



ESAW CHRISTMAS  
SURPRISE 2015

# **EARL OF SEACLIFF CHRISTMAS SURPRISE 2015**

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B. E. Turner (Technical Editor)

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Mark Pirie (Friend of the Family)

**Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop**

**Paekakariki**

**2015**

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Michael O’Leary, B. E. Turner, F. W. Nielsen Wright,  
Mark Pirie

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*You may be a boy and you may be a girl  
You may be bald and you may have a curl  
You may dance a jig, waltz, or do a twirl  
But wherever you are in the world  
It's Christmas Surprise from the Earl*

## MICHAEL O'LEARY

### THE RAILWAY LINE

Looking out the pastel painted  
Colourless Cafeteria window  
Through the long line of leaf-less  
Winter trees, whose branches  
Stick out like ungainly stick-insects  
The railway line –  
Elevated almost sublime  
Symbol of our attempt to bring  
Structure and order, in the form of a straight line  
To a chaotic and natural world  
– Looking out into that realm  
Where the light changes and dances with delight  
On the leaves and other foliage  
Which, although sparse is at places  
Green and lush, and the grey-white clouds  
When the wind blows, perform a polonaise  
Beyond the landscape  
– Looking at the ordered straight rails  
Slightly quake and shake and then move more  
Violently as a thunderous goods train approaches  
Breaking the quiet bleakness with its  
Threat of danger

(From *Main Trunk Lines: Collected Railway Poems*,  
HeadworX 2015)

## TRACK GANG & SHUNTERS AT PAEKAKARIKI

It was familiar, the heavy workers  
There we were replacing sleepers  
The fish plates under re-laying rails  
Tightening bolts with T-spanners

Trundling through tunnels now bigger  
And deeper cuttings on our jigger  
We heard the up-train whistle  
Less than a mile off at Muri

As she passed our hut we smoked  
Together we talked and joked  
Our green bus waiting to take us  
To the point between MT3 and MT4

Later, in the station waiting room  
A fire burning hot in winter gloom  
Goods trains lining up towards  
The next roll on roll off sea lords

The hills outside are misty green  
Closed in, closer than they seem  
Their silence broken in regular  
Rhythm of the rocking, shunting car

(From *Of Paekakariki*, ed. Sylvia Bagnall, ESAW 2015,  
and included in the new Paekakariki Arts Walk)

## LIVIN' INA AUCKLAN'

all too soon it is over  
stepping down on to the platform  
(an almost perfect concrete curve of old-world technology)  
and watching the train move away towards the west  
like a memory of love

a railway is the most melancholy of transport modes  
and when you are aboard  
the motion is one of subtle love-making  
– as the train pulls out  
from the station you stepped down at ...

it is your lover leaving, rolling down the track

all this on a two minute trip to Avondale  
but I defend the suburban services  
saying romance is not confined to the Orient Express  
and Mount Albert is as important as Montmartre  
if you live there

once new and unknown  
love is like a railway ticket held in my hand  
but it has been clipped  
as I stand alone on wind-swept Avondale platform  
watching the train pull out of the station, I ...

(From *Livin' ina Aucklan'* CD by the Earl of Seacliff's  
Lonely Hearts Club Band, 2015)



## BY A CHURCH

*(for Moana)*

By a church we sat, by a wayside road  
The dark-brick building reflected the sky  
And time of day, almost dusk, the colours  
Dark-bright green, the red almost blood  
Contrasting hues emphasising our mood

From this nineteenth century ancient scene  
Our union was forged and as we walked  
Through Johnsonville Mall towards the train  
Our love was tinged with shadowed light  
As the world is divided into day and night

Once aboard the train back to Wellington  
Even the carriages evoked an earlier time  
This line was once on the main trunk  
Is now a branch, almost a twig in size  
A once proud railway almost in disguise

However, even the narrowest gauge is prone  
To Romance and thoughts of faraway places  
Station names give rise to fantasies, thus  
Simla Crescent becomes the fine and large  
Refuge for the bureaucrats of Wellington's Raj

As the miniature train set of this line  
Descends down through the Ngaio Gorge  
The darkness into which the world plunges  
Of tunnels, emerging only intermittently  
To countenance many a road-lined tree

Then bursting out of the bushes  
Like the famed chariot of Cortez  
To behold in our sight an Inca city  
Half golden and half black decay  
A jewel set in a sombre, sparkling bay

(From *Main Trunk Lines: Collected Railway Poems*,  
HeadworX 2015)

A SONNET FOR MALCOLM MURCHIE  
ON TURNING NINETY

Such a long life is like an interwoven tukutuku  
Which intertwines the many strands it binds  
Through aroha and wairua the fabric finds  
A way through life's trials and our mokemoke

Individual lives. Whanau and your many friends  
And the colleagues from your working life  
All have loved, respected you, as well they might  
For the koha aroha you give never ends

Kia ora begorrah was the special greeting  
You always gave to me whenever we met  
The Celtic Maori mauri we both comprehend

I love you, Malcolm, for your understanding  
And not judging me for my loving, and yet  
We both know that the end is not the end

Arohanui ki a koe, e rangatira o te Whanau Murchie

From Michael O'Leary  
(still your son outlaw)

## B. E. TURNER

### SEEDS

I've just come home from visiting my wife in hospital. Yesterday our first child was born. A boy. Eight pounds seven ounces. That's about four kilograms. "You go out with the boys and wet the baby's head" she said. But I didn't want to do that, I wanted to come home to the quiet of the garden and potter around for a bit.

Spring'll be here soon. It's a bit bare this time of year. The winter cabbage and broad beans are coming on. The trees are starting to bud. That old japonica's had red flowers for months. I'm going to plant some parsnip seeds. It might be a bit early but I want to see how they turn out.

Did you ever think about what it is that makes a seed germinate? You put it in the soil and nature takes over. From one tiny seed you obtain a most elaborate structure. I've not idea how it works? And think about that child of mine. I planted the seed in my wife's body the same way I might plant a seed here. It was not the deliberate planting of seeds such as I do here in a garden, it was an impromptu act of pleasure. You say I am the father of the child, but can I be considered responsible for the creation? I didn't put that bundle of flesh and bones together and give it life. I just planted the seed.

And the child has a spirit already, a character of its own. The nurse said "That's going to be a lively one."

Where did the personality come from? Perhaps it was made in heaven. If you believe in heaven.

I've already dug this over. Just have to loosen it up a bit with the hoe. I like to spend time by myself. The reserved type. My wife is a much more outgoing person. We are always surrounded by her friends. Everyone will be around this weekend to see the baby. Aunts, uncles, friends, old school chums, cousins. She seems to thrive on the activity, but I find it a bit much sometimes.

I met my wife at a party. I was leaning against the wall looking at the throng of people when she came up and started talking to me. I think a friend of mine had told her that I composed music. I remember that I felt comfortable with her. I found her easy to talk to. After that we went out on a regular basis and started having a relationship. She became pregnant because we were careless. Or maybe she wanted to have my baby. It was her that wanted to get married. In my heart of hearts I wasn't sure if I loved her or not.

I'm still not sure.

We'll have to wait and see how things turn out.

You have to sow parsnip seed thickly because they have a low germination rate.

I don't know what it's all about either. Maybe it's just my place in life to scatter a few seeds around.

(From *Of Paekakariki*, ed. Sylvia Bagnall, ESAW 2015)

## MARK PIRIE

### ODE TO MOLLY MALONES

(Irish pub, cnr Taranaki St/Courtenay Place)

Molly Malones, Molly Malones  
To close, oh it's where I spent  
My nights, at Molly Malones!  
Yet it's probably where I over spent

My pay! As a young man on Fridays,  
We'd start out at Molly's before  
Heading further down on Saturdays;  
The music rollicking to the core.

One particular night, I was asked  
To leave - an under-age drinker -  
And they booted me out! I basked  
In the glory, a student night stinker.

I returned, of age, a fine pub, as fine  
As they come. Irish musos, cool  
Women, good people, standing in line  
I met All Black Steve McDowell.

Molly Malones, Molly Malones  
To close, oh it's where I spent  
My nights, at Molly Malones!  
Oh nights with laughter well spent!

(From *Valley Micropress*, March 2015)

## TWO DJ POEMS

### *The Show*

Copulating rhythms  
Sharp feedback  
Music's egoism  
Microphone crack

Red light speech  
Is matter of fact  
Disproportionate reach  
Lets airwaves contract

Channel of currents  
Waves of mutilation  
Controlled torrents  
The DJ's jubilation

*Dawn Report*

Tonight, as I wear a crown of thorns  
I talk across the airwaves  
Into bedrooms, shops and flats; and a caller mourns  
The miracle of light as waves

Crash against Wellington's darkened land.  
Now the sleepers are about to rise I feel  
And maybe a listener chuckles on another band  
With the dream I'd like to steal.

\*Mark was a DJ on Radio Active in Wellington, 1993-96

(From *Valley Micropress*, September 2015)



## ANATOMY OF KANE WILLIAMSON'S 6

*One foot to the left, one foot to the right...*

h  
e  
r  
e  
i  
a  
m  
s t u c k  
i n t h e  
m i d d l e  
w i t h y o u  
a n' i k n o w  
w h a t i' m  
g o n n a  
d o

(Cricket World Cup 2015, NZ v Australia at Eden Park)

## DANIEL VETTORI

The bearded Kiwi philosopher of spin  
announces he will no longer walk  
with the gods of cricket. I hear Zeus  
express his sadness. 18 years, and

how the masses, the legions were moved.  
Tight and economical in later years,  
his spin not as prominent, he endured  
taking over 700 international wickets.

His aura like a halo, Dan the Man, could  
do anything, even be Prime Minister.  
Batting became another forte as he propped  
up many a New Zealand middle order.

Ever since his debut as a teenager,  
his glasses and feats enthralled.  
To walk with the cricket gods, and to  
be welcomed in, is what few have achieved.

Vettori, in the halls of fame, will send down  
his arm ball, Zeus waits behind the stumps.

A poem on Vettori's retirement, 1 April 2015

(From *The Cricket Society News Bulletin*, July/August 2015)

## AMAZING GRACE

Maria Tutaia's grace  
is simply unstoppable.

An athlete  
on the netball court,  
distinguished by precision,  
that sharp shooter's  
flair.

I note her calm.  
Even when  
she rarely misses,  
luck throws  
her a rebound  
and she makes good  
the second chance.

And, if she had to  
hit the bulls-eye  
from 100 yards  
my money'd  
be on her.

(From *12 Netball Poems*, The Night Press/HeadworX, 2015)

## REPLACEMENT FOR A GUN CARTRIDGE

(Load it)

hey there  
people ! can't  
be all bad with  
artists around  
making music  
art poetry  
films songs  
(w/ soul and  
spirit flowers  
for peace)  
creativity 's  
gonna have its  
say in a world  
of military  
troopers  
bombs deaths  
politicians lies  
corruption and  
empires our  
love songs are  
gonna reign

## F. W. NIELSEN WRIGHT

FROM FISH HOOK POEMS

THAT OPENS

There is a door ; that opens on tomorrows  
Brighter than any past ;  
No semblance ever yet beheld in mirrors.

There is a door ; that opens on tomorrows.  
With shadows, hypothetical chimeras  
Its panels are embossed.

There is a door ; that opens on tomorrows  
Brighter than any past.

CAME AT

All my campaigns end in defeat :  
A 25 year long disaster.  
Success came at a price.  
It took a fool : to pay it.

Yet I achieved the supreme feat.  
Brings home Ignobel prize ;  
Success bought at a price.  
All my campaigns end in defeat.

So showed dumb enterprise  
Antipodean poet.

Simply by walking on my feet  
I came out absolute a master.

Success came at a price.  
It took a fool : to pay it.  
All my campaigns end in defeat :  
A 25 year long disaster.

APT TO

Are verbal artists strange people ;  
Whose personality baffles.  
Is it a pearl ? Is it a pebble ?

Are verbal artists strange people  
Interminably apt : to babble ;  
In screeds of inspired piffle.

Are verbal artists strange people ;  
Whose personalities baffle.

## HIGH AND

The moon high and aloof presides  
    Over cacophonous wind storm ;  
That strikes ; and batters our hillside:  
Where biosphere and mankind tussle.

    The moon high and aloof presides ;  
As if observing from outside  
Too high and too aloof : to dazzle,  
    Earth in commotion at nighttime.

The moon high and aloof presides  
    Over cacophonous wind storm.

## OR IS IT

It is a matter of irrelevance :  
    The fate of man,  
Likewise the fate of African elephants.

    It is a matter of irrelevance ;  
If elevation or if relevance  
    Applies to moon  
In reference to height above horizon.

It is a matter of irrelevance :  
    The fate of man,  
Simply a point of grammar.  
    Or is it something grimmer ?  
Acculturation at height of unreason.

## MINE IS

Mine was the confidence of ages.  
    Well spent a lifetime ;  
Was walked on cataclysmic edges.  
So came from Lebanon to Nile  
    By camel Jerjes, he south I north  
Midst sandstorm : hell if underneath.

    Mine was the confidence of ages.  
In boyhood from mystical urges  
    At venture left home :  
Ancestral Beth Messiah, Niel.  
Mine was the confidence of ages ;  
    Well spent a lifetime.



## SOMUCH

Haha among trumpets and drums  
Laughs loudest the machine. Laughs last  
    The ghost in the machine.  
So much for Rajah Wright and Dennis Liszt :  
Prophets of profit before new age dreams.

    Life in a fragile age we lived ;  
Where certainties were disbelieved.  
    Machine laughs loudest. Who laughs last ?  
Of myriads on the modern list ;  
Peddling cosmic conundrums.

    Voici l'enfant mechant.  
Laughs loudest the machine. Laughs last  
Haha among trumpets and drums  
The ghost in the machine.