



Friends and Neighbours

**Denis Glover
in
Paekakariki**

Interviewing and editing by Frances Cherry

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Denis Glover

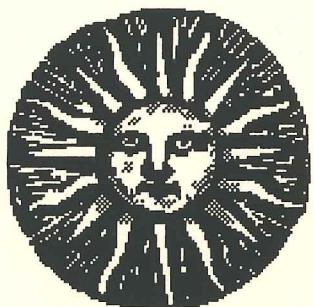
in

Paekakariki

This booklet arose from an evening held at the Paekakariki Hotel on 14 September 1996, to pay tribute to the poet, Denis Glover.

Denis Glover made Paekakariki his home during the latter years of his life. He became part of the community as friend and neighbour, even though the relationship was not always an easy one.

Deepest thanks to all those whose honesty and affectionate tolerance have brought to vivid life "the kind of fellah you got on with or you didn't".



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Warren

Louisa

"I went to see him in hospital and underneath the mattress he had a bottle of gin. He was a hopeless case really. We seemed to get on well and he made me laugh but to put up with him would just be diabolical.

When he was with Khura he'd have three gins in a glass and fill it up with beer so Khura would think he was having a beer. She drank as well but she used to keep her eye on him. I don't know how he survived as long as he did.

He used to do such weird things. He'd be in the pub drinking and then he'd suddenly say, "I've got to go and see my friend Fairburn." And he'd rush out of the pub, sandshoes with no laces in them, these awful shorts he used to wear, hop on the Limited and just go.

I remember him telling me one day his favourite food was duck. I said, "Well if you get the duck, I'll cook it for you. I took it to him and he sat down and ate the lot, nothing else with it. I didn't have any.

He could quote the Bible from beginning to end. His voice was marvellous. He sounded like such an elegant person. But to see him! He had these rotten teeth that were obviously never attended to, a nutcracker nose and chin, and he was a bit cauliflower around the ears.

When my daughter, was 16 she was doing some sort of assignment about Glover at school. I told her to go and see him. She said, "But I'm frightened of him, he's scary"

Anyway she went and they sat outside and he was very helpful, then he said, "Read the poem aloud to me." She did and he grabbed it off her. "That's not the way to do it."

Enid Milne

I knew Denis before the war because he was in the Naval Reserve at the same time as my husband was in the Army Reserve. They were both Christ's College old boys. They met regularly and sometimes he'd come to the house. I don't ever remember him being drunk. Anyway the war came, George went overseas and I lost touch with Denis.

When I came to Paekakariki I was surprised to find that Denis had settled here as well, but then in Christchurch he'd lived by the sea. Anyway I was struggling to make a garden and Denis passed by.

"You'll never make a garden out of it that way," he said. "Until you get your sand turned into soil you've got to grow things in such away that you don't lose all your water supply."

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"What do you mean?" I asked.

"You turn the whole place into the cemetery."

"Denis!" I said.

"I mean it. You turn the whole place into little six foot beds. About 6 x 2 with enough space to walk between them. You make your little garden plots by scooping the sand out to the sides so that you've got little sunken gardens. Plant into those until you've got your soil built up."

He told me what I could grow while the garden was still only literally sand - carrots, lettuces and such like. So that's how I grew for the first couple of years because in those little cemetery boxes the water can't escape.

For all the years that he was here our main source of discussion was always gardening. He wanted to know how I was and what I'd planted.

That to me is the side of Denis that the public doesn't know.

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Sondra Fry

He'd be walking past the playcentre and I'd be there struggling to move the covers off the sandpit. He'd come in, lift off the covers, not say a word and walk out again.

Eve Canvin

I remember his dog Algernon. A big black and white dog. It had a kennel in the corner of the garden. Denis used to come out and screech and shout in that terrific voice of his for Algernon.

There was bamboo in the garden and one day I asked him if I could cut it back because it was coming into my place and he said, everyone thinks it's bamboo but it's only bean stalks.

If my husband was around he'd call me and say, don't go talking to them so I only did it when he wasn't around.

Sometimes I'd hear screaming and I'd look out and see Khura chasing him around the garden with the hose, and he'd have no clothes on. It was really bedlam living next to them. I don't blame Eddie. He used to say, don't lower yourself, don't let me catch you talking to him, he's rubbish. Many a time I've seen him just lying in the gutter in Ames Street, absolutely unconscious and I

didn't dare touch him, and I don't think anyone else wanted to touch him either.

One day Denis rang me after Khura had died. I was working in the post office. "Can I speak to my friendly neighbour." he said. "Khura's died. She's got to be buried and I have to put something out on a table for people to come and eat when they've been to the funeral. I've got a big chunk of corned beef. What do I do with it? How do I cook it?" So I had to tell him.

I remember the Anzac parades we had in Paekak. He used to dress himself up in his full naval uniform and spin such yarns. I never knew whether to believe him or not. Once the bonny Maori girl who did the housework for them invited me in. There was a big enlarged photo on the wall of Khura lying on a grave.

The day after Khura died I remember Sam Hunt coming out and they had her fur coat on the line and Denis was running around shouting, "Hello Mother, hello Mother" to the fur coat, and Sam Hunt came out wearing Khura's very tight purple, you know, those drainpipes, and of course he was so tall they came about half way up his legs. He was backwards and forwards wearing them while he was helping Denis.

(After Khura died) I was coming home to lunch and he and a woman were walking up Ames Street and he stopped me and he said, "This is my friendly neighbour" - you know how he used to. Then he introduced the woman by saying, "She's a good woman. She doesn't drink. She's looking after me, stopping me from drinking. We've just been to see Paul Swain. He's going to put a show on for us at St Peter's."

I said, "Is it a concert?"

"No," he said. "It's our own show."

Anyway that was that. I met him the next day and he told me they were going to live in her house in, I think, Roseneath. Then he told me he was furious because Paul Swain had the bloody cheek to refuse to marry them. So I don't know where they got married after that. The next thing I heard they were married and living in Breaker Bay.

I'm sorry I didn't respect Denis, you couldn't. You never really got to know the man, the person himself.

Majorie

Khura was lying in the passage and Denis had covered her up, put a pillow under her head and there was a glass of water, a glass of gin and some bread and butter on a plate. Khura was quite unconscious. I rang the police and they came and picked her up and put her in a bed and then next day Mrs Dobbs (the house cleaner) went over to Mrs Lane's and Nana Lane rang me and asked me to go over there and Khura was dead, though she was still warm because the electric blanket was turned on.

Eve Canwh

One of the policemen stood outside in the garden so no-one could get into the house and they sent for Denis. He rolled up, large as life, with two bottles under his arm. The police talked to him and then took him in to the house.

I remember him saying he didn't see why he should spend money on burying her. He rang me the next day and said he was upset because he'd rung his wife in Christchurch. He wanted her to come and look after him and she'd bloody refused. Yes, he was a strange man.

Bill

I first met Denis in the Trade Union hall in Vivian Street about 1954. We were running a thing called the Tring cup that was given by Mr Tring, one of our board members as a cup to be competed for by the apprentices for layout and setting. Denis was invited along to be one of the panel judges because he was considered to be very good at this type of thing. Then he moved to Paekakariki and we'd see him in the pub when he was reading his galley proofs.

Barbara

Bill introduced me to Denis and we talked about his war time experiences. He'd spent a lot of time in England and knew lots of places we knew. He used to do proof reading in the pub. He'd go into the public bar and get a tray with holes in that fitted the glasses and he'd buy six at a time. He'd take them into the lounge bar, put them on the table by his galleys, and then he'd sip and read his galleys.

Before I was involved in Playcentre I was secretary of the Old Folks Association. I was their first secretary and I left to have a baby. Anyway Mrs Campbell had the idea to have a song.

"We have a very famous poet living in Paekakariki," she said. "Denis Glover. I think we ought to ask him to write the words for us."

So, I saw Denis in the middle of the road one day. "Mrs Campbell wants to know if you'd like to write a poem for the old folks."

"Oh yes, Barbara," he said. "No problem."

I didn't see him for about a month and then he said to me, "Barbara, I can't write that poem. Every time I sit down to think about writing it, all I think is, oh dear what can the matter be three old ladies locked in the lavatory."

We never got the poem and I never told Mrs Campbell why.

Irene Adcock

I used to see him a lot at the university club just after he'd married Lin. He really helped the Poetry Society a lot. Nothing was too much trouble for him, or for Lin. They did all they could

He was a gentlemen. I know he gave a lot of people trouble through his drinking but when he was in the

poetry society he was a gentleman. He would come and read and he was as sober as a judge. We think of him as always being drunk but he wasn't.

Lin was on the committee and so was Denis. He was getting pretty old then and was also fairly busy. There would be night after night when he and Lin would do the programmes. He came to every meeting and did all he could to help.

She used to write little bits of poetry and she read poetry very well. He never got inebriated at the meetings, never. Lin gently looked after him and they were very happy together.

Derek Gray

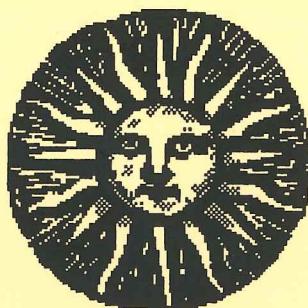
We used to meet up now and then and have a few drinks together. He was all right. The kind of fellah you got on with or you didn't. A character. He wouldn't suffer fools gladly.



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