

**NON-FICTION**

# Myth busting

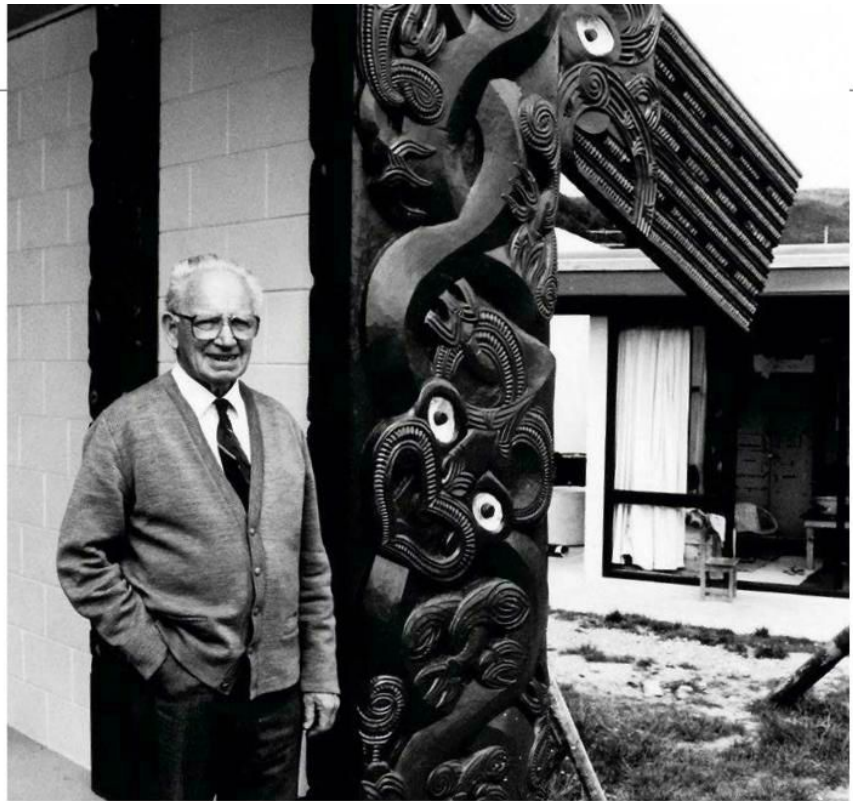
The first detailed study of our major cities' evolution is a fascinating read.

by **CHRIS MOORE**

**B**en Schrader's **THE BIG SMOKE: NEW ZEALAND CITIES 1840-1920** (Bridget Williams Books, \$59.99) offers some trenchant observations about a long-standing perception of European New Zealanders as being essentially a rural people. A myth, Schrader suggests. It's our cities that continue to mould our society alongside its attitudes and popular culture. But it's still surprising to discover that since the early 20th century, most New Zealanders have lived in cities – and equally surprising that this book is arguably the first detailed study of our major urban centres' evolution.

Schrader's fascination with their built and human geography shines through the pages of a lively, absorbing book that, although written from an expert's perspective, will engage most readers. The illustrations are especially absorbing, underpinning the author's view of our cities as dynamic, restless entities that have constantly attracted us from their beginning and that will continue to have a profound effect on our lives. A fascinating, important book.

Literature is littered with peripatetic twosomes – consider Johnson and Boswell, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and Jack Kerouac on the road with his fictional buddy Dean Moriarty. Mike Crean and Dave Hallett are New Zealand travellers tapping into the genre. In **TALES FROM THE BACKROADS: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SOUTH ISLAND'S HEARTLAND** (Sandfly Publishing, \$49.95), they explore the South Island's nooks and crannies with pen and



Jock McEwen at Orongomai Marae with the amo he carved as part of the Whare Whakairo.

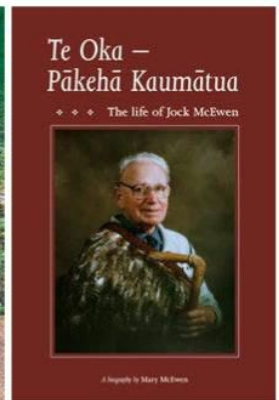
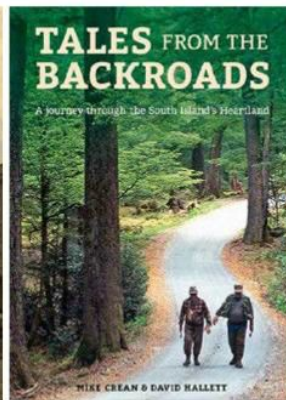
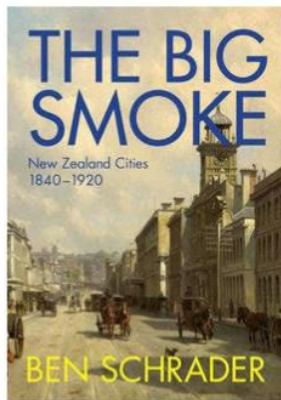
camera in hand – and a collective eye for its human face.

The book began with a series of Crean's popular columns in the *Press*. A decade of travel and writing is now compiled into a rich anthology filled with history, events, places and, above all, people.

Crean adroitly captures the essence of his encounters in a book imbued with charm and an engaging curiosity. The sad and unexpected death of photographer Dave Hallett strikes a poignant chord. His images are an enduring memorial to someone who helped make travelling an art.

Jock McEwen (1915-2010) was a public servant in the truest and best sense of the expression. Throughout his long life, the historian, diplomat, linguist,

administrator and master carver worked to bridge the divide between the Maori and Pakeha worlds. His daughter-in-law, Mary McEwen, has now written a long-overdue biography of the man and his lifelong commitment to building an enduring understanding of what it means to be a New Zealander. **TE OKA – PAKEHA KAUMĀTUA: THE LIFE OF JOCK MCEWEN** (Potton & Burton, \$49.99) reveals how his personal roots shaped his attitudes and work both as a public servant and someone who worked to expand and share his fascination and deep knowledge of tikanga Maori and te reo. Mary McEwen draws a vivid portrait of an enduring New Zealand personality and man of great mana. ■



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