

Editorial Introduction



With the publication of this volume, the *New Zealand Journal of History* turns 50. Started by colleagues in the Department of History at the University of Auckland, its founding editor, Keith Sinclair, included a brief ‘Editorial Note’ in the inaugural issue. The new journal, he wrote, would be ‘particularly interested in articles on New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific and Southeast Asia’, but would ‘not ignore New Zealand’s historical origins in Great Britain and Europe, nor its place in the Commonwealth’.¹ Raewyn Dalziel’s first article in the journal, a study of Julius Vogel — politician, businessman and the colony’s Agent-General in the United Kingdom — was a perfect fit for the journal, but it was her second NZJH contribution, the 1977 essay ‘The Colonial Helpmeet: Women’s Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand’, that signalled the arrival of a significant voice in the field of New Zealand’s women’s and gender history.²

Raewyn Dalziel’s history with the NZJH is wide-ranging and lengthy. As well as publishing her own work in the journal, she guest-edited the April 1989 special issue on women’s history and again in October 1993, when the NZJH marked the centennial of New Zealand women’s franchise. Dalziel is also the longest-serving member of the editorial team. From October 1972 through to the journal’s move to Dunedin in 2013, she has variously been its Business Manager, an associate editor and a member of the Editorial Board. It is fitting that this fiftieth anniversary issue of the journal is dedicated to her and her enduring work in New Zealand history.

The essays in this volume share a common starting-point: Dalziel’s colonial helpmeet essay. ‘Helpmeet’ is deceptively simple and crisp in style. It works on a number of levels, offering a combination of conceptual analysis and rigorous research, and is grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the period. This is why it continues to be cited and why it is central to many of the essays in this collection. Twice anthologized, ‘Helpmeet’ put forward a set of arguments about New Zealand’s early female suffrage victory pivoting around domesticity and the lives of ordinary women.³ The settler women who populate the essay were not the leaders of suffrage campaigns or social organizations; they were wives and mothers absorbed in their homes and families rather than the body politic. Some were married to important men, but that was immaterial to Dalziel’s analysis. What mattered was explaining how the everyday work that women did in their homes translated into a historically significant victory for New Zealand women in 1893, not how the

wives of politicians worked to influence their husbands' votes. However, the article provided far more than a missing piece of the suffrage puzzle. Through 'Helpmeet' we could see how central women's history and gender history should be to the whole of New Zealand history.

Many of the pressing questions being asked by twentieth-century women's historians can be traced back to the unfinished business of the earlier women's movement. New Zealand women won the vote in 1893, but to what effect? For some scholars, most notably Patricia Grimshaw, the early suffrage victory looked like a remarkable milestone which paved the way for ongoing political, social and economic reforms;⁴ to others it and the slow expansion of women's public roles and responsibilities thereafter were emblems of the limits of conventional politics. Dalziel's examination of women in colonial settler society was intended to place the achievements of late-nineteenth-century feminism into an appropriate framework. What had New Zealand women been doing prior to 1893? How did they win the suffrage argument? Should the progressive and change-oriented aspects of women's suffrage be foregrounded when voting left so many aspects of women's lives (and society at large) essentially unchanged? Were matrimony, maternity, domesticity and care-giving — conventionally regarded as the background to women's professional, public and political lives — better treated as their foreground?

'Helpmeet' was, of course, just one article in a long career, not the sum-total of Dalziel's contribution to New Zealand history. Before she wrote 'Helpmeet' there was a book based on her PhD, examining the office of the Agent-General for New Zealand in the United Kingdom.⁵ After 'Helpmeet' there were books on Julius Vogel and the Auckland Home and Family Society.⁶ And through the 1980s and into the 1990s she published a range of essays on topics as diverse as the 'continuous ministry', 'Popular Protest in Early New Plymouth' and sources for writing Auckland's social history.⁷ She also contributed essays to general histories of New Zealand.⁸ The influence of 'Helpmeet', though, continued to be evident in her work, particularly in the entries she wrote for the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.⁹ During this period Raewyn also taught and supervised students in the Department of History at the University of Auckland. At various times she headed the Department and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the University's Women's Studies programme. With Jan Crosthwaite from the Philosophy Department and Maureen Molloy, one of the contributors to this volume, Raewyn wrote the Women's Studies programme proposal that was presented to the Faculty of Arts. She and Professor Pat Berquist then prepared an application to the ASB Trust, which funded the programme in its first three years, and helped steer the academic proposal through the University Senate

and Council.¹⁰ A very active member of the Faculty of Arts and the wider university community, Raewyn served on numerous committees, held many leadership positions and worked tirelessly for the University. History's loss was the tertiary sector's gain in 1999 when Raewyn accepted the position as the University of Auckland's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), a role she excelled in for the next decade.

Despite her diverse contributions to New Zealand history, for many historians 'Helpmeet' remains Raewyn's signature piece and the natural starting point for any consideration of the interplay between New Zealand women's public and private worlds. In her article on New Zealand's 'servant problem' Charlotte Macdonald revisits an issue central to the PhD thesis she completed under Raewyn's supervision, the colony's shortage of domestic help. Where the thesis concentrated on white immigrant women, brought to New Zealand to become domestic servants, this essay looks at why Māori and other non-white women were not recruited into these jobs. Keeping New Zealand white, she argues, 'was more urgent than providing an answer to the problem of a shortfall in domestic labour'.

Like Charlotte, Deborah Montgomerie was also supervised by Raewyn, although in her case for a Masters thesis. Where Deborah's MA concentrated on the mid-twentieth century, and on paid work, 'New Women and Not-So-New Men' examines the immediate post-suffrage decades, and focuses on the interplay between women's aspirations for greater autonomy, popular culture and prescriptive domestic ideologies. It picks up on the themes of 'Helpmeet' but also draws on years of co-teaching a women's history course, 'Women in New Societies', with Raewyn. Like 'Helpmeet', the essay contends that understanding the connection between experience and archetype is vital to understanding how women negotiated a balance between the expectations of female domesticity and their aspirations to live fulfilling and engaging lives. Marriage remained central to most women's lives but it was not immutable. 'New' women hoped to actively reshape marriage without destroying the institution.

Three essays in this collection reference another of Raewyn's key works, her 1993 study of the Auckland Home and Family Society. Maternal mortality, childbirth and welfare, the subjects of these contributions, were central to many women's lives. Maureen Molloy's essay picks up on research she and Raewyn undertook in the early 1990s.¹¹ Like Raewyn, Maureen was very interested in the local, and in family reconstruction. Raewyn co-supervised Maureen's PhD on Waipu. Maureen remembers how Raewyn 'moved seamlessly from supervisor to colleague, mentoring many of us through our early careers'. 'Maternal and Infant Mortality in Auckland, 1870–1930'

returns to a data set generated during this phase of Maureen's career and examines the factors contributing to the death-rate of Auckland mothers.

Linda Bryder's essay, 'An Area Peculiarly Our Own', is more about the politics of motherhood than the practicalities and risks of giving birth. A colleague of Raewyn's in the University of Auckland History Department, Linda's work on the Plunket Society at a national and local level has examined an institution built on the helpmeet ideal. Here she considers another group of activist women, those campaigning for improved maternity services, a Chair of Obstetrics and a national women's hospital. Doris Gordon, Nellie Molesworth, Amy Hutchinson, Agnes Kent-Johnston and Janet Fraser were advocating causes in the helpmeet tradition.

While neither Margaret Tennant nor Lesley Courtney were colleagues or students of Raewyn's, Margaret in particular recalls Raewyn's contribution to the New Zealand Historical Association over many years and her outstanding support and generosity towards other women historians. There are many ways to provide support. The Karitane nurses, on whom their essay focuses, were professional support people. The 'epitome of wholesomeness and responsibility', Karitane nurses cared for mothers and their newborn babies in hospitals and in their homes. Whereas nineteenth-century helpmeets were expected to manage their babies alone, Margaret and Lesley argue that by the mid-twentieth century a 'recalibration of womanhood' made it acceptable to employ specialist baby nurses.

The final three essays in this collection deal with matters of the heart and body. Charlotte Greenhalgh was never taught by Raewyn but is acutely conscious that historians like Raewyn laid 'the professional and intellectual ground' on which she now stands. Before completing her DPhil at Oxford, Charlotte wrote a Masters thesis at Auckland about interwar romance and courtship. Her article on love letters and New Zealand's romantic culture is drawn from that work. The connection to Raewyn's essay on the love life of Donald McLean and Susan Strang is clear.¹² As Charlotte recounts, Raewyn's 'advancement of women's history established questions about lived experience that I now investigate from the perspective of the histories of gender and masculinity'. Like Raewyn's own work, this case study of seven couples takes us beyond individual stories to considerations of wider historical import.

Miss New Zealand is not a topic that Raewyn is ever likely to write about. Yet even in Caroline Daley's essay on carnival queens and beauty contestants the helpmeet is never far from sight. A colleague of Raewyn's for more than 20 years, Caroline co-taught a New Zealand social history course with Raewyn in the 1990s. This was genuine co-teaching, where Raewyn's

seniority was irrelevant and an equal partnership was always the norm. Caroline's essay grew out of a lecture in the social history course; Raewyn's eyebrows were occasionally raised when Caroline gave a lecture on beauty queens, but she never questioned that history could be fun and worthwhile at the same time. Beauty contests show us another way that women revised notions of femininity within a specific social space.

Femininity and masculinity were snipped, shorn and reshaped in a variety of social spaces. Barber shops and hair salons feature in Barbara Brookes's and Catherine Smith's essay. Barbara encountered Raewyn through her writings in the 1970s, at a time when the young and radical were growing their hair longer and experimenting with unisex styles as part of a wider fashion revolution. Raewyn, Barbara recollects, was a great backer of other people's careers, always willing to provide advice at crucial times and an indefatigable writer of references.

Like many of New Zealand's best academic historians, Raewyn's retirement from her university employment was not a retirement from history. Since she stepped down from her job as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) she has continued to play a major role in the life of the University of Auckland and in New Zealand history. She has also returned to the researching and writing of history. The essays collected here, and their references, are a token of our gratitude and respect for her; if nothing else we hope they goad her back into print to set the record straight.

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NOTES

- 1 'Editorial Note', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 1, 1 (1967), p.iii.
- 2 Raewyn Blackstock, 'Sir Julius Vogel 1876–1880: From Politics to Business', NZJH, 5, 2 (1971), pp.150–70; Raewyn Dalziel, 'The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', NZJH, 11, 2 (1977), pp.112–23.
- 3 It was first anthologized in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant, eds, *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, Wellington, 1986, pp.55–68, and then in Judith Binney, ed., *The Shaping of History: Essays from the New Zealand Journal of History, 1967–1999*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2001, pp.184–95.
- 4 Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1972.
- 5 Raewyn Dalziel, *Origins of New Zealand Diplomacy: The Agent-General in London, 1870–1905*, Price Milburn for Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1975.
- 6 Raewyn Dalziel, *Julius Vogel: Business Politician*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1986; *Focus on the Family: The Auckland Home and Family Society, 1893–1993*, Home and Family Society, Auckland, 1993. See also an earlier work on Vogel, *Sir Julius Vogel*, Reed, Wellington, 1968.
- 7 Raewyn Dalziel, 'The "Continuous Ministry" Revisited', NZJH, 21, 1, (1987), pp.46–61; 'Popular Protest in Early New Plymouth: Why Did It Occur?', NZJH, 20, 1 (1986), pp.3–26; 'The Griffen Report: Sources for the Social History of Auckland', *Archifacts*, 2 (1986), pp.14–16.
- 8 Raewyn Dalziel, 'The Politics of Settlement', in W.H. Oliver with B.R. Williams, eds, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1981, pp.87–111; 'Railways and Relief Centres (1870–1890)', in Keith Sinclair, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1990, pp.99–124.
- 9 Raewyn authored essays on Elsie Andrews, Alice Basten, Rhoda Bloodworth, Blanche Carnachan, Mary Ann Müller and Anna Stout. In addition she wrote entries for Francis Dillon Bell, Julius Vogel and Henry Wilding. Online versions of the essays can be found via the Te Ara website, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/browse/page/biographies>. Her essays on Müller and Stout were reproduced in Dorothy Page, *The Suffragists: Women Who Worked for the Vote: Essays from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1993, pp.101–103, 137–43. Raewyn also served as a key adviser to the Dictionary project.
- 10 Two stage one courses were introduced in 1993, a core paper on feminist theories was added in 1995, and by 1996 a full suite of eight courses allowed undergraduate students to major in the subject.
- 11 Aspects of this work were presented at the 1990 Berkshire Women's History Conference: Raewyn Dalziel, 'Marital and Reproductive Behaviour among European Women in Colonial New Zealand', Paper delivered at the Eighth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, State University of New Jersey, 8–10 June 1990, MC 244, Series VII, Box 19, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
- 12 Raewyn Dalziel, '"Making Us One": Courtship and Marriage in Colonial New Zealand', *Turnbull Library Record*, 19, 1 (1986), pp.7–26.