



Putting Dunedin in Perspective

Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Director Art and Visual Culture at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, spoke at the opening of the *Arcadian Dreams* and *Family Silver* exhibitions on 11 March. This is an edited version of his speech:

Fifteen years ago I had the honour to present in Dunedin the first R A Lawson lecture. Inaugurated by the Otago Regional Committee of the Historic Places Trust, the lecture was its contribution to, and intended to be a permanent reminder of, New Zealand's sesquicentenary year.

Locally, 1990 turned into something of a Lawson year. My lecture was published; there was a wonderful exhibition at the Hocken Library; and the late Bill Prior completed a Master of Arts thesis on Lawson at the University of Otago. In 1993 my entry on Lawson was published in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* but not a lot has been written or spoken about him since – although there is now talk of a book on the architect. I hope that Lawson will never be taken for granted or forgotten. More than any other architect – and he had many competitors and rivals at the time – it was Lawson who moulded

the architectural face of colonial Victorian Dunedin. And it was George O'Brien who provided the visual and aesthetic projections of a number of Lawson's designs. According to Roger Collins, the Irish-born O'Brien had practised as an architect in Melbourne. He may have joined the exodus of architects from Melbourne – they included Charles Sawyer, William Barnett Armson, Edward Rumsey, David Ross, and W H Clayton from Tasmania – seeking opportunities from the rush of wealth in the young colonial city. But O'Brien seems not to have contributed to the actual built environment in Dunedin. Instead, he served as a perspectivist, not only to Lawson but also to William Mason, W H Clayton and other architects. Gavin Stamp, in *The Great Perspectivists*¹ refers to Edward O'Brien, who was a perspectivist to Sir George Gilbert Scott – I wonder if there was a family connection?

George O'Brien, *Designs of R A Lawson, 1869*

Architectural perspectivism came into its own in the mid-Victorian period. The job of the architectural perspectivist was to render the projected building as visually appealing and structurally convincing as possible to the client. The English architect H S Goodhart-Rendel said of the perspective that: 'Having unrivalled powers of truth telling it can also magnificently lie. It is the honest architect's most candid and inconvenient friend; it is the dishonest architect's most artful and convenient confederate.' Whatever the moral and ethical implications of this observation, O'Brien was undoubtedly a great perspectivist – an architecturally literate and technically accomplished draughtsman and colourist who served his architect-clients well.

O'Brien's famous composite of R A Lawson's designs, dating from the late 1860s, and representing both built and unbuilt projects, stands in a tradition of composite architectural panoramas: Gavin Stamp publishes Joseph Michael Gandy's c.1818 drawing of Sir John Soane's models for public and private buildings; Charles Robert Cockerell produced a composite of Sir Christopher Wren's designs; Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, the great early Victorian Gothic Revival architect in England, published a composite drawing of twenty-four of his most important church designs as the frontispiece to his book *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture* in 1843.

The activities of architects and artists in mid-Victorian Dunedin attest to the rising importance of the city as the financial and cultural capital of colonial New Zealand. From Scotland and England to Melbourne, and from Melbourne to Dunedin, architects and artists gravitated to those centres where wealth and growth were likely to offer opportunities to design handsome buildings and produce saleable art. The advent of silversmiths, medallists and jewellers is part of this larger story of prosperity. I note from Michael Findlay's research that the firm of G and T Young was founded in 1862, the point from which the architectural transformation of the city from a frontier town of ramshackle buildings to a city of handsome edifices began to take off. My own interest in the crafting of precious metals stems

from my researches on the Catholic Revival and the Gothic Revival and the demand for church plate and the appurtenances of the episcopal office – the crozier, the pectoral cross, the Episcopal ring, and so on.

What this all adds up to in these exhibitions, *Arcadian Dreams* and *Family Silver*, is an excuse to celebrate once again a local and regional heritage of national significance – the architecture of a great architect, the paintings and drawings of a fine artist, and a legacy of silver that remind us of one of the great episodes in the rise to prominence of this wonderful city of *Dun-Edin*.

I would like to direct my thanks and congratulations to Priscilla Pitts, the Director, and her exhibition teams, and the curators, Linda Tyler, from the Hocken Library, and Michael Findlay.

1. Published by Trefoil in association with the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, 1982



A Legacy of Silver

Family Silver: Collections and Connections is an exhibition of silver from the Otago Settlers Museum collection and represents many intertwined histories. Silver helps us recall the well-known stories of influential people in the community including founders of the Otago settlement such as William Cargill and the whaler Johnnie Jones. Other stories are mere traces where people's lives may be represented by an initial on the handle of a spoon or a photograph in a locket.

With the extension of colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, silver became part of the 'movable' capital of ordinary people in western society. Because of its permanence, silver was a stable measure of wealth. It was made into coins and personal objects which were circulated and traded as well as being seized, looted and endlessly melted down and recycled. Some of the silver you own has most likely belonged to many other people over time. Silver has allowed its owners to assert their social status through both heritage and fashion. Possession of 'family silver' showed connections to past wealth and prestige. Buying silver in new shapes and patterns allowed people to try on fresh images and show off their modern taste.

Many silver objects carry marks that allow us to fit them into 'family' groups. Most silver in New Zealand came from Great Britain and was made between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. When we look at the range of marks on a piece of sterling silver, we can trace the history of the object to the precise time and place that it was made. This makes collecting silver a fascinating hobby but it also allows us to trace the movement of these pieces with their owners around the world. Engraved inscriptions can tell us even more about the owner's life. Through these marks, silver has a history of both its making and its ownership that is wound tightly into the object.



The craft of silversmithing extends over many thousands of years and was part of a guild tradition where workers were apprenticed to a master. The craft often ran in families. This tradition can be seen today in the old Dunedin firm of G & T Young which was founded in 1862 and is in its fifth generation. Silversmiths came to Otago in the nineteenth century mainly from England and Scotland but also from many different European countries including Norway, Denmark and Prussia. While Jewish people had been persecuted out of the trade in many parts of Europe, this prejudice was easing during the nineteenth century. Some of Dunedin's early silversmiths and retailers such as Frank Hyams and Nathan Salomon were Jewish. While most domestic silver was imported, a small number of special pieces were made in local workshops. These were often trophies or ceremonial pieces marking important events although simple small pieces of tableware such as napkin rings were also produced for sale. Large and impressive pieces were sometimes made for the international exhibitions that were sweeping the world in the later part of the nineteenth century. Others were made as official gifts to visiting heads of state and royalty.

The giving of silver to mark the passages of life is part of a long tradition but mainly stems from Victorian times when working people began to have the economic power to buy each other luxury gifts. This began at birth and continued through life. Cased sets of cutlery were often presented as christening gifts. Rarely used at the table, the luxury and privilege that went with this type of gift led to the saying 'Born with a silver spoon in his mouth'. Another charming gift of the Victorian period was a miniature silver cradle which was presented to important citizens such as mayors on the birth of a child. An anniversary marking 25 years is commonly known as a silver anniversary and is marked with a gift of silver. Until recent times, many people did not live long enough to celebrate even the silver anniversary landmark. In 1840s England, a member of the gentry or professional classes in an industrial city had an average life expectancy at birth of 38 years, while that of a worker was only 17 years. The list of anniversary gifts has grown to include platinum for the 80th wedding anniversary, an age almost unimaginable to people in the nineteenth century.

The giving of silver on important occasions has a long tradition reflecting affection and respect as well as the status and power of individuals. These items can range from a silver trinket bought and engraved at a fair for a sweetheart, the retirement watch presented to an employee, or a valuable piece of silver kept in a bank vault. Special presentations were sometimes made by communities or groups to respected people who were leaving 'for the colonies'. These are shared cultural property belonging to both the old world and the new. The Victorian taste for the strange and picturesque led to some surprising silver objects. The taking of snuff or finely ground tobacco produced its own range of containers and accessories. These ranged from discreet small lidded boxes to the stuffed ram's head on castors that was trundled across the boardroom table at directors' meetings of Ross and Glendinning. Ceremonial pieces did not need to be remotely practical. The inkwell presented to the Mayor of Dunedin on the opening of the City Corporation electric tramways was dominated by the large

electroplated handle used to send electricity to the overhead wires. Like many similar novelties, it was probably used once and then put away in a case or cabinet.

Many of the silver pieces presented to the Museum over the years are trophies for sporting events or competitions. Many distinctive forms have developed to suit particular types of competition. Agricultural and pastoral societies were important organisations in developing New Zealand's farming economy. More than just farming demonstrations and competitions, the local A & P show blended entertainment, commerce, education and popular culture into strong local and national identities. A & P groups were concerned with promoting the new agricultural practices developed in Britain in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A & P trophies show colonists in a constant 'battle' with the land, clearing pastures, breaking in soil, and celebrating progress and growth. By the second half of the nineteenth century, shows had begun to feature examples of displays of farming skill and prowess, such as ploughing competitions. The idea that New Zealand was 'England's farm in the Pacific' is clearly seen in the decorative language of the cups and medals where English farm animals are placed in the rugged New Zealand landscape.

Family Silver: Collections and Connections is the first time that the Otago Settlers Museum silver has been exhibited as a group and reminds us once again of the richness and diversity of the Museum's collections. I have thoroughly enjoyed returning to the Museum for this project and wish to thank Priscilla Pitts and Blair Jackson for extending the invitation, and Tim Cornelius, Sarah Guthrie, Jill Haley, Francois Lerquin and Steve Munro for their assistance.

Michael Findlay
Department of Design Studies
University of Otago



Locket and chain, 1890, B & C, Birmingham, England.

Money Bags and Fisticuffs

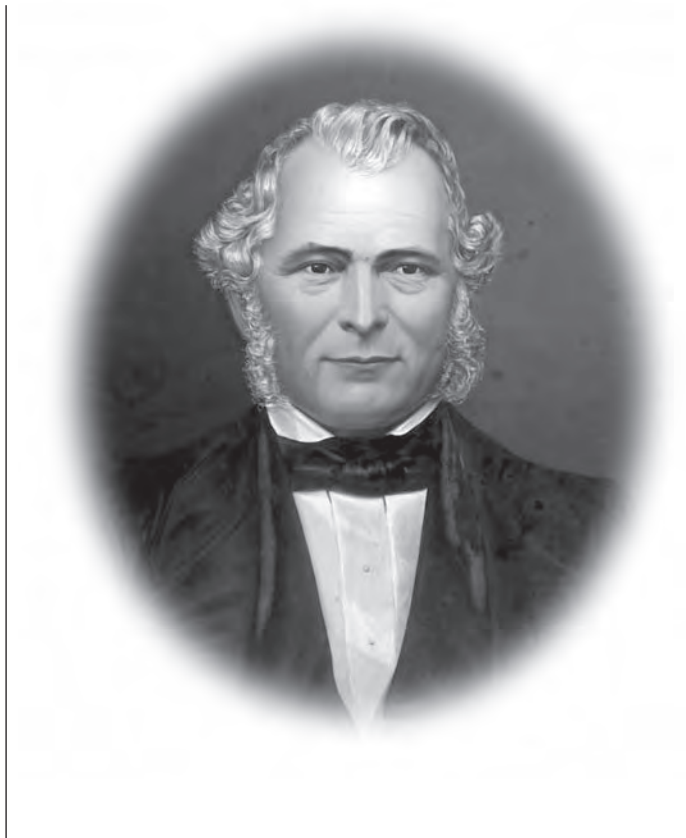
John Jones' Bad Behaviour

An excerpt from a talk given by Ian Church at the Anniversary Day dinner at the Dunedin Club, Fernhill, on 23 March.

Everyone has heard of Johnnie Jones, merchant and ship-owner. Edward Shortland wrote in 1843 that Jones was 'an old sealer' who had 'a history of which he is justly proud,' having 'elevated' himself 'from a lowly position' in New South Wales 'to one of great wealth.' A writer in 1898 said that Jones had 'piercing black eyes' and 'could brook no interference with his will as many a one who received severe personal chastisement at his hands could tell.'

After Jones moved to Dunedin in 1854, the public were threatened or entertained by many instances of his temper. From the record compiled by 'Aliquis', these included assaults on the magistrate John Hyde Harris, on the Commissioner of Crown Lands Henry Cutten, and on his own son Alfred who 'having displeased him, was, I am informed, savagely attacked by his father, and narrowly escaped with his life, having been left with several of his ribs broken.' In May 1858 Jones had a row with Captain Brayley of the ship *Nourmahal* from London. Jones called him 'a damned sweep, a damned robber, a damned scoundrel, a damned blackguard and said he would split his damned nose'. Brayley sued, claiming £100 for alleged assault, but was awarded only £5. In October Jones sued blacksmith John Gallie for assault. There had been a meeting to get steam communication which Gallie said had been pretty fully attended. Jones retorted that only 30 or 40 were there. 'Oh what a damned lie!' responded Gallie. Jones threatened to slap his mouth but Constable Ross got between them. However, Gallie did manage to get in a blow, and was fined £3 for it. Jones subsequently was bound over to keep the peace.

Captain Henderson, who had come out in the *Chile* as a passenger in December 1860, had complained about the drunken behaviour on board of Jones' son Alfred and his cronies. After one outburst Captain Turnbull had taken a bottle of brandy from Alfred and locked him in his cabin. Henderson had remarked to a fellow passenger 'that it was a pity there were not cells in the



ship to confine young convicts in.' This was reported to John who invited the offender to his office to pick up a letter. Jones had told his clerks, William Johnston, James Mills and others, that they were to leave when Henderson arrived. Jones called him 'the son of a Highland cattle stealer, a swindler and a bastard,' and proceeded to strike Henderson several times on the head, and then kicked him till he himself was exhausted. When Henderson sued him for assault the case came before the full bench of eleven justices on 11 January 1861. The events were corroborated by Constable Outram, E B Cargill and the clerks. But Jones cleverly counter-charged Henderson with assault saying he had struck the first blow. Both men were bound over to keep the peace: Jones on two sureties of £500 and Henderson on one surety of £50. Five of the justices, Cutten, Kettle, Reynolds, Dr Purdie and Harris dissented, and the first four said the case should have gone to the Supreme Court.

Hand coloured portrait of John Jones on display in the Smith Gallery, Otago Settlers Museum.

Henderson did not let the matter rest and sought a public prosecution from Howarth, the Provincial Solicitor, but was turned down. No lawyer would take his case until he obtained the services of J Smith, newly-arrived from Victoria, who brought a civil action before the Supreme Court. The evidence was gone over once again although the office clerk was conveniently 'unable to attend through illness.' Jones said he had only wanted an apology, and that if Henderson had complained of Alfred to him he would have 'corrected him.' He claimed that Henderson had aimed the first blow which missed him. Judge Chapman summed up in a way which Henderson thought 'very strange,' and after half an hour's deliberation the jury found for the defendant.

Henderson was not yet done and returned to Melbourne where he wrote and published, under the pseudonym 'Aliquis', a 56-page pamphlet entitled *Otago and the Middle Island of New Zealand, A Warning to Emigrants*. Over forty pages are taken up with his investigation of Jones' past and a review of the assault and all the cases resulting from it. Its tone can be judged by his summing up of Dunedin in 1861: 'a little township ... like a small fishing village at home' inhabited by 'the very needy, "rigidly righteous," but whisky-loving unprincipled Scotchmen, a few of the worst specimens from England [with] a sprinkling of the convict element from New South Wales.' 'Swindling was rampant, and assaults of almost daily occurrence, though by far the greater number of these were committed by one man ... who on account of his wealth, almost always escaped punishment, nearly every individual in the place being in his debt. This man, a son of Tom Jones, a notorious convict of Botany Bay, ruled the town of Dunedin ... by dint of money bags and fisticuffs.'

He called Jones 'the tyrant of this petty Syracuse' with his 'squat gorilla-like frame ... either punching the heads of some in the community, or calculating mentally (for the pen was beyond his powers) the profits he had made on the goods supplied to them.' He instanced an occasion when Jones had been outbid at auction for a chair he wanted and had said 'This will cost you twopence a pound on your sugar,' and proceeded to put its price up.

Henderson told how Jones revenged himself on the magistrates who had not decided in his favour at the first trial. He had a mortgage on Kettle's house of £500 and 'immediately foreclosed.' Kettle was prepared, and gave him a cheque for the amount but Jones refused to accept it as not legal tender and forced Kettle to pay the money over in sovereigns. 'I had the facts direct from Mr Kettle himself.' It is hardly surprising that Jones tried to buy up all copies of Henderson's pamphlet in Dunedin.

Jones' success seems to have attracted malicious gossip. Carey, for example, alleged that Mrs Jones was a drunkard but such charges are easy to make and difficult to judge. Jones' obituary in the *Otago Daily Times* said that he was 'a large-hearted man with the simple instincts of a child who fought with adversity and was improved by prosperity like few others of his kind before him.' The missionary Johann Wohlers, who knew him, wrote that he 'was without cultivation and not without rudeness but he understood how to make money and acquire land after the manner of the worldly-wise which covers a multitude of sins.' The Rev J T Christie, first chronicler of Waikouaiti, described him as a 'broad-built, stout man about the average height ... with a deep jaw and firm step -- a man of resolute purpose ... and a shrewd if not sharp man of business.' He was 'the victim of an unruly temper' but could be generous and was 'indulgent to his children.' Harry Morton in *The Whale's Wake* wrote that as 'a self-made man, with the failings which so irritate those men made by others, he was a type of frontiersman known in several continents and needed in the early stages in development of all of them.' E J Tapp sums up his life in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* saying that 'By sheer courage, determination and hard work, he rose to a position of leadership. All feared his ungovernable and impetuous temper, yet he was known to be generous, and kindly towards women and children. Temperate in his habits and scrupulously fair in his dealings he was a unique product in a pioneer society.' One could say that he was not a man for all seasons but one peculiarly suited to the none-too-gentle time and place in which he flourished.

This article complements and expands on Ian Church's 'Johnny Jones Comes to Otago' in issue 66, May 2000.

Meeting for Wellington Members

One pleasant result of our members' questionnaire has been an informal meeting for OSA members held recently in Wellington. Among those respondents outside Otago who expressed an interest in meetings in their own localities were seventeen from the capital, so we took the opportunity of a visit to Wellington of Vice-President Dr Dorothy Page to follow up on this. John and Jenifer Daniels kindly arranged a venue – St Andrew's Church Centre on The Terrace – took RSVPs and provided tea and coffee. Despite short notice and a Friday morning slot, fourteen members attended and several others put in apologies. Dorothy Page (an historian with a special interest in women's history) spoke on 'Hopes Fulfilled? Some Nineteenth Century Otago Women' and discussed happenings at the museum and with the association. Members were especially interested in a visual presentation of the proposed development and expansion of the museum.

The Committee hopes to arrange meetings in other areas and further meetings in Wellington as the opportunity arises.

Museum Staff

John Timmins, Collection Manager

After twenty years of working in a museum environment, John decided on a change of focus and resigned from the museum in March.

John oversaw the management of artefacts in the Museum collection from their acceptance, cataloguing, storage, conservation as necessary, and display in the museum galleries. On a couple of specific occasions members have had the opportunity to see him 'at work'. In 2001 he explained to us the removal and treatment of the woodworm-affected items from the cottage, and in June 2004 he guided us around the storage areas. This midwinter tour gave us an understanding of the need for major improvements in these areas. He has also addressed the Tuesday Club on various collection-related topics. We thank him for his care and concern for the collection over the past twenty years, and wish him well in his future employment.

Subscriptions

1 July 2005 - 30 June 2006

Renewal notices are included with this newsletter. The Committee thanks you in advance for your prompt payment and any donation you are able to add to your subscription. It encourages you to request a receipt to attach to your Rebate Claim Form and a membership card, valid for the named person only, to show at museum reception.

From the Otago Settlers Museum Shop



Full Colour Prints

From the originals in the museum collection on display in the *Arcadian Dreams* exhibition – on light/medium weight card.

George O'Brien's *Designs of R A Lawson, 1869*

320(h) x 450(w)mm

George O'Brien's *First Presbyterian Church Dunedin, R A Lawson Architect, 1868*

450(h) x 320(w)mm

Price to members: \$14.35 (Postage and tube \$3.50)

In addition to books and prints, the shop holds a wide selection of Dunedin- and New Zealand-made cards and gifts. You are welcome to browse.

A complete list of items for sale in the museum shop will soon be available. If you would like a copy, please contact OSA Secretary, PO Box 74, Dunedin.

Newsletter Personnel

Austin Gee, Editor

The OSA committee is pleased to introduce to members our recently-appointed Newsletter editor, Dr Austin Gee. Austin was born in Christchurch and studied History at Canterbury University before going to Oxford on a Commonwealth scholarship. He completed a D.Phil. there in Modern History in 1989 and stayed on in the UK, doing historical and bibliographical research and writing. He is an expert in the study of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: in 2003 he published *The British Volunteer Movement, 1794-1814* (Oxford, Clarendon Press). He has also compiled a number of historical bibliographies. Since returning to New Zealand and settling in Dunedin, Austin has begun tutoring in the History Department at Otago University and preparing a bibliography on the history of the University. He has a keen interest in local history and we are fortunate to be able to call on this interest, and his various skills, as our Newsletter editor.

Karina McLeod and Tim Cornelius, Designers

The Association takes this opportunity to thank Karina for designing the Otago Settlers News for us since its inception in its present format in 1997. We are always amazed at how she transforms articles of various lengths, notices, loose photographs and captions into a quality newsletter. Karina, who is based at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, is now handing over the design of the newsletter to Tim Cornelius.

Tim has been Exhibition Designer at the museum since 1999. Members will have seen the quality of his work in the numerous temporary exhibitions since then, and in the continuing development of the permanent exhibition spaces. The format for the newsletter will remain the same and the Committee looks forward to working with Tim on this and future editions.

For Your Diary

Members Evening

Friday 24 June 7.30pm

The Home Front: Otago Stories from World War II

Members are invited to attend this evening and share their memories of how the war touched the lives of those of us who stayed at home - Home Guard, war industries, women at work, transport, food, etc. Please email, fax or post one or two of your memories to OSA secretary to be read out (anonymously if wished) on the night. Guest participants, including Seán Brosnahan, OSM curator who is researching a forthcoming exhibition on the subject, will be present to comment and share their knowledge. You are also encouraged to bring items of memorabilia for a display table. Please ensure they are clearly marked with your name and phone number. If you wish to attend, please contact OSA Secretary, PO Box 74; phone/fax 477-8677
email: otago.settlers.assn@xtra.co.nz.

We have organized this meeting for a Friday evening and hope that some of our out-of-town members may attend and then spend the weekend in Dunedin. With this in mind, we are opening the OSA rooms on the Saturday and Sunday from 10.30-11.30am and 3.00-4.00pm for members and friends to enjoy tea or coffee, biscuits and a chat.

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 15 September 7.30pm

Details will be forwarded with the next issue of the Otago Settlers News at the end of August. Do come. Business is kept to a minimum and those present will enjoy a guest speaker and a sociable supper with other members. If you are interested in joining the committee we will be very pleased to hear from you. Please contact the secretary.



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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