



Annual Report  
For the year ended 31 March 2017

**Introduction**

1. This Report covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 during which the Randell Cottage Writers Trust (RCWT) hosted three writers-in-residence at the Randell Cottage: French writer, Nicolas Fargues, who ended his six month stay in June 2016; New Zealand novelist, poet and short story writer, Stephanie Johnson, who was the Creative NZ Randell Cottage Fellow from July to December 2016; and French writer, commentator and autism advocate, Josef Schovanec, who arrived in January 2017 to stay until June 2017.

2. The RCWT is an established part of the New Zealand literary scene, as evidenced in the number and calibre of writers who apply for the Trust's fellowships as well as the public interest in, and knowledge of, the residence and its role. In all, 31 writers from New Zealand and France have benefitted from the residency since its establishment in 2002. They report high levels of satisfaction with the Cottage environment as being conducive to research and writing. They have found it a comfortable, secure, well-located and inspirational haven, allowing them freedom to focus on their work.

3. Nicolas Fargues and Stephanie Johnson have each published work from their time at the Cottage and both have further publications in the pipeline. Josef Schovanec is working on his New Zealand writing project, completing work for his publisher in France, and undertaking public speaking engagements in New Zealand and on French radio.

## The Writers

4. **Nicolas Fargues** concluded his residency in June 2016. Since then he has published (in France) *Ecrire à l'élastique*, an exchange of letters with French novelist, Iégor Gran, which draws imaginatively on Fargues' experiences here. A novel written while at the Randell Cottage will be ready for publication very soon. Fargues participated actively in public outreach, giving a series of conferences at Alliance française branches around the country. He took part in Wellington Writers Week and the Auckland Art Gallery's French weekend in February 2016. He addressed students at Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters, joined forces with Dame Fiona Kidman at a public reading at the Millwood Gallery in Thorndon, and gave a well-attended conference at the National Library interviewed by Winston Roberts, Senior Adviser at the Library.



5. **Stephanie Johnson** welcomed the opportunity offered by the residency to focus on developing her forthcoming non-fiction work, *West Island*, as well as on new fiction writing. During this period Stephanie had two works published: *Playing for Both Sides*, a Bridget Williams Books memoir, and *Good Dog* an anthology of New Zealand writings on dogs. Among her community engagements she took part in Wellington's *Lit Crawl*; spoke to a gathering of the New Zealand Society of Authors; gave a talk about her writing at Millwood Gallery; and was "in conversation" with Dame Fiona Kidman at a very well attended public event at the National Library. She was interviewed on National Radio by Lynn Freeman. The publication of Stephanie's new work is eagerly awaited.

6. **Joseph Schovanec**, well known French writer and advocate for people with autism, arrived in January 2017. Since then, he has been much in demand as he is an engaging and illuminating speaker. Schovanec is completing a second series of his book *Travels in Autistan* for his French publisher. From Wellington he has submitted weekly chronicles on a range of subjects, including reflections on life in New Zealand, to *France Culture* radio. A polyglot, Schovanec is learning Te Reo and immersing himself in New Zealand culture as he shapes his Fellowship writing project which will be set in New Zealand. He is undertaking a programme of public engagements, including speaking to Alliance française branches in various centres, and to students at Victoria University. His interview with Kathryn Ryan on RNZ National reached a wide audience and created much interest. He will speak at the National Library in late May in conjunction with New Zealand writer, Julie Hanify.



7. In November 2016, a selection panel convened by Vincent O’Sullivan selected Perth-based New Zealand writer, **Stephen Daisley** as the 2017 Creative New Zealand Randell Cottage fellow from a strong field of applicants. Daisley was winner of the inaugural Acorn Foundation Fiction Prize in the 2015 New Zealand Book Awards for his second novel, *Coming Rain*. Stephen will take up his residency in July 2017. We look forward to welcoming him.



### Public Outreach

8. The prime objective of the Randell Cottage Writers Trust is to support individual writers in their work by providing rent-free accommodation and a stipend in order to enable them to focus on their writing. Under the terms of the fellowship, each writer agrees to undertake a certain amount of public engagement to encourage interest in their work and to promote New Zealand and French writing generally. During this year, Randell Cottage writers have given seminars to the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University, spoken to the New Zealand Society of Authors, participated in Writers Weeks in Auckland and Wellington, given radio interviews, presented their work in book shops, and taken part in events at the National Library. Where possible, these events have been open to the public and free of charge (with *koha* welcome). They are publicised through the Trust’s website, Facebook page and Twitter and via local social media networks. Interest has been high and audiences enthusiastic.

9. In 2016 the annual Randell Cottage **Open Day** was held on Sunday 4 December, the same day as the local Thorndon Fair. A steady stream of visitors enjoyed visiting the Cottage during the day and were able to hear Beverley Randell Price’s historical explanations about the Cottage and the Randell family. There was a pleasing turn-out at the stakeholders’ drinks in the evening. The Trust is currently liaising with other creative residencies in Thorndon about the possibility of coordinating future public events to generate greater visibility and interest in the local community.

10. The Trust’s website ([www.randellcottage.co.nz](http://www.randellcottage.co.nz)) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/RandellCottage>) are actively maintained by the Friends of the Randell Cottage Association. They contain a wealth of information about the writers (past and present) with updates and newsletters to inform the public about upcoming Randell Cottage events, other literary activities, and news about the Trust and Friends, including new publications and literary achievements of our writers, our Trustees and Friends members.

### Randell Cottage Profile

11. The number of applicants each year from both France and New Zealand remains high and the quality of applicants attests to the value that writers from different backgrounds and genres see in the Randell Cottage writers’ residency. It is not only an established part of Wellington’s cultural landscape and the capital’s network of creative residencies, but also holds an important place on the national literary scene. The Trust is committed to supporting individual writers and promoting literary excellence and, in so doing, to strengthening its collaboration with Wellington institutions, creative residencies, the Embassy of France and the Wellington City Council.

### Friends of the Randell Cottage Association

12. The Friends Association, under its President, Sian Robyns and its Executive Committee, has continued to provide good support to the Trust and writers, notably through liaison with the writers, the organisation of public events and Open Day and management of the Randell Cottage social media profiles. With two new Committee members and a new Treasurer, the Friends are now well-placed to enhance their publicity, fundraising and community outreach activities. Importantly, the Friends have raised funds to help re-roof the Randell Cottage at the appropriate time. Once again this year, the Chair of the Friends, Sian Robyns (also a Trustee) coordinated and participated in the Trust's selection panel for the 2017 Creative New Zealand Randell Cottage resident writer.

### Embassy of France

13. As every year, the Randell Cottage Writers Trust enjoyed excellent links with the Embassy of France in Wellington. The Embassy coordinated the selection of the French writer, managed his programme, and supported the Trust and its activities in a number of practical ways. The Embassy views the Randell Cottage as a key part of its cultural activities in New Zealand and as an excellent example of France/New Zealand cultural collaboration. Two Randell Cottage Trustees, Jean Anderson and Sian Robyns, were members of the selection panel convened by the Embassy. In late 2016 negotiations were concluded between the New Zealand/France Friendship Fund, the Arts Foundation of New Zealand and the Embassy to establish an endowment fund to support a French writer at the Randell Cottage "in perpetuity". This excellent outcome underlines the wish of the French authorities to continue to support the Randell Cottage residency beyond the expected end of the France/New Zealand Friendship Fund in a few years' time.

### Finance and Maintenance

14. The Trust's **annual accounts** are being reviewed by an auditor. The approved 2016-17 Statement of Profit and Loss is attached. At the end of the Financial Year the Trust reported a modest surplus over budget. All non-discretionary costs such as rates, insurance and essential expenses were paid on time; the costs of maintenance, cleaning and gardening were carefully managed. The Trust greatly appreciates the operational funding received from the Wellington City Council which is a great help in this respect.

15. The Randell Cottage withstood the November 2016 earthquake well. The main unexpected **maintenance** issue this year was a burst water main in the garden which was dealt with promptly. Repairs and replacement of essential items have been attended to. The paths are cleaned and the guttering checked twice-yearly. A gardener engaged for four hours a month is doing an excellent job and, as a result, the garden at the Cottage is looking attractive and in keeping with the Cottage's heritage status. The generosity of individual donors has enabled the Trust to meet certain expenses, such as trimming the taupata boundary hedge.

16. In 2016 Trustees agreed to commission a **Conservation Plan** for the Randell Cottage and in November were delighted to secure (with support from Heritage NZ and the City Council) additional funding for this task from the Lottery Grants Community Matters Environment and Heritage Fund. Wellington Conservation Architects, Cochran and Murray, will prepare the Plan during 2017. This will ensure proper programming of future maintenance of the Cottage, including the expected need

to replace the roof. The Trust will endeavour to ensure appropriate materials are used as befits a Category II heritage building. The work will be timed to cause least disruption to the resident.

17. Also in 2016 Trustees drew up a schedule to ensure compliance with the **Health and Safety** at Work legislation. This is being implemented – renewal of the emergency kit, updating the smoke alarms, installing a fire extinguisher at the Cottage, changing the locks and introducing a key ledger - and it is reviewed at each Board meeting.

18. The Trust gratefully acknowledges its **sponsors** without whose generous support it could not continue to operate. A three-year grant (2016-2018) under Creative New Zealand's *Toi Uru Kahikatea* arts investment programme covers the stipend for the New Zealand writer. The France/New Zealand Friendship Fund supports the French writer, including a stipend and a return airfare between New Zealand and France; as of 2018 these costs will be met by the Arts Foundation endowment fund. A three-year Contract Grant (2016-2018) from the Wellington City Council enables the Trust to meet the bulk of its operating and maintenance costs. The Board hopes its sponsors will continue to look favourably on the Trust's activities and achievements.

19. **Attachments** to this report include: background information on the Randell Cottage Writers Trust; residency reports by Nicolas Fargues and Stephanie Johnson; names of current Trustees and all Randell Cottage writers; and the Trust's Profit and Loss statement for the year to 31 March 2017.

*Sarah Dennis*

SARAH DENNIS

*Chair*

*Randell Cottage Writers Trust*

25 May 2017.

**Randell Cottage Writers Trust, P O Box 25204, Featherston Street, Wellington 6146,  
New Zealand**

**Randell Cottage Writers Trust: Background**

The Randell Cottage Writers' Trust, established in 2002, was documented by way of a Deed dated 19 September 2001 and updated on 30 June 2014. Benefitting from the generous gift of Hugh, Beverley and Susan Price, the Trust owns a fully-restored and equipped historic cottage in St Mary Street, Thorndon, Wellington, which is registered as a Category II Historic Building with Heritage New Zealand.

The purpose of the Trust is to support literary excellence and exchanges between France and New Zealand. The trust offers a six-month residency in the Randell Cottage to one French writer and one New Zealand writer each calendar year. Since 2002, the Cottage has hosted 31 writers of literary significance from both countries.

The Trust is registered with the Inland Revenue Department and is exempt from taxation and gift duty. It qualifies for the personal taxation rebate for any donations over \$5.00. GST is paid on income and the Trust is registered for GST purposes. It is registered with the Charities Commission.

All Trustees and members of the Friends of Randell Cottage Association are volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. The French Co-Patron is the Ambassador of France to New Zealand, Her Excellency Florence Jeanblanc-Risler. The position of New Zealand Co-Patron is currently unfilled. In 2016 Board members appointed Dame Fiona Kidman as Trustee Emerita.

**Randell Cottage Writers Trust Board of Trustees 2016-2017**

- Trustee Emerita Dame Fiona Kidman DNZM OBE
- Associate Professor Jean Anderson
- Sarah Dennis (Chair)
- Bridget Hargreaves
- Emeritus Professor Vincent O'Sullivan, DCNZM
- Beverley Price, MNZM
- Susan Price
- Sian Robyns
- Gordon Stewart
- Anita Woods
- Secretary/Treasurer: Jenny Ang.

**Randell Cottage Writers**

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Josef Schovanec 2017     | • Kirsty Gunn 2009        |
| • Stephanie Johnson 2016   | • Olivier Bleys 2008      |
| • Nicolas Fargues 2016     | • Jennifer Compton 2008   |
| • Owen Marshall 2015       | • Nicolas Kurtovitch 2007 |
| • Witi Ihimaera 2015       | • Whiti Hereaka 2007      |
| • David Fauquemberg 2015   | • Annie Saumont 2006      |
| • Tina Makereti 2014       | • Beryl Fletcher 2006     |
| • Thanh-Van Tran-Nhut 2014 | • Dominique Maynard 2005  |
| • Denis Welch 2013         | • Renée 2005              |
| • Estelle Nollet 2013      | • Pierre Furlan 2004      |
| • Vivienne Plumb 2012      | • Michael Harlow 2004     |
| • Florence Cadier 2011     | • Charles Juliet 2003     |
| • Peter Walker 2011        | • Tim Corballis 2003      |
| • Yann Apperry 2010        | • Nadine Ribault 2002     |
| • Pat White 2010           | • Peter Wells 2002        |
| • Fariba Hachtroudi 2009   |                           |

[www.randellcottage.co.nz](http://www.randellcottage.co.nz)

**The Randell Cottage is supported by Creative New Zealand, the New Zealand-France Friendship Fund,  
the French Embassy and the Wellington City Council.**