

Walking Dunedin streets in 150 year old shoes

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There is a great deal of information about the history of a city: photographs, maps, building consent databases, books, early settlers' diaries, engravings, paintings are but a few of the many disparate sources that document our built history. Unfortunately, that information is scattered and not presented in a form that gives a coherent overview of the development of the city.

This project has developed a process to integrate this scattered information. It enables 3D interactive immersive streetscapes throughout a city's history. In short, we will be able to "walk" down favourite streets for any given year.

Clearly, we are information technologists, not historians. We have done is provide the infrastructure for others to apply the framework to a city. Understanding the needs of those historians has been an important part of this project.

The application of the framework has been demonstrated with areas of Kettle's Dunedin.

In 1847, Charles Kettle produced a map showing his vision for Dunedin, its suburbs and port. His was a colonial city juxtaposing a formal human order with dramatic views of the surrounding land and seascapes.

Dunedin's eminences and thoroughfares sported many of the country's finest schools, seminaries, and houses. With their views of the Temple Plain, hills and harbour, these were the dress circle seats in the Romantic City. Few urban places anywhere have such vistas. Kettle's plan was realized and built—not perfectly, but effectively evoking his vision. (Peter Entwistle).

Other New Zealand cities were as ambitiously planned (Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch), but none remained as true to their original plans as Dunedin. Why? Perhaps it was Kettle's unique and workable vision which meshed city and environs into a single entity: streets that ended with vistas of harbour and hills; outlooks that drew the eye from native bush to burgeoning town, thence seaward. And perhaps it was his plan, combined with the early Scottish settlers in Dunedin, whose determination to carry out Kettle's plan was supported by newly discovered gold. Whatever the combination, the result is a city unique in New Zealand.

The assistance of Councillor Fliss Butcher, Peter Entwistle and historians and archivists across the city is much appreciated.

