

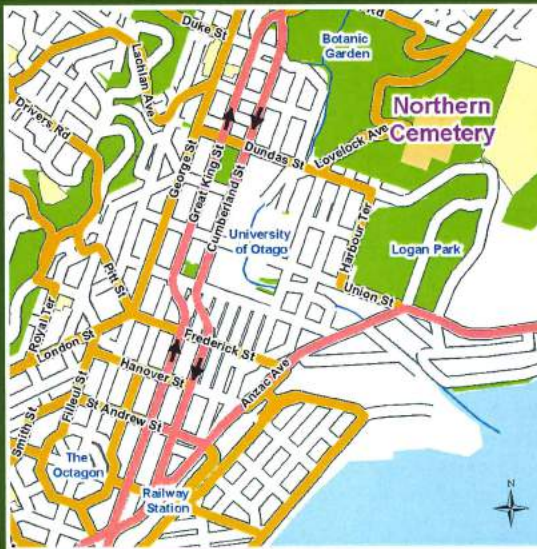
Sport has played a significant role in Dunedin and Otago since the earliest days of the founding of the city. When the first newspaper owner, Henry Graham, tried out his newly-assembled printing press in 1848, the first thing he printed was a notice advertising a meeting to form a cricket club.

Just as a developing Dunedin was the commercial leader for New Zealand, so it was with sport. In 1864, Dunedin was host to the first international cricket visit; in 1884, a Dunedin man organised the first national rugby team, the forerunners of the All Blacks; in 1888, the first British rugby team to visit New Zealand began its tour in Dunedin. The first national athletics championships were in Dunedin.

And the first world champion from New Zealand, Joe Scott, trained by walking from Northeast Valley to Waitati and back.



Gravesite of Joe Scott, champion walker



Sexton's Cottage
Northern Cemetery
Lovelock Avenue
Dunedin
Telephone 03 471 8265
www.southernheritage.org.nz
info@southernheritage.org.nz

Published by the Southern Heritage Trust.
Text and images: Ron Palenski
Design: Richard Hercus



Sports Trail



Above: Alec Downes, middle front row

New Zealand's first world champion, the rugby player who was also a 'song and dance' man, the politician who was in at modern rugby's beginnings ... these are some of the noted sports people who are buried in the Northern Cemetery.



Above: Joe Scott, champion walker

James Allen

Born Adelaide, February 10 1855
Died Dunedin, July 28 1942
Block 132, Plot 41



James Allen, Sir James from 1917, had a distinguished career as a politician and a diplomat and effectively ran New Zealand's contribution to World War I. But he also had a sporting pedigree that was seldom mentioned in later years. Allen had been educated at Cambridge and played in the annual rugby matches against Oxford in 1875 and 1876 (the first Australasian to do so). He continued playing when he returned to Dunedin and captained Otago in 1882 in the two games he played for the province (the second of which was against New South Wales, the first overseas visitors). He was later president of the Otago union (and presided when Pat Keogh, one of the great 19th century players, was banned for betting on a match in which he played). Allen capped his career of public service as New Zealand High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, where he welcomed a new generation of rugby players, the 1924-25 Invincibles. The caricature from the Otago Witness shows the various aspects of his life.

Henry James Atkinson

Born Dunedin, June 22 1888
Died Dunedin, July 21 1949
Block 128, Plot 9

Were there political reasons behind an attempt in 1913 to stop Harry Atkinson from becoming an All Black? Perhaps. Atkinson was a waterside worker in Greymouth and was described by the newspaper *Maoriland Worker* as "one of the staunchest Federation of Labour members on the Coast" and as a "militant industrialist." The newspaper noted that when Atkinson was chosen for the New Zealand rugby team to tour the West Coast of the United States, "a determined effort was made to prevent his going." The New Zealand Rugby Football Union in Wellington had received a letter a month before the tour purporting to be from Atkinson. It read:



"The Chairman, Selection Committee. As it is impossible for me to go with football team to San Francisco, I must notify you. Yours regretfully, H. Atkinson, Railway, Hokitika." The word "Hokitika" had been spelt "Oketika" but this was crossed out and the correct spelling substituted. News of Atkinson's "withdrawal" was published and both he and the West Coast Rugby Union sent telegrams to Wellington saying that the withdrawal reports were incorrect. The New Zealand union secretary, Joe Avery, had already suspected something was wrong because the supposed withdrawal letter was from Hokitika and he knew Atkinson lived in Greymouth. Atkinson duly took his place in the team and made his debut for the All Blacks against Australia in Wellington. He also played against Wellington and in eight matches on tour. The West Coast union referred the bogus letter to the police but its author was never identified. Atkinson resumed his playing career in Dunedin in 1914.

Alexander Dalziel Downes

Born Emerald Hill, Victoria
February 2 1868
Died Dunedin, February 10 1950
Block 98A, Plot 1



Alex Downes was a remarkably gifted athlete who was recognised as the greatest bowler in New Zealand cricket of his era and one of the best backs to play rugby in the 19th century. A spin bowler, Downes took 322 wickets in first-class cricket for an average of 15.77 and for many years formed a formidable bowling attack with Arthur Fisher. He played for New Zealand six times. Among his outstanding feats were 14 wickets in a match for Otago against Hawke's Bay and four wickets in four balls against Auckland. He several times bowled throughout both innings of a match.

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When he died in 1950, George Wycherley, the veteran cricket writer for the *Evening Star*, wrote of him: "It is agreed by all those who claim to possess a knowledge of New Zealand cricket history that Alex Downes was one of the greatest bowlers this country has ever produced."

As a rugby player, his record was almost as outstanding and had there been a New Zealand team in his playing days, he would almost certainly have been the first "double All Black." Downes was a foundation member of the Alhambra club and played for it from 1884 until 1893; he played for Otago from 1887 until 1892 and also played for the South Island in 1888 against the first British team to tour New Zealand. (The first national team was chosen in 1884 and there was not another until 1893).

William ("Monty") Graham McClymont

Born Lawrence, June 22 1905
Died Waitati, May 21 1970
Block 110, Plot 9 (Fitchett family plot)

"Monty" McClymont was a rugby player and a mountaineer in his sporting life, a teacher and writer in his professional life. McClymont played usually on the wing for Otago University and Otago and for New Zealand Universities in 1929. He was an All Black in 1928 when he played in three unofficial test matches against New South Wales (at that time there was no rugby in Queensland). A history major, he taught first at John McGlashan College before moving to Otago Boys' High School. He coached both the rugby and cricket teams at the school. He developed an interest in climbing when injury cut short his rugby career and he was understood to be the first former All Black to climb Aoraki/Mt Cook. He climbed extensively in Europe in the 1930s and included the highest peak in Switzerland (4634-metre Mt Rose) among his conquests.

McClymont's skills learnt in the Southern Alps were apparently of great assistance to New Zealand troops in river crossings in Italy in 1944 and 1945. McClymont wrote *To Greece*, one of the titles in the Official History of the 2nd NZEF series, and a New Zealand history book, *The Exploration of New Zealand*.



Joseph Scott

Born Lettermacaward, co Donegal, Ireland
June 3 1860
Died Dunedin, February 9 1908
Plot 97A, Plot 17

Joe Scott is generally held to have been the first world champion in any sport from New Zealand. Brought to New Zealand at a young age, he first displayed prowess at race walking when he competed at the annual Caledonian Games in Dunedin in 1874 when just 13 years old. One of the Caledonian Society handicappers, Alfred Austin, realised Scott's potential and began coaching him: within a year Scott was beating the best "pedestrians" (as race walkers were known) in New Zealand and Australia. Looking for fresh fields to conquer, Scott and Austin went to Britain in 1888 and in the Agricultural Hall in London in May, he won a six-day contest (12 hours a day) for the world championship by walking 363 miles and 1510 yards. He beat the runner-up by 26 miles. He earned a cash prize of £100 for breaking the eight-year-old world record, plus the world champion's belt and sash. Scott returned to Dunedin and competed at the 1889 Caledonian sports, where he did a lap of honour wearing the belt and sash while a band played "See, the conquering hero comes." Scott competed little after that, although he was an active coach until shortly before his death in 1908 from cancer of the throat. Among the walkers he coached was Albert Rowland, who was among the first New Zealanders to compete at an Olympic Games in London in 1908. Scott's winnings from the walking tracks did not last and he was declared bankrupt. He eked out a living as a cobbler. Friends and supporters rallied round when he died and raised £45 (about \$7350 today) for a memorial at his grave. The chairman of the fundraising committee, Dick Powley, a wine and spirit merchant, promised any money left over to Scott's widow, Isabella.



Joe Scott c. early 1880s

Henry ("Harry") George Siedeberg

Born Dunedin, July 13 1877
Died Dunedin, May 21 1945
Block 161, Plot 3

When Harry Siedeberg died in 1945, he was described in Australian reports as "the greatest athlete produced in New Zealand." The newspapers in his hometown were more conservative and measured: According to the *Evening Star*, Siedeberg "had a remarkably fine record in sport - a record of versatility and prowess in games which had probably not been surpassed by any other sportsman in New Zealand." The next morning, the *Otago Daily Times* was more restrained but no less adulatory: "It can be said of Mr Siedeberg, without exaggeration, that he was one of the greatest athletes produced in the Dominion, if not the greatest."

His athletic prowess was apparent from a young age. At Otago Boys' High School between 1891 and 1893, he set a long jump record and was the five champion. He took up gymnastics while still at school and, according to his obituaries, became among the best in New Zealand (in the days before there were national championships). He played senior club rugby for Dunedin for a time but switched to soccer and hockey and played for Otago in both those sports. It was as a cricketer that Siedeberg gained the greatest renown. He played for New Zealand against Australia in 1905 and 1911, and for the South Island and Otago, and appeared in a total of 46 first-class matches between 1898 and 1922.

When he finished with the more strenuous sports, he won the national billiards title on four occasions and also won a national title in lawn bowls as a member of the winning Dunedin four in 1926.

Harry Siedeberg was the younger brother of Emily Siedeberg-McKinnon, the first woman medical graduate in New Zealand. She is buried in the same plot.

George Stephenson

Born Dunedin, February 4 1874
Died Auckland, November 6 1918
Block 194, Plot 1

As a rugby player, George Stephenson had a unique claim to fame. He played for the Manningham club in Yorkshire in 1893 and again for the same club in 1901. Manningham was one of the 22 founder member clubs of the Northern Union (later to be called the Rugby League) which in 1895 broke away from the London-based Rugby Football Union because of differences over payment and control. Stephenson thus became the first player from New Zealand or Australia to play rugby league (the game was not established in either country until 1970).



Stephenson was a son of Laura and John Stephenson, the latter one of the founders of the Wright Stephenson stock and station company. Young George was sent to Bradford in Yorkshire to learn the wool trade and combined his profession with his pleasure. He continued with rugby when he returned home and played 24 games for Otago between 1895 and 1900. With the wealth inherited on the death of his father

in 1900, George realised a long-held passion to establish a professional theatre company, which toured New Zealand and Australia. He also returned to Britain for his debut at rugby league. The theatre business cost him money and in 1916 he became manager of the Fuller family entertainment business in Auckland. While still an active rugby player, Stephenson had proposed in the late 1890s that he bankroll a New Zealand team to tour Great Britain, but the New Zealand Rugby Football Union turned the proposal down and mounted its own tour in 1905-06.



George Stephenson's touring theatrical troupe

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Henry Siedeberg

Joe Scott

Alex Downes

George Stephenson

Bill "Monty" McGlymont

Harry Atkinson

Sir James Allen

Sexton's Cottage
Information Centre

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Metres

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