

Mosgiel Local History

"The Taieri was once the abode of a taniwha (water monster) which had its home up the Silver-stream Valley near Whare Flat. Its nest was a swamp, Waipotaka (round pool), but it was of a restless disposition so it journeyed downstream to the place where the town of Mosgiel, and the woollen factory, now stand. The hollow where the town exists was formed by its weight. Mosgiel did not meet the monster's demands so it tripped down the Taieri River. Wriggling and wriggling it made all the sharp bends between Allanton and Otokia. This part of the Taieri is called Te Rua taniwha and its former resting place at Mosgiel is Te Konika o te matamata. When the taniwha died it became Saddle Hill near Riccarton with two main humps named Puke Makamaka and Turi Makamaka."

The important land marks on the Taieri plains are:

The Māori divided the Taieri plains into three sections: the northern section nearest Dunedin is Wakehu, the middle section or East Taieri is Owhiro (The owl), and the southern section towards Waihola is Waihora (spreading waters).

The Taieri river that runs through the plains comes from the Māori word "spring tide" and is an important feature.

Makamaka – Saddle Hill soars over the north east of the Taieri plains.

The plains are guarded to the south by lake Waihola. The shallowness of the lake is reflected in its name – Waihola is the southern Māori form of the word Waihora which means, 'spreading water'.

To the west the mighty Maungatuas, sometimes known as Maukaatua rise to 895 meters above the flood plains of the Taieri river. Maungatua comes from the Māori words meaning "Hills of Spirits".

Protecting the north west of the plains lies the Silver peak range. The highest peak – silver peak or Huatea in Māori stands at 767 above sea level.

To the north is flagstaff which enjoys the Māori name of Te Whanaupaki. It is also sometimes called Whaikari. It's highest peak reaches 668 meters above sea level.

The lowest lying point in New Zealand, 2 metres below sea level lies in the middle of the Taieri plains, slightly north of the Dunedin international airport at Kirk's drain road, momona.

Mosgiel (Māori: *Te Konika o te Matamata*) is an urban satellite of Dunedin in Otago New Zealand fifteen kilometres west of the city's centre. Since the re-organisation of New Zealand local government in 1989 it has been inside the Dunedin City Council area. Mosgiel has a population of approximately 14,500 as of June 2022. The town celebrates its location, calling itself "The pearl of the plain". Its low-lying nature does pose problems, making it prone to flooding after heavy rains. Mosgiel takes its name from Mossgiel farm Ayrshire, the farm of the poet

robbery Burns the uncle of the co-founder in 1848 of the **Otago** settlement, the Reverend **Thomas Burns**

Mosgiel stands at the north-eastern extremity of the **Taieri Plain**. The Silver stream, a tributary of the **Taieri River**, runs through its north end. Between Mosgiel and the centre of Dunedin stand the rugged Three Mile Hill and Scroggs Hill, which form part of the crater-wall of a long-extinct volcano, the crater being the **Otago Harbour**. To the south of the town lies one of the many peaks that formed part of the volcano: Saddle Hill, a prominent landmark, visible from a considerable distance and notable for its distinctive shape, lies south of State Highway One where Kinmont Park, a new housing subdivision is located at the foot of the hill.

The **Dunedin southern Motorway**, upgraded in 2003, links Mosgiel with the centre of Dunedin. State Highway 87 to Kyeburn starts at a junction with State Highway 1 at the south-eastern edge of Mosgiel, the first part of the highway being the main street of Mosgiel, Gordon Road.

The site of Mosgiel figures in **Māori** legend, but surrounding features of the **Taieri Plain** and adjacent hills have older mythical associations. Of the canoes of South Island migratory legend the fourth and fifth **Takitimu** and **Arai T Uru** are mentioned in connection with the area. **Mangatua** the large hill to the west of the plain, represents a huge wave which struck the **Takitimu**, throwing overboard **Aonui**, who became a pillar on the **Tokomairaro Beach**. Another account makes **Aonui** a female survivor of the wreck of the **Arai Te Uru**, built by **Kahui Tipaa**, who had arrived earlier but sent this vessel to the Polynesian homeland **Hawaiki** to get **kumara**. On its return the canoe suffered shipwreck at **shag point in North Otago** but its survivors quested about the land in search of supplies. If they failed to get back before dawn they turned into natural landscape-features, and this fate befell **Aonui**. These ancient traditions suggest that some of the earliest Polynesian settlers in the south knew the **Taieri Plain**.

W.R. Kirk repeated the later story of a **taniwha** (water-monster), the "familiar spirit or guardian of **Te Rakitaounere** (also given as **Te Rakitauneke**) a famous chief and warrior" who lost his master about the Dunedin hills, slithered down the Silverstream, 'Whaka-ehu', and 'lay down and left a hollow **Te Konika o te Matamata**' on the site of Mosgiel. The *taniwha* (named **Matamata**) wriggled down the **Taieri**, making its tortuous course, and when he died became the seaboard hills, including **Saddle Hill**. This story has associations with **Kati Mamoe**, ('Ngati Mamoe' in modern standard Māori) of the late 17th or early 18th century. According to tradition this period also saw the occupation of the *kaik* (unfortified settlement) near modern **Henley**– called *Tai-ari* like the river – and on the hill above it a **pa**, or fortified settlement, called **Omoua**. **Tukiauau** built a **pa** called **Whakaraupuka** on the west side of **Lake Waihola** and his rival, **Tuwiriroa** came down from **lake Wakatipu** and built one at **Taieri Mouth** on the coast. Māori soon abandoned **Whakaraupuka**, but the **Taieri** settlement at **Henley** endured into modern times. (Anderson, 1998.)

In February 1770 Captain **James Cook** described the saddle-shaped hill which became known as **Saddle Hill**, the landmark east of Mosgiel. The **Weller brothers** of the **Otago whaling station** on **Otago harbour** (modern **Otakau**) sent a Mr. **Dalziel** to inspect the **Taieri Plain** for a proposed Scottish settlement in 1839, but he gave an unfavourable report. In 1844 **Edward Shortland** noticed Māori running pigs on the landward slopes of **Saddle Hill** or **Makamaka** (as he recorded the hill's Māori name). **Charles Kettle** surveyed the plain and coastal hills for the **Otago Association** in 1846 and 1847. He also climbed the westward hills and saw the raised land beyond, the nearest approach of the **Central Otago** plateau to the sea, which he correctly identified as potentially fine **pastoral** country.

Following the arrival of the Association's settlers at Dunedin in 1848, a Scots shepherd, **Jaffray**, brought his wife and dogs along the Māori track from **Kaikorai valley** and settled on **Saddle Hill** in a *whare* (a Māori-style house) in 1849, establishing the first European farmstead in the district.

In the same year the Reverend **Thomas Burns** spiritual leader of the Association's settlement, **selected** the land which would become Mosgiel.

In the mid-1850s **Arthur John Burns**, a son of Thomas Burns settled on some of the land. A large stand of native **bush** stood nearby. The richness of the land and the proximity of the main south road, more or less following the route of an old Māori track, led to early close rural settlement.

The 1861 **Otago gold rush** saw the development of a road – leading west to the interior – which intersected the site. **Arthur John Burn's** establishment of the Mosgiel Woollen Company and mill in 1871 brought the settlement of workers in cottages. 1875 saw the north-south road paralleled by a **railway** with a branch to the west constructed in 1877. The authorities declared the Mosgiel Town District in 1882 and constituted a **Borough** Council in 1885. The town grew and became the most substantial in the district. The surrounding plain became a sort of **Home County** to Dunedin, a place of prosperous farms and of the large houses of successful businessmen with rural tastes. Horse-breeding and racing flourished

From 1900 to 1997, Mosgiel was the site of **Holy Cross College**, the national Roman Catholic seminary for the training of priests. The seminary was located on extensive grounds which included a farm. The seminary was moved to Auckland in 1997 but many of its buildings remain and are used for Catholic as well as other purposes.

The significance of the area for transport grew in the 20th century when the proximity of the plain's flat land to Dunedin saw the establishment of the **Taieri Aerodrome** just north of Mosgiel, in the late 1920s and the development of **Momona Airport**, now **Dunedin International airport** further south on the plain in 1962.

After the Second World War, some expected Mosgiel might industrialise extensively, like the **Hutt Valley**, but expansion remained limited. The bankruptcy of the woollen mill in 1980 and its eventual closure have not been offset by other industrial developments.

The late 20th century's increasingly aging New Zealand population saw the expansion of housing for the elderly, with several retirement villages and communities located in the vicinity. In recent decades the hills above the plain have seen some division into **lifestyle blocks**. The 2003 completion of the Fairfield bypass shortened commuting-time via the southern motorway (part of **State highway 1**) to the city centre.

Mosgiel's economy until recent years, focused on the manufacture of wool-products and many elderly New Zealanders still associate the word "Mosgiel" with the former Mosgiel Woollen Mills. Today, Mosgiel's income comes from many sources, including local shops, cafés and bars. It remains an important service-centre for the surrounding farming community. It also hosts one of New Zealand's largest **agricultural research** institutes, **Invermay**. Until recently the largest employer was **Fisher and Paykel** which manufactures the Dish Drawer dishwasher and ranges at their Mosgiel factory. The closure of this plant was announced in early 2008.

- Steve Hansen, KNZM – All Black head coach 2012 - 2019 World Cup Winner 2015.
- Barry Milburn – New Zealand test cricketer (wicketkeeper), local butcher
- Michael McGarry– New Zealand footballer
- Rowan Milburn– New Zealand and Netherlands women's cricket international
- Geoffrey Orbell– New Zealand doctor, mostly recognised after he rediscovered the takahe a bird previously thought to be extinct
- Brad Thorn– All Black and Australian rugby league international
- Ernest John “Midge” Didham – Jockey, won 1970 Melbourne Cup

- Thomas Desmond Coughlan – 1958 All Black
- Peter Johnstone – All Black 1949–51. Captain 1950–51. Local Rugby Ground named after him. Undefeated as All Black Captain. Named as one of five players of 1951, by NZ Rugby Almanac.
- Herbert Paul Sapsford – 1976 All Black v Argentina, local dentist
- Andrew Joseph Frances Brown (known as Joe) – Entrepreneur, entertainment promoter. Franchise owner of Miss NZ Contest.
- Peter Renner – 1984 Summer Olympic representative (3,000m steeplechase), national and Oceania record holder (8.14.05) in 3,000m steeplechase.
- Don Munro MBE– opera pioneer
- Kenneth Charles Bloxham– Otago and All Black representative
- Edgar Samuel John King– Pathologist. Professor at University of Melbourne 1951–66.
- Lister Hopkinson – All Black 1967–70. Played 35 matches for NZ, including 9 Tests.
- Jenny McDonald– NZ women's hockey player 1971–85. Captain 1980–85.
- Justin Ives– Rugby International for Japan 2011 – 2015
- Roy Blair- NZ Roller skating Champion NZ Speed Ice Skating Champion Played one First Class game for Otago Cricket team. Father of NZ One Day International Bruce Blair, and Otago Representative Wayne Blair
- Bruce Blair- Otago cricket representative NZ One Day International 14 Matches.
- Mary Cuddie - Early settler, farmer and shopkeeper