REVIEW

Rebecca Lenihan. *From Alba to Aotearoa: Profiling New Zealand's Scots migrants 1840-1920*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. Pp. 320. ISBN 978-1-877578-79-3. NZD\$45.

Whoever it was who decided that New Zealand's pre-1966 census forms should be destroyed owes historians a huge apology. The consequent impoverishment of source data for detailed studies of New Zealand in the century following the first census in 1851 seriously limits our understanding of European migration and settlement in that period. It means that building a solid statistical picture of discrete groups, such as the Scots, requires scratching around among census substitutes that simply cannot support the fine-grained analysis possible in other destination countries for the Scottish diaspora. Those limitations are one of the key takeaways from Rebecca Lenihan's impressive effort to profile New Zealand's founding generations of Scottish immigrants.

This book is another welcome contribution to Scottish studies with its genesis in Brad Patterson's late lamented Irish-Scottish Studies programme at Victoria University's Stout Centre. As well as running its marvellous biennial conferences, the programme also produced three doctoral theses. This is the second of them to be published (the first to appear was Tanja Bueltmann's *Scottish Ethnicity and the Making of New Zealand Society, 1850 to 1930* in 2011). Expanding on her two chapters in a previously published survey volume from the Scottish Migration to New Zealand project (Brad Patterson, Tom Brooking, and Jim McAloon, *Unpacking the Kists: The Scots in New Zealand*. McGill-Queen's University Press/Otago University Press, 2013), Lenihan here takes "previous findings regarding the characteristics of New Zealand's migrant Scots considerably further than earlier studies, using quantitative and qualitative sources to present a fuller and more detailed profile" (p.179).

Her efforts, however, are seriously constrained by the nature of the sources. In the absence of census records and similar primary sources that “are either non-existent or of limited availability to New Zealand historians” (p.26) two alternative datasets have been used. The first is based on a register of Scottish immigrants prior to January 1921 created by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists while the second is a sub-sample of Scottish-born entries from the extensive sampling of post-1876 death certificates collated by Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn for their Peopling of New Zealand project. Both sources have clearly identified strengths and weaknesses but cross-checking them in a comparative way corrects inherent defects in each since “both sets of data are significantly biased, albeit in different ways” (p.112).

Data mining like this must be a thankless task, involving enormous efforts for relatively modest returns. The analysis of Scottish distribution around New Zealand in chapter two, for example, largely serves to confirm received wisdom: “The stereotype of Otago/Southland and Waipu as *the* Scottish settlements of New Zealand is based upon irrefutable fact” (p.91). It also provides the necessary corrective that Scottish settlement was also spread across the country, with a proportionate cross-section of the Scottish population reaching every major province in New Zealand. The colony was thus both Belich’s neo-Scotland, with a greater proportion of Scots than any other diasporic destination, and one with a distinctively Scottish heartland in Otago and Southland alongside almost nationwide dispersal in a pattern uniquely representative of the Scottish homeland.

Occasionally however, closer analysis of particular migrant attributes founders on the rock of inadequate sample sizes. Slicing and dicing the numbers can also miss significant groupings entirely when aspects of the datasets do not quite align with reality on the ground. Substantial Scottish communities in rural areas between Wanganui and Wellington, for example, “do not readily appear in statistical analyses” (p.84) and yet Lenihan’s account of these groups is one of the most engaging parts of the book, enriched by genealogical data beyond the raw numbers. It provides “the greater

understanding of the settlement patterns attainable when analysis moves beyond statistical evidence” (p. 85).

The most notable absence from Lenihan’s study is any substantive engagement with Scottish religious identity. This is inevitable given the absence of information on religious affiliation in any meaningful way from her datasets but it is a serious lack. I would echo her conclusion that “religion is an aspect of the New Zealand Scots migrant experience that calls for much deeper investigation” (p.30-31). It is surely past time for us to have Scottish Presbyterian equivalents to Lyndon Fraser’s benchmark studies of Irish Catholic community formation in Christchurch and on the West Coast (*To Tara via Holyhead: Irish Catholic Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Christchurch* [1997] and *Castles of Gold: a History of New Zealand’s West Coast Irish* [2007]). Until such studies appear, Lenihan’s careful spadework provides a robust quantitative analysis of New Zealand Scots that will be indispensable to any discussion of their characteristics, religion excepted.

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