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Poetry Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of PANZA

Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue 24 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.

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

<http://poetryarchivenz.wordpress.com>

Niel Wright on W H Oliver

Wellington poet, publisher, critic and PANZA archivist Niel Wright remembers W H Oliver (1925-2015). Bill, an editor, historian, and poet, died in September 2015 and made a considerable contribution to New Zealand history and literature.

LAST VIEWING

I saw you last, Bill Oliver at brunch
In a local café ; a man pushing his eighties,
Your company : a Sibyl without branch.

I saw you last, Bill Oliver at brunch ;
Enjoying life for sure : the latest tranche
How soon to pay of mortal debt to Hades.

I saw you last, Bill Oliver at brunch
In a local café ; a man pushing his eighties.

– Poem from *The Alexandrians* Book 119
Day 237.

I note the recent death (aged 90,
September 2015) of my uncle by
marriage W H Oliver.

In 1950 I was talking with Bill Oliver
who married my mother's half sister
Dorothy. I said I too was a poet (then 16
or 17). I think it was Dorothy who asked
how I would find an audience. I said a
poet had to create his own audience. I
still think that 65 years later.

It is now 2015. In 2005 Victoria
University Press published W H
Oliver's *Poems 1946-2005*, a 152-page
book including uncollected poems as
well. There is a 2005 preface by W H
Oliver. I had not read the uncollected
poems before. I am happy to see W H
Oliver's poems collected, but I see no
need to comment on his poetry beyond
the following relevant passages from
my earlier long essay which I have now
reread (in *Collected Works* CLXX).



W H Oliver, *Poems 1946-2005* (VUP)

Bill Oliver wrote the 1960 school publication *Writing in New Zealand: Poetry in New Zealand*. Oliver begins by trying to define (explain the nature of) poetry. I excerpt and at times summarise.

“People write poems because they have something to say....poetry is memorable speech (Coleridge)....Poetry is creative....devices – (eg) rhythm, rhyme, assonance, alliteration – are used to build up a pattern of sound....The poet then, is a man who is skilled in the use of these devices.... What should poems say?...Anything and everything.”

Oliver goes on to quote examples (pages 4-6) that are mainly description, though he talks about “a wealth of reflection.”

Oliver acknowledges that he has summarised the South Island myth. Oliver says (page 16): “Poets...are pretty self-centred. They’re more concerned with their own insides than with the world’s outsides.”

Oliver’s comments partly reveal that he has the mind of a historian and he warms to history in his authors. But he knows that these authors are creating myths.

Oliver concludes (pages 36-37): “But while we are waiting for New Zealand’s Dante or Shakespeare to be born, we can be glad for” what we have so far. He thinks the writers 1930-1960 have been more serious and have more worth. “Wordsworth brooding over mountain, lake, and sea is a kind of father-figure for most New Zealand poets.

“Further, New Zealand poets have not been great experimenters” but borrowers. “But the spirit of innovation and experiment is not entirely absent – some day it may produce a regional contribution in terms of form as well as of content to the great body of English verse. I doubt if any of the names on my list will make this contribution,” but maybe “people who have not been heard of yet” will.

I find that a foreseeing remark, as pretty much what Oliver anticipated is what I have tried to produce in my corpus, namely *The Alexandrians* (etc) appearing since 1961.

Oliver claims that his early verse differs from his later verse, and there is no need to dispute this.

One can say his early verse is more romantic and less concise.

In *Fire Without Phoenix* (1957) Oliver uses rhyme to a greater or lesser degree. Oliver uses rhyme in perhaps 13 poems (out of the 25) in this book. But he continually moves in the direction of diminishing rhyme, and effectively abandons it after 1957.

As it happens, in ‘Preface: An Attitude for a New Zealand Poet’, several of the rhymes would pass as consonantal: “clan/line”, “bone/pain”, “recognise/agonise”, “death/earth”.

There are big stylistic changes between *Fire Without Phoenix* (in general) and *Out of Season*. Note incidentally that the titles are in fact synonymous, since they both imply misapplication/application in the wrong circumstances.

It is a major fact of technique then that Oliver walks away from rhyme in his later poetry.

As to subject matter, Oliver is concerned with existential states (as opposed in *Fire Without Phoenix* eg to historical and social states).

Oliver has always been a poet writing among his contemporaries, and it shows very much in his early poetry, perhaps also in his later poetry. But he has acquired a deftness, an economy in his later poetry that was lacking before.

That is an achievement for which I commend him warmly.

He matches an interesting subject matter with an effective style. He writes as an intellectually subtle poet with genuine taste and decorum. What he has to say is worthwhile and how he says it is noble.

The success of Oliver’s latter poetry is to be attributed to two antecedent situations.

First, Oliver genuinely applied himself to poetry in his youth, from 1946 to the mid-1950s no doubt are the dates. This was a genuine apprenticeship, even if perhaps Oliver himself would also allow his early verse was misdirected in various ways.

Second, somewhere during that long silence 1957-1980, Oliver acquired a sense of poetic voice, unlike anything he used earlier but remarkably pure and effective.

Oliver was only one of a whole raft of poets of his time who fell silent in 1957 or went further adrift.

Of those who did return to the fray as active poets thereafter Oliver was perhaps the last, but I don’t doubt the best. C K Stead finally reached something similar in his Catullus poems.

What Oliver’s case seems to show is that no one who has gone through a thorough apprenticeship can ever be totally derailed. I would never expect they could. It seems to me that a craft learnt can still yield fruit across years which other interests pre-empt.

Classic New Zealand poetry

This issue’s classic New Zealand poetry is by E Mary Gurney (1900-1938). The poem from an Australian paper was sent to us by the Australian researcher Graeme Lindsay, compiler of *When ANZAC Day Comes Around: The 100 Years From Gallipoli Poetry Project*. It’s a nice poem to include in the summer edition of *Poetry Notes*.

Poem by E Mary Gurney

SUMMER MORNING

This is the first summer morn,
All richly gold, perfumed and still,
I shall ride down to Tuakau,
By way of Pukekohe hill.

There’ll be the scent of cabbage-trees –
An incense wild and honey-sweet,
To drown the scent of seeding grass,
In fields where young foals, shadow-fleet,

And drunk with life’s first ecstasy,
Gambol and play by waters cool,
Reflecting glossy willow’s boles,
Within some shade-flecked, silvered pool.

And far and far the quiet hills wait –
Oh, utterly in thrall!
Peace holds the land. Drink with the sun,
A golden dream’s over all.

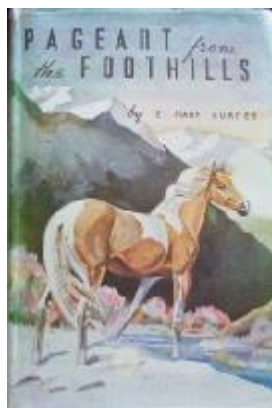
Summer has brought Samarkand
To common places, blessed and still,
I shall ride down to Tuakau,
By way of Pukekohe [hill].

(From *The Advocate* (Tasmania), 10
December 1943, page 2)

‘Summer Morning’ was first published
in the *New Zealand Herald*, 18
December 1937 (the final word/end
rhyme “hill” missing from the last line
has been reinstated here). This date is
shortly before her death, and it appears
her poems were being reprinted in
Australian papers until 1954 (according
to a Trove search).

Rowan Gibbs has provided brief bio
details for Gurney:

Elizabeth Mary Gurney was born in
Saunderton, Buckinghamshire,
England, in 1900. She came to New
Zealand as a young girl with her
parents, Thomas and Mary (née
Montigue) and grew up and went to
school in the Hawke’s Bay. The
family were living in Waipukurau in
the 1920s and in the mid-1930s
moved to Howick, where Mary was a
keen member of the Pakuranga Hunt.
Mary never married and was living
with her parents when she was killed
by a kick from her horse; she died in
hospital on June 22nd 1938, and is
buried in Waikumete Cemetery.
She was very successful in publishing
stories and poetry in New Zealand
and Australian newspapers and
magazines, and a collection of her
stories, *Pageant from the Foothills*,
was published after her death.



Gurney’s poems appeared in *New
Zealand Railways Magazine*, *New
Zealand Best Poems*, the *Auckland Star*
and the *New Zealand Herald* as well as
Australian publications.

Poems about her:

- ‘E. Mary Gurney’ by Ellis M.
Langridge in *The Weekly News*,
8 June 1938, p.65.
- ‘The Rider (In Memory of E. Mary
Gurney)’ in *The Bulletin*, Australia,
8 June 1938, p.18.
- Paula Hanger, ‘The poet lives (in
memory of Mary Lynn Gurney)’ in
Art in New Zealand 42 (December
1938), p.90.



Photo: E Mary Gurney, Ancestry.com

Poetry by Hugh Isdale

This issue we feature some poems by
Hugh Isdale of Christchurch.

Hugh featured in PANZA’s anthology
Rail Poems of New Zealand Aotearoa
edited by Mark Pirie in 2010.

Hugh contacted PANZA recently, and
we asked to include him in our
newsletter.

Hugh supplied the following biography:

Hugh Isdale. Born Wellington N.Z.
01/07/1942.

Educated Thames North and Thames
High Schools, and Canterbury
University.

Employment includes freezing works,
railways, libraries, bookshops and
factories. A hospital orderly from

1985 until retirement in 2013.

Currently a hospital volunteer.

Married in 1977, two adult children.

Christchurch has been my home since
1968. A poetry booklet published in
1996: *Another Place, Another Time*.

Poems by Hugh Isdale

DAILY

It’s a makeshift,
This human life;
A cacophony of breakdowns,
And botch-ups and patch-ups,
Of good ideas (at the time)
And yesterday’s men and women;

Of lessons hard-learned,
To little advantage,
And rules that constantly change.
It’s a makeshift.

SAND IN THE WIND

In 1967, I used to walk
To the steam engine depot,
In frost and darkness,
Listening for distant trains.

I could not admit the loneliness,
It would have struck me to the heart.

This may or may not
Be true.
The past wears many masks;
Memory deceives.

Searching for certainty,
I found treachery, indifference,
Unexpected good fortune,
And sand in the wind.

EAST COAST

Small purple flowers
Adorn the dunes.
Colourless rain
Spreads across the sea.
Dogs run, a child cries.
Unable to understand,
I can only describe.

SIGNATURE IN TIME

The grey streak
 On an old aerial photograph;
 Is it a fault in the image perhaps?
 No, it's smoke from a long-dead steam
 train:
 Two oil-burners blasting through
 Owhango,
 Heading towards the Spiral,
 Or a coal train in the Southern Alps,
 With a coal-burning engine
 Punching holes in the frosty sky.
 The trail is dotted with tunnels
 On the cliffs near Beach Loop,
 But the South express makes an arrow
 track
 Running north from Timaru.

All gone now,
 Except for images on film,
 And the memories of those
 Who are growing old.

HIGH SCHOOL REUNION

That summer, you were at the
 swimming pool.
 I swam, warm and serene.

At school, you were gentle and quiet –
 Until you sang.
 You brightened my winter days.
 I was in a cage
 Of other people's expectations.
 I felt awkward and afraid.

You sat behind me in class.
 I sensed the quick, restless movements
 Of your legs, heard your black stockings
 Softly rasp.

I saw you last in 1959.
 You had a job in town.
 You were riding your bicycle,
 Looking grown-up, and poised.
 Your stockings were apricot now,
 And gleamed in the sun.
 I felt like a callow schoolboy.
 You called me by a name I hated.
 My words were log-jammed
 In the chaos of my teenage brain.
 In 1960, I went south.

Half a century later –
 Oh, there you are.

The cage is gone, I speak,
 And you respond.
 We talk for a while,
 Then move on.

MY FATHER

Aged eighty-nine,
 Mowing his lawn
 On a warm afternoon,
 My father died.

He had been “a brisk young man.”
 He became the local historian
 In a North Island town.

He liked cats, minerals, words and
 ideas.
 He frowned upon sloppy historians,
 And artists who couldn't draw.

On his bicycle
 He would ride enormous distances,
 And carry impossible loads.

At the funeral
 I managed not to laugh.
 I wanted to say
 “Way to go, Dad.”

His famous smile
 Keeps appearing before my eyes.

PORT HILLS, 1974

Uneasy birds
 Wheel in fitful patterns, crying.
 In the still air, breath comes slowly.
 The hills are storing tension
 In their stones.

**Comment on Robert
John Palmer Bakewell**

**ROBERT JOHN PALMER
 BAKEWELL, 1857-1942**
 by Rowan Gibbs

In 1926 Hodder and Stoughton in
 London published an adventure story of
 pirates and gun-runners, *Lost Tribute: A
 Tale of the China Seas*, by a little

known New Zealand author, R. J.
 Bakewell.¹ Local readers recalled the
 story's first appearance, as a serial titled
 ‘The Lost Tribute of Quantung’, in the
Taranaki Herald from August to
 December 1896, and the author as a
 contributor of verse to that newspaper
 over many years, collected as *A
 Coaster's Freight, Verses by an Old
 Salt*, published in New Plymouth in
 1915.²

A reviewer of the novel pictured the
 author “spending the latter days of an
 adventurous life in the backwater of
 Waitara, under the shadow of
 Taranaki's beautiful Mount Egmont ...
 It is suspected that Mr Bakewell is
 spending his leisure in New Zealand
 writing more novels of adventure”.³
 And a year later Tom Mills also foresaw
 further novels, similarly based on the
 author's exciting early life: “Mr R. J.
 Bakewell, author of *The Last Tribute*, a
 novel of adventure on the China Seas,
 has another novel on the stocks. Owing
 to blindness, the whole of his first novel
 had to be dictated to his daughter,
 whom he taught to read to him in four
 languages ... during his earlier years he
 learnt much of the China Seas while
 serving in the British Navy”.⁴

No evidence has been found that
 Bakewell served in the Royal Navy, nor
 did he claim to have done so, but a
 preview announcement of his serial in
 the *Taranaki Herald* refers to “his
 adventurous career as an officer in the
 Imperial Chinese Navy”.⁵ The story
 features a cruiser patrolling the Canton
 River, the crew all European, and the
 Canton (now Guangzhou) fleet of this
 navy certainly included “fifteen small
 war vessels built and stationed at
 Canton between 1865 and 1885”⁶ — the
 period when Bakewell would have
 served there—but whether Europeans
 served in the Chinese Imperial Navy is
 uncertain. Interestingly, the husband of
 Bakewell's sister Alice, Charles
 Rookes, served in the Royal Navy in the
 West Indies and China seas,⁷ and one
 wonders if he passed on some stories of
 his own career that found their way into
 the novel. However, an account by a
 family member (discussed below) tells
 of a maritime career by Robert not in
 any navy but in the merchant service,
 rising from seaman to master mariner.

What we do know is that he was born in Deptford, London, on August 29th 1857 and christened in St Mary's Anglican Church in Lambeth on October 5th. His father was a doctor, Robert Hall Bakewell, and his mother Arabella Palmer from Wiltshire, where they married in 1856.⁸ Young Robert, known as *John* in the family (and henceforth here), went with his parents to Cuba in 1862 and returned with them to England later that year, but we know little of his schooling or of his subsequent nebulous career at sea. Then in 1880, seven years after his parents and siblings⁹ settled in New Zealand, he suddenly appears in Nelson applying to be a schoolteacher. On August 5th 1880 he was appointed to the remote Lyell School in the Buller Gorge and arrived there on August 25th. He taught at Lyell until July 1882¹⁰ when he was forced to resign by deteriorating eyesight, but the following year was teaching again at Dovedale near Motueka.

In November 1883 he married Rosalie Darnell in Motueka and they had two daughters, but in June 1887 Rosalie died at the age of 24. John then moved to Taranaki, teaching at Omata and running a dairy farm. His late wife's sister, Lucy, had joined him to care for the two daughters and in 1889 John and Lucy married and had a further eight children.

John was a successful teacher — “shows promise of becoming a valuable teacher” said his first Inspector's report at Lyell, and at Dovedale the pass rate was “unusually large” — and he steadily improved his qualifications (reaching Class D in 1886), but ongoing problems with his eyesight meant he had to resign altogether in 1897. Despite an initially promising operation in Australia he was soon completely blind. He continued farming until 1924 and remained involved with the local dairy company, served on the Roads Board, stood for the Education Board, and considered standing for Parliament. He finally moved to Tauranga, where he died on January 11th 1942 and is buried in the Anglican Cemetery there. The Anglican references here are significant, for a major religious rift occurred in the family that reputedly

separated John from his parents and siblings.

A later account by a relative¹¹ describes John going with his parents to Trinidad when “about 2 years old” and when it came time for his schooling his father, having “changed his religion in order to marry”, sent him off to England “at the tender age of 5yrs ... given to a Catholic church in Eng. ... to be educated by the Brothers, eventually becoming a Priest”. But, we are told, at 12 John ran away from the school, and “when his Parents finally returned to Eng. It appeared John had vanished without trace... Now we know what happened, John stowed away on a sailing ship & at the age of 13yrs was working on the gun running boats in China, here he worked for 3yrs ... Finding the sea to his liking he soon became an Able Seaman ... eventually he became a Master Mariner ... While at sea, about 1880, the ship ... sprang a leak...” and it was while repairing this that John “burst a blood vessel in his eyes, this was to cause blindness, making an early retirement from the sea he loved. The blindness came on gradually, John thought it time to try & get established ashore, he chose New Zealand taking up a tutor & teaching post at Hokitika. Walking along the main street one day he was greatly surprised to meet his Father, who was the Dr of the town, the family having arrived in N.Z. in 1873, now he learned there were 5 other children. John was still very bitter about early life, his Mother still a devout Catholic, sent the Priest round to see John, this was the last straw, so he off again to the North Island. John was 26yrs old by this time, he settled in New Plymouth, teaching at a suburban school, here he met & later married...”.

There are several fatal factual errors in this account: it was to Cuba the family went when John was very young and he returned with them later the same year¹²; the period spent in Trinidad was not until 1866-1872 when John was aged 9 to 15, so if he was sent back to a Catholic school in England it was not at the “tender age of 5”; but in fact in the 1871 England census Robert and Arabella are living in Hendon in London, back from Trinidad on leave,

and John, age 13, is with them and the other children. Only when the family left England to emigrate to New Zealand on October 29th 1872 was John not with them, so *this* must be when he left home, perhaps sent away to school, and then went to sea. And he was at most 23 when he ended his maritime career, so can hardly have been a “Master Mariner”. This account also has John teaching in Hokitika, of which no record has been found,¹³ and omits his teaching career and first marriage in Lyell and Dovedale before he went to Taranaki. Further, his father did not turn Catholic at the time he married but when he was in Cuba in 1862.¹⁴ John's younger brothers and sisters were brought up Catholic¹⁵ and his father, despite public arguments with Church policies over the years,¹⁶ remained a Catholic and both he and Arabella were buried as Catholics.

The following poem by John was first published in a Taranaki newspaper and reprinted in his book *Coaster's Freight* in 1915. The poems reflect his early nautical background, with several on shipwrecks, and his ardent belief in King and Country (“the tang of the sea and a lofty spirit of patriotism”, said the *Otago Daily Times* reviewer), but all leavened with some satire and a rich sense of humour.

THE STEWARDESS

Honour we owe to the brave and true
Who never a duty shirk;
If honour of right to a woman be due,
Then honour for Alice McGuirk!

With engines slowed and keen look-out
Through fog more dark than night
Uncertain as one in dead'ning doubt,
Steamed the Elingamite!

Suddenly silently through the gloom—
High overtopping her prow,
Grim as a Fate with dreadful doom—
Beetled a cliff's black brow!

Crash upon rock—inrush of wave
Swift as her steel side rent;
And welt'ring down to an ocean grave
The Elingamite went!

Cowards might strive whom death
appalled,
Madly for safety to press—
Serenely she stood where duty called
Alice the stewardess!

And cheerily spake to her charges
round,
Till calmness for all was won—
And life-saving belt for each was found—
But for herself was none!

That raft forlorn, while her life-pulse
fails
Why follow with bated breath
Where the sea fowl waits down the long
sea vales
Deep in the shadow of death!

Can she pass into nothingness 'neath the
wave—
Can that spirit for ever sleep
In the stagnant hush of an ocean—
In the sluggish slime of the deep?

Nay—a soul so fired by the spark
Divine
Has soared from a lifeless breast,
Ever to work in its Maker's design—
Ever to work with our best.

Honour then give to the brave and true
Who nobly hath done her work—
Honour of right to the woman is due—
Honour for Alice McGuirk!

ROBERT J. BAKEWELL.
Bell Block, New Plymouth

(*Taranaki Herald*, Volume L, Issue
12136, 2 December 1902, Page 6)

Notes

¹ A book of which few copies have survived — I have failed to find a copy in thirty years of looking. The Turnbull Library has a copy (with a bookseller's order form pasted in quoting the *Taranaki Herald* review), there is one in Dunedin Public Library, and three in the U.K. copyright libraries.

² Copies at Auckland City Library, Auckland Museum, Auckland University, Canterbury University, Dunedin Public, Hocken, New Plymouth, Turnbull, Waikato University.

³ 'Bakewell, the Adventurer', by "The Recorder". *Aussie*, 15 November 1926 (N.Z. Section, p.35). The "N.Z. Section" was a separate sequence compiled by Pat Lawlor and inserted only in copies of *Aussie* sold in New Zealand.

⁴ 'N.Z.'s Blind Novelist' by T.L. Mills, *Aussie*, 14 May 1927 (N.Z. Section p.ix).

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 29 July 1896, p.2.

⁶ Richard Wright, *The Chinese Steam Navy, 1862–1945* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2001).

⁷ Rookes sold his commission in 1858 and settled in New Zealand, and was soon involved in military action in Taranaki: obituary *New Zealand Herald*, 6 May 1909, p.6. His New Zealand exploits are graphically described in T.W. Gudgeon's *Defenders of New Zealand* (Auckland: H. Brett, 1887).

⁸ His father, Dr Robert Hall Bakewell, born in England in 1831, son of an Anglican turned Methodist New Connexion minister, died Onehunga 1908, was an intriguingly eccentric character on whom I plan to write at length. He served as a military surgeon in the Crimea, was invalided home with cholera, then dismissed from the army for writing to *The Times* criticising conditions at Scutari. He then practised in Deptford, married Arabella in 1856, took the family to Cuba (1862), back to Staffordshire, six years in Jamaica (1866-72), then in 1873 to New Zealand as ship's doctor on the emigrant ship *Charlotte Gladstone*. He practised in Dunedin, the West Coast, Nelson and Christchurch, finally settling in Auckland in 1887. In the Anglo-Boer war he was again (at age 70) an army surgeon, claiming (wrongly it turns out) to be the only man to have served in both those wars. Inventor (he designed an airship), botanist, controversialist ("a thorn in the side of his own profession") and lecturer, he wrote voluminous letters to newspapers and private correspondents (including Charles Darwin), a host of chatty articles, a lively autobiography, many medical papers and pamphlets, two stories published (under pseudonyms) as newspaper serials, and an unpublished drama — "but I have never descended

so far as to write verse". He came from a literary and intellectual Dissenting family, especially on his mother's side — Marianne Haslam published widely on education and child rearing and her niece Frances was the grandmother, and literary catalyst, of Jorge Luis Borges. Arabella, who died in Auckland in 1931 is also interesting. She is said by a well researched website on women writers (<http://neww.huylgens.knaw.nl/authors/how/5714>; accessed 14 January 2016) to have translated *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into Russian. This is based on a statement made by Thomas Watts, keeper of printed books at the British Museum in the 1860s, but I have recently shown (<https://list.indiana.edu/sympa/arc/exlibris-l/2016-02/msg00067.html>) that this is incorrect and derives from a misreading of the title-page of the book. ⁹ John had three brothers and two sisters: Frederick, born in London in 1858, also became a teacher in New Zealand and later Chief Inspector; his three children all became doctors; Alice, 1863-1947, trained as a nurse before marrying; Thomas, 1864-1942, made a career in New Zealand Railways; Katherine, born in Trinidad in 1869, was training as a teacher in Auckland when she died age 23; William Levenet, born in Ross in 1879, worked for the Bank of New Zealand and in later life became a great friend of Frank Sargeson ("dear old Bake") and the inspiration for *Memoirs of a Peon*.

¹⁰ With no school house in Lyell yet John was forced to board at the notorious Zanetti's Hotel, "amidst discomfort and drunkenness", in the words of the Bishop of Nelson describing the isolated settlement (*Nelson Evening Mail*, 27 June 1883, p.4). There was no doctor in Lyell and John, who had picked up some medical knowledge from his father, is found dressing wounds, setting limbs, and even appointed Public Vaccinator (*Westport Times*, 12 July 1881, p.2; 29 November 1881, p.2; 6 January 1882, p.2; *Grey River Argus*, 26 October 1881, p.2; 1 December 1881, p.2). In February 1882 his father visited the isolated settlement to chair a meeting on how to attract a resident doctor—a further indication that he and John were

not estranged at this time (*Inangahua Times*, 10 February 1882, p.2).

¹¹ ‘Robert John Palmer Bakewell Biography’ written by Lucy Bakewell, 1913-1995 (wife of Richard, son of Robert’s youngest brother Levenet), posted on *Ancestry.com* in 2014.

¹² John describes (*Taranaki Herald*, 8 January 1909, p.7) accompanying his father (trying to register an improved method of processing copper ores) to the Patent Office in London after their return from Cuba, and then gives a graphic account of his experiences during the 1865 general election when he was with the family in Staffordshire.

¹³ He may, of course, have worked there as a tutor before he began teaching at Lyell: if so, the story of the encounter with his father could have a grain of truth, as his parents moved from Ross to Hokitika in February 1880. But he would have found only one new sibling, not five.

¹⁴ This is stated explicitly by John in a note correcting an obituary of his father (*Taranaki Herald*, 8 January 1909, p.7) and Dr Bakewell himself says that both he and his sister Caroline turned from their father’s New Connexion Methodism to the Church of England before both moving on to Catholicism (*Auckland Star*, 7 June 1905, p.9) and that he remained an Anglican “after my marriage, for some years, until I joined the Catholic Church” (*AS*, 26 July 1905, p.9). Writing in 1898 he states: “I joined the Catholic Church in 1861”, adding “everywhere, except for a few months in Cuba, the being reputed as a Catholic has been an immense disadvantage to me... it alienated my friends... sowed dissension in my family circle, and made me a marked and unpopular man...” (*New Zealand Herald*, 26 August 1898, p.3).

¹⁵ Soon after they shifted to Nelson in 1876 he took court action against a boy who used “the most disgusting language” against Thomas, 11, and Alice, 13, who “were returning from the catechism at the Catholic School” (*Nelson Evening Mail*, 26 July 1876, p.2).

¹⁶ Though he often wrote as a Catholic apologist the Church was always ambivalent towards him. He was condemned by the *Tablet* for, among

much else, disparaging the Irish clergy and for supporting the *canard* that Pope Pius IX was a Freemason, and was effectively excommunicated in 1898 for a newspaper letter denying the divine inspiration of the Pentateuch and admitting he occasionally attended Protestant services.

NZ Truth poem

It’s been a long-running debate in New Zealand cultural circles about what exactly constitutes ‘New Zealand verse’. The following poem (*New Zealand Truth*, 28 March 1925, page 1), provides an interesting take on the debate. The humorous poem’s initialled author remains a mystery.

A NEW ZEALAND POEM

“Very little verse that is distinctly New Zealand verse has been written....”

(Extract.)

“Truth’s” tame metre-monger submits the following in contradiction; but, he asks triumphantly, if it is not New Zealand verse, what in the name of Paekakariki is it?

Where the nebulous Ngahauranga
Joins the turbulent Tauranga
And the nikaus and the ngaios swoop
and shriek,
Once, among the fern-like kauri
Knelt a little lady Maori
And anon the henna blushes swept her
cheek.

Ha! The hoof-beats of a kiwi!
Was it Tipi? Was it Peewee?
No it wasn’t. ’Twas a hunter—
J. McMan.

He had bagged but one poor pipi
Then his appetite got nippy
And had turned it in to hunt him up
some scan.

Quickly taking in the scene, he
Beat it up to the wahine
And asked her could he have some kai
and wai

And—perhaps he didn’t oughter—
But he must say that he thought a
Little piro would be kapai with the wai.

But she rose and stood a-trembling
Primal maiden, undissembling,
While her heart went pitter-pat and
patter-pit.
Now McMan, who’d eyes for beauty,
Quickly classed her as a cutey
And forgot his food forthwith to make a
hit.

“Hokitika, o Kaitoke,”

Thus he spoke: “E hoki poki
Toku anu-aute anti.” (This is Maori.)
At his pleading words her blushes
Went and came in gusts and rushes
As she whispered: “Wata kauka!”
(Some more Maori.)

As you see from what I write
’Twas affection at first sight
But alas! the maiden took a second
look;
And, deciding he looked stingy
Biffed him brutal in the bingy....
And the Pa that night of pakeha partook.
—C.H.O.

Research request

Dr Jack Ross, editor of *Poetry New Zealand Yearbook*, used the Poetry Archive recently.
Ross needed a copy of *Poetry NZ 7* for his index to *Poetry New Zealand*.
PANZA welcomes research requests, and is happy to help.

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