

Kia ora everyone,

Thanks for your introduction Sue.

One of the great things about working in one place for a long time is that you really get to observe it in detail, in all the seasons and over the years and you get opportunities to soak up the character of the place.

I have taught at Unitec for 20 years and Landscape Architecture has been in 3 different buildings during that time.

Before that I worked for Brian Halstead & Assoc architects and landscape architects who were involved in repurposing some of the Carrington Psychiatric Hospital buildings and grounds for the then Carrington Polytechnic to use for educational purposes. I also live locally. So I have a long association with the site.

My seminar today centres on unpacking some of the layers of history of this place.

This is in order to consider the notion of the therapeutic landscape from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how this has evolved over time to ideas today that the landscape is in need of therapy. The campus can be seen as a microcosm of these changing ideas.

Let's start by considering the geological history of the site....

1. From the pre human era Auckland was a notable geological field of over 50 extinct volcanoes. HOKK STETTER mapped the field back in 1859, as shown on this beautiful map I have pinned on my office wall. It shows Mt Albert / Owairaka our local volcano 2k to the SW of here, and the lava flow which runs across the south west of the campus.

2. Evidence of volcanic activity 30,000 years ago, which formed Mt Albert – Owairaka,<sup>1</sup> can still be seen in the rocky outcrops and cuttings of basaltic rock at the west and south of the campus.
  - The rest of the campus has sedimentary (rather heavy) clay soil, which was quarried for bricks and pottery in nearby New Lynn.
  - The original forest cover would have been podocarp - broadleaf lowland forest - with kauri on the ridges, - puriri on the slopes - and kahikatea in the valleys.
3. Maori settled around the Waitemata harbour in the 14th century. Rakataura, the tohunga of the Tainui canoe, was one of the first documented inhabitants of the area around the Whau river (and he featured in the Wharenui gallery).
4. Another famous character who is known to have occupied the site is Wairaka, the daughter of a Maori leader, who came with a party from the Tauranga area, and is said to have stamped her foot in frustration, and found a source of fresh water from what is now known as Wairaka spring.<sup>2</sup> She has a special place outside the Wharenui entrance. Maori settlers, like the Pakeha who followed, burnt the forest cover for their cropping and settlement.
5. This land was purchased by the Crown from Ngati Whatua in 1848, and European settlers bought blocks of land and cleared it further for typical settler farming of mixed livestock and crops . In 1855 Andrew Rooney purchased the spring site and

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<sup>1</sup> Ewen Cameron, Bruce Hayward and Graeme Murdoch, *A Field Guide to Auckland* (Auckland: Godwit, 1997).  
<sup>2</sup> Unitec Institute of Technology, *A Building Known as Carrington*, Booklet, Marketing, Unitec Institute of Technology (Auckland: Unitec Press, 1994), 2.

it remained his property until 1873. He leased blocks to farmers, including James H. Hayr and Thomas Hicks.<sup>3</sup>

Leave farm slide

Geoff Park has described how “Landscape intervention and modification associated with colonisation by both Maori (700-1000AD) and European (from 1769) irreversibly altered the natural ecology of NZ through cumulative effects of fire, land clearance, over-exploitation of resources and introduced plants and animals.<sup>4</sup> On this site all of these actions are all likely to have happened.

6. By 1863, still very early in Ak’s colonial life, the Crown commissioned a ‘Whau lunatic asylum’ and plans had been drawn up in England, and modified by Auckland architect James Wrigley. The imposing neo -classical building of locally made polychromatic bricks was opened in 1867. Over the next 50 years the main building was extended and several buildings were commissioned to house more patients, up to the peak of 1200 patients were accommodated in four major buildings (numbered 1,6,48 and 76 on the current campus map).<sup>5</sup> One of the most famous patients was writer **Janet Frame**, who said of Ward 7 – “an oasis with its park and willow tree and friendly ward sister”
  
7. In 1976 a radical new purposing of the land began.....the gazetting and construction of the Carrington Polytechnic campus at the South end of the site. The buildings that comprised the Hospital remained as a working institution separate from the Polytechnic campus until the progressive purchase by the

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<sup>3</sup> Lisa Truttman, *Wairaka's Waters: The Auckland Asylum Springs*, Historical, Rosebank Historical Society (Auckland: Lisa Truttman , 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Geoff Park, *The Groves of Life = Nga uruora*. (Victoria University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Unitec Institute of Technology, *A Building Known as Carrington*, 6.

Education Department during the 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Many of the hospital buildings were remodelled, with dayrooms becoming lecture and studio spaces and some of the patient cells becoming staff offices. New plantings were added, such as avenues of trees around the ring road and gardens in association with new purpose - built buildings.

#### 8. Remnants of each of these eras are still visible on the site:

Strong features include Wairaka's spring which I showed earlier

- remnant dry stacked volcanic stone walls,
- remnant shelter belts,
- farm trough
- as well as the heritage buildings, large amenity trees and large open lawn areas

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century Theories of Therapy

In a 1998 SAHANZ paper entitled "Therapeutic Landscapes", Jeremy Treadwell asserts that NZ asylums were developed with the idea of a therapeutic, but controlling utopia for patients.<sup>7</sup> Hospital siting privileged elevation, views, and pastoral surroundings. Buildings with grand frontages favoured light and air with large windows and 'airing courts'. The idealised pastoral and treed landscape was also commissioned for exercise and for redemptive and curative rural work. Treadwell quotes Dr Truby King, who wrote from Seacliff asylum in 1891, "...walks in the grounds, or even definite forms of recreation,

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<sup>6</sup> Unitec Institute of Technology, *A Building Known as Carrington*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Treadwell, "Therapeutic Landscapes."

such as croquet, rounders, dancing etc. **bear no comparison** with **useful outdoor work** in influencing the insane in a healthy direction.”<sup>8</sup> The cynical amongst us may wonder if this was a good excuse for making the patients work.

As well as the idealised English park style of landscape ( of mostly exotic plants) around the hospital buildings, the hospital operated both pastoral farming and horticultural activities. The Conservation Plan of 1994 describes that the former Carrington Hospital building ‘sits in the remnants of a rural landscape which once dominated and which, tended by its inmates, provide the institution with much of its own needs.’<sup>9</sup> Historical archives include journals of farm and horticultural operations and money spent.

Archival photos from 1966<sup>10</sup>, are shown in these next 3 slides.

1. **Talk to the slides - north end** We can see shelter belts, an orchard, ornamental plantings, lawns and vegetable gardens, to the south of the main hospital block, now Building 1
2. **Middle of campus – dairy shed, pump house, hay shed**
3. **South of campus – pig shelters and paddocks.**

A successful livestock farm for the hospital (poultry, pigs, cows and sheep) was developed from the mid 1860s onwards, with the most fertile soils marked on early land sale plans from the 1840s being cultivated intensively as a market garden and later an orchard of about 1.5 hectares. Ornamental gardens were constructed

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<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Treadwell, "Therapeutic Landscapes." 2.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Salmond, *Former Carrington Psychiatric Hospital: A Conservation Plan*, Conservation Plan, Registry of Works, Unitec Institute of Technology (Auckland: Unitec Institute of Technology, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Archive NZ, “DSCF 2847 Archive Sheet for ADZS A1560 1420 Box 5b. Main building, external photographs and aerial photographs including whole hospital, sports grounds, and farm. 1940-1966. .”

around all buildings including residences, and these contained orchards that were maintained by both patients and gardening staff.

John Adam who assisted me with archival searches, found a fascinating letter about the farm production:

It was from F.B. Thomas on behalf of the hospital Superintendant ... to the Department of Health in Wellington (1966) .... And documents a range of facts about the land utilisation at Oakley Hospital of the time. Of the total of 210 acres of hospital land, there are 103 acres of farm, stocked with 58 dairy cows, 317 pigs, 181 poultry and 39 sheep. 82 acres of land were occupied by hospital buildings, and 18.5 acres by market gardens and orchard. 156,100 lbs of vegetable were produced that year, which were all consumed in the hospital, but milk sales produced profits of between 2-4000 pounds were reported, indicating a significant income stream for the hospital. There were 5 farm staff and 3 gardening staff employed.<sup>11</sup>

So quite an enterprise, and reported on to Wellington.

### **Bowling Green - Recreation**

There were also amusements and recreational activities catered for on the hospital grounds, including a full bowling green, cricket pitch and sports grounds.

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<sup>11</sup> F.B. Thomas, "Auckland: Oakley Hospital," Archives NZ - File Sheet YCAA 1081 Box 18c 3/14 Land and Buildings 1954-1968. Memo, Department of Health, NZ Government (Auckland, 1966), 1-3.

## Airing Courts

The belief in the value of providing spaces for outdoor exposure to sun and air can be clearly seen in **this slide**, which shows a plan of the 'airing courtyards' on the south side of the Auckland Lunatic Asylum. The 'proposed improvements & additions' to the separate male and female 'courts' are shown to include central formal gardens, shelter sheds and asphalt surface treatment. Today these spaces are still used as outdoor courtyards for eating, socialising, sun bathing, getting fresh air and as entertainment spaces with music for occasions such as orientation and graduation functions.

## Trees and garden plantings

The quote below demonstrates the value placed on both gardens and the 'view' for asylum patients:

'In 1875 an asylum Inspector, Mr Hamilton reported to the Colonial Secretary on the asylum at Sunnyside in Christchurch, "*...I have only to add, that since then a spacious and well planted garden and shrubbery and a recreation ground have been finished and got into good order. The use of it, or even the lookout over it from the windows and balcony cannot fail to be conducive to the **cheerfulness of the female patients.***" The architecture

here through the window and balcony becomes a mechanism for delivering the therapeutic benefit of the view.’<sup>12</sup>

Plantings and gardens reinforced the nostalgia for the English park through the layout with groupings of trees in groves as well as shelter belts. English oaks and planes are common exotic species in the campus tree collection, along with trees from many other parts of the world, such as North and South America and Asia, including several rare species. Other 19<sup>th</sup> century parks in Auckland display a similar range of tree species, such as Monte Cecilia and Western Park, with influencers such as Governor Grey.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Landscape Ideas: Unitec Campus Today**

How has this idea of **nostalgic idealism of a therapeutic utopia** of the Whau Asylum **translated to the Unitec campus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**? Contemporary models of urban ecology can be used to analyse the role and function of campus in the present day Auckland city.

The isolated utopian hospital site of the past is now understood as a large green open space within wider urban landscape systems. The treed park-like landscape is still a well recognised characteristic of the campus, (despite our CEO’s recent comments in the Herald) which contrasts to the surrounding suburban neighbourhood and is very different

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<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Treadwell, "Therapeutic Landscapes." 6.

from the highly built up tertiary campuses in Auckland's CBD which have a lot less green space within their campuses.

An excerpt from the Unitec website<sup>13</sup> in the About us page

**'A green oasis not far from the city.** Our Mt Albert campus is a 55-hectare oasis of trees, lawns and gardens - just 10 minutes from Auckland's central business district.'

The **trees** on campus still provide the park-like environment intended for the hospital grounds, and more so as they have grown and become more mature.

**Parks** are an important and varied category of landscape architectural production, celebrating the use of planting and landform and creating open space, distinguishing it from its urban or developed surroundings. Although as a 'type' of landscape the park has an ancestry that is many centuries old, public urban parks gained significance during the nineteenth century providing public open space in cities. Frederick Law Olmstead designed public parks like New York's Central Park and Boston's "Emerald Necklace' to provide nearby nature for human recreation as well as ecological services such as water management and wildlife habitat etc. This began the transition from the English

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<sup>13</sup> Unitec Institute of Technology, *About us - Mt Albert Campus*, ed. John Correll, Unitec, [http://www.unitec.ac.nz/aboutus/campuses-and-maps/mt-albert-campus/mt-albert-campus\\_home.cfm](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/aboutus/campuses-and-maps/mt-albert-campus/mt-albert-campus_home.cfm) (accessed January 20, 2014).

landscape style park with a focus on aesthetics through to parks with a stronger emphasis on ecological function.

Parks have become understood to be part of the spatial network of open green space and vegetation which makes up the **urban forest**, with many functions, including pollution and storm water absorption, air cooling, ecological habitat and as access corridors, as well as the already acknowledged human psychological and recreation benefits.

22. Contemporary urban ecology and models of green infrastructure planning<sup>14</sup> suggest that the Unitec campus is a valuable green 'patch' in the matrix of patches and corridors in central west Auckland. Oakley Creek, Unitec, Chamberlain golf course, Western Springs Park, MoTaT and Meola Reef form a network of greenspace with multiple values including ecological, recreational, heritage and transit functions. Earlier theorists such as Ian McHarg, in his book *Design with Nature*, discussed the principle of planning urban open space with reference to natural processes,<sup>15</sup> and advocates the use of mapping as a tool for analysis in this regard. The green network around Unitec can be seen to relate well to the landform and water catchments systems of Oakley and Meola Creeks when viewed on this aerial photo.

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<sup>14</sup> Johan Colding, "The Role of Ecosystem Services in Contemporary Urban Planning," in *Urban Ecology: Patterns, Processes and Applications*, ed. Jari Niemela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1992).

23. Contemporary aerial mapping technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), enable Landscape Architects to analyse the landscape to avoid erasure of the underlying ecological systems. Forest clearance by Maori and early European settlers and subsequent pastoral farming practices removed vegetation for the most part, indiscriminately, without consideration of sensitive soils, slopes, water patterns or vegetation habitat for birds and other fauna. Mapping technology now enables new models for farming and subdivision design, such as integrated catchment management and conservation subdivision models.

We can see that

Colonial views of exploiting the land can be seen to have been challenged and replaced by a desire to bring nature back to the city, evidenced in the trends to plant native spaces in both gardens and public space, and also to improve ecological function seen in the practice of revegetation of areas such as riparian margins, wetlands and steep slopes to promote functions such as animal habitat, air cleansing and water management rather than cultivating comparatively low productivity grass swards.

These practices may be conceptualized as society's intent to provide 'therapy' for the landscape, mitigating or healing the damage done in the past, to restore a healthy ecology and water quality.

Jane Amidon spoke of this

“There is an increasing tendency to use plant communities as biological and cultural agents of change on the land; no longer mute form in a spatial or graphic composition, plant species are selected as much for their ability to alter aspects of the existing environment – be it contaminated soils, degraded water systems, eroding shorelines, polluted air, or levels of solar radiation – as for their visual and structural characteristics.”

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So here are some of the retrofitted features of the 21<sup>st</sup> century campus:

- **Wetland ponds – designed by Isthmus group LA and awarded in 1992 by NZILA**
- **Native plantings privileged over exotic**
- **Riparian planting on the stream in addition to the actual stormwater ponds**
- **Community gardens – opened up radically for local families and groups to tend**
- **Pa harekeke flax plantings for the weaving courses in association with the Marae**

### **Sustainable campus framework:**

In 2011 Unitec adopted a Sustainability Policy, which has provided impetus for the consideration of campus environmental planning and management, and has provided funding for several research projects, including the Unitec Arboretum.

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Amidon, *Radical Landscapes, Reinventing Outdoor Space* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001).

## The Arboretum

Components - heritage trees, botanically rare, notable specimens, memorial plantings

- Documentation
- Labeling – top trees are the most significant in terms of either size, botanical or visual values and also accessible for public viewing.
- Website – to make info accessible to public and encourage engagement. I have had 2 emails about the trees
- Planning planting and community engagement –

The transitions from the farm to the farm / park of the hospital, to the educational park can be characterized primarily by new programmes in architecture and landscape architecture, followed by development and refinement of those programmes, echoing the concerns and goals of the day. Planting, plant growth and plant removal has changed the landscape significantly at each era, but that underlying open farm park grassland is still quite a dominant feel to the place.

This is the radical new Masterplan released in the Herald newspaper just last week:

A housing **SUBDIVISION!!!** What will the next era of **development** value? The Auckland Plan seeks densification, strong public transport, walkability and green networks for recreation and storm water management. I fear we will get a standard subdivision with thin traces of green space the only remnants of the luxury of the education park we have today. It will make the land privatized and locked up again.

Consideration of current models of Urban Ecology has provided insights into the landscape design processes apparent on the present day Unitec campus. The remaining 19<sup>th</sup> century park features of the hospital era, such as green open space with mature trees, lawns and gardens

remain well regarded by staff and students today, along with the elevation, views and airing courtyard features of the architecture. Productive gardens continue to be maintained, providing educational experiences for students rather than therapy. Retrofitted plantings provide new contributions to the wider Auckland urban forest. The therapy offered to patients in the hospital era is perhaps now applied to the landscape, in the revegetation and management of waterways, exotic pest control, along with promotion and interpretation of the Arboretum to staff, students and the public.

Attitudes to the landscape have altered significantly in translation between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The campus landscape is now valued not only as a resource to be exploited for the therapy of patients, and an artifact to be viewed for its visual values, but more as a resource itself needing therapy, restoration and nurture, in order to best provide ecological and cultural services.

Thank you.

Closure of hospital

**It is outside the scope of this paper to review the reasons for the decline and ultimate closure of Carrington hospital along with most other psychiatric hospitals in NZ, except to say that it was a paradigm shift in both treatment with the advent of antipsychotic drugs and in health funding politics....**