OTAGO SETTLERS NEWS

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION *proud to be friends of* toitū OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM **AUTUMN 2022** ISSUE 152

ANYONE FOR DENNIS?



Parking space has been found in the former NZR bus garage for a fire engine, a 1954 Dennis F8. It is on loan from the Dunedin Fire Brigade Restoration Society as part of an exhibition to mark half a century of the preservation of local fire-fighting history. The Society has also lent a range of equipment to illustrate the development of fire fighting over the years. It includes a mid-twentieth century fireman's uniform and a classic Cromwell helmet, named like the Otago town after the leader of the Roundheads, and made by the prosaically named Helmets Ltd in England. Made from cork, covered in canvas, these replaced the familiar shiny brass fireman's helmet which could be deadly in the presence of fallen power cables. An example of 'Salvus' self-contained breathing apparatus is also on show. The Dunedin brigade was probably the first in Australasia to import equipment to deal with smoke inhalation, in 1874. No relation to the lounge lizard's velvet smoking jacket, the Victorian fireman's smoke jacket had a hood into which fresh air was pumped so he could enter smoke-filled buildings in relative safety. Firemen who toughed it out and simply held their breath were known as 'smoke eaters.' The Dunedin brigade also pioneered the use of two-way radios (in 1946), and portable walkie-talkies (in 1953).

Many of our more mature members will remember the red fire alarm boxes that used to be attached to telephone poles, even if most never actually had the opportunity to follow the injunction to break the glass and press the knob. The boxes were linked to the improved 'Duplex' alarm, patented in 1912 by Geoffrey Porter, the driver-mechanic of the Dunedin brigade's first motorised fire engine. The first version of these boxes had appeared in 1880, and the last of them survived

Above: Dunedin Fire Brigade Station (now site of the Harrop Street car park) by Burton Brothers studio – Te Papa C.011747. The Pride of Dunedin is visible to the right of the lamppost. **Inset:** The 1954 Dennis F8 fire engine currently on display in the NZR bus garage.



The Council have threatened to remove the Hankey Street fire alarm if it is tampered with by larrikins. Rev. Dallaston suggests putting a picquet on to guard it.

ARM! ARM! YE BRAVES!

Prominent Citizen: Hello, Parson, what are you doing there? Joined the volunteers?

The Parson: No, I suggested guarding the fire alarm and they picked me for first spell at sentry go. I'm on for eight hours!

into the 1970s, by which time they had become prey to vandals and pranksters. One of the 41 false alarms received by the Wellington Fire Brigade in October 1957 was caused by a nine-year-old boy who had been forced by his parents to run a message. So annoyed at this was he 'that in a fit of temper he broke the glass on a street fire alarm.' The police questioned him 'but evidently satisfied that they could inflict no better punishment on him than had been meted out by his father' they let the matter drop.

It was the well-known chrome-bonnet Ford V8 fire engine No 16 of 1935 that started off the preservation movement. The Dunedin Metropolitan Fire Board was about to dispose of it in 1971, so a group of firemen established Vintage and Veteran Fire Appliance Otago to save it. As is the nature of such things, the collection began to grow, and the Ford came to be housed at Seacliff as part of a plan to establish a Dunedin Museum of Transport and Technology. When this faltered in the early 1990s, the collection was transferred to the Otago Early Settlers Museum. The Dunedin Fire Brigade Restoration Society was formed, and set about restoring the engine in time for the province's 150th anniversary in 1998. Since then, the collection has grown to 17 fire appliances of various types, along with an extensive collection of uniforms, equipment, photographs and archival material.

The Society has undertaken several further restorations, including the Dennis now on show in the Museum. Though not a Dunedin engine, it has been painted in a livery resembling No 25, which arrived at the Castle Street Central Fire Station in 1954 but has not survived. This unnumbered survivor, painted with the Restoration Society's own logo, started life in Auckland, at Remuera, Mount Roskill, Papakura and the Mount Wellington Training station. It was transferred to Invercargill, then Te Anau, and finally Manapouri. The compact, manœuvrable short-wheelbase Dennis carries a surprisingly dainty (and perhaps non-original) ladder. It has a spartan interior with an enormous transmission hump between the driver and front passenger that conceals a Rolls Royce engine. At the back, its fully clothed 'Godiva' pump was produced by Coventry Climax, a firm that also made lightweight engines for Formula 1 racing cars.

Enthusiasm for saving old fire engines has a longer history, however. The 'Pride of Dunedin,' a horse-drawn hand-operated pump, is the oldest surviving appliance in the country. It began service with the Dunedin Volunteer Fire Brigade in 1863 and was sold to the army in 1910, eventually ending up at Trentham military camp, where it was still on active service during the Second World War; the pump has been on display in the Museum since 1946. A decade after that, three young vintage car enthusiasts clubbed together to buy a 39-year old fire engine from the Roxburgh Fire Brigade. In April 1955 Michael Haggitt, Roy Ferens and Bob Oakley took about six hours to return the 1916 N-type Dennis to its home town of Dunedin. The 3.4-ton vehicle was on pneumatic tyres rather than its original solid rubber ones, and with its 60-horsepower, four-cylinder, 9.2-litre engine could still manage more than 40 mph in places. Old No 6 'could roar up hills without changing from top gear … the old vehicle managed to pass some later model cars easily on steep grades.'

Dunedin's first volunteer fire brigade was formed in 1862 and moved into its new station at the corner of High and Rattray Streets in February 1866. They then shifted to an attractively designed, purpose-built station between St Paul's and the new Town Hall in 1879. (The last remnant, the former stables, was demolished to create the Harrop Street car park in 1964. A row of joist holes in the retaining wall and traces of whitewash are now the only clues to its existence.) After the volunteer fire brigade disbanded in 1885, the fire station was continuously manned by rostered staff paid on an annual retainer.

The growing city needed yet another new station by 1911, when the firemen moved to Cumberland Street, where the Countdown supermarket is now. It had previously been the site of the NZ Express Company's stables. The new station provided better access and more room for both the horse-drawn appliances and the new-fangled motorised fire engines. There was a special room for receiving telephone calls and incoming alarms. The brigade soon had itchy feet yet again, and in the mid-1920s began to plan for a larger station. The impressive Castle Street Central Fire Station designed by Henry Mandeno and Roy Fraser was opened in 1931 and at last cured the firemen's wanderlust. It provided larger living quarters for the men and their families — at any one time more than 20 children could be found living there. The crenellated Cumberland Street station still had its uses: it was pressed into service during the Second World War as premises for the Emergency Fire Service.

Right from the beginning, the touted advantages of having a telephone in the house included being able to summon the fire

Top: A cartoon addressing the threat to Wellington fire alarm boxes by 'larrikins'. The Baptist minister Charles Dallaston had previously served in Mornington and Caversham – *Free Lance*, 6 August 1904.





brigade 'in two or three seconds, thus reducing your risk to a minimum.' You just had to make sure your emergency took place during office hours, for at first the exchange did not operate in the evenings or overnight. An annual subscription cost a steep £10, but by August 1885 there were already 329 signed up in Dunedin, almost twice as many per head of population as in London. The emergency number was easy to remember: 'Residents are requested, in Case of Fire, to Ring Telephone No 1.' Progress soon put paid to that: when an automatic exchange replaced human operators in 1927, the number for the fire brigade became the rather less memorable 11-456. Some people sought in vain for the hyphen on their dials.

The *Evening Star* helpfully provided instructions on how to dial, an art that has been dying out in the twenty-first century: 'Remove the receiver from the hook. Listen for the humming sound, which is the indication that dialling may be commenced.' Unaccustomed to this sound, many people assumed it meant they hadn't got through to the exchange. Next, 'Place a finger in the hole over the figure 2, and rotate the dial until the finger touches the finger stop. Remove the finger and allow the dial to run back freely … When the dial has returned on the last rotation your line is connected … and the bell on that line begins ringing intermittently, as you can hear with the receiver at your ear. When the conversation is finished, the placing of the receiver on the hook cuts off the connection immediately. No use of the dial is needed.' Callers were reminded to hang the receiver upside down so that dust did not collect in the mouthpiece. If you still hadn't got the hang of it, 'Two pages of directions and cautions are given in the new directory, and they will be profitable reading for the users of telephones' and, presumably, insomniacs.

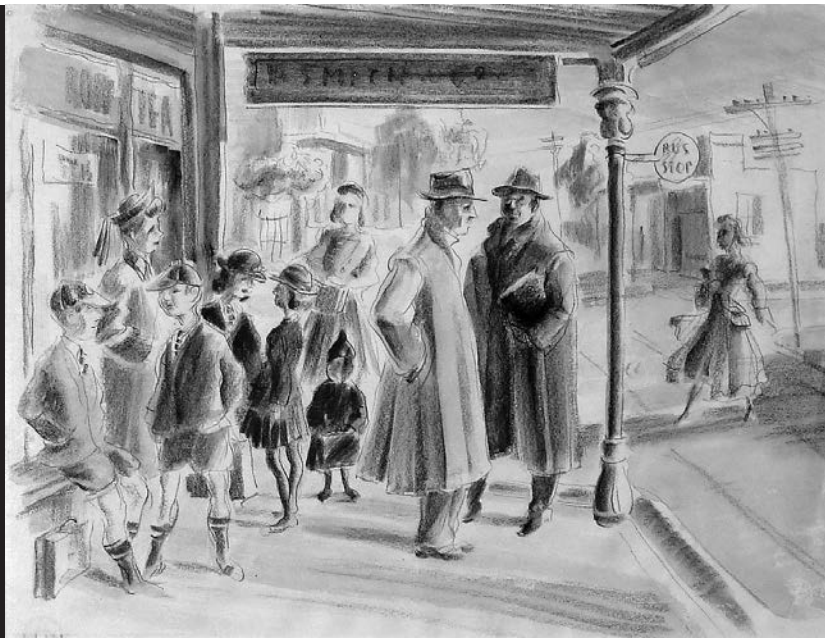
It was not until the late fifties that a memorable number for emergencies returned. The successful example of the British 999 was followed — since the numbering of Antipodean dials, appropriately enough, was in the opposite direction, this produced 111. (By happy coincidence, the street address of the North East Valley Police Station is 111 North Road.) Not only was the new number difficult to dial accidentally, one was supposedly the easiest number to find in the dark after O for the operator. The real reason was explained by a senior telephone engineer: 'If two lines were blown together in a high wind and touched three times within approximately the right time interval an operator could mistake the accidental signals for an emergency call.' Masterton and Carterton were the first on the 111 system by 1958, and Invercargill and Gore had joined by 1960, but the big cities had to wait until all their exchanges were modernised over the following few years. Even in the late fifties, only about one in every 200 fire calls was received from a street alarm; 'People prefer to go to a telephone.'

When the 111 service started in Wellington in 1961, only two minutes passed before the first fire call was received. The second call was a false alarm, from 'a curious child.' In all, 33 of the first 38 calls were false alarms. One had been from a man who had not received his census paper, while 'another was from a woman who could not get in touch with her husband at his office. When it was explained to her that the 111 call was only made in cases involving human life, she replied that her call was such a case as her husband had the weekend meat at the office with him.'



Top left - right: Dunedin Central Fire Station, Cumberland Street, about 1916 – Auckland City Libraries, 7-A9558 & 9576.
Bottom left: A fireman pretending to answer an emergency call at the new Castle Street central station – *Otago Witness*, 15 November 1911.

PLEASE FORM AN ORDERLY QUEUE

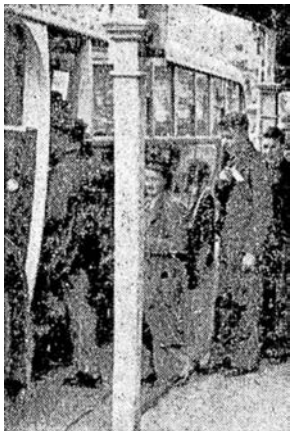


The British are often seen as a nation of patient, polite and phlegmatic queuers, and the South Britons of New Zealand were once thought to share the same characteristics. The historian Joe Moran has shown however that this image was largely the result of wartime myth-making. Having to wait in a slow-moving queue had long been the mark of the poor, needy or otherwise put-upon, and only the camaraderie of the Blitz made waiting for a bus or a rationed tin of snoek tolerable. In New Zealand, what passed for bus and tram queues could be *sauve-qui-peut* affairs, 'desperate scrums and wild rushes.' Wellington in particular was thought to be the centre of 'bus-rush bad manners.' Even in the early 1930s the elderly, waiting patiently, found themselves elbowed aside and left behind by younger latecomers. The city council considered installing railings to corral passengers into orderly queues and prevent pushing in. One local thought 'we are on an equal to the poor ignorant Egyptian who pushes and fights to get on any form of transport.' Things were no better in the post-war years. In 1948 the *Otago Daily Times* thought it would make an 'amusing study' to examine the 'habits of city crowds' at a few Dunedin bus and cable car stops:

Crowd habits, while not always providing a true index to character, almost invariably make an interesting study. Dunedin is no exception to this general rule, the most outstanding feature being the methods adopted by the travelling public to ensure a seat in the trams and buses of the public transport system. Residents of certain suburbs go about this process with a due sense of decency and decorum, but in most instances it is a case of 'devil take the hindmost' and there may well be an analogy between the fierce struggles to board trams and Otago's reputation for possessing some of the hardest rucking Rugby forwards in the Dominion. When it comes to boarding cable cars, the apparent elasticity of these antediluvian contraptions, which carry such incredible cargoes, is forgotten by most people. Before the cars have time to stop the boarding parties are away not with a cheer, but with grim faces and purposeful demeanour, struggling for the few seats available. No known instances have been recorded of passengers being unable to alight and having, willy-nilly, to return to their starting point, but frequently it is only sheer determination and the strong instinct of self-preservation which enable them to force their way through the seething mass of would-be boarders.

Men are not the only offenders. As the cable cars arrive at their town termini, clutching feminine hands pluck open the sliding doors on each side while feminine feet shuffle impatiently until the occupants of the cars — or most of them — have set their feet on the ground and, with thankful hearts, begun to replace their hats and collect their parcels. A solid phalanx of feminine forms then pours in from each side, creating a wild hurly-burly in the middle until all available seats and standing room have been occupied, leaving a number of frustrated females still standing in the roadway.

The narrow entrances to city buses make such headlong rushes an even more desperate business. There are times when boarding a Roslyn or Maori Hill bus in Rattray street becomes fraught with inconvenience, if not actual danger, as the crowds surge forward. The weakest go to the wall, along with those who would rather stand than scrum for a place on board. The triumphant look on the faces of the nimble or robust as they sink into their seats are no comfort to those who are still being elbowed and pushed in the crowd.

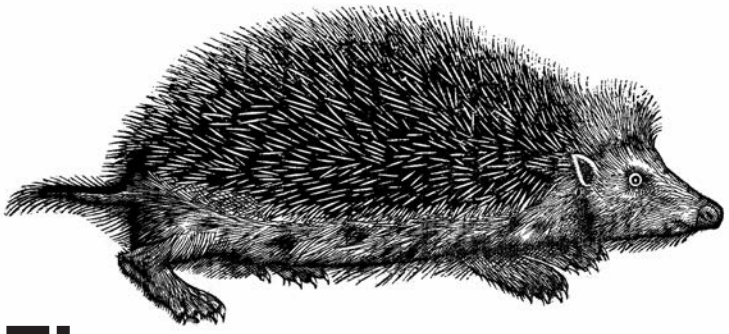


Top: Bus Stop by Dunedin artist Ralph Miller – Dunedin Public Art Gallery 1970-043
Bottom: An orderly bus queue, *Otago Daily Times*, 3 July 1948

This, however, is only one side of the picture. A direct contrast to the more primitive methods employed elsewhere is the orderly precision with which people await buses for Wakari in the Octagon. The signs directing people to 'Q here' are, almost invariably, taken literally and at times the queues stretch for a considerable distance. The orderly residents of an orderly suburb read their papers, talk to their neighbours, complain about the length of time they sometimes have to wait — but at least they know that, as their turn comes, they will find a place in the bus for which they are waiting. The contrast between the Octagon and the scenes in High and Rattray streets is as wide as that between British urbanity and placidity and Gallic impetuousness.

There are, of course, other places where the passengers have to fight their way into the city's transport vehicles, just as there are other places where there are no orderly queues — Frederick street coming into the latter category. Generally speaking, however, disorder and near chaos prevail and those who live in queue-conscious districts may count themselves fortunate in that they are saved much of the inconvenience which is the lot of fellow-citizens from less-civilised sections of the community.





The HOTCHI-WITCHUS of Otago

The mellow hedgehog that ate snails and befriended Bogor the woodsman poet was once a familiar figure in Burton Silver's long-running cartoon strip in *The Listener*. His real-life colleagues, snuffling around suburban gardens on the hunt for slugs, or flattened on the roads, were also familiar sights. Yet now the Department of Conservation has declared them pests and is busy with plans for their extermination. Their forebears however met with a much more welcoming reception in Otago. The first pair of hedgehogs arrived in Lyttelton in 1869 for the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, and its Otago counterpart ordered 100 more from England in 1885. Only three of them survived the voyage, and they were let loose in a suburban Dunedin garden; the solitary female died after a month. Today's hedgehogs descend from the dozen who escaped from a Christchurch garden in 1894, though their progeny took some time to establish themselves more widely. They did not do it all under their own steam, for railway guards did their best to help by dropping these useful urchins off at stations throughout the South Island.

Yet hedgehogs were still a novelty in 1908 when one was exhibited in a shop window in Oamaru 'and attracted a good deal of attention.' The following year they started to appear in Dunedin suburbs, prompting the *Otago Daily Times* to ask 'How came hedgehogs to Otago? … Can anyone tell us about their advent?' They soon became more adventurous: still considered 'very rare' in early 1911, one was found by a policeman in the heart of town. Constable Alexander Webb was on duty in Princes Street, opposite the City Hotel, at two in the morning 'when he observed a small animal running along the street. He gave chase, and on capturing it found it to be a hedgehog. The prize was placed in a box and taken to the Police Station, where it await[ed] identification if a fugitive [domestic pet], or a decision as to its fate if of the feræ' or wild beasts. A week later, David Fraser of Tuapeka Mouth spotted a hedgehog crossing his yard and 'recognising it as something of a curiosity, captured it and placed it in a box where, since its detention, it appears perfectly contented, taking food quite freely. Its staple diet has been bread and milk and porridge, but Mrs [Ellen] Fraser says that it appeared to greatly appreciate a mouse which she took from her cat and gave it the other day.'

Top right: 'Of the Hedge-hog,' in Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes* (1607)



The juvenile intelligence network of Dot's Little Folk was soon on the trail. One little urchin kept one as a pet, asking 'Have you ever seen a hedgehog, Dot? The face is very like a pig, and the animal is covered with pricks. If you touch them they roll up into a ball, and you can never tell where they open out.' 'Raupare' received the slightly tetchy reply 'Yes, dear, I have seen a hedgehog. They are becoming a nuisance here' — this was in 1917. They had acquired a reputation for stealing hen's eggs, and even on occasion eating a chick or two. Despite 'some habits that do not commend them to severe moralists … such lapses of morality on the part of a few immoral hedgehogs are more than atoned for by the good which the majority accomplish,' argued GM Thomson, the renowned Dunedin naturalist and MP: 'on the whole, they are benefactors to the human species.'

Farmers and gardeners appreciated the spiny furze-pig's fondness for beetles, especially grass grubs: 'the man with a large extent of lawn should encourage the hedgehog,' thought Thomson. Their predilection for earwigs made hedgehogs popular with fruit, vegetable and flower growers, both commercial and amateur. Central Otago fruit growers 'liberated large numbers of hedgehogs in their orchards to combat the earwig nuisance,' and they quickly made themselves at home, being hardy enough to live at altitudes of up to 3000 feet. Even so, they were first spotted in Queenstown as late as 1946. The Dunedin Gardening Club issued a plea in 1922 'that this little animal should be protected as much as possible.' Some gardeners were more suspicious, spreading stories that hedgehogs would dig up potatoes, or shimmy up apple trees and carry the fruit off attached to their spines, the latter a canard that dated back to Pliny the Elder in the first century AD. The age-old accusation that hedgehogs would suckle at cows' udders was updated in the 1950s when their adaptable descendants worked out how to tip over milk bottles and pierce the tinfoil tops to get at the cream. One thing New Zealand hedgehogs have never been guilty of is harbouring fleas, as their immigrant ancestors seem to have lost them on their long sea voyage.

Meanwhile, the anti-Tiggy-Winkle tendency had been busy marshalling its forces, and declared war in 1939 by having hedgehogs gazetted officially as vermin. Hunters complained that they ate quails' eggs, and the Otago Acclimatisation Society offered a bounty of threepence per snout. The war on hedgehogs outlasted the Second World War. In 1945 Rupert Fountain, a former President of the Otago Acclimatisation Society, played the xenophobic card to argue that 'every method of destruction should be employed to exterminate' the prickly little 'Marauder from Abroad.' Orchardists leapt to the defence of their hedgehogs: 'at a time when the depredations of the earwig threatened disaster to the industry' their introduction had been 'an unqualified success … officers of the Horticulture Department [had] carried out extensive spraying, poisoning, and trapping experiments in an endeavour to obtain some measure of control. These efforts were all cancelled out when the hedgehog took up the work. Why imperil an industry to save a few privileged-class quail?'

For more on the history and habits of New Zealand's hedgehogs, see 'For the Love of Hedgehogs' by Bob Brockie in *New Zealand Geographic* 44 (October–December 1999), available at www.nzgeo.com/stories/for-the-love-of-hedgehogs



Left: Sir John Tenneil's illustration for 'The Queen's Croquet Ground' in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).
Right: 'The Hedge-hog, or Urchin,' in Thomas Bewick, *A General History of Quadrupeds* (1790).

To Fresh Woods and Pastures New

Our Administrator Gemma Murphy resigned in December to further her career with more challenging work. She joined us just before Christmas 2018 and it was not long before she had to face the problems the Covid pandemic brought with it, which she dealt with cheerfully and professionally. Past President Susan Schweigman says 'Gemma was always willing to try things, and encourage us to do the same. She was always pleasant, even when dealing with a difficult situation.' President Pete adds that he 'cannot praise her enough for her efficiency, ability to complete any job asked of her, and her pleasant manner when dealing with a bunch of old [fogies]. We will miss her.'

Under New Management

The committee is pleased to welcome Jude Johnson as our new Administrator. She hails from South Otago and was an administrator for Mirror Counselling Services in Dunedin. She also volunteers at the Otago Community Hospice Shop in Vogel Street, and is a volunteer gatekeeper at the Otago Farmers Market at the station. Jude commenced work on 1 February, so drop in and meet her when you have the chance.

Interned for the Summer

The OSA-funded internship for the best second-year undergraduate in the History Department at the university has been awarded to Alice Houston-Page. (She has clearly inherited the historical aptitude of her grandmother, our former President. All insinuations of nepotism have been stoutly rejected.) Over the summer Alice has been researching nineteenth-century working women with a view to the curators making some changes in the First Great City display gallery, probably towards the end of this year. She has been gathering material and stories for up to four video clips that will go on an existing audiovisual station in the gallery.

The Magic of Christmas

When the Committee booked the magician Jonathan Usher for the Christmas function, they did not realise he was so good he could make it disappear entirely. The anti-viral precautions deterred so many members that the beano had to be postponed until the new year.

Not Going Out

The Committee has decided with regret to postpone this year's Summer Outing indefinitely in view of the current Covid precautions. We cannot see how we can safely carry out social distancing on a bus trip, and think it highly likely that many of our members would not like to be exposed to such a large gathering.

OSA Membership

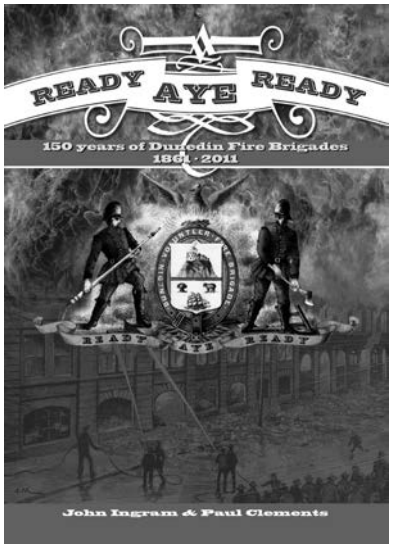
It is now possible to set up and pay for membership of the OSA at the Museum's shop.

Book News



The Bikes We Built: A journey through New Zealand made bicycles by Jonathan Kennett (2021) 150 pages, hardback. $49.90 (with OSA members' discount: $39.92)

The Museum has on display an interesting range of early bicycles, from boneshakers and velocipedes to a tethered replica 'Ordinary' penny-farthing for visitors to ride. This richly illustrated history of New Zealand-made two-wheelers begins in 1869 and takes the story all the way through to the 1970s motorbike-style Raleigh Chopper and BMX bikes of the 1980s. It looks at the cycles' designers, makers and collectors, along with, of course, their riders. Jonathan Kennett brings back to life a vanished world of forges, lugs and pin-striping, when you might know the name of the individual craftsman who had built your trusty steed. The introductory chapters detail the social, political and economic contexts that spurred the bicycles' creation. With his brothers Simon and Paul, Jonathan Kennett is well known in the off-road cycling world, and they have published many guidebooks and other works on cycling and cyclists.



Ready Aye Ready: 150 Years of Dunedin Fire Brigades, 1861–2011 by John Ingram and Paul Clements (Dunedin Fire Brigade Restoration Society, 2011) 205 pages, paperback. $34.95 (with OSA members' discount: $27.96)

Many OSA members will fondly remember John Ingram, formerly the Visitor Programmes Co-ordinator at the Museum. Not all will know he spent part of his childhood living in the Castle Street Central Fire Station. This history was launched at the station in February 2011, but without any copies of the book itself. They were stuck in Christchurch as a result of the second big earthquake. Many Otago firemen helped in the aftermath of that disaster. Not for nothing was 'Ready Aye Ready' ('aye' meaning 'always') the motto of the original Dunedin fire brigade.

This highly informative, lavishly illustrated and superbly designed book looks at the firemen, their engines and equipment, and the fires they fought. It includes many good stories, such as the unintended consequences of the practice in the 1860s of hiring privately owned horses to draw the fire engines. It was not just the fireman who were aye ready: on one occasion a horse, while drawing a wedding carriage away from the church, heard the familiar sound of the fire bell ringing. The newly-weds 'were treated to a breakneck ride through the streets until the horse found the scene of the fire and refused to budge until the fire was extinguished.'

Several major conflagrations are described and analysed, including that of Ross's Building (now the Regent Theatre) in 1879 and the Arthur Barnett's fire of 1959. For the period from 1967 on, Paul Clements draws on his personal experiences as a fireman. He discusses the ideologically driven changes to the fire service in the 1990s and the industrial action they provoked. There are three appendices, giving details of Dunedin fire appliances, notable Dunedin fires and Dunedin firemen.

A 1:76 scale model of a Dennis F8 in NZ Fire Service livery made by Oxford Diecast. It is very finely detailed and depicts DV3445, which entered service with the Christchurch Metropolitan Fire Board in 1956 as No 18. $59.95 (with OSA members' discount: $47.96)



The shop stocks a wide range of items, many of them New Zealand-made, ideal as gifts for adults and children. Members of the Association qualify for a 20% discount, and there are some special OSA online promotions at shop.toituosm.com

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