

**HISTORICAL JOURNAL**

**VOLUME THIRTYONE**

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**EDITORIAL**

THERE IS SOMETHING of an edge to this year's Journal. All the major articles raise an issue, drawing our attention to social problems, life's tragedies, errors of interpretation, or political propaganda.

There's peril by sea and river in 'Song of Raukawa' and in Dick Roach's stories. Hugh Thorpe explains how scientists track changes and floods in Otaki River.

It startled me to discover, when I started to find out about Wellington's Colonial Hospital (founded 1847), that New Zealand's first operation under anaesthetic was carried out on a Waikanae chief; furthermore, this was only a year after the first such operation in London. It should not have been a surprise to find Governor George Grey milking its political value for all it was worth. Nothing changes.

'A Window on Tainui' describes the social survey of Otaki that led to the book *Some modern Maoris* (Wellington, 1946). There was a sad contrast between the cooperation and hospitality of the people interviewed in 1941-42 and their dismay when they read the outcome four years later. Their freely-given information looked very different when used as evidence to diagnose 'the Maori problem', and not surprisingly they didn't like it. For some, bitterness survives even today, and their feelings are respected. However, the survey gave rise to an unexpected gift: a set of 75 photographs of high quality. You can see some of them in 'A Window on Tainui'.

A news item about a train derailment from the atrocious winter of 1929 echoes stories we have been reading in 2010.

Surprisingly, we have three contributions from faculty members of the University of Canterbury. Retired Professor of History John Cookson examines the debates that bedevilled Otaki Borough in the 1930s. Dr Hugh Thorpe speaks about floods with the authority of a hydrologist who grew up beside the Otaki River. Dr Richard Manning raises an issue that troubles many of us about school history teaching: the lack of connection between curriculum requirements and the story of the place where the students live. That is partly addressed by the opportunity in Year 13 History to pursue a personal research topic, but Richard Manning shows how far we have still to go.

Our thanks, as always, to the many people who contribute to our Journal by writing, picture research, distribution and administration, but especially to my associate editor, Jan Harris.

Kia ora katoa.

Anthony Dreaver, Editor