Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue 32 (following issue 31, Spring 2017) of Poetry Notes, the newsletter of PANZA, the newly formed Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa. Poetry Notes will be now be published from time to time 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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http://poetryarchivenz.wordpress.com

Rugby poetry at the NZ Rugby Museum

PANZA archivist Mark Pirie discusses the New Zealand Rugby Museum’s holdings of rugby poetry after a recent visit in June this year.

In June, as HeadworX publisher, I launched Damian Ruth’s poetry collection On Edge at the Palmerston North City Library. Before the event I had arranged to meet with the New Zealand Rugby Museum Director Stephen Berg who had told me via email that there are some holdings of rugby poetry at the museum. I hadn’t been expecting to find poetry at the Rugby Museum but I was pleased to find that the holdings of New Zealand poetry there are reasonably substantial. From the well known early poets like William Pember Reeves, who wrote on the All Blacks “Invincibles” tour of 1924/25, or the UK poet/racounteur A P Herbert in the 1960s, to the more recent poems donated by various people who are not known as poets themselves, there is certainly a wide range of voices on New Zealand rugby.

Two poets stand out from the rest: Tulo Regos and a Miss Browne of Levin who wrote under the pseudonym of Betty May. I expect Tulo Regos is also a pseudonym. Regos = Troubador in Turkish.

Regos identities himself as a Manawatu local in poems on the Manawatu rugby team, but mostly he was a very able reporter on All Blacks tours and matches 1972 to 1984. Chiefly he had the knack of writing or filing a report poem on each All Black test as it happened. His verse style is journalistic and factual without much poetic flair and always in rhyming form. Was he himself a journalist? Nothing much is given by Regos to identify himself, except for his location. The Director had asked previous museum directors if they knew anything on Regos but nothing has turned up. Presumably he has now passed away as no more poems arrived after 1984. Sometimes he has a variant spelling of “Toula Regos”. The poems also include a ‘Homage to Pinetree’ (Colin Meads) when Meads retired and turned out for a President’s side in 1973.
and helped them to defeat the All Blacks.
Here is an example of Regos’s writing
on the 1983 All Blacks fourth test v the
British and Irish Lions, 16 July 1983:

Out-classed and out-manoeuvred
There is no other-way
To describe the fourth test of the tour
At Eden Park today.

Fifty-four thousand packed the stands,
And the fans knew from the start,
N.Z. All Blacks in this test,
Would take the Lions, apart.

They really swamped those pussy-cats,
Of that there is no doubt.
And the 1983 Lions – now,
Know what Rugby’s all about.

Now Hewson, Hobbs and Hayden too,
Scored a try each, of the best.
While super-Stu the flying-wing
With three tries did the rest.

Six tries, would you believe it!
Thirty-eight – six to boot.
That the All Blacks are the greatest,
Even Willie can’t dispute.

So there you have it Rugby-fans
We all of us agree
That the Lion’s tour of eighty-three
Made Rugby History.

Not for the Lions, believe me,
But that great All Black fifteen
That gave the fans the greatest game
New Zealand’s ever seen.

Betty May’s manuscript poems were
forwarded to the museum by the
NZRFU in 1990. They date from the
1960s and appear to be poems sent to
men serving in the armed forces in Viet
Nam as general support for those
serving at the time. The reason for the
donation appears to be the allusion to an
old All Black player, Tiny Hill, a
Sergeant-Major, portrayed in one of the
poems as the army’s rugby selector, and
rugby certainly doesn’t seem to be the
only focus of May’s thoughts. The
humorous subjects are wide ranging and
general, with rugby only featuring in
two of the manuscript poems.

The following example features the
hooker Bruce McLeod of the 1967
touring All Blacks that Alex McKay’s
recent book considers “changed rugby
forever”:

CHEQUE MATE (8-11-67)

My “Rogues,” this is your “Joy Germ”
calling S.O.S. real loud.
The Cong, I fear, will have to wait –
you’re needed by McLeod.
Through no fault of his own he’s in a
most disastrous plight.
Half England and his “All Black” mates
have picked with him a fight!

It happened when he walked into a bank
to cash a cheque.
With care he’d dotted all the “I’s” and
crossed the thing, by hec!
Well naturally, the teller went to check
our hooker’s slate
Found out he didn’t have one and went
full tilt off his pate.

Our hooker boy by now was getting
good and mad himself.
“My cheque’s O.K.” he roared: “Now
fetch my dough down off that shelf.
A Kiwi wouldn’t rob you and I’m with
the “All Black” team.
So just hand out my money, mate,
before I burst a seam.”

The teller stood his ground and vowed
McLeod and cheques were fakes.
The boss was called and who should be
there with him for lands sakes!
None other than two “All Black” pals,
who’d just dropped in for tea.
Our hooker said: “For Pete’s sake boys,
just tell them all I’m me”!

Well, Blimey! our poor hooker near
collapsed upon the floor
When his scoundrel pals said: “Never
seen this creep before.”
So now that you, my “Rogues”, all
understand my S.O.S.
I’ll leave it up to you to get McLeod out
of this mess.

Elsewhere the poet known to PANZA
Trevor Rowe has donated his ‘Ode to
the All Blacks’, and some of the other
poems in the museum from old papers
like NZ Truth also feature in Ron
Palenski’s Touchlines: Rugby Poetry,
published in 2013.

Of the more recent poems, there is a
poem donation from Jane Stevenson-
Wright on the All Blacks’ semi-final
defeat to France at the 1999 World Cup,
and an anonymous poem ‘To the
Wounded’ donated by Chrissy
Hollander. Historically perhaps the All
Blacks “Invincibles” of 1924/25 have
contributed the most poetry as a subject,
if you include Robert J Pope’s poems I
have recently republished into the mix.
It was heart-warming as a poet to see the poetic attention given to our national sport. When I started publishing my own rugby poems, it was often seen by some as a lone wolf operation in the rugby world but the museum’s holdings reveal a Kiwi pastime of making poetry comments on rugby games in this country.

Leaving the Museum, I took several photos of three wall-mounted “acrostic” poems by John Richard Bryan dedicated to Sir Colin Meads, a national rugby treasure.

PINETREE by John Richard Bryan

Can you think of someone better in the history of our Game
For players come and then retire but we revere his Name
One of a kind is what he was, a colossus of a Man
Now name me someone better, I do not think you can
Legend is our word of choice when describing someone great
With guts and pride he just stood tall when playing with his mates
Into those grounds of Battle he wore the colour BLACK
No quarter asked or given as there was no holding back
New Zealand’s finest Player in this Sport we all acclaim
This forward from the Heartland who brought our Nation fame
Mention him to one and all and those foes that he opposed
He strived for eighty minutes with skill he proudly showed
Enjoyment he gave plenty through his running with the Ball
With flair and pace and in one hand this ALL BLACK had it all
Against all odds he triumphed through commitment on the field
And in those eighty minutes he was the true real deal
Doing what all forwards do in this game he chose to play
He scrummed, he rucked and tackled and how he made our day
So COLIN we remember all those years that you did give
And in the hearts of your supporters your memory always lives.

She married James Alan Coster in 1938 and lived in Northland. We include two of her poems.

Honor Gordon Holmes

SPRINGTIME IN PIGEON BAY

I’m glad that Spring is here again, and that it has brought back
The daisies and the dandelions that are flowering on the track.
The cuckoo on the tree-top, and the lark upon the wing,
The bushy manuka’s white flowers, where tuis love to sing.

The grey warbler is building, and very hard he tries
To hide his little pear-shaped nest from cuckoo’s prying eyes:
The bell-bird sucks the honey from the kowhai’s golden cup,
And everywhere on every hill wild flowers are springing up.

The kingfisher is busy now, he has no time to shriek,
For he is digging out his home in a bank beside the creek.
I know beneath a hawthorn hedge a quail has built her nest
And fourteen pretty eggs are hidden there beneath her breast.

A fantail’s made her nest in a little tree of green,
And in it there are four of the sweetest eggs I’ve seen.
The busy little white eye keeps the roses free from blight.
But when the fruit is ready he is there from morn till night.

The prickly old bush lawyer has his starry blossoms sweet,
While the pretty little wind flowers wave their white arms at his feet.
The hedge sparrow has built her nest in a macrocarpa tree.
And in it snugly hidden there are blue eggs, one, two, three.

The chaffinch sings his happy song of welcome every day,
He sings about his little nest made out of moss and hay.
Goldfinches with their caps of red and coats with golden lines,
Are building in the pear trees, in the hedges and the pines.

Down at the heads on a rocky point a seagull’s eggs are lying,
She does not make a careful nest, she’s far too busy flying.
She cracks a cockle on the rocks, she darts into the bay,
She rises with a little fish and then she flies away.

A fresh nor’-east blows down the bay,
let’s sail away together,
I’m glad that Spring has come again and brought the sailing weather.

(The Star, Christchurch, 14 December 1923)

GOODBYE TO HOLMES BAY

The summer sun shines brightly upon the sapphire seas,
And on the white winged fishing boats which speed before the breeze:
The lambs run happily about among the rocks and ridges,
While the kingfishers look all around, from tops of trees and bridges.

The tuis on the treetops build, the seagulls on the ledges,
The goldfinches, with sticks and straw, build nests among the hedges;
The creeks run gently down the hills, like many silver lines,
To lose themselves among the clumps of manukas and pines.

The ribbonwoods and totaras upon the hillside stand,
They overlook a sleepy bay of shells and golden sand.
The black pines and the ngaios on banks and steep cliff grow,
The cloudless sky above their heads, the splashing sea below.

The purple misty hills look down upon the happy Bay,
So will they stand and still look down when I am far away;

So will the sails spread to the wind, the breeze below fresh and fair,
The sailing boats slip down the bay, but I will not be there.

The birds will build another spring, the cuckoo come again.
The kowhai throw its golden glow o’er grass and leafy lane,
But our dear happy childhood’s home, by valley, hill and sea,
Will never more be seen again by Peter or by me.

(The Star, Christchurch, 12 December 1924)

Paul McCartney 2017 Auckland concert poem

PANZA archivist and co-founder Dr Michael O’Leary recently made the trip up to Auckland for Sir Paul McCartney’s world concert tour. We reprint Michael’s poem from broadsheet 21 (May 2018) in honour of McCartney’s contribution to popular song and poetry.

Paul McCartney at Mount Smart Stadium
(16 December 2017)

I nearly didn’t go to the concert
I put forth several excuses such as:
Too expensive, too far to go, it was
Too obvious as I had been such a
Beatles’ fan most of my life

When The Beatles came to Auckland In 1964 I had their pictures all over My bedroom wall. I had a small Turntable which played their records Slightly slowly and off key

But my father was preparing to go To prison and we couldn’t afford life’s Basics, let alone such extravagances As going to concerts, so I missed out On experiencing the four

People who were and would be my
Main inspirations to become an artist
Whether with words, painting or Music throughout my life. Lennon’s
Witty drawings and verse

McCartney’s elegiac Eleanor and his Rock and blues voice; George’s gently Laughing and weeping guitar; while Ringo never let a beat pass him by All wrapped up in artistic

Packages by Brian, George M, Astrid, Klaus, Blake, alligators, wild boats, Garrifles, lepers and Uncle Tom Cobra And all, R Hamilton, I Macmillan, Bold Rumple, B Freeman and all

John, Paul, George and Ringo took our Poverty stricken lives, whether financial, Intellectual or spiritual makes no matter, As they had done for themselves, and Had given us MUSIC

The Chinese word for music translates As ‘Enthusiasm for Life’ which is what The Beatles imbued our lives with, so When I walked up towards the stadium On that Saturday evening

I began to feel the anticipation of the Uncertainty, like it feels when greeting A lover. What would I think and feel After all the intervening years of hardship And heartache, the years

Of struggle and successes, the life I Had lived through, the light and dark. The sun was up, the sky was blue The crowd had come out to play And then it struck

The blackness of my mind and soul That so often underpins and undermines Was stalking me, trying not to let me Enjoy the beauty and extraordinary Ordinary rituals of life. I knew

I was in for a battle, but as the night Transformed into a magnificent triumph Of Paul McCartney’s humour, sound And vision, I was dancing and singing The blues away
So, once there was a way to get back Homeward, and this was it … resonating From the first iconic chord of A Hard Days Night right up to The End I was transported Back to a happier time

When our mother would sing to me and my Brother and sisters, one of whom was at The concert with me, words to the effect of: ‘Sleep pretty darling, do not cry, and I will Sing a lullaby’ – arohanui

Poem © Michael O’Leary

Comment on the poetry of Dan Davin

DAN DAVIN AS POET by Niel Wright

Dan Davin (1913-1990) is better known as a New Zealand novelist, short story writer and general literary notable, but he also wrote poetry of which a selection, A Field Officer’s Notebook, appears in 2018 from Cold Hub Press in an edition by Robert McLean, also a poet who shows independence of mind. Do internet searches for “Robert McLean nz poet editor”.

McLean writes an interesting and intelligent introduction and afternote. I welcome the publication of Davin’s poetry in book form as well as that of any other New Zealand literary or academic notable, because this backgrounds the culture and talents of people who promoted and controlled New Zealand public traditions. McLean gives necessary information. Some annotation to Davin’s poems might also be useful. For instance sangar = a military breastwork of stone or sod (from Pasto).

Davin was immensely well educated in the academic sense, quite likely better than any other New Zealand poet till now (2018). But he is also a New Zealand country boy with a sense of his Irish family origins. He lived life of a bohemian order in European exile, overworked and finally ill and depressed. All of this is reflected in his poetry.

The pessimism that is pervasive in Davin’s poetry other poets share with him, for instance A E Housman. But Housman has an aesthetic effect that Davin may lack, possibly as Yeats also does often enough. Davin is well aware of Yeats and may be the worse for his influence.

Davin’s age grouping may suggest he is a modernist poet, but in fact he never entirely escapes the lure of traditional rhyming, which inclines me to be more tolerant of his poetry. He is less traditional in mode than his friend and coeval M K Joseph (1914-1981). Davin also seems to have a sense of alternative sorts of rhyme, what is covered for some people by the term slant rhyme. It can’t be said that Davin demonstrates an achieved poetic, but perhaps he is feeling his way to one.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to explore New Zealand poetry in the last 150 years to see if there is evidence for a mode of poetry that is less traditional than the Georgians, less open form than the Modernists, but in all round ways highly confident, productive and aesthetically effective. If Davin was showing the way from 1936, possibly there has been time since then for an all round demonstration to have taken place outside the standard assessments of which we still hear too much.

Poetry by Mark Young (Australia/NZ)

Mark Young, a poet and editor now living in Australia, who has previously been written about in Poetry Notes and has donated a number of books to PANZA, recently featured in PANZA member Mark Pirie’s journal broadsheet: new new zealand poetry, issue 21, May 2018.

We include several poems from Young to mark his substantial contribution to New Zealand and world poetry.

Five things I never told my Rōshi

#1

I seek my inner self not for the essays but for the centerfold.
My first visit to a zen-dō was a mistake. I saw the sign & misread it as Zeno; but, since I was seeking infinite pleasure, I entered. I thought it was a bit strange being asked to seat myself in what I now know to be the position of zazen, but went along with it, thinking kinky thoughts about auto-erotic asphyxiation of the groin area.

Was more puzzled when the Rōshi asked me *What is the Buddha Mind?* I suspected it might be some aspect of tantric sex, & so, determined to heighten my pleasure but still conserve my seed, I began by imagining a point on the perimeter of my conscious mind beyond which lay the unconscious. Then I mentally covered half the distance to it, then half the remaining distance, then half the remaining . . . . .

I was brought out of it by the Rōshi’s staff falling across my back. *You were drifting,* he said. *But you may have been making progress so finish up for the time being & come back in two or three days.*

Puzzled by it all, feeling some sort of inner calm but no sexual satisfaction, gratification, or even titillation after I left, I googled the question the Rōshi had asked me & discovered just what a difference a “d” makes. I was more than a little embarrassed. Still, some good had come from it, so I returned as the Rōshi had suggested.

Once again he pointed me to the raised zazen platform, & as I settled myself, he asked another of those paradoxical questions that are designed to help the neophyte find enlightenment. *What would you rather be: the tortoise or the hare?*

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When I sit crosslegged during zazen in the zen-dō, I seek to find, as the precursor to clearing my mind of all thoughts, that single point of equilibrium for what Alan Watts called “the woman in man” — & obviously, the opposite / the same, “the man in woman.” But as I draw nearer to it, I am distracted by the conflict of those gender stereotypes that have imprinted themselves on me over the years. Even now, when I have resolved most of the physical issues, they flutter, like trapped moths, at the edges of the empty plain I seek to surround myself with.

I see myself wearing workman’s boots & a tutu. When I dance, I dance alone. Nobody wants to catch me in my jetés because I have been known to draw blood from my partners when I accidently land on them on the points of my steel caps.

& I am reluctant to climb ladders. It is not the height that frightens me, simply that the other firemen look up my skirt.

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My navel is pierced with a five-carat diamond.

It is an impediment to meditation.

Seek the light, find it, & the facets start strobing.

Epilepsy not epiphany.

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He raised his glass & toasted her across the tablelands. She smiled back; but in the black beyond her eyes she suddenly saw in widescreen the hatred that colonization had engendered. He started, startled. Wine slopped but no servants ran to mop it up. They were alone.
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Judith Haswell – Poems from the Pantry anthology of NZ poetry.

Paul Thomson – Poem Waikanae River (poem scroll/wall hanging).

Mark Pirie – 51 titles.

New Zealand Poetry Society – After the cyclone (2017 anthology).

Puriri Press – 5 titles.

Mary Creswell – 2 titles.

Niel Wright – Poetry (USA), includes feature on New Zealand poetry.

PANZA kindly thanks these donators to the archive.

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Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA)

PANZA contains

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

Wanted

NZ poetry books (old & new)
Other NZ poetry items i.e. critical books on NZ poetry, anthologies of NZ poetry, poetry periodicals and broadsheets, poetry event programmes, posters and/or prints of NZ poets or their poetry books. DON’T THROW OUT OLD NZ POETRY! SEND IT TO PANZA

PANZA will offer:
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• Historical information for poets, writers, journalists, academics, researchers and independent scholars of NZ poetry.
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• Books on NZ poetry and literary history, and CD-ROMs of NZ poetry and literature.
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