

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.

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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Italian Odyssey is very well illustrated and includes a significant number of previously unpublished photographs from the collection of Sir John White. The author makes good use of a range of published and unpublished first-hand accounts to describe conditions on the front line and in the rear areas.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.

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