NZMS 260 and 262, Our Metric Topographical Heritage

Edited by Graeme Jupp, New Zealand Cartographic Society, 2011. Softback, 99 pages, $25 plus $2.50 postage. Available through Graeme Jupp (email: gjupp@linz.govt.nz). Reviewed by Shaun Barnett (in the Federated Mountain Clubs *Bulletin*, June 2011, www.fmc.org.nz).

For many trampers, maps are sources of inspiration and daydreaming. As a high-school student just beginning my tramping career, I remember much distraction from my exam preparations by gazing at NZMS 260 series sheet U20, Kaweka. To me, the sheet was a work of art, beautifully rendering in exquisite detail the contours of the land, the boundary between the bush-edge and the tussock; showing as neat dots a fall of scree, blue lines the course of a stream, black dashes the path of a track, and small squares the location of a hut.

When you know how to read them, these maps provide a source of endless information for trip planning. Some trampers collect great libraries of maps, recording their adventures using the ubiquitous red pen. I don't have a complete library of NZMS 260 maps, but I have most of the ones that cover back-country areas, and have kept even a smattering of the old inch-to-the-mile series (NZMS 1, scale 1:63,360) that preceded them. When I started seriously tramping in 1985, only the mountains of Te Urewera National Park had not yet been converted to metric in the North Island, although many more awaited conversion in the South Island. Indeed, South Island trampers of a certain vintage still refer to ascents in feet rather than metres, a sign of how much influence maps have exerted on their tramping life.

When the country converted to metric in 1969, large parts of the Southern Alps remained unmapped, and so the Lands and Survey made a decision to press on with its NZMS 1 series until they completed the task in 1976. Concurrently, in the early 1970s work began on the new metric 260 series . This was finally completed in July 1997.

The introduction notes that the 260 series came about during a ‘Golden Age of New Zealand cartography’, when ‘great technical change and graphic innovation’ combined. The quality of information on the 260 series earned the respect of trampers, so it is perhaps no surprise to learn that one of their chief architects, Bill Drake, was a tramper and mountaineer himself Drake oversaw production of the maps for Lands and Survey, and then DOSLI, between 1970 and 1992, and died just recently.

Now that the NZMS 260 series has itself been replaced by the Topo 50 series (in September 2009), on a different map projection, it is timely that this book appears. Edited by Graeme Jupp, and published by the New Zealand Cartographic Society, the informative book records the development of the now-classic NZMS 260 1:50 000 topographic series.

As you would expect from cartographers, the book, although small, is very tidily presented, and with good production qualities. The first 40 pages concern themselves with the history of the maps, while the remainder of the book provides
a
definitive list of all the 260 series, with notes on dates, revisions and reprints. Only 150 copies of the book have been printed, so map enthusiasts, get in quick to secure your
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