citizen, or

permanent resident, and published for the first time between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011. No entry fee. Details: the Aurealis Awards website, <http://www.aurealisawards.com>. Or contact the awards co-convenors, Chris Barnes and Susan Wardle, at convenors@aurealisawards.com.

December 31: WB Yeats Poetry Prize, poem with maximum of 50 lines, 1st prize \$500. Go to: www.Wbyeatspoetryprize.com

December 31: Margaret River short story competition, any topic 1200-3000 words, 1st prize \$750. Go to: www.artsmargaretriver.com

January 31: Creative Nonfiction (www.creativefiction.org) in association with Tashmadada, (www.tashmadada.com) invite submission for a special 'Australia' issue. Items should not exceed 4000 words and two prizes are offered: \$6,500 for best essay and \$2,500 for best essay by an Australian writer. For more details go to www.creativenonfiction.org or contact Stephen Knezovich, knezovich@creativenonfiction.org

January 31: Brunswick Poets and Writers Workshop competition, any theme. Contact: BPWW@optusnet.com.au

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

2012 NSW Premier's History Award Categories: Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction, Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry, Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature, Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature, Community Relations Commission Award, UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing, Play Award, Script Writing Award, NSW Premier's Prize for Literary Scholarship (biennial), NSW Premier's Translation Prize (biennial), Special Award, Book of the Year, People's Choice Award. For application and closing dates go to: <http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/>

Twelfth Planet Press are looking for science fiction, fantasy, horror and crime. They will consider borderline literary, new weird, steampunk, space opera, hard science fiction, soft science fiction, urban fantasy, cyberpunk, military science fiction, young adult, paranormal romance and everything in between. Email the first three chapters and a 1-2 page synopsis of your book with marketing and sales outline in rtf file. Title your subject heading

with the genre/subgenre for email management. Include your full contact details, word count and brief biography. Further details: <http://www.twelfthplanetpress.com/news/twelfth-planet-press-novel-manuscript-submission-month-january-2012>

Submissions period: January 1 - 31

Submissions for the 59th Sydney Film festival, June 6 – 17 are being accepted for the main program and three competitions for Australian productions: the 2012 Foxtel Australian Documentary Prize; 2012 Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films and 2012 Yoram Gross Animation Award. More information go to sff.org.au

Closing: February 27

Queensland Poetry Festival invites proposals from poets, performer, and artists interested in being part of the 16th annual festival. QPF 2012 runs from August 24 - 26 at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. QPF . Individuals or groups interested in performing at the festival *spoken in one strange word*, or who have projects to pitch that can be run in association with the festival should apply to: Festival Manager, qldpoetry@gmail.com or go to: www.queenslandpoetryfestival.com.

Closing: February 22

The National Arts Council (Singapore) is inviting applications from writers of books etc for the young for an initiative titled *Beyond Words*. The pilot phase, Young and Younger, focuses on quality children's literature in the following genres: Children's Picture Books, closing: January 15; Chapter Books and Young Adult (YA) Fiction (closing: April 15. For information or to apply go to: www.nac.gov.sg/beyondwords.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS

Varuna workshop: *Doctors Who* dinner – the inaugural Dr Eric Dark Memorial Lecture, Saturday February 25 leading up to *Doctors who Write* residency, February 25 to 26. There will also be a *Doctors' Writing Retreat*, led by doctor/writer Leah Kaminsky and Hilton Koppe. Included in the activities will be a range of activities and guided tours to Darks Cave, details go to: www.varuna.com.au

Romance Writers of Australia's 21st conference *Diamonds Are Forever* will be held at Hotel QT, Surfer's Paradise, Gold Coast, from August 16-19.

Contact: Helen Katsinis, helenkat@bigpond.com or go to: http://www.romanceaustralia.com/conference_goldcoast.html

The Australian Writer's Marketplace Online Learning centre is administered by the Queensland Writers centre. They offer practical online writing courses and enable you to form networks with other writers. For more details go to: www.awmonlinelearn.com.au

Script Mentoring (under the auspices of the ACT Writers Centre). Online workshop with Hunter Cordaiy. This course takes a project (feature film or TV drama) from story to screenplay over 15 weeks - which can begin at any time of the year. It uses email and Skype conversations, with an academic-based schedule of assignments and feedback. Hunter Cordaiy teaches script at tertiary level and works professionally as a writer and script editor. Contact: Go to: www.huntercordaiy.com or bookings <https://app.formassembly.com/forms/view/10261>

BREAKING NEWS

Bellingen Readers and Writers Festival
We received news as we were going to press about the Bellingen Readers & Writers Festival, which will be held March 23-25, and is shaping up to be bigger than the debut festival last year.

The festival will continue to celebrate contemporary Australian writing with high profile authors such as Steven Carroll, Robert Drewe, Alice Pung, Kate Forsythe. Early Bird tickets are available. Go to www.bellingenwritersfestival.com.au

Tuesday, March 6, John Bennett will give a reading of his work at Poetzinc's monthly reading at Trax at the Railway.

- Contact 6772 7840 for details.

Congratulations!

Local writer and artist **Meg Vivers** has a joint book launch and art exhibition at Armidale Art Gallery in the Mall, at 5pm, December 18. The book is *Castle to Colony, the remarkable life and times of Lucy Sarah Gray (1840-1879)*.

Meg collected information in travels to New Zealand, Ireland, England, and Queensland, and some of Lucy Grey's watercolours are included in this project.