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A CONCISE HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand was the last major landmass, other than Antarctica, to be settled by humans. The story of this rugged and dynamic land is beautifully narrated, from its origins in Gondwana some 80 million years ago to the twenty-first century. Philippa Mein Smith highlights the effects of the country's smallness and isolation, from its late settlement by Polynesian voyagers and colonisation by Europeans – and the exchanges that made these people Maori and Pakeha – to the dramatic struggles over land and more recent efforts to manage global economic forces. In the late twentieth century, new upheavals saw governments demolish institutions that had once defined New Zealand, and economic problems damage a country dependent on exports.

A Concise History of New Zealand places New Zealand in its global and regional context, linked to Britain, immersed in the Pacific and part of Australasia. It unravels the key moments – the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* – showing their role as nation-building myths and connecting them with the less dramatic forces, economic and social, that have also shaped contemporary New Zealand.

PHILIPPA MEIN SMITH is Associate Professor of History at the University of Canterbury. She is the author of *Maternity in Dispute: New Zealand 1920–1939* (1986), *Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880–1950* (1997) and co-author of *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, São Paulo
 Cambridge University Press
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521834384
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First published by Cambridge University Press 2005

Printed in Australia by Ligare Pty Ltd

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication data

Mein Smith, Philippa.

A concise history of New Zealand.

ISBN-13 978-0-521-83438-4 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-83438-4 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-54228-9 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-54228-6 paperback

Bibliography.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 83438 4 (hbk).

ISBN 0 521 54228 6 (pbk).

I. New Zealand – History. I. Title.

993

ISBN-13 978-0-521-83438-4 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-83438-4 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-54228-9 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-54228-6 paperback

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In memory of my mother Barbara Ann Staff
whose stories and library
contributed to this book

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A concise history incurs many debts. To my extended family I owe the largest: especially to Richard Tremewan; to Tanya Tremewan, who read and edited the first draft of the manuscript; to Edna, Christine and Peter Tremewan, Philip Tremewan and Trish Hall, and Janis Brooker; to my late mother Barbara, to whom this book is dedicated; and to my brothers Jeff and Alastair. I also thank my second cousin Barry for papers supplied years ago. Readers may notice that in some ways this is a family history.

I am grateful to Kim Armitage, my Cambridge editor, who commissioned a book proposal and gave advice on the draft manuscript, to Karen Hildebrandt, and the Cambridge team in Melbourne. I owe thanks to the anonymous referees who approved the proposal, and in doing so sent me on an enjoyable journey. Colleagues in New Zealand history will see the extent of reliance on their work, and the endnotes and guide to further reading suggest my principal obligations. Colleagues in the School of History at the University of Canterbury provided support, among whom I am especially indebted to Katie Pickles and Miles Fairburn, who read and discussed draft chapters. Ashley Sparrow in the School of Biological Sciences lent lecture outlines to assist with chapter 1, and Elizabeth Gordon taught me about the origins of New Zealand English. Most of the book was written while I was on sabbatical leave in 2004, which allowed the peace and time to write. Thanks are also due to the Marsden Fund of the Royal Society of New Zealand, whose

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Acknowledgements

research grant for a project on ties between Australia and New Zealand supported some of the research underpinning this book.

The link between research and teaching is a precious one, and I thank my students, tutors in New Zealand history and postgraduates, beginning with Chris Brickell, Hayley Brown, Philip Ferguson, Matt Morris, Linda Moore, Rebecca Priestley, Tracy Tulloch, and Megan Woods. I continue to value the friendship of my own thesis supervisors, Len Richardson, Ken Inglis and Barry Smith, and other colleagues in Australia, whose work informs my own. Beyond the university, brief service on a research co-ordinating committee at the Waitangi Tribunal increased my appreciation of the tribunal's enormous task.

I had terrific fun finding illustrations, an exercise eased by the expertise of Marian Minson and David Small at the Alexander Turnbull Library. Duncan Shaw-Brown turned images into digital files, while Tim Nolan and Marney Brosnan prepared maps and graphs. I am especially grateful to copyright holders for permission to reproduce material. Benjamin Pittman and Donna Hall supplied family photographs, and the late Jack Tait lent me his father's 'soldier' magazines. Special thanks are due to the Christchurch Art Gallery and to Bill Hammond, whose painting 'The Fall of Icarus', on the cover, conveys the sense of isolation felt by New Zealanders.

Philippa Mein Smith
August 2004

PREFACE

It is a pleasure to introduce this history to readers who may know little about New Zealand other than that it is located in the Southern Hemisphere, somewhere near Australia. Often people are surprised to find how far New Zealand is from Australia. They may know the country from film, sometimes from art, music or novels, or sport, or business that takes them there; or travel. Some are familiar with national brands, such as Anchor butter and the All Blacks.

Local readers have their own expectations of how the country's history is, or ought to be, written. The basic narrative that they require is of equal relevance to the visitor. I wrote this concise history for my students, so that I could comprehend the story of New Zealand, and explain its significance to them; I also kept in mind friends overseas, and people I have met while travelling. Emphases reflect my understanding and interests; but they also indicate where gaps exist in existing histories of New Zealand. Certain themes, such as literature, are already expertly covered elsewhere. This is not an alternative history, but a broadening of the histories that have already been written.

Neither is this an isolated history; the aim is to place New Zealand history in global and Pacific context. This requires a comparative element, especially concerning parallels with Australia. Globalisation is a core theme of this book. One objective is to explore the persistent tension in New Zealand's short history between domestic politics and global and regional pressures and to examine the importance of the effects of smallness and isolation.

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Preface

Health and social issues are central to this country's past (and present) international reputation, and continue to inform beliefs about national identity. Childbirth is one example of how this small country tracks international trends. Demographic contours are too often ignored; here population and defence issues are treated together, alongside economic problems that have consistently beleaguered a country dependent on exports. Maori–European interactions are pivotal in all histories, but their internal dynamics, prominent at home, need to be balanced by an external regard for foreign affairs.

My approach is to highlight themes that explain what has happened. I try to unravel the way in which key moments and episodes in New Zealand history contribute to the country's national myths. Such events include the Treaty of Waitangi signing, the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, and the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*. But there is more to history than war – sex (women and children, fertility) and money (economic history) drive societies. There is more to myth-making than war. Migrants know little of Anzac legends, but often come here because of myths about New Zealand as a good place to bring up children, as an Arcadia and a social laboratory. Since these are frequently the stuff of marketing exercises, it is often these myths of New Zealand that people overseas first encounter. They therefore beg to be explained, or at least investigated.