

Pen Pals

by Jo Makgill and the students of Room 14,
Arataki School



We write our letters into our books, and our teacher takes the books to Somervale. In the letters, we tell our pen pals about ourselves and the things we do. When they write back, they tell us about themselves and what they do, too.

The students from Room 14, Arataki School in Tauranga have some special pen pals. In this article, some of the students describe how they are getting to know their pen pals and what they have learnt about their lives.

Old Friends

Our pen pals are a lot older than us. Many of them are more than eighty years old. Some are older than ninety! Our pen pals live at the Somervale Retirement Home.





Our pen pals are very busy! They play indoor bowls and table tennis, they go to exercise classes, they sing, have quizzes, listen to music, and go to concerts. Sometimes they go out to the RSA for afternoon tea.

Iris likes to feed the sparrows every day, and Ruth likes to sit by the window and “watch the

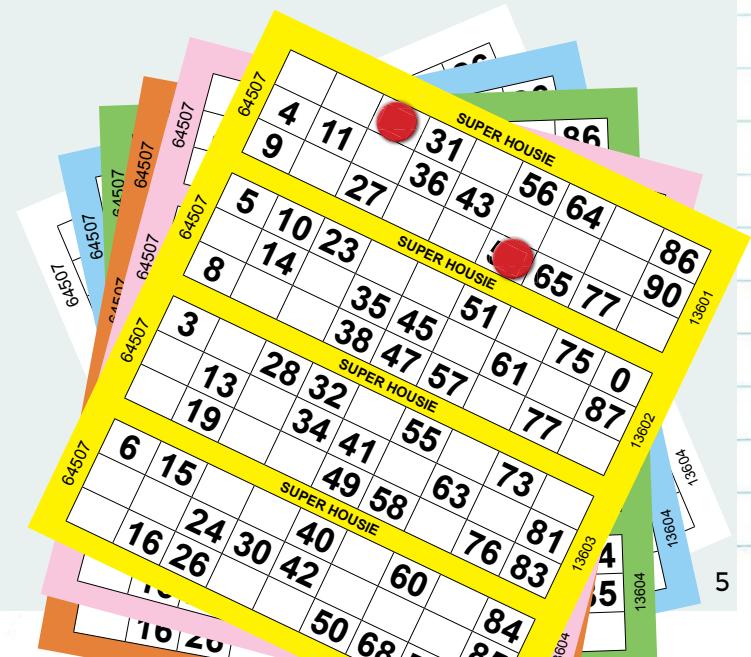
world go by”. She says there are always things to see – things like people, cars, and dogs. If the weather is fine, Ron likes to go out on his mobility scooter and have coffee at a café in town.



Wilf likes to play Housie. Wilf explained that Housie is a game they play at Somervale, and if they win, the prize is usually chocolate. We wanted to find out more about playing Housie, so we asked our families and went on the internet.

Housie

We found out that Housie is a game where the players all have cards with rows of numbers on them. Every card has different numbers between 1 and 90. A caller reads out numbers one by one. As each number is called, people who have that number on their card cross it out or cover it up. The first person to cross out a whole row of numbers calls out “Housie” and wins the game. Another name for Housie is Bingo.



Our pen pals sometimes tell us about what life was like when they were children. Barbara wrote that she used to ride a horse to get to school. Glenys used to play hopscotch outside with the children in her street.

Thank you so much for your letter. I'm not feeling well today so my friend Diane is writing and I'm telling her what to say. You look like a happy class in the photo - I grew up on a farm so I didn't go to school until I was 8, and then I rode a horse to school.

We had a great time because all the children in the street played outside together. We played a game called Hop Scotch. We used to go swimming in the Hot Pools - it was so much fun.

Ron wrote that at school they used pens they filled from inkwells, and Arthur said they had to say their times tables over and over until they got them right.

Inkwells

We found out that desks in schools used to have a hole in them for an inkwell. An inkwell was like a little bowl that you filled with ink. You dipped your pen into the ink. You could only write a few words, and then you had to dip it again.



Wilf told Michael about the movies he used to go to when he was young. We found out more about the movies in those days, too.

Old Movies

When our pen pals were young, there was no television but most New Zealand towns had a picture theatre (a place where movies were shown). As well as the main movie, there would be “shorts” (short films, such as cartoons and the news). Before the movie started, “God Save the Queen” would be played. Everyone had to stand up until it had finished. All the movies were in black and white. The first coloured movies came in the 1950s.

The King's Theatre in Wellington was one of the first picture theatres in New Zealand.



Our pen pals are very friendly. They encourage us and give us advice.



ARTHUR



TAITE

Arthur told me it's important to go to school because you never know when you might need something you have learnt.



BERYL

I sent Beryl a picture of me and my dog. Beryl told me I was a good artist.



LEO



JUNE



LAYLA

June told me that she used to be shy, but that "as we get older, we're not as frightened of being ourselves".

Some of our pen pals make jokes in their letters. June wrote to Layla, "I have just had a birthday, and I am 94 years old. That's a lot of candles!"

When Ari told Doug that he got \$5 when his tooth fell out, Doug replied that when he was young, he only got sixpence. (Sixpence is about the same as 5 cents today.) Doug wrote, "I think I was ripped off!"

At Easter, we went to visit our pen pals at Somervale. It was great to meet them in person. We found it easy to talk. We knew so much about each other already, it was just like meeting up with old friends!



Mixed Meanings

Sometimes our pen pals use words we don't know or that have different meanings from what we're used to. Sometimes we need to explain our words to them, too. Some of us told our pen pals about our class "dabbing", but they thought dabbing was something to do with painting. We sent them a photo to show them that dabbing is also a type of dance.



Dorothy told Jakhova that she played basketball when she was at school, but our teacher told us that Dorothy meant netball. Netball used to be called basketball when Dorothy was young.

I was watching people playing Bowls yesterday. I used to play In door Bowls.
I played Basket Ball at School
I was a Defender.



Netball or Basketball?

Netball has been played in New Zealand for over a hundred years, but it used to be called "women's basketball". That name made things very confusing when basketball became popular. In 1970, the name "women's basketball" was changed to netball.

Michael's pen pal, Wilf, was confused about Michael wanting to eat a "wrap". He wrote, "I'm not sure what a wrap is, but I hope it's good for you!" We found out later that the word "wrap" can also mean a shawl. Maybe that's why Wilf was confused.



We were interested to find out that Jim and Ruth both call bikes "pushbikes". We think it's because Ruth said her bike had no gears, so she had to get off and push it up hills.

Barbara said she was learning to use her tablet to play bridge. We knew what Barbara meant by a "tablet", but we had never heard of playing "bridge". We found out it's a card game.

Doug told Ari that he had worked for the dairy industry. That's when Ari found out that "dairy" has more than one meaning.



Sometimes our pen pals use sayings we haven't heard before.

In my day, we would have said you were "full of beans".

Your writing is very good. It puts mine to shame.

I will be 95 - a ripe old age.



Dear Nate -
Thank you for your letter.
In my day, we would have said that you are 'full of beans'.

YOUR WRITING IS VERY
GOOD; IT PUTS MINE TO SHAME.
HAVE A GOOD WEEKEND
FROM RON

I AM VERY HAPPY HERE.
NEXT MONTH SEPTEMBER I HAVE MY
BIRTHDAY AND I WILL BE 95 (A
RIPE OLD AGE). THE PEOPLE WHO
CALL FOR US ARE SO BAKING I HAVE
NO COMPLAINTS. HOPE TO HEAR
FROM YOU BEFORE TOO LONG. KIND REGARDS

We had to read their letters carefully and think about what the sayings might mean. We found out that words can be tricky!



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