

Obituaries

AUSTIN GRAHAM BAGNALL, 1912-1986

A. G. BAGNALL, historian and bibliographer, died in Sydney on 16 April during a brief visit to Australia. A Victoria University graduate (M.A. first class honours in Philosophy 1937) he worked first in the Pensions Department, transferring to the Alexander Turnbull Library in 1937 and becoming assistant Chief Librarian in 1939. From 1941 to 1945 he served in the Navy Office, joined the War History Branch briefly, and in 1946 was appointed the Librarian of the newly created National Library Centre of the National Library Service. As Librarian of the Centre he was responsible for the development of the major national projects for bibliographic control of the printed resources available in New Zealand — the card file of the Union Catalogue of books and the published *Union List of Serials*, *Index to New Zealand Periodicals*, current *New Zealand National Bibliography*, and the retrospective bibliography of New Zealand books. This last project, the *New Zealand National Bibliography to the Year 1960* (6 volumes, 1969-1985), a labour of love over 25 years (including 12 years after his retirement) will ensure his place as one of the great descriptive bibliographers of a nation's printed history.

In 1966 he returned to the Turnbull Library, his acknowledged first love, as Chief Librarian, a position from which he retired in 1973. He played a prominent part in the affairs of the Polynesian Society (Council member 1939-1955), the Historic Places Trust (deputy Chairman 1959-1965) and the New Zealand Library Association (President 1964).

Graham Bagnall's first historical book was *William Colenso* (with G. C. Petersen, 1948), followed by a quartet of studies on the history of the Wairarapa (*Early Castlepoint*, 1949; *Old Greytown*, 1953; *Masterton's First Hundred Years*, 1954; *A History of Carterton*, 1957) culminating in his masterly survey *Wairarapa: an Historical Excursion* (1976). He edited Cruise's *Journal of a Ten Month's Residence in New Zealand* (1957), wrote and printed *Okiwi* (1972) and was printing a history of the Bagnall family at the time of his death. His major historical preoccupation, next to the Wairarapa, was the history of the central plateau of the North Island, and work was well advanced on a projected three volume publication, *Tongariro and the Ways to It*.

His contributions to bibliography, librarianship and New Zealand history were recognized by the conferring of honorary life memberships by the New Zealand Library Association (1971) and the Historic Places Trust (1969), the award of its Fellowship (1955) and the John Harris Award (1971) by the New Zealand Library Association, the J. M. Sherrard award for local history (1979), an honorary D.Litt from Victoria University (1979) and the O.B.E. in 1978.

Graham Bagnall was a persistent advocate for a strong national library to ensure

the orderly development and management of the country's sparse library resources. After the first step was taken, when the National Library of New Zealand was formed in 1966, he was as vigorous a proponent of the special place of the Turnbull Library within the new structure.

Among librarians he was a bookman, one who valued books and a knowledge of their contents above library techniques, one of the small band of scholar librarians New Zealand has produced. Among historians he was a local historian, an advocate of the value of local history and the need to master the total historical record of the subject. He was only too well aware of the heavy burden of primary documentation (and the lack of it) facing the writer of New Zealand history, and laboured prodigiously in his chosen fields to reclaim the substance of history from below the codex line for the printed page.

J. E. TRAUÉ

Alexander Turnbull Library

WILLIAM PARKER MORRELL, 1899-1986

PROFESSOR WILLIAM PARKER MORRELL, CBE, died in Dunedin on 27 April 1986. He was an international authority on the history of the British Empire and wrote extensively about New Zealand. He held the Chair in History and Political Science at the University of Otago from 1947 until his retirement in 1964.

Although born in Auckland in 1899 Morrell grew up in Dunedin. He attended Otago Boys' High School, where his father was headmaster, and then took first class honours in History. In 1921-2, as the first Ross Fellow, he began research into the provincial system. Sir James Hight suggested this topic and apparently gave him considerable encouragement. After this Morrell proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford (whence his father had graduated) to begin work on his D. Phil. subject, British colonial policy in the age of Peel and Russell. Both theses were later published. In 1927 he was appointed Beit Lecturer in Colonial History at Oxford, in 1928 (with K. N. Bell) he published *Select Documents of British Colonial Policy, 1830-1860*, and in 1930 left Oxford to take up a readership in History at Birkbeck College of the University of London. In the 1930s he contributed a chapter on 'The Constitution and the Provinces' to *New Zealand*, a volume in the Cambridge History of the British Empire. He also wrote a popular history of New Zealand, the first published work to treat New Zealand as a nation, and a history of goldmining throughout the world. He had written four large volumes, two of them based on total immersion in the relevant primary sources, in thirteen years. At the end of the war — during which he served as a fire warden in London — he returned to Otago to take up the Chair in History.

He quickly transformed his Department by making an appointment in Political Science and recruiting able scholars from abroad. He also worked hard, as did his marvellously outspoken wife, Ethel, in getting to know his students. For many years they entertained all students at all levels at their home on Skibo St. By 1960 enrolments had rendered this policy impossible although senior students were invariably invited. In my year, his last in the department, he forgot to tell us that we were invited for dinner. After some discussion we decided that an invitation for 7 pm meant that we were, quite reasonably, expected to have dinner first. Our consternation at being asked to eat a second dinner in two hours alerted Mrs Morrell to what had happened. His absent-mindedness was of course legendary.

While never a lively teacher, for he would have distrusted enthusiasm (unless for cricket), his wry wit and impish humour delighted many. Morrell did not seek disciples but his 'astringent scholarship' deeply influenced his students.

Despite the burden of departmental administration he played an active role in the community, serving for long periods on both the Historic Places Trust and the Board of Governors for Otago's High Schools (which he chaired for many years). He also played a vigorous part in the intellectual life of the university, starting a branch of the Institute of International Affairs for instance, and collaborated with David Hall to write a series of Post-Primary School Bulletins, later published as *A History of New Zealand Life*. In many respects it was the first attempt to write a social history of New Zealand. Throughout the 1950s he also continued working on two large projects, *Britain in the Pacific Islands*, which was published in 1960, and *British Colonial Policy in the Mid-Victorian Age* (1969). In his retirement he wrote a centennial history of *The University of Otago* (1969) and *The Anglican Church in New Zealand* (1973). As he aged, his prose and method became more spare. In 1973 he was presented with a Festschrift.

Morrell was an outstanding scholar, meticulous in his research and careful in judgement. He was also a man of determination, wit, and broad views. He made an outstanding contribution to the history of New Zealand and to the development of the historical profession.

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