



Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

Principal's Report

One of the highlights for the Alumni Association in 2017 has been the continuing growth of connections with our ex-girls from throughout the country. The number of Alumni members continues to grow in preparation for our 150th Anniversary and our database now contains over 3000 names. With the departure of our Year 13 students and a number of our International visitors we add a new cohort to our Alumni database.



The Alumni event held in February also drew back into the school 180 ex-girls who were able to reconnect with their Alma Mater. We have had 14 ex-girls visit us during school hours and we were delighted to welcome these women, give them a tour of the school and present them with one of our ex-girl packs. The organised visit to school of a group of ex-girls resident at Summerset Retirement Village was one of the highlights of our Alumni year. It was lovely to see the way our Public Relations prefect Maia Usherwood-Nosa embraced her role, and connections she made during her year in this role have encouraged her to plan on joining the Alumni Committee.

We always enjoy connecting with our long standing ex-girl branches and so appreciate the donations from them of funds to present prizes at prizegiving, or books on Library Day. Jane Smallfield and I were delighted to join the Dunedin Branch for their recent Christmas gathering and Jane travelled to Timaru for their 72nd birthday luncheon. Both these events are covered in this newsletter along with an event hosted by the Central Otago Branch. It is always heartening to see the continued passion these members have for Otago Girls'.

We have also received school memorabilia over the year from ex-girls or their descendants; including school badges, hats, gym frocks and leather bound prizes as well as personal school photographs. We are always delighted to add such material to our archives.

All the above connections that the school has made with ex-girls over the year strengthen our Alumni network and I feel these bonds continue to expand and strengthen our school community.

Next year will see some changes at Otago Girls'. Firstly we will have an expanded Senior Leadership Team with the addition of two new Assistant Principals. The current team of ex-girl Deputy Principal Rowan Taigel, Assistant Principal Bridget Davidson and myself, will be joined by Mr Chris Richards (currently a biology teacher at OGHS) and Ms Sue Porter (currently an Assistant Principal at John McGlashan College). I look forward to working with this team as we introduce a major change to our pastoral system into the school.

This change sees us moving from a pastoral structure based on year levels to one based on Vertical Forms. The aim of this change is to provide even better pastoral care for our students with each girl being placed in whanau groups made up of students from each level in the school and having their mentor teacher as one of two whanau teachers who will be with them throughout the duration of their time at school. The whanau groups are organised by Houses with each house having seven vertical forms. There are many advantages to this model - increased interaction between students of different year levels,

increased leadership opportunities for students at all levels, deeper relationships between student and mentor and between mentor and family as well as improved ease of running House meetings and greater opportunity to maintain and grow House spirit.

Students in Years 9 and 10 will still have "core" classes which will study English, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education and Mathematics together. Year 9 students will still have Peer Support but their leaders will come from their whanau groups and will be with them for the whole year.

Much research and thought has gone into developing this system. We have had the advantage of looking at what works well in many other schools that have this approach and we have worked to make it fit Otago Girls'.

At the time of writing we are preparing for our Annual Prizegiving and look forward to celebrating the wide ranging successes of our students. We are also delighted to have retiring long term staff member Ann Babbage as our guest speaker at this event.

I wish you and your family all the best for the festive season and hope you all remember that you will always be an OG's girl.

Linda Miller, Principal

Hui Wang OGHS (2001-2002)

Hi, my name is Hui Wang and I live and work in Wellington. I'm a Chartered Accountant and work as a Financial Accountant for the New Zealand Defence Force. Prior to my current role, I also worked in corporate finance for Capital and Coast District Health Board, Otago University School of Medicine, and Terrace Heights Serviced Apartment.



I graduated from Otago Girls' High School (7th form), in 2002 where I was enrolled as an international student. I arrived from China in 2001 with limited knowledge of the English language and I can still remember being very anxious on my first day at school. I studied hard and was supported by the very helpful teachers while I was a student. As a result, I graduated with a B bursary with entrance to the Otago University where I majored in accounting.

The reason I chose accounting as a profession was because I was influenced and guided by my high school Accounting Teacher Ms Babbage. I'm very thankful for her patience and support that she gave me throughout my time at the school.

What I have today is a result of diligence, perseverance, and hard work. I arrived in New Zealand as a fresh and naïve international student 16 years ago. After all those years of pursuing my dream, I am now living my dream as a New Zealand citizen with my own home and a loving family (which includes Max, our lovely pet dog!). My life in New Zealand continues and there are more exciting journeys and experiences to be had. For those of you who are still studying, remember that as long as you have a dream, keep working hard to achieve it and your dream will come true!

Lisa Stevens

OGHS (2001-2005)

Born and bred in Dunedin, I attended Otago Girls' High School from 2001 to 2005, serving as a prefect in my final year. I'm not sure I ever knew exactly what I wanted to be when I grew up (except perhaps the star of the musical film Grease....) so I always involved myself in as many activities as possible, hoping that one would eventually stick. I knew before attending OGHS that they had a great languages program and took up Japanese from my first year. I was very lucky to spend a term studying in a sister school in Hiroshima, Japan in Year 12 which started a love of travelling for me.



However, as well as languages I was also keen on more academic subjects like math and science. After returning from Japan, juggling the work load of both academics and languages was too much and I had to make a tough decision, in the end choosing to favour science over Japanese. As I loved science and helping people I chose the health sciences route after graduating from OGHS, a popular and competitive subject at Otago University. At the end of my first year, I thought Medicine might be my choice of career, however I was disappointed when this was the only Health Science course I was not accepted into. I chose instead Medical Laboratory Sciences, as it drew the most parallels to what I originally liked about Medicine.

Pursuing laboratory science was a blessing in disguise as, like I previously mentioned, I hated committing all my time to doing just one thing. During my laboratory studies, I became heavily involved in competitive ice figure skating and was able to compete with Team New Zealand at the World Synchronized Skating Championships in Zagreb, Croatia in 2009. An opportunity that could only have been realized with a career path that allowed this kind of work/life balance. Although I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my laboratory sciences degree, I found interest in microbiology. This passion must have shown as I was offered my first job in the Southern Community Laboratories Microbiology Department at Dunedin Public Hospital, the same laboratory I completed my final year internship. Here I received one of the best grounding in the industry I possibly could have and will forever be grateful for the kindness, friendship, and knowledge I gained in that position.

Never quite content, I enrolled in a distance taught Master's program with the University of Edinburgh in 2012 and was awarded a Masters of International Health

and Infectious Diseases in 2017. I loved the micro lab, but I wanted to learn more about how the diseases affected people and communities. While I began this in New Zealand, I moved to Singapore in 2013, in an effort to get a more 'international' perspective on health. For two years I worked here for a pharmaceutical research company on new drug developments for viral illnesses Hepatitis and HIV. Although interesting, the research world was not for me, lacking the human contact I craved.

In 2015 I left Singapore with no solid plan in mind. It was a scary time and I felt very alone. I decided to offer some time to volunteer for a charitable foundation I knew through a friend in Cebu City, Philippines. However, on entering the volunteers vetting process, the executive director called me and asked if I would be interested in using my international health degree to design, test and implement a health education program for children in the Philippines. It was an incredible opportunity but not one without big sacrifices – taking a big hit financially and adapting to a new quality of life in a developing country. However, it was one of the best decisions I ever made. I met so many wonderful people and learnt so much about the health, people, and the world. It made me realize how fortunate we are to have grown up in New Zealand, with access to things like adequate, quality healthcare, as well as an amazing education system, like that I received at Otago Girls' High School.

After two years in the Philippines, I was headhunted to apply for a position at the World Health Organization – the United Nations representative for Global Health. I moved to Lyon, France in August 2017 to work as a Consultant for the Laboratory Strengthening Team, in a satellite office of the WHO-Headquarters. I cannot believe I now have an opportunity to use all my skills and all my passions in one place. We plan and implement projects that support, empower, and train laboratories all over the world (especially in the most under-resourced countries) to improve their testing, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases of international concern, such as the Ebola or Influenza Virus.



Of course, I still do far too many things at once. I have coached figure skating and ice hockey with Olympic and World Champions across Asia, trained and competed

internationally for the Philippines in CrossFit, and am currently training to be regionally competitive in France for both Figure Skating and CrossFit. Although the place, the people and the jobs may change, if you are following your passions I believe you will always end up finding the opportunities that are meant for you and you will be successful.

Your story is not a straight-line path towards an end goal. It is the sum of all the many, many things that you will experience throughout your life. I am so grateful to have grown up in New Zealand, with access to opportunities that have led me to where I am today. If I had one piece of advice for girls at OGHS today, it would be not to worry so much about figuring out exactly what you want in life now, and instead focus on just doing what makes you happy and letting go gracefully of the things don't serve you as a person. You can never know which one of the many millions of opportunities out there are right for you, but if you are open to them and willing to enter scary, uncertain places to pursue them, you will find you naturally gravitate to the place in the world you are supposed to be.

Bonjour from France! Bon Chance to the next generation of OGHS alumni.

Central Otago Ex-Girls' function

On 8 October, Central Otago Ex-Girls had a very successful function at The Gate Hotel, Cromwell. Forty five ex-girls, husbands and friends of the school enjoyed catching up over drinks, savouries and sandwiches. This was followed by a wonderful presentation by Professor Barbara Brookes from the history department at The University of Otago, on the history of New Zealand women, including details about some of our early students, Emily Siedeberg and Ethel Benjamin. We were thrilled that Barbara had set aside so much time for us. Everyone loved her talk. She was duly thanked by our president Esther MacKay.



From left: Professor Barbara Brookes, The University of Otago (guest speaker), Esther MacKay, President of Central Otago OGHS Ex-Girls, Marion Craig, Cromwell.



From left: Barbie and Michael Guest (Wanaka)



From left: Gwenyth White (Tiger Hill), Noeleen Johnston (Galloway)



From left: Sue Richardson (Cromwell), Elizabeth Golden (Alexandra)

OGHS ex-girl packs for visitors to our school

We have created some packs for ex-girls who come to visit Otago Girls' High School. We love having ex-students call in at any time and we are always available to give you a tour of the school.

Unfortunately due to postage costs the packs cannot be posted out to ex-students.



Dunedin Ex-Girls' Christmas function

On 5 November Principal and Alumni President Linda Miller and Alumni Secretary Jane Smallfield were invited to join the Dunedin Branch of Ex-Girls' for their Christmas luncheon at J'Tees Golf and Function Centre on the Taieri.

Prior to a delicious Christmas lunch, Linda Miller spoke about developments at Otago Girls' High School over the year. President Hilary Mitchell thanked the Secretary/Treasurer Joan Sinclair for all she does to ensure the continuation of this branch.

Gifts were exchanged, the company of ex-girls and husbands enjoyed and as usual, on such an occasion, much reminiscing took place.



Hilary (nee Smith) and Maurice Mitchell. Hilary is the President of the Dunedin Branch of OGHs Ex-Girls'.



Nyra McGavin (nee Ford) and Margaret Powell (nee Peak).



Frances Yeoman (nee Clarke), Joan Sinclair (nee Baines) and May Bracefield (nee Griffin).



Ex-Girls and partners listening to Linda Miller at J'Tees Golf and Function Centre.



Principal Linda Miller with Joyce (nee Crawford) and Arthur Patton



Agatha Hodges (nee Haig) and Dorothy Finnie (nee Crawford).

Timaru Branch of ex-girls have a belated 70th birthday



L-R: Val Callon (Hore), Lois Kirkwood (Backholm), Patricia Shears (Fairweather), Annette Batchelor (Dewar), Judy Charteris (Rowe), Aileen Stewart (Dawson), Nola McKinlay (Binnie), Nancye Latimer (Homer), Jan Sinclair (Pierson), Joy Williams. Also present but not in the picture were Win Parkes (Mirams), Rod Hurley, and Kay Nicholas.

It was with a bit of a shock that as the end of the year approached we looked at the minute book and discovered we had missed the 70th birthday of our Ex Girls' group. In fact we'd missed it by two years. Not to be deterred we set about planning to celebrate it anyway, which we did at our Christmas luncheon in November.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Timaru Branch of Otago High School Ex Girls Association was held on September 3rd 1945. There were 21 Ex Girls present along with Miss L Morton, President of the Dunedin Association. Committee and Office Bearers were elected and the first Committee Meeting was held on 7 September 1945. The Committee decided that meetings would be held every month. The first meeting of the group was a Trump – Whist Evening along with two items given by members. There were 23 members present with apologies received from 11 ex pupils from around the Timaru district.

In the 72 years since that first meeting our minute books tell of many memorable occasions both happy and sad and that our members have always been a supportive and friendly group. For a small town, membership has always been fairly stable and only in the past 10 to 15 years has become smaller as times and social habits have changed.

There are some interesting snippets from the minutes of meetings originally held in local halls and as they became too expensive for the group to hire, members' homes. Our group still meets in members' homes and also in local restaurants or

coffee bars which gets us out and about the district.

A variety of entertainment and speakers in the 1940s and 50s included the overseas (South Africa) bride of a serviceman, a radiologist, members who had been on overseas trips to Russia, Japan and Africa. We've had talks on fabrics, floral art, pottery, sculpture, the making and altering of hats, local radio announcers and a very popular talk by local well known author Ivy Preston. There was a Play Reading Circle formed which regularly performed at meetings and a Bring and Buy was held at each meeting.

Members attended the School's 75th jubilee Celebrations and a combined Coronation party was held in 1953 along with members from other Schools' Ex Girls' Associations in the area. The connection with Ex Girls from other Secondary Schools in the Timaru, Waitaki and Ashburton areas was strong.

In 1963, three guineas was sent to Dunedin as a contribution to the Schools Prize Fund, a tradition carried on throughout the years although today a more substantial amount is sent.

In 1964 prizes were donated for Letter Writing to Fourth Forms O and M (Commercial). A novel idea was suggested for the Annual party of the group – white candles in bottles and a pianist !

Since the establishment of the Branch all names in the minutes are prefaced by Mrs or Miss. No Christian names were used even for Mrs Dr Garden, a speaker in 1964. It wasn't until the late 70s that the minutes become a little less formalised and

Christian names were used.

In 1964 things got a little merrier and a record player and records were brought along by members. In 1967 the groups subs were 10/-, wine and cheese was served at the Annual party and two flagons of sherry were bought from the groups funds. Some of our present members became members at around this time, perhaps they were responsible for these changes?

Funds over the years had been gathered from subs, bring and buy and sales tables at meetings, auction evenings compered by members, and raffles. Our group today always has a raffle or two at our meetings and our subs are \$5.

Contact with the School has always been a priority with members, and the minutes tell of visits by Teachers, Ex Teachers, and members visiting the School participating in important functions. Some present members took part in the 125th Jubilee celebrations by performing a rendition of "Ten Little High School Girls." We all thoroughly enjoyed a visit from Principal Linda Miller and Librarian/Archivist Jane Smallfield in 2014 and were delighted to have Jane join us again for our luncheon in November as we celebrated 72 years of our group.

Our group of Ex Girls, though small, still enjoys getting together every two or three months, reminiscing over our days at OGHS, and it always involves plenty of good memories and laughter. The fact that we all originate from Dunedin is also a plus and we are always discovering something new about each other. Why only just last week at our luncheon I heard two members discovering they had lived in the same area and reminiscing over the same macrocarpa trees they had played in as children. Dunedin and Otago Girls' is what binds us together.

Annette Batchelor



Nancy Latimer cutting the birthday cake, decorated with the school crest that existed when most of the Timaru Branch Ex-girls were at school. Close up of cake below.



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

Planning is already underway for our 150th Celebrations 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 enter your details on our Alumni page. Alternatively you can email us at alumni@otagogirls.school.nz

Chris Carrell (nee McCorkindale) OGHS (1963-1967)

Chris was a student at Otago Girls' from 1963 to 1967. Her class had a 50 year reunion in 2013. A summary of classmates' careers showed the substantial majority followed careers in teaching or nursing, but journalism, law, science, library work, radiography, secretarial work, physiotherapy, medicine were all represented.



Chris has provided the following question/ answer report about her historical novel *Harvest*.

Time for Harvest

Chris Carrell (nee McCorkindale) has just launched her historical novel *Harvest*, set in post-earthquake Napier, wartime Wellington and rural Otago between the 1930s and late 1970s. It's a story of love for land and family and the struggle between tradition and change.

What made you write this book?

One reason was discovering (when I was about twenty) that Georgina McDonald's 1950s novel *Grand Hills for Sheep* was about my Scottish ancestors settling inland from Dunedin 150 years ago. I had a very strong sense that the struggles and upheavals of last century were a story needing to be told too.

I'm also very interested in the drivers of social change. What makes fiercely held moral stands or assumptions soften over time until criticism becomes acceptance? Do external forces like war and earthquake dictate lives, or does God himself? Are we really in control of anything?

Of course I grew up on a farm near Waitahuna: the heartbeat of the land still lives in our hearts, though after six generations the land is no longer in the family. *Harvest* is set on the family farm but one city reader said to me yesterday "That's me! I am Rose." It's stirring memories wherever readers lived.

You've obviously done a lot of research. What resources did you use?

I started with my father's war diary, letters and his farm diaries. My children had made tape-recorded interviews of my mother's childhood experience of the Napier earthquake, so the Napier chapters began with those, but I needed much more. Books, photographs, magazines. PapersPast is a wonderful resource! The most difficult chapter needed details of inside a troopship. I read a lot about the Lloyd Geering heresy trial too, though most of what I wrote got edited out. And I pored over minutes of the Women's Division of Federated Farmers in the Hocken Library. I needed to understand New Zealand's role in brokering peace in Trieste in 1945. What happened to soldiers after the war? Then there was music, farming practices, the weight of a heifer, breeding habits of rabbits, how to cure a sheepskin and much more.

How long did it take to write?

I read the first segments of the story to my father in the Leslie Groves Rest Home in 2009! So it must be eight years.

You've included almost five decades. Which was the most interesting for you?

A difficult question. I enjoyed the simplicity and security of the fifties – I no longer think it deserves the 'bring decade' label. Rose and Robert were in love and involved with every social event in a very active community. More people lived in the country than the cities then.

But of course I loved the 60s and 70s, though I had to write through my older characters' eyes. The book ends before the matrimonial property law change and homosexual law reform, but foreshadows both. Unequal pay was the norm for women, or unequal access to the family cheque book. I wanted to explore the time when the 4000 babies offered for adoption a year equaled the number of childless couples wanting to adopt, before the DPB assisted single mothers to keep their babies, before anyone sought babies from Romania or Russia. It's hard for today's young people to see a pregnancy as the crisis it was then. It was still illegal for adopted children or their birth mothers to find each other.

It's as much a man's story too, a tale of father-son relationships, issues of inheritance, and leadership and exactly what was expected of men during last century. As women came out from behind their men to explore new ways to live authentic lives, they struggled through change together.

Harvest is available from Chris Carrell at nuggetstreampress@gmail.com, University Book Shop (Otago) in store or online and Paper Plus stores.



Visitors welcome

Fay Letham (nee Reeves) OGHS 1967-1969

On a lovely sunny Dunedin day recently I decided to take up the offer (from Alumni newsletters) of a tour through the school. I hadn't been back inside since leaving 5R at the end of 1969. I was shown around by Jane and met several staff members in the process.



The major changes were:

- The house that housed the library and embroidery room has been replaced by a classroom extension from the main building. It is good to see that the exterior of this extension is in keeping with the old part.
- The gym is now a performing arts centre complete with a dance studio. The old gym floor of course is ideally suited to this purpose.
- A new music suite has been built and has a recording studio in amongst its practice rooms and classrooms.
- The hall has been enlarged and some of the balcony area removed.
- A new purpose built gym and courts.

I was amazed at how the area of the school that drops sharply down to the old gym and backs onto Rattray Street has been very well utilised to give good access up to the music suite extension above including disabled access.

The entrance to the main building is still the same and it was a little like going back in time for a brief moment. I enjoyed seeing all of the art works and photo display boards that are around the school.

The new gym and courts are across the road but connected by a tunnel which has enlarged the schools footprint and kept good outdoor spaces on the old site.

Any of you who were my classmates in 3S (1967), 4R and 5R, I hope you are planning on attending the 150th celebrations in 2021 as I intend being there and would love to see what everyone has done since leaving school.

I started my training as a registered nurse in Dunedin in 1971 and spent 16 years post registration in the operating theatres

there before my husband, Gordon and I shifted to Snells Beach (near Warkworth) to run a residential Christian Youth Camp. We did this for 16 years and worked with many schools and groups over this time. The work that we were able to do with children and families from underprivileged backgrounds was particularly rewarding and is a period of time that we really enjoyed with Gordon still working as an outdoor educator at another camp. Since leaving camp I have worked back in the operating theatres at both North Shore and Waitakere Hospitals (Waitemata DHB). I'm currently the Charge Nurse Manager at Waitakere hospital surgical unit in Henderson.

We have four adult children and five grandchildren, the latest being born in Dunedin at the beginning of November.

Thank you Jane for the lovely time I had looking around my old school and to the receptionist and other staff for making me feel welcome.

Faye Letham (nee Reeves)

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 out of date emails.

School Memories

Under the Alumni section of the school website there is now a place to add your memories of your time of school. We would love to start gathering these to use for the 150th reunion. Please visit our the website and send us some of your memories from your time at Otago Girls' High School. www.otagogirls.school.nz



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This newsletter was compiled by Jane Smallfield on behalf of the OGHS Alumni Association.