

A Note on Ball-Point Pens

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[Jane Stafford](#), in [Kotare](#) Vol.2, No.1 (May 1999), makes the following observation on [Ngaio Marsh](#)'s early play, [Little Housebound](#) (p.30, note 6): 'The name and address are written in ball-point pen, rather than the ink of [Marsh](#)'s dedication. My assumption is that this indicates that it was written later than 1922.'

There is no need to 'assume': it could not have been written before 1938, when Biro patented his design, and is unlikely to have been written until after the Second World War, when ball-point pens became generally available in New Zealand. (I judge from a notebook with dated entries that I acquired my first in 1949.) This is not a trivial point. It would be crucial to the dating of some manuscripts, and literary scholars should take note of it.