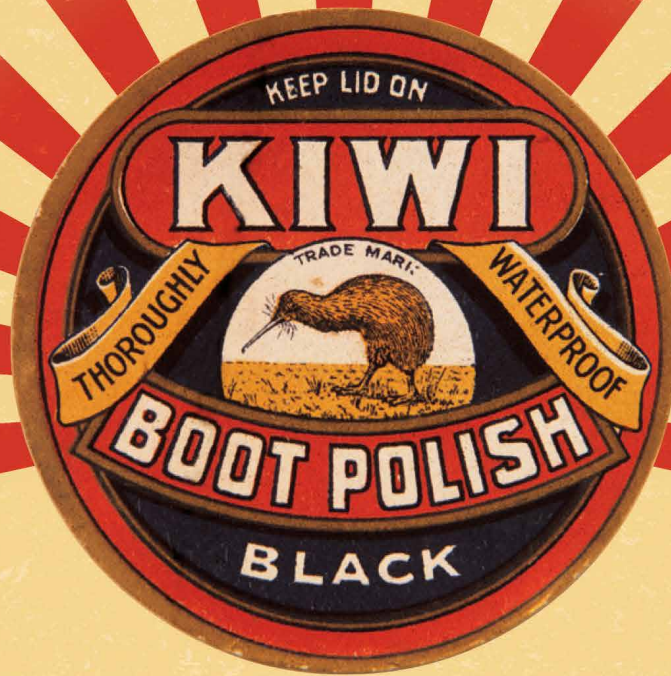


KIWIANA

UNIQUELY NEW ZEALAND



Stephen Barnett & Richard Wolfe

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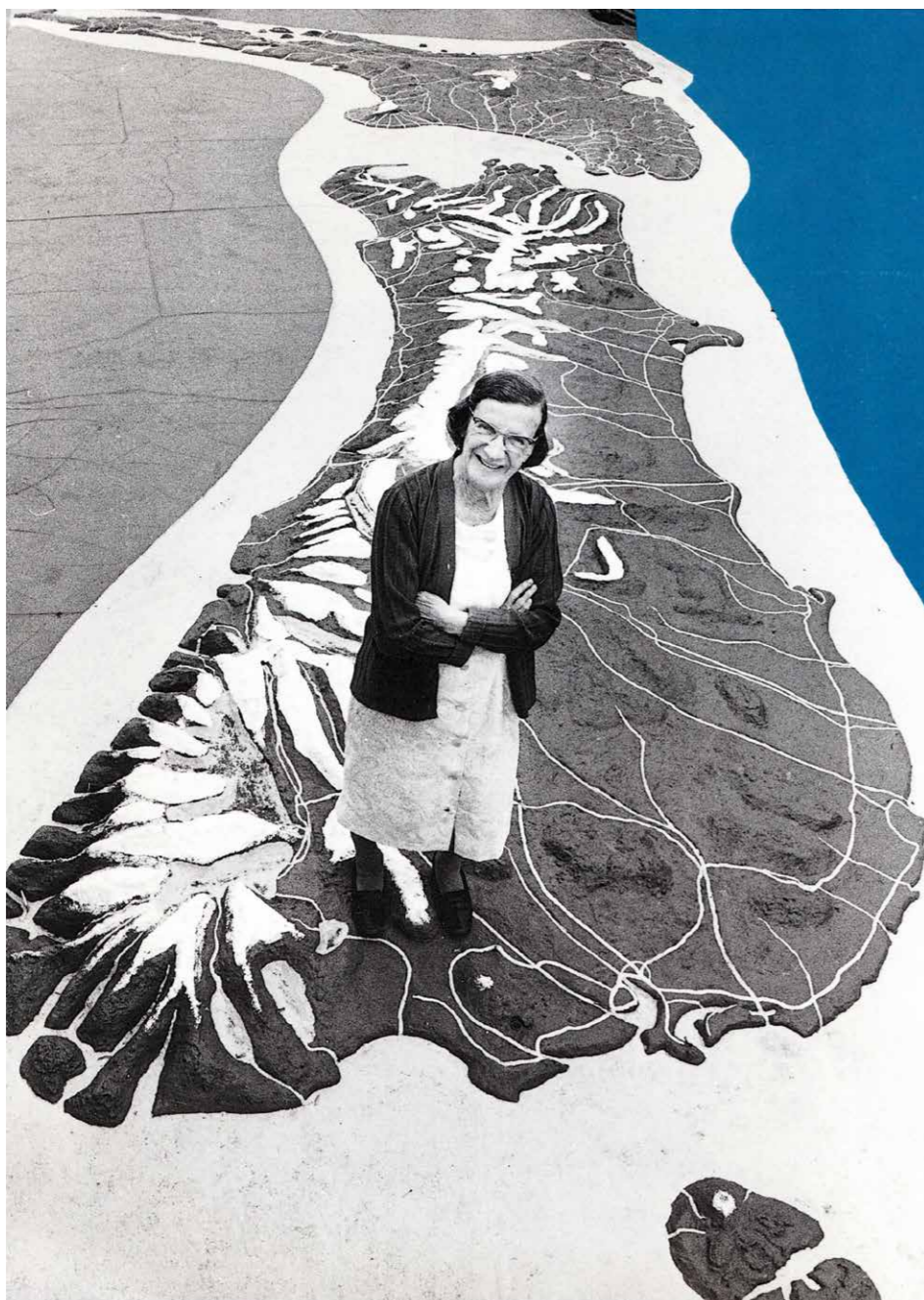
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Kia Ora

This book is a celebration of Kiwiana - a name for New Zealand's popular culture - which gathers together many of the threads that go to characterise life in these islands and which make up what is the unique New Zealand difference.

It's a quirky list covering objects, images, language and ways of doing things that typify life in this land, and to a large degree stem from the country's isolation in colonial times and the independence and self-reliance of its people. The early settlers, both Polynesian and Pākehā, had only what they brought with them; anything else they had to make or invent.

Kiwiana had its greatest consolidation over the two decades following the Second World War as the baby-boomer generation, buoyed up on a cradle-to-grave welfare state, met rising prosperity. For the average New Zealand couple and their 2.6 children it was a life of Plunket, Buzzy Bee, Saturday rugby, a beer or two, a rotary clothesline and the occasional pav. It was also a time when New Zealand began to make its mark internationally in new and different ways - when we were, for example, first to stand at the summit of the world's tallest mountain, when our

sports people were increasingly to the fore, and when we protested injustices - all of which added to the sum of what it meant to be a Kiwi.

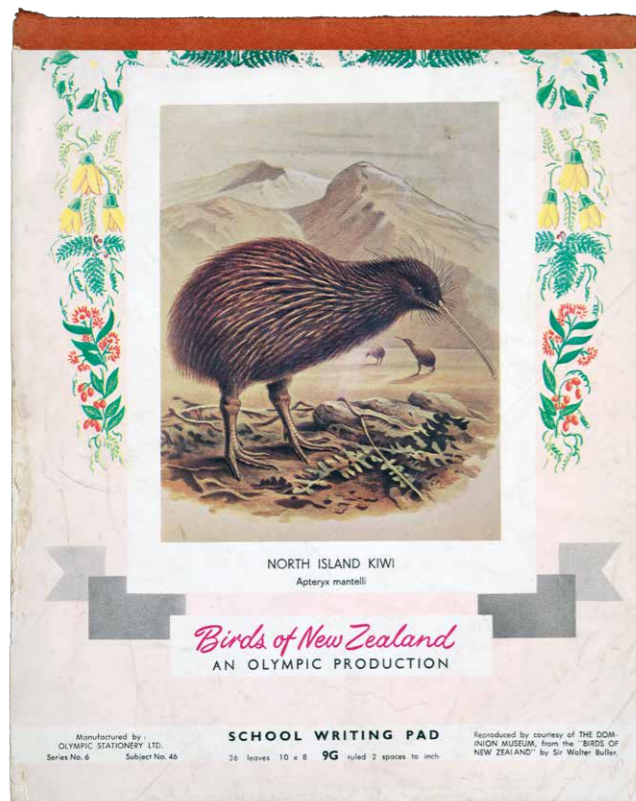
Today this shared popular culture continues to do a good job of explaining something of life in New Zealand and its 4.7 million people, 32 million sheep (and who knows how many possums out there in the bush) and Ten Guitars.

*Haere Mai and God Defend
All Blacks, baches and beaut
Silver fern, sheep and Anzacs
Swannndris, gumboots, mates
Southern Cross, She'll be right.*

- Stephen Barnett and Richard Wolfe



ABOVE Kiwi boot polish originated in Australia (in 1906). LEFT The biggest commercial representations of kiwis were those used to advertise Hutton's Kiwi Bacon. These steel and fibreglass models were installed during the 1960s on top of the company's buildings in the main centres and over the years became much-loved landmarks of those cities' skylines. 'So long a part of their local environment,' as photographer Geoffrey Short has remarked, 'that only strangers would think it odd that somehow kiwis might be a source of bacon'.



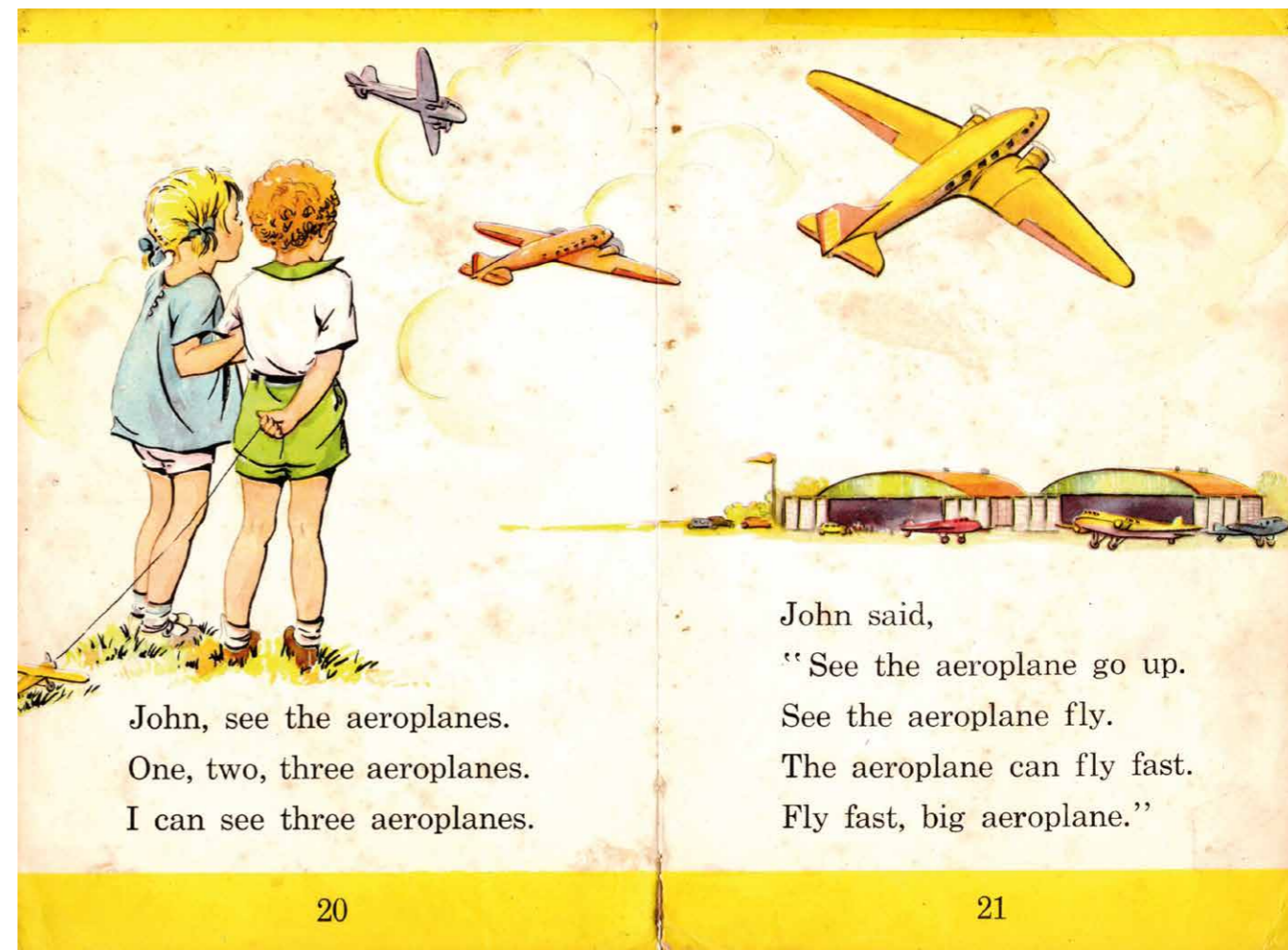
ABOVE A school writing pad of the 1960s featuring New Zealand's unique natural history.
RIGHT This won't hurt . . .

For nearly as long as this country has been 'Godzone', it has also been hailed as a good place to bring up children. This was certainly the case from the middle of last century onwards, and children here are fortunate indeed to live in a land that enjoys an abundance of fresh air, sunlight and space, and with the wilderness of hills and coast never far away.

By the early 1940s, New Zealand was at the forefront in the world when it came to care for infants and children: free dental and medical care,

and free milk in schools were just some of the benefits of their early years, beginning in the safe hands of Plunket soon after birth.

The Plunket Society was founded in 1907 and named for Lady Plunket, whose support for the organisation ensured it a high profile. At the time the country's record on infant care was abysmal, and before long Plunket had become an integral part of the country's health system. The nationwide



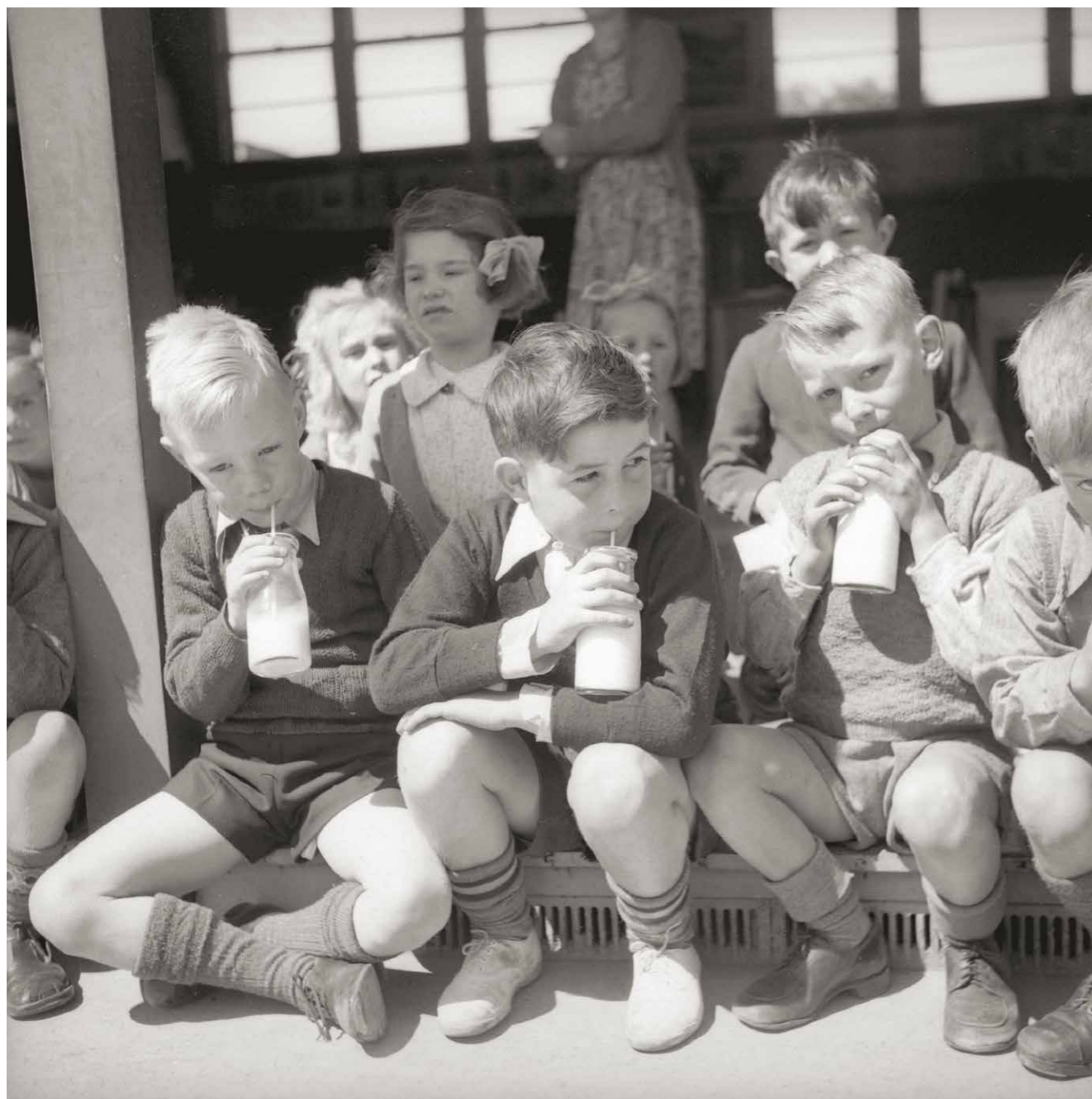
The Janet and John series of readers ('Look, John, look!'), together with the Department of Education's School Journal and A.W.B. Powell's Native Animals of New Zealand,

organisation offering preventative care has succeeded in large measure due to a unique support network of volunteers.

Led by Sir Truby King, the organisation's

were the most memorable of the publications put in front of growing Kiwis.

philosophy for infant and child care stressed the importance of fresh air, sunshine, diet and exercise. Plunket held that when the child went to school, the time spent within halls of learning should be also



be physically beneficial. Early twentieth-century primary schools provided large areas of playing fields while classrooms were airy and filled with light. The buildings often featured verandahs, with large, glazed, folding doors that spanned one wall to let in a maximum amount of sunlight and fresh air.

As well as learning their three Rs, generations of young Kiwis grew up learning the ABCs of their country's natural world. The covers of their school exercise books and writing pads displayed images of our native birds as painted by Johannes Keulemans, which had originally appeared in Walter Buller's books in the nineteenth century, and familiarised children with New Zealand's unique birdlife. Similar osmotic absorption took place with regard to our native trees, this time by way of wooden pencil cases and rulers inlaid with slivers of wood from matai, rimu, tawa, beech, kauri, pūriri and others, an innovation of Sovereign Woodworkers in Wanganui.

Further positive reinforcement was to be had in school mottos (although these were often somewhat obscure for young brains, such as 'Sacrifice Before Self') borne on boards high up on the school buildings and whose influence it was hoped would adhere whenever pupils raised their eyes. The frequent presence of straw, string and feathers poking out from behind the board, where sparrows nested warm and dry, may have distracted from the effect, but then it provided a little nature study as well.

Less uplifting was the school dental clinic, better

OPPOSITE *The 10 o'clock swill. Schoolchildren down their half-pint daily ration of milk.*

RIGHT *Health camps (for which money was raised each year through the sale of health stamps) were another initiative that put the country at the forefront when it came to care for the child.*



known as the Murder House. Often sited at the end of a lonely pathway some distance from the main cluster of buildings - in order, one imagined, that the screams of the victims would not carry to the classrooms - pupils were called there twice yearly. Messengers bearing the fateful summons would enter a classroom to speak the awful words to the teacher, and if you were really unlucky the electric drill would be out of commission and the dental nurse would be using one of the old-style treadle-powered drills whose much slower speed served to drag out the torture.

For anyone at primary school in New Zealand



from the late 1930s until the late 1960s, an enduring memory is that of school milk. All across the country at 10 o'clock the rattling of half-pint bottles in wire crates signalled morning playtime. School milk had its origins in the Depression. The widespread poverty of the period had led to undernourishment among thousands of children while at the same time there was a large surplus of milk available as the result of reduced economic activity. Among the voices raised in favour of a free milk scheme to address this situation was that of British playwright and critic George Bernard Shaw. Like many other international commentators of the time, Shaw saw New Zealand as a kind of social laboratory in which the absence of class, an even spread of wealth, a gentle climate and ready access to open spaces were producing a fair and just society of fit and healthy individuals. While on a visit here in 1934 he argued that 'a little loss on milk does not matter. It is of enormous importance that all your children should have plenty of milk and that the next generation should be a generation reared from first-class children.'

Shaw was lauded during his month-long visit to New Zealand with crowds at his meetings hanging on his opinions and criticisms of everything from school milk to tourism; when in Rotorua he visited one of the local thermal areas and was so impressed with its fire and brimstone he likened it to 'Hell's Gate' - by which name it continues to be known today. The free school milk scheme eventually began

LEFT . . . the attraction of other dietary supplements.
 OPPOSITE Jaffas . . . not just for the eating. A scene from the annual Cadbury Jaffa Race in Dunedin.





We Are What We Eat

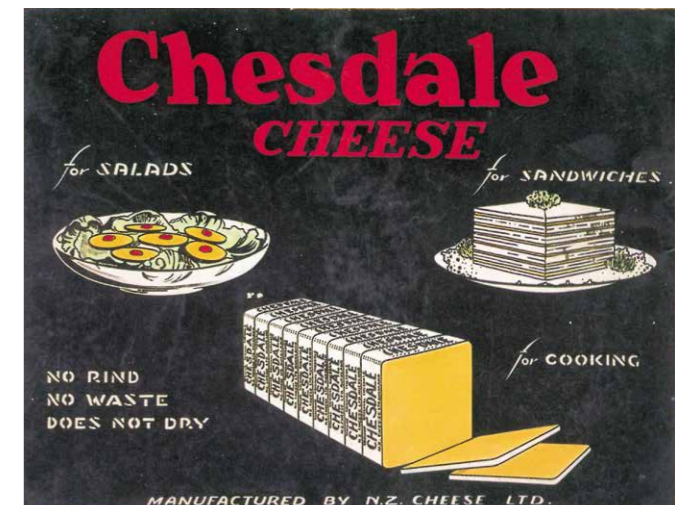
Popular culture is also shaped by what we eat, so it's little surprise then that, living in a country of milk and meat since the days of colonisation, our mealtime thoughts should start with meat pies, ice cream and cheese.

Chesdale cheese, smooth-textured processed cheese of smoky taste, dates back to the time when home refrigeration was non-existent and Chesdale had the virtue of surviving in the cupboard without the need to be kept cool. Ordinary cheese might sweat, become oily, dry out, crack, grow mould and start to smell once it had been cut, but not Chesdale. Originally produced as a block, its foil-wrapped triangles and individual slices were a staple of school lunches and picnics.

Promotion of Chesdale has for many years involved a couple of rural types, Ches and Dale, and also contributed a jingle that became part of the Kiwi repertoire, brought out when there'd been a few drinks and no one could remember the words to anything else:

OPPOSITE *Ches and Dale.*

*We are the boys from down on the farm
We really know our cheese
There's much better value in Chesdale,
it never fails to please
Chesdale slices thinly, never crumbles, there's no waste
And boy it's got a mighty taste,
Chesdale cheese - it's finest cheddar, made better!*

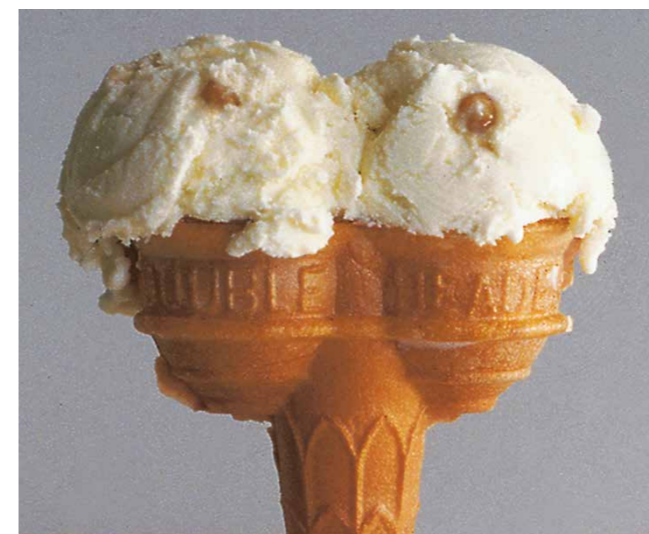




New Zealanders love their ice cream as well, and have established themselves at the top of the world rankings for ice cream eaters. The first such local confections were hand-churned and sold from handcarts. Later, when milk bars had come into being, ice cream was made and sold on the premises. If this ice cream had any kind of brand name at all, it tended to take the name of the milk bar in which it was made. Later, when ice cream became more of a manufacturing concern and was made in factories, many of those original names were carried over, among them Everest, Arctic, Egmont, Frosty Jack and Tip Top.

Tip Top, the local giant in ice cream, grew from such characteristic small beginnings. In the 1930s

the then manager of the Royal ice cream company in Dunedin and one of his customers decided they would go into business for themselves. While searching for a name for their new enterprise the two partners, seated in a restaurant, overheard a fellow diner use a then common expression - 'tip-top' - in his praise of the restaurant's service. The two partners had their name and now, armed with their own recipe and premises in Wellington, they began offering the public something new in the form of an ice cream shop in Manners Street selling solely ice creams and milkshakes - New Zealand's very first milk bar. By the end of the 1930s Tip Top milk bars had spread from Wellington to the lower half of the North Island, and to Nelson and Blenheim.



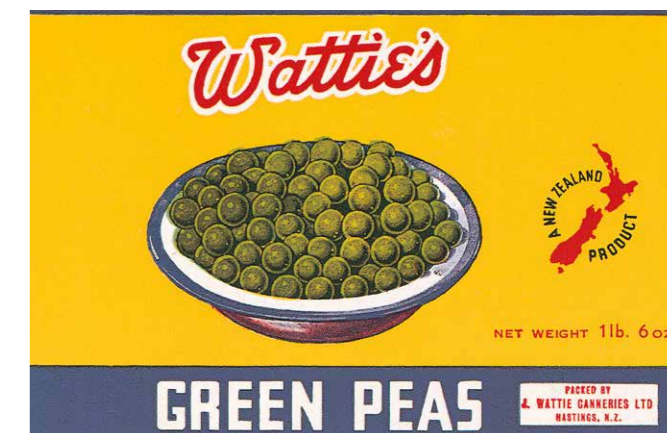
A favourite ice cream flavour with Kiwis is hokey-pokey, a blend of vanilla base and pieces of toffee, which Tip Top added to its range in the 1950s. While the idea of adding toffee to ice cream wasn't new - in the USA for instance, so-called 'candy' flavours were common at this time, and to this day there are ice creams similar to our hokey-pokey such as 'butter brickle' - what was unique was the distinctive taste given by the recipe used here for the toffee. This involved caramelising sugar and adding baking soda, resulting in hokey-pokey's familiar honeycomb structure. A patent for the recipe had been filed in the late 1890s and hokey-pokey had become a popular sweet in New Zealand long before it was added to ice cream.

Initially, Tip Top made their hokey-pokey toffee in large sheets which were then broken up, using hammers, into small pieces suitable for the ice cream blend. These would occasionally jam up the machinery however, and eventually the hokey-pokey

was made in the standardised nuggets seen today that suit modern high-volume production.

Ice cream improved the flavour of milkshakes as well, and these were a standard of dairies and takeaway places - many of them using the chrome and green milkshake machines made by US company Hamilton Beach. Today it's regrettably a case of the disappearing creaming soda and other flavoured milkshakes, as fewer businesses are prepared to give space to the cartons of bulk ice cream or to put time and effort into making up milkshakes when milk drinks can be stocked in chill cabinets.

'It must be Wattie's!' That line from the radio jingle, in the pre-television days when radio was king, helped Wattie's to become a household name, and the company, J. Wattie Canneries, grew into one of the country's largest commercial concerns. It was all down to James Wattie's vision of a New Zealand self-sufficient in canned fruit and vegetables, an ambition that had been spurred by seeing the fruit and vegetable bounty of his Hawke's Bay region literally rotting on the ground for want of a preserving facility.



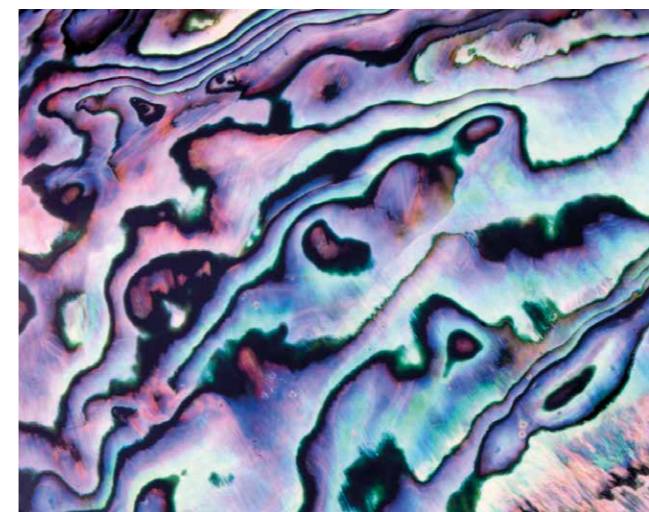


Pāua galore: the famous pāua-decorated living room of Myrtle and Fred Flutey.

The end of the calendar year in New Zealand meets the conclusion of the school and work year, adding extra frisson to Christmas preparations and summer holiday planning. After the forced march of a December trying to prepare for all of that, the country traditionally ground to a halt from Christmas through to the end of January as we all fled to the beach.

Given that the furthest you can ever be from the

sea in New Zealand is something like 130 kilometres (it is the residents of Garston in Southland who must travel furthest for a dip in the sea), and as the great majority of us live little more than 10 kilometres from the coast, it's only natural that the seaside assumes such a large role in our lives. There are thousands of kilometres of coastline available, providing a rich profusion of bays and excellent beaches. From our suburban homes we head east and



west to settle along the coast like so many migratory birds, making temporary homes in tents, caravans and baches. For a society already greatly egalitarian, the beach is a further levelling where labourers and business managers, farming folk and townies, the rich and the not-so-rich, blend together in a wonderful confusion of jandals, shorts and t-shirts, togs and hats: towelling, straw and baseball caps.

Once the motor car had opened up otherwise inaccessible parts of the coast to holiday-makers, Kiwis were able to build and enjoy that little slice of heaven called the bach (after 'bachelor'). The history of the bach is a rich tale of recycling and building in peculiar places. Many of the first baches were built from wood cast-offs, such as used car cases made from durable hardwoods like cedar. Old trams have

One of the best known and most evocative depictions of the pōhutukawa was by Swedish-born artist Edward Fristrom. His Pohutukawa, painted around 1905, shows a typical summer scene in New Zealand's North Island.

also been put to good use, as has the occasional cave. Classic construction materials included fibrolite and board-and-batten and, of course, corrugated iron.

Right up until the 1980s the humble bach continued to mushroom along the country's coastline. In the years since, however, the growing appeal of coastal living has seen the bach become a luxury, now increasingly unaffordable to the average Kiwi. At the same time, what was once a spartanish bolthole has been increasingly replaced by proper houses replete with the kinds of mod-cons we were previously happy to leave behind. Some baches may have bordered on the primitive but that was the point - and their charm.

The bach's original philosophy was simplicity, an eagerly anticipated contrast to the usual rules at home. The deadly metronome of working life was abandoned for the time being, replaced by holiday time. Meals were fairly informal and nobody got into too much trouble for bringing sand inside. There seemed little point in going to the effort of duplicating the cares of overly house-proud city



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