

wonderfully eccentric characters and some of it is laugh-out-loud funny. Drummond Fernie, one of the owners in the 1930s, liked to deal in cash and in town carried a sugar sack full of money over his shoulder. When they began cultivating some of the better country, sowing green feed and permanent pasture, someone asked Drummond how his swedes were doing. 'They're cooeeing to each other', he replied. It was obviously a thin crop.

For much of its history Ngamatea was a remote and difficult place to manage and life was pretty tough. The homestead was made up of three whare knocked together, with a room or two added later. A diesel generator provided some power until a hydro plant was put in in the early 1950s. Access was difficult so the stores for the homestead and cookhouses did not come in very often, and when they did it was by the truckload: a ton of flour, half a ton of sugar, two tons of potatoes, tea in 100lb chests, and plenty of tobacco.

None of the early owners could make the place pay and even the Fernie–Roberts partnership struggled. When Lawrence Roberts died in 1966, after nearly 30 years on Ngamatea, the station was struggling. Things were so tough that the new manager, Ray Birdsall, used his own chequebook to pay for the plant and machinery that he needed to run the station. Birdsall began a development programme that in time changed Ngamatea from a relatively low-cost grazing run relying solely on fine wool for its income to an intensively farmed property producing prime lambs wool, cattle and deer.

Ngamatea was a great sprawling station and this is a great sprawling story. Riseborough does well to hold it together. A good selection of photographs accompanies the text and there are excellent maps. However, the first detailed map, facing page 88, would have been better at the front of the book to help make sense of the geography of the place and the numerous place names mentioned. Like Wigley, Riseborough tends to pull her punches when dealing with some of her leading characters. Lawrence Roberts, for all his wonderfully dry wit, seemed to be a difficult customer and his daughter Margaret, who took over Ngamatea after he died, appeared to follow her father. There were clearly some 'issues' around Phil Mahoney who managed Ngamatea from 1978 to 1990. Riseborough skirts around these.

Both Wigley and Riseborough have written highly readable and informative books. There are interesting contrasts in the writing styles of the authors and in the subject matter of the two stories. By the nature of the country it took in, Cheviot Hills was a good property and Robinson had the money and will to make it a great station. Ngamatea was a long hard battle that came good in the end, largely due to Margaret Roberts and the team she gathered about her. Both stories are worth the telling.

ROBERT PEDEN

*Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*

*Family Silver: From the Provinces to Privatisation — A Personal Journey.* By Richard Shallcrass. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2006. 231 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-86473-533-2.

HISTORIANS DRAW ON WRITTEN ARCHIVES and on the recollections and opinions of participant observers. Sometimes the latter are interviewed and sometimes they write memoirs. Recently there have been several memoirs by public servants intimately involved in New Zealand's tumultuous foreign policy and economic reforms during the latter half of the twentieth century. The best is undoubtedly Gerald Hensley's *Final*

*Approaches*, published in 2006 by Auckland University Press, but there is also much to be learned from *Family Silver*; a less cautious account written by his contemporary Richard Shallcrass and published at the same time by Victoria University Press.

Both men studied history with Professor Neville Phillips at the University of Canterbury in the late 1950s. On graduation they joined the Ministry of External Affairs (later to become Foreign Affairs and Trade). Both served in a number of overseas posts, Shallcrass in Canberra, Jakarta, Hong Kong, London and Saigon.

Hensley, whom Shallcrass does not seem to have liked or respected, rose to senior diplomatic posts before becoming head of the Prime Minister's Department under Muldoon and Lange and later Secretary of Defence. Shallcrass clearly failed to impress his most senior colleagues in Foreign Affairs, became somewhat embittered, and finally left to find a more congenial and rewarding working environment in Treasury. There he became an enthusiastic supporter of Roger Douglas and the manager of the government's privatization of state assets, but once again fell out with other senior managers and in his own words suffered 'constructive dismissal', although he subsequently negotiated a substantial compensation package.

*Family Silver* is divided into four sections. The first, deeply and even disturbingly personal and candid, deals with the author's early family life on the West Coast. He clearly disliked his grandmother, had a very ambivalent relationship with his father, had understandable difficulty coping with his mother's mental breakdown and probable suicide, took a long time to accept his stepmother, and engaged in sibling rivalry with his older brother John. The repeated difficulties he had forming positive relationships with colleagues in Foreign Affairs and Treasury later in life may well be explained by what he reveals in this introductory section.

The second section deals with Shallcrass's career in Foreign Affairs. The account becomes less interesting and less informative as it goes on, his postings to Canberra and Jakarta making easy reading but the later recollections of Hong Kong and Saigon revealing little of interest or importance. His assessment of the department and the people in it differs markedly from that of most other past and present members, and he seems to agree with Bill Rowling's observation to him that Foreign Affairs types were 'the most charming, self-seeking people I've ever met' (p.82). He was not sympathetic to what he saw as a takeover of the department after 1966 by senior colleagues he regarded as pro-American and who he thought did not understand or sympathize with Asia. Unfortunately, Shallcrass does not really substantiate his criticisms, instead seeming to be more concerned with transporting his BMW car around the Pacific or locating his golf clubs and books as Saigon falls to the communists. One unfortunate error is the misspelling of Sir Leslie Munro's name as 'Monroe' (pp.82 and 228).

Sections three and four, which deal with the author's later career in Treasury, form the most informative part of the memoir. After dealing with the culture and people he found there, Shallcrass touches on Muldoon's campaign on Third World debt, the negotiation of Closer Economic Relations with Australia, and New Zealand's overseas borrowing in the early 1980s. Then follow six chapters dealing with the privatization of state-owned assets and enterprises, the 'sale of the family silver', which Shallcrass clearly believed in. As enthusiastic manager of the process, he oversaw nine of the 22 privatizations Treasury carried out between 1988 and 1994, including the Bank of New Zealand, Postbank, Air New Zealand, the Development Finance Corporation, Telecom and New Zealand Rail.

In discussing the role played by advisers, specifically Michael Fay and David Richwhite, even Shallcrass admits that 'Treasury took a calculated risk every time we retained their services, or sat across the table negotiating a deal' (p.204). His account of the role of Fay Richwhite in the BNZ and the battle both before and after the 1990 election to save the BNZ from collapse is especially provocative, though clearly there is much more to be written on that subject.

The memoir ends with a short account of the author reluctantly retired, enjoying some success as an artist, but sadly revisiting his relationship with his father, from whom, like so many others throughout his life, Shallcrass felt unable to win approval or even communicate with effectively.

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*Final Approaches: A Memoir*. By Gerald Hensley. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2006. viii + 320 pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN 978-1-86940-378-2.

SOME PEOPLE ARE EITHER EXTRAORDINARILY LUCKY or extraordinarily adept at making their luck. Gerald Hensley is one of them. A senior New Zealand diplomat and public servant, he seems to have been present at some of the most interesting events in global diplomacy in the post-war period. In this memoir, he shares his experiences and observations of people and places and unfolding events around the globe in the last half of the twentieth century in eloquent, sophisticated, frequently ironic and suitably self-deprecatory prose. It is memoir writing at its very best.

Hensley began his diplomatic career as an apprentice in (Western) Samoa as it was preparing to take its final steps into independence. In the early 1960s, even as Asia and Africa were in the throes of decolonization, independence for Pacific island territories was by no means a certainty. For Samoa, the 'Tonga Solution' (protectorate) was mentioned, along with various combinations of autonomy, internal self-government and independence. Intra-departmental battles, long gone and forgotten, feisty characters fighting over turf, are recounted with a kindly and benign eye. The mood of a somnolent Samoa slowly waking up to its new future is sketched with skill and humour.

From Samoa, Hensley went to the United Nations, 'a kind of terrarium' he calls it, 'not so much the hothouse of its critics as a sealed community where the shape of things could be rearranged' (p.42). From that vantage point, Hensley describes the New Zealand position, the goings-on in the chaotic Committee of Twenty Four, life in the cloistered diplomatic community in Manhattan, and the effort to find a solution to the tangled issue of the Cook Islands' future political status. A 'Free Association' arrangement was eventually agreed upon. This was a remarkable achievement whereupon New Zealand found itself 'being congratulated by Indonesia and hearing countries like Tunisia and Algeria speaking approvingly of New Zealand's readiness to devise new solutions to the problems of small territories' (p.56).

After the United Nations and the Pacific, Hensley went to the fledgling Commonwealth Secretariat in London, in the mid-1960s trying to find a broadly acceptable role for itself in a new world which now extended well beyond the white dominions to include recently independent nations in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean fighting for their own place in the sun. Africa dominated the debate. First, it was Rhodesia and the problem of dealing with its irascible leader Ian Smith. Should sanctions be allowed to have their effect before contemplating other alternatives? Should military force be a live possibility? The war in Nigeria has a full chapter of its own. We get a first-hand view of these developments which once so exercised the minds of international diplomats, but which now lie faded in the vanishing memory of middle-aged men and women.

In the United States, Hensley witnessed the squalidly secretive Nixon administration's China initiative and the gradually intensifying debate about the Vietnam War, and other domestic developments. Much of this material, except for the New Zealand angle, will be familiar to most readers of this journal. But it is the manner in which they are