

Reviews (Books)

A History of New Zealand Women. By Barbara Brookes. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2016. 554pp. NZ price: \$69.99. ISBN: 9780908321452.

BARBARA BROOKES BEGINS HER HISTORY of New Zealand women by reflecting on her own life; how different it has been from her mother's life and how changes in New Zealand in the second half of the twentieth century can explain some of these differences. This approach of using a single experience to illustrate a larger change is something that Brookes uses to great effect in this history. The work carefully details both Māori and Pākehā experiences (and, later, women of other ethnicities) and acknowledges the differences of experience of women depending on class, religion, place and sexual orientation and identity.

Starting with the Māori and Christian creation stories, along with the pre-colonial history of Māori women and the history of women in eighteenth-century England (but not the rest of the British Isles), Brookes moves through the history of the early colonial period and the conflict that arose, the experience of Pākehā women as missionaries and how Māori and Pākehā women viewed each other. The ways in which the English-inherited legal system subjugated women is examined, along with how Māori women were increasingly subject to its restrictions, particularly through the actions of the Native Land Court. This discussion is followed by a consideration of the varied experience of women, both Māori and Pākehā, during the New Zealand Wars and the destabilizing impact of the gold rush for many women.

By the late nineteenth century women were increasingly challenging their exclusion from the body politic, and influenced by movements overseas, including the Women's Christian Temperance Union, as well as the writings of John Stuart Mill, they first gained the right to vote in a number of local elections before winning a closely fought battle for national suffrage in 1893. While world-leaders in terms of suffrage, it took New Zealand women longer than their sisters in England to secure the passing of Married Women's Property Acts and repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, although New Zealand led the British Empire in awarding university degrees to women. As well as gaining the franchise at the same time as Pākehā women, Māori women, when excluded from Te Kotahitanga, established their own parliament.

In the twentieth century women continued to build on the gains they had made in education, and those that succeeded in gaining university degrees fought for a place in the professions. Other women gained clerical skills, but all struggled to achieve equal pay and opportunities with men. The First World War further changed the nature of women's work with more and more women leaving domestic service, which had been the primary source of employment for women, to work in industry. As well as the upheaval and loss that went with war, it created new opportunities for women, with more women moving to towns and away from their families, and by the end of the war the idea of the 'Modern Woman' had been established. The loss of life suffered during the war led to a growing concern with infant and maternal health in the interwar period, and there was growing alarm at the shrinking size of Pākehā families at a time when the Māori birth rate was increasing.

Like World War One, the Second World War was a time of great change for women, and of particular note is the urbanization of Māori women. Following the

war, the combination of the benefits provided by the welfare state coupled with full employment (although the impact of the industrial strife at the beginning of the 1950s is also discussed) meant that women had larger families, but by the 1960s, middle-class women in particular were voicing their dissatisfaction with their lives. During the 1970s there was a growing Women's Liberation movement whose central slogan was 'the personal is political'. The 1980s saw a continuation of the activism of the 1970s, particularly in terms of women's health. As well, an increasing number of women entered Parliament on both sides of the House and the Ministry of Women's Affairs was established. By the turn of the century New Zealand had had two women Prime Ministers.

Throughout the work the centrality of marriage, family and both unpaid and paid work to women's lives is highlighted, as well as the significance of demographic changes in terms of the ratio of women to men, the average age of the population and the average number of children borne by women. Brookes also draws attention to how the demography of the Māori and Pākehā populations differed and the significance of these differences. This work celebrates the achievements of New Zealand women as a group, as well as individuals, but also highlights where more work needs to be done for women to have equality with men. Diversity of experience is an important theme, and it is clear that some of the gains that have been made have not benefitted all women equally.

This historical synthesis draws on Brookes's extensive knowledge of New Zealand historiography, including her own significant contribution to that historiography, and reflects the many years Brookes has been working on this project. Moreover, Brookes situates New Zealand in an international context and highlights points of transnational exchange of ideas. One of the many strengths of this work is the beautiful illustrations and detailed captions, although at times these are placed alongside text to which they have no clear relationship, which can be slightly distracting. Overall this work is essential reading for all New Zealand historians and is a welcome addition to both the existing general histories of New Zealand, as well as the growing number of works which focus on the history of gender. *A History of New Zealand Women* will be an important reference for many years to come.

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New Zealand Society at War, 1914–1918. Edited by Steven Loveridge. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2016. 416pp. NZ price: \$40.00. ISBN: 9781776560608.

BY NOW IT APPROACHES something of a necessary cliché for any recent work on New Zealand's First World War experience to begin by noting the traditional paucity of the historiographical field it enters, especially regarding the home front experience. This has given the cycle of historiographical reconsideration prompted by the war's centenary a peculiar character in New Zealand compared to that of other belligerents: beyond a rudimentary Gallipoli narrative, New Zealand's First World