

Defining conflict

A landmark study of the New Zealand Wars is an important contribution to change.

by NIGEL PRICKETT

The title *The Great War for New Zealand* is from Wiremu Tamihana Tarapipipi, the “Kingmaker”, referring to the Waikato War as decisive in the 19th-century struggle between Pakeha and Maori. In the first of 600 pages, author Vincent O’Malley goes further – that this was “the defining conflict in New Zealand history”.

There was, of course, another “Great War”, of 1914-18, now World War I, for 100 years central to our nation-building, with the Government committing leadership and \$25 million to the centenary commemorations.

Only months before the World War I centenary was the 150th anniversary of the 1863-64 Waikato War, with remembrance co-ordinated by Nga Pae o Maumahara, described as a collective of iwi and community representatives, to which the Government contributed \$250,000.

O’Malley’s book has four main parts. The first describes Waikato before the war, including the crucial establishment of the Kingitanga under Te Wherowhero. On the Pakeha side are the preparation for war and the politics required to bring it about, from fear of an independent Maori power in Auckland’s hinterland and a desire for land.

“Te Pakanga ki Waikato – War in Waikato” tells of the war itself, referring throughout to the politics and objectives of the two sides, effectively tying the fighting to the all-important

before and after – how it came to this and the results that are still with us. Among stories is the peace that might have been after Rangiriri.

“The Aftermath” covers especially the confiscation/raupatu of 486,000ha of Waikato land. O’Malley notes that despite this, the people and Kingitanga were not defeated, although they were driven south of Puniu River to Ngati Maniapoto territory, now the King Country. The last section, “The Long Search for Justice”, takes the struggle for recognition and recompense to the 1995 Raupatu Settlement.

The author estimates Maori killed at nearly 4% of the pre-war Waikato population – which is more than twice the death rate of Kiwi troops to population in WWI. The latter is awful enough, although it includes the servicemen and women who died from illness, accident and wounds, which are mostly unrecorded among Maori casualties of the New Zealand Wars.

The book is introduced by two short sections, “Owning Our History” and “Remembering (and Forgetting) the Waikato War”, to tell of changing Pakeha recognition of the conflict to the present “historical amnesia”.

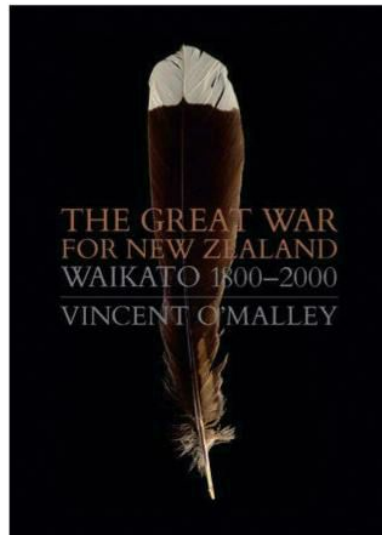
In his essay “What is a Nation?”, 19th-century French historian Ernest Renan wrote that: “Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.” Also: “Forgetfulness, and I would even say historical error, are essential in the creation of a nation.”

Here we have the reason for Government spending on remembrance of “The Great War for New

Zealand” being 1% of that spent on WWI commemorations.

O’Malley urges knowledge and understanding as a way forward. “None of this requires feelings of guilt or shame, but simply a willingness to hear, read and embrace the difficult aspects of our past.” His book is a landmark study of the New Zealand Wars and an important contribution to change. ■

THE GREAT WAR FOR NEW ZEALAND: WAIKATO 1800-2000, by Vincent O’Malley (Bridget Williams Books, \$79.99)



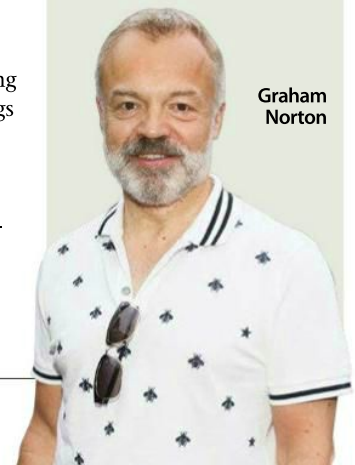
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TOP 10 CRIME FICTION

- 1 THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN, by Paula Hawkins (Random House)**
- 2 THE FOUR LEGENDARY KINGDOMS, by Matthew Reilly (Pan Macmillan)**
- 3 HOLDING, by Graham Norton (Hachette)**
- 4 INFERNO, by Dan Brown (Random House)**
- 5 HOME, by Harlan Coben (Random House)**
- 6 NEVER GO BACK, by Lee Child (Random House)**
- 7 I AM PILGRIM, by Terry Hayes (Random House)**
- 8 PIRATE, by Clive Cussler & Robin Burcell (Penguin Books)**
- 9 ORDER TO KILL, by Vince Flynn & Kyle Mills (Simon & Schuster)**
- 10 TRIPLE CROWN, by Felix Francis (Simon & Schuster)**

TOP 10 FILMS

- 1 DOCTOR STRANGE**
- 2 JACK REACHER: NEVER GO BACK**
- 3 THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN**
- 4 AE DIL HAI MUSHKIL**
- 5 KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES**
- 6 BRIDGET JONES’S BABY**
- 7 INFERNO**
- 8 I, DANIEL BLAKE**
- 9 OUIJA: ORIGIN OF EVIL**
- 10 HELL OR HIGH WATER**



Graham Norton