

Post Marks largely succeeds in its aim of introducing people to New Zealand postcards. What is enjoyable about this book is that it presents what Leo Haks mentions at the end of the introduction, ‘a kaleidoscope view of early New Zealand’ (p.13). It truly highlights the vast range of uses to which New Zealanders put millions of postcards, from the prosaic to the bizarre.

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A Bloody Road Home: World War Two and New Zealand's Heroic Second Division. By Christopher Pugsley. Penguin Books, Auckland, 2014. 620pp. NZ price: \$70.00. ISBN: 9780143571896.

A Bloody Road Home is a serious read. The latest in a long line of histories of the First and Second World Wars by Pugsley, it is the first to cover New Zealand's Second Division as a whole. Previous historians have approached each unit or campaign separately, such as Jim Henderson's history of the 22 Battalion and Monty Soutar's acclaimed *Ngā Tama Toa*. Weighing in at 2.3 kg and running to 620 pages, the book consolidates the numerous disparate histories. It looks at how the Division worked together (when it was able to) and how the commanders' different leadership styles worked for and against the Division. The role of Freyberg – particularly the way he juggled his own relationships with the British Army and New Zealand government – is also considered. Governor-General Lieutenant General Sir Jerry Mateparae provides the foreword and highlights the enduring legacy of the men of the Second Division, their experiences and sacrifices.

While this book is a worthy history, it is also an engaging read. The lively descriptions of campaigns and analysis of events and people are the strengths of this book. I found the descriptions of battles and camp life evocative and the analysis of the commanders' personalities interesting. Armed with extensive reading, and an understanding of strategy and the terrain where the battles were fought, Pugsley reassesses the work of other military historians. He explains the tactics of the commanders and the reasons for successes and failures. In particular, his descriptions of Crete and Greece highlight the expectations of the commanders and the realities on the ground.

As well as dealing with the battles and tactics, Pugsley examines the people involved: commanders and officers, soldiers and doctors. The commander of each unit is introduced with the words of his own men – taken from the diary, letters or oral history of a subaltern, not those of an officer, commander or historian. This is a nice touch, as we are encouraged to consider the commander from the point of view of his men.

Despite the focus on military history, the personal experiences of the men of the Second Division are evoked throughout. From the start, Pugsley tells the human stories of the men of the Division. He begins with the Morrison family. Four sons and

a daughter enlisted; two sons lost their lives, while another lost a leg. This is the story of just one New Zealand family – there are thousands more like it.

Contributing to this sense of the personal is the richness of the sources. The use of soldiers' diaries, letters and oral histories from public collections enhances the narrative and contributes to the feeling of the personal experience of war. Both Allied and German military sources are also used, providing a more complete understanding of events and strategies, including occasions when the German commanders were surprised by the actions (or inactions) of the New Zealand commanders.

Some good yarns are told – in fact, there could have been more of these. There's a story about what happened when the quartermaster ran out of 'lemon squeezer' hats in North Africa and the men were issued with the tropical topi instead. The men loathed them so much that the hats would 'accidentally' find themselves under the wheels of trucks (p.185). The fulsome use of diaries, letters and oral history reveals stories about life under bombardment and losing mates. The realities of inappropriate uniforms, poor supplies and the appalling lack of equipment are expressed through the personal accounts of the men.

Pugsley's decision to write in the present tense to evoke action and build a stronger connection to the events can be distracting. I found it particularly noticeable alongside quotations from first-hand accounts, the majority of which were written in the past tense. The level of detail can also be overwhelming. However, this is understandable in the context of a book that is bringing together the stories of many companies and their roles in battle.

A Bloody Road Home is well illustrated, with black-and-white photographs within the text and colour images confined to plates. However, interpretation of the images is lacking, usually comprising the title and the artist of the work or a one-line caption – thus missing the opportunity to add context. Some excellent works by Peter McIntyre are included alongside drawings from soldier-artists taken from diaries, letters home and sketchbooks. Many of the photographs come from the War History Collection and have been sourced from the National Army Museum, which receives a special credit for its role in the book. There are also numerous maps and charts to help the reader understand the geography of battles and the structure of the Division (p.20). There is an excellent index and extensive bibliography.

This is a book for future generations, whether they are descendants of the men who fought in these battles or historians seeking to understand the context and tactics of New Zealand at war. Pugsley paints a picture of the battles and events, allowing the reader to visualize the hardships and action of battle and the times in between. In bringing together the many disparate histories of the units and campaigns, Pugsley helps readers to understand the Division as a whole and its place within the larger context of the war. This is a great responsibility, which he has met thoroughly and thoughtfully.

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