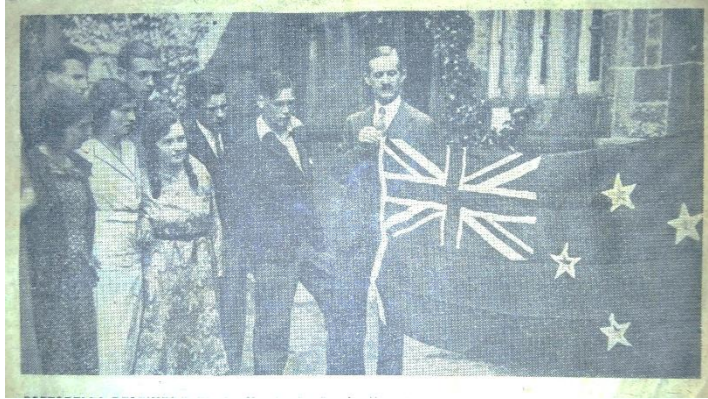


LINK WITH DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

Schools connected across 18,400 kilometers



Presentation of the Dominion flag

The school log reports that an interesting event took place in June, 1932.

Mr. W. Brugh, of Dunedin, New Zealand, presented a flag to the school on behalf of Arthur Street School there.

A year later Portobello Secondary, as

it by then was, presented a Scottish Royal Standard ('Lion Rampant') to Arthur Street School.

The pupils of Arthur Street sent the school an album containing photographs, drawings and essays illustrating life in New Zealand, and first-year pupils of Portobello responded by compiling a similar album illustrative of life in Scotland and sending it to Dunedin.

Mr Brugh visited again in 1937 and 1949 (when Sir Donald Cameron, mayor of Dunedin also visited) and the New Zealand flag was flown to mark the occasion.

The reason for these exchanges was that the first schoolmaster in Dunedin was one Mr. James Blackie, a teacher in Portobello who had emigrated in 1847.

The wish to emigrate in the 1840s was in part driven by the 'Great Disruption' of 1843, a schism in which 450 evangelical ministers broke away from the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland. The intention was to set up a Free Church settlement around the world in "New Edinburgh" (now, Dunedin) in New Zealand.

Thomas Burns, a nephew of Robert Burns, was a minister in the Free Church who actively promoted the scheme. In 1846 he took up an appointment in Portobello where he met James Blackie, a church member and schoolteacher at one of Portobello High's predecessors, who signed up.

In November 1847 Burns and Blackie departed Scotland from Greenock aboard the sailing ship *Philip Laing*. Both were among the 12 passengers paying upwards of 20 guineas (£4,000 today) for cabins. A further 235 passengers travelled in steerage in a single open cabin 45 metres by 11 metres. There was a crew of 26.

After 117 days at sea, the ship arrived at Otago harbour on 15th April 1848, three weeks after her sister ship the *John Wickliffe*.

During the journey Blackie taught regular classes on board – there were 93 children under 14 years old – and on arrival he set up the first school in the colony, originally known as the Beach School.

After only 2 years he contracted tuberculosis and moved to Sydney where he sadly died on 25th March 1851, aged only 26.

Contact between the two schools continued for some time but unfortunately ceased not long after our centenary in 1976. As part of *Portobello 150* we have reached out to them again and will be making a presentation to Arthur Street School over the summer.



Painting by David Ogilvie Robertson (1848 – 1920) depicting the arrival of the 'Philip Laing' at Port Chalmers, 18th April 1848 with the 'John Wickliffe' at anchor.