

brief #34

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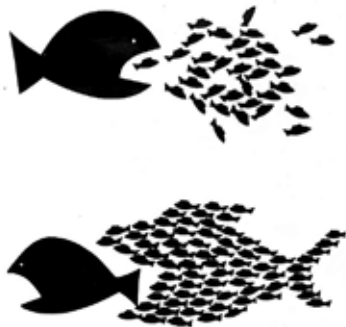
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*Cover images by the very talented Ellen Portch.. Thanks to Brett 'the Boss' Cross for some clever computer work. brief #34 is dedicated to **Leicester Kyle**.*



OPPOSE BUSH'S WAR – GROUND THE ORION!

To Whenuapai workers – in and out of uniform!

We are picketing this airbase to protest the Clark government's plans to send an RNZ Air force Orion to the Persian Gulf to support Bush's war for oil in Iraq. Working with the frigate Te Kaha, the Orion will be asked to identify and plot the movements of every ship passing through the only sea access to Iraq. Information collected by the Orion and Te Kaha will be fed to the US aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln. In recent months, the Abraham Lincoln has been involved in the bombing of Iraq and in planning for an invasion. By doing some of Bush's grubby spying, the Orion and Te Kaha would help US ships and planes to focus on direct aggression against Iraq.

But the Orion can't take off if there is no one to service, supply, or even fly it. Whether you are a worker wearing a uniform or a worker on civvy street, there are three bloody good reasons why you should join the global anti-war movement and blackballing this plane.

Reason #1: the Iraqi people will suffer terribly from the war the Orion would be supporting. According to a study by Australian doctors, 500,000 lives are at risk from an invasion of Iraq. 'Collateral damage' from bombs and missiles, contamination from depleted uranium shells, and disease are all expected to take a toll.

Reason #2: your fellow workers around the world are already suffering the effects of Bush's War of Terror. Many workers recognise that Bush's 'War on Terror' is a war on workers in the West, as well as a war on the peoples of the Middle East. The warmongers want to take long-term control of the region and boost their flagging profits by making Western labour as well as Middle Eastern oil cheaper. Bush used his war plans as an excuse to attack the West Coast waterside workers when they tried to strike last year, and is trying to use his post-World Trade Centre 'Patriot Act' to strip hundreds of thousands of state employees of their right to union membership. In Britain, Bush's best friend Tony Blair has used the war as an excuse to threaten to ban the right of firefighters to go on strike for higher wages. (Refusing to back down, the firefighters have scheduled more strike actions.) We can trust Helen to pull the same 'national security' card out of the pack the moment she fears the prospect of working class militancy.

Reason#3: you will suffer from continued New Zealand support for Bush's wars.

The Clark government is trying to trade military and political support for the War of Terror for a free trade deal with Bush. According to economic analysts, such a deal would mean the privatisation of the New Zealand health system and water services by U.S. multinationals, the removal of restrictions on Genetic Engineering, and the buying up of the New Zealand countryside by US bosses. This is what New Zealand workers in uniform are being asked to risk their lives for in the Middle East!

Unions representing 130 million workers from Australia to Togo have come out against the latest stage in the endless War of Terror. In Western Australia, 75,000 workers from nine unions have pledged to go on strike the minute any attack on Iraq begins, whether or not it is sanctioned by the UN. In Ireland, mass pickets have forced the US government to stop using the Shannon Air Base to move troops and supplies to the Middle East. In New Zealand, the Council of Trade Unions opposes a war on Iraq and calls on its members to protest. You should protest by blackballing the Orion!

Working class militancy can defeat this military madness!

Oppose Bush's war – ground the Orion!

Leaflet issued by Direct Anti War Action (DAWA)

Rough cut

For Leicester Hugo Kyle

Persistence of tussock

maxed-out Mastercard

Well, I've had some rather bad news. My friend Leicester Kyle is **in extremis**, with terminal cancer, at the Bone Marrow Unit of Christchurch Hospital. He's elected to receive no further treatment for it, and his partner Carol circulated an email on the 18th of June warning his close friends and associates that he wasn't long for this world.

As I write, a week later, they're administering the Anglican last rites, or "final anointing." David Howard – who was able to travel up from Dunedin to see Leicester one last time – just rang to tell me that, and also that he and I have been asked to be literary executors. I wish I could be there too. Writing this instead is, it seems, the best that I can do.

Barns raise rooftops

in reverse

Leicester's wife Miriel died of cancer, too, a year or so after we first met. It was at a poetry workshop in 1997, actually – rather an auspicious day: the day I met Lee Dowrick and Stu Bagby, also. We've been friends and allies ever since.

The first Leicester I knew, then, was the Auckland Leicester – the man who invariably went along to Poetry Live on K Rd and sat

there looking avuncular with his long white beard and broad-brimmed leather hat, before standing up to read some wry and witty verses to the assembled hipsters.

The scenic guard-rail's

whited out

After Miriel's death I asked him if there was anything I could do for him, anything at all to make things easier. He said that there **was** one thing, rather a trivial thing – if I were to organise a regular gathering of friends, perhaps weekly or fortnightly, to talk about poetry, that might be a nice distraction.

Accordingly Richard Taylor, Scott Hamilton, Leicester and I began a semi-regular series of meetings in the London Bar, punctuated by visits from the likes of Hamish Dewe, Michael Arnold, Miriam Bellard, Kirsty and Andrew McCully, as well as the boys from evasion (and, on one memorable occasion, Yves Harrison, who got into a bit of a fight with Scott over the former's disruption of a Salt launch a few weeks before ... the laws of libel prevent me from saying more about that distinctly unedifying scene ...)

Those meetings still continue, at Galbraith's tavern, under the nom-de-plume of the brief organising committee. Leicester got us onto a good thing.

Charming Creek

takes an awkward turn

Then Leicester left. He bought a house, sight unseen, in the tiny village of Millerton, in the hills above Westport, and drove off there in his red Land Rover. It seemed a bit of a leap in the dark.

I felt quite worried about him at first. But when I heard he'd acquired a little cat called Cursor (because he kept pace with the lines every time you turned over a new page in a book), I thought he'd be all right. And he was.

I visited Leicester in Millerton three times. The first time, in 1998, I flew down for ten days. The second time was after escaping that vast melancholy mud hole called the Gathering at the turn of the millennium. The third time, a few years later, I drove over in a rental car with David Howard for a week or so.

A naked tap

for Miner's Dark

The lines I've been quoting above are from a poem called "Tips on Stress from Seddonville" which I wrote during my first sojourn in Millerton. We drove over there to buy some coal, after trying rather unsuccessfully to dig some out of one of the exposed coal seams that criss-cross the region (it looked bona-fide enough, but belched out acrid smoke whenever we tried to burn it).

The Tavern is, it appears, quite famous. We had a beer there, and then tried to compose some poems in each other's manner. After a while the proprietor came over and remarked that there were two types of weather in Seddonville – if you can't see the hills, it's raining; if you can see them, it's about to rain. Then he turned on the rugby. No poetry-scribbling drifters for him!

This is the poem I wrote that day, called “Kylesque.” I’m sure it doesn’t do him justice, though it later appeared in one of Tony Chad’s anthologies under the title “City Face”, so it must have touched some kind of chord:

Told yesterday
I had a ‘city
face’

this morning
I spent
practising
before the glass

insouciant sneers
atrocious leers
insolent stares

till I noticed
the espresso
had gone
cold

(9/7/98)

[As “City Face” – **Valley Micropress** 1: 11 (1998) 6;
All Together Now! A Celebration of New Zealand Culture by 100 Poets,
ed. Tony Chad (Wellington: Valley Micropress, 2000) 85].

After a while, as Leicester became more and more of an iconic figure on the West Coast (mainly because of his intense involvement in the fight to save the local environment from

strip mining), I began to feel that someone should compile an anthology of the various poems and tributes to him which had begun to appear all over the place. Virtually everyone who visited seemed to want to write a poem about Millerton and his strange, old-man-of-the-mountain role in the community.

Tony Chad, David Howard, Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, Jim Norcliffe are just some of the writers I know who went there and wanted to record something of the extraordinary nature of the place.

So what will I miss most about Leicester? His wry sense of humour, above all, I suppose. In the very last letter he wrote me, just six weeks ago, he offers one parting reflection: “it isn’t really true that the quality of a poem has anything much to do with the beauty of the reader” – a typically sly and offbeat reaction to my own moonings over girls.

Also, his unfailing courtesy. He was a gentleman in the deepest sense of the term. When I heard how ill he was, a couple of months ago, I sent him an advance copy of the Classic New Zealand Poets in Performance anthology that I’d edited for AUP with Jan Kemp. I thought he might like it, hearing again the voices of Curnow, Glover, Tuwhare and the rest reading their iconic poems. Even from a cancer ward he took the trouble to ring up and thank me.

I was out at the time, so he had to leave a message. Is it sentimental of me to have saved it, and to play it back again now?

The voice is thin and breathless – a shadow of what he used to sound like – but it’s so recognisably him:

Message recorded Sunday June the 4th, 12.27 pm:

“Hello Jack, this is Leicester. Just ringing to thank you very much for the poetry book. I think it’s a real triumph. The poems are so well

chosen, and it's really good to read New Zealand poetry all keeping such good company. So very thoughtful of you, and I'm reading it with great pleasure. Bye."

I guess that's the last time I'll hear his voice. There are a thousand more stories I could tell. Maybe I will tell some more of them later on, but for the moment I just want to put on record my love and respect for that wise and complex man – priest, poet, conservationist – the Reverend Leicester Kyle.

—Jack Ross

More than Pain: Leicester Kyle 1937-2006

When I met Leicester Kyle for the first time he was wearing a leather jacket and a broad-brimmed leather hat and stroking a long white beard. He looked like a cross between a religious prophet and a genteel bikie, and neither religious types nor bikies were common sights at the Dead Poets Bookshop's Friday night poetry readings. Leicester soon became a fixture of the late '90s Auckland literary scene, turning up at readings, book launches and conferences, and invariably drawing respectful but bemused attention from Bohemian hipsters and literary politicians alike. It's not difficult to appreciate the reason for the attention Leicester attracted. Kiwi writers are, by and large, a dull lot. The days when popular philistinism and government persecution moulded us into interesting shapes are long gone. Nowadays we are encouraged by friendly teachers at primary and secondary school, allowed to study 'creative writing' at university, then provided with safe middle class jobs as academics or publishers' assistants or librarians when we graduate. We marry other writers, settle in safe leafy suburbs like Grey Lynn or Te Aro Valley, write about our cute children and our greying hair, and take yearly holidays in Greece or Thailand. Like I say, we're a boring lot. But Leicester Kyle wasn't dull like us: he was emphatically and effortlessly different. He had come to writing late, by a circuitous and sometimes bizarre path.

After a childhood marked by the Great Depression and by the suicide of both his parents, Leicester trained first as a botanist and then as an Anglican priest. Over several decades he and his wife Miriel ministered to communities as far apart as Banks Peninsula and India. After they retired and moved to Auckland Leicester began to write poetry, and Miriel was stricken with the cancer that would kill her in 1998.

In his fine tribute to Leicester, Jack Ross reveals that it was the old vicar's idea to establish the regular poetry discussion evenings

that began at the London Bar in 1997 and continue today in the more sedate surroundings of Galbraith's Alehouse. I don't know whether it was Jack or Leicester who chose the London Bar as a venue back in 1997, but whoever it was may well have been motivated by a desire to forestall the labyrinthine monologues that tend to occur whenever poets are given a captive audience and a regular supply of alcohol. In those heady pre-smoke free days the London Bar was so noisy on Friday nights that even Richard Taylor in full swing after a dozen Lion Reds couldn't avoid interruption, as the wannabe Coltrane in the resident jazz band reached for a higher note, or a girl in a white miniskirt spilt red wine over Hamish Dewe. In the London Bar on a Friday night there was always a surfeit of reasons not to pay close attention to anyone's table talk. When Leicester spoke, though, everybody always listened. That quiet and wry yet solemn voice somehow made the jazz and the mini-skirted girls disappear.

When Leicester spoke it was usually to tell a story, and the events in most of his stories took place decades ago, in obscure places like Okains Bay or the wilds of Bengal. Despite or because of their settings, I always felt that Leicester's stories were intended as urgent parables, as gestures toward some moral lesson that needed learning. Yet story after story seemed to evade easy interpretation, to frustrate the urge to moralise. Leicester's tales were at once unforgettable and elusive. Nearly a decade later, there are a couple that I still recall almost word for word.

Leicester's Story of the Young Man in the Gutter

This happened when I had only recently been ordained a priest and was full of a desire to serve God and humanity. I was hurrying down a busy Christchurch street through the spring sunshine on my way to an appointment when I almost tripped over a young man in a black trench coat who had seated himself in the gutter. His eyes were bloodshot, there was a brown stain around

his mouth, and he was shaking feebly. 'Are you alright?' I asked. 'You look like life has dealt you a harsh blow' I added, as I looked at him with what I am sure was an expression of sincere concern. 'I was about to say the same thing to you' he replied, staring back at me calmly.

Leicester's Story of the Corpse on the Roof Rack

A colleague of mine and his new wife were using their honeymoon to drive around a remote and beautiful part of northern Bengal, but the young bride took ill and died before they could find medical help. He decided he would have to return her body to her family, who lived on the other side of India, in a little village south of Bombay, so that they could help him organise a funeral. But his car was very small, too small to spread a body out in, and he was forced to put his wife's body on the roof rack, wrapped in the mattress they had been sleeping on during their trip. For three days he drove across India, stopping only for a few hours' sleep on the side of a dusty road in the centre of the country. When he arrived at his wife's family's home he climbed out of the car with a tired sigh of sad relief. He turned to the roof rack to undo the rope he had tied the mattress around his wife's body with, only to see that the mattress had been stolen.

It seems to me that these stories capture something of the worldview that would assume sharper focus in Leicester's best poems. Leicester Kyle's world is a place where love and horror, order and chaos, life and death are balanced precariously against one another:

*as if there were no town
nor warm things in it*

*just the jungle
on the first day*

In Leicester's world, heroic efforts are made by humans to impose order on reality, but the very extent of the schemas that men and women build up - systems of theological argument, or moral justification, or botanical and zoological classification - betray the ever-present threat of chaos and death. Ultimately, chaos enters into and undermines attempts to impose order on the world - as Leicester knew only too well, botanical classification and theological explication both succumb to the chaos of subdivision and conjecture, as the human mind wrestles unsuccessfully with the infinite complexity and fluidity of reality:

*We walk on a meniscus
under it is silence, darkness
depths we have no means to plumb*

But if there is chaos in the order that humanity creates, there may also be order in the chaos of nature. Like Hopkins, a poet he admired, Leicester struggles to read the universe as scripture, to explicate its infinite details into revelation. Leicester's poetry is attentive to the way that chaos of nature can give way suddenly to a brief mysterious order: he notices the way the symmetry of a fern can rise out of the rubble of the forest floor, and the way that the churning chaos of the ocean can throw up the sudden perfection of a wave.

Leicester's oeuvre is marked by an unresolved tension between the effort to impose order on the world and a yearning to surrender to the world. The equanimity with which Leicester greeted his death from a cancer of the bone marrow does not surprise me. One of the darker themes of his poetry is the role of death as the final solution to the shortcomings of all human attempts to control reality:

*Making makes mistakes,
as in making us
who make ruin*

Why did Leicester Kyle begin to write poetry in his seventh decade? By the time he retired to Auckland he had enjoyed a memorable career that had seen him intimately involved in the lives of half a dozen different communities. He had been a social worker and a spiritual advisor for hundreds of people. Why would a man with his breadth of experience suddenly start sweating over where he put words on a page, reading to tiny audiences at Bohemian bars, and placing poems in little literary magazines?

We may detect, in the poems Leicester wrote during his years in Auckland, a reaction to the role he had played for so long as a minister. The Auckland poems are frequently full of surreal imagery and situations, and show a fascination with sin, violence and death. In a sense, they are ‘anti-sermons’: wildly personal poems written to meet the spiritual needs of the priest, not the priest’s flock.

‘Heteropholis’ is the best of the Auckland poems, and it shows the strange territory Leicester was mapping in the second half of the nineties. Written as the interior monologue of an angel which has been turned into a lizard and set down in a glass tank in modern-day Auckland, the fifty-part poem is filled with exact and unsympathetic observations of a minute yet representative piece of the city:

My caregiver has no female. From observation of his ways (behold they are so various) I have learned of pleasures denied my reptilian self

He grows amorous as the barometer falls, which is often at full moon. His thighs taughten. Sensing from my wooden perch I see him fes-

*minate as the day goes until at
dark he rings for a Working Girl*

It is a small tragedy that 'Heteropolis' has not yet found a professional publisher. With its disgusted, fascinated stare at the city most Kiwis love to hate, the poem reads like a bizarre successor to works like ARD Fairburn's 'Dominion' and James K Baxter's 'Ode to Auckland'.

At the end of the nineties Leicester surprised the many friends he had made in Auckland by moving to Millerton, an old coal mining town on the West Coast of the South Island. Joining the local volunteer fire brigade, publishing poems about local people and issues, conducting botanical expeditions through West Coast forests and swamps, and throwing himself into the campaign to stop the Happy Valley coal mine, Leicester soon became something of a celebrity in the Buller region of the West Coast. In a letter he sent me for a recent issue of **brief**, Leicester explained the new role he had found for himself amongst the Coasters:

[O]ne does like to write for a known readership...being poet to a defined and domestic community has its attractions, a sense of professional belonging...In Buller there is a great fondness for verse but little for poetry, so I stand alone and unassailed. My observable literary ability, my success in conservation and botany, my involvement in civic affairs, have all pushed me into a certain notoreity in the region which, were I so ambitious, would give me satisfaction...

We can say, then, that Leicester's move to Buller saw him once again assuming some of the roles he had played as a minister. The relative isolation of the Auckland years had been left behind, and not unsurprisingly the tone of Leicester's poetry changed. The best of the West Coast poems bring the alienation

of ‘Heteropolis’ into conflict with a sense of community, and an empathy with the people of that community.

With its storms, wild coastline, industrial ruins and decaying towns and villages, the Buller region offered Leicester a metaphor for the precariousness of life, but the harshness of the region had created a sense of community that was absent in Auckland. In his 2005 book **Breakers** Leicester wrote about the erosion of Buller’s coastline by a violent sea, but also celebrated the efforts of locals to stop the sea and other hostile forces - economic, as well as natural - from destroying their communities.

One of the most memorable of Leicester’s late works is ‘Death of a Landscape’, which is at once an elegy for his daughter, who committed suicide in 2004, and a cry of protest against the Happy Valley coal mine. Handwritten on topographical maps of Happy Valley, ‘Death of a Landscape’ expresses a collective as well as personal loss:

*But it was more than pain.
So much love
polished practiced honed
lost dead buried,
then blown like pollen
from trees in the wind.*

I felt the some of the same sense of loss when I learned of Leicester’s death yesterday.

—Scott Hamilton

LEICESTER KYLE (friend, poet, and scientist)

Recently my very dear friend Leicester Kyle a great man and poet died - I was greatly distraught - it still hasn't completely "sunk in" - to utilise that cliché - I feel he is still alive.

(In regard to Leicester and his works etc - see Jack Ross's "The Imaginary Museum" and also my link to that and "Reading the Maps".)

I met Leicester in 1994 when he came to my Poetry Club that I started in Panmure. That was in many ways a very successful Club - I met some interesting people and the publican - Stuart Dodds helped me a lot - he is Maori - and highly educated - he kind of "bridges the worlds" - and like Eddie MacGuire (who was) the compere of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" (my favourite TV show) who can talk about pop singers and rugby and then quote whole sections of Shakespeare - Stuart knew Shakespeare and the Gettysburg address and so on - (he is now a very successful businessman) - together - we organised a competition of the best reader of the famous "To be, or not to be" speech from Hamlet - which was well attended (good first prize) - and was won by Robin Kora - who is also Maori BTW.

But Leicester came later: I think his was a quiet but powerful presence. We met up later at the London bar with David Howard - later joined by Jack Ross and perhaps earlier by Scott Hamilton. He also came to the book shop I worked in, and also where I organised Friday nights readings of various Auckland poets for Ron Riddell - my good friend and fellow poet - who at that time owned the Dead Poets Book Store just off Dominion Rd. Later Ron moved his shops to K'Road and also Henderson. Leicester served in the shop once, and once or twice his wife.

Leicester showed me one of his first major works in progress. It was called “Koreneho” - the Maori name for Colenso - who came from England in the 19th Century for the Anglican Church and the Royal (Scientific) Society and translated the Bible into Maori and discovered many new plants and explored much of NZ - Leicester liked the fact that he was out of favour with the Church he was in because of an affair with a local Maori woman and also that sometimes his discoveries were in fact not new plants or that he occasionally misclassified them - this carries on into Leicester’s incredible work ‘Koreneho’ which uses (and twists or torques) Colenso’s scientific texts (Leicester was a member of the Scientific society and discovered or studied various plants and a new version or sub species of the Giant NZ snail) and then he - on the following page - then pared down the text - and we are left with a very subtle compilation of latinized words which form a very dense matrix of almost pure language (but Colenso’s ambiguity is in there energising the language) - but then comes a small poem with a “pronouncement” - in all Leicester’s “direct” pronouncements there is a subtle humour - and a seriousness - he could see that we live and stand in language - he was a man who experienced much tragedy in his own life but maintained a great dignity, a mana. He remained upbeat despite tragedies that would have sent me to the crazy house I’m sure...

Leicester produced many books of poetry. One of his books was dedicated to me.

Here is a section from “Koreneho” (after he has quoted Colenso’s scientific report verbatim) (that work has poetic-scientific intersection) he then transforms it to this -

FIELD NOTES *E. alba*

Ochraceously imbricated in mamillary
gland decurrent in the petiole sub-5
sided with mucro in the perianth tip
distichous striated entire and
twisted yellow margins sessile 2
fimbriate crenules sub linear to
terminal in compound panicle
and calli in declivity tubercular W. C.

NOTE: A description
of some newly-dis-
covered indigenous
plants Trans , vol 23,
pp 381- 91 Vol 24 pp.
W.C.

This is tough Louis Zukofsky stuff - around this time I lent him
my (my photo-copy of Zukofsky;s “80 Flowers”) and he was
reading that poet (he read “A” at least twice and also “Bottom”
a huge work by Zukofsky apparently vital to “getting into”
his later works) ; and also the letters of Lorine Niedecker to
Louis Zukofsky. (Lorine Niedecker’s poetic influence was very
important). Then we get this transform on the next page of
“Koreneho”

Hab. E. alba

under beech
sub-fusc
where honey drops
black sweetness

lichened cliffs
and scree and moss
small grass

in cracks

root forever
set with rock
glossed
for table books
and calendars

when autumn
from the southern ice
is falling over everything

The next page includes the subtitle “Joyful News Out of New Found Land”

(even in the title he simultaneously mixes satire and seriousness - one “take” is that Colenso feels (perhaps subconsciously) that he is God naming a new land - even God or Adam naming his new beings in eden (here is perhaps also the sin of pride) - there are many “takes” on this work however.

Obs. E. alba

sobs in the air
cut into my mind
like butter

chrysanthemum
or gentian blue

But white
and I'm made joyful

a friend

for a new-found land

white
for resurrection

gold
at the throat
for glory

perfume
for embalmment

in a land
I've made my own

by name for the nameless
and by claim
on order
in a wild world

I used to phone him regularly when he was in Buller and he would make joke of it - "Oh, is that Auckland calling?" ! And he would of interrupt by putting another log on the fire (where he lived -in the South Island it is pretty damn cold in winter) so -when I called him not too long before he died - he turned to his partner and said (I overheard him) - he was very weak - "I have this drunken Auckland poet on the line and he wants me to say: 'Put another log on the fire' " He was enjoying the humour of the situation even when he knew was almost certainly dying. (The drunken part was the old me - I hardly drink lately! But the point was well made and taken!)

Leicester's poetic style was deceptively "laid back" - in fact there was always much more in his poems than a simplistic or casual reading could reveal.

He sent me his long poem "Written from Captivity" - it includes this ending which he told me came to him via a dream - the poem as whole deals with the long and tragic death of his wife Miriie (who did much writing on the history of the Anglican Church in NZ) and his reactions at that time and to some degree their relationship - but this poem or this last part of the main poem actually deals with death and dying, and is perhaps for all of us - coming from a dream as some (very few) poems do :

8

Death is a cold wet thing
a slip in the fog
to a sink of sleep

a slip in the fog
a slip a sleep
a slip in the fog
a slip a sleep
a slip

—Richard Taylor

Leicester on the Coast

I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to post something here, because it wasn't possible for our family to get to Leicester's funeral in Christchurch today. As the next best thing we went up to Millerton and walked along some of the historic tracks Leicester helped re-open at the Old Dip and Millerton mines.

When he came to live in Millerton it was as if a tornado had hit the place. Not a violent tornado of course. That would be out of character. Rather it was a methodical and very polite one as Leicester immersed himself in the community (fire brigade, Millerton radio station) and the botanical glories of the coal plateau.

I met him through the local conservation group, but quickly realised we shared another interest - coalfield's history. I have a collection of Marxist books, some bearing the names of long-dead communist miners. Marx's Capital is hard enough to read, but **Anti-Duhring** by Engels is a shocker. It's all theory and counter-theory, intensely academic, and to most mortals, barely decipherable. I've never got past the first chapter. But Leicester read it cover to cover and enjoyed it.

I went on several walks around the moonscape of Stockton Mine with Leicester and his dog Red. We did it when the mine was on holiday, at New Year and Easter.

The place has an unusual botany, and Leicester's probing revealed several new species of alpine herbs. I could see the pain the opencast mining caused him - it's not just the famous Mt Augustus snail that's headed for extinction.

Leicester became a regular at Buller Conservation Group meetings but one day announced he wouldn't be coming anymore. The conflict between miners and greenies was too much for him. I felt it went back to his vicar days - it's not a vicar's job to have enemies.

Despite missing meetings, Leicester kept us up with all the mining gossip and supported the young people of the Save Happy Valley Coalition with their protest occupation. But I know he felt overwhelmed by the Machine that is Solid Energy. His 'Lament For a Landscape' assumes the destruction of Happy Valley.

Leicester loved the Coast - he'd been here often on holiday as a child. And he told me his Coast-born father never fully acclimatised to living in Canterbury.

I went to a couple of Leicester's poetry readings in Westport. I felt he was very happy writing for a small community. Any wider recognition was a bonus.

I loved his stories - told with a glint in his eye and his special economy of language. The one that comes to mind was when he swapped parishes for six months with a vicar from Sheffield in England. The Sheffield parish was very poor - this was brought home to Leicester when he got sick and joined the depressing queue outside a doctor's surgery in the winter cold.

His misery wasn't helped when he found he wasn't being paid - the English vicar had retained his old salary while also being paid in New Zealand and saw no need to change the arrangement.

Pete Lusk

THREE POEMS BY LEICESTER KYLE

Nematoceras triloba

Beech Spider

Sometimes male
And other times not
See the Latin

Changed names
And fudged identities

With the inner surface
Of your lamina
Retrorsly papillose
With your median apiculate lobe
You can manage a presence
That can be immense

And then you vanish
Leaving a few plants behind
On the edge of the bush

You don't flower
And you're not a great looker
But you can spread yourself about
At home in higher places

The Creeping Sky Lily

Montane
in a sward
or a diffuse patch

the bloom pale within
blue at the tips
ice-blue
or the sky

small grassy green leaves
at the lip of a bank
at the edge of a bog
in other stuff

trigonus
loculicidal

Actinotus suffocta

The Patch Plant

Low herb
With creeping branching stems
Forming compact patches

Stylopodium stout
And ill-defined

So small
You could be the young
Of any green thing

Of a moss

A slime mould
Peripatetic
On a bank

They should have let you go
Without a name

Anonymous
Anomalous

Patching up the pakihi
With humility

~ Leicester Kyle

Notes on Contributors

Michael Arnold continues to wander the vastness of China. Find out what he's eating at: <http://www.mishen.net/>

Stacey Arnold has watched a lot of movies.

Charles Bernstein is one of America's senior avant-garde poets.

Born in America, **Brenda-Anne Burke** lives and writes in Wellington.

Titus Books will be publishing *Luce Canon*, **Will-Joy Christie's** first collection of poems, next year.

Brett Cross is one of the proprietors of Titus Books, as well as a member of the 'proto-nothing' rock supergroup Dead Men Rising: <http://readingthemap.blogspot.com/2006/07/meet-new-rock-gods.html>

A former editor of the fugitive Auckland journals *Salt* and *flint*, **Hamish Dewe** decamped to China after writing an acclaimed but still-unpublished book on the American Marxist poet Bruce Andrews. These days Hamish describes himself as 'a nihilist of the old-fashioned kind'.

Bill Direen now lives, writes, and rocks in Paris, but in the 1980s he lived in the South Island and recorded albums with titles like *We are the Coolest Cats in the World* and *High Thirties Piano*. One of Bill's many current projects is Percutio, a heroic attempt to link French and Kiwi culture: <http://titus.books.online.fr/Percutio/Percutio.htm>

Based in Wellington, **Kathryn Dudding** is an artist as well as a writer.

Don Franks is a Wellington-based Marxist who wrote an acclaimed account of his life as a cleaner called *Next to Gods* for Lloyd Jones' Four Winds Press. In his spare time Don plays in the Brass Razoo Solidarity Band.

An inventor as well as a writer, **Bernard Gadd** is rumoured to be working on a contraceptive for the fountain pen.

Scott Hamilton has been described by Jack Ross as ‘a sick dog who needs to be put out of his misery’. Check out his blog at: <http://www.readingthemap.blogspot.com>

Marion Jones lives and writes in Dunedin.

As the tributes in this issue suggest, the late **Leicester Kyle** was a much-loved member of the Kiwi literary scene, even after he proclaimed himself a Buller secessionist. Jack Ross and David Howard are currently working on a collection of the man’s work.

Pete Lusk is a former member of the dissident Trotskyist faction of the Communist Party of New Zealand who has in recent years been very active in the anti-mining movement on the West Coast of the South Island.

Olivia Macassey has described herself as a ‘diehard, last ditch structuralist’.

Stephen Oliver is the first ever ‘trans-Tasman poet’.

Sugu Pillay lives and writes in Christchurch.

Jack Ross is worryingly prolific. Check out his blog at: <http://www.mairangibay.blogspot.com>

KM Ross grew up on the North Shore and writes in Edinburgh. His novel *Falling into the Architect* was published last year by *brief* Books.

The much-published **Ron Silliman** is a father figure to many American avant-garde poets. Check out his blog at: <http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>

Kendrick Smithyman was one of the most prolific and thoughtful poets born in New Zealand. Check out his website at: <http://www.smithymanonline.auckland.ac.nz/>

Richard von Sturmer co-wrote ‘There is no Depression in New Zealand’.

Henry Talbot was last seen working in a Thai restaurant in Herne Bay.

Richard Taylor may be on the verge of giving up drinking. Titus will be publishing a book of his poetry called *Conversation with a Stone* next year.

Greville Texidor is one of the enigmatic figures in Kiwi literature, and we all owe thanks to Evelyn M Hulse for her work in bringing the short story ‘San Toni’ to light.

Like Charles Bernstein and Ron Silliman, **Barrett Watten** is a senior member of the literary tendency sometimes called Language poetry. You can visit his homepage at: http://www.english.wayne.edu/fac_pages/ewatten/