

Editorial Introduction



IN THIS FIFTY-SECOND YEAR of the *New Zealand Journal of History*, it is useful to revisit the goals of its founder, Sir Keith Sinclair, to consider whether they are still relevant. On the launching of the journal in 1967 Sinclair effectively provided a mission statement, published in the *University of Auckland Gazette*.¹ First, he saw the launch of the journal as a mark of New Zealand history's maturity. He explained how in 1940 New Zealand historians had joined Australians in *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, published by Melbourne University (this later became *Australian Historical Studies*). Sinclair's belief in 1967 that it was timely to launch a separate journal for New Zealand history was not misplaced. The appetite for researching and reading about our national histories has grown enormously over those 50 years, both within the academy and beyond (as evidenced, for example, by the successful New Zealand Historical Association conferences). Sinclair saw the new journal as filling a gap. His comment that 'There is not an insatiable demand from overseas journals for articles on New Zealand' is possibly as relevant today as in 1967. And where else would people go to learn of the latest monographs and edited volumes relating to New Zealand history, assessed by those best placed in the field to do so?

And yet in his mission statement Sinclair also explained that he did not wish to see the journal become, in his words, 'narrowly nationalistic'. He said the editors hoped to attract articles dealing with 'our historical origins in Britain and Europe' and Commonwealth history. He also wanted articles on Pacific and Southeast Asian history, reflecting, he said, the growing interest of New Zealanders in its neighbours. The current issue shows the currency of this view, with an article on New Zealand's relationship with its close neighbour Sāmoa.

A third goal of the new journal related to student research, or as he said, to 'encourage young historians to complete and publish their researches'. He explained that 'Most New Zealand history lies buried in unpublished master's theses, many of them of high quality, but known only to academic prospectors'. One local newspaper, the *Northern Advocate*, enthused about this goal: 'The material's there if needed and can be made available no doubt. But what use is that to a man who doesn't know it's there and doesn't even know exactly what he is looking for?'² Making student research available to

a wider audience was a part of the agenda from the beginning. Even in this digital age this goal to publish excellent student research is still relevant, evident in this issue with the publication of Ross Webb's findings from his Master's thesis in History. Many established New Zealand historians had their first research endeavours published in the NZJH. And one of the features of the journal since the beginning has been the publication of the titles of Master's and PhD theses from the universities around the country. That in itself has been a useful contribution to knowledge.

Themes and areas of focus change over time. For example, environmental history was not on the radar in 1967 but is very relevant to modern societal concerns, and we are pleased to include André Brett's article on 'rivers and railways' in the current issue. His fascinating study teases out the environmental and economic factors at play in this relationship during the nineteenth century. Brett gives power and agency to both but identifies a critical shift by the 1880s when 'the course and floodplains of many major rivers had been altered permanently'. Despite Māori history featuring since the journal's inception, there is still scope for further understandings, as evident in the discussion in the current issue of nineteenth-century election results for the Māori seats of Parliament. Paerau Warbrick brings 'the carnival-like atmosphere of the polling booths' to life and reveals the importance of kinship ties and strategic campaigning to maximize 'natural' pockets of support over wider distances. He shows very clearly how Māori men – and later women – embraced the ballot box and parliamentary democracy in increasing numbers across time, just as they had adapted Christianity, colonial schooling and the legal and administrative systems of the Native Land Court.

In the essay that follows, Safua Akeli Amaama shifts our focus to Sāmoa and revisits the 1936 'Goodwill Mission' of the newly elected New Zealand Labour government. This initiative was certainly viewed from Wellington as a 'mechanism for change' in the fraught relations between Sāmoa and New Zealand in the wake of the 1918 influenza epidemic, when 8000 people in Sāmoa died, and the imprisonment, deportation and killing of Mau members by colonial authorities in the 1920s and 1930s. She vividly depicts the complexities of exchange during the period, points to ongoing Sāmoan resistance to successive colonial administrations, and stresses the persistence of paternalistic attitudes by New Zealand which continued to shape relations on the long road to independence in 1962.

Labour history held a special place in past issues of the NZJH, though less so in recent years as historians have moved away from class analyses. In the final article in this issue Ross Webb draws on a swathe of oral history testimonies to provide fresh insights into the expressions of workplace

culture created by freezing workers during the 1970s and 1980s. His gritty account is set in the context of profound political and economic changes that swept through the industry locally and globally, leading eventually to the loss of union power by the 1990s. Webb focuses squarely on the factors that shaped and sustained trade unionism in the period under consideration. Whereas freezing workers have often been viewed as lazy, strike-prone, overpaid and greedy, his informants construct a rich counter-narrative – one that speaks of ‘camaraderie and community, of union pride and solidarity in the workplace and of community support during long strikes and challenging times’. Webb’s concern here with the social, community and family life of a multi-ethnic and multi-generational workforce fits within the best traditions of ‘history from below’.

If this issue features elements of continuity, it also reflects our aim to engage with new directions, specifically the digital revolution that is reshaping our profession and our understanding of the past. With this in mind, the NZJH has reinstated the role of ‘Reviews Editor, Other Media’, held by Bronwyn Labrum from 2007–2012, to address the various ways in which history is currently being ‘done’ in this country, including digital platforms such as *Te Ara* or *Kā Huru Manu*. Marguerite Hill joins the editorial team in this position and begins by offering her opinion on Radio New Zealand’s podcast of William Ray’s *Black Sheep*, which profiles ‘the shady, controversial and sometimes downright villainous characters of New Zealand history’. A Heritage Researcher in the Auckland Council Heritage Unit, Marguerite brings valuable skills to this post. Her previous roles have included Project Curator History at Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, Curator of Human History at the Canterbury Museum, and Resources Researcher at Te Ara – Encyclopedia of New Zealand. She has also worked in History and History Textiles at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and as a contractor for the Historic Places Trust Pouhere Taonga (now Heritage New Zealand). Welcome Marguerite!

In this section we also bring you Rowan Light’s insightful reflections on Te Papa’s Gallipoli exhibition, which he describes as a ‘victory of poetic remembrance over critical history’, re-affirming twentieth-century narratives of Gallipoli as foundational national myth. He has a strong message for scholars, curators and artists engaged in the remembrance ‘work’ to reflect on how they contribute to this stream of memory.

Our familiar book reviews section remains intact and we are delighted to introduce a new editor, Massey University’s David Littlewood.

In another significant way this issue is a landmark. This is the first occasion where the NZJH itself has ‘gone digital’. You will now submit your article

online through our platform powered by Scholastica, leading we hope to a more efficient way of managing your submission. For more information, see our website: <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/arts/about-the-faculty/school-of-humanities/journals-initiatives-residencies-and-fellowships/nzjh.html>

We welcome papers on all aspects of New Zealand history and from emerging scholars and established historians. We offer you the opportunity to be published in the leading journal in New Zealand history internationally, and look forward to receiving your submissions, and hope you continue to read, enjoy and learn about the history of New Zealand/Aotearoa from our offerings.

LINDA BRYDER & LYNDON FRASER

NOTES

1 Keith Sinclair, 'The New Zealand Journal of History', *The University of Auckland Gazette*, 9, 1, April 1967, pp.1-2.

2 *Northern Advocate*, 6 June 1967.