

## **W.H. Oliver prize 2025**

The judges were Barbara Brookes and Buddy Mikaere.

### **Winner**

Jared Davidson, *Blood and Dirt: Prison Labour and the Making of New Zealand*, Bridget Williams Books, 2023

This book raises a number of societal spectres from our past at a time when communities all over the country are grappling with vital infrastructure failure and costs through decades of underinvestment. Davidson underscores contemporary issues such as “crimmigration” – the controversial section 501 deportation of criminals from Australia to New Zealand - and the perception by some that punishment in this country is perceived as too soft. Davidson’s book comes as an almost shocking reminder of how the administration of justice and punishment used to be and offers to the thoughtful, a startling comparison between the administration of justice then and now.

### **Shortlisted**

Bain Attwood, *‘A Bloody Difficult Subject’: Ruth Ross, te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Making of History*, Auckland University Press, 2023

In this close examination of the discipline of history as practised in New Zealand, Bain Atwood focuses on historian Ruth Ross and her pivotal 1972 article about te Tiriti in the New Zealand Journal of History. This unusual blend of biography and intellectual history reveals much about the awakening of academic historians to a past which has been, and continues to be, much contested.

Jeffrey Sissons, *Forgotten Prophet: Tamati Te Ito and His Kaingārara Movement*, BWB 2023

*Forgotten Prophet* charts the rise of independent Maori religious thought and more importantly its role as a vital underpinning of Maori resistance to the colonial invasion and its overwhelmingly superiority in arms. Faced with military muscle they could not match, those invaded turned to the supernatural for relief. Tamati Te Ito’s contemporary, Te Ua Haumene, and the Pai Marire movement for example believed that the Archangel Gabriel and flights of angels would join Maori to drive the invading Pakeha into the sea. Te Ito and his follower had a more pragmatic response and took a leading role in the Taranaki defence of their lands, and even further afield, as far as Te Wai Pounamu. Diligent research and well worth the effort.