A shoebox can make a difference at Christmas

BY LANA BEST

What a bunch of heroes! For the past four years UTAS Financial Services employees have filled around 25 shoeboxes a year with gifts for kids living in poverty overseas – and School of Human Life Sciences staff members have donated cash to cover distribution costs.

This year the 25 UTAS-packed boxes for Operation Christmas Child run by the Samaritan’s Purse charity were among a total of 17,000 shoeboxes filled by Tasmanians. They’re on their way to third-world countries such as Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Anne Elliot from Financial Services said that four years ago former finance employee Seon Cannon started the project because her mother was an Operation Christmas Child regional co-ordinator, and many people have enjoyed being involved every year since.

“It’s so rewarding to choose items knowing how appreciated they will be,” she said.

“We’ve given guidelines of what to pack and you can choose to fill a box for a boy or a girl; it’s something children at home can get involved with that helps them realise how fortunate they are and how important it is to help others.”

The UTAS finance department has a long history of giving to many different charities – from the boxes of confectionery they frequent in the name of various good causes to the charity morning teas for Australia’s Biggest Morning Tea, Red Nose Day, Stress Down Day and National Biggest Morning Tea, Red Nose Day, Stress Down Day and National Bandana Day.

UTAS Financial Services and School of Human Life Sciences staff have heard first-hand how much their donations to Samaritan’s Purse Operation Christmas Child mean to the impoverished children who receive the boxes.

While collecting the donations from the UTAS Newnham campus in November, Operation Christmas Child regional co-ordinator Josie Ford explained how she had taken part in a distribution in Cambodia in January, witnessing the mixed emotions of children as they received what was their first, and possibly their last, personal gift.

“A bar of soap, a writing pad and pencil, a small toy – these are treasures they never usually see and they bring excitement and wonderment and opportunities they can only dream about,” she said.

“It is such a powerful project, where you put both practical and fun things into a box and you pack it with love and the thought of who is going to receive it – it’s amazing to see how it brings hope and joy and literally transforms their lives.”

The Cradle Coast campus Student Centre and Sandy Bay and Newnham campus libraries host ABC Giving Trees where unwrapped toys, gifts and non-perishable food and clothing can be delivered before 14 December.

Just a month after taking over as director, and as his staff began to move into the completed lower floors of MS2 in Hobart, Professor Marwick has outlined a sharpened medical research focus at Menzies.

He has condensed the 14 areas being researched at Menzies to just five key topics – public health and primary care – “it’s what the Menzies became famous for in the first instance and it is still a core interest”; neurodegenerative disease and brain injury; cardio-metabolic disease; musculoskeletal disease and cancer genetics and immunology.

“The 14 areas are all worthy topics but the way research works these days, particularly in Australia, is that it is important to focus: to bring disparate researchers with common interests together so they see problems from multiple angles,” Prof. Marwick said.

“Those are the grant applications that are competitive and those are the research studies which achieve high impact, which are published in high-impact journals such as the New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet and BMJ.”

“So we have condensed those areas to five key topics relating to the burden of disease in Tasmania.”

A cardiovascular expert who specialises in cardiac imaging, Prof. Marwick was recruited from internationally renowned Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.

He was introduced at a Menzies supporters’ event by the former acting director Professor Alison Venn as someone who “brings to Tasmania a wealth of experience in medical research and teaching”. (His CV runs to 120 pages.)

“He has a strong interest in research directed at practical health outcomes,” she added.
At the art school READ honours the place of books

The Carington Smith Art Library at the Tasmanian School of Art has been transformed, with red walls and club-like seating creating a nostalgia for the time of the book.

ACCORDING TO art librarian Juliet Beale, the change was inspired by The Reading Room, a recent installation at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery by UTAS lecturer in fine arts, Dr Brigita Ozolins.

With the School of Art’s major renovations to accommodate the co-location of the Tasmanian Polytechnic and increase the vibrancy of the arts community at the Centre for the Arts, Juliet was considering ways to make the library a more vital and inviting place for its users.

“Libraries have been undergoing radical transformations in the past decade as we shift towards increasing digital formats of information and away from familiar physical formats,” she said.

“Now people have access to digital resources 24/7 if they want, from home, work and every location in between, using a range of personal devices.

“But there is an increased focus on the library as the third space, neither work nor home, and a huge resurgence in rebuilding and remodelling these spaces.”

According to Dr Ozolins: “We discussed installing a component of The Reading Room, a large-scale installation that featured around 30,000 discarded books and a video of over 60 Tasmanians from all walks of life reading a short passage from a favourite book.

“Visitors were literally gathered around a library”

- Shelby Foote, novelist and American Civil War historian

“...a university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library”

Amanda Dennis
Associate Professor Amanda Dennis has been appointed to the Northern Tasmanian Health Organisation’s governing council. Assoc. Prof. Dennis is head of electromics and genealogy at the Launceston General Hospital. The council is one of three regional governing councils established to make decisions in consultation with Tasmanian Health Organisation chief executives on how services are delivered to patients. The council reports to Health Minister Michelle O’Byrne and Parliament.

Rob White
Professor Rob White has won an award at the recent Brisbane conference of the Sociological Association of Australia for the best sociology book published in the past two years. His book, Transnational environmental crime – toward an eco-global criminology (Routledge 2011), explores crimes related to pollution, crimes against wildlife and those harms that pose threats to the environment more generally. In the past few weeks Prof. White has given a public lecture at the University of Michigan and been a keynote speaker at a Rome conference on the book’s subject matter.

Noel Davies
Associate Professor Noel Davies has been awarded the Royal Australian Chemical Institute Analytical Division Medal, presented this month at the institute’s meeting in Geelong, where he presented an invited lecture. The medal is awarded for excellence in pure or applied scientific work in Australia involving substantial analytical chemistry, or for service to analytical chemistry in Australia over the preceding 15 years. Previous UTAS medal winners were Professor Peter Alexander in 1997 and Professor Paul Haddad in 1993.

Carington Smith Art Library redesign: Based on an installation by Dr Brigita Ozolins, two areas have become rich, warm and lively backdrops to comfortable seating areas that are contemporary but also reference the past.

“...spending time with a book or listening to others read to them.”

- Jack Carington Smith (1908–1972) after whom the library was named, and Lucien Dechaineux (1869–1957) who became the principal and lecturer at the Hobart Technical College from 1908 to 1939.

There are also other artworks by art school staff, including an intricate three dimensional ‘monstrance’ by senior lecturer Paul Zika.

The result is spaces where students can reflect, contemplate, ruminate over ideas and engage with each other – and which honour the place of books and the strong emotional responses people have to them.

On campus

Another string to their bows

It’s enough to make you quiver: UTAS Newnham campus staff accessed their inner Robin Hood to participate in the Active UTAS archery session at Paringa Archery Club at the Trevallyn State Reserve. Sabine Hagstroem from the UTAS library, Paul Bloomfield and Michael Underhill from the AMC, Tim Parsell from the Student Centre and Helen Poumary from the AMC lined up their targets and showed remarkable accuracy for beginners.

Our people

Amanda Dennis
Associate Professor Amanda Dennis has been appointed to the Northern Tasmanian Health Organisation’s governing council. Assoc. Prof. Dennis is head of electromics and genealogy at the Launceston General Hospital. The council is one of three regional governing councils established to make decisions in consultation with Tasmanian Health Organisation chief executives on how services are delivered to patients. The council reports to Health Minister Michelle O’Byrne and Parliament.
Girl lead singers outshine guys to win Falls gig

“Craft is important but what I have tried to impress upon these students is that often performers who are at the top of their genre are not the most virtuosic. But they know how to put on a show.”

On the way to Marion Bay: Lead singer Leah Armond and guitarist David Lawson, members of the progressive metal band Infernal Outcry.

Set for the Falls Festival: Lead singer Katy Raucher and double bassist Blair Reardon from jazz/pop acoustic outfit Katy Raucher and the 3rd Row.

BY PETER COCHRANE

Two Conservatorium of Music bands led by Leah Armond and Katy Raucher will get their day in the sun at The Falls Music and Arts Festival beginning 29 December.

After hearing from nine bands of mostly males, the panel deciding on two bands to make Falls selected progressive metal band Infernal Outcry and jazz/pop acoustic outfit Katy Raucher and the 3rd Row.

A new sponsorship agreement between the festival management and Wotif founder Graeme Wood means the Con can now showcase its emerging young talent at Marion Bay.

Nine bands drawn from the cohort of 43 students who enrolled in a special Falls Festival unit at the Con this year auditioned for the two spots. Each band was given 15 minutes to perform two songs in front of a live audience and a judging panel including rock studies tutor Dean Stevenson, who doubled as MC, and Con director Dr Andrew Legg.

“Here’s your chance to shine in the sun,” Dean told the students before they hit the stage.

“Who’s got a show?” he asked. “Falls audiences want not just to hear a band but to see a band.”

Preparing for the auditions, students were treated to workshops by singer Maria Lurighi, veteran band manager Dario Phillips and former Badloves front man Michael Spiby.

The bands rising to the challenge straddled many genres and in the end two bands that couldn’t be further apart musically got the nod. Infernal Outcry, a progressive metal band whose lead singer, Leah Armond, was a welcome female presence on stage after five consecutive all-male groups got the first slot.

The second went to Katy Raucher’s jazz/pop acoustic outfit.

Another crowd favourite was the gypsy folk group Guerilla Zingari, which helped restore a gender balance in the second part of the evening and added variety to the sonic mix with double bass, piano accordion, harmonica and various exotic string instruments.

“The two bands selected will each have to engage a Falls audience with 10 tunes over 40 minutes,” Dean said of the judging criteria. “They will need to converse and connect with that audience.

“Craft is important but what I have tried to impress upon these students is that often performers who are at the top of their genre are not the most virtuosic. But they know how to put on a show.”

In conversation

Best wishes for celebrating 2012

Graduation ceremonies are always a source of joy, an opportunity to see the university’s accomplishments through the eyes of delighted students and proud parents. Our achievements resonate throughout our communities.

Our Strategic Plan, Open to Talent, recognises that by building a world-class university for Tasmania, we create opportunity and unleash talent. We must be global in our aspirations, hosting research programs that contribute to the most pressing issues for humanity and illuminate our reputation, providing curriculum and experience that enable our students to stride the world stage with confidence.

2012 brought welcome recognition of our teaching quality. We achieved significant national peer recognition of programs and teachers, competitive grant success and recognition of discipline scholars. By these measures at least, we can claim to be Australia’s leading teaching university.

Several indicators, including the prestigious Academic Ranking of World Universities, now position us around the top 10 Australian universities for research. We’ve nearly doubled our performance in national competitive grants and achieved dramatic improvement in outcomes from the ERA analysis of Australian research with 11 discipline areas at UTAS now national leaders.

Investment in infrastructure positions us for the future. This week we were able to announce the $75 million Academy of Creative Industries and Performing Arts (ACIPA), a statewide initiative that will position Tasmania on the global stage for cultural education and research. NBN-enabled connectivity will connect ACIPA with other major cultural institutions worldwide, enabling us to deliver a curriculum that transcends geography.

Our National Rental Affordability Scheme initiative, $100m to build 270 affordable student apartments, proceeds steadily, with plans to locate the majority of the apartments in the CBD of major Tasmanian cities. In partnership with the Tasmania University Union we have invested substantially to improve student support, catering and the vitality of clubs and societies.

Key to our achievements is, of course, our people; as the Chancellor often observes, it is debatable whether our staff or our students are our greatest assets. End-of-year functions provide an opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments of the university and the work of colleagues, and to farewell those who leave us. Their work is much appreciated. 2013 will see an ambitious recruitment drive, bringing at least 50 new academics to UTAS from around the world.

Finally, our Chancellor of six years, Damian Bugg, has stepped down from the University Council. UTAS has prospered under his stewardship and I would like to extend the best wishes of all staff to Damian and Jen for the next phase in their lives. Damian’s passion for this university will see him stay in close touch with us in 2013 unfurls.

With best wishes for a relaxing Christmas.

Peter Rathjen
Vice-Chancellor
www.utas.edu.au/vc
'It ain’t all bad': rethinking moral decline

We hear a lot that morality is in a state of decline in the contemporary West, says UTAS sociologist Dr Nicholas Hookway, but perhaps morality is in a better state than we think.

AUSTRALIAN commentators like Clive Hamilton and Hugh Mackay suggest that in the face of sky-rocketing divorce rates, the fragmentation of the nuclear family, shrinking households, lone households and the drying up of life-long commitments, morality is terminal.

The argument goes that as we become less likely to dine together – more individualised – we become less friendly, less kind and less giving.

Another group suggests that with the decline of religion and traditional forms of authority, Westerners have come narcissistic and uncaring as they become absorbed by a ‘therapeutic’ culture where the ‘self improved is the ultimate concern of modern culture’.

According to one researcher: “Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement: getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning how to ‘relate’, overcoming the ‘fear of pleasure’.

I’d like to offer three preliminary criticisms that I believe help proffer a more positive reading of the current health of morality.

First, there is an insistence in both strands of moral decline that the weakening of external agencies such as faith, community and tradition has rendered the moral order terminal. Such a perspective fails to acknowledge immorality as a potential corollary of society and offers a rather ‘romantic’ image of community, overlooking how the insistence on a common value system can silence individual moral responsibility and exclude alternative moral voices.

Second, both traditions offer a one-dimensional view of cultures of therapy and self-fulfilment as unavoidable egoistic and self-absorbed. In doing so, they overlook the morally creative potential of contemporary cultural values of self-development and self-fulfilment. For example, does the turn to ‘the wisdom of the East’ or ‘eating health food’ have to be read as indices of a meaningless and narcissistic moral impoverishment?

Does the ‘wisdom of the East’, captured for example in the recent growth of Buddhism in Australia, not centre on an ethics of minimising suffering for self and others? Further, recent research on food and the ethics of consumption shows how the growth of fairtrade and cruelty-free products, the slow food movement, practices of ‘buy-cotting’ and vegetarianism can figure in new forms of lifestyle politics, engender new modes of ethical citizenship and encourage a virtuous ‘politics of the self’.

The third is an empirical critique. We hear a lot about the ‘end of morality’ but how do Australians actually understand and experience morality? In a nationally representative survey with 2000 respondents on how kind they see themselves and other Australians, my colleagues – Daphne Habibis and Anthea Vreugdenhil – and I found that 95% of respondents believe that it is quite or very important to be kind to one another; 97% agreed that they see themselves as a kind person; 90% reported performing a kind act at least once a week and 82% say they most Australians are quite or very kind.

These findings suggest that rather than lamenting the inevitable slide of morality with the weakening of traditional forms of authority perhaps it is time to think about how self-created forms of morality rooted in notions of self-authenticity, emotion and care can figure as part of a renaissance of morality in contemporary times.

The jury is still out but perhaps morality is in a better state than we think.

This article is an edited version of one originally published on The Conversation website: http://theconversation.edu.au

AMC works on a healthier river for Launceston

By Nicole Mayne

Researchers at the Australian Maritime College have taken part in a Tamar River raking trial, hoping to improve the river for the community.

The Launceston Flood Authority is investigating raking as an alternative to dredging to improve the amenity of the Tamar River.

Dr Andrew Fischer, Martin Filleul and marine environment student Shane Walters monitored the 10-day trial. Near the tailrace at Riverside a rake was fitted to the rear of the fishing boat Karmin to scour silt away from the mud banks.

“The process of raking stirs up the sediment and during a high tidal flow period this sediment would be picked up off the bottom and washed away,” Dr Fischer said.

“There are concerns that elevated levels of metals may get stirred up when the raking proceeds. We were involved in monitoring to see what’s in the sediment and to minimise the impacts these contaminants may have on the Tamar’s water quality and ecology and on human health.”

The AMC team took sediment cores and water samples from the trial to be tested. These results were then delivered to the Environment Protection Authority, responsible for issuing the raking permits.

“Human activity has changed the estuary; this is the first step towards possibly rectifying it for the benefit of user groups such as boaters, fishers and tourism operators.”

It is hoped that AMC’s involvement in the raking trial could turn into a larger project, including evaluating the proposed river restoration options such as developing a lake or barrages.
Making sense of marine data on Maria

BY PETER COCHRANE

Faced with a growing mass of data about reef systems gathered by volunteer divers in 36 countries, IMAS researchers Professor Graham Edgar and Dr Rick Stuart-Smith hit on a grand plan: stage a workshop on a remote Tasmanian island and invite some of the world’s leading marine ecologists to help make sense of it all.

“Thus what would take Graham and Rick years to analyse can be achieved in two weeks, with 15 to 20 papers as output,” IMAS’ Fisheries, Aquaculture and Coasts Centre director Professor Colin Buxton explained on the first day.

The Reef Life Survey global dataset is the most extensive and detailed dataset on coastal marine life to have been collected through standardised methods, gathered from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego and many points in between.

“We can tell you that there are on average 50 species per 500 m square in this part of the world and 25 species per 500 m square in that part of the world – which species, which families, how abundant they are,” Dr Stuart-Smith said.

The workshop site was Maria Island, its isolation ensuring workshop participants would not be distracted (except by the stunning scenery). Its permanent human population is no more than three to four Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service rangers, kept company by day trippers and overnight campers attracted by its rugged beauty and marine reserve.

The logistics were challenging for the organisers, as a handful of international researchers who arrived too late for the regular 3pm Sunday ferry service to the island discovered – they made the 12-km crossing from Triabunna by a dinghy at 6 o’clock that night.

The workshop was held in the old convict probation station at Darlington. Participants were accommodated in the penitentiary, which dates back to the 1830s and has changed little since then; occupants sleep in bunk beds and are without electricity.

To recharge their laptops, and to collaborate on the analysis of the dataset, the researchers would head for the 1847 chapel, where IMAS technical officer Antonia Cooper and her team had created an IT hub, rigging up wi-fi and a local network.

For meals they’d go to the mess hall, fitted out recently with a basic commercial kitchen, and electricity and gas connected.

“We can tell you that there are on average 50 species per 500 m square in this part of the world and 25 species per 500 m square in that part of the world – which species, which families, how abundant they are.”

On the beach: Dr Mike Becerro from the Canary Islands, Dr Ed Parness from San Diego and UTAS’ Dr Rick Stuart-Smith experience the pristine Maria Island environment.

Chef (and marine ecologist): Kevin Redd prepares dinner in the mess hall on Maria Island.

Lunch in paradise: Researchers lunch on day one of the Maria Island workshop – checked out by inquisitive Cape Barren Geese.

Spike takes a dip: This echidna fascinated scientists as it took a swim in a channel off the beach at Darlington Bay.

“W e can tell you that there are on average 50 species per 500 m square in this part of the world and 25 species per 500 m square in that part of the world – which species, which families, how abundant they are.”

5

Feature
By LANA BEST

Two national awards for university teaching worth $25,000 each but much more in terms of reputation, rankings and internal pride have been awarded to two teams of educators from UTAS in Launceston.

The Patient Partner Program (P3) run by the School of Medicine’s Launceston Clinical School and the Maths Education Team from the School of Education have both been recognised by the Australian Government’s Office for Learning and Teaching.

The 10 Programs that Enhance Learning awards were made by the tertiary education minister, Senator Chris Evans, recognising learning and teaching support programs and services that make an outstanding contribution to the quality of student learning and the student experience of higher education.

In winning two awards, UTAS out-performed 32 other nominations.

The 17-strong Patient Partners Program team led by Jenny Barr won the Innovation in Curricula, Learning and Teaching category.

The Maths Education Team, consisting of 10 academics led by Associate Professor Kim Beswick, won the Social Science category of the Teaching Excellence Awards.

Assoc Prof Kim Beswick said that the maths team is finding better ways to help education students overcome their fear of maths, building their knowledge and confidence to ensure they are more than capable of teaching maths by the time they graduate.

"Many of our education students haven’t done maths since Grade 10 so the way it’s reintroduced is important – just as it’s important for them to keep learning maths after they graduate,” she said.

One initiative of the maths team has been to send groups of three or four education students to a school for six consecutive weeks where they work intensively with small groups of children in the classroom.

“They don’t have to concentrate on teaching a class like they do during prac, and they’re not being assessed by the teacher – they get time to plan their lesson and talk to the teacher as a colleague about what works best for each child, as well as critiquing each other and then going back and trying to do it better.”

Maths Education team members: Associate Professor Kim Beswick, Mrs Dianne Ashman, Associate Professor Rosemary Callingham, Associate Professor Helen Chick, Mr Bruce Dancey, Mrs Virginia Kinneer, Mr David McBain, Dr Tracey Muir, Dr Robyn Reaburn, Mr Brett Stephenson and Professor Emerita Jane Watson.

P3 team members: Associate Professor Kim Rooney, Mrs Jenny Barr, Dr Kathryn Ogden, Associate Professor Jan Radford, Mrs Maria Unwin, Dr Helen Parkes, Dr Andrew Hordson, Dr Beth Mulligan, Dr Helen Deane, Dr Jane Strong, Dr Ali Kidman, Dr Natasha Vavrek, Dr Di Seaton, Dr Winnie Ho, Dr Amanda Harmon, Dr Maureen Ryan and Mr Adam Hill.

Bouquets

David Green
Professor Emeritus David Green has been awarded the prestigious Medal of the International Mineralogical Association for “sustained excellence in mineralogical research.” An honorary research associate in the UTAS School of Earth Sciences and in CODES, Prof. Green received the medal and presented the plenary address at the European Mineralogical Congress in Frankfurt, Germany. He said the conference provided an excellent reunion with UTAS alumni who had earned their PhDs in 1977–1994. Following the European visit, Prof. Green spent three weeks in China giving nine lectures at universities and research institutes and gave the inaugural Shenju Sun Memorial Lecture at the annual National Conference of Petrology and Geodynamics in Lanzhou.

Emily Bremner
UTAS Bachelor of Tourism student Emily Bremner was recently awarded the Skal International Hobart Tourism Student of the Year for 2012 at the recent Tasmanian Tourism Awards. The award recognises an outstanding tourism student and their commitment to contribute to the development of a vibrant and professional tourism industry in Tasmania. Part of Emily’s prize is a three-month internship at the Skal Tourism Institute in Launceston. Emily also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree this year.

Ramnik Singh Walia
UTAS journalism graduate and Tasmanian broadcaster Ramnik Singh Walia has been named best youth broadcaster of the year at the National Ethnic and Multicultural Council’s 2012 conference in Adelaide. Ramnik has worked for two years at City Park Radio, Launceston’s volunteer community radio station, broadcasting in Indian language to the city’s Indian community. Ramnik’s award entry highlighted the experiences of people who work in the taxi industry in Launceston: a documentary about how technology has helped improved the services of the taxi industry in Launceston. Ramnik holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and was awarded his master’s in journalism, media and communications in 2011.

Whitey Bejah
UTAS business student Whitey Bejah will start work in 2013 as a financial planner with Launceston business financialpartners with the added achievement of a Tasmania University Union Mount Nelson Award to her name. At a special ceremony last week 22-year-old Whitey received a certificate and $3,000 as the Mount Nelson Award winner; she will graduate with a Bachelor of Business, majoring in marketing and resource management and follow with PhD studies in the Mount Nelson Award established by students for students, recognises not only academic and practical achievements by an individual but also their potential for success in their chosen field and the community at large.

National award for two teams of teachers

Finding better ways to help education students overcome their fear of maths: Four of the National award-winning UTAS Maths Education Team members Dianne Ashman, Dr Tracey Muir, Assoc. Prof. Kim Beswick and Virginia Kinneer.

By CHERIE COOPER

AN OFFER by a friendly stranger has won Louise Oseyel the 2012 Shoalhaven Literary Award for Poetry.

The UTAS associate lecturer in student learning, learning skills advisor and poet created her winning poem Invitation to Earnscliffe while she was on a Tasmanian Writers’ Centre residency in 2011 on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

At Louise consulted with writers and provided feedback on their manuscripts at the University of Prince Edward Island, a woman who’d come for a chat offered Louise the use of her daughter’s empty house on the coast – the Earnscliffe of the poem.

“There was something quite emotional about it, that someone had been so generous,” Louise said.

“I asked about the keys and she said: ‘Oh we never lock the house.’

“I started to describe this beautiful weatherboard house by the sea; that’s how the poem arose.

‘Later I was sorry I didn’t dedicate it to that woman but I will if it is published.”

Judging the award, Assajjin poetry editor Judith Beveridge said the poem engaged her attention from the outset for its finely-wrought details and images drawing her strongly into the landscape and scenes.

Louise has won $1,000 and a two-week residency at Arthur Boyd’s Bundanoon artist complex on the Shoalhaven River in NSW.

Kindness of a stranger inspires award-winning poem

Bundanoon, for Louise Oseyel

We never lock the house: Earnscliffe, the Canadian home that inspired Louise Oseyel’s award-winning poem.

“We never lock the house”: Earnscliffe, the Canadian home that inspired Louise Oseyel’s award-winning poem.

“We never lock the house”: Earnscliffe, the Canadian home that inspired Louise Oseyel’s award-winning poem.

“I never lock the house.”

Louise Oseyel’s winning poem Invitation to Earnscliffe while she was on a Tasmanian Writers’ Centre residency in 2011 on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

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Read Invitation to Earnscliffe online: http://www.fawnswshoalhaven.org.au

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North West vegetable facility gets facelift

“The whole idea of the upgrade was to bring the infrastructure up to a point where we can lead by example.”

Creating a centre of excellence: TIA’s Vegetable Research Facility at Forthside.

BY ELIZA WOOD

THE TASMANIAN Institute of Agricultural’s Vegetable Research Facility at Forthside has had a facelift, been kitted out with modern technology and given a new name. TIA’s Sue Hinton says irrigation mains have been replaced, tractors have been set up with guidance technology, and an old shed has been turned into a laboratory. New OH&S-friendly farm equipment has also been bought.

“The whole idea of the upgrade was to bring the infrastructure up to a point where we can lead by example,” she said.

“We’re creating a centre of excellence to support the vegetable industry so we all need to work together to ensure we’ve got a positive future.” Used by TIA researchers and companies working in the vegetable industry, the facility’s upgrades aim to increase its relevance to vegetable farmers.

Horticultural scientist Dr Mark Boersma will use the site to trial biochar in vegetable production and Botanical Resources Australia is currently looking at varieties of Artemisia, a plant that produces anti-malarial medication.

Research around controlled traffic farming, precision irrigation, and pathogens affecting potato production continue.

The 50-year-old facility was taken over by TIA from the State Government in 2007.

Simplot has conducted trials for many years, improving potato production, selecting pea and bean varieties; the company is revisiting commercial broad bean growing after a 17-year break.

Devonport-based Peracto is also a long-time user of the site, valuing the confidentiality of the staff when conducting commercially sensitive work.

A field day was held in late November to show-off the improvements.

By Ian Copland, Ian Mabbett, Asim Roy (UTAS School of History and Classics), Kate Brittlebank, Adam Bowles (Routledge, 2012)

This book aims to understand and explain the problems concerning some of modern and contemporary India’s salient political, social and cultural institutions and ideologies such as nationalism, democracy, secularism and tolerant pluralism.

In seeking answers to those complex issues the chosen approach in this study bears on the long durée historical methodology of the French Annales School. Spanning the whole gamut of Indian history from ancient times through the middle ages and the British colonial to post-colonial decades of independent India, the volume seeks to explore and capture the transient interface of religion and governance in India as a key note to this epic story.

Kate Cashman, postgraduate in the UTAS Faculty of Law, is looking at how lawyers use, understand and challenge DNA evidence in criminal cases.

Because of the “CSI effect” (an implicit acceptance of DNA evidence) those in the legal profession are struggling with forensic evidence to the extent that there have been serious miscarriages of justice. Kate’s research is part of an ARC-funded project based at UTAS and involving universities in Sydney and Switzerland, the Australian Federal Police, Victorian Policing and the National Institute of Forensic Science.

“I examined cases in our two project jurisdictions, Victoria and the ACT, and found DNA has been quite a large part of a lot of big criminal law cases.

“A couple of big miscarriages of justice cases occurred as a result of problems with DNA and forensic evidence,” Kate said.

“Because it involves people error that can occur at any stage in the process: an error in the crime scene or in the lab, for example.”

Because of the CSI effect influencing jurors, it is up to lawyers to learn how to understand and use DNA evidence more effectively.

“Jurors, lawyers, sometimes even judges, trust DNA evidence because they feel they are not scientists. That is what lawyers find difficult to deal with.”

Kate’s research found the difficulties lawyers face fall into three areas:

- They struggle with science statistics and scientific methods and terms;
- Procedure: Who to talk to, what happens at a crime scene, what happens in a lab and how things are stored;
- Communication: difficulty talking to scientists and investigators.

“We cannot expect lawyers to become experts in DNA, when they have to look at ballistics one week, chemical drugs one week, then something else.”

“I believe the eventual recommendations will focus instead on having information available to them and if when they need it and a process in place which means they know who to talk to and what questions to ask.”

Kate has about six months of her PhD remaining.

She plans to go into criminal law but would love to balance academia with practice.

“There is so much interesting research to be done into how forensic operates in the justice system.”

Kate was also the winner of the 2012 UTAS Three-Minute Thesis competition. She went on to represent UTAS in the Trans-Tasman Competition in October.

The Value of Water in a Dying Climate

Edited by Tor Hundloe, University of Queensland and Christine Crawford, UTAS Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies; Contributors include Jeff Rass and Barry Gallagher, IMAS (CSIRO Publishing, 2012)

After climate change, disputes over water allocations are the dominant environmental and public policy issues of the present era. This timely book establishes a template for all types of resource allocation disputes and gradually evolves to become the story of everyday life of one small Australian catchment. A team of ecologists, economists and sustainability experts spent three years interviewing people in the Little Swanport catchment, seeking answers to the optimal allocation of water on the Tasmanian East Coast. The hinterland of this area produces some of the most valuable merino wool in the world, the estuaries grow mouth-watering oysters, and much of the land is in near-pristine condition, providing valuable biodiversity resources.

A History of State and Religion in India

By Iain Copland, Ian Mabbett, Asim Roy (UTAS School of History and Classics), Kate Brittlebank, Adam Bowles (Routledge, 2012)

Tasmania: Island of Treasures

By Pam Sharpe, UTAS School of History and Classics, and Sue Atkinson (40 Degrees South, 2012)

Tasmania is well known for its built heritage and its many beautiful Georgian and Victorian buildings; whole villages are straight from the pages of history. Accompanying this built heritage is a rich collection of beautiful and significant artefacts. The state collection is on display in the larger population centres and in a fascinating array of smaller museums curated by an army of dedicated volunteers. This beautifully produced book featuring 133 museums and history groups celebrates our physical links with the past and acknowledges the people, amateur and professional, who ensure the survival of our physical cultural heritage.
It’s all about moi at Christmas

BY CHERIE COOPER

When Christmas rolls around, what do we do? We eat and drink a lot. And we spend, spend, spend.

Gift buying is big part of consumer culture during the holiday season. Often we feel the gift says much more about us, the purchaser, than the person we’re buying it for.

Consumer behaviour expert Associate Professor Martin Grimmer from the UTAS Faculty of Business said many people experience anxiety about gift giving.

“A gift is a publically consumed item and usually people go to more trouble looking for a gift for someone else than when buying for themselves, because they are worried about what the gift says about them.

“Products are an expression of identity, so what you buy reflects who you are, to a greater or lesser extent.”

With most gift prices plummeting Boxind Day, why do we continue to spend big in the lead up to Christmas?

Assoc. Prof. Grimmer said we are bound by the occasion of Christmas – and we also don’t want purchase was overpriced or faulty, if someone tries to tell us our purchase was overpriced or faulty, we don’t want to listen to that. People tend not to listen to that. People don’t want confirmation for the decision they have made. They don’t want to experience ‘post-purchase dissonance’, as it is called.”

Assoc. Prof. Grimmer said Christmas seems to start earlier every year.

“Christmas starts in October and I believe people are getting more cynical about that.”

And what about those everyday items that are specially Christmas-themed to entice us to spend during the festive season, like biscuit tins shaped like Santa?

“There is also an increasing cynicism about that.

“I don’t think people are necessarily persuaded to buy products tied to a specific event – but that’s just my intuition.”

There is exception to the rule though: children.

“Having said that, if you do pop-up displays and put them at kid height, it always works.

‘Point-of-purchase displays and check-out items are designed for ‘pester power’, which is extraordinarily effective.’

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