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Philippa Mein Smith

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Second Edition

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PHILIPPA MEIN SMITH is 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* (2000) and *Remaking the Tasman World* (2008).

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# *A Concise History of New Zealand*

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

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Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---



## CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvi
<i>Preface</i>	xviii
1 Waka across a watery world	1
2 Beachcrossers 1769–1839	22
3 Claiming the land 1840–1860	47
4 Remoter Australasia 1861–1890	72
5 Managing globalisation 1891–1913	100
6 ‘All flesh is as grass’ 1914–1929	128
7 Making New Zealand 1930–1949	156
8 Golden weather 1950–1972	183
9 Latest experiments 1973–1996	210
10 Treaty revival 1973–1999	237
11 Shaky ground: Seismic shifts 2000–2011	262
<i>Glossary of Maori words</i>	285
<i>Timeline</i>	288
<i>Sources of quotations</i>	298
<i>Guide to further reading</i>	315
<i>Index</i>	336

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-40217-1 - A Concise History of New Zealand: Second Edition

Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### MAPS AND FIGURES

- |       |  |               |
|-------|--|---------------|
| 1.1   | New Zealand: principal mountains, regions and towns.<br>Cartographer Tim Nolan.  | <i>page 2</i> |
| 1.2   | From Gondwana to New Zealand's emergence.<br>Cartographer Tim Nolan.   | 3             |
| 1.3   | A watery world. Cartographer Tim Nolan.  | 8             |
| 2.1   | Maori tribes (iwi), c.1839. Cartographer Tim Nolan.  | 23            |
| 2.2   | Carte de la Nle Zélande visitée en 1769 et 1770 par le<br>Lieutenant J. Cook Commandant de l'Endeavour vaisseau<br>de sa Majesté. Paris: Saillant et Nyon, 1774. The French<br>version of Cook's chart. MapColl 83oatc/1769-70<br>(1774)/Acc.39323, Alexander Turnbull Library,<br>Wellington. | 25            |
| 2.3   | Lieutenant George F. Dashwood, Maoris, 1832, Sydney.<br>Wash drawing from the albums of Lt George Dashwood.<br>Ref. PXA 1679/vol. 2/f. 89b, Mitchell Library, State Library<br>of New South Wales.   | 32            |
| 2.4   | James Barry, The Rev. Thomas Kendall and the Maori<br>chiefs Hongi and Waikato, London, 1820. Ref. G-618,<br>Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.   | 34            |
| 2.5   | George F. Angas, Motupoi [Motuopuhi] Pah with [Mt]<br>Tongariro, 1844. Ref. A-196-022, Alexander Turnbull<br>Library, Wellington.  | 40            |
| 3.1.1 | Patuone, Treaty of Waitangi signatory. Courtesy of<br>Benjamin Pittman.  | 48            |
| 3.1.2 | Tamati Waka Nene, Treaty of Waitangi signatory and<br>Patuone's brother. Courtesy of Benjamin Pittman.   | 48            |

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978-1-107-40217-1 - A Concise History of New Zealand: Second Edition

Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

*Illustrations*

- 3.2 The Treaty of Waitangi: English translation of Maori text, 1865. J. Noble Coleman, *A Memoir of the Rev. Richard Davis*, London, 1865, 455–6. 53
- 3.3 William Mein Smith, From the Pah Pipitea, Port Nicholson, December 1840. Ref. C-011-005, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 60
- 3.4 William Strutt, Settler putting out chimney fire, 1855 or 1856. Ref. E-453-f-003, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 62
- 3.5 Thomas B. Collinson, Hosey's Battle, 1847. Capt[ain] Henderson, Capt[ain E.] Stanley, R. N., Tamati Waka Nene, Te Wherowhero Potatau (the future Maori king). Ref. A-292-058, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 70
- 4.1 P. E. jnr, 'For Diver's reasons'. *Wellington Advertiser Supplement*, 19 November 1881. Bryce is carving up the protester, who wears the white feather headdress of Te Whiti's followers and lies down in passive resistance. Ref. A-095-038, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 79
- 4.2 Population growth components. After Phil Briggs, *Looking at the Numbers: A View of New Zealand's Economic History*, Wellington: NZ Institute of Economic Research, 2003, 21. Updates at <<http://nzier.org.nz/publications/looking-at-the-numbers>> 83
- 4.3 Population pyramids 1874, 1891 (European only). Tim Nolan, based on Statistics NZ data. 84
- 4.4 Sew Hoy dredge gold mining. Burton Brothers Collection, C.014896, Burton Brothers ref. BB N5220, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. 86
- 4.5 Helen Connon, MA Hons 1881, Canterbury College. Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury. 93
- 5.1 House in Bealey Avenue, Christchurch, possibly the Minson family home near the Carlton Mill Bridge. This spacious villa represented the suburban house to which most New Zealanders aspired. Photographed c.1897. Ref. F-145266-1/2, PAColl-6051, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 106
- 5.2 The Summit at Last. *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal*, 1894. Amazonian womanhood assisted to the summit. Ref. PUBL-0126-1894-01, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 109

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-40217-1 - A Concise History of New Zealand: Second Edition

Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Illustrations*

xiii

- 5.3 Scatz, How we see it. *New Zealand Graphic*, 20 October 1900. Zealandia, Britannia's daughter, wearing an indigenous feather cloak, holds hands with the noble savage. She fends off the ogre of convict Australia to protect her indigenous ward (depicted as a Pacific Islander rather than Maori), and so opts for a separate destiny in the Pacific. Ref. J-040-002, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 118
- 5.4 John C. Blomfield, Still they come. *Free Lance*, 17 January 1905. Chinese or Japanese (to xenophobes they were indistinguishable), depicted as coolies, pole-vaulting into New Zealand over the barrier of immigration restrictions, aided by, as opposed to in spite of, the poll tax to the chagrin of Premier Richard Seddon. Ref. A-315-3-042, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. 123
- 6.1 'Row on row'. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, the second largest New Zealand cemetery in Belgium, 6 June 2004. Photographer Richard Tremewan. 135
- 6.2 A. Rule, "In Blighty!" A thing we dream about'. *Shell Shocks: By the New Zealanders in France*, London: Jarrold & Sons, 1916, 29. Courtesy of Jack and Betty Tait. 136
- 6.3.1 Capt. P. P. Tahiwī, Sling Camp, July 1916. Photographer H. S. Tremewan. 137
- 6.3.2 Mrs M. Mylrea YMCA and Capt. H. S. Tremewan, Sling Camp, July 1916. Tremewan album. 137
- 6.4 Eat more milk, health class, 1926. Ministry of Health, Wellington. 144
- 6.5 Californian bungalow, Wakefield, Nelson. Photographer Jeff Mein Smith. 147
- 6.6 Milk for muscles: drain layers, Christchurch c.1920s milking the cow for morning tea. Ref. 2000.198.452, Pheloung Collection, Canterbury Historical Association Collection, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch. 149
- 7.1 Unemployed women organise: A May Day unemployed workers' demonstration led by a small band of women, Christchurch, 1932. c/n E3254/72, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena, University of Otago, Dunedin. 159
- 7.2 G. E. G. Minhinnick, The Medicine Man, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1938. Savage has had to resort to distributing medicines himself. Ref. H-723-005, Alexander

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-40217-1 - A Concise History of New Zealand: Second Edition

Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

*Illustrations*

- Turnbull Library, Wellington. Courtesy of Dion Minhinnick and *NZ Herald*. 164
- 7.3 'Got his man'. All soldiers were souvenir collectors. Here men from 28 (Maori) Battalion perform for their Australian photographer. Alexandria, 1 June 1941. Negative no. 007783, Australian War Memorial, Canberra. 173
- 7.4 *Making New Zealand*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1939–40. Photographer Duncan Shaw-Brown. 180
- 7.5 The invincibility of the All Blacks. In C. V. Smith, illustrated by G. E. Minhinnick, *From N to Z*, Wellington: Hicks Smith & Wright, c.1947. Family collection. 181
- 8.1 Neville S. Lodge, Needmore Power Project, 1963 or 1964. Ref. PUBL-0206-081-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Courtesy of Debby Edwards. 191
- 8.2 Toddler in sandpit, Palmerston North, c.1959: for the under-five set in a new house in a new subdivision, the sandpit took precedence over making a garden in an undeveloped backyard. Family collection. 197
- 8.3 A comment on parental anxieties about nuclear testing and wry tolerance of teenage music. Cartoonist unknown, *Christchurch Star-Sun*, 6 October 1956, 7. Courtesy of *Christchurch Star* and Gary Whitcher. 199
- 8.4 Eric W. Heath, Big 3 ANZUS meeting, 'Is there some reason we can't all support a nuclear-free zone, gentlemen?', 27 February 1974. Ref. C-132-124, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Courtesy of Eric Heath. 203
- 8.5 G. E. G. Minhinnick, Tails you lose! *New Zealand Herald*, 3 February 1966. Courtesy of *NZ Herald*. 207
- 9.1 Trading partners: Proportion of total exports going to different markets, 1860–1989. *New Zealand Official 1990 Yearbook*, Wellington: Department of Statistics, 1990, 599. Source: Statistics New Zealand. 212
- 9.2 Robert Muldoon and Malcolm Fraser. Copyright unknown. 216
- 9.3 Eric W. Heath, ANZUS, 5 February 1985. Ref. B-143-009, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Courtesy of Eric Heath. 231
- 9.4 The stricken *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland Harbour, July 1985. Courtesy of *NZ Herald*. 233
- 10.1 Justice Edward Taihakurei Durie, Chair of the Waitangi Tribunal, 1981–2003. Courtesy of Donna Durie Hall. 243

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-40217-1 - A Concise History of New Zealand: Second Edition

Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Illustrations*

xv

10.2	Prime Minister Helen Clark on Hochstetter Dome, Mt Cook National Park, 5 July 2003. Photographer Gottlieb Braun-Elwert, courtesy of Helen Clark's office and Anne Braun-Elwert.	251
11.1	Before the earthquake: Christ Church Cathedral, Christchurch, 2006. Photographer Mark Tremewan.	263
11.2	After the earthquake: Christ Church Cathedral, Christchurch, after 22 February 2011, Dean Peter Beck in the foreground. Courtesy of Christ Church Cathedral.	264
11.3	Meadowlands Shopping Centre, Howick, South Auckland, 9 April 2011. Photographer Jessica Mein Smith.	281
11.4	Prince William greets locals on his visit to Sumner, a quake-hit seaside suburb of Christchurch, 18 March 2011. Author's photograph.	282

## TABLES

4.1	Population trends and Maori land ownership. Adapted from Mason Durie, <i>Whaiora: Maori Health Development</i> , 2nd edn. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998, 36.	89
9.1	What did New Zealanders want? From <i>Defence and Security: What New Zealanders Want</i> , Wellington: Defence Committee of Enquiry, 1986.	234

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This second edition was framed by earthquakes. I commenced the revisions, shakily, in September 2010, but was propelled to the finishing line by the earthquake of 22 February 2011 which, ironically, allowed the time to write by obliging me to work from home while teaching online supplemented by meetings in a tent with students. This edition is shaped by being denied access to the usual



*Acknowledgements*

xvii

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-40217-1 - A Concise History of New Zealand: Second Edition

Philippa Mein Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## 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. The revisions and updates for the second edition continue this pattern. 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: first driven by the British Empire, then by the United States, and now by China. 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 remoteness.

Health and social issues are central to this country's past (and present) international reputation, and continue to inform beliefs about national identity. Demographic contours are 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 regard for global shifts and 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 New Zealand myths that people overseas first encounter. They therefore beg to be explained, or at least investigated.

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