



Bills, Mrs C. , Wire-Mattress Maker, George Street, Dunedin; factory, 72 Cumberland Street. This business was established by the late Mr. Charles Bills, and is now carried on by his widow and son. The business was established on such sound lines and was so well conducted, that in 1903 it became necessary to move into the commodious premises now used in connection with the industry. The machinery and appliances include a patent weaving machine, of which Mrs Bills has the sole right for Otago and Southland. With this machine the factory can turn out five hundred mattresses per month. The manufacture of wire mattresses, children's cots, and stretchers is an important branch of the business, but other articles in which wire is utilised are also manufactured. Wire shutters for shop fronts are made a specialty and also ripple-matting for gold saving on dredges; kiln floors, sand and malt screens, flower stands, bird cages and rat traps. The whole machinery is driven by a seven horse-power gas engine, and ten persons are employed on the premises. The factory, which occupies a floor space of 100 feet by 60 feet, is divided into two compartments—the weaving room, and the general wire-work room. For the woodwork manufactured in connection with the industry over 30,000 feet are kept in stock, so as to be thoroughly dried and seasoned before use. The webs are woven by the Bill Brothers' multiple weaving machine, of which Mrs Bills holds the sole rights for Otago and Southland. This machine twists from one to twelve wires at one operation, and turns off two, four, or six-ply wire, according to the strength required. Only the best plated steel wire is used. The wire shutters now so much in use are turned out in great numbers; indeed, a specialty is made of this particular branch. A large kiln-floor, weighing five tons, was recently manufactured for the Wanganui Meat Freezing Company, and the directors were so pleased with the remarkably good workmanship that they presented Mr. Bills with a gift of £10 over the contract price, “as showing their appreciation of real good work.” All the machinery at the factory is of the latest design. It includes a crimping machine, and straining rollers. Since the death of Mr. Bills in January, 1904, the business has been carried on by Mrs Bills, who has practically managed it for some years.

Mr. Charles Bills was born in Brighton, England, and accompanied his father to Dunedin by the ship “Warrior Queen,” in 1866, when he was fourteen years of age. He knew a great deal about birds, and had a great liking for them, and shortly after his arrival he was employed by the Acclimatisation Society to obtain various species for its purposes. Subsequently he was

employed by Messrs Crust and Crust, but left their service to start the wire woven-mattress industry, with which his name became so intimately and honourably connected. Mr. Bills was the first to start this business in the Australasian colonies, and his brothers subsequently introduced it in Australia. Mr. Bills was popular with all classes of the community as a man of high personal character and much mechanical ingenuity. He was a Freemason of many years' standing, and a prominent member of the Caledonian Society. He died on the 13th of January, 1904, after a short illness, at the age of fifty-one, leaving a widow and a family of four daughters and one son, and is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery..

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