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Poetry Notes

Quarterly Newsletter of PANZA

Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue 14 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>

Mark Pirie on James H Elliott

Wellington writer and publisher, Mark Pirie discusses the Waikato poet James H Elliott, who wrote between the early and middle-part of the 20th century.

The poet James H (Hawthorne) Elliott is an interesting New Zealand poet in the bardic tradition, that dates back to the likes of John Barr of Craigilee in Dunedin and Tom Bracken, and takes in writers like Ernest L Eyre up to more recent figures like Sam Hunt, Andrew Fagan, Michael O'Leary or Simon Williamson.

Elliott does not appear in any New Zealand anthology that I'm aware of, but he is listed like a number of other New Zealand poets of this period in *New Zealand Literature Authors' Week 1936: Annals of New Zealand Literature: being a List of New Zealand Authors and their works with introductory essays and verses*, page 55: "Elliott, James Hawthorn [sic] *Random Rhymes* (v) 1924."

The National Library of New Zealand's catalogue credits him with six books from 1924-1950. The name James H Elliott does not appear in *New Zealand Biographies* at the National Library, but there is a brief Obituary in the *New Zealand Herald*, 13 July 1955.

A Tapuhi search shows correspondence from Elliott for J C Andersen's *Author's Week 1936* bibliography.

A Papers Past search brings up further pieces about Elliott, namely book reviews in *The Evening Post* and the *Auckland Star*, racing club news, shipping passenger lists and land purchases. There is a further review of his final book, *Odes & Episodes* in the *Auckland Star*, 2 December 1950, included as a newspaper cutting in the Alexander Turnbull Library's copy of Elliott's *Odes & Episodes*.

Elliott's Books

His six books all in expensive hard-back editions printed for the author that collected over 500 poems (including some long examples of narrative verse) are:

1. *Random Rhymes*, 205 pages, 20cm, 66 poems. Auckland, N.Z.: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1924.

2. *Rhymes and Rigmaroles* 147 pages, 20cm, 65 poems. Hamilton, N.Z.: Printed at the office of the Waikato and King Country Press, [1939]. Turnbull copy inscribed by the author.
3. *Idylls of an Idler* 172 pages, 19cm, 107 poems. Hamilton, N.Z.: Waikato and King Country Press, 1942.
4. *A Rhymer's Sketchbook* 177 pages, 19cm, 96 poems. Hamilton, N.Z.: Printed by Waikato and King Country Press, 1943. Turnbull copy inscribed by the author.
5. *Poetic Potpourri* 167 pages, 19cm, 107 poems. Hamilton [N.Z.]: Waikato and King Country Press, 1946. Turnbull copy inscribed by the author.
6. *Odes & Episodes* 166 pages, 18cm, 111 poems. Hamilton [N.Z.]: Printed at the office of the Waikato and King Country Press, 1950. Turnbull copy inscribed by the author.

Biography

Elliott was born in Northern Ireland on 9 January 1879. His childhood alluded to in poems was spent in 'sweet Ballyholme' in Northern Ireland and at some later point in Lower Manhattan, New York. It is safe to assume that his family are of Irish origin and may have moved to America briefly. Elliott left in search of his fortune, first taking in Australia's gold-rush mountains before heading for New Zealand. He arrived in New Zealand in 1905 first farming in the North Auckland region. In the Waikato he managed the stock department of the Farmers' Co-operative Auctioneering Company Ltd in Hamilton for eight years, then became a stock agent on his own behalf. He bought crown land himself in December 1913 (*Auckland Star*, 20 December) farming in Te Awamutu. In the *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 June 1918, No. 87, p. 2239, he is called up for military service and his poem from that year 'Lines Written in a Camp' (in *Random Rhymes*) implies that it was near the end of the war (around October) so he may not have seen action before Peace was declared in November. Elliott married Leigh Euphrosine Collins on 23 December 1913, and they later separated. By 1929 and 1930 he had

refused a court petition to rekindle Leigh's conjugal rights. They divorced in 1930. The couple had two children according to his WWI file at Archives New Zealand (now unrestricted). His son Edgar Elliott served in Crete during World War II according to his poem on the subject. His daughter, Mrs Helen Laird, lived in Auckland. Returning from war in 1919, he was a member of a local hydroelectric board appointed to draw up boundaries for the Te Awamutu district (*New Zealand Herald*, 6 February 1919). Throughout the '20s and '30s he must've received/inherited some family fortune. Elliott traveled like a modern Ulysses across North America (California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Tennessee, Mississippi, East St Louis, Wisconsin, Alabama and Chicago), Canada (Vancouver, Niagara and Ontario), South America (the Andes, Chile, Peru and Argentina), North Africa and the Middle East (Nineveh, Egypt) and visited London, Australia, Scotland, South Africa (Durban, Transvaal), and Ireland. He also traveled to the sub-continent (India) and Asia (Japan, Singapore, China, Penang, Siam) via the ship "Gorgon" a new service in the 1930s connecting Singapore to West Australia. Outside of travel and literary pursuits, he co-founded the Waipa Racing Club and the Hamilton Racing Club. He was a lover of horses but not of Governments. In one of his poems, 'Lines to A. S. Wallace', he declines nomination for the Waikato electorate preferring the call of the Muse and 'the broad highway'. His official declining of the nomination is in the *New Zealand Herald*, 24 May 1922. As a writer, he contributed letters and verses to the *Waipa Post* and the *Waikato Times* and was the official "bard" of the Hamilton Caledonian Society. He died in 1955 aged 76 years, leaving no reputation as a poet and no subsequent interest since his death. Bookseller Rowan Gibbs (Smith's Bookshop) notes seeing his books around the second-hand trade. There is no subsequent mention of him either in the modern history of the Te Awamutu region published in 1984. His burial was a cremation, and his ashes interned at the Waikumete Cemetery (Auckland).

Literary Style

Elliott writes, as mentioned, in the bardic tradition. He is an admirer of Robbie Burns, James Beattie's *The Minstrel* and other classical and Romantic poets such as Sir Walter Scott. He is versatile and can write in various forms: ballads, narrative tales, Māori and folk legends in verse, fairy tale verse, shorter lyric poetry and light verse, elegies, popular verse on racing, horses and country-life, and sentimental pieces picturing the Waikato. He is adept as a storyteller relating tales from overseas characters and other travelers he has met, from America to India to New Zealand. His narrative tales like 'Liza Lee of Hutewai', 'Island Dreams' and 'Rose Dillon' among others are compelling. He has his shortcomings. Each book has a hard-luck story about bad reviews received and one has a poem replying to a note from the Petone Library reading and returning two of his books. His poetry can seem flat, overly sentimental, trite, clichéd and dull at times, but he is competent enough. He has produced a body of variable work worthy of some attention. Critics may react poorly to what comes across as a racially superior European attitude and there is non-sympathy for women and suffragettes, but this verse could well be written as narrative monologues portraying the politics and men of his period and may not be the author's own views. Aside from his bad reviews, his verse had support from fellow poet and book critic for the *Evening Post* "Quillus" [A F T Chorlton]. Chorlton writes about him in his memoirs, *The Wandering School: Memories in Prose and Verse* (1960) as well as in *The Evening Post*, 2 November 1944, 17 February 1945 (for 'putting Hamilton [poets and writers] conspicuously on the map') and again on 23 June 1945. This friendship is also recorded by Niel Wright in his *Account of the Comic Poet A F T Chorlton* (1998). Another writer that was in contact with Elliott and to whom he dedicates verses is "J.C. [John Christie?]" A fellow Hamilton writer also known to Elliott is Marcus G. B. James whose "dramatic phantasia" *In a*

Persian Garden appeared in 1945 printed by the *Waikato Times*.

In one of Elliott's American poems, he relates a gangster's death, a rival leader (city florist) to Al Capone's gang who shot him dead.

I will now provide brief examples of his work.

The following are typical of his shorter lyrics, reminiscent of American poets Robert Frost or Ella Wheeler Wilcox (the latter as also suggested by an *Auckland Star* critic, 12 July 1924):

UNDER THE STARLIGHT

Night-time, under the starlight,
Youth and Love,
How near, draweth the far light
Of Heav'n above.

Onward, wearily winding
Nigh to the snow,
Yet still, back yonder finding
Warmth in the ember's glow.

THE TURN OF THE ROAD

Here do I, faltering, stand
At a turn in life's broad highway,
For wisdom points to the road straight on,
But my feet to the side will stray.

Allured from the bustling throng
By a dim and distant star,
Where men seek dreams in its shadowy
beams
And the graves of the seekers are.

Is it madness? Ah! who can tell?
For ever I seem possessed
Of eyes that see but a crazy world
And a soul that finds no rest.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF A FRIEND

The oaken branches shake
As though the whisper calls
Of Autumn breath and down to earth
A loosened acorn falls.

And many another left
In vigour still to grace
That tree it helped adorn, shall miss
The fallen from its place.

Acorn trees are more American than New Zealand suggesting his earlier childhood in America. The following love lyric is almost a companion to Eileen Duggan's 'The Tide Runs Up the Wairau' and appears to be from a woman's point-of-view:

A LOVER'S SONG

The snow is on Pirongia
The south wind chilly blows,
But in its teeth I laugh, for love
A mantle round me throws.

Let friends forsake and fortune frown,
I step across the stile
And in my sanctuary greet
A benefactor's smile.

Beyond the unromantic world
I pierce the clouds to see
A realm of heavenly loveliness
Embraced in mystery.

There's snow upon Pirongia
And life is steeped in gall,
But love's the magic recipe
That neutralizes all.

Other songs at times are written à la Robbie Burns of 'Tam O'Shanter' like 'Maggie-o' (in *Random Rhymes*) which has a rollicking lilt: 'The fiddle-o—the fiddle-o-- / An' a lass around the middle-o / I'd something else to think upon / Than the queerness o' life's riddle-o.'. His lyrics can be moving such as this poem about a soldier's farewell suggesting he has localized his verses to suit his adopted homeland:

THE SOLDIER'S FAREWELL (Song)

'Tis at last the parting hour
And from all I love I'm going,
Where the fires of hate are flaming
And the blood of millions pour,
All the hopes that once we fondled,
All the joys we dreamed of sowing,
Must await another Springtime
When this crimson harvest's o'er.

Keep me in your thought always,
Oft shall mine be homeward straying,
In that spirit land, let's fancy
We can feel each other near;
And we'll tune our hearts to welcome
In that peace for which we're praying,
When we'll stride once more together
On the road that halted here.

But if I be, after all,
In the ranks that lie forsaken,
Never more to hear reveille,
Never more in line to fall,
'Mid regret, let this remembrance
In your heart some joy awaken,
Till the last I heard the voices
From my own New Zealand call.

Another shorter lyric called 'The Shearing' is further evidence of his localization of his New Zealand verses, giving a rugged quality missing from much of his more sentimentalized, more American work; this too could be said of some of Eileen Duggan's tougher work in the 1940s:

THE SHEARING

The bleating sheep in primal fleece
arrayed,
Forth from its range of quiet hill and
glen
Comes at the muster—timid and afraid,
To stand imprisoned in the shearing pen.

Defenceless to the tyrant hand it goes,
And trembling meets the fury of his
blade;
No pity follows, as he outward throws
It naked to the wind. It is his trade.

Awhile the shearling cowers beneath the
blast,
But soon a new protecting growth
appears
That turns the storm's assault unheeded
past,
And with it too, all terror of the shears.

So when the year revolves and off is
clipped
Another fleece, inured it fronts the
storm,
Now realizing that its back is stripped
For means to keep some needier body
warm.

The short lyric ‘My Dark Blood Stirs’ again shows his willingness to localize his verses in his adopted land, this time in favour of Māori waiata (also a theme in the work of Michael O’Leary b. 1950 who is part-Māori on his maternal side):

MY DARK BLOOD STIRS

Although enriched with Irish blood
I sometimes think, through me
There coursed in ages past, a flood
Of darker ancestry;
At least I know, when Maoris sing
The lilts I heard to-day,
My heart attunes its zither string,
My limbs in rhythm sway.

Oh people, happy in the light
Of laughter, love and song,
Whene’er from care thy smiles invite,
How often do I long
To step across the harsh divide
That caste between has thrown,
And for a season at thy side
Breathe nature’s pure ozone.

I’ll end with one of his more successful lyrics again alluding to New Zealand as his home of homes:

WHEN DAY IS DONE

When day is done
And down the sun is descending
Behind him draws the night’s curtain
o’er the dome,
How welcome ’tis
To one from labour wending,
To greet the lights of Home.

Oftimes afar,
When other beams have beckoned
And dazzled for a moment,—o’er their rays
I’ve watched arise
One flame that in that second
Dimmed ev’ry rival blaze.

So happy he
Who to the harbour turning
When life’s vast ocean he has ceased to roam;
Above the port,
Shall find in welcome burning
The Pilot light of Home.

Mark Pirie, author of this article, is a New Zealand poet, editor, publisher and archivist for PANZA.

Classic New Zealand poetry

This issue’s classic New Zealand poetry is by John J Gallagher (1843?-1931). Gallagher, a North Otago poet, was a Catholic farmer who lived at Kakanui North in the Oamaru District, a place that held a special place in his heart. His wife was Catherine Gallagher and the couple had eight children. At Kakanui he was associated with the Totara School, serving on their committee from 1891-1903, initially as secretary and from 1894 as chairman. Gallagher organized and conducted music programmes and recitations at Totara School concerts. Gallagher’s poetry appeared in the *North Otago Times*, and he often recited in public. In his later years, he was an ‘old favourite’ at Totara Hall and Kakanui Oddfellows functions. He was also associated with concerts given by the Kakanui Orchestral Society. Gallagher’s poetry of place, patriotic and stirring, was typical of the turn of the 20th century period where poets sought to raise national consciousness with their pen. While expressing his loyalty to the British Empire, Gallagher also shows localization of content and pride in his birthplace. This is something not often noted in Colonial and 19th century poets (often born elsewhere) making his work of interest to the period. His daughter Rose Ann Gallagher was also a poet and entered the *New Zealand Tablet* Christmas poetry competition in 1896, where she received commendation. She later died young at 16 in 1899. During the First World War, Gallagher’s son James John served and Gallagher was associated with patriotic military farewells and welcomes to departing and returning soldiers at Kakanui.

Gallagher retired to Oamaru with his wife Catherine. He died in 1931 aged 88. His burial took place in the old Oamaru Cemetery.

Poems by John J Gallagher

OAMARU

There is a town on North Otago’s coast,
As lovely a town as New Zealand can boast;
On its east lies the great Pacific so blue,
That dashes its waters before Oamaru.

Oh! for the town that gave me birth,
Oh! for the healthiest place on earth;
Its streets are all so fine and wide,
There’s nothing but health on every side.

Its houses are built of a stone that is found
In all the neighboring district around;
And all those buildings so white and so pretty,
Give Oamaru the name of the “White Stone City.”

Thou wert the scene of my schoolboy days,
What else can I do but write thy praise.
In thee live my friends and comrades true,
That endears thee to my heart, sweet Oamaru.

John Gallagher, Kakanui, Sept. 16, 1896
(North Otago Times, 25 September 1896)

SPRING

When stormy winter’s fury’s past,
With its ice, its snow, and rain,
Then spring her glorious shadows cast
O’er mountain, hill, and plain.

Fair smiling skies, and fields of green,
Greet the eye where’er we turn;
While nature views this peaceful scene,
And urges us her laws to learn.

High in the trees the wild birds sing
Their pleasant notes so sweet and gay;
Songs that herald the approach of spring,
With the bright and sunny day.

The trees, the shrubs, the pretty flowers,
All, all burst out again,
When spring pours forth her cooling
showers
In place of winter's rain.

Then welcome be the glorious spring,
With its azure skies o'erhead;
When the birds their songs of joy doth
sing,
And winter's storms are fled.

John J. Gallagher, Kakanui, Sept. 4th,
1897.

(*North Otago Times*, 18 September
1897)

SCHOOL

Oh the happiest days of all our life
Were the days when we were at school;
When we were free from worldly strife,
And obeyed the teacher's rule.

Those were the times I remember with
joy,
The times that will ne'er come again
When many a man was then a boy,
Well used to the strap and the cane.

We learnt our tasks with a will every day,
The harder they were, the harder we
worked;
And we never once heard our teacher say
That the work he gave us we ever
shirked.

Our spelling, grammar, history, all we
knew,
Our reading, geography, and sums of all
sorts—
And after we'd finished what we had to
do,
We ended the day with schoolboy sport.

At cricket and football our play hours we
spent
In the heat of the day or the cool of the
eve;
And these and other pastimes a pleasure
lent
To the school and grounds we were loth
to leave.

Full well I remember our teacher's smile
As he met us at the door in the morning;

And his pleasant talk as we traced the Nile
On the maps, the school walls adorning.

But past and gone are all those joys,
We sigh for them in vain;
The happy days when we were boys
We ne'er shall see again.

J. Gallagher, Kakanui, September 10th,
1896.

(*North Otago Times*, 15 September
1896)

THE BRITISH FLAG

The flag of Great Britain that floats on
the breeze,
That majestically waves o'er all lands
and all seas;
Triumphant is seen in all parts of the
world,
'Tis the emblem of freedom where e'er
'tis unfurled.
And the sons of Great Britain when
danger is nigh
Will fight for that flag, will conquer or
die,
Will raise it on high on the battle red
field,
Will die for to save it, but never will
yield.

The flag that's been carried to victory so
oft,
The flag that Lord Nelson hung proudly
aloft
When in the midst of his glory, the
power of his might
He bravely went forth, England's foemen
to fight;
How proudly it waved on that glorious
day,
Midst the tumult and smoke of that great
battle fray
And 'tis sacred to Britons, who in him
took pride,
For beneath it he lived, and beneath it he
died.

Beneath its folds many a hero has died,
In foreign lands, or on the great ocean
wide,
Who for his country has bravely met
death,
Fervently prayed with his latest breath
That that glorious flag forever may wave,

Over the home of the free and the home
of the brave,
That the sons of Great Britain for e'er
may be seen,
True to their flag, and true to their
Queen.

John J. Gallagher, Kakanui, 28th July,
1897.

(*North Otago Times*, 3 August 1897)

OAMARU

Down by Pacific's mighty shore,
Adorned by Nature's hands,
Where the ocean foams and the breakers
roar
The town of Oamaru stands.

To the westward lie the hills,
Beneath it lies the bay;
While all a vision fills
As bright as the dawning day.

The smiling azure skies
O'er it their glories fling,
While sounds of joy arise
Like songs of birds in spring.

Its stately buildings white,
Nestle midst foliage green,
Then, who desires to view a sight
More peaceful and serene?

No town to me's more fair
Than that city by the sea;
May sunshine hover there,
And sweet tranquility.

John J. Gallagher, Kakanui, January
15th, 1898.

(*North Otago Times*, 21 January 1898)

Comment on W S Marris

AN ACCOUNT OF THE AOTEAROA POET W S MARRIS by Niel Wright

I was aware of the name W S Marris as
an Aotearoa poet because two
translations by him of Odes of Horace

are given in [*Canterbury*] *College Rhymes* (1923) pages 79-80, with a note on page 131, reading "Rectius Vives Page 79 This and the next ode are from 'The Odes of Horace in English Verse,' by W. S. Marris (Oxford University Press, 1912). Marris was junior and senior scholar and graduated B.A. at Canterbury College in 1892. He afterwards entered the Indian Civil Service where he won distinction and is now Sir William Marris, K.C.I.E., Governor of the United Provinces." This note will have been written by O.T.J. Alpers.

So when in Quilter's Bookshop recently buying a small book I noticed another *Horace: The Odes* for \$10, translations by W S Marris. I recognised it at once for what it was and bought it therewith. A Google search for Sir William Marris governor of UP brings up besides other hits two profiles, the Wikipedia based on the other with additional information on his later career and on his books. W S Marris was born at Aston, Warwickshire, England in 1873, but was educated in New Zealand to graduate level. I am indebted to Rowan Gibbs for the following material sent by email:

Sir William looks an interesting chap

bio on Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_S_inclair_Marris

Was at CUC with Alpers - Cheerful yesterdays p.66:
...there were two men whom the College still proudly regards as its most distinguished graduates. One was Sir William Marris, Governor of the United Provinces in India. When the following year he "topped" the Indian Civil Service Examination by a lead of nearly a thousand marks-a feat till then at least unprecedented-and when some years later he published his translations into graceful verse of the Odes of Horace and the lyrics of Catullus, I basked mildly in his reflected glory. The other was Sir Ernest Rutherford, O.M. ...

Member of the "Milner Group" --
The Milner Group was the name given by historian Carroll Quigley to a secret

society whose existence he inferred in his book, *The Anglo-American Establishment*. According to Quigley, the "Rhodes secret society", a group of imperial federalists founded by Cecil Rhodes, developed into the Milner Group after 1901
http://powerbase.info/index.php/Milner_Group

photo
<http://tiny.cc/9sxytw>

Writings (by date):
*

The Odes of Horace. By Horace, (translated Sir William Marris). Published London, New York [etc.]: H.Frowde, 1912 (books I-IV and the Saecular hymn translated into English verse).

Translations from the Greek anthology. Aligarh [Uttar Pradesh] : Bharat Bandhu Press, 1919.

Civil government for Indian students (with James Wilford Garner). Calcutta, S.C. Sanial & Co., 1921.

Catullus. By Catullus, (translated Sir William Marris). Published Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924.

The Odyssey of Homer. By Homer, (translated Sir William Marris). Published London, New York [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1925.

The speeches of Sir William Marris: as governor of the united provinces of Agra and Oudh : December 1922-January 1928. Mysore, [India]: Wesleyan Mission Press, 1928.

India: the political problem. Nottingham, 1930 (University college, Nottingham.; Cust foundation lecture).

The Iliad of Homer. By Homer, (translated Sir William Marris). Published London, New York [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1934.

[ends

The Turnbull Library has the Horace and the Iliad but not any other of Marris's books, though his name does variously

come up in their Tapuhi collection of private papers. From reviews Rowan Gibbs got the impression that Marris's Homer is in prose, and that may have been the popular assessment, but I have examined the copy of Marris's *Iliad* in the Turnbull Library. It has a short preface by Marris and an card advertisement stuck into the back cover, both of which make it perfectly clear that Marris's Homer was written and published as blank verse, as indeed it is justifiably so in blank verse paragraphs of a sort seen in Shakespeare and other classic dramatists. No New Zealand poet matches W S Marris's body of poetry for volume and prestige, admittedly translations, but George Chapman owes his surviving reputation as a poet to his Homer translations and Alexander Pope survived in comfort as a poet on the income from his translation of Homer (in which other poets contributed as well). Many English language poets of name produced major verse translations, e.g. William Morris, Binyon; and as distinguished a prose author as Dorothy Sayers owes her standing as poet to her fine verse translation of Dante's *Commedia*. John Buchan was on Milner's staff and presumably also a member of the Milner group. So W S Marris was in good literary company. The only New Zealand anthology that picks up W S Marris as a poet is [*Canterbury*] *College Rhymes* (1923), one of the editors of which was O T J Alpers, who in fact seems also to be the only literary historian/memoirist to mention him.

Obituary: Sarah Broom

**DREAMTIGERS:
I.M. SARAH BROOM
by Jack Ross**

My friend Sarah Broom died on Thursday, 18 April 2013, finally losing her long battle with cancer. It's not that the news was unexpected. Sarah's struggle with the disease had

been protracted and courageous, but – though none of us really wanted to admit it – there was never any real prospect of a cure. Month after month, year after year, we received emails telling us of the latest experimental program she was on, the latest series of flights overseas to try one more wonder drug.

As a young mother, Sarah knew that every moment with her children and family was precious. She never faltered or flagged in that duty, tempting though it must have seemed at times just to give up and let go. She never did.



Sarah Broom, 2010

I first met Sarah about ten years or so ago, when she came to take up a Post-doctoral fellowship at Massey Albany. She'd just finished the PhD research which would eventually become her first book, *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry: An Introduction* (2006), and I suppose I was one of the few people there who'd even *heard* of some of the poets she'd been studying. We shared a love of craggy British poet Peter Reading – it was, however, she who converted me to the great and powerful Paul Muldoon.

She left to take up a lectureship in English at Otago University, but gave it up after a year. I must confess that it wasn't till then that I understood that, while literary-critical research was important to her – and she was indeed a very fine critic, as I said in my *Poetry New Zealand* review of her book – what she wanted above all to be was a published poet in her own right. I remember her showing me the initial drafts of what would become *Tigers at Awhitu* (2010), and my slightly ambivalent reaction to it. Her poems seemed – I have to admit it – a bit old-fashioned to me, a bit well-behaved,

well-rounded, *British*. By the time the book eventually appeared, though, it was a very different proposition. Quite a few of those earlier poems remained, but they had been supplemented by a section of poems about her disease – wilder, stranger poems, culminating in the title piece “Tigers at Awhitu”:

tiger, why do you hide?

my fur is matted
and mangy, my face
is raw, there's red
under my claws

tiger, have you killed?

no, not for weeks
of stony days
and vagrant nights

tiger, why do you cry?

I cannot say

I think my heart
was left unwatched
and opened,
secretly, rashly,
like a flower in the night

sleep, tiger, sleep
sleep and let it be

tiger hearts can take a lot

of love

[p.66]

Is the tiger cancer? No, nothing as simple and reductionist as that – but it is (perhaps) a symbol of the unpredictable forces of nature: those which smile or frown on us seemingly at whim. The power of the poem lies in its suggestiveness, its unpredictability: “And when I have found enough wildness / I lie down right inside it / and sleep” [p.69].

I saw Sarah last at the Korero exhibition last year. Twenty poets had been matched with twenty artists, each of them taking inspiration from a single poem. The artist Sarah had been paired with chose “Tigers at Awhitu,” and – as I recall – produced a very beautiful

driftwood sculpture to evoke its magnificent setting at the head of the Manukau Harbour.

We had a nice chat about that; about, also, the great success of her book, both here and in the UK, where it had been published simultaneously by Carcanet Press (characteristically, Sarah asked me if I'd like a copy of the British edition to go with the New Zealand one – she knew that with my bibliographic obsessiveness, I'd like to have both versions on my shelves: and so I do). I remember also, shortly before her collection appeared, when it had been accepted by both publishers, but was still in that limbo that poetry books inhabit before they come bursting out on the scene like phoenixes, I invited Sarah to take part in a poetry reading at Massey Albany.

The reading was for our stage one Creative Writing class (the other readers were Jen Crawford, Thérèse Lloyd, Lee Posna and Michael Steven). Sarah admitted to me that it was her first formal poetry reading, which should give you some idea of how long she'd been waiting for her work to be recognised. She must have got a lot more habituated to poetry readings after that – from 2010 onwards, the name Sarah Broom was on every list of up-and-coming young poets in New Zealand.

I'll never forget what she did on that first occasion, though. She started off by reading Stevie Smith's famous poem “Not Waving But Drowning”, then segued into her own response to the poem, “All my life” (now available on the Tuesday Poem website). It seems somehow terribly apposite now, more even than it did at the time:

and yes he was
drowning, not waving, now we know,
and isn't it hard to tell?

**In Memory of
SARAH BROOM (1972-2013)**

Wife of Michael

Mother of
Daniel, Christopher & Amelia

Author of
*Contemporary British and Irish Poetry:
An Introduction* (2006)
Tigers at Awhitu (2010)
& (hopefully forthcoming soon):
Gleam (2013)

Rest in peace, Sarah:

sleep, tiger, sleep
sleep and let it be

(This article first appeared on the author's blog site *The Imaginary Museum*, 20 April 2013)

Dr Jack Ross has published several books of poems, including City of Strange Brunettes (1998), Chantal's Book (2002), To Terezin (2007) & Celanie (2012), as well as three novels, a novella, and two collections of short stories. He also edited a number of books and literary magazines, including (with Jan Kemp) the trilogy of audio / text anthologies Classic, Contemporary & New NZ Poets in Performance (AUP, 2006-8). He has a Doctorate in Comparative Literature and teaches Creative Writing at Massey University's Albany campus.

A tribute to Helen Longford

The following tribute to the early New Zealand poetry editor of the late 1920s/1930s, Helen Longford, was found recently.

HELEN LONGFORD by Wilfred Westley

That dear old term "atmosphere" has done good service. An author creates it, or imagines that [they do]. Perhaps it is the atmosphere which creates the author. Helen Longford and her sister Christine were informed by atmosphere. I remember spending an afternoon at Albert Street in company with Ernest Drake, the late John Leech, and a baritone whose name I have forgotten. We were practising a quartette. Not an operatic one such as the bishop in "Bab

Ballads" was assisting when the "Phantom Curate" came and took the bass in it. We were, if I remember aright, preparing for a Tennyson evening illustrated with music. One of our numbers was the inevitable "Sweet and Low." There arose a hot contention as to whether "Wind" should be pronounced to rhyme "tinned" or "kind."

Mrs. Mason objected to the first pronunciation because wind rhyming with "tinned" made her think of a baby. She might have found a place in *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*, that charming study of Methodist social life by Ellen Thomeycroft Fowler, which belonged to the *Heavenly Twins* genre, the dear old epigrammatic novel. Arthur Mason had been a choir boy at St Paul's, London, as was Walter De La Mare. Mason had a brother with a top-line voice. This brother sang a solo when the choir went to Windsor to sing to Queen Victoria. Her majesty may have taken a fancy to young Mason because, unlike William Ewart Gladstone, he did not address her as if she were a public meeting. He just sang to her as only a boy can sing. On the following visit Mason the soloist was absent with measles or something. When the Queen asked for him Arthur Mason was presented in his brother's stead.

As a man, Mr Mason always seemed to me to be something of a misfit in Dunedin. He should have been a lay clerk in a Cathedral City. The Cathedral City would have presented Christine Mason with a happier milieu than did Dunedin.

Helen Longford was a devoted sister. She had her own way to make in the world, however, and she proceeded to make it with a courage that won the administration and affection of all who knew her intimately. She was on the staff of the *Otago Daily Times* as a young woman until she went to Wellington, where she acted as private secretary to Sir John Findlay; a great opportunity for her. It was always an inspiration to hear Helen Longford speak of Sir John.

Then she joined the staff of the [*New Zealand*] *Radio Record* and as "John O'Dreams" initiated a poetry page in

which a prize of ten shillings was offered weekly for the best poem. I won this prize on one or two occasions and thus "contacted"—"John O'Dreams" of whose identity I had no knowledge. My first actual meeting with Helen Longford took place in Wellington. She came to interview me on behalf of the *Radio Record*. She was a friend of Mrs Coleridge, daughter of the late Dr Sprott, Bishop of Wellington. I had more than one spirituelle afternoon with Mrs Coleridge in her room at Bishops court. Here again we might drag in "atmosphere." Here I met Helen Longford.

Another meeting was the occasion of Mrs Mason's funeral. Helen Longford, then growing frail, made the journey from Wellington to Dunedin and hurt her head through a fall on the ferry steamer. It was one of the smallest funerals I have ever attended, but those who were present were there for a very good reason. Archdeacon Whitehead conducted the service just in the way "Christine would have liked," to quote Helen Longford's words.

When Helen Longford was herself laid to rest there was a representative gathering of men and women who loved and admired her. I used to encounter her in Castle Street with a milk billy. I would ask her if she had her pennies in her hand. Perhaps this question was ill-timed as there was no plethora of pennies in Helen Longford's tiny establishment. She had the pride of Lucifer.

She typed an entire novel for me, and would not take a penny for her work. She did the same for a young man in Auckland. Sometimes I just left a typing fee on her mantelpiece. In this little room she would hold court.

I have engaged somewhat freely in personalities in the course of this appreciation, so I shall refrain from mentioning two men who sat with me at Miss Longford's flat one afternoon. Despite her deafness, she could govern a causerie in the manner of a Madame De Sevigne. A more detailed account of her activities will be found, I hope, in a future number of the *P.E.N. Gazette*. A memorial to Helen Longford may be found in the New Zealand Room at the Dunedin Free Public Library. It consists

of an entire set of *The New Zealand Mercury*, bound according to years. Of her two anthologies, *A Gift Book of New Zealand Verse* and *Here are Verses*, the former is perhaps the better. I take the liberty of lifting the following poem by Chistine Mason.

ELEGIE

(In memory of Dean Fitchett)

Twelve moons have waxed and waned
since our loved Dean
Passed slowly down the aisle for the last
time...
That night the moon looked through the
flying clouds
And shed her radiance gently o'er the
scene.
Slowly the winter crept; the quiet rains
wept;
And soft mists hid the margins of the
hills.
Come next the Spring with its pale
primroses
And crocuses like chalices of gold.
That Summer-time adorned the land with
flowers,
The queenly rose and poppies that unfold
Their silken-petalled loveliness to view.
And so to Autumn's falling leaves and
sere,
That close the cycle of the changing year.
- Christine Mason.

Miss Longford included two of her sister's poems. Apart from the merit of this poem it has significance for all who remember Dean Fitchett. Mrs Mason was often locum tenens at All Saint's organ, and like other women of her calibre, enjoyed the friendship of a charming and witty man and a tender pastor.

(First published in C R Allen's magazine, *The Wooden Horse*, 1950)

Comment on Angus McMaster

Recent New Zealand cricket and rugby poetry anthologies have revealed a number of poets working away mainly

for their particular sporting interest group. Because of this, a place worth checking for poems is sports club histories. As with family histories, they are privately printed – and occasionally contain poems inside. One poem found recently by PANZA member Mark Pirie is by the College Rifles back Angus McMaster. It was included by editor Max Smith in a 1972 College Rifles' club souvenir book to celebrate 75 years of the club's existence, which included a reunion.

ODE TO A PARD

That spirit always met
In the College Rifles set
Has in no way been upset
By this bloody toil and sweat;
And the only real regret
Is that you're not here to let
Me take YOUR pass – or yet
To drink your health. You bet!
- Angus McMaster

McMaster's poem is clearly a war poem. It's hard to say though whether McMaster is in effect a practicing poet. In his playing years, players often broke into song, played guitar or dashed off verse at Smokos. McMaster sent it home in a letter to his Rifles' mate, Stan Kirk. Kirk collected all the Rifles players' letters from the war and later deposited most of them with the War Memorial Museum in Auckland. Ian Appleton who has done research on Kirk's collection says that he didn't find much verse and does not remember McMaster contributing verse. He writes that: 'Kirk was key in the survival of the club during and after the war, and his letters were critical in this regard. Very quickly after the war began nearly all of the eligible players at the club had volunteered, from memory there were only a couple out of eighty odd who did not make it into the armed forces and this was on medical grounds, or in Kirk's own case because of employment in an essential industry. The Club was placed into recession – on its own request – for the duration of the war, as were many of the Auckland clubs.'

Angus McMaster (full name Harry Angus McMaster b. 6 February 1908) played rugby for College Rifles 1929-1937. His positions included wing three-quarter, halfback and five-eighth. He was skipper of the Second Grade Juniors side in 1934 and progressed to the seniors. He served on the club's management committee 1935-36. He left rugby like most Rifles players to serve in the armed forces during World War II. After the war, he lived in Auckland where he was a 'clerk' according to electoral rolls. He was married to Nyra McMaster. Angus died in 1976.

Comment on *The Tuapeka Times*

Another New Zealand paper that contains early poems of interest is the Otago paper *The Tuapeka Times*. It was published bi-weekly from 1873 and usually had four pages to an issue. It ceased in 1941. PANZA member Mark Pirie found the following anonymous poem (which makes interesting comment on New Zealand life in Otago in the 1870s) when searching its contents recently:

MODERN NEW ZEALAND

Hurrah for our modern New Zealand—
The bonniest land on the seas;
Where might is the right of the strongest,
And rich men can do as they please.

The country where gentlemen wreckers
Can salvage the immigrants' store;
The country where tigers of women
Can murder their servants galore.

Where a man may have wives without
number,
And nobody think him to blame
Where a maiden, who fights for her
honor,
Must flee from the country in shame.

The country where midnight marauders,
May rob with bravado and din

And policemen look wise and see
nothing—
Unless you have plenty of tin.

Where a larrikin smashing your windows,
And a thief caught robbing your till,
Are either “discharged with a caution,”
Or the jury will find ’em “no bill.”

Where swindlers can live upon credit,
And pay off their debts with a “smash;”
And the mice and the matches are handy,
When a man’s in a hurry for cash.

Where parsons go out of their pulpits
To dabble in “townships” and “shares;”
And merchantmen, “doing religion,”
May mix up their goods and their
prayers.

Where “society” smiles on “Miss Kitty,”
And “Good Templars” rejoice in their
“nips;”

Where publicans minister “justice,”
And jurymen brag of their “tips.”

Where the working man raises the taxes
To pay for the rich man’s school
And the loafer runs off, that his children
May be kept by the honest fool.

Then hurrah for our modern New
Zealand,
The bonniest land on the seas;
For sure, if we’ve somehow made money,
Why shouldn’t we do as we please?

(From *The Tuapeka Times*, 22 May
1878)

Further comment on George Clarke

Searches on George Clarke, whose
poems appeared in the previous issue of
Poetry Notes, have produced the
following information.

Clarke appears to be ‘George Balderson
Clarke’, an Auckland journalist, who
arrived in New Zealand in 1915. Clarke
was born in Nottinghamshire about
1883 according to the 1911 *England
Census*.

Clarke married in England Winnifred
Annie Clarke in 1905, and they

divorced in 1924, while he was living in
Auckland. She had remained in England.
Clarke appears on Auckland electoral
rolls until 1946 listed as a ‘journalist’.
His death appears to be 1957 aged 74
years according to official Births,
Deaths and Marriages records.
There may well be more of his writings
in Auckland newspapers and journals.

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