

A word from the President

Dear Friends

We apologise (I'm not using the royal "we", but on behalf of the committee), for the delay on the newsletter.

We've had a slightly challenged year with the renovations posing a little uncertainty for events and those of our committee employed in the library, struggling on valiantly in spite of the noise. Mary has also been impeded in doing her wonderful display cases with the Reading Room being closed. Due to this we hope to be able to bring you at least a photographic image of donations coming in, for those of you who subscribe to our digital channels such as Facebook.

I find myself to be very tired, coming to the end of a busy year. In this I am reminded of the *Phantom Tollbooth* (Norman Juster) and the scene where Milo, somewhat drearily making his journey along a peaceful but monotonous road, accidentally ends up in the Doldrums. People end up there, according to the Lethargians, because they are not paying attention – simply not taking notice. Milo is lucky enough to meet an energetic watchdog, Tock, to remind him that all he needs to do is start thinking to get out of the Doldrums. Sometimes all of us need that reminder – there is always something interesting to take notice of. Waking up the mind and feeding it is the best way out of the humdrum days.

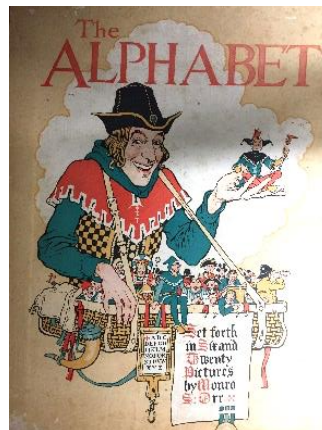
So, I wish you all fewer humdrum days coming into Summer – it shouldn't be hard. There is so much happening at this time. As long as we also stop to recharge it's a great time for the revitalisation of mind, body and spirit.

Corrina Gordon,
FDNWC President

From the Research Librarian

Offers of donations to the children's collections continue to come in at a gentle pace. Additions to the Dorothy Neal White Collection in the latter part of the year included this lovely title:

The Alphabet, set forth in six and twenty pictures / by Mr. Monro S. Orr, sometime Limner in London, to all which is added the ancient appropriate rhyme gathered from oral tradition & diligently compar'd with the original & authentick texts. London & Glasgow: Collins, 1931 (reprinted 1937)



This is a very attractive large format book of the English alphabet, with a colour plate for each letter. Monro Scott Orr (1874-1955) was a Scottish illustrator, painter and etcher. His children's book illustrations included editions of

classics such as *The Arabian nights*, *Grimm's fairy tales*, *A Christmas carol* and *Treasure Island*.

Because of the extensive building work currently underway at the library, our children's literature displays in the level 1 reading room and foyer are currently suspended. I am hoping that they can be partially or fully re-instated early in the new year when the worst of the drilling noise and vibration should be over.

Finally, we advertised our Research Grant again this year, with a closing date of 31 October 2023, but we did not receive any applications to consider. So, we will readvertise this next year.

Mary Skarott,
FDNWC Research Librarian

From the Dorothy Neal White Collection

A flat iron for a farthing, or, Some passages in the life of an only son / Juliana Horatia Ewing.

First published: London: Bell & Daldy, York Street, Covent Garden, [1872]. Multiple editions available.

This story by Juliana Ewing (1841-1885) is recognised as being one of her most successful. Like many of her works, it is an example of the domestic fiction genre, in which family life forms the basis for the story.

Regie, the son of a country squire, is a child from a privileged background. However, in a not uncommon scenario in Victorian times, by age 4 when the story opens, he has suffered the death of his beloved mother and newborn baby sister. The story is a simple one, following Regie from childhood to early manhood, and it is largely Ewing's talent for characterisation and her ability to make everyday incidents interesting that makes this a very readable work.

Ewing creates in Regie a likeable individual who possesses the admirable quality of honestly recognising his own weaknesses as well as his strengths. His is fun-loving and imaginative, and enjoys playing and being outdoors, but he also thinks about things deeply, perhaps because he is an only child.

As the story progresses we see Regie, with the help of family and friends, develop from an uncertain and grieving little boy to a confident and earnest young man. It is his childhood years that form the core of the story, and Ewing shows a real gift for getting inside the mind of the child. She reflects what Regie sees, what he feels, and what matters to him in his life with empathy and not a little humour. The scene in which he sees his future wife at the tinsmith's buying toy flat irons with her sister (chapter XI) is a charming one, full of details about dress and social customs. And his foray with his cousin Polly into the world of charitable works (chapter VII) is richly humorous.

The Victorian domestic world that Ewing portrays is one that only children of the well-off were able to enjoy. It is, nonetheless, a story which affirms the ideal qualities of a happy childhood for all children, and they still apply today: time to be a child and enjoy the world of imagination, the opportunity to form bonds with friends and pets, and the security of support and guidance from loving adults.

Nine editions of *A flat iron for a farthing* are held in the Dorothy Neal White and National Children's collections, and it is available to read online at Project Gutenberg:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19859>

and the Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/search?query=flat+iron+for+a+farthing>

**Mary Skarott,
FDNWC Research Librarian**



Frontispiece (detail) by M.V. Wheelhouse "She ... scrambled off backwards". From: *A flat iron for a farthing* / by Juliana Horatia Ewing. London: G. Bell, 1927.

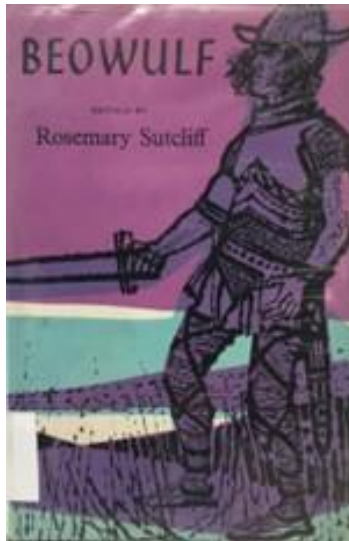
From the National Children's Collection

Beowulf / retold by Rosemary Sutcliff ; with drawings by Charles Keeping. London: Bodley, 1961.

2024 marks the centenary of the birth of celebrated illustrator and author Charles Keeping. Most well-known for his illustrative work, he was twice winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal (1967 for *Charley, Charlotte and the golden canary*, 1981 for *The Highwayman*) and received many other awards. Many of his book illustrations were

black and white, using line on its own or together with ink wash, but he also produced picture books in vibrant colour. He illustrated books for both adults and children and perhaps the most memorable feature of his work is his tendency towards the spooky and macabre.

This 1961 edition of *Beowulf* is a prose retelling by Rosemary Sutcliff of the ancient Anglo-Saxon poem, recounting the heroic deeds of the warrior Beowulf as he battles the monster Grendel, Grendel's mother the Sea-Woman and, much later, the treasure hoarding Fire-Drake. Keeping illustrated more of Rosemary Sutcliff's books than any other artist, twelve in all, and the illustrations in *Beowulf* are typical of his early work in black and white. The image shown here of the Fire-Drake and its hoard shows a clever use of perspective – the dragon lurks menacingly at the back of the composition and the precious objects tumble alluringly towards the viewer.



Keeping revisited the story of *Beowulf* some 20 years later when he produced new images for Kevin Crossley-Holland's 1982 retelling. In that version the illustrations are much darker in mood; you can see some examples of them

online in [this article](#) by Dan Piepenbring in the *Paris Review of Books*.



Illustration showing the Fire-drake and its hoard, from: *Beowulf* / retold by Rosemary Sutcliff ; with drawings by Charles Keeping. London: Bodley, 1961.

When our display cabinet returns in 2024, I am hoping to showcase Keeping's work sometime during the year and I will be sure to include his two renditions of *Beowulf*.

Further reading:

Martin, D., & Keeping, C. (1993). *Charles Keeping : an illustrator's life* / Douglas Martin. Magpies Magazine.

[The Paris Review - Charles Keeping's Grisly Illustrations for Beowulf](https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/09/22/charles-keepings-beowulf/)
<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/09/22/charles-keepings-beowulf/>

Mary Skarott,
 FDNWC Research Librarian

Publication News

Member Kathryn Walls published “Joyce Lancaster Brisley’s *Bunchy* as the Shadow of Milly-Molly-Mandy” in the journal *Children’s Literature in Education* (June 1922). It is a longer version of a talk Kathryn gave at a Members’ event in May. Here is an abstract;

While Brisley’s work has always been popular, critical commentary is scarce. Set in an English village between the wars, the MMM stories exhibit documentary realism, even while reflecting the national idealization of country living in this period. In so doing, they may be contrasted with Brisley’s *Bunchy* stories which are as surrealistic as the Milly Molly Mandy stories are realistic. But they are also as dark as the MMM stories are sunny. *Bunchy*’s adventures are unnerving fantasies, very different from Milly Molly Mandy’s credible and life-affirming expeditions. They reflect *Bunchy*’s situation as an orphan, living with her apparently widowed grandmother, and without playmates on the outskirts of Milly Molly Mandy’s village. Milly Molly Mandy, needless to say, is the youngest member of a loving extended family, and is blessed by her good friends, Billy Blunt and Susan. . *Bunchy*’s make-believe companions (formed out of cold and clammy pastry dough, inadequate drawings etc.) are not just unsatisfactory as such—they are threatening allusions to mortality and loss. Brisley’s close personal identification with *Bunchy* is implied by *Bunchy*’s imaginative inventiveness – she is even, like Brisley, an

illustrator; indeed some of Brisley's illustrations purport to be Bunchy's own. It could be that the gulf between the lives of Milly Molly Mandy and Bunchy is the product of Brisley's own disrupted life-history, divided (in all likelihood traumatically) by her parents' divorce, and her consequent shift as a young adult from the beautiful village of Bexhill-on-Sea to the inner-city London suburb of Brixton.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-022-09486-9>

Another publication, this one co-authored by members Kay Hancock and Kathryn Walls:

This is the ninth chapter in a recently published critical anthology edited by Melanie Duckworth and Annika Herb, *Storying Plants in Australian Children's and Young Adult Literature: Roots and Winged Seeds* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). 149-66. "Entitled Conservation and the Flower-Fairy Tradition," it is summarised in the editor's Introduction (p. 20) as follows:

Kay Hancock and Kathryn Walls address [Avis] Acres's and [Maurice] Gee's respective entanglement with the flower fairy tradition
.. Applying a descriptive and discursive approach, [they] interrogate the relationships between humans and plants encapsulated in these miniature, humanoid plant-dwellers, and draw attention to an intriguing body of work that . . . has received far too little critical attention.

New Zealand culture also features in the final chapter of *Storying Plants*. Entitled "In Quest of 'Green Strangeness' and Freedom: Polish Perspectives on Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Plants in Texts for Young Adult Readers," by Polish Professor Maciej Wróblewski

Kathryn Walls
Committee Member

Obituaries

K M Peyton (1929 – 2023)

K M Peyton, a well-loved author of over 70 novels for young people, died on 19 December last year. She won the Carnegie Medal in 1969 for *The Edge of the Cloud*, and was appointed MBE in 2014 for Services to Children's Literature. She was shortlisted for the Carnegie medal for seven other books: *Windfall*, *The Maplin Bird*, *The Plan for*

Birdsmarsh, *Thunder in the Sky*, *Flambards*, *Flambards in Summer* and *The Team*.

She is best known for the *Flambards* series [*Flambards* (1968), *the Edge of the Cloud* (1969), *Flambards in Summer* (1969), and later *Flambards Divided* (1982)] especially after they were produced as a popular television series in 1979.

Kathleen Wendy Herald was born in Birmingham on 2 August 1929. She grew up in London, remaining there during the Blitz – see *Blue Skies and Gunfire* (2006). She wrote her first book at the age of 9, writing many others, also not being published, until *Sabre, the Horse from the Sea* was published in 1948 by A & C Black.

It was during her time at Manchester Art School that she met and married fellow art student Michael Peyton. After her marriage they collaborated in writing articles and stories for newspapers, including boys' adventure stories for the magazine of the Scout Association. They wrote under the name K M Peyton, the M for Michael, partly because she did not consider that boys would read stories written by an author named Kathleen.

While her obsession is horses, Michael's is boats. He continued to be an inspiration and guide throughout their writing. His interests and influence also feature in many of her early stories. For instance the sailing in *Stormcock Meets Trouble*, *Windfall*, and *The Maplin Bird* to mention a few.

From the 1960s on she developed steadily on her own and became a major writer of stories for both girls and boys. Some commentators have talked of her as a writer of pony books but, while she did have a love of horses and wrote several books involving the caring and rescuing of horses, there are many other genres that she has excelled in. One can learn a lot about different times and activities from reading her books.

For instance: Sailing in *Stormcock Meets Trouble*, Pony Clubs in *The Team*, Georgian Coachmen in *The Right-Hand-Man*, Flying in *The Edge of the Cloud* and *Wild Lily*, Racing in *Darkling*, and many others including historical times.

She also wrote books for younger readers in for example *Who Sir? Me Sir?* and *Downhill all the Way*.

Besides a few stand-alone books (e.g. *Marion's Angels*), she wrote many series of only two or three titles.

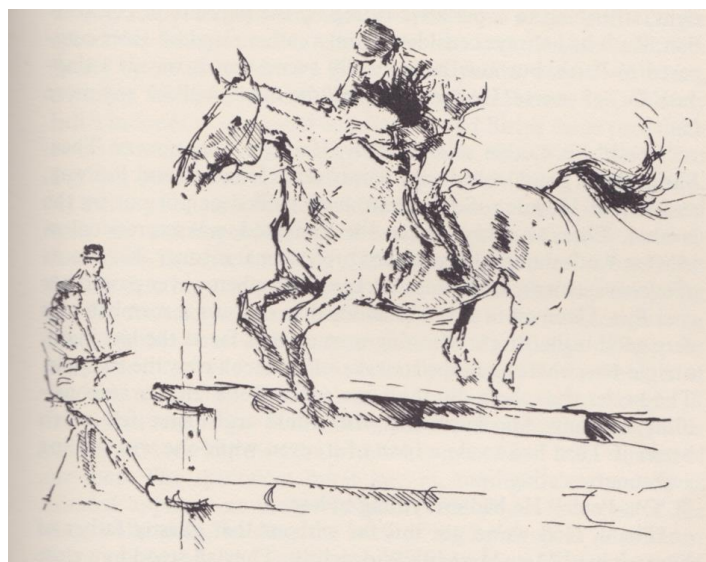
Pennington's Seventeenth Summer, *The Beethoven Medal* and *Pennington's Heir* feature a troubled rebellious teenager and his musical talent as well as an obstinate young woman who likes a challenge.

The Swallow Tale, *The Swallow Summer* and *Swallow, the Star* feature the progress of a spirited bay pony with a will of his own.

The copy that I have of *Sabre, the Horse from the Sea* is sub-titled "A lonely teen-ager defies the law to keep the one thing she loves – a magnificent gray stallion". Similar descriptions could be applied to a majority of K M Peyton's books, though not necessarily referring to a horse. Most of her heroines and heroes have troubled lives, but are filled with determination to protect and retain what they love most. There are feisty girls who make their way in life despite difficult circumstances.

My copy of *Downhill all the Way*, written as a sequel to *Who, Sir? Me, Sir?* but involving skiing rather than horses, has an Afterword by the author in which she describes what she feels a week's skiing is all about: "an expansion of horizons and awareness and a thorough investigation into one's own (generally unexplored) physical and mental resources." (1991). This comment could be relevant to many of the situations in her books.

As mention above, Kathleen attended Manchester Art School and illustrated some of her own books. Following is a selection of her illustrations:



The Team



Fly by Night



Pennington's Heir



A Pattern of Roses

More detailed biographies can be found at [Telegraph Obituaries](#) and

[Jane Badger Books](#).

Barbara Robertson
Committee Member

Book Reviews

Madeline Miller, 2011. Bloomsbury Paperbacks.

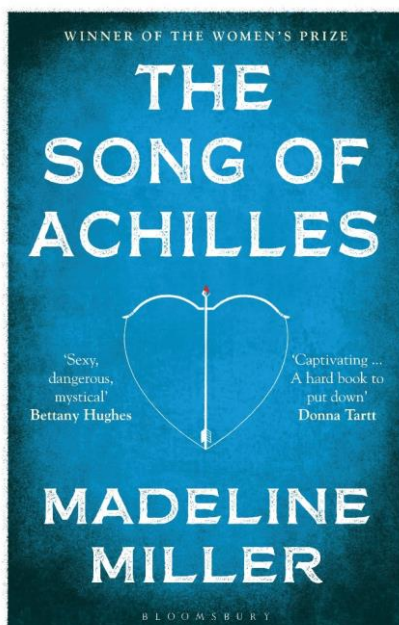
A new twist on an old tale, *The Song of Achilles* tells the story of the Trojan war from the perspective of Achilles' lover, Patroclus. I was recommended this book by my teenage son and am very glad to have read it. Though I have been a keen reader of Greek mythology, I had never heard much about Patroclus.

The story begins when Patroclus is very young, but brought by his father to Sparta, where Patroclus is presented as a suitor for Helen. Helen instead chooses Menelaus, and the rest of the suitors, including Patroclus, make an oath that they will defend her choice. After an unfortunate accident, where Patroclus kills a high-born boy, he is sent by his father to grow up in the court of Achilles.

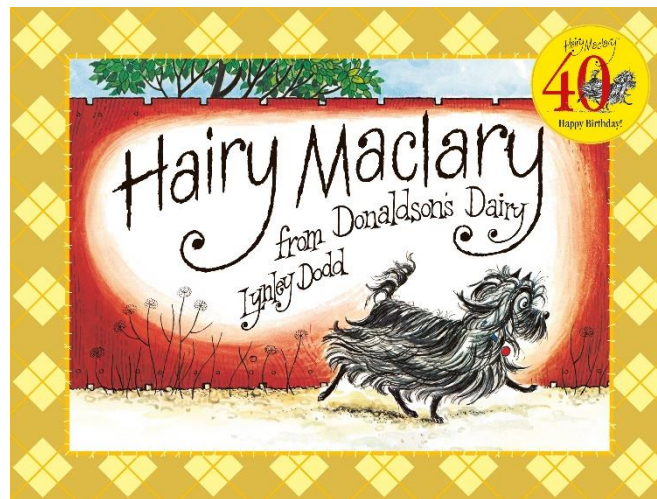
Here begins the coming-of-age part of the narrative, and the two boys fall in love. However, this is not just a love story – it is a powerful character study of all the key players in the Trojan tragedy and details the sequence of events that led to the demise of so many brave men and women.

Miller draws out the personalities of all the people involved in the myth – the soldiers, the slaves, the women trapped as chattels and the gods and goddesses – they are all very 3-dimensional and as such flawed as all humans are.

Beautifully written, with lyrical descriptions, this was a pleasure to read. It challenged many of the traditional tellings of the story and gave a real depth and voice to otherwise minor players.



Corrina Gordon



Out of the gate and off for a walk went Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy... Could there be a more memorable opening line for a children's story? For forty years parents and children have been reading this line before they then get to meet Hairy Maclary and his dog friends. It is probably safe to say that most people living in New Zealand in the past forty years have read this story. Many people have memorised this story, with its rhyming rhythmic storyline. And it is probably hard to find someone who does not smile when they hear the words.

The book was first published in 1983 by Mallinson Rendel and has continued to be published. The most recent publication was the 40th anniversary edition, published in 2023 by Puffin. Lynley Dodd wrote and illustrated the book. It has been a popular read since it was first published. As Dodd states in Finlay Macdonald's book, *'It took off! It just hit a chord with people.'* (Macdonald, p.15). Since this book was written, there have been another eleven adventures written about Hairy Maclary and nine about his friends.

In case you have not read the book (and I suggest you should), the story begins with meeting Hairy Maclary leaving his home and walking down the street, meeting up with his friends; Hercules Morse (as big as a horse); Bottomley Potts (covered in spots); Muffin McLay (like a bundle of hay); Bitzer Maloney (all skinny and bony); and Schnitzel Von Krumm (with a very low tum). It then continues describing the scenery they pass until they meet... Scarface Claw, the toughest tom in town. Once Scarface Claw does his memorable yowl, the dogs turn around and race back home.

Of course, early reviews of the book were positive. The image below was the review which was published in the *Press*, 8 October 1983.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP19831008.2.107.4>

The *Press* also included the book in their supplement which identified books for Christmas. This was published on the 6 December.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/press/1983/12/06/55>



Dorothy Neal White also wrote a small review of the book in the *Listener*. Given the language in the review, it is difficult to know exactly how she felt about the book. She describes how the book is written, and the only clue that shows she enjoyed it, is that she states the book "is out to entertain". Here is the article, so you can decide yourself what you think she thought of the book.

Lynley Dodd has developed a new comic vein in **Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy** (Mallinson Rendel, \$9.95). Her earlier stories *The Apple Tree* and *The Smallest Turtle* were quite serious picture-books intended to extend the young child's awareness of the natural world. The new book, about dogs, dogs and more dogs, is out to entertain, with its chantable text and swiftly moving pictures for readers and listeners from three to six. (Lynley Dodd was the first holder of the Choysa Bursary, in 1981.)

Hairy Maclary has become popular in many formats. The obvious has been merchandise. In the early 90s Hairy Maclary and his friends turned into a stage show. Due to its success, the "Maclary Theatre Productions" were formed and put on shows in the July school holidays every year, for ten years. In 1996, there was a film made, which was included in a ten-part series of some of the Hairy Maclary and Friends books. If you have not seen it, it is available to watch on the NZ on Screen website: <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/hairy-maclary-from-donaldsons-dairy-1997>. In 2015, sculptures were unveiled on Tauranga's downtown waterfront featuring Hairy and his friends.

So happy birthday to Hairy Maclary. I am sure it will continue to be a book that entertains children for many more years to come.

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Chantalle Smith

Committee Member

Events

EKB: Artist and Friend



In October, Cherie Jacobson, Director of the Katherine Mansfield House and Garden, gave a fantastic talk to the Friends. In her talk she explored the life of Edith Kathleen Bendall (EKB).

EKB is mostly known for her relationship with Katherine Mansfield, however in her talk, Cherie explored the artistic side of her life.

Edith Kathleen Bendall was born in Oriental Bay Wellington in 1879. She married George Robison in 1909. She lived a long life, dying at the age of 107 in 1986. Her only daughter, Barbara, was born in 1911. She lived for most of her life in Wellington. However, she did live in Sydney for a while, working for the *Sydney Morning Herald* for two years. She studied at the Wellington Technical High School. She was known for her work in capturing portraits of children and scenery. The reason Cherie used the initials EKB is because although many of her works were signed E. K. Robison, she also used the signature EKB. EKB continued her artistic work until her 90's, when her eyesight became too poor to continue. She often exhibited her work.

Cherie's presentation focused on a few of EKB's pieces as well as the effort she put into locating pieces to exhibit at the Katherine Mansfield House and Garden. One of the pieces that Cherie focused on was the cover of the

publication *Scribbling Sue* by Amy Eleanor Mack. Cherie found that EKB had illustrated the cover of this am Australian children's



literature calendar held in the library's collection. However, when she requested the book itself from the library's collections, this cover was illustrated by May Gibbs. With assistance from Mary Skarott, Research Librarian Children's Literature, they were able to determine that EKB had illustrated the frontispiece for the book. The National Library of Australia held a copy with the dustjacket still included.

Cherie also focused on the portraits EKB did of Chinese children. Many of her works featured the Chinese community.

The EKB exhibition featured at the House in 2021. Prior to it opening, Cherie featured in a *Dominion Post* article to speak about the upcoming exhibition. She was hoping that more artworks by EKB would be held in private hands, and this article would help unearth them. Through this, she was successful in locating further pieces, some of which featured in the exhibition.

Cherie also began her presentation by highlighting that fact that it was the 100-year anniversary of Katherine Mansfield's death. There had been many events held throughout the year to commemorate this. She described a few of these events. It was also the 35th anniversary of the opening of the Katherine Mansfield House and Garden. If you are interested in seeing some of the highlights of these events, they have been posting on their Facebook page:

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

If you are interested in learning more about her work, the library does hold some of her artworks. You can find a list of the items here:

<https://tiaki.natlib.govt.nz/#details=ethesaurus.133330>.

One of these items is an interview that was conducted with her as part of a centenarians oral history project. If you are interested in listening to this interview, come visit, and you can listen to it in the Katherine Mansfield Reading Room.

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Chantalle Smith

Committee Member