

Blacks and the Springboks, Auckland, 1997.

3 See Albert Grundlingh, Andre Odendaal and Burrige Spies, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, Johannesburg, 1995, for a short but stimulating introduction to the issues.

Where They Lived: Studies in Local, Regional and Social History. By W.J. Gardner. Regional Press, Christchurch, 1999. 108 pp. NZ price: \$25.00. ISBN 0-473-05580-5.

THE THEMES of the essays in *Provincial Perspectives*, the festschrift presented to Jim Gardner following his 1979 retirement, celebrated a university career which, perhaps as much by chance as design, had been pioneering in the fields of New Zealand's regional and local history. Twenty years later Gardner is still going strong, having, in the interim, published a splendidly detailed study of the Cheviot estate, one which already promises to become a classic. In this self-published collection of essays — some previously published, others not, most with penetrative afterthoughts appended — an elder statesman of New Zealand history demonstrates that he has not only kept up with recent trends, he has also continued to ponder. There is much distilled wisdom in these pages.

Gardner's historical concern has always been with people: where they came from; where they settled; how they interacted; how they saw themselves. For Gardner, people are not just numbers, aggregates, all too easily merging into misleading abstractions. Eschewing both 'history from above' and 'history from below', he counsels instead 'history from alongside'. Further, he questions whether national history, particularly in the colonial period, has much to tell us about New Zealanders, as distinct from New Zealand. His stress on the variety of experiences, both within regional and lesser spatial units, is persuasive. But Gardner is also keenly aware of the dangers of such studies retaining a distinctly antiquarian tinge. He therefore contends that regional and local history should be regarded as subsets of the new social history, perhaps even providing unity to that sub-discipline's already disparate strands. He pleads eloquently for recognition of local history as a bridge between academic and popular history.

Gardner's regional and local history is, of course, primarily rural history. Urban history is specifically excluded, although towns may be considered in the context of their hinterlands, and suburban localities are deemed acceptable units for study. While conceding their necessary imprecision, the author offers two key and linked concepts: those of *community* and *region*. A community is defined as 'a group of people who live their daily lives in a more or less defined area of which they are conscious, and with which they identify themselves in significant degree as residents, workers and members of associations' (p.50). A region, Gardner concedes, is even more difficult to define. Employing what he terms 'regional geometry', he suggests the spatial unit may be distinguished by clear lines leading out from an identified centre, even if the circumference may be subject to regular change. 'The essential characteristic of a region', he states, 'is that it should be felt by its residents to be a reasonably distinct part of the country' (p.51). Geography, vested interests, utility and sporting ties all have their parts to play in determining boundaries. The relative homogeneity of these units — both economic and social — is implicit, which immediately places Gardner at odds with those recent New Zealand historians who have placed more stress on colonial transience and disunity.

The collection is in several parts, the first comprising seven papers written between 1957 and 1988. All in their time were 'attempts to break new ground'. They remain interesting for that. It is useful to have them reprinted together. Added value is imparted

by Gardner's retrospective comments. Aptly, the group commences with his seminal *Landfall* article, 'Grass Roots and Dredge Tailings', which assessed the state of local history in the mid-1950s. After reviewing the ensuing debate, Gardner concludes that the agenda he then advanced has been only partially followed. Other papers focus on such varying topics as the genesis of the Sherrard Awards and the place of regional history in schools. Perhaps the gem is the 1984 paper comparing the origins of the Nelson and Canterbury settlements. Insightful and incisive, it continues to pose questions for students of New Zealand's other early 'planned settlements'.

Four papers discussing recent work in the field of New Zealand social history, at the same time seeking to locate regional and local history within this milieu, make up the second part of the collection. While disclaiming any intent to re-litigate old differences, Gardner characteristically sticks to his guns. Though continuing to disagree with Miles Fairburn's interpretations, he nevertheless pays generous tribute to the originality of Fairburn's work. Erik Olssen's Caversham study, considered an advance on his *History of Otago*, is warmly commended, while James Belich's *Making Peoples* and the *Historical Atlas* are subjected to constructive, but generally favourable, criticism. Most poignant is Gardner's evaluation of the contribution of Rollo Arnold to New Zealand social history: 'his work is nothing less than a landmark in the study of the early colonial countryside' (p.71). In his respect for the sources, and his careful yet innovative use of them, Arnold was clearly very much a man after Gardner's own heart.

The third part of the book is made up of seven methodological appendices. Drawing from his long experience, Gardner offers some practical suggestions for intending researchers. A discussion of how New Zealand's population was distributed in 1881, based on maps handily provided in a back pocket, is followed by a case study of the evolution of North Canterbury's communities between 1871 and 1886. Other pièces examine some social indicators of community status (particularly the incidence of schools and churches), political aspects of localism, and a tentative model of factionalism in colonial politics.

In these collected essays Gardner skilfully guides the reader over some of the (predominantly) country roads of New Zealand's colonial history, all the while avoiding the ruts and muddy sidetracks. They constitute an appeal to continue the historical journey, finding time to also clear away the adjacent 'blackened stumps' (recorded legends) and 'tangles of gorse and broom' (popular misconceptions and learned suspicions), which have obstructed earlier 'breakers in' (researchers) of New Zealand's colonial landscapes. One can only admire the singleness of purpose of a professional lifetime and Gardner's unflagging energy.

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Heathen in Godzone: Seventy Years of Rationalism in New Zealand. By Bill Cooke. New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists, Auckland, 1998. 240 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-473-05392-6.

BILL COOKE is one of the new breed of members of the Rationalist Society. From this useful vantage he has written a history which is colourful, frank and well-informed.

The Rationalist Society is a small organization. Founded in the 1920s, at its largest it never had more than a few hundred members (although it drew on many more