

Hunting is generously illustrated with over 120 images, many of them in colour. These include works by colonial artists, posters, ephemera, crisp archival photographs and faded family snapshots, plus the illustrations of Wairarapa brothers ‘Stag’ and Tory Spooner (who also painted a panoramic frieze in their bedroom of the deer-infested Tararua Ranges where they hunted). Hunter’s book also celebrates a profusion of hunting objects and iconography, ranging from hardware to everyday domestic items, fashionable accessories, ceramics, artworks and interior decoration. This wealth of material and visual culture, plus an abundant archive, suggests that hunting would work well as the subject of a museum exhibition.

Hunter has tackled an activity that New Zealand’s urbanized population knows largely through culture. Part of this hunting culture is its history, and *Hunting* shows that ‘[h]unting is everywhere in New Zealand’s past. That past is very recent and we remain connected to it through our families and whanau, our kitchens and communities, and through the history of the land itself’ (p.286). These are all good reasons to take hunting seriously as an object of historical enquiry, rather than seeing it as a cliché best left to hunters. In *Hunting: A New Zealand History*, Hunter has convincingly written about ‘different groups and their perspectives on the natural world’ (p.27), but she has also convinced me that ‘[i]f there is a “national culture” in New Zealand, then hunting and hunters are at its core’ (p.27).

KIRSTIE ROSS

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Shear Hard Work: A History of New Zealand Shearing. By Hazel Riseborough. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2010. 360pp. NZ price: \$45.00. ISBN 978-1-86940-453-6.

THIS TEXT, THE SECOND BY HAZEL RISEBOROUGH published by Auckland University Press, is subtitled *A History of New Zealand Shearing*. Like the first book, *Ngamatea* (2006), it is compiled around the personal stories provided by interviewees and, in this case, a great number of personalities, and for that reason it might be more appropriately subtitled *The History of New Zealand Shearing Personnel*. When compared with other books on New Zealand shearing, such as John E. Martin’s *Tatau Tatau* (1987), Tony Williams’s *Tales from the Shearing Shed* (1999) and *Boards, Blades & Barebellies* by Halina Ogonoswka-Coates (1987), this is a lengthy tome, and it is the stories of shearers, members of shearing gangs and farmers that account for this length. In the introduction, the author refers to the difficulty of fitting in the stories of all those whom she has interviewed, and therein lies the volume’s problem. When it comes to the cited memoirs and interviews, and the innumerable quotes (which are not always acknowledged), less is in fact more. Many of the personal stories are similar, and a more selective policy should perhaps have been exercised. For example, there are 21 interviews reported in Chapter 7, which comprises 37 pages. There is a pattern in the stories — many of the interviewees tell us that they did not fit into formal schooling and left to work in the gangs as soon as it was possible. Among the best stories are those of the experiences of Joe Paewai and family, the gangs at Ngamatea and the champion shearers, and perhaps they alone should have been left to represent their fellows in the domain.

It is difficult to identify the specific intended audience for such a book. One has the sense that it is written for those, and in honour of those, who are already involved with the shearing industry and farming. To begin with, a reader new to the subject would have difficulty appreciating the meaning and significance of particular terms, such as *expert* (a specialist usage), *drummer*, *ringer*, *mid-micron* and *open shed*. As these are, and have been, important terms in the history of shearing, the reader should have been served with a comprehensive glossary. A national map with the various localities and stations referred to

in the stories would have also assisted the reader. For example, on p.25, the author refers to Glenburn, Te Weraiti and Te Whiti, but there is no indication where these are situated (they are in fact in the Wairarapa).

As a history, there are some aspects of style here which one would not normally find in the genre. For example, the author addresses the reader in a conversational, almost chatty, tone, and uses an informal vocabulary. It is a colloquial narrative style. Examples can be found on p.58: 'All the kids would help ... they all started out rousieing' and '[i]t was a Maori gang, Nolan Kraiger's gang from Masterton. He had taken over from Alan Barker'. The author has used a similar writing style to that in *Ngamatea* with epigraphs from a range of origins to introduce each chapter. Sometimes these epigraphs lack references especially where they are a part of a larger quote in the body of the chapter. In other parts, the author uses the second person: 'You might be given your bottle of beer, but even at thirteen or fourteen you did not get your gear ground for you: you had to do that yourself' (p.60). In another section, she honours a deceased shearer with: 'You touched us all with magic, Joe'. Earlier, we read, 'Shearers were said to be the most important of all seasonal workers' (p.12), but we are not told by whom this claim was made. Instead, some unrelated citations follow. Conversational exclamations such as 'No wonder shearers were known as "Knights of the board!"' are used, but we are again not told who described them as such, or where, or when. Throughout the text, single inverted commas are deployed constantly, but there is no indication whose voice is being used.

The organization of so much narrative material is a challenge. Dedicated chapters would have helped the reader to better appreciate some of the factual material and assisted a chronological arrangement. Chapter 1 is a mixture of information about shearing shed types, both historic and those still operating, followed by Maori participation in shearing, and the development of unions. In the chapter headed 'Down on the Farm', we read on p.46 that 'A Committee of Inquiry into the shearing industry took place between December 1976 and March 1977 ...' and then on the following page 'During the war and in the post-war period, the shortage of shearers had become acute ...'. Perhaps, chapters dedicated to shearers' cooks or to wool handlers would have strengthened the narrative. One of the strengths of the Tony Williams text *Tales from the Shearing Shed* is that it is arranged geographically, whereas *Shear Hard Work* moves from place to place and text parts lose their significance, particularly without maps. Williams, whose work is also heavily concerned with quotes, organizes his interviews in boxed sections at relevant parts of the narrative.

What is missing here? The story stops in the shed. But part of the shearing process involves getting the wool out of the shed — packing out has also always been 'shear hard work'. The history of New Zealand shearing also involves the animals used to pull the wool wagons, the dump sheds, the transfer from wagons and lightering to ships anchored precariously close to shore. The inclusion of historic photographs of these activities similar to those used in *Boards, Blades & Barebellies* would have completed the picture. We have photographs of individuals or small groups associated with the woolshed in *Shear Hard Work*, but none of the historic photographs of very large gangs of 30 or more that show the huge labour investment made on single properties.

We are left in no doubt of Hazel Riseborough's affinity with the woolshed and her admiration for those involved in the shearing domain — in the text, adjectives like heroic and incredible abound, and we are well reminded 'It is hard work in the shearing sheds' (p.266). This is a text which is sure to be appreciated by those within the industry.

DIANNE BARDSLEY

Victoria University of Wellington