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A SOCIAL HISTORY OF OTAGO RUGBY IN THE 1940s

ANTHONY LYNCH

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of B.A. (Hons) in History at the University of Otago.

1984.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this dissertation, I have received help and advice from many and am in their debt. Firstly I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Erik Olssen, for suggesting this topic, and for his guidance in its preparation. Dr. T.W.H. Brooking gave valuable advice and assistance. I am also grateful for the assistance of the librarians and staff of the Hocken Library; to Mrs. K. Martin for typing this dissertation; for help received from Scott Crawford and Sean O'Hagan; to my flatmates Chris, Hugh, Jane and Sue; to my parents for their support and encouragement; and to Mrs. Conradson for reading over the text.
INTRODUCTION

Sport plays a special role in New Zealand society, and one sport, rugby, dominates all others in terms of time, interest and participation. The 'national game' has helped to shape New Zealanders' perceptions of themselves, and the feats of the All Blacks have assisted the formulation of national identity. New Zealanders take pride in their prowess in this physically demanding game, and every Saturday in winter thousands turn out to participate in the game, as players or spectators. This interest is reflected in the great number of accounts of teams, games and trophies, and yet surprisingly little has been written about the role rugby has played in society. This long essay looks at what rugby meant for the people of Otago in the 1940s.

In the history of rugby in the province, the 1940s were probably the most interesting and certainly the most important decade. It could be divided into two distinct periods; the war years and the Shield era. Between 1939 and 1945, New Zealand was involved in a major war, and this had an impact on sport as it did every other facet of New Zealand life. The first chapter will look at the impact of the war on the rugby in the province, and at the response of the ORFU, the clubs and the players to the difficulties of wartime rugby. The other important, and distinct, period in the 1940s was the 'Shield Era', when for three glorious years the province held the symbol of national rugby supremacy, the Ranfurly Shield. Otago was at its most formidable in 1948, its
centennial year, and the final chapter looks at this period and its significance for the province.

During the war years, rugby at the club level was most important, for there were few representative games played. But in the Shield era, Carisbrook hosted a feast of representative football, and all attention focused on the Otago team and its achievements. These two periods were very different because of this, and yet there was much that remained the same. These elements have been incorporated in the middle chapters. The first two look at those who were most actively involved in the game, the players, and the coaches and administrators. The latter two chapters regard the rituals that surrounded the game and were followed by the players and spectators.

In writing a social history of rugby in the 1940s one great advantage has been the ability to use oral sources. Oral evidence adds life and vigour to the history of a lively and vigorous game, and where possible I have tried to reproduce this evidence, rather than that of newspapers or minutes, in the text. In conducting the interview I followed the procedure set out in Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past*, and then each interview was transcribed in full. Where possible, evidence was checked against documented sources (mostly newspapers). The 'Saturday' chapter in particular has drawn largely on oral sources, and so perhaps this best of all gives an insight into what the game meant for these men, and the many thousands like them. In all, I have tried not to lose sight of the game itself. As D. Smith and G. Williams
in their fine work Fields of Praise noted, the game has too often emerged only as an illustration of something else that was going on in the real world; the intrinsic value of the game's history and the interlocking aspects with 'the real world' have not been appreciated.
FOOTNOTES


A B.A. (Hons) Long essay by Neal Swindells, 'Social Aspects of Rugby Football in Manawatu from 1878-1910' (Massey 1978), examines the relationship between the game and the community for a particular province, but little work has been done on more recent years.


CHAPTER ONE
RUGBY AT WAR

The ORFU quickly responded to New Zealand's declaration of war with a wire to the NZRFU assuring them on behalf of the footballers of Otago of our loyalty to the British Empire.¹ In contrast to the attitudes prevalent in the last war,² the continuation of organised sport was not regarded as impeding that loyalty. Instead, the value of sport as entertainment, as a means of providing for national fitness, and of encouraging morale, was generally recognised:

It is a far cry from the serious things of today to games, but particularly in countries placed as New Zealand is, there is still a valuable service to be given by organised sport. In the first place it makes an important contribution to the achievement of a high standard of national fitness - perhaps more important today than it has ever been before - and then it provides an antidote to less cheerful trends of thought.³

Rugby at club and representative level had to quickly adapt to the wartime situation, for it was the young men of rugby - playing age who provided the bulk of New Zealand's imperial commitment. Many players enlisted, or were balloted, and so there was a continual drain on club strength. Several clubs had to withdraw their senior team. Many others were, however, unfit for various reasons, or held 'reserved occupations', and continued to play. Clubs lacking such a nucleus of players often made informal arrangements with others, as did Taieri with Zingari-Richmond, and Alhambra with Kaikorai.

Kaikorai would have been unable to field a side ... I think there was six of us who got the O.K. to play for them. We kept a second and fourth grade at Alhambra ... The first year I was at
Kaikorai I was made deputy captain - it worked pretty well really - and the second year I was player-coach for the side, so it wasn't as if they were taking us in for nothing at all.

Individual players from clubs not able to field senior teams every year of the war, such as Pirates and Southern, also assisted the other clubs.

Besides the dispersion of existing senior players about the clubs, another option was to promote younger players, and bring back retired players.

There seemed to be an element at Zingari that said 'Well, we'll keep on playing as long as we can, even if we have to play schoolboys and old men', and Zingari was able to keep the club going through the war years.

The 'old men' could still play a good game of football.

A.C. Proctor, a former All Black, since retiring from 1st grade Football, has coached the Zingari-Richmond team, turned out on Saturday for his old Club. Playing on the right wing, he showed some of his old dash and ran and tackled well. He scored a try in the second half after a solid burst down the line. Proctor, who went to Australia with the 1932 All Blacks, is only one of the older players who have rallied around their club now that many of the younger men are enlisted in the armed forces.

Another 'great' to return briefly to club rugby was Dave Trevathan for the Dunedin Club. The wealth of experience of these men was appreciated by the younger players.

It was like when you go for your first job, you're not quite sure what it's all about. These fellows would hop in pretty quickly to stop arguments, and had their say, the same in training. But a lot of them by this time would have families, and I don't think their interest in the training side was as much as the young single fellows.

There was, however, some concern that 'it might not be in the interests of the game to have young players playing
against old and seasoned players, and so some clubs, like Taieri, decided to concentrate on their junior sides.

This state of flux did make the club competition unbalanced and this led to calls for the ORFU to formalize arrangements between clubs, rather than leaving initiatives to be made by individual clubs:

Club officials might not welcome the suggestion at first, but it does appear that the temporary amalgamation of the weaker clubs could be a great help, perhaps a solution. There could be a smaller competition, the teams would be better and the competition would be more keenly fought.

At the beginning of the 1942 season, faced with the prospect of a greatly reduced club competition, ORFU delegates made even more far-reaching proposals:

The prospects for the coming season were discussed and from the discussion that ensued it was pointed out that it was likely we would get some entries from competitors, and it was suggested it might be necessary for the various clubs to amalgamate and it was suggested it might be necessary to form a north and south end senior team.

But amalgamation, despite its obvious benefits, was resisted. One attempt to balance the competition was made by dividing University senior players into two teams of similar strength, Combined Faculties and Medicals, rather than 'A' and 'B' teams. The smaller number of Dunedin clubs in the competition was considerably boosted by the entry of teams from the military camps about Dunedin. In 1942, three of the nine teams were from these camps, the Otago Mounted Rifles, the Army, and the Airforce. These meant a satisfactory number of teams were entered in the competition, and the ORFU did not have to take any more positive moves towards
amalgamating clubs.

Wartime demands for manpower, especially after 1941, made it increasingly difficult for clubs to find, and keep, fifteen senior players through the season. Even when this problem was resolved, there was still difficulty in finding suitable coaches, and in getting the practices necessary to improve and develop play. The University had Wednesday afternoon practices, but other clubs were not fortunate enough to have such daylight practices. With the dim-out, outside floodlights were not allowed, and because players had to practice after work, they had to make do with what light was available or have their practices inside (if the club had a training shed). 14 These difficulties led to a noticeable deterioration in the standards of some teams, as the ODT complained in 1944:

A regrettable feature of the senior rugby competition this season has been the number of teams which have taken the field with apparently no pre-arranged system of play. Too often there has been a complete absence of method, no evidence of any tactical plan, and a lack even of knowledge of such fundamentals as taking and giving a pass correctly, of proper control of the ball when dribbling, of tackling, and little realisation of the value of backing up.

If it was at times difficult, at least club rugby in Dunedin was able to carry on. But in the sub-unions, the problems of getting players, and of transport (considerable at the best of times) proved too great for most. At the representative level, traditional fixtures such as the Otago-Southland sub-unions' match, and the 'Country' team tour, had to be abandoned, and at the club level only South Otago was
able to continue its senior competition (mainly because of the number of junior teams in the district, and players from reserved industries, such as the mines at Kaitangata). Concern at the petrol restrictions was continually expressed by Country delegates at their Annual Conferences, and endeavours were made through the ORFU and NZRFU to secure extra allowances. As a result, in 1941 179 gallons per month were made available to the sub-unions and in 1945 a total of 580 gallons was allocated. Petrol was just one problem, for the country also lacked the 'pool' of men to replace those in the camps or overseas, and so were desperately short of players.

The President invited Mr. Paul Clark to advise the Committee regarding the position of country football; he stated they (Maniototo) had only one player, Vincent were in a similar position and Eastern Districts had no players and did not consider there was any chance of arranging a country week this year.

Little could be done without the players. It was possible at times however, to arrange special fixtures that did not require teams at full strength, such as seven-a-side tournaments.

In those years of rationing and controls, the responsibility lay with club rugby to provide the recreation players and spectators alike needed, for there were few representative matches. Petrol restrictions reduced the fixture list to the customary 'home and home' matches with Canterbury and Southland, and so only two representative games were played on Carisbrook each year. This placed the ORFU in financial difficulties, and Ted Kerr recalled that 'for a period all of us who were on the Union actually worked on the gates.'
But despite wartime restrictions, and weakened teams, the enthusiasm so characteristic of pre-war Otago-Southland 'invasions' still remained, though problems of transport had taken their toll.

As an invasion - a word which has come to signify the huge influx of people to Dunedin for this match - the occasion was but a shadow of its former self. Perhaps 1200 people arrived by train from Southland. They were accompanied by one band, which, despite its brave showing, could not make the impression of the eight or nine of the previous years ... On an occasion when coming up to Dunedin by car would have been an enjoyable journey, petrol restrictions, again a result of the war, prevented all but a few from making the trip ... If the occasion lacked the magnitude of previous ones, the atmosphere on Carisbrook did something to make up for that deficiency. Fourteen thousand people can make a considerable amount of noise, and their enthusiasm can go a long way towards counteracting any deficiencies in the game itself.

The Ranfurly Shield, held by Southland at the start of the war, was not at stake, for the competition had been suspended by the NZRFU. With the nation at war, it could not afford to have teams travelling up and down the country.

For much the same reasons, Payne Trophy matches (between the club champions of Christchurch and Dunedin) were also suspended. This deficit in representative fixtures was in part made up by the arrangement of special patriotic matches. These were welcome sources of entertainment, and also made respectable contributions to 'patriotic funds'. In September, 1941, a Sports Gala was held on Carisbrook, featuring a marching display, soccer, archery and athletics competitions, as well as two rugby matches. One was between the Police and a Metropolitan side, the other between 'the Swimming girls and
the Hockey girls'. Matches were also held between various service teams, such as the Army and Airforce in September 1943, and the Otago and Canterbury army teams in July 1942.

Otago was fortunate, and perhaps exceptional in supporting during the war so many of those occupations set aside as 'reserved'. The nucleus of players in reserved occupations was vitally important to Otago rugby during the war, and provided the foundations for Otago's post-war recovery. Many players of great potential had been lost in the war, and many others who would have contributed much as coaches and administrators. The Taieri Club alone lost seven of its senior players. Many promising players were lost simply because five years of war had put them past their prime. By 1946, most of those who had played representative football before the war (some of whom would have played South Africa in 1940) had stopped playing:

The only member of the Southland team for Saturday's match who was a member of the 1939 Shield side is A.G. Sutherland, who is reported to be showing brilliant form in Invercargill this season. Willis Perriam, the Otago captain against the Kiwis, is the only present player who figured in the challenger's side in 1939.

The Captain of the Kiwis, Charlie Saxton, was one of the few men in that team to have played at representative level before the war, and he too soon ended his playing career. At the national level, none who played Australia in the first Test in 1946, had previously represented New Zealand. Otago rugby, and New Zealand rugby, was starting off afresh.

Yet Otago was starting from strong foundations. Just
as the Kiwis side took New Zealand rugby into the 1950s so did the men who had served overseas make a significant contribution to club and representative football. The Training College ran a 'pressure-cooker' course for returned servicemen, and this Club was able to field a strong senior team for a number of years. The number of returned servicemen in subsequent Otago sides - Rex Orr, Jimmy Kearney, Bert Kellyer, Peter Johnstone, Ray Dalton, Bill Meates, Hec Wilson - showed the value of the wartime experience. These men were fit and hard, and had had the essentials of teamwork and discipline drilled into them. These were the qualities Otago coach, Vic Cavanagh, required from his team.

Many who had served overseas continued to play long after they might otherwise have retired.

There were a lot who carried on rugby when they came back who were 38, 40 years of age. They were fit and strong, and they had a taste of that life, it kept them going. Rugby was weak in the clubs, they'd just survived, they had a lot of young players, so these good skilled players came back into the side to assist them through that period, to lift them up.

The return of the older, more experienced servicemen, many of whom had played rugby during the war, helped the transition of rugby from war to a peacetime footing. In return, rugby, with its emphasis on teamwork, physical strength and courage helped these men in their own transition from the discipline and closeness of military life to the more impersonal, individualistic nature of civilian life.

The servicemen were back, but many of the wartime restrictions continued. Petrol and butter were rationed, imports
and consumer goods remained in short supply. The men who had fought overseas, or stayed behind in a 'reserved occupation', wished to enjoy the peace for which so much had been sacrificed. Most of these had also lived through the difficult years of the Great Depression. George Nepia's comments after the First World War applied to the Second as well:

We had not long survived a great war in which seventeen thousand of our countrymen had been killed and thousands and thousands more wounded and I suppose sport was the best of all reliefs in those days of few cars and restricted social outlets.

There might have been more cars, but sport still provided a necessary and welcome relief. In 1946, post-war enthusiasm for sport saw the entry of 73 teams in the Dunedin club competition, thirteen of these in the senior competition. The ODT noted that 'the prospects for the season are the brightest for many years'. The enthusiasm of the clubs to field a senior team and return to a full competition was not, however, matched by a high level of competition that year.

It can scarcely been gainsaid that the decline in the standard has been due to the number of senior teams being out of all proportion to the number of available players of senior calibre. Instead of assisting in the rehabilitation of Otago rugby following the war years, the increase in the number of teams to thirteen is retarding it.

Whatever the concerns about the level of competition in Dunedin, rugby in the sub-unions was stronger than ever. By 1945 most clubs had sufficient players to field senior teams, and so the club competition could restart. The sub-unions had six to eight senior teams in the competition, and most had three or four junior teams. The exception was South Otago
with thirteen junior teams, and this strength had enabled the sub-union to continue its club competition through the war. South Otago was prominent in reviving country rugby after the war, having established an impressive record in the latter years of the war. South Otago defeated a provincial side, Southland, for two years running, and this attracted much attention to country rugby. This achievement was all the more remarkable when the efforts of travelling to Invercargill were taken into account:

They started from Milton, and left Kaitangata Post Office at 3.30 in the morning. They picked up the Balclutha boys, any Clydevale boys as well, and went through by bus to Clinton where they met the contingent of Owaka boys. They boarded the slow train at Clinton and travelled to Invercargill ... We piled off that train at 12.30, we were on the paddock at 1.30. We haven't had a meal, and the seniors had to walk around to get a meal of some sort. We played Southland, the seniors played Southland and decisively beat them ... When the games were finished, we had a few beers, and then had to rush and catch the train at 4.40 at the railway crossing, and travel back to Clinton on the slow train, catch a bus and get back home to Kaitangata about 12.30 that night.

The tediousness and long hours of travelling were an unavoidable part of country rugby, and illustrate the enthusiasm for the game in the rural areas. South Otago officials requested a copy of the Metropolitan draw so that they could arrange games against those teams having byes, such was the enthusiasm to participate. 31

The war had heightened the pursuit of leisure, particularly in the form of organised entertainment, and this was demonstrated by the great numbers that attended matches at Carisbrooke. When the celebrated Kiwi team arrived to play
Otago, the Mayor declared a half-holiday:

On Wednesday last business in Dunedin came to a virtual standstill while the city and his wife attended a Rugby football match. Industries closed down for the afternoon, shops locked their doors and offices were wholly or partially depleted of staff. A coastal vessel had to sail from Dunedin without a full cargo because no labour was available to load it. The occasion was, admittedly, a notable one, and the fact that some 20,000 people crowded through the gates at Carisbrook indicated that the holiday was generally enjoyed in the spirit for which it was granted.

The Kiwi side that so disrupted life in Dunedin that afternoon had a lasting impact on Otago rugby, and the New Zealand game. Charlie Saxton, the Captain of the side, made his contribution to Otago rugby as administrator and coach, and, together with Vic Cavanagh, helped blend in elements of the Kiwi style into the Otago game. The Kiwis were later denounced as 'flashy' and 'unsound', but the essential elements of their play - intensive backing up, and passing the ball quickly to the wings - made for open and winning rugby. Otago under Cavanagh and Saxton used the same formula.
FOOTNOTES

1. Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of the ORFU (thereafter M/M/C/ORFU), 4 Sep. 1939.


3. ODT, 4 Jul, 1940, p.4c.1.

4. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.

5. S. Dowland, 0. 10 Jun. 1984.

6. ODT, 11 Jul. 1940, p.4 c.3.


10. ODT, 24 Apr. 1941, p.4 c.2.


15. ODT, 31 Aug. 1944, p.7 c.3.


17. M/M/C/ORFU, 16 Jun, 1941. The breakdown of this allocation was: Vincent 24, Eastern Districts 34, South Tuapeka 10, South Otago 75, Maniototo 36.

18. M/M/C/ORFU, 28 May. 1945.

19. M/M/C/ORFU, 1 Jun. 1942.

20. E.J. Kerr, 0. 8 Jun. 1984.

21. ODT, 5 Aug, 1940, p.4 c.4.

22. ODT, 23 Sep. 1940, p.9 c.2.
23. M/W/C/ORFU, 20 Sep. 1943. This match provided £622.1.0. towards patriotic funds.

24. ODT, 27 Sep. 1945, p.3 c.1.

25. ODT, 1 Aug, 1945, p.3 c.2.


28. ODT, 9 May. 1946, p.3 c.3.


31. M/W/C/ORFU, 10 Jun, 1946.

32. ODT, 3 Aug, 1946, p.6 c.2.
CHAPTER TWO

PLAYERS

In Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players, K. Sheard and E. Dunning have shown that Rugby Union in England was primarily a middle-class sport, with only a handful of players coming from the lower-middle and working-classes. The exclusive character of the game was also maintained across the Channel in France, though not so in Wales, where rugby, whilst initiated by the middle-class, acted as a 'social comment' between classes, its clubs 'open' and 'socially inclusive'. In colonial New Zealand, where egalitarian values were strongly affirmed, and class distinctions necessarily blurred, the social exclusiveness of a game inherited from England was not replicated. Unlike cricket or golf, rugby became itself the vehicle for more egalitarian values.

A study of rugby in Manawatu between 1878 and 1910 found the 'bulk of players came from a broad middle and working class' and concluded that these simply represented a vertical cross-section of the wider society. Despite great changes within New Zealand society, leisure patterns remained difficult to delineate in terms of class, and in most sports, occupation was probably less significant in patterns of participation and association than age, sex, marriage and ethnicity. This Chapter looks at such patterns in Otago, at who played rugby and why players chose a particular club.

Most senior players were young, in their twenties, and there were 'very few players who played after twenty-nine or
There were, however, wide variations. The 1949 Port Chalmers side had only five players over twenty years, and University teams (particularly University B), have traditionally been younger than their opponents, because of the requirement that players still be at University. As well, many players after retiring from senior levels still played, though well into their thirties or even forties, and country men like "Nugget" Storer (and his father before him) might still be playing at fifty-five.

Marital status clearly influenced participation, for most players were single and 'once you got married your football days were getting short'. With greater responsibilities, and little compensation for injuries, most could not afford to continue playing after marriage, but as 'chaps didn't get married so young', these men would have had a number of years at senior level. After the war, marriage patterns changed to almost universal marriage at a younger age, and as this was paralleled by increases in the number of men playing senior rugby after marriage, this would suggest that age was perhaps more significant than marriage in patterns of participation. Nevertheless, in this period most still followed traditional patterns of marriage, and so the game was played predominantly by young, single men.

As seen, rugby in England served the needs of a specific social group, but in New Zealand rugby is regarded as 'the great leveller', cutting across class boundaries. To test this myth, four Clubs in Dunedin were selected – Dunedin, Union, Southern, Kaikorai – and their senior players, from
three different years, were ranked by occupation. From a population of 258, 190 occupations were found using Stone's Directory and electoral rolls. The results are tabled below:

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>Total Player</th>
<th>% Dunedin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Employer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Professional</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Semi-Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self Employed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Officials/Petty Executives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. White Collar</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Skilled</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Semi-Skilled</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Unskilled</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Players' occupations are set out in Appendix 1, and the occupational structure of Dunedin is set out in Appendix 2. The census results were not precise enough to enable each category to be compared, and so were divided into three broad groupings.

Every occupational level is represented, though white-collar and skilled workers clearly predominate, as they would appear to do in the population generally (see Appendix 2). Certain occupations within the broad categories are clearly over-represented, most notably the skilled metal trades (16.8% of the sample from 4.4% of the population) and constables.
(6.8% of the sample from 0.23% of the population). Other occupations over-represented are storemen, grocers, warehousemen, carpenters and teachers, while clerks and labourers, though significant groups in the sample, appear to reflect the large proportion of workers in those occupations in Dunedin.

In contrast to the other years, the distribution of occupations in 1944 is much more even, and there is greater representation at the upper levels. Senior teams in the latter years of the war were able to continue because of older players returning to the game, and younger players being promoted. The pattern for 1944 probably reflects the different age composition of those playing at that time, and suggests that there was considerable mobility between the middle and upper levels in many occupations.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the results in Table 1. In comparison with the social structure of the wider population, the middle-classes are clearly over-represented as participants in the game, and the working-classes underrepresented, and so rugby would appear to be "the" game for the middle-classes. However, because in absolute terms each class was equally represented, rugby was not simply a "middle-class" sport. Players were drawn from each social class to participate in the game; working men played alongside, and against, white-collar workers, and so rugby was still 'the great leveller'.

Players associated with a particular club for varying reasons. In the country, players were not faced with a choice
of clubs. Each district had its own club and the efforts and achievements of the home side, and individual players, were closely identified with the local community:

Laurie Haig, the All Black five-eighth, who is something of an idol in Kaitangata, was the guest there last week when town and district representatives met to honour him on his selection for New Zealand. "Haig, who had represented the Kaitangata Club through all the grades, had then gone on to represent Otago and finally New Zealand" said the mayor, Mr. J.C. Pennell ... "By his achievements he had put Kaitangata on the map, and brought honour to the whole district".

In Dunedin trams provided cheap transport and so reduced the significance of locality, for players need not simply play for the nearest club. Nevertheless, most clubs retained well defined 'feeder areas'; Alhambra and Union tended to draw players from North Dunedin, Kaikorai from Roslyn and Wakari, Southern from Caversham and Zingari-Richmond from Mornington.

Two clubs that lacked such close identification with a locality, Pirates and Dunedin, developed associations with particular secondary schools. Pirates was regarded as an 'old boys' club, and drew many of its players from Otago Boys High School, while Dunedin drew its players mostly from the Christian Brothers' School. Both these schools attracted pupils from throughout Dunedin, and so identification with a locality, for these men, was already subordinate to other associations. One strong association, through the link with Christian Brothers' School, was that of the Catholic religion with the Dunedin Club. Not all Catholics played for Dunedin - Kevin Skinner played for Pirates - nor was the Club exclusively for Catholics, but it was recognised as
'the Catholic club' and its players were associated with this religious background.

I'm not a Catholic, and anyone who played for Dunedin in those days was thought to be a Catholic, and for years people thought I was a Catholic too. We did have one or two players in the team, Merv McKerchar and Joe Little, who were Protestants, and my cobber Ron Matchett. I got him to play for Dunedin.

Religion appears to have influenced patterns of association between other Dunedin clubs, though not as explicitly with the Dunedin club, as shown by the attitudes towards training on Sundays. At Kaikorai 'sport on Sunday was frowned upon' because 'they observed the Sabbath', yet the Southern senior team had its main practice on Sundays, and after that they went for drinks at the Pearson's Pub. Clearly a whole range of values was being expressed here; and players were going to associate with a club that most closely reflected those values.

Workmates, and the worksite, were strong influences on a player's preferences for a club. Once a club had attracted one player, then through a 'mateship network', others would be drawn to that club:

If anyone new comes (to Hillside), usually there'd be someone there that knew you'd played at school, and they would try and get you along to their club. The fellows who did that were not only ones your own age, but also senior players ...

Southern in 1940 and 1949 had five Hillside workers in its senior team, and Dunedin, through the efforts of one man, Jim Tither, had six constables in its senior side in 1944. Of the five schoolteachers found in the survey, four played
for Kaikorai and three were in the same team.

Clearly, men who worked together also wished to share their recreation. This was most evident in the development of 'Railway rugby'. In 1939 a Dunedin Railway Football Club had applied for affiliation to the ORFU, but this had been refused and it was suggested they approach one of the senior clubs. Many did join clubs, but others did not finish work in time for Saturday sport. Hence, in 1947 a New Zealand Railway Rugby Union was established, and competitions were arranged on similar regional and national lines to those of the wider rugby body. Thus railway workers were provided with opportunities for recreation and fellowship with their workmates, outside the work situation, that would not otherwise have been available. The success of 'Railway Rugby' showed the desire of these predominantly skilled workers to participate in rugby, and confirms that skilled workers, as found in the survey, were strongly attracted to the game.

Locality, schooling, religion and the worksite all influenced the players' choice of clubs. As a result, although rugby cut across class lines, there was social differentiation between clubs. These tended to reflect the social composition of their surrounding areas, and this was reinforced by the close association between work and club. Southern was predominantly a working-class club, through its connection with the Hillside Workshops and its proximity to the predominantly working-class suburbs of South Dunedin.

Kaikorai, situated in the midst of the hill suburbs of Roslyn and Wakari, tended to be a more middle-class club.
These distinctions were not rigid however. Kaikorai for example had five unskilled workers in its senior team in 1949.

Two clubs in Dunedin were not socially integrated, but were composed entirely of middle-class players. The University Club (with two senior teams) and the Training College Club, both lacked the working-class component of other clubs and this difference was perceived in their style of play. As a grocer, associated with the University Club, said:

Where the Varsity players have the edge on others is in their quickness of thought. They're natural players, they can really go just that fraction quicker than the average working man ... They were all through secondary schools, and they'd been taught the fundamentals of the game, and it was only a matter of training to get them fit enough to carry it on.

Critic, the student magazine, noted in 1944 that 'most University footballers were too gentlemanly in their methods when on the field.' The majority of students were training for one of the 'gentlemanly' professions, most notably medicine, which was the largest faculty in the University in the 1940s. It is significant that the two clubs with the most sharply-defined class representation, Southern and University, were famed for their great clashes on the field. Social distinctions might have been obvious off the field, but as working men and students confronted each other in the game, these were submerged. All were equal on the rugby field, and so rugby acted not as a divisive force but as a vehicle for egalitarian values, assuring New Zealanders that in their society, all were equal. Even All Blacks were not exempt, as Peter Johnstone
explained:

If you were the only All Black in the club side you were a marked man, and you just had to accept that. I got the odd broken rib, which I don't think I got legally ... but I don't think there's any harm in that. It brings you down to size if you've been on a tour. There's no word spoken, it's just "Righto, we'll have this joker on", and that's that. Good mates too; that's all part of the game. I don't think it does you any harm, it didn't do me any harm.

At the higher levels of the game, rugby appeared to be more exclusive in terms of class. Eight players in the 1947 Ranfurly Shield squad were students, five were farmers, and each of the following occupations had one representative: clerk, grocer's assistant, boilermaker, builder, metal worker, and manufacturer. Students were clearly over-represented, and this probably reflects the important role that secondary schools played in developing the skills of players, both through the coaching given, and the high level of competition that existed between schools. Working men were under-represented, with only one each from skilled and semi-skilled occupations.

This team, however, like other Otago teams in this period, was much more representative of the province in terms of sectional interest. The introduction of the country players, who had been the exceptions in the 1930s, meant that the Otago side was no longer simply the Metropolitan side, but represented both town and country interests. Selection to the representative side was based on merit, but players of promise in the country had been disadvantaged in having limited opportunities to demonstrate their talent to the town-based selectors, and in the difficulties of developing a combination that could
best display that talent.

The sub unions played off their games, and they selected an Otago Country team and that team played against North Otago and then came down and played the Metro side. Everybody says the sub unions have the advantage ... but I said the town players have the greater advantage because they'd played against each other on the Saturdays and they'd intermingled. The country boys didn't see each other, a guy from Owaka wouldn't even know where Ranfurly was in those days ... That country team would carry on to Invercargill and play the Southland sub-unions. After that the Otago team was more or less selected.

A bad game against the Metropolitan team might ruin any chances of representative selection. It was the achievements of South Otago at the end of the war that attracted much attention to country rugby, and a number of country players were selected in the Otago team. After the appointment of Arthur Marslin (from the Vincent sub-union) as a co-opted member of the selection panel in 1947, players were no longer disadvantaged because of locality.

The inclusion of country players may reflect a wider concern about the effects of modernisation and urbanisation on the society, a belief that something of the vigour and strength of the early pioneers had been lost by those in the towns. At the start of the 1947 season, the ODT pointed out the need for the Otago side 'to be strengthened by the inclusion of vigorous country blood', and the results of this 'injection' were clear. 'The middle row provided the real stiffening of the pack - four country forwards who never let up, and whose consistently solid all-round play had a great deal to do with Otago's success'. The men on the land were eminently
suited to the demands of a hard physical game, and especially
to the Cavanagh pattern of play. Country players made a
most important contribution to the Otago teams of the 1940s,
and their inclusion meant that Otago sides more truly repre-
sented the diverse elements that made up the province.

Rugby in Otago was played by a wide cross section of the
population, although the majority of players were drawn from
skilled working or white-collar occupations. Proportion-
ately there was greater participation from the middle-classes,
suggesting that rugby, with the belief that it was inherently
character forming, was 'the' sport for middle-class men. In
absolute terms, working and middle-class players were equally
represented, although between clubs there was evidence of
social differentiation. Inter-club matches, then, ensured
interaction between groups that did not normally mix socially. 24
Rugby appeared to be more exclusive at representative levels
in class terms, although the sectional interests within the
province were more evenly represented in the mixture of town
and country players. Rugby became the cement that filled in
divisions within the province.
FOOTNOTES

3. Smith & Williams, p.66.
8. B. Barnes, 0. 3 Jul. 1984.
10. Dunstall, p.400.
11. Occupational classifications devised by Prof. E. Olssen, for the Caversham Project, University of Otago.
14. B. Barnes, 0. 3 Jul. 1984.
17. M/M/C/ORFU, 3 Apr. 1939.
18. B. Barnes, 0. 3 Jul. 1984.
20. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May. 1984.
22. A.R. Haig, 0. 5 Jul. 1984.
CHAPTER THREE

COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS

As rugby became increasingly institutionalized and attitudes to the game more professional, coaches and administrators came to play an increasingly important role in the game. The majority were involved solely at the club level, but a number were chosen as delegates to represent the club at the Annual General Meeting of the ORFU, and some of these were then elected to the governing body of the Union, the Committee of Management. It was expected that this hierarchical structure, and the nature of administrative responsibilities, would favour men from the higher occupational levels. To test this assumption, the occupations of ORFU administrators between 1939 and 1950 (from a population of 52) were ranked using the same criteria as that for players (see Appendix 3).

TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. Administrators</th>
<th>Coaches and Administrators (%)</th>
<th>Players (%)</th>
<th>Dunedin (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Employer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Semi-Professional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-Employed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Officials/Petty Executives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. White Collar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Skilled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Semi-Skilled</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Unskilled</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast to the results from the survey of players, the higher occupational levels are clearly over-represented and the working-class under-represented (though again each category is represented). This was also reflected in the representation of occupations within these categories, so that while 16.8% of players were from the skilled metal trades, only 2.1% of administrators held a skilled trade, and of the other occupations over-represented for players, only clerks and teachers were over-represented as administrators. Those men who had risen to upper management levels, or had become self-employed, appeared the most likely to rise through the hierarchy of rugby administration, and so, in effect, the social structure found for players was inverted.

N. Swindells found a similar pattern in Manawatu between 1878 and 1910, and concluded that "the fact that administrators came from the upper-class indicates that well-to-do men were more likely to have both the time and the ability to carry out administrative tasks". By the 1940s greater time for leisure, and steadily rising minimum standards of education might well have reduced the factors that had earlier favoured the well-to-do. All these administrators were former players, and some, like Charlie Saxton and Dr. Perry, exceptionally good players, yet there was a significant difference between the results for players and for administrators. One factor may have simply been age. Many working-class men, in time, acquired the skills or capital to become self-employed, or to rise to the 'petty-executive' category. Many with white-collar occupations in their playing days rose to the pro-
fessions or upper management levels. But age and occupa-
tional mobility cannot account fully for the differences be-
tween the two groups, and class would still appear to be a
significant factor. The majority of administrators came
from the upper and middle-classes, and few working men con-
tinued their active involvement in the game with service on
the ORFU Management Committee. Moreover, membership of an
organisation such as the ORFU may itself have induced social
(if not occupational) mobility for these working men. It was
still the middle and upper-classes which had the time, ability
and willingness to administer the sport in the 1940s.

Class differences between players and administrators do
not however, appear to have been a source of conflict in the
1940s and indeed the egalitarian ethos of the sport seems to
have blurred such differences. Middle-class attitudes to-
wards the game were demonstrated by the administrators (and
newspapers), as seen in the emphasis on strict non-profession-
alism, on sportsmanship, and fair play, but then these atti-
tudes pervaded the sport and do not appear to have been a
source of conflict. It was the game that mattered.

I think in those days too players didn't worry
about the executive. I couldn't tell you who
was President or on the Committee. All I was
worried about was playing the game. I think all the other players were the same ...

Differences arose, however, between the Dunedin-based
provincial administration and the country sub-unions. Otago
selectors and officials all came from Dunedin clubs, reflecting
in sport the increasing centralization of Otago's population,
economic strength and political influence in Dunedin. In
1947 the country delegates, at their meeting with the ORFU management committee, made proposals to restore the balance between town and country:

Mr. Donnelly (Vincent) had suggested that the ORFU can be constituted on the lines of the Waikato Rugby Union, and that a Metropolitan Sub-union committee be appointed to control city football ... Mr. Miller then brought up the question of the representation of the sub-unions to the Annual meeting of the ORFU and considered sub-unions should have greater representation.

The Committee did not feel the constitution should be changed, but at the heart of these calls had been the question of country representation in the Otago team, and the desire for a country member to sit on the selection committee. As seen, before the war the Dunedin side had been regarded as the Otago team, but in 1945 six country players had been included in the representative team, and four of these remained in the side the next year. But with three town-based selectors there could be no guarantee that the country would not return into the shadow of its urban counterpart once more.

As a result of this pressure, it was decided to elect a country delegate as a 'co-opted member of the selection committee', who would 'view the sub-union matches and advise the selection committee'. Arthur Marslin of the Alexandra Club was appointed, and though he did not have full voting rights, his presence was very important.

Vic always maintained that Arthur Marslin ... never actually selected a dud. He usually nominated country players. Vic had great faith in his judgement, and that probably had a lot to do with the picking of the country players.

In carrying out his duties Arthur Marslin travelled some
1200 miles a year, which gives an indication of the dedication required to overcome the difficulties involved in country rugby. This arrangement largely resolved conflict over representation, although country officials were still quick to protest against any perceived slight to their players or teams, as seen in this message in 1948:

Sub-union executive emphatically protest against our fixture with North Otago being played as a curtain raiser to club match. Strong resentment throughout province. Metropolitan Union urged to reconsider decision.

The decision remained, but the resentment was soon forgotten as town and country were drawn together by the successes of their representative side that Centenary year.

These successes made coaching and the name of Vic Cavanagh (junior) virtually synonymous in this period. Much has been written about the man who so stamped his work on Otago rugby; John Reason regarded Cavanagh and his father as 'two of the greatest coaches in the history of the game'. Cavanagh widened the functions of coach to become tactitian, instructor, motivator and psychologist. In this respect he was far ahead of his counterparts in England, where training and coaching still played a subordinate role in the game, and was perhaps only matched in approach by the South Africans at this time. When D. LaLanne in The Great Fight of the French Fifteen wrote of the 'mistake of the South Africans in treating Rugby as a science, when it is merely a game', he made explicit the conflict between the traditional and new approaches to the game. Rugby was becoming intellectualised; men thought about and planned the game more seriously, and
Cavanagh was one of the most astute thinkers of the game. Where Cavanagh was exceptional, however, was in his ability to express his knowledge to his players.

I remember one night we had him up at Alhambra, just after the war, and we weren't going too well ... We had all our teams there after practice on Thursday night, and he came out with the football. He didn't seem to be saying anything different to a lot of other people. He said this is a rugby ball - this is the way he started up - and you could feel the prickles going up your back, the way he could put it over, and he went on and on, and you could have heard a pin drop at any stage. He just got everybody's attention ... there was something about him ... He finished this night, and the whole senior side was there, and he said 'Oh well, chaps, you're playing my old team on Saturday, don't be too hard on them will you', and bugger, we went out and beat them.

Cavanagh's skill in communication may have been natural, but his knowledge of the game had been acquired and developed, in the same way as a serious student masters any subject.

I also went to the public library and read every book that looked like it might be any advantage, because I was a great believer that if you can't wait to learn through your own experience you can learn through someone else's experience ... I studied the game, and I discussed things with my father ...

Cavanagh was the pupil who outshone his teachers. In turn, Cavanagh had his own 'pupils', and whether they were aspiring youngsters or representative players like Peter Johnstone, his effect was the same:

I was coached by good coaches, and I thought I understood the game, and after a couple of team talks from Cavanagh (I realised) I knew nothing. I had only started to learn the game. His theories and reasons why were just a revelation. Nobody could copy them.

Team talks were conducted on Thursday nights in the Offices of the Evening Star, and these had a profound impact
on the game in Otago, for it was here that the 'Otago game' was developed and perfected. The pattern was simple—pressure rugby.

It had generally been the aim of the side to win the ball from every possible position as speedily as possible. The backs' job has been to move into opposition territory immediately, so that forwards could back up in support, then the back either broke into play with loose dribbling rushes, or, if the ball was held on the ground formed loose scrums quickly to restart play. It was the object of the side to build up unrelenting pressure against the opposition, and by a series of either back or forward attacks, to get the opposing team out of position or off balance. \(^{16}\)

These tactics required teamwork, discipline and fitness, qualities all well developed in the many returned servicemen that represented Otago. Cavanagh, as will be seen, moulded his players into a team that played with great precision, and for three years Otago dominated New Zealand rugby. Much of the skill and knowledge that was uniquely Cavanagh's has since been lost, although the legacy of his style still remains with his club, Southern.

In the latter part of the decade there was an increasing awareness of the need to interchange coaching ideas to improve standards in the game. Cavanagh, together with Charlie Saxton, gave a number of lectures for local coaches, and in 1946 a Rugby Coaches Association was formed, one of its objects being to 'encourage the exchange of views among coaches'.\(^{17}\) The competitive nature of the sport, regarded as so important to maintaining high standards of play, at times hindered the exchange of ideas and opinions.
It wasn't until Vic Cavanagh and Charlie Saxton had a few Sunday morning sessions with coaching that coaches got together a bit. They didn't fraternize much - each club kept to its own style of play. Southern, through the Cavanagh coaching, played a more patterned style of rugby than many other teams. Dick Vorrath, who coached the Union, didn't believe in going to the sessions where Cavanagh and Saxton were coaching because he said everyone would be playing the same way. But a lot of the younger coaches, the position was - you go along and learn as much as you could ... 18

There was very little interchange of coaches between clubs, as most remained in the club for which they had played, and so coaches were reluctant to vary a club's 'traditional style'. One club that had to rely on coaches from other clubs was the University, for few of its players remained in Dunedin after graduating. These coaches then faced a difficulty that was peculiar to this club.

Players are drawn from all parts of New Zealand and have learnt their football under various types of coaches. This necessitates an endeavour to mould all these into one school of thought. One has to be dogmatic otherwise the side would develop into a debating society instead of a football team.

The University was also the exception in having a single practice on Wednesday afternoons, and this daylight practice was seen as a great advantage to the club at a time when lighting was very poor. Tuesday and Thursday nights were training nights for most clubs, and some, like Southern, also held practices on Sundays. Midweek practices began around seven o'clock, rather than straight after work. Tom Mockford describes his practices at Alhambra:

We'd do a bit of everything, scrum practice, tackle practice, passing the ball. A lot of running and sprinting - short sharp sprints. A couple of rounds around the paddock to warm
up. You didn't muck around, standing around talking. When we came off the paddock we knew we'd been to the races. The coaches trained with you, very seldom did you have a coach who wasn't out there in his togs.

The keener players also went running on the other nights, for fitness or simply to 'blow out the cobwebs'. After practice on Thursdays coaches gave their team talks for the coming game, and from there most returned home, although at Kaikorai both senior and junior players met afterwards for hot drinks of milo or coffee.21

In the country, coaching was still very rudimentary, for it was difficult to get experienced coaches. Teachers played an important role in the coaching that was given, and so too did those players who had been coached by Vic Cavanagh.

These players who came to Dunedin to rep practices and representative games, then they understood what the game was about, and learnt the greater skills of the game, and the essentials of fitness and training; and they went back and tried to impart that knowledge to their club.22

The increasing awareness of the importance of fitness and training in Dunedin was filtering out to the country, but inadequate lighting and equipment, and getting the players together, caused many problems.

They used to try and organise practice twice a week, Tuesday and Thursday. Most of them did get practice, but not too many got a full practice ... They had one light stuck up on a post, and mostly for training you ran in the shadows.23

Some obstacles were overcome with great ingenuity, as shown by Athol Miller, the South Otago coach, when it came time for scrum-practice.

He had a 1948 V8, laid with four by twos that fitted onto the boot of his car, with shoulder
pads on them, and he put the brake on in his car, and the forwards had to get down and pack a scrum. They pushed that car around the Balclutha showgrounds. That was the scrum-maging technique.

Despite the difficulties that country rugby faced in the 1940s, the sub-unions produced some very talented players, and strong teams, and this contributed to the strength of the provincial team.

The dedicated manner in which coaching, training and fitness was approached by players and coaches reflects the ways in which rugby has become more professionalized. The increasing prominence and influence of the coach provoked some fears that individuality and spontaneity might be lost from the game.

It would seem in many instances Rugby footballers are overcoached and that they are imbued with the desire of following instructions to the very letter. Surely however players should exercise some individuality when they are on the field. When they find that the tactics being employed are inefficient, they should try other methods.

Cavanagh's methods and approach to the game received much criticism for 'taking the adventure out of rugby and making it a game of mechanics', and there was a point where coaching and natural skills could come into conflict.

Vic Cavanagh himself said - they were so drilled in heeling the ball back from a ruck, with the idea of getting a back out of position, that sometimes they forgot the element of taking the ball further forward ... He said - you'd get perfection in one thing, say a good ruck, but you'd lose in something else.

The widespread criticism of Otago's style, and Cavanagh's coaching in particular may be explained as that which any successful team inevitably has to face. More fundamentally,
it showed that the 'amateur' view that extensive training was unsporting, and that coaching should not be to produce highly trained athletes, was still strong in wider New Zealand society.

It was said that Otago obtained its successes by training its representative group to the exclusion of all other interests, including club football. It was said the country players were brought to Dunedin an unusual number of days before a match and that in one year a couple of important country players were practically supported in Dunedin throughout the winter by football interests ... These and a 101 sneers and cracks and criticisms were made about Otago by officials, by players, by supporters up and down the country.

Much of what was said was true, but that these actions should be seen as detracting from Otago's success shows that this part of the amateur ethos of the game was still strong. The other element of the amateur tradition, that victory was supposed to be a subsidiary aim, had never been accepted in New Zealand.

I shall never be convinced ... that the challengers for the Ranfurly Shield were down here just to play for the game's sake. I have had too much experience of the methods used to counter Otago's tactics. Otago's objective also was to win, not merely to avoid being beaten, and the players had a clear idea of how best to work towards that victory.

Otago, through Cavanagh, had made the link between extensive coaching (with pre-match preparation in tactics and teamwork) and winning rugby that much sooner, and more effectively, than the other unions.

Just as all could and did play rugby, so too were administrators drawn from all social classes. But while players were predominantly from the working and middle-classes, there
were few working-class administrators. This did not seem to be a source of conflict between the two groups, although there was some tension between the town-based administration and the country sub-unions. Training was an important part of the game, and the coach an accepted and necessary member of any side. One coach, Vic Cavanagh, stood out before all others in his knowledge of the game and the success of his methods. Though criticised, Cavanagh ensured that Otago remained at the top for three long years.
1. Swindells, p.36.

2. Teachers were over-represented because of the allowance for a permanent Secondary Schools representative on the Management Committee.


8. ODT, 12 Apr. 1949, p.9 c.1.

9. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee of the ORFU, 8 Jul. 1948. The Club game that took precedence was between Pirates and Southern.


12. La Lanne, p.73.


14. Vic Cavanagh, junior, in an interview conducted by Sam Simpson of the Southern Centenary Committee. Sam Simpson kindly allowed me to listen to this tape, held at the Southern Rugby Football Club, Dunedin.


17. ODT, 19 Sep. 1946, p.3 c.3.


19. Comments of the University A Coach, Mr. J.E. Manchester at the end of the 1948 season, quoted in Hay, p.82.


activities of clubs clearly reflects the class composition of those clubs. These 'coffee hours' confirm that Kaikorai was a predominantly middle-class club.

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. ODT, 24 Jul. 1941, p.4 c.2.
30. R.H.T. Thompson, p.2.
31. Star Sports, 10 Jun. 1950, p.3 c.4. (Vic Cavanagh Article No. 6.).
"LOOKS AS THOUGH THE RUGBY SEASON IS HERE AGAIN!"
CHAPTER FOUR

SATURDAY

... Well, this is the day. A few hours and it will all be over. This is it. It's funny how time comes around. For ages you talk of something and think of it and prepare for it, and it's still a long way off. You keep thinking how good it will be, and then suddenly, bang, it's there, you're doing it and it's not so enjoyable after all. I think football's like that: better before and after the game than in it.

A.P. Gaskell, *The Big Game*.

The working week for many continued to Saturday mornings; students had lectures, dairy farmers their cows to milk, factory workers their machines to tend. In Dunedin, the Exchange at midday would be crowded as men tried to get to the various grounds about the city. Most had to rely on public transport, for few had their own, even after the war.

There were very few people who were motorised, and we either caught the bus or the train. I remember when I played first for Taieri just before the war - the only bloke who was motorised in the team was Jim Barron. He had a BSA Silver Star motorbike, and he was the envy of the whole team. He gave it one kick and he chugged away down the road, whereas we walked or rode a pushbike. After the war, a few of the blokes were fortunate enough to have a vehicle, but the majority didn't, and we had to find our own way to the grounds.

Public transport, particularly the trams, provided a cheap and regular service, and consequently players travelled independently, only meeting together at the ground. This was not practicable in the country, where 'away' games involved considerable travelling, and so a bus was usually arranged for the team. This was often a trial in itself.

... we used to travel in a bus with an open side, and you used to get sick, because it would
suck in the dust - it was all gravel roads - and hard seats; just like a truck with a canopy on top.

Pre-match preparation on the day was kept to a minimum, with only a short warm up, and perhaps a few words from the coach.

We never used to go out of the pavillion much. We might run out the back for a bit. Usually you'd hear them stamping around inside, and the coach would have a bit of a yarn.

The pattern was the same for all but the biggest games.

I said to someone once that the only time you smelt embrocation under the stand at Carisbrook - when everybody was getting fired up - would be for an Otago-Southland game. Before that we used to arrive with our gear, put it on and go and play. Probably it was a bad thing in a way. Sure we used to warm up a bit, but not the warm up psychologically and physically that goes on today.

In many cases, there was no time for a lengthy build up to the match, for early games at 1.30 p.m. meant those who finished work at midday had to go straight onto the field on arrival. Many who had already been to work, or ridden or walked to the ground would have been 'well-stretched'. But the absence of any systematic warm-up really reflected the current state of sports medicine, when the importance of pre-match exercise was not widely known.

Knowledge of the treatment for muscular injuries was also rudimentary. Arnold Manion recalls that there was no awareness of the benefits of ice on injuries, and that a hot bath was the usual treatment for any pain. Bert Haig recalled the efforts made to treat his brother Laurie's injured leg:

He had an old Chev touring car, with two milk cans, and we would drive down to the sea, and
walk a quarter of a mile across the sand, fill up those cans with salt water, carry them back to the car, and he used to boil up that water in the wash-house, because they told him the steam was good for his ligaments.

Some knowledge was being disseminated. Dr. Arnold Perry was known as 'Hot and Cold' because of the buckets of hot and cold water that he used to treat muscular injuries. But not all were able to avail themselves of his sounder methods, and obviously many looked on their Saturday aches as an inevitable part of the game.

The significance of the lack of any pre-match build up is more difficult to identify. Players went to training with the next game in mind, tactics were planned beforehand, and so perhaps this was a last vestige of the old, informal approach to the game, when players had simply arrived and the game started. Possibly the players felt their own motivation and any more only lessened the enjoyment of the game: 'I'm sure some of this psychological build up is detrimental to the game. At times it's no longer fun, and I think rugby is a game of fun, and we used to have a lot of fun.'

With the exception of Pirates, none of the Dunedin clubs had 'clubrooms' but simply training sheds or changing pavillons, on or near their local ground. Usually these consisted of little more than a couple of rooms connected to a larger hall, and had limited facilities. Kaikorai, for example, only installed showers in 1941, and many clubs in the sub-unions did not have showers. These pavillons often hosted modest after-match functions, where the players could sit down together and relax after the game.
If we were playing at home and we'd had a decent sort of a day, somebody would jump on a bike, and go and get a five, or something, and bring it back and then we'd have the wooden bung to belt in the tap - usually get an expert to do that job - then we'd each get a couple of glasses of beer out of it and we were happy with that...

In those days the weekend treat was a game of football and a couple of glasses of beer and maybe a packet of Capstans.

This was the usual practice when the team played at home, or if they were hosting visiting teams.

Any function in the club, say a special function for a visiting team - we had an affiliation with Toko, and Milton and Matakana - in those days it would be perhaps a few saveloys and a five gallon keg. Someone would go around with an enamel plate, and you just threw your two bob in, and if they ran out and wanted another five gallon keg you'd throw another two bob in. This is in the changing room.

These were very modest and informal affairs, and, because none of the clubs had licences, also illegal. But even though the police would have been well aware of this, it seems few clubs were ever bothered. For teams travelling in the country, the five gallon keg was also a traditional part of the long bus journey home, a journey that was itself an important part of the Saturday ritual; even in strongly Presbyterian South Otago.

They didn't have licensing in South Otago until the laws came, so the only drink they had was the five gallons on the bus with them, and what the host teams had at their club. They always managed to have beer on board the bus to bring back. They were sing-songs and they were great days. They were probably the most glorious days of rugby that I would know of. I was only a young guy too, and I drank beer with those fellows... A few bottles of beer made you drunk, and the older ones were the same. The sing-songs in the bus, it was tremendous.
Each club had a close association with a particular pub, and if the teams didn't stay behind at the pavilion, each went to their own pub. The Dunedin Club went to Heff's, Zingari Mrs. Blaney's (Tattersalls), Kaikorai the European, Union the Bowling Green or the Cock, Alhambra the Victoria. The pub was usually one close to the Club's local grounds, but often a publican was actively involved in a club, and the club would return to that pub. "Spud" Murphy was long involved in the Kaikorai Club, and so the European, of which he was proprietor, became the Kaikorai pub. Heff's was the 'Catholic' pub in Dunedin, hence the connection with the Dunedin Club. Mrs. Blaney was a very good supporter of Zingari-Richmond:

For Zingari, Ma Blaney's was their headquarters, though not only theirs. There used to be other clubs too - a Rugby Hotel - for Mrs. Blaney was a terrific old lady, and she had quite a few friends in the Pirates, and Dunedin. But Zingari seemed to be her club, and she helped us out quite a bit. She gave us a piano one time, and she gave us a lot of financial assistance. And she always used to come around very quietly and put some money in someone's hand to shout her boys. A fellow would go around and say "How many in your school?", and with beer a sixpence, and there'd be four in your school, so you'd get two bob ... and if there was enough money everybody would get a round. Then Ma Blaney would come around and say "Have I shouted for you boys today?" and someone would usually say "I don't know Mrs. Blaney, I've just come in", and she would say "Oh well, I'd better shout again". Sometimes she might shout two or three times in the night, sometimes she might shout once.

This remarkable lady, remembered with such affection, was also made a life member of the Dunedin Club, and when Zingari built its own clubrooms, a sign was hung inside, 'Ma Blaney's Canteen', to recall those earlier times.
The informal atmosphere of the pub also allowed players from different teams within the club to mingle.

We used to go to the Gresham for a few years, then the Victoria. All the teams would meet there. It was probably better then because we all got around the bar, third grade, second grade, firsts, all talked away there. When you go to clubrooms now you're inclined to sit in bunches. I don't think they'd mix quite as well as they did when you're having an hour in the hotel afterwards.

This sociability was important for the club, though not all teams were able to join in, because of age restrictions in the pubs.

There'd be a few honorary members, a few old players. There wouldn't be many junior teams, mainly seniors, and second grade and that ... because you couldn't drink under twenty-one, and the publicans were pretty strict on underage drinking, and you didn't have a show of getting into the pubs after-hours if you were underage ... though they'd still get a few beers somewhere.

If the team had played a late game, with six o'clock closing time it wasn't long before it was 'after-hours'. Dunedin pubs were well known for their leniency regarding licensing hours, and many players stayed on after six. Heff's was a 'good after-hours' pub, and players were often invited to stay on for a meal. Mrs. Blaney had her own arrangements regarding closing time.

There was six o'clock closing, but Ma for some reason she didn't used to have to close her door. She used to close them at six if she felt like it, but someone would come in just the same. I remember one old fellow, Hughie Williams - he was our touchjudge - and it was about a quarter to seven, and he'd just got to the door, and there were two policemen. He didn't know what to do, he'd got the fright of his life. Mrs. Blaney was right on his shoulder, and she just got hold of the door and said 'Excuse me, Sergeant. I'll clear the bar', and she closed the door in front
of the policemen. We all went out the back-yard, including old Hughie, who'd just about been having pups by this time, and the police would come through, and I don't know what she used to do, but I know they used to get their supper on the later night round. She used to look after them pretty well.

But for the majority, six o'clock was time to leave for home.

Even though a lot would stay on later, there was an awful lot for whom it was taken for granted had to be home for tea at six o'clock. You used to laugh about being late home for tea at 6.30 or a quarter to seven.

The importance of the pub, or even the keg, to post-match social life, would suggest that drinking was a central, perhaps essential element of the Saturday ritual. Yet this was not necessarily so.

If you were having a game at the University Oval and you decided to put on a bit of a show afterwards, it was very modest. There would be a limited amount of beer available, but one of the most favourite things was beef tea, and lemon-ade. There was quite a number of us who didn't drink after the game.

This contrasted markedly with the attitudes of many spectators towards drink.

At Kaikorai, Bruce Barnes recalls that 'quite often they would have beef tea, or a cup of tea and biscuits, but there was 'never any drink'. This reinforces impressions that this club was more white collar. Although it is unlikely that alcohol was never available, nevertheless it appears that while drinking was an accepted and, no doubt, enjoyable part of the social events after the game, it was not an all-embracing part, nor was it socially obligatory. Attitudes varied between clubs, but for many, 'drink wasn't a big thing.'
Many players would only have had a few glasses of beer, if at all, because they could not afford to, or else wished to preserve their fitness (especially at more senior levels). But similar attitudes to drink prevailed amongst the middle classes, and so it is not surprising that in a sport which drew its players equally from the middle and working classes, and its administrators from the middle and upper classes, such attitudes should be demonstrated. This does, however, make the close association between 'pub and club' maintained by all clubs appear somewhat anomalous, but this can be explained. The pub was not just a drinking venue, but, as seen, was as much a social venue, and it was this function that had forged the connection. The Depression, and then the War years, had placed financial constraints on the ability of the clubs to improve their facilities, and so the warmth and familiarity of the pub was infinitely preferable to the austerity of the pavillion. But the increasing prosperity in post-war society facilitated the disappearance of the old pavillons and the emergence of vastly improved clubrooms, and so the clubroom replaced the pub as the venue for social activities. The association between the clubs and the pubs had been a close one, and cherished by many, but when the opportunity arose to provide the clubs with their own social venue, it was taken, though not without some delay and much debate. Clubrooms began to appear in the 1950's with Zingari, one of the first, opening its new rooms in 1953.23

One factor common to the pubs and the pavillion, that was less dominant as clubrooms appeared, was their rigidly
The fact that if you went out to Taieri you'd just meet in the shed afterwards. You didn't have any outsiders like you do today. There'd be no women, or girlfriends. It was just the players. They fraternised a bit more than they do today, because the immediate team, say Taieri, would be there, there wouldn't be juniors or women or girlfriends, so you saw more of the players.

This also reflects the greater participation of women in the social activities of the club, and the increasing desire and willingness of the men to share their leisure with their wives or girlfriends. Some of these changes were starting to emerge in the 1940s. Women were watching the games in significant numbers and, because most clubs held dances each month, they were being admitted, even if temporarily, into the clubs. Changes in marriage patterns, though not so evident in the 1940s, meant that increasing numbers of players married at an earlier age, and continued to play. As a result, increasing numbers of women took part in club activities, while the 'all-male' activities played a lesser role in the clubs. The more 'neutral' atmosphere of the clubrooms, compared with the austerity of the pavilion and the social taboos against women in pubs, may have facilitated this. The male-dominated rugby environment, centred on the pavilion and the pub, was changing, and so for many these 'citadels' became all the more important. This possibly explains why some clubs built their clubrooms long after other constraints had been removed.

After six, the range of organised entertainment was limited to the pictures or the dances. Large numbers attended
Joe Brown's Town Hall Dance, and there were many smaller dances about Dunedin. Kaikorai held a dance at Bishopscourt most Saturdays, and other clubs usually held a monthly dance.

They used to run a dance at St. Joseph's Hall, and there'd be quite a few players from different clubs ... It was run by Christian Brothers Old Boys in the main, and a lot of these were Dunedin Club members, but blokes from Pirates and Southern would go there, though there wouldn't be that many. A lot of blokes from different clubs would be at the Town Hall Dance.

Many went individually, and met fellow club members at the dance, though some teams still remained together.

Zingari after the war were a particularly social crowd, a lot of team spirit. It'd be nothing to see the whole team out together. The Southern club used to have a monthly dance, and I'd say you'd see more Zingari seniors at the Southern dance than Southern seniors. We used to have friends at every club.

Although not all players stayed together on a Saturday night, nor necessarily mingled with men from other clubs as 'rugby players', this physical contact game was also very much about social contact.

I knew all the blokes who played for Dunedin Union. I still remember the Gensicks from Union, the Mullers, all these fellows, from Dunedin. Arnold, Des Lowe, all these fellows. We seemed to get to know them pretty well, and whether it was at dances and social functions afterwards or not, but, we had a sort of friendship amongst the players ...

Perhaps this was what Saturday was all about - the 'sort of friendship' that developed between players in the same team, and with many from other teams. The game itself was certainly very important, as players met the challenge to their skills, fitness and courage, and this could produce great emotion: 'When we stood there for an Otago - Southland game, you had a lump in your throat and tears in your eyes. It stirs in you,
you're itching to go and the adrenalin's pumping. Something tremendous about it.'29

But rugby was also much more than eighty minutes on the field. Men trained, planned and often lived the game for days beforehand, and then finally came together and translated this into the team effort of the Saturday. Shared activity and shared emotions strengthened the bonds between members of a team and these were demonstrated and further strengthened in the social activities after the game. The competitive nature of the game could, however, put up barriers between members of opposing teams, and so the drinks in the pavilion after the match performed an important social function in enabling all players to mingle. Rugby may have been the only thing many had in common, but this might have been all that was needed. In the same way, most clubs in Dunedin had interchanges with clubs with Invercargill, Christchurch and the sub-unions,30 so through sport players could associate with men from other localities, other backgrounds. Drink played a welcome, though not an essential, role in these associations, and this reflected the middle class attitudes of a large proportion of the players. The absence of 'outsiders', particularly women, was regarded as further strengthening the bonds between players. Rugby was, then, a force for social integration, enabling men from diverse backgrounds to play alongside and against each other, and so each Saturday the divisions between men in this modernised, industrial society were for a time broken down.

This male sub-culture was, however, coming under threat
as women played an increasing role in the social activities of the club, and rugby and the whole Saturday became less an exclusively male preserve. Although outside the 1940s period, one response to this may have been a strengthening of the ties with pub and pavillion (which embraced the values of this sub culture), and resistance against moves to establish the clubrooms. 31
FOOTNOTES.

2. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May. 1984.
4. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.
5. Prof. A.D. Macalister, 0. 13 Jul. 1984.
10. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May. 1984.
15. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.
17. Ibid.
18. S. Dowland, 0. 10 Jun. 1984.
19. Ibid.
21. B. Barnes, 0. 3 Jul. 1984.
22. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.
23. Holloway, p. 17.
25. Dunstall, p.400.
27. S. Dowland, 0. 10 Jun. 1984.


30. Most clubs had Easter trips, and many travelled down to Invercargill to play a friendly game with one of the local clubs before the Otago-Southland game. Dunedin had connections with Celtic (Timaru) and attended the Marist Easter tournament, Zingari with Matakanui, Southern with Albion (Christchurch), Pirates with Zingari (Timaru), Linwood (Christchurch), and the Pirate's Eastern Tournament, Alhambra with Merivale (Christchurch) and Star (Invercargill), University with Canterbury College.

31. K. Sheard and E. Dunning in their "The Rugby Football Club as a type of "Male Preserve" : some Sociological Notes" (International Review of Sport Sociology, 3-4(8), 1973 : 5-24) provided a useful comparison for this chapter. The sub culture that grew around English rugby is in many respects similar to that in New Zealand, particularly in its emphasis on masculinity, though it developed in a very different social setting.
CHAPTER FIVE

SPECTATORS

It is a robust game, a physical contact game, essentially a manly game. It is above all else a participants' game. Compared with other games it is pretty dull stuff to watch, but it has the propensity to produce great drama, hence its spectator appeal.

Rugby was a participants' game, but the drama was not confined to the thirty-one men on the field. It involved all that watched the game, listened to it on the radio, discussed it at the pub. Rugby was about intense involvement in a ritual carried out every Saturday afternoon. It fostered local consciousness, submerging differences in age, class and religion, as men (and some women) joined together to support their side. Victory was important, for at the highest levels of the game this was a celebration of provincial, or national, achievement and worth. Rugby may often have been dull stuff to watch, but the game was only one part of a greater drama, played out on a small scale at club matches each Saturday, or on the grand scale of the clashes between Otago and Southland.

Each club in Dunedin had its own band of followers who often displayed an enthusiasm and loyalty as fervent as any that religion, politics or work could inspire.

If enthusiasm and faith in the merits of a team could win matches, the Taieri senior rugby fifteen could undoubtedly have been unbeaten for several seasons. Each Saturday, wet or fine, a gallant band of supporters cheers the country team on to greater efforts, and the side can do little wrong in the eye of its supporters.

Individuals often stood out amongst the mass of spectators.
University had a great following. There was one old chap (who was) always on the tram going out to Carisbrook. Nobody ever knew who he was, but he wore a Varsity scarf and he was the most avid supporter you'd ever seen in your life.

Support of the home side could be fiercely partisan, and referees suffered the abuse or received the blessing of the crowds, depending on how their decisions affected the game. Spectators wanted to see their team win, and a winning team attracted the crowds.

The Opoho people themselves have never been good supporters of the football club. I don't know why. There are patches of them, but not what you'd expect... You might see them at the odd game, you'll see a lot of them if you're winning a lot of games in your senior grade.

At Carisbrook, two senior club matches were played most Saturdays, and these regularly attracted crowds of 5000 or more (even though the main game was broadcast over the radio). The competitive aspect was clearly important, and towards the end of the season, as leading teams contended for the championship, crowd numbers soared. Zingari-Richmond had a very good side in 1949 and attracted a crowd of 5000 in its first encounter with University A. In the final round the same two opponents met before the largest crowd of the season, 8000, to determine the championship. The expectation of seeing good football was undoubtedly important, but it was the contest, particularly if there was a championship, shield or trophy at stake, that drew the large numbers.

Otago-Southland matches (for the Donald Stuart Memorial Trophy) and Ranfurly Shield matches were keenly awaited,
though not necessarily by all.

Dear Miss Fairfax - I don't know whether or not many wives are having similar trouble to my own, but I would be most grateful for your help. My husband is a keen football fan, and since our marriage eighteen months ago has taken every Saturday afternoon off in the football season to go to Carisbrook, and of course after every match he goes drinking, and I don't see him till nearly seven o'clock on Saturday night, by which time it is too late for us to think of going out. With the matches coming off for this old Ranfurly Shield thing, I suppose it will be harder than ever for me to keep him home on Saturday, but if you can suggest any way of doing it I would be grateful - Saturday widow.

The reply is just as revealing, for 'Miss Fairfax' advises that the husband 'is just one of the great majority of men in Dunedin whose interests centres on Carisbrook at present' and that the best course for her was not to keep him from the games, but to attend them herself. This letter illustrates a negative side of the Saturday ritual, for it was essentially masculine - 'of course he goes drinking' - and so many women did feel excluded, and also had their own social activities disrupted. The reply, however, shows that such exclusion was seen as self-imposed, and that women could and did attend rugby matches. One indication that women were at Carisbrook in significant numbers was in the decision of the ORFU to finally build ladies lavatories in 1949. Considering ladies had been charged admission since 1928, this 'omission' does show just what a male bastion Carisbrook had been.

The build-up to provincial matches often began days before the game, for many in the lengthy task of obtaining tickets for the stands.

The first persons to arrive on the scene were two women supporters who took up their positions
at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, and by 11 p.m. the number had increased to twenty. By 5.30 a.m. yesterday a queue extended from Charles Begg and Company's shop in Princes Street to a shop in the Octagon adjacent to the Regent Theatre ... Shortly before the box plan was opened at the booking office at 8 a.m., it stretched as far as the Municipal Baths at Moray Place ... The crowd which was patient and good humoured included a number of women and children, as well as one member of the Otago team. There was talk on many subjects, but, of course, Rugby was the main topic of conversation and the prospects for Saturday's match were eagerly discussed.

Such was the enthusiasm surrounding a Shield match against Southland. Many did not purchase tickets in the stands, but chose the less expensive, more convivial atmosphere of the terraces. Interest and excitement built up as Saturday approached, especially on the Friday as supporters began to arrive in the city.

The normal hustle and bustle of a Friday evening in Dunedin was intensified last night when hundreds of Southland rugby supporters, the advance guard of today's invasion, swelled the crowds in the streets. Snatches of conversation heard on every side revealed the fact that the one main topic was on almost every tongue - today's Ranfurly Shield match.

The players were also caught up in the infectious popular enthusiasm, as Peter Johnstone recalls:

With success, everything falls into place. The public got behind you, they turn up in their thousands. You're talking rugby every day of the week, it doesn't matter who you meet, they're talking about the game you won last Saturday or something. It gives the team something solid.

Saturday arrived, and all roads led to Carisbrook. Many walked to the grounds, or took their bicycles. For those from greater distances, the tramcars provided a cheap, regular service, and cars were an increasingly important means of
transport.

By the time the main match commenced, hundreds - probably thousands - of vehicles were lined along the sides of every street within reasonable distance of Carisbrook. Many of the cars bore mud coverings which inferred (sic) long journeys from the country, and there were buses from far afield. Buses were often hired by clubs, so that teams could travel together to the game. Although passenger traffic was moving away from the railways to the private car, trains continued to play an important role, particularly in the Otago-Southland matches. The train journey provided the opportunity for fellowship and intermingling as supporters were joined by their common interest, and so served to heighten a sense of provincial identity. The railway station became the focal point for the supporters of the challenging team.

The arrival of the express from Invercargill at 11.20 was the signal for Southland supporters to rally at the railway station and make their presence and their intention of returning to Invercargill with the Shield - felt in the city. A fleet of decorated cars and buses, led by the Band of the First Batallion, Southland regiment, boys sections, and accompanied by a large crowd of beribboned supporters of the challengers, made its way through the main streets attracting a large crowd of outsiders. The procession was boisterous and noisy but withal good-humoured and well-behaved.

Led as every by Bill Graham, the procession marched up Stuart Street and through the city centre to Carisbrook. In 1949 the Buller side came down for the first challenge of the season and the 400 supporters who made the arduous overnight train journey to Dunedin also formed a procession through the streets. Supporters arrived with banners, brass bands, trumpeters, bagpipes, all wearing ribbons or 'colours' to show
their allegiances. The carnival atmosphere created had an informality and spontaneity that recalled the popular celebrations of a much smaller, younger Dunedin, though these were on a far grander scale.

The game against Southland, always on a Saturday, enabled many players to renew old acquaintances. The club competition was suspended to allow local clubs to play friendly matches before the game. Alhambra, for example, had an annual match with Star from Invercargill, and after this the teams joined together to watch the main game.

Wednesday games posed little difficulty in terms of priorities, and matches like the famous encounter with Auckland in 1947 drew over 25,000. Work came a poor second on such afternoons: "I hardly ever missed them. There was real Shield Fever. You'd get some excuse for getting off work, others would sneak off, or make up time, working a couple of hours extra at some stage." The Hillside workshops began work early, and many offices and factories closed down as both employers and employees went to the match. Many just took the afternoon off: "That was a packed crowd (at the Auckland game). As soon as the cameras came out, they all hid their heads so that the boss wouldn't see they were at the footy." Sometimes this was not enough. During the 1949 Auckland challenge, an announcement was made for two railwaymen to report back to work immediately. There was little doubt as to where they had gone. In those days of full employment, the ODT expressed some concern at the absenteeism. After a very popular Wednesday match, the ODT calculated that "the equivalent of one man had been completely written off the city's
labour potential for fifteen years".

Many had more attentive bosses, and had to be contented with listening to the game over the radio. With television still in the future, the radio was a vital medium for those who lived too far away to make the journey to Dunedin.

May I request the Otago Rugby Union ... to use its influence in an endeavour to get the afternoon session of the radio on Wednesday August 20 extended until the conclusion of the Auckland-Otago Ranfurly Shield match ... Many hundreds of us from this district alone made the long trip to Dunedin last Saturday to see the North Auckland game but it is not convenient to travel in mid-week ... There was widespread disappointment when Southland played North Auckland and the broadcast was cut off at 4 p.m. - Maroon (Gore).

This letter also illustrates the interest generated by Shield matches even outside the province, and, again, the difficulties country spectators faced. With the attention of most of Dunedin, and the province, focussed on the one event, the city was very quiet.

The Ranfurly Shield has been described as a commercial proposition, but although business was brisk in certain establishments which do not close until 6 p.m. so far as other retailers are concerned, to judge by the deserted nature of the streets after 3 o'clock, there could not have been much business done.

The general movement towards Carisbrook became evident at midday, although on Saturdays many arrived well before this. 'Football enthusiasts' began to arrive at the entrances to Carisbrook by 10 a.m. for the North Auckland challenge, and the Star Sports expressed surprise when, for a Southland match, 'no more than 200 enthusiasts were waiting to greet the gateman when Carisbrook was thrown open at 11.15.' The numbers moving towards the ground had their effect on the players, as Bert Haig remembers of the Otago-British Isles
game in 1950:

One car had gone away with a load, and there was only Lawrence and myself left... We were going past Shacklock's towards the Oval, and I could see the beads of perspiration on Lawrence, and I said 'A bit of a crowd', and he said 'Yes, it'll be tough'. That's all he said. The streets were lined with people from Dunedin, walking from the Octagon to Carisbrook. The crowds were tremendous, really, that made the game.25

Saturday rugby at Carisbrook was practically an all-day event. Before the Southland game in 1950, there were three curtain-raisers, the first commencing at 10.45 a.m. Brass and pipe bands also provided entertainment for those early arrivals, and usually played at half time as well. There was also much unofficial entertainment off the field.

They were terrific days. You'd have to see them to believe them. Out on the terrace there'd be fights and arguments going on. That old joker Hunter used to play the cornet. He'd walk around and around, he was a terrific cornet player....26

One part of the Otago-Southland ritual was the entry of the provincial standards (and their supporters), which were then carried around the ground.

Half an hour before the game long queues were stretching from all entrances to Carisbrook. The Otago banner came in the railway end, and soon after, a much travelled Southland standard was ushered in with becoming ceremony at the Workshop's end, one of its supporters bearing a replica of 'the' Shield. There was a crushing and friendly jostling of bodies when the two bands of participants met on the middle of the terrace.

With a quarter of an hour to go most had taken up their positions on the terrace and only a few were moving into the stands. The Scotsman's grandstand (on the railway embankment and along the Caversham rise), provided a free if distant view
for many, while those on the terraces also took measures to secure a clear view of the game.

Amateur carpenters had obviously been at work during the week for, instead of mere boxes, imposing planks on collapsible trestles large enough to accommodate four or five spectators were used on the terrace.

The numbers at games were generally given as rough estimates by the newspapers, but when compared with the 'gates' received by the ORFU these estimates appear relatively consistent. The gate for the 1947 Auckland challenge (£2060 7s 5d) confirms that an exceptionally large crowd attended this midweek game. Presumably many who made long journeys to attend Saturday matches would not have done so on this occasion, and as there had been no 'invasion', the majority must have come from the city. With 25,000 at Carisbrook, and probably as many listening to the game, most of Dunedin were in some way involved in the game. Only the 1948 Wellington challenge, and the Southland matches attracted greater numbers.

The attendances at Southland games, considerably boosted by the 'invasions', reached a peak in 1949 of 34,000, and clearly show that there was a 'special feeling' between the two provinces. Games with the other strong South Island side, Canterbury, drew far smaller crowds. The popular myth, expressed constantly by rugby officials, players, and sports writers, was that of 'friendly rivalry' between the two provinces which was not equalled anywhere else in the Dominion. Undoubtedly there was a special spirit between the southernmost provinces, but much of it was the result of the Shield and
competition it inspired, for when the Shield was not at stake, crowd numbers were significantly reduced.32

The popularity of the matches against Auckland in 1947, and against Wellington in 1948, demonstrate that the contest was also most important. At the end of the 1947 Season, the game against North Otago drew only 12,300 (though this was still a respectable crowd) for there was little doubt about the outcome. Winning was important, but the harder the contest the better. The Wellington and Auckland challenges had promised to be Otago's biggest tests, and so attracted the greatest crowds.

The matches against these two North Island teams also had a wider significance. Such days were demonstrations of provincial strength and worth, and success on the rugby field, especially against these North Island teams, was a cogent reassurance that the 'drift north' had not yet sucked out the vitality of the province. Otago was still strong, as proven in the test on the field. Opportunities to show this came rarely, and so were all the more important. In 1947 only four, in 1948 seven, and in 1949 six inter-provincial matches were played on Carisbrook, all of them Shield challenges. Most were played in quick succession, and so popular enthusiasm was heightened and sustained over those few weeks.

This enthusiasm was given vent during the match, and the atmosphere created by the great numbers often made up for any deficiencies in play.

They were provided with a match that, while hard fought and spectacular, lacked in many actions the mark of good football. But the crowd was prepared to cheer at any movement that looked
exciting, and if the match itself did not keep the spectators at a high pitch, their own enthusiasm did. 23

Smaller crowds became the exception, and were remarked upon:

A smaller crowd, less vociferous support for the teams, fewer bottles lying on the terrace after the game, 'no invasion' by supporters of the challenging team - everything but the score in the match itself was on a diminishing scale for the final Ranfurly Shield game on Saturday ... the normal boisterous element on the bank below the press box was not apparent, and after the tremendous enthusiasm whipped up for the Southland match, the atmosphere was almost tame.

This illustrates what was expected of a Ranfurly Shield challenge. Yet the enthusiasm of Otago supporters could be taken to extremes (especially in the eyes of those outside the province) and it was no coincidence that this was most evident in 1948, Otago's centenary year. The men and women that poured through the gates at Carisbrook that year were not there simply to enjoy a good game of rugby. They were there to support a side, and they wanted to see it win.

Thousands of football-minded Dunedin citizens again flocked to their Mecca at Carisbrook on Saturday to pay homage to - and to cheer vociferously - the Otago representative team. It was apparent however that the crowds are becoming blasé about successes and indifferent to the merits of the performances of players in teams opposing Otago. An indication of this was the fact that the referee and the linesmen received more than their normal share of attention from the noisy section of the crowd.

The skill and determination of the opposition might be appreciated by the crowd, but only when Otago were comfortably ahead.
Fine play by the visiting team drew applause from the crowd, though in the latter part of the game, when things were looking black for Otago, this generous impulse was not so noticeable.

Things had also 'looked black' for Otago in the game against Hawkes Bay when the Bay's 'spoiling tactics' and the decisions of the referee threatened to steal away the Shield. The home crowd responded at its most partisan, and the Star Sports that evening felt it necessary to reaffirm the sportsmanship ethic of the game.

... it might be appropriate to say that the Shield were much better lost if its possession is to provoke such expressions of poor sportsmanship as were heard at Carisbrook last Saturday. The great majority of the 23000 people who saw the match must have been seriously disturbed at the vocal display of bad manners by a minority which could well be dispensed with. Such people do a disservice to the sport and to the province. However much they disagree with the referee it is the worst of form to do anything which might put a player off his stride as he is attempting to kick at goal.

Such 'middle class' attitudes were not accepted by a significant number in the crowd. Those who jeered and called would continue to do so if this could somehow help their home side. Nor was this attitude confined to one portion of the crowd.

You usually found in those days the type of people you got in the grandstands were fairly one-eyed ... They got to the stage where they thought they knew everything about the game, and the opposition couldn't do anything right. I don't think those in the terraces were quite as vociferous as the old die-hards in the stands.

Assuming that working class spectators tended to stand in the terraces, and that middle class spectators were largely represented in the stands, then whilst the 'boisterous element' on the terraces may have been predominantly working class men,
the partisanship displayed at games was not confined to a particular social class. Middle class opinion, reflected in the newspapers, may have been opposed to such unsportsmanlike displays, but vocal support for the provincial team was just another part of the game that crossed class lines.

These games promoted a sense of solidarity and sociability amongst the spectators, and the achievements of the Otago team, especially in holding the Shield, intensified their sense of local belonging. One sign of this - viewed as negative by some - was the partisanship demonstrated by many of the crowd. But this was simply an expression of a more positive and fundamental sense of local consciousness and affinity. This may not have lasted any longer than the weekend, but nevertheless it was there and so had a social importance. In an industrialized, modernised, impersonal society, sport could and did break down the barriers, if only briefly, that separated individuals, and different social groups, from others in the province.

Nationalism was also fostered by sport, and demonstrated in the same way. In the match against the British Isles in 1950:

The crowd were unashamedly partisan. They wanted their untested team to win and at every critical moment they cheered lustily for the Dark Blues. They showed some enthusiasm too, when the British made a mistake ... Applause for the British side came seldom, but occasionally there were small outbursts of clapping. A most unsportsmanlike burst of cheering came when a British player missed a kick from a penalty.

Other displays by spectators also drew complaint. Drinking was for many an integral part of the afternoon at
Carisbrook, and despite notices that 'intoxicating liquor would not be admitted onto the grounds' large quantities of alcohol were consumed at the match. In response to a letter complaining about the smashing of beer bottles at Carisbrook, and calling for sterner preventative measures, 'Another Spectator' wrote to the ODT:

Sir - as one of those who also suffered last Saturday from the inane bellowing and interferences of drunken men and women at Carisbrook, I sympathise with your correspondent on Saturday morning. I believe the Rugby Union is trying to remedy matters, and I believe that if the police had the power to do so, they would rapidly check the abuses we see at every match from the so-called sports. For your correspondent to hope that legislation will be introduced on the same lines as that dealing with drinking at dances is to wish for the moon.

The ORFU were well aware of this problem, for in 1939 the Management Committee had addressed the problems of 'men committing a nuisance at Carisbrook, also the drinking and bad language that was used on the Terrace'. 'Measures' were taken, but these obviously had little effect. The army of small boys that scoured the ground during and after the game continued to fill their collecting sacks. The anonymity of the crowd on the terraces certainly facilitated such behaviour, and, as the letter suggests, drinking seems to have been tacitly condoned by the authorities. That this 'problem' was isolated to the terraces shows that the drinking was principally by the working classes (especially when taken to excess). But the above letter refers to 'drunken men and women' suggesting that this activity was not just part of a masculine ritual. Sport, for players and spectators, has been described as a
safety valve for modern man 'trapped in assembly-line jobs, smothered by conformity and afflicted by urban anomie'. Rugby did provide such a 'release', and with increasing female movement into the workforce, such behaviour was not confined to men alone. This cannot however be further quantified, for though photographs reveal significant numbers of female spectators, no other references are made to women or their behaviour in the crowds.

Yet to view the game simply as an escape was, as D. Smith and G. Williams argue, 'to sell football short'. Rugby was not a diversion from 'real life', but was a playing out of true capacities and real aspirations. Rugby was about involvement, not escape, as D.R. Gent (a former England international, who travelled with the 1950 Lions), remarked: 'I must say, in conclusion, that I leave the Otago neighbourhood after a rugby feast. The whole area is rugby-minded, and their heroes are worthy of their background.' The 25000 who attended a Wednesday match, those who listened to the game on the radio, argued and debated it at work, at home or the pub, did not do so to escape the realities of industrial society. Rugby was just as much a part of life as the workplace, church, or politics. Rugby was about involvement and participation, and the game itself was only one part of a far greater drama. Activities related to the game could begin days beforehand, in purchasing tickets, travelling, parading colours, even in discussing the game, and could continue for long after it had ended. During the game the closeness and conviviality of the crowd (even if often assisted by alcohol) bridged, for a time, div-
isions of class and locality within the province. The closest parallel to the unanimity of purpose and support that these matches engendered was during World War II, when there was a similar confrontation with an identifiable opposition. The outbursts of xenophobia, prompted by the war, also had their parallel in the fervent and 'one-eyed' partisanship shown by many in the crowds, but this was simply an expression of the much wider sense of local belonging that had been fostered at these matches.
FOOTNOTES


3. ODT, 19 Jun. 1941, p.4 c.4.


6. ODT, 9 May. 1949, p.6 c.1.

7. ODT, 8 Jul. 1949, p.6 c.1.


9. The ORFU Annual 1950, p.10. O'Hagan, pp. 135-6, notes that ladies were admitted free until 1928, while the men were charged 6d. to the ground and a shilling in the stands.


15. Match times were even set around train timetables. Kick off was usually at 2.45 to enable spectators to catch the Southern express, which was specially stopped on these days, at Caversham.


17. ODT, 30 Jul. 1949, p.8 c.5.

18. ODT, 21 Aug. 1941, p.8. c.1. 25,000 had attended the Test match with Australia the year before. Shield challenges reproduced much of the fervour and excitement that surrounded Test Matches, and so attracted as many to the games.


22. ODT, 14 Aug. 1948, p.6 c.4.
28. ODT, 19 Aug. 1948, p.6 c.3.
29. The gate takings, recorded in the ORFU minutes confirm that crowd estimates, given in the ODT, were fairly consistent.

1947 v Auckland £2,060.7.5 (25,000), v Southland £2,392.11.3 (30,100).
1948 v Poverty Bay £776.15.8 (9,000), v Hawkes Bay £1,732.3.10 (23,000) v Southland £2,629.12.0 (30,000).
1949 v Buller £1,990.14.4 (24-25,000), v Southland £2,938.14.5 (34,000).
1950 v Southland £2,561.16.0 (30,000), v Canterbury £960.14.2 (12,000).

30. The New Zealand Official Yearbook 1947-9 (p.34) gives the population of Dunedin on 1 Apr. 1948 at 88,800, and so at least half the Dunedin male population attended this match. Rugby was still the great leveller, all could play and all seemed to watch.

31. Shield Fever: The Ranfurly Shield History of Otago and Southland, produced in 1950, is an excellent record of the mythology that was created around the games between these two provinces.

32. In 1946 16,000 attended the match, in 1951 20,000. But between these years, each game attracted in excess of 30,000, with a peak in 1949 of 34,000.

33. ODT, 5 Aug. 1940, p.4 c.1.
34. ODT, 28 Sep. 1947, p.6 c.3.
35. ODT, 23 Aug. 1948, p.4 c.1.
36. ODT, 30 Jul. 1949, p.6 c.5.
37. *Star Sports*, 4 Sep. 1948, p.3 c.5.
41. W/M/C/O2FU, 1 May. 1939.
42. Pearson, p.283.
43. Smith & Williams, pp. 84-5.
"There should be a permanent pictorial record of that great advance, achievement and settlement. Generations yet unborn will be interested in how the country was started."

Keith Murdoch

A short history of N.Z.
Otago seemed to do well out of the Wars, as the unbeaten 1922 side had shown. This team had used the famed 2-3-2 scrum, and though this was now gone, it was not forgotten. In 1944 it was reported to the Management Committee that 'a sub-committee had been appointed to consider approaching the English Rugby Union re. reverting to the 2-3-2- scrum'. The new 3-4-1 scrum formation caused New Zealand rugby endless difficulties, and was only resolved after some uncompromising lessons from the South Africans in 1949.

But in Otago, the two Cavanaghs had developed a pattern of play - the Otago game - that could still enable a team to take the offensive, cross the advantage line and score tries. It was a pattern eminently suited to the wetter grounds of the South Island, and was based on fitness, teamwork, forward domination and disciplined back play. Peter Johnstone explained:

In our day, the theory was that against a very good side you seldom scored from set movements. It was the secondary phase that you got your tries. We used to practice that, regardless of whether we'd won the ball or the opposition had won the ball, we used to make a fetish of being there first, and Cavanagh and our coaches used to say "the player should run back into position as fast as he runs on attack, so that when that second phase play appears, if your backs are in position, the opposition may not be, and then it's just a matter of running with ball and there's a hole there to score".

Ron Elvidge, the Otago captain, was at second five, and he was the master at 'taking the tackle' and setting up second phase play. This was repeated over and again, until the gap
occurred, and the backs were able to score. The forwards had to be fit, for they had to be the first to the breakdown, and they had to secure the ball. To ensure this, the Cavanaghs had developed and perfected the ruck, or what was really a loose, running scrum.

Cavanagh coached, and all the forwards knew that the first person to the ball went over it, the rest went in and you got a front row. The next two, no matter who they were, formed the nucleus of the scrum and went in as locks. The next two would cower their bodies and looked for the ball, applying themselves to the blind and open side. The last man, whoever he was, became the number eight. They knew their job.

With this formation the Otago forwards drove through their opposition, winning the ball for another assault, and continued to do so until their opponents cracked under the pressure. It was the backs' job then to score the tries. It was fundamental rugby, it was simple rugby, and it was winning rugby.

Cavanagh always used to say - It doesn't matter what team comes down ... even if you're losing at half time. If you play my way, these backs are not used to it, and the last twenty minutes will be yours.

For over three seasons, and nineteen Shield challenges, Cavanagh's promise was kept.

Southland had retained the Shield in 1946, and, as was customary, Otago had the first challenge in 1947. The standard of club rugby that year had not been high, and this had been a cause of concern for the ORFU. Efforts were made to improve standards, but the season remained a poor one, and rugby at higher levels had not held much promise. The ODT noted that 'taken generally the Metropolitan team will need a lot of intensive coaching before it can be reckoned a
side with any great punch'. The representative side was selected, and though they had some very talented players, they were untried as a team. Southland was a big challenge. But Cavanagh knew just what his team needed.

Before we played for the Shield in 1947, he lined us up after the last practice on Carisbrook on Thursday, and we were going down to Southland on the Friday, and it was the only time I ever heard him praise a team or anybody. At that stage everybody was telling us what Southland was going to do to us because we were a brand new team, and he said, 'well fellows, the more I see of you, the better I like you.' and all of a sudden I felt 'Christ, we've got a show of winning this bloody Shield', and up to then it was a hopeless thing.

This 'new team' defeated Southland 17-11 amidst 'scenes of enthusiasm and jubilation (as) hundreds of Otago supporters swarmed onto the ground after the final whistle and carried off members of the winning team shoulder high.' The ODT also noted that it was the 'speed, combination and resource of the Otago backs which proved the deciding factor; the Otago captain R. Elvidge played a match-winning game.' But Elvidge had not played the team game, Cavanagh's game, where the ball passed quickly along the chain to the wings. Individual brilliance was no compensation for teamwork, as the Otago captain was made well aware.

Everybody said Elvidge was the hero, he'd won the Shield for us. He was as far as I was concerned. But the next team talk, before we played North Auckland, I'd never heard a player told off like it. He said both times Ron had beaten his opposite number and both times he elected to beat the full back ... and if that fullback had knocked him over we wouldn't have the Shield today. Both times he had an unmarked centre and winger outside him and there was no danger. He should have drawn the fullback and played fundamental rugby. I honestly
couldn't believe it. But that's pure rugby, and from then on, Ron Elvidge hardly scored a try ... he gave the wingers, Bill Meates and Ian Botting so many tries they couldn't count them.

This demonstrates the discipline Cavanagh demanded and received from his players. The next game, against North Auckland, was the first Shield challenge on Carisbrook since 1938, and to the delight of the crowd of 25,000, Otago won comfortably 31-12. Otago had been so dominant in the forwards (winning 20 scrums to 6, 15 loose rucks to 3) that the manager of the challenging team later stated: 'We have learnt a lot. One thing we did find out and that is we do not know a thing about forward play'\textsuperscript{11}. Otago had also been 'going as strongly at the finish as at any stage of the game',\textsuperscript{12} and so clearly the last twenty minutes had been as Cavanagh had promised.

The next challenge was from the talented Auckland side, and the visitors completely dominated to be leading 12-3 at half-time. But the second half saw a transformed Otago side come back to save the game, after a few judicious words from Cavanagh.

At half-time Cavanagh came into the dressing room and everyone was sitting there with their heads between their knees, we had played so poorly, and we were down. He just walked up and down the room, and finally he said "Well, chaps, when a better team comes down and takes the Shield off us I'll be the first to stick out my hand and congratulate them, but this is not the team. What about doing something about it?" That's all he said. He could have abused us and ranted and raved like most coaches at half time, but that's all he said ... and then the whistle went for the second half to start, and there was a race to get through the door. There was a different
attitude - Let's get out of here -. It just went click from then on.

Otago's return to win 18-12 became legendary, as did Cavanagh's talk at half time, so profound was the transformation. The Otago side had the tactics and the ability to win, but what had been missing was the motivation and confidence required. After the half, the Otago forwards 'played like Trojans and split the Auckland formation in the rucks.' This was the Cavanagh style - beat them in the forwards and you beat them everywhere - and the game was Otago's.

With the Shield secure, Otago went on a northern tour, though leaving behind such key players as Elvidge, Kearney and Willocks, and of the five matches, two were lost (against Canterbury and Poverty Bay). On returning, the side had two challenges to face, the traditional return match with Southland and then one from her smaller neighbour, North Otago. This shows the special relationship between Otago and Southland that this second match should also be a Shield challenge. It was this regular competition (Otago played most other unions only every two years), as well as the enthusiasm within the two provinces, that did much to foster this spirit of 'friendly rivalry' between the two. Southland had the record at this time for wins in Shield games (nineteen), but this was equalled with Otago's victory against Southland, and then surpassed with an easy win over North Otago 42-3. Hopes looked high for the Centenary year.

The representative season was only ten matches, and four of these were played on Carisbrook. Otago supporters were
only given a few opportunities to support their side, hence part of the attraction in travelling down to Invercargill in the 'invasions'. For the players, the limited number of games meant considerable commitment was necessary to achieve the level of teamwork required by the 'Cavanagh game'. In previous years, when Otago sides had been largely composed of Dunedin players, these men had played against each other during the club season, and mixed after the game. But with a large number of country players in the side (who often only met others in the team at the representative level), even greater commitment was demanded to achieve a satisfactory combination. One factor that both showed, and strengthened the closeness between team members was the '31 Club'.

We got a tie and a badge each, called the 31 Club. There was a room called 31 at the Criterion Hotel, that's where about five of us stayed. That's where they all used to congregate, the whole team every Saturday night and stay together. There was no women-folk in the picture at all. All together 15 every night.

Again the exclusion of women was seen as further strengthening these bonds. On the field a big factor in Otago's favour in 1947 was Cavanagh's ability to keep the forward pack intact for all five Shield games, and in all only eighteen men were used. As the Auckland game had shown, Cavanagh had been able to mould together his players into a successful combination.

We played as a team. It was beautiful rugby to play in ... every ruck was like a scrum. Everybody facing the right way, everybody on their feet, the ball raked back. It seemed easy rugby to play in compared to Club football, because of the coaching.
This easy, but effective rugby had an impact on the game that was recognisable even as the one season progressed. The editors of the 1948 *Rugby Almanack* remarked on this, as they looked to explain the apparent revival of the game:

Due credit for the awakening must go, firstly, to the recent 'Kiwis' side, who showed what could be done if Rugby was played as it was originally intended it should, and, secondly, to Otago. The Kiwis featured the attractiveness of solid forward play, fast heeling from the loose scrum-mages, and a minimum of kicking by the inside backs. Otago enlarged on that by reducing the loose man almost entirely, and adding a "drive through" by the pack. Otago, too, retained the judicious short punt by the five eighth, a tactic not sponsored by the 2nd N.Z.E.F. team, generally. Otago's success proved the method right, and those responsible for it, and the players who carried the instructions out, have the rest of New Zealand in their debt. Unions in the North Island were soon made aware that something was amiss with their game, and sought to change.

The emphasis on the need to return to the 'sound principles of the game reflects developments that were taking place in patterns of play, especially on the drier, harder grounds in the north.

Auckland footballers are as good as those in the South, but to win the Ranfurly Shield back we have got to develop tight rucking forwards and sound positional play, and quick passing among the backs. We have got to eliminate a certain flashiness which has crept into Auckland football and get back to the reliability which was a feature of the old type of game.

Responsibility for this flashiness lay in part with the Kiwis (with men such as Ron Dobson who played like a 'demented butterfly') as teams sought to reproduce their unorthodox back play without having developed the teamwork and combination that had enabled the Kiwis to play so well. A greater concern
was the appearance of the 'loose' type of forward who spent
his energies on disrupting the opposition backs. Such a
player seemed to threaten all prospects for bright open rugby
and Vic Cavanagh shared his father's firm opposition to this
type of play: 'Vic also said 'I don't want any cheating ...
if the other side's good enough to win the ball, it's good
enough to let them play with it. We've got to counteract
it'. 21 Such 'cheating' caused a national uproar when in
1949 the Springbok Hennie Muller used similar tactics with
devastating effect. But in 1947, inspired by the Otago game,
New Zealand rugby appeared to have been rescued from this
blight. Otago, as instructor and innovator, could face the
next season with confidence.

This was important, for 1948 was Otago's centennial year.
In a province steeped in tradition, when minds were naturally
cast back over the past century, there was no better way to
celebrate that past, and look to the future, than in success
in a game that recalled the virtues of the early pioneers -
teamwork, physical strength and courage - but which had been
refined and developed to fit the needs of modern industrial
society. Success on the rugby field was a celebration of
provincial achievement, a vehicle for provincial pride.

The Club competition had started off strongly, with Charlie
Saxton's Pirates edging out a strong Zingari side to take their
first championship win since 1925. A strong country side
defeated Metropolitan 9-0, and recognising the depth of talent
in the sub-unions, the selectors chose nine country men to
represent Otago. Strengthened by the arrival in the province
of Bill Meates and Ray Dalton, and with most of the 1947 side
available, Otago had faced the first of her seven challenges with confidence.

Yet another invasion occurred (though tamer than its pre-war counterparts) and 30000 packed Carisbrook to see Otago score seven tries to none, winning 25-0. The return match was the same story. Carisbrook then hosted a feast of Shield rugby, with five games in three weeks. In the first, against Canterbury, Otago repeated its earlier efforts against Southland to win 31-0. Otago was supreme in the South Island, but still had to face the North Island sides. The first was Wanganui, and though Otago won 20-3, it was a hard game.

Although Wanganui lost for the first time in 16 games, at least it had the honour of being the first side to cross the Otago line ... It was a fine game and Otago were put thoroughly on the metal by a very good combination — the best outside team to play on Carisbrook this year.

Although this was a fine game, as the ODT commented, 'the crowds were becoming blasé about successes and indifferent to the merits of the performances of players in teams opposing Otago'. Parochialism was rearing its ugly head, but perhaps understandably for this was Otago's centenary year, and the crowds wanted to see their side win, especially against North Island teams. Worse was to come, as northern sides sought to counter the Otago game.

It wasn't all perfect - when Hawkes Bay came down here, we just managed to keep them off. They restricted the half back quite a bit around the scrum ... They'd get the odd game like that when things didn't go right.

Otago escaped, 12-6, though not before the crowd had voiced its opposition to the Bay's 'spoiling' tactics, and to
the Wellington referee who allowed them to continue. That evening, the Star Sports expressed concern at the crowd's display, for it did a 'disservice to the sport and to the province'.

This comment demonstrated an awareness that the honour and prestige of the province was very much at stake in this encounter, and that it was not just the fifteen men on the field that represented Otago. Yet the 'one-eyed' Otago supporter was firmly established at Carisbrook, and the appearance of this partisan attitude reveals much about the mood in the province. This was Otago's Centenary year, her special year, and for many the hearty 'Otago, Otago' yelled from the terraces was the best, if not only, way to demonstrate their sense of belonging. Though this could, at times, violate notions of fair play and sportsmanship (as when the crowd booed a penalty attempt by Hawkes Bay), the feeling created by the 1948 Shield matches had an important and positive impact on the province.

You had everybody sitting up. That's what the Shield set off, a rage, it was just like one day cricket ... In '48 the Shield fever set all this going, and it brought the province closer together too.

But Otago had just edged out Hawkes Bay, and still had to face three more challenges, the first against the Poverty Bay side that had beaten them on the northern tour the year before. Doubts were expressed about the prospects for the side, but the province was not let down.

It was feared after the Hawkes Bay game a week before, when the spoiling tactics of the Bay team held a comparatively lethargic shield team to a 12-6 margin, that something had gone
amiss with the Dark Blues - maybe they were getting stale physically, or maybe they had just become too tired mentally to shake themselves into their real winning mood. But the game against Poverty Bay (won 40-0) showed that there was nothing wrong, and Wednesday's match with South Canterbury indicated that the old fire is still there and burning brightly.

Otago had been restricted to one try by Hawkes Bay's tactics, but came back to overwhelm Poverty Bay with eleven tries. South Canterbury fared little better as Meates, in scoring five tries, helped his side to a 36-6 victory. The 'well-oiled machine' was back in form and all Otago savoured their side's success. The Star Sports described the mood of the crowd as they awaited the start of the final challenge from Wellington: 'It was indeed what can only be described as a satisfied crowd, happy in the expectations of seeing good football, but confident in the prowess of its own side.'

The crowd was the largest of the season, with over 30,000. Only Southland matches had attracted similar crowds, and with no 'invasions' from this opposition, it was truly an 'Otago celebration' on a grand scale. Celebrate they did, for Otago won 11-0 after a scoreless first half. The Dunedin Jockey Club had also held its spring meeting that day, but there had been no question of divided loyalties for the final Shield match, as the 30,000 attested.

Otago's record that year was exceptional, perhaps matched only by the 1926 Hawkes Bay side. The team was solid on defence, conceding only two tries, and effective on attack, scoring forty-one tries. These illustrated the effectiveness of the Cawthra game, and thirty-seven of them were
scored by backs (twenty by the two wingers Meates and Botting). It was not all perfect, for placekicking was weak (perhaps surprisingly so, in the era of Bob Scott) and only eleven of these tries were converted. This accentuated the need to play constructive, try-scoring rugby. The Rugby Almanack said of Otago's performance:

Otago held the Ranfurly Shield against all-comers, compiling a formidable record and are to be complimented upon their positive approach to the game. The team played to win, but sought to do so by attractive and constructive football. The keynote was teamwork, the coaches emphasising the need for every man to merge into the combination...

This teamwork had been the result of long hours of training, and had required an intense, almost professional commitment from the players. This had involved sacrifices of time and money, not only by the players but also by their families and relations, especially from those in the country.

We'd come in Tuesday night for practice, and go back home, come in on a Thursday night for practice, and stay the night. In town all Friday, team talk on the Friday night - no going to the pictures - just a team talk then straight back to the hotel for a cup of coffee and that would be it. Saturday morning you'd just hang around the hotel. Sunday morning we were out there training 9.30, 10.00... If there was a rep game on the Wednesday, those country players didn't go home. So they were a whole week away from home if they had a Wednesday game.

Yet the long hours had the required results:

It was obvious in every display by the Otago team that its tactics had been exhaustively planned, that each member had thoroughly understood his job as a member of a team, and that all the players had been fit.

Although Otago had been stretched in a few games, the Shield had remained safely in the province in this most im-
portant year. Otago's sportsmen and women had won a plethora of trophies and awards in 1948 but the most important was un­doubtedly the symbol of rugby supremacy in New Zealand, the Ranfurly Shield. 'There was really no doubt concerning Otago's right to be classed the champion team of 1948' de­clared the Rugby Almanack.35 This champion team brought even greater honour to the province when sixteen were chosen to trial for the All Blacks, and when eleven of these were named in the side to tour South Africa. Otago was supreme.

The success of Otago in rugby had a much wider social significance in the province, because of its coincidence with the Centennial. This celebration had been a time for nostalgia, a time to look back at the efforts and achievements of the pioneer years. Otago's golden period had been the 1860s, when the province was pre-eminent and Dunedin the commercial centre of the colony. But these days had gone, as McLintock noted in his History of Otago (written to mark the centenary):

During the years which followed immediately on the conclusion of the First World War, it was evident that those social and economic trends which, since the turn of the century had indicated that Otago's supremacy was ended, were marked with an emphasis even the most obtuse could read ... By the 20s of the new century, therefore, Otago, once the most flourishing of provinces, had dwindled in im­portance in direct relation to the fast moving progress of its northern rivals.

Yet one vital part of provincial life, all but ignored by McLintock, had not followed these trends. This was, of course, sport. After dominating the nation's summer sport, cricket, to win the Plunket Shield, the provincial rugby side had taken Otago into another 'golden era', when her supremacy
over her northern rivals was undisputed. The 30000 at that final match against Wellington had little doubt about the strength of the province, and this was only confirmed when eleven Otago men, 'a record for all time', were chosen to go to South Africa. For Otago to excel in a game 'which fitted well the style of person living in a frontier society, a century after the arrival of the first pioneers gave the province confidence that, deep down, things had not really changed that much. In the test of physical strength and courage, teamwork and skill - all qualities necessary in a frontier society - Otago had proven on the rugby field she had the better of any province. If these were the qualities that had once helped Otago ascend, then prospects for the future of the province looked more secure than McLintock's 'decline-and-fall' analysis supposed.

The end of this year was also marked by a controversy surrounding the man who had done so much to restore provincial pride and confidence. Despite popular expectations, Vic Cavanagh was not selected to travel as coach with the team to South Africa. In April, the ORFU had proposed 'to nominate Mr. V.G. Cavanagh jnr. as coach of the New Zealand team', but Alex McDonald, Otago's resident delegate to the NZRFU, had suggested the nomination be as 'Team Manager, or Assistant manager, instead of coach of the New Zealand team'. In the event, Cavanagh declined nomination, but finally accepted nomination as assistant manager in October. Alex McDonald was Otago's nominee as Manager. The NZRFU, however, saw fit to appoint Jim Parker, as manager, and Alex McDonald instead
as assistant manager. The just claims of Cavanagh, the architect of Otago's success and the man responsible for Otago's contribution to the All Blacks, were completely ignored. Provincial pride at the selection of the 'eleven' turned to indignation at the affront.

A lot of people were really put out about it. There was quite a lot of talk, letters to the editor and this sort of carry on. Big Rugby Union meetings. But there was nothing they could do.

The ORFU protested to the NZRFU, but were informed that 'the procedure adopted was done in good faith, and for the good of rugby and that no useful purpose can be served by pressing the matter further.'

The 1949 All Blacks, then, did not have a coach 'for the good of rugby'. In part this reflected the problems of competing at an international level in a game steeped in English middle-class values. Coaching smacked of professionalism. Though long established at the provincial level, coaches were not so acceptable at international levels, hence the advice that Cavanagh could not be nominated as 'coach'. Personality also played a role, for most on the NZRFU Council had far more time for Cavanagh senior that his somewhat arrogant, dogmatic son, and so even if the function of coach were generally accepted, his chances of selection would have been reduced. Whatever the reasons, Alex McDonald travelled as assistant manager, but Cavanagh was sorely missed.

That wonderful chap Alex McDonald ... was there with Parker, but I really felt that great player and administrator that he was, there had been an evolution of change, in scrums for instance ... and I think it demanded a man who was young,
virile and proven to be successful in the national field so far as the Ranfurly Shield was concerned. That coach of course was Vic Cavanagh, and I think that was one of the great tragedies that he did not get that appointment as coach of that side to Africa. I think we would possibly have had different results had he gone there, because he had wonderful influence and he was deeply respected by the players.

The All Blacks lost all four Tests in South Africa, and this came as a deep shock to all New Zealand, especially when the build-up to this series had been so long, and so intense. In farewelling the team, Keith Holyoake, the acting Leader of the Opposition, had said that 'the honour and prestige of the whole of New Zealand were in the hands of the team, and he was positive that they would carry out that trust with great honour.' National honour and international sporting success were closely related, and the men responsible became local, if not national, heroes.

Dunedin's citizens have earned a reputation for being undemonstrative, but that could not be said of the crowd that gathered at the railway station yesterday morning when the Otago members of the All Black rugby team to tour South Africa left the city of the first stage of their trip. The crowd that gathered numbered hundreds, and one spontaneous gesture that probably did not impress itself fully on those present was that the Dunedin Ladies' Brass Band arrived in full force without being requested to do so.

With such a build up to the tour, and the great pride of the province in its contribution to the national team, the 'national disgrace' of defeat might have weighed most heavily on Otago. That there was no evidence of this can be easily explained, for the one man who had the ability and knowledge to counter the South African game had been left behind in New
Zealand - Otago's Vic Cavanagh. Indeed Cavanagh would have had the South Africans seeking ways to counter the New Zealanders. Cavanagh's record in 1949 only confirmed this, although not before local feeling had been further inflamed by a second snub to Cavanagh, when he was dropped as South Island selector.

That some discrimination has been shown against Otago would appear evident however from the fact that during the past ten years or so, it has been represented among the South Island selectors on only two occasions and when a man of the calibre of Mr. V.G. Cavanagh jnr. is passed by for men with far fewer qualifications then it is increasingly apparent that this province is paying the penalty for its success.

Post-war complacency in the wider society was reflected in rugby thinking, and so, for example, the lessons provided by the 1937 Springboks in scrumming were only absorbed a decade later after an even more decisive, and humiliating display. Many at the higher levels of the game still looked back to the glories of the '2-3-2' days', and indeed both the managers on the 1949 tour had achieved their playing fame under the old system. But there were also other men, younger men with new ideas who urged changes to the game, realizing that New Zealand rugby could not simply rely on its past successes, such as the 1924 'Invincibles' and more recently the Kiwis, but had to progress if it wished to retain its international standing.

There is a growing conviction among the public and the football fraternity that the time is overdue for a change of personnel not only of its administrators in the controlling body, but in positions such as those of selectors, where some of those older members should stand aside and allow younger men with new ideas to impart new virility to the game.
It took the double defeat at the hands of the Australians and South Africans in 1949 to shake this complacency, though for some time (as Cavanagh complained) administrators still did very little to tackle the playing problems of the day. Cavanagh could have been one to lead the restructuring, but by 1950 New Zealand rugby had lost the services of its most outstanding coach.

Cavanagh gave a final display of his mastery in the season before he retired.

It won't go down in history as having that particular emphasis but I think one of the greatest years was when we were able to put eleven players in our national team to play South Africa, and still have a calibre of players left who, by training and the development of skills by Cavanagh, combined with their natural abilities, enabled us to hold the Shield in that difficult year. That proved that we had the strength and the depth.

Otago had faced a daunting season, with six Shield challenges, and a northern tour, and eleven of the team in South Africa. Few would have foreseen that at the season's end, Otago still held the Shield, had lost only two matches and four of the team represented New Zealand against Australia. It was not done without difficulty. Two key players, L. Haig and C. Moore, were lost through injury even before the season began, and injuries through the season meant the back line was not the same for two games running. Otago took great pride in her champions, as Arnold Manion recalled:

I think most of Otago people prided themselves that they were so strong, they thought they had a team strong enough to hold the Shield and yet the top line were away.
The first challenge proved the most severe, though it came from one of the smallest unions in the country, Buller.

We were playing Buller ... and they had us slogged in the first half. They had us beaten, and then for some reason they changed their tactics. Our blokes tired a bit, I think they were possibly overtrained. We finished up drawing with them six-all so we still held the Shield. But from then on it built up again. I don't think anyone else at that time could have filled Cavanagh's place.

Otago picked up to give a far more convincing display against Manawatu (22-3), and then faced its great rival, Southland. In the largest 'invasion' since 1937, 34,000 saw Otago just hold on to win 6-3. The special feeling between the provinces was still strong, and was reinforced by Otago's decision to offer Southland the game against Australia, originally allocated to Otago.58 The size of this crowd shows the intense interest of the province in the fortunes of what was really its 'second fifteen', and victory confirmed the strength of the province and the injustice done to Vic Cavanagh by the rugby establishment. The All Blacks in South Africa, themselves the focus of great attention, shared this interest in the Shield challenges:

We got a cable every Sunday to let us know who'd won the Shield game, and it was always announced at the team talk on Sunday morning at 10 o'clock ... I always remember sitting beside Has Catley, and Has said "She'd be gone today" because we were playing Waikato, they had a good team ... Anyway the cable arrived. Jim Parker opened it and said "The result of the Shield game is Otago 27, Waikato 3" and Has said "Christ, I wonder where they were beaten" and I said "They were beaten everywhere by the sound of things".

Immediately after the Waikato game, Otago went on a
gruelling northern tour, playing five matches in two weeks. But though Otago travelled north, the Shield remained in the south, as it had since 1935. In the latter years of Otago's 'reign', the province had to defend its possession of the Shield against northern critics as well as northern challengers. The New Zealand Sportsman criticized Otago for not taking the Shield on this northern tour:

The representative fixture list provides Otago with six Ranfurly Shield games, all at Carisbrook. Other unions, notably Hawkes Bay and Wellington having had a good run with the Shield, sportingly took it on tour. Not so Otago. It appears regrettably clear that Otago's main interest in the Ranfurly Shield is the money it can get out of it. Already it has made a glittering harvest out of the Shield and continues to trade in the fact that it is difficult for North Island teams to challenge at full strength. Otago is making a northern tour this year, and would have gained immeasurably in prestige if it had elected to play at least one match in the North Island for the Shield.

The Otago reply was that this tour was not being undertaken at full strength, for eleven players were in South Africa, and so any victory would have been a hollow one. The contribution of the two southern provinces to the game was also reiterated.

It will not be gainsaid that the performances of Otago and Southland Shield teams during the past three seasons have proved that the way to achieve rugby success is to get back to the fundamentals of the game and if for no other reason the game owes something to these two unions. If they have capitalised on possession of the Shield, no one will say that their gains have not been put back for the good of the game.

This was the Otago of old, the leader in politics, in education, and in sport.
Otago played six matches before returning home, and with losses against Wanganui and Southland, and a drawn game with Wellington, perhaps it was as well the Shield had not been taken on tour. In the final two challenges for the season, Otago just edged out Taranaki 6-5, and having beaten Auckland at Eden Park, convincingly repeated this at Carisbrook before another large Wednesday crowd. The Otago All Blacks had sent a wire before the last match, reading 'Expect to see the Shield on arrival. Best of luck. Club 31.' With this incentive, the Shield was retained for another year.

Vic Cavanagh, assisted by Charlie Saxton, had performed the impossible, and, as the Rugby Almanack noted 'chief credit must be given to (Otago's) selectors and coaches for their success'. There was little doubt in the province that Cavanagh had been the architect of the success:

Vic had the art of stirring up his players to get the best out of them ... Some players you kid to go harder, others you bully to go harder, and this is why I think Otago was so strong at the time. Vic was so ruthless and he was able to work his men up so that they were so mad at him that they were giving the best all the time.

Many felt he could have done the same in South Africa. On the return of the Otago All Blacks, a dinner was given at Forbury Park, and Arnold Manion recalled that after presentations to the Otago coaches, Cavanagh spoke so strongly that Jimmy Kearney exclaimed 'wouldn't it make you cry'. Cavanagh had been sorely missed in South Africa.

Yet it was unlikely that Otago could have held the Shield had Cavanagh gone to South Africa (even though Charlie Saxton was an astute coach). This chapter has shown the importance that this 'symbol of Rugby supremacy' held for
Otago and its impact on provincial spirit, but if there were a choice, was it 'the Shield' or the possibility of victory in South Africa had Cavanagh been there?

I think that everybody was disappointed that he didn't get the honour. I think if it came down to it, you would have thought well, sooner lost the Shield and Vic got what he really deserved.

This puts provincial consciousness and pride in its context. The Shield had served a most important purpose in reviving and strengthening this feeling, but gone was the strong provincialism that had characterised Otago's early years. The national importance of the All Blacks, and New Zealand's efforts in South Africa, laid a greater claim to loyalties than did the province. There was certainly provincial pride in Otago's contribution to the national side, and disappointment at the rejection of the claims of Vic Cavanagh, but the tour was viewed in its national context and its failure was felt as New Zealanders. Cavanagh, writing in 1950, demonstrated this priority of national, before provincial, interest:

It is not a healthy sign that one province should provide so many members of an All Black pack as Otago has provided so recently. I must make myself clear. I do not think for a moment that Otago's All Black forwards have not earned their places. On the contrary, I have the greatest admiration for the Otago players, and any distinction that has come their way has been well earned and well deserved. But the standard of forward play throughout New Zealand should be so high and competition so keen that no province should have such a preponderance of representatives in an All Black pack.

National interests, and local concerns, were predominant in the lives of most New Zealanders.
The Shield had been vitally important to the province in its Centennial year, when pride and nostalgia for past glories merged with pride in present achievements, giving the province renewed confidence in its future. But for many, Otago's lengthy tenure of the Shield was at too high a cost. With the attention of the province focused on the representative side, club rugby seemed neglected. This was a cause of concern even in 1947.

Sir - There was no Rugby competition matches last Saturday, there will be none this Saturday, and if Otago retains the Shield there will be none next Saturday. It is discouraging for players to miss their rugby week after week in this fashion. Admittedly it is difficult to work in both club and representative matches on the same day, but I and many others are sure it can be done. There is plenty of time before three o'clock on Saturday afternoons, and I don't think many players would object to an occasional Saturday morning. Hoping the Rugby Union will think seriously of the hundreds who want to play football as well as watch it. - 68 Player.

For the next three years, the club competition was curtailed, and there was concern at the impact this would have on the game.

The club season was very short - fourteen Saturdays - and this is an unfortunate thing for the mass of the club players. After all, only a handful of the regular players can hope to qualify for the rep team, and there is always the possibility that the standard of club rugby might suffer in the following season if the majority of the players do not get a full programme completed. 69

As soon as the representative season started, interest in club games fell away, and by 1950, although Otago had hosted a feast of high level rugby, many players had had enough.
(The Shield) did bring the province together, but I know club players were a bit sick of the Shield. A lot of them were hoping to see the Shield go when it did go, because of what was happening.

Yet at the lower levels of the game, rugby clubs were receiving the benefits of the interest in the sport generated by the Shield.

It was a great boost to rugby. There's no doubt about that. It did the same as television has done to a lot of sports, it put all the interest onto rugby because we had some terrific teams and some very good wins, and probably dozens of kids took on rugby who otherwise wouldn't have in our peak years. We gained a lot of young fellows to rugby.

This interest was fostered by the great excitement that still surrounded the matches at Carisbrook, for even if the players were tiring of the Shield, spectators continued to flock to Carisbrook.

The first representative match in 1950 was against the British Lions, and a great crowd (33-35000) gathered to see one of Otago's finest games. With the return of the Otago All Blacks (though some, like Charlie Willocks, had retired), Otago had a formidable side; indeed every forward had represented New Zealand. The practice and experience of the Shield years came together in a glorious display.

That was a terrific game in 1950. When he kicked off, the whole team seemed to follow the ball right down to where the ball landed, which was fairly well near the goal line, and they virtually went straight over for a try. They came back like that over and over again. The Lions wondered what had hit them.

J. Pearson and C. James in The World of Rugby give the reactions of Bleddyn Williams, the great Welsh centre, to this game:
The game against Otago really hit us. I had never seen anything like their rucking in my life before, and neither had any of our forwards. We could hook the ball alright in the scrum, and we could win some ball in the line-out, but we simply could not match the ball winning ability of the New Zealand forwards in the loose.

But it was not just the forwards who were dominant. Peter Johnstone recalled Williams saying 'We expected to have a tough game in the forwards, but we never expected your backs to be so good'. Williams might have been referring in particular to one of Meates' tries:

There was a throw-in, and it was fifteen yards from the Rose Pavilion and on Carisbrook, and we got possession, and then out to Laurie ... Ron Elvidge at second-five, Colin at centre, and he stepped inside Bleddyn Williams, and he passed to Bill Meates on the right wing and he still had ten yards to run to put it down. That would be the epitomy of the speed of the ball beating the speed of the man.

Otago 23, British Lions 9. National pride in inflicting the first loss on the touring side combined with great provincial pride, especially as the last overseas team to play Otago, the 1937 Springboks, had soundly beaten Otago. The province confidently looked to another season with the Shield.

The first challenge, as ever from Southland, confirmed the strength of the province with a good win, 22-3. The next game was against Canterbury, and as the Star Sports declared: 'Canterbury may beat Otago in the Ranfurly Shield challenge, but no-one would bet on it.' Only 12,000 came to Carisbrook, such was the confidence that day.

It was a Wednesday game, and the ground had been fairly firm up to that stage. That morning we had steady light rain for two or three hours, and it was greasy on top. Otago had rested
a couple of players for this game, because Canterbury had been beaten by Southland - they weren't looked on as being a terribly serious challenge ... but Canterbury were a totally different team ... and we were completely outplayed on the day. We had a Wellington referee too. There was a stunned silence in the stand, and I can remember somebody saying 'that's the referee we'd had in some game when we hadn't done well' (Hawkes Bay 1948).

The end had come, 'not with a bang but a whimper'. Canterbury, in its Centennial year, had won the Shield by beating Otago at its own game.

In the Canterbury game, the forward domination upon which Otago's success has for so long been founded, the very factor which has brought victory after victory, failed. In fact it was in this department that Otago was decisively beaten.

Otago could, however, take pride that the value of the 'Otago game' had been recognised. Although Otago supporters were naturally disappointed, the players did not necessarily share this emotion.

It was marvellous while we had it, but in every way it was a relief to see it go, well, I felt that way anyway. We'd held it so long, and we used to train on Sundays, and I didn't have a car, and I used to catch the train in Mosgiel on a Sunday morning at nine o'clock, and go into town, get off at Kensington, and go on the tram to Tahuna for practice, and I'd be there for an hour before the practice started ... we'd have our practice for a couple of hours ... and then after a shower, catch the tram back to Kensington ... sit up there for an hour and a half or so to wait for the four o'clock train ... and that was my Sunday. That was Sunday after Sunday I'd have to do that.

Such dedication and commitment was an important part of Otago's success. As well, Otago had players of great skill and natural ability, as shown by the representation of Otago players in All Black sides during the Shield period. But
as seen, Otago also had Vic Cavanagh.

Beyond this was the special factor in Otago's success - a coaching of a standard not approached in New Zealand in the last generation. Mr. V.G. Cavanagh junior, the principal coach, became surrounded by detractors as his successes mounted. But he carried on producing teams, often composed of indifferent material, which played which an intelligence and spirit beyond the reach of any other New Zealand province. He received astonishingly few tributes from other parts of New Zealand.

Otago received few tributes and much criticism for its style of play, and this came from within the province as well. In response to an article by Cavanagh noting the similarity between the Otago game and the Kiwi's style, 'Wasted Years' wrote:

In one thing I agree heartily with Mr. Cavanagh. I can see the similarity of the Kiwi to Otago football. It is grey and colourless, uninteresting to watch, smugly contented, and as it has never used its wings, is confined to a safe existence on definitely solid ground, where, by waiting for a dropped prize or a mistake of its competitors, and scratching quickly, it achieves many a goal that its more venturesome cousins do not get. May I venture to hope that the Kiwi of New Zealand Football will some day fly.

There were fears that bright, interesting football was threatened by the 'grim, dour' Otago game, especially as other unions moved to adopt this style of play.

Had Otago enjoyed only moderate success, the rest of the Dominion would have had forcefully brought to its attention the need for earnest scrummaging, careful coaching in essentials, and physical fitness. Those other unions that were willing to learn could have incorporated these lessons in their usual play and benefited thereby. Otago's continuous runs of success, however, have done more than suggest improvements. They have cast a long shadow over New Zealand rugby and they are bringing the belief that the only way to beat Otago is to do all things that Otago does but do them better.
But whether Otago's contribution was perceived as benefi-
cial or detrimental to the game, the province had dominated
New Zealand rugby in this period and had a profound impact on
the game. Canterbury had learnt its lessons well, and the
Lions had had much to regret about Otago's influence in the
All Black's style of play. The Rugby Weekly explained the
criticism of Otago:

The anti-Otagoism which has been so prevalent
in New Zealand in recent years has been caused
by two things, envy of Otago's consistent
success in Shield challenges and a belief that
Otago's natural pride in its achievement ex-
ceeded proper bounds.

If pride should be a cause for censure, it is little
wonder Otago faced a barrage of criticism. The Shield period
was a source of tremendous pride for the province, and had
reawakened a sense of identity and community within the pro-
vince, if only for a while. Divisions within the province
were submerged as town and country, working-class and upper-
class, rallied behind their victorious side.

Shield rugby was also special rugby for the players, and
the high level of competition produced nineteen All Blacks,
again a source of pride. At lower levels of the game, many
youngsters were drawn to rugby, and the clubs, in time, bene-
fitied from this influx.

Shield successes had also done much to restore provincial
confidence. Cavanagh had shown that it was not just popula-
tion that made for achievement (as All Black teams showed at
the international level), for had this been so, Otago would
soon have lost the Shield to its northern rivals. The demo-
graphic trend did not necessarily spell disaster for Otago,
and past glories might return.

The golden era is over for Otago - for the moment at least. It was good while it lasted, and during that time Otago fielded some grand Rugby teams and played some fine football. It will all come again.

But the golden era of rugby was as its precursor. It had a profound impact on the province at the time, it was remembered with pride and a certain nostalgia, but it would not return.

They had the old Cavanagh 'do or die' still at that stage. That went on through different coaches for years after. Everybody was talking about Cavanagh and everybody tried to do the same as he did, the same style of rugby. It went on for a while ... But they lost the art.
FOOTNOTES

2. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May 1984.
3. W. McCarthy, Haka! The All Blacks Story, p.204.
5. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May 1984.
7. ODT, 10 Jul. 1947, p.2 c.1.
8. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May 1984.
10. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May, 1984. The same story is also related in O'Hagan, p.107.
13. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May 1984.
14. ODT, 4 Sep. 1947, p.2 c.3.
15. A.R. Haig, 0. 5 Jul. 1984.
17. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May. 1984.
21. B. Bernes, 0. 3 Jul. 1984.
22. ODT, 2 Aug. 1948, p.4. c.4.
24. ODT, 23 Aug. 1948, p.4 c.1.
25. A. Manion, 0. 5 Jul. 1984.
26. Star Sports, 4 Sep. 1948, p.3 c.5.


30. This game had been set back to 3.15 at the request of the Dunedin Jockey Club, who were holding their Spring Meeting (W.M/C/ORFU, 6 Sep. 1948). The ORFU tried to avoid such clashes wherever possible, and smaller attendances at games were generally blamed on the counter-attraction of the races.

31. L. Knight, Shield Fever, p.74.


34. Star Sports, 2 Oct. 1948, p.5 c.3.


36. McLintock, p.748.


40. W.M/C/ORFU, 26 Apr. 1948.

41. The All Black team to tour South Africa was announced on 2 Oct. 1948 after the North-South match (McCarthy, p.208). Vic Cavanagh's decision to accept nomination was clearly influenced by the large number of Otago players in the team.


44. Dunning & Sheard, p.223. The English Rugby Union, which dominated the organisation of rugby at international levels had yet to fully accept the importance of training and coaching.

45. O'Hagan, ch.9, and Knight, p.64, discuss possible reasons for Cavanagh's rejection.

47. The proposed tour in 1940 was cancelled because of the war, and then plans for a 1948 tour had had to be delayed because of difficulties over travel. New Zealand had waited a long time for this tour.

48. ODT, 12 Apr. 1949, p.6 c.1.

49. ODT, 7 Apr. 1949, p.8 c.4.

50. ODT, 4 Jun. 1949, p.4 c.1.

51. Dunstall, p.397.

52. ODT, 1 Jun. 1949, p.3 c.2.


58. ODT, 3 Jun. 1949, p.4 c.3.


60. ODT, 16 Jun. 1949, p.3 c.3.

61. Ibid.


64. B. Barnes, o. 3 Sep. 1984.


68. ODT, 9 Aug. 1947, p.9 c.2.

69. Star Sports, 24 Jul. 1946, p.3 c.2.

70. A.R. Haig, o. 5 Jul. 1984.
71. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984. There was a record number of 48 teams entered in the primary schools competition in 1949 (ORFU Annual 1950, p.13).

72. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.

73. Reason & James, p.106.

74. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May. 1984.

75. A.R. Haig, 0. 5 Jul. 1984.

76. Star Sports, 22 Jul. 1950, p.3 c.2.

77. A. Manion, 0. 5 Jul. 1984.


79. P. Johnstone, 0. 30 May. 1984.

80. Star Sports, 16 Sep, 1950, p.3 c.4.


83. quoted in Star Sports, 16 Sep, 1950, p.3. c.4.

84. Star 7 O'clock, 17 Feb. 1979, p.12 c.1. (Reprint of articles from 'Great Days in Otago Rugby').

85. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.
CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt of the special role rugby played in Otago in the 1940s. Rugby was not 'only a game' nor was it a diversion from 'real life'. This upper-middle class English game had been taken over and democratized; all could and did participate in the game in some way. Rugby represented divisions between class and locality within the province, yet bridged them, and so was as much a part of 'real life' as work, religion or politics.

Rugby, as did the nation, struggled for its survival during the first half of the decade. Many clubs were unable to field senior teams, and in some areas competitions ceased altogether. Yet, where possible, rugby continued, and it was the men in reserved occupations during the war that laid the foundations for Otago's post-war success. These were reinforced by returning servicemen, and, with this nucleus, Otago under Cavanagh was able to rise to greatness, dominating New Zealand rugby for three years.

Rugby, at all levels, was still the 'great leveller'. Players were predominantly from the working and middle-classes, but all could and did participate. Social differentiation was noticeable between clubs, yet distinctions were not rigid. Administrators were drawn principally from the middle and upper-classes, but a number of working men did serve on ORFU committees. Although the grandstands and the terraces made for some social distinctions between spectators at Carisbrook, the game attracted the interest and support of all social
classes. Rugby, then bridged divisions within the province, at least for men.

The rituals of the game for both players and spectators were almost exclusively male. Thus the myth of a pioneer, male-dominated society was perpetuated in modern, industrial society. This was slowly beginning to change after the war. Women were attending matches and the dances held by clubs, and after this period, played a greater role in the social activities directly related to the game. The rugby club became less a 'male preserve' than it had been in the 1940s, and the male sub-culture centred on the club changed accordingly.

Rugby, and its associated social activities, enhanced the quality of life for those who followed and played the game. Rugby was one of life's few pleasures for men who had grown up in the Depression, and then lived through a world war. The thrill of the game, the closeness and conviviality on the terraces, the mingling in the pub and pavilion strengthened the bonds between those involved; these pleasures were valued highly. Men at times made great sacrifices to play the game, particularly so in the rural areas. The challenge and satisfaction of the game itself was important, although rugby for both players and spectators was much more than eighty minutes on the field. The whole day could revolve about the game, so close was the tie between rugby and male social patterns. As Tom Mockford recalled: 'We just lived for rugby, and there was nothing else to do'.

2
There were few alternatives to rugby, but then none (with the exception of the races) were sought. Rugby was 'the' sport.

Post-war enthusiasm for the game reached new heights between 1947 and 1950 when Otago held the Ranfurly Shield. Otago entered its second 'Golden Era'. Success at the provincial level re-awakened a sense of identity and community within Otago, and revived the confidence of an earlier period of provincial supremacy. Otago's domination of New Zealand rugby reassured all that past glories could return, that the decline did not matter. But rugby stood alone against the tide, and soon, too, the 'Golden Era' of rugby came to an end.

Rugby in Otago did not start in the 1940s, nor did it end with the loss of the Shield. It was not the intention of this essay to trace social developments in the game (although some have been noted), for historical change cannot be isolated into neat, clearly defined periods. Rugby and all that the game entailed in this decade drew on long established customs and patterns of behaviour. But in a sense this decade was distinct. Within one decade rugby has passed from its most difficult years to its most glorious. Yet rugby in both periods was still 'Otago rugby'. Those who played and administered the game were the same, and the rituals associated with the game remained strong throughout. The difference was the interest and enthusiasm fostered in the latter years because of the success of the provincial side, as shown by the great crowds regularly attended Carisbrook. Not all played, and not all watched the game, but especially in the Shield
period few were not involved in these games in some way. Those who did not attend the game or listen to it on the radio, heard about it at the pub, at work or at home, and read of the game in the newspapers. Rugby involved the province, and the success of these years was felt by all. It gave a much needed confidence to the province, drawing the province together, if only for a time. Rugby was an important and vital part of life in Otago; it had never been 'just a game'.
FOOTNOTES

2. I.B. Mockford, 0. 4 Jul. 1984.
APPENDIX (1)

PLAYER OCCUPATIONS

1: Employer
Company secretary (1), cartage contractor (1), soft goods manufacturer (1).

2: Professional
Minister (1), accountant (2), professional (1).

3: Semi-Professional
Schoolmaster (5)

4: Self-Employed
Grocer (6), soapmaker (1), maltster (1), commercial artist (1), builder (1), confectioner (1), pastrycook (1), milkman (1), fruiterer (1), plumber (1), butcher (2), dry cleaner (1), janitor (1), boxmaker (1), painter (2).

5: Officials/Petty Executives
Constable (13), bank official (1), guard (1).

6: White Collar
Clerical: Clerk (10), post office clerk (1), insurance clerk (4), customs clerk (1), railways clerk (2), clerk - justice department (1), clerk - tax department (1).
Salesman (1), shop assistant (2), draper's assistant (1), grocer's assistant (2), paint salesman (1), civil servant (6), university student (1), Training college student (4), traveller (4), wool sorter (1), warehouseman (7).

7: Skilled
Metal Trades: Hillside worker (14), boilermaker (5), moulder (3), fitter (6), machinist (1), mechanic (1), brass finisher (1), roll edge machinist (1).
Carpenter (11), plasterer (2), coach painter (1), enamel sprayer (1), compositor (1), engine driver (1).

8: Semi-Skilled
Presser (1), wool presser (2), lorry driver (1), truck driver (1), gardener (1), foundry employee (1), linesman (2), storeman (7).

9: Unskilled
Post Office Worker (2), brewery worker (2), factory worker
(2), timber worker (1), railway worker (1), packer (1),
gripman (1), labourer (14), hospital porter (1),
attendant (1).

TOTAL: 190.
APPENDIX (2)

DUNEDIN OCCUPATIONS


1: Employer

Employer (non-precious metals), 26, employer (clothing) 39, manager (clothing) 93, employer (food drink and tobacco) 34, employer (construction) 172, employer (transport) 45, manager (finance and commerce) 520, merchant 13, company secretary 57.

Total: 1009.

2: Professional

Marine engineer 13, lawyer 95, doctor 76, civil engineer 32, accountant 198, auditor 75.

Total: 489.

3: Semi-Professional

Minister 106, dentist 39, teacher 197.

Total: 342.

4: Self Employed


Total: 2446.

5: Officials/Petty Executives

Manager/foreman (mining) 19, manager/foreman (stone and clay) 22, manager/foreman (chemicals) 57, foreman (non-precious metals) 212, manager/foreman (food, drink and tobacco) 115, manager/foreman (wood) 55, manager/foreman (paper) 59, manager/foreman (construction) 111, manager/foreman (transport) 108, guard 31, supervisor (post office) 24, constable 84, caretaker 141.

Total: 1048.
6: **White Collar**

Insurance agent 53, livestock buyer 4, commercial traveller 151, salesman 302, shop assistant 340, warehouseman 147, public servant 32, draughtsman 54, clerk 1389.

Total: 2472.

**Middle-Class** (not specified).

Financial and commercial occupations 3266, persons in public administration 1715, clerical and professional occupations 2986.

Total: 7967.

7: **Skilled**

Boilermaker 162, mechanical engineer 219, fitter 421, moulder 202, machinist 114, mechanic 76, motor engineer 227, turner 98, welder 78, coachpainter 25, slaughtermen 28, joiner 90, wood machinist 69, compositor 39, plasterer 65, carpenter 714, plumber 149, crane driver 29, engine driver 87.

Total: 2692.

8: **Semi-Skilled**

Fisherman 103, gardener 121, linesman 73, motor assembler 20, presser 88, chamberman 7, yardman 37, fireman 115, shunter 32, conductor 79, tram motorman 113, taxi driver 135, bus driver 57, van driver 519, telegraph cable operator 17, storeman 634, sheet metal worker 55.

Total: 2205.

9: **Unskilled**

Farm labourer 81, forest occupations 13, miners 78, coal mine worker 10, coal miner 5, manure worker 115, factory hand 88, freezing works employee 29, factory assistant 11, sawmill worker 15, builder's labourer 133, roadman 29, railway surfaceman 48, ganger 18, labourer 422, porter 56, railway worker 199, garage attendant 56, seaman 17, waterside worker 432, packer 97, hospital attendant 13, cleaner 33, watchman 46, barman 117, hotel porter 47.

Total: 2208

**Working-Class** (not specified)

Workers in stone/clay 186, workers in processes relating to chemicals etc. 510, workers in non-precious metals 3104, workers in precious metals 85, workers in ships/boats 188, workers in fibrous material 518, workers in
clothing 670, workers in leatherware 40, workers in food, drink, tobacco, 892, workers in wood 631, workers in paper 409, workers in other materials 93, workers in construction 2128, workers in gas, water etc. 258, workers in transport 2614, occupations connected with sport 127, personal and domestic workers 652.

Total: 13105.

Categories excluded: armed forces; other; not specified.

GRAND TOTAL: 36,183.
APPENDIX (3)

ADMINISTRATOR'S OCCUPATIONS.

Taken first year of election to management committee (after 1939)

1: **Employer**
   Company secretary (3), company manager (1), manager 'Truth' (1), manager 'Modern Furniture Ltd.' (1), manager 'Knox Bros.' (1), manager 'C.K. Saxton Ltd.' (1), manager City and Suburban Window Cleaning Co.' (1), company representative 'Watties' (1).

2: **Professional**
   Doctor (2), engineer (1), accountant (1), master OBHS (1)

3: **Semi-Professional**
   Teacher (6), Inspector SPCA (1).

4: **Self Employed**
   Bootmaker (1), grocer (1), butcher (2), carter (1), maltster (1), storekeeper (1), pastrycook (1).

5: **Officials/Petty Executives**
   Department manager (1), foreman printer (1), timber inspector (1), postal officer (1).

6: **White Collar**
   Civil Servant (1), clerk (3), traveller (2), woolbuyer (1), draper's assistant (1).

7: **Skilled**
   Turner (1).

8: **Semi-Skilled**
   Storeman (1), hosiery operative (1).

9: **Unskilled**
   Newspaper runner (1), corporation employee (1).

**TOTAL:** 47.
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1. Unpublished

(i) Oral Interviews

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Blazey, Ces 17 May. 1984 at his home, Wellington.
Churchill, Albert 24 May. 1984 at his home, Dunedin.
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Haig, Albert 5 Jul. 1984 at his home, Mosgiel.
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Kerr, Edward 8 Jun. 1984 at his home, Dunedin.

Macalister, Prof. A.D. (Sandy) 13 Jul. 1984 at the School of Dentistry, Dunedin.


Mockford, I.B. (Tom) 4 Jul. 1984 at his home, Dunedin.

(ii) ORFU Records, AG 248, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

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2. Published

(i) Official

Census of New Zealand, 1945, Vol. 9 ('Industries and Occupations').
New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1947-49.
(ii) Unofficial
Stone’s Otago and Southland Directory, Dunedin, 1941-50.

(iii) Newspapers
Otago Daily Times, Dunedin
            Jul. – Sep. 1940.
            Apr. – Sep. 1941.
            Jul. – Sep. 1944.
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B. SECONDARY SOURCES
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2. Published
(i) Books
-----, Shield Fever: The Ranfurly Shield History of Otago
and Southland, Dunedin, 1950.


Knight, L., Shield Fever, Auckland, 1980.


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(ii) Articles

----, '65-6 looks good, but what's wrong with New Zealand Rugby', New Zealand Listener, 25 no. 630 (July 27 1951), 7.


