



At Home with the Buchanans of Squatters' Gully

The replica pioneer cottage is finished at last, and has proved to be one of the more popular attractions in the redeveloped Museum. There is still however a lot to be paid for, so any further contributions would be most welcome. It will always lack a fourth wall so that school parties can be evacuated safely if necessary, though this has the happy consequence that the interior can be used like a stage set if desired. Though not an exact replica, it is modelled on an actual cottage that belonged to the Buchanan family.

The Buchanans came to Otago in the *Philip Laing* in 1848. At that time the family consisted of John Buchanan, a 48-year-old former hand-loom weaver from Kirkintilloch near Glasgow, his 42-year-old wife Margaret McCulloch, and their daughters Isabella, aged five, and Jean, aged two. A son, Gilbert, was born in Dunedin in 1851. John's brother Gilbert and his family were also on board the *Philip Laing* and settled on the Taieri. John was one of a number of hand-loom weavers from Kirkintilloch who sought a new life in Dunedin after mechanisation made their skills redundant in Scotland.

By November 1849 the Buchanans were in situ in 'Squatters' Gully,' which was $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from Dunedin in the bush.' This was actually in the Town Belt above MacLaggan Street (a site which is now somewhere in Jubilee Park). We know this from a letter home that John wrote at that time in which he describes the cottage he had built for the family to live in: 'After great perseverance and difficulty I have at length succeeded erecting a house single handed with the exception of two half days which I got from Alexander Watson. The house consists of one apartment about 12 feet square the sides upwards of 7 feet high are posted, the posts being about a yard asunder are wattled across and clayed betwixt the wattles. It is roofed with grass and I have a clay chimney attached to it. I have got a garden cleared out of about 24 yards by 30 yards. It consists of potatoes and cabbages which are looking well, also peas and a few garden seeds but they are not looking so well.'

We can imagine the Buchanan family treasures on display beside the cottage replica as being kept secure in their packing cases until the cottage was well and truly finished. Then, out

The new pioneer cottage viewed from its 'cut-away' side to reveal the detailed interior dressing.



they would have come, one by one, to make the little cottage in the bush seem more like a home. The lustre jugs, glasses and porcelain would have been reminders of the finer things of life back in Scotland. Likewise the fine silk apron — surely too good for everyday use. Family tradition has it that the two porcelain figurines served as dolls for Jeanie and Isabella when they were girls.

Surviving family letters to and from Scotland tell us much about the Buchanans' life in early Dunedin as well as the strong bonds that endured with their relations back at home. John's bachelor brothers in Kirkintilloch were stalwart supporters of their New Zealand kin, sending vital supplies — fabrics, footwear, dolls! — that were hard to obtain in early Dunedin. The Buchanans lived in their cottage for fourteen years after their arrival in Otago. They then moved to a section they had bought in Great King Street, where John and Margaret were to live out their days. Isabella Buchanan died from illness when she was seventeen. When she grew up, Jeanie married James Stevenson, a fellow Scot. They had a farm at Duntroon in North Otago before moving to Waimate in South Canterbury, and finally to Temuka. Jeannie died there in 1926, aged 78, survived by two sons and two daughters. They in turn donated the family treasures brought from Scotland to the Museum.



Clockwise from top left: The dramatically lit cottage frontage; detailed 'hands on' props inside; the exterior bush scene; costumed performers bring the cottage to life on opening day; objects brought by the Buchanan family on the *Philip Laing* can be seen in a nearby display case.

Selling and Making Music at Begg's



Beginning in Dunedin in 1861, only thirteen years after the settlement of Otago began, Begg's was an early business in what was to become the wealthiest city in New Zealand. The firm subsequently spread throughout the country and continued to operate until 1970, a period of nearly 110 years — an impressive record for any company. For many generations of New Zealanders, Begg's meant music and music meant Begg's. Yet it was not just a music retailer, it was also a manufacturer and wholesaler. From very early on, Begg's was astute enough to see the potential of, and embraced, the new musical technologies of gramophone and radio.

Begg's later expanded its importing to cover a wide range of electrical goods, including refrigerators, washing machines, shavers, irons, cake mixers and more. When strict import licensing measures were introduced in the 1930s, Begg's established its own 'Dreco' (Dominion Electrical Company) factory in Otahuhu and began assembling Philco radios and, in the 1960s, television sets.

Charles Begg arrived in Otago on 8 October 1861 and began work the next day. His business developed rapidly. On 12 January 1865 the New Zealand Exhibition opened in Dunedin. It was a creditable achievement for the newly settled province. A magnificent building was erected in Great King Street to house a wide range of displays and the exhibition attracted 800 exhibitors from around the world. Charles was a judge in two classes (Furniture and Upholstery), as well as an entrant in the Musical Instruments class at the Exhibition. He entered

two pianos, a Collard & Collard cottage pianoforte from London which won him an honorary certificate, and a piano of his own construction (apart from the action which was made by Broadwood of London) manufactured from New Zealand woods. The case was of Otago rimu and the string board and sounding board of Swiss pine. Charles' piano won a bronze medal 'For Piano Manufactured by him in New Zealand, and of New Zealand woods.'

After Charles' death the company was managed by his wife, Jessie, until 1896 when their sons Alex and Charles assumed management of the business. In 1908, after a protracted legal battle within the Begg family, the business became a limited liability company. During this time Begg's expanded to Timaru (1885), Wellington (1897) and Invercargill (1900), before opening an office in London in 1904 and finally a branch in Waimate (1907), as well as having numerous agencies throughout the country.

In early 1885 Begg's Timaru branch or 'saloon,' as it was named, was opened in the Theatre Buildings, Stafford Street with William Huggins as manager. He was a violinist and keen bandsman, and was to serve as manager there for nearly forty years, eventually dying at his desk on a Saturday afternoon after the shop had closed. His son, Frank Sargant Huggins, also worked for the company, originally training as a coffin maker and then as a piano tuner in Dunedin and subsequently being in charge of the piano tuning department at the Wellington branch. The Timaru branch offered all that was available in Dunedin, albeit in a more limited range and promised that 'country clients can rely on their orders being dispatched with Promptness and Despatch.' By 1887 the Timaru branch had a resident tuner, Mr Hathaway, who would undertake a single tuning for twelve shillings and sixpence, a reduction in the amount charged when the tuner had to come from Dunedin.

As is still the case today, musicians were attracted to working in an environment dealing with music and many of Begg's staff were very involved in the musical life of the community they worked in. In 1901 the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall visited the Dominion and a signal was sent to Dunedin to announce their landing at Auckland. As the signal was received flags were flown, bunting hauled up and a 21-gun salute fired, with a crowd gathered in Princes Street. Alas no band had been organised to play 'God Save the King' but on 'Messrs Charles Begg and Co's balcony ... eight or ten of the employees formed themselves into a band, and taking up a position on the balcony, played the National Anthem. Rousing cheers were given as the flags all around were hoisted.'

Begg's growth continued to be steady, with five new branches opened and staff numbers increased to 200 by 1926. The opening of a branch in Christchurch in 1920 meant Begg's now had a presence in three of the four major cities in the country and was another important step in their expansion policy. The manufacturing operation was substantially expanded during this period, moving from a workshop in the basement of the Princes Street premises to a specially built factory. Although Dunedin was still the major branch and head office, the city's position within New Zealand had begun to wane and it was vital for the company to develop in other areas to maintain its



position in the market. No doubt in part as a response to this Begg's were very involved in the 1925-26 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition which was held in Dunedin and stressed the importance of New Zealand's place in the empire and the promotion of local industry.

For the Exhibition Begg's constructed a special piano with an oak case and iron frame. Each piano had a round brass plaque on it with the words 'Specially manufactured for the 1925-26 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition, Dunedin' impressed into it. The frame had been specifically made for the company and had 'Begg' within a lyre motif (a symbol the firm used frequently) moulded into it. The design of the case was relatively simple and its straight lines and lack of excessive ornamentation had an Art Deco look to it.

In 1924, in a reversal of previous New Zealand exhibitions Begg's had exhibited at, where the largest part of their displays was imported goods, Begg's sent a piano and gramophone of their own manufacture to London for the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley. This illustrated the increasingly global nature of their business. By May 1926 there were between 40 and 50 men employed in the Filleul Street factory and Alex Begg had plans to expand further.

In 1926 Begg's became a public company although the Begg family were still involved. As well as expanding the range of musical goods and other types of products Begg's sold, the business also expanded its physical presence in New Zealand, most importantly with the opening of a branch in Customs Street East, Auckland in 1928. With this opening Begg's had achieved nationwide coverage and now had a presence, and were to become a keen competitor, in New Zealand's largest city. As before, Begg's continued to maintain agencies in the smaller cities and towns throughout the country and in 1943 new branches in Hamilton and Palmerston North were opened. Staff numbers continued to increase to the extent that during the Second World War eighty staff members served overseas, four making the 'ultimate sacrifice.' Most of those who served returned to Begg's employ after demobbing.

Many thousands of people worked for Begg's during its long history. Some employees came and went fairly quickly, some became integral parts of branches they worked in, and a few spent their whole working lives there. There were staff who never moved from the branch they began at, and retired from it years later, while others were transferred all over the country

as their career paths developed. There were many marriages among staff, and families would often have more than one member working for the company.

James Dixon (always known to Begg's staff as 'JD') managed the Dunedin branch. He had joined the firm at some time in the 1920s and conducted the successful choir in the nationwide 1927 Firm's Contest. In 1933, when Eric Begg was made general manager, JD succeeded him as branch manager. JD was heavily involved in the brass band world and in particular the St Kilda band. One of his sons, Jim, served his apprenticeship as a piano tuner at Begg's. JD's other son Arthur fought in the Second World War and on his return to New Zealand, JD bought the old Dunedin business of 'Terry's,' which included a substantial sheet music section, for his son to run. Needless to say, this caused a sensation among the staff of Begg's Dunedin branch, to whom the purchase smacked of treachery. In 1953 JD retired from Begg's and became general manager at Terry's with his son Arthur as manager.

Lots of well-known musical names worked at the various branches over the years — Jock Begg, bagpipe specialist and father of the famous mezzo-soprano opera singer Heather Begg (Auckland); Kiri te Kanawa (Auckland); Clare Golomos the violinist (Wellington); as well as countless band musicians who often worked at Begg's during the day and performed in the evenings. Michael Hill's father was an appliance salesman in the Whangarei branch.

Piano repairs and piano tuning were still a big part of the business in the 1950s. When Eric Officer began his apprenticeship in Dunedin in 1956, the branch had several tuners. As well as tuning pianos, there were many repairs to be undertaken in the piano workshop or 'the sunshine factory,' as it was known. Some tuners worked just in Dunedin itself, while others went out tuning in the country. When someone rang in for an out-of-town tuning they might have to wait until there were other tuning jobs nearby to make it worthwhile. When the country tuners came in on Monday morning they were given a list of where to go and went off in one of the branch's two small Ford Anglia vans that had 'Begg's Piano Tuning Service' on them. Margaret Gardiner says the tuners got to know their clientele well and would often stay privately in piano teachers' houses.

In 1961 the company celebrated its 100th birthday. In Invercargill the branch donated a square piano to the Invercargill museum to commemorate its 100 years, but the new grand piano

Left-right: Ground floor of the Princes Street premises displaying small instruments and music; piano repair and polishing in 1911.



ordered from Begg's by the Dunedin City Council for their Town Hall had to be paid for by them. Some felt that it should have been donated, as had happened some twenty years before. By now the family atmosphere was on the wane and many staff felt disappointed in the lack of importance attached to the centenary. The manager of the Dunedin shop, Walter Sinton, wrote to Begg's London representative, Bert Rayment, 'Confidentially, we have had a peculiar sort of Centenary, in that it has not been celebrated at all ... not a thing was done here even in the birthplace of the Begg organization.' The whole timbre of the company was changing.

In more than any other aspect of Begg's operation it is the publishing of music that best illustrates the commitment the company had to New Zealand music and the contribution it made to many aspects of New Zealand cultural life, not all of it for purely pecuniary gain.

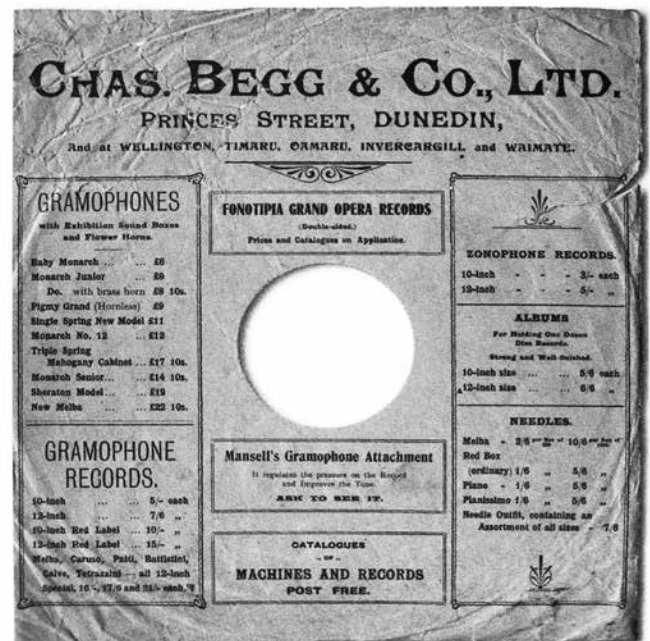
One well-known song was 'Blue Smoke,' written by Ruru Karaitiana, a Maori soldier who later wrote regarding it 'We were on the troopship Aquitania in 1940 off the coast of Africa when a friend drew my attention to some passing smoke. He put the song in my lap. It was a natural.' Ruru Karaitiana could not read or write music and although he composed the tune and wrote the words for the chorus, it was Begg's personnel who supplied the verse (Walter Sinton) and piano arrangement (George Winchester, manager of Begg's wholesale music division in Wellington). The author Patricia Grace remembers being taken by her mother to Begg's Wellington branch and hearing Ruru playing and singing the piece on the piano, presumably in order to publicise it. Ruru got a little carried away with the success of 'Blue Smoke' and went up and down New Zealand charging all sorts of things to his royalty account — greatly exceeding any royalties he was ever likely to receive, which caused enormous problems for Begg's. Begg's also published other compositions by Ruru: 'Let's Talk it Over' and 'Ain't It a Shame.'

Clare Gleeson (née Begg)



This is an extract, with the kind permission of the author, from *Meet Me at Begg's: The Story of Charles Begg & Co, Music and Appliance Manufacturers and Retailers, 1861-1970* (Wellington: Ngaio Press, 2012).

Copies (\$49.95) are available from selected bookshops or directly from the author, by electronic mail at claregleeson8@gmail.com or by telephone: (04) 4792 554.



Top left-right: New technologies – Begg's phonograph and radio departments, 1911 and 1930s
Bottom: A Begg's record sleeve c1908



Toitū Otago Settlers Museum

As most readers will be well aware, over the past few years the Museum has successfully undergone a major \$37 million expansion and redevelopment programme, mainly funded by the City Council, but also with government input and substantial support from the Otago Settlers' Association. The Museum has been closed for the past year and a half during the final stages of this process. It reopened on Friday, 7 December last year with twice as much exhibition space, excellent new storage facilities and some old storage areas brought up to exhibition standard, together with a new entrance hall, shop, café and auditorium.

By the end of January there had been more than 80,000 visitors. The portraits in the Smith Gallery have proved to be a great attraction, and the Burnside wing as a whole saw more than 63,000 comings and goings in just January alone. The former NZR bus station attracted 37,000 visits in the same period, while unsurprisingly the entrance concourse, with Josephine, the shop and café, has proved to be the most visited part of the museum.

The place of the Settlers' Roll on the wall of the former concourse (that has become the new Research Area) is now occupied by a video screen. The roll is safely stored and will reappear on the south-facing wall just around the corner in due course. The rotating national and ethnic displays formerly in the alcove in the Burnside Building are now to be found in a display case in the Research Area; the current exhibition commemorates the 140th anniversary of the beginnings of Otago's Polish community.

The Archives

The Museum's Archive is open from one till four every weekday afternoon, and is closed at weekends and on public holidays. It costs \$12 a day to consult the archives, but it is free to members of the Association. If you know anyone who uses the archives and is not already a member, is well worth recommending they join; the necessary form is on the back of this newsletter. OSA members also have the right to one hour's expert research by the archivist, Jill Haley, each year; just send your queries by post or electronic mail.

Much research can now be conducted when the archives are shut by using the computers and books in the new Research Centre just outside. Guides to genealogical sources in other archives are provided, together with useful indices to passenger lists and assisted immigrant debtors' lists, among others. There is a comprehensive index to all photographic portraits in the collection, which are now virtually all digitised; prints can be ordered at the enquiry desk nearby. The computers offer a range of internet-based resources for family history. Most importantly, the Museum is the only public institution that provides free access to OASES, the Otago & Southland Early Settlers database. Bob Matthews has compiled this over the course of several years from a wide range of sources, and he continues to add information, making it even more comprehensive. Pages from the database can be printed if required.



Left: A striking view of the Museum's new Josephine Foyer - Photo by Graham Warman
Right: The Archives (above) and Research Centre

The Christmas Meeting

It was standing room only at the Christmas Meeting of the Association on Thursday, 13 December 2012. The Museum had reopened only the previous weekend, and more than 300 members and their families attended. After a short introduction from Will McKee to the redeveloped building and the new displays, the multitude was let loose on the galleries. Several staff members were available to answer questions, though Curator Seán Brosnahan was present only in electronic form, appearing on at least two of the video 'listening posts.' Not everyone had been inside the former bus garage before, and the gentle early evening sunlight made it appear unexpectedly picturesque. After inspecting the new displays the crowd reassembled in the new concourse for punch with Christmas cake and strawberries. A raffle was held, the prizes being two hampers and a box turned by the late John Martin. It raised \$298 for the Cottage Appeal.

For Your Diary Otago Anniversary Day

The annual Anniversary Day dinner will be held at the Savoy on Saturday, 23 March. Full details are provided in the flyer which will be posted out to members with this newsletter.

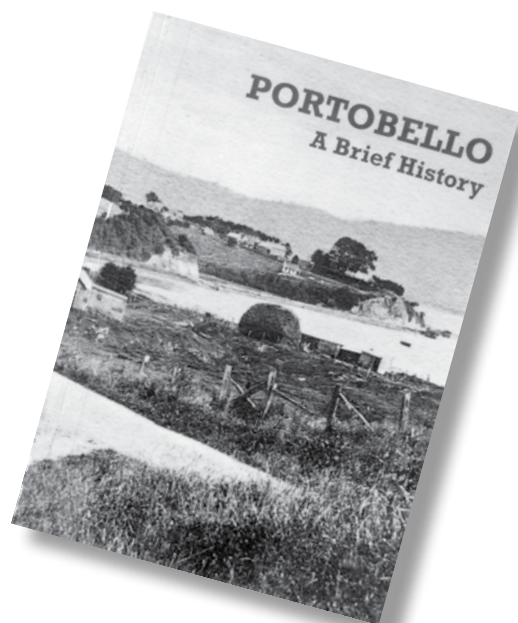
Otago Anniversary Church Service

OSA is again collaborating with First Church (which is 140 years old this year) in a special Anniversary Day service at 10am on 24 March. Members are warmly invited to join the congregation for a service of commemoration and celebration, and for morning tea afterwards in the Burns Hall.

Federation of Historical Societies Conference

The Otago Settlers Association is to host this year's conference and Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Federation of Historical Societies over the weekend of 5-7 April. Visitors will be welcomed at an informal get-together on the Friday evening and will take a sightseeing tour on Saturday morning. After lunch at Burns Hall, there will be time for them to enjoy the delights of the Museum before gathering in its new auditorium for their AGM. This will include discussion of problems and issues of interest to local historical societies. Preceding and following the AGM will be two guest speakers, Museum Curator and historian Seán Brosnahan, and Professor Tom Brooking of the University of Otago. The Conference dinner on Saturday evening will be at the Dunedin Club and the weekend will conclude with more heritage sightseeing on Sunday. OSA members are welcome to register for the whole weekend for \$50 or for Saturday (including lunch and afternoon tea) for \$25.

Book News



Portobello: A Brief History

(Otago Peninsula Museum & Historical Society, 2012) Paperback, 74 pages. ISBN 978-0-473-22504-9 Price \$32.50

Thomas Bracken thought Portobello a 'charming spot' and the scenery on the road leading to it from Dunedin 'simply magnificent.' This profusely illustrated book looks at the origins of the township; provides biographies of early settlers, and the interesting people buried in the cemetery; and considers the Presbyterian and Anglican churches, local businesses, public services such as the Post Office and Volunteer Fire Brigade, transport, social events and many other aspects of life in the peninsular community since 1848. The book is illustrated with a wide range of photographs, together with facsimiles of newspaper reports and advertising, and several maps.

Shop News

Among the wide range of books of local and historical interest stocked by the Museum shop are two new DVDs:

Dunedin Hill Suburb Trams, Alan Gilchrist (\$20)

This contains a photographic slide-show of the Kaikorai, Roslyn, Mornington and Maryhill cable cars, together with the Maori Hill electric trams.

Kaikorai Then & Now, Alan Gilchrist (\$20)

This DVD contains a photographic slide-show depicting the suburb from its early years to the present day. It shows the shops, businesses, churches, schools, trams and cable cars, and many other items of interest.

Introduce a Friend to the Otago Settlers Association



Otago Settlers Association Membership Application Form
Please return this section with payment to
Otago Settlers Association, PO Box 74, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

Annual Membership

1 July to 30 June. Discounts are available for those joining during the year.

Receipts for Subscriptions and Donations of \$5.00 and over may be attached to your Tax Rebate Claim.

Family and Family Life Membership include two adults and children under 18 at the same address.

Please complete personal membership details below.

Subscription Category (Please tick as appropriate)

ANNUAL		LIFE	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$70.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$700.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Over 60	\$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 60	\$300.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Two Over 60	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Two Over 60	\$450.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior (U18)	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Endowment	\$1,400.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Company/Firm	\$75.00		
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organisation	\$55.00		

I/We wish to join the Otago Settlers Association Inc.

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

Family and Two Over-60 members; please give family name and first names of both proposed members.

Title (please circle): Dr/Rev/Mr/Master/Mrs/Ms/Miss

Family Name(s):

First Name(s):

Junior Members, please give date of birth:

Address:

Suburb: City:

Postcode: Telephone: (0__)

Email:

Your reason for joining the Association:

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Privacy Act Declaration

I understand that the information I have given will be used for the general purposes of Association administration and membership benefits. The Privacy Act gives the right to access this information and to correct if necessary.

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Cash/Cheque * enclosed for \$

(made payable to Otago Settlers Association)

* EFTPOS and credit card facilities not available

Membership forms are also available online at: www.otago.settlers.museum/about/otago-settlers-association



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This newsletter was produced by the Otago Settlers Association, founder and supporter of the Toitū 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 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 Toitū Otago Settlers Museum

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