Otago Settlers Museum

OTAGO SETTLERS NEWS

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2001 ISSUE 72



"Would you like to dance?"



by Denise Montgomery and Judy Tait

The tea dance to be held at the Otago Settlers Museum in November (see page 2) has aroused memories of other dances around Dunedin in years gone by. Last year our member Winifred Feathers wrote in the *Otago Settlers News* about the dances in the Otago Settlers Hall which helped support the Museum in the 1930s and 1940s. In the following decades there were other popular dances – the St John's Dance in York Place, Harry Strang's Dance at the South Dunedin Town Hall, and the Manhattan in Moray Place. But the most popular of all was the Town Hall Dance.

This was a venture of Joe Brown who began running dances in Central Otago during the Depression. Then he had the idea of holding a dance in Dunedin's Town Hall on the night of a Ranfurly Shield match. He raised the necessary money by rabbiting, and held his first Town Hall dance on 1 August 1936. It was a huge success, and soon Joe Brown decided to run a regular dance in the Town Hall. This was held on Saturday nights for thirty years and was broadcast nationally. So many young couples met there that it was known as 'Joe Brown's Matrimonial Agency'. Our member Denise Montgomery and her friend Judy Tait have been collecting memories of the later years when they went to the dance.....

We were taught ballroom dancing at secondary school by Jack and Betty Robinson. Once a week they would visit the various schools in Dunedin and take classes during the lunch hour – Gypsy Tap, Maxina, Military Two-Step, Canadian Scottische, Destiny Waltz, quick-step and fox-trot, and others. On Wednesday afternoons the Robinsons would hold an after school dance so that boys and girls from local secondary schools could practise dancing together. Then we graduated to real dances, especially the ones at the Town Hall.

We went to great trouble to prepare for these. Our bodies were squeezed into long-waisted boned bras, with stiffly pointed rubber cups, plus rubber elastic girdles with metal suspenders attached which gouged painfully into our legs but held up our expensive pin-point stockings. This was the era of the full skirt (about knee length) with stiffened petticoats to hold them out. The petticoats were stiffened as much as possible with starch and a solution of sugar and water and were very crackly and noisy to wear. Tightly-fitted shift frocks were also popular but had problems as the vents or pleats in the back might split if you danced too energetically. They might also rip when stepping up the high steps of buses. So most of the dancers wore dresses with fitted bodices and full gathered skirts, usually of plain or floral cottons. On our feet we wore high stiletto-heeled shoes which often felt very insecure. Many heels were lost and ankles twisted while dancing.

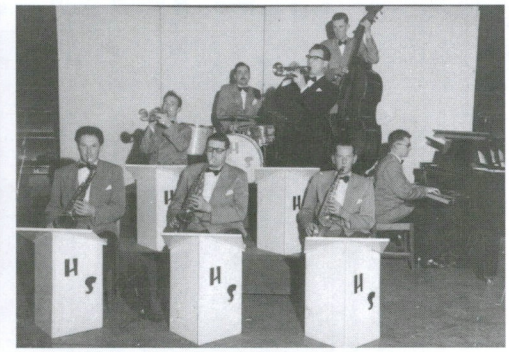
On our arrival at the Town Hall we paid to get in, and then proceeded to the cloakroom where we checked in our coats and bags

Winners of a Bunnyhop competition: Grant Humphrey, Neil Ross, Eric Brockie, Alan Hale, Ray Wilson and Albie Benson
Judy (Hale) and Graham Tait





At the Town Hall Dance (Otago Daily Times)



Harry Strang's Band (Otago Daily Times)

and received a ticket to collect our possessions before going home. In the Ladies we tidied our make-up and hairdos, and tightened our wide stiffened belts which were pulled in by large buckles. Then we went into the hall where the males were usually gathered on one side of the hall, eyeing the 'talent' gathered on the opposite side. They wore narrow trousers, jackets with narrow lapels, narrow ties, and shirts with small collars which often had a pin pushed through.

Joe Brown announced the programme for the evening and then said 'Gentlemen would you please take your partners for the first dance'. The men and boys made a beeline for the girls they had sorted out. The ladies waited in intense anticipation to see whether they would be asked for a dance or left on the sideline feeling like the proverbial wallflower.

The perfect gentleman would ask. 'May I have the pleasure of the next dance?' If he made your heart go pitter-patter you would eagerly put your hand through the curvature of his arm as he escorted you out to the dance floor. If your heart dropped to the bottom of your shoes, you might give the nervous lad the feeble excuse that you were sitting this dance out!

There were a variety of bands and singers which Joe encouraged to perform at his dances. Harry Strang's band played for a while, John Hore was popular and Alan Jones used to sing with a band. There were also various guest artists which Joe would bring in for a night, such as the Howard Morrison quartet, and Bill and Boyd.

Amongst our favourite dances were the Gypsy Tap, Canadian Scottische, Military Two-Step and the Hokey Tokey. Sometimes we would all end up sitting in a circle on the floor singing, and clapping to the song, 'The Quarter Master's Store'.

Poor old Joe used to get booed at sometimes because he was not a very polished MC, but he ran a great dance. This included entertaining competitions with good prizes. One was an elimination contest with the finalist being given a list of local shops to memorise in a given time. If the names were recalled correctly, gift vouchers for those shops were won. There was also a Bunnyhop competition – the Bunnyhop was a dance craze in the 1950s. And many others...

From 1960, Joe Brown also ran the Miss New Zealand contests, and the finals were always held in Dunedin. When the contestants were in town, Joe would bring them along to the Town Hall dance to show them off and introduce them to the crowd. In 1960, during the Canadian Scottische (a dance where the couples formed a circle and changed partners during the dance), the boys could dance with all the Miss New Zealand contestants.

When the supper waltz was finally announced, every young lady would be hoping to be twirled around the dance floor, as the young man who asked her to supper might also ask if he could escort her home. Supper was served in a room behind the stage. A cup of tea, a glass of orange cordial, cakes, sandwiches, and sometimes jelly with ice cream, were all included in the price of your ticket. Then it was back to the dance floor.

Couples could sit out the dances in the dress circle, along with the many folk who visited the Town hall dance just to listen to the music and watch the dancers enjoying themselves. Even people at home could enjoy the fun, as there was a broadcasting box situated to the right of the stage behind the choir stalls. There Peter Dawson or Noel Robson described the later part of the town hall dance for a national radio audience (after 'It's In the Bag' and the early evening radio programmes were over).

Towards the end of the evening the lights were dimmed and special lighting created a romantic atmosphere. Just before midnight the last dance was announced, and then we all joined hands and sang 'Auld Lang Syne'. After collecting our coats we made our way out, most likely hand in hand with that gorgeous young man who had asked for the last dance!

At midnight the Dunedin City Corporation buses were lined up in Harrop Street outside the Concert Chamber to take home all the young folk without cars. We had enjoyed a wonderful night at the Town Hall dance.

Christmas Tea Dance

This year our Christmas function is to be a tea dance at the Otago Settlers Museum from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm on 25 November. Come to dance, or sit and watch, listen to live dance music, see demonstrations by the South Dunedin Dance Club, and join in the fun of the Lucky Spot, Monte Carlo, Snowball and other old favourites. We can also wander through to enjoy the *Collectomania!* exhibition. All are welcome. If you wish to attend, please contact the OSA secretary, Box 74, Dunedin, Telephone/Fax (03 477-8677) by 20 November. (Gold coin donation.)



From Cabinets of Curiosities to the Devil's Rope

The urge to collect is perhaps one of mankind's most basic instincts. Many of us collect, and we collect a huge variety of things. This 'magpiety of mankind' is something that has been going on since the dawn of civilisation.

King Ptolemy had a museum of collectables in his palace at Alexandria in 280 BC. By the end of the 16th century 'cabinets of curiosities' displaying collections of curios were all the rage in Europe. In the late 17th century private collections gave rise to the public temples of collectomania we call museums.

But what still lurks in the private collectors' closet? What curiosities can be found in their cabinets today?
Mainstream collectors such as philatelists (stamp collectors), numismatists (coin collectors), cartophiles (card collectors), arctophiles (teddy bear collectors) and cochlearists (spoon collectors) still exist in our midst. A cartophile, an arctophile and a cochlearist are amongst the collectors featured in the exhibition, *Collectomania!,* which opens at the Otago Settlers Museum on 10 November.

Other collectors seek out the unusual. The 'Devil's Rope', better known to us as barbed wire, is one of these more unusual, yet strangely popular, collectables. Around 2000 different variations of this are sought by avid collectors. In *Collectomania!* we have another strange wire-related collectable on show. I'll leave it up to you to try and guess what that product is....

The world's most popular collectables

Two of the top collectables today are products of the soft drink maker, Coca-Cola, and the global foodservice retailer, McDonald's. Coca-Cola first appeared in 1886 and was an instant success. It was bottled from 1899 and the famous curved bottle emerged in 1915. Coca-Cola bottles, glasses, food trays, thermometers, clocks, and many more items containing the most recognised trademark on earth are all collected.

McDonald's collectables have a much shorter history. Much of the McDonald's collecting frenzy began in 1977 with the launch of the children's Happy Meal. Since then hundreds of millions of items have been produced in association with the Happy Meal and other McDonald's promotions. As McDonald's expanded outside the United States, so too did the number of fast food toys for collectors to acquire. Each country often produced specific variations.

Collectomania! (10 November 2001 to 10 February 2002.)
Our *Collectomania!* exhibition features a variety of collectors, male and female, young and the young at heart. The collections on show encompass some mainstream items and a few unusual ones, representing the broad spectrum that is collectomania.

Peter Read Curator
Otago Settlers Museum

(Note that most of the items in this newsletter relate to collecting or collections of one kind or another – they're a big part of life!)



W.F. Keane

'Remembrance, to remain vivid, must always frame its picture.'
***Scott Of The Antarctic* by R.C. Sherriff**

In October 1999 I was walking south along Dunedin's Princes St. when I passed Plumbly's Auction House. In the shopfront window there was a display of naval artefacts that were to be auctioned the following day. Despite my status as a confirmed landlubber, these items caught my eye because I had researched the activities of the Otago branch of the Navy League during the Great War. The League's use of popular culture through products aimed at its large school membership is a fruitful source of inquiry for cultural historians.

Inside the auction house I found a framed multicoloured print (46.5 cm x 28.5 cm) entitled 'THE TRAGEDY OF THE SOUTH POLE.' Dated 17 February 1913, it reproduced 'CAPTAIN SCOTT'S LAST MESSAGE' and was inscribed with the words 'Presented by the Navy League (Otago Branch).' I returned to the auction house the following afternoon and, after enduring a number of $5 incremental raises, successfully bid for the discovery.

The artefact is an offset colour lithograph of a type commonly used in commercial printing in the early twentieth century and printed by a Dunedin firm – Coulls, Culling and Co. Fifty framed copies were distributed by the Otago branch, with virtually all of these being presented to school branches of the League throughout the province. Printing techniques such as offset colour litho, combined with telegraphic cables running along oceanic floors, enabled a deluge of imperial literature and iconography to circulate throughout the nations of the British empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such techniques developed personality cults and incorporated them into the imperial narrative. Concepts such as heroism and sacrifice were central. The mythology surrounding Scott and the fate of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1910-13 fits squarely within this framework.

At the top of the print the crown and anchor motif symbolises the tradition of the Royal Navy. The portrait photo of Scott in naval uniform, complete with decorations, indicates his status as an officer and a gentleman. Both of these attributes were central to the narrative of the Expedition and meant that Robert Falcon Scott, as an individual, represented cultural values that were larger than himself. As an officer he had a Captain's rank, he 'commanded' the British Antarctic Expedition of 1910-13. As a gentleman he had certain roles to fulfil and a code that determined his actions as leader. Those who surrounded Scott, both on board the *Terra Nova* and on shore in New Zealand, expected him to act by this code. Recent focus on his professional incompetence and personal inflexibility disregard the importance and power of the cultural context in which he operated.

The portrait is flanked by two flags. One, the Union Jack, was perhaps the single most important unifying symbol of the British empire. Local users of the 'Jack' ranged from imperial organisations such as the Navy League, Victoria League and the Overseas Club, to the poetry of Henry Newbolt, to Tuhoe prophet Rua Kenana's extraordinary flag, 'Kotahi Te Ture.' Imperialism, by its very nature, attempted to encompass difference. The other flag is the White Ensign flown by the ships of the Royal Navy. Through these symbols the designer of the print signalled the interlocking nature of New Zealand's national and imperial identities.

This dual identity is complemented by the

botanical specimens supporting the flags. Behind the Union Jack is the representation of that quintessentially English tree, the oak. Imagery associating its strength with British military, especially naval, prowess was encapsulated in the 18th century song 'Hearts of Oak' and continued into the twentieth century. The plant behind the White Ensign is most likely Karamu/Coprosma robusta, a plant common throughout the country, with a wide variety of uses for Maori, and well-known to Dunedin residents. By choosing this hardy and successful tree the print's designer depicted a native that mirrored the symbolism of the oak, assuring the local audience that traditions of stoutness and strength ran throughout the empire, from the imperial metropolis to Dunedin's colonial periphery.

The artefact contains a wealth of symbolic language as well as images. The phrase under the photo, inscribed also on the memorial cross built by Expedition members at Observation Hill, is the final line of Tennyson's 'Ulysses': 'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.' This poem is concerned with overcoming death and bereavement and introduces the context in which the print is to be read. The events in Antarctica are a 'TRAGEDY', expressed in the most critical part of the text, 'SCOTT'S LAST MESSAGE.' The prologue to this message gives dates, names and locations. The fact that the Expedition 'sailed from Port Chalmers for the Far South' bound the local audience into the wider imperial narrative of science, exploration and heroic sacrifice.

Most of the text is devoted to Scott's 'MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC' found in the last tent, in which the bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers were found. It is a statement of defence from the leader of an Expedition which failed. The sickening and deaths of Evans and Oates, in combination with an extended period of 'appalling weather', are blamed for the failure of the return jouney. But the document has considerable cultural power in the way it casts this failure within the code Scott knew his audience would understand. In his last message Scott, the author, achieved a literary triumph that would give him cultural immortality:

We are weak and writing is difficult, but for my own sake I do not regret this journey, which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. We took risks. We knew we took them. Things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined to do our best to the last.... Had we lived I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman....

The news broke for most New Zealanders on Wednesday 12 February 1913, almost eleven months after Scott, Wilson and Bowers made their final camp. The shock was palpable. Memorial services, mostly organised by local branches of the Overseas Club, were held throughout the country on the following Saturday, including a number in and around Dunedin. These services established the context in which the deaths were to be understood, the context in which the artefact was conceived and produced. The Reverend Balfour gave the address at First Church:

We have but to imagine the circumstances. Three men in a little tent in the midst of nothing but ice and snow, a blizzard raging round them, two of their number already overcome with disease and cold, too exhausted even to struggle across the 11 miles to where they knew were food and comfort and life, certain death staring them in the face. Then, think of the manliness of him who could write calmly and clearly of the arrangements he had made and of the unexpected difficulties he had encountered.

In Mosgiel the Reverend James Aitken enthused:

The adventure is no longer to be judged by its results. It is no longer to be regarded as a means to an end, but rather as a manifestation of a spirit. Its value does not lie in what it accomplishes, but in what it bears witness to. It does not matter whether it succeeds or no; its very endeavour is a successful expression of the true nature of man.

Canon Curzon-Siggers spoke at St. Matthew's:

Thus, in dying, he silences those who think that the nation is decadent, he inspires us with an ideal whereby to live to-day, and reveals the threefold character of the true man ... brave in hardship, altruistic in life, and strong in death, doing his best to the last.

Several of the memorial addresses expressed key concerns of the age: the perceived degeneration of the British race, a loss of virility in manhood that threatened the future of the British Empire, a fear that materialism had destroyed the spiritual dimension of life. The example of Scott was seen to challenge and allay these fears.

The context of my interest in the British Antarctic Expedition of 1910-13 is a PhD that explores sacrifice, masculinity and empire in Aotearoa during the period of the Great War. Any postgrad will tell you that research sometimes feels that it has a life of its own. It is an organic process that takes you to unknown places as you develop an awareness of events, people and places in the past. One reason for this is that all our lives contain both the present and the past – they are inseparable.

Initially my interest in Scott was limited to a paragraph that discussed the unveiling of the memorial cairn outside Port Chalmers in May 1914. This seemed a useful example to introduce my first chapter exploring the concepts of heroism, sacrifice and empire. Discovering the print at Plumbly's made me realise that this example *was* Chapter One because it illustrated so aptly how New Zealand was bound up in the wider story of Britain's imperial history.

During the period of the Great War New Zealand's colonial society lived by a code made up of symbols, images, music and language that made heroic masculinity and sacrifice a familiar theme. The saga of 'Scott of the Antarctic' was a major episode in affirming this code in the years before the outbreak of the 1914-18 conflict. It would be utilised to cope with the mass grief and bereavement encountered by New Zealanders during the Great War.

This article is abridged from a longer paper, including sources and acknowledgments, which is deposited in the Otago Settlers Museum Archive. We hope to share further fresh perspectives on our past from postgraduate History students in future issues.

THE BLACK BOX

by Eva Wong Ng

We are always proud of achievements of our members, and last year Eva Ng published a collection of stories, **Shadow Man,** *about her New Zealand Chinese childhood – the first stories of this kind published in New Zealand. Here is one of the stories. (The Museum's display Windows on a* **Chinese Past** *was created with Eva and Jim Ng's help.)*

Of course we'd always known there was a black lacquer box sitting up there on top of the wardrobe in our bedroom. It seems to have always been there. Encased in a canvas jacket that fastens with knotted frog buttons just like a real garment, it is grey with age and dust and so much part of the furniture landscape, we don't see it any more. All we know is that it was our mother's and she brought it with her when she came to New Zealand from China as a young bride. We used to ask about it but the answer was the same, 'It's just an old chest we brought from China.' But as we've grown older so has our curiosity increased. To see what is inside has become an obsession.

One afternoon Wailin and I are alone at home. This is the perfect opportunity to satisfy what has been gnawing away inside us for so long.

We can hardly wait. My heart thumps loudly like a beating drum. We climb on the table that stands beside the wardrobe and lift the chest down by its side handles. We undo the canvas buttons, loosen the pin from its brass padlock, unhook the fastenings and raise the lid. Under a layer of shiny brown paper it is filled with garments, our mother's clothes. Everything is neatly folded, summery frocks of patterned crepe, everyday ones of cotton, winter dresses made of woollen fabrics, underslips of locknit, a corset pink and stiff with inward curving ribs and dangly suspenders. There are several pairs of stockings of lisle and silk. Some have heels with darns like woven webs, others are new. There are handknitted cardigans in various colours and lacy patterns; a long winter coat. Wailin and I carefully lift each item from the orderly pile. A fragrance of spice mingles with the smell of scented soap as one by one we unfold the garments. Crumpled cellophane wrappers of long evaporated camphor tumble out together with little paper packets enclosing a mixture of cloves, aniseed stars and cinnamon sticks.

We were so young when our mother suddenly left us. Our only memories of her are dream fragments. With each garment a snatch of memory unfolds. I remember that pattern! Oh how I loved that dress, the one covered with the little flowers. I remember that colour now – ugh, it still reminds me of squashed berries.

At the bottom of the chest are clothes we have never seen before before: Chinese brocades, gleaming pastel coloured silks, finely woven black cottons. They look as if they are permanently folded, creases set sharp as knife edges. We hestitate . Somehow it seems sacrilegious, an act of vandalism almost to disturb such symmetry. We are about to expose the privacy of a stranger's life, our mother's life.



Slowly, reverently we handle each garment. There are 'sarm' hiplength tops with wide three-quarter length sleeves, baggy 'foo' pants which tie around the waist with tapes; there are cotton fabric underpants like voluminous shorts so cleverly fashioned to use every piece of material; there are brocade tops of exquisite silk, with stiffened stand-up collars and knotted frog and loop fasteners across the front and down one side; there are cylinders of black silk that are skirts with wrap-around waist tapes, there is a set of jacket-top, calflength pants and skirt all in a dove grey silk. There is a word motif woven into the pattern, 'git' and 'cheang'. The two characters are stylised and combine into one single happy-good-fortune word. There is a black top of a stiffer fabric where some open lacework is part of the weave. Some of the things look unworn, some have a faint tell-tale underarm stain.

We stroke the fabrics, marvel at the softness, the sensuousness of the silk, exclaim at the economy and the simplicity of design, admire the beauty of the patterns, the lustrous colours, soft apricot, vivid peacock blue, the palest jade green. For how many years have they lain hidden from sight? Father will not talk about our mother.

At first we can only look, reluctant to think about trying them on. At the back of my mind lingers a fear. Will we change into someone else by wearing that person's clothes? That someone is our mother. What spirits will we invoke by summoning her from her other world? Wailin and I look at each other. We know what each other is thinking. Finally the urge to learn more about our mother is irresistible. We hold the garments against us for size. Can we? Should we? What will Father say? Need he ever know? Curiosity proves stronger than prudence. Well why not? We may never get another chance like this. Yes, let's. The shared excitement makes us bold.

Giggling and self-consciously we undress and put on our mother's Chinese clothes. Some we can barely squeeze into, our arms and legs overhang, protruding like scarecrow limbs. Middle Kingdom women are more diminutive than their New Gold Mountain raised daughters. We joke about the shapeless underpants. To our surprise they are comfortable and cool. We put on the sarmfoo and suddenly we change into real China girls. The transformation is a shock. We giggle then laugh a little too wildly. It relieves the mounting tension. The enormity of a realisation hits like a body blow. This was how our mother looked in her China-life, how we would have been had she stayed in China. This was the life she put behind her, stowed away at the bottom of the chest the life she sacrificed, the life she lost in New Gold Mountain.

We finish the looking and the trying on. Surfeited with laughter we fold everything into their original creases about to replace them in the box. Only then do I see it, tucked into one corner like a discarded scrap of fabric, a small cloth bag handsewn from ordinary looking striped cotton. It is no larger than a bulging matchbox. We pull open the drawstring top. Inside wrapped in red hessian are two round Chinese coins – 'five cash' the words on them say – and a small piece of paper folded like an envelope on which a central red strip has these characters black brushed: 'The luck of this paper-gold is unsurpassed in any world'. It contains another folded square of paper stamped with a faded yellow design and something that looks like dust. What is it? I rub some between finger and thumb, sniff at it. There is no smell. It is fine and grainy, this colour of dried earth. A pinch of village soil, a sheet of 'lucky' gold paper money to burn for the ancestors and two coins for prosperity. Chinese luck comes paired. Our mother must have brought these vestiges of home with her. Did she have a prescience that she was leaving forever?

The significance of what we see silences us. To her children she was always a figure of confident authority. Now we know of uncertainties our mother felt, sense her trepidation about leaving home and family for the unknown a world away. She needed to bring and hold on to these reassuring talismen of her former life. These were tangible reminders she once had in that other life before she came to live amongst foreigner ghosts.

Hidden for all those years in a black lacquer box with its camouflage cover the shape and substance of our dead mother's life was there waiting for this day of discovery. It was here all along and we hadn't known. Now at last for us she has become a real person.



above: From right to left, Eva, Wailin and their sister Ehlin
below: Eva's mother

OTAGO'S INNOVATIVE HERITAGE

The speaker at our AGM was Professor John Tagg and, as president Barry Clarke said in his introduction, the talk reminded us that our province has a continuing story – that the past contributes to the future. On an evening when Otago people were proud of premiering a film showing the fantastic battle between gigantic Tyrannosaurus Rex and Spinosaurus, we heard of another remarkable battle which has begun between miscroscopic bacteria Streptococcus pyogenes and Streptococcus salivarius. These are a few extracts from Professor Tagg's fascinating talk:

The word is that the Revolution is under way – the biotechnology revolution. Its origins were a few years ago in the United States. Dunedin is now leading the country in this. It offers opportunities to create new wealth – a second gold rush perhaps.

What are the signs of this revolution? In the last two years, no less than seven new biotechnological companies have begun in Dunedin. The Centre of Innovation at the University of Otago – with its new building due to be opened next year – is providing an interface between university researchers and business developers.

Why are things happening in Dunedin in such a big way? One reason is because the people have a heritage of industry, innovation and Scotch canniness. This heritage may be affected by our isolation and by our challenging climate which forces us to work cooperatively. Another reason is our size – not too big, and a university city with a high proportion of scientists and managers. Things happen faster and more cost-effectively here. And we have a strong intellectual capital which has developed in research institutes and the university – rich gold nuggets of intellectual property which can be mined.

What are the likely consequences of the biotechnological revolution? We hope to retain graduates in burgeoning new industries, increase prosperity, and stop the 'brain drain'.

I'm an example of 'Niarb niard' – the brain drain in reverse!

I spent my first 25 years in Melbourne. At the age of 12 I had an encounter with Streptococcus pyogenes. It won, and I got rheumatic fever. This disease can kill, and if not it can affect your heart for a long time. I had to take two penicillin tablets daily for a decade, and so I spent my adolescence smelling like a toadstool.

I decided to get my own back on Streptococcus pyogenes by fighting the sore throats in children which can lead to rheumatic fever. I wanted to find friendly bacteria which would attack Streptococcus pyogenes.

I began research in Melbourne. Then I went to the United States. Then I wanted to go back home, but there were no jobs in Melbourne. I saw a job advertised at the University of Otago, so I decided to take that as a step to getting home. I intended to be in Dunedin briefly. Twenty-five years later I'm still here!

Over the years I collected streptococci from colleagues all around the world until I now have more than 10,000 in my freezer. I collected bacteria the way other people collect stamps. All the time I was looking for a friendly one which would attack Streptococcus pyogenes. Eventually I discovered that certain strains of Streptococcus salivarius would settle on the tongue and prevent sore throats from developing. With these bacteria growing on the tongue, rheumatic fever can't even begin.

I certainly believe that prevention is much better than cure. When we use penicillin it is like an atomic bomb for bacteria – it destroys the good as well as bad bacteria. Streptococcus salivarius destroy just Streptococcus pyogenes.

In our laboratory, researchers are now looking for friendly bacteria to fight meningitis and various other diseases. Streptococcus salivarius is the first to be developed commercially. The bacteria will be taken in a small tablet. The protective effect of a single course might last for years in one person, but others might find they have to take the tablets more frequently in order to be fully protected – human beings are so variable. The first product is expected to be released early next year.

I am now the scientific consultant for one of the first biotechnology companies to be created – 'BLIS Technologies Ltd'. 'Bliss' might mean 'utter joy or happiness' to most people. To me true bliss is bacterial. BLIS is an acronym for 'bacteriocin-like inhibitory substances.'

It has been a life-long passion for me to help develop this technology. I hope it's good for Otago too.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Since the last newsletter much of the work being carried out in the archives has been on the map collection. With the purchase of new plan cabinets we have been able to move the collection out of the old wooden cabinets which have split and buckled with age. This work has also seen the introduction of acid free folders into which the maps are being placed. Because some of the maps have rips and tears they will be encapsulated in mylar which is a neutral enclosure.

We are also taking the opportunity to index the maps on our database 'Collection'. This will allow them to be searched not only by location, but also by surveyor, lithographer etc. This will make the collection more accessible, easier to use, and give better protection.

In October we had the pleasure of receiving the Taieri Photographic Archive. The collection consists of the Mosgiel Borough Photographic Collection which was drawn together in the lead-up to the Borough centenary in 1985. In 1998 the Taieri Photographic Archives Group was formed and they have indexed the collection as well as adding further photographs. The collection has been divided into twelve categories and all the photographs have received captions (many being identified in the process). Both the catalogue and copies of the photographs are available at the Mosgiel Public Library and the Taieri Historical Museum in Outram as well as at our Museum. Those originals not retained by their owners have been deposited with us.

Thanks must go to the Taieri Photographic Archive Group for making this such a successful project. This collection will prove invaluable for researchers, family historians, in fact anyone with an interest in the Taieri area.

Just a quick note, the Research Room will be closed from 21 December 2001 until 7 January 2002. Have a great holiday.

Aaron Braden

NOVEMBER TALKS AT THE MUSEUM

Sunday, 11 November, 2 pm.
A floor talk by Otago Settlers Museum curator Seán Brosnahan on the exhibition, **Abbotsford '79.**

Thursday 15 November, 5.40 pm.
Why Abbotsford? Can it happen again? Professor Richard Norris of the Geology Department at the University of Otago discusses the geology of Dunedin.

Wednesday, 21 November, 5.40pm
Hard Doers and Misery Guts. In the last of the *All Write Here* series, Mike Riddell of the Theology Department at the University discusses how the tension between Calvinists and gold miners has shaped the way we view life and the future.

FOR YOUR 2002 DIARY

At the ANNIVERSARY DAY DINNER, on 23 March, the speaker will be Professor Geoff Kearsley. Mark this date in your 2002 diary.

CHANGES IN COMMITTEE

At the Annual General Meeting on 23 August 2001, President Barry Clarke and Vice-Presidents Melville Carr and Phil Dowsett were re-elected. John Fletcher has retired after ten years' service to the Association because of his move to Central Otago, and Rev Denis Povey and Dr Paul Trotman have retired because of pressure of work. Two new members joined the committee.

Ann Barsby was Head of the Otago Polytechnic Tourism Department until the end of 2000. With time now to devote to other interests and as co-founder and trustee of the newly formed Heritage Tourism New Zealand Trust, she is relishing the opportunity to contribute to promotion of Otago's rich cultural heritage.

Dr Alex Trapeznik is a Senior Lecturer in the History Department at the University of Otago, where he teaches courses in Russian history, world history, and public history. He is passionately interested in heritage issues and has published a book in this area entitled *Common Ground? Heritage and Public Places in New Zealand*. It is the first detailed, multi-disciplinary guide to historical and cultural heritage management in New Zealand.

GIFTS FROM THE SHOP

Thinking of gifts? Think 'Made in Dunedin'. There are some interesting and unusual items in the museum shop all with the added advantage of being made in Dunedin:

Rimu Thistle Boxes. Made by John Martin, each finished with a tartan ribbon in presentation box.

Wooden People. Hand-crafted by Friederike Schmaltz, painted-on Victorian-style costume. Fascinating individual pieces.

Silk Scarves and Handkerchiefs. Created by Marie Gaut, hand-painted and beautiful.

Happy Hens. Ever popular product made at Portobello on the Otago Peninsula. For rugby enthusiasts there are All Black and Wallaby Happy Hens!

Cards by Dunedin artists Zuna Wright and Lindsay Crooks.

Southern Books. A wide range of fascinating titles to choose from....

Check these out – all with members' usual 10% discount.
Visit or contact the Otago Settlers Museum, Box 566, Dunedin, phone 03 4775052.

... AND ANOTHER IDEA

Give a membership card to a friend or relation as a present – and persuade others to join up themselves!

REMEMBER EVERY NEW MEMBER HELPS TO SUPPORT OUR MUSEUM OF SOCIAL HISTORY.

Members have free admission to Otago Settlers Museum exhibitions and archives; shopping discounts at the Museum Shop; several social functions a year in which we share our love of Otago and its heritage; newsletters which focus on our dramatic and colourful southern history; and above all the satisfaction of supporting our unique Museum and enhancing its collections and services.

Please contact the Secretary about details of special offers. Telephone/Fax 03-4778677. Email Otago.Settlers.Assn@xtra.co.nz Or write to Secretary, Otago Settlers Association, Box 74, Dunedin.

Otago Daily Times *The Otago Daily Times supports Otago Settlers Museum*

OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM
31 Queens Gardens Dunedin
PO Box 566 Dunedin
Ph 03 477 5052 Fax 03 474 2727

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION
31 Queens Gardens Dunedin
PO Box 74 Dunedin
Ph / Fax 03 477 8677

The Otago Settlers Museum was founded by the Otago Settlers Association.
The Otago Settlers Museum is a department of the Dunedin City Council.