

# Book Reviews

## **Pay Dirt: 'The Westland Goldfields' from the Diary of William Smart**

HILARY LOW

Canterbury University Press, 2016

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RRP \$39.99

Containing the edited transcript of William Smart's Diary and his other writings, *Pay Dirt: The Westland Goldfields' from The Diary Of William Smart* documents his gold prospecting adventures and the history of the Westland goldfields. Low places these writings within the historical context of gold discovery in New Zealand and provides a brief biography of Smart, who died in 1900. Smart prospected for gold, motivated by rewards offered by the Canterbury Provincial Government for finding a payable gold field on the West Coast. The reward was actually given to another prospector, but Low makes a convincing case that this should have gone to Smart and fellow prospector, Michael French.

The transcripts record his prospecting at Greenstone Creek, and his early interactions with Māori. They are illustrated with Smart's drawings of the landscapes and people he encountered. All 18 of the illustrations in the original Diary are reproduced in this book.

*Pay Dirt* is an important addition to the history of gold mining in Canterbury and Westland. Low's publication is especially valuable as William Smart's memoir exists only on microfilm at the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.

Low writes: p. 135 – "Smart's writing reveals many of his admirable qualities, including that he was energetic, hard-working and versatile. This small, remote colony was a place where a restless young man could reinvent himself and forge a number of careers out of very little. Smart certainly tried many different roles: builder, architect, sheep farmer, soldier, racehorse owner and breeder, prospector and miner, explorer, storekeeper, amateur medic, gold buyer, entrepreneur, company director, geologist, mine manager, writer and artist.

"But as we have seen, he had his frailties. After the freedom and success he had enjoyed on the West Coast, the more formal regulated society of Victorian Christchurch seemed not to suit him. Many of his business ventures ended in failure. And although he had suffered at the hands of a fraudster, some of own dealings came very close to being

fraudulent.”

*Pay Dirt* is recommended for any heritage institution with collections relating to gold mining in the Canterbury and Westland provinces. It would also be useful for anyone studying Māori history, particularly 19th Century interactions with Europeans. The book is well indexed and referenced, using both published and archival sources. Many of Smart’s writings and illustrations could be added to projects like the Ngai Tahu Mapping Project or be included in exhibitions.

*Vivienne Cuff*