

Dear Oliver

Uncovering a Pākehā history

PETER WELLS



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A FRESH WAY TO LOOK AT NEW ZEALAND'S HISTORY

When writer and historian Peter Wells found a cache of family letters amongst his elderly mother's effects, he realised that he had the means of retracing the history of a not-untypical family swept out to New Zealand during the great nineteenth-century human diaspora from Britain.

His family experienced the war against Te Kooti, the Boer War, the Napier earthquake of 1931 and the Depression. They rose from servant status to the comforts of the middle class. There was army desertion, suicide, adultery, AIDS, secrets and lies. There was also success, prosperity and social status.

In digging deep into their stories, examining letters from the past and writing a letter to the future, Peter Wells constructs a novel and striking way to view the history of Pākehā New Zealanders.

'[Dear Oliver] is immersive and it's riveting and the stories are incredible ... It's going to be seen as one of the big perennial New Zealand memoir-biographies. And it's going to last ... This is going to stick.' — Tilly Lloyd, *Unity Books*

'Dear Oliver is an important, meticulously researched book that will resonate with readers on many levels. It certainly brought a few tears of recognition to my eyes.' — Linda Herrick, *NZ Listener*

LONGLISTED FOR THE 2019 OCKHAM NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Wells is a writer of fiction and nonfiction, and a writer/director in film. His fiction looks at a world of secrets, identity, subterfuge and illusion, frequently using the lens of a gay narrator. His first book, *Dangerous Desires*, won the Reed Fiction Award, the NZ Book Award, and PEN Best New Book in Prose in 1992. His memoir *The Long Loop Home* won the 2002 Montana NZ Book Award for Biography, and he has won many awards for his work as a film director. He is co-founder of the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival. In 2006, Wells was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to literature and film. His most recent histories examined William Colenso, a resident of Napier, and Kereopa Te Rau, the Pai Mārire follower who was hanged in Napier for murdering Reverend Carl Völkner. *Dear Oliver* brings to an end this Napier trilogy.

SALES POINTS

- One of New Zealand's most distinguished writers at his lyrical best
- Wells's deep reach into his family's history stands for the universal Pākehā experience
- Beautifully designed in a winning package

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