

1000 Years of Gardening in New Zealand. By Helen Leach, with illustrations by Nancy Tichborne. A. H. and A. W. Reed Limited, Wellington, 1984. x, 157 pp. NZ price: \$24.95.

HELEN LEACH'S very readable, highly informative, and rather quirky book is in seven sections. The first section is a justification for studying garden history, a rapid transcultural overview, geographically widely ranging and historically referring back to and forward from about 9000 B.C. (Dr Leach sticks to the old convention), which establishes a perspective in which may be placed, for instance, the first use and later cultivation of potatoes in the Andes, in Western Europe, and in New Zealand where eventually develops the peculiar case of 'Maori potatoes'. For Dr Leach the history of gardening is substantially the history of 'kitchen or vegetable gardening' (p.ix), to which she recurs in her Chapter 7. Gardening of that sort in New Zealand 'has been the dominant activity. It is only in the last 120 years that the gardener's attention has been distracted by flowers and ornamental trees' (p.121). Of these distractions (she says) others are better equipped to write, and are doing so. It is the overview which is needed, for which she is herself well equipped. But it has to be remarked that her record of kitchen or vegetable gardening takes in the cultivation of fruit and nut trees, and one has to wonder if the satisfaction which these afforded was only crassly utilitarian, at what point the useful shaded off (if it did) into the ornamental. Did the two not coexist, as they did equably in the old (European) kitchen and medicinal gardens? Were those groves of karaka which so frequently occur in the immediate neighbourhood of northern pa only useful, not discernibly ornamental as well, and as well reach beyond substantial use of ornament to transcend any limited sense of 'the natural' which of course Helen Leach takes into account in respect of, say, kumara cultivation? If, in Chapter 4, Leach acknowledges the 'spiritual' in relation to material culture in Maori gardening, they are nonetheless matters of material culture which dominate her account, and there is no reason to niggle about that approach except that it does perhaps lead to an underestimation of a like 'spiritual' dimension to the garden practices of historic Western Europe which are rehearsed in Chapter 5.

Writing about the introduction of 'the tropical relative of the cabbage tree', ti pore (*Cordyline terminalis*), Leach refers to 'ti' until p.56, and only then comes out with 'ti pore' and the botanical name. The first allusion to New Zealand cordylines is on p.54 as 'cabbage trees', 'native cabbage trees' arrive on p.56, and the last on pp.69-70. No Maori names are given, no Latin beyond 'Cordyline' on p.54, where that is associated with 'Carex' in a way that suggests both are cabbage trees. Since no Maori name for the native trees occurs, the impression conveyed is that 'ti' is a Pacific but not a New Zealand name, which is not helped much by the index, which gives 'ti, see cabbage tree', but under 'cabbage tree' has two separate entries 'cabbage tree, New Zealand' and 'cabbage tree, tropical' without making it clear how 'ti' applies. The index lists '*Cordyline australis*, see cabbage tree, New Zealand', even if the botanical name does not appear in the text, and the text itself indicates there is more than one New Zealand cabbage tree. Another introduced plant discussed in the paper mulberry: 'see tapa', but indexed as 'tapa plant', which is also the 'cloth plant'. The entries of p.21 and p.25 are not illuminating but suggest the tapa plant has little height, and p.27 seems to confirm this: 'many traditional crops like the paper mulberry grew stunted unless planted behind walls'. P.28 seems to agree about

low stature, and p.30 tells us that tapa was grown between rows of breadfruit. At p.56, the last entry, we find that the tapa plant is 'the aute or paper mulberry tree, the source of tapa in the tropics'. Not in New Zealand too? No botanical name in the text (but one is given in the index displaced from aute, tapa or paper mulberry so it is not very helpful). And no illustration. Is *Broussonetia papyrifera* a 'tree' or a 'plant', and like what? Did New Zealanders make a cloth from the bark? And was the cultivation in New Zealand a gardening as is the case in the tropics? If aute deserved some attention, what about autetaranga (*Pimelia arenaria*), which is not mentioned at all?

Nor, puzzlingly, is there any mention of karaka, *Corynocarpus laevigata*, although Karaka Bay appears. In view of the place which karaka once held in debate over introduced species and in view of what Leach recognizes of tawa and hinau, why no karaka? The machinery of the book is not impeccable, as these few examples show.

However vulnerable, *1000 Years of Gardening in New Zealand* has much to commend it. It is likely to be popular and re-issued. In that event, cutting back Chapter 5, 'The development of the English kitchen garden tradition' (pp.73-97) and enlarging Chapters 6 and 7 (pp.98-130) would help, by allowing for what is at present set aside, the matter of flowers and ornamentals which are surely rather too firmly separated from the utilitarian. Dr Leach's own citations on p.113 do not endorse her stand.

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A History of Otago. By Erik Olssen. John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1984. 270 pp., illus. N.Z. price: \$39.95.

THE FIRST POINT to make about this book is an obvious one. It is superbly presented, one of the most handsome books I have seen in a long while. The lovely colour plates, the more than 150 black and white illustrations, and the strong, clear type-face make it a delight to hold, to see, and to skim through.

It is also a delight to read. A reverence for tradition, a concern to preserve past glories has always been alive and well in Otago, and one of the results of this has been a regional historiography much more extensive and much richer than in any other part of New Zealand. In the Centennial year of 1948, for example, as well as the fireworks at Hancock Park, the procession down George Street and the solemn pageant at First Church, no less than 20 volumes of local or district history appeared, together with A. H. McLintock's huge and idiosyncratic *History of Otago*. Since then, a number of university theses and dissertations, often written under Professor Olssen's direction at the University of Otago, have joined the continuing stream of memoirs and local histories to provide him with a rich lode to mine for this most recent attempt to describe and explain Otago's distinctiveness.

For it is the issue of continuing provincial identity in a nation become at once more complex and less diverse that is Olssen's main theme, and it must be said that he sustains it exceedingly well. The story at one level is a familiar one. In direct, spare