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Poetry Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of PANZA

Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue 12 of *Poetry Notes*, the newsletter of PANZA, the newly formed Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa.

Poetry Notes will be published quarterly and will include information about goings on at the Archive, articles on historical New Zealand poets of interest, occasional poems by invited poets and a record of recently received donations to the Archive.

The newsletter will be available for free download from the Poetry Archive's website:

<http://poetryarchivenz.wordpress.com>

Rowan Gibbs on William Wills Robinson

Wellington bibliographer and genealogist Rowan Gibbs writes on early New Zealand poet and sportsman W W Robinson author of Rugby Football in New Zealand (1905) recently republished in a new edition with introduction and notes on the text by Rowan.

William Wills Robinson (1847-1929) is a significant figure in the history of New Zealand sport. In his twenty two years in New Zealand he represented and captained Thames and Auckland in

both rugby and cricket and was an influential rugby theorist, law-maker, coach, referee and administrator, a competitive athlete and an athletics official, and was prominent in horse racing as a starter and a skilled handicapper. He was also a talented amateur singer and actor.

In rugby he was an important pioneer of the game in Auckland and an innovator of wing-forward and three-quarter play. He says himself: "I practically introduced Rugby football into the Province of Auckland, in 1871", and on the 1905 All Black tour he was called "one of the 'fathers' of Rugby football in New Zealand"; an Australian obituary called him "one of the founders of Rugby football under the Southern Cross".

His rugby and cricket careers are noted in passing in books on those sports but his 1905 booklet *Rugby Football in New Zealand*, first published as a series of articles in the London newspaper *The Pall Mall Gazette* in October and November 1905, and in early November as a one penny 16-page booklet, is never mentioned and seems to be unknown locally. Of the four copies recorded in libraries none are in New Zealand and it is not included in the standard bibliographies. The booklet goes unnoticed in the many books, old and new, written on the 1905 tour, despite references in New Zealand newspapers to the publication of the original articles and even a review of the booklet in the *Auckland Star*. The only modern reference to it I have found is in an article by an Australian academic who no doubt saw the copy at the National Library of Australia.

The 1905 articles and booklet are in fact a rewriting in part of an article on the history of Auckland Rugby which he contributed under the pen name “An Old Half Back” to the Auckland *Football Annual* for 1887 and 1888, the latter revised and expanded. This article has been drawn on, directly or indirectly, by most historians of Auckland rugby.

Robinson’s other writings include a regular racing column, ‘Notes by Spread Eagle’, in the Auckland *Observer* and over the years he published quite a number of sporting poems under various pseudonyms in magazines and newspapers, including *The Sporting and Dramatic Review*, the *Auckland Star*, and *The Observer* in New Zealand, and *The Sportsman*, *The Sporting Life*, *The Sporting Times*, *Fry’s Magazine* and *The Daily Mail* in England.

He planned to publish a collection of these poems in 1916 but it did not appear, probably a victim of the wartime paper restrictions. The collection was finally published in 1922, as *Racing & Sporting Rhymes (in British and Empire Climes)*, with the author given only as “‘Akarana” (W.W.R.)”, printed, no doubt at his own expense, by Perkin & Co. in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, where he was living.

The fifty-three poems in its 88 pages are nearly all on horse racing: of the others, one is on athletics, three on sport in general, three are tributes to Australian poets (Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, and dedication to Adam Lindsay Gordon), and three are on rugby: ‘The Seven Ages of the Footballer’, ‘How it’s done’, and ‘Farewell:– Kia Ora te Pango!’. There are no cricket poems in the book, although Robinson is credited with the authorship of a “stanza” on a snoring fellow player in *On the Tented Fields of the South, 1882*, a light-hearted account of the Auckland cricket team’s southern tour in 1882-3. My feeling is that the poems in the book are all the work of the anonymous author, ‘The Childe’. Two cricket works to which he very likely contributed I have not yet been able to see: *The Auckland Cricketers’ Trip to the South: A Complete History of the Late Successful*

Tour of the Auckland Representatives to Christchurch, Dunedin, Nelson, and Wellington (Auckland, 1874) and *Pavilion Echoes from the South, 1884-5, by The Twelve* (Auckland, 1885), on the Auckland cricketers’ 1884-5 tour.

II

William was born on June 17th 1847 at 10 Ann Street, Birmingham, England, the home of his parents John Robinson, a surgeon, and Sarah Mary Robinson, née Lee. In 1855, at the age of eight, William, living in Long Buckby in Northamptonshire (his mother’s birthplace), was admitted to Epsom College in Surrey as one of the original “Foundationers”, to be educated, clothed and taken care of entirely at the College’s expense. The voting papers for his admission provide some interesting information:

The father, John Robinson, MRCS and LSA, followed his profession five years in England and then, under pressure of adverse circumstances, emigrated to the State of Illinois, US, where he died in June 1854, leaving a widow, with health hopelessly shattered, and about £50, the wreck of their property. The mother hopes to support herself by needlework, but has no means of providing for the child.

This is supported by the information that can be found in American records. The family appear in the 1850 United States Census living in Galena City, Jo Daviess County, Illinois: John Robinson, physician, age 33; wife Sarah, age 26; son William, age 3, all born England. Now a picturesque historic town of 3,500 people, Galena (named after the natural mineral form of lead sulphide) was then a booming lead mining centre and a busy river port and commercial hub, which attracted many British migrants.

And in the burial records of the Old City Cemetery, West Galena Township, we find recorded the death of Dr John Robinson on June 22nd 1854, age 32, by suicide: perhaps he lost his funds in a failed mining investment?

Not long after his death Sarah and young William returned to her home town in England, near destitute.

III

William spent nine years at Epsom College, where he played both cricket and football, leaving at seventeen in 1864. It seems he then remained in Northamptonshire, possibly farming with his stepfather, as there is a probable record of him playing cricket there in June 1866, but on February 9th 1867 we find him arriving in Auckland, at the age of nineteen, sailing on the *England* which left London on October 19th 1866. He is a saloon passenger, travelling by the most expensive passage: his mother had remarried in 1862, to a wealthy farmer. Soon he is in Thames, probably drawn by the rush to the goldfield which opened on August 1st 1867.

Unfortunately virtually no Thames newspapers survive before 1874, so when exactly he settled there remains uncertain. There is no mention of him at the Caledonian games of New Year 1868, the first organised sporting event in Thames, but on February 12th 1868, a year after his arrival in New Zealand, he is playing cricket for Thames against the Auckland Peripatetics, so was almost certainly living in Thames by then.

There was more than one W. Robinson living in Thames at this period, but he seems to have been the only W.W. Robinson, so he was very likely the possessor of mining rights on the Karaka field dated 24 July 1868 and 26 November 1869.

He may also have farmed: a crown grant in favour of a William Robinson was approved in Auckland in January 1868 and in July 1870 Mr W.W. Robinson was elected a member of the New Zealand Agricultural Association in Auckland. Many years later, in the 1901 England and Wales census, he gave his profession as “retired farmer”.

He is listed on the Thames Electoral Roll for 1875-6 and 1876-7 with a dwelling in Owen St, Grahamstown, and at some point he became manager or owner of Gregory Waller’s

tobacconist and sporting goods shop in Brown Street in Grahamstown. He played cricket and rugby in Thames, captaining both teams, was involved in athletics and horse racing, and often appeared in local shows and plays. In June 1877 he left Thames for Auckland and took over Waller's Queen Street shop. On his departure *The Thames Advertiser* said (26 June 1877 p.3):

The Thames is about to lose its best cricketer, football player, amateur theatrical, amateur vocalist ... Mr Robinson is the most thorough athlete and lover of old English sport we have at the Thames, and our respective clubs owe their origin and vigour to his untiring exertions on their behalf...

and at a ceremony held in the interval of a theatrical performance on June 28th the mayor presented him with "a diamond ring and a set of sleeve links and studs".

Mr W.W. Robinson left by the Rotomahana for Auckland to-day. He said "good-bye" to many of his numerous friends last night, but there were some to see him off and wish him good luck. We sincerely trust that he will succeed in his new venture. He is succeeded in his business here by Mr T. Lawless, who is well known, and will no doubt be able to preserve the old connection.

Soon he is advertising widely in Auckland, Thames, Waikato and Bay of Plenty newspapers – cigarettes, tobacco, "Havannah and Manilla Cigars", Meerschaums, fancy goods, and a wide range of sporting goods, including bats selected for him by Charles Bannerman, "the best bat in Australia", on his England tour in 1878 (*NZH* 27 Sep.1878 p.2; *TS* 3 Oct.1878 p.2).

Mr W.W. Robinson, who has succeeded to Mr Waller's business in Queen Street, Auckland, advertises the tobacconist department, and in addition notifies that he has on hand a large stock of cricketing material by the best makers. Mr Robinson's fame as a

cricketer will be remembered by most of the public to whom the cricketing portion of his advertisement is addressed, and his intimate knowledge of all that pertains to the game will be the best guarantee that the articles enumerated are selected with care (*BPT* 13 Oct.1877 p.3)

In November 1877 he seems to have been living in Devonport (*AS* 26 Nov.1877 p.3, advertising an impounded strayed pig) and the following year he is advertising for tenders for the construction of "a cottage in East-street, Newton" (*AS* 25 July 1878 p.3).

In February 1879 he is looking for "a man who can milk, groom, and garden" (*AS* 7 Feb.1879 p.3), but in July 1879 he was lodging in a boarding house kept by Mr Francis Pemberton in City Road, where he and another boarder (John Whitford – possibly the Thames cricketer of that name) put out an early morning fire (*NZH* 8 July 1879 p.5). By September 1884 he was living at 181 Grey Street (advertising for his stolen fox terrier: *AS* 2 Sep.1884 p.3), and he is still listed at that address with a residential qualification in the 1890 Auckland electoral roll. He left for a trip to England, via Sydney, at the end of March 1880, not returning until February 1881. The *Observer* remarked while he was away (16 Oct.1880 p.35):

Mr W.W. Robinson, who is now seeing life in the old country, is not expected out again before the new year. Billy's returning with a young bride will be a severe blow to many fair ones in this city, who have long had an eye on him.

But when he returned, via San Francisco on the *Zealandia* on February 9th, just in time to play for the Auckland cricketers against the visiting Australians, it was clear he had adopted *Punch's* advice to those about to marry, and instead of a young bride he brought 'a carefully selected assortment of fancy, fine, and rough cut tobaccos, cigarette and pipe smoking; also, fine cut and plug tobaccos for chewing, to suit all tastes. The above make quite a

show in his window' (*AS* 24 Mar.1881 p.20), and also on show in the window was "a handsome bat, presented by Mr C. Sharland of London, as a prize for the highest average scorer in Auckland this cricket season" (*AS* 14 Feb.1881 p.2; this was awarded in August to D. Lynch, the presentation made by Mr F.C. Sharland, brother of the donor, "Mr Charles Sharland, of London, but formerly of this city": *NZH* 25 Aug.1881 p.4).

However, Waller, who clearly still had an interest in the business (or at least in the premises, as he did in Thames), had died suddenly while on a visit to Australia in December, and the following advertisements appeared in the *Herald* on May 13th, with a note on p.5 that "The estate of the late Mr G. Waller is to be cleared off at very low prices". However, a correction the following day (p.5) stated: "We find that a paragraph inserted in yesterday's issue was in error. The only portion of the late G. Waller's estate to be realised upon absolutely is the tobacconist's business, hitherto conducted by Mr. W.W. Robinson".

The same advertisements continued to appear until at least July 18th, offering concurrently not just the old stock but "a large quantity of attractive New Goods [which] have lately been received from London" (e.g. *NZH* 18 July 1881 p.8), and at the end of the year: "REMOVAL CRICKET! TENNIS! CRICKET! W.W. Robinson begs to inform his patrons and the public that he has Removed his Stock of the above material to the premises of Mr Jones, Tobacconist, Queen-street" (*AS* 7 Dec.1881 p.1; Jones was at 103 Queen Street).

Working for (or possibly with) Robinson since at least 1880 was Arthur Tilly ("...Apply to Arthur Tilly, at Robinson's Tobacconist, 98 Queen-street": *AS* 13 Apr.1880 p.3) and in January 1882 Tilly took over the similar business at 64 Queen St ("Arthur Tilly, for a number of years with Mr W.W. Robinson, Begs to intimate to the Public that he had succeeded to the Tobacco Business, 64 Queen-street, until recently carried on by Messrs Partridge and Woollams, as a Branch Establishment...": *AS* 7 Jan.1882 p.1).

It appears that Robinson may have been manager for a period of H.N. Abbott's newly opened Opera House in Auckland, which opened on May 23rd 1882, but he continued to sell his cricketing equipment at Jones's ("...cricketing material for the coming season..." AS 26 Sep. 1882 p.1) until in November 1882 comes the announcement that "W.W. Robinson ... has disposed of his cricketing material to Messrs Partridge and Woollams, Tobacconists" (NZH 8 Dec.1882 p.3), followed in September 1883 by news he is back in the business (NZH 17 Sep.1883 p.1).

How long he continued selling sports equipment is uncertain but no advertisements have been found after December 1883. From about this time he appears increasingly frequently as a racing handicapper and associated with Tattersall's, the racing authority, of which he became secretary; he also acted as an agent purchasing race horses at auction.

He visited Australia early in 1888 (AS 4 Feb.1888 p.2) and left New Zealand for good early in 1889, returning to England via Australia. The *Observer* published a "capital portrait" of him on December 29th 1888 (reproduced at the end of this article): "his is a well-known face, not only on the cricket field but also on the race course and football field, where he is generally respected for his many genial qualities" (p.10) and there was an "illustrated biographical sketch" of him in the *Family Friend* at the start of February.

He sailed on the *Mararoa* on February 12th, having played his last cricket match in New Zealand the day before. The cricketers gave him a hearty send off from the field and that night there was a dinner given by "a small party of his most intimate friends", racing colleagues, at which he was presented with a gold locket (AS 16 Feb.1889 p.2; *Obs.* sd p.11).

IV

We catch a few glimpses of him after his return to England, still playing cricket and maintaining his interest in cricket, rugby, athletics, horseracing and the stage. He settled in Wellingborough,

coaching sport at Wellingborough School. In 1895 we find him attending a parade and inspection of the St John Ambulance Brigade in Wellingborough (NM 23 Aug.1895) and attending a wedding there in 1899 (NM 8 Sep.1899); he was stage manager for local amateur plays in 1895 and 1902. New Zealand papers printed some of his sporting poems over the years and the *Auckland Observer* published a photo of him in its issue of 25 Sept.1897 (p.7): "a photograph recently sent by Mr Robinson to Mr John Marshall, President of the A.A. and Cycle Club ... Mr Robinson has never lost his interest in Auckland or in Auckland sport of all kinds" (p.6).

In the 1901 census of England and Wales he is single and living with his mother, now 84, at The Chestnuts, 30 Poplar Crescent, Wellingborough, both "of private means". She died on April 2nd 1902 (death notice NM 4 Apr.1902, and her death was noted in the AS June 11 1902 p.4); the probate valued her effects at £2832 11s 2d.

He saw at least the Northamptonshire game on the 1905 New Zealand rugby tour, and was honoured after the match. New Zealand papers quoted at length from his 1905 articles on New Zealand rugby and the *Auckland Star* printed a review of the booklet by its London correspondent. His poem 'How it's Done' (on the All Blacks' record total) was published in the *Daily Mail* in December 1905 and reprinted in the *Auckland Star*.

In the 1911 census he is boarding with a William Lissenden and his wife in Wellingborough; there as a visitor is an Arthur Manning, a solicitor and company secretary born in 1865, probably a close relative and the same Arthur Manning who was to be his executor.

He planned to publish a collection of his poems in 1916 but it did not appear until 1922; it was reviewed in the AS in December (see above).

He saw the 1924 All Blacks play in Leicester and Northampton, and the following year a long account of his sporting career, together with an interesting chatty letter from him, appeared in the AS (2 Oct.1925 p.5). He was consulted in 1925 on the prospects

of a New Zealand cricket tour to England and watched the team play Northamptonshire at Kettering in 1927. He died in Wellingborough on September 14th 1929, aged 82. Probate was granted in London on October 11th to Arthur Manning, retired secretary, and Hugh William Jackson, solicitor; the value of his effects was £2468 2s 5d. A death notice appeared in *The Times* (20 Sep.1929 p.1: "New Zealand papers please copy"). There was an obituary three months later in the AS (31 Dec.1929 p.9):

...He was one of the pioneers who introduced rugby football to the province... His services to the game, both as a player and a coach, were invaluable ... he contributed much material of historical value to New Zealand football, and wrote a book on 'its development and small beginnings' ..."

And an Australian paper published an obituary three months after that:

...Mr. Robinson, who was an English public school boy, was recognised as one of the founders of Rugby football under the Southern Cross. He settled in Auckland, N.Z. ... played for his province, and in 1882, when the first invasion of Maoriland by Australian footballers took place, the soundness of his training was evidenced by the defeat by Auckland of a much vaunted New South Wales team... It was from that defeat that New South Wales and Australia learned the true inwardness of rugby, and in years to come both New South Wales and Queensland were oftentimes superior to their teachers. The shortness of football memory, however, is illustrated by a statement in a recent issue of a Sydney paper that "Sydney taught Maoriland rugby football." The late Mr. Robinson had lived in England since 1889, but he had never lost contact with Australasian athletes, and often sent messages to his alumni scattered throughout Australia and Maoriland...

Abbreviations used:

AS = Auckland Star
 BPT = Bay of Plenty Times
 NM = Northampton Mercury
 NZH = New Zealand Herald
 TS = Thames Star



BILLY ROBINSON
 (From a Photograph
 by Charles Hemus, *Observer*,
 29 December 1888, p. 6)

This essay is the introductory biography to W W Robinson's life by Rowan Gibbs.

Rowan's book on W W Robinson, Rugby Football in New Zealand: Its Developments from Small Beginnings, is available from Rowan at rowan.gibbs@paradise.net.nz

Classic New Zealand poetry

This issue's classic New Zealand poetry (found by Mark Pirie) is by Oswald Edward Hugo (1855?-1915). Professor Hugo, a poet, artist and colourful lecturer, travelled around New Zealand in the 19th century offering entertaining and fascinating lectures on such subjects as 'Language', 'Faces', 'Noses', 'Hands', 'Eyes' and other parts of the body. His specialist and pioneering interest was physiognomy and phrenology.

He was Danish originally. His father was Alfred Edward Hugo, M.D., of Copenhagen. Hugo married in 1882 Elizabeth Annabella Campbell (1860?-1924) in Reefton, formerly from Picton, Nova Scotia. A son Angus Oswald Hugo was born in 1883 and lived till 1958.

Hugo lectured first as a young man at the Institute in Masterton in the 1880s, and developed a way of delineating character by picking people as examples from his audiences in live lectures.

At one stage he was also in Rangiora and was a member of their literary and debating society. He later lived in Auckland and Otago and enjoyed travelling the country. In Otago, he wrote on his encounters with Southern Māori.

His poetry, prose, travel tales, art and literary criticism and verse translations of Danish and European poets like Goethe appeared in a number of newspapers, including the *Auckland Star*, *Otago Witness*, and *Canterbury Star*.

His sonnets are of particular interest for their easy registering of the New Zealand landscape and stand apart from other poets of this period who were still coming to grips with the exotic bush surrounding them.

There is no record of poetry book publication from him, and he does not appear in official literary histories or national poetry anthologies. Hugo died in Nelson aged 60 in August 1915.

Poems by O E Hugo

BACK FROM THE DEAD

The apparition of my youth arose
 From out its grave and thus to me it
 spoke:
 "We dwelled together, you and I, in
 those
 Love-sheltered days before thy soul
 awoke
 To realise how much of hope was
 dream;
 And now I come from out yon silent
 land,
 Beyond the murmurless night-tinted
 stream,
 To hear if still you wish that hand in
 hand

We two could wander through the
 summer fields?"
 "Depart!" I cried, "I miss thee not;
 depart.
 For with contentment now my spirit
 yields
 Unto the autumn calmness of the heart
 With thee I buried aspirations vain,
 And love with all its bliss and all its
 pain."

July 23

(*Otago Witness*, 31 July 1890)

TREES

I love all trees— both those which on
 the plain
 Appear oasis-like in deserts drear,
 And those that seem on mountains to
 sustain
 The sinking clouds and those which by
 the mere
 Look king-like among reeds. I love the
 trees
 In summer when within their shade I
 rest
 Embowered in leafiness, through which
 the breeze
 Sounds like a voice from islands of the
 blest.
 I love the trees in winter when through
 sere,
 Late-lingering leaves, the wind sighs
 pensively
 For glories longed for eagerly as were
 It Orpheus, and spring Eurydice.
 Trees were my early friends, and may
 they wave
 Their songster-shelt'ring branches o'er
 my grave.

(*Otago Witness*, 10 October 1889)

AFTER FIVE YEARS

I left her in the beauty of her youth and
 innocence;
 Years sped onward, on my heart they
 left their trace.
 But often during absence rose a longing,
 deep, intense,
 Once again to see that lovely girlish
 face.

At last I reached the village, but it held
no more the maid;
In the churchyard, hedged with yellow,
blooming gorse,
They pointed out her tombstone. Sad in
heart, I knelt, and said,
“Magni saevique Di sunt, et dira
mors.”*

*The gods are great and cruel, and dire is
death.

(Auckland Star, 18 February 1888)

ATYS

(On reading *De Atye*, by Catullus.)

I read the story of young Atys, told
By him who, first in conquest-weary
Rome,
When Hellas’ day waxed lustreless and
cold,
For fair Euterpe reared a sunny home,
That picture haunts me still. I see him
stand
Upon the shore, and gazing through his
tears
Across the sea towards a distant land
So luculent in light of happy years.
And thus, my brothers and my sisters,
each
Of us is Atys. Like him we have gazed
Into those realms which only thought
can reach,
Where lies, soft-hued and dimmed and
distance hazed,
A flower-girt strand— one lovely spot
which bore
Those joys and happy days that are no
more.

Oamaru, September 25

(Otago Witness, 3 October 1889)

THE HOME OF THE PARA FERN

In some lone gully, deep and dark, it
grows,
The treasured secret of the forest’s
heart.
The creek which through the mystic
twilight flows
Slackens its pace, unwilling to depart
And high above, upon the dripping
ledge,

Like eyes that flash with curiosity
The flaming rata flowers creep o’er the
edge,
Seeking to penetrate the mystery.
In such a spot as this life seems a torch
Swung by a madman—to perplex,
distress,
And not to guide the spirit near the
porch
Of the Nirvana, perfect selflessness.
For mortals met the great Pan face to
face
In lonely places—through the forest’s
maze.

Auckland, March 1893

(Otago Witness, 24 March 1898)

MARE PROFUNDUM

*Seele des Menschen
Wie gleichst du dem Wasser!
Schicksal des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wind!*
Goethe

Oh, palpitating, blue, expanding sea!
Thou ever wert to me
A fount of wonder, awe, and strange
delight,
Which thrills my soul e’en more than
does the sight
Of woman’s loveliness, in all the
mystery
Of beauty’s majesty.

Thou restless, wailing, ever-troubled
sea,
I recognise in thee
A mirror of my agitated soul,
So tempest-tossed, so weary of the
whole
Incomprehensible and incessant strife
’Twixt peace and life.

I hear thee sing a dirge, sad, dark blue
sea,
With mournful melody,
For all the dead who through eternity
Shall sleep in thy embrace. Incessantly
My heart, too, hums a dirge in constant
monotone
For joys for ever gone.

I watch thy silver waves and see them
reach
The rocky shell-strewn beach.
What am I but a wave upon the vast
Expanding sea of time; I too at last.
Perhaps ere long, shall reach that silent
shore,
Where breakers foam no more.

(Auckland Star, 8 December 1888)

SONNET

I mourn not at the thought that I shall
leave
This world of men. How could I when
I think
That not one joy shall cease, or heart
shall grieve,
Or eye be tear ennobled when I sink
Into the depths of Orcus? But thou, blue
Eternal sky,— O I could leave to-day
With Roman resignation if I knew
That thou wouldst not for ever fade
away;
And O, ye mountains, and ye forest
trees;
Thou many-voiced and ever restless
sea,
Responding to the tempest and the
breeze
Like human hearts to poet’s melody;—
No chord can render, and no voice can
tell
What I shall feel when bidding you
Farewell.

(Otago Witness, 5 September 1889)

**Comment on Richard
A Singer**

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE
AOTEAROA POET RICHARD
ARNOLD SINGER by Niel Wright**

Singer’s dates are given as 1878?–1961,
so he lived to 84. Registration of birth is
confirmed in first quarter 1878. His
father was a Rev. Singer = Rabbi?
I am indebted to Rowan Gibbs for the
following research on the Singer family.

Richard's father was indeed a Rabbi, and an author (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_Singer and <http://www.newwestend.org.uk/visitors/Singerlecture.doc>):

- Rev. Simeon Singer, father;
- Charlotte Singer, mother;
- Fredericka (Freda) Abrahams, sister; and
- Julius Singer, Samuel Alexander Singer, David Jacob Singer, Dr. Charles Joseph Singer, brothers.

The National Library of New Zealand has in Tapuhi 17 files for R A Singer. Record 2 of 17 has a library profile "Solicitor, actor and poet, born in Camberwell England. He lived for many years in Auckland where he was the object of a bomb attack in 1945. He moved to Australia where he later died." There are references to him in Australian papers quoted below. *Auckland Star* 12 May 1934 page 8 'The Passing Show, Personality of the Week' has a piece naming Richard Arnold Singer in full, of which these are the leading points:

- born in London;
- schooled at the City of London School and University College;
- member of the English Bar very early in life;
- is a barrister of the Inner Temple;
- "He was junior counsel in a Privy Council case with the famous and perhaps immortal Asquith" ie future Prime Minister from 1908;
- at 1934 more than 3 decades in Auckland;
- "in many of the most sensational trials of our time";
- "unsurpassed in oratorical advocacy, pungent, analytic and convincing";
- "combination of orator and litterateur";
- "not only immersed himself in other people's poetry as a chief hobby. But writes poetry of his own";
- *The Years go Round* – "many friends have it";
- "Much of his excellent literary work went into the *Triad*";
- "good listener as well as a good talker";

➤ "Plays bridge, drives a car, reads much. Tells a bright story... well known to police" presumably as a criminal lawyer, but Singer was also taken to court on two matters for failure to file tax returns for himself (so also was Shakespeare, be it said). There are sufficient references to Singer's interest in drama to put it beyond doubt, but so far I have found no public records of his name in theatrical matters. The other 16 records go back to Pat Lawlor's literary papers and deal with contact between Singer and other literary figures of the time. In Record 7 of 17 one correspondent says Singer '(a Jew) is about the best and most brilliant chap.' PapersPast has 40 items for Richard Arnold Singer and 166 items for R. A. Singer. To that extent his life is well documented.

The PapersPast items listed as Advertisements give for Richard Arnold Singer only public notices regarding his legal clients.

Authors' Week 1936 bibliography of New Zealand Literature lists under his name

1908 *Dreams in Exile* verse

1928 *The Years Go Round* verse

He appears in Bagnall with these books fully catalogued in the National Library. No other publications by Richard Arnold Singer are held by New Zealand libraries.

PANZA has both books courtesy of Alistair Paterson [Singer's own 1908 copy with poem inscriptions] and Dr Michael O'Leary [the 1928 collection]. Otherwise 8 libraries in New Zealand have copies of 1928, but only 2 libraries in New Zealand have 1908.

Both books are private editions. 1908 consists of 57 pages unpaginated 20 cm in height and 15.5 cm in breadth. It is centre string bound in brown tape knotted top and bottom but tied in the middle with a bow. There is a brown soft leather cover, but in the PANZA copy it has split apart totally at the spine.

There is no indication of publisher or printer, but the presumption is [Auckland? NZ R A Singer] self

published and possibly hand bound by the author or friend.

Pat Lawlor (see below) in 1935 writes "Dick Singer has told me much of the early days of another poet, Dick Harris [1887-1926]. Incidentally I understand that through the generosity of Singer, who paid the printing bill, the publication of Harris's first book of poems "*Monodies*," was made possible." *Monodies* was published in 1910 printed by Whitcombe & Tombs in 125 copies string bound through holes, leather cover, copies held in only 5 New Zealand libraries today plus PANZA (copy 59 signed Dick Harris 1910) courtesy of Dr Michael O'Leary. *Monodies* is a more professional companion book to Singer 1908. *Observer* (18 October 1913) 'Pars About People' has this to say:

What, oh what has happened to the literary facilities of Richard Arnold Singer? How is it that we no longer hear his tuneful poetic pipe amidst the thunderous clamour of the wheels of commerce? Time was when Richard Arnold sang with a lightsome heart of the sunlit side of life, but now it would seem nothing more interesting than the crabbed formulas of the law drop from his irridium [sic]-pointed pen. Seriously, besides being one of the leading lawyers in a city which is overrun with them, Mr Singer at one time had the faculty of writing good prose and better verse – he was want [sic] to revel in the mask of critic, but alas, he revels no longer. It may be, of course, that his time is taken up "within the meaning of the act" in the dry technicalities of the law, but surely he might find time to write another "Little Grey Eyes," or a further "Lyric". It is so seldom that we of New Zealand have the opportunity of enjoying good work, that Mr Singer might come down from his seat upon Parnassus or from his tomb beneath the parchment and verbiage of legal matters to thrum a tuneful lyre once more.

The poem 'Little Grey Eyes' to D. M. first given in his privately published

book *Dreams in Exile* of 1908 when he was 30 can be read in unfortunate terms as a man preying on young girls. In it he says he is 33 years old, which implies his birth date was 1875 or earlier rather than 1878? and that actually sounds more plausible given his career in Britain. Possibly D. M. became his wife Dorothy Rose, who died in 1930. *NZ Truth* issue 1043 21 November 1925 gives a profile under the heading 'Lawyer-Litterateur'. After quoting a witticism it goes on:

This was one of the many witticisms cracked by Richard Arnold Singer, barrister and solicitor, known to his intimates as "Dickie."

The self-same R.A.S. was once referred to by a member of the profession in the Supreme Court as one of the cleverest criminal lawyers in the Northern city. And that is the general opinion of the Bar and probably of the Bench.

But Lawyer Singer is a man of more than usual attainments and hobbies. His favourite pastime, if pastime it can be termed, is literature in general and drama in particular. His library contains classics, primeval, mediaeval, and modern, and its owner has more than a nodding acquaintance with the best known and some of the [e]ast known authors down the ages. A club man with many attachments, his circle of friends is a very wide one. He has not his peer as an impromptu humorist, and he will write and produce a playlet or comedy while you wait.

Art finds him an ardent and devoted follower, and music claims his ungrudging admiration.

Rowan Gibbs advises me there is information on Singer in Ian Thwaites, *Biographical Journeys*, p.175, 2009. Quilter's Bookshop has a copy in the reference collection. There are copies in the Turnbull Library, National Library and Te Aka Matua Research Library at Te Papa (by appointment) etc. Thwaites's book is a collection of bookplates with profiles of the bookplate owner and artist. 2/3rds of a page of text is given to Dick Singer, the

rest to Arnold Goodwin (1889-1978) the artist who designed his bookplate dated c1925; chief points as follows.

Singer came to New Zealand in 1902, frequently attended the meetings of Savage Club, and of the graphic arts interest group, the Quoin Club of which Goodwin and T (Tom) V Gulliver were members. Singer appeared in plays, took part in long running radio series *Famous Trials*. In 1945 a bomb exploded in his home letter box. He died in Australia in March 1961, obituaries in *New Zealand Herald*, 15 March 1961; *Auckland Star*, 26 March 1961; gets a chapter in Pat Lawlor's *Confessions of a Journalist* (1935). In the 1930s [but this is the wrong decade as she was dead by then] Mrs Dorothy Singer led the Auckland Amateur Opera Society orchestra and provided incidental music for Auckland Little Theatre Society productions. Their daughter Pam was a student at Elam School of Art from 1933.

In 1928, Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd printed *The Years Go Round* – a handsome book. There are 61 pages but only 34 have print on them, only those with text having the page numbered. Every poem starts on the recto, but if it doesn't continue to the verso the verso is blank. I have never met another book of verse with this sort of pagination. Thwaites cited above says Gulliver designed this book, "which became a collector's item, notable for its typography and distinctive endpapers," though he is not credited in it for doing so.

Rowan Gibbs supplied this quotation. *The Years Go Round* is: "probably the first well-printed book of poetry done in New Zealand" – Ron Holloway (distinguished Auckland printer) in *Turnbull Library Record*, May 1989, p. 12."

Of 1928 200 copies were printed. The Turnbull Library copy, inscribed by the author is no. 200, and has an errata slip tipped in as leaf [58] and dated 1930. The PANZA copy is no. 83, with an inscription by the author dated December 1928. His is not a script easy to read at times. There is no writing on the blank pages.

This is a case where the later book is better known, in 8 libraries besides

PANZA. The earlier book is only held in 2 libraries plus PANZA. Only the University of Auckland General library and the Turnbull Library have both books, besides PANZA.

With only access to 1928 one actually gets a misleading impression of Singer's work and worth as a poet. It takes access to 1908 to get a handle on Singer as a poet.

The two books 1908, 1928 have a very substantial core of poems in common, viz 15 poems.

This common core suggests that the poet's oeuvre had taken its character by his age of 30 (1908). In fact he is almost *fin de siecle* in character, but probably most of his poems belong to the 20th century. Pat Lawlor in his *Books and Bookmen New Zealand and Overseas* (1954) pages 98-100 describes Singer's personal library as strong on *fin de siecle* (1890s) poetry first editions and praises Singer highly as a poet. Singer's earlier book, *Dreams in Exile*, is the better book. It has extra love poetry, a lighter touch, and a clearer cultural context.

Singer handles a wide range of poems with some assurance. Album verses are what I call light short complimentary poems addressed to women. There are 10 examples in 1908 none repeated in 1928.

The later book is less happy in its additional poems, which are grimmer and sadder, usually less effective for lack of context or sharp focus. The poet is 20 years older but in fact is to live another 33 years.

Even in 1908 there are poems with a sense of sadness and distress at the human predicament. But by 1928 this sense has greatly deepened, one supposes as a result of the global warfare that overwhelmed the 20th century. In the last 30 years of R A Singer's life the sadness and distress clearly broke the man who may have seen or may have wished to see the world pre-1914 in idyllic terms.

I have no doubt that the 1908 book should be reprinted, because it is his best work as a poet.

But it seems also sure that there are uncollected poems to be found and a collection should be made of them.

Auckland Star, 18 October 1929, reports Richard Arnold Singer in court for failure to file income tax returns.

Auckland Star, 7 October 1930, has a death notice for Singer, Dorothy Rose, wife of Richard Arnold Singer.

Auckland Star, 31 October 1934, Girl's Death reports that Singer was in an accident involving cars at an intersection; one travelling 15 to 20 miles per hour (in which Singer was a passenger) was hit by the other travelling twice as fast (in which the 12 year old daughter of the driver was killed). Was Singer injured in this accident?

Confessions of a Journalist (1935) by Pat Lawlor pages 246-7 has page and a third complimentary profile of a public figure in line with what you would expect for R A Singer in 1935. I quote one sentence "His rare efforts in prose may be found in early numbers of *The Triad*."

"Postscripts" column, *Evening Post* 4 July 1936, under the heading below Percy Flage = C A Marris comments as quoted and gives the text of 'Let who will believe it', which appeared first in 1928 under the title given below in capitals. It is significant to have Marris's endorsement of Singer as a poet. This is the only occasion "Postscripts" refers to Singer by his full name.

AN OLD COMPLAINT DENIED

These verses, which breathe a warming philosophy for the up-in-years, are the work of Richard Arnold singer, professionally a man of law but at heart a poet.

Of interest: *Auckland Star*, 26 October 1937, reports a bomb outrage against R A Singer, with Peter Fraser Minister of Police posting a reward. A later Australian newspaper reports that Singer was severely injured and in ill health for years afterwards.

Auckland Star, 2 September 1941, reports Richard Arnold Singer was struck off the legal rolls, but does not state the cause.

If more comes to light about R A Singer's biography there may be some scandal involved. Why was he exiled from Britain? Why was he crossed off

the legal rolls in 1941? It seems however that anti-Semitism may have been the bugbear of his life.

However a later Australian newspaper report indicates he was a party to misappropriation, but later repaid the funds to the plaintiff. His son was killed in war.

Here follows the substance of the report. The significance of which is it confirms Singer's age so date of birth, and fills out his biography in important detail:

APPLICATION REFUSED

Disbarred N.Z. Barrister

The Full Court of the Supreme Court yesterday refused an application by a Sydney solicitor for permission to employ a former New Zealand barrister who was struck off the roll in 1941.

The former barrister is Richard Arnold Singer, 73, who has been living in Australia for five years. Evidence was given that Singer lost his wife in 1931 [sic, correctly 1930], and later a son was killed in the war.

In his judgment, the Chief Justice, the Honourable K. W. Street, said that Singer had built up an importan[t] practice in New Zealand. After a series of illnesses, he had been the victim of a brutal bomb assault [in 1937], and suffered a nervous breakdown.

He resumed practice, but continued to suffer bad health. In 1941 his name was removed from the roll because he was a party to appropriating for his own purposes a debenture left in his custody. However, he had redeemed the debenture, and handed it back to the owner.

The Chief Justice said...[i]n Mr. Clark's business however, Singer would be a responsible person in the office, and there could not be adequate supervision over him. If an application was made in other circumstances, by a larger legal office where there could be supervision, the Court might reach a different conclusion.

(*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 February 1951, page 7)

Richard Arnold Singer does not appear in the 2012 book *Jewish Lives in New Zealand: A History*. However this may simply be an oversight as the editors consulted a knowledgeable bibliophile who knew of Singer as a poet but not that he was Jewish. Previous books on Jewish writers in New Zealand had not covered Singer.

Poetry Archive road trip: Hawke's Bay

In October 2012, as an invited guest for the Hawke's Bay Live Poets Society, PANZA co-organiser Mark Pirie gave a talk on the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa and was guest poet there.

Accompanying him was the co-founder of the Poetry Archive Dr Michael O'Leary who had agreed to join Mark in a joint presentation on the Archive.

The Hawke's Bay Live Poets committee includes former Labour MP and poet Dr Bill Sutton, Chairperson Carole Stewart, Marty Smith, Dave Sharp, Marie Dunningham and the poet-dermatologist Dr Ian McQuillan.

A smallish but appreciative crowd was on hand, about 30 people.

Michael and Mark gave their talk on the Poetry Archive. They emphasised the importance of collecting New Zealand's national poetry wares for public display similar to the arts council assisted Poetry Library in London. They stated PANZA was always on the lookout for new additions and every kind of poetry was acceptable to the project: privately printed material to mainstream publications.

Next, poets from the Hawke's Bay read. There was a break to remember a recently deceased member Allen John (88). His daughter Kerin John read Allen's last poem, a tribute to his late wife Myra, discovered on his computer. This again as Michael pointed out was a fitting reminder of the importance of having a Poetry Archive. Michael also read in the Open Mic.

Mark finished off the reading with about 20 minutes of his own poetry. He first warmed up by reading Harry

Ricketts' fine elegy for Louis Johnson. Mark had reprinted his *broadsheet* tribute to Louis for the occasion. (Johnson lived in Hastings 1959-63 working as a journalist for the *Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune* and running his Capricorn Press there.) The next morning, Mark and Michael visited the second-hand bookshop: The Little Bookshop. Packed with NZ poetry, they took a box back to Wellington with them. This included Louis Johnson's Capricorn production of James K Baxter's *Two Plays: Jack Winter's Dream and The Wide Open Cage*. The owner discounted the price as a salute to the non-funded Archive initiative.

Robert J Pope book launch

The following report on the launch of PANZA member **Mark Pirie's** books, including his edition of early New Zealand poet/songwriter, *Robert J Pope*, appeared on Beattie's Book Blog, 6 December 2012.

A good crowd of 30 people packed into Alan Aldridge's Kiwi Art House Gallery on Tuesday night, 4 December, to celebrate two new books by Wellington poet and publisher Mark Pirie. Those in attendance included well-known poetry personalities like Vivienne Plumb, Lewis Scott and Michael O'Leary, Dr Bill Sutton of the Hawke's Bay Live Poets Society, Wellington poet/publisher Helen Rickerby and librarians from the Turnbull and National Library of New Zealand. Dr Niel Wright, Mark's co-organiser with the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa, launched both books. After Niel's speech, Mark read poems from each of the books. Mark, commenting on why he edited the substantial volume of Robert J Pope's work some 63 years after Pope's death, told people of the similarities between Wellington of 70-100 years ago and the Wellington of 2012. "The poems prove

that not much has changed in 100 years and Pope's poems are just as relevant today as they were in the 1920s and 1930s, whether it is politics at Parliament, the cricket at the Basin or the latest All Blacks rugby match." In honour of the windy conditions outside, Mark read Pope's poem 'Windy Wellington' written and published in *The Evening Post* in 1940:

WINDY WELLINGTON

It seemed to me of late (I fear I erred),
That Wellington, grown wise, was
wearing down
Her one reproach, those blustering
springs which gave
Detractors joy, and cause to dub her
oft: "The windy town."

In this, her hundredth year, has she
relapsed,
Dispelling hopes that some amend was
made?
Alas! a fore-time gale she late released,
The fickle jade!

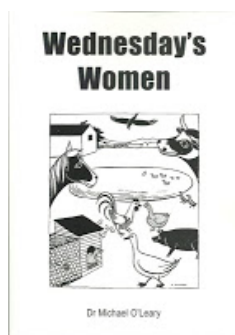
Her lovely Gardens, then enjoying
wealth
Of cherry, plum, magnolia, kowhai,
gay,
She smote with ruthless, biting blast,
and swept
That wealth away!

Mark read four poems from his *Old Hat* book, including the book's title poem 'Old Hat', a tribute to Bob Dylan, and a cricket poem 'Old Bat' for his young nephews. *Old Hat*, designed to be out of step with current poetry trends, reinterprets the old triolet French form. There is also a blues motif running through the book with a blues hat featured on the cover (drawn by Michael O'Leary). Mark commented: "The blues is about truth telling, and saying it like it is. The poems represent different attitudes of people and comment on diverse subjects." Dr Niel Wright's launch speech is reproduced below:

I have been asked to launch Mark's new books, the latest he has written or edited. I am Niel Wright. I do so with pleasure because they are

books that share two of my interests. There is a need to see things in a different light, in a different perspective as Mark does. One is a large collection of poetry by a long forgotten NZ poet Robert J Pope whose poetry was in print from 1902 to the 1940's. The book is *King Willow: Selected Poems*. Pope lived 1865-1949. He was 12 years younger than the earliest New Zealand born poet Mary E Richmond. She also lived to 1949. I shared the last 16 years of both their lives. So literally I grew up in their era with some degree of exposure to both. Mark Pirie's judgement on Robert J Pope is valid. Mark's words are "Pope's poetry, lyrically gifted, showed musical flair and easy felicity of rhyme." I would add Pope is intelligent, acute and witty. He reflects his time, but his insight is subtler than is obvious on the surface. He has a profound sense of what changed between 1880 and 1940. The other is a book of Mark's triolets, *Old Hat*. Triolets have been around since the 13th century and have been popular all over Europe. There was a Frenchman the Duke of Orleans whose son became king of France. When the Duke of Orleans was a prisoner of Henry V of England he wrote triolets in English as well as French. The triolet was neglected otherwise in English till the late 19th century. Mark's triolets are like nothing that has previously been written in English. They are a vigorous development which I welcome as a fruitful line of work. Mark Pirie says his book *Old Hat* gives a set of dramatic monologues reflecting popular interests nowadays. But interestingly Mark Pirie sees Robert J Pope as doing similarly in much of his poetry in newspapers and weeklies. And I have to say all my poetry is also a dramatic enactment in which I present myself as author, persona and dramatic character interacting with other epic characters all of us running together to some point.

New publication by
PANZA member:
Wednesday's Women by
Michael O'Leary



Dr Michael O'Leary's new book was launched by David McGill's Silver Owl Press at Petone Jail Museum in Jackson Street, Petone, 12.30, Friday 23 November 2012, and St Peters Hall Beach Road, Paekakariki, 1-4pm, Sunday, 25 November 2012. Dr O'Leary's PhD thesis on three decades of discrimination against women writers preaches what he practised and reintroduces writers worthy of attention. Few women writers are prominent in the period 1945 to the late 1960s, deliberately under-represented and trivialised by male writers and publishers. Dr O'Leary, poet, painter and publisher of works by men and women, uncovers this era dominated by openly hostile misogyny which only ended when women 'started doing it for themselves'. In the process he reminds us of neglected reputations, including that of the cover artist Anne McCahon. An article on the book by Jim Chipp appeared in *The Wellingtonian*, the *Kapiti Observer* and on the stuff.co.nz website in December 2012.

Title: *Wednesday's Women*
Author: Michael O'Leary
ISBN: 978-0-9864519-7-3
Price: \$25.00
Extent: 176 pages
Format: 148x210mm
Publication: November 2012
Publisher: Silver Owl Press

NZ publication of
Cameron La Follette's
poetry

People checking the New Zealand National Bibliography may have come across the name Cameron La Follette, of USA, since 2010. PANZA member Niel Wright has been producing archival editions of this Salem, Oregon poet in New Zealand. Expectation is to archive 1,000 poems by Cameron La Follette in total. So far the following 8 volumes have been published (362 poems in total):
43 poems: Daphne and Apollo to questing beast / 2010.
Midsummer stars: 44 poems / 2010.
Spiderwebs of silver: 48 poems / 2011.
Beyond the painted hills: 46 poems / 2011.
Amber and gold: 43 poems / 2011.
Mist in the morning: 45 poems / 2012.
Jewels of the harlequin: 48 poems / 2012.
Salmon guardian: 45 poems / 2012.
La Follette's poetry is lyrical, passionate, classical and traditional in approach centred around nature and wildlife themes and with classical mythology and spirituality at her core. In this mode Cameron's work is impressive and her overall oeuvre is building up to being quite significant. Poetry by Cameron La Follette also previously featured in *Poetry Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Autumn 2010.

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You can now become a friend of PANZA or donate cash to help us continue our work by going to <http://pukapukabooks.blogspot.com> and accessing the donate button – any donation will be acknowledged.

Recently received
donations

Nelson Wattie – *New Zealand Books*, a full set of this review periodical.

Laurice Gilbert – *My family & other strangers* by Laurice Gilbert; *Building a Time Machine* – NZPS anthology 2012; and *The Shed* by Judith Clearwater.

Alistair Paterson – *Dreams in Exile* by Richard Arnold Singer.

Mark Pirie – 70 titles.

PANZA kindly thanks these donators to the archive.

About the Poetry
Archive

**Poetry Archive of New Zealand
Aotearoa (PANZA)**

PANZA contains

A unique Archive of NZ published poetry, with around five thousand titles from the 19th century to the present day. The Archive also contains photos and paintings of NZ poets, publisher's catalogues, poetry ephemera, posters, reproductions of book covers and other memorabilia related to NZ poetry and poetry performance.

Wanted

NZ poetry books (old & new)
Other NZ poetry items i.e. critical books on NZ poetry, anthologies of NZ poetry, poetry periodicals and broadsheets, poetry event programmes, posters and/or prints of NZ poets or their poetry books.

DONT THROW OUT OLD NZ
POETRY! SEND IT TO PANZA

Summer 2013

PANZA will offer:

- Copies of NZ poetry books for private research and reading purposes.
- Historical information for poets, writers, journalists, academics, researchers and independent scholars of NZ poetry.
- Photocopying for private research purposes.
- Books on NZ poetry and literary history, and CD-ROMs of NZ poetry and literature
- CDs of NZ poets reading their work
- Inspirational talks on NZ poets
- Video/DVD/film screenings of documentaries on NZ poets
- Readings/book launches by NZ poets
- Educational visits for primary schools, intermediates, colleges, universities and creative writing schools/classes.
- The Northland Writers' Walk (in planning)

You can assist the preservation of NZ poetry by becoming one of the Friends of the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA).

If you'd like to become a friend or business sponsor of PANZA, please contact us.

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Current PANZA Members:

Mark Pirie (HeadworX), Roger Steele (Steele Roberts Ltd), Michael O'Leary (Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop) and Niel Wright (Original Books).

Current Friends of PANZA: Paul Thompson, Gerrard O'Leary, Vaughan Rapatahana and the New Zealand Poetry Society.

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