

**THE DEATH OF JOHN DOBREE PASCOE
(1908-1972)**

Chief Archivist, National Archives of New Zealand

The sudden death on 20th October, 1972, of Mr. J. D. Pascoe, New Zealand's Chief Archivist, is a great loss to many.

A wiry, out-of-doors man, not at all academic looking and more at home in informal clothes than business attire, he was a complete contrast to the traditional view of an archivist. Perhaps he was best known as a mountaineer but in actual fact he had a wide range of interests and blended the man of action with the thinker interested in things cultural. John Pascoe was not a formally trained archivist. As an archivist, however, he should not be underestimated. He knew how to make the best use of his wide experience. He started his career as a law clerk and then, in 1937, he joined the Department of Internal Affairs. He served continuously with that department until his death, first on the staff of the Historical Branch, and then, in turn as Illustrations Editor for the war history publications, Secretary of the Historic Places Trust, Controller of Wildlife, Legal Officer and finally, from 1963, as Chief Archivist. In his spare time Mr. Pascoe continued to make notable mountaineering expeditions in New Zealand and wrote or edited at least 16 books. It is to be regretted that he did not live to carry out the projects he had planned for his retirement. I believe he would have produced some of his best work in the literary field then.

As Chief Archivist, John Pascoe was a most effective administrator and a remarkably efficient, methodical person. I first realised something of this when, many years ago, I worked with him in the War History Branch and he took the time to explain to me the organisation of the photo collection – a most impressive system he had evolved. This illustrates another facet of his character – a kind generosity and a readiness to help and encourage others.

Life was never dull with John Pascoe at the head of the Archives team. He was a lively personality who was so interested in all his staff and supported everyone so loyally that all responded with affection. He was a man of honest integrity in the widest sense – a fine example for all, whether aspiring mountaineer, photographer, writer or archivist.

Judith Hornabrook