Archives in Place: Deep Histories in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
Lucy Mackintosh

The following is a transcript of a talk by Lucy Mackintosh, introduced by Neill Atkinson. It was recorded live at the National Library of New Zealand in March 2023.

In her book *Shifting Grounds: Deep Histories of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland*, Lucy Mackintosh explores the layered histories embedded in three landscapes in the city. Starting with rocks, lava flows, a grassy paddock, the remains of a garden, the site of a cottage, or a monument, the book examines the histories that unfolded in these places and connects them with the broader historical context of the city, the nation and the world.

Lucy Mackintosh:

Tēnā koutou katoa. Kei ngā maunga whakahī o Te Whanganui a Tara, ngā wāhi tapu, ngā whenua i takahia e ngā mātua tūpuna, tēnei ka mihi. Ki ngā mana whenua o tēnei rohe, he mihi nui. He kōrero tēnei mo Tāmaki Makaurau. Nō reira, he mihi nui au ki ngā mana whenua o tērā rohe hoki. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

Hello everybody and welcome – it's wonderful to see you all here today, especially in the wake of such a difficult few weeks across the North Island. Thank you to Neil, for the introduction, to Manatū Taonga, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and to the National Library of New Zealand for inviting me to talk about my book. It's great to be here in Wellington, and to see so many familiar faces of family, friends and colleagues, and many new faces here as well. And, it's great to be speaking in this building, where I did a lot of the research for the book.

Ko wai au? Who am I? I'm a historian and a curator from Tāmaki Makaurau or Auckland – I'm currently a Senior Research Fellow at Auckland Museum, I was curator of history there for 5 years, and before that I researched and wrote about material, spatial and cultural histories of New Zealand, much of centering around Auckland, as a public historian. And all of that work over the years has fed into, and influenced the research for the book, which I'm going to talk about today.

Shifting Grounds centres around histories in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, but it's as much about exploring the histories beneath our feet wherever we are. And that's why I've called this talk - Archives in Place. Because the approach I've taken is to start with the ground; diving deeply into particular places, peeling back the layers, exploring the nooks and crannies, and following the threads gathered there across time. From there, I work upwards and outwards - asking how the histories in these particular places might change the way we understand the some of the bigger stories we tell about our cities, our nation and the world. So, while the stories I tell today are grounded, so to speak, in Auckland, they're also about what happens when you deeply engage with the places around you – the material, spatial, geographical and oral archives in place.

The book focuses on three places in Auckland - the first Pukekawa, also known as Auckland Domain very close to the CBD – a popular inner city park in Auckland, home today of the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

The second place is Maungakiekie – also known as One Tree Hill and Cornwall Park in the central suburbs of Auckland – NZ's largest pā, or defensive settlement built, a working farm since the 1840s and the place where a large obelisk sits on the summit - a well known landmark throughout the country.

And the third place is the Ōtuataua Stonefields at Ihumātao. They're in Māngere, next to the Auckalnd airport, and a place that was unknown to most Aucklanders and New Zealanders, until 2019 when a large protest took place there against a planned housing development.

There are many places that I could have written about, but I chose these ones because they're in different parts of the city, so each has their own constellation of geographies, histories and identities, and each of them also, I think, opens up a view shaft into lesser known histories of the city that deepen, and at times challenge, the way we understand the past and the present in Auckland.

Auckland is home to one-third of the country's population, but like most cities in New Zealand, it's received relatively little attention from historians (with a couple of notable exceptions including Melissa Matutina Williams and Ben Schrader's recent work). But much of the history there remains unexamined and outdated. To this day, for example, there are histories that still repeat old 19th century tropes about the city's past – that Māori were constantly at war in the pre-colonial era, for instance, that Tāmaki (known today as Auckland) had been abandoned by Māori and was empty when Pakehā first arrived in 1840, and that colonial Auckland was a 'little Britain' or a 'neo Europe'.

As well as a lack of historical research on Auckland, a lot of the city's physical/tangible history has also disappeared – its volcanic cones, rivers, headlands, landmarks, have been destroyed over the years as the city has continued to spread and intensify. So it can sometimes be hard to make sense of Auckland from its physical environment and from its written histories.

Like many Aucklanders, I grew up knowing very little of the history of my city. My parents weren't from Auckland, so they had few connections with the place, and when I studied New Zealand history at school and university, there were no courses on Auckland history, or on urban history. The situation is still much the same today, although I think that's in the process of changing right now with the introduction of the NZ history school curriculum this year.

So it wasn't until I started working as a public historian for local and central government, for museums, for iwi and hapū that I began to learn about the deep and layered histories in Auckland. Those histories were often embedded in material or tangible things – in monuments, buildings, landscapes, sites, objects, taonga. Histories not found in the written sources that historians like to rely on, but found instead in layers on the land, in the stories passed down, in a neglected grove of trees, for instance.

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One of the places that I worked on during that period was the Ōtuataua Stonefields, when it became a historic reserve back in 1999. The stories that I came across there and in other places across the city were unlike any that I had learnt about at university, or read about in books, or seen in museums. These stories were long, complex and nuanced, and sometimes painful. They were still very present for certain communities, and had shaped the wider city, yet they were unknown to most Aucklanders and to most New Zealanders.

So the book's lineage really began back there, many years ago, and it continued with a PhD thesis that became this book, and with my more recent work as a curator of history. And along the way, I've been supported and guided by colleagues, iwi and hapū representatives, descendants of those I write about, friends and family, who have all made this work so much stronger, and I'm deeply indebted to them all.

I have the team at Bridget Willaims Books to thank for putting such care and effort into producing the book.

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So for those who haven't read the book, and I'm sure there will be a fair few of you who haven't, it follows a loosely chronological framework, from early human arrivals in New Zealand in around the 1300s through to the present day. Each chapter focuses in on a material aspect of one landscapes at a particular moment in time, then follows those stories up to the present day.

So, there's a chapter on the early Māori stonefield gardens at Ihumātao, there's one on a house built in the Domain for Potatau Te Wherowhero by the early colonial government, there's another on a mission station at Ihumātao, one on an olive grove planted at Maungakiekie, another on a market garden run by the Ah Chee family in the Domain, and one on the building of the obelisk at Maungakiekie in the mid 20th century.

So I think when you take this type of approach, when you start with the ground, and build your stories from there, it immediately shifts, or refocuses Auckland's history in several ways -

One of these is that you move away from short, truncated time spans that historians often work within – of a decade, or even a century, or post 1840 which is a common one, and you start seeing some of the deeper histories that underpin and still explain the city today.

The second thing is you don't have to start in the main street - Queen St in the case of Auckland – you can look instead at other parts of the city - places with their own histories, cultures, politics, and networks that have in turn influenced things at the centre but are harder to see or understand when you start right in town.

Thirdly, starting with the ground broadens the archive for the historian from one that relies primarily on written sources, to one that draws also on material sources, environmental histories, oral histories and spatial relationships to examine the past. I'm not an expert in all of these areas, far from it, but they all provide important insights into different ways that the past has been experienced and understood. They make for a more kaleidoscopic view

of history, one that has a long lens and takes in numerous perspectives. My job, as a historian, was to recover some of those layered, textured histories embedded in these places, and then weave them into the bigger stories we tell about Auckland, New Zealand and the world.

So, let's have a look at some of these places.

The Ōtuataua Stonefields

We'll start with the Ōtuataua Stonefields at Ihumātao, a place that most people had never heard of a few years ago, certainly when I started writing this work in 2013. But its better known today. And for good reason.

It's a place where people have been picking up rocks for more than 600 years, and carrying them, turning them in their hands, arranging and re-arranging them to make walls, garden structures, houses, pathways, roads and more recently airport runways. Histories here reach back to some of the earliest human residents of the place we now call Auckland, forming important but little-known histories that still underpin the city.

The Ōtuataua Stonefields were formed by the eruption of two volcanic cones, which produced lava flows that carried huge amounts of rock with them as they spilled out across the land, creating a rough dry landscape. Over time, fertile, well drained volcanic soils formed on the lava fields that were perfect for gardening. These eruptions happened all over Auckland – there are around 50 volcanic cones there, giving it a very distinctive landscape, although many of them have since been quarried away.

Māori histories of Ihumātao and the wider area also begin with the formation of the land and waters. And in one of those stories, a powerful ancestor called Mataaho formed all of Auckland's volcanic features and his name is recorded in many of those features across the city – including Ihumātao – which is Te Ihu o Mataaho - or the Nose of Mataaho. Place names like Ihumātao record some of the earliest histories in this city, and they also reveal notions of collective identity amongst Māori across the Auckalnd area that existed long before the city expanded to encompass most of the volcanic plateau.

The same broad group of people have been living at Ihumātao since the earliest days of human arrivals in the Auckland area, making it one of the **oldest**, if not **the** oldest continuously lived in villages in the city. These deep histories have been recorded in Māori tribal histories, and in the land itself, with archaeologists finding evidence of Māori living and gardening in the area from the 14 or 1500s.

And there are many many layers of occupation and different activities here across hundreds of years. And that includes the gardening activities of the early Māori in Auckland, who planted the tropical crops that their Polynesian forebears brought with them to Aotearoa - kumara, taro and yam. Those crops grew well in the fertile soils of Tāmaki's lava fields, but Māori also used the rock strewn across the landscape to help create a warm, sheltered environment for those tropical crops in a sub-tropical climate. Drawing on the knowledge they brought with them from Polynesia, they cleared the loose volcanic rock from the lava

fields to create cultivation areas, they piled up the rock onto existing ridges to create windbreaks, boundary walls, and terraces, and they formed complex drainage system for their gardens.

Those rock wall systems across the stonefields served not only as gardening structures, though, they were also named after particular ancestors and events, so they were places of historical memory as well, which in turn helped to define and organise the way the stonefields were lived in and gardened by particular family groups over generations. And the pathways in between that stonework guided people through the landscape, helping them navigate through tapu and noa areas. So as visitors walk through parts of the stonefields today, they unwittingly following these earlier systems of gardening, occupation and memory, that are hundreds of years old.

These stonefield gardens once covered much of Auckland, but almost all of the gardens have now been destroyed by urban development. The Ōtuataua Stonefields are one of the very few areas that's left. As archaeologists have pointed out, these gardens tell the story of long peaceful periods of settlement in Tāmaki that have largely disappeared from the physical landscape and from the written record.

Auckland history starts to look a bit different, when you begin at a place like Ihumātao. Here, there are longer histories, reaching back to the earliest inhabitants of Auckland, and telling of continuities and fluidities in Auckland's past, that are important to know alongside those stories of constant warfare that are often told in our histories.

And built on to those very deep histories on the Ōtuataua Stonefields, there are also more recent histories there that offer different insights into colonial Auckland.

Tamaki, as pre-colonial Auckland was known, has often been portrayed as empty when Europeans first settled here in 1840, but when you look at a place like Ihumātao, a very different picture emerges. In the previous couple of decades, during the intertribal musket wars, Māori from across the Tāmaki isthmus had spent periods of time in Waikato, under the protection of the leader Potatau Te Wherowhero. But throughout that time they returned to Tāmaki to replant gardens and collect resources, and they moved back to their ancestral lands permanently in 1835.

So by 1840, when Governor Hobson arrived to establish the government settlement of Auckland, Māori had resumed their seasonal patterns of planting, fishing, harvesting and filling the storage pits on their lands. Auckland, far from being empty or abandoned, was in fact a place full of movement across the land and waters in well-established patterns. These rythms were in operation when Europeans arrived in the area, and they continued after the colonial town of Auckland was established.

In the first few years of European settlement, Māori lost a lot of their land in the Auckland area, but there were still some places where Māori continued to live on their ancestral lands – and Ihumātao was one of those places. In 1848, there were around 200 Māori living at Ihumātao under the leadership of Epiha Pūtini, who was an influential leader in early Auckland, but has completely disappeared from its histories.

It was at Putini's request that a Methodist mission station was built at Ihumātao in the late 1840s on Māori land, next to Pūtini's kainga or village and beside the gardens of the Ōtuataua Stonefields.

Missionaries such as [Henry] Lawry tried to encourage Māori to settle in fixed locations, and to follow their strict daily routines, but despite this Māori continued their more fluid pattern of existence. And this in turn continued to shape the mission station and its wider networks. The missionaries noted, for example, how Māori in the area continued to move between their tribal lands, following their seasonal patterns of fishing, planting and harvesting– along the lines of the map we saw earlier. Lawry and others often complained that they weren't able to find their Māori congregation, so they had to follow Māori as they moved around their lands so they could continue to preach to them. And as the missionaries travelled round the Manukau Harbour, visiting settlements in the waka provided by Māori, they were broadly following the pattern of movements that had been in place there for hundreds of years.

As well as missionaries using existing Māori networks, Maori also began to use the missionary networks for their own purposes, often travelling between mission stations throughout Auckland and further afield.

On the lava fields beside to the mission station, Māori continued to cultivate their gardens, providing food for the mission station, their Pākehā neighbours, and for the nearby township of Auckland. They continued to grow kumara on the Stonefields, but they also grew European crops such as potato, corn, wheat and oats, and they kept pigs, cows, and horses. And the field systems began to evolve to reflect these changing agricultural practices,

So throughout the 1840s and 50s, there very different relationships being formed at Ihumātao than those at the centre of town. It was was not so much a site of cultural hegemony, or a 'neo-europe' as early Auckland has often been portayed, but more a mixed place, one forged by both existing tribal dynamics and the structures of the British empire. One where the knowledge channels flowed both ways – from Māori to Pākehā as well as vice versa.

The sudden shift in this community, happened not in 1840, when Māori histories of Auckland tend to end and Pākehā ones begin - but later on, in July 1863, when Māori were forcefully evicted from their ancestral lands at Ihumātao and other settlements around the Manukau Harbour, just days before the Waikato War officially began.

This moment brings the New Zealand wars and its consequences into the city in a way that has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged in histories of Auckland. The raupatu or confiscations that took place after the war had devastating and long-lasting consequences for its Māori communities. Those consequences have continued to ripple through wider Auckland and New Zealand ever since, and occasionally they bubble up to the surface, as we saw with the 2019 protests at Ihumatao**.** So these are important stories to know if we are to understand and come to terms with this city's past, and its present.

Pukekawa - Auckland Domain

I'm going to turn now to the second place in my book - Pukekawa, also known as Auckland Domain. It's a place that many of you will be more familiar with than the Stonefields. It's a pleasant, picturesque landscape, and one was largely created in the early 20th century, when much of the land there was drained and cleared and re-formed for 1913-4 Industrial Exhibition held there, and for the building of the museum shortly afterwards in 1929. But even here, in this carefully crafted landscape, there are places that tell longer, and more complicated stories about Auckland's past.

The duck ponds in the Domain are actually fresh water springs, which were once part of a much larger swamp that was an important resource for Māori. That swamp, which was drained in the 1860s to create cricket grounds, recently appeared again during the Auckland floods.

The springs were also an important resource in colonial Auckland. When the capital first moved to Auckland in 1840, the Domain was part of the Governor's grounds, which ran all the way from Old Government House, now on the grounds of the University of Auckland, across Stanley St (which was a river at the time) and to the Auckland Domain. Governor Hobson planned to eventually build a new permanent residence right beside the springs (something that never eventuated as the government moved to Wellington of course, in 1865). In preparation for his new house, Hobson began clearing the fern and converting the land in the Domain to pasture for his horses. And building a large garden on the bank beside the springs, which was his own kitchen garden, but it was also New Zealand's first botanical garden.

The gardens contained exotic flowers, fruit trees and seedlings, which were all collected from botanical gardens around world, planted here in the Domain and then redistributed out to settlers around the country. So from the very beginning of European settlement in Auckland, the Domain was an important site of collection, experimentation and dissemination of plants and scientific knowledge.

Now within this rapidly evolving colonial landscape in the Domain, there was also a cottage built for Pōtatau Te Whero Whero, the leading Waikato āriki or chief, who later became the first leader of the Kingitanga – the Māori King Movement.

The cottage was built in 1845 by the Governor of the time, by now Robert Fitzroy – and it was built on a site close to the government gardens and to the Governor's planned new residence. The date of its construction, is important – its right at the time that war was breaking out in Russell or Kororareka at the beginning of what became the NZ wars, land wars), so Governor Fitzroy was wanting to secure the support of this powerful leader at a critical time for the country. The house was a strong statement of the mana of Te Whero Whero, of his close ties with the Crown, and of his central role in the future of Auckland.

We're not exactly sure where the cottage was in the Domain, and there are a number of different theories about where it may have been – but my best guess from the historical records is that it was at the top of the ridge near the springs, looking out over the township

of Auckland – one of the prime locations in town at the time. It's on the site of what is now the Auckland hospital grounds or actually, where the mental health unit is now located.

While he was living at the cottage, Te Wherowhero met with the governor often, to discuss the Treaty of Waitangi and other issues, but he also held a number of large hui in the Domain with Māori leaders from around the country as he continued to build and shape the tribal alliances and dynamics in the area.

It's said that Te Wherowhero also gave a new meaning to the name Pukekawa while he lived there – a name that literally means 'sour hill' but which he used to remember those who had died in the intertribal musket wars of the 1820 and 1830s, calling it 'the hill of bitter tears'. So Pukekawa is one of the very few places in Auckland where those wars are remembered. And it gives the 20th century museum, built on Pukekawa, much deeper foundations that reach into the ground and back across time.

So here, in the centre of colonial Auckland, you had both Crown leaders and Māori leaders co-existing in the same space, crafting very different, but intersecting senses of identity and place, and both striving to maintain a fine balance at a critical time for Auckland, and for New Zealand.

Te Wherowhero's cottage has now gone, and it's been forgotten about by most Aucklanders, but it has always been remembered by Māori. In 1940, on the centennial of the township of Auckland, Te Wherowhero's great grand-daughter, Te Puia Herangi, by now the Kingitanga leader, planted a totara in the Domain in memory of his presence there. The memorial still sits quietly across from the Museum today, reminding Aucklanders of the deeper histories that reside in this place.

Well in the late 19th century, there is yet another layer of history in the Domain. After the government moved to Wellington in 1865, the botanical gardens by the springs became neglected, and they were soon taken over by a Chinese market gardener. And further down the hill, at the bottom of the Domain, Chan Ah Chee and his family established their home and market gardens alongside one of the rivers that flowed down from the springs.

The Ah Chee family lived at the foot of the Domain from 1882 to 1920, when they were removed to make way for the rugby league stadium, Carlaw Park. Like the cottage of Te Wherowhero, the Ah Chee gardens were subsequently forgotten about by most Aucklanders, until 2007, when Carlaw Park itself was destroyed and archaeologists uncovered traces of the Ah Chee house and gardens underneath.

The hundreds of gardening, cooking and recreational items found on the site opened up a world that's largely been left out of histories of Auckland and erased from the land.

What those excavations found were glimpses of a family that had one of the most successful fruit and vegetable businesses in Auckland in the early 20th century. The Ah Chees supplied fresh produce to many of the city's households and restaurants, as well as to the newly developing international cruise ship industry. And they also had extensive commercial networks throughout New Zealand and around the world, including with China and America. It's a family that went on later, to open the first supermarket in New Zealand - Foodtown.

And all the while, at home, in the Domain, the Ah Chee's were carefully navigating the European settler practices and expectations of the time, while also implementing their own ideas, practices and networks. Archaeologists found that the positioning of the house along side the river, for instance, appeared to align with the spatial principles of feng shui rather than the European property boundaries and the neighbouring buildings. They found Fan tan counters from a traditional Chinese gambling game and Chinese coins which were used by workers brought over from China by the Ah Chees, who also lived and worked on the gardens.

And among the Chinese brownware, ginger jars and rice bowls, they also found an English Royal Doulton teapot and teacups. It's thought that these were used to entertain European guests. You can see that it's a standard English willow design on the teacup, but that's a design that actually derived from 18th century Chinese porcelain designs – so the teacup itself tells its own story of mutual English and Chinese borrowings over hundreds of years.

So here in the Domain, underneath the carefully crafted 20th century landscape, there are earlier stories of relationships between people and their natural environment – the springs, rivers, gardens. There are deeper histories of war and commemoration. There are important relationships between the Crown and Māori leaders in colonial Auckland, and there are early Chinese histories that had a significant impact on the city. These stories are all right here, in the centre of the city, but they're hard to see until you start peeling back the layers of the land, and bringing them to the surface.

Maungakiekie - One Tree Hill and Cornwall Park.

The final place I look at in the book is Maungakiekie, also known as One Tree Hill and Cornwall Park.

Here I examine some of the narratives crafted by Auckland's most prominent settler, John Logan Campbell, and how those narratives have intersected with the deeper histories in this place.

Today I'm just going to briefly talk about one of those stories.

And that story is about the remnants of a large olive grove at Maungakiekie, which was planted by Campbell in 1878. It's a grove that's always looked very out of place to me in the pastoral landscape of Cornwall Park. And it's out of place, too, with histories of this era, which often describe New Zealand in the late nineteenth century as the 'Britain of the South', and tend to focus on the mass conversion of the land to grass.

But Campbell ran the olive grove as a commercial venture for over 20 years, and I think when you look more closely at the grove, you start to see that some 19th century settlers in Auckland may not have been trying to create a 'little Britain' - they may have been crafting a broader sense of place here.

We now know of course, that our climate and geography are well suited to growing olives, but back in the 1870s, Campbell was one of a small but vocal group of individuals who were trying to develop products for non-British markets, such as Spain, Italy, France and the United States.

In 1878, Campbell brought over 5000 seedlings from Australia and planted them on a plateau. As well as the olive grove, Campbell also planted a vineyard, which didn't survive; and he also planned to build an Italianate home on the property as well as a campanile (which is an Italian bell tower) on the summit of Maungakiekie or One Tree Hill, neither of which eventuated.

After trying, and failing to graft the olive seedlings with more imported stock from Australia, Campbell paid a very skilled Canadian orchardist to do the grafting work for him. Once that was done the seedlings were planted out over the slopes of the terraces where some of them remain today.

Now the ground on which the olive trees were planted had once been part of an extensive and famous Māori gardening area at Maungakiekie in the 1700s. And when archaeologists recently did some work in the olive grove, they found that the topsoil there was full of finely fragmented shellfish, which had washed down from terraces above over time. So the sheltered north western slope, with its fertile volcanic soils mixed through with shells from the middens, created a perfect free-draining site for the olive grove.

For most of the period that Campbell was developing the grove, there was also a Chinese-run market garden beneath the trees, which adds yet another layer of complexity to this site. And here is Ming Quong who ran the market garden there for some years with his family. It's been assumed that Campbell had given up on the grove when he leased it as a market garden, but in fact the grove was thriving, and as some newspaper reporters observed at the time, it was partly because of the market gardeners who were constantly ploughing and weeding and applying manure to the grove.

When it came to carrying out the first pressing of the olives, Campbell sought the help of an Italian vintner called Giovanni Federli, who was in New Zealand trying to set up vineyards and orchards around the country. Federli spent a week overseeing the pressing operations, and at the end of it he declared it a great success, calling the olive oil 'equal to the best in Lucca, Italy'.

The next step for Campbell was to try and break into the international markets. He sent samples of his olives and olive oil to Portugal, where they received favourable reviews, but the olives that he sent to California leaked on the journey over there, and were turned down by his agent in San Francisco, who told Campbell he was still trying to get the disagreeable bitter taste of the Auckland olives out of his palate.

Well Campbell continued to experiment with the olives throughout the 1890s, but he was let down by the lack of equipment and technical knowledge, and in the meantime, refrigeration was invented and mutton, beef, and dairy products began to dominate the New Zealand economy.

So, the commercial olive grove didn't last, and it would be a hundred years before another one was planted in New Zealand. But what it shows I think is that even on the property of the one of the most prominent, successful British settlers in Auckland, there were alternative articulations of Empire at work. The grove had no single lineage – it was a mixture of Māori, North American, Italian, Chinese and British influences. While it is important to acknowledge the dominance of the British Empire in shaping New Zealand, there are also other, more nuanced influences that shape a place but can be hard to find until you look closely. Here, in this forgotten corner of an iconic landscape, we can see the finer, more varied workings of a local community over time, as well as the wider international networks that were generated from this place.

A couple of years ago, some award winning olive grove producers decided to produce olive oil from the Maungakiekie grove for the first time in over 100 years- and they said it was one of the finest olive oils they had tasted. I was lucky enough to get one of the bottles, and I would agree with them.

So, three places in Auckland, all with very different histories. What do these places tell us about this city? How do they change Auckland's history?

Well to begin with, I think they bring the physical environment into our histories, in ways that often get overlooked. Auckland's lava fields, kumara gardens, trees, freshwater springs, rivers and harbours have actively influenced where and how people have lived across the city since they first arrived in around the 1300s. They are core historical factors that explain much about a city's past, and it's present – as the recent flooding has shown.

Secondly, when you explore the layers of history embedded in places you start see the longer human connections between the deep past and the present. You can't understand Auckland today if you look at it with a short lens – if you start this century, or last, or even the one before that. There are deep Māori histories, and networks and knowledge that have profoundly shaped this city over time and continue to do so. These longer histories are important to know if we are to better understand the places we live in, and the diversity of human experiences that are woven through them.

And thirdly, I think these places all show more complex colonial histories of Auckland. The city becomes a place that is at once indigenous, settler and international, with Māori tribal networks, missionary circuits, Chinese trading practices, raupatu or confiscation and Mediterranean connections all present alongside the structures of the British Empire that have preoccupied historians of colonial New Zealand. These places show the unevenness of collective memory – what has been remembered and what has been forgotten, over time.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these places resist a singular, authoritative story about Auckland. When you start with the histories at your feet, it opens up Auckland's history. It makes room for the voices and the silences, for the presence and the absence that makes up this city's past.