Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue 36 (following issue 35, Winter 2019) 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.

Articles and poems are copyright in the names of the individual authors. The newsletter will be available for free download from the Poetry Archive’s website:

http://poetryarchivenz.wordpress.com

Significance of R A K Mason’s Unpublished Poetry

PANZA co-founder Dr Niel Wright writes on the recent publication of renowned New Zealand poet R A K Mason’s uncollected and unpublished poetry.

When I was a junior lecturer doing a PhD at Victoria University of Wellington in 1971 R A K Mason died and I stuck notices round the campus saying R A K Mason is dead, copying Tennyson who had written on a sea beach Byron is dead. There is some sort of match between Byron and Mason, certainly in personality and poetic status given the difference in scale between the British empire in 1825 and New Zealand in 1971.

But at Mason’s death his status was not assured. His authoritative Collected Poems had appeared in 1962, with a definitive edition in 1971 (copies of both in PANZA). The difficulty for Mason’s status was that the only work of his to look like poetry after 1938 were political poems in free verse, and whether you liked Mason’s politics or not the free verse to be chanted lacked obvious literary merit. That’s how it looked to my eyes. So when it was announced in 2019 that there would be a publication of Mason’s Uncollected Poems there was trepidation, not helped by the fact that some unpublished poems were reported to carry caveats “Not to be published” “of pathological interest only,” and Mason’s demand that the Twayne World Authors monograph should not include his unpublished poetry. The handsome (1970) copy held by PANZA bears out Charles Doyle’s assurance to Mason in 1963.

The merit of the Collected Poems (1962, 1971) is that the poems are of a very high standard of technical finish for rhymed poetry in English (what might be called Parnassian in the French sense of that word). In the Uncollected Poems all those given for the 1920s and 1930s rhyme, but they all fall short of Parnassian technical standards. However they still...
show Mason’s outlook in those decades as a dispirited man. In the case of Mason’s unpublished poetry from 1938 to 1960 there are still five examples of rhyming poems, but their technical polish is deficient to the point that Mason at best looks like a casual versifier doing a quick job of work.

But when you come to Mason’s years in Dunedin in the early 1960s as Burns Fellow the ‘Song for Dunedin’ is the casual versifier still at work, but all the other unpublished poems given show him writing in rhyme as an experimental poet who commands my respect, if only because that was the approach I took in the same era from 1960 on.

I don’t know whether Mason was exposed to my books of poetry published from 1960 on. It is possible. I note Doug McPhail’s comment in the book (page 3) Words from a Journey (copy in PANZA): “I remember with awe and pleasure the 1960s Dunedin friendship of Hilaire Kirkland and our mutual friend Ron Mason. Together we planned castles of poetry in the air which have been a core part of my life ever since.”

Somewhere Mason himself says he had no true friends but many acquaintances, and that is true. His contacts were wide ranging, and likely to see influence both ways. So it was valuable to have the evidence what Mason was doing in the 1960s and come under that influence belatedly 50 years later.

I welcome such evidence furnished by the Cold Hub Press book R.A.K. Mason: Uncollected Poems, edited by Cold Hub Press publisher/poet Roger Hickin and introduced by poet Robert McLean (whose books have been donated to PANZA).

Classic New Zealand poetry

This issue’s classic New Zealand poetry is by Stella D Capes. Stella Dorothy Capes (née Bryant) was born on 1 August 1913 and died 20 November 2003 at 90 years old. She was said to be active in Pukekohe as a poet in 1949.

A letter in the Auckland Star, 8 August 1931, states she was a member of the Peter Pan Club in Auckland and showed wide reading and literary knowledge as a girl. In fact some 33 results are returned in Papers Past for Stella Bryant of Huapai and Manukau Road, concerning competitions and prizes and letters to the Auckland Star and short stories or poems published as a girl. She married the market gardener Vincent John Capes in Auckland on 11 March 1939.

After her marriage, Stella appears on the Franklin Roll 1946-1963 and the Albany Roll 1978-1981. The deaths of Stella and her husband both occurred in 2003 in Tauranga, so it is presumed they retired there to live. It is not known what happened to her poetry or how long she continued to write it after her early promise as a girl.

A search of the National Library online catalogues shows her correspondence with Pat Lawlor is listed in Tiaki, yet there appear to be no printed book publications of her poetry in New Zealand Library or the British Library catalogues.

Her name was not known to PANZA. PANZA researcher/archivist Mark Pirie noted Capes in one of journalist and writer Pat Lawlor’s memoirs More Wellington Days (1962), with her poem tribute to Katherine Mansfield, dated 1949, in her late thirties:

“You sought the clear beauty
Of the white moon;
The vision of the bright star
In its timeless vigil;
Strove for the clarity
Of spring waters,
Leaping from the bush-clad hills.

Oft, as the blue petals,
Of the tall delphinium,
Delicate your artistry,
Tender as the uncurled fern;
Then—like the rapier—
Deep, thrust your words
Probing the truth you knew!

Here are some more of her early teen poems we have found:

Poems by Stella D Capes

THE FAIRIES BALL
(By Stella Bryant. Manukau Road, Avondale; age 15.)

The fairies are having a ball to-night,
        Yes, they will dance in the silver light
Of the big round moon, in a darkening sky.
They’ll list to the wind as it goes by.

They’ll feast and they’ll play, and form a ring
Magic and powerful, then some will sing;
The gay little toadstools will form a seat
For each little fairy dainty and sweet.

The Queen of the fairies charming and fair,
With a crown of gold upon her hair,
Will sing to the children from Mortal-land
(Those who belong to the “Sleepy band”).

The revels will cease as the pale grey dawn
Creeps o’er the hills to welcome the man.
Unfolding their wings the fairies will fly
Away back to Fairyland, across the sky.

(Auckland Star, Volume LX, Issue 16, 19 January 1929)
**IN A NEW ZEALAND BUSH**  
(By Stella Bryant)

A kauri here has fallen,  
King of New Zealand trees!  
Never more its leaves will shake  
Or tremble in the breeze.

The stillness now is broken  
By the bellbird’s voice in song.  
Oh! the beauty of that music,  
So bell-like, clear and long.

A fantail here is flitting  
About from tree to tree,  
A bird who knows no fear,  
So happy and so free.

The floor of Nature’s mansion  
Is carpeted with fern,  
While on the walls hang garlands  
That climb and twist and turn.

The air is sweet and earthy,  
In this world of green,  
In this Land of Splendour, then,  
Nature reigns as queen!

*(Auckland Star, Volume LXII, Issue 186, 8 August 1931)*

**B E Turner**  
(1936-2019)

In October 2019, PANZA farewelled Dr Michael O’Leary’s publishing companion and fellow writer/playwright Brian Edward (B E) Turner, who had become Michael’s technical editor with ESAW in the early/mid-2000s. Together the two worked together and produced many Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop titles, including the signature mini book series which ran to nearly 40 titles. Brian until recently had also maintained the ESAW website until its closure. Brian E Turner added much needed impetus to the support of local Kāpiti and Horowhenua writing under the ESAW imprint. Brian also worked on other projects such as typesetting/design work for local authors like Marion Rego and the Horowhenua Writer’s Group anthology.

Brian’s support of local and national writers will be sorely missed. We have reproduced an article Brian E Turner wrote for the 25 Years of the Earl of Seacliff book published in 2009 and edited by Mark Pirie, a long term editor and associate of ESAW.

At the age of 58, I fell from a roof. Although the head damage limited my ability to concentrate for extended periods, it qualified me for a writer’s grant from the Accident Compensation Commission. Having time on my hands, I decided to write a novel that had been rattling around in my head for a number of years. This novel had a history. It was accepted by two overseas agents and two overseas internet publishers. They all went out of business. My friend, Frances Cherry, liked the book and decided to invite myself and a publisher-friend to a dinner party. This was where I met Michael O’Leary for the first time. After an excellent meal, some bottles of wine and literary conversation Michael took Frances’ word that it was a good book and agreed to publish. Eventually, he did actually read it, though his stated policy was – ‘we write books, we publish books, we shouldn’t have to read them.’ The published book did reasonably well, partly because of a remarkable review by someone who thought I was someone else. (It appears I am a pretty good writer if I am someone with a reputation but not so good if I’m not.) A couple of years later Michael asked me if I wanted to become publicist for ESAW. The distribution agency that Michael had been using had been sold and the new owner decided to abandon him. This seemed to be quite an interesting retirement occupation so I found a free newsletter email program and collected email addresses of bookshops and libraries from the internet. I also thought that a website might be a help. Initially I considered utilising free space provided by my ISP, however, it turned out that commercial space is pretty cheap so we bought some and registered our domain name – ‘earlofseacliff’. Being a self-taught web designer, I developed a rough and ready site that seems to do the trick. There are over 350 files on the site. It gets hits from all over the world and has actually brought business from American universities. Nevertheless the email newsletter and website do not enable us to penetrate as far into the market as we would like.

The next step was to distribute the books. Over time the most efficient methods of using the postal system were developed. Also, having spent my life programming computers, I was able to develop a system for invoicing and recording of data in the Microsoft Access programming language. It’s a rare system but it does the trick, although I’m probably the only person able to use it. About this time it came to my attention that ESAW’s publishing process using offset printing was surely uneconomical for short run books of poetry. This led me into an enquiry into the methods of digital printing. The local print shop was very helpful in this and we started publishing chapbooks as well as the Christmas Surprise mini book and our mini series. I utilised Microsoft Publisher as the typesetting tool, and eventually graduated to Adobe Pagemaker (which Mark Pirie, of HeadworX, had also been using to help typeset and design a number of works for us).
We are still not selling books in large quantities; however, the press is financial. What we really need is an agent that will approach libraries and bookshops direct but as yet we have not been able to find one. So I am now publicist, distributor, webmaster, accountant and publisher. No it’s not a take-over, it’s just a retirement hobby.

Comment on Aenfer Na Fili and Tommy Kapai

AN ACCOUNT OF THE POET AENFER NA FILI

Among recent donations to PANZA were five books published by Rainbow Works. PANZA already has at least one other publication of theirs. The National Library of New Zealand holds five publications by Rainbow Works, four of which PANZA now holds. The National Library has three books of poetry with the author’s name as Aenfer na Fili, two of which PANZA also holds. I have no personal information regarding a poet called Aenfer na Fili. As a poet he/she is modernist in using no punctuation but ampersand, but he/she does use rhyme incidentally as recommended by Robert Bridges the Georgian poet laureate. The books we have of Aenfer na Fili are Skinch twixt Albion & Aotearoa (1983) and A Far Cry in Deep Weather (3 editions 2004, 2004, 2005, ours the latest of them). Skinch twixt Albion & Aotearoa is a typescript with hand done cover, title page and illustrations (all sheets photocopied or otherwise reproduced). The poems are identified by titles, numbers, dividers or layout on the page. I bought a Wellington ex-library copy for $1 and was intrigued by the author’s unusual name.

A Far Cry in Deep Weather is a much more sumptuous production, using different type faces and sizes etc and at times hand written asterisks and arrows to signal poems. As a modernist/Georgian Aenfer na Fili over the two books of his/her PANZA has developes to impress highly as a poet. I have not so far found any poems by him/her in South Hokianga anthologies (of which there were three among the recent donations from Wong Liu Shoeng, a resident north of Auckland).

ON TOMMY KAPAI

One of the functions of PANZA has been to compile and keep up to date a list of all poets who reflect New Zealand with books to their credit containing their poems. One such person is Tommy Kapai Wilson born 1955, who has a website Te Tuinga giving biographical detail. There are books about Tommy Kapai. There are also 43 books about Tommy Kapai attributed to Uncle Anzac, in which Jon Gadsby (died 2015) is also involved. Not all the Kapai books contain poems (eg stories in rhyme) but those that do are the ones we record at PANZA.

Niel Wright

Poetry by Alex Jeune

This issue we feature some poems by Alex Jeune. Alex Jeune was born in Wellington in 1986. He grew up in Ōtaki and Levin, and attended Levin’s Waiopu College. He moved to Lower Hutt in 2008 to study at Victoria University of Wellington. He graduated with a BA in Chinese and Sociology. He has had his poetry published in Valley Micropress, in the Horowhenua Writer’s Group anthology, Iridescent Blue, and in broadsheet in May 2019. He has read his poetry at the “Poets to the People” Cafe in Kāpiti and at the Fringe Bar Open Mic in Wellington City. He is a lay preacher in the Hutt City Uniting Congregational Parish.

Alex will feature in a multi-poet anthology, Three Poets, with Marion Rego and Margaret Jeune, to be published by HeadworX in 2020.

Poems by Alex Jeune

THE COLD NIGHT

This evening calm
No false alarms to frighten
This darkened sky
Emboldens one to wonder
About this time
Of quiet and introspection
To think anew
Of life and all that may come
For time to grow
And see new horizons
Ahead of us all
As the chill of winter comes upon us
Once again.

PETONE

Pohutukawa blossoms red
And evenings stretch across the blue suburban skies
Light pouring throughout this valley of green
As the year turns once more
Toward the limitless future beyond this day
Sea wrapping around the shoreline
Sure of nothing but this moment
Gazing at the horizon far away
Longing for certainty and new hopes to come
Somewhere to rest and wait for a change of scene
As days stretch on until the dawn
The circuit of the ages, above and beyond us here and now.

INSOMNIA

Falling in my dreams
On sleepless nights
Yearning to fall below myself
Into unconscious states of mind
To pacify these hours of solitude
Without disturbing the people around, this time
In daylight’s hours of routine and rhythm
I fear this darkness most of all.
REMEMBRANCE
I look at the photo frame
And remember how
I did share in her life
Her art and her skills
And I silenced myself like you
I read your rhymes
And I recall your voice
Like a small shiny shell on the shoreline
And I walk on the beach
Like you
And I remember your stories
While I sit in the cafe
Where you were treated
To a cup of tea
And a ham sandwich
On an outing with your husband
My Grandad
And I remember the times
We had together
On that afternoon
Alone I sat and I try
To find a way
Remembering.

COMPULSION
No more of this
What is this I fear?
What do we do in the dark?
We wait in silence.

STRENGTH
Summoning some force
Within this time I have
Available light that shines
Throughout this room
I choose to sit
And wonder
What to do
During these daytime hours
That lasts as long as life
Withheld to stop
A force within

New publications by PANZA members

Title: The Wanderer
Author: Ron Riddell
Extent: 80 pages
Price: $10.00
Format: 140mmx211mm
Publication: February 2020
Publisher: HeadworX

About the Book
Ron Riddell is undertaking the poetic journey of his life. Along the way he meets fellow travellers; first and foremost the wanderer, who has also embarked on a similar mission of exploration, reflection and philosophic contemplation. This is a shared journey, which traverses many landscapes, seascapes, continents. The sojourners share many experiences, dialogues, ideas; helping one another on their life journeys, helping to realise each other, fulfill each other. The Wanderer is a journeying Everyman, asking searching questions of life and life’s journey. Thankfully he comes up with some answers and is keen to keep pointing us in the direction of the light at the end of the tunnel. This is Book One of his ongoing odyssey.

About the Author
Ron Riddell has worked as a teacher, editor and bookseller and has performed his work in many festivals and cultural venues around the world, including The Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Harbourfront (Canada), El Festival Internacional de Poesía de Medellín (Colombia), El Festival Internacional de Poesía de Cartagena (Colombia), The Austin International Poetry Festival (U.S.A.), El Encuentro Internacional de Poetas (El Salvador), International Poetry Festival in Costa Rica, Festival de Poesía de Bogota and Chilepoesia in Santiago, Chile. In Auckland in the 1970s Riddell founded The Titirangi Poets and later in the 1990s established a haven for poets with the Live Poets’ Café which adjoined the Dead Poets Bookshop in Karangahape Road. In Wellington he founded The Wellington International Poetry Festival. A painter, musician and the author of a number of plays and novels, he has published twenty-one collections of verse.

Comment:
“What a poem…Reading it I had the sense of being increasingly spellbound, of being transported to a place I’d previously not known about. Its repetitions had a hypnotic effect on me – it was like a music that returns to a coda at intervals along the way…a kind of extended Gregorian chant or a jazz musician’s riff open to endless interpretation.” Bob Orr

broadsheet 24 features the Wellington poet Nick Ascroft, and includes a
number of his friends as well as several poets outside the main feature. Poets included are: Corin Black, Kay McKenzie Cooke, Michael Duffett (USA), David Eggleton, David Karena-Holmes, Margaret Jeune, Mark Pirie, Jenny Powell, Blair Reeve, Richard Reeve, Laura Solomon, Eileen Van Trijgt and CAJ Williams. Cover photo of Nick Ascroft by Kate Wanwimonrak.


About the Editors

Tim Jones was awarded the NZSA Janet Frame Memorial Award for Literature in 2010. He has published five collections of poetry, one novel, a novella and two short story collections. He has co-edited two Australasian poetry anthologies specialising in speculative, fantasy, horror and Science Fiction poetry.

Mark Pirie is a Wellington poet, editor and publisher. Pirie has published four mini books previously with ESAW, a biography Tom Lawn, Mystery Forward and written or edited a number of poetry collections, including the Winter Readings series and a selection of early poems, Giving Poetry a Bad Name.

Donate to PANZA through PayPal

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

Recently received donations

PANZA kindly thanks these donators to the archive.

Julie Chan – 3 titles by Jill Chan.
Mark Pirie – 15 titles.
Ken Scadden – 66 titles.
Wong Liu Shoeng – 25 titles.

About the Poetry Archive

Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA)

PANZA contains

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

Wanted

NZ poetry books (old & new)
Other NZ poetry items i.e. critical books on NZ poetry, anthologies of NZ poetry, poetry periodicals and broadsheets,
poetry event programmes, posters and/or prints of NZ poets or their poetry books. DONT THROW OUT OLD NZ POETRY! SEND IT TO PANZA

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.
You can assist the preservation of NZ poetry by becoming one of the Friends of the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA ). If you’d like to become a friend or business sponsor of PANZA, please contact us.

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Visits welcome by appointment

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

Current Friends of PANZA:
Paul Thompson, Gerrard O’Leary, Vaughan Rapatahana, Cameron La Follette (USA), Riemke Ensing and the New Zealand Poetry Society.

PANZA is a registered charitable trust