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# INTRODUCTION

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This issue is dedicated to Professor Emeritus Thomas Warden Hastings Brooking—Tom to everyone who knows him—who retired in 2017 after over 40 years working in the Department of History, at the University of Otago. Tom is well-known internationally as one of the co-founders, with Professor Emeritus Eric Pawson, of environmental history in Aotearoa New Zealand. Some of the articles produced here are drawn from a symposium, held at the Hocken Library, University of Otago, and organised by the Department of History, in honour of Tom, held in November 2018.

International readers who access this journal are probably unaware that Tom also has a stellar career as one of New Zealand's leading historians whose works span economic history, ethnic and gender studies, biography and general history. In **'Scoping Yeotopia: Tom Brooking and the making of rural New Zealand'**, long-time friend and collaborator Graeme Wynn draws out the warp and weft of Tom's academic life. Graeme's article is an exercise in reflection on Tom's career as much as it is in assessing Tom's lifelong project, a history of rural New Zealand.

As Curator of History at New Zealand's leading social history museum, Toitū Otago Settlers Museum, Seán Brosnahan demonstrates Tom's exceptionally important contribution to public history. Fittingly titled **'Tom Brooking: A people's historian'**, Seán's elegant article traces Tom's public engagement through his scholarship as well as his work with genealogists, as a public lecturer and in promoting New Zealand history through his work with various museums. It's apposite to note here that Tom's long lobbying, along with others, to have the subject of New Zealand history inserted into the national curriculum for secondary schools has finally been achieved by the present New Zealand Labour-Coalition Government.

Tom's facility for friendship comes out strongly in this special issue. Contributions come from former colleagues and students, one of whom is sadly no longer with us. One of the great losses to environmental history has been the passing of Emeritus Professor Peter Holland. A biogeographer by training, Peter turned increasingly to historical research due to an inability to work long periods in the field. It's a measure of the environmental history community that Tom and Eric fostered that he and his work were welcomed with open arms.

With Sherry Olsen, Peter's jointly written posthumous article, **'The farmer's cutting edge in southern New Zealand, 1864–1914'**, interrogates the key role of technology in New Zealand's environmental transformation. Sherry and Peter chart the constant experimentation and information flow that developed between New Zealand and overseas manufacturers in the refinement of the plough for the particular environments of southern New Zealand. Their work is part of a broader engagement with the rural environmental history of Aotearoa that has examined farming networks, financial institutions and environmental learning.

Tom's long-time collaborator, Eric Pawson, explores Tom, his and others' work in the context of the Anthropocene. **'Into the Anthropocene: Environmental history and the morality of climate change'** interrogates the legacy of environmental modernism—also understood in light of their joint project on grasslands—in our own age of uncertainty. Eric examines some possibilities of promoting what he terms 'an empathetic recognition of humanity as an intergenerational project', notably, through place-based projects drawing on Māori land- and water-based schemes as well as a broader questioning of the emphasis on solely productivist landscapes.

The next article, **'Fashioning a future. Part I: Settlement, improvement and conservation in the European colonisation of Otago, 1840–60'**, is in many respects a homage to Tom, for it draws on and expands my original 1999 dissertation that Tom supervised. The article examines environmental attitudes and actions amongst the first generation of settlers in Otago, New Zealand, and argues for historians to take seriously the complexity of responses, emotional and environmental, cultural and material, amongst that group. What Tom probably doesn't know is that the work was deeply personal to me. When I was 11 years old, my family left New Zealand for the United Kingdom. I returned 8 years later to a New Zealand that I really didn't know, having left a country in which I was always a foreigner. Studying how settlers made sense of and fashioned a new life in the environments of southern New Zealand helped reduce my sense of 'double foreignness', of belonging to neither one country nor the other. In the process, it helped guide me towards finding a sense of home in the country of my birth.

The next article is from Tom's first student in environmental history, Paul Star. Tom worked with Paul on both his Masters—on early conservationist Thomas Potts, whose biography by Paul has just been published by Otago University Press (*Thomas Potts of Canterbury: Colonist and conservationist*)—and his PhD dissertation, examining the currents of settler environmentalist thinking in New Zealand. They also collaborated together on his and Eric's grasslands project. In his article **'On the edge of Canterbury settlement, 1854–58'**, Paul fittingly focuses on Potts, examining the role of the personal narrative in the construction of Potts' ideas about the environment.

Long-time Tom collaborator, historical geographer Mike Roche provides a fascinating analysis of imperial forestry, through an examination of forester Owen Jones, who worked in Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand. **‘Practice in place in empire forestry: Owen Jones in Ceylon, Australia and New Zealand, 1911–55’** provides a justification for the importance of transnational historical geography/environmental history. As Mike notes, Jones’ career reveals the different cultural and political contexts in which Jones deployed his skills across the British Empire, from broader professional advice in British India to a more narrowly defined set of roles in Victoria, in silviculture and afforestation, to working for New Zealand Perpetual Forests, in afforestation.

Finally, I’d like to thank Tom for the spark he helped ignite in me for environmental history. More than that and much more importantly, I’d like to thank him for his friendship, support and guidance over the last few decades.

## Submission details

See inside cover.

## Call for papers

I particularly encourage submissions on topics related to history and energy, the atmosphere and water, especially in relation to Africa, South America and Asia. Please also contact me if you are interested in guest editing a special issue.

## Acknowledgements

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James Beattie, Editor,  
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