

## **Annual Report**

**For the year ended 31 March 2014**

### **Background**

The Randell Cottage Writers' Trust, established in 2002, was documented by way of a Deed dated 19 September 2001, 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 25 writers of literary significance in both countries (see list attached).

The Trust receives financial support from Creative New Zealand through a three-year contract grant under *Toi Uru Kahikatea*; from the French Government through the France-New Zealand Friendship Fund and the French Embassy; and from the Wellington City Council under a three-year Service Contract. Creative NZ funds the stipend of the New Zealand writer; the France-NZ Friendship Fund meets the travel and living costs of the French writer; and WCC funding goes towards the ongoing operation, insurance and maintenance of the Randell Cottage. The Trust is deeply appreciative of this support without which it would be unable to fulfil its objectives.

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. It is also registered with the Charities Commission. GST is paid on income and the Trust is registered for GST purposes.

The Governor General, Lt. Gen. The Rt. Hon. Sir Jerry Mataparae, and the Ambassador of France, S.E. Mr Laurent Contini, are Co-Patrons of the Trust.

### **Board of Trustees**

The current Trustees are:

- Associate Professor Jean Anderson
- Sarah Dennis (Chair)

- Dame Fiona Kidman, DNZM, OBE
- Emeritus Professor Vincent O'Sullivan, DCNZM
- Beverley Price, MNZM
- Susan Price
- Sian Robyns
- Gordon Stewart
- Jo Thorpe
- Anita Woods
- Secretary/Treasurer: Jenny Ang.

### **Resident writers 2013-2014**

Writers in the Cottage this past year (1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014) were Estelle Nollet, France (to May 2013), Denis Welch, NZ (July - December 2013) and Thanh-Van Tran-Nhut, France (January - March 2014). All three writers have established reputations with previous publications to their names. All found the Cottage residency highly conducive to their very different writing projects. Each reported good progress with their planned research and writing towards eventual publication. Estelle Nollet researched themes from Maori culture for her fictional writing; Denis Welch carried out in-depth research for a major biography on former Prime Minister, Norman Kirk; and Thanh-Van Tran-Nhut uncovered rich seams of material in the National and Turnbull Libraries, which she will incorporate into a work of historical crime fiction weaving elements of France's early links with NZ, science and detective writing. Denis Welch submitted a very positive report about his experience at the Cottage (copy attached). The French writers reported positively (in French) to the French Embassy. In addition Thanh-Van Tran-Nhut wrote an enthusiastic blog about her time in Wellington which can be seen at [www.eisenhut.canalblog.com](http://www.eisenhut.canalblog.com).

In November 2013, the Board's selection panel, comprising Vincent O'Sullivan (Convenor), Fiona Kidman, Sue Orr, Jean Anderson and Sian Robyns, selected Tina Makereti as the next Creative New Zealand writer-in-residence (July to December 2014).

### **Public Outreach**

In keeping with the terms of their residency agreements, each writer contributed actively to the local literary scene by taking part in public readings of their work and/or participation in discussions and seminars. Both Nollet and Tran-Nhut followed programmes drawn up by the French Embassy, which involved them in talks to groups organised by the Alliance Française in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Tran-Nhut spoke to a well-attended gathering at the National Library. Both French writers visited New Caledonia under the auspices of the Maison du Livre in Nouméa. In addition, under the French Embassy's new regional programme for the Randell Cottage writer, Tran-Nhut undertook a successful, week-long speaking programme in Australia. She gave interviews to the *Dompost* and Radio

NZ. Welch spoke to a well-attended seminar series in October at the Stout Research Centre on "*Kirk in his Time*" and joined forces with Fiona Kidman at the Millwood Gallery in Thorndon speaking on "*Evoking the Historic Person in Fiction and Biography*".

All Randell Cottage events were open to the public with free entry, although koha has been welcomed. The annual Open Day at the Cottage was held on 29 September 2013 to coincide with Wellington's Tulip Sunday. Visitors were treated to a historical talk by Beverley Price about the early days in the Randell Cottage.

### **Growing reputation**

The Randell Cottage Writers Trust continues to gain in strength and recognition of its role as an integral part of the New Zealand literary landscape. This year saw the Trust consolidate its reputation for supporting literary excellence. The active outreach accomplished by the writers at the Cottage helped raise the profile of the Randell residency with a wider circle of the public. The Randell Cottage Writers Trust has continued to enjoy close links during the year with the French Embassy.

Besides the activities of the current writers-in-residence themselves, further achievements by former residents continue to augment the status of the Randell Cottage residency. Recent new publications by Vivienne Plumb, Kirsty Gunn, Michael Harlow, Jennifer Compton, Tim Corballis and Beryl Fletcher have achieved critical success. Others, including Kirsty Gunn (Best NZ Book Award for "*The Big Music*"), Whiti Hereaka and Michael Harlow have received literary awards. Kirsty Gunn's memoir on her time spent at the Randell Cottage: "*Thorndon, Wellington and Home: My Katherine Mansfield Project*", was launched this year at Unity Books. It warmly acknowledges the Trust and its funders.

Randell Cottage events were publicised on the Trust's website ([www.randellcottage.co.nz](http://www.randellcottage.co.nz)) and Facebook page, both maintained by the Friends of the Randell Cottage. Updates and newsletters have kept readers informed about events and highlighted activities of resident writers (present and past) as well as the literary successes of some Randell Cottage Trustees, notably Vincent O'Sullivan (Poet Laureate) and Fiona Kidman, and Friends Maggie Rainey-Smith and Mary McCallum.

### **Friends of the Randell Cottage Association**

The Friends Association has been active in support of the Trust and the writers. In June 2013 Sian Robyns was elected Chair after Mary McCallum stepped aside to focus on a new publishing venture. This year, the Friends have given priority to increasing their membership and to fund-raising, notably through the establishment of a special fund to help pay for the projected re-roofing of the Cottage in the near future. The Friends have been instrumental in supporting and organising speaking events and the Open Day at the Cottage and in liaising with university and literary contacts. They have helped welcome writers to the Cottage, assisted with development and maintenance of the garden at 14 St Mary Street, and managed the

Trust's website and publicity which underpin the Trust's outreach and cultural interaction. The Friends provided support to the Board's selection panel which nominates the Creative New Zealand resident writer each year.

## **Finance and Maintenance**

The Trust operates within tight financial constraints. The audited annual Statement of Financial Position and Financial Performance for 2013-14 are attached. As can be seen, the Trust ended the year with \$295.00 net income over expenditure. The Board is grateful to the generosity of individual donors who have enabled it to meet certain unexpected expenses. New insurance requirements will mean a significant increase in the house insurance on the property in the coming year. The maintenance provision in the budget is expected to be needed soon as essential maintenance of the Cottage roof is foreshadowed. Quotes for this work have been sought.

The Board of trustees has managed the Randell Cottage carefully. All maintenance requirements have been attended to promptly. Important improvements have been the installation of a heat pump and a new water-heater. Priority is given to ensuring the Cottage is well heated and ventilated. The paths are cleaned and the gutterings checked twice-yearly. A gardener has been engaged for four hours a month and his work has been supplemented by voluntary working bees carried out by Trustees and Friends which help keep the garden at the Cottage in good order. A new native section was planted in 2013 and is developing very well. The Cottage has been seen as a secure home, an inspiration and a pleasure to be in by the writers-in-residence during the year of this report.

**SARAH DENNIS**  
**Chair**

**July 2014**