

REVIEWS

development of seaside suburbs. Both the similarities with Eastbourne (the focus on the beach and the efforts to develop Days Bay into Wellington's 'playground' in the 1890s, for example) and the differences between the two seaside suburbs (a key one is that there was no state housing development in Eastbourne and the Eastern Bays) are revealed.

The text is lively and readable. At times, the clutter of illustrations distracts the reader. These include maps, sketches, reproductions of paintings, and photographs. Many of the photographs have real interest. Two which stood out for me are of the earliest documented race meeting on Titahi Bay beach in March 1862 and the multi-coloured boat sheds at the southern end of the Bay. Other illustrations, however, seem to have no justification for inclusion beyond an attempt to compensate for gaps in the text.

Despite some reservations, there is much to appreciate in *The Bay*. Above all, the achievement of the authors in turning a mass of detail into a readable account in a limited time and within budget is impressive.

ANN BEAGLEHOLE

Stout Centre, Wellington

A Dream of Spires: Benjamin Mountfort and the Gothic Revival. By Ian Lochhead. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 1999. 364 pp. NZ price: \$79.95. ISBN 0-908812-85-X.

BENJAMIN MOUNTFORT was a leading architect in Canterbury through the second half of the nineteenth century. He produced some of the country's most cherished buildings of Gothic Revival influence. Mountfort set a lasting imprint on the city of Christchurch, but his prolific work extended as far as Auckland. In Christchurch his well-known buildings included the wonderful Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, the Canterbury Museum, Canterbury College, and Trinity Congregational church. Their skilled architecture contributes to the very identity of the city.

In *A Dream of Spires*, Ian Lochhead considers the background to Mountfort's thinking. He reviews both the Victorian Gothic Revival in England, its sources and examples such as the work of Butterfield, but also recognizes the local circumstances, materials, and society, here in New Zealand and how they influenced Mountfort. Although Mountfort was inspired by revivalist thinking, such as that of Cambridge's Ecclesiologists, he nonetheless developed a creative, professional understanding of local materials and circumstances. The original architectural contribution of Mountfort is valued here for its own sake. Lochhead also discusses the development of Benjamin Mountfort as a person; he endeavours to get under the architectural skin.

There is much interesting detail in *A Dream of Spires* on buildings created by Mountfort. For example, the Provincial Council Buildings in Christchurch, while incorporating timber construction with traditional stone, show a strong yet varied Gothic spirit with personally interpreted elegance. The wooden portion (1859) displays local ingenuity such as the rhythmic timber-frame work. The Council Chamber (1865), on the other hand, shows an ornate polychromatic High Victorian character in masonry, regarded as one of the finest of its type. We also have to thank Mountfort for the completion of Christchurch Cathedral. Though originally designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, who was sceptical of colonial abilities, its final success was also due to Mountfort, as Scott came to acknowledge.

Later, having developed more New Zealand-architectural skills, Mountfort produced St Mary's pro-cathedral, Auckland (1886) with its wonderful open truss-work like an

upturned boat. This, his culminating and largest wooden church, shows creative spatial emphasis with in-depth feeling for local timbers.

A Dream of Spires results from thorough scholarly research of Mountfort's well-known and lesser-known designs. Ian Lochhead has written a comprehensive, well-structured, profusely illustrated (if mainly black and white), clearly written book, which is exemplary in its referencing. The publishing too is a quality production. The book constitutes a veritable archive on Mountfort. Yet I wonder whether it is not just a little too formal and lengthy for a wider audience. Lochhead's own enthusiasm and Mountfort's driving architectural spirit do not always shine through. Nor do alternative views on Mountfort's work. While Lochhead has always been strongly against the moving of St Mary's across Parnell Road in the 1980s, he does not mention here Professor Toy's concept of the multi-generation sequence linking to Thatcher's Selwyn Library (even though the link across St Stephen's Avenue has not yet been completed).

Architects are concerned with spatial conceptions, rhythms, materials, scale, structure, proportions, and aesthetic articulation. There is idea, integrity, and wholeness, with details being secondary means. It is a pleasure to see someone other than an art historian write about New Zealand architecture, someone who recognizes that architecture is about more than a comparison of surface styles and unrelated historic details. It is quite untrue to think that nineteenth-century architecture in New Zealand was just copied from England. Ian Lochhead's *A Dream of Spires* offers such an understanding of one architect. I encourage all to enjoy Lochhead's quality book.

PETER SHEPPARD

The University of Auckland

A Policeman's Paradise? Policing a Stable Society 1918–1945. By Graeme Dunstall. Dunmore Press in association with the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Palmerston North, 1999. 528 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 0-86469-356-7.

A POLICEMAN'S PARADISE? is the fourth book in a series of five dealing with the history of New Zealand policing. The previous three were written by Richard Hill. This penultimate volume, by Graeme Dunstall, covers the inter-war and Second World War era. The period was a distinctively stable one in the history of policing, but it was, nonetheless, one in which significant changes in the logistics and organization of police work took place.

Although police numbers relative to the population remained stable during these years, rates of violent crime generally declined while property offending increased. The influx of firearms following the First World War, then the Depression of the 1930s and the onset of the Second World War, all had significant effects on policing priorities and methods during this period. Advances such as the acquisition of the first police motor vehicles in 1918–1919, the formation of the Police Association in 1936, the recruitment of the first women constables in 1941 and the development of radio communications in the mid-1940s, also impacted on policing style and efficiency.

Dunstall divides his text into three sections. Following a comprehensive introductory chapter, which sets the context of the book, the first section, 'Continuities', deals with the adjustment period that followed the First World War and perceived problems, such as those presented by the influx of ex-military firearms combined with fears of socialist insurrection. 'Patterns of Policing', the second and largest section, covers specific topics such as the policing of gambling and liquor laws, petty corruption arising from selective application of these laws, the increasing importance of detective work, the differences between urban and country police work, and the continuing surveillance of political activists between 1919 and 1935. The final section, 'Transitions', discusses the period