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## Inside this Issue

1

Welcome

Mark Pirie on J H E  
Schroder's New Zealand  
cricket poems

3

Rail poems by John  
Maclennan

Classic New Zealand  
poetry

4

Niel Wright on Mark Pirie  
as Romantic Satirist

5

New publication by  
PANZA Member

6

Recently received  
donations

About the Poetry Archive

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# Poetry Notes

## Quarterly Newsletter of PANZA

### Welcome

Hello and welcome to the third issue 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>

### Mark Pirie on J H E Schroder's New Zealand cricket poems

*Wellington poet/critic/publisher Mark Pirie discusses the New Zealand cricket poems of J H E Schroder.*

J H E Schroder (1895-1980), New Zealand poet, journalist, educator and broadcaster, was best known as a mentor and editor to younger writers. As literary editor of *The Sun* and *The Press* newspapers, he published and encouraged writers like Robin Hyde, Eileen Duggan, A R D Fairburn and R A K Mason. Little known, however, is his role as a New Zealand cricket poet, mostly in comic rhyming forms.

Schroder played cricket from high school days to senior level representing Canterbury College and West Coast. His second collection of verse, *Yet Once More* (Pegasus Press, 1969), includes half a dozen cricket poems. It was written in the 1960s (after the publication of Leslie Frewin's influential *The Poetry of Cricket* anthology in 1964) and after retirement from his position as director of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service. Four of these poems ('Operator', 'Pitch Please', 'Echoes from Lancaster Park' and excerpts from 'Basin of Words') feature in *A Tingling Catch*. They seem to stem from Schroder's extensive cricket listening. 'Echoes from Lancaster Park', referring to the Christchurch cricket ground, mimics radio commentator Jim Reid's thick Scottish burr, while 'Basin of Words' contains snippets of radio commentary from Plunket Shield matches in the 1964/65 First Class cricket season at the Basin Reserve, Wellington. Other cricket poems not included in *A Tingling Catch* are 'Commentary' (which references Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch) and 'Erstralia Fair', his Ashes poem. Again these poems draw on Schroder's commentary listening and criticism of cricket commentary broadcast on radio at the time. It is possible there are more uncollected Schroder cricket poems published in *The Press* in the 1970s. It'd be nice to gather them all some time in the future. In the meantime, I'd like to share with you the two further poems not included in *A Tingling Catch*:

**J H E SCHRODER**

**Erstralia Fair**

*Third Test, 1963*

Oh to be there,  
In Erstralia fair,  
With Johnny Moyes,  
Michael Charlton, Bob Richardson,  
Brian Johnston, old  
Uncle Ray Lindwall, and all!

Then I'd smell on the air,  
The native air  
Of Erstralia fair,  
Each delicate flower  
From the broadcasting bower,  
Unfiltered through our  
Transmitting tower.

How much sweeter there  
In Erstralia fair  
The accents sweet  
Of the four Erstralians,  
Antidotes  
To a single alien's  
English notes.

Oh joy of joys,  
To be there, to-day...  
To be, as I say,  
With Johnny Moyes,  
Michael Charlton, Bob Richardson,  
Brian Johnston, old  
Uncle Ray Lindwall, and all –  
All on the air  
Of Erstralia fair.

*Note:* Australia vs England, Ashes series, Third Test, 11-15 January 1963, won by Australia.

**Commentary**

Long years ago a journalist,  
Reporting that a batsman missed,  
Sought to avoid the obvious word,  
And not in vain; for there occurred  
To him the “elegant variation” –  
As Quiller-Couch called the device  
Of saying instead of rats and mice  
(Such common words!) rodents or  
vermin  
To bring a classier sort of term in –  
The “elegant variation”, namely,  
“Failed to connect,” and used it gamely.  
The journalist in jubilation  
Reflected that his happy thought

Success unthought-of, too, had brought.  
Not only had he reached his aim,  
In writing of this tedious game,  
To find in prose, that obdurate medium,  
Some way to alleviate the tedium  
By substituting in his story  
New words for old ones, stale and  
hoary;  
But he had freaked a touch of wit –  
“Failed to connect”! the barb of it! –  
And, more, his phrase had just the right  
Near-technical flavour to delight.

Oh yes! I sympathize. This young  
Reporter, hitherto unsung,  
Had cause to jubilate. But I  
Would hang him, hang him high.  
For what to him was just a trick,  
Trick of the moment, now is slick  
Compulsive formula; and sick  
And tired I am of commentators,  
Filled with this undivine afflatus,  
Who never, never say “He missed” –  
No, won't, can't any time desist  
From following my innovator,  
That toiling hack, that tired narrator  
Of hits and misses, catches, drops,  
Boundaries, snicks, and lucky stops,  
In “failed to connect.” But now it's not  
“Elegant variation.” What  
Wearies the air? “Failed to connect.”  
Sometimes, at least, we might expect  
In commentary dialect  
Short, simple “missed.” It's never  
heard:  
“Failed to connect,” the unfailing word!  
Its use is merely automatic,  
Sanctified, unpointed, dull,  
Stupid, monotonous, and null.

Now touchy, idiosyncratic  
As may be my reaction, that  
Is hostile and relentless. What  
Can explain why men of sense reject,  
In favour of this “failed to connect,”  
A brisk and sturdy monosyllable,  
Its place by naught so lively fillable?  
I groan, I snort, I generate  
Against my friends the commentators  
Such positively murderous hate,  
I'd toss them to the alligators.  
“Failed to connect”: its little joke  
Is joke no more but iron yoke.  
“Reid took a swing at that one, but  
Failed to connect ...” “Motz tried a cut,  
A sort of chop, failed to connect,  
And . . .” On and on! And who object?

None that I've heard of; only me,  
A singular minority.

But I am in a dangerous mood  
And give fair warning, harsh and crude.  
Let me get at a commentator,  
No matter which. I may not rate a  
Bradman or a Cowdrey, no,  
But still can deal a lusty blow.  
Spirit I have; I have a bat,  
I have a pair of ears; and at  
The first use of that phrase; I strike  
Fiercely, together, man and mike.  
And, may I add, I don't expect  
To hear him comment, “Failed to  
connect.”

*Note:* Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's famous cricket poem extract was ‘Not Out’: ‘I see the rapport of the wicket-keeper and umpire; / I cannot see that I am out. / Oh! You umpires.’ ‘Motz’ in the poem is New Zealand player Dick Motz.

Schroder also published collections of his newspaper essays: *Remembering Things* (1938) and *Second Appearances* (1959) as well as a book of his radio talks on language, *The Ways of Words* (1969). His first collection of poems, *The Street and Other Verses* (Pegasus Press, 1962), contains his most well known poem. ‘The Street’ (anthologised in Quentin Pope's anthology *Kowhai Gold*) as well as an interesting introduction by poet and critic Niel Wright placing his work in a mainly Georgian literary context. Wright refers to this Georgian influence as distinctly belonging to the Schroder-Marris school of poets (that also includes Wright's own poetry and Ruth Gilbert's poetry) in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

*Sources:* *Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, eds. Robinson/Wattie (OUP, Auckland, 1998); *The Street and Other Verses* by J H E Schroder (Pegasus Press, Christchurch, 1962); *Yet Once More: A Collection of Light Verse* by J H E Schroder (Pegasus Press, Christchurch, 1969); *The Poetry of Cricket* ed. Leslie Frewin (Macdonald, London, 1964) and *Theories of Style in the Schroder-Marris School of Poets in Aotearoa* by F W N (Nielsen) Wright (Cultural and Political Booklets, Wellington, 2001).

**Mark Pirie's** *A Tingling Catch: A Century of New Zealand Cricket Poems 1864-2009* was recently published by *HeadworX*.  
He is co-organiser and archivist for the *Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa*. His poetry will appear in *Issue 14* of the online journal *International Literary Quarterly (UK)*.

## Rail poems by John MacLennan

Earlier in the year PANZA published a collection of New Zealand rail poems. The following rail poems by John MacLennan were sent into us by Mary Bell Thornton.  
MacLennan was her grandfather. He died in 1911 at age 41. He was a published poet and his obituary claimed him as 'the labour poet of New Zealand'. He was a fitter and turner with the railways.  
We have included two of his rail poems. Mary sent us eight poems in total. PANZA has one book by him, *Neptune's Toll*.  
We greatly appreciate Mary's correspondence.

### AN ANVIL SONG

*Concerning the steam hammer in the Addington works*

It stands all grim  
In the smithy dim,  
In feats of labour skilled,  
With its arm at rest  
On its anvil breast  
And its cylinder lungs unfilled.  
With its feast of scrap  
On the big heap's lap  
Or piled by the furnace door,  
In a frame of wood  
And its big tongs, slewed  
By the crane, on the iron floor.

A giant, there  
In the smoky air  
It rests, till the watchman comes,  
To poke and drag  
At the bars and slag  
Till the smelting furnace hums,

And the forge is manned,  
And the forgers stand,  
A pale, but a jovial throng,  
In singlets light,  
Who straight unite  
In waking the Anvil Song.

Their arms are stripped,  
And the scrap is gripped  
In the tongs, and the furnace glares  
In the forgerman's face,  
As he finds a place  
In the heat for his giant wares;  
Then the big doors meet  
On the glaring heat,  
And greedy fires are fed,  
Till the scrap comes out,  
With a forger's shout,  
And drips by the anvil bed.

The blows are light  
Of the piston bright  
On the dazzling pile agape,  
Its tap! tap! tap!  
Till the molten scrap  
On the anvil breast takes shape.  
The forger knows  
His work, and the blows  
Increase with stupendous roar,  
Till at last they crash  
With mighty dash,  
And bed in the cooling ore.

There are men in the light,  
And men in the height,  
Controlling the noisy steam;  
But clear in the blaze,  
Or dim in the haze,  
They people a clamorous dream:  
And every ghost  
In the dream has a post,  
And a voice in the weird refrain,  
And silence falls  
On a scene that calls  
For the molten slabs again.

For the song that's dear  
To the forger's ear  
Is heard when the fires are white,  
And the heat comes out  
With a surge and a shout,  
And the cylinder proves its might.  
'Tis a song profound,  
Whose theme is bound  
In massive chords, and strong,  
And glittering sparks  
From the piston marks  
The bars of the Anvil Song.

### THE ENGINE CLEANER

If you met him in the shadow,  
You'd take him for one of the shades  
With his hands black,  
And his face black,  
And his dungarees as black as the ace of spades.

From dark till light he's cleaning,  
With kerosene, colza and waste,  
And a caper or two  
And a scraper or two  
And a grater or two to grind down the brink for his paste.

He's booked to clean a "Scotchman"  
The South Express just in  
With her wheels grimed  
And her stack grimed  
And the dome of her as black as a burnt out whin.

He starts in the pit with his "contract"  
And out and in he crawls,  
His head is grease  
And his heels grease  
And a gloss of grease covering his overalls.

He tackles the dome in the morning  
The rest of the job is done  
The rods are bright  
And the cranks are bright  
And the brass of her will glint in the morning sun.

The cleaner goes home to his breakfast  
A soot-bag walking in shoes,  
He's earned a rest  
With the very best  
Why, the job he's got would give ten in twenty the "blues".

## Classic New Zealand poetry

This issue's classic New Zealand poem is by Walter Charman. Charman spent time living in Hataitai and working in Wellington. He observes: "Every morning in the [Hataitai] tunnel I prepared against the oppression of office restraint by yelling poetry and songs against the tunnel thunders of

trucks and buses. Multiple reverberations snatched up and distorted every sound so that not even the few foot passengers heard my shouting.” He likens the experience to his own ventures with getting his poetry heard and read.

Charman is the father of New Zealand poet Janet Charman who kindly donated the book to the Poetry Archive. One book of his poetry was printed during his lifetime:

**THE BLUE PENGUIN**

*By Walter Charman*

Six years in the thrumming Unit  
Commuting  
Taking, in the carriage the side  
Nearest the harbour  
Hoping –  
“Today, tonight, I may see  
The Northern Blue Penguin.”  
Buoyed by the prospect I endured  
The clerical ghetto –  
On still water I thought to see  
The slight chevron  
Of the small head – swimming,  
At the water’s edge perhaps  
The insouciant blue-suited little one  
Hurry across the sand to his home...

Admire his survival  
In that vast environment,  
Shrugging aside the Sea’s  
Contumely,  
Making a good life:  
Food, security. Admirable bird!  
The State Services Commission  
Would have commended him  
– Politically inactive  
Living on a few sprats  
And...Invisible!  
Politicians could not count him –  
They could revile him,  
He would not care –  
And the Association would not defend  
him.

(From *The White Schooner and Other Ventures*, Asterisk Publishing, New Plymouth, 1973).

## Niel Wright on Mark Pirie as Romantic Satirist

I became aware of Mark Pirie as a figure on the local literary scene in Aotearoa a good few years ago because of the prominence he gained as the principal editor of the well presented literary magazine *JAAM*.

I read none of Mark Pirie's books of poetry until *The Blues* on the occasion of its launch in 2001. I recorded my impressions in some notes which I mean to append to this essay when they turn up again in my papers.

I have since read most of Mark Pirie's books of poetry but I do not intend to comment on them individually at length. Instead I will offer some general comments on his poetry to date.

Early in his literary career Mark Pirie identified himself with the X Generation. My impression of this generation in literature is that they prefer realistic writing. Perhaps as a generation they had no more troubles and are no more adventuresome or reckless in relationships than any other, but they certainly seem franker in their reports of their early life struggles and problems.

So it is not surprising that in his poetry Mark Pirie has written extensively about the love life of the young. I don't know whether he writes from observation, imagination or experience, and it does not matter, but in fact his romantic writing seems to be distinctive indeed. Mark Pirie uses a verse style for his love poetry (as much else) that is spare and brief. It is unrhymed. His love poems tend to be worded from the viewpoint of a young male relating to a young female. The presentation is quite bluntly realistic, but there is usually a surreal angle dropped into the text.

Much of Mark Pirie's verse outside the love poetry is overtly satiric, and even the love poetry has a satiric edge, so it is quite appropriate to describe Mark Pirie as a romantic satirist. However all his writings can be seen as social comedy. I do in fact think that the romantic satire is the finest element of Mark Pirie's

poetry to date, and indeed very fine work. There would be several dozen pieces scattered across his first six books that fall under the heading of love poetry written as romantic satire. I would actually like to see all this material collected and published as a separate book on its own. It might be that it would be too much of a good thing. But I suspect in fact it would read as a substantial and impressive treatment comparable to A E Housman's *Shropshire Lad* or even Heine's whimsical love poems as an expression of the Weltschmerz of Pirie's generation as those works are of Housman's and Heine's.

Love poetry is an important part of poetry as a whole. There are poets who seem incapable of writing love poetry and offer very little of it, for instance Allen Curnow, or even more surprising William Wordsworth. It is not easy to write love poetry, and even poets who make a point of doing so find it hard to come up with. So there is a real value in a volume of love poetry such as Mark Pirie has produced and has available to be collected as a separate publication. Such work doesn't grow on trees and is to be treasured highly. Michael O'Leary is particularly admired for his ability to write convincing love poetry.

I do think it was one of the historic prospects that people of the X Generation would come up with fine love poetry, Mark Pirie for one has done so.

As I understand it, Mark Pirie is still in his thirties, so he is still a young man. His love poetry goes back it seems to the earliest days of his poetry writing 18 years ago. So it is very much an achievement of youth.

And why not, since his subject is young love, or love with the intensity and innocence of youth but the knowingness and irony in it of a real poetic talent? One gets the impression that other topics increasingly have come to occupy Mark Pirie's books of poetry with the passing decade.

Mark Pirie is already an outstanding editor and publisher, and as such is to be compared strongly with Noel Hoggard and Denis Glover. I leave Hoggard out of consideration here because his poetry has never had a large import. But it is

worth noting that Denis Glover wrote and published his own poetry for twenty years from 1931 before his poetry really commanded and received acclaim with the collected *Sings Harry* and *Arawata Bill* sequences in 1951 and 1953.

Although some of Glover's poems prior to 1950 were anthologised, it has been forgotten that until 1951 Glover's standing was as a printer and publisher, and his poetry was largely satiric in quite a rough and ready way. In other words Glover hardly counted as a serious poet before 1950. Thereafter he went on to write an extensive bulk of poetry which is consistently Georgian in its techniques. Denis Glover was affectionately regarded as a poet and man by J H E Schroder (see his sonnet to Glover). My own view is that Glover's Georgianism was the worse for a slapdash craftsmanship, so that Glover's poetry from 1950 on looks like a wrecked oeuvre, but nevertheless it should all of it including the newspaper poems be collected in print. I am sorry that Denis Glover's literary executor, his son Rupert Glover has not furthered such an outcome so far.

My point in the comparison between Mark Pirie and Denis Glover is that as in Glover's case Mark Pirie might not really achieve his major literary production until 20 years on the literary scene, that for 20 years he too like Glover may simply count as a minor satirist until finally striking a mother lode maybe ten years on from now. That may be so.

But in fact there is nothing in Denis Glover's corpus comparable to Mark Pirie's love poetry dating from his earliest youth. So while in some ways Glover and Pirie look alike as publishers and satirists, in other ways Pirie may well prove to have had a literary accomplishment in his youth of a far higher order. Why should this be so?

I suspect it is due to the influence of Louis Johnson's poetry. Mark Pirie got to know and admire Louis Johnson's poetry very early on and went on to write his MA thesis on Louis Johnson. So there are strong sympathies on Pirie's part for Johnson's approach to poetry. In terms of style Mark Pirie is the opposite of Louis Johnson. Pirie's verse

is spare, cut down, uncluttered, whereas Louis Johnson's verse is noticeably voluble in words and ideas. It may even have been a natural reaction to Johnson's overflowing abundance that turned Pirie to the succinct poem. But in fact when you discount differences of style there is much in common between Pirie and Johnson.

Principally for a significant portion of their poetry those similarities are these:

- There is a strong drive in both men to be realistic in subject and presentation.
- There is also a persistent fund of intelligent reflection, both men showing effective imagination, in Pirie's case often as surreal touches.
- There is in both men a very deep insight into and persistent attention to the love relationships of men and women.

My impression is that the best of Louis Johnson's love poetry has yet to be collected from the magazines where it appeared in the early 1960s and has yet to be published in book form. So just how intimate and convincing Johnson was in treating such interrelations people forty years later may overlook, but as a conscientious student of Louis Johnson's literary work it may well be that Mark Pirie was someone in the know in this regard from the early 1990s. If so, once more credit can go to Louis Johnson for his good works and influence as a poet, editor and critic.

*F. W. Nielsen (Niel) Wright*

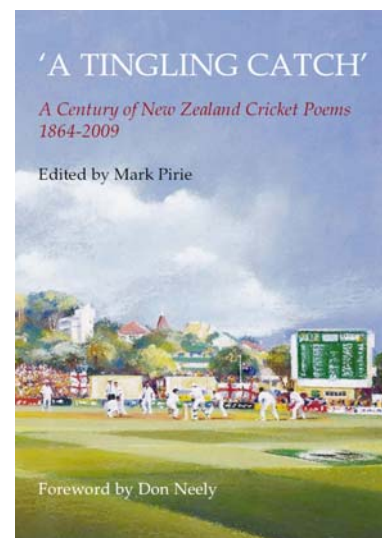
#### **Bibliography:**

- Pirie, Mark, *Shoot* (Christchurch: Sudden Valley Press, 1999).  
 - *No Joke* (Christchurch: Sudden Valley Press, 2001).  
 - *The Blues* (Paekakariki: Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop, 2001).  
 - *Reading the Will: Satires and Poems 1992-2001* (Christchurch: Sudden Valley Press, 2001).  
 - *Dumber* (Paekakariki: Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop, 2003).  
 - *Gallery: A Selection* (Cambridge, UK: Salt Publishing, 2003)

*Niel Wright's The Pop Artist's Garland: Selected Poems 1952-2009 was recently published by HeadworX.*

*He is co-founder and administrator for the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa. His poetry will appear in Issue 14 of the online journal International Literary Quarterly (UK).*

## New publication by PANZA member



### *A Tingling Catch: A Century of New Zealand Cricket Poems 1864-2009*

*Editor: Mark Pirie*

ISBN: 978-0-473-16872-8

Price: \$34.99

Extent: 189 pages

Format: 149x210mm

Publication: September 2010

Publisher: HeadworX

'*A Tingling Catch*' is the first anthology of New Zealand cricket poems to be collected. This substantial volume traces the history of cricket poetry in New Zealand from 1864 to 2009 spanning 145 years of New Zealand cricket. It brings together verse and song by some of our best poets – past and present. From Samuel Butler's classic

Spring 2010

description of the visiting All-England XI in 1864 to Arnold Wall's widely known First World War piece, 'A Time Will Come', to the 'underarm incident' of 1981 and more recent cricket poems that feature current members of the New Zealand team. 'A *Tingling Catch*' is presented with notes by editor and cricket follower Mark Pirie and a foreword (a poem) by well-known cricket historian, former national selector and former President of NZ Cricket, Don Neely. It contains over 100 poems and songs and features a wide variety of forms and styles from rhyming poetry to free verse and is sure to appeal to cricket lovers and poetry readers of all ages.

About the Editor

Mark Pirie is the author or editor of over 20 books, including the anthology of 'Generation X' New Zealand writing, *The NeXt Wave* and (with Tim Jones) a prize-winning anthology of New Zealand Science Fiction poetry, *Voyagers* (one of the "Best 100 Books" of 2009 in the *NZ Listener*). He has been a cricket watcher and enthusiast since he was a boy and has played social grade cricket for two Wellington clubs, Wellington Collegians Cricket Club and Hutt District Cricket Club.

Recently received donations

Ila Selwyn – 3 titles

Alexandra Gilbert – 2 titles

Jack Ross – 7 titles

*Letter to James K Baxter* by Stephen Oliver (from Stephen Oliver)

*after the Buddhist comes to call* and *summer, Hauraki plains* chapbooks by Owen Bullock (from Owen Bullock)

Raewyn Alexander – 11 titles plus poem brooch

Gillian Cameron – 31 titles

*Earth Into Moon* by Judith Lonie (from Peter Andrews)

Alistair Paterson – 200 titles

Sue Fitchett – *Charts and Soundings* by Sue Fitchett and Jane Zusters, *Drawing Together* poetry anthology plus NZ gay/lesbian poetry launch ephemera

*Nicolo's World* by Noeline Gannaway (from Noeline Gannaway)

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 four 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

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.

Contact Details

Poetry Archive of NZ Aotearoa (PANZA) 1 Woburn Road, Northland, Wellington PO Box 6637, Marion Square, Wellington Dr Niel Wright - Archivist (04) 475 8042 Michael O'Leary - Archivist (04) 905 7978 email: pukapuka@paradise.net.nz

Visits by appointment only

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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 and the New Zealand Poetry Society.

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