

## A word from the President

Hard to believe we're half-way through the year! Dear members, we are full of apologies for our seeming lack of activity this first part of the year. As you will know, this has been a most difficult time for our friends within the National Library, and our resources have been pulled in other areas, not at the heart of our beloved children's collections.

One of our committee members, Joan, has now retired from the Library, thankfully not from the committee, and we applaud her energy and passion throughout her time at the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Recently I have been able to attend a course with Kate de Goldi (more of that later...) and have taken a book off my shelf that was given to me years ago and never read – *The Back of the North Wind*, by George McDonald. Gifted to me by my parents long ago, this is a story of a child growing up but holding onto their inner magic by stepping into the world of the North Wind, a female embodiment of the element. As we move into colder times ourselves there is nothing like the warmth of a child's tale to keep our heart coals burning.

**Corrina Gordon,**  
FDNWC President

## From the Research Librarian

The DNW and NCC collections continue to be well used by researchers. The DNW collection is steadily added to by incoming donations, although at a slower rate than in previous years.

Towards the end of the Library's financial year there was a one-off adjustment to the purchasing budget for the NCC; this is the money that is used to select books that are published overseas, to complement the locally published material that is received through legal deposit. So, I was pleased to be able to select around 100 additional titles.

A reminder that we are currently taking applications for our research grant on an annual basis, rather than every

two years. Applications close on 31 October each year, and if members know anyone who might want to apply, please encourage them to do so. We would love to receive their application. You can find information about the research grant on the National Library site here: <https://natlib.govt.nz/about-us/scholarships-and-awards/dnw-scholarship>

and on the Friends' site here:

[https://dnwfriends.nzl.org/index.php/home/research\\_grant/](https://dnwfriends.nzl.org/index.php/home/research_grant/)

**Mary Skarott,**  
Research Librarian, Children's Literature

## Obituaries

### Francine Pascal

(13 May 1932-28 July 2024)

For anyone who was a pre-teen or teenage girl in the 1980s and 1990s they are bound to have read at least one of Francine Pascal's books in the Sweet Valley High series. This was a hugely popular young adult series which followed the lives of twin sisters Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield.

There were 181 books published over the period of 20 years. Pascal wrote the first twelve books herself but then guided a team of ghostwriters to continue producing the books at the rate of up to five books per month.

In 1994 a TV series was produced, which ran for four seasons. There were many spin-off series written based on the same characters, but taking place in different times during their life, from their childhood through to adulthood. These were published up until 2012. More recently, Nicole Andelfinger and Claudia Aguire have published a graphic novel series based on the series.

Francine Rubin was born in New York City, but mostly grew up in Jamaica, Queens. She studied journalism at New York University. She had three children with his first husband, Jerome Offenber, then in 1964 married newspaper journalist, John Pascal. Her career began with writing freelance articles for magazines. Over her career prior to writing the Sweet Valley high series, she

wrote for television, Broadway and then later moved into novel writing.

She passed away at the age of 92 in New York City from lymphoma.

## References

Francine Pascal. (2025). Wikipedia.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francine\\_Pascal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francine_Pascal)

Lee, B. (2024). Francine Pascal, creator of the Sweet Valley High books, died aged 92. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/jul/30/francine-pascal-sweet-valley-high-author-dead>

Maughan, S. (2024). Obituary: Francine Pascal. Publishers Weekly.

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/authors/article/95665-obituary-francine-pascal.html>

## John Marsden

(27 September 1950 – 18 December 2024)

John Marsden was a well-known Australian young adult author. From the 1980s onwards he published 44 novels. His most acclaimed books were the *Tomorrow Series*.

This series of seven books were published between 1993 and 1999. It follows a group of teenagers who enter guerilla warfare after their town is invaded by a foreign country while they are out camping. The story is told through the eyes of the main character, Ellie Linton. These books all won multiple literary awards, most of these being Australian based literature awards. The first book, *Tomorrow When the War Began*, was also turned into a movie and television series. After the success of these books, Marsden then wrote a follow-up trilogy called *The Ellie Chronicles*.

Marsden was an English teacher prior to becoming an author. He states that seeing the students' apathy in reading is what made him decide to start writing. His first book, *So Much to Tell You* was written in three weeks. His books are aimed for young adults and cover many themes that were topical for this group; sexuality; school life; dealing with adults; and violence in society. His books sparked life into children wanting to read, who may not have read otherwise. This is evident in the fact that Sweden distributed copies of *Tomorrow When the War Began* to hundreds of thousands of teenagers, after it was voted as the book most likely to inspire a love of reading.

Throughout his career, Marsden won many literary awards, including the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award, which he won multiple times; American Library Association Best Book of the year, which he won twice; the Lloyd O'Neil Award for contributions to

Australian publishing; Dromkeen Medal; and was named Australia's most popular author today in any literary field by *The Australian* in 1997.

In 2006 Marsden founded and was the first Principal of Candlebark School. He also founded its senior school, Alice Miller School. The Alice Miller School wrote a letter to parents confirming his death, saying "He died at his desk in his home doing what he loved, writing".

## References

- John Marsden (writer). (2025). Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Marsden\\_\(writer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Marsden_(writer))
- Cain, S. (2024). *John Marsden, author of Tomorrow When the War Began, dies aged 74*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/dec/18/john-marsden-author-of-tomorrow-when-the-war-began-dies-aged-74>
- *Acclaimed Australian writer John Marsden, author of the Tomorrow series, dies aged 74*. (2024). Radio New Zealand. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/world/537097/acclaimed-australian-writer-john-marsden-author-of-the-tomorrow-series-dies-aged-74>

Compiled by Chantalle Smith, Committee Member

## FDNWC is on Facebook

Follow us here:

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

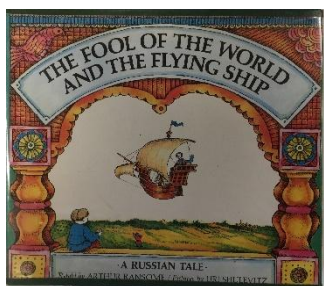
## Annual General Meeting, 2025

Members were invited to our Annual General Meeting, which was held on Wednesday 11 June 2025 at 5.30pm in the Tiakiwai Conference Centre (lower ground floor), National Library of New Zealand.

Our new constitution, which complies with the requirements of the The Charities Amendment Act 2023, was approved. We now need only to fully complete the registration paperwork.

Minutes of the meeting and associated reports will be emailed to members.

## From The National Children's Collection



**The fool of the world and the flying ship / Uri Shulevitz.**

**London: Hamilton, 1970.**

**(Originally published New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.)**

Caldecott Medal, 1969.

I selected this book to remember children's author and illustrator Uri Shulevitz, who died on 15 February 2025, only a couple of weeks before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. The National Children's Collection currently holds 36 of Shulevitz's works, out of a total of more than 40. His output includes works both written and illustrated by him, as well as those he illustrated for other authors. You can read a full obituary on the Publisher's Weekly website here:

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/97177-obituary-uri-shulevitz.html>

*The fool of the world and the flying ship* won the Caldecott Medal in 1969. During his long career in illustration Shulevitz also received Caldecott Honors for three other books, *The treasure* (1980), *Snow* (1999) and *How I learned geography* (2009).

The text used in this picture book is the version that was recorded by Arthur Ransome when he lived in Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and published in 1916 in his *Old Peter's Russian tales*. The tale has its origins in the Russian oral folktale tradition and was one of the many stories collected by Alexander Afans'ev in the mid-nineteenth century, appearing in his 8 volume work *Tales from Russian folklore* (1855-1867). It was also included in one of Andrew Lang's collections, *The yellow fairy book* (1894).

When the Czar proclaims that he will marry his daughter to the man who brings him a flying ship, the Fool of the World sets out to try his luck and meets some companions with very unusual skills on the way. When the flying ship arrives at the palace, the Czar is reluctant to have a penniless peasant as his son-in-law, and he sets the Fool a series of seemingly impossible tasks. But with the help of members of the crew including the Eater, the

Drinker, the Swift-goer and the Far-shooter, the Fool eventually wins the day.

Shulevitz's illustrations were often made with ink and watercolour, and this book is an attractive example of his earlier style using these media. In this work he combines a naturalistic palette, reflecting the colours of the Russian countryside, with bright accents of pinks, reds, greens and yellows in clothing and architectural features.



Interior illustration (detail). The Fool guides his Flying ship over the highroad.



Interior illustration (detail). The flying ship's brightly clad, multitiered crew.

In a 1971 article published in *The horn book magazine*, not long after *The fool of the world* was published, Shulevitz talks about his creative process:

*"When I start on a new book, I try to see the images contained in the words of the story and to 'listen' to the different pictorial elements and their impact, their orchestration, and whether they are expressing what I want them to. Although my natural way of thinking is through images, at some point there is a fusion of the different modes of expression. One 'listens' with one's eyes, and 'sees' through one's ears and fingers. For me, it is the small chaos preceding creation."*<sup>1</sup>

I read this as a unique way of summing up the symbiotic relationship between the words and pictures in a well-made picture book, and Shulevitz was certainly a master in his field.

Notes:

1. Shulevitz, U. (1971). Within the margins of a picture book. *Horn book magazine*, 37(3), 309-312.

**Further reading:**



If you are interested in finding out more about Uri Shulevitz's early life, his illustrated memoir, *Chance*, is in the National Children's Collection. Published to critical acclaim in 2020, it documents the years his Jewish family spent as refugees after fleeing Warsaw in 1939, and their eventual arrival in Paris where Shulevitz spent his early teenage years and began to fully develop his artistic talents:

*Chance: escape from the Holocaust* / Uri Shulevitz.  
New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 2020.

[https://natlib-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1s57t7d/NLNZ\\_ALMA21354970450002836](https://natlib-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1s57t7d/NLNZ_ALMA21354970450002836)

Mary Skarott,  
Research Librarian, Children's Literature

## In the display cabinet

### #34 Charles Keeping, 1924-1988

(on display from 25 Sept 2024 – 17 Dec 2024)

2024 marked the centenary of the birth of celebrated illustrator and author Charles Keeping. He illustrated more than 200 titles, for both adults and children, and was twice winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal (1967 for *Charley, Charlotte and the golden canary*; 1981 for *The Highwayman*). He also illustrated the 1970 Carnegie Medal winner, *The god beneath the sea*, by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen.

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 one of the most memorable features of his work is his tendency towards the spooky and macabre.

#### Further reading:

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



Two views of the Charles Keeping cabinet on show.

### Books included in the display:

Keeping, Charles. *Charley, Charlotte and the golden canary*.

London: Oxford University Press, 1967

*Kate Greenaway Medal*, 1967

When his friend Charlotte leaves their city street to live in a tower block, Charley is so lonely that he buys a golden canary as a companion. This little bird leads to the two friends finally being reunited.

Noyes, Alfred. *The highwayman*. Illustrated by Charles Keeping.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981

*Kate Greenaway Medal*, 1981

*Beowulf*. Retold by Rosemary Sutcliff; illustrated by Charles Keeping.

London: Bodley, 1961

This edition of *Beowulf* is a prose retelling of the ancient Anglo-Saxon poem. 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.

*Beowulf*. Retold by Kevin Crossley Holland; illustrated by Charles Keeping.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982

This is Keeping's second interpretation of *Beowulf*, coming some 20 years after his work for Rosemary Sutcliff. The images for this work are much darker and more emotive than the earlier ones. In a *Books for Keeps* article (July 1988) Ron Heapy, his editor at Oxford University Press, remembers Keeping saying this about the *Beowulf* illustrations: "I've got to make the monsters sympathetic, especially the mother. I mean her son's just been bloody killed! No wonder she's angry."

Garfield, Leon and Edward Blishen. *The god beneath the sea*. Illustrated by Charles Keeping.

London: Longman, 1970

*Carnegie Medal*, 1970

A collection of retellings of the Greek myths.

You can see additional photos of the display on the National Library's Facebook page here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/NationalLibraryNZ/posts/pfbid0pgeLgcb4HPCJmkWynTdCqVqosQNQntoaRP7GhgNn1LGPqgyrDLeXU2WGjJJW26QCI>

### **#35 Down the Rabbit Hole: 100 years of portal fiction for children** (on display from 18 Dec 2024 – 12 Mar 2025)

Portal fiction refers to stories that include a transition, by magical or supernatural means, from one place or time to another. Some of the most familiar portals in children's literature are the rabbit hole in *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the mirror in *Through the looking-glass* (1872), and the spare room wardrobe in *The lion the witch and the wardrobe* (1950).

The word portal implies a gate or doorway, but the transition in a story can also be made in other ways, such as a journey or the use of a magical object. Characters might be transported within our own world or to another world entirely, and this can happen in a deliberate and planned way, or spontaneously and unpredictably.

Portal fiction is found in both fantasy and science fiction. The stories on display here all fall into the fantasy genre, although Madeleine L'Engle's *A wrinkle in time* (1962) crosses over into the science fiction realm and is generally categorised as a science fantasy.

#### **Books included in the display:**

**Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's adventures in Wonderland; and, Through the looking glass and what Alice found there. With ninety-two illustrations by John Tenniel including eight in colour.***

London: Macmillan and Co., 1934.

(*Alice's adventures in Wonderland* first published 1865; *Through the looking glass and what Alice found there* first published 1872)

**Molesworth, Mrs. *The cuckoo clock.***

London: MacMillan and Co., 1877.  
(1880 reprint)

This Victorian story employs a magical object - an enchanted cuckoo clock - to transport lonely Griselda to magical places. Her new friend, the cuckoo, can manipulate size and time, both of which he says are "Just a matter of fancy."

**Baum, L. Frank. *The Wizard of Oz. Animated by Julian Wehr.***

Akron, Ohio: The Saalfield Publishing Company, 1944.

(First published in 1900 as *The wonderful wizard of Oz*. This version is heavily abridged, with movable illustrations).

This is the first and best-known story in a series of six, in which Dorothy and Toto are transported from Kansas to the magical land of Oz when their house is carried away in a "cyclone" (what we now commonly call a tornado). At the end, Dorothy returns home by knocking the heels of her silver slippers together three times. In the sixth story, *The Emerald City of Oz*, Dorothy decides to stay and live in Oz, along with Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, and the way there is closed for ever by the good witch Glinda. "...those who fly through the air over our country will look down and see nothing at all. Those who come to the edge of the desert or try to cross it, will catch no glimpse of Oz, or know in what direction it lies."

**Barrie, J. M. *Peter and Wendy. Illustrated by F. D. Bedford.***

London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911.

(This well-known story first appeared as a 1904 stage play with the title *Peter Pan*. The book, *Peter and Wendy*, was first published in 1911. Some later editions of the book were published with the title *Peter Pan and Wendy*)

In this story the transition - from this world to the magical island of Neverland - takes the form of a long flight with the help of some fairy dust. The island only allows invited visitors to land there: "... after many moons they did reach it, and, what is more, they had been going pretty straight all the time, not perhaps so much owing to the guidance of Peter or Tink as because the island was out looking for them. It is only thus that any one may sight those magic shores."

**Masefield, John. *The box of delights, or, When the wolves were running.***

London: Heinemann, 1957.

(First published in 1935.)

Another story which uses a magical object, this time a little box which schoolboy Kay Harker is given for safekeeping. The box can be used to go swift, go small, or go into the past.

**Lewis, C. S. *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe. Illustrated by Pauline Baynes.***

London: G. Bles, 1950.

The Pevensie siblings use the spare room wardrobe to travel into Narnia. Later books in the *Chronicles of Narnia* make use of other portals, including a railway platform, framed picture and magical rings.

**Pearce, Philippa. *Tom's midnight garden*. Illustrated by Susan Einzig.**

Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1976.

(First published: London: Oxford University Press, 1958)

*Carnegie Medal, 1958*

Tom is bored and lonely until the old grandfather clock in the house points the way into a magical garden where he meets Hatty, a girl who lived in the house in the late Victorian era.

**Juster, Norton. *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Illustrated by Jules Feiffer.**

London: Collins, 1962.

(First published in 1961)

Milo is bored. But all that changes when he receives a mysterious tollbooth through the post. Before he knows what he's doing, he's entered the Kingdom of Wisdom, where everything is unexpected.

**L'Engle, Madeleine. *A wrinkle in time*.**

London: Constable Young Books, c1962

*Newbery Medal, 1962*

When their scientist father disappears whilst on a secret mission, Meg and Charles, together with their friend Calvin, search for him through time and space by a process of "tessering". The "wrinkle in time" of the title is a tesseract, a portal which allows them to travel through a fifth dimension.

You can see additional photos of the display on the National Library's Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/NationalLibraryNZ/posts/pfbid02epsCi6G2G6baTniYMV9d55LUEKJfaAWhQK7JdoTyyryx76NkfVTPfAMrdMzzEizjl>

**#36 Antarctic Adventures  
(on display from 13 Mar 2025 -**

These books from the National Library of New Zealand's children's collections were published between 1903 and 1967 and reflect our changing relationship with, and attitude to, the continent of Antarctica.

Some are stories about the early phases of Antarctic exploration. These cover the period from early sightings of the continent by sailors looking for commercial gain through sealing and whaling (around 1820), through to the land expeditions for the purposes of discovery and building knowledge that took place during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration (1898-1922).

As our knowledge about the geography, environment and wildlife on the continent expanded during the later 1920s and 1930s, adventure stories made use of the new information that was available, and tales featuring appealing penguins also made an appearance.

By the 1960s, permanent bases were well-established in Antarctica. The age of geographic exploration of the Earth had ended and the space exploration age had begun. In this decade we can see science fiction and non-exploration driven adventures that make full use of Antarctica as a dramatic setting.



The Antarctic Adventures cabinet.

**Books included in the display:**

**Stables, Gordon. *In the great white land: a tale of the Antarctic Ocean*.**

London: Blackie & Son, 1925?

(Originally published 1903)

A lively adventure story written in the early years of the Heroic Age. The story begins with exploration in the Arctic regions, and then Captain Mayne Brace and his crew and companions, including his cousins Charlie and Walt, set off for the Antarctic. There are two ships, the *Walrus* and the *Sea Elephant*, equipped for a three-year expedition.

**Surrey, Lionel. *Polar peril*. Illustrated by A.S. Forrest.**

London: Thomas Nelson, 1939.

The *Queen of Antarctica* sails from Hobart to Antarctica carrying 20 scientists and explorers on an ambitious scientific expedition. Captain Baker's 15-year-old son, Alan Baker, and two of his friends are also on board for the adventure of a lifetime.

**Sperry, Armstrong. *South of Cape Horn: a saga of Nat Palmer and early Antarctic exploration*.**

Philadelphia: John C. Winston, c1958.

In an expedition to search for new seal hunting grounds, 21-year-old Captain Nathaniel Palmer sailed south in the sloop *Hero* in the summer of 1820-21. The expedition sighted part of the Antarctic peninsula, which now bears



the name Palmer Land. Earlier in 1820 two other expeditions, led by Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen and Edward Bransfield, reported possible sightings of the Antarctic land mass. A fictionalized biography.

**Ross, M.I. *White wind: an account of the Oates Land party of the Biggers' Antarctic Expedition of 193- to 193-.* Illustrated by Paul Quinn.**

New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1937.

Follows the adventures of a fictional overland Antarctic surveying expedition, set in the 1930s.

**Hussey, L.D.A. *South with Shackleton.***

London: Sampson Low, 1949.

Dr Leonard Hussey, who served as meteorologist on the 1914-17 Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, recounts his experiences.

**Chaffee, Allen. *Penn the penguin.* Illustrated by Henry Suskind.**

London: John Murray, 1934.

**Bryan, Dorothy and Marguerite Bryan. *Johnny Penguin.***

New York: Doubleday & Co., 1931.

**Dicky, F.E. Davy. *Snow in summer.***

Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967.

Fourteen-year-old Peter Tender has always had an interest in zoology and biology. The adventure of a lifetime awaits him when he is chosen to join an expedition from New Zealand to Scott Base in the Antarctic.

**Barrett, Michael. *Antarctic secret.* Illustrated by Stuart Tresilian.**

London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1965.

A vehicle carrying Project Javelin, a newly developed British space weapon, has been sabotaged and immobilised near the Antarctic polar plateau. Former submarine commander Peter Keene is dispatched to lead a salvage expedition and prevent the weapon from falling into enemy hands.

**Dickson, Gordon R. *Secret under Antarctica.* Illustrated by Charles Geer.**

New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, c1963.

A science fiction adventure published in 1963 and set in 2013. Thirteen-year-old Robby Hoenig has joined his father on a research project in Antarctica. Events take an unexpectedly exciting turn when he gets caught up in a

malevolent plot to change the world's climate by exploding the Ross Ice Shelf.

**Crisp, Frank. *The ice divers.***

London: Hodder and Stoughton, c1960.

Specialist deep-sea diver Dirk Rogers and his team are summoned to the Antarctic. Two scientists have been lost while diving to inspect a wreck; but is it possible that they are still alive somewhere behind the ice barrier?

You can see additional photos of the display on the National Library's Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/NationalLibraryNZ/posts/pfbid02qjzuU19QJ1uxJdSKzkjgie5VCrEpeUWhJNKKxboAkoU243grbs4CDdY5o5CL9cBil>

## Hans Christian Anderson: 2 April 1805 - 4 August 1875

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the death of Hans Christian Andersen, one of the best-loved authors in the world of children's literature. His literary fairy tales (156 in total) include *The Little Mermaid*, *The Snow Queen*, *The Little Match Girl* and *The Ugly Duckling*, and his work is particularly notable for its emotional depth and poignancy.

Since his death, his fairy tales have regularly been published in new versions – either with his original text or as retellings - and these have included visual interpretations by hundreds of illustrators. His stories have been translated into at least 125 languages, and have provided inspiration for stage plays, movies and completely new stories.

Named in his honour, The Hans Christian Andersen Award is given every other year by IBBY (The International Board on Books for Young People). It is a lifetime achievement award, presented to an author and an illustrator whose body of work has made an important, lasting contribution to children's literature. The only New Zealand recipient to date is Margaret Mahy, who was given the Author Award in 2006.

Keep a look out in the National Library's General Reading Room, in August 2025, for a display featuring books by some of the authors and illustrators who have

been honoured with the Hans Christian Andersen Award.  
Both articles by [Mary Skarott, Research Librarian, Children's Literature](#)

## 80 years of Moomin Stories

2025 marks the 80th anniversary of Tove Jansson's Moomin stories. For those who have never read these delightful and quirky books a real treat awaits you.

Tove Marika Jansson (9 August 1914 – 27 June 2001) was the creator of the Moomins.



It

all began with the first Moomin tale, *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, published in 1945.

Penned by Tove Jansson during WWII as a fairytale to comfort herself during dark times, it mirrors the realities of millions of displaced people seeking refuge. Following Moominmamma and Moomintroll's quest to find a new home and the missing Moominpappa, the story lands in what will become known as Moominvalley. There stands a tall blue house – a joyful place where everyone is welcome, whoever they are, whenever they come. The Moominhouse is a symbol of security, shelter and a sense of belonging. These are universal needs. Timeless needs. They are as true today as they were 80 years ago.

The central family consists of Moominpappa, Moominmamma and Moomintroll. Other characters, such as the Snork Maiden, Hemulens, Fillyjonks, Sniff, Snufkin, and Little My are accepted into or attach themselves to the family group from time to time, despite generally living separate lives in Moominvalley, the setting of the series, where the Moomin family decides to live at the end of *The Moomins and the Great Flood*.

To read more about the Moomins jump into the [Moomin world](#), and maybe even take the quiz to see which Moomin you are!

Compiled by [Corrina Gordon](#),  
FDNWC President

## Spotlight on Kate de Goldi



The Friends of the Dorothy Neale White Collection were delighted to hear that author & advocate for children's literature (and former FDNWC committee member!) Kate De Goldi has been appointed the third Te Awhi Rito Reading Ambassador.

Kate took up the role in June from Alan Dingley. Ben Brown (Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Koroki, Ngāti Paoa) was the inaugural Te Awhi Rito New Zealand Reading Ambassador from May 2021 to May 2023. You can read more about Kate's appointment on the National Library website and follow the activities of Te Awhi Rito on the Reading Ambassador website.

<https://natlib.govt.nz/about-us/media/kate-de-goldi-named-te-awhi-rito-reading-ambassador-for-aotearoa>

<https://readingambassador.nz/>

As an added bonus, I was very privileged to have a golden opportunity given to me – a six-week course on Children's Literature, presented by Kate de Goldi! Surrounded by public and school librarians who also loved children's literature and listening to the very passionate Kate read excerpts of recommended books - it was very much my happy place.

Kate de Goldi has been taking this course for some years now and it is very popular. She is most certainly a strong advocate for the importance of the children's narrative as a valued form of literature.

The first question she posed to us was disarmingly simple – what is a children's book? And the answer we all agreed on was that the book should be written from a child's perspective, not simply be about a child.

We began with historic literature, moving on to contemporary authors. It's hard to give justice to all that was discussed, but Kate gave us all insight into some of the most influential and pivotal books written for



children, and though they may be books for younger audiences, it certainly doesn't mean that deeper themes are not explored. Some of the heart-wrenching topics are the more poignant for being seen with a child's eyes.

We then moved into the realm of picture books, and what a plethora of books that encompasses, from picture books without words to sophisticated picture books, and everything in between.

Every week Kate arrived with stack of books to entice us – there was never enough time to get through all of them, even mentioning them just by title, nor to hear the enthused librarians talk about their own favourites. I confess one of my favourite parts of the course was listening to Kate read from her best loved books – taking me and the rest of the group back to a cosy place, where we could simply be in that moment, and let our minds travel into the story.

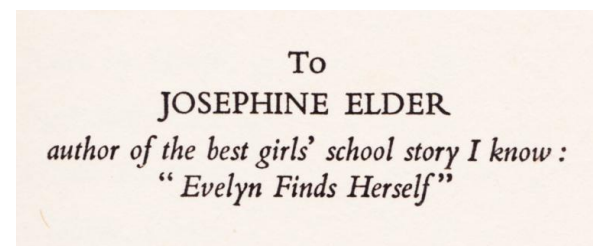
It was truly a literary feast, and it did but scratch the surface. We left the course mentally enriched and freshly enthused about the magic and worth of books truly written for the child.

**Corrina Gordon, FDNWC President  
and Joan McCracken, Committee Member**

## Josephine Elder. Why?

During the first weekend of March 2025 over 30 readers and aficionados of older children's books met in Palmerston North enjoying hearing about their favourite authors, and being introduced to others, at the 3rd Vintage Children's Books Conference.

### Why did I start reading her books?



Because of this dedication in *Juliet Overseas* by Clare Mallory.

### Who was Josephine Elder?

Dr. Olive Gwendoline Potter. Born 5 December 1895. Died 24 July 1983.

She was a short woman only 5 feet high. (1.5 metres). Hence Thomasina Toddy.

Olive's father insisted on a good education and so sent her to Croydon School, a member of the Girls Public Day School Trust, rather than the local village school.

She studied medicine at Girton College, Cambridge, which is where Evelyn (of Evelyn Finds Herself) also studied.

Evelyn had a close friend, Elizabeth, just as Olive had a close friend during her High School days.



*'It's beastly, being so little,' she said crossly.*  
The caption to this frontispiece of Thomasina Toddy reads: 'It's beastly, being so little, she said crossly.'

She started writing short stories and then books in the 1920's to earn some money when people were reluctant to patronise a woman doctor.

In her writing she drew heavily on her own experiences – boarding school, university at Cambridge, a love of science and finding out how things work.

Many of her books start with a new girl, with real or imaginary handicaps, finding a friend or friends who show her she is not so different from everyone else and can (and does) achieve and become accepted and popular.

Often the heroine shows a determined interest in science of all kinds. Erica in *Erica Wins Through* (much later, after her bad start at school) dissects a dead cat to see how its muscles work!

The value of learning things one is interested in is important – other skills will follow.

Her characters are always developing.

Relationships are important, especially in the boarding school and University books.



This frontispiece from *The Scholarship Girl at Cambridge* shows a gathering of friends.

Olive's

grandparents had a fruit and dairy farm near Maidstone where many holidays were spent. In the three Farm School books she makes use of this experience.

The Farm School is a model of an alternative way of learning. Practical skills help understanding of facts and methods taught in more conventional schools.



"Annis realised all of a sudden that whatever the Farm School took up seriously, it took up superlatively." [Exile for Annis] "We are allowed to do anything here, as long as we do it properly." [Strangers at the Farm School.]

At various points one is reminded that the author was a practising doctor.

At the end of *Erica Wins Through*, Erica is aiming to be a doctor.

### What can you learn from reading Josephine Elder?

How to play hockey. For instance, in *Evelyn Finds Herself* there are 5 pages describing blow by blow an important hockey match. Early on in *Erica Wins Through* there are six pages of an important hockey

match, which helps to establish Erica as a person of some skill.

Tennis also features, again strike by strike. The author certainly knew her sports.

In *Exile for Annis*, you can find out how to make a dug-out canoe from a discarded tree trunk. "We'd better start by chiselling a line all round to mark the edge of

the hole," Kitty said. "Then we can peel back the bark off the middle bit – we'll leave it on the outside of the boat, shall we? – and then begin to dig its middle out. Where do you think the line had better go – here to here?" [page 97]

In the Farm School books, there are many descriptions of caring for animals or crops. At one stage, two of the characters admire the rows of hops growing and discover they are not for eating, as the gypsies say: "No, mister, yer don't eat 'em, yer drinks 'em! 'Ops, ter make beer!'" [Strangers Page 80.]

"They had come upon a shady enclosure which, when they looked into it over a gate, could be seen to consist of avenues of tall poles round which twined sturdy plants with large, indented leaves. They covered, too, ropes which ran horizontally and diagonally between the poles, and from their higher fronds hung drooping bunches of pale green fruit." [Strangers at the Farm School. Page 78]

And if you ever want to know how to look after bees, including introducing a new queen bee or making the bees start a new hive – Strangers at the Farm School will tell you. [P.252 – 255.]

[Factual information from The Encyclopaedia of Girls' School Stories (Sue Sims and Hilary Clare.) and FOLLY issue 11 "Elder or Better. The Secret Life of a Woman Doctor" by Hilary Clare.

### The Books of Josephine Elder

- S1 *Erica Wins Through*, Chambers [1924]
- S2 *The Scholarship Girl*, Chambers [1925]
- S3 *The Scholarship Girl at Cambridge*, Chambers [1926]
- Thomasina Toddy*, Chambers [1927]
- Evelyn Finds Herself*, OUP [1929]
- Barbara at School*, Blackie 1930
- The Redheads*, OUP 1931
- Sister Anne Resigns*\* (as Margaret Potter)
- The Mystery of the Purple Bentley*\* (as Margaret Potter)
- F1 *Exile for Annis*, Collins 1938
- F2 *Cherry Tree Perch*, Collins 1939
- F3 *Strangers at the Farm School*, Collins 1940
- Lady of Letters*\*, Lutterworth 1949
- The Encircled Heart*\*, Lutterworth 1951
- The Doctor's Children*\*, Lutterworth 1954
- Fantastic Honeymoon*\*, Robert Hale 1961

S = Scholarship series

F = Farm School series

\* = Adult Novel

Barbara Robertson, Committee Member