

“KNOWING OUR PLACE” – CONNECTING WITH PUKE AHU



A marriage of design and creative writing brought together students and staff from Massey University’s College of Creative Arts and College of Humanities and Social Sciences to create a living anthology dedicated to exploring the suburb of Mt Cook, Wellington.

Pukeahu: An Exploratory Anthology combines waiata, poems, essays and fiction from past and present to tell the stories of Mount Cook's history, topography and inhabitants. It includes new works by staff and students, as well as work by some of New Zealand's most renowned writers such as Katherine Mansfield, Robin Hyde and Witi Ihimaera.

Senior lecturer Dr Ingrid Horrocks, who initiated the project, says the collection draws on the sense of place as a living and breathing entity.

"By assembling a collection of voices and stories, we wanted to evoke a sense of one particular place as mobile and living, and of the unsettled imaginaries of those who have moved through it. We combined our thoughts of Pukeahu as a place made from multiple constellations of activities, meeting and movement, with our thoughts of 'place' as something always under construction, always being re-imagined, always in the process of becoming" she says.

The online publication is divided into sections that reflect different experiences undergone in the Pukeahu/Mt Cook environment. Over time it has been home to a men's prison, an early police station, an army barracks, the National War Memorial, Wellington High School and Massey University. The sections include titles such as *Embodied Archaeologies*, *Contesting Histories*, *Confinement* and *Inhabiting Pukeahu*.

The first instalment of the anthology was developed by two creative non-fiction students Lena Fransham and Thomas Aitken, design student Rosie Percival, writer Lynn Davidson, and Dr Horrocks. It is the hope of the group that the anthology, like the place it is named after, will always be under construction.

"We anticipate that the anthology will evolve and grow as new students and new readers and writers get to explore Pukeahu/Mt Cook and find other stories, poems, art and articles to add to this opening conversation," says Lynn Davidson, who at the time of the project was completing her PhD in creative writing at Massey.

In 2016 a collection of creative essays entitled, *Extraordinary Anywhere: Essays on Place from Aotearoa New Zealand* will be launched to follow-up on the anthology and on a colloquium held on the campus in 2014. It will be co-edited by Dr Horrocks and Dr Cherie Lacey and will feature prominent historians, cultural theorists, and writers from around the country reflecting on their own places

The anthology forms part of a larger Puke Ahu project driven out of Massey University's Wellington campus, which is designed to celebrate the culturally rich history of the area. Other aspects of the campus-wide initiative include a kaitiaki roopu, a cultural impact report and an archaeological report.

To see the full anthology, go to pukeahuanthology.org.nz

Dr Ingrid Horrocks is a Senior Lecturer of creative writing and literature in the School of English and Media Studies. She received her PhD in English from Princeton University and has been a Resident Scholar at the Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies at Victoria University of Wellington and an official Visiting Scholar at the University of Melbourne. Ingrid is based at the Massey University Wellington campus.

Students and staff from the Pukeahu Anthology project.

