



THE STARTING POINT FOR THE DUNEDIN CITY ELECTRIC TRAM SERVICE: A VIEW IN PRINCES STREET,
Muir and Moodie, photo.
OPPOSITE THE POST OFFICE,

Dunedin adopts and adapts to the motor car 1901-1930

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Car Ownership

By the mid-1930s the world average was one car to every 66 people; here, it was one to 11. We were not far behind Australia, Canada, or even the United States, which had one car to every 5.4 of its citizens. (France had 1:25 and Britain 1:31.)



Anne and Thomas Whitelock Kempthorne on their twin-cylinder Locomobile, made in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The firm had been founded only in 1899 and their first cars were relatively cheap, at \$600 in the USA. They were unreliable and notoriously prone to catching fire, but still they sold well: more than 4,000 between 1899 and 1902, at a time when most cars were sold in mere handfuls. Kempthorne was the co-founder of the New Zealand Drug Company, otherwise known as Kempthorne Prosser. He was the first person in Dunedin to own a car, in 1901.



The lower Stuart Street end of the Octagon probably some time from 1907 on. The car is almost certainly the 28/36HP Daimler owned by Sir James Mills, one of the grandest cars in Dunedin at the time. Mills was the founder and managing director of the Union Steam Ship Company. He had one of the first cars in Dunedin, a Gardner-Serpollet steamer (King Edward VII had one of these). Mills later replaced it with a petrol-powered 10HP Oldsmobile. Then he bought this new Daimler directly from the factory while on a visit to England in December 1906.



The fellow in chauffeur's uniform and peaked cap leaning casually against the front mudguard is very likely to be R.J. Knight. Cars could not legally be left unattended on the roadside for more than a few minutes at this time. "The Unique" was a millinery shop, so Mills was more likely visiting an office upstairs.

- 1909-1915 17% of all car owners were business owners; another 10% were managers or managing directors of businesses; 11% were farmers or runholders.



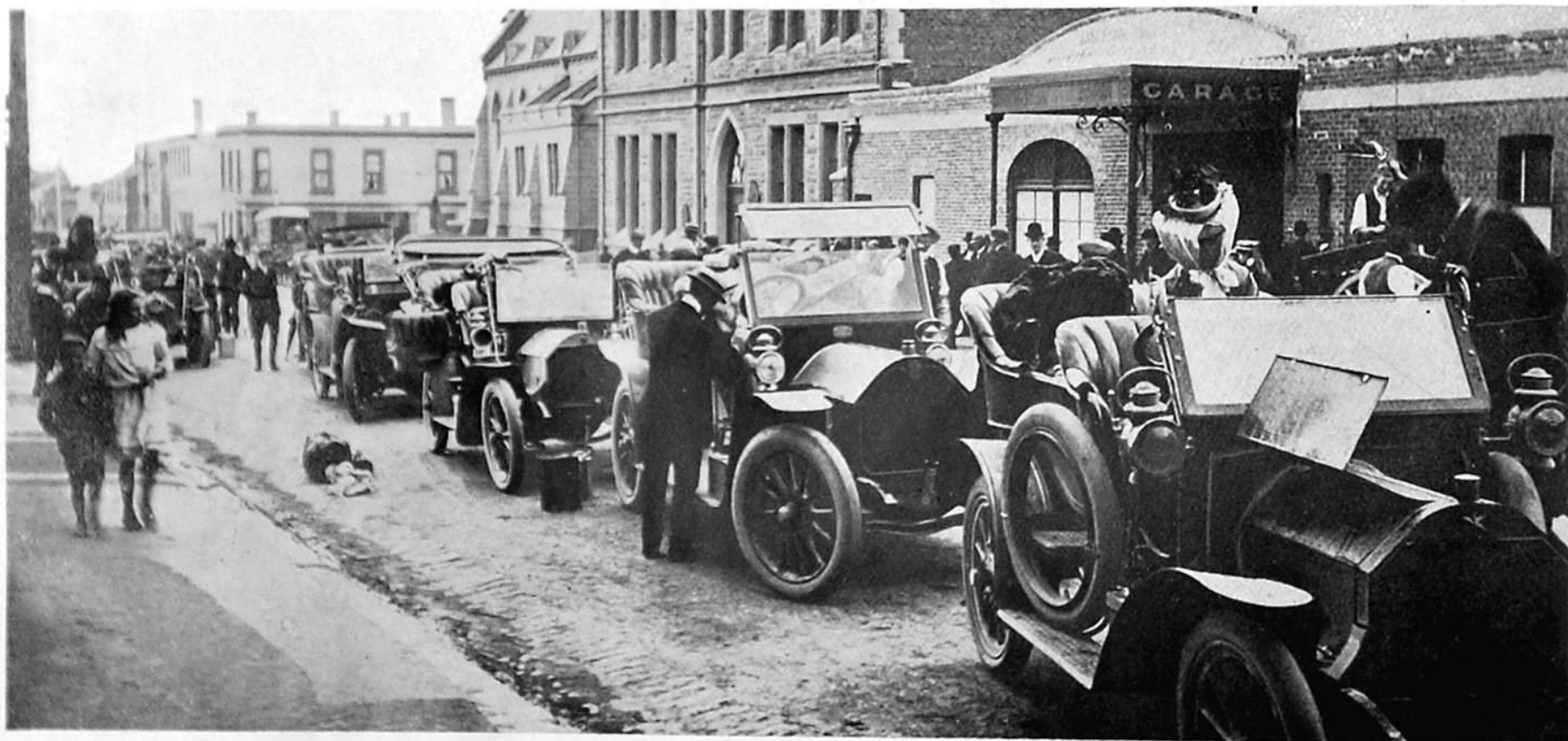
The *Otago Witness* published this photo in March 1903 with the caption "On the road down to Queenstown from Ben Lomond: the first locally-made motor car". It was a two-seater with a 4HP petrol engine, which was good for 12 mph on 28-inch wheels with solid rubber tyres. No mention was made of brakes. George Methven, who made and drove this vehicle, ran a large engineering works, first in Crawford Street and after 1910 in Anderson's Bay Road, making plumbing fittings.



This is the oldest known surviving purpose-built private garage in Dunedin, at 39 Park Street. It was built in 1912 for Angus Marshall, Principal of the Technical School. It was constructed and probably also designed by the builders C.W. Wilkinson & Company of Athol Place. Its tall proportions are characteristic of early garages, as is the ventilation: the louvres in the gable and the pipe to the far side. Petrol and oil were stored in garages so they needed good ventilation. The risk of fire meant brick construction was important, and it has a marseilles tile roof. Perhaps its most remarkable feature though is that it retains its original doors - this is exceptionally rare even for garages from the 1920s and 1930s.



Empire Motor Garage, Palmerston 1916



LEAVING COOKE, HOWLISON'S GARAGE FOR CHRISTCHURCH ON THE RETURN JOURNEY, MONDAY
MORNING, DECEMBER 30.
Y RUN FROM CHRISTCHURCH TO DUNEDIN AND BACK TO CHRISTCHURCH. (Photos by Guy.)

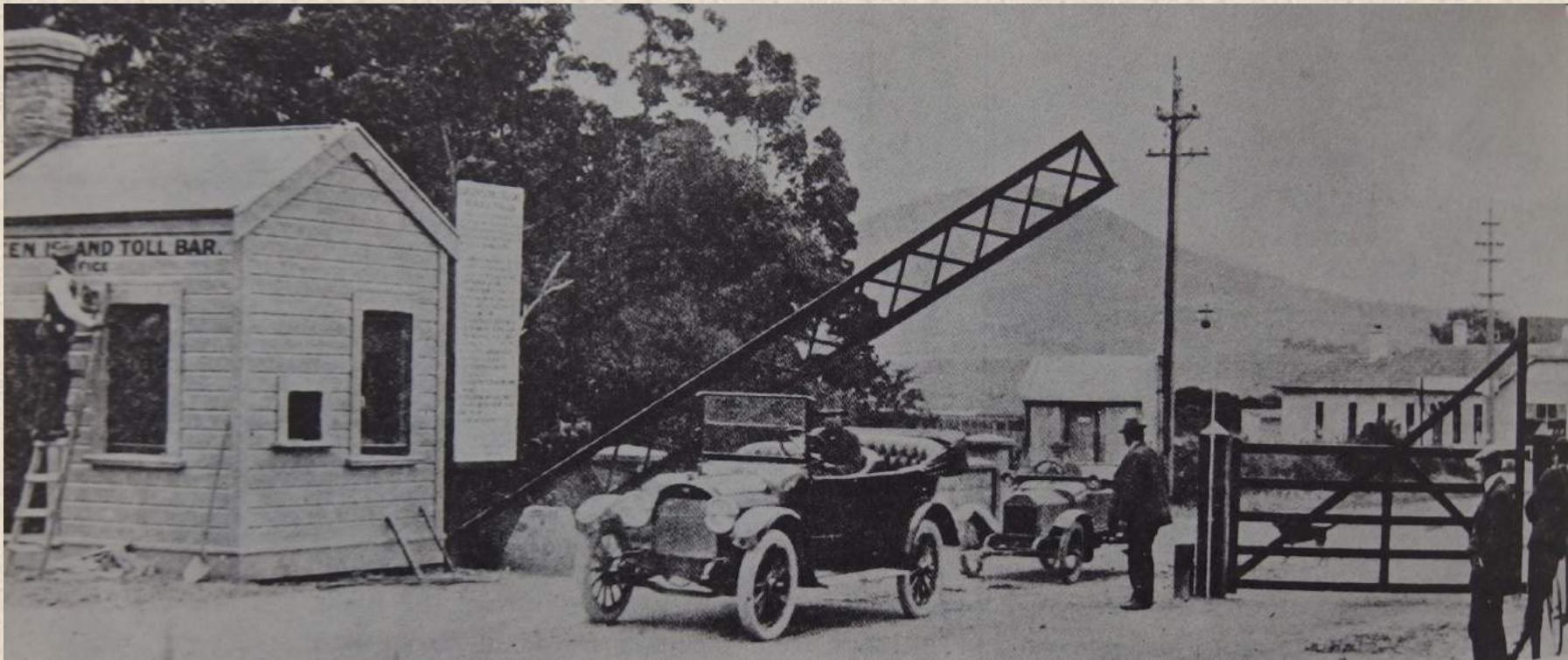
Cooke Howlison's motor garage in Hanover Street. It was built in 1907.



The First Church sector of Moray Place was one of the few places in the city where you could legally park a car for any length of time before the First World War. Business owners could object if you blocked their frontage, so cars were left in the centre of the street. Closed car bodies were uncommon until the late 1920s, so these owners are trusting to Dunedin's famously reliable climate by leaving their hoods down.

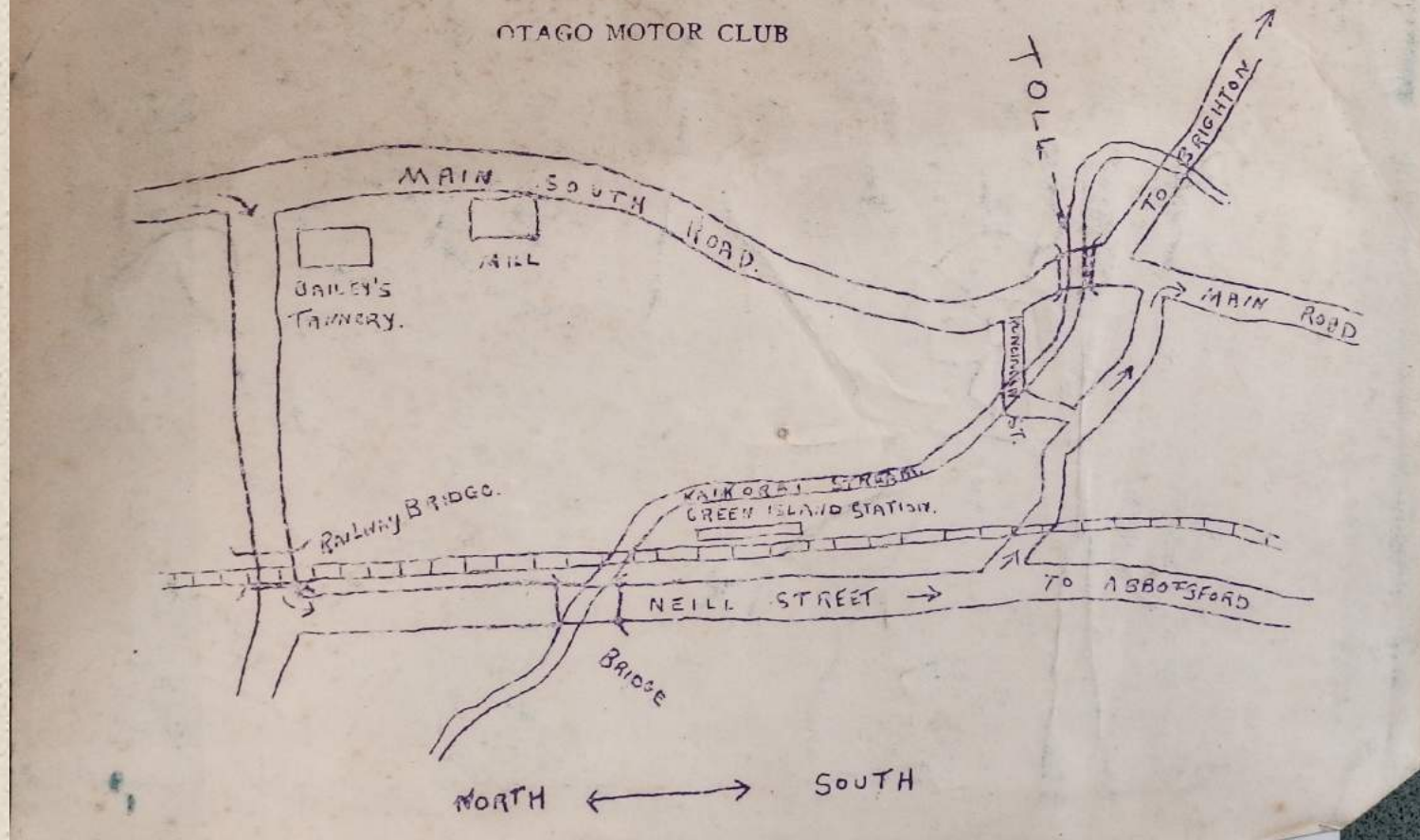


This photo of Lower Stuart Street shows cars parked along the side of the road all facing the right direction. The photo was taken before 1930 as there are no traffic lights at the Cumberland-Stuart Street intersection.



A popular outing for early motorists was a day's jaunt to Brighton or Milton, and the county councils became unhappy about the damage to their roads. The Portobello Road was closed to motor vehicles entirely for several years, and in March 1916 the Green Island Borough Council put up a toll bar across the main South Road on the small bridge across the Kaikorai Stream just before the turn-off for the Brighton Road to help pay for the road's maintenance. The mayor explained the "borough was in the peculiar position of having to maintain three miles of main road for all and sundry ... no other three miles of road in the Dominion was so expensive to keep up." 65% of the rates was being spent on the upkeep of this one stretch of road, and the council hoped this would force the government to take responsibility for it.

Plan showing Side Road to avoid
Green Island Toll.
Cars 15 hwt. or under may use Runciman St.



The Otago Motor Club distributed this hand-drawn map showing a back way to evade the toll gate, and funded a successful legal challenge to it in May 1917.



Lower Stuart Street looking east from the Bath Street corner, probably between 1925 (when national number plates came in) and 1928 (when the *Evening Star* building was finished). There are no street markings or traffic signs, only street-name signs.

The well-liked police Constable Joseph Strachan Oswald, who directed traffic at the intersection of Cumberland and lower Stuart Streets in the late 1920s until traffic lights were installed. He then controlled the much more complex Exchange intersection until 1945. He is wearing the pre-1913 police shako which had been reintroduced in 1927 and was to be dumped later in 1930 when the police reverted to the familiar British-style helmet.



THE EVENING STAR, SATURDAY, JULY 12, 1930.

WHERE PEDESTRIANS LINGER AWHILE

"Silent Policeman" Entertains Spectators at the "Evening Star" Corner



No, this is not a crowd of Rugby football enthusiasts awaiting the result of Britain's latest game. Nor is it a gathering of street corner habitués of the usual type. It is merely a little group of pedestrians, who have lingered awhile to view with critical interest and quiet amusement the motor circus presided over by a "silent policeman" in three colours, which operates at the intersection of Stuart, street and Cumberland street.

For the past few days every corner at this busy crossing has attracted similar assemblies. No doubt some of the people here are waiting for the thrill which inevitably comes when some unenlightened driver attempts the right-hand turn, or buzzes serenely through against the signals.

The *Evening Star* building on the corner of Cumberland and lower Stuart Streets was only a couple of years old when this photo was taken in July 1930. The wooden pole on the right held one of the new traffic lights, out of shot above the hand-made sign that was hurriedly added to stop the confusion caused by motorists trying to make right-hand turns. Clearly no females found the spectacle interesting. Already a few of the younger men are not wearing hats, a tendency that became much more pronounced in subsequent decades.