

When I was only semen in a gland
 Or less than that, my father hung
 From a torture post at Mud Farm
 Because he would not kill. The guards
 Fried sausages, and as the snow came darkly
 I feared a death by cold in the cold groin
 And plotted revolution. His black and swollen thumbs
 Explained the brotherhood of man...

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Before ANZAC, Beyond Armistice. The Central Otago Soldiers of World War One and the Home They Left Behind. By Keith Douglas Scott. Activity Press, Auckland, 2009. 352pp. NZ price: \$39.99. ISBN 978-0-9582634-5-0.

SINCE 2000 THERE HAVE BEEN NO LESS THAN 31 BOOKS and 17 scholarly articles published solely on New Zealand's participation in the First World War. *Before Anzac, Beyond Armistice* is a welcome addition to the publications in this field of study. The book is primarily set during the period of the war and its immediate aftermath, and it focuses almost exclusively on the soldiers from Central Otago. While the focus on soldiers is not new, the regional approach adopted by the author, Keith Scott, is new, at least in the context of New Zealand First World War studies, and so is the main primary source he uses, being the military service files of the soldiers themselves. What unfolds is a broad coverage of the First World War and its impact on 'Central's' males of military age.

There is a typical chronological structure to this book spanning the years 1914 to 1919 that begins in 'New Zealand' and then shifts to 'At Sea and in Egypt', 'Gallipoli', the 'Middle East', the 'Western Front', and then back to 'New Zealand'. Each of these sections is layered with easily recognized chapter headings like, 'GOODBYE CAIRO! Departure for the Dardanelles', and 'SUFFERING HUMANITY: The Somme 1916'. The text is interspersed with 61 illustrations and 44 tables of statistical information, ending with a set of appendices pertaining mainly to the 'Central Boys of World War I'.

Scott, with family connections to the region dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, writes with passion and a sense of duty and attachment to the soldiers. A strong feature of this book is the assembly of diverse details about these soldiers, including whole letters and diary excerpts, tables of data on demography, casualties, employment, family, conscription and drunkenness, which previously would not have been readily accessible to readers. This information will no doubt be of immense value to the residents of Central Otago who have family connections to these young men, as it will be to historians interested in making regional comparisons and trans-Tasman connections. In this sense *Before Anzac, After Armistice* has a role to play as a building block in more comprehensive understandings about the participation of New Zealand soldiers in the First World War.

Throughout the book Scott introduces and elaborates upon situations and issues experienced by the region's soldiers. Conscription and the work of the Appeals Court are particularly noteworthy. The Military Service Act (1916) was undoubtedly New Zealand's most disruptive piece of wartime legislation because it introduced conscription, which subsequently affected entire sections of the community. Single males of military age were vulnerable, but so too were married males without children. Wives and families faced possible economic hardships with the call-up of male breadwinners and employers faced labour shortages. Successful appeals were rare, most merely gave a conscript time to prepare his exit from society. Scott describes the issues faced by Central's communities

in some detail, although unfortunately the discussion of conscription and its impact is not consolidated in one dedicated chapter.

While the depth and breadth of information on Central's soldiers is one of the key assets of this book, there remains an issue for further consideration. The book seems to stand in isolation from the array of recently published literature on the First World War. The soldiers from Central did not act in isolation. In 1914 at the same time that the Reid boys from Kokonga were joining up, so too were the Malones in Taranaki, and in Europe entire armies were on the move. A current international trend in First World War studies is to compare and examine areas of intersection. How typical or unique were the experiences of the soldiers from Central in comparison to contemporaries from elsewhere in New Zealand and from overseas in Australia and Britain? Here, references to Jock Phillips's *A Man's Country?* (1996), Suzanne Welborn's *Bush Heroes* (2002), which is about the soldiers from Western Australia, and Helen McCartney's *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (2005) would have enabled some contextualization and testing of ideas about the soldiers from Central. For example, the chapter titled 'GOODBYE COBBER! The Send Offs' is essentially about a convergence zone between soldiers and their local communities. It is a sub-topic rich in social interactions and rituals and open to interpretations and analysis where some comparative work with Robert Rutherford's study of Canadian 'send-offs' may have yielded further understandings about Central's departures.

Writing about wartime British society in *Sussex in the First World War* (2004), Keith Grieves remarked that 'locality matters alongside the dimensions of nation, class and gender'. Keith Scott has employed 'locality' as the underpinning concept in *Before Anzac, After Armistice* and in doing so has amassed a considerable amount of micro-historical detail that historians researching New Zealand's participation in the First World War will find difficult to ignore as our historiography of the conflict moves towards the publication of a single-volume general history.

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Captain Charles, Engineer of Charity: The Remarkable Life of Charles Gordon O'Neill. By Stephen Utick. Allen & Unwin, Crow's Nest NSW, 2008. 276pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 978-1-74175-378-3.

THIS BOOK'S TWO LENSES RANGE OVER THREE COUNTRIES, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia, in pursuing the life of Charles O'Neill. O'Neill is presented as a product of two nineteenth-century forces: liberal progress, with its belief in technology (O'Neill the engineer); and the heightened Christian social conscience (O'Neill the promoter of charity, most especially the St Vincent de Paul Society).

It is the latter on which Utick ultimately pins the significance of his subject, but O'Neill's feats as a civil and architectural engineer in Glasgow, and as government surveyor for the province of Otago and provincial engineer in the Auckland and Wellington provinces, provide a counterpoint to the story of the devout Catholic organizer of charity. His ten years as a member of the New Zealand House of Representatives also provide insights into the 'parliamentary roundabout' of the provincial era, the social concerns evident at the legislative level and the politics of development. In three directions, at least, O'Neill's political advocacy seems remarkably modern. He anticipated the emergence of an Antipodean wine industry, and warned against the environmental and climatic effects of widespread deforestation. He was also a significant early promoter of town planning in New Zealand, his main legislative achievement being the 1875 Plans of Towns Regulation Act.