

NEWSLETTER

Number 62

October 2021

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends

What a world we live in now – almost science fiction territory. I admit to being very amused by a bookshop sign doing the rounds in social media (as below):



Unity Books Wellington

We have done our best to bring a couple of events to you in the last year and luckily managed our AGM on site this year. I always look forward to seeing the treasures that have arrived displayed by Mary Skarott, our wonderful Research Librarian, Children's Literature.

For myself I am looking forward to the new beginnings of Spring. In spite of all the Covid restrictions nothing can take away the joy of seeing blossoms and the gentle bouquet of spring flowers. It's time to find my copy of *The Secret Garden* and reread it. This is my favourite 'spring book'. Admittedly this is harder to do than usual as I have just moved house and many of my books are still in boxes, but it's a time for rediscovering old friends again.

We look forward to bringing you our next event when the levels are back to one (see the enclosed flyer), but for now I wish you all the joys of finding your own spring book – something old, or perhaps something new, to herald in the new season.

Corrina Gordon
FDNWC President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

This year's AGM was held at the National Library on 3 June 2021. The evening began, as is our tradition, with an opportunity to mix and mingle over drinks and tasty comestibles supplied by the committee (thank you!).

We then moved upstairs to the Lilburn Room where the Turnbull's Children's Literature Specialist, Mary Skarott, had a fascinating display of books, part of a recent very generous donation from Ron Lambert, as well as some award-winning titles that have been added to the National Children's Collection. See Mary's article below for more details about the marvellous Ron Lambert donation.

The formal AGM followed with 14 members in attendance. Full minutes of the meeting are available on the Friends of the Dorothy Neal White website, as are the reports from the President, Treasurer, and Research Librarian <https://dnwfriends.nzl.org/index.php/home/agm/>. Please do get in touch if you are unable to access the reports from the website and would like a copy – my phone number is given below following this article.



Mary, Diane & Alison looking at books
on display
Photographer: Joan McCracken

Highlights from the meeting include

- Four events were held during the year. Which is impressive given the Covid restrictions!
- Talia Crockett is our Research Scholar for 2020/2021. There will be a call for applications for the next grant in 2022. [See below for a report of Talia's research]
- Mary Skarott's *Notes-Books-Authors* was published. [If members have not received their copy of *Special Prize for Gardening School and Sunday School prizes in New Zealand during World War I: some examples from the Dorothy Neal White Collection* please let me know and I will send it to you – see my number below].
- We received news from the Chief Librarian that the Turnbull Endowment Trust has approved a grant of \$5000 for conservation work on the DNW Collection.
- A new separate Children's Literature Collecting Plan for the National Library has been agreed. This will be available on the National Library website in due course.
- The Friends are now using the National Library postal address – PO Box 1467, Thorndon, Wellington 6140 – saving the society about \$150 per year.
- The annual subscription rate for Friends remains at \$20:00 per year.
- The committee is working with designer Hamish Thompson on a new logo for the Friends.
- Proposed changes to the Society's Constitution were discussed. When the changes have been integrated copies will be emailed to members.

Election of committee

Margaret Hurst resigned from the committee at the AGM. She was thanked for her contribution to the work of the Friends. All other committee members were re-elected.

Committee 2021-2022

President: Corrina Gordon

Treasurer/Membership Secretary/Webmaster: Jeff Hunt

Facebook: Chantalle Smith

The roles of Minutes Secretary and Newsletter Editor will be shared by committee members on a roster.

Committee: Barbara Robertson, Chantalle Smith, Joan McCracken, Kathryn Walls.

Ex officio – ATL Research Librarian Children's Literature Mary Skarott.

At the AGM Mary Skarott provided the following statistics relating to the Dorothy Neal White Collection.

Donations, Collection Usage and Research Enquiries, May 2020-April 2021

	2020-2021	2019-2020
Donations accepted – Dorothy Neal White Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 books • 3 periodicals • 465 Lambert donation • 22 transfers from the Overseas Publications Collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51 books • 8 periodicals
Donations accepted – National Children’s Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53 books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 books
DNW items requested by researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71 items • 2 runs of periodicals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 items • 1 run of periodicals
DNW & NCC items used in displays, exhibitions and tours	<u>Foyer display cabinet:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNW 6 • NCC 14 <u>General Reading Room displays:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCC 36 	<u>Foyer display cabinet</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNW • 22 NCC <u>General Reading Room displays:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 84 NCC
Children’s literature research questions Answered by Research Librarian (online and in person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40

Joan McCracken

Editor FDNWC Newsletter

Please contact me if you have not received your copy of Mary Skarott’s *Notes-Books-Authors* or there are any AGM papers you would like. My phone number is 474 3056 (please leave a message – I am often away from my desk).

FROM THE RESEARCH LIBRARIAN

As I mentioned at the AGM, one of the highlights of the year so far has been the arrival of a large donation, generously given to the National Library by Ron Lambert of New Plymouth. Ron had developed an extensive collection of mostly late 19th to mid-20th century children’s fiction, and many of the titles reflected his special interest in adventure stories (for both boys and girls). The donation has added further depth to our already impressive collection of children’s adventure literature, and it also includes some fascinating examples of early science fiction.

The library’s collections and Ron’s books had quite a large area of overlap so, after a careful check of the list he provided, we chose 465 titles that we would like to be added to the Dorothy Neal White Collection and the National Children’s Collection. The books came to the library in January and, after the completion of the

acquisitions process, cataloguing began in March. By August the cataloguing was done, and the books were safely shelved. Sixty-five titles are in the NCC, and the remainder in DNW.



A selection of books from Ron Lambert's donation.

IN THE DISPLAY CABINET

Display #24 Prizewinning historical fiction (On display from 8 December 2020 – 25 March 2021)

Works of historical fiction are realistic stories that are set in a period well before the time of writing of the book. A general rule of thumb is that this separation in time should be at least twenty-five years, although there is no universal consensus. A book does not become historical fiction simply because it was written some time ago. For example, Louisa May Alcott's *Little women* (1868-69) is a story of contemporary life, set at the time it was written. However, Charles Dickens' *A tale of two cities*, written in 1859 and set during the French Revolution, is historical fiction.

Early examples of historical fiction were more often described as adventure stories, and the genre has been popular with children since the 19th century. Titles from that era include: *Ivanhoe*, by Sir Walter Scott (1819); *The last of the Mohicans*, by James Fenimore Cooper (1826); *The children of the New Forest*, by Captain Marryat (1847); and *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson (1883).

The books in this display dated from the early 20th century onwards, and they were all prize winners. The Newbery Medal, first given in the United States in 1922, was the first award for children's fiction. Many more awards have been established since, including the Carnegie Medal, first given in 1936, which is the British equivalent of the Newbery.

This display also showcased the work of Rosemary Sutcliff, marking the centenary of her birth:

Rosemary Sutcliff (14 December 1920 - 23 July 1992)

Rosemary Sutcliff is widely acknowledged as one of the foremost authors of historical fiction for children and young adults. During her writing career, which began in 1950, she produced over 60 books. Most of these were primarily aimed at a younger audience, but she also wrote historical novels and non-fiction for adults.

She is particularly noted for her ability to combine rigorous historical research with empathic and insightful descriptions of the lives and feelings of her characters. Her biographer, Margaret Meek, describes this skill as "total imaginative penetration of the historical material." Sutcliff herself firmly believed that "history is people" and that, although society changes over time, people's emotions and the way they relate to one another remain constant. She wanted her stories to teach history, and bring it to life, by introducing children to the past through characters in which they could identify their own experiences. This, she believed, helped children to develop a sense of continuity and a link with the past: "To know and really understand something of where one came from helps one to understand and cope better with where one is now-and where one is going to."

Her fascination with the later period of Roman rule in Britain, and the Dark Ages which followed, inspired some of her best loved works, including the trilogy (*The Eagle of the Ninth*; *The silver branch*; *The lantern bearers*) that follows the Aquila family through many generations of their life in Britain.

Her awards include the 1959 Carnegie Medal (*The lantern bearers*), the 1972 Boston Globe Horn Book Award (*Tristan and Iseult*), and two Phoenix Awards (1985, *The mark of the horse lord*; 2010, *The shining company*).

Sources: Meek, Margaret. (1962). *Rosemary Sutcliff*. London: Bodley Head.
Sutcliff, Rosemary. (1974). "History is people" in Virginia Haviland (Comp.), *Children and literature: views and reviews* (pp.305-312). London: Bodley Head.

Further reading: <https://rosemarysutcliff.com>

Collection items from the display:

Hawes, Charles Boardman. *The dark frigate*. Illustrated by Anton Otto Fisher.

Boston: Little Brown, 1934. (Originally published: 1923)

Winner of the Newbery Medal, 1924.

When the *Rose of Devon* is seized by pirates, 19-year-old Philip is forced to become part of the pirate crew. Set during the time of Charles I.

Kelly, Eric P. *The trumpeter of Krakow*. Illustrated by Janina Domanska.

London: Chatto & Windus, 1968. (Originally published: 1928)

Winner of the Newbery Medal, 1929.

A story of adventure and mystery, set in 15th century Poland.

Landman, Tanya. *Buffalo soldier*.

London: Walker Books, 2014.

Winner of the CILIP Carnegie Medal, 2015.

Charley, a young slave from the Deep South, is freed at the end of the American Civil War. Following her mother's brutal murder, she joins the army disguised as a man.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Chains*.

London: Bloomsbury, 2009.

Winner of the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, 2009..

After being sold to a cruel couple in New York City, a slave named Isabel spies for the rebels during the Revolutionary War. The first book in the *Seeds of America* trilogy.

Locke, Elsie. *The runaway settlers*.

London: Jonathan Cape; Auckland N.Z.: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1965.

Winner of the Gaelyn Gordon Award, 1999.

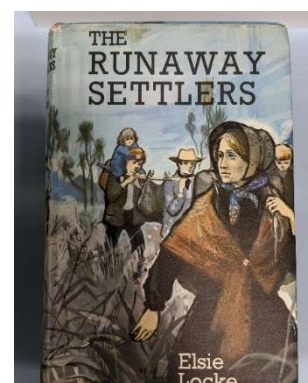
In 1859, Elizabeth Small and her six children escape their abusive husband and father in Australia, making a new life for themselves in the fledgling colony of Canterbury, New Zealand.

Menefy, Diana. *Shadow of the Boyd*.

Auckland, N.Z.: HarperCollins, 2010.

Winner of the Esther Glen Medal, 2011.

Based around the events of the burning of the *Boyd* in 1809. Two young boys, Māori and Pakeha, find their friendship stretched to breaking point.



Elsie Locke's modern New Zealand classic, *The runaway settlers*. (1965)

Park, Linda Sue. *A single shard*.
New York: Clarion Books, 2001.

Winner of the Newbery Medal, 2002.

Tree-ear, a 13-year-old orphan, longs to learn the art of making delicate celadon ceramics. Set in 12th century Korea.

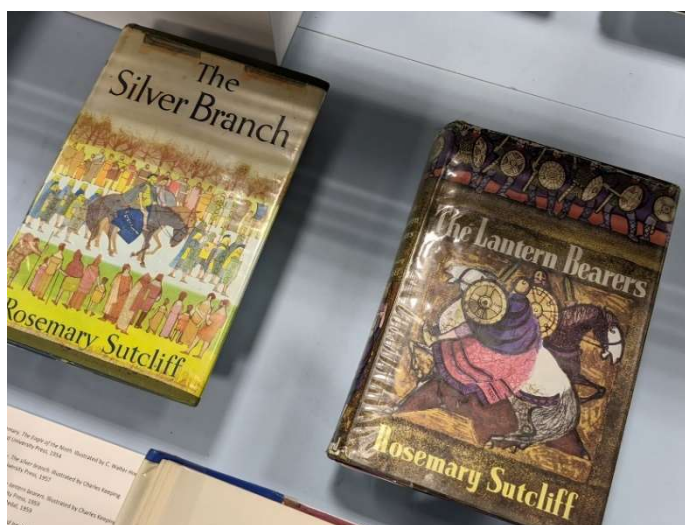
Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Eagle of the Ninth*.
Illustrated by C. Walter Hodges.
London: Oxford University Press, 1954

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The silver branch*.
Illustrated by Charles Keeping.
London: Oxford University Press, 1957

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The lantern bearers*.
Illustrated by Charles Keeping.
London: Oxford University Press, 1959
Winner of the Carnegie Medal, 1959

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *Tristan and Iseult*.
Illustrated by Victor Ambrus.
London: Bodley Head, 1971.
Winner of the Boston Globe Horn Book Award
(Fiction), 1972

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The shining company*.
London: Bodley Head, 1990.



The silver branch and The lantern bearers, the final two titles in Rosemary Sutcliff's Eagle of the Ninth trilogy.

Display #25 Mapping the imagination (On display from 26 March 2021 – 29 June 2021)

One of the first maps to appear in a story popular with children was in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. In fact, the map was the starting point for the whole story, Stevenson taking inspiration from a picture by his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne. Although not a real place, Skeleton Island is part of an adventure story set firmly in our world.

Other authors have overlaid their imaginations on clearly identifiable locations. In Arthur Ransome's *Winter Holiday*, the children reimagine part of the English Lake District as other places they have read about, including Spitzbergen and the North Pole. A. A. Milne's Hundred Acre Wood, frequented by Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends, grew out of the author's time in Ashdown Forest, his weekend retreat from life in London.

The Oxford imagined by Philip Pullman, in stories including *Lyra's Oxford* and the trilogy *His dark materials*, is placed in an alternate universe with features both recognisable and imagined. Other maps show us wholly imaginary worlds, such as Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea and Barbara Else's Fontania.

Collection items from the display:

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. Illustrated by N.C. Wyeth.
London: Victor Gollancz, 1982.
(First published: Cassell & Co., 1883)

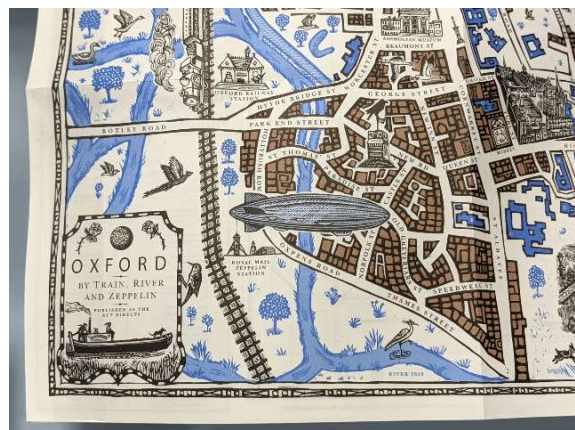
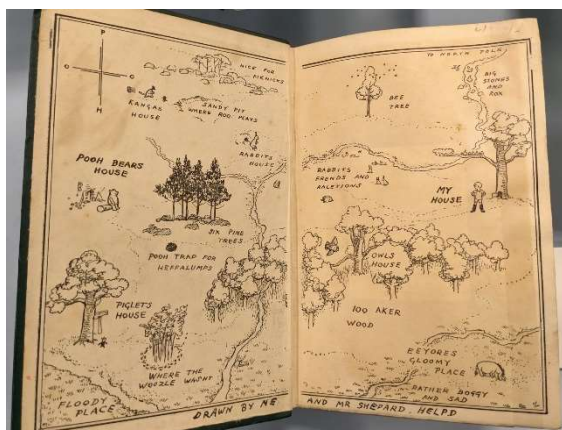
Le Guin, Ursula K. *A wizard of Earthsea*. Illustrated by Ruth Robbins.
Berkeley, Calif.: Parnassus Press, 1968.

Else, Barbara. *The knot impossible: Rufkin's travels in four acts*. Illustrated by Sam Broad.
Wellington, N.Z.: Gecko Press, 2015.

Milne, A. A. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. With decorations by Ernest H. Shepard.
London: Methuen & Co., 1926.

Ransome, Arthur. *Winter holiday*.
London: Jonathan Cape, 1933.

Pullman, Philip. *Lyra's Oxford*. Engravings by John Lawrence.
Oxford: David Fickling, 2003.



Left: Ernest Shepard's (and Pooh's) map of The Hundred Acre Wood, in A.A. Milne's *Winnie The-Pooh*.
Right: Oxford, but not as we know it. Detail from "Oxford by train, river and zeppelin", engraving by John Lawrence, from Philip Pullman's *Lyra's Oxford*.

Display #26 Stories for winter (On display from 30 June 2021-)

Life during winter takes many forms in the books chosen for this display, which were all from the Dorothy Neal White Collection.

Included were stories of surviving the long months of snow in the Canadian and Alaskan wilderness, competing in a skating race in the Netherlands, and friendships formed during a winter in Quebec City. In the realms of fairy tale and mythology there were Hans Andersen's classic story, *The Snow Queen*, and the Māori tale of Matariki, whose appearance in the winter sky heralds the start of a new year.

Collection items from the display:

Dodge, Mary Mapes. *Hans Brinker, or, The silver skates*.

Chicago: Saalfeld Publishing Company, 1925. (First published in 1865)

A Dutch brother and sister work toward two goals – finding the doctor who can restore their father's memory and winning the competition for the silver skates.

Marchant, Bessie. *A girl of the Northland*. Illustrated by N. Tenison; cover illustration by D. Osborne.

London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1937. (First published in 1915)

The Scarth family lives in Alaska. Their father has gone prospecting for gold, and when he goes missing it is oldest daughter Olive who undertakes the dangerous journey to find him and bring him home.

Ray, Anna Chapin. *Janet: her winter in Quebec*. Illustrated by Gordon Browne.

London: Henry Frowde, Hodder and Stoughton, 1909.

In Quebec City, Janet's family have fallen on hard times after their father's death and must turn their home into a boarding house. This means extra work for Janet and her mother, but also leads to some unexpected friendships. The author often spent her own winters in Quebec, and her summers in New Haven, Connecticut.

Young, Egerton R. *Winter adventures of three boys in the great lone land*. Illustrated by Leonard Skeats. London: Robert Culley, ca. 1900.

Three visitors from Europe experience a winter in the Canadian wilderness. This extract describes the severity and speed of the onset of winter:

"Yesterday may have been balmy and reposeful, with only a few breezes from the summer South Land. To-day the wild north winds may howl and shriek, while full of frost and pinching cold is the icy, biting air. Yesterday the waves may have been merrily rippling in the sunshine on the beautiful lakes. To-day, after a night of storm and boreal tempest, the ice is rapidly forming, and is binding down in strongest fetters the highest billows."—p.16.

McCosh Clark, Kate. *Māori tales & legends*. With illustrations by Robert Atkinson. London: David Nutt, 1896.

In one of many stories about the origin of the Matariki star cluster, Tane, with the help of Sirius and Aldebaran, shatters the most beautiful star in the sky into six pieces. Thereafter, they are known as the "little eyes". The reappearance of Matariki in the winter sky, visible just before dawn, signals the Māori New Year.

Andersen, Hans Christian. *Fairy stories from Hans Christian Andersen*. With 48 coloured plates by Margaret W. Tarrant. London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1917.

Andersen, Hans Christian. *Stories from Hans Andersen*. With illustrations by Edmund Dulac. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911.

The Snow Queen, first published in 1844, is one of Hans Andersen's most complex fairy tales, is considered by many to be his finest work. The Snow Queen's world is one of unrelenting ice and cold, but, when Kai is finally rescued by Gerda, and winter melts away, they walk home together in the warmth of spring.



Left: The *Stories for Winter* display cabinet
Right: Frontispiece by Margaret W. Tarrant from Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy stories*.

FROM THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S COLLECTION

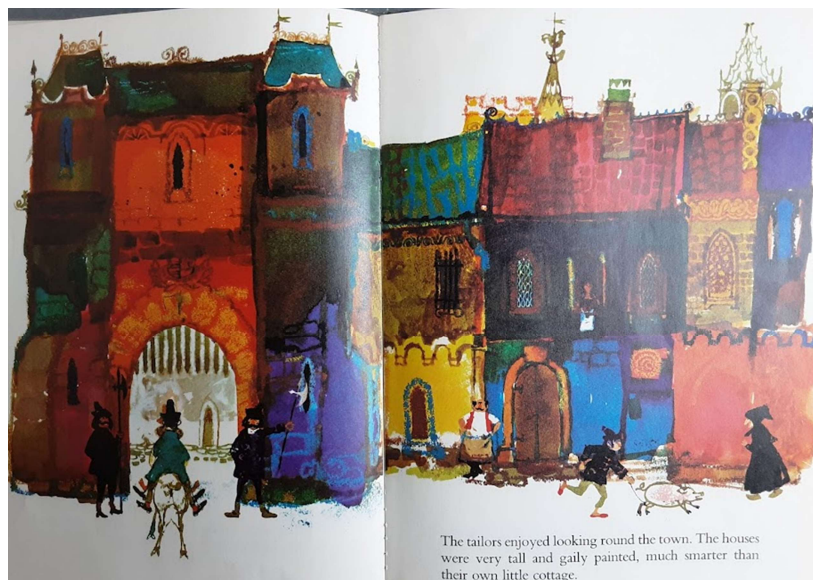
Remembering Victor Ambrus, 1935-2021

For a full obituary see: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/mar/10/victor-ambrus-obituary>

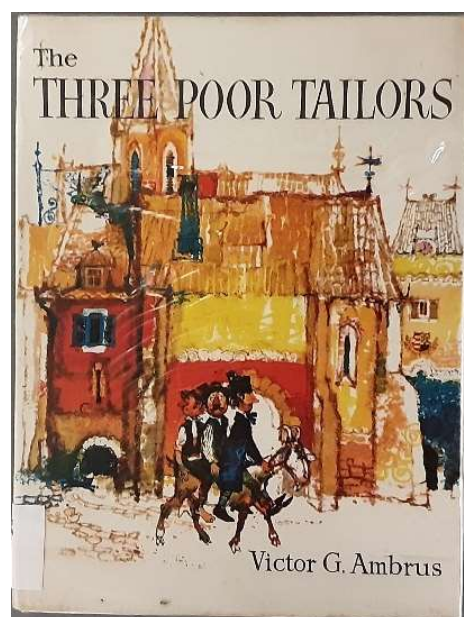
Celebrated children's book illustrator Victor Ambrus worked in his specialist field for more than 50 years and was twice awarded the Kate Greenaway Medal (1965, 1975). The unsuccessful Hungarian Revolution of 1956 forced him to abandon his studies at the Hungarian Institute of Fine Arts and he fled to Austria and then made his way to England. He completed his studies at the Royal College of Art in London, and his career as an illustrator began in 1960, his last year at the College. He had a long association with Oxford University Press, and taught at Farnham, Guildford and Epsom Colleges of Art. Later in his career he was the resident artist on the long-running television series, *Time Team*, a role which made full use of his love of history and his ability to work at speed.

Ambrus had a prolific output, working on around 300 books, most of them for children. The National Children's Collection has an excellent representation of his work, holding 252 titles to which he contributed. Most of his illustration work was for other authors, but he also illustrated a number of his own stories, including *The three poor tailors*.

The three poor tailors is a retelling of a Hungarian folktale. The tailors work very hard making clothes for people in the nearby town, and one day they decide it is time to take a day off and visit the town themselves. Off they go, riding their nanny-goat, to see the sights and have some fun. After visiting an inn and being unable to pay their bill, they try a quick getaway on the goat, leaving a trail of mayhem in the marketplace. The tailors are soon caught by the guards and are made to mend the townsfolk's old coats to pay for the damage they have caused.



The three poor tailors. Illustration by Victor G. Ambrus. (1965)



Victor G. Ambrus *The three poor tailors*
London: Oxford University Press, 1965.
Kate Greenaway Medal, 1965

Many of us will be familiar with Ambrus's delicate and detailed black line drawings, prominent in the novels he illustrated. *The three poor tailors*, a picture book, allows him to show his skill as a colourist and his gift for humorous characterisation. Using what appears to be a combination of watercolour and crayon or pastels, his delicacy of line is still in evidence, combined with washes of vibrant colour to reflect the simple, cheerful narrative. The strength of this book certainly lies in its illustrations, which beautifully support and enhance the unremarkable text.

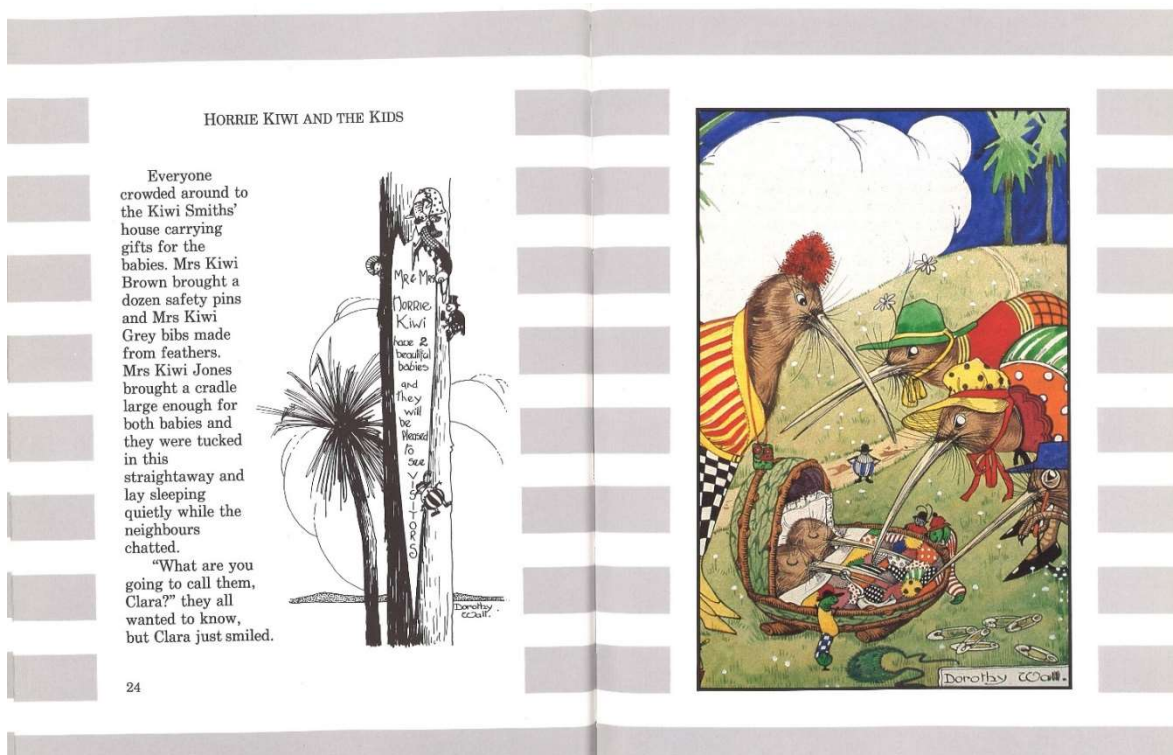
Mary Skarott
Research Librarian, Children's Literature

MORE ON DOROTHY WALL

In the last newsletter (#61 December 2020) Chantalle encouraged readers to read a blog published by the State Library of Victoria about a collection of drawings by New Zealand-born illustrator Dorothy Wall <https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/our-stories/collection-care/blinky-bill-in-the-conservation-lab/> (9 October 2020).

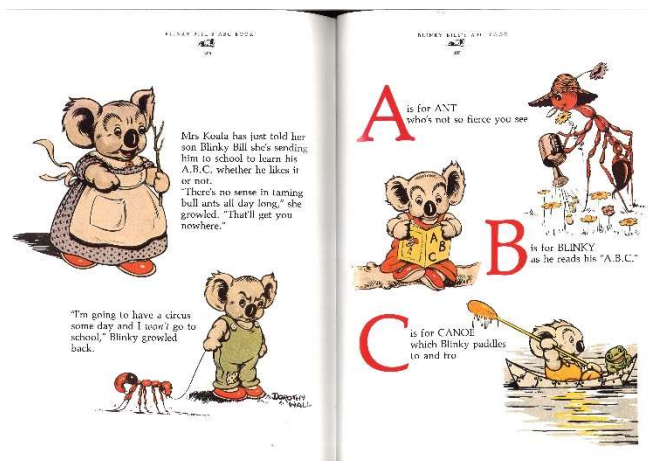
Best known for her stories about Blinky Bill, a koala, Dorothy Wall also wrote and illustrated a story with a New Zealand lead character. *Horrie Kiwi and the kids* was, according to the cover notes, written in the 1940s but was not published until 1983 by Angus & Robertson in Australia. The notes continue “Now Dorothy Wall’s clear and lovely colour and black and white illustrations can be seen in all their beauty, alongside a text brought amusingly up to date by David Harris [the title page actually says, “retold by David Harris”], and can be enjoyed by young children everywhere.”

The illustrations are striking – but the text, whether by Dorothy Wall or David Harris, is not so appealing (to me anyway), and according to Dorothy Wall’s biographer, Walter McVitty, “the book’s dustjacket is off the mark by more than twenty years. *Horrie Kiwi and the kids* dates from the First World War, not the Second”. He goes on to give evidence to support this statement. His full, beautifully illustrated & fascinating biography is part of a two-volume set, *The Blinky Bill Collection* (Angus & Robertson, 1988) with also includes *Blinky Bill and friends: selected stories*.



Horrie Kiwi and the kids, by Dorothy Wall
(Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1983), p.24-25.

Dorothy Wall was born in Wellington in 1894, mostly educated in Christchurch, and completed her secondary schooling and art training at the Wellington Technical College under well-known artist Maud Sherwood in 1912. Dorothy moved to Sydney to pursue her artistic career in 1914. She found illustration work for a number of magazines and newspapers. In 1919 she came back to New Zealand for a holiday and when she returned to Sydney she was accompanied by her younger sister Muriel who was just 15 at the time. Dorothy continued her freelance artistic work, and with Muriel she also produced hand-made cards, bookmarks and calendars which were sold through stationers H C Swain in Sydney. In 1920 her first book *The story of Tommy Bear and the Zookies* was published. Tommy was a koala – the forerunner of the very popular Blinky Bill. In November 1921 she married Del Badgery, the marriage later ending in divorce.



Blinky Bill's ABC, one of the stories included in *Blinky Bill and friends: selected stories*. (1988)

Angus & Robertson published *Blinky Bill: the quaint little Australian* in 1933. The book was an immediate success and she went on to produce more in the series, often using the exploits of her son Peter as inspiration for Blinky Bill's adventures.

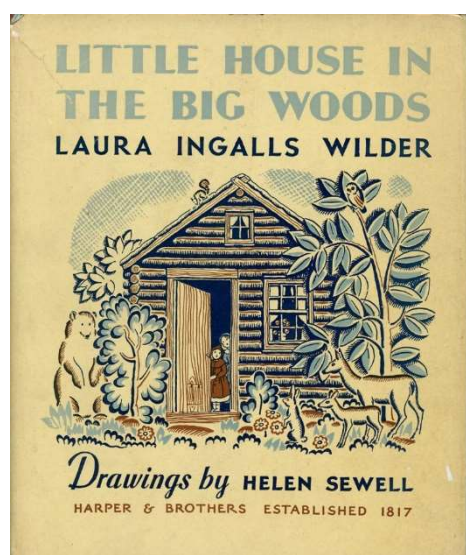
In July 1938 Dorothy returned to New Zealand with Peter. She illustrated articles for the *NZ Herald* and continued writing and illustrating children's stories, but "homesickness" for Australia saw her returning to Sydney in July 1941. Sadly, she contracted pneumonia six-months later and died on 21 January 1942 leaving a legacy of stories for children that are still enjoyed today.

The Library does not hold a complete collection of Dorothy Wall publications so if any readers have titles which they might be willing to donate please do contact us through the [Ask a librarian](#) link found on the National Library website.

Joan McCracken
FDNW Newsletter Editor

LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS – LAURA INGALLS WILDER

Considered a modern classic, *Little House in the Big Woods* is a work of historical fiction first published in 1932 by Laura Ingalls Wilder, then aged 65, because she believed that her experiences were "Altogether too good to be lost" (Anderson, 1992, p. 195). It is the first book in a series of seven about Laura Ingalls published during the author's lifetime, making up a *bildungsroman*. She wrote a further book about her husband's childhood, and a ninth was published posthumously about her married life.



The story is of a pioneer family over one year in the 1870s in the Big Woods of Wisconsin. One may consider whether to recommend it to a family of vegetarians today given the number of animals shot, slaughtered and deliciously eaten over the course of the book, starting right from chapter one.

The book is full of opposites. The woods are big – so big there is seemingly no end to them, and the log cabin in which the Ingalls family live is small – and Laura, the main character, smaller still. However, the house is comfortable, and Laura is safe, the house protected by Pa and the brindle bulldog Jack. The dominant male presence of Pa and the dog is offset by the soft and quiet domestic realm of Ma, completing the aura of safety felt by Laura and her elder sister Mary. Right from the very first page, the homely scene is set.

Later in the book more opposites are introduced – Laura has brown hair and Mary has blonde hair, and it becomes obvious that Laura has by the age of five absorbed that culturally blonde hair is the preferred hair colour – even though they see so few other people at their isolated cabin. Laura has a strong temperament and can be naughty, whereas Mary is always good and well-behaved.

The book describes life as a pioneer throughout each season, both through the activities of Pa and Ma, and how the little girls can help them both, and the pleasure – or not – they derive from the things they do. This would interest a child reader today both for the historical context, and also understanding the joy or frustration Laura feels when she is rewarded or punished.

What is important in the book is the level of detail given with each new activity, so much so that the reader feels they are actually there with Laura, down to helping Ma make deliciously described food, watching her aunts getting dressed for a dance, or, dare I say it, slaughtering a pig. Most evenings, Pa sings and plays the fiddle, adding to the domestic contentment and ensuring that any upset that may have occurred during the day is resolved.

Whilst modern readers may grimace at the strong gender delineation in the book, this was a historical reality, and this is a book about the past based on the author's own life; and one should really look past this to recognise how close Laura is to Pa and how, from this first book she aligns herself to his values and his love and respect of the outdoors. Although Laura and Mary have gender assigned roles even at their age to help Ma, Laura takes great care to explain that Pa never takes more than he needs, and even, when presented with nature in its beauty, chooses not to shoot deer and a bear, which Laura approves of, even if it means the family could go hungry in the winter.

Laura even wishes she were a boy when she meets a neighbour, Clarence, and she envies his copper-toed shoes. She and Clarence play in the trees whilst Mary and his sister Eva walk nicely together and talk. She describes the fun in the snow with her cousin Peter, and her naughty cousin Charley who gets stung by yellow jackets. By including her male cousins, and "wild" Uncle George, home from the army and who dances with Laura at the sugaring off dance, Ingalls Wilder is counterpoising the strict feminine expectations of the time against Laura's "naughty" wish to rebel against that and be more like Pa, and her other male relatives. This theme is explored in more detail across the subsequent stories.



THIS PIG SAT DOWN ON JAMES

Little House in the Big Woods is usually overlooked in favour of *Little House on the Prairie*, but this is the first in the series and is a joy in itself. Intended for younger readers, the books change and grow in complexity of theme and tone as they progress and as Laura ages, so this first book, (originally written for 8–12-year-olds) about a five-year-old is aimed at a younger audience than the last, which isn't to say an older reader wouldn't enjoy this book – you may have to know it is the first in a series and that across the books Laura is going to grow up.

If you have missed this book perhaps now is the time to look it up – and maybe read all the books in order if you haven't before or do it again for the sheer pleasure of meeting Laura. If you are a vegetarian however, don't say you haven't been warned.

Bibliography

Anderson, W., 1992. *Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Biography*. New York: Harper Collins.

Little House in the Big Woods has been digitised as part of the Gutenberg project, and you can read it online at <https://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/wildersewell-woods/wildersewell-woods-01-h-dir/wildersewell-woods-01-h.html>

Cheryl Paget

Literary historian

Cheryl has given two very popular presentations to the Friends of the Dorothy Neal White Collection. In March 2019 she gave an entertaining talk about her pilgrimage to Prince Edward Island, Canada, and sites connected with L M Montgomery and her famous character Anne of Green Gables, and the following year she explored the life and writings of Arthur Ransome.

DOROTHY ON SOCIAL MEDIA



This report was given at the 2021 AGM.

Due to commitments and an overly active toddler, I have been unable to post on Facebook as often as I have previously done. However, I am ensuring that I post about anything relating to the Friends of the Dorothy Neal White collections, which includes the changes to the display cabinet and anything relating to our events.

Facebook now breaks down how many people can support a page by “liking” a page or “following” it. We have 83 likes, and 101 follows. Some people may like and follow the page, so this does not mean we have 184 different people engaging with our page. As with previous years, most of our posts are reaching between 20-40 people. Thank you to those members who always engage with the content I share. I do appreciate all reactions, comments, and shares that you do.

Other topics I have posted about over the past year have included; obituaries of prominent Children’s literature contributors, most recently Eric Carle; News relating to the first Te Awhi Rito New Zealand Reading Ambassador, Ben Brown; award winners, for example Julia Marshall of Gecko Press being awarded the Margaret Mahy Medal and Tessa Duder being awarded the 2020 Prime Minister’s Award for Literary Achievement for fiction; and stories relating to children’s literature, for example a news story about a project in Kāpiti where children’s books are being hidden for children to find and read (published in the *Kāpiti News*, 1 February 2021).

The post which has gathered the most reactions was in relation to the research grant applications being open. This reached an audience of over 1,000 people, was shared by multiple people/groups on Facebook, and generated 48 clicks through to the details on our website (this number of clicks is based on those who clicked from our original post, it does not include any clicks from the posts that were shared). Link to this post: <https://www.facebook.com/dnwfriends/posts/1556850464485794>

Other posts which gathered higher than normal reach was:

- Celebrating 100 Year since the Alexander Turnbull Library opened to the public. 236 people reached. <https://www.facebook.com/dnwfriends/posts/1548751611962346>
- Nicola Daly’s event. 60 people reached. <https://www.facebook.com/dnwfriends/posts/1587331978104309>
- FDNW Christmas event. 76 people reached. <https://www.facebook.com/dnwfriends/posts/1690123161158523>
- New display cabinet featuring books with maps. 67 people reached. <https://www.facebook.com/dnwfriends/posts/1783032231867615>

If you locate any interesting articles, news of new publications or obituaries, please feel free to either private message us through Facebook so I can share the item, or share these on the page itself.

Please like and follow us and share the FDNW page with your friends and family:

<https://www.facebook.com/dnwfriends>

Chantalle Smith
FDNW Facebook Administrator

HANNAH AND TALIA

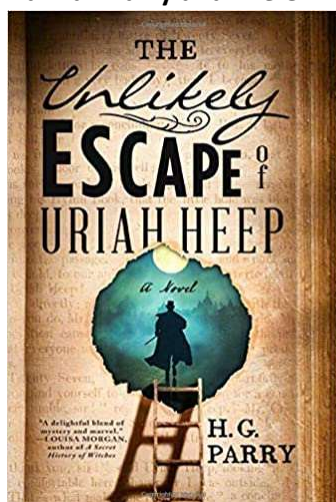
On March 10 of this year, we were treated to an evening with one of Wellington’s young authors, Hannah Parry, preceded by our research scholar, Talia Crockett. In fact, any event we manage to hold in the time of Covid is a major coup, so we were triply delighted!

Talia Crockett

As part of the research scholarship, we always look forward to hearing about how the children's collections are being used. Tania updated us with how her research is going and what areas she is looking at. Her research is focussing on trauma and the way this is treated in young adult literature. To develop her themes Tania is looking at novels about the holocaust, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and other related books. She will be discussing the merits of the use of flashbacks and other recognised techniques to show how the trauma has affected the characters. The research is centred around breaking down the conventional ways of writing about trauma and the difference in the way it is treated historically and culturally.

Talia was particularly interested in young adult fiction as it has the potential to raise difficult questions and challenge teenagers to think beyond the bare bones of the text. We certainly look forward to hearing about the fruits of her research when it is further on.

Hannah Parry and *The Unlikely Escape of Uriah Heep*



Hannah gave an engaging and inspiring talk about her debut novel, *The unlikely escape of Uriah Heep*. This is an intriguing story about Charlie, who is reading David Copperfield, out of which comes the character Uriah, who gives a warning that a new world is coming, before he is sent back into the pages of the book.

Hannah said she was interested in the idea of bringing characters out of books, in fact, this would be her chosen superpower if she could have one. She really wanted to explore the intrinsic relationship between the writer and the reader and says she was inspired by authors such as Cornelia Funke, who wrote *Inkheart*, which has similar themes. However, Hannah felt that many of these types of books leave the characters fixed within the book, never developing a character outside of this. She wanted to find a way to give the characters a more 3-dimensional life.

Among the themes explored in this book are those of sibling rivalry, something which is explored in children's books, but often neglected in adult ones. Hannah peppers the book with references to her favourite literary figures and authors, characters from Dahl and Dickens.

- Hannah spoke with a real passion for literature and showed a genuine love of the characters she has created. She delights in playing with the veil between the world of fantasy and reality and enjoys challenging our expectations of where the barriers stand. Truly an uplifting talk, especially when considering that Hannah wrote this book while waiting for her first submitted book to be edited. Would that we could all be so productive! *The Unlikely Escape of Uriah Heep* was published by Redhook, New York, in 2019.

Both speakers were well received, and many questions followed, always a good sign. We look forward to hearing of their future efforts.

Corrina Gordon
FDNWC President

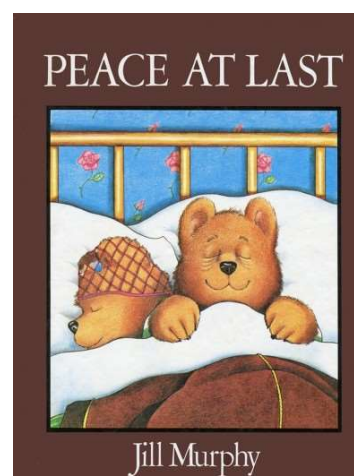
Editor's note: You can hear Kim Hill's interview with Hannah, recorded 8 February 2020, on RNZ National
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/2018733257/h-g-parry-novelist-on-the-unlikely-escape-of-uriah-heep>

OBITUARY

Jill Murphy (1949-2021)

I felt a real pang when I heard that author Jill Murphy had died on 18 August 2021, aged 72. When my son was little one of our favourite books was her *Peace at last* (published in 1980) about the difficulties the Bear family have sleeping one night, and I have taken great pleasure in sharing it with other children since. *Peace at last* was Commended for the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1980

We weren't the only family to enjoy Jill Murphy's books. Her books have sold millions of copies and several have been adapted for stage and theatre. Among the most popular of her picture books are those featuring the Large family of elephants, and her last book again featured the Bear family and was published in September 2020, just three weeks before she became ill. Of *Just one of those days* Jill Murphy said "...when I finished it, I was 100% thrilled with it."¹



Mildred learning to fly on her broomstick with her kitten Tabby, who has difficulty balancing on the stick. With typical creativity Mildred finds a solution to the problem – one that is not appreciated by form teacher Miss Hardbroom!

Also much-loved is Jill Murphy's Worst Witch series of novels, the first of which was written when she was just 18 though not published until 1974, having first been rejected by several publishers. Murphy attended a strict Catholic girls' school, which she did not enjoy, and this inspired the Worst Witch books. She said, "The whole ghastly experience gave me the Worst Witch, because I was Mildred, one of the worst students at the school."¹ Murphy's 'ghastly experience' became her readers delight as Mildred Hubble, and her good friend Maud Spellbody, cause mayhem at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches.

Jill Murphy leaves a wonderful legacy with her writing and illustrations and I am sure they will continue to be enjoyed by generations of children (and their parents).

Obituaries for Jill Murphy can be found in the *Guardian* and on publisher Pan Macmillan's website

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/aug/22/jill-murphy-obituary>

<https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/books-for-children/beloved-author-jill-murphy-dies-peacefully>

1. Donna Ferguson "I feel so lucky; in conversation with the late, beloved Jill Murphy" published in The Guardian, 22 August 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/aug/22/i-feel-so-lucky-in-conversation-with-the-late-beloved-jill-murphy>

Joan McCracken
Newsletter editor

The contents of this newsletter will be published on the Friends of the Dorothy Neal White website where you will be able to see the images in colour <http://www.dnwfriends.nzl.org/>

SUBSCRIPTIONS / MEMBERS ADDRESSES

The annual membership subscription for the Friends of the Dorothy Neal White Collection is \$20:00.

Whether you want to be active in a friendly group supporting the promotion of children's literature, or just want the satisfaction of being associated with a valuable community group, we value you. Members might also like to make a contribution to a special Research Grant fund that will allow us to continue and / or increase the amount we are able to offer a student doing research based on the collections supported by the Friends. A separate line has been included on the form for those Friends who would like to make such a donation.

The Treasurer will be delighted to receive your subscription payment at the next meeting, or by post to:

The Friends of the Dorothy Neal White Collection
C/O National Library of New Zealand
PO Box 1467 Thorndon
WELLINGTON 6140

If you prefer to pay by **internet banking** this is encouraged. Please include your name as reference.
Bank details are Society of Friends D N White BNZ 02-0585-0045879-000

Please indicate any changes to your address details when you complete the form. We are now able to send notification of meetings by email. If you would like to receive information in this way, please include your email address.

Friends of the Dorothy Neal White Collection 2021-2022 Membership

I would like to join / renew my subscription to the Friends of the Dorothy Neal White Collection for
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

☐

My cheque / cash for \$20:00 is enclosed

☐

My donation of \$_____ to the DNW Scholarship Fund is enclosed

☐

I would like to receive receipts, notification of meetings and other Friends' events by email

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

<http://www.dnwfriends.nzl.org>