



Centennial Celebrations 2008

On Anniversary Day, 23 March 1908, members of the Otago Early Settlers Association gathered for the formal opening of their very own building. A dignified and substantial edifice, designed by leading Dunedin architect JA Burnside, it was still not quite finished and was quite unfurnished – note that all the people in the photograph are standing – but its opening marked an important milestone in the development of the Association. In March 2008 we will join with the Museum to celebrate its centenary.

The original Association, restricted to migrants who had arrived before 1861 (when the Gold Rushes brought in all sorts of undesirables), had been founded at the fiftieth anniversary of the colony in 1898. It soon began collecting papers, portraits and articles of historical interest from the early period, and the primary object of the building was to display these. The Association's Secretary Lachlan Langlands, who, together with President Donald Reid, dominated the Otago Early Settlers Association (as it then was) in the early twentieth century, was behind the idea, and 'ladies of the Association' raised an impressive amount of money for it by a huge bazaar. The Burnside building is still the heart of the greatly expanded and developed Otago Settlers Museum, now under the care of the Dunedin City Council. The Association itself is now inclusive of all Otago settlers, whether from the 1850s or the 2000s.

A rich programme of events is planned for the week leading up to Anniversary Day on 23 March 2008. Many will be in traditional Otago Early Settlers Association style – picnics, soirees, lectures and processions were very much their thing – and almost all will be open to the public.

We are inviting the whole community to celebrate with us. Some of the events were foreshadowed in a brief item in the last Settlers News, and we will publish full details of the programme in the first issue next year. Meanwhile, you may care to note the following, which were not mentioned in the last newsletter:

There will be a special OSA members' evening on Thursday 6 March, before the main celebrations, so that we can socialise together and acknowledge the contribution, over a long period, of some outstanding members.

On 12 March we will join the Museum in hosting the launch of Committee member Norman Ledgerwood's illustrated history of the Octagon, *Heart of a City*. We have supported this fascinating narrative through the Alfred and Isabel Reed Trust and are delighted to participate in this next stage of its journey.

On Tuesday 18 March, there will be a tea dance. The Art Deco bus station foyer makes a splendid setting for this typically Edwardian style of entertainment, which was very popular in Britain between the wars. We held a tea dance for members in 2001 and since then have had frequent requests for another. Bring a partner or make up a party.

Seán Brosnahan will give a lecture on 19 March, after which the supplement to his centenary history of the museum, *To Fame Undying: The Otago Settlers Association and its Museum, 1898-1998*, bringing the story up to the present, will be launched.

Mark March in red as soon as you buy next year's diary.

Opening day at the Museum, 25 March 1908 – Otago Settlers Museum.

Delving into Bell Hill

Memories of Upper Dowling Street

By Donald Gordon

It is almost a ghost street now, but when I first became familiar with upper Dowling Street it was a lively and exciting area. In 1960 I started working in Speight's laboratory and one of the greatest thrills during my first days was to visit the lab of Dr Roy Gardner, analytical chemist, who tested samples of the brewery's boiler water. This man was revered in chemistry circles and his modification of the Periodic Table of elements was cited in my university text books. By the time I met him he was nearing retirement and looked every inch a venerable scientist. He had set up his lab in the early 1930s but, with its blackened benches and antiquated glassware, it put me in mind of the workshop of a medieval alchemist.

Albion Chambers

Dr Gardner's lab was housed in an upper Dowling Street building known as the Albion Chambers. This had evolved from a tiny structure serving as offices for accountants Burton and Patterson. About 1901 this firm added a long annex at the back and the chambers building itself at the front. The annex was, for a time, a hosiery factory and later held the printing press of Laing and Matthews. Burton and Patterson moved into the chambers, as did lawyers Brugh and Calvert.

But I was more interested in the fact that, for a time in the 1940s, the Albion Chambers had accommodated the surgery of Dr Ken Brokenshire. As a child I had known this man when we both lived at Waiuta on the West Coast. Tall, red-faced and bespectacled, he had a reputation for intellectual brilliance, having been Dux of New Plymouth Boys' High School two years in a row. As a young doctor he had been Superintendent of the Dunstan Hospital at Clyde. I was impressed by his ability to use several long words when one short one would have sufficed. When I was taken to him with hives he diagnosed the

condition as an 'urticarial manifestation.' He was well known for his fondness for alcohol. Because there was no pharmacy in Waiuta he had to do his own dispensing, but was careful not to do so when drunk. It was rumoured that my infant teacher Miss Nimmo was in love with him, and it is true that, when the doctor moved to Dunedin, she later moved there too. Dr Brokenshire dropped dead while attending the centenary celebrations of the Dunstan Hospital in 1963.

In the 1970s and 1980s the Albion Chambers were occupied by Williams Sign Studios and the Centrefire Gun Shop. The building was demolished in 1987.

Clyde Chambers

In view of his association with Clyde, it would have been more appropriate if Dr Brokenshire's surgery had been two doors down Dowling Street, in a building known as Clyde Chambers. Built in the first decade of the twentieth century, this had once held offices of the Department of Labour (Inspector of Factories and Women's Employment Bureau) and NZ State Coal Mines. Subsequent occupants included lawyers, land agents and a money-lender. Upstairs, at different times, were dressmakers, tailors, mantle manufacturers and a cake maker.

The Clyde Chambers ended up in the possession of Whitcombe and Tombs, whose Princes Street shop backed on to the rear of the building. It was demolished in the 1980s, but a remnant of the frontage can still be seen.

Road works

Upper Dowling Street, in its present form, started to take shape in the late 1880s when it took the form of a cutting carved out of Bell Hill. Previously the street was on the same level as the footpath leading from the top of the present Dowling Street



Left to right: Albion Chambers, Clyde Chambers and the Salvation Army Fortress circa 1980 – New Zealand Historic Places Trust Otago Branch Archives [27 August 2007].

steps and included what is now Tennyson Street. There were cottages on both sides. The part of Dowling Street between the top corner and Rattray Street was then included in Canongate. It was as a result of blasting during the 1880s excavation that an airborne rock killed two women in Farley's Buildings in Princes Street. (See *Otago Settlers News* 93, June 2007, page 3.)

Salvation Army Fortress

The first building to be erected after the 1880s road works was the Salvation Army Fortress. This large edifice, with capacity for 1,800 worshippers, was completed in 1891. About a dozen foundation stones were laid, and most of them can still be seen. The official opening was carried out in 1892 by no less a personage than General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army.

For almost a century the Salvationists made their presence felt in the neighbourhood, especially on Friday evenings when their band, and sometimes a fiery preacher, would enliven the Princes-Dowling Street corner. They moved out in 1986 and the Fortress subsequently became a backpackers' hostel. It is now in the process of being converted into residential apartments. The building was in the news in August 2007 when a large retaining wall at the rear of the property collapsed and buried three cars parked in an alley below.

Excelsior Hotel

Ironically, considering the Salvation Army's prohibitionist leanings, their most prominent neighbour in Dowling Street was the Excelsior Hotel. This replaced the wooden gothic Oriental Hotel which had stood on the Princes Street corner site since the early 1860s. The new hotel was built for John Donaldson whose name can still be seen at the top of the building. Donaldson was a Glaswegian banker who had emigrated in 1862. He tried his luck as a gold miner in Victoria, Hokitika, Thames and Central Otago before settling in Dunedin in 1870 and establishing the highly lucrative Glasgow Pie House in George Street. He moved the business to Princes Street in 1887, and built the Glasgow Hotel on adjacent land in lower Dowling Street soon afterwards. On selling that property to an insurance company he bought the old Oriental Hotel, demolished it, and built the Excelsior in 1898.

The architect was Robert Forrest, a former building contractor who had trained as an architect under David Con Hutton at the Dunedin School of Art. A friend of the three founders of Speight's Brewery, he designed residences for all of them as well as several brewery buildings. These included the Shamrock Building which now houses Speight's Ale House. Some years later the Excelsior Hotel was enlarged with the addition of a new wing on the upper side.

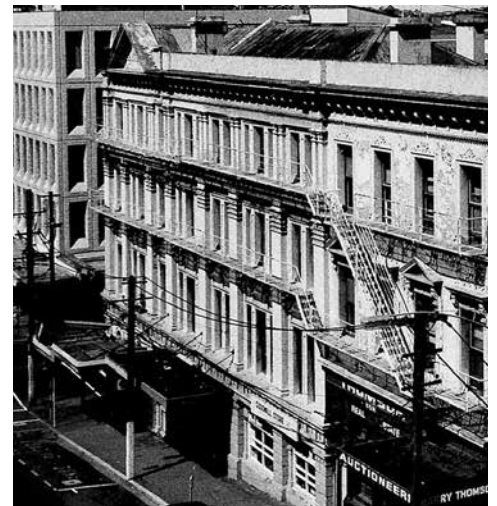
Donaldson died at the age of 86 in 1926, but his estate retained ownership of the hotel until the 1950s. For most of the previous half-century, it had been leased to a succession of licensees, most notably Jim Young, doyen of many of Dunedin's Scottish organisations. In 1952 the hotel was bought by Frank Paape, a well-known boxing administrator. The Excelsior was one of Dunedin's leading hotels for many years, but its licence was relinquished in 1967. It is now a residential apartment building.

Earthworks

In 1907 part of Bell Hill on the south side of the upper portion of the street was demolished by the contractor William Dunford to make way for new buildings. This was a major operation in which no fewer than 22 horses and drays were engaged. Once again there were flying rocks, some of which broke skylights in neighbouring buildings. In another incident, a vehicle carrying spoil from the site collided with a tram travelling along Princes Street. According to the *Otago Daily Times*, 'The capsiz was very neat. The cart was upside down on its former contents of clay, and the horse was on its back with its legs in the air. The dray was drawn back and placed in its normal position, and a very much surprised but uninjured horse resumed its feet. Not so much as a buckle was broken.'

'CT' Building

Towering above the neighbouring Rossbotham's College, and displaying an elegant Oamaru stone façade, was the three-storied Commercial Travellers & Warehousemen's Club building. This was erected in 1915-16 to the design of Edward Walden, architect of several of Dunedin's cinemas as well as Hallenstein's building in the Octagon. The top storey of the 'CT'



Left: The Oriental Hotel, demolished to make way for the Excelsior Hotel – Otago Settlers Museum. Centre: Architect Robert Forrest. Right: The Excelsior Hotel built in 1898, photographed circa 1980 – New Zealand Historic Places Trust Otago Branch Archives [27 August 2007].

building, as it was known, contained a social hall with stage, and accommodation for staff and out-of-town travellers; on the first floor were a library, reading rooms, card rooms and two two-table billiard rooms, with skylights providing day-time illumination; the ground floor housed a kitchen, dining room, bar, office and committee room; while the basement served as a motor and bicycle garage.

The building was officially opened by the Hon GW Russell, Minister of Internal Affairs. In 1927 the Commercial Travellers vacated it and sold it to next-door neighbours Speight's. The brewery had no immediate use for it and, in a public-spirited gesture, provided it rent-free to a succession of individuals and groups associated with the performing arts who used it as rehearsal rooms or teaching studios. Among them were the Dunedin Philharmonic Society under Signor Raphael Squarise ('Old Square Eyes'); Stanley Lawson, dancing teacher; the Dunedin Operatic Society; Dunedin Repertory Society; and Anita Oliver, teacher of elocution. One of Mrs Oliver's pupils was Silvia Poulter, later Dame Silvia Cartwright, Governor General.

In due course the ground floor became Speight's cooper's shop, with about a dozen men noisily turning out hundreds of wooden barrels every year. The foreman for several years was another Oliver, Frank, whose son Frank junior and grandson Anton both became All Blacks. On the floor above the cooperage was the brewery's carpenter's shop, presided over by Tom Rodger who had been at Speight's since 1911. I admired his craftsmanship, but he told me, 'There's only ever been one good carpenter: He came from Nazareth.' The top floor of the building then contained a billiard table; the basement a range for Speight's miniature rifle club.

Use of the building began to decline after the advent of metal casks in the 1950s and Tom Rodger's retirement in 1964. By the 1980s it was almost deserted and in a poor state of repair. In 1991, along with the adjacent structures, the building was sold to Carter Car Services, who demolished it soon afterwards.

Steps

One of the most conspicuous features of upper Dowling Street is the fortress-like structure that contains the steps and ramp

leading to Tennyson Street. This impressive, if somewhat gloomy-looking, piece of concrete work was installed in 1926 following the widening of the cutting. The steps are still there but, of the six buildings that once stood in upper Dowling Street, only two survive, along, perhaps, with a few ghosts.

Below: Frank Oliver (right) foreman in Speight's Brewery's cooper's shop with visiting mayor and city councillors.
Bottom: Tom Rodger in the Speight's carpenter's shop.



Dunford's 22 horses and drays engaged in clearing away the hill on the southern side of Dowling Street – *Otago Witness*.
'CT' Building circa 1980 – New Zealand Historic Places Trust Otago Branch Archives [27 August 2007].

Let the Good Times Roll

Dunedin in the 1950s



Examine closely this photograph by Barry Mayfield of the Exchange in October 1956, allow yourself to be transported back half a century, and you will see why this scene has been chosen to take centre stage in the our 1950s exhibition.

It's a time of peace and prosperity, convention and conformity, home and family. In most cases father is the breadwinner and mother is the homemaker. There is a baby boom. By the time this photograph was taken the population of Dunedin has reached, or is about to reach, the 100,000 mark. There is a housing boom. The suburbs are continuing to expand, and photographs of new sites being prepared in Brockville and Waverley can be found in October's newspapers.

There is a boom of consumerism. The newspapers are littered with advertisements for the latest ranges, washing machines, refrigerators, radios, lawnmowers and much more. Department store shopping is in its heyday. The pictured shoppers may have popped into the likes of Brown, Ewing and Co, under the big BE, to check out the latest clothing on offer.

It is the age of the six o'clock swill, and come six o'clock people may be spilling out of the nearby hotels into the street, perhaps hoping to catch a 'Speights Special' (trams that ran around hotel closing time) for a ride home. The trams and cable cars will soon be gone, however. Trolley buses and diesel buses are taking up where the trams and cable cars have left off and are being joined by increasing numbers of cars.

Speaking of cars, a two or three years-old Morris Minor will set you back about £500 (roughly equivalent to \$22,000 today) and a similar-aged Vauxhall Velox in good nick nearly £700 (about \$30,000 today). Roads are being improved, and at the far end of George Street steel girders are being put in place for the Northern Motorway overbridge.

Down at the Century cinema, the British comedy *Geordie* is setting a new record for that theatre, into its eighth week of screening. At the Octagon cinema, one of the most popular films of the day, *The King and I*, starring Yul Brynner, is beginning its run. *Rock Around the Clock*, the rock 'n' roll movie that had 'left a trail of smashed seats, ripped screens and assaulted cinema-managers' when it screened in Britain, was on its way here, playing at the St James on 2 November with only minor disruption and disorder. Boys can be seen out playing in their 'coon skin caps, in the wake of the popular *Davy Crockett* movies.

Just to the right of the photograph, adjoining the Grand Hotel, the Exchange cityscape is altering with the construction of one of a new generation of skyscrapers. When it opened in November 1958, the 90-foot, six-storey State Fire Office building was described as 'probably the most modern building in New Zealand.'

For more of an insight into Dunedin in the 1950s or a trip down memory lane, *Let the Good Times Roll* will run until March 2.

The Exchange, Dunedin by Barry Mayfield, 1956 – Otago Settlers Museum.

Fired with Enthusiasm

The Dunedin Fire Brigade Restoration Society



This group is taking an active interest in all aspects of Dunedin's Fire Brigade history, on behalf of Dunedin's citizens. We take responsibility in a custodial role, very much looking that Dunedin should benefit from our endeavours. We actively seek public occasions for the display of early fire appliances and equipment. Perhaps the most notable of these is when Santa is delivered to many venues during the festive season by our stunning fully-restored 1935 chrome-bonnet Ford V8. We can also be observed regularly helping the museum with holiday programme activities.

We have a group of craftsmen who have restored many of Dunedin's early fire appliances. Current projects include:

- a wheeled escape from Seacliff Hospital, being readied for display
- archiving of early Brigade records
- negotiating with Invercargill for the return of a 1954 Rolls Royce fire appliance
- planning for the Dunedin Fire Brigade's 150th anniversary celebrations in 2011
- negotiating a partnership with the Settlers Museum
- collecting memorabilia: uniforms, equipment, photos, books, certificates
- fitting out a mobile display unit for some of the above material

We have a rich history, with many of Dunedin's early citizens being involved in the fire service, along with supporting photos of these individuals. Of course fires attract photographers, and this has been of immense help in recording our history. An irony is that our earliest photograph of a Dunedin fire was taken by the photographer Meluish, who lost his premises in the same blaze.

This fire occurred on 24 January 1865 and originated in the Exchange Hotel. As with most Dunedin fires at this time, it rapidly attracted thousands of onlookers, who hindered the efforts of the Brigade to get to work. Not only did they stand

in the way, but they were also known to enter threatened buildings and throw items of value into the streets (from where they were often stolen). As no city water supply was yet in place, the volunteer brigade were forced to get supplies from barrels, tanks and water carts that plied between the fire and the foreshore. This supply was hardly enough to keep their manual engine 'Pride of Dunedin' working, and it was not long before the fire spread to engulf thirteen other properties on either side of the Bank of Otago. The brigade were then forced to adopt the usual practice of demolishing outlying buildings to create a fire break in which it was hoped the fire would burn itself out. When the recently-constructed interim Presbyterian Church (a wooden structure that served until the current First Church of Otago was opened in 1873) was threatened, the Brigade was admirably assisted in their efforts to save this building by Mr Hodgson, the representative of the Shand Mason Company of London. Mr Hodgson had recently arrived in Dunedin with fire-fighting equipment to be displayed at the 1865 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition being held in the city. Under Mr Hodgson's supervision a small force pump about the size of a bucket assisted in bringing the fire under control and saved the church (this and a favourable wind). Included in the buildings destroyed were the Bank of Otago, the original Presbyterian Church (that was currently serving as a wool store) and the shop of photographer Meluish.

The Dunedin Fire Restoration Society is enthusiastic in its efforts to record such details and restore the appliances and other equipment that have been used in our city since 1861. Long may its efforts continue.

Paul Clements
Secretary

If anyone has photos, certificates or other material relating to Dunedin Fire services they would like to add to the collection, please contact Paul Clements on 4822 640 or by e-mail: p.g.clements@xtra.co.nz

The fully-restored 1935 chrome-bonnet Ford V8 fire engine – Otago Settlers Museum.

Otago Settlers Association Annual General Meeting



At a well-attended meeting at the museum on Thursday 13 September the Director Priscilla Pitts presented her final annual report. As a parting gift from the Association, she received both honorary life membership of the Association and an engraved oval silver brooch depicting Lake Wakatipu made by former Dunedin jeweller Jane Dodd. Dr Melville Carr retired as president and Dr Dorothy Page was elected in his stead. She paid tribute to the fine work of her predecessor over the past four years. There were no changes to the membership of the committee, and no permanent treasurer has yet been elected to replace the late Gordon Sharpe.

After business was concluded, Graeme Marsh spoke on the history and current operations of Scott Technology, a well-known local business that started as J & AP Scott Limited in 1913. After the Second World War, the company began manufacturing domestic appliances, and now it specialises in designing and building bespoke automated production lines for appliance manufacturers. Scott's exports machinery to more than a dozen countries, though a large proportion of its production goes to the United States. The Managing Director, Chris Hopkins, spoke about current operations, and showed two short films about the company's activities. These include an automated hot-water cylinder welding line for an Australian company, and a robotised meat-processing system that scans lamb carcasses with x-rays to locate the bones and guides a system of mechanised knives.

Archives Holiday Hours

The Archive will be open the following times over the Christmas and New Year period:

24 December: 10am to 1pm
25 - 26 December: closed
27 - 31 December: 10am to 1pm
1 - 2 January: closed
3 - 4 January: 10am to 1pm

For Your Diary

Otago Settlers Association December Meeting

The OSA Christmas party will be held on Friday 14 December from 7.30pm in the former NZR bus station foyer. John Drummond and Friends will entertain us with 'Music from Early Otago.' John is equally well-known for his wit and his knowledge of early Otago music. We will again be able to visit the newly-upgraded Pixie Town, courtesy of John 'Santa' Ingram, and the galleries will be open. We will finish the evening with a festive supper and good conversation.

The New Pixie Town Bigger, Brighter, Better

You can't change an old favourite, but you can present it better, and that is the aim of the Association and the Settlers Museum this year. First, we wish to recreate the basement-feel that children experienced when Pixie Town was in the DIC building. With this in mind, the classroom will be developed as a dark and mysterious tunnel where visitors will 'discover' the floodlit units. Then out into the Bus Station foyer, where Santa will be resident with a lot more space. We are also setting up special activity tables so that children can write to Santa, construct Christmas cards and try their skills at other decorative work. The centrepiece in the Bus Station will be a large Christmas tree decorated by children. Around the base of the tree we will be collecting cans of food in support of the Mayor's Christmas Community Can Help Appeal. With the school term finishing so late this year, we are also going to open in the early evenings so that families can enjoy the Pixie Town experience. If you would like a look at our new presentation the public hours are as follows:

Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 December:
10am to noon, 1 to 4pm

Monday 10 December to Friday 14 December:
1 to 4pm, 5 to 7pm

Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 December:
10am to noon, 1 to 4pm

Monday 17 December to Friday 21 December:
1 to 4pm, 5 to 7pm

Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 December:
10am to noon, 1 to 4pm

Monday 24 December:
10am to noon, 1 to 4pm, 5 to 7pm

Priscilla Pitts receives a farewell presentation from retired OSA president Dr Melville Carr at the Association's Annual General Meeting.

The Otago Settlers Museum Shop

If you found the 1950s dresses in the new *Let the Good Times Roll* exhibition interesting, you may also like Tom Tierney's *Great Fashion Designs of the Fifties*. It contains cut-out paper dolls and 30 haute couture costumes for them by Dior, Balenciaga and Chanel, among others. Dover paperback, 1985.

Price to members \$13.95 (Postage and packing \$3.50)



The museum shop stocks a range of colourful **sequined hanging decorations** from Caroline Mitchell collectibles. They include a fantail, kea, albatross, tiki, pohutukawa and whare whakairo designs.

Price to members \$13.50 each (Postage and packing \$3.50)



In the spirit of the 1950s, Dishy has produced a range of **retro designs for tea-towels**: maps of New Zealand surrounded by borders of native birds and flowers.

Price to members \$14.85 each (Postage and packing \$3.50)



Contemporary New Zealand artists have provided the designs for **t'towels**, a range of **black-and-white tea-towels** from Esther Diamond. The designs are *pohutukawa* and *decorate a cake* by Leanne Culy, *domestic bliss* by Dick Frizzell and *rough diamonds* by Martin Poppelwell.

Price to members \$25.20 each (Postage and packing \$3.50)

General Information

Orders should be posted to the Otago Settlers Museum, PO Box 566, Dunedin, and cheques should be made out to the Dunedin City Council.

The shop holds a wide selection of Dunedin and New Zealand-made books, cards and gifts. You are always welcome to browse.



Editor: Austin Gee; Designer: Tim Cornelius; Publisher: Otago Settlers Association.

This newsletter was produced by the Otago Settlers Association, founder and supporter of the Otago Settlers Museum. Membership of the Association is open to everyone interested in the heritage of this region. Details of membership are available from the Museum Reception desk or Otago Settlers Association Secretary, Box 74, Dunedin. Phone/fax 03 477 8677, email otago.settlers.assn@xtra.co.nz

 **Otago Daily Times**

The Otago Daily Times supports Otago Settlers Museum

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