

The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History. Edited by Ian McGibbon. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 2000. 653 pp. NZ price: \$99.95. ISBN 0-19-558376-0.

BETWEEN 'ABYSSINIA' AND 'Z SPECIAL FORCE', this thick volume crams in over 650 individual entries prepared by 67 contributors as it sweeps across the history of New Zealand's military endeavours. The range of topics is eclectic, reflecting the fact that military matters often cross over into such diverse fields as international relations, social history and medical science as well as traditional operational narratives. For example, the 'Abyssinia' entry details the first Labour Government's displeasure with the League of Nations' abandonment of Ethiopia to Mussolini, while the concluding entry looks at a little known World War II specialist reconnaissance and sabotage unit ('Z Special Force') formed for insertion behind Japanese lines. In between these foreign affairs and special-forces entries all manner of subjects and themes are surveyed, including Maori in the Boer War, the role of the armed forces in industrial disputes, the origin of the lemon-squeezer hat, the late nineteenth-century Dog Tax Rebellion, military law and women in the armed forces. As is to be expected the materials also encompass many of New Zealand's sons and daughters, as well as various immigrants and sundry interlopers who figured in this country's military affairs, including Hongi Hika, Te Rauparaha, Thomas McDonnell, Gustavus von Tempsky, Charles Upham, Keith Park, Bernard Freyberg and Peter Phipps among many others.

Illustrative of the material presented are two entries of note composed by Jock Phillips and Jeffrey Grey. Phillips makes a compelling case for the changing place of war in New Zealand's national identity. As a general rule, Maori have seen military exploits as significant to their identity. On the other hand, Pakeha have been less consistently enamoured with the place of warfare in expressing their distinctiveness. Although the Boer War, and the First and Second World Wars made a considerable impact on New Zealand identity, the same cannot be said for the period preceding and following the first half of the twentieth century. Phillips argues that because much of the fighting of the nineteenth century was carried out by British regulars, Australian settlers, or Maori allied to the crown, rather than the colonials themselves, this latter group were disinclined to remember and celebrate inconclusive conflicts in which they played no direct part. Likewise the second half of the twentieth century saw a movement away from the simple adoration of past military glories to the realities of the controversial war in Vietnam, a burgeoning anti-nuclear movement, and a subsequent drifting away from our alliance-based defence outlook of the past.

An outsider's view of the teaching and research of military history in New Zealand is provided by Jeffrey Grey of the Australian Defence Force Academy. His historiographical summary of the major internal and external conflicts to affect New Zealand is an excellent introduction to the field. Many salient works are mentioned and discussed briefly. Grey is, nevertheless, realistic about the breadth and depth of work thus far undertaken in the field. Overall, he concludes that at best New Zealand's knowledge and understanding of its military past is patchy. World War II was examined in exhaustive detail over 48 volumes, but the Boer War still lacks a single full-scale history of New Zealand's participation. While his comments regarding the marginalization of military history in New Zealand academia are worth noting, it should also be remembered that the New Zealand experience merely reflects a world-wide trend away from traditional 'guns-and-trumpets' histories to social and cultural studies. Moreover, given the relatively small number of historians and limited resources available for such endeavours it is hardly surprising, as pointed out elsewhere in the volume, that the attention devoted to the official World War II series deprived many post-war conflicts of the same lavish attention.

In spite of the fact that New Zealand lacks a significant body of historians actively working in the field of military history, the present volume is a remarkable achievement.

Although the quality of some entries is a little uneven and the odd idiosyncratic entry appears, the overall content of the *Companion* is well considered and will serve as a good reference work. It may also play a small part in reviving interest and research in New Zealand military history.

ADAM CLAASEN

Massey University – Albany

Italian Odyssey: New Zealanders in the Battle for Italy 1943–1945. By Matthew Wright. Reed Books, Auckland, 2003. 195 pp. NZ price: \$29.99. ISBN 0-7900-0897-1.

MATTHEW WRIGHT has produced a series of lively, short histories of campaigns in which New Zealand was involved during World War II. Unfortunately, the title of this book, *Italian Odyssey: New Zealanders in the Battle for Italy 1943–1945*, is rather misleading. It deals solely with the role played by the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) in the Italian campaign and pays no attention to the important contribution made by New Zealanders serving with the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

Wright provides the reader with a good outline of why the Allies embarked on the campaign and the debate in New Zealand about what part, if any, the 2NZEF should play in the liberation of Italy. He concisely sets out how New Zealand's serious manpower problems were exacerbated by the furlough scheme which saw thousands of experienced soldiers return to New Zealand. Wright could perhaps have usefully devoted more space to discussing the overall strategic importance of the Italian campaign which has often been erroneously criticized as a waste of lives and resources.

Italian Odyssey is very well illustrated and includes a significant number of previously unpublished photographs from the collection of Sir John White. The author makes good use of a range of published and unpublished first-hand accounts to describe conditions on the front line and in the rear areas. Wright effectively uses a range of primary material drawn from the Alexander Turnbull Library, Archives New Zealand and, in particular, the copy of Freyberg's official diary held by Sir John White. There are, however, some notable omissions from the secondary sources. Sir Geoffrey Cox's important memoir of the New Zealanders' operations during the final stages of the campaign is not referred to at all. Nor is there any evidence that Wright has made use of Roberto Rabel's significant work analysing the role of the New Zealand Division in Trieste. Curiously, Wright refers to Arthur Bryant's books based on the diaries of Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke which appeared in the 1950s, but not to the much more authoritative edition of the diaries published in 2001. The overall result of this patchy use of secondary sources is a work that does not fully reflect recent scholarship on the Italian campaign. This is especially significant with respect to Wright's account of the struggle for Cassino, which takes up nearly a third of the book. If properly used, the extensive secondary literature on the battles for Cassino would have enabled Wright to make a more insightful analysis of New Zealand's role in these operations.

Nonetheless, *Italian Odyssey* is a very useful introduction to the 2NZEF's role in what was a long, difficult campaign. Before the publication of this book there was no reasonably detailed overview of the role played by New Zealand ground forces in Italy. *Italian Odyssey* should encourage readers to delve more deeply into the history of this campaign. Regrettably, the binding of the book is substandard and as a result my copy is already falling apart.

JOHN CRAWFORD

Wellington