THEME 13: DUNEDIN AND ITS PLACE IN THE WORLD

As a part of the New World, Dunedin has always had to look outwards. Prior to the development of roads and railways almost all transport over any distance was by sea, and Port Chalmers was a major early port of entry for New Zealand. The story is often told that Otepopo roofing slate from near Herbert in North Otago could not compete in the Dunedin market with imported Welsh slate from the other side of the world, because the latter came as ballast on ships directly to the town.
The gold rushes, in particular, brought thousands of men to Otago. Many came from the Australian goldfields, but many also came from other places by way of the Pacific trading boats.

International trade, particularly with Britain, is widely acknowledged and supported by dozens of archaeological excavations throughout Otago and New Zealand, where English and Scottish ceramics have been found. The amount of pottery from Staffordshire, and to a much lesser extent from Glasgow, indicates that large quantities were being shipped here. Probably many other goods were also being imported from Britain, but ceramics are particularly useful for the identification of origin as they often bear makers' marks. Dunedin sites have yielded many fragments of pottery marked J. & M.P. Bell of Glasgow, perhaps illustrating the city's continuing close ties with Scotland.

Dunedin was the venue for several international exhibitions, the last of which was the 1925-26 New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition. The legacy of this can be seen in Logan Park, which was reclaimed from Lake Logan (formerly Pelichet Bay) for the exhibition, and the avenue of elm trees along Anzac Avenue, which survives as part of the landscape plan.

13.1 WAR AND DEFENCE

The effects of international warfare and tensions can be seen in the conservation of Taiaroa Head, which is the location of a restored Armstrong disappearing gun [**B579**]. The Fort Taiaroa complex of fortifications was progressively built and modified from the period of the

Russian scare in the 1880s until the Second World War. Gun emplacements and other military infrastructure can be found below the road to Taiaroa Head and at Tomahawk in Dunedin. At Deborah Bay the torpedo boat mole [site **I44/340**] still exists, now used as a pull-off carpark on the harbour road. The torpedo boat station was established in 1884 in response to the Russian scares (Church 1994: 73).

13.2 OTAGO HARBOUR

Kai Tahu use of the harbour: Otago's attractiveness to settlers, both Maori and European, was based on safe sheltered harbours and access from the sea to waterways and overland routes. River mouths were places of particular strategic importance to Kai Tahu and fortified pa were established on coastal headlands and around the Otago Harbour, where sheltered water with good access to food was available.

The harbour was briefly named Port Oxley in honour of the explorer/surveyor, John Oxley. Captain James Herd mapped the harbour entrance in 1826 and by 1839 it was home to the largest concentration of Europeans outside the upper North Island settlements.

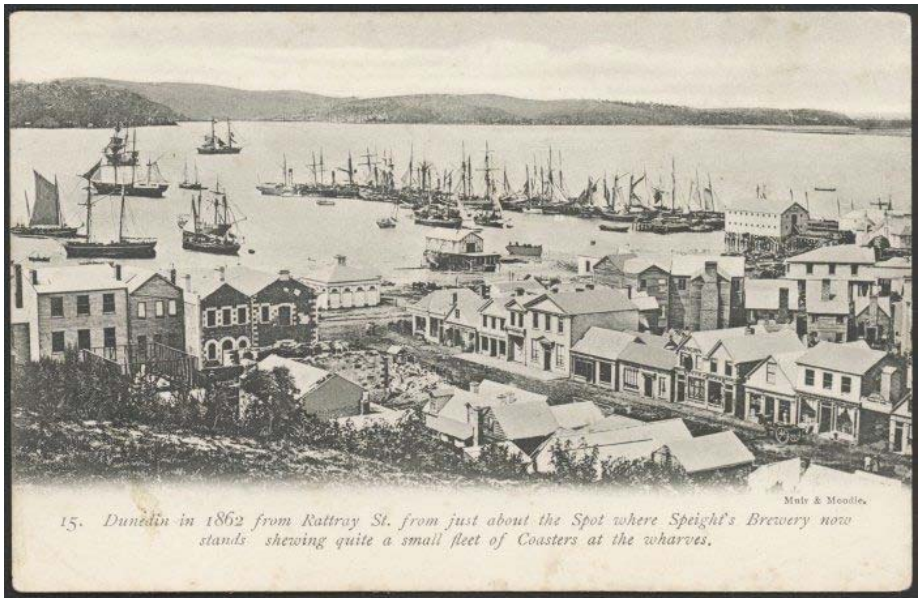

Figure 136: Dunedin, 1862.
Original caption reads: *"Dunedin from Rattray Street from just about the spot where Speight's Brewery now stands shewing quite a small fleet of coasters at the wharves."*

Port and harbour development: Otago Harbour presented a difficult situation in terms of access from the deep water anchorage at Port Chalmers to the site of the future city. At almost 8 metres depth at low tide, the port at Koputai was accessible at all times while the winding channel to the upper harbour was extensively silted with broad mud flats obstructing its uppermost portion. Early shipping was unloaded at Port Chalmers and goods were conveyed by lighter vessels to Dunedin township (Fig. 136).

A petition was presented to the first session of the Otago Provincial Council in 1854 stating the need for shipping to be able to approach Dunedin and, as a consequence, the Custom House was relocated to Port Chalmers. A Harbour Master was appointed in 1860 and the port was placed under the control of the Provincial Council. The Provincial Council provided funding for the purchase of the dredge, *New Era*, which was kept busy clearing the channels in the upper harbour. Much of this early harbour work was overseen by the Australian, Charles Swyer, an engineer from the Melbourne firm Purchas and Swyer, who were appointed engineers to the Otago Provincial Council in 1862.

By 1873 it was clear that the progress of the port was better handled by a board. Extensive plans were drawn up which involved deepening the channel to allow shipping to reach the city. Wharf storage was also urgently required to supplement the private warehouses and bond stores which were under construction on the new reclamation. The Rattray Street jetty was extended to 438 metres at a cost of over £12,500. The Victoria Channel was proposed in 1877, initially enabling ships drawing up to six metres to come up to the city berth at high tide. Stone walls were constructed to form 23 kilometres of channel from the harbour entry to the city. Parts of the wall which were constructed to hold back the sides of the channel can be seen in many parts of the harbour at low tide. The entrance was marked by the Taiaroa lighthouse on the east side while a rock mole was extended 1.25 kilometres out to sea from Aramoana to control tidal flow. Two steam powered tugs, *Plucky* and *Koputai*, were purchased to assist with shipping movements. Storage space at Port Chalmers remained limited and goods were

conveyed to Dunedin on the Dunedin Port Chalmers Railway which opened in1873 with two Fairley double ended locomotives running on a 3 foot 6 inch gauge track.

A large graving dock was constructed at Port Chalmers and extensive marine engineering facilities were developed at the port. A set of sheer legs, able to support 82,000 kilograms, was constructed. The workshops were later taken over by the Union Steamship Company, at that time the largest private capital company in the Southern hemisphere.

The Otago Harbour Board's programme of reclamation was highly profitable and considerably expanded the commercial area of Dunedin (Fig. 137). By the beginning of the 20th century the Board had leased over 27 acres close to the city with another 35 acres coming available around the harbour edge. The entire reclamation encompassed 284 acres. The Board also controlled over 580 acres of land at Aramoana, which it leased largely for holiday houses and cribs. This area was intended as the site of a 1970s aluminium smelter project which failed to eventuate. (See **2.10**, page 51)

Containerisation: Changes in ocean and coastal shipping during the 1960s and 1970s saw the Harbour Board experiment briefly with roll-on roll-off facilities before committing to containerisation. Roll-on, roll-off terminals were intended for the 'short-sea trades' when coastal shipping had a significant share of New Zealand goods movements. The Columbus Line introduced a container service to North America in 1971 and New Zealand ports began a long wrangle over where local container facilities would be located. Auckland, Wellington and Port Chalmers were the first choice with Lyttelton added due to political influence. The Otago Harbour Board invested heavily in new equipment including gantry cranes and straddle carriers. The consequent reshaping of the Port Chalmers wharves saw the loss of many heritage features, including the graving docks, engineering works and the Port Chalmers Railway Station. Facilities at the city port were gradually transferred to Port Chalmers, which now handles virtually all commercial shipping on the harbour. A tank storage facility and fertiliser works are

located further up the harbour near Ravensbourne. The port is managed through the Otago Regional Council. Its property arm, Chalmers Properties, recently announced plans for the revitalisation of the city reclamation north of the steamer basin.

13.3 SHIPPING

The Union Steamship Company was founded in Dunedin in 1875 by James Mills. Mills was the son of a Wellington civil servant who began his maritime career with Johnny Jones' Harbour Steam Company. A trustee of Jones, Mills kept the company operating after Jones' death in 1869 and used this start to establish the Union Company. Mills established a fruitful business relationship with the British shipbuilder, Peter Denny, who invested in the company. Denny organised the takeover of the Union Company's main coastal competitor, the New Zealand Steam Shipping Company.

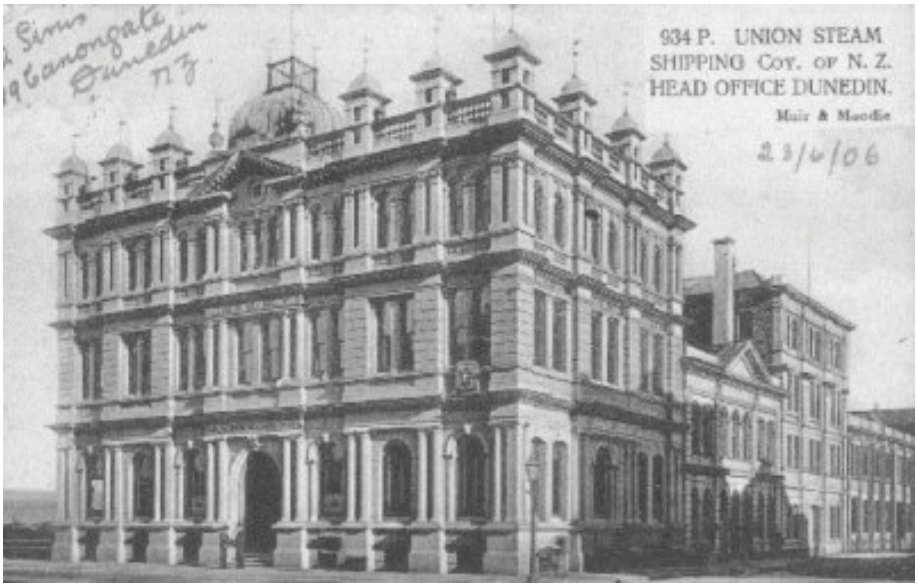

Figure 137: The Union Steam Shipping Company head office, Dunedin

Also absorbed were the Anchor Shipping and Foundry Company, Canterbury Steam Shipping, Richardson & Company and the Holm Shipping Company, to secure a monopoly on the coastal trade.

The Australian trade followed with the acquisition of Melbourne based McKeckan, Blackwood & Company. The Union Company's Denny-built ships *Rotomahana*, *Te Anau*, *Manapouri, Wairarapa*, *Huauroto*, *Tarawera* and *Waihora* came into service from the end of the 1870s. A takeover of the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company created close to another monopoly between Tasmania and the mainland.

The Union Company operated services to the Pacific Islands and San Francisco. Realising that rail was likely to cut into the New Zealand coastal trade, Mills invested in larger steam ships, the *Taupo* and the *Hawea* at 720 tons, "not much inferior to ocean liners in size and accommodation". Despite his high ambitions, Mills' operation was the target of a scathing passage in Mark Twain's *More Tramps Abroad* where he observed after a miserable crossing on the *Flora*:

> "They give no notice of their projected depredation…you innocently buy tickets for the advertised passenger boat, and then you get down to Lyttelton at midnight to find that they have substituted the scow. They have plenty of good boats but no competition – and that is the trouble".

Twain's berth was "as dark as the soul of the Union Company, and [that] smelt like dog kennel". The deck cabin of the *Flora* is part of the collection of the Part Chalmers Maritime Museum.

Mills' shipping company became the largest 'south of the line' and he sold the Union Company to British owned P&O in 1917. The company's head office relocated from Dunedin to Wellington in 1922 and it expanded into the New Zealand airways industry, forming Union Airways of New Zealand in 1935 and acquiring Cook Strait Airways, Australian National Airways and Tasman Empire Airways Limited (TEAL). Union Airways and the company's stake in TEAL were later nationalised to form the basis of National Airways Corporation (NAC) and Air New Zealand.

Figure 138: The Union company moved into a smaller building when its head office was relocated to Wellington in the 1920s.

The company responded to changes in the shipping industry in the 1960s with ships equipped with deck cranes and roll-on, roll-off vessels (RO-ROs). The company was sold by P&O to the Australian transport business Thomas Nationwide Transport (TNT) and was later owned by BIL (Brierley Investments Limited). Despite the company's significance, it has not left a great deal of physical evidence in Dunedin. Its grand main office at 49-57 Vogel Street (Fig. 138) was designed by David Ross and Edward Roach and is now substantially reconstructed. This building was exchanged for smaller premises [**B614**] (Fig. 139) when the head office relocated to Wellington in 1922. The Union Company's repair yards at Port Chalmers were demolished for the container port redevelopment, leaving few recognisable traces of the firm's extensive interests in the city.

13.3 INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

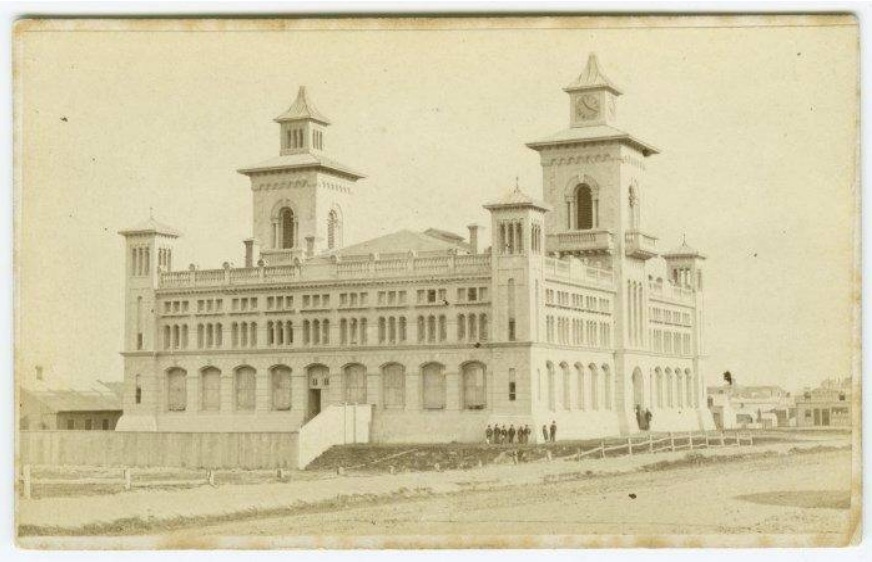

Figure 139: Dunedin Exhibition pavilion, Great King Street. 1865

Dunedin Exhibitions: The first New Zealand International Exhibition took place only 25 years after the establishment of the country and a mere 17 years after the founding of Otago. Exhibitions were intended to remedy some of the ills of society. They reflected the gradual acceptance of human rights and enabled people to learn more about their world. The Great Exhibitions glorified imperialism and allowed a tantalising view of the vast resources waiting in the far off colonies. The expressed aims of the exhibitions were to encourage Peace, Education, Trade and Progress.

For large sums of public money to be used, it was usually necessary to time the event to mark a significant point in the community's history. The jubilee of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the proclamation of New Zealand as a colony of Britain was celebrated in the 1889-90 Exhibition. The 50th year of the Otago Settlement was marked by the 1898 Exhibition.

The architect of the 1865 Dunedin Exhibition, William Mason, designed a traditional masonry structure with open galleries inside (Fig. 140). It was the largest brick building in New Zealand at the time of its construction and was certainly massive in colonial terms. Mason's pavilion (situated near the site of the current Dunedin Hospital) featured

four corner towers and a pair of 40 metre high central towers over the entrance. A glass roof let in abundant natural light and the internal spaces were large and open. The building was visible from much of Dunedin, where most buildings were no higher than two storeys.

The Otago Court contained over 500 exhibits and covered one quarter of the ground floor of the Exhibition's main pavilion and part of the gallery above. A comprehensive mining display and maps of the goldfields left visitors in no doubt as to the source of Otago's wealth. In the central courtyard stood the centrepiece of the Exhibition, a tall gold painted obelisk representing the total of all the gold extracted from Otago during the first wave of mining. Arranged around the right side of the central court were the exhibits sent by other New Zealand provinces. The six Australian colonies, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Austria and Holland also sent exhibits. The Exhibition closed after 102 days and 29,831 visitors.

New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition 1889-90: By 1890 it was well understood that the appearance of the site was an important factor in attracting and entertaining the crowds. The 1889 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition (Fig. 141) was capped by an exotic Moorish dome, while the classical form of the main pavilion gave a look of power, solidarity and permanence, even though the buildings were

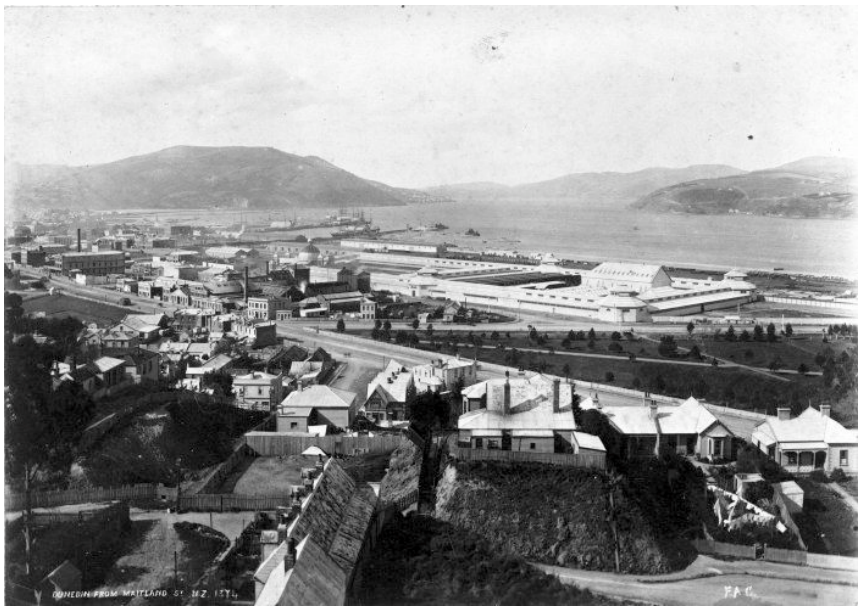

Figure 140: A view over Melville Street towards the 1889 Exhibition site.

designed to be later removed. The Exhibition was held on an area of reclaimed land on Crawford Street, south of the city near the Oval Reserve, which was later leased for commercial development.

The Exhibition opened in November 1889. Its pavilions, planned by James Hislop, incorporated the latest techniques in design and construction. The main dome, rising to a height of almost 30 metres, was sheathed with lead on the outside and decorated inside with painted panels. Light filtered in through 'windows' made of waxed cloth over wire netting. The dome overlooked a fernery and a refreshment bar by way of a wide plate glass window. All the pavilions were undercover and a large concert hall and art gallery took up the rear of the site. Although the amusements took up a relatively small area, they were very important to the Exhibition's success. The Exhibition was a 'tonic' to the people of Dunedin after the long economic decline of the 1880s. Visitor numbers reached 628,458 during the Exhibition's five month opening period. One of the domes from the main pavilion was transported to a farm near Brighton where it remains, albeit in a parlous condition.

Figure 141: Crowds at the 1925 Exhibition in the gardens fronting the exhibition pavilions and Festival Hall.

New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition 1925-6:
The New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition (Fig. 142) held at Logan Park between 1925 and 1926 was the largest public event in New Zealand's history. Over 3 million tickets were sold – 45,000 on the first day alone. Daily attendance was never lower than 9,000, and 89,935 visitors were counted on the final chaotic day. The site chosen for the Exhibition had once been Pelichet Bay, becoming Lake Logan after it was cut off from the sea by an embankment for the railway. As the land was still under water, it was proposed that the Otago Harbour Board would take responsibility for reclaiming the lake. The newly formed land would be gifted to the City Council as a public park and, in return, the Council would build a new highway linking the exhibition site with the Railway Station. The whole scheme cost £80,000 and the work had to be completed in a single year.

Visitors entered the exhibition from gates on Union Street. Ornamental gardens with a pair of reflecting pools led down the Grand Court towards a bandstand and the Festival Hall with its 30 metre high dome. On the right side was the British Pavilion, the Otago Court, the Provincial Court, General Exhibits and the Art Gallery. On the left was the British Colonial Pavilion, New Zealand Government Pavilion and the New Zealand Secondary Industries Pavilion.

Arranged around the northern edge of the site was the Amusement Avenue and Fun Factory, dominated by the Scenic Railway Roller Coaster. On the opposite side, behind the Art Gallery, was a grandstand and sports ground where massed displays of marching and athletics were held. A number of restaurants and tea rooms tempted the visitor. The most impressive was set in the upper floor of the Festival Hall, enabling patrons to watch the crowds in the Grand Court. The main restaurant could seat 800 diners. At the end of the day weary visitors could retrieve their cars from the motor park or make their way to the trams lining up near the Union Street entrance.

Most international exhibitions left permanent features behind, such as art galleries, improved transport services and roads, sports and recreation grounds and collections. The main pavilion of the 1865

Exhibition remained on its site in North Dunedin until 1936, when it was demolished to make way for the expanding Dunedin Hospital.

The 1889 Exhibition inspired William Hodgkins to press for the establishment of a permanent art gallery. The Otago Court in the 1898 Exhibition led to the establishment of the Otago Early Settlers Museum while the Art Gallery building from the 1926 Exhibition was purchased by Sir Percy and Lady Sargood and presented to the people of Dunedin [**B744**]. The construction of the Town Hall was made possible from the profits.