OTAGO SETTLERS NEWS

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION *proud to be friends of* taitū OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM **WINTER 2017** ISSUE 133

LONG HARRY, ENGLAND AND SAINT GEORGE

Over this past summer, I worked behind the scenes at the Museum as the OSA/History Department Summer Intern. While I live in Blenheim, I am a product of settlers who came to Otago and Southland, most of them arriving in the 1860s: the Dickies, Prydes and Vials of the Gore/Mataura/Waikaia area; the Glasses and Rawcliffes of North Otago; and the gold miner Thomas Lister. The first Dickie in New Zealand is said to have been Alexander, the eldest son of Eliza and David Dickie of Ayrshire, south-west Scotland. On 1 June 1860, he left the family's farm at Tannahill, near Kilmarnock, for Glasgow to sail for New Zealand in the *Robert Henderson*. He arrived in Dunedin on 3 September after a 92-day voyage. Alexander quickly started work for a farmer named Pearson at North Taieri, where he was when gold was discovered at Gabriel's Gully. Joining the rush, he drove his employer's team, a cart and four bullocks, with stores to the goldfields. The Taieri River was in flood, so they could not ford it. Rather, they had to take the load and cart over in a rickety boat. Smaller items went in a 'canoe,' which was really little more than a hollowed-out log. The bullocks would not swim so had to be towed behind in single file. On the return journey they stopped at a tent to inquire if the river was fordable. In the tent, four or five men were eating a meal. They were all armed with revolvers but answered them fairly civilly, and Alexander and his group went on their merry way. What they did not know

The destruction of the iconic Dunedin Stock Exchange building in January 1969 – part of Tom Rawcliffe's focus on 'Dunedin's disappearing icons of the Twentieth Century.'

until later on was that these men were actually the Garrett gang of bushrangers led by the career criminal Henry 'Long Harry' Garrett. At the time they were in the process of terrorising gold miners returning from Gabriel's Gully, tying them to trees and looting their gold. When Alexander came across Garrett and his men, they supposedly already had a number of people tied up in the bush, but for some reason decided against robbing them. Of course, we do not know why they chose not to rob Alexander and his boss. However, Elizabeth Smith in *The Dickie Pioneers and Descendants* offers her own theory for why Garrett and his lads might not have been too keen to take on my relative: 'Perhaps the sight of a bullock whip in the hands of a six-foot-four-inch Scotsman suggested that discretion might be the better part of valour.'

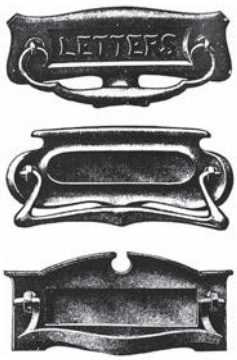
My project at the Museum was to help revamp the timeline in the twentieth-century gallery, which is currently focused on food. The new topic is 'Dunedin's disappearing icons of the Twentieth Century.' It will focus on the businesses, industries, buildings, sports grounds and so on that were formerly 'icons' of twentieth-century Dunedin but now are no more. The topic was curator Peter Read's idea, but I was very pleased to have worked on it because I think it has the potential to appeal to a lot of people from Dunedin. It will, I hope, evoke happy memories, maybe even a sense of melancholy, as people remember some of the institutions that used to be a part of the city. Examples of the institutions I researched are Bell Tea, Arthur Barnett's, the Roslyn and Mosgiel woollen mills, the Stock Exchange building and Carisbrook. With the help of Peter, my job was to research these icons, source images and objects associated with them, and write captions about them which will appear on the timeline.

While researching Dunedin icons, I often came across interesting and funny stories. One I read about from the 1950s was the Great Jam Challenge involving Irvine & Stevenson's St George brand. An influx of English jams into the New Zealand market began in 1955. They were cheaper to buy than the local ones because the Poms could get their sugar more cheaply. Consequently, these new English competitors were really biting into the New Zealand jam market. But there was more to it than just the fact that the English jams were cheaper. They were more popular because they looked more attractive in glass jars than the local product did in tins. The St George company claimed to have been the first to realise this, and so in 1956 they began producing jam in glass jars, just like their English rivals. They went so far in their attempt at imitating English jam that they even labelled their product 'Old English Style.' But not everyone was impressed with the new look of St George jam. In 1957, the North Island Housewives' Association came out and declared that New Zealand jam was still not as good as the English stuff, despite being packaged in an attractive glass jar and labelled 'Old English Style.' Clearly aggrieved by this, St George took up the challenge and got the New Zealand Manufacturers' Association in to conduct an independent test — a 'jam joust' as the *Auckland Weekly News* described it — between the rival jams. For about an hour, seven women meticulously tested the competing jams, tasting and comparing each variety, in an attempt to crown the winning jam. In the end there could only be one winner. Can you guess who won? Funnily enough, the spoils went to the much-maligned New Zealand-made St George brand, proving that Dunedin could come out on top against the big boys in the jam-making department.

Of course, aside from the funny stories, there were a number of challenges that came with the job. One in particular was thinking about how we order our icons. In the timeline there are ten boxes, each representing a decade of the twentieth century, and only one icon or theme can go in each. There has to be some connection between the icon and the decade, whether it be the founding of the particular company in that decade, an important event in the history of an icon, or simply that the object you have which represents that icon is from a certain decade. This can often lead to a dilemma, where you have a number of possible boxes an icon could go in but you have to pick the one that's going to both suit the icon and accommodate other icons. An example is the Hillside railway workshops. The Museum has two sets of tools used at Hillside: some moulding tools used there between 1968 and 1995, and some tools used by a father and son who worked at Hillside in 1906–18 and 1924–64 respectively. I've also seen some photos of the workshop from the 1970s that might be good to use, but have read that peak employment there was reached in the 1940s. So which decade should I put Hillside in? These are some of the challenges of the job. However, I enjoyed the challenges and was made to feel very welcome at the Museum. Everyone was kind to me and I am very grateful for having had the opportunity to work there and experience what it is like to work in such an environment. So, thank you to the OSA for this prize.

Tom Rawcliffe
OSA Summer Intern 2016–17

An advertisement from *New Zealand Grocers' Review* July 1959 referencing the result of the 1957 'jam joust.'



The Postman No Longer Rings Twice

As the volume of letters handled by the Post Office falls back to levels not seen since the late 1980s and deliveries are whittled away, the postal service is no longer what it used to be. Yet the rot set in more than a century ago. The postman used to deliver letters to your house, and if no-one was in, return the next day to try again. He was not allowed to simply push the letters under the door to save himself the trouble: 'the postman blows his whistle or knocks (or does both) and then has to wait for someone to answer the door before he can continue on his round. Most people know what happens inside, when a knock is heard at the front door, particularly in the forenoon. If there is a servant she may be out of hearing at the first knock. A second one is almost invariably needed before the postman is relieved of his letters. Where there is no servant, the mistress of the house usually jumps to the conclusion that the knock means an early caller, and she hastily doffs her apron, and dashes to the nearest mirror to straighten her hair, before answering the door's appeal. Meanwhile, the post-man (who is prevented by regulation from slipping letters under the door) where that is possible, awaits the lady's pleasure with a patience born of experience.'

By 1910 the Post and Telegraph Department decided that it would be altogether more efficient if we were to follow the practice common overseas of having a letter slot in the front door so the postman would not need to wait for someone to answer the door, tidy hair or not. The department sent a circular to all householders and businesses 'pointing out that the time of letter-carriers was to a great extent wasted through the failure on the part of the public to provide apertures in the doors of their premises, or letter boxes, for the reception of correspondence.' They suggested residents insert 'an aperture in the front door of [their] residence or place of business with a suitable cover, and ... to affix inside the door a wire box to hold correspondence passed through the slot, but this would not be insisted on where the householder wished to take the risk of loss arising through articles being dropped on the floor.' As ever, alleged 'improvements' to a public service were presented as being of great convenience for the customer: a letter slot 'would frequently be of service to householders themselves, as it was not always convenient for inmates to answer the summons of the carrier, and where the occupier was absent correspondence had, under existing arrangements,

Top: A fine range of attractive Edwardian letter plates.
Centre: Post office employees, circa 1896.

to be returned to the Post Office.' (Why it could not simply be pushed under the door was never explained.) The Postal Department promised to secure samples of 'aperture fixings' and provide householders with 'the conveniences described at the least possible cost.' The legacy is a fine range of attractive Edwardian letter plates to be seen on the doors of older houses throughout Dunedin.

All this presupposed the postman could find the correct house in the first place. Increasingly frustrated at the reluctance of householders to put numbers on their residences, in 1918 the Dunedin City Corporation offered to provide them free of charge. The City Engineer explained that 'owing to the failure of householders to recognise the advantage of a systematic method of numbering ... a good deal of confusion in numbers still exists in some streets.'

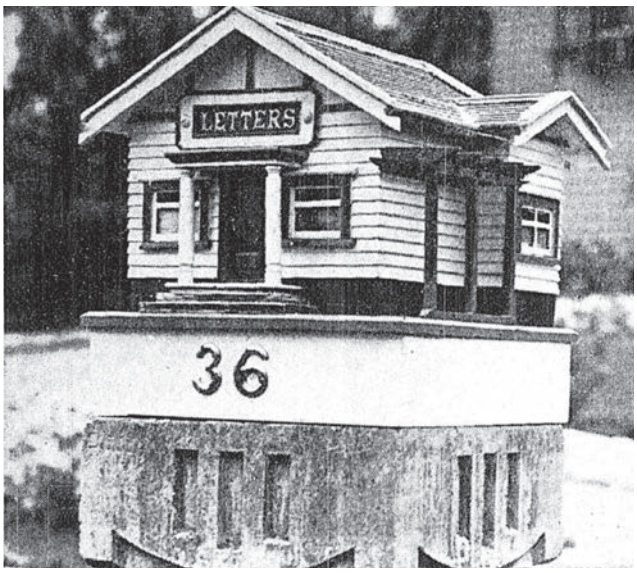
The familiar plop of the morning post landing on the hall floor came to an end barely three decades later. In the dark days of early 1942, when Darwin was bombed and, fearing the worst, air-raid shelters were being constructed throughout Dunedin, the postman could no longer spare the time to walk up the garden path to deliver letters. In many cases there was no postman at all, as he had been called up and his place taken by a postwoman. The solution was a separate letter-box at the gate. Already in 1910 'persons whose houses are situated at considerable distance from the street line' — more than about 20 yards — had been requested 'to provide letter-receiving boxes in a convenient position.' Wartime cutbacks meant this was made compulsory in 1917 by an Order in Council. Then in late 1940, during the next war, all householders were asked to do their bit by providing letter boxes at their gates. Dunedinites were more reluctant to comply than residents of other cities, but from March 1942 letters were no longer delivered to the door. Everyone had to get a letter-box or face having to collect their mail themselves from the local Post Office. There was no standard type of letter-box; all the Post Office required was 'something that will hold the mail but it must be at the front gate.' Like some other temporary wartime expedients, this one has turned out to be permanent.

POSTMAN'S KNOCK.

TAKING ALL THE PRIDE OUT OF HIM.

Charley: By Jove, Tom, why in the name of all that's æsthetic did the Government rig you out in such an outrageously ugly hat?

Postman Tom: Well, you see, we were always ladies' pets, and, when we called with the mail, the girls would keep us glued to the door for a chat, but now, when they see our pots, they just blush and shrink inside.



Left: Cartoon by William Blomfield, *Observer* 24 April 1909. **Top right:** John Citizen receives the 'Postman's Knock' in this cartoon by Gordon Minhinnick, *NZ Herald* 2 March 1931. **Bottom right:** An unusual letter box, *NZ Herald* 18 February 1939.

Garden Guns and a Church Mouse

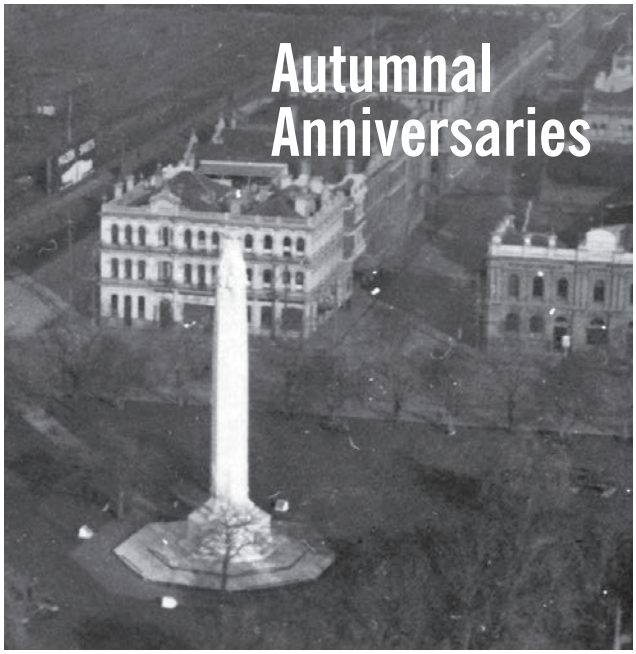
Our first summer outing took place in a deluge, but in compensation we had glorious weather for our second annual jaunt, to the Kuriheka Estate near Maheno. Lyndon Ansell and Trish Marinkovich (née Nicholl) even flew in from Auckland expressly to join the bus party. Tim Nichols welcomed all the visitors and gave each an interesting book about the homestead and an introduction to his family estate. After a leisurely amble about the grounds, OSA members enjoyed a lunch on the lawn in the gorgeous North Otago sunshine. Colonel Joseph Cowie Nichols (1859–1954), who bought the estate in 1885, commanded the Otago Mounted Rifles and was an avid collector of military memorabilia. We all enjoyed hearing Tim's tales about the artefacts collected by his long-lived ancestor, which include some impressive field guns in the gardens.

Our next stop was St Andrew's Memorial Church in Maheno. Colonel Nichols and his brother Cyril paid for the construction of this very attractive small church, designed by the Christchurch architects Cecil Wood and Richard Harman, and built in 1938–39. Its distinctive warm, brown stone was quarried on the Kuriheka Estate. The interior features fine carving by Frederick Gurnsey and several impressive stained-glass windows. Dorothy McKenzie highlighted the church's special features, which include details such as pew-end carvings of keas and moreporks, a tuatara on the prayer-desk, and a kookaburra on the vicar's chair as a nod to the Nichols' connection to Australia. Members delighted in finding a stone mouse carved above the entrance, reminiscent of the furniture of Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson of Kilburn, North Yorkshire. This little church mouse quickly became one of the most photographed animals of the day.

We had time for a quick ice-cream stop on the way back to Dunedin, and thanks to the skills of our bus driver Richard, of The Good Bus Company Tours, we all were delivered safely home to Dunedin on time. Trish Marinkovich has since written to say she found the outing extremely interesting and very well organised, and really appreciates all the effort that went into the planning of it, as doubtless do the other members who also enjoyed the day.

Kylie Darragh
OSA Administrator

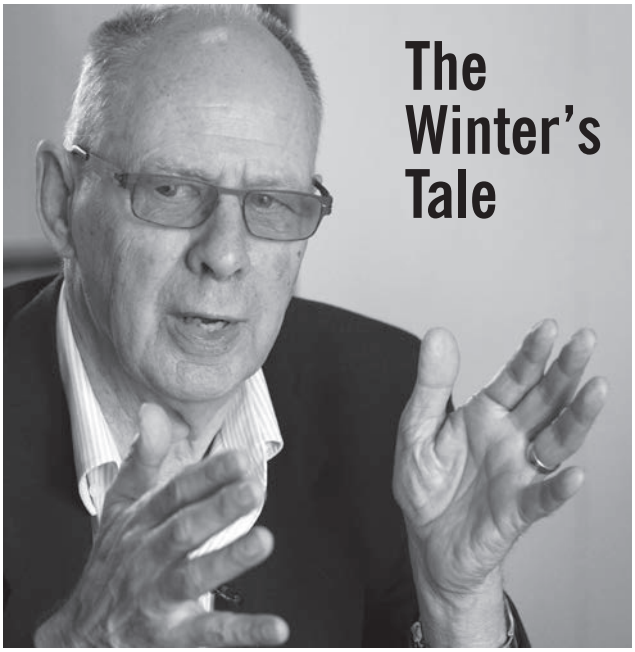
Top left: The church mouse carved above the door of St Andrew's Memorial Church in Maheno.
Right: Scenes from the OSA outing to the Kurihika Estate and St Andrew's Memorial Church.



Autumnal Anniversaries

Otago Anniversary Day was commemorated on Thursday, 23 March with a very well-attended dinner at Fernhill. It was one of the biggest ever, with more than 120 diners, the maximum the Dunedin Club can cater for. Sophie Barker, marketing manager of the Otago Peninsula Trust, gave an interesting and well-illustrated talk on the work of the organisation, which is celebrating its jubilee. The trust seeks to stimulate public interest in the beauty, history and character of the peninsula, to preserve its natural attractions, and to protect its flora and fauna. To increase public awareness and enjoyment of the peninsula without harming its beauty or character, the trust has developed tourist attractions and recreational services. The trust bought Glenfalloch early on, in 1968, and in its fifty years has grown into a surprisingly large enterprise, running Fort Taiaroa, the Royal Albatross Centre and Blue Penguins Pukekura nearby at Pilots Beach; the Sandymount lime kilns; the Fletcher House at Broad Bay; Glenfalloch and the Colinswood Bush Reserve; as well as a range of education programmes. Congratulations go to the Anniversary Day Committee and the Dunedin Club for this splendid occasion.

A month later, on a calm, grey Anzac Day morning, OSA members and Toitū OSM staff served biscuits and hot drinks to those who came in from the cold after the dawn service. The Anzac biscuits donated by the RSA went down a treat. The crowd was a little smaller than last year, but it included many young people. OSA President Susan Schweigman and Museum Director Jennifer Evans laid a large wreath of woollen poppies at the Cenotaph, which is 90 years old this year. (It was unveiled in March 1927 by the Duke of York, who just under a decade later unexpectedly became King George VI.) A second wreath of woollen poppies was placed in the Roll of Honour room in the Museum, and the colours of the NZ Scottish Regiment were put on display nearby.



The Winter's Tale

Winter came early this year, or rather the Association's midwinter meeting did, in order to nab Roger Hall as our guest speaker. Thanking him afterwards, Danny Knudson gave a tongue-in-cheek account of how the OSA Events Committee had come to invite him, deciding against an even more famous playwright when he turned out to have died 401 years ago. Donations were collected for the Roger Hall Theatre Endowment Trust, which helps support needy and deserving theatres and performances throughout the country.

The Halls lived for many years in Dunedin, where Dianne was a guide at the Early Settlers' Museum and a member of the OSA committee. Roger recounted that when they left for Auckland in 1995 some people called him a 'traitor,' telling him it was a 'terrible place' to go to. He had several reasons for going, among them that he enjoys the warm summer evenings, likes living near Rangitoto, and as a native Londoner pines for a big city. Not many 'traitors' get a bronze plaque in the Octagon, after all.

Roger is famous as a prolific and successful dramatist, the author of 34 plays, five musicals, many pantomimes and several television series. Yet to counter the impression that it has all been a seamless string of effortless successes, he chose to concentrate on 'The Ones That Got Away.' Roger is one of the very few playwrights who has seen every play he has written actually produced, and his failures have been of the sort that many lesser playwrights might consider modest successes. They flopped for a variety of reasons: the script, the casting, inadequate rehearsal, insufficient market research — 'all the planets need to line up for a successful play.'

Almost everyone at Otago University in 1981 was complaining about Robert Muldoon, so it seemed to Roger a good idea for a play. In his political allegory *The Rose*, the 'Leader' has

Top left: The cenotaph in Queens Gardens shortly after its construction, photographed from the spire of First Church.
Top right: Playwright Roger Hall, guest speaker at the OSA midwinter meeting.

acquired a dangerous level of power. 'Man' is dissuaded from assassinating him by discovering he has a human side in his love of roses — Muldoon was famously a lover of lilies. Unfortunately for the fortunes of the play, some confused it with the Bette Midler film of the same title, which is now rather better remembered.

Politics provided the material for another play, *The Hansard Show* of 1986. Intended as a quirky history of New Zealand, its dialogue consists almost entirely of what was actually said in parliament over the years. Our President Susan Schweigman remembers in particular the outrageous statements of the MP Henry Fish, a former Mayor of Dunedin and a prominent opponent of women's suffrage in the 1890s. Other MPs provided Roger with a great deal of odd and amusing subject material. A fish may famously have no need of a bicycle, but a spate of thefts led to the Bicycle-Dealers' Registration Bill of 1900. The John Donald Macfarlane Estate Administration Empowering Act of 1918 effectively declared a living man dead so his heirs could get their hands on his estate. The Barmaids Abolition Act of 1907 did just that, for more than half a century. Despite the comic potential, *The Hansard Show* did not do well; Roger concludes the title, script and contents all share some of the blame.

In other cases, the actors and producers were clearly the problem. Roger was too discreet to name many of the guilty parties, but the late Susannah York's diva-like behaviour scuppered the chances of *Multiple Choice* making it to the West End in 1983. In Auckland, another production was set in a circus with clowns and break-dancers, undermining the point of the play. Since the director of the travesty did not change any of the actual words of the script, there was nothing the aggrieved author could do except disown the production and donate his royalties to charity.

Research is very important to the success of a play, both into its subject matter and into its intended audience. In researching *A Shortcut to Happiness* in 2011, Roger found himself obliged to interview several attractive young Russian women, but also had to defy half of Sir Thomas Beecham's famous dictum and try folk dancing. Lack of market research did for *Mr Punch*, a one-man show based on the writings of Denis Glover. It fell flat in 1989 because schools no longer taught his works and so were uninterested in bringing along their pupils to see it.

Roger's 'most painful failure of all' was a play commissioned in 2004 for the fortieth anniversary of Downstage Theatre in Wellington, with which he had been involved virtually since its foundation. *Foolish Acts* was self-consciously theatrical, full of in-jokes, digs at critics, and quick costume changes. Yet one of the leads was badly miscast and not enough time was allowed for rehearsal: the first night did not go well and the season never recovered. The critics were disappointed; Harry Ricketts called the play 'a curious hotchpotch' that 'should be fun, but mostly it isn't.'

But the worst was yet to come: the 'daddy of them all' proved to be *Golf: A Love Story* in 2015. Roger is a keen golfer, and had long wished his audiences could share in the frustration and misery of the game. Alas the actor chosen for this one-man play had never played a round in his life and was disastrously under-prepared on opening night, forgetting many of his lines. This, Roger said, was 'the lowest point of my career ... so far.' It was a powerful reminder of how difficult it can be to put on a play and get it right, particularly on the first night with the reviewers present. Unlike theatres overseas, New Zealand companies cannot afford much time for rehearsal or previews in order to hone the performance. Single-actor plays are especially difficult, given the huge task of remembering lines unprompted. The playwright needs to be involved with the rehearsals, as 'a play doesn't come alive until you have heard it performed.'

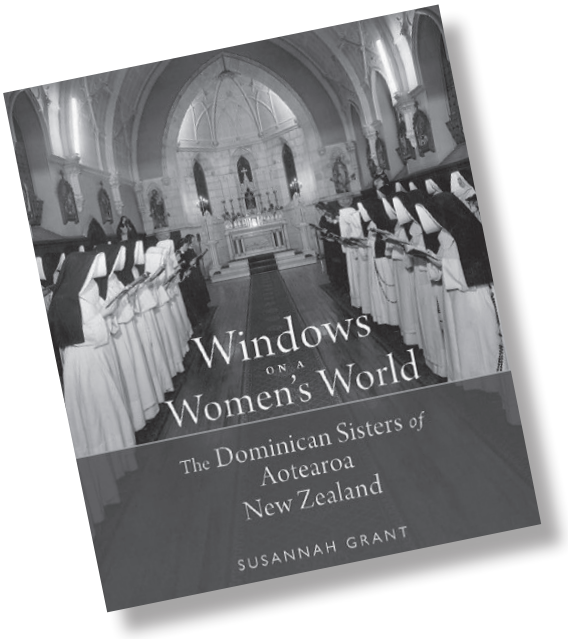
Spinning a Web

The OSA now has a website of its own, independent of the Museum's: have a look at otagosettlers.org.nz — it includes news for members and details of events, projects and publications. There are some interesting photographs, and electronic copies of this newsletter back to 2005 are also available on the site.

Book News

The Life and Times of John Simpson 1853-1928
by Donal Duthie (Fielding, 2017). 39 pages, paperback.

An OSA member among the North Island diaspora, Donal Duthie was prompted to research the biography of his great-grandfather by discovering an old newspaper cutting in a family Bible. John Simpson was born in the Scottish borders and worked in a woollen mill in Galashiels. He was recruited by John Ross in 1879 to work at Ross and Glendining's new Roslyn Woollen Mills in Kaikorai Valley. A few years later John Simpson moved his family north, to take up a position at the Kaiapoi Woollen Mill. There they were joined by his brother William and his family. John did so well that in 1901 he was appointed manager of the Bruce Woollen Mills at Milton. Five years on, he moved once more, to become manager of the Onehunga Woollen Mill. He was an active volunteer, both as a fireman and as a soldier. The military spirit was inherited by his son Charles, who was an expert shot and represented New Zealand at the National Rifle Association's Imperial Meeting at Bisley in Surrey in 1897. This short book is packed with information about the family, and is illustrated with 20 photographs. The author can be contacted at 5 Ellerslie Lane, Fielding 4702.



Windows on a Women's World: The Dominican Sisters of Aotearoa New Zealand
by Susannah Grant (Otago University Press, 2017). 328 pages, paperback. $49.99 (With OSA members' 15% discount, $42.49 plus $5 packing and postage. Please make out cheques to the DCC.)

In this new world order of post-truth politics, it is good to be reminded of an organisation whose motto is 'Veritas.' Dominic was an equal-opportunities saint in establishing his mendicant order 801 years ago: the sisters came first, and soon afterwards they were joined by preaching brothers, devoted initially to fighting heresy in the south of France. The Dominican order quickly spread throughout Europe and later worldwide, eventually reaching Dunedin in 1871. Ten sisters from Sion Hill near Dublin took over St Joseph's primary school, which had been founded 1863, and within a week had also established a girls' secondary school. Francis Petre designed a striking gothic revival priory for the nuns next to St Joseph's Cathedral, completed in 1877 and still the largest unreinforced concrete building south of the equator.

The sisters established several Dominican schools in Otago and Southland and eventually throughout the country, and their many former pupils will find this book very informative. It will appeal to a wide range of other readers too, as it deals with the life and activities of a community of socially engaged women, both religious and lay, over the years. It is organised thematically, with much on the sisters' communal life and community work, their living arrangements and daily convent life, relationships between the sisters, their identity as a congregation, their openness to the secular world, and their international connections. There is naturally a great deal about education and the nuns as both students and teachers, at St Catherine's college in Invercargill, St Dominic's college and St Joseph's primary school in Dunedin, Teschemakers near Oamaru, and St Dominic's school for the deaf in Feilding, among many other places.

Susannah Grant is not an OP — a member of the order — so she came to the subject with an outsider's perspective, having previously written the centenary history of a not-so-cloistered community of women, St Margaret's College in the University of Otago. She conducted many interviews with the sisters and was given unfettered access to the congregation's rich archives in Dunedin. An appendix lists all 346 members of the New Zealand congregation from 1871 to the present, with both their religious and family names. The book is beautifully designed and produced, and illustrated with a wide range of interesting and unexpected photographs — one of them for example illustrates the difficulty of playing table tennis in a novice's habit.

Members of the Association are entitled to a handy discount of 15% on the cost of books and other items from the Museum shop. They also have free access to the archives, and for those living outside Dunedin an hour's free research each year by the Archivist, Emma Knowles.

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION

Editor: Austin Gee; **Designer:** Tim Cornelius; **Publisher:** Otago Settlers Association.
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 SETTLERS ASSOCIATION
31 Queens Gardens
PO Box 74 Dunedin 9016
Ph / Fax 03 477 8677
email otago.settlers.assn@xtra.co.nz

TOITŪ OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM
31 Queens Gardens
PO Box 566 Dunedin 9016
Ph 03 477 5052 Fax 03 474 2727
email osmmail@dcc.govt.nz