

## Report: Randell Cottage Writer's Residency

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14/1/2020

Initially, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for the opportunities the Randell Cottage Residency gave me. During my stay in Wellington, the proximity to the Alexander Turnbull Library and National Library for research purposes was invaluable in the writing of my novel, as was the opportunity to visit Somes island, the major setting for a large part of it. The cottage itself was a tranquil and inspirational place to work and I felt immediately welcomed, supported and encouraged by the Randell Cottage community.

When I arrived in Wellington in July, I had almost completed a very basic first draft of my new novel, 'The Green of the Spring,' which is a sequel to my last novel, 'Through the Lonesome Dark'. This new novel mainly focuses on a previous character, Otto Bader, who, as many men of German heritage were during this time, is imprisoned on Somes Island for the duration of the first world war. During my residency, with the research opportunities available to me, I was able to develop this initial draft much more fully. For example, at the Alexander Turnbull Library, as well as a wealth of information and images, I discovered hand written accounts of the prisoners' experiences on the island. I also visited and stayed on Mātū/Somes island which gave me the opportunity to fully experience the island-the landscape, the sea, the wildlife and the weather - which made these men's experiences so much more real to me. Place-setting- getting that right- has always been extremely important to me as a writer and these visits were wonderful, as were the experiences of becoming familiar with Wellington which is also an important setting within the novel. In addition, I had the opportunity to meet and speak with people whose relations had been involved with the situation on the island or who offered information I could follow up on.

I also enjoyed the opportunities I was given to talk about my new novel and general writing. During my time in Wellington, I was a speaker at the Taupō Winter Festival, Wairarapa Word, the Friends of the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Friends of the Randell Cottage. I read from my new novel at the Randell Cottage Open Day and tutored and spoke about the process of writing at the

Blackball Writers' Retreat. I was also this year's judge for fiction for the New Zealand Heritage Book Awards and an associate judge for the Michael Gifkins unpublished novel award. I was able to meet and discuss my tutoring role with Kirsten Le Harival regarding this year's Kahini Writers Weekend to be held in Waikanae in February.

During my residency, I completed the draft of my novel to the extent that it is now being read by my editor and publisher. Though, no doubt, there will be changes to make and possibly areas to change and further develop, I know that it has benefited hugely by the experiences made possible by my time in Wellington. As well as that, I loved the opportunities that living in Thorndon, close to the city, offered, from simply walking through the gardens and streets to being able to go to book launches, meeting and talking to other writers, going to Wellington concerts, talks and theatre. All of this combined with the interest and friendliness of the Randell Cottage community made this residency an experience I will never forget.

Thank you again for the opportunities given to me,

Paddy Richardson