



Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

Principal's Report

Last year the school carried out a major community consultation aimed at developing a new vision statement for the school. After many meetings with parents, whanau, staff and students where we explored what it was that made us feel proud to be associated with Otago Girls', what the specific contribution OGHS has made to the lives of others and what these contributions allowed others to go on to do or be, we arrived at our new vision: Inspire, Empower, Challenge, Dream. Our vision is that we work together as a school community to inspire, empower and challenge our learners so that they have the desire, the ability and the capacity to not only dream, but to realise those dreams.

One of the things that we are really proud of here at Otago Girls' is our history and this came through loud and clear in our consultation. There is very good reason for this pride, with our history a major source of inspiration for learners within our school. Otago Girls' High School was the first state secondary school for girls in the southern hemisphere, making this the place where universal secondary education for girls in New Zealand began. As a result young women began to have access to knowledge and later careers that until then had been only been available to boys and men. It is hard to imagine now, but this school opened before women had the right to vote in New Zealand and since its opening thousands of women and hundreds of teachers have passed through the school. Among them have been the 'firsts' that we acknowledge and celebrate whenever we can; Flora Allan, Ethel Benjamin, Margaret Cruickshank, Emily Seideberg, Yvette Williams, Dame Silvia Cartwright, to name but a few. But we are not just about educating the firsts. There are also thousands of women who may not have become famous but who have led great lives and have contributed to their families, their professions and their communities. All of the women and men who have been part of our school make up our alumni and in 2013 we established the Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association to enable ex-girls, ex-staff and supporters of the school to remain connected to the school, regardless of where they lived. The establishment of the association has also enabled us to build a database of alumni members as we near the 150th anniversary of the opening of the



school. At present we have over 3000 names on this data-base and planning for the 150th celebrations is well underway. Everyone receiving this newsletter is on our database. If you are aware of other alumni who are not, please encourage them to get in touch.

Our 150th is going to be celebrated at Waitangi weekend 2021, which is appropriate as the school was founded on February 6th 1871. This will be a weekend of celebrations and events for our Alumni to attend and it will begin with an open ceremony down at the Regent Theatre involving the whole school on the Friday afternoon.

In the lead up to this event we recently held an Alumni Function at the school to which around 100 ex-girls and ex-staff members came. Performances by current students, a rousing rendition of the school song, tours of the school and drinks, nibbles and plenty of conversation filled the time.

The next step in our preparations for the 150th is to convene a group of current students who will begin to plan activities to involve students throughout 2021.

Linda Miller
Principal



Alumni Committee member Linda Kinniburgh, with Alumni President Principal Linda Miller at the Alumni function.

Visit from 1953 ex-girls

On Friday 15 March we delighted to have a group of ex-girls who started at OGHS in 1953 come and visit us for the morning. A number of these women had not returned to the school since they left

We were delighted to be able give them a tour of the school along with morning tea in the staffroom. They also each left with one of our Ex-Girl packs.

We are always available to give tours to ex-girls whether it is on an individual basis or to a group who are having a mini reunion. Please email the Alumni Association for more details.



Meeting a Year 10 Social Studies class while touring the school.



Having a rest in the Principal's office and asking questions of Public Relations Prefect Mika Cottle.



Front row L-R: Kay Klitscher, Joan Webster, Barb Baillie, Mika Cottle (Public Relations Prefect), Judy Knox
Middle row: Alison Timms, Hilary Jaket, Jennifer McKinnon, Jan Palmer
Back row: Jocelyn Harris, Anne Malcolm, Ailsa Johnston, Lexie Kay, Catherine Goodyear

OGHS Alumni Function

On 1 March the OGHS Alumni Association held its second alumni gathering in the school hall and were delighted that over 100 ex-students of all ages were keen to join us.

We were delighted to have Wairua Pūhou (our kapa haka group), the choir, jazz band and two soloists Rose Stevenson and Marika Fukuzawa provide entertainment for us. All present were also pleased to have the opportunity to sing the school song (twice through!).

The Prefects did a great job guiding our guests around the school and they certainly enjoy many of the stories that the ex-girls shared with them.

I would like to express our sincere thanks to the people that donated generous raffle prizes for us to use on the night. Loris King donated a \$200 Earth, Sea, Sky voucher; Colleen Dennison donated two rounds of Evansdale Cheese, and Anne Routledge who lives in Yorkshire sent us a beautiful "Betty's" hamper all the way from the UK. Thank you for your generous donations.



Valborg (Val) Agar (nee Jensen)

OGHS student (1943-1948)

OGHS staff member

(1953-1958, 1962-1966, 1969-1993)

Val Agar's association with Otago Girls' goes back to 1943 when she started here as a third form pupil and she was a prefect in 1947. She was a top academic student and a member of the school choir and the honours gymnastic class.

Val returned as a staff member in 1953 and when she left Otago Girls' in 1993 (with two short breaks during this time) she was the longest serving staff member in the history of the school - her time on the staff at the school totalled 37 years. She held this position until the retirement of her colleague Janice Sinclair in 2014.

Val held a Teaching Diploma and a Diploma in Physical Education and was the Otago Girls' Physical Education Specialist from 1953 to 1958. In December 1958 she temporarily left the school to take a trip to England and the school magazine of that year states *We admire the quiet efficient way in which Miss Jensen organised and controlled the Physical Education department, and her unfailing cheerfulness and good humour.*

Back on the teaching staff from 1962 to 1966, and then returning in 1969 until 1993, Val was teaching English and Social Studies and in 1986 she became the head of the English Department. She also held the position of Fifth Form Dean in 1993.

Val is remembered for her wonderful sense of humour but also as a woman who took her job

seriously. She was a mentor and great help to the younger staff in the school and was always willing to share her resources. The students liked her and she had a good relationship with them. One vice recalled by staff was that she was part of the smoking circle, a vice that was quite acceptable for most of the time Val taught at Otago Girls'. In later years however Val and her smoking buddies were forced to retreat to a small room in the lower floors of the school.

In 1993, on her retirement, the following words about Val were written in the school magazine:

Her incisive teaching of English and her wit caused many of her ex-students to remember her teaching with appreciation, and her encyclopedic knowledge of the finest points of grammar and language made her a "significant authority" in the staffroom. Her many years of service to the students of Otago Girls' High School deserves the highest acknowledgement.

When we heard of Val's passing we posted an image and words about her on our school facebook page and many ex-girls took the opportunity to speak so warmly of Val - they remembered Mrs Agar as one of their favourites, with a kind and warm nature, an open minded approach and how she had a positive impact on them as a teacher. Many also fondly remembered her lovely husky voice and her three legged dog.

Val taught generations of students and is still remembered fondly by them - she will always have a significant place in the history of Otago Girls' High School.

A representative from the school spoke at Val's funeral in Clyde.



Val Agar, back row at right, 1993.

Rachael Baxter OGHS (2009-2013)

Cambridge Rutherford Memorial PhD Scholarship

Ex-girl Rachael Baxter is one of three people nationally to receive the Cambridge Rutherford Memorial scholarship with her research aimed at discovering more information about volcanoes.

The scholarship will enable Rachael to study the crystals formed throughout the storage of magma preceding eruptions in Iceland. Studies to date have investigated changes taking place in the crystals from days to weeks preceding eruptions. *Rachael Baxter*



In her PhD work, she will collect and chemically characterise new samples, which will ultimately lead to a better understanding of the relationship between key elements of crystal structure, magma activity and the eventual volcanic eruption.

Rachael says she is delighted to receive the scholarship and is looking forward to expanding her network of “incredible scientists” to work with.

“I am very excited to have this opportunity to study Icelandic volcanoes for my PhD, as they fascinated me throughout my undergraduate studies. Studying this will in turn help us better understand magmatic processes both abroad and in New Zealand.”

The scholarship will cover university fees and provides a stipend.

(extracts taken from [The Royal Society](#) website).

Report from Public Relations Prefect Mika Cottle

On the 1st of March Otago Girls' had the privilege of hosting the Alumni Association function. It was a wonderful event and a great chance for ex-girls to return and catch up with other former ex-girls as well as see how the school has developed over time. It was also an awesome chance for current pupils, just like myself, to mingle with the ex-girls and listen to all the stories they had to tell. I met some wonderful women, all very successful in their own way. They had fond memories of the school and a few had some outrageous stories.



Mika Cottle
Public Relations Prefect

I met two women who were hockey players back in their day and one day they decided they would get a hockey goal transported to the astro felt turf next to the canteen without permission. They got in tremendous trouble for bringing the goal to school and scored many detentions for it. They looked back at the memories, laughed and said 18 years down the track it was all worth it. That goal still brings joy to all the students who use it to this day. Some ex-girls also reflected fondly on memories of the typing room and embroidery classes which have been replaced by digital technologies. For myself it is weird to even think about having a typing room! Many of them mentioned how the school had changed so much, but hardly changed at all. It was really cool to see the ladies enjoy the night and come back to reconnect with the school.

The Alumni Association was founded in 2013 with one of its main aims being to keep alive friendships made at Otago Girls' and to provide opportunities for social interaction amongst ex-girls. This night was just another one of the events that has been organised to do just that. A huge thank you to all involved who organised it, the night was a huge success! I can't wait to return as an ex-girl myself at the school's 150th Jubilee to be held Waitangi weekend 2021.

OGHS 150th Jubilee - Waitangi Weekend 5-7 Feb 2021

Planning is already underway for our 150th Jubilee in 2021. You can help us out by making sure any ex-students or staff you know have registered their interest in this event. If you aren't already on our database you can go to the school website and register your details via the countdown clock on the home page. Alternatively you can email us at alumni@otagogirls.school.nz

Alice Moran (OGHS 2012-2016)

I am currently living with a homestay in Hokkaido, Japan - serving Italian cuisine and cross country skiing before beginning my exchange programme at Keio University in April. With a constant white road, 20 cm of snow falling most days and my water bottle freezing when I go outside, the lifestyle is just a little different from New Zealand. I must say I no longer think that Dunedin winters are cold! I plan to spend my third year of university in Tokyo where I will continue to study the Japanese language, try lots of new activities and venture out on a bit of tiki touring!

When I look back on how I got to be living, skiing and serving mixed pizzas (the most popular meal on the menu) in a small village in the north of Japan I really credit it to the experiences and opportunities I gained during my time at Otago Girls'. After gaining a small taste of the Japanese language at high school, I developed a love for languages which lead to me studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Japanese and minoring in Chinese at Otago University. After studying Japanese and Chinese at university for two years I have become even more fond of other countries, languages and cultures. Learning languages has become a huge part of my life as I find they guide me to meeting a huge range of people and doing many different activities outside of university. I find it so much fun trying to communicate with others in another language, sharing similarities and differences (even if sometimes there is not much talking and lots of hand actions). I also am studying towards a Bachelor of Commerce (majoring in International Business) to keep my study balanced and ensure I don't become a language nerd!

However out of my university studies, I have also continued to love the passions and hobbies that I found during my time at Otago Girls'. I have developed a love for cross country skiing which was first introduced to me on Year 13 PE camp. I am sure many ex-girls will have also skied the snow farm trails on Year 13 PE camp and can agree it was an incredible week of learning, scenery and fun! I am now cross country skiing daily in Japan, exploring the woods and competing in races here and there (very much for fun and to explore nature).

During my time at Otago Girls' I participated in World Challenge where we flew off to Thailand and Laos. I loved the challenge, exploring new places and embracing a completely different culture. I have now developed a very serious case of "the travel bug". Recently I spend a month backpacking around China and although it tested my limits it was an incredible, eye-opening and rewarding experience. I can't help looking ahead, wondering when I can next hit the runway and travel some more.

I am continuing to discover what I enjoy and try lots of new and crazy things. But when looking back I see how my time at Otago Girls' really shaped what I have grown to love. While at high school I was fortunate to try many different activities, and go to all kinds of places. It was through these experiences that I discovered what I enjoy. These passions have grown into hobbies, what I am studying now and what I hope to do in the future. I am very grateful for the experiences and opportunities I gained and the knowledge and skills I was taught while at Otago Girls' High School.

I look back on my time at Otago Girls' with only fond memories and I am very proud of the values, opportunities and people that are involved with the school.



Phoebe Lee (OGHS 2010-2014), Fashion Designer

Otago Girls' High School are very proud ex-girl Phoebe Lee who was selected as one of the designers to participate in the iD International Emerging Designers Awards at iD Fashion Week.

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Dunedin designers tapped for international iD show

DAVID LOUGHREY

EMERGING designers from as far away as Vietnam, Hungary and Bangladesh will be heading to Dunedin in March as this year's iD Fashion Week takes shape.

The 37 designers from fashion schools in 16 countries will be in the city for the iD International Emerging Designer Awards.

The designers this year have explored themes from technology and war to sustainability and abandoned buildings.

Two of the 37 hail from Dunedin, including Otago Polytechnic graduate Phoebe Lee.

Ms Lee said yesterday her designs were usually colourful and she designed "to how I'm feeling".

She liked to incorporate her own drawings and illustrations into her designs.

She found out she was one of two chosen from Dunedin late last year.

"I was very excited. I've always dreamed of being in an Emerging show."

In the past she had dressed models, and last year she modelled in the show herself.

"It's pretty cool that it's built up to being a designer showing my own things."

For her future, Ms Lee said she was delving more into art to find different outlets for her creativity outside fashion.

"I will keep doing fashion design," she said, though that might be aspects such as accessories.

Of her collection for the show, she said it was "a combination of funky, quirky, edgy and cute".

"It's inspired by the '60s and punk individuality."

The other graduate is Rosette Hailes-Faku.

Judge Tanya Carlson said there was a consistency of themes from graduates, no matter where in the world they came from.

"This year many of the entries are inward-looking, asking 'who am I, as they explore their place in the world'."

"Young designers are drawing upon their experience with family, ethnicity and what it is like to be an immigrant to inform their clothes and at the same time define identity and how it defines their place in the world."

Each designer will show five garments at the show.

David.loughrey@odt.co.nz

Designer emerged . . . Otago Polytechnic fashion design graduate Phoebe Lee (22) has been chosen to show her collection at the iD International Emerging Designer Awards show in March. PHOTO: STEPHEN JAGUIERY

Jenna Thorne (OGHS 2014-2018)

A huge congratulations to ex-girl Jenna Thorne who has received a scholarship to Hutchinson Community College in Kansas and their NJCAA Div I Volleyball Program. She will be heading there in July for two years.



Suzie Bates (OGHS 2001-2005)

It was great to have ex-girl Suzie Bates return to Otago Girls' in early March. She spent time coaching our talented cricket players and also gave a talk on the importance of leadership in general to an appreciative group of students. Suzie has continued to be a very supportive ex-girl and regularly gives back to the school.



Suzie Bates with some of our budding cricketers.

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.

Photo shared with school



L-R: Hilaire Chivers, Susan Crawley and Sally Wilson (all of Form IIIS) outside Dunedin Railway Station in 1956 (Crawley Family Collection).

As the school archivist I was delighted when I was emailed the above photograph to add to our collection. Photos such as this are rare in our collection and I appreciate the thoughtfulness of Susan Bremner (nee Crawley) who sent it to me. Susan writes here of the circumstances around the photograph being taken.

This photo was taken outside the Dunedin Railway Station looking towards lower Stuart Street – the incidental street scene is quite amazing! Our family, Jim and Joan Crawley, myself and two younger sisters Margaret and Judith left Dunedin on 23rd October 1956 by train to begin our journey to Perth, Western Australia, where Dad took up a senior administrative position at the newly established Medical School at the University of W.A. It was lovely that Hilaire and Sally were allowed to leave school and come to the station to farewell me.

We left Wellington on the gracious ship “Dominion Monarch” and it took ten days via Sydney and Melbourne to reach Fremantle and Perth on 9th November 1956. It was quite an adventure for us all. However, it was hard to leave Dunedin where all branches of our family had lived for several generations.

Susan Bremner (nee Crawley)

Joan Sinclair retires from Dunedin Ex-Girls' executive roles.



Joyce Patton, Hilary Mitchell and Joan Sinclair at the AGM.

The Dunedin Branch of Otago Girls' High School Ex-Girls' held their Annual General Meeting on 11 March.

Joan Sinclair the Treasurer/Secretary of the Branch announced that she had decided to stand down from this joint role that she had held since 1997, also having been the Treasurer from the mid 1980s, and a long term committee member prior to that. Joan was also a Life Member of the Branch. Another long term Committee Member Joyce Patton extended a vote of thanks to Joan and presented her with flowers and a gift.

For many years Joan has been the stalwart of the Dunedin Ex-Girls branch and it is her organisational skills and hard work that has ensured that the branch has continued to exist. Thank you Joan for your extraordinary contribution to this group over so many years.

As no one was prepared to fill Joan's shoes as the Secretary/Treasurer the school has offered to take up the Secretarial component of the Branch ensuring that they continue to meet on a regular basis.

Principal Linda Miller spoke at the AGM about various happenings at the school over the past year and those present were very impressed by what the girls are achieving in all domains and by their positivity.



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