



The Friends of the
Turnbull Library

Ngā Hoa o te Whare Pukapuka Turnbull



A H Turnbull, 1868-1918

NEWSLETTER

“My books and Mss I
hope will assist future
researchers after the
truth ...”

-- Alexander Turnbull, 12 July 1912,
Excerpt from letter to Captain Gilbert Mair.

Number 98
February 2025

Programme February to June 2025

Our public talks are free to all, although donations are welcome. Events are held in **Taiwhanga Kawhau**, the National Library Auditorium on the *Lower Ground floor* (Aitken Street entrance).

Wednesday 12 February at 5.30 pm

Katie Cooper, historian and author

Rēwena and Rabbit Stew: The Rural Kitchen in Aotearoa, 1800–1940

Thursday 13 March at 5.30pm

Dr Elizabeth Bowyer, historian

A Matter of Property: Women, settler

colonialism and the courts of law in colonial Aotearoa New Zealand

Tuesday 15 April at 5.30 pm

Chris Elder, author of “*Interesting Times: Some New Zealanders in Republican China*”

The Hunt for the China People

Tuesday 13 May at 5.30 pm

Flora Feltham, archivist author of “*Bad Archive*”

Fish for my net, scraps in the sieve:

On archives and essays

Thursday 26 June at 6.00 pm

Dr Monty Soutar CNZM, historian and author

“*The Kāwai series: conveying history through fiction*”

Founder Lecture 2025: our premier event (RSVP essential)



The Friends of the Turnbull Library Committee 2024/2025

President:

Prof **Barbara Brookes**

Past President:

Katherine Baxter

Secretary:

Robin Anderson

Treasurer:

Gillian Cross

Committee: Dr Elizabeth Bowyer, Steve Cosgrove, Kate Fortune, Dr Don Gilling, Emma Jean Kelly, Jim Mayo, Dr Daniel Morrow, Dr Anne Phillips, Winston Roberts, Louise Sinclair, Dr Robin Skinner, Tess Tuxford, Rachel Underwood QSM.

2025 FoTL programme details

Details were correct at the time of going to print, but circumstances sometimes make changes necessary. Updated information will be published on our website, www.turnbullfriends.org.nz, so do check it regularly. Note: **These events will also be offered on Zoom.** Register on our website to receive the Zoom link.

12 February: Katie Cooper, *Rēwena and Rabbit Stew*



Preparing food, however people choose to do so, is surely one of the most vital of all human endeavours. We need food to survive, and for that reason social practices related to food are fundamental in every society. At the same time, food preparation can be mundane and repetitive, and it is such a routine part of our lives that we don't often stop to consider its cultural significance. In her 2024 book, *Rēwena and Rabbit Stew*, **Katie Cooper** explored how cooking and food practices shaped the daily lives, homes and communities of rural Pākehā and Māori in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In this presentation, she will discuss some of the key themes of the book, using stories and images from the Alexander Turnbull Library collection to delve into cooking technologies, provisions, and the variety of cooking spaces used.

Katie Cooper grew up on a small sheep farm just out of Gore and is the daughter of an agriculture teacher and a history teacher. She completed her PhD in history at the University of Otago, and since 2016 has been a curator at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

13 March: Elizabeth Bowyer, *A Matter of Property*

Elizabeth Bowyer will discuss women's appearances in court under the civil law in colonial Aotearoa New Zealand. Matters relating to property is what brought women into the courts most frequently during the colonial period. Women maintained a steady presence in court records involving cases concerning consumer contracts, labour, employment, and the buying and selling of land, goods, chattels and services. Civil legal records reveal the networks of commercial and economic relationships that occurred through such transactions. Casting the spotlight on the courts of law provides an opportunity to explore a rich archival environment to analyse how the law worked in practice alongside gender, settler colonialism, property ownership and marriage as a legal and economic institution.



Dr Elizabeth Bowyer completed her PhD at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington in 2024. Her PhD thesis 'Women Contracting in Law c.1840-1920: Gender and settler colonialism in the courts of Aotearoa New Zealand' is currently being written as a book manuscript with the help of the Judith Binney Writing Award. She serves on the editorial collective of *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* and is a committee member of the Friends of Turnbull and the Professional Historians Association of New Zealand Aotearoa.

15 April: Chris Elder, *The Hunt for the China People*



A surprising number of New Zealanders went to live in China for varying lengths of time in the tumultuous period between the fall of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1911 to 1949). Many years later **Chris Elder** and a friend, Michael Green, found opportunities to seek out and talk to some of the China hands, by then elderly, about their experiences. Many, many years later, those encounters provided a framework for his book, *Interesting Times: Some New Zealanders in Republican China* (THWUP, 2024).

In this talk Chris Elder sets out to describe briefly the China years of some extraordinary New Zealanders, and to note the pitfalls, frustrations, and occasional serendipities encountered in attempting this account.

Chris Elder served twice in the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing, first in the 1970s when it was still Peking, and most recently as New Zealand ambassador in 1993-97. He is the editor of *New Zealand's China Experience: Its Genesis, Triumphs, and Occasional Moments of Less Than Complete Success*, and *Forty Years On: New Zealand-China Relations Then, Now and in the Years to Come*, as well as two literary anthologies: *Old Peking, City of the Ruler of the World*, and *China's Treaty Ports: Half Love and Half Hate*.

13 May: Flora Feltham, *Fish for my net, scraps in the sieve*



In her 2024 essay collection, *Bad Archive*, **Flora Feltham** explored the corners where her memories are stashed: the Alexander Turnbull Library vault, her mother’s house, a marriage counsellor’s office, Wellington’s tip and Newtown New World. She took us on a bender in Croatia, learned tapestry and met romance novelists, all while wondering how families and relationships absorb the past, especially given everything we don’t say to our loved ones. Most importantly, her work asks, how do you write about a life honestly when there are so many flaws in the way we record history and, more confrontingly, in the way we remember? In this talk, Flora will reflect on what she means by ‘bad’ and ‘archive’ in *Bad Archive*, as well as her own writing practice, inspired by many conversations she’s had about archiving since the book was published.

Flora Feltham is a writer, archivist and weaver from Pōneke, who has an MA from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington. Her work has appeared in *Turbine / Kapohau*, *ArtNow* and *The Guardian*. Her essay collection *Bad Archive*, published in July 2024, was selected as one of the Dominion Post’s best 35 books of the year and won The Spinoff’s 2024 People’s Choice Award for best New Zealand nonfiction.

26 June: The FoTL Founder Lecture, Dr Monty Soutar on his *Kāwai* series

We advise with great pleasure that historian **Dr Monty Soutar ONZM** will give this year’s Founder Lecture. As a historian Dr Soutar has consistently sought to engage audiences by making New Zealand’s history more captivating. Through his best-selling novel series, he has reached a far broader audience than he could have achieved by presenting the same material in a non-fiction format. Monty Soutar has been a teacher, a soldier, a historian, and he has worked for the New Zealand government, museums and his tribal organisation. He has a research background that spans almost 40 years, in which time he led one of the largest oral history projects in New Zealand, interviewing Māori elders about their WWII experiences abroad and at home. In 2015 he was awarded the NZ Order of Merit for services to Māori and historical research. He continues to serve on the Waitangi Tribunal.



Dr Soutar is the author of *Whīiki Whīi Whīi E! Māori in the First World War* and *Ngā Tama Toa: The Price of Citizenship: C Company 28 (Māori Battalion 1939–1945)*. *Whīiki* is a major publication about Maori participation in the First World War and the award-winning *Nga Tama Toa* focussed on Maori participation in the Second World War. In 2021 he was awarded the Creative New Zealand Michael King Writer’s Fellowship to write the *Kāwai* series.

Put Thursday 26 June, at 6.00 pm, in your diary now!

Membership renewal

We invite you to use the form below for membership renewal for 2025-26. *Please note that there is a small increase in subscription fees approved at the 2024 AGM.*

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: The Friends of the Turnbull Library

Tax Invoice GST No. 46-630-734

Annual Subscription to 31 March 2026

- Double \$62
- Individual (waged) \$45
- Individual (unwaged) \$38
- Institutional (NZ) \$73
- Overseas: Individual \$62
- Overseas: Institutional \$90
- Donation \$

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr

Address

Phone

E-Mail

Amount enclosed: \$ **Membership enquiries to: turnbullfriends@gmail.com**

The Friends of the Turnbull Library is a registered charity #CC22660. Donations of \$5 or more are acknowledged with a receipt, and are eligible for a 33% tax-credit claim.

Your subscription may be paid EITHER by internet banking/ direct credit to Friends of the Turnbull Library, BNZ, a/c no: **02-0534-0043670-000**. Please add **your name** as “particular” and **Renew** as “reference”.

OR payment by bank teller at your own bank. (Use your name as Reference, and then afterwards, also notify The Secretary, The Friends of Turnbull Library, PO Box 12-186, Wellington NZ, 6144)

2025 FoTL Research Grants

We are delighted to announce that three research grants and a travel grant have been awarded to four distinguished researchers. There were 17 applications in this round, and the selection panel, convened by Dr Robin Skinner, praised the generally high standard and the diverse range of these projects.

Author of the 2004 publication *A Carved Cloak for Tahu*, **Dr Mere Whaanga** (*left*) receives a research grant of \$10,000 for her project 'Conflict, land, and leadership', which aims to extend understanding of major conflicts in the greater Māhia/Wairoa area in the 19th century.



Dunedin researcher **Dr Annabel Cooper** (*right*) has been awarded a grant of \$7000 to support her biography of the Hayward family and their contribution to entertainment and film in Aotearoa New Zealand through the twentieth century.

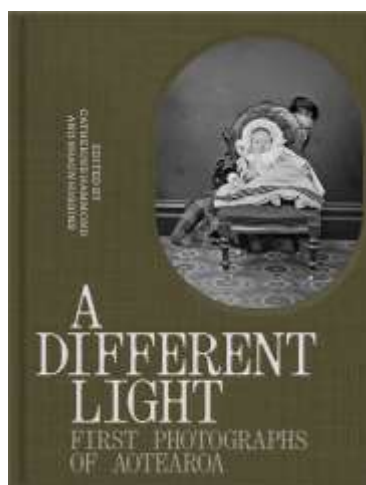


Australian-based researcher **Jo Oliver** (*left*) has a grant of \$3000 for her project to produce a biography of Rita Snowden, a mid-twentieth-century writer. Snowden wrote for both adults and children, and with 68 books published, was read and loved in her home country and internationally.

In addition to these three research grants, the well-known Wellington historian and author **Redmer Yska** has been awarded a travel grant of \$4000 towards his current project, a new biography of Alexander Horsburgh Turnbull, whose generous bequest of his own personal library to the nation became the foundation of the Alexander Turnbull Library.



New exhibition on early photographs



A touring photography exhibition featuring important Turnbull collection material will open at Wellington's Te Pātaka Toi Adam Art Gallery, Kelburn Parade, from 1 February until 15 June 2025. ***A Different Light: First Photographs of Aotearoa*** has been recently showing at Auckland Museum. The exhibition traces photography's rapid development from the unique daguerreotypes made in the late 1840s to the widely shared cartes-de-visite of the 1860s and the emergence of amateur photography in the 1880s. A collaboration between Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, the Alexander Turnbull Library and Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, it has been jointly curated by Shaun Higgins, Anna Petersen and Natalie Marshall. *A Different Light: First Photographs of Aotearoa* is accompanied by an illustrated book (*left*) published by Auckland University Press, and edited by Catherine Hammond and Shaun Higgins, with contributions by Angela Wanhalla, Shaun Higgins, Paul Diamond, Anna Petersen and Natalie Marshall.

A focus on photography also features at the National Library, where ***A Secret Tear / Adam Maclay Photographer*** continues in Te Puna Foundation Gallery until 15 March. From 12 April, photographs by John Feeney illustrate his enchantment with Egypt, where he lived for forty years. Photography continues as the focus in the library's main gallery when City Gallery Wellington opens ***Site Seeing***, on 12 April, which profiles the work of contemporary photographers Conor Clarke and Bridget Reweti.

Auckland Writers Festival

This year's event will be held at the Aotea Centre on 13-19 May, and once again we are providing sponsorship for one of the speakers. Our FoTL session (to be selected by the Festival organisers) will feature the work of one of the scholars whose research makes an enormous and exciting contribution to the development of new knowledge in New Zealand. The full Festival programme will be available in March.

In Memoriam

We record with regret the death of Dr Cathrine Anne Coolahan on 3 January 2025, aged 95. A loyal and longstanding supporter of the Friends of Turnbull Library, **Kate Coolahan** was a member for many years and regularly attended our public programme events.