

the cause of any of the allies. There is a time to fight and a time to stop. October 1917 was a time to stop. As it happens the British were not persisting in order to help their allies. They were continuing because of Haig's and Plumer's obsession with capturing the Passchendaele Ridge — which in fact they never did. Nor would it have mattered much if they had.

Harper's next section on the halting of the German offensive in March and April 1918 is a delight to read but its conclusion is also somewhat problematic. He claims that the single New Zealand Division played a 'decisive part in halting the Kaiser's battle'. I think in the choice of the word 'decisive' Harper does not do his story justice. Perhaps 'important' would have been a better word because his narrative shows that many factors combined to halt the Germans — not least of which was Ludendorff's lunatic plan to win the war by infantry alone. As Harper acknowledges, the Australian Corps also played its part, but what goes unacknowledged is the greater part of the offensive was halted by the introduction of countless French divisions into the line. These divisions (which often lacked artillery) frequently did little more than maintain a continuous line during the retreat. But by keeping a line in being they bought time until the German infantry were stopped by their own exhaustion. This is not a New Zealand story but it is essential context if the full reasons for the German failure are to be appreciated.

The section on Bapaume is most satisfactory. Here, in late August 1918, the New Zealand Division could take advantage of a weapons system that had been evolving for at least a year. The system consisted of artillery, which through the application of science to the battlefield could at last hit what it aimed at, providing an accurate creeping barrage to protect the soldiers from machine gun fire and an array of infantry weapons, from rifle grenades to trench mortars, to a plethora of light machine guns. Reliable tanks helped push the offensive further than it might otherwise have progressed. This weapons system allowed the New Zealand and other divisions to exercise their battlefield skills. Without at least a goodly number of these weapons the most skilled soldiers would have found themselves pinned down by the enemy's artillery and machine guns.

Overall, I rate this book very highly. It is important that New Zealanders read it to understand the role their small democracy played in protecting the democracies of Europe from Prussian domination and how their sacrifice (as Harper refreshingly notes) was far from futile. It is also important that Glyn Harper continue on his way with more books of this calibre to enlighten us all about New Zealand's role in the Great War.

ROBIN PRYOR

*University of New South Wales*

*Holiday Seasons: Christmas, New Year and Easter in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand.*  
By Alison Clarke. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2007. viii + 189pp. NZ price: \$35.00. ISBN: 978-1-86940-382-9.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY 1906, 21-year-old Mary Cranstoun attended a picnic for 80 people at the bush near her parents' house in Edendale, Southland. Mary 'had a real good time' despite coming home with a bruise on her face after she was hit by a cricket bat during a game. By the early twentieth century, New Year picnics had become firmly established in the cultural life of New Zealanders. Alison Clarke's book provides readers with an account of how these holidays came to be part of our national psyche, arguing that holidays help historians examine another side of nineteenth-century Pakeha life to that conventionally featured in standard histories of the period. With lives often dominated by demanding physical labour, Christmas, New Year and Easter holidays were relaxing highlights which broke up the routine for many people. Family members and the broader community came

together to enjoy themselves, take stock and prepare for the year ahead. And as with other forms of cultural identity, British migrants brought with them to New Zealand holiday traditions and rituals which either flourished or declined in their new setting.

The book's three main chapters discuss in detail the holidays and traditions which surrounded Christmas, New Year and Easter in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Readers can come to grips with the ways in which these traditions have played a role in shaping New Zealand cultural life. Seasonal differences changed holidays from winter celebrations in Britain to summer festivals in New Zealand. Food and drink choices had to be adjusted and the New Zealand tradition of outdoor activity on holidays began to develop. But some British traditions remained — as Clarke points out, many Pakeha families continued the English tradition of roast beef at Christmas. Others bemoaned the distinctiveness of the antipodean Christmas and New Year holidays. They longed for the snow and yuletide cheer that were often a feature of this time of year in the northern hemisphere. Clarke's discussion of Easter explains the importance of Christian ritual to nineteenth-century Anglicans and Catholics in New Zealand. The chapter also explores how established religious practices fared in the new colony. For example, observing the self-denial of Lent in late summer rather than at the end of winter was a difficult seasonal adjustment for nineteenth-century Pakeha. While the book focuses on Pakeha traditions, Clarke also asks how Maori reacted and adapted to the European customs that had been transplanted to colonial New Zealand.

This book is a lovely and thought-provoking look at something familiar to all of us. Generations of New Zealanders have enjoyed the beach and the bach at Christmas and New Year as our cultural life has moved away from ties to Britain. In an era when more and more New Zealanders are interested in the social life of their past — the ways in which traditions have played out — *Holiday Seasons* tells an engaging story. It will appeal in particular to readers interested in New Zealand leisure and social life, the roles of men and women in social activities and the development of cultural customs. Those interested in processes of cultural migration and the transplantation of social customs will also find much to stimulate them. While the book does not offer comparisons with other similar cultural settings, a reader wanting to take the topic further could draw some conclusions. This is the fourth in Auckland University Press's series Studies in Cultural and Social History. These books are intended for general and academic readers, and this volume should satisfy both groups. The interesting illustrations grab attention, encourage further inquiry and reach out to us in a lively way.

EMMA DEWSON

*Ministry for Culture and Heritage*

*Women in British Imperial Airspace, 1922–1937.* By Liz Millward. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2008. 249pp. Canadian price: \$80.00. ISBN 978-0773-53337-0.

THIS IS AN ELEGANTLY WRITTEN MONOGRAPH that brings new understanding to women in British imperial airspace during the interwar years. Focusing largely on New Zealand and Britain, Millward draws upon an impressive range of primary and secondary sources, including the Amy Johnson and Jean Batten papers at the Royal Air Force archives in Hendon, London. She is in command of an impressive body of interdisciplinary literature that includes a Maori perspective. While individual pilots are showcased, the primary focus is how gender, class, race, sexuality, nationalism and imperialism variously collided in the development of aviation.

Indicative of Millward's academic training the book has an overtly geographical