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Our Mutual Friends

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Otago and Southland, like others of the former Provinces, have always had their distinctions and their differences. It is surely time to examine how closely we are knit together, especially in the personal aspect.

In 1948, on the principal day of Otago's centennial celebrations, quite an interesting little gathering was held in Invercargill to mark the event. We had booked a room in the local Y.M.C.A. and inserted a short advertisement in each of the newspapers. It was an invitation to the local descendants of Otago's earliest pioneers, especially those from the *John Wickliffe* and the *Philip Laing*, to get together for a chat and a cup of tea ; also to bring their children, so that something of the tradition might be passed on. We reckoned on an attendance of about 25, and when nearly 100 rolled up the frantic quest for more fizzy drinks and adult refreshments can be imagined. You may be as surprised as we were.

The Tale of two grandmothers

Henrietta Alexander was a passenger on the *John Wickliffe* bound for Wellington via Otago along with the Rev. T. D. Nicholson and his family. This is the family tradition, confirmed by the ship's original passenger list. Dr. Hocken's "Contributions" needs to be corrected on this point. She was a granddaughter of the Bishop of Dunkeld, and her destination, along with the Nicholsons, was Nelson. There she married a widower, Dr. Bush, who had come out as surgeon on the *Lloyds* in 1842. They had a family, and in the course of the years their son settled in Invercargill.

Jane Williamson was a young girl when the large Williamson family came out in the *Philip Laing*. They settled on the Taieri, where "Bantaskin" is still held by descendants. Jane married John Turnbull Thomson, who came to Dunedin in 1856 on the *Star* as Provincial Surveyor.

A daughter of Jane Williamson married the son of Henrietta Alexander, and from them my wife and family are descended. Furthermore one of our sons married a descendant of Dr. Robert Williams of the *Bernicia*, another arrival of 1848. My own father came out to Otago in 1873, and soon moved north to make his career in Timaru. All of which explains why my wife and I arranged that little gathering here in 1948.

The widow and the widower

The Niven family came out on the *Philip Laing*. Their youngest child, David Elles Ramsay Niven, was born on the voyage and was given the names of the captain and the surgeon. The family settled on the Taieri, but when the husband was accidentally killed the widow moved into Dunedin.

John Kelly—his name is sometimes given as James—was one of the first of the seamen-settlers of Southland. He was married by native custom to a Maori wife and when the rites of the Church were added in 1844 Bishop Selwyn recorded that Kelly had been resident in the district for 20 years. The people of Otago's immigrant ships were late-comers by comparison ! Southland is the only district where sealers had settled in the early twenties, and taken Maori wives and brought up their families in civilised fashion. Kelly's son could read and write, though the father could not, and had been taken up to Otago to be baptised by Bishop Pompallier. Selwyn has left us a highly favourable account of these pioneers of the far south.

After his wife's death Kelly visited Dunedin and met Mrs. Niven. The widow and the widower decided to make a new life together, and were married by the Rev. Thomas Burns on the

last day of the year 1850. She and her family were the first of the Otago settlers to make their home in the south, but it must not be forgotten that two or three other wives and families had already settled there from Australia. The Kellys made their home at Ruapuke Island, later at Bluff, and then became the first settlers on the site that was eventually selected for Invercargill. There treasures. Dr. Hocken's adverse criticisms of him can be completely they lived in a "rude whare" with their three families—his, hers and theirs. In our centennial celebrations of 1956 we featured a gathering, with about 100 present, of their descendants.

Others to the South

McDonald-Sinclair (as we like to call him, for he went under both names, the second being correct) was next. In 1853 he came and bought a mob of cattle from the ex-whalers for the Dunedin market. It is on record that he and his men camped with the cattle on the site of the future Invercargill. This was the beginning, for others followed his example, of Southland's export trade to Otago. He later settled here, with the Argyle Hotel at Bluff and a pastoral run on the east bank of the Mataura.

Tom Winton of the *Philip Laing* was only a youth when he came south as a stock-driver. Working on McFarlane's run he found some strayed cattle browsing contentedly at a remote spot which became known as Winton's Bush and finally Winton. Many other Otago settlers took up land in Southland, and we can only make bare mention of such prominent names as Blatch, Chalmers, Shanks, Shand and that Waikouaiti pioneer of 1840, W. S. Trotter. On the other hand the runholders, other than the seamen-settlers of Riverton, were mostly from abroad and knew Dunedin only for the transaction of official business.

Many merchants in Dunedin opened up business in the south. McGibbon started at Mataura and Macandrew had the first store—the stock-and-station agency of those days—at Invercargill, at the corner of Dee and Tay streets. John Jones built another next door. Without actually settling here many Dunedin pioneers took up business sections in Invercargill, making a success of the new settlement and incidentally doing quite well for themselves.

Officials

It must be made clear that for the first few years both Invercargill, Bluff and the whole Southern District were administered from Dunedin by the Otago Provincial Government. There was no form of local body here, but there was an official of the central government in the form of a customs officer and postmaster. This was A. J. Elles, formerly the captain of the *Philip Laing*. His name is preserved here in Elles Road, his official papers are in Dunedin, and it is beyond our comprehension why Otago historians, old or modern, should give his name as "Ellis". His wife was Clementina Burns, grandniece of "The Bard" and daughter of that eminent Dunedin divine, so honoured and so loved, yet fated to be martyred along with Cargill long after his death. Captain Elles is our closest tie with the first immigrant ships, along with his wife and two of his passengers, Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. J. T. Thomson. His bluff and hearty personality is reflected in his written reminiscences, which give us an intimate account of the peoples and places and conditions of his time. When he came south to take up his appointment his ship had to put back because of the weather. So he came overland laboriously, a sailor on horseback, only to find at Bluff that the little *Endeavour* had beaten him to it after all. We can sympathise with him when Invercargill ran out of stores, including tobacco, during a six-week storm, and again when he watched the historic mooring post on the bank of the Otepunu stream demolished to make way for the Bank of New Zealand.

John Turnbull Thomson held the post of Provincial Surveyor etc. for some 20 years in Dunedin. His first assignment was to select a site for Invercargill and to lay out the town. This was completed in 1856 and was followed by a reconnaissance survey which opened up the whole district for settlement. He has left us detailed accounts of his journeys to and fro,

interspersed with lively humour, while his water-colours and oils and sketches, ranging back as far as 1856 and covering Southland from the Waiau to the Mataura and the Eyre Mountains rank among our historical Pompallier on the *Sancta Maria*. James Spencer of Bluff took Mere Kauri demolished. We must recognise that the doctor had his likes and dislikes, also that a man who could advocate the Darwinian theory of evolution would in those days call the fury of the orthodox on his head. It was not until 25 years after the town was founded that Thomson retired from the post of Surveyor General and built his home at Invercargill, two miles from the Post Office.

Invercargill

It is a matter of pride that the southern capital bears the name of a man who was a distinguished captain in Wellington's Peninsula campaign and who later became the leader of the Otago settlement both under the Company and as Provincial Superintendent. He knit the community close together with a high standard of public life, and for more than 20 years after his death Dunedin was the largest and most progressive town in New Zealand. Otago's gold was certainly a contributing factor, but gold-mines are a transient source of production and often create a low standard of community spirit. The age was one of religious intolerance. One of Cargill's ancestors had suffered martyrdom, and his community had fled from the oppression of the Old World. It should not be held against him that he strove valiantly for his own particular sect. In public life he had his opponents (what leader had not?) to whom firmness was obstinacy and all virtue was distorted. Notwithstanding ancient and modern criticism Cargill has come down to us as a very great man. We can well accept the judgment of J. T. Thomson who some years after the Captain's death referred to the Clutha river as

"the Molyneux of Captain Cook, the Clutha of Captain Cargill—
both great men of their spheres".

The meaning of the name of Invercargill deserves a moment's attention. It is obviously "a river-mouth town named after Cargill", but one often hears the meaningless interpretation "at the mouth of Cargill", which treats "Inver" as a preposition instead of a noun. Neither the Governor Gore Browne who coined the name nor the Dunedin citizens who accepted it as suitable would have passed anything inappropriate. An "inver", signifying a town at the meeting of the waters, may be either a river-mouth town or a river-junction town. It is the latter which the Governor must have had in mind, for he had the accounts of Stokes and Hamilton that Bluff Harbour was suitable only for a port town but that a good site for a capital was to be found at the junction of the Oreti and Makarewa rivers. The latter was inspected in due course by Proudfoot, who pronounced it in his diary as a good site for a town, but later investigation showed that the vicinity was liable to floods and that communication with the port was unsatisfactory. The story that Invercargill was first intended to be at the Bluff is of course fallacious. It should be noted that the word "inver" can be associated either with the name of a river or, as at Invergordon, with the name of a person.

At the time the present site was selected the New River Harbour was both deep and extensive, and in the early days more than 30 vessels were recorded in port at a time. Vessels from the Old Country could unload their cargoes at the Invercargill jetty. J. T. Thomson reported that "here the interior traffic can centre—to here the sea-borne traffic can be brought; it is consequently here that the interchange of merchandise must take place, and people congregate for that purpose". One hears the occasional remark that the pioneers should have built Invercargill further inland where the climate is better. Splendid, and of course they should have had motor transport and sealed roads to the wharf at Bluff !

Sundry Observations

We should not overlook the reciprocal interest of Southland in Otago. Kelly took his children up by boat to Otago Heads to be baptised by Bishop up to Waikouaiti where their

marriage in 1841 is entry No. 1 in Watkin's Register. John Jones had vast tracts of land in both districts, but abandoned his southern interests in favour of Waikouaiti. However, he had already sold most of the south to purchasers in Australia, and it is quite possible that on failing to give title he refunded their purchase money.

Tuckett also pronounced in favour of Otago, and Southland was only his third choice. We have a theory that he was carefully shepherded by the seamen-settlers who through their Maori connections were monarchs of all they surveyed and who viewed with little favour the sharing of their broad acres with a host of immigrants. When he set out to test the soil at the head of Bluff Harbour he, was taken to the Awarua bog, where his spade went down to the handle in wet peat. At Riverton he saw only coarse and sparse vegetation, and a scruffy cow that gave less milk than a goat. Yet only seven years later Hamilton saw large herds of cattle in prime condition from the excellent feed.

Southland has always had elements different from Otago. Sealers made their permanent homes here from 1824 onwards, nearly a quarter of a century before the immigrants reached Dunedin. The sealers were joined later by the whalers, but all were very different from the types we read of in the North Island. Selwyn visited them in 1844 married them to their Maori wives and baptised their children. He found that most had a Bible, and all were concerned for the education of their families. All he could find to criticise was their language in driving cattle across a river. Captain Howell and his relations and several others took up pastoral licences of the lands which they had been using "by permission of the natives". The rest of Southland was soon filled up by another distinctive group, the runholders who imported their stock from Australia. After the separation of the provinces a third group arrived in the various immigrant ships that came out direct to Bluff. Thus it is not surprising that while there is a close kinship with Otago there is also a consciousness that Southland is a distinct and separate community.