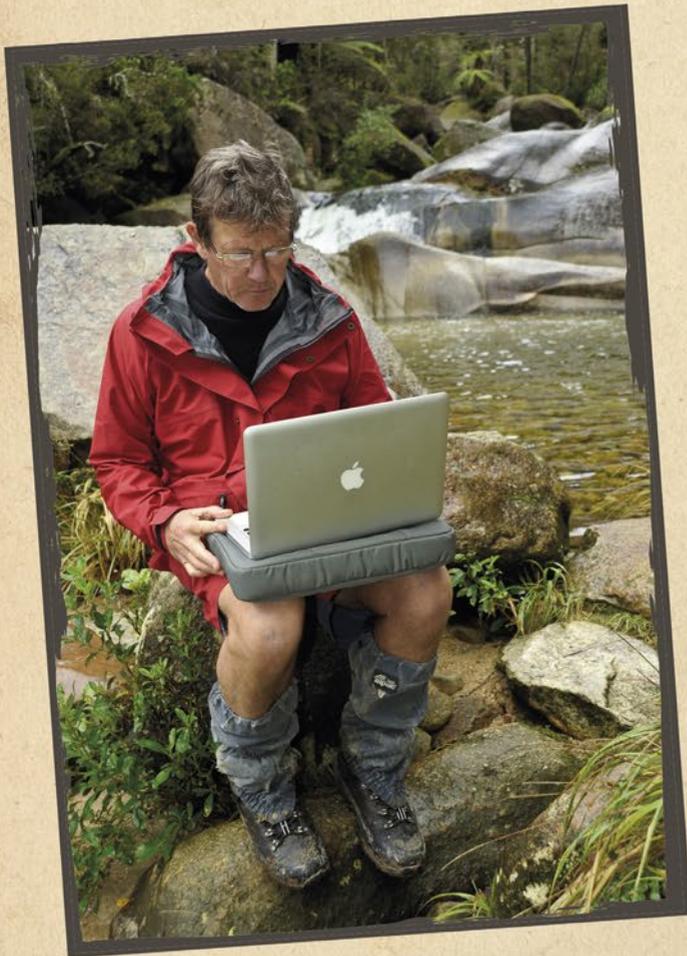


**A
WAY
WITH
WORDS**

**A MEMOIR OF WRITING
& PUBLISHING IN
NEW ZEALAND**

**CHRIS
MACLEAN**



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CHAPTER ONE

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PAST

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS IN NEW ZEALAND HOUSES

Oxford University Press, 1983

Jock and I began work on this, our first book, in the late 1970s. I can't recall if we had a clear purpose in mind at the outset but, after our first foray to photograph stained-glass windows in houses, we developed a successful methodology. During our initial research trip to Whanganui we found that interesting windows were easily spotted when driving at night. 'There's one!' Jock would say, and we would back up for a better look. If it proved to be more distinctive than the prevalent mass-produced catalogue windows of the 1920s and 1930s, we would note down the address and return to knock on the door the next day. In this way, we got to see several interesting examples. Perhaps the finest was Matai Awa, an early twentieth-century house on the edge of St John's Hill, where the wealthy lived looking out over the town. The originality of Matai Awa's sinuous Art Nouveau windows alone made the trip worthwhile, but we also found other excellent examples as we explored the countryside beyond Whanganui. At Oneida, near Fordell, we discovered outstanding early Victorian domestic glass with ecclesiastical overtones; at Bushy Park, to the north of Whanganui, impressive Edwardian glass graced what is now a Forest & Bird lodge, but had once been a magnificent rural homestead surrounded by bush.

Our travel expenses were partly met by a \$2,000 grant Jock arranged



The entrance window at
Bushy Park.

with Jim Traue, the head of the Alexander Turnbull Library. We also received excellent advice from one of his librarians, Walter Cook, whose encyclopedic knowledge of decorative styles was manifest in his collection of Art Nouveau items, one of the finest in New Zealand. Their support added credibility to our mission. We also used the grant to help with our photography. Then, photo-

graphing on slide film meant posting the exposed roll to Australia for processing. Several years later, it became possible to get this done locally, which avoided a two-week delay before we got to see the results of a trip. Evenings spent scrutinising the slides were enjoyable and entertaining, as we discussed both ideas about the stylistic and technical development of stained glass as well as the outline of our proposed book. Stained glass had been an artform since mediaeval times, and New Zealand's earliest colonial styles mirrored the Old World, but what had developed here in more recent times? Had indigenous stained glass evolved in New Zealand to reflect the cultural nationalism that characterised national art and literature from the 1950s? There was only one way to find out. So every month or two we journeyed to another part of New Zealand to search for more stained glass.

Back in Wellington, our research on stained glass also led to friendship of a different kind. One afternoon we knocked on the door of an old Kelburn mansion with promising windows. A young woman opened the door, explained that her flatmates were out, but that we were free to look around. As she showed us the house, I noticed both her enthusiasm for our project and her lively intelligence. When we

left, I quickly got rid of Jock, then returned to the Kelburn flat to ask her out. Much to my surprise, and the subsequent concern of some of her flatmates – ‘You don’t even know him! He could be a killer!’ – she accepted. Over a picnic at Makara, I soon learnt that Pauline Rodgers was completing her teaching diploma at training college after graduating with a degree in history and literature, and her conversation showed a love of language that I found most attractive. She was also keen on photography and tramping. This was the start of a relationship that would last for 24 years, give us two children and provide me with a platform for creativity, first in glass and later with words.



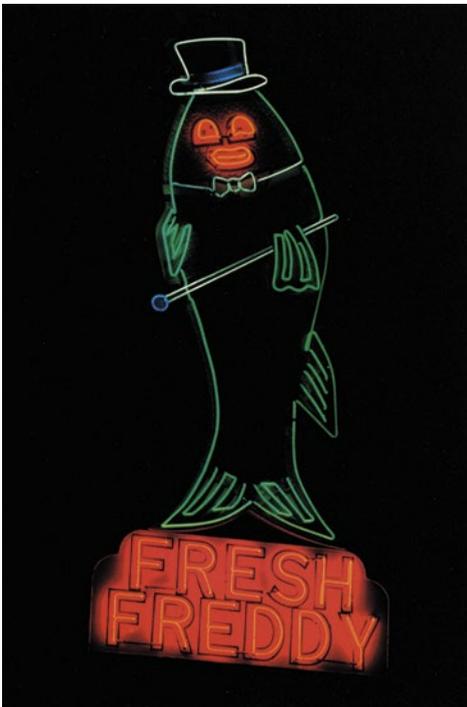
Pauline Rodgers framed in the remains of an abandoned dairy factory at Waihi Village, Tokaanu, c. 1984.



Meanwhile Jock and I continued to make trips to different areas of the country in search of stained glass. Although he was still teaching American history, this was soon eclipsed by Jock's interest in New Zealand's past and in 1984 he established the Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies at Victoria University. His interest matched my own. I had first explored New Zealand on family holidays, then Pip and I made a number of road trips searching out antique shops and ghost towns, two of her passions. These journeys had given me a familiarity with the country, but Jock's inquiring mind and great knowledge of New Zealand history made the towns and cities we visited come alive and brought a deeper understanding. Every day was full of humour and learning. We interspersed sessions of searching for stained-glass windows with body surfing, walks and, when time allowed, longer overnight tramping trips. We visited art galleries, battle sites, churches, cemeteries, marae and museums as well as stopping to look at many memorials and monuments. If ever there was a stimulating way to learn history, this was it.

LEFT Jock photographing the war memorial window in the Great Hall at the Arts Centre, Christchurch.

RIGHT Jock researching on the road.



In 1980, Michael Martin published a series of eight cards featuring my photographs. They included two neon signs Jock and I had come across while searching for stained glass. We found 'Fresh Freddy' on top of a Dunedin fish shop, and the neon motorbike in a shop window in Mount Eden, Auckland.

As I drove, Jock researched the territory ahead, checking maps and books, or arranging accommodation. We stayed in backcountry huts, motels, motor camp cabins or sometimes camped. At other times, we stayed with friends such as the Otago historian, Erik Olssen, whose extensive knowledge of that province greatly aided our research. We also visited contemporary glass artists such as James Walker and Holly Sanford in Auckland, as well as David Clegg in New Plymouth. Occasionally, we split up and stayed with separate friends, but most of the time we enjoyed the enforced intimacy of car travel – a test of any friendship.

Early on, Jock and I decided to ignore ecclesiastical windows, which often depend on painted scenes to depict biblical situations, in favour of domestic glass that was seldom painted, relying instead on skill with coloured glass and lead lines to achieve an artistic result. Furthermore, residential and domestic glass reflected the evolution of architectural and decorative styles in ways that church glass did not. It had changed with the times. Victorian austerity preceded the exuberant yet formal designs of the Edwardian era which, in turn, were eventually superseded by the simpler, more natural lines of the Art Nouveau movement. But then, with the advent of a more mechanistic age, came sharp-edged Art Deco designs devoid of colour. By the 1950s, even these had disappeared, with designs now sandblasted directly onto glass, culminating in the familiar standing stags on the front doors of suburban houses. For perhaps a generation, decorative domestic glass vanished until the art glass revival of the 1970s and 1980s spread from the United States, reintroducing glass art to people's homes.

When it came to writing the book, it seemed appropriate that Jock should have a greater role, given his experience both as a teacher, and as the author of a substantial thesis on the American philosopher John Dewey. Jock wrote the text, while I organised the images and provided some technical advice, and continued to make stained-glass windows. His senior role was also apparent when it came to finding a publisher; Jock led the way while I remained in the background. When a meeting was arranged with Bridget Williams of Oxford University Press, and conservation architect Chris Cochran, I did not attend.

At that meeting, Oxford accepted the book on stained glass for publication, although by the time it was produced several editors had come and gone.



Of the eight cards Michael produced, the one of the quaint Kaukapakapa Library, built in 1865, sold far more than the rest.

Wendy Harrex oversaw the initial conceptualisation of the book and made the crucial decision to allow full colour throughout. Jock and I had insufficient experience to understand just how lucky we were. Almost all books, bar a few at the top end of the art market, were black and white, with several colour sections, at best, which required readers to turn many pages to locate an image mentioned in the text. Wendy's full-colour decision allowed the seamless integration of text and pictures, which complemented each other perfectly. This was a successful combination I would aspire to achieve in all future books.

Jock blended reminiscences of our experiences on the road with descriptions of the stylistic development of glass design, which we had to work out for ourselves, as there was little literature on the subject. The few books available on stained glass were 'how-to' manuals, usually devoid of discourses on its historical evolution. We had found a few trade catalogues from glazing and home-decorating companies that supplied mass-produced windows in the first half of the twentieth century, but mostly it was Jock's research that underpinned the story. His most valuable sleuthing illuminated the remarkable windows of Dunedin artist, Robert Fraser, whose imaginative, almost disturbing, glasswork towered above everything else we found.

We chose a detail from one of Fraser's finest windows, a stairwell panel in an elegant Highgate home, for the cover, then sent a second-best slide of it, slightly out-of-focus in one corner, for the designer to use in a mock-up. This proved a mistake, as the best image was never substituted for the one in the design rough, but the slight imperfection was barely discernible even to those

who knew about it. Otherwise, when we received advance airmail copies of the book we were delighted with the way our photographs came to life on high-quality paper.

Good book design is crucial, especially if it is the unobtrusive servant of the story, and much of *In the Light of the Past's* visual appeal could be attributed to the astute eye of its designer, Sandra Morris. She gave each illustration gener-

ous space in an uncluttered format, complemented by a simple font for the text and the limited use of capitals in headings. The overall informality and clarity of her design made the book attractive and accessible.

But we had a long wait to see the bulk of the books. Originally scheduled for publication in October 1983, to catch the Christmas market, *In the Light of the Past* became a hostage to militant unionism as a succession of shipping and wharf strikes delayed its arrival. Finally, in desperation, the publisher obtained a few cartons by airmail from the printer in Hong Kong and a launch was arranged for 13 December. All prospects of pre-Christmas bookshop sales had gone, but at least we would be able to enjoy the function.

We launched it at Carrigafoyle, an elegant mansion on The Terrace in Wellington, which featured in the book as an excellent example of colourful Edwardian stained glass. But the occasion turned out to be a strange one. Carrigafoyle's new owner, the property developer and city councillor Rex Nicholls, had bought the house because of its outstanding stained glass. At the time, the Wellington City Council was debating whether to hold the Miss World beauty pageant in Wellington, and Rex supported the proposal. The book launch had been arranged before the controversy and Jock and I,

perhaps naively, never considered the two might become linked. We did not endorse Rex's view, but we were caught off guard. Guests arriving for the launch had to cross a feminist picket line. For Jock's wife Phillida, herself a prominent feminist, this was an impossible situation: she spent part of her time inside Carrigafoyle and part outside with the protesters on the pavement. Absorbed in the party, I was barely aware of the picket but for Jock the situation



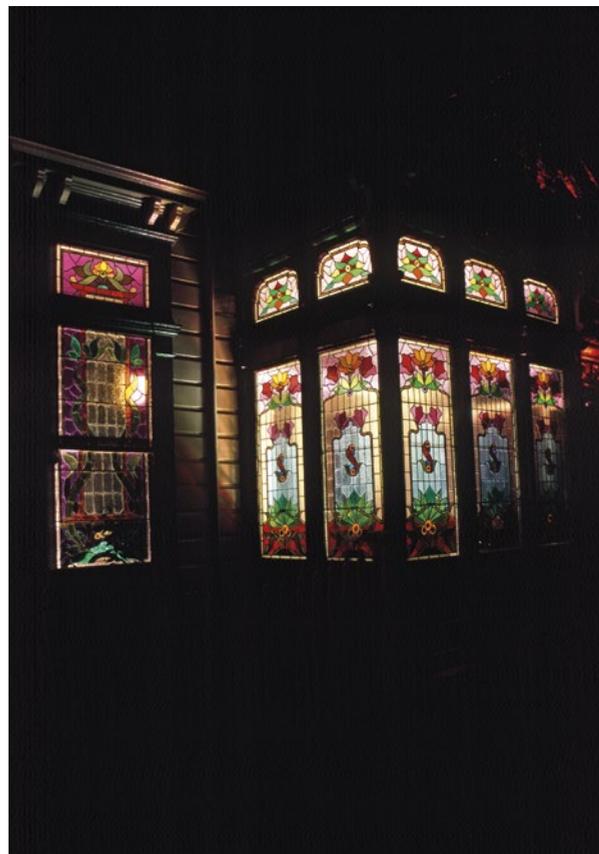
The Robert Fraser stairwell window, c. 1900, in Dunedin.

was extremely stressful. James Mack, director of the Dowse Art Gallery and an articulate advocate of craft as art, launched the book. It was dedicated to our mothers, Joan Maclean and Pauline Phillips, both of whom attended.

Review copies sent to magazines and newspapers produced glowing responses. The book's publication coincided with another book about an equally unusual subject, corrugated iron buildings in New Zealand, leading to them often being reviewed together. We keenly anticipated a review in the influential pages of the *New Zealand Listener*, which in the 1980s provided a rare cultural and intellectual forum. But when it appeared the content and tone surprised us. The reviewer, Fiona Ciaran of Christchurch, had become known to us after the publication of an article I had written about our book for *Craft New Zealand*, which had prompted several letters from some of Fiona's students criticising my failure to acknowledge her work. From these, we learnt that she taught a course on stained glass, with an emphasis on the ecclesiastical, and regarded the subject as her own. Our failure to acknowledge this had damaging consequences. Her review was a carefully constructed demolition job. After faintly praising *In the Light of the Past*, she detailed every flaw she could find, right down to the slightly out-of-focus corner of the cover image.

Since this was our first book we were, understandably, sensitive. We complained to the *Listener's* literary editor, Andrew Mason, explaining that our book focused on residential windows while Fiona's expertise lay in church glass, but he remained unperturbed: 'I like to see blood on the floor.' But others shared our sense of injustice, including James Mack, who wrote a letter to the *Listener* criticising Fiona's review. Several similar letters from others also appeared. Although the controversy surprised and hurt us, it also produced excellent ongoing promotion for the book.

The truth soon emerged. Fiona herself was writing a book about stained glass in New Zealand and clearly we had beaten her to it. This must have been an unsettling experience. Fifteen years later, when her book *Stained Glass Windows of Canterbury, New Zealand*, finally appeared, it did not resemble ours in any way. Her exhaustive examination of stained glass in a single province, with an emphasis on the ecclesiastical, traversed entirely different territory.



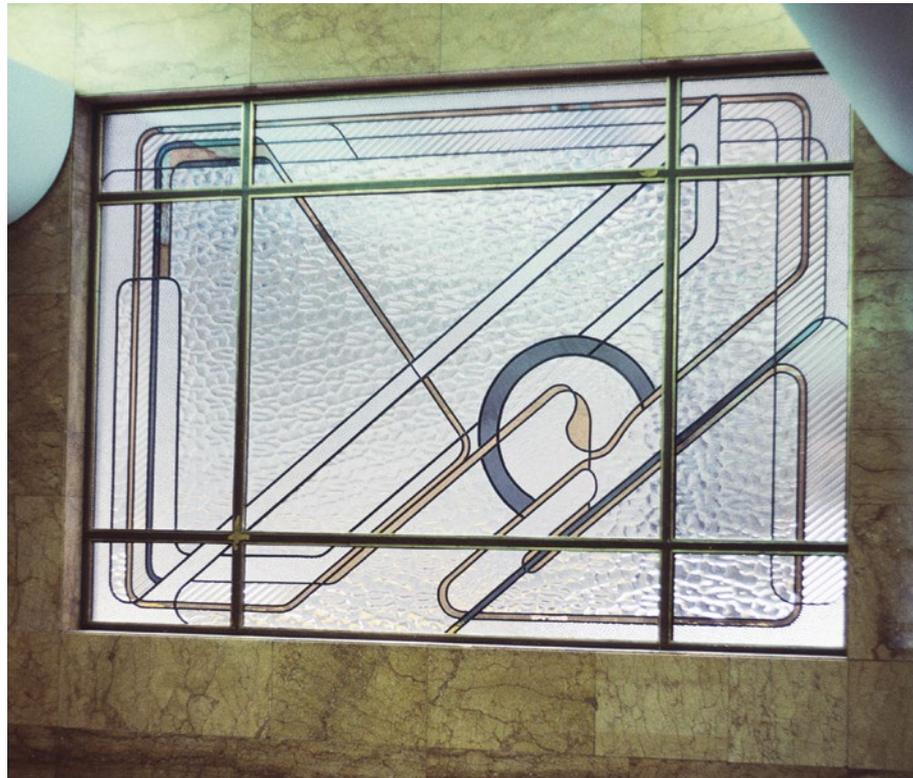
Carrigafoyle, Wellington.

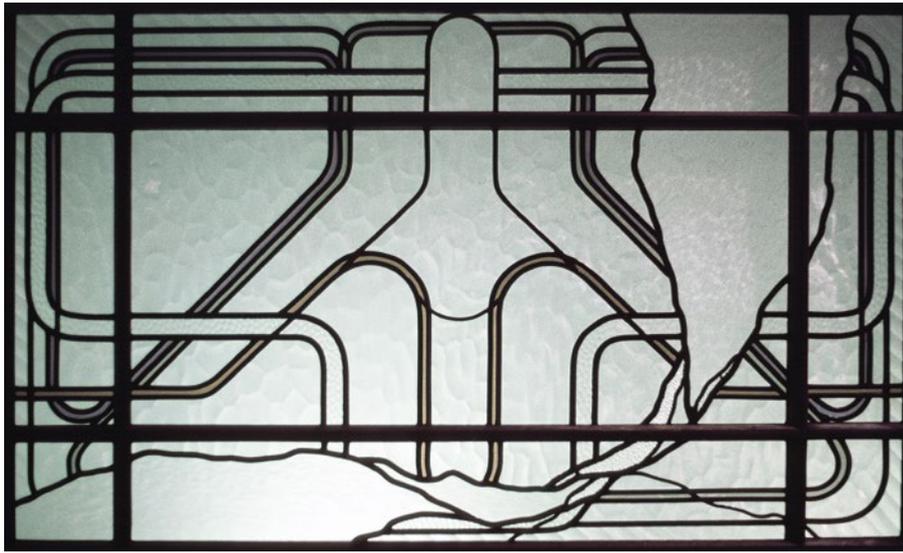
Once bulk stock of *In the Light of the Past* eventually arrived in New Zealand after Christmas, it sold well. Local booksellers provided support and Unity Books invited us to create a window display for their small shop in Willis Street. The following year, it was shortlisted for the book production section of the New Zealand Book Awards. The judges regarded the absence of an index as a serious fault in a book that was ‘a forerunner in its field [and] likely to remain the standard text for a long time’. They felt, however, that the general high standard of the design put *In the Light of the Past* ‘among the better productions of the year’.¹⁰ By 1985, only 700 copies of the original 3000 print run remained unsold. As Oxford University Press planned to withdraw from New Zealand, the remaining stock was offered to us at \$2 a copy, so we bought 100 copies each. The rest were remaindered through London Bookshops. Their stock, discounted from \$49.95 to \$7.99, soon sold, leaving Jock and me as the sole suppliers of a title that became sought after by stained-glass practitioners.

I thought this would be my only book. Jock had already begun work on a book about Kiwi male culture, *A Man’s Coun-*



RIGHT The foyer window of the Departmental Building (pictured above).





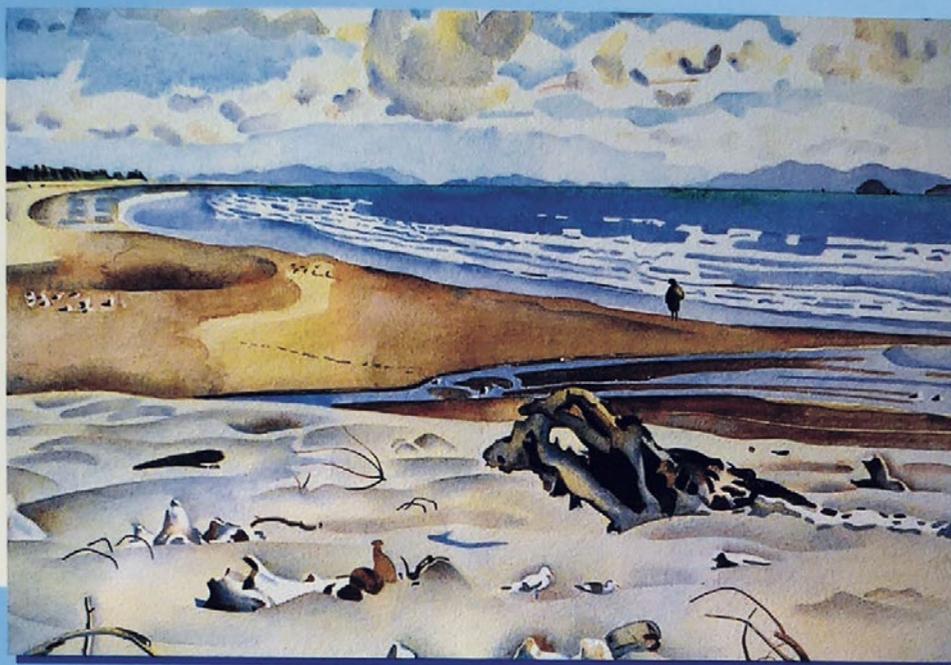
In 1984, I entered this autonomous panel in the Phillips Glass Awards. When it did not sell, I realised, as artists have for centuries, that large fragile artworks are difficult to store. Commissioned work, by contrast, offered no such problem – and certainty of payment.

try?, but at the age of 30 I had no other literary aspirations and saw my future as a glass artist. In this I had been encouraged by winning a design competition earlier in 1983 for a large entrance panel to the Departmental Building in Wellington's Stout Street. The other New Zealand glass artists asked to submit designs all produced proposals that reflected their personal preoccupations, but with my understanding of the history of glass styles I submitted a design sympathetic to the building's distinctive Art Deco style. It was an important commission to win, not only for the confidence boost but also for the money involved – much more than the modest margin on most domestic windows. Such public commissions, though infrequent, encouraged my thoughts toward a future in glass.

Yet I could not have been more mistaken. Despite my stained glasswork, the next few years would increasingly be devoted to making books, which would soon become my passion. Quite by accident, this occurred just when book production and publishing were on the cusp of significant change as faster and more certain computer-to-plate printing began to replace traditional typesetting techniques and often unreliable colour reproduction. And a rather different sort of book, a local history, would give me the opportunity to take advantage of this revolution.

Waikanae

past & present



Chris and Joan Maclean

CHAPTER TWO

WAIKANAE

PAST & PRESENT

The Whitcombe Press, 1988

In 1839 the Battle of Kūititanga, one of the most remarkable encounters in the history of the Kāpiti Coast, occurred when Ngāti Raukawa from Ōtaki attacked Te Āti Awa, in their three pā at the Waikanae Estuary. Te Āti Awa repulsed the dawn raid, driving Ngāti Raukawa back up the beach. Many were forced into the soft sand at the foot of the dunes, where they were caught and killed. Meanwhile, in a waka beyond the breaking waves, an anxious Te Rauparaha watched the battle between Ngāti Toa's allies. But the brutal encounter also had implications beyond a Māori world riven by intertribal rivalries. Further offshore, in the lee of Kāpiti Island, the New Zealand Company's vessel, the *Tory*, lay at anchor, having recently arrived from England to buy land, lots of land, for the settlers already on their way in a fleet of the company's ships.



Charles Heaphy's watercolour of a chief lying in state following the Battle of Kūititanga.

The next day, the surveyor Charles Heaphy and the scientist Ernst Dieffenbach, with others from the *Tory*, went ashore to help the wounded. Heaphy sketched a slain chief lying in state, while Dieffenbach wrote the following description of the main Te Āti Awa pā:

All the people of the village were assembled, and though grief was expressed in every face, they received us with the greatest kindness and attention and we were obliged to shake hands with everybody. They regarded us as friends and allies for we had brought with us from Te-awa-iti [Te Awaiti] some of their relations, and when they saw the medical men of our party giving assistance to the wounded, their confidence and gratitude were unbounded.

Some of the women gave themselves up to violent expressions of grief, cutting their faces, arms and legs with broken muscle [sic] shells, and inflicting deep gashes from which the blood flowed profusely.¹¹

More than 130 years later, my mother's contemplation of this battle and its aftermath prompted our book on Waikanae. Joan and Joe had moved to Waikanae, north of Wellington, in 1974 when I was 21, buying a beachfront section there. Then it was a modest village clustered around the main road, 6 kilometres inland from a smaller, sleepy seaside settlement. During the summer holidays the latter briefly became a bustling resort; for the rest of the year Waikanae was merely a place to drive through on the way to somewhere else, unless you chose to retire there. Popular with the elderly, the Kāpiti Coast became known as 'God's waiting room'.



Joan with Chris and Sarah,
Karori West, c. 1953.

My father had recently retired, after almost 30 years with Shell Oil Company, which he had joined soon after the Second World War. My mother had held high hopes he might become a university lecturer, building on his two degrees in English literature, one from Canterbury College and one from Cambridge, but the austerity of the late 1940s, with wartime rationing persisting well into peacetime, encouraged him to seek the security of a corporate role.

Joan regretted this, but Joe never did. His own mother died when he was three and security became an enduring priority, especially after his experience of pacifism. Joe gave Shell lasting loyalty, at times placing its needs above those of his family – or so it seemed to Joan, isolated with three small children in the suburb of Karori West. Later, feminists such as Marilyn French in *The Women's Room* would expose the unrelenting stress on women living in



LEFT 111 Field Way, Waikanae Beach in 1975. The house was designed by Christopher Johns.

BELOW Joe, Joan and Chris at Waikanae, 1988.

such situations but, at the time, New Zealanders, like their counterparts in other western countries, thought that they were building the Ideal Society. Dads went to work while mums stayed home to raise the kids, their lives supposedly relieved of traditional drudgery by an array of new labour-saving appliances: washing machines, dryers, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and cars. Not until the late 1960s did it become clear that these rigid gender roles were a poor prescription for happy families. My parents' shift to Waikanae offered an opportunity for a new life. With their three children now adults, they first enjoyed an extensive overseas trip, then planned and built a new home on Field Way behind the dunes at Waikanae Beach.

On my return from overseas in 1976, I enjoyed staying with my parents at Waikanae. This opened my eyes to new landscapes of beach, river and the hills that rise behind the town. Here I found I could re-connect with my parents who had become almost strangers to me during my boarding school years. This new closeness was aided by a mutual interest in history which Joan, in particular, found fascinating. Earlier, Joan had studied New Zealand history part time at Victoria University and this interest continued at Waikanae, where she soon read all the



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