

# Prism

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## from the Editor

It's now been over five months since Franci and I moved from Masterton to Christchurch.

Christchurch certainly lives up to its reputation as New Zealand's Garden City. 150 years ago, early European settlers bemoaned how drab the area was. Being people of action, they decided to do something about it. Around 1860, they set aside five hundred acres for a large central park and planted oak and chestnut trees around the perimeter. Hagley Park was born. And thanks to constant upkeep and improvement, we now have a stunning tree-filled area right next-door to the central business district.

Despite being only ten minutes' walk from the Park, our move has certainly meant more city than garden. But we've brought it upon ourselves. There's work, play, music, movies, books, friends, family, church – and of course, like hundreds of other city-dwellers, we said yes to it all.

Does it have to be this way? Is it simply the fact that there's so much available, and it's hard to say no? Or is there something else about the city that draws people into its busy pace? Why do so many urbanites secretly (or not so secretly) want to find a nice place in the country? Another interesting question: why is Paradise called the *Garden of Eden*, but Heaven is a city – the New Jerusalem?

Originally this issue's theme was going to be "urban versus rural", but we soon decided it shouldn't really be a fight, and we hope the magazine begins to show why.

Once again, we welcome your feedback. We'd love to hear if reading the magazine pushes you over some brink and *you* decide to move into or away from the country. If you'd like to contribute or subscribe, visit our website or contact us.

So have a good urban-and-rural read. Happy 2007!



We welcome feedback, so feel free to write to the editor – casual or formal, positive or negative, short or long.



*The real Australia?*

# Just a big country town

When I was small, my family lived in the country and my father worked at a bank. Each weekday, he dressed in a short-sleeved shirt, a tie, dress shorts, a belt and long socks. If the weather grew cold, he added a vest. A few years later he was transferred to a city of close to a million people, with the State capital sprawling just an hour away down the highway, and we went with him. I remember asking, “Will there be real traffic jams?” But my new school friends derided my quaint regional vocabulary; I said *port* when I meant *schoolbag*, *tea* when I meant *dinner*, and *togs* when I meant *swimming costume*. And my father put away the long socks and wore only trousers and long sleeves. He even donned a suit in winter.

At some stage in their education, Australian schoolchildren are required to write a composition about what a typical Australian might be. Fortunately for the young essayist, there is a commonwealth of stereotypes there for the critiquing, and they nearly all have the bush as their setting. You know them already: Akubras, Driza-Bone, jackaroos, bushrangers and everything Banjo Patterson rhymed about. This sits uneasily with the more recent truth that Australia is now one of the most urbanized nations in the world.<sup>1</sup> While we exhort international visitors to head to the Outback to see the “real Australia”, one in five of us lives in Sydney. And so the paradox at the heart of any meaningful discussion about Australian identity is that, while nearly all of our well-used images are grounded in the dirt and fields and heat of rural Australia, very few Australians live there.

It used to be different. In 1933, more than a quarter of working Australians were working on the land, engaged in some sort of farm employment. But the Second World War and its aftermath brought industry, jobs and, importantly, immigration to the cities – this figure had halved to an eighth by 1955. Now less than one per cent of the population lives in the Outback<sup>2</sup> and 90 per cent of working Australians live in the cities and major centres.<sup>3</sup> Pundits and television lifestyle programs make much of the recent sea- and tree-change phenomena, in which city workers eschew the rat race and anonymity of the capital cities, trading them for the relative peace and community of small beachside and mountain towns. It’s happening, to be sure, but these parties tend to be neither young nor entrepreneurial; couples nearing the end of their working lives rather than the growing families that bring with them the most meaningful investment for

a regional town – the prospect of renewal.

The English writer Anthony Trollope toured Australia in the late 1800s and visited a number of country towns in New South Wales, noting the “look of scattered, straggling incompleteness, and an air of disappointment, as though men were beginning to fear that their Eden was not becoming that city of Elysium which they had fondly anticipated.” (He did, however, note favourably the superior facilities of Australian hotels, almost all of which had a bathroom: “I wish I could convey this information to hotel-keepers in England.”)<sup>4</sup> Fast forward a hundred years and a bit: farmers are in the midst of the worst drought in over a century, banks and building societies are closing and specialist medical services are moving away. In the country, it’s harder to open a bank account and it’s harder to have a baby. Some towns have rediscovered their niche – there are markets for heritage tourism, wineries and smaller-scale agriculture that didn’t exist fifty years ago – and are thriving. Others struggle.

I fear that I have painted something rather grim. But take heart: it rained this Christmas and commodities are booming. And it is also true that, despite any earnest advertising campaigns to the contrary, the fondest insult an Australian can direct at their capital city (State, Territory or Commonwealth) is that “it’s just a big country town”. They mean it’s somewhere friendly, where you can bump into people you know and where you are greeted in the summer with, “Hot enough for ya?” And I’m glad that I was born in a little town where there are never any traffic jams and where the men wore shorts and long socks. I come from a place and it’s mine and it’s Australia.

*Deborah Evans was born in Gympie, Queensland, Australia (pop. 33,000).*

<sup>1</sup> “Urbanization”, *Wikipedia*, <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbanization> Accessed 22 December 2006.

<sup>2</sup> D. Woodward, “The National Party”, in D. Woodward, A. Parkin, J. Summers (eds), *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia*, Longman, South Melbourne, 1999, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Characteristics of Wage and Salary Earners in Regions of Australia*, 2002–03, Cat. No. 6261.0.55.001, <http://www.abs.gov.au>, Accessed 22 December 2006.

<sup>4</sup> A. Trollope, “Country Towns, Railways and Roads”, in P. D. Edwards and R. B. Joyce (eds), *Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1967, pp. 262–263.

# Land values

Farmers may struggle with issues like fart tax, city dwellers may complain about rates, but one issue common to rural areas, urban areas and the bits in between is how to use land. It's something everyone needs to think about – politicians, councillors, landowners, tenants, adults and children – because in some way or another we all interact with the land. We all live on it. And we should know how to live on it properly. It's really an ethical issue, one that requires careful attention.

We don't have to go very far to find a working definition of the term "land" for our discussion. The book of Genesis (always a good place to start) has a clear one. In the first chapter we find the narrative of the creation account. It can be divided into two sections: the days of forming and the days of filling. God spends the first two days of creation forming day and night and the sky. On day three He commands, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear."

Then God names those entities. He calls that dry ground "land", or "earth" in some translations, and those gathered waters "seas". And there's our definition. "Land" is the dry ground. Note that later in the chapter it is clear that God adds to the land vegetation, animals and man. They are distinct from the land, but inextricably bound to it.

Throughout human history, that bond has been cherished by mankind. It still is. Men and women everywhere have understood the critical importance of land to their survival and enrichment. Often it has been a resource to die for. Not all land is valued equally, however. Some land is more equal than others. The value we place on a particular tract of land depends on its perceived qualities. If it's fertile, it has economic significance. If it's pretty, it induces us to feelings of wonder and awe. If it holds memories, it has sentimental value. If it occupies a prime location, it's the envy of have-nots.

There would be very few people who would say that man has always placed the perfect value on land. So where exactly do we find out the true value of land? Well, who better to explain than God himself? After all, He made it.

His word sums it up neatly at the conclusion of the initial creation account in Genesis: "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." In fact, the adjective "good" is used seven times as the Lord performs a self-evaluation of His handiwork throughout the creation process. Now if God made the land and He says it's good, surely it would follow that that should be our attitude. We, too, should see the land as something good, something valuable.

But there's more to it than that. The creation actually reveals God's glory. Psalm 19 tells us that "The heavens declare the glory of God", while in the New Testament Paul explains that "since the creation of the world God's

invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made" (Romans 1:20). Clearly creation, land included, is important to the Lord.

It's so important that God takes great pains to ensure its preservation. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6 that God cares an awful lot about His earth: "See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all His splendor was dressed like one of these." Just take a look out your window and you'll see what Jesus means.

So, in light of all this, how should we, as humans, value land? It is vital to understand at this point to whom the land actually belongs. The easiest way to look at it is that the land, as part of the earth as a whole, is on loan to us from God. We've already seen from Genesis that He created it. It's His. But in Psalm 115:16 we are let in on a surprise: "The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth He has given to man."

Yet this is not a gift to be squandered, because in Romans 8:21 we learn "that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God". When God returns in final judgment, He won't only be coming for us, He will also be coming to redeem His beautiful creation. "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." (Romans 8:19) The land has been given to us as a gift, but it's a gift that will one day need to be returned to its Maker.

Think of God as the ultimate landlord. In Leviticus 25, when giving property laws to the Israelites, God explains that "the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants". We must remember that we are effectively visitors in the land we're given.

God has told us what He want us to do with His property. In Genesis 1 He commands Adam and Eve, the first humans, to "fill the earth and subdue it". He grants man power over the land. But like all power, this power comes with responsibility. Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden to "work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15). Other translations use the phrase "keep it". The authority given is not tyrannical but caring.

So when New Zealanders are confronted by issues like climate change or urban sprawl or ownership of the foreshore and seabed, there is a lot to consider. We have always placed a fairly high value on land, but what has dictated that? Has it been its economic potential, its aesthetic value, or something spiritual? Often it has been a combination of all three, and rarely has it been an appreciation of the land as a gift from God. A shame really, considering it belongs to Him.

*Tim Sterne was born in Manukau City (pop. 330,000). Jonathan Marinus was born in Lower Hutt (pop. 75,000).*

# Musings on urban/rural theology

Town or country?

Most people have a strong leaning one way or the other. I spent most of my growing-up years on a small farm just out of Levin, and loved it, so I suppose I'm a country boy at heart – no mega-urban sprawl for me!

But then I got thinking. What would God choose, were he given the choice? Would he prefer the wild sounds of the great outdoors, or the vibrancy of inner-city life? Depending on whom you ask, you'll probably get different answers.

To some, it would be an obvious choice for God. He'd choose rural, they claim. Away from the city. Back to nature. After all, God has revealed himself and his glory in his natural creation. And rural is as close to natural as you can get these days.

Besides, look at the alternative. Our urban environments seem to be dominated by the mighty modern townhouse – an invention that comes with as much asphalt as possible, to reduce the quantity of time-consuming green stuff we used to play on. Oh, there's the odd bush, shrub or flowerbed here and there for the sake of good looks, but not really a lot of opportunity for God's glory to shine. And if that still isn't enough evidence, remember that it was on a *garden* that God set his stamp of approval (and called "good") when he made the world, not a city.

Be that as it may, I'm not ready to be persuaded quite yet.

You see, while it's true that God dwelt in a garden in the beginning, that's not the end of the story. When we move forward to the time of King David, God chooses to dwell among his people in a *city* – in Jerusalem. Now if God wasn't into cities, I'm sure he could have had David set up the tabernacle (and later, the temple) in some suitable and secluded rural location. But no, the ark which symbolised God's presence is enthroned in a city.

Jerusalem isn't a temporary storage location, either. God isn't just grudgingly putting up with the city until Jesus returns to restore a sin-ruined creation. Rather, God even goes so far as to use the imagery of a city to *picture* the new creation (Revelation 21). The new Jerusalem will be pleasant to the eye, perfectly symmetrical, adorned with precious jewels; it will have streets of pure gold and will shine with the glory of God.



Chicago: Orthanc or Minas Tirith?

But what if you find yourself *preferring* rural, even though God is heading towards a city? Well, perhaps one of the main reasons some of us struggle to appreciate the *beauty* of the city is because all too often our cities lack beauty. Our building codes are littered with rule after rule, guarding us against fires and earthquakes, telling us how many car parks we need to provide, but requirements for beauty take a definite back seat. We're good at functional, not so good at beautiful – here in New Zealand, anyway. They tell me that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but, since I'm not a trendy relativist, that doesn't wash on me.

J. R. R. Tolkien does ugly cities well, as any beholder of beauty ought to acknowledge. Take Bree, the industrialised Orthanc or the occupied Shire. Cities whose soul has been reduced to progress, efficiency and the mighty dollar. But Tolkien also gives us cities of unparalleled beauty. Places that thrill the imagination, even when adapted for the big screen. The grandeur of Minas Tirith. The splendour of Lothlórien. The Shire after the cleanup has taken place. Paradise was Lost. But then Paradise is Restored.

And it's Paradise Restored that we see at the end of Revelation and that helps answer the question we began with. At the heart of the new city is God's throne, and flowing from that throne is the river of the water of life, with the tree of life from the original Eden flanking its banks. Creation begins with a garden, and ends in a garden city. God may start rural, but he ends urban.

*Andrew Nugteren was born in Stratford (pop. 5,000).*

# Workers unite, farmers fight!

I've usually felt no desire to study the history of New Zealand. The country is too young, and it seems like nothing *happened* here. But recently Tim Sterne put me onto the *Penguin History of New Zealand* and its account of the waterside workers' strikes in Wellington, 1913.<sup>1</sup> Soon after I began reading I was thinking, "This is almost as good as fiction! They should make it into a movie."

In the eight years from about 1905, tensions within industrial relations took New Zealand from relative peace to the brink of civil war.<sup>2</sup>

In the early 1900s, industry was more or less peaceful. Most workers were happy being part of the 1894 Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (ICAA). Its role was to solve arguments between employer and worker in a "let's talk about this" fashion. And in 1905 the Act was modified, making strikes illegal.

One of the first real tests of the Act came in 1908, with the "tucker-time strike". Seven coal miners in Blackball (a small town near Greymouth) started protesting about their lunch break: 15 minutes maximum. Words weren't getting them very far, so one day they simply decided to stop for a full half hour. Their bosses promptly sacked them. The Blackball Coal Miners' Union, who had registered under the new Act, responded by going against their registration commitments and calling a full strike. It lasted until the mine owners relented, gave them their 30 minutes tucker time, and reinstated the sacked men.

But there was more at stake than a half-hour lunch break. The moral of the story, for the union-lovers and

socialists, was that strikes work far better than any arbitration.<sup>3</sup>

From about this point on, more and more workers left the ICAA's arbitration system. They wanted action, not some paperwork-swamped committee. Many joined the much more militant New Zealand Federation of Labour (known as the "Red Feds" because of their almost-communistic ideals).

In 1912 both sides turned up the heat. Gold miners in Waihi began a months-long strike that ended in big fights between workers and "scabs" (non-union labourers called in to replace strikers). Before the strike ended, ten percent of the country's police were called in, one policeman and one "scab" were shot, and a unionist was beaten to death.

It seems that neither side had learned their lesson, for during 1913 a total of about 15,000 workers were involved in strikes. In May, a group of 40 Wellington shipbuilders cancelled their ICAA registration and joined the Wellington Waterside Workers' Union, which soon demanded a good number of bonuses for them. Their bosses weren't very impressed with the Workers' Union, and promptly cancelled their travelling allowance. The shipbuilders went on strike, of course. Striking didn't help the already-edgy vibe, so before long 1500 waterfront workers stopped work to have a union meeting. The employers said this broke their contract, and called a lockout (a kind of strike, but started by the employers: "You're no longer working *here*, thank you!").

So the Wellington Wharves were shut. Auckland and



Lyttelton waterside workers joined the strike in sympathy, and soon all New Zealand ports were closed.

Wellington workers broke through the barriers barring them from the wharves and, in the understated words of the day's *Dominion*, "The demeanour of the strike had completely changed." Riots began. Shop windows were smashed. Strikers were told they couldn't use the Basin Reserve for a protest meeting, so they responded by smashing down its main gates.

Like the Waihi strike, these new strikes weren't really about better hours or more pay; they were a large-scale power play. (In fact, "British sailors in port were sympathetic until they learned the strike was not over wages or hours, but over a matter of principle.<sup>4</sup>) Who would have the say – the workers or their bosses? Unions or employers? Socialists or capitalists?

Now the government started to get serious. Huge numbers of police were called in, but were overwhelmed by the thousands involved in the skirmishes. Prime Minister William Massey, who was not at all friendly with the unions, called in over a thousand farmers to act as both substitute workers and special police. At the very least the farmers were armed with heavy batons, and most came on horseback. Tension mounted.

Auckland took similar action, adding secret gatherings to the mix. President of the Auckland Farmers' Union, D. H. Lusk, sent a confidential message to all nearby farmers, calling for secret meetings to be held in every country centre, to "enrol all those who consent to take an active part in the work abandoned by the waterside workers".

Up and down the country, the addition of farmers seemed only to fuel the fire. Wellington's Royal Tiger Hotel had housed some of them and, hearing of this, strikers smashed all its windows. More riots began. Firearms started to appear. The British Navy's *HMS Psyche* was even seen threateningly polishing her big guns.

At one point a *Dominion* journalist, Pat Lawlor, witnessed gunfire going in both directions, but Police Commissioner John Cullen, very much in favour of the special police, censored his story. The newspaper's editor removed all reference to the farmers' use of guns.

Finally, after clashes in all three major ports, and events knife-edging between tense unrest and all-out combat, the unionists were defeated. Police began to arrest strike leaders as soon as they felt it was wise. The unions conceded defeat on December the 19th.

Defeated in the strikers' battle, the unionists turned

their energies to political action. Some of the key leaders of the 1913 strikes, having "learned the hard lesson that the labour movement could not achieve its goals through industrial action alone," went on to help form the New Zealand Labour Party in 1916.<sup>5</sup>

Personally, while I disagree with the ethics of large unions, I believe both sides went too far. In an effort to unite workers against employers, many of the strike leaders delivered some very militant speeches. As for leaders in government, perhaps they had to be decisive, but they knew the farmers were already biased against the unions. It was not asking for peaceful resolution to call them in – and when they rode away, it was with even greater dislike of the union-oriented city workers. This was a dislike that would help shape New Zealand politics and town-country relations for many decades.

*Ben Hoyt was born in Atoka, Tennessee, USA (pop. 5,000).*

1 Apart from the *Penguin History*, I gleaned much of the content for this article from the first essay in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand* by Melanie Nolan.

2 A rather weighty claim, but one that's well justified by both events and sources.

3 Partly because *Prism* is a magazine and not a journal, and partly because I'm not a political historian, I'm probably over-simplifying here. But dig into Nolan's book if you want the full picture.

4 From *Wellington: A Capital Century* by David McGill, p. 46.

5 From Prime Minister Helen Clark's speech at the launch of Melanie Nolan's *Revolution* (<http://tinyurl.com/23l3a9>).



# Xerxes can't sleep

*I sit beside the fire and think  
Of people long ago,  
And people who will see a world  
That I shall never know.*

*But all the while I sit and think  
Of times there were before,  
I listen for returning feet  
And voices at the door.*

— from Tolkien's song "I sit beside the fire and think"

I'm a lazy writer. It was almost a year ago that I spoke to the editor of a superb magazine about history. "Most people don't like history," he said, and I may have heard the word "boring" in that conversation as well. What did he mean? History? Boring?

Do you mean most people find the incessant rattling off of dates and place names more like a lullaby than a gripping drama? You wouldn't be alone if you thought this. King Xerxes from the book of Esther had insomnia problems, so he got out a history book to read. But, before you take out a prosaic history book as a last resort on a sleepless night, hear me out. I might be able to persuade you otherwise.

It seems the reason most people despise history is two-fold. Firstly, there's the problem of the classroom. It's a hot Friday afternoon. The P. E. class is hitting little green balls with sticks on the tennis court. The art class is sitting in the shade of trees sketching. The school band is rockin' it in the room down the hall. In the Science lab they're blowing stuff up. In Bio they're dissecting worms. And you're sweating in the heat, surrounded by sheets of paper with tiny writing, hearing the monotone of your history teacher telling you something about 450,000 people signing the Solemn League and Covenant in Ireland in September 1912. You can't count that number on your fingers *and* toes. How did they make the number so exact? A fly buzzes over to your desk. You swat it. Ooo, fly guts. Huh? What was that? No wonder you hate history.

You see, for most people history is nothing but a boring class to be put up with. One must regurgitate scraps of information onto an exam paper at the end of the year. It's dead. It's boring. And no wonder.

Secondly, there's the question of usefulness. As far as I understand (forgive me if I'm wrong), there's always been a war waging between those in the Science/Mathematics, white coat camp and those in the Literature/History,

mismatched motley camp. Without Science where would we be? We wouldn't know what those fluffy clouds are, or how our digestive system functions, or what chemicals we should mix to cause destruction. And how could we count without Mathematics? Or determine the height of a tree without having to climb it with a measuring tape? Or figure out the frequencies for musical notes? We'd be lost. We wouldn't have been able to determine the diameter of this earth. We would have missed His design stamped all over creation.

Who needs scribbles on a page anyway? Why analyze novels? Why all those essays? What a waste of breath! Who cares about the theme of a poem? Or who won the battle and why? It's not going to help us, is it?

These are rhetorical questions. I don't have all the answers. But where would we be without the written word? How could I understand human nature without Leo Tolstoy? How could I laugh at social quirks without Jane Austin? How can I understand the present and the future if I can't understand the past? And besides, there's more to this earth than matter. There are people. They call it the humanities for a reason.

History is like a large palace with a hallway so long you can't quite see the other end. And there are doors in this hallway. You open one and find yourself hiding behind a trench with a hard, green hat on your head (like one we have at home), dodging bullets in World War II. "Phew," you think as you close the door quietly behind you. "Lucky I missed that one!"

You enter another door. A candle flickers in the room. The wind rattles the windowpanes. A woman in a hat with a feather in it is standing in the line in front of you. "What are they signing? Oh yeah, it's that thing I learnt about in history class once ... the Solemn League and Covenant." You peer at one man. He has blood dribbling down his arms. He's signing in his blood. You see numerous red

signatures amongst the black ink ones. “This is real,” you think, as you quickly make for the door. “They mean this ...”

The 78th door down the left side takes you into the opulent court of Queen Elizabeth the First. Your corset is so tight you can’t breath. Or, if you’re a man, you look down at your hideously tight pants and pointy shoes. You meet her. You experience this life, if only for a moment, and begin to understand the politics and ins-and-outs of her court.

Further down this hallway, in another room, you find yourself in a hot middle-eastern town. Kids are playing in the street. A group of men with long beards stand talking in the market pace. A merchant comes by leading a camel packed with bags. “Smell-y!” you think, turning away. You walk through the streets. You see bread rising in the sun. You enter a house. There’s a workshop at the side and a man is crafting something with wood. He looks up and smiles.

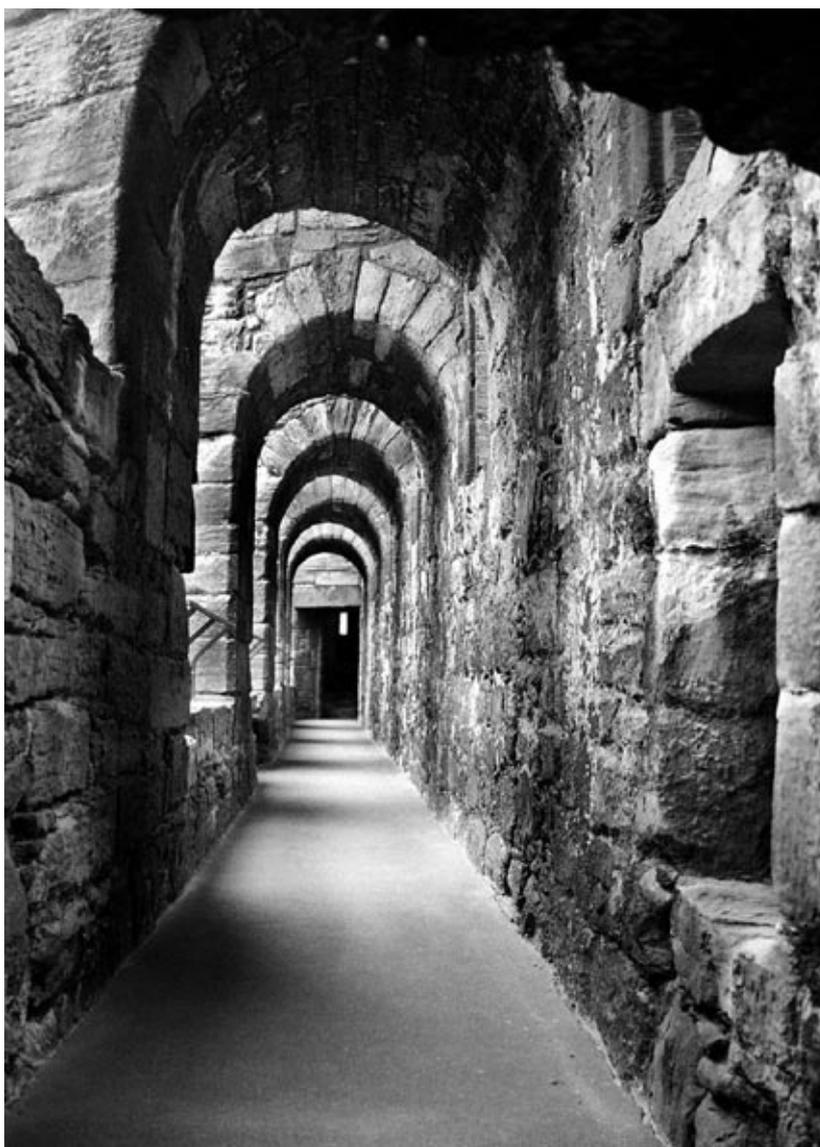
You see, it’s through history that the reality of those crosses on a hill hits me. The darkness that night. The tombs breaking open. It’s true. It happened. He walked this place. Some time *in history*.

I’m not trying to set history up as number one, or even close to it. But like Xerxes, when I read history I find myself in the middle of something big. I can’t sleep. Who first owned my 1924 piano? Who else’s fingers danced along the keys? How much coal has my old bucket held? Who else sat in that chair or used that old phone? What was it like to be aboard Sir Frances Drake’s pirate sh ... I mean, *exploration* ship? History is full of stories. It’s

about people. People who have sweated and toiled and laboured, worked the land, built empires and broken down strongholds. Who were they? Why did they do that? What are their stories, their histories?

I always thought I should have been born in another time. My costume box is always growing. Old things clutter our house. But I shall have to remain content with sitting by the fire and thinking of people long ago.

*Lauretta Duinkerke was born in Hamilton (pop. 190,000).*



# Gardening with Madame Whitefly

## WATERING, FEEDINGS, PESTS AND DISEASES

What a windy beginning to our new growing season! Hopefully this hasn't deterred you from planting out your vegetable patch. Prolonged periods of wind offer a few challenges for the new seedlings (and the novice gardener). Tender seedlings can often be stressed and slow to grow in a unsheltered site. They may actually be burnt by the wind, due to the low humidity and rapid loss of ground moisture. Be sure to water them well and often during these unseasonal windy patches.

Various vegetables can only be planted once at the beginning of summer, as our season is quite short compared to how long it takes them to ripen. These include tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkin, potatoes, sweetcorn, zucchini, celery, runner beans, capsicum and melons.

Throughout the growing season (till around the end of February), plant successive rows of lettuces, cabbages, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots and snap peas. This way you will be sure to have fresh veges all summer and autumn long.

Slugs and snails can be a problem, completely demolishing tender seedlings by chewing through the main stem. They come out at night when you least expect them! You can spray your vegetables with an insecticide, or lay pelleted bait around your plants (preferably under stones, or in small lengths of plastic tubing to deter birds, pets and children from eating them). You can also the kill snails and slugs by dropping them into a bucket of salty water. Remove garden debris, loose piles of stones, leaves and old weeds – they may hide in these during the day.

Neem Oil once you notice the butterflies around. (Derris Dust and Neem Oil are natural insecticides, great for killing and deterring aphids and other sap-sucking insects.)

Aphids love to feed off tender new shoots on all sorts of plants. They will pierce a hole in the outside wall of the stem and sit and suck up the sap, depriving the plant of its energy source.

Mildew is a white mold that grows on cucumbers, cabbages and pumpkins. It can defoliate (kill the leaves on) an entire plant quite quickly. Remove infected leaves and throw them in the rubbish, not the compost bin. Spray the plants with a fungicide or a 50/50 mixture of trim milk and water. This milk and water mix will need to be reapplied after each rainfall.

Remember to feed and water your garden regularly. It surprises me that even experienced gardeners forget to provide these basic requirements on a regular basis throughout the growing season. Developing plants will deplete the soil very quickly, and to ensure a steady rate of growth it is essential to replenish the supply.

A general fertiliser such as Nitrophoska Blue can be spread on top of the soil, worked in with a trowel and then watered in. Ensure the fertiliser doesn't rest against any stems, as it may burn through the plants, effectively killing them! Reapply fertiliser at least once a month, throwing on about two handfuls per square metre. Compost makes a great mulch between plants, and provides renewed nutrients and a moisture retention layer.

A long, slow water once a week is an effective way to ensure that the roots of all plants are kept moist and encouraged to grow deeply. A strong root system anchors the plant in place and will withstand the effects of wind far better. I have a regular pattern in my gardens of systematically watering each bed of flowers or vegetables once a week for at least an hour, even if it rains during that week.

The ideal time to water is early morning. This allows the foliage to dry quickly and helps prevent bacterial diseases and mildews. If I can't arrange my day to accommodate this I'll water in the early evening. Never water during the heat of the day – it can burn the plants as it dries (it's also a gross waste of a valuable resource, with a substantial amount evaporating almost immediately).

Next issue I'll look at making and maintaining a compost stack. Remember to keep those gardening questions coming in to [gardening@prismmagazine.com](mailto:gardening@prismmagazine.com).

*Janette Bartlett was born in Nelson (pop. 45,000).*



White butterfly caterpillars are also a real nuisance. The butterfly appears midsummer and lays her eggs under the leaves of many vegetable plants, especially cabbages. The maturing plant is a convenient supermarket for rapidly chewing caterpillars! The small holes left in the outer leaves are not the problem, it's the honeycomb effect in the middle of cabbages (as well as the resultant defecation!). Sprinkle Derris Dust over the seedlings and larger plants, or spray them with

# Eastside, Westside or countryside?

In 1975, John Denver released his number one single, “Thank God I’m a Country Boy”. At the time, rural New Zealand rugby players would have been justified in singing along – the code was flourishing in the back blocks, and being a farmer wasn’t a hindrance to one’s career. Plenty of hicks were making the All Blacks. But this is 2007, and things are different. The fact remains: these days you have a far greater chance of making it to the top level playing town rugby than country rugby. Sad but true.

Famous All Black sides like the 1905 “Originals” and the “Invincibles” of the 1930s contained a good proportion of farmers. This was still the case for the great All Black sides of later decades, right up until the ’80s. Take some of the big names in New Zealand rugby folklore: Colin “Pine Tree” Meads hailed from Te Kuiti in the heart of the King Country and was a member of the Waitete Rugby Football Club from ’54 to ’75; “The Boot”, a.k.a. Don Clarke, played his club rugby in a small Waikato settlement called Kereone.

But current All Black stars play their club rugby in the city. Jerry Collins, Richie McCaw, Joe Rokocoko, Dan Carter – they all belong to town clubs.

The explanation for this transformation lies in the way players gain selection for the All Blacks. Fifty years ago you could be picked for a provincial side like King Country straight out of club rugby, and the next step was the All Blacks. Pretty simple: club, province, country. Jump forward to 2006 and the process has become slightly more complicated. Now you are selected from club rugby to play provincial rugby, but that could be first, second or third division NPC. And if you want to take the step up to Super 14 you’d better be playing for a first division side. Once you’ve been picked for Super 14 you have a chance to be chosen for the All Blacks. Club, province, Super 14, All Blacks.

Anyone notice the difference? That’s right, Super 14. And it’s the result of something that happened in the mid-’90s: professionalism. The game changed forever when the almighty dollar began running New Zealand rugby, and the effects are intriguing.

Put simply, the opportunities now lie in the city, not the country. “Most All Blacks are in Super 14 franchises with urban bases – country players go to those urban centres,” says Brent Anderson, NZRU Community Rugby Manager. If you want to get noticed you have to be playing for a top team, and top teams are based in the city.

But should it come as a surprise for a professional to

have to move to the city to further his career? Not at all. The drift is there in all professions. Doctors, lawyers, accountants and the rest all have to move to the city if they want to make it to the big time.

It’s not only a result of professionalism but also a symptom of societal change in New Zealand. Statistics New Zealand claims that between 1881 and 2001 the population of urban New Zealand “increased by over 1,500 percent, compared with an increase in rural areas of 83 percent.”<sup>1</sup> There are now more than six times as many people living in the city than in the country, so even in terms of raw numbers, it’s no surprise that fewer All Blacks are coming from country clubs.



Nevertheless, the NZRFU does appear to be providing equal opportunities for all players. The funding is the same across the board, with the union paying for things like club liaison officers, administrative support, training assistance and liability insurance for both town and country clubs alike. That much is comforting.

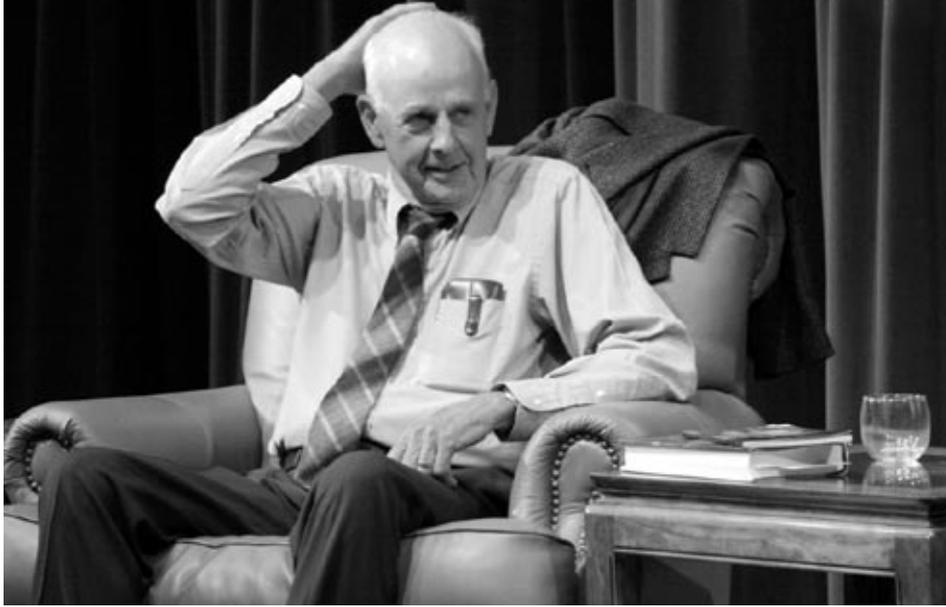
But the fact remains: country players (like Dan Carter from Southbridge) are being forced to leave the country and play their rugby in the city. And so are coaches. Anderson cites coach Colin Cooper as an example. He moved from Clifton to Taranaki to the Wellington Hurricanes and is now coaching the Junior All Blacks.

As long as New Zealand rugby remains professional, there will always be a rural-to-urban drift. It’s a shame, but it’s part of playing sport in the twenty-first century.

*Tim Sterne was born in Manukau City (pop. 330,000).*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.stats.govt.nz/urban-rural-profiles/historical-context/default.htm>

# Wendell Berry, genius



often blandly assuming that his cause was the same as theirs. ... The certified Christian seems just as likely as anyone else to join the military-industrial conspiracy to murder Creation.”<sup>2</sup>

Berry recognises, however, that although the indictment of Christianity by conservationists may be just, it does not come from a good understanding of the Bible. He correctly sees the problem: the Church herself has been insufficiently Biblical in her understanding of Creation and of what Stewardship ought to mean.

It is in fact the inadequate *Christianity* of Christianity that is to blame for our poor showing in ecology and conservation.

Wendell Berry is a Kentucky farmer, novelist, poet, conservationist, philosopher, agrarian and teacher. Now aged 72, he raises crops, uses horses for ploughing, and writes with a pencil. His manuscripts are transcribed by his wife Tanya on a manual typewriter.

He is the author of 11 novels and short story collections, and he has written many books of poetry and dozens of essays – all this in a writing career that spans five decades. Berry has been called “the prophetic American voice of our day” and “a philosopher ... in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau.”<sup>1</sup>

Wendell Berry is also, and most crucially, a Christian.

## The genius

I consider Berry to be a genius, and believe that everyone should read lots of his work. My proclamation of Wendell Berry’s genius does not mean I believe he is omniscient or infallible. Berry is a genius because of his fearless application of Biblical Christianity to the burning issues of the day: ecology, globalisation, international justice, and morality. He applies Biblical insights to the issues of economics, imperialism, farming, animal husbandry and global warming.

He articulates a compelling view of practical Christian living that I wish many more would read and heed.

Berry is no tree-hugging pantheist or idealistic dreamer; he is a brilliant man who works hard on his marginal farm and writes hard truth.

He deals head-on with the conventional critique of Christianity by conservationists – that is, he accepts the problem: “Throughout the five-hundred years since Columbus’s first landfall in the Bahamas, the evangelist has walked beside the conqueror and the merchant, too

## The agrarian

Berry has been described as an agrarian, a description he himself would accept. However, agrarianism has become a term of abuse when people use it to describe hopeless romanticism. There have been writers under the agrarian banner who appear to be advocating an impractical farm-centred life for every human being on the planet. But to Berry, agrarianism is about applying the principles of respectful utilisation of resources to all walks of life.

“Everything that happens on an agrarian farm is determined or conditioned by the understanding that there is only so much land, so much water in the cistern, so much hay in the barn ... The agrarian sense of abundance comes from the experienced possibility of frugality and renewal within limits.”<sup>3</sup>

He has farmed the same Kentucky acres, not far from his birthplace, for most of his adult life. He grounds his respect for nature, land and livestock in the love of the Creator for His creation. Berry challenges conservative, wealthy, western Christians to remember that God created the universe and that He created it good. He urges us to remember that God loves His creation – so much that He himself redeemed it through His own suffering from the almost mortal wounds inflicted on the world by man’s sin.

Berry is urging us to love and respect creation in an imitation of the Creator’s love.

## Berry applied

So what use is Berry to the world? What application can be drawn from his work, apart from a call for responsible farming?

I believe that Berry’s agrarianism is a model of Christian

living and is every bit as applicable to the urban family as to the farmer.

Country Christians show respect for Creation when they avoid industrial-scale monoculture,<sup>4</sup> when they use the land to produce what the land can produce, and when they embrace the goal of sustainability rather than short-term profit.

Urban Christians show respect for community when they eat local produce. They participate in God's creation when they eat in tune with the seasons. Setting our menus by whim, eating out-of-season food imported from far away at great cost of fuel for transport or heating – these are destructive and wasteful.

Christians of either urban or rural origin fail to love their neighbour unless they take responsibility for how they dispose of their waste and heat their homes.

Christians fail to exercise stewardship of their world by choosing destructive hobbies, extravagant food and useless employment. Professional golfers, skateboarders, forex dealers and marketing executives are exceeded only by computer game developers as examples of useless occupations.

There is also much joy in country-style life, even in the city. Beer tastes better after good work. There is real joy after harvest. Rather than the artificial jollity of “new year” when one celebrates a calendar change (or the pointless fireworks on November the Fifth in memory of whatever it was), there is relief, gratitude and celebration of a good crop, a nice wool clip, or new wine in the vats. The poets, builders and bus drivers in the city will also rejoice because it is their food that is being stored.

Berry strongly emphasises the centrality and the continuity of community to Christian living. A respect for tradition, learning from the experience of previous generations, a reverence for place, a commitment to build on existing foundations – these are some of the hallmarks of the Christian.

He challenges the young to stay where they were born, to work and worship with family and community, and to resist the pressure to move away from the land.

Berry notes several drivers behind the huge country-to-city drift. Rural life is being destroyed by industrial farming with its mechanisation and low employment needs. Local farming has its viability further harmed by the large-scale importing of mass-produced commodities disguised as food.

In addition, we appear to have accepted the current belief that country work is “bad” and city work is “good”. The view appears to be that milking cows or shearing sheep is menial, dehumanising toil. But liberation, wealth and ease are to be found in town.

Of course, for every professional musician or neurosurgeon for whom the town is indeed a better place, there are thousands of people who work in fast “food” joints, decorate shop windows, or work in factories – hardly the epitome of freedom and dignity. Even more are on the dole or other forms of welfare.

Is a solution to damaged country-side and crowded cities to be found in agrarianism, or is the price too high? Is agrarianism just joyless toil at “Hardscrabble Farm” with no comforts or treats?

Of course not. To be in tune with Creation is to be aware of the Creator; to love our neighbours is to be loved by them.

In a word, read some Wendell Berry<sup>5</sup> and become both a help and an ornament to our nation.

*Hans Snoek was born in Medan, Indonesia (pop. 2,400,000).*

1 From *Christian Science Monitor* and *San Francisco Chronicle*, respectively.

2 *CrossCurrents*, “Christianity and the Survival of Creation,” <http://www.crosscurrents.org/berry.htm>

3 *Orion*, “The Agrarian Standard,” <http://www.oriononline.org/pages/om/02-30m/Berry.html>

4 *Monoculture* is the cultivation of only a single crop in a given region.

5 More recommended Wendell Berry: *The Unsettling of America* (non-fiction), *Jayber Crow* (novel), “The Death of the American Family Farm” (*Agribusiness Examiner*, <http://tinyurl.com/18r>), “In Distrust of Movements” (*Resurgence*, <http://tinyurl.com/26ct4r>).



# The tale of Johnny Town-mouse

Johnny Town-mouse was born in a cupboard. Timmy Willie was born in a garden. Timmy Willie was a little country mouse who went to town by mistake in a hamper. The gardener sent vegetables to town once a week by carrier; he packed them in a big hamper.

The gardener left the hamper by the garden gate, so that the carrier could pick it up when he passed. Timmy Willie crept in through a hole in the wicker-work, and after eating some peas – Timmy Willie fell fast asleep.

He awoke in a fright, while the hamper was being lifted into the carrier's cart. Then there was a jolting, and a clattering of horse's feet; other packages were thrown in; for miles and miles – jolt – jolt – jolt! and Timmy Willie trembled amongst the jumbled up vegetables.

At last the cart stopped at a house, where the hamper was taken out, carried in, and set down. The cook gave the carrier sixpence; the back door banged, and the cart rumbled away. But there was no quiet; there seemed to be hundreds of carts passing. Dogs barked; boys whistled in the street; the cook laughed, the parlour maid ran up and down-stairs; and a canary sang like a steam engine.

Timmy Willie, who had lived all his life in a garden, was almost frightened to death. Presently the cook opened the hamper and began to unpack the vegetables. Out sprang the terrified Timmy Willie.

Up jumped the cook on a chair, exclaiming "A mouse! a mouse! Call the cat! Fetch me the poker, Sarah!"

Timmy Willie did not wait for Sarah with the poker; he rushed along the skirting board till he came to a little hole, and in he popped.

He dropped half a foot, and crashed into the middle of a mouse dinner party, breaking three glasses.

"Who in the world is this?" inquired Johnny Town-mouse. But after the first exclamation of surprise he instantly recovered his manners.

With the utmost politeness he introduced Timmy Willie to nine other mice, all with long tails and white neckties. Timmy Willie's own tail was

insignificant. Johnny Town-mouse and his friends noticed it; but they were too well bred to make personal remarks; only one of them asked Timmy Willie if he had ever been in a trap?

The dinner was of eight courses; not much of anything, but truly elegant. All the dishes were unknown to Timmy Willie, who would have been a little afraid of tasting them; only he was very hungry, and very anxious to behave with company manners. The continual noise upstairs made him so nervous, that he dropped a plate. "Never mind, they don't belong to us," said Johnny.

"Why don't those youngsters come back with the dessert?" It should be explained that two young mice, who were waiting on the others, went skirmishing upstairs to the kitchen between courses. Several times they had come tumbling in, squeaking and laughing; Timmy Willie learnt with horror that they were being chased by the cat. His appetite failed, he felt faint. "Try some jelly?" said Johnny Town-mouse.

"No? Would you rather go to bed? I will show you a most comfortable sofa pillow."

The sofa pillow had a hole in it. Johnny Town-mouse quite honestly recommended it as the best bed, kept exclusively for visitors. But the sofa smelt of cat. Timmy Willie preferred to spend a miserable night under the fender.

It was just the same next day. An excellent breakfast was provided – for mice accustomed to eat bacon; but Timmy Willie had been reared on roots and salad. Johnny Town-mouse and his friends racketted about under the floors, and came boldly out all over the house in the evening. One particularly loud crash had been caused by Sarah tumbling downstairs with the tea-tray; there were crumbs and sugar and smears of



jam to be collected, in spite of the cat.

Timmy Willie longed to be at home in his peaceful nest in a sunny bank. The food disagreed with him; the noise prevented him from sleeping. In a few days he grew so thin that Johnny Town-mouse noticed it, and questioned him. He listened to Timmy Willie's story and inquired about the garden. "It sounds rather a dull place? What do you do when it rains?"

"When it rains, I sit in my little sandy burrow and shell corn and seeds from my Autumn store. I peep out at the throstles and blackbirds on the lawn, and my friend Cock Robin. And when the sun comes out again, you should see my garden and the flowers – roses and pinks and pansies – no noise except the birds and bees, and the lambs in the meadows."

"There goes that cat again!" exclaimed Johnny Town-mouse. When they had taken refuge in the coal-cellar he resumed the conversation; "I confess I am a little disappointed; we have endeavoured to entertain you, Timothy William."

"Oh yes, yes, you have been most kind; but I do feel so ill," said Timmy Willie.

"It may be that your teeth and digestion are unaccustomed to our food; perhaps it might be wiser for you to return in the hamper."

"Oh? Oh!" cried Timmy Willie.

"Why of course for the matter of that we could have sent you back last week," said Johnny rather huffily – "did you not know that the hamper goes back empty on Saturdays?"

So Timmy Willie said good-bye to his new friends, and hid in the hamper with a crumb of cake and a withered cabbage leaf; and after much jolting, he was set down safely in his own garden.

Sometimes on Saturdays he went to look at the hamper lying by the gate, but he knew better than to get in again. And nobody got out, though Johnny Town-mouse

had half promised a visit.

The winter passed; the sun came out again; Timmy Willie sat by his burrow warming his little fur coat and



sniffing the smell of violets and spring grass. He had nearly forgotten his visit to town. When up the sandy path all spick and span with a brown leather bag came Johnny Town-mouse!

Timmy Willie received him with open arms. "You have come at the best of all the year, we will have herb pudding and sit in the sun."

"H'm'm! it is a little damp," said Johnny Town-mouse, who was carrying his tail under his arm, out of the mud.

"What is that fearful noise?" he started violently.

"That?" said Timmy Willie, "that is only a cow; I will beg a little milk, they are quite harmless, unless they happen to lie down upon you. How are all our friends?"

Johnny's account was rather middling. He explained why he was paying his visit so early in the season; the family had gone to the sea-side for Easter; the cook was doing spring cleaning, on board wages, with particular instructions to clear out the mice. There were four kittens, and the cat had killed the canary.

"They say we did it; but I know better," said Johnny Town-mouse. "Whatever is that fearful racket?"

"That is only the lawn-mower; I will fetch some of the grass clippings presently to make your bed. I am sure you had better settle in the country, Johnny."

"H'm'm – we shall see by Tuesday week; the hamper is stopped while they are at the sea-side."

"I am sure you will never want to live in town again," said Timmy Willie.

But he did. He went back in the very next hamper of vegetables; he said it was too quiet!



One place suits one person, another place suits another person. For my part I prefer to live in the country, like Timmy Willie.



# Ninetieth birthday

You go up the long track  
That will take a car, but is best walked  
On slow foot, noting the lichen  
That writes history on the page  
Of the grey rock. Trees are about you  
At first, but yield to the green bracken,  
The nightjars house: you can hear it spin  
On warm evenings; it is still now  
In the noonday heat, only the lesser  
Voices sound, blue-fly and gnat  
And the stream's whisper. As the road climbs,  
You will pause for breath and the far sea's  
Signal will flash, till you turn again  
To the steep track, buttressed with cloud.

And there at the top that old woman,  
Born almost a century back  
In that stone farm, awaits your coming;  
Waits for the news of the lost village  
She thinks she knows, a place that exists  
In her memory only.  
You bring her greeting  
And praise for having lasted so long  
With time's knife shaving the bone.  
Yet no bridge joins her own  
World with yours, all you can do  
Is lean kindly across the abyss  
To hear words that were once wise.

*R. S. Thomas was born in  
Cardiff, Wales (pop. 320,000).*

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