



Farming and Rural History

Although farming earned three-quarters or more of our export earnings and farmers dominated politics before the enormous changes of the last 15 years, surprisingly little has been written about our farming and rural history outside the area of local history.

A FEW energetic historians such as Rollo Arnold and W.J. Gardner, and geographers such as Ray Hargreaves, have striven valiantly to address this unsatisfactory state of affairs, but much remains to be done. One day I too hope to help remedy this situation (hopefully for 2004) by writing a broad overview of the development of New Zealand farming and the making of rural New Zealand society. In the meantime one of the best ways of addressing the many gaps in this field is to consult the magnificent holdings at the Hocken.

Those who do not have the time for such time-consuming pursuits might like to turn to two old standards held by the Hocken to gain a sense of what happened before the 1970s: Horace Belshaw, F.B. Stephens and D.O. Williams (eds.) *Agricultural Organisation in New Zealand*, Melbourne University Press/OUP, 1936 and B.L. Evans, *Agricultural Production and Marketing in New Zealand.*, Keeling & Mundy, Palmerston North, 1969. P.R. Stephens also wrote many useful articles in the *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture* (see **II, 2 (i)**). Kenneth Cumberland's *Landmarks* takes the story up to 1980 and there are useful updates in Alan Grey, *Aotearoa and New Zealand: A Historical Geography*, Canterbury University Press, 1994, and Malcolm McKinnon (ed.) *The Historical Atlas of New Zealand*, David Bateman/Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, Auckland, 1997.

I MANUSCRIPT DOCUMENTS

1. High Country Run Diaries and Journals

These tend to be cryptic accounts of the yearly round of work and have been written mainly by men. They comment on the weather more than anything else but occasionally they reveal a little about the difficulties of runholding. These records are also usually confined to a few years of experience but occasionally long-run,

inter-generational diaries have survived. Many of these sources have been heavily mined by L.G.D. Acland, Herries Beattie, Robert Pinney and Peter Chandler, but they are still worth viewing in their own right because more use could be made of this material and Beattie did not always record his information accurately. Some of the more useful are listed below. Two theses which help make sense of the detail are Marilyn J. Campbell, 'Runholding in Otago and Southland, 1848–1876', MA University of Otago, 1981; and Yvonne Spiers, 'Preston Runholding in the Maniototo and the Mackenzie, 1858–1917', MA University of Otago, 1988.

At least eight runs have generated records worth investigating. By far the most useful and ample relates to the **Preston family** of Longlands station (Ms 0989 and 1271) for the period 1848–1960s. These records are so extensive that they will reward further investigation. The **Ida Valley Run** (Ms 0658) also generated detailed records which have survived for the 1863 to 1957 period. Extensive records (Ag-659) have also survived for the **Jardine family** and the Kawarau Falls and other Queenstown runs over the 1901–51 period; and the **McMaster family** and the Tokarahi run (later estate — Ms 1011) for 1869–1903. Smaller collections are also available on **Mt Nicholas station** 1874–75 (Ms 0672), and **Edwin Trolove** of Woodbank in North Canterbury (Ms 0590); Campbell Island 1923 (Misc Ms 1487) and Puketoi for 1876–77 in the Sir John Roberts papers (Ms 0625). **Frank Mathias** of Canterbury enlivened his journal kept between 1859–61 (Misc Ms 1560) with sketches and maps

2. Farm Diaries

Generally these are as cryptic as the diaries of runholders and concentrate on the daily grind of farm tasks. More accounts written by women have survived, however, and some do comment on community and family life. Some interesting examples are listed

below: The **Davidson family** (AG-523) of Dome farm near Waikaia have left the longest run of inter-generational records of farming from 1848 to 1941. **Catherine (Valpy) Fulton's diary** (AG-613) provides the next longest run from 1857 to 1917 and is full of details concerning the daily round of chores. **Alice Mackenzie** (Ms 0137) kept a diary of daily activities at isolated Martins Bay in 1890 and 1891. This diary includes her reminiscences of her longer stay in a series written for the Southland Times. The **Ramsay family** (AG-680) have left records of farming at Hyde for 1852–53, 1894 and 1910–1929. The **Nicolson family** (97 044) of Poolburn near Oturehua have left diaries for the years 1903–26. James Brass (Ms-0669-B) has left a very laconic account of threshing, ploughing and other farming tasks from the Invercargill area for the years 1863–66.

3. Businesses with strong rural links, Stock and Station Agencies and Mortgage Companies.

The Hocken holds several excellent collections of business records of firms which earned their livelihood from farming. Some of these collections are very extensive but generally they have been properly catalogued and can be used in systematic fashion. A useful thesis which helps set these various organisations in their context is J.P. McAloon, 'Colonial Wealth. The Rich of Otago and Canterbury, 1890–1914', PhD University of Otago, 1993. The most important business records are:

Murray, Roberts and Co. under Sir John Roberts Papers Ms 625. Helen C. Harraway's MA Thesis, 'John Roberts: man of business', MA University of Otago, 1967, will help guide the researcher through these records.

The National Mortgage Agency (UN28) bequeathed its Dunedin office records. Gordon Parry's *N.M.A., National Mortgage and Agency Company*, Dunedin, 1964, will help place these records in context. Manager John Macfarlane Ritchie's acerbic observations on Dunedin business culture are particularly interesting.

The Hocken holds 93 rolls of microfiche copies of the Scottish-based **New Zealand and Australian Land Company (UCK6/N)**. The index can be found at **Z8N/+S**. Mervyn Palmer's 'The New Zealand and Australian Land Company in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', PhD University of Otago, 1971, will help researchers wading through this vast record.

Records of the agricultural implement manufacturer **Reid & Gray** can be found for the 1883–1931 period at **Ms 1/65**. These records are patchy (for example

they do not include order books) but they do house an excellent set of photographs.

The Dunedin-based stock and station agency **Donald Reid**, which is still with us, has largely unsorted records at **Ms173 and 1156**. John H. Angus, *Donald Reid Otago Farmers' Limited*, Dunedin, 1978, will help guide the researcher into this rather confusing archive.

The John Ross Family Papers 97-118 are of interest because **Ross and Glendining** operated four high country runs.

The records of the **Taieri and Peninsula Milk Supply Company Ltd Ms -0986** cover the period 1871–1942.

The records of the Invercargill and Lawrence records of the Stock and Station Agency **Wright Stephenson and Co. Ltd.** can be found at **AG130 and UN 103** respectively.

II PRINTED DOCUMENTS

1. Official

(i) Parliamentary

Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives.

The *AJHR* are a veritable goldmine for anyone interested in the history of farming and rural life. Not only do they include lengthy annual reports on Crown lands from 1877 (C1) but numerous Commissions of Inquiry can be found which provide much first-hand evidence from farmer witnesses. Some of the most important Commissions include the 1905 Land Commission (C4, -A, -B), the 1920 Commission on Southern Pastoral Lands (C-15), the 1934 Commission on the Dairy Industry (H-30), and the 1949 Commission on Sheep Farming (H-46A). Other activities which impacted directly on the rural environment such as gold mining and drainage can also be tracked through various reports and commissions such as the 1901 report on 'The Pollution of Rivers and Streams' (H-31) and the 1907 Rivers Commission (C-14), or the Forestry Commission of 1913 (C-12). The more awkward story of Ngai Tahu land alienation which underpinned the development of southern farming can also be tracked through such a Commissions as Smith Nairn of 1879–81 on 'Middle Island Native Land Purchases' (G-6 and G-7).

Statutes of New Zealand.

Since its beginnings in 1854, Parliament has passed an extraordinary number of laws to regulate farming practice and to control a vast range of 'pests' from rabbits and small birds to a veritable army of weeds. The 1908 *Consolidated Statutes* provide a quick way of assessing 19th century developments and Butterworth's

Consolidated Statutes can short circuit the task of tracking down the evolution of this legislation. A trawl through the original volumes, however, often reveals all kinds of fascinating (and frequently futile) attempts to improve the efficiency of farming and the productivity of our less than bountiful land.

New Zealand Parliamentary Debates

Our parliamentary debates are a seriously underrated source partly, perhaps, because politicians are currently held in low regard. Before World War 2, Parliament represented the major debating forum in the land and a vast range of issues were aired in its chambers.

Agriculture, farming and rural life received frequent comment and these can be easily accessed because this source is fully indexed by subject as well as speaker. It is, therefore, relatively easy and quick to use, and leads logically into more time-consuming sources such as newspapers.

Votes and Proceedings of the Otago Provincial Council

These are not as full as the parliamentary debates but if cross-referenced into newspapers they can lead the researcher into interesting areas of rural life by revealing what provincial government policies and activities most agitated farmers.

(ii) Statistical

Statistics of New Zealand, Census of New Zealand, New Zealand Official Yearbook.

All three of these sources provide information necessary to establish the skeletal outlines of economic development and social structure. The *Statistics* and *Yearbooks* are especially helpful on the production side of farming, while the *Census* reveals much about population trends, marital rates, religious affiliation, occupational make-up and (from 1926) income.

2. Unofficial

(i) Periodicals

Overseas research on urban societies suggests that newspapers reveal information on only a tiny proportion of the population, that is, the elites and the notorious. In rural New Zealand, in contrast, more than half the population of districts turn up in accounts of community life. Indeed as Rollo Arnold has shown, newspapers constitute the richest source of all for the study of rural life. The most useful are: the *Otago Witness* (weekly, 1861–1932), *New Zealand Farmer* (monthly, Auckland, 1882–; the Hocken's holdings are patchy early on) and *New Zealand Country Journal* (quarterly, Christchurch 1877–1898, complete).

The *Otago Witness* is indispensable for the study of

Otago's rural life because it features weekly summaries of local happenings and several superb columnists writing under such noms-de-plume as 'Agricola'. Photographs also appear from 1899 which catch much of the rhythm and more romantic side of country living. The *New Zealand Farmer* provides national rather than local coverage and is graced by evocative line drawings, woodcuts and etchings as well as photographs from the early 1900s. It is also blessed with an excellent index. Generally it is rather apolitical, but leans towards the liberal rather than the conservative. It is also the most valuable source on the role and expectations of rural women because it introduced a women's page as early as 1885. The *New Zealand Country Journal*, produced by the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Society, is focused much more narrowly on farming practice. Like the two papers above it incorporates many overseas articles and reveals that New Zealanders were kept in close touch with the global village by their rural newspapers. Occasionally more reflective and historical pieces are included.

More explicitly political material can be found in the official paper of the New Zealand Farmers' Union (Federated Farmers from 1944) *Point Blank* (1933–41), *Progress and Farming First* (1939–41) and *Straight Furrow* (1941–). The more specialist *Dairy Exporter* is available from 1982. A more regional perspective emerges from the 1970s via the *Otago Farmer* (1973–82), the *Southland Farmer* (1975–82) and the *Otago and Southland Farmer* (1982–).

The Hocken also holds full sets of the **N.Z. Journal of Agriculture** (1910–) and the **Journal of Agricultural Science** (1958–) which are indispensable to anyone interested in changes in farming methods and the role of science within the development of New Zealand agriculture. Attitudes (especially concerning environmental impact and the role of the state in national development) can also be extrapolated from editorials.

(ii) Local Papers

Most New Zealand small towns produced newspapers containing ample information on the activities of farming clubs and such women's groups such as the Country Women's Institute (1919–) and the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union (1925–). The Hocken holds extensive runs of several such papers, for example: **Dunstan Times** (Cromwell), **Western Star** (Riverton), **Taieri Advocate** (Mosgiel), **Bruce Herald** (Milton), **Mt Ida Chronicle** (Naseby) etc. Incidentally, two other valuable small-town papers covering rural life are Lawrence's *Tuapeka*

Times (held in the Otago Settlers Museum) and Oamaru's *North Otago Times* (Dunedin Public Library).

(iii) Pamphlets

Dr Hocken collected a huge range of pamphlets on every conceivable subject including agriculture, farming techniques, land tenure, Maori land ownership and the most desirable forms of rural social structure which are indispensable for anyone interested in the world of ideas and the rather utopian nature of pre-WW2 New Zealand.

(iv) Street and Trade Directories

Stones (1884–), **Wises** (1875–94) and **N.Z Post Office** (1894–); **Cyclopedia** (1905 etc); **Electoral Rolls**. Anyone trying to track individuals in the wastes of more remote rural areas should begin by consulting the directories listed above. Full sets of **Stones** and **Wises** are held by the Hocken but electoral rolls (which have the added advantage of including a large numbers of women from 1893) are patchy. Although none of these sources is exactly comprehensive, a surprising range of people can be traced through them.

III VISUAL

The Hocken holds a spectacular set of visual images incorporating more than 17,000 **paintings and etchings** (many of them catalogued on computer for easy viewing), over 2 million **photographs** (many of them catalogued and easily viewed in hard copy) and well over 2000 **posters and postcards** of famous tourist and beauty spots. Much of this material relates to country life, and even the most perfunctory viewing reveals the extraordinary transformation of our landscape and the huge impact of British-style farming, mining and timber felling. The viewer can also see how roads, railways and dams have further reshaped the land in the 20th century. This marvellous collection, seriously under-utilised, deserves much greater exposure and celebration.

IV SECONDARY SOURCES

1. General

The major contributions, apart from Belshaw and Evans, have been made by H. Guthrie Smith *Tutira* (just reissued by University of Washington Press); Stevan Eldred Grigg, *A Southern Gentry*, 1981; W.J. Gardner, *The Amuri*, 1983; John Martin, *The Forgotten Worker: The Rural Wage Labourer in Nineteenth Century New Zealand*, 1990; Rollo Arnold,

New Zealand's Burning, 1993; Geoff Park, *Nga Uru Ora: The Groves of Life, Ecology and History in a New Zealand Landscape*, 1995; Miles Fairburn, *Nearly out of Heart and Hope: The Puzzle of a Colonial Labourer's Diary*, 1995; W.J. Gardner, *Where they Lived*, 1999; and my own *Lands for the People?*, 1996.

2. Local Histories

Although these publications vary enormously in quality they nevertheless contain masses of detail about rural life in general, and farming technicalities in particular. They often provide a logical starting point for inquiry. The Hocken has a huge collection and one way to begin, at least for Otago/Southland, is to consult George Griffiths' catalogue, *Books of Southern New Zealand listed by locality*, Dunedin Genealogical Conference, 1989; or consult David McDonald about later updates.

3. Theses

The Hocken holds all the theses written in the Department of History. Many of these have been written on land settlement and rural life and separate naturally into three distinct groups. Among the most helpful and well executed are:

(i) Estate Break-Ups

C. Conlan (Ardgowan), N. Ellis (Windsor Park), R. Hall (Waikakahi), P.C.F. James (Pomahaka), M. Morgan (Greenfield), D. Mortimer (Tokorahi), J. Muirhead (Chaslands).

(ii) Environmental

M. Baker (Abel Tasman National Park), N. Clayton (environmental anxiety in early Otago), L. Davidson (southern mountaineering), A. McMechan (Port Craig), P. Ross (tourism at Franz Joseph Glacier), P. Star (changing attitudes to the natural world, 1870s–90s).

(iii) Specialist Rural

H. Anderson (hydatids), T. Brooking (New Zealand and English Farmers' Unions), R. Egerton (rabbits in Central Otago), M. Knauf (representations of pioneer women), A. Lynch (pioneer farming in South Otago), F. Sinclair (Otago Provincial Council Wastelands Board).

Other useful theses from geography are available in the central Library of the University of Otago.

Prepared for the Friends of Hocken Collections by Tom Brooking; edited by George Griffiths; designed by Gary Blackman.

