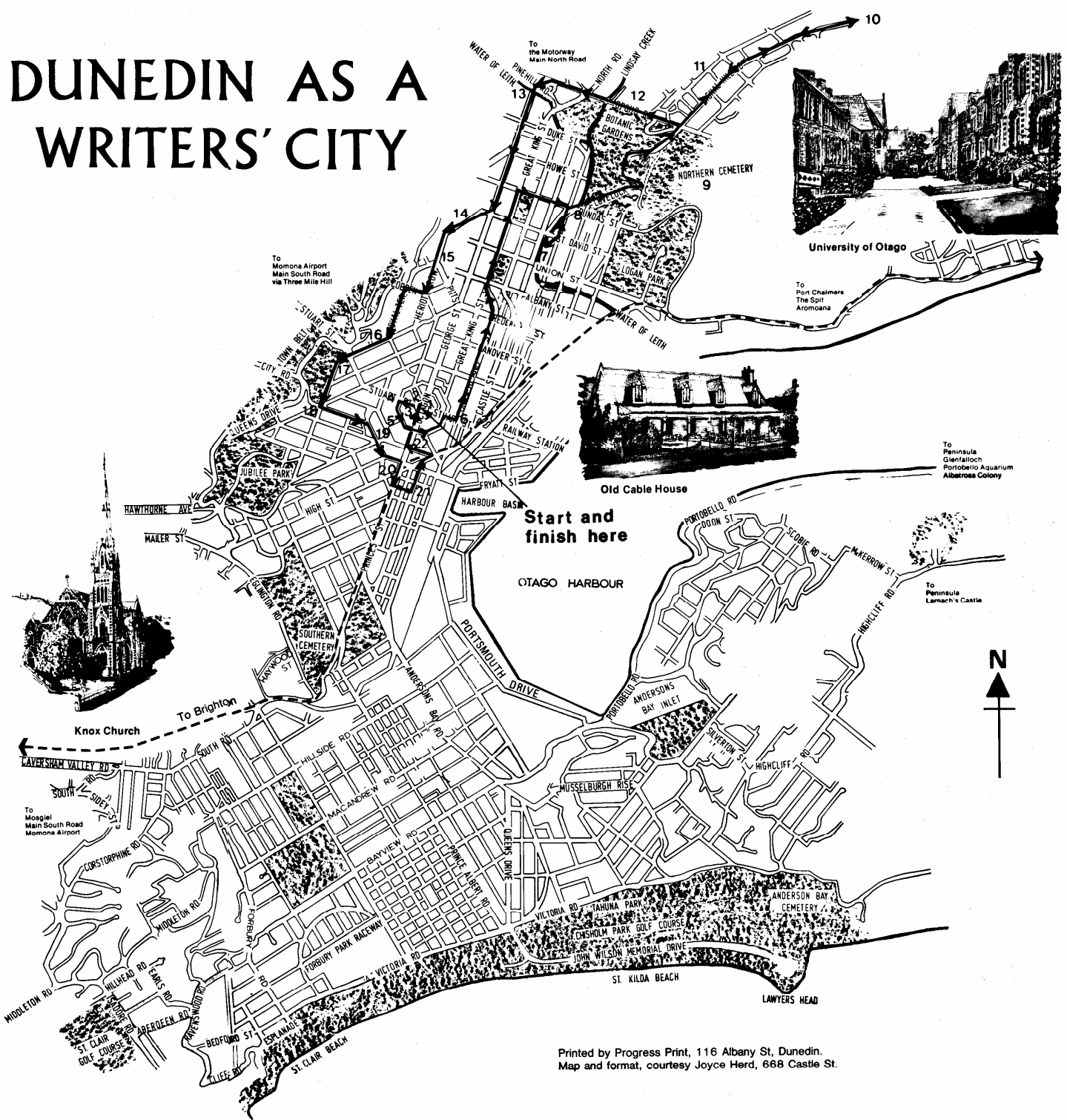


DUNEDIN AS A WRITERS' CITY

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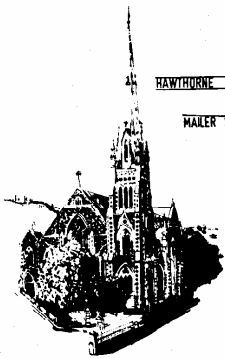
Map and Guide to places of literary interest



University of Otago



Old Cable House



Knox Church



There was a young girl in DUNEDIN,
So fond of drinking and feeding,
Till she grew so fat
That the size of her hat
Was as big as the *bell* of Dunedin.



There was a young lady at CAVERSHAM,
Her smiles were so sweet, and she lavish'd 'em
Till she candied the heart
Of each youth in that part,
Did this young lady of Caversham.

Otago Punch December 8, 1866

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1. **THE OCTAGON**, now considerably redesigned for the 1990s, marks the centre of the survey of Dunedin, and Robert Burns (1759-96) presides over it not only as the lyric genius of Scotland, but also as the wayward and dissolute uncle of the Rev. Thomas Burns (1796-1871), co-leader of the Free Church contingent which founded Dunedin in 1848. The bronze statue, commissioned from the Scottish sculptor, Sir John Steell, was publicly unveiled on 24 May 1877; though some of Dunedin's citizens, aware of Burns' output of pornographic verse, were less than willing to contribute to the statue's cost. The words on the scroll—"Thou lingering star, with lessening ray"—are from Burns' poem *To Mary in Heaven*. The clock on the Municipal Chambers tower, being restored to its full height after 25 years of truncation, appears in Glover's *Dunedin Revisited*—"Over the harbour waters/A slow-gonged clock/Floats the hours and the quarters".

2. The new **PUBLIC LIBRARY**, beside the Civic Centre, was opened on 10 November 1981. Its book stock of more than 300,000 includes 55,000 in the Children's Library, and 40,000 (originally based on the bequest from historian Robert McNab) in the New Zealand Room. Don't miss the Reed Collection, one of New Zealand's finest, with its valuable coverage of early manuscripts, bibles, Dickens, Samuel Johnson; the Dunedin goldrush collection, Ben Farjeon, and his literary family. Also a fine Walt Whitman collection; the Hector Bolitho novelist; and the large output of Fergus Hume, the Dunedin-educated author whose classic thriller *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* once rivalled Sherlock Holmes.

3. Across Stuart St from St Paul's Anglican Cathedral is the handsome terrace of town houses which J. L. Salmon designed in 1900-01 and which featured in the credits of the TV serial *Close to Home*. No. 119-121 once housed the **CHILDREN'S LIBRARY**, the librarian for many years being Dorothy Neal White, author of two excellent books on children's literature, after whom the National Library's historical collection of children's books has been named.

4. A block up Stuart St, on the corner of Moray Place, is the **FORTUNE THEATRE** which, since 1978, has occupied the former Trinity Methodist Church, designed by R.A. Lawson and built in bluestone in 1869; seats 236. Notable for staging contemporary New Zealand work, in particular the premieres of several of Roger Hall's best plays.

5. The **CARNEGIE CENTRE**, just a few metres left down Moray Place and now a popular centre for crafts and fine art, is the former Dunedin Public Library, partly funded by the Carnegie Foundation and opened to the public in 1909. Ann de Roo, the children's writer, was at one time on the staff.

6. The RSA building at the corner of Moray Place and Burlington St occupies the site of T.M. Hocken's former home. After R.A. Lawson's magnificent First Church (1873) turn east towards George Troup's impressive Railway Station (1906), the **ALLIED PRESS** building, designed in 1928 by Edmund Anson on the corner of Moray Place and Cumberland St for the *Evening Star* (ceased 1979), now also holds the *Otago Daily Times*, oldest surviving daily paper in New Zealand. Many well-known writers worked for periods on the editorial staffs of these papers over the years, going right back to the days of Ben Farjeon and Julius Vogel (author of the prophetic novel *Anno Domini 2000*). W. F. Alexander, who edited the *Star* for some years, was co-editor of the very first reputable anthology of *New Zealand Verse* (1906).

7. If you can make your way safely past the Robbie Burns, the Captain Cook and the Bowling Green, the periodic haunts of every Dunedin writer from Dan Davin to Peter Olds, and frequently recalled in their pages—Maurice Duggan actually lived at the Captain Cook while Burns Fellow—you should reach the **UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO**. Much of Dunedin's literary life has been associated with the university, even since those distant 19th century days when the 21-year-old Ebenezer Hay first studied Chaucer in the original university building by the Exchange in 1869, and vowed modestly to commit himself to literature: "My pipe is small, but I will labour hard/That naught but melody will issue thence."

From the Shakespearean Ramsay and the classicist Lawson to Jocelyn Harris's studies of Richardson and Austen, and Lawrence Jones' analysis of New Zealand fiction, it has been the home of good literary scholarship; as well as innumerable student writers flexing their quills in *Critic and Review*. Most notable, of course, was Baxter, who heard through the 'mock-Gothic windows' of the Lower Oliver the 'soft wet water's boom' in the neighbouring Leith.

The extensive Library includes a notable collection of 18th century English literature: Basil Dowling and Fleur Adcock wrote while on the staff there. The new Hocken Building (E. J. McCoy, 1979) houses the fine Hocken Library holdings of New Zealand and Pacific literature, based on the extensive collection of the historian, Dr T. M. Hocken. E. H. McCormick, man of letters, was briefly librarian in the 1930s. The University of Otago Press, which has published steadily over the past quarter-century, was edited for a long period by W. J. McDowen, briefly in succession by the poets Bill Sewell and Iain Lurie, and now by Helen Watson White.

Since 1959 the University has been the home of the **BURNS FELLOWSHIP**, founded by Charles Brasch and others to provide a sabbatical asylum for writers. Those who have held the fellowship represent a roll-call of New Zealand's most notable authors, including Ian Cross, Maurice Gee, Witi Ihimaera, Noel Hilliard, R. A. K. Mason etc, and Dunedin has benefited greatly from their contribution. Several stayed nearby—Maurice Shadbolt at 69 Union St, Baxter at 660 Cumberland St, Warren Dibble at 75 Union St, Cilla McQueen at 31 Grange St.

8. The nearby student hostel, Arana Hall (Arana is the Maori form of Allen), was the home of Cabinet minister Sir James Allen and his blind son, C. R. Allen (1885-1962), novelist, poet and founder of the literary periodical, *The Wooden Horse*. Janet Frame flatted at 116 St David St when Burns Fellow. Ruth Dallas, poet and children's writer, is only a short rhyme away at 448 Leith St; and Hone Tuwhare at 137 Dundas St. Turning from Dundas St towards the Northern Cemetery via Lovelock Avenue (down which 1936 Olympics champion, Jack Lovelock, ran daily to his Medical School classes from his Opho home), one passes at No. 4 a decaying castellated mansion, once the home of Judge H. S. Chapman of that distinguished literary family, and designed by F. W. Petre in 1875-76 as one of the world's earliest examples of domestic architecture in poured concrete.

9. The **NORTHERN CEMETERY** holds the bones of several earlier writers, including T. M. Hocken. One of the most notable was Vincent Pyke (1827-94), journalist and novelist, whose *Wild Will Enderby* is a vivid description of the Central Otago goldrushes. The main literary significance, however, lies in the grave of the talented and prolific Thomas Bracken, author of *God Defend New Zealand* and *Not Understood*. The **BRACKEN VIEW** look-out under the gums at the south end gives a good view of the inner city.

10. Lovelock Avenue leads up through the Botanic Gardens (where the botanical writer Alison Evans works) to Opho, and thence to the 1940 Centennial Monument on **SIGNAL HILL**, a more comprehensive vantage point over the whole city. The view across to the Peninsula just takes in Macandrew Bay, from which Bracken wrote his *Dunedin from the Bay*; where Rutherford Waddell, devotional writer and famous crusading preacher once lived, and writers Eileen Soper and Joan de Hamel do now. [Further down the harbour, out of sight, are Broad Bay, where R.A.K. Mason lived for a time in Brasch's holiday cottage, later owned by John Caselberg; and also Portobello and Harwood, where Sam Hunt stopped briefly, and the artist Robin White lived for some time.] Over the brow of the Peninsula and aimed towards the Pacific by Smalls Beach is the gun emplacement where Baxter exploded with a triumphant bang in *Horse*; and in the middle distance can be seen the cliffs of St Clair which provided the title for Davin's *Cliffs of Fall*. The 'Big Home' of Glendining Home, the orphanage where Alistair Campbell lived in the late 1930s, used to be a prominent feature on the hill high above Andersons Bay, but was demolished some years back (though the cottages he describes in his autobiography are still there). Saddle Hill, dominant to the south, has been noted by every writer since Captain Cook; while Swampy, Flagstaff and Mt Cargill (the Sleeping Warrior, with the TV mast on his tummy) recur among the images of the poets. Alan Mark, the botanical writer, has been largely responsible for the re-establishment of reserves on both Mt Cargill and Signal Hill. Directly below the monument is Logan Park, training ground for University rugby teams—including a lock forward from the 1930s, Alex Pickard, who became better known as A.P. Gaskell. The Art Gallery within the park is the only remaining building from the famous Dunedin and South Seas Exhibition of 1925-26.

11. A slight detour into **EVANS ST** on the downhill return will take you to No. 61, Janet Frame's home for some years after 1965. 'Raise me high!', she wrote in her poem *At Evans Street*, 'and in this part of the city that would be/ high indeed for here my head is level with hills and sky.' Many writing academics have lived in Opho, including D. O. W. Hall, Margaret Dalziel and G. W. Parkyn; as well as New Zealand's most prolific cookery writer, Alison Holst. Lovelock, the subject of McNeish's biography, lived at 38 Warden St.

12. **KNOX COLLEGE** (1907), where Dennis McEldowney was once librarian, houses the Presbyterian Theological Hall—probably better known for Lloyd Geering's controversial theological writings in the 1960s than for the more orthodox writings of G.A.F. Knight or the influential German refugee, Helmut Rex.

Across the valley, short story writer O.E. Middleton lives in Clifford St, on the slopes of Pine Hill; upstream in Leith Valley is the setting for Robin Hyde's poem *Church of the Holy Innocents, Dunedin*.

13. The bridge across the Leith at **GEORGE ST** saw the tragic death in 1958 of Merton Hodge, the Otago medical graduate whose fine play *The Wind and the Rain* once took London by storm. The next block of George St, going south, has been proclaimed a special precinct by the DCC for its interesting range of domestic architecture, and is well worth a stop. The best-known ex-pupil of nearby George Street Normal School (though in an earlier building, of course) was John A. Lee, whose *Children of the Poor* (1934), first hit Dunedin where it hurt most, and is now proudly claimed as its own.

14. Turning up **PARK ST**, No. 44 is historically interesting as Transit House, built in the late 1860s for Robert Gillies, and named for the rooftop observatory from which he watched the transit of the planet Venus in 1882. Gillies' wife, Emily Street, was the favourite niece of the brilliant English humorist Edward Lear, who named his Italian home, Villa Emilia, after her. Their son, Sir Harold Gillies, was the world-famous plastic surgeon.

15. **HERIOT ROW** takes us into Landfall Country. Charles Brasch's last home was at 36, where he lived for some 20 years; earlier he and Rodney Kennedy had shared a flat round the corner at 31 Royal Terrace. Constitution St, which runs off steeply, was Philip Temple's home as Burns Fellow; and Cilla McQueen taught French at St Hilda's on the corner. **OLVESTON**, Dunedin's stately home, is a block along, by the Town Belt; and the paved path opposite, running up through the Town Belt towards Pacific St, was the setting for Marta's murder in Davin's *Cliffs of Fall*. [By the top of Pacific St, incidentally, stands Columba College, now a Presbyterian boarding school for girls, but originally the grand home of Bishop Nevill, Dunedin's first Anglican bishop. Winifred McQuillan, principal of Columba 1942-48, wrote a string of successful books for girls under the pen-name of Clare Mallory. Elspeth Sandys, the novelist, was a more recent pupil.]

16. Royal Terrace takes us past No. 30, the former home of W.M. Hodgkins and his artistic family, particularly Frances, the subject of Eric McCormick's fine biography. O. E. Middleton lived for a time at No. 58. Thence to **LONDON ST**, where the **GLOBE THEATRE** flourishes at No. 104. Built by Patric and Rosalie Carey in 1961 to seat 75 people, it not only presented a selection of the world's best plays, but also new local work such as Guyan's *Conversations with a Golliwog* (1963), and many Baxter plays. The house itself was once the home of William Mason, New Zealand's first really notable architect and Dunedin's first mayor, 1865-67.

Davin shared digs in London St at one stage in the 1930s with Jim Raeside (scientist by training, but also author of the prizewinning biography of de Thierzy), and his Dunedin years are mirrored in both *Cliffs of Fall* (1945) and *Not Here, Not Now* (1970), something of a *roman à clef*.

The Fels house, prominent in Brasch's *Indirections*, is at 84 London St, while Brasch's own childhood home, formerly entered from London St, is now No 4 Stoutgate—and can be seen from the Stoutgate steps leading from London St, or from the rear of the carpark opposite Moana Pool (opened 1964).

17. **OTAGO BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**, across Stuart St, is notable for Lawson's tower block (1884) and McCoy's fine additions (1883). The school produced many writers, e.g. Fergus Hume (1873), *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* etc); A. H. Adams (1886, novelist, playwright, poet); W. Downie Stewart (1888, historical biographer); R. N. Adams (1890, *The Counterfeit Seal*); A. H. McIntock (1918, historian); Olaf Ruhen (1925, *Naked Under Capricorn* etc); Alistair Campbell (1940, poet); Graham Billing (1949, *Forbush and the Penguins*) etc etc.

18. **ARTHUR ST SCHOOL**, next door, now largely rebuilt, was the school where Janet Frame realised she would never be a teacher; which figured in Jess Whitworth's autobiographical novel, *Otago Interval*; and in the opening to Denis Glover's *Hot Water Sailor*, where he saluted the flag and battled Christian Brothers boys in the Town Belt. [Just a block away, at the corner of Arthur St and Elm Row, is the former nursing home where Baxter was actually born, in 1926.]

19. Turning townwards down Rattray St, past F. W. Petre's handsome St Joseph's Roman Catholic Cathedral (1886), and his adjoining St Dominic's Priory (1877), then the largest building of poured concrete in the Southern Hemisphere), is **OTAGO GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL**. Its staff over the years included that legendary teacher of literature, Alexander Wilson; Miss F. E. Grant, better known as the journalist and writer, Mrs Malcolm Ross; and Miss H. K. Dalrymple, the author of two charmingly illustrated booklets on Dunedin's natural history. Yet, as the various anniversary publication suggest, the school has produced relatively few creative writers. Olga Strangifellow (1933) wrote *Mary Bravender* and other novels.

20. Cargill's Monument by the **EXCHANGE** is the closest thing in Dunedin to a village cross, standing as it does at the virtual centre of the original village settlement (a plaque set into the pavement in nearby Water St, by John Wickliffe House, marks the landing place of the original settlers). From the steps of that monument the outriders of the Salvation Army first preached their message to New Zealand. J. T. Thomson, the provincial surveyor whose fascinating *Rambles with a Philosopher* (1867) was the earliest work of its kind in New Zealand literature, recalled the setting in 1850 as a mob of cattle was being driven past: 'Princes-street—for that magnificent name had been revived here—was covered with flax or deep plastic mud—not even there were vestiges of footpaths on either side, where the mire-bespattered traveller might find refuge...'

The Grand Hotel (1883), the older part of the Southern Cross Hotel at the foot of High Street, boasted one of the first electric lifts in New Zealand—and is also the hotel where Janet Frame was working when she first showed her writing to Charles Brasch. [About 200 metres further on, by Broadway and Manse St—though no remnant exists today—were famous sites associated with the goldrush days. The 'imitable' Thatcher sang his brilliantly witty songs at the Theatre Royal; and Vogel's stage adaptation of *Lady Audley's Secret* at the Princess was one of the first plays professionally written in New Zealand.]

21. A couple of very short blocks from the Exchange, at 51 Crawford St (past Petre's old Guardian Royal Exchange; and Dunedin's 'first skyscraper', the MFL building designed by the Luttrells in 1908), is **JOHN MCINDOE LTD**, which for many years has dominated the book industry for creative writing in the South Island, has taken many publishing awards, and has an impressive backlist of leading New Zealand writers and titles. Poet Brian Turner was managing editor for some years, now succeeded by Barbara Larson.

22. Before the one-way system takes you past Queens Gardens and the unamused statue of Queen Victoria ('If you'd stood still for sixty years/ I bet your feet would turn to stone'), turn left into Dowling St. To round off the trip at the Octagon, on **QUEENS BUILDING**, 109 Princes St, a plaque marks the first performance of Thomas Bracken's *God Defend New Zealand* in the Queen's Theatre in 1876. Bracken may not have been New Zealand's greatest writer, but anyone tempted to dismiss him as merely Victorian and jingoistic might do well to read his words afresh: his themes of minority rights and disarmament are not so different from those of today.

Other addresses of interest:

153 Glenpark Ave, Mornington: Home of Sir Alfred Reed (1875-1975), founder of one of New Zealand's biggest publishing firms, collector of note and generous benefactor to the **Dunedin** Public Library, and (though only after his 60th birthday!) a most prolific author.

7 Marshall St, Kaikorai Valley: Joseph Mellor (1869-1938), Yorkshire-born chemist and ceramist, who spent his boyhood here—studying by candlelight in a shed in the garden, kept warm on winter nights by relays of stones heated in the kitchen oven—later wrote one of the great scientific classics of the 20th century, the 16-volume *A Comprehensive Treatise on Theoretical and Organic Chemistry*.

35 Rawhiti St, Musselburgh: From 1921 to 1945 home of Edith Howes (1872?-1954), former teacher and one of New Zealand's earliest and best writers of children's books (*The Sun's Babies*, *The Cradle Ship* etc). She held regular musical and play-reading evenings in the earlier years and, ahead of her time, dyed her bed-linen pink.

Further Afield:

South: For a visit to Baxter's **BRIGHTON**, join the Southern Motorway out of Dunedin, past the Carisbrook sports ground, the focal point for A.P. Gaskell's well-known short story, *The Big Game*. The motorway itself goes on through Fairfield, where the leading feminist novelist, Jean Devanny, author of the notorious and banned *The Butcher Shop* (1926), lived in 1920-21 with her coalminer husband in a modest cottage, now gone. But the turn-off to Brighton comes before that: The house at 15 Bedford Parade was the home of the pacifist Archibald Baxter ('We Will Not Cease...', 1939), his wife Millicent (*Memoirs*, 1981)), and their famous writer son, James K. Baxter (1926-72). Perhaps even more interesting are the many geographical features between Saddle Hill and the rocky coast which, as W. H. Oliver noted in *James K. Baxter: A Portrait* (1983), can be found in Baxter's poetry. Lawrence Jones, leading commentator on New Zealand fiction, lives with his writer wife Marion at 30 Bedford Pde; and Dr K. E. Westerskov, one of New Zealand's leading writers on birds, at 7 Wells St. A return on the back road past Blackhead brings one to the hill views above St Clair and Kew.

North: A pleasant outing along the harbour road takes one to **PORT CHALMERS**, the setting for Otago's very first 'literary' association when Tom Arnold, son of the Rugby headmaster (of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*), and younger brother of the poet Matthew Arnold, was on the very first emigrant ship to arrive in 1848, and recorded his impressions. Sir Joynton Smith, founder of the famous Australian periodical *Smith's Weekly*, described in his autobiography what the port was like when he worked there in the 1880s; and F. T. Bullen, author of *The Cruise of the Cachalot*, also had strong links with the port. Ian Wedde lived in Currie St when a Burns Fellow, and watched the old wooden fever hospital on Quarantine Island weathering 'pearly-greys like a wraith'. And Kerry (now Kerri) Hulme stopped briefly at nearby Careys Bay—where Cilla McQueen also lived during her marriage to artist Ralph Hotere. The Upper Junction Road, passing poet Brian Turner's on the way back to Dunedin, not only gives fine views of city and harbour, but you may even meet the ghost of Anthony Trollope hurriedly taking the Mt Cargill coach road to Christchurch. His one-night stay in Dunedin in 1872 had been marked by the temporary loss of all his luggage, and somewhat embarrassingly he had been unable to attend a birthday celebration for Sir Walter Scott. Only a hero, he subsequently remarked, could 'sit down comfortably to dinner with the full-dressed aristocracy of a newly visited city in a blue shirt and an old grey shooting jacket.'