

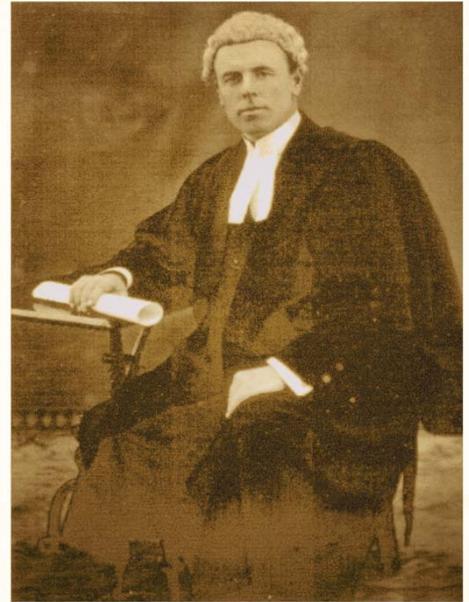
William Bodkin

William Bodkin was the driving force behind the first Historical Association in Alexandra and subsequently the first local museum, which has evolved into the Central Stories complex that we know today.

William Alexander Bodkin was born in Queenstown in 1883. He moved to Clyde with his family in 1889 when they purchased Monte Christo farm. Six years later William left school to work on the family farm. By the age of 18 he had saved enough money from this and other sources to attend the Wilson Grammar School in Christchurch. He went on to study law at the University of Otago and was admitted to the bar in 1909.

In 1920 married Elizabeth McCorkindale in Manuka Creek and moved to Alexandra where he purchased the Law Practice of J.R. Bartholomew. He was heavily involved in politics and worked tirelessly to promote Central Otago throughout his time in parliament. Irrigation was also one of his major interests and he is often referred to as the 'Father of Irrigation' in the Central Otago area.

William was very popular locally and both he and his wife played a prominent role in the community; she particularly had a focus on women's rights and childcare. William Bodkin was knighted in 1954 and died in Alexandra in 1964.



William Bodkin graduation portrait 1909 PD 09.203

Significant Events

- | | | | |
|----------------|---|-------------|---|
| 1883 | Born in Queenstown to Irish immigrant parents James and Eleanor Bodkin. | 1954 | Knighted (Knight Commander of the Victorian Order). Retired from politics. |
| 1889 | Family moved to Monte Christo, Clyde. | 1957 | Meetings often led by Bodkin of the Manuherikia Dunstan Historical Association (MDHA) held informally at various venues (including kitchens & living rooms!) around Alexandra. |
| 1901 | Education at Wilson's Grammar School, Christchurch. | 1959 | First official meeting of the MDHA and Bodkin elected as Chairman (President). |
| 1908 | Qualified as solicitor from Otago University. | 1960 | MDHA has 200 paying members (five shillings per family). Bodkin stepped down as President and Keith Blackmore (Mayor of Alexandra) elected. |
| 1909 | Admitted to the Bar. Purchased the practice of J. R. Bartholomew, Alexandra. Bodkin specialised in mining and irrigation law. | 1962 | MDHA celebrates 100 year centenary of the gold rush in Central Otago. |
| 1914 | Contested the Central Otago seat in parliament but was unsuccessful. | 1963 | MDHA changes name to Alexandra District Historical Association (ADHA). Bodkin donates £100 to the ADHA with the vision to finding a suitable building to house its growing collection. |
| 1920 | Married Elizabeth Lillias McCorkindale, at Manuka Creek, South Otago. | 1964 | Sir William Bodkin dies. |
| 1928 | Elected to parliament as the United Party's Candidate for Central Otago. | 1967 | 25th September Sir William Bodkin Memorial Museum opens on corner of Walton and Thompson Streets, Lady Elizabeth Bodkin attendance. |
| 1930 | Law practice in Alexandra changed its name to Bodkin and Sunderland. | | |
| 1930s | Chairman of Committees, NZ parliament. | | |
| 1936 | Helped establish the National Party of New Zealand. | | |
| 1942 | Minister of Civil Defence in wartime coalition government. | | |
| 1949-54 | Minister of Internal Affairs and during this time held various portfolios including Social Security and Tourist & Health resorts. | | |

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Contributions

Museum & Historical Association

William Bodkin organised the first formal meeting of the Manuhirikia Dunstan Historical Association (MDHA) in December 1959. The aims of this group were clearly defined – (i) to save the Clutha River Bridge from demolition and (ii) to establish a local museum. Under William Bodkin's guidance and dedication the association continued to grow from strength to strength, totalling 200 paid members by 1960. In 1962, after the Gold Rush Centenary and the establishment of a museum in Clyde, the group changed their name to the Alexandra District Historical Association (ADMA) to better reflect their location.

It quickly became obvious that purpose built premises would be required to show off all the donations the association had received and to tell local stories. William Bodkin led the fundraising campaign for the first purpose built museum but sadly he never saw the completion of this project as he died in 1964, three years prior to the museum opening in 1967. The museum was named The Sir William Bodkin Memorial Museum and stood as a memorial to him; recognising both his time and many contributions.

Despite many different names and locations in the last few decades, the first museum and initial MDHA are the foundations that the present day Central Stories was built upon.

Central Otago contributions

William Bodkin was a qualified lawyer, with local offices in Alexandra which specialised in mining and irrigation law. In 1909, he set up a group to promote irrigation in Central Otago and was passionate about providing effective systems for the area. He also spent a large part of his working career in Central Otago involved in local, and later national, politics. In the late 1910's and early 1920's, William Bodkin was Alexandra Borough's official solicitor and he served a term on the Borough Council. In 1928 he won the Central Otago parliamentary seat for the United Party, opening the door for his contributions on a national scale.

New Zealand contributions



*'Personality of the week'
Evening Star, September 1931.*

In 1935 the Coalition government was defeated and Bodkin was active in establishing the New Zealand National Party. National won office in 1939 and he first served as Minister of Internal Affairs and Social Security. During the bi-partisan war administration he was the Minister of Civil Defence. In 1951, with National now back in sole government, he was appointed Minister in charge of Tourist and Health Resorts. He was an objective member of parliament and someone unafraid to stand up for what he thought was right. An example of this was when William was one of the few in his party to agree with the Maori interpretation of the Treaty of Waitangi over the 1937 Petroleum Act.

He was knighted for his services to the Queen in 1954, and it is in this year he also retired from politics, aged 71.



Sir William Bodkin And Lady Elizabeth 1955 PD 09.202

Memories and Stories

“W.A” was a fascinating person to me. He rarely did things by halves ... and was also quick to make up his mind and get things done. Once when I was staying there (aged about 8 years), on a Friday night he said ‘Let’s go to Queenstown for the weekend’. Before my aunt could say yea or nay he was busy on the phone booking accommodation at McBride’s Hotel.’

Bill Bodkin, Sir William’s nephew



Bodkin (far left) quail shooting at Lauder PD 97.225

“When my father protested to my uncle about his giving me a rifle at that early age, Will said, “Every boy should have a rifle!”

Bill Bodkin, Sir William’s nephew

“Good deal” of the money raised for the first museum building “was contributed towards the purpose because [it was] a building as a memorial to the late Sir William Bodkin”

Stuart Bringans, ADHA President 1967.

“Just about the most popular man in Alexandra”

New Zealand Truth article on William Bodkin, 1929

“Conscientious administration”, “generosity to his constituents”, “fine speeches”

Opposition leader Walter Nash’s comments upon Sir William’s retirement from politics in 1954.