



OTAGO SETTLERS NEWS

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION *proud to be friends of* **toitū** OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM

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BASKING IN THE GOLDEN GLOW



The first Tuesday Club talk of the new year was hugely well-attended: the auditorium was packed and an overflow crowd watched on the video screen in foyer. Brian Miller began with a geology lesson, explaining where gold comes from and why we found ourselves sitting on so much of it. Geology was in the minds of surveyors when potential sites for settlements were being considered. The New Zealand Company's surveyor Frederick Tuckett selected the site for Dunedin in 1844. He 'hoped to find a good stretch of land, well timbered and rich in coal and lime, in proximity of a sufficiently safe harbour,' and he found them

all right here. An energetic and strong-principled Quaker, Brian thinks the Bristolian Tuckett should be better known. He worked in the Nelson settlement and, though his religious principles meant he was unarmed, was caught up in the Wairau Massacre of 1843. Returning to England, Edward Gibbon Wakefield asked Tuckett to find a place suitable for the prospective Scots settlement, and he agreed on condition that he would be allowed a completely free choice. He undertook a ten-week journey in 1844 from Port Cooper (later Lyttelton) that was meant to reach Milford Sound in the schooner *Deborah*.

The 1925-26 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition Grand Court photographed at night. Electric lighting, comprising 17,312 lamps, many of them coloured, made the Exhibition a spectacular sight after sundown.

It was assumed by most that he would select Banks Peninsula as the site of New Edinburgh. He went off the idea after climbing over the Port Hills to the swampy edge of the plains, hoping to visit the Deans brothers, Scots farmers at Riccarton. En route he got lost in swamp in the Heathcote River, spending a night alone on his own, soaking wet and stuck in an eel trap. Meanwhile, another party from the *Deborah* were lost in bush on Banks Peninsula for three days. The huge, largely treeless Canterbury Plains, Tuckett concluded, were not suited to the Scots settlers – it was big man's farming country, no place for wee crofters. The great lowland forests had been burned down centuries before.

Heading south, there was nowhere to land until they got to Moeraki. There whaling, though still active, was starting to decline. Tuckett walked from there to Waikouaiti where John Jones had established a small settlement four years earlier. He decided to continue to Otago Harbour, walking inland through the bush rather than along the coast in order to see if a road route was possible in future. After three days with his two local guides cutting their way through the bush they reached their goal. Tuckett crossed the Taieri Plain then headed down the gorge to Taieri Mouth. Walking along the beach at Kaitangata he found coal in enormous quantities. Meeting the *Deborah* again, he went on to Stewart Island and as far west as Riverton. Nothing he saw surpassed the Dunedin site, which has access to all the things the Scots settlers could desire: a good harbour and plenty of timber, coal and agricultural land. Within a month he had signed the deeds to purchase the Otago Block at the end of July 1844.

In 1848 the settlers duly arrived and got on with settling. They were aware of the gold rush in California that year and the Victorian one that followed three years later, and did not like what they heard. They wanted a peaceful, industrious little Scottish settlement, not a sink of iniquity full of pubs and brothels. Geology however had other ideas. Otago is mainly composed of schist, full of gold in quartz veins and shear zones. The gold originated in collisions of neutron stars, which create heavy metals and blast them into space as dust. It is thought that 3.9 billion years ago a meteor shower injected gold into earth's mantle. Accumulations of gold are formed by volcanoes – half the world's gold was made by mountain-building. A belt of gold deposits runs through Otago and Westland, but it completely missed Canterbury. Gold is found in quartz veins in schist; the gold-bearing mountains eroded but as gold is very heavy, it got stuck in crevices and gullies when the rivers bore sediment into the ocean. Even so, it took millions of years for the gold deposits to accumulate. In the first year of the Otago gold rush, 1861–62, more than 42 tons of gold was mined. It would be worth \$5.3 billion today, enough to build 26 stadiums.

By the end of 1871 126 tons had been extracted, equating to \$16 billion or 80 stadiums, or more, given the recent volatility of the price of gold. To excavate the bed of the Clutha an experimental submarine named *Platypus* was built in 1873, but it failed to lay the golden eggs. The invention of gold dredges caused another massive surge in gold production. Even so, all the gold ever mined in history would fit into just four

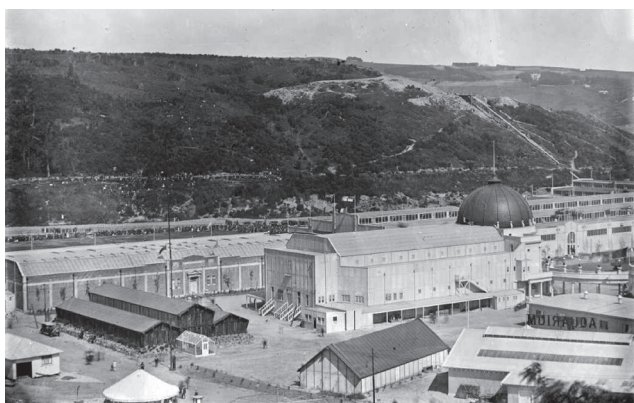


Olympic-sized swimming pools, and more than half of it has been extracted in the last 50 years. At Macraes 2 oz of gold are found per tonne of rock. New Zealand produces about 5 per cent of all the world's gold, about 10 tonnes each year, half of it from Macraes and another 40% from Waihi. There is more where that came from, too. Much of Otago has never been properly prospected with modern technology, and it is fast becoming one of the most attractive gold mining locations in the world. Though a lot of it is used for jewellery, half of the world's gold production is used in technology – computers, mobile telephones, electric cars – because it is an excellent conductor of electricity.

Dunedin's population mushroomed as a result of the gold rush, from 30,000 in 1861 to 79,000 two years later. By 1865 it was the largest and wealthiest town in the country. Back Home in 1851, the first truly international exhibition of industrial and artistic achievements had been held in the giant, temporary Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. The Great Exhibition was such a success they held another one in 1862, to which Otago sent some exhibits. The French fell for *expositions universelles* in a big way, holding ten of them between 1855 and 1937. The Eiffel Tower is a legacy of the 1889 exposition held to mark the centenary of the revolution. Two smaller imitations featured in a Dunedin exhibition the same year, and a small settlement near Ashburton was named Eiffelton. The first exhibition held in Dunedin was the little-known Bazaar and Industrial Exhibition of 1862, right in the middle of the initial gold rush. Its promoters saw an exhibition as a way of turning short-term gold-rush wealth into long-term wealth. The Bazaar was to raise funds for the new Anglican church of St Paul's in the Octagon, now rebuilt as the cathedral. The industrial exhibition was the first of its kind in New Zealand. Its displays comprised an amazing range of practical items, a mixture of science, industry, agriculture and art. The displays included building materials, minerals, household items, agricultural products, leather goods, and Maori and Fijian objects. Like all subsequent exhibitions, it included a display of works of art.

Dunedin's second exhibition was the better-known New Zealand Industrial Exhibition of 1865. This was a time when the easily won alluvial gold was declining, so the event was perhaps designed to boost things. It was a world-class exhibition at the bottom of the world, and provided a start for the Otago Museum.

The 1889-90 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition building, a temporary structure erected on recently-reclaimed land near the Oval.



About 800 exhibitors from round the world were represented, from Australia, India, Canada, the United States, Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Including repeat visits, the attendance exceeded 31,250. The permanent exhibition building in Great King Street, designed by William Mason, was subsequently used as the public hospital until 1933 when it was demolished to make way for what until recently was the Psychiatric Services wing. The 1862 exhibition ran for five months, though it was only open in daytime as the town gas pressure in the North End was inadequate to light the building after dark. On show were displays of wool, wood, minerals, and agricultural implements and other machinery. There were 412 paintings, the first large art exhibition in the country. The exhibition attracted international attention, pictures of it appearing in the *Illustrated London News*.

The massive New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition of 1889–90 is now pretty much forgotten about. It was held towards the end of the long depression that had begun in the late 1870s. Wool prices down and gold production in decline, so the exhibition was an attempt to stimulate things. It marked the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of British sovereignty in 1840. The 10 acres of temporary buildings were on 13 acres of recently reclaimed land between the Oval and where the Spotlight building is now. The exhibition ran for five months and attracted 628,485 individual visits, including many repeats, at a time when the whole country's population was only about 600,000. Musical performances features a huge choir. There were 1074 works of art on display, 339 of them British, including John Everett Millais' portrait of Cardinal (now Saint) John Henry Newman. The pictures were for sale, and cost up to £250, equivalent to perhaps more than \$60,000 today. The artist William M Hodgkins, father of the more famous Frances, was in charge of the photographic display. He and his friends purchased several of the paintings, which eventually formed the basis of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. The Millais however ended up at the National Portrait Gallery in London. Astute local businessmen drove the feverish preparations for the exhibition – providing enough accommodation was a difficulty, and it was reported that the city's tailors could not make coats fast enough and the painters wore their brushes to stumps in their rush to get the buildings ready. One the exhibition was over, the site was cleared. One of the structures was purchased and, though barely more than an 'iron shed,' re-erected adjoining



the south side of Otago Museum for the public art gallery. One of the exhibition buildings, an octagonal pavilion, survived until just a decade ago. It was moved to Kuri Bush and used as a threshing shed and as a shelter for animals and small boys – Pete Smith remembers sleeping in it one night when on a Scout camp about 1959–60, when it was still in good condition. The barn became increasingly derelict and was destroyed by high winds in 2015.

Dunedin's fourth exhibition was the biggest of the lot, and the largest the country has ever seen, outdoing even the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition of 1939–40 in Wellington. The New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition was held in the newly drained Logan Park in the summer of 1925–26. Dunedin was pretty hacked off at being reduced to the ignominy of being merely the fourth-largest city in the country so wanted to make a statement: 'We are still here.' John S Ross (of Ross and Glendining) was chairman of directors of the company that ran the exhibition, while Brian's grandfather was in charge of the signwriting. It had taken a year to drain the 100-acre Lake Logan, and the exhibition buildings designed by Edmund Anscombe covered 16 acres of the 65-acre exhibition site. Planning took 14 months; building took a year; and another four months were needed to fit out the pavilions. The main contractors were James Fletcher and James Y Love. (Pete Smith points out that the latter's joinery and roof truss factory building from 1925 survives in the Naylor Love yard, at 55 Sturdee Street.) A new road was constructed from the railway station to the exhibition grounds and named Anzac Avenue.

In the six months from November 1925 to April 1926 there were 3.2 million visits, at a time when the national population was 1.25 million. Among the many repeat visitors was Brian's grandmother, who lived nearby and had a season ticket. Visitors came from all over the country as well as Australia. The averaged attendance was 22,500 people a day, equivalent to the city coping with an Ed Sheeran concert every day for half a year. There were seven large pavilions containing dozens of galleries (called 'courts') with exhibits from all round the world. The only permanent structure was the brick art gallery, which was bought by Sargood family and donated to the city after the exhibition closed. Next to the gallery was the huge Festival Hall which could hold an audience of 2500. An Exhibition Choir of 400 'well-selected voices' performed there. Advertised as

Top left: The New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition of 1925–26. The Festival Hall and the art gallery seen from the north-west, part of a panorama by Albert Godber, 17 November 1925 – National Library APG-1050-1/2-G; **Top right:** The roller coaster at night photographed by Albert Godber, 1 May 1926 – National Library APG-1921-1/2-G.

'New Zealand's Great Playground for the Summer 1925-26,' the diversions included an aquarium, a sports ground, and an amusement park with dodgems, a boat ride (the 'River Caves'), a swing carousel (the 'Merry Mix-Up'), a roller coaster (the 'Scenic Railway'), a caterpillar ride, a helter-skelter and various sideshows. This massive event was remembered for years afterwards, and many families still have items of exhibition memorabilia somewhere about the house. The largest piece of memorabilia is the ticket office that was moved to Brighton, becoming for a time the South Seas Gallery facing the dunes at 1088 Brighton Road. The exhibition broke even, but the big winner was the city council, which made so much money from public transport that it was able to pay for the construction of the long-planned Town Hall from ready cash. The architect Henry Mandeno, who had won the competition to design the building in 1914, was called back, and his partner Roy Fraser reworked the plans in a more modern idiom.

The exhibitions were a great stimulus to the local art scene, attracting artists from round the world to show their work, who then often stayed and taught painting. Among several professional artists who came to Dunedin in 1889-90 were James M Nairn, one of the Glasgow Boys who went on to teach in Wellington, and Girolamo Nerli. The Sienese aristocrat Nerli was quite a character, young, tall and bohemian. He settled in Dunedin in 1893 and set up an Art Academy. Over three years he trained many local artists, including Alfred O'Keeffe, Grace Joel and Frances Hodgkins, who said she had been stimulated to become a painter by her many visits to the 1889-90 exhibition. O'Keeffe had a studio in the Exchange building and went on to teach several hundred Dunedin artists, probably more than anyone else, among them Brian's father. He suffered a personal tragedy in 1915, both his sons being killed ten days apart during the August offensive at Gallipoli.

Victorian Dunedin put the profits from gold mining to good use, building a gothic revival city and attracting artists who left an outstanding legacy. We are today left with a beautiful city and a rich culture – all of it ultimately came from the gold.

This is an edited version Brian Miller's talk of 11 February.



Left: Three special postage stamps to the same design were issued in November 1925 and sold only at the Exhibition.