



Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

Principal's report

As we move through Term Two I am excited to reach out and connect with our extensive alumni across the country and the globe.

Firstly I am delighted to introduce myself as the 12th Principal of Otago Girls' High School and to say how honoured I am to be leading this great school. I am humbled by all who have gone before - students, teachers, former principals, communities and families connected to our school. It is a delight every year during Open Night and the Year 8 interviews to reconnect with former pupils as parents and to make connections through mothers, grandparents and aunts who have attended Otago Girls' High School in the past.

I grew up in Oamaru, attended Otago University and began teaching at James Hargest High School, Invercargill. I taught overseas at Lister Community School in Plaistow, East London and worked as a nanny in northern Scotland. On my return I came to Otago Girls' High School teaching Geography and English and soon passed through a journey from Careers Advisor, Head of the Department of Social Sciences, Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal, Acting Principal and finally my appointment to Principal from the start of this year.

I am married with two nearly-grown-up children aged 20 and 18 and I live in beautiful Purakaunui. In and outside of school I have enjoyed a long association with the outdoors including rock and alpine climbing and cycle-touring. In 2013 we were fortunate to spend six months biking with our children on tandems on the Pacific Coast Highway from Canada to Mexico - and in the French and Italian Alps. We completed a Cape Reinga to Bluff tour in 2017-18 and a circumnavigation of the island of Taiwan in early 2019.

In 2018 I was fortunate to be awarded the prestigious OGHs Highgate Fellowship which took me to Ireland to a cultural conference and Writers Retreat, to the International Conference on Excellence, Innovation, and Creativity in Basic-Higher Education and Psychology at the University of Paris Descartes, France and to the Tour of Monte Rosa - a nine-day hike crossing from Zermatt in Switzerland to Italy and back into Switzerland.



Bridget Davidson

I love this school. I am passionate about education for women and am all about high expectations and belonging for every student. I deeply believe in the importance of being involved in Sport, Outdoor Education and the Arts. Despite a challenging first term, I have loved working with students, families, the School Board, PTSA and the wider community on many exciting plans and initiatives - particularly around creating inclusion and connection for every student in our school. I appreciated the many messages of support I received from ex-girls and alumni over the last term and I thank you wholeheartedly for your trust and belief in me and in the school. We have a truly stunning school with an amazing team of teachers, students and community.

We will continue with our alumni newsletters during the year. If you have ex-students you know of (perhaps including yourself!) who are doing interesting and exciting things, please send through details and photographs to Cheree Henderson in our school office - hd@otagogirls.school.nz - who is an ex-girl herself and is excited to connect with you all.

When Covid-19 eases, we look forward to holding an alumni event to welcome you back into the school. In the meantime the best connection is through our weekly school newsletter, the Nautilus News and through our excellent Facebook and Instagram pages. For the older members of our alumni who would like a paper copy of happenings, this also can be arranged and we welcome, acknowledge and value your very long-standing association with your school.

Thanks to those who donated 150th funds to the school and these will be used to purchase new Honours Boards in the foyer and to create other lasting memories of our 150th Jubilee year. During this year we will be launching a new fundraising initiative - raising money for three of our most expensive school activities - Rowing, Kapa Haka and Choir in this instance. There will be a choice to donate one-off or ongoing to these causes - followed by a different set of activities two years later. Watch out for the flyer in your inbox or mailbox. We look forward to connecting again with our alumni in our next newsletter in Term Three.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi
With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive

This whakatauki talks to community, to collaboration and a strengths-based approach. It acknowledges that everybody has something to offer, a piece of the puzzle, and by working together we can all flourish.

Ngā mihi nui
Bridget Davidson - Principal

Cathy Highton-Sim (née Sim) OGHS 2003 – 2007

Kia ora e te whānau,
I was a student at Otago Girls' High School from 2003 – 2007, during which time I thrived on all facets of performance, whether this be in the realm of theatre, orchestra or choir, and I also took up the role of Performing Arts Prefect in my final year.



View down the Elbe River towards the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, 2018

My passion for performing, and singing in particular, has endured since leaving OGHS having taken-up various performance opportunities, including attending the New Zealand Singing School in 2013, competing in the finals of the Dame Malvina Major Foundation Aria Competition in 2014, and in the same year, performing twice as soprano soloist with City Choir Dunedin. Immediately after leaving school, I went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree in German and Music. I also spent a semester studying at Ruprecht-Karls-Universität in Heidelberg, Germany and following this, I completed a Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching. My career began with a language content creation role in Dunedin start-up turned global enterprise Education Perfect, with whom I worked for 5 years, covering a plethora of roles from Content Management through to Global Projects initiatives.

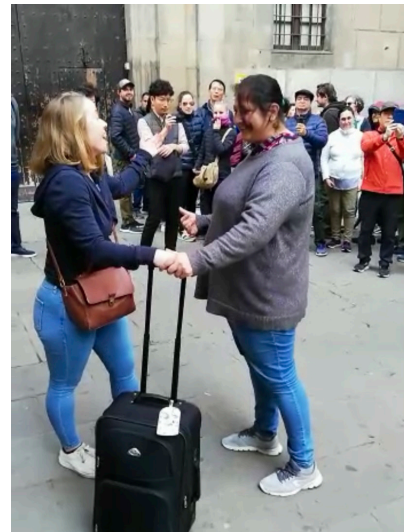
At the beginning of 2015, my now-husband Andrew and I moved to Oxford, UK, where I continued remotely in my role with Education Perfect. After living and travelling in the UK for 3 years, where I was able to compete in some local competitions, recitals and masterclasses, we decided to make the move to Germany to utilise my language skills and experience life somewhere new. My musical pursuits and educational background led me to taking up work as an early childhood music teacher in Hamburg – a role which I absolutely loved and which has inspired my passion for bringing music to life for kids! Living and working in Europe also led to many wonderful and diverse travel and performance experiences, including auditioning for the Hamburgische Staatsoper choir and accompanying an operatic street busker in the alleys of Barcelona.

Upon returning to Dunedin in late-2020, I settled into life as both a singing teacher and doctoral scholarships administrator at the University of Otago, before welcoming my first child (a son named Jack) in

September 2021. This year (2022) will see me return to the stage once again, as I prepare to audition for the Lexus Song Quest in April, and perform in Opera Otago's Road to the Lexus concert. My great hope is to be able continue to re-immense myself into the Dunedin musical community and to inspire and encourage the youth of New Zealand to experience the joys of classical performance. I am grateful that my time at Otago Girls' provided such a strong foundation to pursue this passion into my adulthood.



City Choir & Southern Sinfonia 'Mass of the Children' concert, 2014 (credit: Pieter du Plessis Photography)



Singing on the streets of Barcelona with an operatic busker, 2019.



With my son Jack ready for the Road to the Lexus concert April 2022.

Lucy Huang - OGHS 2009 – 2013

Kia ora, my name is Lucy, and I am an OGHS alumnus! I was born and raised in Dunedin, where I went to OGHS in the years between 2009 - 2013. The subjects that I enjoyed were science, art, and economics. After my High School studies, I decided to take Health Sciences First Year at the University of Otago, which is where my interest in bacteria started. Therefore, I completed a Bachelor of Science with honours in Microbiology. Then, I moved to Wellington where I recently defended my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis in Microbiology.

My PhD research project investigated how plant pathogens cause disease, specifically the kiwifruit pathogen *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *actinidiae* (Psa). The economically destructive pathogen of the kiwifruit causes disease symptoms of necrotic leaf spots, canker, dieback and in worst cases plant death. To cause an infection, Psa must first navigate its way to entry sites of the kiwifruit leaf surface. Psa can 'smell' chemicals exuded from specific sites of the leaf such as the stomata. The ability to smell is regulated by biological sensors that mediate movement. My thesis dived into the molecular basis of Psa biological sensors and the chemicals on the kiwifruit leaf surface.

What I enjoyed about my PhD were the laboratory experiments. I got to explore different science techniques and cutting-edge technologies. I was also happy to be in the Microbes, Molecular and Evolution (MME) research group because we did all sorts of activities including conferences, baking, tramps, mini-golf, laser force, and Christmas parties. A challenging aspect would be doing a PhD during a pandemic because most of the results were obtained from laboratory experiments. Another time was when one of my research aims was to characterise a protein with an unknown function. Part of it was challenging because there was limited information out in the open world, yet exciting as I got to untap into something that no one else had explored that addresses fundamental questions.

The PhD journey also reignited my passion for art and science communication. I volunteered to help with some art for the department that I was worked in and for conferences. In the laboratory, I loved tinkering with the artistic side of experiments such as agar art. Microbes that we can't see through the naked eye have a fascinating morphology and colour. A science communication highlight for me would be getting into the finalist for the 2021 American Society for Microbiology Agar Art competition in the open category. Due to the pandemic, the open category was any form of art medium other than agar art. Hence, I made an augmented reality video explaining how bacteria sense chemicals. My PhD days were also



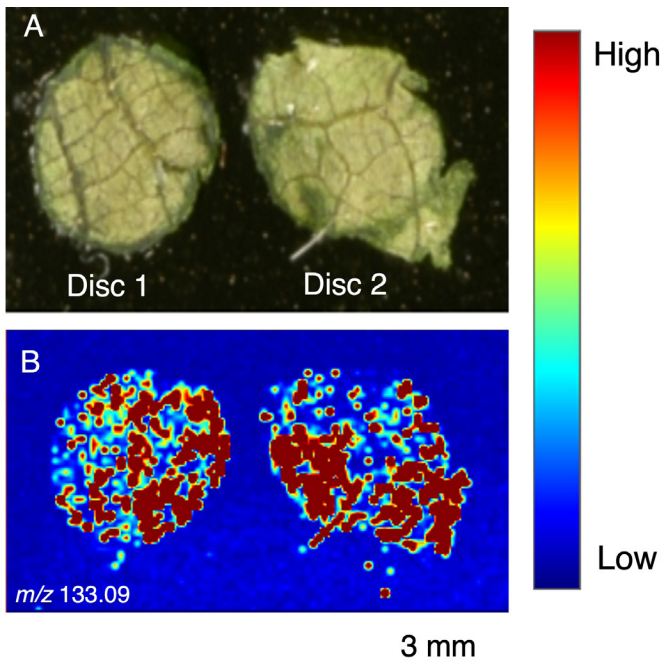
A large bouquet from the MME laboratory research group after the post PhD defence celebration.

when I started using LEGO blocks as a method of learning and science communication.

Post PhD life, I am now working as an associate patent examiner at the Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand. I get to assess the latest biotechnology inventions for intellectual property rights. Aside from that, I am working as a LEGO instructor and freelance graphic designer for a kid's programme. I teach kids how to build motorised toys with a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math focus learning. I also work on miscellaneous things such as website design. I would love to publish a book that explores the microscopic world and children's science illustration books.

That's a wrap of my career so far! My top two career tips for anyone who wants to be a scientist are 1) initiate conversations with lecturers/supervisors in the research field(s) that interests you, and 2) join a big laboratory group because the activities, mentorship, and support contribute to the right mindset (i.e., mental health) and overall PhD experience.

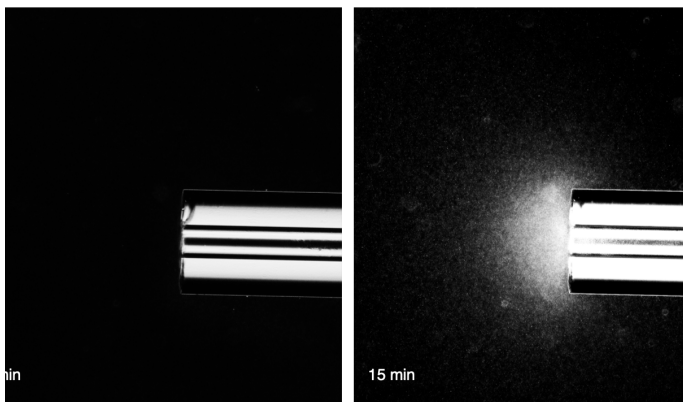
I would like to thank all the teachers at OGHS who taught me and supported my studies! And finally, thank you to everyone in the OGHS 2013 cohort!



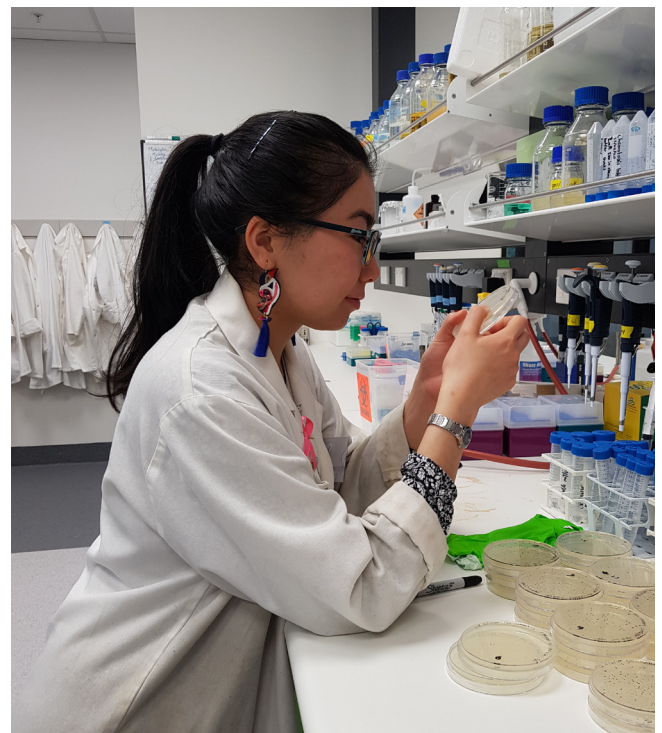
Kiwifruit leaf samples for imaging mass spectrometry. A two-dimensional imaging technique is used to visualise the spatial distribution of chemicals on or within tissue to understand the underlying biological processes and observed phenotypes. (A) Optical image of two kiwifruit leaf discs. (B) Imaging mass spectrometry of A. The colour bar represents the intensity of the chemical at the corresponding mass to charge ratio (m/z).



A day in the life of a LEGO instructor. Kids learn how to build motorised toys using LEGO blocks.



Psa senses and swims toward attractant chemicals (e.g., nutrients). In this assay, a capillary is closed at one end with an attractant filled at the open end. The capillary is then placed in a pond of *Psa* cells. Over time, *Psa* senses and swims in the direction of the gradient that is formed by the attractant. The cloud shown at the time point of 15 minutes is the accumulation of *Psa* cells at the tip of the capillary.



A day in the life of a PhD student. Counted *Psa* colonies on agar plates.

Email addresses

Please remember to keep us updated with your current email address. Every time we send this newsletter out we find we have a large number of email addresses that are no longer active.

Juliette Lequeux - OGHS 2009 – 2013



Otago Girls' experienced much success at the 2022 Maadi Cup which took place in the last week of March at Lake Ruataniwha. Otago Girls' took eight rowers to this annual event; the National Secondary School Rowing Championships. Harriet Thompson of Year 12 took 2nd place in the Under 17 Girls' single skulls while her team, the Under 17 Girls' Quadruple skulls gained a third place. The Quad team consisted of Harriet, Islay Merriman, Maggie Hepburn, Sophie Orchiston, and Emily Esplin. It has been two decades since Otago Girls' won a medal let alone two. The students attended up to twelve trainings a week always at the crack of dawn or in the early evening. Mike Goldsmith and Matt Thompson, their coaches, were an integral part of the student's success and we thank them for the hours they put in. It was just a delight and a surprise for our team to meet Juliette a week after their stunning medal haul and we hope to see more of Juliette when she next visits us from France.

We were delighted Juliette able to present these medals at an assembly. The video of the assembly can be viewed by clicking on this link <https://youtu.be/YKECM2ZOI1c>

Juliette's speech:

"Thank you to Mrs. Davidson for inviting me and to you all for having me. It is a real honour for me to be here today and to celebrate such an incredible achievement for the OG's rowing squad.

A quick summary of myself: I started off rowing much like these girls, representing Otago Girls'. After leaving school I spent a couple of years as a high-performance rower for New Zealand training and competing with elite rowers. I then moved to France where my family is from and over the following years I represented France at a couple of World Champs. This was an extraordinary experience; to be part of a sporting community in another country with a totally different culture and different views to us Kiwis. My goal was still to definitely represent New Zealand and to carry the silver fern but when I finally got around to trialling and being selected, Covid came around and threw everything up in the air.

Since Covid, I have taken a back seat in rowing, allowing me to take a step back and spend time with the younger generation. This brings us back to these girls. To Harriet, Islay, Maggie, Sophie, Emily and the rest of the rowing squad: I am so proud to be from Otago Girls' today to see how the squad has developed; to see you all succeed at a national level. For me, it was my dream and I can't imagine how overjoyed you all must feel. Rowing at Otago Girls' was the most fun and most fulfilling time of my rowing career. The support within the school squad and the parents; having a family away from home; even coming back from regattas and having all my classmates and teachers taking an interest, just like today. All that makes me so proud to be back today and to see how you are all thriving. Getting into an "A final" in itself is such an achievement never mind finishing on a podium. Congratulations".



Sarah Hubbard - OGHS 2014-2018

Kia Ora! I'm Sarah Hubbard, I graduated from Otago Girls' High School in 2018. I sang throughout high school and was incredibly blessed with the opportunities Otago Girls' gave me.

Since leaving school I have really tried to pursue a career in opera singing. I started studying at the University of Otago in 2019, enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts and Science majoring in Music and Physics. I figured out early on that studying anything alongside music was disadvantaging my singing. I didn't have the time I needed to practice singing as much as I should. I changed my degree to a Bachelor of Music majoring in Performance. I had great success in my first year, having a number of placings and wins in Dunedin and Christchurch singing competitions. I also received the Colin McDonald Memorial Award from the University, having the highest mark for my performance paper out of the 1st or 2nd year singing students. 2019 also saw my involvement in Opera Otago's season of *The Mikado*.

In 2020 I had a gap year, planning to drive from London to Mongolia with my partner at the time. We ended up having to come home only a month and a half into our trip, as COVID-19 reared its ugly head. After fleeing Croatia and leaving our car in a field, I found myself back in New Zealand with no University enrolment. I ended up working for that year while working towards my Associate Diploma with NZMEB. I figured I may as well become qualified to teach singing instead of sitting around not singing for a year.

In 2021 I started off my year at the New Zealand Opera School. This two week intensive singing course accepts 21 singers a year, and is based at the Whanganui Collegiate School. I had the opportunity to learn from some of the best New Zealand singers who have made careers overseas. The Opera School really fuelled a fire in me to strive for excellence in my singing. After returning from opera school I continued my bachelors, slotting into 2nd year. In 2021 I tried to compete in as many competitions as I could, however COVID restrictions meant that the Dunedin competition and the NZ Aria competition in Rotorua both got cancelled. I still had the opportunity to compete in Napier and Christchurch. The Napier competition had me selected in the prestigious Aria final, being one out of 6 finalists. This achievement was to me one of my first huge singing successes. In 2021 I was also cast as Adele in Opera Otago's season of *Die Fledermaus*. However after a number of rehearsals, the production was cancelled due to the COVID lockdown.

2022 has gotten off to a great start. Once again I commenced my year at the New Zealand Opera School, having a whole bunch of different, talented tutors to learn from this time. I am now in my third year at the University of Otago, due to complete my bachelors at the end of this year. Recently I found out that I have been selected as a semi-finalist in the prestigious Lexus Song Quest. This is by far the biggest achievement in my career to date. I am currently in full rehearsal mode getting ready to compete in the semi-finals in Wellington in July. I am also practising towards the North Shore singing competition which will occur in June.

Next year I am planning to study towards a postgraduate degree in Australia. Depending on how I go there, I want to head to Germany in 2024 or 2025.



Sarah during a singing lesson at the New Zealand Opera School 2022.



Headshot taken by Kelk Photography



Sarah performing "Ich bin die Christel von der Post" at the New Zealand Opera School 2021



The Chambered Nautilus

We were delighted to welcome Ms Julienne James to assembly on Tuesday the 24th of May. Julienne is the granddaughter of Roy Spackman, the composer of The Chambered Nautilus, our iconic school song. She has gifted us the original score written by her grandfather in 1936. Miss Mary King, the principal between the wars, asked Mr. Spackman to set the poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes to music. Since then, the nautilus shell has become a symbol for our school and is seen on badges, bags, on "Shelly Cards" and in the beautiful embroidery of Betty Fraser (Kai Tahu) presented to the school in 1990 when the M.H.M King block was opened.

Mary King saw that in the nautilus shell, nature provides a container for growth, a protective shell where vulnerability might be present. Like the cephalopod (a sea creature that makes its home there), Students grow at their own pace and in their own way. As it grows, the nautilus makes new, larger chambers of its shell in which to live, closing off the old chambers and gradually forming a spiral.

We were also privileged to read some of Molly Spackman's diary at assembly. Molly is Julienne's mother and was a dancer in "The Ballad of Light and Beauty," the pageant created by Mary King where The Chambered Nautilus premiered.

She wrote:

August 12th Wednesday

It is getting too close to be comfortable. I have managed to get skins for the hunt ballet. Miss Aitkin said I could wear them. Now, I shall stand out above Daphne. Show is going very well. Nearly off my head.

August 14th Friday

Of course, the most important thing was the show at night. Went very well except for the orchestra. Thrilled with the whole thing. The soloists were a very big disappointment; Mr Ripley was the best of them. I danced in the cymbal and misery ballets.

August 15th Saturday

Once again, only this time about 100 percent better. Everyone excelled themselves. Miss Johnston absolutely hugged Miss King at the end. I am beginning to like her again. I must stop myself. She is not nice.

Serendipitously, the Otago Museum recently joined with local artist Bruce Mahalski to support him in painting many of the items in the museum's Animal Attic. One of them was our beloved Chambered Nautilus. Have a look as you travel up Rattray Street. It is magnificent.

The choir sang the song for Julienne and our Year 9s at assembly. Because of Covid restrictions, it has been difficult, almost impossible for the school to be together in one place let alone sing together. Who can go past the soaring sound of the school in good voice as they sing The Chambered Nautilus? Hopefully, Celebration will return to Knox Church this year and we will once again lift the rafters off in the way Mary King would have intended.



Julienne (J.J) Spackman, Kathryn Dick (Deputy Principal), Bridget Davidson (Principal) and retired archivist Jane Smallfield.



Julienne (J.J) Spackman joining in on school assembly 24 May 2022.



Luca Burton and Amadee Reynolds showcasing the mural painted by Bruce Mahalski in Rattray Street.

Photo credit: Otago Daily Times



Photo credit: Otago Daily Times

Ada Duffy pictured with former disputes tribunal referee Jean Park (also an ex-student) who was one of the first to champion the cause for the room.

Ada Duffy - OGHS 2014 – 2018

Tēnā tātou katoa

He uri tēnei nō Kāi Tahu. Ko Ada ahau.

I am in my fourth year studying Law and Māori Studies. Over the summer I did an internship working as a court attendant at the Dunedin Law Courts. This was an awesome opportunity, giving me a direct look at judicial procedure. I spent most of my days sitting in courtrooms, soaking it all in, as well as doing some background administration. I was also tasked with finishing off the restoration of the Ethel Benjamin room, a space in the courthouse that our nation's first woman lawyer used early in her career. The objective was to create an authentic office space as a tribute to Ethel, as if she were to waltz right in at any moment

I felt particularly honoured in learning more about her trail-blazing achievements. After leaving Otago Girls' with a myriad of accolades under her belt, Ethel enrolled in the laws programme at Otago. At the time, women were not allowed to practise law, so Ethel took a huge risk in stepping into the unknown. Following the enactment of the Female Law Practitioners Act prior to her graduation, Ethel went on to lead an extensive career dealing in property, hotel management and women's rights, namely domestic abuse, divorces and adoptions.

Courthouses are intimidating institutions, but in creating a room dedicated to a revolutionary woman lawyer born and bred right here in Ōtepoti, the court's spirit is warmed and elevated. It is an acknowledgment of her successful navigation within an adverse, isolated environment, and a commemoration of her ongoing influence that has no doubt contributed to the widening diversification of legal practitioners

*

* Ada Duffy was a co-author of the School Haka.



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This newsletter was compiled by Kathryn Dick on behalf of the OGHS Alumni Association.