

## **EXCERPT FROM "THE VERY VERY LONELY PLANET - 2060"**

### **Dunedin - Overview**

Of all of New Zealand's drowned cities, Dunedin is one of the most spectacular. Once it must have been a proud and vibrant university city but its current state is a permanent reminder of how foolish and blind our species can be.

Dunedin was a defensible city. It had a narrow harbour mouth and many believe the eastern coastline could have been successfully reinforced if work had begun early enough. Unfortunately, early in the 2000's the city was intent on spending money on other things like the now-derelict Stadium and later got caught up in the Second Credit Crisis of the 2020's. When sea levels rose they were not financially buoyant enough to build the defences the city required. Once flooded, there was no economic base to build on or borrow against. Their loss, but certainly our gain as it is an eerie, if rather desolate, place to visit. It's certainly an object lesson in how financial decisions can have long term implications so, if you can, take your children there.

### **Dunedin - Activities**

One of the most popular canal trips takes in what were the Railway Station, the Court House, the University and the Stadium. Tickets are available from the First Kirk Kiosk situated at the top of Bell Hill. From there it's a short walk down the hill to the Burlington Marina - Stop 6 on the old Vaporeto Loop Route . (At one stage Dunedin was unsuccessfully marketed as the "Venice of the South" and they named the city's now defunct public boat system after the Venice equivalent.) Single and double canoes are available on the left hand side of the old Vaporeto stop. Try to organise your tour for low tide as then it's much easier to get under the entry gate at the Stadium and into the flooded arena. Unless you are hooked on Victorian architecture, this is the highlight of the journey. There's a light and sound show that runs for ten minutes on the big screens inside the Stadium on the hour every hour from 9.00am till 4.00pm. Called "A Cautionary Tale", the show tells the story of how the stadium came to be and examines the reasons for its demise. Statements and assertions made by those who supported the building of the Stadium in the 2000's are intercut with what really happened. On one level it's an amusing spoof of earlier foolishness, but as you sit in the middle of that forlorn arena you can't help but wonder how they managed to get their priorities so disastrously wrong and can't help ponder the long term consequences for those who used to live in the city.

It seems that at the turn of the century stadiums were a bit like cathedrals in the Middle Ages. Every city thought they should have one, even if it pauperised them. Such stadiums quickly turned into financial "black holes" and some claim this one was partly responsible for the Dunedin Rate Strikes of the 2010's and the Rate Riots of 2022.

Rising oceans were only part of the story. Declining attendances at rugby matches made the venture uneconomic well before the Stadium was flooded. That decline was partly attributable to the high price of admission as a result of the capital cost of the Stadium, but its usefulness as a location for a sports event was absolutely scuttled by the advent of the now ubiquitous "Portable Transposer". As the advertisements of the time claimed, they provided an experience that was "As Good As Being There". They became the way fans experienced any games, anywhere, anytime, from any era. As a result real crowds in stadiums were replaced by the computer generated ones with which we are now all familiar. Once that technology was perfected, matches could be placed in a virtual stadium with an appropriately partisan crowd digitally created to match each subscribing fan's requirements.

The Stadium was put to other uses once rugby was played and recorded elsewhere and a few of them are still evident. The cylindrical objects in Section H are the remnants of compost bins from the decade when the turf was turned into community gardens and the long boat slide at the west end was part of an unsuccessful aquatic theme park. Keep well away from the south

wall as that is where the roof collapsed during the Great Snows of 2045 and parts of it can entangle your canoe.

As you paddle out you may be able to see an interesting piece of graffiti painted just above the gate. Some of the lettering is barely discernible - but if the light is right you can make out this slightly twisted re-versioning of Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias"...

I saw a traveller on an old TV

Who said - One vast and empty stadium I saw  
Stranded in water ... Near by.. swallowed by sea  
An ancient empty city sits, whose fathers,  
With wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
And ...mocking sounds of protest as they went  
Built this great edifice... then, desires met,  
Left citizens to pay for what they'd spent.  
So on the golden plaque the words should read  
"My name is City Councillor, Fool of Fools  
Look on my works ye citizens and despair"  
For nothing of worth remains. Round the decay  
Of this colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level water stretches far away.

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