



W. H. OLIVER LECTURE

W. H. OLIVER HUMANITIES RESEARCH ACADEMY



'CROSSING THE FIELD'

EMERITUS PROFESSOR LYDIA WEVERS

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, WELLINGTON

The idea of a historian who is also literary has fallen out of favour in recent decades yet W.H. Oliver, Keith Sinclair, and J.C. Beaglehole also wrote poetry, memoir, and literary essays. I would describe myself as a literary historian but I don't mean only that I write about the history of literature, I mean I am interested in a history that has literature as a constituent. The twentieth century separations of our disciplines have been bridged in some ways—the history of emotions for example, or the historical turn that has taken place in literary studies—but older configurations of history as a form of literature have fallen away. Yet to think about literature as a constitutive part of history means thinking about the role literature might play in configuring not only historical sensibility but shaping discourses and events.

Dickens published his first and name-making novel *The Pickwick Papers* in 1837. On 22 May that year Edward Gibbon Wakefield chaired the first meeting of the New Zealand Association in London. One of the first things that the troupe of young men from the New Zealand Company did when they arrived in Port Nicholson in May 1840 was to found a Pickwick Club. Dickens's novels and the colony of New Zealand expanded together, their history is interlinked and make a particular kind of space—the borderlands of history and literature which constitute the complex and crisscrossed field of nineteenth century Aotearoa.

DATE: TUESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2017

TIME: 7.00 PM

VENUE: RANGIMARIE 1, TE HUINGA CENTRE, TE PAPA, WELLINGTON

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED FOLLOWING THE LECTURE



This public lecture commemorates the contribution of Bill Oliver, foundation Professor of History at Massey University, to the development of the humanities at Massey University and in New Zealand.