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# 'Cheap, Scientific and Free From Danger': Accounting for the Development of Field Hockey in Aotearoa New Zealand

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## ABSTRACT

Hockey's emergence as an organized sport in New Zealand is typically regarded as having occurred during the 1890s. Reverend Henry Mathias, who formed the Kaiapoi Hockey Club in 1895, has been credited with a particularly influential part in the game's development. Indeed, there is considerable truth to this foundation story in that the formation of clubs in Christchurch was the catalyst for the adoption of the 11-a-side form of the game played under the rules of the Hockey Association of England. Arguably, however, these 1890s developments represent a reformatory phase rather than an origin story in and of themselves. The analysis of online newspaper records contained in this paper suggests a widespread presence of informal games from at least as early as the 1860s, through to the formation of the Dunedin Hockey Club in 1876. Hockey also appears to have been played in schools from at least as early as the 1870s and, outside of school, was sometimes associated with 'larrikinism'. By the 1890s, though, it was perceived to be a respectable game, supported by dedicated patrons and a much more developed sporting infrastructure in New Zealand.

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Hockey's emergence as an organized sport in New Zealand was an uneven process. Two parallel phases, overlapping to some degree, are evident. Initially played informally on social occasions, it rapidly became part of the formalized structures of New Zealand sport during the mid-1890s. For many years the origin story of hockey in New Zealand was centred around Christchurch and, in particular, the efforts of Reverend Henry Mathias. The 1966 *Encyclopedia of New Zealand* stated that 'the "father" of the sport in New Zealand was the Rev. H. Mathias, who was one of the founders of a club in Kaiapoi in the late 1890s'.<sup>1</sup> Such a claim is not without foundation, insofar as Mathias played a leading role in the development of the Kaiapoi club in 1895 and coached the first women's club, Hinemoa, the following year. These activities were the catalyst for the development of a formalized club competition in Christchurch, from which the game subsequently spread throughout Canterbury province and New Zealand more broadly. To focus solely on developments in

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Christchurch in the 1890s, however, is to overlook a wider prehistory dating back at least as far as the 1860s. Elements of this narrative have been discussed in some previous texts. *Seasons of Honour*, published in 2002, discusses the early development of the game in New Zealand, but was written before newspaper digitization was advanced.<sup>2</sup> A 2013 entry on hockey in *Te Ara – Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, briefly noted the earliest recorded game in New Zealand in 1861 and the formation of a hockey club in Dunedin in 1876, but, being a brief historical overview, a more detailed examination of the origins of hockey was beyond its scope.<sup>3</sup> An evaluation of the development of hockey in New Zealand is important because it offers insights both into the development of that particular code and wider patterns of sport development.

### Historical Patterns of Sport Development in New Zealand

Before examining the development of hockey in New Zealand it is important to understand the development of sport in New Zealand more broadly. Prior to contact with Europeans, Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, engaged in a variety of games and physical activities which promoted both physical development as well as teaching Tikanga (customs and world-view) particular to each hapū (tribe).<sup>4</sup> European games were introduced into New Zealand from at least as early as the 1830s. The transplantation of British sport, and sporting culture, to New Zealand gained impetus after it became a colony of Britain following the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) in 1840. Although Europeans were initially a minority in New Zealand, there being approximately 2,000 people of European ancestry in residence in 1840 compared to between 70,000 and 90,000 Māori, sports such as rowing races and athletics events were held at the annual anniversary holidays of European settlements. The act of playing British sports in New Zealand was a practical way of demonstrating that the country could live up to its billing as the ‘Britain of the South Seas.’<sup>5</sup> By 1874, after the major conflicts of the New Zealand Wars had concluded and legislation had been passed confiscating large tracts of Māori land and allowing land under tribal ownership to be sold privately via the Native Land Court, the European population of New Zealand was 297,654 and the Māori population 47,330.<sup>6</sup>

This rapid transformation in terms of population was accompanied by changes in political organization which would have a significant impact on sport. Initially a crown colony, New Zealand was divided into six provincial governments, and a central government under the 1852 Constitution Act, with the Governor (appointed by Britain) retaining control over policies towards the indigenous people and defense. The creation of provincial governments was, at one level a pragmatic recognition that the size of New Zealand and the limited funding available to central government, made regional authorities necessary. Each provincial government assumed responsibility for immigration and infrastructure which initially meant they had their own distinct character. The leading cities of the South Island provinces of Otago and Canterbury, Dunedin and Christchurch, were founded as primarily Scottish Free Church and Anglican settlements respectively. By virtue of most of the South Island having been purchased from Māori by 1848, and the discovery of gold in Otago in

1861, 62% of the population resided in the South Island in 1871.<sup>7</sup> By the mid-1870s, however, central government was becoming increasingly powerful, having assumed responsibility for policy towards Māori in 1867 and, under the influence of Julius Vogel, funded an extensive immigration and public works program.<sup>8</sup> The ascendancy of central government came at the expense of the provincial governments, which were regarded as obstructive and abolished in 1876. In his research on rugby in Canterbury, Geoffrey Vincent argued that following the abolition of provincial governments, sport became the primary expression of provincial identity.<sup>9</sup> The sports which became most closely aligned to provincial identity, initially cricket and from the mid-1870s, rugby union, became the leading summer and winter sports respectively. Prior to the 1870s, organized sport tended to be infrequent in New Zealand, often taking the form of one-off occasions such as provincial anniversaries or ethnic-based activities such as Caledonian games. There were some cricket and football clubs established in the larger settlements, and some inter-provincial cricket matches during the 1860s, but games were infrequent. Many of the matches played were intra-club fixtures and many clubs lasted only a few years before folding owing to lack of players.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1870 and 1890, sport became more organized with provincial associations formed in cricket and rugby union and regular club competitions established in the larger cities by the 1880s.<sup>11</sup> The presence of cricket and rugby union in New Zealand secondary schools such as Christ's College and Nelson College was also important. Although few in number – less than 3% of New Zealand's European population attended public secondary schools in 1900 – many of the pupils who played sport in these schools would go on to have a significant impact in the development of sport in New Zealand because they were keen to continue playing once they had left school and had the time, means and access to decision-makers to proselytize their chosen sports. New Zealand teams also began to compete more frequently at international level with tours from Australian rugby union teams in 1882 and 1886 and Great Britain in 1888. Cricket teams from England toured in 1877, 1882 and 1888. Despite its growing presence, sporting contests outside of urban areas remained irregular and sport was an almost exclusively male domain. Between 1890 and 1914 the sporting culture New Zealanders presently take for granted began to emerge. That is, organized sporting competitions for males and females in both urban and rural areas with regular inter-provincial fixtures came into existence. The combination of a growing domestic base, interprovincial rivalry and international competition, saw many national sports organizations founded during the 1890s, including the New Zealand Football Association in 1891, the New Zealand Rugby Football Union in 1892 and the New Zealand Cricket Council in 1894. Hockey was a relative latecomer in this context.<sup>12</sup> The New Zealand Hockey Association was founded in 1902 and the New Zealand Ladies Hockey Association in 1908. Among the contributing factors to the delayed development of the game, as will be discussed, were its absence from boys' secondary schools (it was played in some girls' secondary schools from the late 1880s but women's participation in sport at club level was constrained until the 1890s) and the lack of interprovincial contests. Accordingly, it was outside the key elements of the pyramid of sporting participation in New Zealand – the progression from school to club and then provincial and national level.<sup>13</sup>

It is evident from newspaper reports, however, that hockey was played informally in New Zealand long before formalized club competitions and provincial associations were established. In order to account for the development of hockey, it is therefore important to examine an informal sporting culture which existed in parallel with the formalized and more visible sporting culture discussed above. This informal sporting culture included, but was not limited to, games played on social occasions such as picnics and pick-up games of hockey played predominantly by young people. Charlotte Macdonald has argued that some early sports for women such as tennis and croquet developed among the social circles of the well-to-do before they became formally organized.<sup>14</sup> Clare Simpson identified a similar trend in women's cycling.<sup>15</sup> The history of informal sporting encounters is much less studied than organized sporting competitions. Its participants tend to be primarily interested in playing rather than recording their activities or engaging in the rituals of organized sport such as annual general meetings. The lack of surviving records makes it difficult to precisely determine how many participated in these contests, but there are some clues to their nature from contemporary newspaper reports. As will be discussed later, hockey appeared in a number of articles discussing perceived breaches of social order by juvenile exponents. Unsupervised children were seen as particularly problematic in nineteenth-century New Zealand. There were frequent references to 'larrikinism' in newspapers and the behaviour described in these articles is consistent with what historian James Belich refers to as the phenomenon of the 'Wild Child' – young New Zealanders who grew up with little adult supervision.<sup>16</sup>

### Introduction of Hockey into New Zealand, c. 1840 to 1876

Information on the early development of hockey in New Zealand is limited. The following analysis is primarily based upon material in electronic databases, notably Papers Past. This searchable database, administered by the National Library of New Zealand, started in 2001, and in 2024 comprised runs from over 180 newspapers. The search term 'hockey' was initially used to locate relevant articles and further searches were then conducted on key names and locations arising from material consulted. Prior to the formation of the Dunedin Hockey Club in 1876, hockey was mainly played within the context of the informal sporting culture noted above. It was also discussed with reference to shinty and polo. References to hockey in Britain can be found in New Zealand newspapers from the 1840s. An 1843 editorial in the *Auckland Times*, reflecting on local Christmas festivities, commended the playing of cricket in the settlement, observing: 'the playing of the most manly of English sports is well kept up here'. In contrast, it suggested, people in England would then be thinking of 'hockey and the serpentine'.<sup>17</sup> The following year, the *Nelson Examiner*, relaying news from England, recorded that a student at the Military College at Sandhurst had been killed after receiving a blow to the head 'in the game of hockey'.<sup>18</sup>

It seems that hockey was being played socially in New Zealand from at least as early as the 1860s. In December 1860 an advertisement for the Junction Hotel in Mount St John, Auckland, promoting its facilities after a recent change of ownership, advised 'every facility will be afforded at this Hotel for the exercise and cultivation of Athletic Sports and manly exercises such as Quoits, Cricket, American Bowling,

Skittles, Hockey, &c. which tend so much to enervate the systems of a town tired public'.<sup>19</sup> It is not clear whether any hockey matches occurred, but that the game was nominated as a possible activity suggests at the very least the advertiser believed there may have been an interested constituency. The earliest reference to a game proper appeared in 1861 when Nelson newspaper the *Colonist* recorded that, following a presentation of a bugle to the 'volunteers of Waimea West' from 'the Ladies of the district', a celebration was held during which 'foot races, hockey, quoits and other sports' were played.<sup>20</sup> In 1864 Christchurch newspapers the *Press* and *Lyttelton Times* carried advertisements advising that a variety of sporting equipment, including hockey gear, would shortly arrive.<sup>21</sup> Collectively, these references to hockey suggest it was being played in New Zealand in a variety of social settings during the 1860s. The articles do not specify the form the hockey games took, but, in keeping with the broader pattern of sport in this era, it is likely they were played informally according to rules devised by players.<sup>22</sup>

Hockey was one of a number of stick and ball games played in early colonial New Zealand. Shinty, which is similar to hockey in that it uses a stick and ball, but, unlike hockey, allows both sides of the stick to be used, appears to have been widely played, particularly on festival occasions. This may well reflect New Zealand's prominent Scottish heritage. Whereas Scots accounted for approximately 10% of the population of the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century, they comprised approximately 20% of the immigrants from that region to New Zealand and 30% between 1850 and 1870.<sup>23</sup> Shinty was played on Saint Andrew's Day in Wellington in 1847.<sup>24</sup> The following year the *Wellington Independent* carried a match report of a shinty match being played as part of a Highland Games festival. At the conclusion of the festivities, Lieutenant Gordon from the 65<sup>th</sup> Regiment, stated 'he was delighted to see that his countrymen had that day shown that they had lost none of their native energy or feeling by being transplanted to this side of the globe, and hoped they would ever try to perpetuate the manly games of Caledonia'.<sup>25</sup> There may also have been some overlap between hockey and shinty. The *Lake Wakatip Mail* on 26 June 1872 noted the arrival of a number of hockey balls and suggested this could assist the formation of a club:

Some time ago Mr J.S. Worthington was made the recipient of various small contributions for the purposes of obtaining proper foot balls and hockey balls. They have now arrived and a club can now be started. We understand a trial match will be played this Saturday on the vacant ground in Camp Street. The season is favourable for such games and the bush affords timber for an unlimited number of shinty sticks.<sup>26</sup>

There were no further references to hockey balls or hockey-related activities in Queenstown so it is unknown if any matches were played. What is apparent from a number of accounts of early hockey games in New Zealand, however, is that many of the initial participants had played shinty or hockey in their youth.

During the early 1870s, there were references to informal games of hockey in a variety of locations. A public notice in April 1873 listed hockey among an extensive list of banned activities on lands controlled by the Auckland Improvement Commission.<sup>27</sup> A social match of the Maungakarama Cricket Club in January 1874 concluded with 'gymnastic exercises and a game of hockey' by 'some of the gentlemen remaining'.<sup>28</sup> Hockey also appears to have been played in schools from at least

as early as the 1870s, albeit primarily it seems as an informal recreation. An 1873 letter from Nelson resident and school pupil Maurice Richmond to Richard Richmond stated ‘we are getting tired of gymnastics and play hockey at the College [Nelson College] now. Hockey is a game with sticks like walking sticks and a ball, and you have to hit the ball through goals. You very often get hurt in hockey and a good many boys have got black eyes and hurts in other places.’<sup>29</sup> The existence of the game at Nelson College is particularly interesting as it was pupils from that school who played the Nelson Football Club in what is believed to have been the first match played under rugby union rules in New Zealand in 1870.<sup>30</sup> It is possible that hockey was a recreational pastime at the school, rather than an actively promoted game for formal competition. An article from 1895 referred in the past tense to ‘old scholars’ having played hockey at Wanganui Grammar School. Although no dates were specified, the school changed its name to Wanganui Grammar in 1864 so hockey may well have been played there between the 1860s and 1880s.<sup>31</sup> Hockey was frequently referred to as a game played by youth.<sup>32</sup> While this acknowledged its existence, it possibly limited its appeal as a sport for adult men.

Newspaper references also suggest hockey was being played in schools during the 1880s, particularly in Christchurch. The history of Sydenham hockey club records ‘in the 1880s Sydenham School had hockey for both boys and girls.’<sup>33</sup> The children of schools in Pigeon Bay, Akaroa, reportedly played hockey, along with cricket and rounders, to celebrate a school holiday in October 1885.<sup>34</sup> An article in the *Star* in 1880 discussed the prosecution of the principal of Ferry Road School for strapping one of their pupils, as a consequence of which they were reportedly unable to play hockey.<sup>35</sup> The case was dismissed, with the magistrate asserting ‘Children at the present day showed far too much disrespect for their superiors’, but does also hint at hockey being played by school-aged children.<sup>36</sup> There are also reports of hockey being played in North Island schools. In 1886, the Master of the Industrial School at Kohimarama, Auckland, reported their pupils having a lucky escape after a wayward artillery shell fired by the coastal gun battery at Point Resolution buried itself in the place where children had been playing hockey only a few moments earlier.<sup>37</sup> Two articles from 1887 refer to hockey being banned in schools on account of injuries incurred by players. A compendium of news from Gisborne corrected earlier reports that a youth had had their eye knocked out playing hockey, but stated ‘Mr Morgan has very wisely stopped the school children from playing this dangerous game.’<sup>38</sup> That same year the Whangarei School Committee resolved ‘owing to several accidents resulting from this game [hockey], it was decided to put a stop to it as far as possible.’<sup>39</sup> The word ‘hockey’ was enclosed in quotation marks in this article and a number of others referring to similar incidents, possibly to distinguish it from the formally organized version of the game approved by the Hockey Association in 1886. The effect of such reporting, however, may have cumulatively been to diminish the standing of hockey as a respectable activity.

### **Hockey and ‘Larrikinism’**

The association of hockey with ‘larrikinism’ placed it at odds with a wider trend in other games, notably rugby union, towards greater respectability during the 1880s and early 1890s.<sup>40</sup> Larrikinism was a social concern throughout the British Empire at

this time. It was a term typically applied to teenagers from poor backgrounds who engaged in antisocial behaviour in urban areas.<sup>41</sup> Organized sports were viewed as an antidote to larrikinism, whereas informal gatherings of youths tended to attract suspicion. An 1875 article, in the *Marlborough Express*, argued that organized sport was important for social cohesion, ‘amusement and rational recreation are necessary to the enjoyment of existence’ and that ‘larrikinism’ would emerge if they were not cultivated.<sup>42</sup> Hockey was at times associated with anti-social youth. In 1877, Christchurch newspapers devoted considerable publicity to an incident where a group of children assaulted the owner of a property who objected to their using his premises to play hockey on a Sunday.<sup>43</sup> In 1880 the *Auckland Star* reported that ‘several respectable boys were brought up at the Police Court, charged with playing “Hockey” in the public streets.’<sup>44</sup> Assisted by the intercession of their school principal, Mr Pardy, the boys were discharged without conviction, but the case is illustrative of the wider tension between fostering the vigour of youth and the transition then occurring towards a more orderly society. Sport was generally seen as a public good, but one increasingly in need of formal sanction and supervision. In 1891, two Presbyterian Ministers in Waipu were tasked to work together in the locality to improve observance of the sabbath: ‘Their united efforts will be all required to convert some of the youth of Waipu, who spend their Sundays playing football, cricket and hockey, and sometimes pig hunting, fishing etc.’<sup>45</sup>

The use of improvised equipment for ‘hockey’ matches caused further difficulties for public order. Christchurch newspaper the *Star* reported in 1880 that ‘a number of youngsters’ in different parts of the city were ‘in the habit of playing “hockey” in the public thoroughfares, often at the risk of injuring some passer-by with the “whizzing cat”’, the term given to the improvised stick.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in 1881, councillor Elliott in Dunedin complained of youths playing hockey. ‘Hockey, when played with a ball’, he remarked, ‘was less objectionable, but when for that article is substituted a tin pot, the most steady horse is liable to take flight.’<sup>47</sup> Nor were these activities confined to boys. Dayle Jackson, in her history of the New Zealand Women’s Hockey Association, suggested that by the late nineteenth century, many girls of primary school age played hockey with improvised sticks and ball-like objects.<sup>48</sup> The commonplace practice of fashioning sticks from trees on local properties caused friction on occasions.<sup>49</sup> In 1892 three youths were defendants in a civil case in which the plaintiff accused them of having killed a mare who was residing in a field they had entered without authorization for the purpose of cutting hockey sticks. The charges were not upheld.<sup>50</sup> Collectively, these references suggest hockey was played by children and some adults in primarily informal settings between the 1860s and 1880s.

### **Formation and Demise of the Dunedin Hockey Club, 1876–1881**

The development of hockey as an organized recreation for adults began in Dunedin, whose population in 1874 totalled 18,499, comprising 9529 males and 8970 females.<sup>51</sup> Between 1876 and 1881 the Dunedin Hockey club played at least 50 hockey matches, the majority of which were intra-club games, with the feature games of each season being the ‘English’ versus ‘Scotch’ matches and games against the ‘Footballers’.

Although played under pre-1886 rules which did not have a shooting circle and stipulated 11 players per side, the game was modelled on hockey as it was then played in Britain. The Dunedin Hockey Club was the first to adopt the contemporary organizational culture of sports clubs – distinctive colours (Blue), rituals such as Annual General Meetings, and the instigation of trophies.<sup>52</sup> Dunedin newspaper the *Evening Star* reported on June 27, 1876, that: ‘a game of hockey will be played at Montecillo on Saturday afternoon when a large muster is anticipated and some capital sport, as this will be the first time the game has been played here by adults, although so popular at home.’<sup>53</sup> ‘Home’ was a reference to Britain, which was frequently referred to by that name in New Zealand newspapers.<sup>54</sup> An editorial in the *Otago Daily Times* welcomed this development:

We are pleased to note that a meeting of gentlemen favourable to the formation of a Hockey Club will be held in Wain’s Hotel tomorrow .... We hear that many have already signified their intention to join, and have no doubt the club will speedily assume large proportions, as the game, under the various names of Hockey, Shinty and Hurley, is already a great favourite in England, Scotland and Ireland.<sup>55</sup>

The organizers of the hockey club were well known in sporting circles. J.C. Thomson and H. Rose were captain and vice-captain of the Dunedin Football Club in 1876.<sup>56</sup> Their prominence in football (clubs played a variety of football codes in Dunedin in the mid-1870s, although by the 1880s rugby union was the dominant football code) may be the reason for the decision to suspend football – owing to the poor state of the Southern Recreation Ground – on the day scheduled for the first hockey match.<sup>57</sup> The decision to play the game at Montecillo, a park located on the town belt, may also have been influenced by sporting politics, with the Dunedin Cricket Club and the Dunedin Football Club being embroiled in a dispute over the rights of each code to use the Southern Recreation Ground. Henry Rose, Deputy Captain of the Dunedin Football Club and one of the participants in the first game of hockey in Dunedin, wrote a long letter to the editor of the *Evening Star* denying reports that members of the football club had improperly accessed the pavilion of the Southern Recreation Ground without authorization by the Dunedin Cricket Club.<sup>58</sup> He further maintained that the Montecillo ground, located near the town belt, was a less desirable venue, asserting ‘after the experience of last season, not many footballers would be found willing to play on that dangerous ground, over which puddles more than ankle deep are scattered throughout the greater part of winter.’<sup>59</sup>

Notwithstanding reservations about the venue, the advent of hockey was well received among Dunedin’s sporting community. The *Evening Star* reported ‘nearly fifty aspirants have signified their intention of taking part in what promises to be a most exciting game’, which appeared to live up to its billing.<sup>60</sup> The match report stated ‘the promoters of Saturday afternoon’s game of hockey may be congratulated on the success attending their efforts, for a large number of players assembled at Montecillo, together with a crowd of spectators.’<sup>61</sup> Teams were selected along nationalist lines. J. Richardson captained an ‘English’ team comprised of 18 players and J.C. Thomson led the ‘Scotch’ team comprised of 14 players and after 90 min play the match ended in a two-all draw. Matches between English and Scottish descendants were pinnacle sports events in Dunedin at that time. The match report of the first

match of the 1877 hockey season noted 'there was a limited attendance owing to the Dunedin Football Club match hosting a Scotch versus English match', which 'invariably draws a large attendance of members'.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the inaugural 'Scotch' versus 'English' hockey match attracted considerable publicity. 'Although the play was rather rough', according to the *Evening Star*, 'no serious injuries were sustained by any of the players'.<sup>63</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* was equally enthusiastic, its match report observing: 'this exciting old English game was introduced in Dunedin when a large number of players went to Montecillo to try their skill. The weather was beautifully fine and the ground hard and dry'.<sup>64</sup> The playing implements attracted particular attention 'the variety of the sticks of the players caused no little amusement, as they ranged from common walking sticks to thick cudgels cut out of the bush'.<sup>65</sup> 'Should this game be continued' it concluded, 'we have no doubt that it will become popular during the winter months'.<sup>66</sup> The match was also reported in Milton, a village approximately 50 kilometres south of Dunedin. The *Bruce Herald* stated: 'to those active spirits who care little for cuts and bruises, and who like to seek some variety from football, the newly introduced game offers them opportunities wherein they might enjoy and distinguish themselves'.<sup>67</sup>

Shortly after the match, notices advising of a meeting to form a hockey club appeared.<sup>68</sup> People of social standing were sought, one advertisement presenting the event as 'a meeting of gentlemen favourable to the formation of a hockey club'.<sup>69</sup> A number of eminent citizens were duly elected including Dr Brown, a prominent local doctor as president, and James Mills, a leading local businessman, among the committee members. The meeting agreed on the rules for forthcoming games. These rules appear to have been based upon a then contemporary book, titled *Country Games*, that was published by Routledge, with the link being that the *Evening Star* printed an excerpt on hockey rules credited to that publication. They stated: 'this fine old game may be played by any number. Each player must grab himself a stick of oak, crab, or hawthorne, having a curved or crooked head at its lower extremity'.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, 'two goals or bounds should be formed, about 500 yards apart, each goal being indicated by two small flags'.<sup>71</sup> Sides were then chosen and 'chance decides which side is to have first strike at the little wooden ball, which is usually the object of contention'.<sup>72</sup> The objective of the game was 'to strike the ball over their adversaries' bounds.<sup>73</sup> Initial reports forecast a promising future. The Dunedin correspondent for Christchurch newspaper the *Lyttelton Times* suggested 'Football has this winter found a rival in hockey, a game which has been publicly played here for the first time'.<sup>74</sup> The correspondent asserted 'Hockey should be encouraged by the cricketers, as it is played on the unimproved land of the town belt, whereas the footballers conduct operations on the cricketers' oval, and a pretty mess the ground is in for cricket when spring sets in'.<sup>75</sup> It was further stated that the cricket club had spent £5000 (approximately \$919,686 in 2023) on improvements to the ground, yet because it was a public reserve they had no more rights to it than any member of the public.<sup>76</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* concurred, stating 'the game of hockey is now becoming a recognised Saturday afternoon institution'.<sup>77</sup> Hockey did not, however, displace football. During the 1876 season there were two football clubs, the Dunedin club and the Union club.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, a longer-term weakness of hockey was that it tended to draw its participants from the existing pool of cricket and football players rather than

creating its own constituency. Unfortunately for hockey, its formative era in Dunedin coincided with the 1877 provincial tour by the Otago rugby union team, which Phillips argues was central to establishing rugby union as the football code of choice in the South Island because it became the agreed-upon format for interprovincial competition.<sup>79</sup>

Hockey, by contrast, remained an intra-club affair. Match reports from the 1876 season, which included at least 13 games, suggest games were keenly contested, but the playing equipment was rudimentary. During one contest, a scratch match contested by 20 players, including 'several footballists', 'no less than four balls were smashed'. Because 'nothing in the shape of a ball could be found except a "golf bullet" (a better name for it than "ball")', play continued with a golf ball. But as this was 'quite invisible during its passage through the air', two players were struck and play continued with a football.<sup>80</sup> There were, however, some elements of progress, during the season, when it was reported 'the members have supplied themselves with new sticks made and turned by steam at Messrs Guthrie and Larnach's establishment'.<sup>81</sup>

By the end of its first season, hockey had established a foothold in Dunedin. Reports from the first Annual General Meeting of the Dunedin Hockey Club stated that it started the season with 'a small cash balance in hand' and 46 members, compared to 15 when the club was first formed.<sup>82</sup> The committee's report expressed the hope that 'the time may be not far distant when a team will be sent to compete with other clubs in the provincial district and colony'.<sup>83</sup> On a practical note, 'members were also enjoined to avoid the flourishing of sticks, so common last season, which led to many accidents'.<sup>84</sup>

Hopes of interprovincial games did not materialize during the 1877 season of club hockey in Dunedin but newspapers recorded at least eight intra-club matches, culminating in the 'Scotch vs English' match. The third season of the Dunedin Hockey club comprised at least 15 matches played between April and September 1878. The second annual general meeting of the club reported a membership of 20 people, significantly less than the membership of 46 at the first annual general meeting.<sup>85</sup> The early matches of the season appeared to suggest declining levels of interest. An article following the second match of the season stated 'there are many complaints at the small numbers who make a point of attending the ground to take part in these Saturday afternoon contests'.<sup>86</sup> The number of hockey players who played football may have been a contributing factor as an *Otago Daily Times* article noted 'the members of the Dunedin Hockey Club will not play today, several of the members being engaged in the football match between the Dunedin and Union clubs'.<sup>87</sup> In the second half of the season, however, the club regained momentum with increased attendances being reported at matches, something the *Otago Witness* welcomed, observing 'it would be a fortunate thing if every Saturday as full a muster of players could be obtained, as the game then proves exceedingly enjoyable and exciting'.<sup>88</sup> Two 'Scotch' versus 'English' games were played towards the end of the season, the *Otago Daily Times* eagerly anticipating the sequel to the first drawn encounter between the teams:

We understand that the return match is to be played shortly before the close of the season, and from the increasing interest taken in this healthy amusement, combined with the fixed determination of each nationality to defeat the other, we expect to see one of the most exciting hockey matches yet witnessed in Dunedin.<sup>89</sup>

The 'Scotch' won the return match 5-1, possibly assisted by the 'English' having to 'enlist two of the onlookers who had never played hockey before' to make up their fifteen. Interestingly, the match appears to be the first officiated by umpires, R.H. Wallace for the Scottish and F.R. Smith for the English, who reportedly 'gave entire satisfaction'.<sup>90</sup> The final match of the season was a game against the footballers, which the hockey club won by four goals to two.<sup>91</sup> Comparing their respective performances, the *Otago Daily Times* suggested, 'the Hockey men showed more science in their play than the Footballers' but 'one could not, however, fail to observe the fine staying powers of the Footballers, the result of their long and good training'.<sup>92</sup> 'They seemed to play regardless of fear of any kind' the reporter asserted.<sup>93</sup> The physicality of rugby union versus the purportedly scientific nature of hockey would be a recurring theme in the coverage of the respective sports, particularly when the game was established in Canterbury during the 1890s.

The 1879 season appears to have been a transitional moment in the history of the club with Dr Brown, the founding president standing down, as did Valpy, the secretary of the club in the previous season. The third annual general meeting of the club in April 1879 saw discussion around awarding a trophy to the leading goalscorer of the season. The proposal was defeated but an amended motion to award a trophy to the best player in the winning team for the 'English' versus 'Scotch' match was passed by majority vote.<sup>94</sup> That the presentation of a trophy was a topic of discussion suggests an implicit confidence that the club would be an ongoing presence in Dunedin, despite two of its office-holders having vacated their roles. To some degree this confidence was justified, with at least 10 matches being played. One match report suggested 'a number of new faces' were taking the field and 'that this fact is an evidence that the game continues to increase in attraction'. By way of a caveat, however, it stated that if 'the old members of the club only make a point in rolling up, this season might be one of the most successful the Dunedin Hockey Club has yet seen'.<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately for the Dunedin Hockey Club, these hopes did not materialize. There is no record of a 'Scotch' versus 'English' match having been played in 1879 and newspaper references to hockey became infrequent in 1880. The annual general meeting of the club was reported as having occurred but the only other newspaper reference to hockey that season was a statement that the hockey club had offered the Dunedin Cricket Club – which was facing significant financial challenges owing to being £39 in arrears for the previous financial year – £10 for use of the cricket oval during winter.<sup>96</sup> That an offer of payment was made suggests the hockey club remained financially viable and matches were still being played. The offer to rent the cricket ground may also reflect a desire for a better playing venue, the Montecillo ground being among Dunedin's less favoured venues on account of its poor condition.<sup>97</sup> There were no newspaper reports of the hockey club holding an annual general meeting or hosting any intra-club games in 1881, although two 'footballers' versus hockey players games were played as well as an 'English' versus 'Scotch' match. These games took place in September and October, between the cricket and rugby seasons, and suggest that because many hockey players also played cricket and football, hockey may have become an inter-season sport. Although hockey appears to have been played infrequently in 1881, the games were reported in colourful fashion by 'Poster' in the *Otago Daily Times*, the first time a report on a hockey match had

been bylined in a Dunedin newspaper.<sup>98</sup> Among the ‘footballers’ was Taiaroa, who is among the first, if not the first, identifiably Māori hockey player. Taiaroa is only recorded by surname, but is likely Te One Wiwi (Jack) Taiaroa, who played for the Dunedin Football Club that season and was subsequently selected in 1884 for the New Zealand Rugby team which toured Australia.<sup>99</sup> He was from a prominent Māori family. His father was elected a Member of the House of Representatives for the Southern Māori seat in 1871 and was a lifelong advocate for Ngāi Tahu in seeking redress for their historical grievances against the Crown.<sup>100</sup> ‘Poster’, who claimed to have read the regulations of hockey as played in England, asserted ‘the rules as played in Dunedin are rather vague’ and that a degree of handling was allowed, something which was forbidden in the English version of the game.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, the report praised hockey as ‘a capital game, quite as exciting as football, less boisterous than shinty, and, when well played, both exciting to join in and amusing to witness.’<sup>102</sup> He was, however, critical of the standard of the ‘English’ vs ‘Scotch’ game, where the English were defeated 6-1. ‘The fierce play which characterized this encounter in former years was not to be seen,’ lamented ‘Poster’, who fulminated ‘none of the tough melees where even 15 to 20 sticks went crashing over the disputed ball, and poor shins came in for their liberal share of caresses’ were evident.<sup>103</sup>

The Dunedin Hockey Club appears to have faded out of existence after 1883. There are no newspaper accounts of any hockey matches in 1882. There were no intra-club matches reported during the 1883 season. Dr Coughtrey, president of the Dunedin Bowls Club, reportedly hoped to add hockey to their winter activities, but there are no reports of any matches having been played.<sup>104</sup> In late September and early October, however, two matches were played. These were ‘Insurance Companies’ versus ‘The World’ and ‘cricketers’ against ‘footballers.’<sup>105</sup> Although positioned as a match between players of two different codes, the ‘cricketers’ and ‘footballers’ teams included many former hockey players, a match report noting ‘Sleigh’s blues numbered among them some dangerous veterans.’ Samuel Sleigh was a prominent figure in Otago sport, organizing the 1884 New Zealand rugby team.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the presence of ‘a large number of spectators’ at the footballers versus cricketers game, it appears to have been the last game of hockey played in Dunedin until 1899 when both men’s and women’s hockey clubs were established. Catherine Smith, in her research on sport in girls’ schools, found that hockey was played at Otago Girls High School from 1889, so the women’s club may have been at least partially comprised of former pupils of the school.<sup>107</sup> The men’s club, called the Dunedin Hockey Club like its earlier namesake, was formed around the same time. The *Otago Daily Times* reported ‘the interest the game created indicates that it has come to stay’ and subsequently asserted, ‘it was very popular some years ago, but an unfortunate incident, which some players will remember brought it into disfavour and the game was allowed to die out.’<sup>108</sup> The nature of the ‘unfortunate incident’ is unknown, but even if it were able to be established it is unlikely to have been the sole cause of the club’s demise. The Dunedin Hockey Club was established at a time when sport in Dunedin and indeed New Zealand, was in its formative phase. The absence of hockey as a competitive game in secondary schools meant that unlike rugby and cricket there was not a new cohort of school leavers each year to maintain playing numbers. Its exponents were mainly prominent players and administrators

from other sports, so promoting hockey was not their primary interest, and they had no incentive to organize the interprovincial games so important to expanding sport in New Zealand.

### **Becoming Orderly and Organized: The Development of Hockey in Canterbury during the 1890s**

The re-establishment of club hockey in Dunedin reflected a broader expansion of hockey from the mid-1890s, centred in Canterbury. It appears there was little development of hockey as a game for adults between 1883 and 1895, with only a few references to hockey in this period. A newspaper article from 1886 advocated a hockey club be established in Waipawa in Hawkes' Bay, but there is no record of any games having taken place.<sup>109</sup> The presence of hockey in British colleges was also discussed in media articles, sometimes in relation to the emergence of independent young women as a social phenomenon.<sup>110</sup> Aside from a letter calling for the formation of a hockey club in Christchurch in 1893 and occasional references to street hockey, including the tragic death of a youth struck by a stick, no organized games are mentioned.<sup>111</sup>

Between 1895 and 1897, however, hockey gained significant impetus. The primary factors for this appear to be the sophisticated sporting infrastructure of Canterbury, including supportive media, available facilities, reliable transportation networks, the determined efforts of key patrons, a constituency of willing players, some of whom had played the game previously, and, finally, something of a 'civilising process' within hockey itself.<sup>112</sup> In a sporting context, the term 'civilising process' has typically been applied to rugby union, notably in Dunning and Sheard's *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*. They argue that one of the reasons the Rugby Football Union banned 'hacking' (the practice of vigorously kicking an opponent's shins) was that they wanted rugby union to appeal to the respectable middle and upper classes.<sup>113</sup> In the hockey context, the formation of the Hockey Association in 1886 and the subsequent emphasis on the 'scientific' nature of the game, suggest a similar pattern can be discerned.

Newspaper coverage of the revival of hockey in Christchurch in 1895 emphasized its civilized nature. On July 11, 1895 Christchurch newspaper the *Press* published a letter from 'A Lover of Hockey' endorsing a proposal by Reverend Mathias of Kaiapoi (a settlement approximately 10 kilometres north of Christchurch) to start a hockey team. 'This game would be taken up by the boys of Christchurch and boys from the suburbs' the writer asserted.<sup>114</sup> On July 12, 1895, a letter from 'Another Lover of Hockey', who had played the game at school, echoed those sentiments, arguing it would attract players from outside rugby union: 'as football is the same old rough and tumble game (with few exceptions) as we saw played here at least ten years ago, I have no doubt we could find plenty here who would sooner play hockey than football'.<sup>115</sup> A *Press* editorial of 13 July further endorsed hockey as an ideal game for young men, emphasizing its safety. 'During the last few years', the *Press* asserted, 'it has become very popular at home, especially in the North of England, and it has long since attained the dignity of being managed by an Association'. It went on to state 'when well played it is a fast, passing game, giving plenty of exercise, demanding a considerable amount of general combination and of individual skill, without the

roughness or danger of football.<sup>116</sup> The *Weekly Press*, a supplement of the *Press*, gave further publicity to the code when it published the rules of hockey in late July.<sup>117</sup> The formation of a club in Christchurch acted as a catalyst for the formation of a hockey club in Ashburton, located approximately 85 kilometres south of Christchurch but linked to it by railway. On July 27, 1895, the *Ashburton Guardian* included an advertisement inviting attendees to a meeting to establish a hockey club, its subheading promoting the game as 'Cheap, Scientific and Free From Danger'.<sup>118</sup> Three days later the Ashburton Hockey Club was formed, the report of the meeting noting 'there were a great many old hockey players in the town, and they were all enthusiastic in support of the movement'.<sup>119</sup> On August 3, 1895, another hockey club was formed in Tinwald, a settlement three kilometres south of Ashburton, with Reverend J. Blackburn in the chair. Reportedly 40 members were enrolled and club colours of blue with a white sash were chosen.<sup>120</sup> On August 30, 1895, the earliest recorded match between two hockey clubs occurred when Kaiapoi defeated Papanui Rovers from Christchurch by five goals to nil.<sup>121</sup> The presence of two ministers, Mathias and Blackburn, among the inaugural club founders, gave hockey legitimacy by incorporating it within the wider framework of 'Muscular Christianity'.<sup>122</sup>

If 1895 was hockey's foundation year as a club sport in Canterbury then 1896 and 1897 saw its consolidation, with the inaugural club competition held and the first women's club in New Zealand founded. The Christchurch Hockey Club was formed in March 1896 and it successfully applied to be allocated a playing ground in Hagley Park in April.<sup>123</sup> At least two other clubs were founded in Christchurch that year. The Hardware Athletic club played an intra-club match on a Thursday half-holiday, suggesting working-class interest in the game.<sup>124</sup> The first weekend in May saw two clubs hosting scratch matches, the Christchurch club at Hagley Park and Willowglen in Waltham.<sup>125</sup> The first game between two towns occurred when Christchurch Hockey Club made a return trip to play Ashburton via train on the Monday of Queens Birthday Weekend, the match ending in a 2-2 draw.<sup>126</sup> The earliest recorded women's hockey clubs were also formed in 1896, with 'Muscular Christianity' again playing a supporting role. The Hinemoa club was founded in Kaiapoi in July with Mathias agreeing to coach the team.<sup>127</sup> In August, the first hockey matches on Lancaster Park, Christchurch's principal sporting ground, occurred when Christchurch defeated Ashburton 3-0 and Kaiapoi beat Tinwald 4-0.<sup>128</sup> During the 1897 season Christchurch men's hockey included both Thursday and Saturday competitions (Thursday was a half-holiday in Christchurch for shop assistants).<sup>129</sup> The Thursday competition comprised Drapers, Grocers and Post and Telegraph and the Saturday competition five teams; three from the Christchurch Hockey Club, Kaiapoi and the Young Men's Christian Association. In October 1897, the 'first ladies hockey match in the colony', occurred when Hinemoa played the Christchurch Ladies Club.<sup>130</sup> Strictly speaking, this statement was not entirely accurate as informal matches had been taking place for over a year, but it is the earliest recorded fixture between two women's clubs in New Zealand. Kaiapoi, playing on their home ground in front of a 'good attendance' defeated Christchurch 6-0 before both teams retired to the Women's Christian Temperance Tea Rooms.<sup>131</sup> The following year, the Canterbury Hockey Association was formed in April 1898 and the first inter-provincial match in the code occurred

when Canterbury defeated Wellington 3-0 at Athletic Park in Wellington.<sup>132</sup> Canterbury was not the only location where hockey was played in 1896 and 1897, as a seven-a-side tournament was held in Napier in both of those years as part of a wider sporting festival, but it was certainly the first region where hockey was played in an organized fashion.<sup>133</sup>

Whereas it had previously been viewed primarily as a children's activity and sometimes associated with larrikinism and violence, hockey was able to recast itself as a respectable sport between 1895 and 1897, thereby establishing an enduring foundation for the game in New Zealand. Its re-emergence was supported by key opinion formers in society, notably the media and Church leaders and it found a cross-class constituency. Its consolidation in Canterbury, and Christchurch during the 1890s can also be attributed to the highly developed sporting infrastructure of the region. In accounting for the re-emergence of hockey in the 1890s, however, its prehistory also needs to be considered. The Dunedin Hockey Club, which operated between 1876 and 1881, provided a precedent of sorts being the first hockey club in New Zealand to play regularly, hold annual general meetings and award trophies. The game also had a presence in schools from at least as early as the 1870s and was informally played by many young people. Like many sports, the emergence of hockey as an organized game in New Zealand, owes its existence to a multifaceted amalgam of key patrons, underlying social forces and an under-recognized supporting cast of anonymous and unrecorded participants.

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129. Ryan, 'Sport in Christchurch', 343.
130. 'News of the Day', *Press* (Christchurch), September 30, 1897, 4.
131. 'Hockey', *Press* (Christchurch), October 7, 1897, 3.
132. 'Local and General', *Star* (Christchurch), April 1, 1898, 3; 'Interprovincial Hockey', *Evening Post* (Wellington), August 30, 1898, 6.
133. 'Brunner Relief Carnival [sic]', *Hastings Standard*, April 30, 1896, 3; 'Flood Relief Fund Demonstration Sports', *Hawke's Bay Herald* (Napier), May 12, 1897, 3.

### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### Notes on Contributor

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