

T. K. Macdonald: a note

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Wallace Kirsop's discovery of the T. K. Macdonald—A. H. Turnbull links in the Quaritch archive is of much interest. (*Turnbull Library Record*, May 1981 pp.13-22) May I add a minor codicil to his paper. Macdonald was declared bankrupt in December 1891, a situation which had prompted his resignation from the House a week earlier.¹ Turnbull's candid assessment of his business probity is confirmed by tradition from other sources. However, the wrought-iron gates which guarded his impressive residence at 192 The Terrace in 1953, and later, testify to something having been saved from the wreck at the expense of others than Quaritch.² It could not have been a spiritual home for the New Zealand Library Association! Nevertheless, like more recent politicians, Seddon did not forget a friend.

In addition to membership of the commissions named in his *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* entry there were his duties as 'supervising valuer' which were sometimes undertaken to the chagrin of officers of the Department of Lands and Survey which considered its own staff better able to perform these duties in sober moderation than one who could only be regarded as a political interloper. One such assignment was to assess and write up the attractions of the Awarua Block, in 1894, following Crown purchase from its Maori owners of the first part of this 300,000 acre north Rangitikei giant. His report was the more unwelcome when he riled the Bureaucracy by unjust allegations that the reluctance of departmental surveyors to work through the winter months had delayed the placing of the first subdivisions on the market by a year.³

It would be nice to think that some of his blurb was read by a small group of Christchurch settlers about to move north to establish on the block the village of 'Collinsville', i.e. Taihape. One of the four in the advance party was W. J. H. McCormick who, eleven years on, was to become the father of a boy who, some generations later, would be the biographer of A. H. Turnbull, T. K. Macdonald's critic and scrutineer.⁴

'T. K.' possessed redeeming qualities beyond a commercial interest in books. In an 1895 letter defending the beauties of