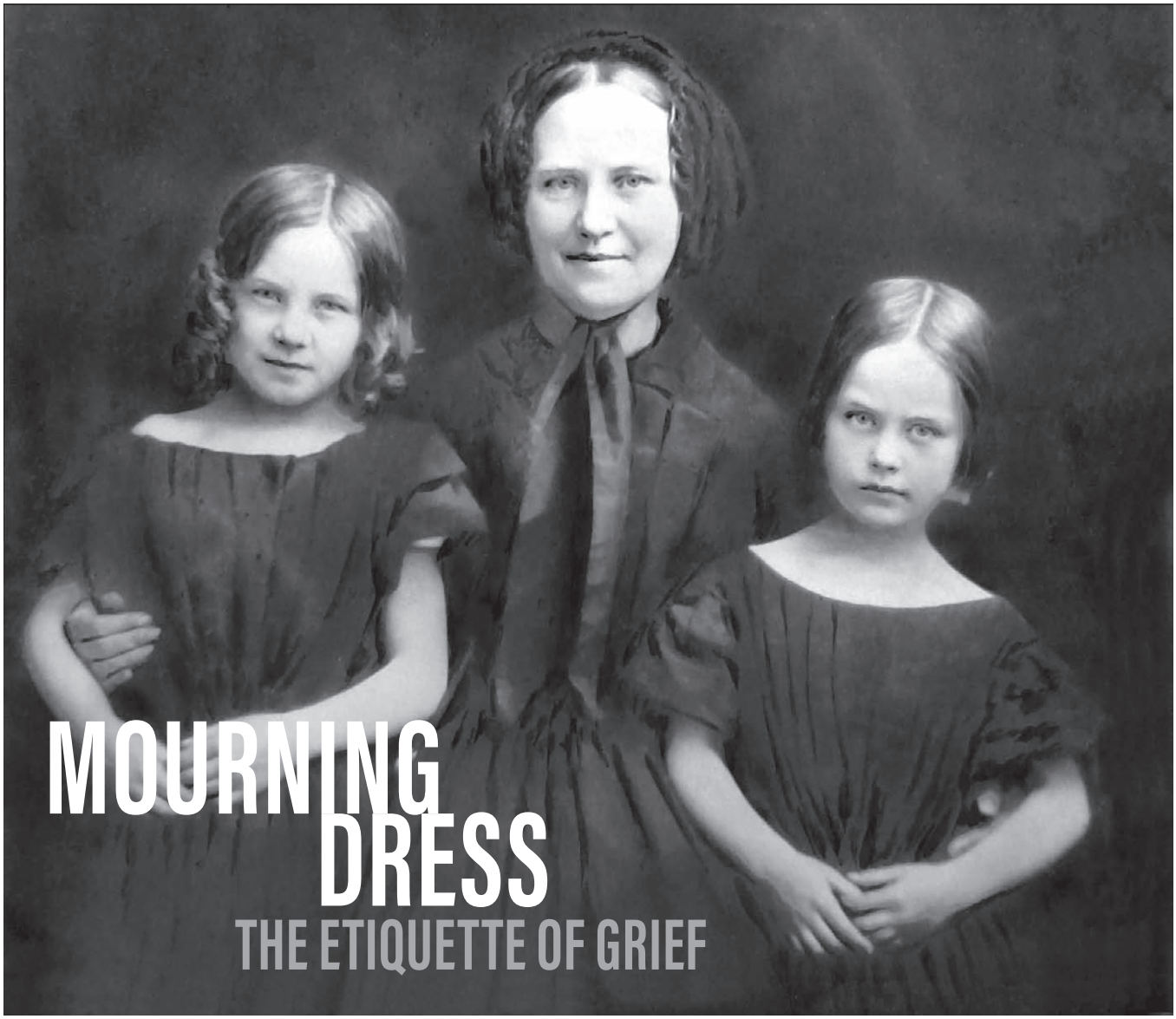
OTAGO SETTLERS NEWS

OTAGO SETTLERS ASSOCIATION *proud to be friends of* toitū OTAGO SETTLERS MUSEUM **AUTUMN 2024** ISSUE 160



MOURNING DRESS

THE ETIQUETTE OF GRIEF

On offer at a Proctor's jewellery auction held last December in Dunedin were several pieces of early Victorian mourning jewellery — rings and brooches inlaid with diamonds and seed pearls, and a ring formed from a lock of braided hair. Exemplifying the Victorian and early twentieth-century obsession with death and its regalia, mourning jewellery was just one of the bereavement traditions the settlers brought with them from Britain and Ireland.

Reflecting the solemnity of the occasion, Western society grieved in black. The mourning period for a widow was two years immediately following the death of her husband. After 18 months, the convention to wear unrelieved black gave way to half mourning with touches of purple, grey or white. In the *Otago Daily Times* in 1875, Brown, Ewing & Co offered 'Deep Mourning, Half Mourning, Slight Mourning in all the finest and most durable fabrics.'

Textile manufacturers made a fortune out of black cloth, known in the business as the Black Branch of the Trade. In New Zealand as in Britain, the universally accepted fabric was a black crepe produced by Courtauld & Co. The total sales of Courtauld's black crepe remained at around £200,000 a year from 1913 until 1918, when long periods of mourning were abandoned.

Reg Lord, who joined Smith & Caughey's department store in Auckland in 1908, recalled a member of the Silk Department, where he worked, reading the death notices in the newspaper

The recently widowed Caroline Douglas with her daughters Helen and Janet shortly after their arrival in Dunedin in the *Jura* in 1858.





and sending out samples of black cloth to the bereaved. Whether Dunedin department stores did this or not is unknown, but they did stock a plenitude of black fabrics referred to by the DSA (Drapery Supply Association) in George Street as 'black stuffs.' In 1877, Brown, Ewing & Co invited inspection of 12 different types of black mourning dress materials, and A & T Inglis advised the public that 'a large stock of Mourning and Complimentary [sic] Mourning Dress Materials is always available.' Silk and lace were two of the more elaborate 'black stuffs' permissible in the later stages of mourning.

It was customary during the late nineteenth century for department stores to offer parcels in various categories, containing merchandise chosen by the store. Among the contents of A & T Inglis' Parcel No 4 'The Mourning Parcel' (32 shillings and sixpence, including carriage paid to any address, equivalent to about $400 today) were 7 yards of black cashmere, black buttons and Dents black kid gloves.

'Exquisitely Trimmed Mourning Bonnets' were another A & T Inglis speciality. On the other side of George Street, directly opposite Inglis, a Mrs Dreaver who made mourning outfits to order also operated as a milliner, claiming in 1886 to have 'the largest stock of mourning millinery in Dunedin.' The same claim was made in the same year by a Mrs Gill. The Misses Brownlie in Princes Street, four doors down from the Octagon, made no such claims, although in addition to stocking a good selection of mourning millinery and trims such as jet silk and crepe flowers, they did offer a special service, retrimming old mourning hats while the customer waited.

At the Princes Street stores Herbert, Haynes & Co and Thomson, Strang & Co, customers could choose between having garments custom-made or selecting ready-to-wear mourning garments 'kept in stock in order to supply at the shortest notice.'

During the mourning period, touches of black were often introduced into the everyday wardrobes of family members. Men wore black armbands. White petticoats and little girls' dresses and pinafores were threaded with black ribbon. In this 1910 photograph (above) of a New Zealand bridal party, the bride's and bridesmaid's white hats are trimmed with black ribbon on both the crown and the brim, indicating a recent death in the family. The wearing of specially commissioned mourning jewellery, invariably black or gold combined with seed pearls, diamonds, sometimes amethysts, or a lock of the deceased's hair, was another tangible expression of grief.

Black onyx, enamel and jet were obvious choices for mourning jewellery. Jet, the best said to come from Whitby in North Yorkshire, was popularised by Queen Victoria when Prince Albert died in 1861. The archetypal grieving widow, Victoria shrouded herself in black from the time of Albert's passing until her own demise in 1901. The comment was made that the only difference in her dresses in all that time was in the waist measurement. On the Queen's death, special memorial services were held in the places of worship of all denominations throughout Dunedin. The pulpits were draped in black and the newspapers noted that the majority of the Knox Church congregation wore some token of mourning, and the congregation of All Saints Church were dressed mainly in mourning garb.

Top left: Ellen Brooke and her daughters Esther and Jane, c 1895, following the death of her husband and their father in a quarry during the building of the Otago Central Railway near Naseby – Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, P1991-026.
Top right: An unidentified Edwardian bridal party, somewhere in New Zealand – Fran McGowan Collection


"HALF MOURNING."



To commemorate the death of Edward VII in 1910, a day of mourning was declared in New Zealand, and Dunedin churches were heavily draped within in mourning colours. In Britain, the legendary annual Ascot race meeting still took place. Out of respect for the recently deceased monarch, the racegoers, both men and women, dressed entirely in black. The event went down in history as Black Ascot. In 1964, Cecil Beaton referenced the occasion in his costume designs for the race scene in the film *My Fair Lady*.

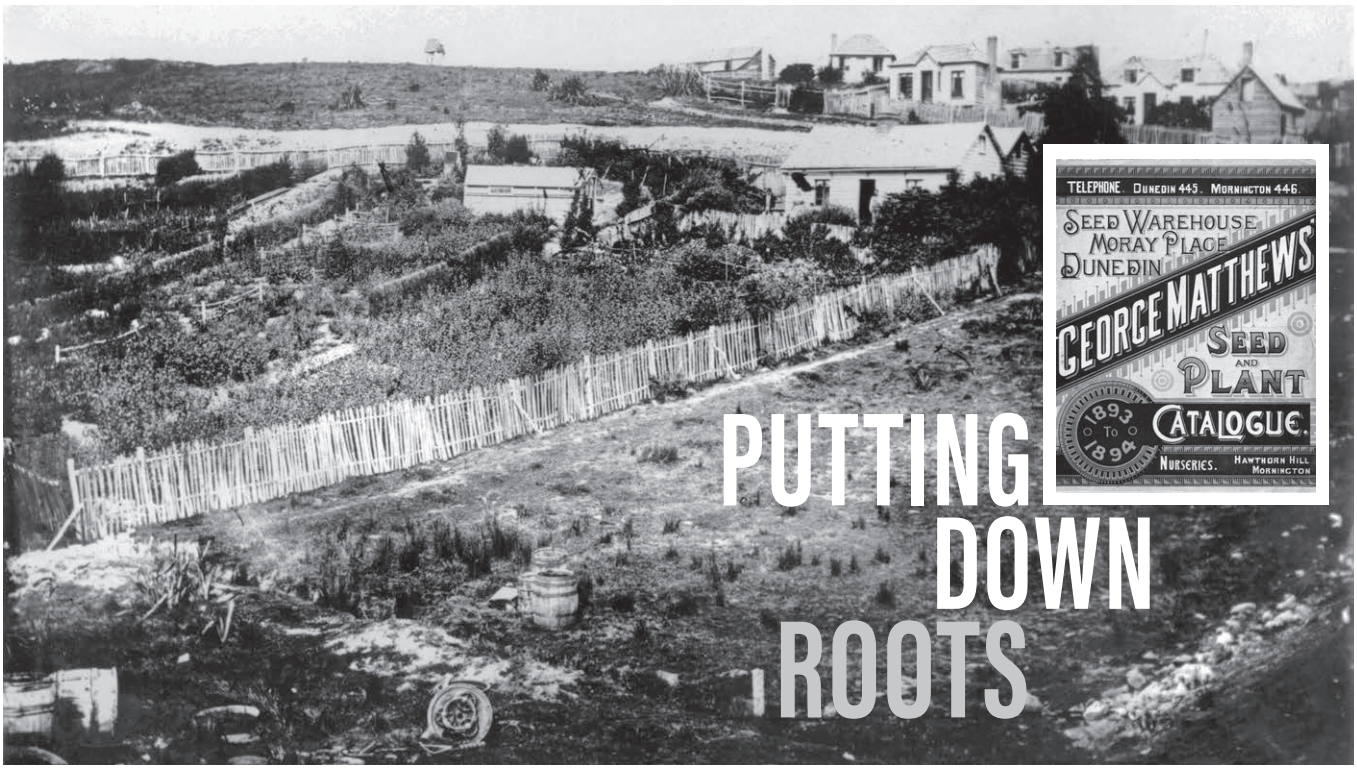
During the First World War, attitudes to mourning customs began to change. It was believed that with so many men dying on the battlefield a universal wearing of black as an expression of sorrow would have been unthinkably depressing and bad for public morale. Lengthy periods of mourning were dropped, and wearing black to funerals was no longer obligatory. It was left to the discretion of the individual. Women often kept a set of black clothes in their wardrobes solely for this purpose, and men kept a black tie.

The textile, clothing and jewellery manufacturers, dressmakers, milliners and retail outlets which had profited for so many years from the mourning trade were left mourning a loss of revenue. Freed of its funereal connotations in the 1920s, black became ultra-stylish, a colour synonymous in high-fashion circles with sophistication and flawless good taste.

Cecilie Geary



Top: A literal interpretation of half mourning, c 1905, by Charles Dana Gibson; **Left:** A nineteenth-century gold and black mourning locket set with a diamond and freshwater pearl star; **Bottom right:** Queen Victoria, Princess Alice and Prince Alfred in mourning alongside a bust of the late Prince Albert in March 1862 by William Bambridge – Royal Collection Trust;

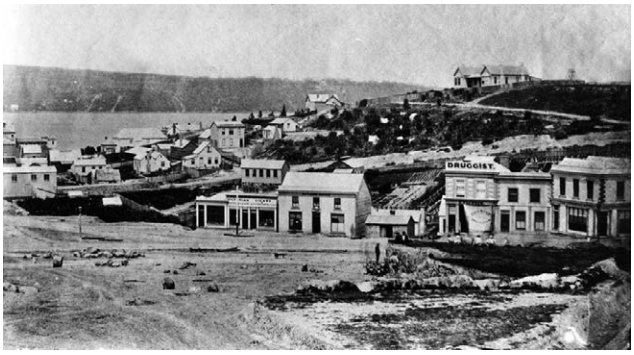


PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

This rustic early Dunedin scene shows cottages not in some quiet suburban side street but rather Moray Place, close to where First Church would be built. Or rather above where the church would be built, since Bell Hill would first be excavated to about half its original height, starting in 1862. The neat garden surrounded by the picket fence was not a domestic veggie patch but one of the earliest commercial nurseries. George Matthews, who is possibly the man standing at the door of the cottage, was a pioneer horticulturalist who helped the colonists expand the range of plants in their gardens and helped them make Otago more like home. He was born in 1812 in Stuartfield near Old Deer in Aberdeenshire, 10 miles (16 km) west of Peterhead. George worked on the family farm until he was about 18, when he became an apprentice gardener for the Laird of Nethermuir, about 10 miles west. His training complete, he became foreman gardener at Fyvie Castle (another 12 miles west), moving on after a year to the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. After six years as foreman gardener nearby at Dryden (near Rosslyn Chapel), he married Eliza Pressly in 1840 and went to work in Ireland. First at Martinstown on the edge of the Curragh, and later in the western outskirts of Dublin at Knockmaroon, he 'achieved considerable reputation as a plant-grower, his attention being specially directed to the hard-wooded sorts.' He got to know a fellow gardener, James Gebbie from Riccarton near Kilmarnock, and the two men discussed their families' future options in the colonies.

They plumped for the new Otago Settlement, possibly because a gardener George had once worked with, John Anderson from Old Deer, was already in Dunedin. He had arrived at the start of 1849, and in December Gebbie and family came too, in the *Mooltan*. The Matthews with their three children and George's youngest sister Jane followed them in the *Lady Nugent* in March 1850. The family eventually grew to four sons and two daughters. Jane Matthews married the Yorkshireman John Hartley Jenkinson the following year. The Gebbies and the Matthews stayed together in North East Valley, where they built a fern-tree cottage. George Matthews then purchased the quarter-acre section in Moray Place that can be seen in the photograph above for £40. It was on the site of what is now Bracken Court, facing the top of Burlington Street, and ran down to the Octagon roughly where the Athenæum is now. The north-facing slope was ideal for a nursery, sheltered from the wind and with a 'never-failing stream' at its foot. With great foresight George had brought a selection of seeds, trees and other plants with him from Britain. Dunedin was barely two years old and still more a large village than anything, and though its residents were busy planting, it was not enough to support a gardener or seedsman's business. George 'found that the prospect of doing much in the way of gardening was very poor, and he soon became convinced of the reality that a hard struggle was before him. In fact, he found it necessary to engage in manual labour of the severest kind, but he never felt discouraged. He went bravely to work, taking employment wherever he could obtain it … at certain seasons his services were in demand for breaking up ground with bullocks, and for thrashing grain with the flail … The first job he undertook was to assist in building a house. After his day's work, his time was employed in clearing, breaking up, and fencing a quarter-acre of flax land,' his Moray Place nursery. 'Here he laboured before and after his regular day's work, and often late on moonlight nights. Nine months after his arrival he had a house of his own, which he built himself, and a little nursery, from which he occasionally sold a few apple-trees, hawthorn plants, or gooseberry bushes. For years, however, there was very little demand for nursery goods, and he continued at work, occasionally taking a contract to drain land,

Above: Church or Bell Hill about 1860; **Inset:** George Matthews' Seed and Plant Catalogue for 1893-94.



form a road, or clear a building site.' For several years George was farm manager and gardener to James Macandrew and his brother-in-law William Reynolds in the Glen.

The anthropologist Helen Leach has pointed out that 'Gardening seems to have been a major interest of the Otago settlers: the *Otago Witness* had a garden column every month in the early 1850s, and the Otago Horticultural Society had been formed early in 1851.' In due course the Church Hill Nursery began to prosper and was expanded towards Princes Street. By 1853 George was able to buy a second property above the Town Belt in Mornington and developed a 10-acre nursery there for shrubs and trees, which he called Hawthorn Hill. He later added a further 25 acres, but it was mostly poor, hard clay soil which he had to drain and manure extensively. Thorn, holly and laurel hedges could only protect the nursery against the prevailing winds so far, but in any case 'the trees grown in this exposed position are very hardy and remarkably healthy.' The site of the nursery is today covered with the houses of Hawthorn Avenue. George's 'love for rare and fine plants was an absorbing passion.' His own garden was 'beautifully kept' and contained some rare exotic trees, while the lawn was 'literally as green and smooth as the cloth upon a billiard table.'

Tens of thousands of timber, fruit, nut and specimen trees were grown at Hawthorn Hill, along with decorative shrubs such as rhododendrons, laurustinuses, hydrangeas and oleanders. The fruit included apples, pears, plums, cherries, apricots, peaches, grapes, currants, figs, blackberries, raspberries and gooseberries 'by the thousand.' By the late 1850s George's regular advertisements in the *Otago Witness* drew 'the attention of Settlers to his one and two-year old Apple Trees, which are remarkable for bearing when very young. Also Pears — Plums — Peaches — Apricots — Cherries — Gooseberries — Black, Red, and White Currants — Raspberry Canes — Strawberry Plants — and a large stock of Rhubarb Roots. Forest Trees, consisting of Ash, Elm, Poplar, Locust, Laburnum, &c. Evergreen and Flowering Shrubs — Roses and Flower Roots — Lilies and other Flowering Bulbs, &c.' He planned in 1858 to establish an 'Agricultural & Horticultural Museum' and invited 'his numerous friends in the country' to send him 'specimens of Wheat, Oats, Barley, Rye, Peas, Beans, Vetches, Grasses, &c. Also, Potatoes, Turnips, Mangold Wurtzel, Carrots, Parsnips, Beet-root, Onions, Shallots, and various sorts of Fruit. Also, specimens of rare and useful Native Trees and Shrubs. Likewise, Minerals, &c.' It is unclear if anything came of this. As more land was turned



over to crops and pasture there was a great need for hedging. George sold gorse or whin seed and yellow broom for hedges, and by the mid-1860s was advertising half a million thorn quicks at 12–15 shillings a thousand (equivalent to about $85–105 today). That many would do for nearly eight chains (160 m) of hedgerow. For the pasture itself, George sold clover seed and cow grass obtained 'from one of the most celebrated Seedsmen in Edinburgh.' Perennial and Italian rye grass, Yorkshire Fog, Timothy and cocksfoot were big sellers, and George recommended rib grass for sheep runs as it 'will grow well on rocky ground at a very high altitude.' By 1863 he was importing clover seed by the ton. To establish permanent pasture in drought-prone areas or to grow crops on poor soil, George supplied the finest Peruvian guano. In 1870 he was entrusted with the levelling, harrowing and sowing of the new racecourse on the swampy, 'almost useless' site of Forbury Park.

George was already doing so well by 1861 that 'the attraction of the goldfields did not seduce him from his own proper calling,' but he was in any case pushing 50 by then. His not quite so elderly friend James Gebbie was tempted to try his luck, however. Returning from a few months on the goldfields he bought some land for a new nursery in the bush on the east bank of the Leith between the Dundas and St David Street bridges, not far from the original site of the botanic garden. There he grew a wide variety of trees, shrubs and flowers, and found strawberries 'extremely profitable.' Despite careful nurturing over 18 years, however, a ginkgo tree did not grow an inch. After the Botanic Garden moved to its present site in 1869, Gebbie's son James took over the management of the 11-acre reserve. He planted many trees and laid out walks for the public, using some of the land as nursery beds for the family business.



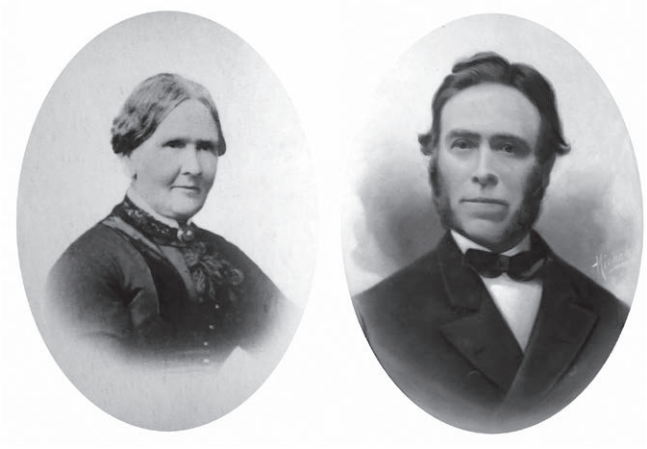
Top left: Bell Hill in 1862 – Presbyterian Research Centre P-A133.4-9; **Top right:** Matthews' cottage was hemmed in by newer buildings by 1865. Detail from a panorama; **Bottom left:** Moray Place in 1879, the Otago Seed Warehouse on the far left – Te Papa C.012061

The Matthews family meanwhile moved to a newly built 11-room single-storey brick house on the hill-crest (now 151 Kenmure Road) in 1870, though they continued to operate the Moray Place nursery for many years. The original wooden cottage there survived until 1872, when it was replaced by a large stone and brick building. Designed by RA Lawson, it housed a shop, office, seed store, living accommodation and conservatory. Its pediment proclaimed the building the 'Otago Seed Warehouse' and it faced the neoclassical portico of the Masonic Hall. It was considered much 'more in keeping with its improved and improving surroundings' than the pioneer cottage had been. Eventually the site of the old nursery was swallowed up by the demand for business premises in the central city and the land was sold by the Matthews family in 1911. The shop was replaced by Jamieson's Buildings, now renamed Bracken Court.

Though he became an elder of First Church in 1860, George 'took no very active part … in public matters,' yet 'at the same time he had decided opinions, and did not fail to express them when occasion required.' Illness restricted his involvement in the business in his later years, and he died at the age of 72 in 1884, after a working life helping transform the countryside of Otago, both farms and domestic gardens. His son Henry managed the business during his father's illness and continued it after his death with his foreman John Wood McIntyre, 'an acknowledged authority on New Zealand flora.' It was largely due to them that 'New Zealand species were gradually recognised overseas as valuable garden plants,' being exported to Europe and North America, and even to Japan. In 1896 Henry was appointed the country's first Chief Forester, in charge of government nurseries and plantations, and he helped establish the first state forests. In the meantime, one of James Gebbie's sons had laid out the Oamaru Public Gardens, becoming their first curator.

George and Eliza Matthews' great-grandchildren included the poet Dennis Glover and Ruth Gow, whose joint biography of George and Henry was published in *The Advance Guard: Series One*, edited by George Griffiths (1973).

With thanks to Seán Brosnahan. A fully referenced version of this story can be found on the website of the Garden History Research Foundation at gardenhistoryresearchfoundation.com





WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

Following a nostalgic visit to Pixie Town and filled with Christmas cheer, about sixty OSA members assembled in the early evening of Thursday, 7 December in the the former NZR Road Services bus garage. There Curator Peter Read described the themes of the newly reopened galleries, the Three Ts: transport, technology and temporary exhibitions. The first of the latter marks 150 years since the stranding of the immigrant ship *Surat* off the Catlins with its 271 passengers and 37 crew on New Year's Day 1874. The ship was beached in Surat Bay and the French naval transport *La Vire* took the passengers to Dunedin. The incident is memorialised there by Vire Street, which runs between Leith and Harrow Streets. *La Vire* was in this part of the world with a French expedition to observe the transit of Venus from Campbell Island. The drunkenness of the *Surat*'s captain was blamed for the disaster and he was imprisoned for two months. Among the passengers was the five year old Arthur Ellis, the future bedding manufacturer, who along with a few other survivors donated the ship's figurehead to the Museum in 1924, a few months after they had commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of their delivery from danger.

Portable computers and other rather less easily moved high technology have been shifted to the northern end of the gallery, where the old garage doors have been replaced with a large window decorated with a printed circuit design. Some items from the local firms ACP (Allied Computer Processors) and Databank Systems Ltd have been added, along with some new videos. It is now possible to walk round Cadbury's 60-year-old British-made ICT 1301 computer and fully appreciate its scale and complexity. It was only the second electronic computer in New Zealand, and is one of only three of its type left worldwide. The others are named Flossie and Arthur, and ours has now been christened Brucie in honour of Bruce McMillan, who helped

Left: Eliza and George Matthews.
Top right: The figurehead of the wrecked *Surat*.

install it in the first place, and has maintained and preserved it over the decades. (For more data, see Tim Hyland's article in *Otago Settlers News* for June 2009.)

Human-, animal- and engine-powered transport are reunited in the new 'On the Move' display, though the reindeer-powered sleigh was not on show because it was needed for duties elsewhere. The new gallery has been supported generously by the Otago Motor Club Trust. Created in 1991 to protect the assets of the Otago Automobile Association when the regional bodies were merged to form a national organisation, our late Treasurer Barry Clarke, a long-term Jaguar man, was one of its founding members. Both of the Otago AA's first patrol cars now stand alongside each other, a yellow baby Austin 7 and a blue 8 HP Morris Minor.

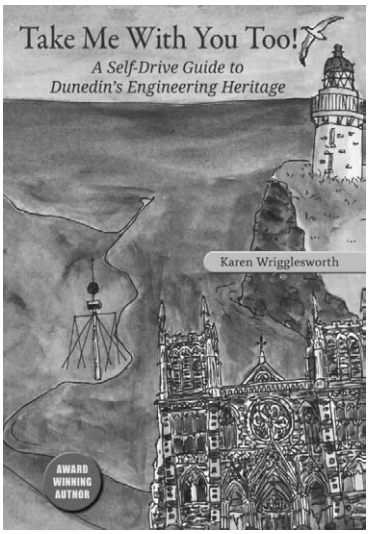
Peter Read gave an entertaining account of the motor gymkhanas organised jointly by the early Motor Association and the Early Settlers Association at Tahuna Park in 1908 and 1910. Prizes were awarded for cars tastefully smothered in floral decorations, and the outlandish competitions included motorised musical chairs, a turnip race, driving blindfolded and steering to avoid danger, which required the drivers to dodge dummies of pedestrians thrown in front of their cars at random, rather like modern central Dunedin late on a Saturday night. (For the details, see Peter's article in *Otago Settlers News* for September 2014.)

At the far end of the gallery are the 'Kid Magnets,' the Tiger Tea bus, the Dennis fire engine and a newcomer, one of the last ever Holden highway patrol cars. The magnet for grown-ups was the festive spread in the Josephine foyer, including asparagus and chicken rolls, savouries, chocolates, strawberries and Christmas cake. Melville and Nancy Carr were once again lucky in the prize raffle draw, and cheerful conversations continued well into the evening.



The entrance to the newly refurbished Transport and Technology Gallery.

SHOP NEWS



Take Me With You Too! A Self-Drive Guide to Dunedin's Engineering Heritage, by Karen Wrigglesworth (Cliff Creatives, 2022) paperback; 237 pages, 110 colour illustrations and two maps. $48 (With OSA members' 20% discount, $38.40 plus $5 packing and postage.)

The mechanical engineer and writer Karen Wrigglesworth put her ten weeks in residence at the Robert Lord Writers' Cottage in Titan Street in 2019-20 to good use exploring the diverse engineering heritage of Dunedin and its hinterland. Even if you think you know the place well there will be plenty here to interest you; Karen's hope is 'that dipping into this book will whet your appetite to get out there and explore sites and stories for yourself.' That said, this book is equally suitable for armchair travellers. It is full of unexpected details, such as that vault lights, those translucent windows set into the pavement to illuminate shop basements, comprise not simply thick, flat panes of glass but also include prisms on their underside to make the most of the available light.

The topics cover a wide range of places and people from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, straying into the twenty-first with the Forsyth Barr Stadium. Some are well preserved, others a bit scruffy; some, like Donaghy's rope walk, are endangered, while others are already largely gone, such as the Hillside railway workshops; some such as the rope walk and gasworks are the last surviving examples of their kind in the country. The subjects of the concise chapters include Baldwin Street; the Winter Garden in the Botanic Garden; Woodhaugh; the Ross Creek Reservoir; the Water of Leith flood protection works; Francis Petre, 'Lord Concrete;' Kempthorne Prosser; Port Chalmers; the Aramoana mole; the Physiotherapy Pool at the public hospital; Norma the Town Hall organ; the Athenæum; the Dowling Street steps; Speights Brewery; Moana Pool; the Beverly Begg Observatory; the New Zealand Express Company building; the old Cumberland Street overbridge; the cable cars and trams; Choie Sew Hoy; the Crown Roller Mills;

Shacklock's; the gasworks; the St Clair heated salt-water pool; the Sandymount kiln; coastal defences and the Armstrong disappearing gun at Fort Taiaroa; the Taiaroa Head lighthouse; the Roslyn and Mosgiel woollen mills; the airport at Momona; the Otago Central Railway; and the Waipori power scheme. All this comes with a bibliography so you can follow up the history and engineering in more detail.

All the photographs are by the author, and the cover was painted by her daughter Freyja, who is studying at the Dunedin School of Art. Karen has written on a wide range of subjects, especially the history of engineering, including this book's North Island counterpart, *Take Me With You! A Self-Drive Guide to Whanganui's Engineering Heritage* (2020), which was Highly Commended in the Engineering New Zealand Heritage Awards. She is at present writing a biography of the 'Iris Lady' Jean Stevens, the hybridiser world famous for creating the pinnacle iris.

Oojah-cum-Spiff



Part of Otago's engineering heritage is represented by this finely detailed limited edition die-cast scale model of Dunedin City Corporation tramways Box Car No 11. Only 500 have been made, and each comes with a certificate of authenticity. No 11's nickname came from the rooftop advertising for Spiff boot polish, a short-lived brand introduced in 1919 by Neill & Co and advertised with cartoons of a family of cats emulating Puss in Boots. The signage is very finely printed and the tram's windows are glazed; the model is static, not motorised.

The original was built by JG Brill & Co of Philadelphia in 1903 and was retired in 1955. It ended up on Hastie's farm on Pine Hill and in 1967 was taken north for restoration by the Tramway Historical Society at the Ferrymead Heritage Park. No 11 can now be seen trundling through the streets of Christchurch, the oldest working tram in the country.

Scale 1:87 (HO) approximately 11 x 4.5 x 2 cm. $74.95 (With OSA members' 20% discount, $59.96 plus $5 packing and postage.)



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

If you would rather receive this newsletter as an email attachment (a PDF file) rather than in print, please contact Jude Johnston, our Administrator, at the OSA office — it will help us save money on postage.

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