

chapters set in the Pacific. In 'Ambrym I' Edmond writes about the experiences of his great-grandfather as missionary on the island of Ambrym, making good use of the diary Murray kept during part of his time there. In 'Ambrym II' Edmond writes of his own visit to Ambrym, where he attempts to square the evidence of written sources with the oral traditions of the ni-Vanuatu residents, keeps his own diary in an attempt to better understand his forebear, and has some challenging experiences (both physical and psychological). He encounters with some discomfort the religious devotion of the locals; any sense of postcolonial guilt at the actions of his great-grandfather in denouncing some of the 'evils' of indigenous culture is thrown into disarray by the ni-Vanuatu celebration of Charles Murray and his brother William Murray as bringers of Christianity to the island, and the villagers' desire to go through a 'sorri ceremony' where they formally apologize to Edmond for their ancestors' treatment of the Murrays.

Edmond's reflections on diary-keeping are intriguing, though he could have made more of his forebears' religious motives: Edmond refers only briefly to diaries as a tool for self-examination, but this was the most powerful motive for diary-keeping in the puritan and evangelical traditions. On the whole, though, the book captures vividly and with considerable empathy the religious and psychological world of Edmond's ancestors. His generally acute use of language is let down by the careless use of the term 'non-conformist' several times in the chapter on New Zealand. One of the most important features of religion in colonial New Zealand was the lack of an established church; strictly speaking, there were no non-conformists in this country, a fact celebrated by migrants considered dissenters in their countries of origin.

The book includes no illustrations, though it does have some helpful maps and genealogical tables. Occasionally, when Edmond describes a picture of one of his ancestors or a landscape he is photographing, I longed to see that image. I suspect, though, that the absence of illustrations is not due to simple pecuniary issues. Edmond is a skilful writer and the book is a very personal one: we see people and places as he interprets them, and photographs might diminish the power of the written language. There is, throughout the book, a strong sense of place.

We are all shaped by our particular cultural tradition and family background. Although our family history may contribute to our curiosity about the past, few academic historians in this country actively engage with their own family histories in their work. Māori historians have shown the most initiative in this respect; the work of Ngāi Tahu historians Angela Wanhalla and Michael Stevens, for instance, demonstrates how family stories can be integrated into particularly evocative and powerful understandings of our pasts. Rod Edmond's achievement in this outstanding book is to reflect in an engaging and considered way on his own life, on the lives of his colonial forebears, and on the enormous impact of migration on individuals, families and cultures. *Migrations* is a compulsive page-turner, but it is also deeply thoughtful and thought-provoking.

Alison Clarke

University of Otago

Home in the Howling Wilderness: Settlers and the Environment in Southern New Zealand. By Peter Holland. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2013. 256pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 9781869407391.

Peter Holland is appreciated by many both as a person and a scholar, and for us it is particularly satisfying to view the steady flow of publications he has achieved since retirement. Appointed Professor of Geography at the University of Otago in 1982, he made his reputation as a

biogeographer, but recently he has practised equally in the field of historical geography. His book expands greatly on earlier contributions to *Environmental Histories of New Zealand* (2002) and *Seeds of Empire: The Environmental Transformation of New Zealand* (2011), edited by Tom Brooking and Eric Pawson. Holland investigates European settlers' adaptation to and of the 'waste howling wilderness' (as some saw it, quoting Deuteronomy) of southern New Zealand in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This book has been handsomely produced by Auckland University Press. It includes a scattering of fine black-and-white photographs from the period, though the George Chance image on the front cover, of 'storm-tossed cabbage trees', dates from well into the twentieth century. The chapters examine, in turn, how settlers were first programmed or encouraged to view their new land; what Māori could have told them about it and how much they listened; what they learnt about 'wind, warmth and rain'; and how much harder it was to comprehend the longer-term cycles and accommodate the 'exceptional challenges' presented by 'flood and drought, ice and snow'. The emphasis then shifts from climate history to environmental change, investigating how the 'old' (indigenous plants and animals) was utilized or dismissed; how new plants and grazing animals were introduced and depended upon; and how environmental problems emerged in their wake. Rabbits get fullest coverage, with 13 pages devoted to the minutiae of methods for their control. A later chapter considers the opportunities (at horticultural exhibitions and A & P shows, for instance, or through newspaper columns) to both sow and glean environmental knowledge.

As Holland explains, his interest in such matters was first stimulated and informed by his family's South Canterbury farming background, but he writes primarily as a geographer. His first chapter begins with the conclusion of a Canadian (A.H. Clark, in 1949) that early European settlers of the South Island viewed the land as a commodity and mutilated it without thought of conservation. Holland's attempt to redress this picture is founded above all on the surviving farm and station diaries which he has ploughed through for 20 years. This research has been a massive undertaking: he mentions having noted over 10,000 entries to wind, water or temperature alone. His most persistent analysis, however, often relies on eight specific consecutive diaries concentrating on the period from 1870 to 1900.

Drawing upon this kind of data, Holland has been able to construct a convincing and revisionist portrait, in which settlers appear neither as blind destroyers nor as conservationists, but as realists in an unfamiliar environment which they often first utilized, then replaced. As Holland shows, they learnt as they went, with a measure of conservation as one result by the end of the nineteenth century. He maintains that 'settlers had to experience the inherent environmental variability of southern New Zealand so that they could learn the rules of environmental stewardship for their respective areas' (p.205). He feels that their achievements should be 'celebrated'. This is a closely reasoned and informed assessment, quite similar to that reached by Robert Peden in *Making Sheep Country: Mt Peel Station and the Transformation of the Tussock Lands* (2011). On the negative side, Holland considers (with hindsight) that 'the shift from diversified to simplified plantings ... and settlers' inability to recognise that a fine-textured physical environment requires a comparably fine-grained land-use' were 'the most regrettable aspects of landscape transformation' (p.209).

Was there a greater intake of Māori environmental knowledge by European settlers in the North Island, where there were more Māori? Was the pattern of environmental learning different, or at least the pace different, in areas where most settlers initially faced bush rather than tussock? Were Australian settlers less receptive to Aboriginal knowledge than New Zealand settlers to Māori knowledge, and was there a greater failure to understand climates and environments that were even further removed from those in Europe? Holland does not pose such questions, let alone attempt to answer them. He never speculates beyond the boundaries of his chosen area, nor beyond what the detail of his own research suggests.

In his application of historical evidence, Holland appears most influenced by people of a similar academic background (at one point, five geographers receive mention in the space of two pages); also by ecologists; and less so by historians and their work. We, however, have the most to gain from him, since his approach to material differs from how most historians would look at it. Throughout (and notably so when marshalling data on climate), he, like historians, includes primary quotes, but they are not there to make a point or forward an argument on their own merit. Rather, he produces them to illustrate the data types classified within categories, which he displays in tabular form, then analyzes in graphic form. The changing frequency with which kinds of remarks or events crop up, rather than individual occurrences, informs his conclusions. The emphasis is on rigour more than on inspiration.

Every part of this book has its insights and rewards, but the most stimulating chapter is the last. Until then, Holland tends to hold himself in by constant referral back to all those diary entries: these are pages which demonstrate a justifiable constraint, while stating and supporting a case. There is sometimes just one paragraph near the end of a chapter that succinctly slots the evidence into an ecologically informed overview. In the final chapter, however, he gives free rein both to his ecological approach and to his vision of southern New Zealand's rural future. 'After relocating to a new place,' he writes, 'or when experiencing accelerated environmental change, living things encounter new opportunities and challenges and must respond effectively to them if they are to survive' (p.190). Holland applies this understanding not only to indigenous and exotic biota, to stock and crops, and to pests and weeds, but also to people. The new generation must learn that 'sustainable and economically productive landscapes in the plains and low hill country of southern New Zealand should comprise functional, managed mosaics of mostly native and largely artificial ecological systems' (p.211).

Home in the Howling Wilderness can be read for pleasure, since Holland, almost despite his discipline and his method, has nevertheless managed to present an intriguing and chronologically forward-moving narrative of environmental change. Most importantly, though, it is a deep and respectful study of the practices of European settlers in response to the opportunities and challenges of a particular but varied landscape. Holland forces us to look again at earlier assumptions about environmental attitudes, and in doing so he employs techniques all too rarely applied to historical material. On both scores this book, while fairly short, can teach us a great deal.

Paul Star

Dunedin

Extra! Extra! How The People Made The News. By David Hastings. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2013. 287pp. NZ price: \$45. ISBN 9781869407384.

Much has been written about the media by scholars from a variety of disciplines strong on theoretical ideas, but with little or no practical experience of journalism. David Hastings's engaging account of the emergence of newspapers in Auckland in the second half of the nineteenth century clearly demonstrates how an historical narrative can be greatly enhanced by analysis grounded in an understanding of the realities of the news industry.

More than 20 years ago, Patrick Day chronicled the rise and fall of newspapers in Aotearoa/New Zealand between 1840 and 1880 in his excellent study *The Making of the New Zealand Press*. A key theme was that our early (and consistently short-lived) newspapers were partisan and generally reliant on political patronage, but that from the 1860s newspapers were launched