

# The Town Belt

## ?! What the...?!

Squatters were a particular problem in the Town Belt in the early days, especially with the rapid population increase in Dunedin following the discovery of gold in 1861. By 1866, it was reported that there were 75 people living unlawfully in the Town Belt.

## Digging deeper...

The Town Belt is always alive with the sound of birds. This stretch of bush and forest is an inner city sanctum for many of our native species, including bellbirds, tūī, kererū, fantails, warblers, silvereyes and Shining cuckoos. Many introduced birds, such as blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows, finches and rosellas, also call the Town Belt home.

## Who's who

### Charles Kettle

Charles Kettle was an English surveyor who came to New Zealand in 1840. He became a publicist for the 'New Edinburgh' settlement in Otago and travelled widely back in Britain to gather support for the new settlement. Upon returning to New Zealand, he laid out the required urban and rural lands for the future city of Dunedin, with painstaking accuracy.

It's one of the great things about Dunedin – being able to go for a bushwalk without even leaving town. The city's unique Town Belt stretches for 4.7km in a great green expanse, offering fantastic recreation opportunities for citizens and an inner city haven for local **birdlife**.

Also known as the 'Green Belt', the Town Belt was an important part of Dunedin right from the very beginning. When the new city was being planned in the 1840s, the effects of the Industrial Revolution were beginning to be felt in cities 'back home'. As a consequence, greater attention was being given to urban living conditions and the importance of parks and gardens was appreciated more than ever. So, when Charles Kettle surveyed Dunedin, he allowed for a belt of bush and parklands to remain intact, to separate the city from its suburbs.

Dunedin's early European settlers were quick to guard the Town Belt – a Board of Commissioners was set up as early as 1854 to manage this and other reserves. They had the power to remove squatters and take measures against the destruction of the bush for timber and firewood.

Today, the Town Belt is one of Dunedin's most important recreation areas, and residents have the enviable opportunity to make use of its many sportsfields, reserves, walking tracks and playgrounds.



One of the many playgrounds nestled in the Town Belt



A runner jogging through the Town Belt

