UTAS graduate ‘blown away’ by $30,000 Vogel win

BY LUKE SCOTT

When Rohan Wilson was a UTAS undergraduate studying creative writing, he hoped one day he might be published.

Now he has – and he’s won the prestigious 30th annual Vogel Literary Award for young unpublished Australian authors, an award that kicked off the career of his idol, author Tim Winton.

A UTAS honours arts graduate, Launceston-based Rohan was announced winner of the $30,000 Vogel by Winton at a ceremony in Sydney.

Rohan, who graduated from UTAS in 1998, said he was blown away to win the award for his first novel The Roving Party, set in colonial Tasmania.

The novel explores the life of northern Tasmanian businessman and founder of Melbourne, John Batman, and the fledgling colony’s relationship with Tasmanian Aborigines.

“You never expect to receive an award like this,” Rohan said.

“You put your application in and cross your fingers but you don’t expect to win.

“To pull it off is unbelievable – an affirmation of all that hard work.”

The Australian newspaper’s chief literary critic and Vogel judge Geordie Williamson said while Rohan’s entry was “not the smoothest manuscript in competition … it impelled the judges’ attentions like no other book”.

“I always knew it was a good story, it was just whether I had the ability to tell it the way it deserved to be told.”

“The language with which the author relates events arrests the reader most,” Williamson said.

“It is self-consciously archaic, comma-wary, a combination of fragments and rolling sentences that combine gruesome verisimilitude with hallucinatory flights.”

When Rohan’s job teaching English in Japan fell through he was stranded far from home and decided to do something with the long-germinating idea of a novel about Batman.

“I’d been reading around the subject since early 2001 but didn’t start writing until 2007.

“A lot of the research I did at the State Library. But some things, like John Batman’s diary, were only available in Victoria so I had to make special appointments to see them in the archives section and put the white gloves on to view them.

“I always knew it was a good story, it was just whether I had the ability to tell it the way it deserved to be told.”

Rohan didn’t see a copy of the book until after he won the Vogel.

“It was incredible to just hold it,” he said.

And he believes his time studying at UTAS helped him make his idea for a novel into reality.

“I loved my time at UTAS, there’s no doubt,” he said. “A lot of what I know about writing I learned at UTAS. It was essential for me.”

Why rural women run (and why they don’t)

IT’S WELL KNOWN that people who live in rural areas have poorer health than their city counterparts, and rural women are less active than city women. But why is this?

The Menzies Research Institute thinks the lower physical activity levels may be due to differences in the features of the built and natural environment where rural women live, work and play.

Environmental features such as footpaths, street lighting and having common destinations within walking distance have been found to be important for physical activity among urban women. But Dr Cleland says that because rural environments are so different from urban areas, the features important for physical activity are also likely to be different.

“Rural areas have large open spaces, low population densities and limited access to walking and cycling tracks and recreational centres. But little research has tried to understand how features of the environment influence rural women’s participation in physical activities,” she said.

“We would like to hear from rural women about these issues and listen to their ideas for any changes that could be made to the environment that might support them in being more active. This research aims to identify the major barriers to physical activity among rural women, and see if we can find ways to overcome these barriers,” she said.

Women aged 18–55 years who live in Geeveston, Bothwell, Hamilton, Ouse, Penguin or Ulverstone are asked to register their interest by calling 03 6226 7712 or emailing ruralwomen@utas.edu.au

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One-stop shop for Hobart arts students

By Cherie Cooper

For arts students handing in essays will be easier than ever with the launch of the new Arts Student Central services point in the Sandy Bay campus Arts Faculty.

The new streamlined services point provides a central location (Level 2, social sciences) for students from the seven schools within the faculty to submit assignments and get information about courses, units and tutorials.

Dean of the faculty, Professor Sue Dodds, said the new service point will be a helpful way to streamline support and information for students and will soon provide a one-stop service for assignment submission and collection.

Largest-ever partner joins plan to save the Tassie devil

PLAN TO SAVE the Tasmanian devil has become the catch-cry of Australia’s leading producer of diaries, planners and organisers with the announcement of their new partnership with the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal.

Collins Debden has partnered with the appeal, Australia’s official response to the rare and contagious devil facial tumour disease which has wiped out more than 90 per cent of the wild devil population.

The partnership will take the message about the plight of the devil to millions across the world.

Collins Debden managing director, Steve Ferrerri, said: “Now and then you have the opportunity to make a difference. Collins Debden wants to help Australia avoid what could only be described as a potential national tragedy if we allow this animal to be lost.”

The arrangement is expected to raise substantial funds for the devil through in-store promotions and fundraising by Collins Debden, their customers, and the general public.

The Collins Debden catalogue of diaries and planners for 2012 will include a limited edition diary featuring a devil on the cover.

Manager of the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program Appeal, Jess Tyler, said Collins Debden had approached the appeal enthusiastically and energetically – the epitome of the model of the way forward in helping to save the Tasmanian devil.

Date with the devil: Collins Debden is the largest partner to pledge assistance to the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal.

One of the world’s largest partner joins the plan to save the Tasmanian devil.

AFMA is the Australian Government agency responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fish resources. Dr Findlay had been acting CEO since September 2010, responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fish resources. Dr Findlay had been acting CEO since September 2010, responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fish resources. Dr Findlay had been acting CEO since September 2010, responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fish resources. Dr Findlay had been acting CEO since September 2010, responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fish resources. Dr Findlay had been acting CEO since September 2010, responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fish resources.

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Our people

Derek Colquhoun

Professor Derek Colquhoun from the University of Hull in the UK has been appointed the new head of the School of Education.

Professor Colquhoun currently holds the position of chair in urban learning in the Centre for Educational Studies at Hull. He is also director of research in the Education Faculty there.

A prolific author, Prof. Colquhoun previously has held positions at Deakin University, the University of Ballarat and Victoria University.

Prof. Colquhoun will take up the position in September this year; he will be located at the UTAS Newnham campus.

Ian Hay

The dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor Ian Hay, has been appointed by the Australian Council of Deans of Education to represent the teacher education sector in a new national approach to teacher accreditation programs in Australia.

Prof. Hay will collaborate with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership as they prepare supporting documentation, recruit and train accreditation panel members and liaise with teacher education providers to implement the new national approach.

The move is aimed at producing teacher education programmes of a consistently high quality across Australia.

James Findlay

Dr James Findlay, formerly UTAS senior lecturer in genetics in the Department of Applied Science, was appointed CEO of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) in April.

AFMA is the Australian Government agency responsible for the efficient and sustainable management of Commonwealth fish resources. Dr Findlay had been acting CEO since September 2010, and his appointment is on a full-time basis for five years.

Dr Findlay has had a long association with the agriculture, fisheries and forestry portfolio, working in the former Bureau of Rural Sciences as general manager of the Climate Change, Water and Risk Sciences Branch, and the Fisheries, Land, Forestry and Social Sciences Branch.

Do you have a tidbit for ‘Our people’? Email news snippets on UTAS people to: Media.Office@utas.edu.au and mark your email subject: ‘Our people’.

Unitas

Unitas is the monthly newsletter of the University of Tasmania. It is printed on soy-based ink, on stock which is 80 per cent recycled and 20 per cent total chlorine-free pulp (FSC Mixed Source Certified). Aluminium printing plates are also recycled after use.

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Contributions are welcome, but items with a release appeal will be given priority. The Editor reserves the right to edit copy or hold it over for a later issue and is under no obligation to publish contributed material. The opinions expressed in Unitas are not necessarily those of UTAS. For a list of Unitas deadlines and guidelines, visit us at: www.utas.edu.au/units/unitas.html

UTAS values workshop

STAFF FROM ACROSS UTAS have been involved in the development of a statement of values, a document aimed at discovering which organisational values are most important to UTAS staff.

After initial work on developing such a statement last year, it was decided as many staff as possible from across all areas of UTAS should have input. Workshops have been held at the Launceston, Cradle Coast and Hobart campuses.

The statement of values process will help determine which values are important to the University of Tasmania. For more information on the process visit the Shape our future: developing a UTAS Statement of Values website.
Bodily warmth moulds Alexandra’s clay

BY CHERIE COOPER

Netherlands artist Alexandra Engelbrecht uses tonnes of clay to create her art – kneading, rolling, crawling in it, using bodily warmth to mould and shape it.

The end result is a curious, rippling field of stiffened clay that will eventually return to the earth it was taken from.

Alexandra recently worked on campus the UTAS Tasmanian School of Art in Hobart, creating an installation in the school’s courtyard out of four tonnes of raw clay.

To create the work, 'Reclain,' she enlisted the assistance of enthusiastic university and polytechnic art students who eagerly stepped in, shaping the wide field of clay and sometimes losing their boots in the creative process.

Head of the School of Art, Professor Noel Frankham, said it was an honour to have Alexandra working with the students.

"During her residency here Alexandra has also delivered a fantastic art forum for students and staff about her art practice."

"It is wonderful UTAS and polytechnic art students could be involved in the creation of this installation and see the processes Alexandra uses in her large-scale clay pieces," he said.

Alexandra was in Tasmania for Woodfire Tasmania 2011, a gathering of international ceramists who create their work using woodfired rather than gasfired kilns. She has worked for more than 12 years with materials from the earth that can be kneaded and shaped, including silt, clay, sand, loam, earth and snow.

Alexandra works on a large scale, working all over the world to create monumental environment-based works: a film of her making bodily patterns in the huge mudbanks on the coast of the Netherlands is mesmerising viewing.

She also creates ceramic sculptures and has recently begun to make smaller woodfired works for exhibition that typically reflect the bows, fields and ripples of the raw materials that she manipulates for her larger works.

This artist-in-residence collaboration between the Tasmanian Polytechnic and UTAS has been supported by the Pathways Project: www.pathways.tas.edu.au

Appeal-ing support for students

SAMANTHA ALLAN has competed against 850 applicants to win the 2011 UTAS Annual Appeal Scholarship.

"I am so excited to have this opportunity to further study the subjects which have been my passion since high school," she said.

"Since starting my studies at UTAS I have been challenged and stimulated every day by my lecturers and fellow students."

The Annual Appeal is currently supporting four students in their studies. They are Samantha Allan (BSc-BE), Jesse Swan (BSc), Cameron Ritchie (BA-LLB) and Stuart Paul (BEHon).

The scholarship honours the commitment of UTAS alumni and friends to the success of UTAS students.

Additional support will enable the increase in not only the number of scholarships, but also their value.

UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said he supports the aims of the UTAS Foundation to increase the number and value of Annual Appeal Scholarships offered to students each year, from one scholarship valued at $3,000 per year to four valued at $5,000 per year.

"The Development Fund also has an ambitious goal of reaching $3 million over the next few years. These goals can only be achieved with the generous support of the UTAS community," Prof. Rathjen said.

"I would ask supporters of the university to contribute to providing a UTAS student with the opportunity to excel."

In recognition of the generosity of donors and to ensure this year’s Annual Appeal has real impact for students in need of financial assistance, the UTAS Foundation will match all donations to the appeal.

For more information about the Annual Appeal or to donate please visit www.utas.edu.au/annual-appeal

Samantha Allan: Winner of the 2011 UTAS Annual Appeal Scholarship.

In conversation

Professor Peter Rathjen
VICE-CHANCELLOR

Our international friends

Universities have traditionally provided refuges where teachers and students can come together free of restriction in the interests of learning and the pursuit of knowledge. As such they are pioneers of globalisation, participating in the international community and bringing international perspective and profile to the surrounding community.

I have had cause to consider this recently, after another spate of cowardly attacks on our students in our community. Once again, whether opportunistic or more targeted, these attacks involved our international students – young people who have left their homes and chosen to come to Australia, and in particular Tasmania, to pursue their academic studies.

While UTAS works with the State Government, Tasmania Police and a number of other organisations and individuals to tackle the issue of student safety from the ground up, the university also has a leadership role to play in articulating to the wider Tasmanian community the benefits of internationalisation.

This university is an institution founded on principles of almost a millennia – part of its mission is to create an environment where academic inquiry transcends geographical and political barriers for the advancement of humanity.

UTAS actively encourages and welcomes students and staff from around the world to its campuses. Those that are attracted come not just for the opportunity to study at this university but also because of the location, the environment and the community that is Tasmania.

Tasmania gains in turn from interaction with international students – there is a broadening and enriching of cultural perspective and intellect, social and economic benefit. Our communities are enriched and strengthened, increasingly civil and urbane, welcoming and tolerant.

While international students are in Tasmania they want to be part of our community, from campus life through social interaction to enjoyment of our superb natural setting. At UTAS we try to deliver a student experience of this richness, working hand-in-hand with the community to add to our undoubted attractiveness as destination.

If we are to be a forward-thinking, innovative yet sustainable institution for Tasmania we need to embrace internationalisation completely, welcoming staff and students from all nations into a society based on respect and civility, and providing the safe environment that they rightly expect.

Peter Rathjen
www.utas.edu.au/vc
Recently, new University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor PETER RATHJEN inadvertently sparked a debate about the Tasmanian education system. His experience and knowledge of education nationally and internationally does not include a system that ends one stream at grade 10 to transfer students to a separate college system. He wondered whether it served Tasmania’s needs as well as it might.

Education continues to be highly valued by communities across the world today and by Australia. In much of Europe and Asia OECD data show that the rates for high school completion equal or exceed 90 per cent, and that 70 per cent of young adults enter tertiary programs. The reasons are straightforward. AMP estimates that over a working lifetime university graduates earn $4.5m, or 70 per cent more, than those less qualified. With this in mind the Australian government has set national targets of 90 per cent year 12 retention by 2015 and 40 per cent of young Australians with a university degree by 2025.

In comparison, the situation in Tasmania is sobering. Retention rates from year 10 to year 12 last year were 70.7 per cent with 16.6 per cent of our population being University graduates. We have important regional peculiarities — in the north-west and west coast regions, university graduates make up only eight per cent of the community. Yet when I visit the north-west I see opportunities yet to be harnessed — for example, there are advanced, technology-based companies, which are playing a critical role in supporting Australia’s mining boom but which are forced to source their engineers from overseas. I wonder why we are not providing this expertise.

Higher education is not for all, and this debate is not just about people going to university. It is about creating life options for all through educational engagement. Those who find rewarding and challenging lives without participating in further education and training are fortunate. Nonetheless, we serve the broader interests of society most effectively by encouraging participation in education and by removing any barriers or perverse incentives that might discourage our youth from pursuing this destiny. In this context it seems reasonable to raise questions about the structure, effectiveness and culture of our secondary education system.

To look to the future is not to criticise the past. Times have changed. Structures that have served us well may need to be challenged and altered. It can take courage to challenge the status quo and to propose change. But this is the centu- ries-old role of great universities, and I am delighted that UTAS can stimulate such an important debate.

Students find time to give through Oaktree

These students believe education is the strongest force to sustainably lift people out of extreme poverty. “We have 25 core team members and 30 students in our Generate program,” Jess said.

“They’re students who don’t have a lot of time to campaigns but know they want to help with poverty, so they meet once a week and find out how they can help.”

Jess, 22, is studying arts at UTAS, concentrating on international relations and sociology.

She became involved in Oaktree after taking part in the organisation’s 2007 road trip, a campaign tool used at election time or against or a political movement wishing to cut aid.

“Several hundred people travelled from their capital city to Sydney, campaigning along the way,” Jess said.

“There wasn’t a group from Tasmania so I joined the Melbourne group. Then I started the Tasmanian branch.”

“In 2010 we had 50 leave from Tasmania on the road trip and that was the foundation on which we built the current branch,” she said.

Jess will continue her role until the end of 2012, after graduation she plans study for a masters in international development.

“I want to work in aid and development; women’s and children’s rights is my main area of passion,” she said.

Oaktree has a Live Below the Line campaign coming up. The age limit for Oaktree is 16 to 26. To become involved in the Oaktree Foundation see http://theoaktree.org/
Photographer Tim Moss turns the ordinary into the extraordinary.

In Tim’s new exhibition on the Cradle Coast campus, he seeks to share some of the ‘ordinary places’ that have inspired him since he moved to the north-west coast late in 2009.

“As a Tasmanian photographer with a major focus on landscape works, I am very familiar with the iconic imagery associated with our island,” he explains. “From the jagged coastlines of the west coast, to the (sometimes) snow-covered peaks of Cradle Mountain and Mount Wellington, to the untouched wilderness of the south west, these places are known to many.

“But these are not the places I seem to find myself in for my own photographic practice … rather, I find myself intrigued and challenged by the Tasmania that I find on everyday roads, the places that exist between those that are named on the touristor maps. Ordinary places. It is in these ordinary places where I find my own vision of the beauty that is so characteristic of our island; in the golden light that streams through twisted branches of a once-green tree at Natone; in the decaying geometry of a worn-out shed at Cuprona; in the subtle invitation of an open, rusted gate leading into a field of green at Stowport …”

In his work Tim is particularly interested in light, pattern, and time – and how these three elements can be combined to produce images that sometimes reflect the world, sometimes evoke a new way of seeing the familiar and the known.

The Ordinary Places: North West Tasmania exhibition runs at Cradle Coast until June 3. To view Tim’s work online, please visit http://twoviewsphotography.weebly.com
Justice for mentally ill offenders

BY CHERIE COOPER

THE PROVISION of criminal justice services to mentally ill offenders was explored at a recent workshop at UTAS.

The Tasmania Mental Health Diversion List (MHDL) was the key focus at the Integration and Collaboration: Building capacity and engagement for the provision of criminal justice services to Tasmanian mentally ill workshop.

The event brought together the court, police, and mental health services, including Forensic Mental Health Services, community agencies and legal aid, law firms, police prosecutors and other relevant stakeholders.

Topics covered research on the diversion process, referral processes, perceptions of communities, victims, minority communities and complainants and issues relating to policing, impact evaluation and resource allocation.

Director of the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES), Professor Jenny Fleming, said highlights of the workshop included talks by Sue King (Manager Specialist Courts and Intervention Programs, Adelaide), Michael Hill (Chief Magistrate, Magistrates Court Hobart) and John Lesser (Magistrate, Melbourne Magistrates Court).

"The workshop was built around presentations and discussions by researchers and practitioners working on the key issues that define the provision of criminal justice services to mentally ill offenders," she said.

Professor Fleming said it was a key opportunity to engage in discussions about the future direction of the MHDL and the possibility of extending it to young offenders.

Debra Rigby, President of the Mental Health Tribunal, opened the workshop.

She explained that rates of major mental illness, such as schizophrenia and depression, are between three to five times higher in the offender population than those expected in the general community.

Debra explained that prisons are not appropriately staffed or equipped to treat the underlying issue of mental illness and the point of the diversion system is to reduce offending, behaviour and assist with recovery.

There is a recognition that it is the consequences that arise from untreated mental illness such as homelessness, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse that brings many people with mental illness into contact with the criminal justice system.

Police, lawyers and health providers must work together to provide criminal justice services to people who are mentally ill: Scott Tilyard, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Tasmania Police; Professor Jenny Fleming (TILES); Michael Hill, Chief Magistrate, Magistrates Court Hobart and Dr Isabelle Bartkowiak-Theron (TILES).

"It is true that doctors and lawyers think differently and that police and defence counsel are not natural allies.

"However, if a mental health diversion list is to succeed in achieving its aim, it requires the focus of all parties.

"Collaboration and co-operation is essential for the success of the scheme."

A final report will be drafted for magistrates following the workshop.

This workshop was presented by TILES in partnership with the Hobart and Launceston Magistrates Courts.

Put the ‘public’ back into public service to innovate in Tasmania

BY PETER COCHRANE

T try this quick quiz: there are 11 entities within the Tasmanian Government that claim to have a role in public sector innovation. You don’t have to list them, just name the Minister for Innovation …

When Professor David Adams, Tasmania’s inaugural Social Inclusion Commissioner, posed this question during a seminar at the Australian Innovation Research Centre, the audience struggled to respond.

Prof Adams’ talk was entitled Public Sector Innovation: Can it Save Bureaucrats from the Wolves? His key point was the limited institutional innovation capacity in Tasmania to think about how to make the changes that are necessary.

"In Tasmania we have a number of transition issues, including economic transformation (or economic restructuring, depending on how you want to discuss the issue). … Then there’s the issue of food security, of global competition for talent – there seems to be a whole raft of issues which are pretty fundamental to the future wellbeing and prosperity of Tasmania which seem to be out of scope of the mainstream capability of state governments and the mainstream departmental structures."

The challenge facing us was not unlike trying to herd cats – a point he humorously underscored with a YouTube clip purporting to show a team of professional cat handlers in action: Anyone can herd cattle … holding together 10,000 half-wild shorthairs – that’s another thing altogether.

The solution, basically, was that we should be turning to local communities as the source of innovation for change and putting the ‘public’ back into public service.

We should not expect real innovation would not come from a risk-averse government and a public sector “which is organised around traditional functions and not around those big-ticket issues that we are facing”. Turning to local communities as a source of innovation for change: Professor David Adams believes government and the Tasmanian public service have limited capacity to think about change in the state.

"We have a Minister for Innovation but that person’s brief tends to be around that narrower notion of innovation support to the private sector and government investment in science and technology."

"What we’ve got are lots of bits and pieces but no central node to connect the potential threads of knowledge. It’s not about having one entity to manage it but how you create the flows of knowledge and learning to create value," Prof Adams said.

"Governments generally continue to act as though things are predictable, that they are in control, they possess a lot of levers, incremental change is sufficient to ensure ongoing relevance of government, and that sovereign boundaries really matter."

"In fact, most things today are complex, interconnected and unpredictable, for which that Fordist production-line model doesn’t work, and the external drivers are much more significant, and so the ability of sovereign states is really in question.”

High-skill future for regional manufacturing companies

BY MERIAN ELLIS

REGIONAL COMPANIES in Tasmania can secure their future by finding new opportunities in advanced manufacturing, according to Chicago-based manufacturing entrepreneur Dan Swinney.

Mr Swinney has spent the past 25 years spearheading collaborative and innovative approaches to retaining industrial jobs in Chicago and across the United States.

He established and now directs the Centre for Labor and Community Research, established in response to the thousands of jobs lost due to manufacturing plant closings in the Chicago area over the past 20 years.

On his recent Australian tour Mr Swinney visited Benidigo, Ballarat and Bunnie, running two workshops at the UTAS Cradle Coast Campus focusing on opportunities for smart manufacturing in regional areas.

"There is a perception in Australia and the US that manufacturing is dead. People are wondering how we can possibly compete with low labour costs in countries like China, India and Mexico,” he explained.

"The reality is quite different. There are definitely low skill jobs going offshore, but this is creating an interesting opportunity in shifting production to high value work."

"Our competitive advantage is now in creating complex things. The big challenge for companies in the US and Australia is to find enough talent to develop this complex manufacturing."

Mr Swinney said many people still think about manufacturing work only in terms of repetitive low-paid employment.

"To be successful in advanced manufacturing, regional communities have to focus on providing educational opportunities anchored on innovation in production,” he explained.

"Advanced manufacturing is an interesting work. It relies on critical thinking, problem solving and people working in teams."

"With advanced manufacturing you are building social capital as well as supporting people in the workplace and giving them a good living. All this is definitely possible in regional areas if local companies are open to the idea of change."
How improved ‘plumbing’ helped flowering trees dominate the world

IY PETER COCHRANE

ew research analysing the ‘plumbing’ of fossil leaves has pinpointed the time when large flowering trees plants came to dominate the world and change the Earth’s climate.

A team by Dr Tim Brodribb from the University of Tasmania’s Department of Plant Science and the University of Tennessee’s Assistant Professor Taylor Field have discovered that 65 million years ago the leaves of flowering plants (or angiosperms) had more veins per unit area than leaves had previously. They suggest that this increased the amount of water available to the leaves, making it possible for plants to capture more carbon and grow larger.

By examining digital images of more than 300 different fossil leaves, collected from around the world, the team counted how many veins there were in a given area of leaf. Primate vascular plants such as ferns have relatively few veins. But the team’s work shows that even after flowering plants first appeared at the beginning of the Cretaceous period 130 million years ago, it took some time before they developed the efficient plumbing systems that would allow them to develop into giant life-forms such as tropical trees.

The density of veins in the leaves of flowering plants increased at least two different times as the transition from ancient to modern rainforests took place. The first jump — when the vein density in fossil leaves of flowering plants first exceeded vein density in the leaves of ferns — took place about 100m years ago. The second and more significant increase in vein density took place 35m years later. This occurred towards the end of the Cretaceous period, just before most species of dinosaur were wiped out. The fossil records show that the vein densities of flowering plants were 75 per cent more than non-flowering plants.

Dr Brodribb says the study is an exciting new way of looking at how rainforest plants evolved. That second spike in vein density which we haven’t seen [in previous research] would infer a pretty major transition in the ecology of angiosperms and possibly the chemistry and climate of the atmosphere.

“When angiosperms did take control of the canopy with these very photosynthetically active and very rapidly transpiring leaves, they in fact changed the atmosphere and developed a feedback which allowed the development of rainforests,” Dr Brodribb said.

Without this angiosperm evolution you couldn’t have large [modern] equatorial rainforests because … the massive amount of rainfall recycling for that type of climate to develop couldn’t exist.”

Dr Brodribb’s transpacific collaboration with Professor Field has been ongoing for more than 10 years, since they met at Harvard.

Garrett launches education research

IY SHARON WEBB

ustralian primary school principals had a hands-on introduction to research exploring the public purposes of education recently when the research was launched in Melbourne by Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Peter Garrett.

The principals learned how to do an audit of their school’s education purposes, based on research done by Emeritus Professor Bill Mulford and Professor Neil Cranston from UTAS, and Professor Jack Keating from Melbourne University and Emeritus Professor Alan Reid from the University of South Australia.

Acting head of the School of Education, Prof. Cranston, said the three-year ARC linkage project, commissioned by the Australian Government Primary Schools Principals Association, examined the public purposes of education (for example, to develop good future citizens) versus the private purposes (for individual or personal advantage).

“From our research we argue that the public purposes have fallen off the agenda for some time; education’s purposes have become more managerialist and economic,” he said.

“That’s interesting, because in many ways it runs counter to current national education policies.”

Launching the research by video, Peter Garrett acknowledged that it was controversial and would spark vigorous debate.

“These conversations are important in ensuring our schools are the best they can be,” he said.

“The public purpose of education, to prepare young people to be active, informed and engaged citizens is at the heart of the government’s agenda.”

The report’s authors introduced school principals at the launch to one of the exercises they had developed: a toolkit used to examine school, national or state policies in education — and their real purposes.

“The principals applied the toolkit to the My School website, asking whose interests it caters for and what benefits it has for students,” Prof. Cranston said.

“We’re trying to give school leaders some simple strategies they can use with their staff to identify what’s happening in their schools and the priorities that follow from that.”

Prof. Cranston said the Education Minister was supportive in his response to the report “but careful about not accepting all the comments we made because we’ve been critical of the My School website and aspects of the Australian curriculum.”

He said schools need to take time out of their busy schedules to consider exactly what they are doing — and Mr Garrett agreed.

“This research will give principals another perspective on their day-to-day work,” he said.

“The debate about purpose is good to have, particularly in the context of the government’s current review of funding for education. The research contained in this report will be of interest to the review panel.”

Research on the public purposes of education: At the Melbourne launch of the report by Education Minister Peter Garrett were the treasurer of the Australian Government Primary Principals Association, Geoff Scott, the president Gabrielle Leigh and the researchers: Emeritus Professor Alan Reid, University of SA; Professor Neil Cranston, University of Tasmania; Professor Jack Keating, University of Melbourne. (Absent: Emeritus Professor Bill Mulford, University of Tasmania.)

UTAS hosts Australasian Macroeconomics Workshop

MORE THAN 60 DELEGATES from around the world attended the 16th Australasian Macroeconomics Workshop in Hobart in April, hosted by the UTAS School of Economics and Finance.

This annual workshop is a forum in which economists discuss the most significant issues of the day, including monetary and fiscal policy, the role of the financial system in economic fluctuations, how people incorporate ‘learning’ into forecasts, and models of pricing decisions.

One of the high-profile speakers was Professor Ben Heijdra, whose recent research focuses on the interactions between ageing, retirement income provision and economic growth. While Prof. Heijdra’s research explores the implications of demographic change in Holland, it has important implications for other small, trade-exposed countries such as Australia.

Professor Heijdra is based at Faculty of Economics and Business, the University of Groningen (Netherlands), having previously held positions at a number of other universities including the University of Tasmania (1984–1990).
Scholarships ensure quality cancer care for north-west Tasmania

Nettefold scholarship for memory artist

Scholarship for mature-age women: The 2011 Dr Gwen Nettlefold Memorial Scholarship has been awarded to artist Raelene Marr who is enrolled in a Master of Fine Arts at UTAS.

Raelene has exhibited paintings in Melbourne, Sydney, North Sydney and New York; in 2004 her drawing was selected for the Dobell Drawing Prize at the Gallery of New South Wales.

In 2009 she art editor from the influential magazine New York Art selected her drawing for a special edition of Australasian Art. She was one of only four artists chosen from Australia.

Raelene's proposed masters research project is concerned with exploring the relationship between observational drawing and memory, through an investigation of how everyday objects can embody and signify collective memory and common human experience.

The Dr Gwen Nettlefold Memorial scholarship has been endowed in memory of Gwen Nettlefold by her family, friends and colleagues to encourage mature-age women to undertake study for the benefit of women in any discipline.

Dr Nettlefold was born in Hobart and trained as a nurse and naturopath; she completed a Bachelor of Communications degree before doing a philosophy doctorate at UTAS.


The scholarship is valued at $1000 a year for up to three years.

Jim Bacon lives on through scholarships

The 2011 Jim Bacon Memorial Scholarships: Awarded to psychologist Alison Archer for research into the care and treatment of cancer, and to textile artist Neil Holstrom.

THE 2011 JIM BACON Memorial Scholarships were recently presented to psychologist Alison Archer and textile artist Neil Holstrom.

Alison received the scholarship for her studies on the care and treatment of cancer; she is currently completing her masters thesis on couples coping with breast or gynaecological cancers. She developed a particular interest in researching cancers following the death of her father from bowel cancer several years ago.

Neil will study honours in art and design theory; his skills as a textile artist have seen him work as artist-in-residence in southern Tasmanian schools and at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Alison has been a teacher for 22 years, returning to UTAS six years ago to study psychology. She also does volunteer work with Pregnancy Counselling Support, Tasmania and said although many cancer studies have been done there is a need to develop a greater understanding of the communication between couples struggling with cancer.

Presenting the scholarships Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor David Rich said they are a fitting memorial to Jim Bacon who understood the key role education has in developing talent and nurturing high achievers.

The Jim Bacon Foundation also provides practical support and financial assistance to cancer patients and their families by making funds available to organisations that offer cancer treatment and palliative care services.
UTAS academic presides over police parade

BY CHERIE COOPER

UTAS School of Government academic Dr Rob Hall presided over the graduation parade at the Rokeby Police Academy this year, presenting certificates to graduates and delivering the commemorative speech.

As the newly-appointed reviewing officer of the Tasmania Police Graduation Parade, Dr Hall reviewed the recruits on the parade ground and congratulated the graduates for completing one of the most demanding and academically challenging police recruit training programs in Australia.

“I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to work with everyone involved in this course as we worked together to ensure recruits attained the standard necessary for them to graduate as constables in the Tasmania Police Service,” he said. Dr Hall told the graduates they had not only successfully completed the Tasmania Police recruit course providing the knowledge and skills to act effectively as a Tasmania Police constable, they had also completed nearly two-thirds of the Bachelor of Social Science (Police Studies) degree at UTAS.

“As well as this, you have also completed five more physically oriented skills units that are no less challenging and important. And all this has been done in just 35 weeks,” he told them. “The range of new skills and abilities that you have acquired during your training will put you in good stead to fulfil your duties in a police service that is recognised as providing the safest state in Australia.”

Police graduation: As graduation reviewing officer UTAS School of Government academic Dr Rob Hall presided over the recent police graduation ceremony.

Tasmania Police and the University of Tasmania have jointly delivered police recruit training since 2010 and Dr Hall is the university’s coordinator of the initiative. He has had a long involvement with Tasmanian Police Academy programs, teaching in every sergeant’s and inspector’s course for 20 years. More than 250 Tasmanian police officers have obtained tertiary degrees by completing School of Government programs at bachelor and postgraduate levels, placing UTAS at the forefront of the professionalisation process in Australian policing.

UTAS staffer is Young Achiever of the Year

BY CHERIE COOPER

Astrophysicist Dr Stas Shabala was recently awarded the Tasmanian Young Achiever of the Year award. Dr Shabala, 27, from the UTAS School of Physics, said he was surprised he was the winner of the TEMCO Science and Technology category, as well as winning the top honour.

“It’s great that a scientist can get an award like that. It means scientists are viewed as doing something relevant and at that’s what we strive for,” he said.

Dr Shabala completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge in astrophysics and cosmology. “I looked at the way black holes affect the way the universe evolves. If you look up at the sky the stuff you’ll see will either be our own galaxy or other galaxies.

“Black holes play a really important role in explaining why you see the number of galaxies you do and why they’re as bright or dim as they are. Basically black holes sit in the middle of these galaxies and cause big explosions which regulate the way the galaxy evolves. 

“Black holes play a really important role in explaining what makes everything tick.’

“The reason this is important is these black hole explosions are the most powerful explosions in the universe – they are pretty important to what’s going on.”

He followed up his PhD with a research fellowship at Oxford University, after which he returned to UTAS, where he is an ARC Super Science Fellow in the Astrophysics and Environmental Geodesy groups. The Shabalas are a well-known family at UTAS.

Stas’s father Sergey Shabala is a professor in the UTAS School of Agricultural Science and TIAR, his mother Svetlana is a research fellow in TIAR and his younger brother Alex is a UTAS graduate and the 2009 Rhodes Scholar. Alex is currently studying at Oxford.

“Mum and dad set the bar pretty high,” Dr Shabala said. Dr Shabala said as a boy he was fascinated with finding out how things worked.

“I was one of those annoying kids who took cars apart. The reason I went into physics was to find out what makes everything tick,” he said.

“I wanted to find out how the world worked and physics lets you do that.”

From Cambridge to Oxford and back to UTAS: Physics staffer Dr Stas Shabala is Young Achiever of the Year.
Bollywood at Edge as Ramnik hits the mike

BY LUKE SCOTT

Regular listeners of Launceston’s City Park Radio will be familiar with the voice of Ramnik Singh Walia because for the past six months, the Indian-born UTAS Journalism, Media and Communications Masters student has presented two shows on the community radio station.

This month he will expand his horizons by joining the Hobart-based UTAS community station Edge Radio.

“It’s a real benefit to be working in a radio station while I’m doing my UTAS masters degree,” Ramnik said.

“When I first went to City Park Radio, I didn’t know how to work the panel, to change the music or how to present a show.

“But the volunteers taught me every aspect of radio work. The person who trained me has 25 years of commercial radio experience.”

Ramnik said he had thoroughly enjoyed presenting his Around the World and multicultural programs on City Park Radio (one in Hindi) and he planned to work for both radio stations for as long as possible.

He will present his new Edge Radio show, Strings of Bollywood, each Wednesday between 10am and 11am on Hobart’s 99.3FM.

“Strings of Bollywood will be about Indian music, the latest Indian releases, comedy, plus some old music from the 1970s and 80s."

There is a big Indian community out there, so I think I will be getting a big break by getting on air in Hobart. Launceston’s Indian community is small compared with Hobart’s.”

“I also hope to get to talk to some Indians about their experiences in Australia – people who have been really successful in Tasmania.

“Hobart has a big Indian population; there is a big Indian community out there, so I think I will be getting a big break by getting on air in Hobart. Launceston’s Indian community is small compared with Hobart’s.”

Ramnik said he hoped eventually to find employment in the radio industry, to give something back to the Tasmanian community.

“I love Tasmania. I have been here for the past four and a half years and I love this place,” he said.

“I would like to stay in Tasmania throughout my life.”

Sharing Indian culture on community radio: Ramnik Singh Walia will launch a new show on Hobart community station Edge Radio this month.

Photos as artefacts of expression and experience

BY CHERIE COOPER

JUN YET CHOOK sees something special when he looks through his camera.

What he takes are not just photos, they are “artefacts of his expression and experience”.

Jun Yet, recently graduated with an Architecture masters degree from UTAS, is also a talented, self-taught photographer. He shows his work online, getting feedback from more experienced photographers.

Despite his obvious flair with a camera, Jun Yet chose to pursue study in architecture. His masters project explores ideas around a low-cost, high-density social housing project in Kuala Lumpur.

“I have liked to construct and design things since I was young,” he said.

When he was younger Jun Yet would renovate and change the furniture of his family home, causing headaches for his parents.

He didn’t pick up a camera until he had to take photos of buildings for school assignments.

“I discovered that I should not just photograph buildings as there is more out there that is beautiful and meaningful to be captured.”

Jun Yet has found photography informs his architecture work.

“It inspires me significantly in my architecture design, training me to be meticulous about small details in architecture.”

“But I think my friends, family and my life experiences inspire me the most.”

“Sometimes when I get stressed I just go for a walk and take pictures. There are always things to be photographed and I feel relaxed instantly.”

In the future Jun Yet hopes to travel the world, taking pictures and striking up friendships with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

“Above all, I hope I can be successful in my architecture career and contribute to the built environment for a better future.”

To see more of Jun Yet’s photos, visit his blog at: http://jychook.blogspot.com/

No limits to Jun Yet’s photography: The architecture graduate has a flair with the camera.
Climate change experts focus on threats to rural children

Some of the world’s biggest names in climate change research have collaborated on a new book to explain how climate change threatens the health of rural children and what to do about it.

*Climate Change and Rural Child Health* is an edited collection of 19 papers by 46 authors from 10 countries, including some of the world’s most celebrated climate change researchers and innovative new voices. Its audience will be researchers, practitioners and health policy-makers around the world wanting an overview of some of the key issues for rural child health in a climate-changing world.

Tasmanian lead editor Associate Professor Erica Bell, deputy director at the UTAS University Department of Rural Health, said the book brings together papers from a wide range of disciplines.

"Climate change is one of the biggest foreseeable threats to human health in the 21st Century," she said.

"Many climate change 'hotspots' lie in rural communities and within these communities children are a vulnerable group. Until now rural child health has been relatively neglected in the climate change research."

"This book is less about hand wringing and more about what we can do collectively to make a difference. Even for those who do not believe that human activity is causing climate change, there can be no argument against paying attention to how climate is influencing the health of vulnerable groups such as rural children."

Topics covered in *Climate Change and Rural Child Health* include sustainability education for children, child rights and equity, as well as specific impacts of climate change on child health.

The book includes the direct effects of climate change, such as increased mortality from flooding, as well as indirect effects such as mental health issues linked to drought. The needs of particular groups such as Aboriginal children and children living in the Pacific islands are also highlighted.

The contributing group for this book is diverse but well-connected by a shared commitment to excellence in climate change research for vulnerable groups," Prof. Bell said.

"They include Dr Michael MacCracken, chief scientist for Climate Change Programs at the USAS Climate Institute in Washington DC; Professor Cheryl Macpherson, chair of the Bioethics Department in the School of Medicine at St. George’s University in the West Indies; Professor Max Comte, president of the European Federation of Parasitologists and expert member of the World Health Organization at the Universidad de Valencia, Spain, and Dr Paul Beggs from the Department of Environment and Geography in the Faculty of Science at Macquarie University, who won this year’s Eureka Prize for Medical Research for his work on the impact of climate change on allergies."

"It was an exceptional opportunity to bring together experts in disease, paediatrics, bioethics, education, community development and other fields."

Prof. Bell said the chapters offer new concepts, directions for health and allied health practice, and analyses of appropriate policy responses.

This project was supported by co-editors Tasmanian GP Dr Bastion Seidel and Professor Joao Merrick from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Jerusalem.

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**China’s renaissance man honoured by UTAS**

**World renowned** Chinese scholar Prof. Jao Tsung-i was presented with an honorary Doctor of Letters in Hong Kong by the University of Tasmania last month.

Known as one of China’s most outstanding scholars, Prof. Jao is expert in many fields in the arts and has helped established China’s cultural place by bringing to the attention of the world the richness of Chinese literature, history and art.

He is also renowned as an artist, calligrapher and poet, and has been the inspiration for the establishment of a new style of Chinese art, the North West School, informed by the famous Dunhuang Buddhist frescoes.

He is also renowned as an artist, calligrapher and poet, and has been the inspiration for the establishment of a new style of Chinese art, the North West School.

Prof. Jao has taught at the University of Hong Kong, the National University of Singapore, Yale University and the University of Tasmania.

Now 95 years old, Prof. Jao has an impressive record of achievement to his name; along with publishing more than 80 books and 500 papers, he is currently Wei Lun Honorary Professor of Fine Arts and Emeritus Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said Tasmanians are proud of their bond with Prof. Jao and China.

"We have been humbled by Professor Jao’s friendship with Tasmanians, graciously agreeing to exhibit his works in Tasmania in 2009 and embracing inter-cultural dialogue by visiting us, teaching us and taking a strong interest in our society," Professor Rathjen said.

"We are proud of our bond with Professor Jao and with China, and with the richness that it has brought to our lives."

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**My PhD**

Pollyanna Hilder

UTAS PhD candidate supported by the Australian Seafood CRC

Small fry lead to some fantastic opportunities

After 23 years working in aquaculture, Pollyanna Hilder has returned to UTAS to achieve her PhD working with Southern Bluefin Tuna.

"Tuna is such an important species, both in terms of wild fisheries management and aquaculture," she said.

Pollyanna’s research is on the visual development of the tuna and requires her to go to the Great Barrier Reef tuna hatchery in South Australia for the spawning season each year. She is halfway through her PhD, having completed two experimental seasons.

She has been looking at visual development of larval and juvenile fish, in regards to retinal development, including describing the stage of appearance of light-sensitive cells called photoreceptors. She has also been conducting experiments to assess the feeding response of larvae exposed to varying visual environments, including light intensity and turbidity, and has been using video footage to monitor the distances at which larval tuna react to their zooplankton prey.

Pollyanna’s area of expertise is larviculture of marine finfish. She finished her honours on the visual development of Striped Trumpeter in 1996 at what is now IMAS in Taroona.

Pollyanna had been working in Western Australia and moved to Tasmania recently when her husband was offered a job. She saw this as the perfect opportunity to obtain her PhD and hadn’t looked back.

"I’m having a ball," she said. "To be able to come back and do this PhD is amazing and I’m cherishing every moment of it.

As part of her study, Pollyanna has had the chance to go to Panama and attend a Yellowfin Tuna workshop.

"I’ve had some fantastic opportunities," she said.

Pollyanna is looking to finish her PhD in the next year and a half. She is supervised by Dr Jennifer Cobcroft and Associate Professor Stephen Battaglene (IMAS).
Capturing Tassie’s water a terrorist’s dream

BY LUKE SCOTT

L aunceston artist Ben Miller likes layers. The 34-year-old Master of Contemporary Arts graduate submitted this multi-layered piece for the 2010 School of Visual and Performing Arts show Make Me a Sandwich. Entitled Running Out Of Water 2, the mixed media piece drew on the creation of the state’s three new regional water corporations for inspiration.

Miller had been toying with the idea of what an invading force would most like to capture in Tasmania; water would have to be near the top of the list, he thought. “I was playing with this notion that terrorists could take over water features at local parks, securing all the water and on-selling it,” Miller said. “At the same time I was exploring my own ambivalence to environmentalism and industrialism. I am concerned about the wellbeing of the planet for the sake of my children, but at the same time I need technology and I use the car in my daily life. There are all these resources I use that are having an adverse impact on the world, and I have to find a balance.”

Among the layers of the painting are old maps of Launceston, street signs, references to City Park and the state’s three regional water corporations.

Miller admitted he had lost track of the number of layers in each of the works in the Running Out Of Water series but that he was pleased to achieve his vision. “In a way they are really ugly,” Miller said. “I really enjoyed making them but they are the least commercial thing I have ever created. This really wasn’t about commercialism though; it was about finding something interesting to paint.”

Miller said the process of layering each of the works had been time-consuming. “There’s lots of spray paint and pencil under there as well. I love layers. I was going through a period of using lots of layers because I love the act of doing it and I think it also makes for an interesting composition when you are continually counter-balancing colours and different shapes against each other.”

With a laugh he added: “There is also the benefit that if you make a mistake you can put something over it.”

“What’s on

The Theatre

5-6 JUNE
Student Directed Festival:
The 13th Floor, Season 3
This year’s Student Directed Festival is filled with many new and exciting plays, all directed by the School of Visual and Performing Arts third-year students. Three short plays every night. Tickets: adult $12, concession, UTAS Staff member or student $8. For more information on the plays on offer, check the UTAS Events page online.

Time: 7-9pm
Venue: Annexe Theatre, School of Visual and Performing Arts, Inveresk
Information: (03) 6324 4450 or email Deborah.Scull@utas.edu.au

9-10 June
Student Directed Festival: The 13th Floor, Season 4
For more information on the plays on offer, check the UTAS Events page online.

Time: 7-9pm
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What’s on

Now is the winter of our content

Justin Groves as Richard III is surrounded by “evil henchmen” Brenton Neighbour, Dylan Saville and Bec Reedman.

BY LUKE SCOTT

AFTER OVERSEEING two classic Shakespeare plays in four days at Inveresk’s Annette Theatre last week, a tired but relieved director Robert Lewis has thanked UTAS staff and students for their support.

In one of the biggest theatre challenges in the School of Visual and Performing Arts’ 10-year history, a group of 20 second-year theatre students pulled off six separate performances of Richard III and Othello without a hitch.

Many of the performers had multiple roles in both plays, with some tackling up to seven different characters.

“I was very pleased with it,” Mr Lewis said.

“The students were all very tired by the end, but I think they each learned something about themselves through the process.

“The plays were very well received; we had very, very good houses….

“We had nearly 600 people come through, which is very, very good in terms of numbers, so we would like to thank everyone who came along to support it.”

Mr Lewis said the successful performances showed that it was possible for a team of people to achieve anything they set their minds to.

Asked what he had planned for students next year, Mr Lewis was coy.

“Maybe four shows,” he laughed.

“No, I think we will do something on a smaller scale, but still something classical. Now I want to touch base with some really truthful performances and look at more pragmatic acting methodologies.”