



Donald McNaughton Stuart was the first of twin sons born to Alexander Stewart, a farmer, and his wife, Janet McNaughton, at Sticks (Stix), Perthshire, Scotland. He was baptised Donald on 2 February 1819. Educated at the parish school of Kenmore, he acquired sufficient knowledge to earn a living as a teacher when he left home at the age of 14 or 15. Keen to pursue education at a higher level, he saved hard and in 1839 began study towards an arts

degree at the University of St Andrews. However, in 1843 he was one of those expelled for supporting the candidacy of Thomas Chalmers as rector, against the wishes of the university authorities.

Financially embarrassed, he moved to England in pursuit of work, accepting a post at a preparatory school in Windsor. At the same time he commenced part-time theological study, which he subsequently completed in Edinburgh, and was ordained as a minister of the Free Church of Scotland in 1848. On 8 May 1849 he was inducted into his first charge as minister of the border parish of Falstone and Kielder in Northumberland. He married Janet (Jessie) Robertson, at Upton cum Chalvey, Buckinghamshire, on 3 July 1850.

Although happy at Falstone, in 1858 Donald Stuart wrote to the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland that he was 'panting for the exciting labours of planting the gospel in some part of our great Colonial Empire'. His opportunity came with a call to Otago, New Zealand. Donald and Jessie Stuart and their three young sons sailed for Otago on the *Bosworth*, arriving on 25 January 1860. After serving at First Church for some months, on 16 May 1860 Stuart was inducted as first minister of Knox Church, Dunedin. He was the seventh minister to take up a charge in Otago and the second minister settled in Dunedin.

Donald Stuart made an immediate impact on the young community. Over six feet in height, he was instantly recognisable by the plaid he wore draped over his shoulders. He became an important and influential public figure, well liked for his genial manner, ready smile and compassionate interest in people, and for his tolerance and deep commitment to the social expression of his Christian principles.

His popularity as a minister was attested by the rapid growth of his congregation. The first Knox Church, on the corner of Great King and Frederick streets, had provision for 578. On 5 November 1876 the present church, on the corner of George and Pitt streets, was opened. The imposing bluestone building, designed by R. A. Lawson in Gothic style, has the capacity to accommodate over 1,000 worshippers.

Stuart was an active member of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland and the Presbytery of Dunedin. His synod activities reflected his interests in education and church expansion: he was a senior member of the synod's University, Theological College and Church Extension committees. He advocated the foundation of a theological college, and was its tutor in church history and historical theology during 1875. In 1872 he had been awarded a doctorate of divinity by the University of St Andrews.

Considering it an obligation to help forward education in the province, Stuart was especially involved with the development of secondary and university education. He was chairman of the Otago Boys' and Girls' High Schools Board from 1878 to 1894. He also inaugurated technical training in the province by urging the establishment, in 1865, of a night school in connection with Knox Church. He was a key figure in the movement to establish a university in Otago although he always modestly disclaimed his own contribution. Among the first appointed members of the Otago university council, he was elected vice chancellor in 1871, a position he held until elected chancellor in 1879. He used his influence for tolerance and moderation in university controversies. During his tenure the university added schools of mines, medicine and law to its original core of arts and science subjects. He opposed the absorption of the University of Otago into the University of New Zealand, but was a member of the senate of the University of New Zealand from 1874 to 1881.

Stuart's public life was a marked success, but his private affairs were less fortunate. Jessie Stuart had died on 16 April 1862. Two of his sons were heavy drinkers, to the detriment of their careers, and predeceased him. His eldest son, who survived him, failed in business. Stuart died at Dunedin on 12 May 1894.

## MARGARET MORGAN

Hislop, J. *History of Knox Church*. Dunedin, 1892

Ross, C. S. *Life and times of D. M. Stuart*. Dunedin, 1894

Stuart family papers. MS. Otago Early Settlers Museum

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[Skip to content](#)

[English](#) | [Māori](#)

# PAPERSPAST

- [Papers Past Home](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Search](#)
  - [Search history](#)
  - [Search help](#)
- [Browse](#)
  - [By date](#)
  - [By region](#)
  - [By title](#)
  
- [Papers Past](#) >
- [Otago Witness](#) >
- [28 June 1894](#) >
- [Page 28](#) >
- THE STUART MEMORIAL FUND.



## THE STUART MEMORIAL FUND.

Otago Witness , Issue 2105, 28 June 1894, Page 28

▶ [About this newspaper](#)



[List of search results](#)



▶ [Article view](#)

### THE **STUART** MEMORIAL FUND.

A meeting of subscribers to the **Stuart** memorial fund was held at the Town Hall last night. His Worship the Mayor (Mr H. S. Fish) presided, and there were about 70 persons present.

Mr E. B. Cargill moved— "That in the opinion of this meeting the form which the memorial should take is a public statue to be erected in a prominent place in the city, and that any surplus be applied to founding one or more scholarships in connection with the Otago University." Mr Cohen proposed the following amendment — "That the most fitting way to perpetuate the memory of the late Dr **Stuart** and show our regard for his life-long services to this community as divine, citizen, philanthropist, and educationist, is by the establishment of a free reading room and public library, to be named the **Stuart** Library." Mr Torhance said that he had an amendment to propose, and it was — "That this meeting is of opinion that the memorial to Dr Stuart should be in the form of a hospital pavilion bearing his name, and having in connection with it a bust of the deceased." Dr Hocken moved— " That, in view of Dr **Stuart**'s great love for higher education, 100 guineas be devoted to getting a suitable bust erected in the university, and the balance of the fund applied to the purchase of books for the university library." Mr T. W. Wintson moved — "That, in the opinion of this meeting, the form of the memorial should be the founding of one or more scholarships in connection with the Otago University." In reply to a question it was elicited that the amount raised so far was about £400. The various motions having been duly seconded, after some little discussion, the meeting proceeded to a vote on the proposals before them. The Mayor subsequently read out the result of the ballot as follows :— : — University ... .. 21  
Hospital 382 Library ... .. 355 Statue 898 The total number polled for the three different objects — library, hospital, and university — was 758, and the statue having 898, there was a clear majority of 140 in its favour. Therefore, he declared the proposal to erect a statue to be carried. He trusted that every person who wished to reverence and respect the memory of Dr **Stuart** to put his shoulder to the wheel and get subscriptions for the purpose. — (Applause )  
A vote of thanks to the chair closed the meeting.