Josiah Cocking Papers, University of Newcastle
By Tony Laffan

Josiah Cocking (1867-1960) could probably lay claim to have been the most published Newcastle poet to date. As well as being a coal miner and socialist autodidact, for over 30 years Cocking contributed poetry and letters to a wide variety of socialist and union newspapers. Cocking wrote under names such as Daisy, Dandelion (Dan DeLeon), K. N. Pepper, Violet, Taraxacum, Capsicum, Billy Khan and Edward Kelly as well as several varieties of Sosohlistic Kove when writing in the C. J. Dennis style. His material was published in such papers as The People, International Socialist, Newcastle Argus, Newcastle Morning Herald, The Toiler, The Industrialist, OBU Herald, Revolutionary Socialist, Common Cause, Tribune and War Cry. Cocking was a member of the Australian Socialist League from 1893 and was an advocate of industrial unionism and the Industrial Workers of the World from 1907. He was a consistent anti-militarist and did regular knee drill at the local Salvation Army hall.

He also kept a diary and copies of his writings. His papers have been put into a coherent order by a grandson and deposited with the University of Newcastle Archives. These papers include an unpublished anti-war novel. Unfortunately Cocking did not always maintain his diaries but when he did we get valuable insights into the history of the labour movement as well insights on the intellectual development of this fascinating autodidact. The period 1893 to 1896 is written up and is important as it describes what the Australian Socialist League did at Wallsend. The period from 1899 to 1904 is also covered but from then until 1920 the papers are mainly copies of published letters, poems and articles from the International Socialist. During 1920 Cocking resumed his diary, which then continues for most of the next four decades. These papers are a valuable resource and the diary portion is available as a CD-ROM from the Archives. The call numbers are A7748 to A7754, inclusive. They will repay research.