Welcome to the Geography Discipline Newsletter!

2013 Thomson Awards

The Manawatu Branch of the New Zealand Geographical Society’s Thomson Award is presented annually for the best student research presentation. The award is named after Prof Keith W. Thomson who was Dean of Social Sciences and the inaugural Professor of Geography at Massey University. Keith was born locally and completed his BA in geography at Canterbury College as it then was. This was interrupted by war time service in the NZRAF – he was in Canada training corsairs when the war in the Pacific ended. Keith subsequently completed a MA and PhD at the University of Washington and taught for a time in the USA before joining the geography department at the University of Adelaide. From here he was appointed Principal of Palmerston North University College in the late 1950s and with the merger of PNUC and Massey College to form Massey University, he became Dean and Professor of Geography. His research interests included land settlement and population. Keith was always immensely interested in ‘his’ postgraduates, thus it is particularly appropriate that this award should bear his name. This year there were three entrants. Michelle McCabe, a Masterate Student who has just completed her first year of Postgraduate study, gave a talk entitled ‘Shallow landsliding and catchment connectivity in the Houpoto Forest’ which presented the results of work she has done as part of a Massey Summer Scholarship project. Michelle was followed by Rob Dykes, who has just recently submitted his PhD thesis. Rob spoke on ‘Sub-annual variability of iceberg calving at Tasman Glacier 2011 - 2012’, which among other things demonstrated to the audience some of the challenges of working in NZ alpine environments (see picture top left). Lastly, Simon Vale, who is in his second year of a PhD, presented on ‘Sediment fingerprinting in the Manawatu’ and discussed how he intends to apply geochemistry and statistics to track the origins of sediments carried down the Manawatu river during flooding events.

Talks were judged by Professor Mike Crozier. Mike is Emeritus Professor of Geography in the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria University. He is also the outgoing President of the IAG (International Association of Geomorphologists). All three speakers gave highly polished and informative presentations, and Mike Crozier noted that this made it very difficult to judge a winner. But in the end, Rob Dykes was deemed the winner of the 2013 Thomson Awards. This is the second Thomson Awards win for Rob, who also took out the 2008 awards. Well done Rob!
This year’s 145.304 Applied Field Geomorphology fieldtrip was blessed by a run of beautiful weather at the end of August, which helped appreciation of the landscape processes and management. 20 students were led by Ian, Alastair and Sam and accompanied by David Feek in a grand tour extending from Turakirae Head to the East Cape, Bay of Plenty and Central Plateau, taking in some of the North’s Island’s most exciting geomorphology.

The weather remained fine, if windy (!) for the annual 145.121 fieldtrip in October led by Ian, Sam, Kat and Alastair. A short core was recovered from a swamp in the Ashhurst Domain to demonstrate a technique used to reconstruct past environments and environmental change.

Students of 145.320 Quaternary Biogeography and Environmental Change took to the water back in July to collect a sediment core from Lake Waitawa, at Forest Lakes reserve. They performed a pollen analysis on the core as part of their course assessment. The 3 metre long sediment core preserved an excellent record of vegetation change in the surrounding area (see below) over the past ~3000 years. The pollen record produced by the class shows a major decline in tall tree pollen and concurrent rise in herbs, ferns, aquatics and charcoal at ~90cm. This represents deforestation and landscape disturbance triggered by the arrival of Maori settlers approximately 700 years ago. This is followed by further disturbance associated with the arrival of European settlers several centuries later.
Congratulations Juliana!

Associate Professor Juliana Mansvelt has been awarded the New Zealand Geographical Society’s Distinguished Service Award. Juliana has been an active committee member of the Manawatu Branch of the New Zealand Geographical Society since 1995, and has held positions as Review Editor for the New Zealand Geographer from 2003-2007, and as Secretary of the Manawatu Branch 1995-98, and again from 2012. Juliana’s publication record includes 52 peer reviewed and 94 research outputs. She is author of Geographies of Consumption, (Sage, 2005), and editor of Green Consumers: An A-Z Guide (Sage, 2010). Juliana is a part of the Health and Ageing Research Team, which received the Massey University Research Team Medal in 2012. In addition Juliana has received a number of tertiary teaching awards, including the Society Award of Excellence in teaching, a Massey University Award for Sustained Excellence and a New Zealand Tertiary Teachers Award in 2006. Juliana is also very much engaged with her family commitments and is liked as a colleague and teacher who is modest and hardworking and highly committed to service to geographical research and teaching, and a real credit to geography.

(article summarised from http://www.nzgs.co.nz/awards/distinguished-service-awards)

Keeping busy in Armidale

Mike Roche

For most of September I was at the University of New England, Armidale NSW as the Visiting Fellow in the School of Behavioural Cognitive and Social Sciences. UNE has some interesting parallels to Massey, being established as University College of the University of Sydney in 1938, gained full university status in 1958 and teaches distance students. They have also be through a similar restructuring process whereby departments have been merged into larger schools. In this case the grouping was similar to PEP but a little different including archaeology, criminology and psychology as well as sociology, planning, and all of geography. The geographers, planners and archaeologists are based in the Earth Studies building which appropriately enough when there is much attention being paid to climate change is in the building numbered CO2. I was housed in a suitably large office accessible by the exterior stair well which everyone seemed to use instead of the lifts. The morning ritual, as the school computer technician had warned me, generally involved pulling out the Ethernet connection, counting to 20, re-plugging it, and only then connecting to the web. Although most of my time was spent on a collaborative writing project, I did get to make several trips out of Armidale to visit Dorrigo and Bellingen and thus got to see some on-the-ground manifestations of multifunctional landscapes and post-productivism, which was the topic of the research. This also meant seeing a number of waterfalls, still impressive even in the local near drought conditions. Furthermore having been taken to part of the World Heritage Area Gondwanaland forests national park I can now say I have seen an example of Nothofagus moorei. I wandered around the local farmers’ market and car boot sale in the weekend but was not tempted by the goat meat special.

The America’s Cup challenge faltered without much notice – Armidale is in the New England Ranges and over 1000m above sea level, besides which the AFL and NRL finals were in progress during December and captured local attention. Over all this was a pleasant and profitable trip (with two weeks of fine weather in the mid 20 degrees Celsius and above range) in which little that was untoward occurred. I didn’t however appreciate that Armidale was not like the typically flat Australian city which resulted in my first gentle evening jog turning into an unwanted encounter with oxygen debt. More memorable at least in later retelling for the Armidale colleagues was the prequel to lunch with the Head of School. We had set off through a warrant of narrow roads and paths to the staff club and no sooner had Professor Nunn uttered the words, ‘there have been several heads of school, but I’m the one who has lasted the longest,’ than a fast moving green car (of indeterminate make and model) rounded the corner at speed forcing us to jump hurriedly onto the grass verge.

Needless to say I also checked out the local war memorials (including what was originally a private family one at nearby Chevy Chase) and the Armidale arboretum. I also spoke in the geography seminar programme on differing imaginaries of Gallipoli and Anzac Day. There was also a good second hand bookshop in the central city where I purchased a copy of a political geography textbook previously owned by Jim Fox, for many years Associate Professor of Geography at UNE and before that an editor of the NZ Geographer and one of Ken Cumberland’s original appointees to the Department of Geography at Auckland University college as it then was and a reminder of the many longstanding, sometimes to the point of being almost lost sight of, connections between New Zealand and Australian geographers.
2013 Geography Photo Competition Winners!

Winner: Humorous Geography Category
Petra Franzen: ‘Life on the Edge’

Runner-up: Geographers in Action Category
Goldie Walker: ‘Examining the layers’

Runner-up: Geography in Motion Category
Nour Serhan: ‘View from Kingdom Tower, Riyadh’

Winner: Geography in Action Category
Goldie Walker: ‘Examining the layers’

Winner: Geography in Motion Category
Ana Castellanos: ‘Just a casual climb’

Runner-up: Humorous Geography Category
Amanda Death: ‘Tired van’

Runner-up: Geographers in Action Category
Edith Bretherton: ‘No tide to linger’

Compass Points