

Ice skating

Jargon hunter

A bonspiel is a major curling match. Bonspiels are called at short notice when ice conditions are right.

Local nuggets

You can still skate outside in Central Otago. Manorburn Dam, just ten minutes from Alexandra by car, provides the largest area of skateable ice in the Southern Hemisphere when it freezes.

Sixty acres of ice and 2000 spectators set the scene for the first New Zealand Ice Skating championships, held at Manorburn Dam, near Alexandra, in July 1939. The *Otago Daily Times* noted that the day was perfect: 'the skates flashing in the sun,' and that the 'refreshment booths did a roaring trade in hot pies and saveloys'.

Although the New Zealand Ice Skating Association had only been formed two years earlier it was not a new sport: an ice skating club had been active in Alexandra as early as the 1880s, when permission was granted to form a skating pond on the Recreational Reserve there. Central Otago's intense winters mean that skateable ice can be found on dozens of ponds and lakes in the coldest months of the year, so it is no surprise that its residents were early exponents of the sport. Indeed, at those first championships only one skater from outside the area gained a title – Mrs Gilkison of Dunedin who won the ladies' three quarter mile speed event in a time of 4 minutes 20 seconds. Central Otago's prime spot for skating today is the Maniototo Ice Rink in Naseby, a town that titles itself the Ice Capital of New Zealand. You can relax in front of a fire and enjoy some of the hot food available after you have hung up your skates.

Curling is also a popular Otago winter sport, particularly in the Maniototo. There are more than a dozen clubs in the area, the oldest of which is the Mt Ida Curling Club, formed in 1878. In 2005 Australasia's first indoor International Curling Rink opened in Naseby and in 2007 New Zealand's first natural luge course was opened in the town.



A skater (or two?) on Manorburn Dam



A bonspiel was held in July 2007 on Idaburn Dam, Oturehua

