



A man of ingenuity and scientific expertise, Henry Skey was born in London, the younger son of William Fawcett Skey, a barrister. Orphaned at an early age, Henry ended up on a farm with his brother William. Of an inventive frame of mind, Henry tried various ways of making his fortune, none of which seem to have come to anything. After he and his brother were involved in an unsuccessful attempt to produce alcohol from beetroot, they decided to seek their fortune in New Zealand, and reached Port Chalmers in 1861 on the *Evening Star*. The pair made for the goldfields where they spent the next couple of years without any great luck.

Happily they were then appointed assistants to Hector's geological survey in which capacity they rapidly demonstrated their scientific competence, the younger brother in analytical chemistry, and Henry in general draughtsmanship. In 1865 the brothers finally parted when William was transferred to the Dominion Museum where he was to enjoy a distinguished career.

Henry married Sarah Ann Ross in Dunedin and joined the local Survey Department under John Turnbull Thomson, where he remained for the rest of his working life, as senior draughtsman 1882-1903.

A virtually founding member of the Otago Institute he entertained its members with erudite papers on a wide range of topics, such as Herschel's zodiacal lights; a new kind of astronomical telescope, of which he produced a working model; and a description of a smokeless self-feeding furnace. In 1908,

60 years ahead of his time, he described a form of decimal currency with ten 'tennies' to a 'bron', ten brons to a florin, and ten florins to a pound.

In 1912 Skey lent his prize telescope to the local Astronomical Society for installation in its new observatory on Tanna Hill. He died a year later on 25 February 1914, survived by his wife and five children, and is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery in a simple grave with just the word SKEY as a memorial.