

and-white buildings took shape on an elevated site that gradually shed embarrassing neighbours such as the mental asylum and developed attractive grounds and playing fields on its steep slopes. Wars and depressions brought their own challenges, as did concerns over the structural integrity of the buildings themselves. At one stage the education authorities wanted to pull down the distinctive tower block and associated Victorian structures. They were strengthened and restored late last century.

Sweetman tells the school's history through the careers of its leaders, giving each rector a chapter to himself. While this provides a version of the chronological narrative usually preferred by lay readers of books of this type, it creates a slightly dated 'great man' feel to the book, gives some short-term or forgettable principals too high a profile, a little like writing a history of New Zealand Prime Minister by Prime Minister, and obscures more important turning points such as legislative changes or national policies such as 'Tomorrow's Schools'.

That said, Sweetman writes well and within the demands of an institutional history offers a good balance between people, policies and the many activities that make up the life of schools such as OBHS. There are no long lists of names of duxes or First XV captains, and relatively few nods to distinguished old boys such as Russell Coutts. As might be expected in such an elite school, there is a long history of sporting endeavour. The cadet movement held sway for a long time, with OBHS losing around 400 of the 3000 old boys and teachers it sent away to the world wars. Team sports are still important, but more recent chapters show interest in activities such as camping and tramping at the school's Matukituki River lodge, as well as drama and music. The roll is now considerably more multicultural – or at least by Dunedin standards. Several short appendices present old boys' memoirs and a brief pen portrait of a much-loved tuck shop and its operator.

'*Above the City*' is well presented in an attractive hardback format and on thick, high-grade paper. Sweetman has chosen the photographs well, sparing us most of those monotonous team photographs of young sportsmen facing the camera, arms grimly folded. On the other hand, the first 16-page section of amateurish caricatures from the school's *Morgazine* 60 years ago is a waste of half the precious colour space. Surely those pages would have been better given over to the school's architecture, collections and magnificent setting?

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'*I think I am becoming a New Zealander*': *Letters of J.C. Beaglehole*. Edited by Tim Beaglehole. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2013, 504pp. NZ price: \$80.00. ISBN: 9780864739025.

Collections of letters are a fascinating conceit when one stops to consider them. Firstly there is the writer's sense that their correspondence may be of interest and use to others

outside of the recipient. Therefore authorship is never solely directed just to the recipient nor to the matter directly at hand and under discussion. Such letters are always, it could be argued, partially written to an imaginary future readership. In this they are never 'just' correspondence, being instead a combination of literary activity, journalism, performance and the hopeful contribution to future primary source material. To that end, collections of letters rely on two actions. The author must consider this particular piece of writing worthy of (usually) making a carbon copy and keeping it. The recipient must also consider that, due to a combination of writer and content, this correspondence is worthy of keeping. In these decisions occurs a sense of mutual worth of correspondent and content – and often, also of the recipient's self-assessment. Therefore collections of letters arise out of a certain combination of self-conception and self-awareness by both author and recipient. They represent the sense of writing for a future audience who will appreciate their value and the value of the correspondents. These are never just private writings. They are similar then to the diary and the journal as carefully crafted literary and social texts. They are all written in the hope of more than just the immediate audience; they are rather performances of the self in an expectation that this performance may be read by others, elsewhere, in the future.

Linked to this hope is the cultural understanding of the value of the well-crafted letter as a literary-cultural artefact. The action of writing a letter occurs in a different format and context to how most of us now correspond. While the century-old fears of the impact of the telephone on future archival and historical work are not unfounded, it is the internet in both its format and interaction that results in the imminent end of what is such a rich and valuable repository. Collections of letters have value and meaning not just because of who wrote and what they wrote but also because of the value of the letter itself. Whether handwritten or typewritten, the letter on paper signalled that time, thought and care had occurred in the composition of the correspondence. Paper and carbon copies were kept because they physically had to be – or they had to be physically destroyed. Correspondence was also slower. The interaction with those elsewhere was not a normal part of everyday life. To write a letter signalled a particular intent and investment in time, composition and cost. There was always a lag time between the writing and the reading and then, further, of the recipient responding. Letters were often not just singular texts in composition and reading, often being annotated in their margins, both by the author before final sending and by the recipient. They also demanded a concentration in reading, in deciphering the individuality of each hand. Letters, it could be said, were what really taught us to read.

On the back cover and the endpapers of this book we can attempt to read Beaglehole's hand. To many modern eyes this would not be an easy read. But in the careful reading – or perhaps deciphering – the recipient would also most likely hear Beaglehole's voice. The hand, its flow, its misspellings (often deliberate), its personal shorthand, all combine to make the letter, especially the handwritten one, intensely personal. There is the time taken to write and the time taken to read, and then the time taken to store. Compare this to the immediacy and disposability of the email. It demands a response as soon as it arrives. It occurs most often as an interruption and not as an event. It is rarely copied and stored for future readings. Often it occurs more as series of brief exchanges than as a relational event over time. In fact time and

distance disappear in the email while they were emphasized in the letter. Perhaps I am wrong and in the future we will see 'the emails of ...', but I doubt it. Therefore to read collections of letters is not only to read letters, it is to read a type of communication, creation, art and intent that has increasingly disappeared in the face of e-technology.

Such a preamble reminds us that the history of correspondence has shifted – or will shift – immeasurably and that it affects the way we access this thing labelled 'the past' via material culture. Furthermore, correspondence by written letter was often far lengthier than the hurried email exchanges of today. As Tim Beaglehole notes in his introduction, these letters are of an average length of 4000 words. This is correspondence by essay and therefore is intended for an audience, present and future, who have the time and inclination to sit and read an essay.

The collection is therefore a type of autobiography by essay epistle and a companion piece to the existing superb biography by Tim Beaglehole of his father. While the biography made fine and assiduous use of the letters, here as separate and select text they provide a different encounter, a more personal reading of John Beaglehole in which his voice, in all its guises, is present. What is immediately apparent is that Beaglehole was, from the first, a writer who became a historian. He writes as a writer, as a correspondent, as one who takes great joy in the act of writing, of corresponding, and the possibility that it provides to express himself in a variety of voices. There is the letter as conversational monologue, with its intermingling formality and colonial slang informality. There is the letter as travelogue, thousands of words of travelling, cultural pursuits, purchases, sights and events relayed to those at home. These are vivid expressionist essays. They also remind us, somewhat jarringly, as to the extent of casual racism, for most an unthought-of event in the 1920s. The young Beaglehole, in describing his passage through the Suez canal, refers offhand to 'niggers', the expression a reminder of how such a term was illiberally applied. I mention it for this is a central value of letters: we read the public figure on a different level and it humanizes them. In the letters we hear the past in an immediate way in the midst of an ongoing narrative. These letters, in their immediacy and sense of disclosure, are a rich resource of attitudes, language, slang and opinions of the times in which they are written. Yet alongside these readings there is also Beaglehole as scholar, poet, literary reader and art collector, as concertgoer and gallerist, and centrally as intellectual flâneur, most often in London. The life and drama of the voyage and the excitement of the arrival in London with its cultural splendours continue throughout this collection. Beaglehole's 'OE' is one in which access to a more vivid and culturally rich world is continuously experienced and remarked upon. This was, it is sensed, the real world for which the colonial longs; the provincial, the peripheral scholar encounters the world from which in many ways they feel exiled. These are the gossipy letters of frenetic activity, reading, listening, viewing, concertgoing, meeting, cycling, walking and talking, always talking. How he got time to write, not only the letters but his studies (and, it must not be forgotten, his verse) is a wonder. The impression gained when Beaglehole goes overseas is that of a scholar as dynamo, looking, noting, writing, mind whirling. But underlying this is the expression of the limitation of antipodean life, a limitation of experience, culture and possibility, most certainly the latter in regard to employment. These early letters are also therefore letters of worry: what are

the prospects for the young, educated, literate scholar, the intelligent and skilled, back in the provincial, antipodean world?

Returning home during the depression he becomes, as is known, a type of wandering scholar for hire. These letters from the 1930s also give an alternate view of the depression years, a reminder that contrary to popular myth, not everyone was in sugarbags and work camps and on the verge of rioting. For many of those Beaglehole taught and interacted with, life continued, just more slowly. Not that Beaglehole is immune to what is around him or not politicized, but even those of leftist sympathies got on with the busy-ness of life. These years also remind us of what the WEA offered to the intellectual and cultural life of the nation, often at the expense of the energies and careers of its lecturers. Yet as well as lecturing and travelling to lecture, Beaglehole was writing, always writing – and as a companion to this activity, constantly reading and talking. The public intellectual is without security – and, he fears, prospects – but he enjoyed the freedom of WEA lecturing and worried about the constraints of teaching within a university syllabus and, when he arrived in Auckland, the limitations of the library. From this time (the 1930s) we also begin to read an all-too-familiar history of university life and politics: personalities, grudges, bureaucracies and continuing fears of attempts to limit academic freedom. However, hope is at hand. Returning to Wellington he soon comes under the patronage of Joe Henan, Under-Secretary for Internal Affairs who treats his portfolio like a personal fiefdom, and Beaglehole becomes centrally involved in the Centennial publications. This event seems to have centrally changed him, forcing a self-reflection that provides the title of this collection. In 1946 he states: ‘I think I am becoming a New Zealander. That is part of the fact that a good many other people are becoming New Zealanders ... I think that in the last ten years we have proved that we can think for ourselves in N.Z., and do some interesting things; and I think that life as New Zealanders can be worth while’ (p.219).

This is an interesting claim, that the term ‘New Zealander’ is not a statement of birth or residence but rather a claim of identity – something that one becomes, and in response to ‘foreign and domestic policy, poetry, art, history’ and cultural production. This is the triumph of cultural nationalism, the attempt to shift life here from, as Beaglehole notes, ‘just imitation as it used to be’ (p.219). We need to remember that Beaglehole was 45 when he wrote this: the easy nationalism and identity of today was not easily given nor attained. To become a New Zealander was to be aware of the country’s limitations as much as its possibilities; more so, it is to signal that one decides to stay here and make the attempt to help create a nation. As Beaglehole states of leaving: ‘In some ways it would seem a cowardice to go’ (p.219). Yet to stay could only be made meaningful if he continued to be able to get out of New Zealand to stop going stale in a nation where ‘everything is a hell of struggle and the dead weight of the philistines is pretty heavy’ (p.219).

This statement of identity is therefore the centrepiece of the collection; before this point we have the letters of the colonial Beaglehole moving to postcolonial status. London was (and in many ways still remained) the cultural and intellectual centre. There is always the tinge of ‘Home’ continuously present. But now, having helped create the postcolonial moment of the Centennial, Beaglehole can be *of this*

place more fully: he has written and thought himself into a located identity. It is from this point onwards too that Cook's voyages become a central element of his correspondence. This is his own voyage of discovery that combines archival work, physical travel and personal engagement. Following Cook's voyages around New Zealand and the Pacific, Beaglehole returns to the travelogue, for which he shows a particular aptitude. It suits his essayist style; in another life he would have made a fine travel writer, with his gift for the personal observation and his ability to engagingly relate experience and enthusiasm. These latter years are also important for those interested in what is often neglected in historiography, for in these letters we listen to the historian at work, revising his opinions, cajoling his contacts, dealing endlessly with the business of publication; in short, the methodology of getting a life's work from source to public.

Now, as 'a New Zealander' there is a new confidence in his return to England, a confidence not only derived from his society of academic title and identity but, it can be hazarded, from his own sense of self. The distance that for the colonial, for the antipodean, was notably redirected in the famous 1960 Auckland lecture series had already been redirected for Beaglehole, in a personal sense, by the end of the 1940s. This is not to say he becomes parochial in any sense. Rather, he is now aware of what he can accomplish as a man of influence in a country that, in his opinion, requires his assistance: as one who can link both worlds, purchasing books and art for back here, supporting the arts and combining a particular role of intellectual and public figure that draws heavily on the influence of Heenan. These later years are also a record of a changing cultural life in New Zealand, at least in Wellington. Concerts are more regular and of better quality; art and artists assume more importance; theatre and films are discussed. There is the sense that while the gap between 'here' and 'over there' will remain, 'here' is now more tolerable, more civilized, more varied.

This collection of 206 letters is credit as much to the son as to the father. It is more so a fine-looking book with Sutton's portrait of Beaglehole on the cover and as noted, a copy of a letter from father to son ('Dear Delinquent') from 1963, on the back. The editing of these letters is a superb undertaking, scholarly yet accessible, exhibiting a light touch in the footnotes and an excellent index. The pithy biographical notes on correspondents often pique interest, and sent me in search of more information. This is a resource that facilitates an increasing web of further reading and research. I turned over many page corners so as to note statements, ideas and discussions fruitful to my own varied interests and work on New Zealand life and I believe many who read these letters will do likewise. For this is not just a life of Beaglehole in letters; this is another, new, vibrant and engaging cultural and intellectual history of New Zealand – scholarly, gossipy and opinionated. A life of becoming and being very much 'a New Zealander'.

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