

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



New museum honours father of radio astronomy

A new museum celebrating the life and achievements of the late radio astronomer, Dr Grote Reber, has been officially opened at the University of Tasmania's Mt Pleasant Observatory.

The museum, developed by the UTAS School of Maths and Physics in cooperation with the Launceston Planetarium at the Queen Victoria Museum, was officially opened by Dr Ken Kellermann, a world-renowned radio astronomer from the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Dr Reber, who moved from the United States to Tasmania in the late 1950s, was the father of radio astronomy and the first person to build a "big dish" antenna for the purpose of mapping the sky at radio frequencies.

He discovered many discrete radio sources and mapped the band of bright radio emission from our Galaxy, the Milky Way.

The museum includes exhibits of Dr Reber's telescopes, his life's work and his many other interests. A unique feature is Dr Reber's original radio shack, which was the control building for a 1.5km-wide radio telescope grid he built at his home in Bothwell, and which has been installed at the museum with Dr Reber's original radio equipment in place.

Another feature of the museum is a virtual-reality theatre, provided by the Swinburne University of Technology, which will screen entertaining and educational movies and demonstrations in 3D for school groups and other interested community groups.

Dr Reber relocated to Tasmania because of its unique location at high magnetic latitude in the southern hemisphere. He spent 40 years studying low frequency emissions with telescopes he built himself, both alone and with the UTAS School of Physics.

His accomplishments are remarkable in radio astronomy, electrical powered transport and also in the carbon dating of aboriginal settlements. Dr Reber died of cancer at the age of 90 on 20 December 2002, two days before his 91st birthday.

The museum is open to the public from early March, by appointment only. Contact Karen Bradford, UTAS Maths and Physics, on 6226 2439 for bookings.

For more information on the museum:

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