

Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Award 2007 Professor Eric Pawson

New Zealand Geography has a reputation for producing new knowledge through novel practices. Professor Eric Pawson is one of New Zealand geography's intellectual leaders. His geographic contributions have added greatly to this reputation.

Eric achieved international recognition and standing early in his career. Rapid publication of *Transport and Economy* from his DPhil placed him at the cutting edge of theoretical and empirical research in world historical geography. On arrival in New Zealand from the UK in 1976 he started a major programme of research on the geographic bases of information circulation and time standardization in New Zealand. This impressive archival investigation contributed to international knowledge about modernization processes and economic development through the theoretical lens of time geography. In the 1980s his research began to explore how cultural and environmental concepts might reveal new insight into historical processes operating at different geographical scales.

Eric is best known for his research focus on environmental and economic transformation in the context of New Zealand's colonial and post-colonial experience. He has been the guiding light behind a succession of geographic research programmes that have shifted the knowledge frontiers about New Zealand. That they have done so comes in large part from Eric's effectiveness as an insightful scholar as well as leading researcher.

In the early 1990s Eric was responsible for the bigger picture socio-cultural and environmental frameworks that distinguished the path breaking books on restructuring *Changing Places in New Zealand: A Geography of Restructuring* and *Changing Places: New Zealand in the Nineties*. In a country that at the time was experiencing unprecedented changes, these books gave a theoretical underpinning for processes that otherwise were poorly understood and in so doing they influenced a decade of geographers in New Zealand's university system. The books were the outcome of extensive collaboration, which strengthened the reach of the new knowledge made available through the series.

In parallel with the *Changing Places* programme, Professor Pawson was taking an active lead in the background research programme that made possible the *New Zealand Historical Atlas*. His intellectual leadership ensured that perspectives from history, geography and Maori were

brought into productive dialogue, yielding an atlas noted for its theoretically-informed user oriented cartography. The *Atlas* enabled him to show case his skills at project management. Eric was very instrumental in seeing that processes of environmental transformation were put into peoples' minds, by putting them so to speak, on the map.

In the ambitious venture, *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, he facilitated collaboration between geographers and historians, which revealed the spatiality and historical conditions of environmental processes. The effectiveness of this cross-disciplinary knowledge-production strategy formed the foundation for the recently awarded *Empires of Grass* Marsden project with Professor Tom Brooking from the University of Otago. This examines the development of New Zealand's pastoral landscapes within the wider context of imperial networks of trade, biotic exchange and information flow

Eric's work spans the four scholarships of discovery, synthesis, application and pedagogy. This rare combination means he is known for spotting emerging trends and new intellectual currents, asking the next generation of questions and designing theoretical frameworks and systems to implement new research initiatives. His remarkable capacity to align theoretical expertise and energise collective contributions has meant that what has been achieved by him and the New Zealand geographical community is more than the sum of the individual parts. Eric is also internationally acclaimed for his New Zealand fieldtrips run to support IGU and NZGS conferences held in Australia and New Zealand.

More recently his energies have turned to two new projects. As Chair of the New Zealand Geographical Society's Editorial Board, he inspired and managed the transition of the Society's journals into a fourth generation model, in a relationship with Blackwell, a prestigious international publisher. His intellectual enthusiasm has now turned to geographic pedagogy, with his appointment as Co-Director of the (INLT) International Network of Learning and Teaching (in Geography in Higher Education).

The New Zealand geographical community is much the richer for Eric Pawson's geographic leadership and intellectual achievements. The ultimate New Zealand geographic award, Distinguished New Zealand Geographer, recognises Eric's outstanding contributions