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## **+ABOUT US**

*ENNZ* provides a forum for debate on environmental topics through the acceptance of peer reviewed and non peer reviewed articles, as well as book and exhibition reviews and postings on upcoming events, including conferences and seminars.

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# Contents

i-iv	<b>TITLE &amp; PUBLICATION DETAILS</b>
v	<b>EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>1 - 14</b>	<b>REVIEW ARTICLE:</b> WALTER COOK ON JANET WAYMARK, <i>THOMAS MAWSON: LIFE, GARDENS AND LANDSCAPES</i>
<b>15-19</b>	<b>BOOK REVIEW:</b> PAUL STAR ON JOHN ANDREWS, <i>NO OTHER HOME THAN THIS: A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN NEW ZEALANDERS</i>
<b>20-22</b>	<b>BOOK REVIEW:</b> JAMES BEATTIE ON CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTONE, <i>THE PAINTED GARDEN IN NEW ZEALAND ART</i>
<b>23-26</b>	<b>GARDEN REVIEW:</b> PETER SERGEL & GEOFF DOUBE, 'TE PARAPARA GARDEN' AND 'THE INDIAN CHAR BAGH GARDEN'
<b>27-31</b>	<b>WEBSITE REVIEW:</b> CATHERINE KNIGHT, 'EXPLORING NEW ZEALAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY ONLINE'

## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

JAMES BEATTIE

I have just dug over the vegetable garden for the first time since Winter's arrival. Abundant crops of lemons and mandarins ripen nicely on our citrus trees. The weather, although frosty, has been bright and clear. And I am eyeing up our hedge for cutting. With my thoughts at last turning to the garden again, it is entirely appropriate, I think, that this year's issue begins with a review article by Walter Cook of Janet Waymark's book on the British garden designer and town planner, Thomas Mawson. Mawson was responsible for many designs throughout Britain, Europe and Canada and incidentally, had a New Zealand link, one of his sons, John (1886-1966) having shifted to New Zealand in 1928 to become Director of Town Planning.<sup>1</sup>

Two other book reviews appear in this issue: Paul Star considers John Andrews' new book, *No Other Home Than This: A History of European New Zealanders*, an environmental history of Pākehā relationship with Aotearoa that begins deep in pre-history and moves to the present. I review Christopher Johnstone's sumptuous new book on the presentation of the New Zealand garden in art.

The first of a new section appears in this issue too: an introduction to a garden or discussion of a resource pertinent to New Zealand nature. Geoff Doube and Peter Sergel introduce readers to two landscape designs in Hamilton Gardens. Catherine Knight overviews an exciting new development in environmental history in New Zealand: [envirohistory NZ](#), a website exploring New Zealand's environmental history.

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Miller, 'A Prophet in a Barren Land: the New Zealand Career of J.W. Mawson', in *The 21st Century City: Past/Present/Future, Proceedings of Seventh Australasian Urban History/Planning History Conference* (Geelong: Deakin University, 2004), 258-271.



**REVIEW ARTICLE:**

**JANET WAYMARK, *THOMAS MAWSON: LIFE, GARDENS AND LANDSCAPES*,  
FRANCES LINCOLN, LONDON, 2009, PP.240, ISBN-13: 978 0 7112  
2595 4 (HBK.).**

**WALTER COOK**

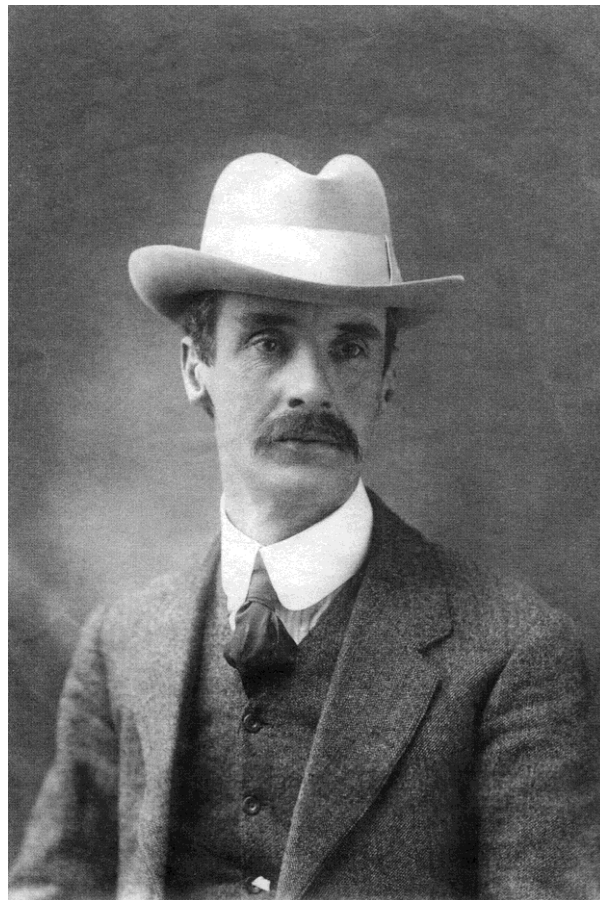


Figure 1: Thomas Mawson in early maturity.

From: Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 6.

Janet Waymark's account of Thomas Mawson's life and work includes copious descriptions and analyses of the gardens, parks, and towns he designed, well supported by plans and photographs. Mawson (Figure 1) was the first English garden designer to call himself "landscape architect," and as a second string to his business he took up the emerging profession of town planning. In

both garden design and town planning he gained a national and international reputation.

### **Thomas Mawson's early life**

Janet Waymark's introduction deals with Mawson's early life and the state of Britain at the time that he established his nursery business at Windermere in the Lake District in 1885. It is very much a rags to riches story typical of the Victorian period. The lives of architect and garden designer Joseph Paxton and novelist Charles Dickens are obvious examples that spring to mind. So also is the life of one of Mawson's wealthiest clients and patrons, Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish born, American iron and steel millionaire for whom Scotland remained a second home.

Mawson's father, John, died in 1877 and two years later in 1879, at the age of 16, like Dick Whittington, the largely self-educated Mawson was forced to leave home and seek in London, not only his fortune, but that of two brothers, two sisters, and a mother. This strong sense of family responsibility was combined with ambition, a liberal, protestant work ethic, and that great Victorian virtue of self-help. Family was important to Mawson throughout his professional life, and his business was very much a family affair that included brothers, sons, and at times members of his extended family. Between 1879 and 1885 he gained positions with several commercial nurseries in London and Somerset, and through this work acquired a training in horticulture, a knowledge of plants and plantsmanship, and some of the skills required in running a business.

It was during his time in London that Mawson met Anna Prentice, a trained nurse and the daughter of a doctor. They married in 1884 with the security that Mawson had been given a partnership with a firm that promised him the opportunity to train as a landscape designer. In the event the offer of a partnership fell through, and instead, he found land in the Lake District, and with the help of his brothers established a nursery, Mawson Brothers (later Lakeland Nurseries), from which he hoped to establish a landscaping business of his own.

### **Mawson the garden designer**

The world which Mawson hoped to break into as a garden designer with no qualifications other than those of a gardener and nurseryman, was one ruled by rigid social hierarchy. The occupation of gardener was at the very bottom of the pile. This had not always been the case, and in the mid-Victorian period gardeners could become famous arbiters of taste, creating gardens, writing books, and sometimes overriding the wishes of their employers. But as the late-Victorian class system became more rigid and stratified, the gardener was relegated to the role of a servant, fit only to take instruction from the master, the owner of the estate. In the words of historian Brent Elliott, 'the Victorian myth of the heroic gardener was replaced by the myth of the amateur plantsman, of aristocratic, or at least wealthy extraction, whose garden was informed by his own artistic sensibility, and whose gardeners have disappeared without trace in horticultural literature.'<sup>1</sup> Gertrude Jekyll is an obvious example of the new myth, a woman from a well-off middle class background, art school trained, who took up garden design when her eyesight began to fail. She was able to form partnerships with successful professional men of her own class such as architect Edwin Lutyens, and fill a role that in the recent past had been the preserve of professional gardeners. According to Janet Waymark, Jekyll's attitude to Mawson, a man who had risen through the trade, was always rather distant and frosty, though she could not ignore him, and he was included in the book *Gardens for Small Country Houses* that Jekyll wrote with Lawrence Weaver, architectural editor for *Country Life*.<sup>2</sup> In the context of these realities, it was important for Mawson to be seen as a "landscape architect" rather than a landscape gardener with all the lower class connotations that being a gardener implied. But as well as this, it was also important because architects were getting in on the act, and leading the charge in modern British garden design.

There was also a battle of horticultural styles emerging which would include an assertion by architects that as they were the professionals trained in design, they were best qualified to design gardens, especially in relation to the house. In part this was a reaction to the natural, or wild garden promoted by William Robinson. Followers of Robinson tended to abandon form and

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<sup>1</sup> Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1986), 216.

<sup>2</sup> (London: Country Life; New York: C. Scribner & Sons, 1914).

design in favour of a paradise wilderness in which the native British vegetation was enhanced by colourful hardy exotics. To counter this, architects such as John Sedding and William Blomfield proposed a return to formal gardens, which should be seen as extensions of the house and even enclosed by walls and hedges from the landscape beyond. Mawson was one of the garden designers of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who resolved this dichotomy by developing gardens in which formal elements were not only associated with the house, but also thrust out into, and included, the immediate landscape or surrounding woodland which could also be enhanced in the manner of the natural garden.

### **The intellectual background of garden design in Britain**

Another aspect of the new formal gardens lay in a political and cultural shift in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain and Europe that historians have subsequently dubbed “romantic nationalism.” In Britain, empire was a large part of this—more particularly, the imperial destiny of the Anglo Saxon Race. Janet Waymark deals with this in the person of the politician and arch imperialist, Joseph Chamberlain, and the political idea of “Greater Britain.” She suggests that, for Mawson, its cultural implications related to his town planning activities outside Britain, especially in Canada, and ‘the danger that Englishness would be adopted without any consideration that settlers in new lands would want to evolve styles of their own’ (17). Certainly the city he projected for Calgary, Alberta, was a grand imperial fantasy for a frontier city in the throws of what historian James Belich calls “explosive settlement.”<sup>3</sup>

Another aspect of romantic nationalism was the belief that national cultural characteristics were rooted in ancient traditions. This led to movements in architecture and design throughout Europe and beyond that promoted vernacular traditions as a source of modern cultural expression linked to national identity. Architect Reginald Blomfield’s book *The Formal Garden in England* (1892), as well as trouncing landscape and natural gardeners in favour of architects, was also intended to demonstrate that, unlike the mid Victorian view that British formal gardens existed only as

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<sup>3</sup> *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

a local response to those of Italy and France, there was a distinctive native tradition reaching back to Tudor times and beyond.<sup>4</sup> This was to lead to the revival of the old English formal garden that became very popular with another movement that fed into romantic nationalism and the search for a vernacular based modern culture.

The Arts and Crafts movement arose from the writings of John Ruskin and William Morris, both of whom were protesting against the industrial revolution and the factory system in particular. This protest included utopian ideas for an anti-liberal, communal, green, post-industrial future for Britain, predicated on an idealised view of a supposed green, communal, pre-industrial past. In practical terms it was a factor in the development of the garden suburb and the idea of the garden city, and inspired a generation of architects, many of whom designed gardens with their houses, to study local building traditions, crafts and trades, and to design houses that fitted the locality in terms of traditional styles and materials. The Arts and Crafts movement was a strong influence on Mawson, especially in the gardens he designed in the 1890s and early 1900s. He went into partnership or association with arts and crafts architects Dan Gibson and Charles Mallows, who also designed gardens, and used local stone for dry stone walls and facing terraces, or brick if stone was not available, wood for garden furniture and trellis work, and hand made wrought iron gates designed by Gibson. He also absorbed and made use of those features of the old English formal garden favoured by Arts and Crafts garden designers, such as spaces enclosed by clipped hedges and topiary forms as features within formal garden spaces.

The other source of inspiration for modern formal gardens in Britain from 1890 to 1914 was a return to the Italian Renaissance garden as a model. This favoured less baroque examples of Italian gardens than those that informed the work of Charles Barry, for example, from the 1840s to 1860s. The new Italianate gardens were particularly associated with the work of architect Harold Peto, whose reputation in the style even won him commissions in Italy.

The old English formal garden and the new Italianate garden brought structure and form back to the modern British garden of this period in a new way that stood out from the rest of

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<sup>4</sup> (London, Macmillan, 1892).

Europe. In the opinion of Edward Hyams, writing around the late 1960s, ‘in France, Germany, Holland, South Africa, Japan, and above all in the United States, advances in scientific horticulture were great; but there were none in the art of composing a garden, except in Britain.’<sup>5</sup> He goes on to claim that what emerged was a style that would accommodate, in a unity, the picturesque, the Italianate, the architectural, and plantsmanship. Thomas Mawson’s career as a garden designer was in the thick of this development (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Detail of the upper terrace, Rydal Hall. Designed in 1909 this garden has been recently restored. In spite of the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement on him, Mawson was not above using moulded concrete for the balustrades and the large pots.

From: Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 46.

### **The business of landscape design**

Mawson established his business at Windermere at a propitious time. The Lake District, in spite of protests from conservationists, was being connected to the British railway network, which opened the area for development. Wealthy industrialists from nearby cities in search of country estates and sites for country houses were attracted to the area and its long established scenic reputation. It was from this group that Mawson gained most of his early commissions for gardens, and once in, satisfied clients

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Hyams, *A History of Gardens and Gardening* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1971), 299.

passed his name on to others. This combined with Mawson's cultivation of connections and promotional abilities, enabled him to grow his business beyond the Lake District, first throughout northern Britain, and finally, nationally. By 1901, as well as his nursery and home base in the Lake District, he had a head office in Lancaster, and a subsidiary office in London. Over the next 10 years, as well as designing gardens, he established himself as a maker of urban parks and a town planner, with offices in Canada and Greece. During this period, he also gained three very wealthy clients, two of whom facilitated his first opportunities to work outside Britain. One was Andrew Carnegie mentioned above. Another was the furniture manufacturer, Samuel Waring; the third, William Lever (Lord Leverhulme), who had made his fortune from Sunlight soap.

In 1897, Carnegie bought himself a permanent home in Scotland, Skibo Castle in Sutherland, and commissioned Mawson to improve the landscape. But more importantly for Mawson's standing in his profession, was Carnegie's decision after his retirement in 1899, to turn his fortune into a foundation for welfare, education, and peace. In 1903, he gave \$1.5 million U.S. to build the Peace Palace at The Hague. When work on the Palace finally commenced in 1908, Mawson, as one of three invited competitors, won the commission for the laying out the grounds. Through the influence of Samuel Waring, Mawson got the job of designing the garden for Queen Alexandra's holiday home in Copenhagen. Both of these commissions were important for Mawson's professional reputation. The first established him as a leading garden designer in the context of Europe, and the second enhanced his status in class-conscious Britain. Janet Waymark also suggests that the royal commission, given Queen Alexandra's links with the Greek Royal family, may have been an important factor in King Constantine's decision in 1913 to select Mawson as the man to provide a town plan and a park system for Athens as well as work on designs for the Palace gardens. This was a commission on which Mawson and his firm could use all of their accumulated skills in garden and park design and town planning (Figure 3).



Figure 3: A pergola of Pompeian splendour designed by Mawson for the garden of The Hill, Hampstead, for William Lever.

From: Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 54.

### **Town planning**

Mawson became a pioneer town planner via park design. In the early 1890s, to give his business another income stream, he decided to enter competitions for the design of public parks. It was through one of these projects that he connected with the guru of the early town planning movement in Britain, the Scotsman, Patrick Geddes. In 1903, he and Geddes were invited by the Carnegie Trust to prepare plans for a park in Pittencrieff, Dunfermline, on land given to the town by Andrew Carnegie. In

the event Carnegie rejected both proposals, but offered Mawson the job at Skibo Castle. Mawson's illustrated report on the park was published, and through this his reputation reached North America and was important in relation to his future work there. For a brief period Mawson and Geddes considered working together, but as each man's approach to design was so very different, it is not surprising that this never eventuated.

City improvement was not unknown in Britain before the 1890s. From the middle of the century this had been instigated by civic leaders, and patrons, and motivated by public health and sanitary concerns. Industrial cities like Manchester, Glasgow and Halifax had cleared central city slums and created new urban centres with grand town halls, museums, art galleries, and even parks. Effecting these improvements was in the hands of architects and civil engineers. Along with this, an understanding of the causes of disease had been growing since the 1830s, and from the 1860s this had instigated a great age of drain laying. London was provided with 1,100 miles of sewage tunnels and subsidiary drains in the 1860s, and by 1883 the factories of Doulton's of Lambeth, for one, were churning out each week 37 miles of salt glazed stoneware drain pipes for use in British towns and cities.

City improvement did not constitute town planning as it developed from the 1890s. Slums may have been cleared from areas undergoing improvement, but tenants were simply evicted and left to regroup where rents were low, reconstituting the slums out of sight of the new urban centres. Nor did city improvement espouse an overall plan with zones for the various functions of the city. Britain also continued to urbanise throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, placing continuing pressure on the services and facilities of cities. By 1911, 80 per cent of the British population lived in cities and towns. It was in the context of these realities that town planning emerged as a profession designed to deal holistically with cities and towns and their various functions and communities.

The sort of town planning espoused by Mawson went by the name of "civic art." It dealt with practical issues such as traffic circulation and zoning, but was strongly influenced by continental examples of urban renewal such as took place in Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, and through the teaching and styles of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Practitioners imagined ideal cities imposed on exciting urban landscapes. This vision brought with it difficulties

in liberal democratic Britain and Canada, where elected governments and local bodies were of temporary duration, and dependent on a voting public with a strong interest in their own property rights and the spending of public money. These schemes needed the miracle of democratic consensus, or a ruthless dictator with vision, security of tenure, and a strong stable economy. It is notable that the only British example of this sort of city was not achieved in their homeland, but in India where they ruled as imperial autocrats: New Delhi's construction did not depend on permission from the representatives of a voting public. Mawson had experienced these sorts of difficulties as a result of his proposal for Pittencrieff Park. His plan included 'driving new streets right through the town and destroying nearly half the buildings including the new baths'<sup>6</sup> and the house of the chairman of the Carnegie Trust who had commissioned the plan. Thus its rejection was probably a foregone conclusion. In Britain, the situation was never going to allow the sort of makeover that Baron Haussmann implemented in Paris during the reign of Napoleon the Third.

Janet Waymark characterises civic art as a mixture of town planning and park building, and Mawson's version of it as a concern with the aesthetics of town planning. It was an approach where town planners spent most of their time considering the appearance and arrangement of buildings, leaving local authorities to take care of water, sewage, and electricity. Waymark also presents Mawson as being strongly influenced by the American "city beautiful" movement and the writings of its promoter, Charles Mulford Robinson. This movement flourished from 1893 to 1903 and remained an influence on town planning during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

In concert with the rise of civic art and the city beautiful, there was a revival of classical architecture that superseded the various free historical styles of the 1870s to 1890s. In Britain this was manifested in a revival based on baroque and renaissance models for public buildings, and a return to Georgian domestic architecture, which had entered the cannon of "British vernacular" (Figure 4). Mawson took to this change, approving of its formal discipline and order, and through this style gave expression to his vision of the ideal cities that he planned for Canada and Greece. In

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<sup>6</sup> J. Howard Whitehead, Carnegie Trustee, quoted in Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 194.

1910, his eldest son, Edward, joined the firm. By that time Edward was a qualified architect trained in Britain and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In 1913, he was given the job of running Mawson and Sons' office in Greece. Mawson's second son, John, qualified in town planning at Liverpool University where a department of civic art had been established in 1908 funded by a grant from William Lever. John was to take charge of the Vancouver office in 1912.<sup>7</sup>

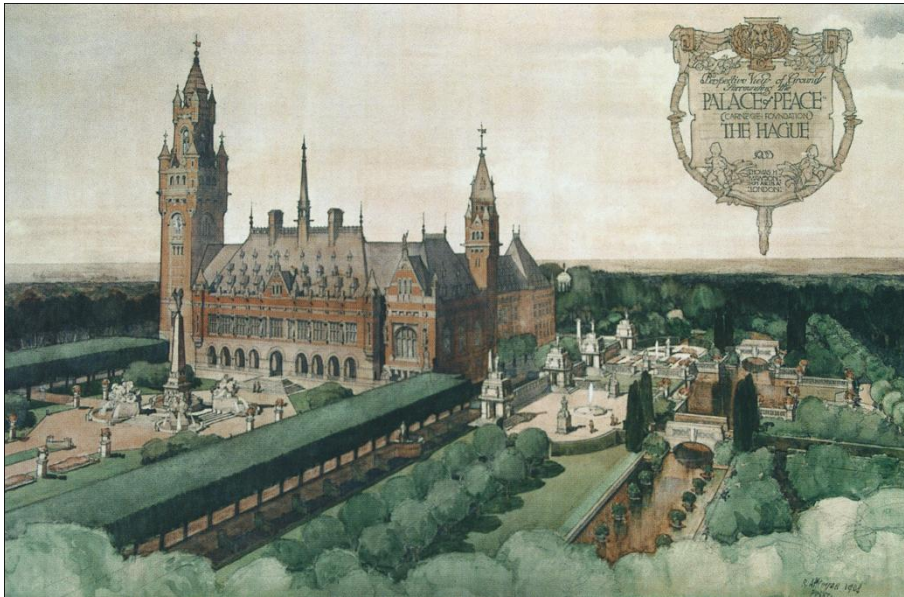


Figure 4: Robert Atkinson's presentation watercolour of Mawson's gardens for the Peace Palace at The Hague, 1908. The unexpectedly high cost of preparing the site meant that most of the architectural embellishments were abandoned, and stone was replaced by brick.

From: Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 65.

Mawson and Sons' involvement in town planning projects in Canada and Greece lasted for about four years. In Canada the firm worked on town plans for Ottawa, Vancouver, Regina, and Calgary, and on plans for the universities of Saskatoon and British Columbia. Ultimately, I am left with a sense of frustration that so

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<sup>7</sup> In 1926, Parliament passed New Zealand's first town planning act. In 1928, John Mawson was appointed as the second Director of Town Planning in this country, a position he held until 1933. Caroline Miller, 'A Prophet in a Barren Land: the New Zealand Career of J.W. Mawson', in *The 21st Century City: Past/Present/Future, Proceedings of Seventh Australasian Urban History/Planning History Conference* (Geelong: Deakin University, 2004), 258-271.

much was planned and so little realised. Local politics, local competitors, and an emergent Canadian nationalism were part of the problem. The other part was Mawson himself and his idealistic approach to town planning. His vision of the imperial city beautiful bore little relationship to the realities of frontier states that in the case of Saskatchewan and Alberta were not far away from tents in the wilderness. Their priorities lay ultimately in establishing viable economic bases, and Mawson's vision was too expensive to implement. Alberta was still experiencing a settlement boom when Mawson arrived on the scene. In just 12 years Calgary had grown from a town of four thousand to a city of 44,000. The situation was volatile and potentially unstable, even without the disruption of the First World War. Of Mawson's supporters in Canada, Janet Waymark writes 'they were the leaders of society and higher education ... [who] either admired or were intensely patriotic to empire and its roots in the crown'. Mawson himself, notes Waymark, 'could write of the malls he planned for Vancouver that these were places for viewing royal processions, without a flicker of doubt that this might not be appropriate' (164) (Figure 5).

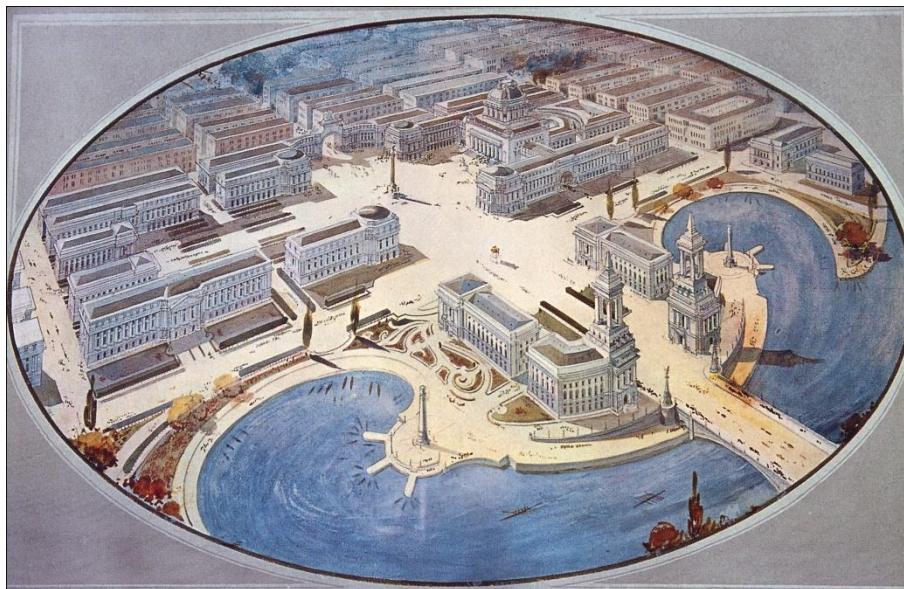


Figure 5: Calgary as the imperial "city beautiful." Frontispiece to 'Calgary,' Mawson's report on his town plan for the city.

From: Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 160.

The situation in Greece was also a political minefield and the country was unstable. The new Athens planned by Mawson exists only on paper. In 1917, his patron, King Constantine, went into exile and his younger brother took his place as a puppet of the nationalist government. Anti-royalist feeling in the country and parliament left Mawson high and dry without any support for his scheme. But in the same year, he was invited back to Greece as part of an international team brought together by the government to formulate a plan for rebuilding Thessaloniki, a large part of which had been destroyed by fire. The resulting plan was a fusion of the generically similar schemes of Mawson and the French member of the team, Ernest Hébrard. It is only in Theasaloniki that a shadow of Mawson's formal city beautiful can be seen today (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Modern Thessaloniki.

From: Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 181.

The Greek venture was Mawson's last commission outside Britain. After the First World War the firm worked, as before, on town plans, parks, and to a lesser extent, gardens, but Mawson's schemes for cities like Bolton foundered as they had in Canada and Greece. He died in 1933 just as the new international modernism was beginning its rise to world dominance. It was also the year that Hitler came to power, so he missed the experience of Europe's most extreme manifestation of romantic nationalism, Nazi Germany.

## **Conclusion**

Janet Waymark's richly detailed study of Mawson's life and work is a valuable addition to our knowledge of a period of culture that almost vanished from human consciousness after the Second World War. The last 40 years has seen its slow emergence from the closet. It was a time when the modern English garden and the English house were widely admired throughout the western world and Mawson played an important part in these developments. Though he may not have achieved his ideal cities, he helped to humanise urban environments through designing and building parks, and perhaps without his visionary town plans, which also contained a good deal that was practical, the city leaders involved would not have been challenged to consider possibilities beyond the pragmatic and immediate. This is often the main purpose of the consultant's work.

The twentieth century with death duties, world wars, economic depression and rising labour costs has not been kind to Mawson's gardens. Of those featured in the book only a few have come through largely intact. One has been recovered through restoration, and given the extent of Mawson's archive more may be revived from their original plans.

**REVIEW:** John Andrews, *No Other Home Than This: A History of European New Zealanders*, Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson, 2009, pp. 364, ISBN: 978 1 877517 082 (hbk.).

### **PAUL STAR**

Before his retirement, Professor John Andrews had a distinguished career as a zoologist at Victoria University of Wellington. His book, *The Southern Ark*, a history of zoological discovery in New Zealand, has had an honoured place on my shelves since its publication in 1986.<sup>1</sup> Over two decades later, here is a volume to place beside it.

In this new book, Andrews bravely sets out to 'describe how one group within this society [New Zealand], the pakeha or New Zealander of European ancestry, has colonised the country and learned something about it, changed it, adapted to it, and developed some affection for it' (299). He is well aware that, 'in a country keen to forge its own identity and make amends for its colonial history it has not always been politic to mention the European heritage' (292). Andrews, however, wades into it. This takes him far away indeed from his home in suburban Auckland, since he begins with the origins of *Homo sapiens* in Africa. The first three chapters plot the temporal, spatial and cultural journey which led to some of these humans 'becoming European'; only in part two of the book does Andrews describe the process whereby some of these European humans have landed up 'becoming pakeha'.

Andrews is intrigued that, after their lines of descent diverged near the River Indus about 75,000 years ago, European and Polynesian humans met up in New Zealand in 1642, having both reached these shores within about the last 750 years. His subject matter, however, is rarely those humans who got here first and their Māori descendants, and when Māori are mentioned it is mostly to say what Europeans felt about them. A parallel description would deal with those who turned right, rather than left, when leaving the Indus; what 'baggage' their descendants picked up along the way in Asia and the Pacific; what their

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<sup>1</sup> *The Southern Ark: Zoological Discovery in New Zealand, 1769-1900* (Auckland: Century Hutchinson, 1986).

descendants' descendants did to Aotearoa, what Aotearoa did to them, and perhaps also with what they felt about Europeans.

Many New Zealanders, particularly younger ones, could benefit from some knowledge of 'the old country', such as Andrews provides. There is less exposure to this material than there once was and of course it remains part of New Zealand's heritage. Personally, I learnt little new from Andrews' potted European history; I felt it was superficial and often too loosely tied in with the book's main purpose. For instance, while it is interesting that 'Dürer's *The Great Piece of Turf* painted in 1503 was a virtual ecosystem in a painting that was as aesthetically pleasing as it was true to life' (88), how is this relevant? Nevertheless, part one has value as an overall survey of Pākehā's pre-New Zealand past. Simply to have it written is important, since no-one else has attempted anything quite like this; but I did feel a sense of relief when both Captain Cook and Andrews' book finally 'anchored in New Zealand waters' on page 133.

The chapters that follow discuss why Europeans came to New Zealand, what it was they came to, and the effect of each upon the other. Drawing on the work of scholars and friends, like Charles Fleming and George Gibbs, Andrews discusses the possible origins of the landmass and how this determined what species evolved, such species having either remained on or long ago reached New Zealand. Their lengthy isolation, of course, then increased their vulnerability to extremely rapid colonisation by humans and their 'biological portmanteaus' (the organisms settlers wittingly and unwittingly brought with them to New Zealand): 'no other country has had to digest human impacts so intensively over such a short timespan' (12).

We are told that 'once colonisation was well underway a farming future for the country was inevitable' (208), but also, and perhaps incompatibly, that 'In spite of the ultimate success of farming ventures and the growth of farming into a mainstay of the New Zealand economy, it is a matter of some wonder, given its earlier history and the obstacles encountered, that this point was ever reached' (215). The environmental changes brought by colonisation and agriculture are covered, followed by a brief history of conservation in New Zealand that relies fairly heavily on David Young's *Our Islands, Our Selves* (2004).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Our Islands, Our Selves: A History of Conservation in New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2004).

A further chapter catalogues the presence and influence of the landscape and native biota in New Zealand's paintings; another deals similarly with the country's poetry (the book's title comes from a 1924 poem by R A K Mason). Andrews' examples are presented more or less chronologically, though I wonder if, for those individuals born overseas – that is, for most of the earlier poets and painters mentioned, and a few later ones – the length of time spent in their newfound land, prior to when they wrote or painted a particular work, might be as significant as the date of its creation.

In the 1980s, historians like Keith Sinclair and David McIntyre identified the South African War and World War One as, Sinclair notes, productive of 'the first unmistakable New Zealand voices', resulting in, as McIntyre observes, 'a much greater sense of New Zealand identity'.<sup>3</sup> Like Andrews, I would rather stress the role of the country's landscape and biota in creating European New Zealandness, but it is odd that he makes no reference whatsoever to these wars, not even to note or to dismiss the significance given to them by earlier historians.

In his final chapter, Andrews identifies a recent 'gradual acceptance of modified landscape and alien biota as part of a more natural order, treated on a par with the wild landscape' (298). He believes 'this sort of compromise has been part of the journey Europeans in New Zealand needed to make if they were to properly settle in this country', and that, in some locations, 'the mixture of aliens and natives is to be admired rather than condemned' (243). Here there is need to differentiate observation from opinion, but Andrews has highlighted something which contrasts with the identification, by myself among others, of an increasingly marked separation of the indigenous from the exotic in the Pākehā mind in the twentieth century, in terms of both species protection and the reservation of land.

Around a hundred years ago, the botanist Leonard Cockayne played a key part in promoting that separation, through his emphasis on specifically native flora in uniquely national parks. Cockayne wanted Tongariro National Park to extend

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<sup>3</sup> Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin/PNP, 1986), 126 (first quote); W. David McIntyre, 'Imperialism and nationalism', in Geoffrey W. Rice, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn., 1992), 344 (second quote).

beyond snow and rock, down onto the lower slopes with their endemic plant cover, reasoning that 'the special features of any landscape depend upon the combination of plants which form its garment, otherwise a monotonous uniformity would mark the whole earth'.<sup>4</sup> Andrews, however, has more to say about the geomorphologist Charles Cotton, who singled out the rocks for attention, rather than the plants. He believes that Cotton's 1922 work on this 'field-based, visual science' explained New Zealand's landscape, which to the country's poets and artists became 'a source of symbolism ... greater than would be found in the flora and fauna' (283). This is a further valuable suggestion.

In his preface, Andrews lists those 'fields of expertise' he has 'raided' to produce a book that targets 'a more general readership' (6). Since it is only supposed to be a summary it should not be faulted on these grounds, though perhaps it could, all the same, have been more of a synthesis or critique. An absence of original research can still leave plenty of scope for original insight, but Andrews on the whole is content just to repeat what Jared Diamond said on biological distribution, what James Belich gave as the periods of New Zealand history, and so on.<sup>5</sup> There is a useful 22-page bibliography that confirms that he has consulted a remarkably wide range of books but surprisingly few of the many pertinent articles by historical geographers, environmental historians and others. Furthermore, while part one is notable for its global perspective, part two, in exploring what Europeans made of New Zealand, does not utilise relevant work on other settler societies, such as that in Thomas Dunlap's comparative study on *Nature and the English Diaspora* (1999).<sup>6</sup>

This is a beautifully produced volume from Craig Potton Publishing, with a stunning cover, clear print, and a

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<sup>4</sup> Leonard Cockayne, *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives*, C-11, 1908, 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997); Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005); James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Allen Lane; Auckland: Penguin, 1996); Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000* (Auckland: Allen Lane; Penguin, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

comprehensive index. I found only three small misprints in the 300 pages of text. Andrews' work deserves the care his publisher has put into its presentation. He has made, in my view, a pioneering attempt to bring together the now extensive secondary source material on 'being pakeha', particularly where it relates to European heritage, and New Zealand landscape, flora and fauna. His book will stimulate further gathering-in and thinking-through on this subject. There is still plenty to be done.

**REVIEW:** Christopher Johnstone, *The Painted Garden in New Zealand Art*, Godwit, Auckland, 2008, pp. 272, ISBN: 978 1 86962 141 4 (hbk.).

### **JAMES BEATTIE**

Christopher Johnstone's *The Painted Garden in New Zealand Art* is a beautifully produced book that should appeal to lovers of gardens and garden art the world over. Containing over 100 artworks of New Zealand gardens from early colonial times to the present, *The Painted Garden* is testimony to the powerful place of garden-making in the New Zealand artistic imagination.

An art historian and former Director of the Auckland Art Gallery (1988-1995), Johnstone selected the images for their innate aesthetic appeal as well as for their depiction of identifiable gardens owned by or known to the artist. A useful introduction surveys some of New Zealand's main (European) garden history themes such as the vogue for the gardenesque, the introduction of exotics, and the initially gendered nature of botanical art, while each of the book's five main parts is prefaced. Its five parts are organised into the following sections: the Early Artists (1830-1860); Later Nineteenth Century (1860-1890); Early Modern (1890-1940); Modern (1940-1970); Contemporary (1970-2008). A one-page discussion accompanies each image, placing it in its cultural, gardening and art historical setting. This allows Johnstone to guide the viewer through the image's multiple layers and greatly enriches one's appreciation of its aesthetic and historical significance.

The book's wide breadth, both temporally and stylistically, means that it provides a visual record of different pictorial traditions and garden styles. Traditional topographical images informed by European picturesque conventions can thus be compared with neo-pointillist garden depictions. Richard Kelly's draughtsman-like depiction of semi-rural Dunedin in 1862, with its close attention to detail and gorgeously vivid greens, can be contrasted with William Cumming's neo-pointillism in 'Garden' (1976), with its Seuret-like haziness. In some instances, the individual layout of gardens – as interpreted by artists – can be discerned. Consider the two images of Governor George Grey's paradisiacal hideaway on Kawau Island (by Alfred Sharpe and

Constance Cumming respectively), which reveal the owner's fascination with acclimatisation of exotic plants and animals. Compare the Grey mansion's grandeur with the more modest settler home and garden of the Ardern family in Taranaki (by Hamar and Francis Ardern), with its neatly tended lawn and bright flowers. Contrast the gently subdued pinks and greens used to depict the garden (displaying the vogue for the 'gardenesque') and residence of Captain William and Mary King in Jermyn St., Auckland (1858) with Pat Hanly's psychedelically bright, abstract 'Garden Energy' (1972).

In reflecting on the methods and perspectives of garden history, eminent garden historian, John Dixon Hunt, complains that, in their popular writing, 'new wine is poured into old-shaped bottles,' as 'gardenists' shirk their responsibility 'to set their local work in context'. They make little attempt, he observes, to explain those 'figures emerging from the shadows of the shrubbery in the light of either any narrative of garden making that might explain their significance over and beyond their mere presence on the scene, or any idea of the garden, to which they may or may not have contributed.' In other words, there is often little attempt by writers of popular garden histories to contextualise their work in relation to other garden developments, let alone wider historical processes. While this, in part, reflects the divergence between popular and academic approaches (and here Hunt finds fault also with practitioners sequestered in the ivory tower), it also, he notes, arises as a result of a distinct lack of methodology or acceptance of garden history in university circles.<sup>1</sup>

With its sumptuous illustrations, printing on glossy art paper and hard-back publication, *The Painted Garden in New Zealand Art* is clearly a luxurious book. Its appearance would seem to indicate its market – towards the popular – yet it also is rare among such works in that it provides welcome detail and further notes that can be followed up on both garden history itself and the artists whose work is reproduced. As noted, there is a particularly useful contextualisation of New Zealand garden history in the introduction, while each entry facing the image contextualises the scene from a garden and art historical perspective. At the end are biographies of the artists mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> John Dixon Hunt, 'Approaches (New and Old) to Garden History', in Michel Conan, ed., *Perspectives on Garden Histories* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1999), 77-90 (quotes, 81-82).

(236-261), a glossary (263) and a bibliography (265-268) of further works an enthusiastic reader can follow up.

The author thus succeeds admirably in catering, first and foremost, to his popular audience, in the process also situating the work in its wider garden and art historical contexts. As such, then, *The Painted Garden in New Zealand Art* is a fine book, which should find a home in the library of many garden and art lovers while also serving admirably as a useful reference tool to academics.

## **GARDEN REVIEW: 'Te Parapara Garden' and 'The Indian Char Bagh Garden', Hamilton Gardens**

PETER SERGEL &  
GEOFF DOUBE

### **Introduction**

First-time visitors to Hamilton Gardens who arrive expecting a collection of plants in a traditional botanic garden will be in for a surprise. Rather than simply focussing on plant collections, at Hamilton Gardens the emphasis is on the gardens themselves. While botanic gardens concentrate on plant taxonomy and classification, Hamilton Gardens concentrates on the cultural meanings and contexts that gardens have historically had.

Throughout history, gardens have been a way of expressing the important philosophical ideas of their time, and in many respects the story of gardens corresponds with the story of human thought. There is more to be learnt from gardens than plant names. They can also increase our understanding of the beliefs and values of the people who made them.

Hamilton Gardens tells the story of gardens by recreating some of the most historically important garden styles from a wide variety of times and places. The aim of this short article, the first of several, is to explain a little bit about each style of garden and to place each of them in their historical context.

### **Te Parapara Garden**

While some modified landscapes were valued solely as spiritual sites, it was more common to combine the spiritual aspects of a garden with more practical purposes, for example, that of food production. An outstanding example of this could be found in pre-European times along the banks of the Waikato River, which were important sites of Tainui Māori settlement. The fertile sandy soil ideal suited the cultivation of traditional crops, the most important of which was kumara (*Ipomoea batatas*).



Figure 1: Entrance to Te Parapara Garden

Te Parapara (Figure 1) represents these earliest of Waikato gardeners and it takes its name from the pa that occupied part of the site of Hamilton Gardens. The two sections of Te Parapara are separated by a carved waharoa (gate). The carvings on the waharoa are based on designs from a house called Te Urutomokia that was built for Potatau Te Wherowhero, who became the first Māori King in 1858.

Before the new Māori arrivals in Aotearoa were able to develop largescale horticulture, they were nourished by the foods they found growing wild in the bush. The section between the Piazza and the waharoa is the realm belonging to Haumia Tike-tike, the deity of uncultivated plant food. This section, called Te Ara Whakatauki (the path of proverbs), features many of the wild plants that were sources of food for traditional Māori society, for example, the Aruhe (*Pteridium esculentum*), the Karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) and the Kiekie (*Freycinetia banksii*) can

all be eaten, although they tend to require extensive preparation to render them edible.

The section inside the waharoa is the realm of Haumia's brother Rongomatane, deity of cultivated food crops. The Kumara was brought to Aotearoa (New Zealand) by the Māori along with other food crops but was the only one to thrive anywhere except in the far north. The cultivation and storage of Kumara was therefore a matter of the utmost importance to Māori society. Fresh Kumara were stored in covered pits called rua, whilst dried Kumara could be stored in storehouses called pataka, which were elevated on posts to protect against rats and other threats.

### **Indian Char Bagh Garden**



Figure 2: Image looking towards garden entrance

Like Te Parapara, the Char Bagh Garden (Figure 2) is a form of garden that contains a wealth of spiritual representation in its design. While Te Parapara's symbolism represents local deities and the day-to-day concern of horticulture, the Char Bagh symbolises a more general and abstract spirituality. In Persian,

'Char' means 'four' and 'Bagh' means 'garden'. Char Bagh are thus walled, four-quartered gardens. They are sometimes called 'universal' gardens because of their very widespread occurrence.

Char Bagh have a history that stretches back at least four thousand years. Although they originated in ancient Persia, it was the Muslims who distributed them over a geographical range that extended from Spain in the West to India in the East. The wide extent of their geographical and historical dissemination is mirrored by the commonality of their appeal across cultures; traces of Jewish and Christian influence mingle with Islamic and Hindu motifs to create a truly universal garden. Char Bagh were adapted for the plains of Northern India by the first Mughal emperor, Barbur. While the Mughals themselves were Muslim, many of their subjects were Hindu and so the resulting Mughal Empire and its gardens were a blend of the two cultures.

The Hamilton Gardens example is based on an Indian Kursi-cum-Char-Bagh, or 'Riverside Garden'. One of the distinctive features of this type of design is the location of the pavilion at the end of the garden overlooking the river (Figure 3). The flowers in the Hamilton Gardens Char Bagh 'carpets' are representative of those that would have been found in Mughal gardens. The water features are designed to bubble rather than splash because of the need to preserve water in arid climates, which lends the Char Bagh a calming, peaceful atmosphere.



Figure 3: Pavilion of Char Bagh Garden.

## WEBSITE REVIEW: 'Exploring New Zealand's environmental history online'

CATH KNIGHT

In November 2009, with ample support from my tech-wiz husband, I launched [envirohistory NZ](#), a website exploring New Zealand's environmental history.

The idea for the website came from a somewhat surprising source. In August 2009, the Government announced a proposal to build an expressway through my neighbourhood – a newly established “eco-subdivision”. The eco-subdivision incorporates low-density housing, expansive parks, and wetland areas to absorb and filter stormwater. Each home also has rainwater tanks and greywater recycling systems. My husband and I set up a blogsite to inform affected residents of the implications of the expressway proposal and how to effectively participate in the decision-making process, while providing a forum for people to express their feelings about the proposal.

We were utterly overwhelmed by the popularity of the site. In only a month, the site went from absolute obscurity to the garnering of 10,000 hits from all over the world. This made me aware of the potential of the so-called “blog,” as a powerful forum to inform, share ideas and network all at once. So when the expressway saga had subsided, rather than returning to leisurely weekends in the garden, I decided to apply this newly discovered tool to a more positive and constructive application – the exploration of our environmental history.

I first became attracted to the field of environmental history after completing a masters and a doctoral thesis examining aspects of environmental management and history in Japan. This led me to reflect on New Zealand's own environmental history and environmental management practices, with the initial presumption that “We must do things a lot better here”. Eric Pawson and Tom Brooking's *Environmental Histories of New Zealand* fast became the most-read (and re-read) book on my bookshelf – and also became the inspiration for many of the earlier posts on *envirohistory NZ*. I suspect that like many who study environmental history, I am also inspired by particular landscapes that I have a special spiritual or emotional connection with. Totara Reserve in the Pohangina Valley of the Manawatu is

one such landscape that has made me think about the way our values and environmental perceptions (in this case, of lowland forests) have changed over time (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1: 'Totara Reserve about 1915', photo by C. E. Wildbore. Palmerston North City Library.



Figure 2: Totara Reserve today. Photo by C. Knight.

The intended audience for the site is anyone with an interest in either the environment or our history, or both – not only those with an academic interest. So, while the articles on the site are generally drawn from academic research of one kind or another,

they are relatively short and written in an accessible, non-academic style, with plenty of photos – both contemporary and historical. The website is in a blog format, meaning that the homepage is comprised of a series of blog “posts” listed in sequential order, and allowing readers to comment or make contributions on each post. I also began a [podcast series](#) exploring the stories and themes on the site.

The common message behind many of the stories on the website is that to understand the environmental issues we are facing today, it is essential to understand our environmental past – the way the environment once was, the way we have transformed it, and the implications of these human interventions. New Zealanders, probably like people of most other nations, have largely come to accept as “natural” the landscape around them – only barely (if at all) conscious of the fact that only one or two hundred years ago, the landscape was a vastly different one.

Yet, as those of us who study environmental history know, this rapid environmental transformation has had significant implications, not only for wildlife and ecosystems but also for human society. For example, wetlands play a vital role regulating and filtering pollutants from water, but more than 80 per cent of these have been destroyed since European settlement. Hill country and lowland forests also play an essential role in regulating water flow, and thus mitigating the effects of heavy rainfall or storms. So while erosion, landslides and flood events – such as the Manawatu/Wanganui floods of 2004 – are becoming increasingly frequent and serious, few people make the connection between historical environmental degradation and the events we experience today. Thus, deforestation, wetland destruction, and other forms of environmental transformation are common themes explored on the website (Figure 3). Examples of posts that deal with transformation include: [“This sacrifice will bring retribution – deforestation and its consequences”](#), [“The evils of deforestation”](#) and [“From swamps to wetlands”](#).



Figure 3: Carting railway sleepers from Totara Reserve, Opawe Road, Pohangina Valley, about 1904. Photo by C. E. Wildbore. Palmerston North City Library.

However, the website is also replete with stories about achievements in our (sometimes recent) environmental history. These were often the consequence of the commitment and actions of one or two individuals, with the lesson – possibly clichéd, but nevertheless true – that one person can make a significant difference in terms of environmental and social outcomes. Stories about [Christchurch's Deans' Bush](#), [Wharemauku Stream in Kapiti](#) and [the Nga Manu Nature Reserve](#) in Waikanae are good examples.

Each week, the level of interest in the site increases (with the exception of the occasional blip around events such as the Football World Cup!), and the site has now been viewed from about 70 countries. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of convening this website has been the relative popularity of individual posts – this is extremely hard to predict and a constant source of amusement (and bemusement). The post about [Scandinavian settlers of the Manawatu](#) comes in at an easy number one in terms of number of views, but that is because (as I found out from a Palmerston North city librarian), this was a topic of an NCEA assignment earlier in the year. High school students aside, the three most popular posts (in order of views) have been on the [history of the radiata pine](#), [19<sup>th</sup> century concerns about](#)

[pollution in the Manawatu River](#), and [the advent of the lawnmower in New Zealand](#) (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Unknown fellow pushing the handmower circa 1920, photo by Isaac Henry Bowen Jefarre. Alexander Turnbull Library. Ref. 1/2-077674-G.

### **Conclusion**

The establishment and development of *envirohistory NZ* has been an extremely rewarding experience, and in particular, I have been thrilled by the support extended to me by fellow denizens of the environmental history “blogosphere”, such as Dr Jan Oosthoek, convener of the [Environmental History Resources](#) website, and Dr Sean Kheraj, convener of the [Canadian History and Environment](#) website. Like the natural and physical world we live in, this virtual world has provided a whole new realm of friendship, discovery and adventure.

### **Further information**

To find out more about the thinking behind the site, and the research it features, download the [podcast interview](#) with UK-based environmental historian, Dr Jan Oosthoek.