

SECRETS OF THE LAND by Kate Mahony

COVER BLURB

Imogen Maguire is bewildered when in 2018 she is 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.

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