

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.

O'Neill was the Scottish-born son of Irish migrants, and his involvement in charity began in the Glasgow slums, graphically described by Utick. Utick has been an energetic researcher of the conditions from which charitable enterprises sprang not only in Glasgow, but in France (where the St Vincent de Paul society originated), in Sydney and, to a lesser extent, in New Zealand. A strength of the book is its attempt to delineate the theological as well as the social underpinnings of charity among Catholic laity, and to understand the nature of the bachelor O'Neill's religious zeal and personal commitment to the relief of poverty in all three countries where he lived. Most histories of Catholic social services in Australia and New Zealand emphasize the religious orders which dominated Catholic charitable endeavours, and where welfare history more generally has acknowledged voluntarism, women's role in philanthropy has been the more usual focus. Utick gives insights into a society where women were the secondary element and where male lay endeavour was to the fore, using O'Neill as an example of a charitable entrepreneur who organized and inspired others. Even where he was not responsible for the initial presence of the St Vincent de Paul Society, O'Neill played a major part in establishing it as an organized force with branches and links to the Paris-based organization.

Utick was not able to construct this biography from a wealth of personal papers, so O'Neill is seen mostly through the eyes of others, or via his public statements and a limited number of letters to others, mostly written in an official capacity. There is, consequently, something of a 'life and times' feel to the book, probably unavoidable when an understanding of a subject has to be built up laboriously from context. Utick is nonetheless able to emphasize the on-going importance of family to this unmarried engineer, politician and promoter of charity — he was one of 11 children, and his father and a number of siblings followed him to New Zealand. O'Neill was inseparable from his older brother John, who went with him to Sydney and shared the poverty of his final years. He was heartbroken by the death of his sister, Maria Gordon O'Neill, in 1883, to the extent that he took her middle name, referring to himself from this time on as Charles Gordon (rather than 'Bryson') O'Neill. Family, religiosity and community service were inextricable themes in O'Neill's life. But the charitable entrepreneur was a poor businessman; he died an obscure pauper in Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital in 1900. This book is part of a process of recovery, containing unexpected gems of insight for historians of religion, of welfare, and of colonial technology and politics.

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Mr Ambassador: Memoirs of Sir Carl Berendsen. Edited by Hugh Templeton. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2009. 336pp. NZ price: \$40.00. ISBN 978-0-86473-584-3.

A HEAD OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT who can tell his Prime Minister sternly that 'I do not believe that anything that is morally wrong can ever be politically right' is clearly an interesting character. Even more so one who could later rebuke Peter Fraser, that great man of principle, for running away from his principles and elicit from that Prime Minister two lengthy messages earnestly (and correctly) denying the charge. This bold mandarin was Carl Berendsen, head of the Prime Minister's Department for nine years to 1943, and afterwards first High Commissioner to Australia, then Ambassador to the United States and our first Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He retired in 1952 and in his later years dictated these memoirs, now carefully edited and published for the first time by Hugh Templeton. This is timely because Berendsen and the Fraser he served were the founders of their country's foreign policy and have left a permanent stamp on New Zealand's view of itself and of the world.