

Hello my name is Thomas McLean.

I'm a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Linguistics at the University of Otago,

and I'm one of the curators of the current exhibition,

*Keeping it in the Family: British and Irish Literary Generations, 1770 to 1930.*

And today I'd like to talk a little bit about one of the items on display.

It's a volume of poems from William Wordsworth, a volume from 1815, that's from the Special Collections.

Otago holds early volumes of William Wordsworth's poems that were all previously owned by one Charlotte E Wordsworth.

She signed her name on the front page of each of these volumes.

Now this could be Charlotte Emmeline Wordsworth, the grand-niece of the poet.

She was the daughter of Charles Wordsworth, who was the Bishop of St Andrews in Scotland.

Unfortunately, we've been unable to find any documents that are in the hand of Charlotte E Wordsworth to compare her signature.

However there's something else that's quite interesting about this volume.

In several of the poems someone has added interesting marginalia and in fact has gone in and changed the lines of some of the poems.

Now this is quite unusual, especially with a poet as famous as William Wordsworth, that someone would make changes to his poems.

We're pretty sure however that the writer is Charles Wordsworth, the Bishop of St Andrews.

It looks like it's in his hand and the changes are quite interesting.

So for instance in the page that we have the book open to there's a passage that reads,

“He's not so wise as some folks be. / The Devil take his wisdom!' said / The Doctor, looking somewhat grim.”

Well the previous owner has gone in and made a change to this, taking out “the Devil take” and replaced it with

“He's not so wise as some folks be. / a plague upon his wisdom!' said / The Doctor,”

which would suggest someone like the Bishop of St Andrews who would feel a little bit uncomfortable reading from a poem that named the Devil.

The exhibition will be closing soon but there will be an online version,

so I hope you can give it a look online or perhaps here in Special Collections.

Thanks very much for watching.