

Marsden Women and their World: A History of Marsden School 1878–2003. By Kirsty Carpenter. Samuel Marsden Collegiate School, Wellington, 2003. 303 pp. NZ price: \$65.00. ISBN 0-473-09703-6.

THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF NEW ZEALAND and the older state schools in the grammar school tradition have been celebrating anniversaries with histories, and this history of Wellington's private Anglican girls' school has the added merit of being written by an academic historian. The genre has produced a rich range of published and illustrated histories. The best of these include Don Hamilton on Christ's College, Gordon Ogilvie on St Andrew's, and on the girls' schools, Judy Mason on St Hilda's, Michelle Whitmore on Nga Tawa, Rosemary Brittan on Rangi Ruru and Margaret Hammer on Auckland Diocesan. They are a fine group of histories but with some distinctive qualities, partly due to the qualities of school histories as a genre, partly reflecting the special character of religion and privilege associated with the schools. Typically such works analyse successive principals with extraordinary seriousness, delve into that elusive issue of school tone, explore the balance between character-building and academic curriculum and provide gently indulgent stories of the changing interests of pupils and their community. The genre of school histories has rarely produced much of historical significance, perhaps because schools in themselves have been less central to the New Zealand story than for example schools in the United Kingdom, where some of the histories of grammar schools, elementary schools and public schools have contributed crucial aspects to the history of the whole country.

Nevertheless private schools are important in the history of minority cultures. In *Marsden Women and their World*, Kirsty Carpenter gives the story of Marsden a very interesting twist. She is an acute observer of the culture of a private girls' school and this book is marvellous for tone. She is at her best in her account of Audrie Smith, the rather unsuccessful English principal in the 1950s and in comments like that about Margaret Ogle: 'She knew she was going to an impoverished paradise where intelligent women were thin on the ground and men who prized intellect over accomplishment even scarcer' (p.91). I was sometimes not entirely sure how much irony was intended in comments like this and how much was simply reportage of oral interviews. The work is written in that delicate semi-feminist style characteristic of the independent girls' schools, in which, perhaps, there is a certain feeling of alienation from the culture of New Zealand as a whole. This makes it a great deal of fun, not just for the former students for whom it is written but for others as well.

One of the best features of this work is exploring the role of religion in the school. The tone of the religion clearly moved from attempts to inculcate Anglicanism to a moral training and religious discussion; although unlike the Anglican boys' schools, religion is still considered an important value in the girls' institutions. Schools like Marsden clearly survive for more than their Anglicanism, but as this exhaustive history conveys, they are still rather special places, albeit rather alien to the rest of us.

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The Making of New Zealand Cricket, 1832–1914. By Greg Ryan. Frank Cass, London, 2004. 257 pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-7146-8482-1.

I WILL CONFESS at the outset that I'm no fan of cricket, having been forced — under threat of expulsion — to play the game at an élite private school in Australia. And I will admit that the bland grey-green cover with the workman-like title hardly inspired me to