

NOTE

1 In a rare careless phrase, by suggesting that Mt Egmont is 'now known' as Taranaki (p.8), Sharp has reinforced the absence of tangata whenua.

Samuel Marsden, Altar Ego. By Richard Quinn. Dunmore Publishing, Wellington, 2008. 219pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 978-1-877399-35-0.

THIS IS A HIGHLY OPINIONATED BOOK which sets itself against the works of A.T. Yarwood, notably his *Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor*. It levels a number of highly specific charges against Marsden, arguing the not-unfamiliar case that he was a hypocrite and a greedy rogue. The book gives more or less equal space to Marsden's Australian work and reputation on which much has been written, and to his New Zealand activities.

Some degree of detachment is required to assess this work, but it is a detachment which Richard Quinn himself singularly lacks. This does make the book quite entertaining. Quinn plays with words: Marsden is 'SM' throughout, and quips and word plays slip into the text in a constant banter. The effect is entertaining but perhaps in the end distracting. There is no hiding the author's view of Marsden. It is so passionately angry against Marsden that he cannot forebear commentary even on Marsden's more acceptable side. It is also unfortunate that the book is not based on a thorough re-reading of the primary evidence. He relies heavily on the work of earlier historians and transcribers, in particular Sandy Yarwood's works.

Yet Yarwood, who is certainly the principal Marsden scholar of the last generation, is the focus of much of the book's hostility to academic writers. Quinn construes Yarwood as a defender of Marsden. This I find somewhat troubling. Certainly Yarwood aimed to balance the hostility to Marsden in previous Australian scholarship, but his work was based on meticulous scholarship and he clearly recognized the flaws in his subject. Yarwood's concern was that the tendency of Australian scholars to idealize Governor Macquarie made them unsympathetic to his key opponent. Marsden was vicious and mercenary in his opposition to Macquarie, but as Yarwood points out, each of the opponents had strengths and weaknesses. This political balance is lacking in Quinn's book. He scores a legitimate point in showing how Yarwood plays down the most outrageous act of Marsden, his treatment of the witness Rumsby, whom Marsden locked up, leading to his deposition from the magistracy. However, Yarwood did comment on the case and thus one can scarcely say he was an apologist for Marsden. The final sentence of Yarwood's biography reads: 'He had a sense of destiny and divine purpose which not only sustained him in physical danger and political controversy but drove him on to the zealot's great error of believing that ends justified the means'.¹ While this is a defence of a kind, it is scarcely a ringing endorsement.

The Australian evidence cited by Quinn is therefore familiar, and not particularly new. However, the portrayal of Marsden in New Zealand has been far too sympathetic and it is therefore valid to question Marsden's motives and to attempt to find some common values in the Marsden we know from Australia, preoccupied with his own interests and distinctly grumpy and uninspiring, and the role he played in New Zealand. Here Quinn makes some useful contributions. In essence he follows the clues of the early critics of the mission, John Dunmore Lang and the pamphleteer John Thomas Campbell, under the pseudonym Philo Free. First he suggests that the CMS, not Marsden, paid for the establishment of the mission. The evidence certainly points to a very tight control of the funds by Marsden, and (the point is taken from Yarwood) that Marsden used the *Active*, the so-called missionary ship, to bring profit-making cargo back across the Tasman. Quinn's most damning charge is that Marsden either directly or indirectly facilitated the provision of guns to Maori. His evidence is essentially inferential; we know that some

missionaries provided guns; we know that Marsden was responsible for the missionaries and loved to make money; hence Marsden was responsible. But there is no hard evidence despite much recent research into the traffic in arms.

The book is barbed and bitter, full of sharp puns and satirical innuendo, and while some of it is justified, it simplifies Marsden's character, implying that he was nothing other than a gun runner and mercenary money maker. Quinn has added to the evidence of the strength of his mercenary motivation, especially later in his life, but it was never that simple. People rarely are.

PETER LINEHAM

Massey University – Albany

NOTE

1 A.T. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor*, Wellington, 1977, p.281.

The Amazing World of James Hector. Edited by Simon Nathan and Mary Varnham. Awa Press, Wellington, 2008. 185pp. NZ price: \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-9582750-7-1.

AMIDST A RECENT SPATE OF PUBLICATIONS about New Zealand's scientific history aimed at the general reader comes a book specifically devoted to the lasting legacy of a man who has been dubbed New Zealand's 'Mr Science': James Hector. *The Amazing World of James Hector* investigates the life of this Scottish doctor and geologist who was 28 years old when he arrived in Dunedin in 1862 to carry out a geological survey of Otago and Southland. Seven and a half years later, Hector had cemented for himself the position of New Zealand's foremost scientific authority and manager; he had founded and was in control of all the major scientific institutions in New Zealand. This dominance has led historian C.A. Fleming to label the years from 1867 to 1903 the era of 'Hector hegemony'.¹

This collection consists of 14 pieces which were originally given as presentations at a one-day symposium, held in 2007, which commemorated the centenary of Hector's death. The symposium was held at Te Papa Tongarewa, and was sponsored by three modern incarnations of institutions founded by Hector: Geological and Nuclear Sciences (GNS); the Royal Society of New Zealand; and Te Papa itself. The authors of the essays collected here come from a wide array of professions and disciplines, including scientists, palaeontologists, historians, museologists, and some of Hector's own descendants; two of his great-grandsons wrote essays. The expertise reflected in the range of essay topics and the diversity of perspectives about Hector's life are among this collection's strengths. The book represents well the multifaceted nature of Hector's own interests and career as an explorer, geologist, government official, administrator, exhibition organizer and family man.

Individual essays focus on Hector's employment with the geological survey in Canada as part of the Palliser expedition, the part he played in Otago and New Zealand geological surveys, his role as the director of the Colonial Museum, and his position as the manager and editor of the New Zealand Institute and its associated publication, the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*. His roles in establishing the Colonial Botanic Gardens, heading the Meteorological Department and Colonial Observatory, and as the Chancellor of the University of New Zealand are also foci. His interests and publications in palaeontology, zoology and botany also form the basis of essays.

This representation of the broad span of Hector's career and interests, while providing strength to this collection, also creates a weakness. The book lacks unity and focus. Each