

## 2012 HETSA Distinguished Fellow: G.C. Harcourt

Geoff Harcourt was made the 2012 Distinguished Fellow of the History of Economic Thought Society of Australia. One might say that the award was long overdue. It is of just one of many honours that have been bestowed on him. Three other history of economic thought societies have already accorded him honours. In 2004 he was made a Distinguished Fellow of the History of Economics Society and, in the same year, an Honorary Member of the European Society for the History of Economic Thought. In 2010 he was the recipient of the Veblen Commons Award of the Association for Evolutionary Economics. Closer to home, he has also been commended by the Economic Society of Australia as its Distinguished Fellow in 2006. He had been President of the Economic Society in the stormy seventies when economic controversies about stagflation and fighting inflation first raged. Official recognition came in 2004 when he was made an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AO), 'for service to economic theory and to the history of economic thought'.

This award from HETSA carries particular weight however, because it has been bestowed upon Harcourt by, as one might put it, his 'ain folk'; that is, his fellow Australian historians of economic thought. This counts for something. Despite being based at Cambridge for a considerable part of his career, from 1982 till 2010, Harcourt always retained an interest in Australian affairs. He was at the very first meeting of what would become HETSA in May 1981, held at the University of New England and hosted by John Pullen and John Wood. Harcourt has attended many HETSA conferences since and has always made a point of commenting on every paper. This is an example of just one of the pastoral roles he has assumed, not just for HETSA, but heterodox economics and, more generally, Australian economics. He has examined countless dissertations, generously offered opinion and guidance on proposed conference papers, acted as a referee for countless Australian economists seeking jobs or angling for promotion. Then, there is his work on countless editorial boards as well as being co-editor (with Keith Hancock) of *Australian Economic Papers* for over two decades.

Harcourt always has global appeal. Apart from an assortment of visiting fellowships, he held long-term appointments at Adelaide, Cambridge and now the University of New South Wales. Harcourt was a university lecturer in economics and politics for Cambridge in the 1960s and spent a further 28 years rising to become 'Reader in the History of Economic Theory'. He took many Australian visitors to the high table at Jesus College. Apart from his humanity, the most endearing thing about Geoff is that he has been a mentor to hundreds of students and young economists. In his own career his mentors were the formidable trio of Joan Robinson, Eric Russell and Nicholas Kaldor.

There have been some recurrent themes in his career. His contributions have been to develop the micro-foundations of the Keynesian-Kaleckian system, starting with one of his first dissertations in Melbourne where he put Kurt Rothschild's ideas of oligopoly into a *General Theory* setting. His other areas of comparative advantage include writing the biography of Joan Robinson and her circle (with Prue Kerr) and portraits of other Cambridge identities and economists from the wider heterodox community. He is an authority on the Cambridge School of Economics.

He made his name internationally when he took on the brief to write an intelligible and witty guide to the capital debates. You can see the work he put into that venture from initial scribbles to the galley proofs in the Harcourt Papers kept at the National Library of Australia. There are more papers kept at the University of Adelaide. Both repositories add to the allure of this 'Australian patriot and Cambridge economist'.

Alex Millmow  
President, HETSA