



Secrets of the Land

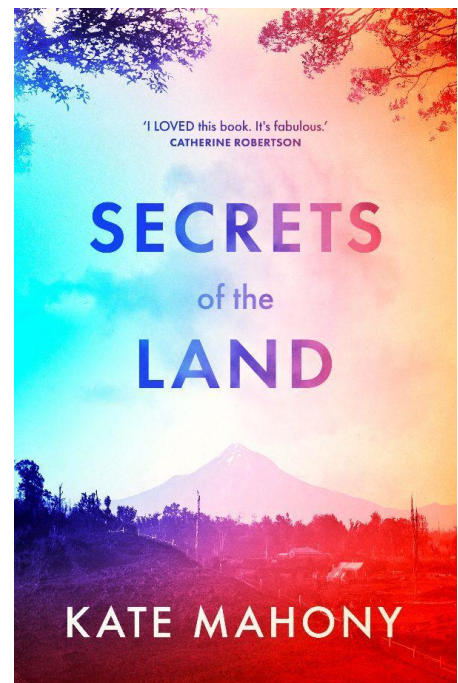
Kate Mahony

Published by Cloud Ink, 1 September 2023, RRP \$29.99

A debut novel from New Zealand writer Kate Mahony combines historical fact with vibrant fiction to create an engrossing read.

Imogen Maguire is bewildered when she's accosted in a Melbourne Street by a mysterious stranger who says her grandfather in New Zealand needs her help. But her grandfather is dead, isn't he? A former journalist, Imogen decides to investigate and travels to Taranaki where she finds that her grandfather is very much alive, and someone is trying to frighten the old man off his farm.

A long shadow hangs over her grandfather's land stretching from 1864, when two young Irishmen join the British army in its fight against the Taranaki Māori, to 1975, when Imogen's grandparents arrive fleeing trouble in Ireland. Their daughter Aoife, Imogen's mother, hates the new country her parents have brought her to, yet she knows it is impossible to return to Ireland. The Irish man she encounters sheltering in a hedge is as lost as she is. And why does Matiu, her one friend, warn her off exploring the swamp?



Ghosts from the past haunt the present, and the land holds its secrets close. But some secrets won't stay hidden.

Praise:

What seems to be a novel about generations of a family swiftly becomes much deeper and more intriguing. Kate Mahony deftly weaves past and present, reality and the supernatural into a richly textured story of the effect of colonisation and war on communities, families and individual identity. An engrossing, wonderful read. – Catherine Robertson

Secrets of the Land draws parallels between the domination of Ireland by the English in the 19th century and colonialism in Taranaki, New Zealand. The stories range from 1864 to 2018 through characters who fight over farming rights, past hurts and secrets, and those who try to make peace with the present. Kate Mahony is a skilled writer and blends well-researched historical facts with vibrant, believable fiction to create an engrossing novel. – Sandra Arnold

Author note:

'The novel began long ago as a short story in which the central character was a young Irish girl whose family had fled to New Zealand to escape the trouble her father had got into in Ireland in the 1970s. Later I began writing the novel based on the same characters but then set the story in three different time periods on the same piece of land. The character of the 1860s period was inspired by a real soldier. He was an Irishman who was the brother of my maternal great grandmother and had been in the Taranaki Militia during the New Zealand Wars.

Once the story began to unfold I researched the history of the New Zealand Wars in Taranaki, along with that of Ireland twenty years on from the start of the Great Famine . Throughout the novel, I also went back and forth to many sources – from stories I heard in Ireland to Te Ao Māori experts and farmers I know.

The major themes of the novel are secrets (as in the title!), finding family, history, guilt, and reparation and redemption. In some respects, the farm is another character.'

About the author:

Kate Mahony grew up on a farm in Hawera, South Taranaki, one of nine children. She worked as a journalist in London in her 20s, and when she returned to New Zealand, she worked for the *Wellington Evening Post* now known as *The Post*. Later on, Kate tutored in media studies and journalism at Victoria University.



She is a long-time writer of short stories with an MA in Creative Writing from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University of Wellington. Her work has been published in anthologies and literary journals internationally and in New Zealand. Most recently, her short story *Respect* was longlisted for the 2022 Commonwealth short story award.

Secrets of the Land is her debut novel.

Kate lives in Wellington with her husband. They have two adult daughters, and two grandchildren. (Author photograph by Amelia Barton.)

Kate is available for interview

For media queries, review and giveaway copies, extracts and interviews, please contact publicist Karen McKenzie, 027 693

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