

Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

The following is the speech Principal Linda Miller gave at the school's prize-giving held on 10 December 2019.

Principal's Report

He mihi nui, he mihi mahana, kia koutou

Tonight I would like to ask you to take a moment's silence. Silence for the victims of the White Island tragedy, silence for the victims of the Christchurch Mosque attacks, silence for Grace Milane and Amber-Rose Rush and all the other victims this year of domestic and date violence. Let us take some time to remember these people and all they meant to their friends and families.



Linda Miller, Principal

Every year I promise myself that I will begin early when it comes to writing my prize giving speech. And every year I manage to take it right to the wire. Why? Well, it could be that new ideas and themes keep presenting themselves to me right up to the night. It could be that things change at the last minute and I want to reflect those changes. It could be that I am simply a terrible procrastinator. Or it could be all of the above. Up until a week ago, the themes I thought I would talk about reflected the year that had been. It occurred to me that we could look back on 2019 in different ways, depending on our attitude and our standpoint. Some will say that 2019 was marked by violence and anarchy, while others will say that it was notable for its inclusiveness and activism. Both descriptions are true, but one carries a message of hopelessness, and the other a message of hope, and that matters.

The content of my speech has evolved over the past week, however, as a result of the time I have spent with my ailing mother. Sitting with her has led me to reflect on the life she has led which has, in turn, led to me thinking about how our school Vision: inspire, empower, challenge, dream - relates to her life, compared to my life, and the lives I want for the students in my care at Otago Girls'. Mum was born in 1923 on a farm in rural Southland. Her parents were immigrants from the Shetland Islands.

They were humble, hard working Presbyterians who believed in moderation in all things and that one should 'never get too big for one's boots'. Mum and her four siblings were raised during the Great Depression and reached adulthood during the Second World War. They had very little, but they always had enough.

Mum's future was determined by her gender and by her duty to family. This duty saw her leaving school, something she loved, aged 14, in order to care for her family while her mother spent time in hospital and then in recuperation. Mum never had a paid job. After a decade of looking after other people's families for nothing more than pin money, she married and had her own family, which she spent the next three decades raising. I wonder who or what inspired her? While I don't really know,

and cannot ask her anymore, I do know that she looked up to her elders, especially her primary school teacher, Mr Brash, who instilled in her a love of learning and excellent grammar. Her inspiration came from people like her in background, ethnicity and beliefs and from the natural world that could be found within a horse ride of her home. Looking in from the outside, I feel that she lacked empowerment. Or was it just a different take on empowerment? Mum had her drivers' licence and so some freedom of travel but she never earned her own money or had any assets of her own. She enjoyed belonging to groups like the Country Women's Institute and Spinning Club, things that were located within the radius allowed by the need to get home to cook and clean for the family. She was a great communicator; responsible for the development of oral language in her children and grandchildren, she taught us to love reading, and she enjoyed the craft of writing, even having one of her poems published in a magazine. The challenges she faced were mainly of the domestic variety with one of the early ones being to find a husband after the devastation war had heaped on the young men of her district. When my daughter asked her grandmother how she knew 'Grandad' was 'the one', she replied that he wasn't related and he didn't drink so that was a good start. Mum met the challenge of being able to clothe and feed a family of six children on a minimal budget. What makes me really sad is that I don't know what her dreams were. I suspect that finishing high school was one of them. One that she was unable to realise. She did get to go to Shetland though, twice. I actually wonder if Mum ever dared to dream. She never got too excited about things, as if there was a rule that said wanting something too much would lead to disappointment. I think that attitude was a factor of the era in which she lived and the challenges that were faced every day during the depression and the wars.

During the nearly 96 years mum has been on this earth (it is her birthday on Thursday), the world has changed so much, the role of women has changed so much and the opportunities available to all of us have changed so much. Now our inspiration can come from anywhere, from anyone and from any time - Yvette Williams, Barak Obama, Greta Thunberg. Inspiration is all around us and regardless of our ethnicity, gender, sexuality or beliefs, we can find people to inspire us.

We are empowered as a result of the education we receive, the work done by those who have gone before to ensure we have equal rights to employment, remuneration and decision making and by the opportunities we are given. We can enjoy challenges of every type and scale, from asking a question in class to taking part in camps and attending international competitions and events. We can be challenged by hearing the views and beliefs of people from backgrounds that are different than our own. And through these challenges we can grow as individuals; growing our humanity and the communities in which we live, work and play. When it comes to the dreams of our generations - the sky is the limit. And it doesn't matter if our dream is to invent a cure for cancer or simply to grow a beautiful garden. Both contribute to a better world.

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. We hope to open registrations in mid-February 2020.

My mum made me into the person I am today. Although I don't know what her dreams were or are, I like to think that her dreams can be seen in my dreams and in those of my children. I think that each generation has a responsibility to make the most of the advantages the previous generation gave them and to make the world a better place. I also believe that one of the most important goals my generation must achieve is to ensure that the young people of our world have hope; hope for the environment, hope for humanity and hope for the future.

Which brings me back to the themes I mentioned at the outset of this speech. Rather than remembering 2019 for a terrorist attack, I encourage you to think of it as a year in which we focused on valuing diversity. The response of our school and wider community towards those impacted by the Christchurch mosque attack was beautiful. Driven by our students, the focus on inclusiveness, the seeking of understanding and the actions of togetherness and support drew us together and helped us heal. Diversity was celebrated throughout the year with the visit of Elizabeth Eckford, of The Little Rock 9, the hosting of the Anne Frank exhibition and the visit during Dunedin Writers' week of authors Marcus Zuzak of the Book Thief fame and John Boyne, who read from his new book "My Brother's name is Jessica" which dealt with issues of gender diversity.

2019 was also a year in which activism came to the fore and we saw our students and our school take a more active role in the world. The response to the Christchurch attacks, the action against climate change, the Zayed Sustainability Award application, the I am Hope initiatives, the work of the Sticks n Stones anti-bullying group, the Otago Pasifika Speech Competition, the Pasifika mental health talanoa, Shave for a Cure, Relay for Life, International Food Festival; all activities that were student led. As a school we were involved in the development of the Centre of Digital Excellence funding application, we are the lead school in the Secondary Refugee Cluster and a key partner in the United Nations University Regional Centre of Excellence application. We are working with others to make a difference. Students of this school make a difference. Girls, your actions make a difference. Make sure that difference matters.

In the education sphere, this year has brought more change. It is easy to feel that education is becoming more and more complicated and yet, at its heart, the foundation of education, the foundation of hope and the foundation of success remains the same now as it was when Mum was in Mr Brash's class at Knapdale School; that foundation is reading.

While I was sitting with Mum the other day, my daughter and I were reading a People's Friend magazine - the extent of Mum's reading these days. In it was an article about Cressida Cowell, the author of "How to Tame a Dragon" and UK Cornerstones Children's Laureate this year. She talks about books having a transformative power and states that there is evidence that a child who reads for joy is not only more educationally successful, but more likely to vote, to be successful professionally and more likely to own their own house. And these outcomes transcend social class. She sees books as being key to a child's creativity. Whereas films can be very bossy, books are partly what the author writes and partly what the reader imagines. The variety of words in books gives us power. The more words we have, the more complicated thoughts we can have. As part of her role as Children's Laureate she wrote a charter in which she said that every child should, among other things:

Read for the joy of it
Own their own book

See themselves reflected in a book
Be read aloud to
And have a planet to read on.

I'd like to say thanks to Mum for ensuring I had all of Cressida's rights. As a community we need to work together to ensure that everyone else has them too. Over the holidays girls, make sure you read; during the school term, make sure you read. It is the key to your future success.

Tonight is the final OGS prizegiving for a number of staff and students. To those of you in Year 13, thank you for your contribution to the school. In particular I would like to thank Head Prefect Rose Stevenson and Deputy Head Ella Steel for their hardwork and team work in leading the students of the school this year. I wish all of our leavers well for the future and hope that you will always take pride in belonging to this school.

We have a number of staff leaving us this year also and I would like to make mention of two of them - Mrs Crowe and Ms Taigel.

Mrs Ada Crowe has been our Guidance Counsellor for the past 30 years and it is with gratitude and some sadness that I thank her for her service to the school and wish her all the best for her well deserved retirement. Ada has worked tirelessly to keep the staff and students of this school safe.

Also leaving us this year is our Deputy Principal, Ms Rowan Taigel, whose expertise in the areas of innovation, change management and agile methodology has led to employment opportunities outside of our school. The Launch programme Rowan ran this year was nothing short of life-changing for the students who were fortunate enough to have participated in it and I know this will be one of the lasting legacies of her short but impressive time with us.

Thank you to all the staff who make Otago Girls' the school it is. You contribute so much to make possible the rich and varied opportunities on offer to our students. To Lyn Hurring and members of the Board of Trustees, thank you for your support and for the expertise you bring to your roles. The school is in good hands.

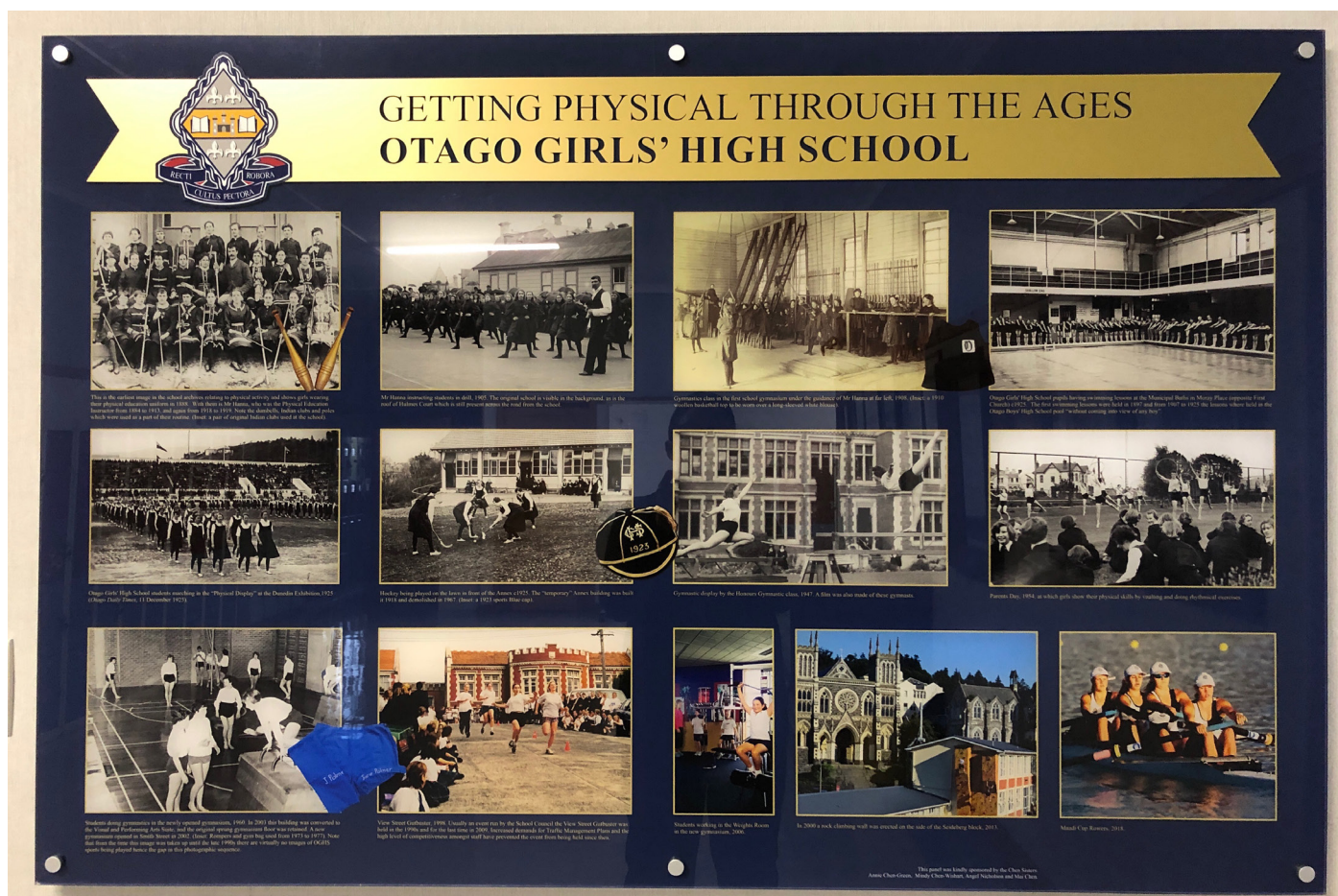
Tonight is our opportunity to come together as a school community and celebrate our dreamers, our grafters and our contributors. Congratulations to everyone represented here, those receiving awards and those supporting them. We each contribute to the achievement of our own and others' dreams.

No reira
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa



Principal Linda Miller with 2019 Dux Samantha Couper.

Sports Panel



We are pleased to have a fourth historical panel installed in the school. This one is entitled "Getting physical through the ages" and was made possible through the generosity of the Chen sisters: Annie Chen-Green, Mindy Chen-Wishart, Angel Nicholson and Mai Chen.

Would you like to be responsible for producing the Jubilee cakes?

The 150th Jubilee Committee would be keen to hear from a talented baker/cake decorator - preferably an ex-girl who would be willing to make the main Jubilee cake for our 150th, along with some smaller ones to be served to our attendees.

Ideally we would love to find someone who would take on the task for 'the love of the school' and for reimbursement of the cost of ingredients. If you would be keen (fee or not) please contact us on alumni@otagogirls.school.nz

Ex-girls who are authors

As part of the 150th Jubilee the McNab Room at the Dunedin Public Library will be doing a display of published books written by ex-girls. If you have had a book published we would love to add you to our list. Alternatively let us know your favourite book written by an ex-girl - there are many to choose from. Email details to alumni@otagogirls.school.nz

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.

Shirley Scambary (formerly Mowat) nee Kroon

OGHS student (1939-1943)

Shirley Scambary (formerly Mowat, nee Kroon) passed away on 2 December 2019 aged 93. She was one of the school's greatest fans! Shirley was an active member of the Christchurch branch of the OGHS ex-girls and below are words spoken at the funeral by Dawn Tait (nee Holland), the Immediate Past-President of Christchurch ex-girls branch



Dawn was not anticipating these words being reproduced in written form, but she hopes they reflect the high regard in which Shirley was held.

"There is exactly twenty years between Shirley's first day at school in 1939 and my first day in 1959. Despite the 20 year difference we both shared:

- The regular trudge up one of Dunedin's steepest streets - View Street
- As we walked in the main gate we checked that our navy hat was firm on the head and our navy gloves covered our hands.
- When necessary we waited outside the Head Mistress's office just inside the main door on the left.
- We sensed the warm afternoon smell from Speight's Brewery in Rattray Street especially if the lesson was in the dungeons.

It doesn't matter what our age is - all ex-girls begin with a part of our personal history in common.

- We were all proud to attend OGHS - the oldest state girls' school in the southern hemisphere.
- We learned "Recti Cultus Pectora Roborant - "The Right Education Makes the Heart as Strong as Oak".
- We sang our school song "The Chambered Nautilus", which really sounds like grand opera and is very challenging ... but we sang lustily.
- We have all lived in Dunedin for at least one to five years.

Everyone who has spoken to me about Shirley mentioned how much she loved her five years at Otago Girls'.

To quote a friend:- *She was always telling me how much she had loved "school". I think most of us look back fondly and are grateful for the education we received but did we really love it when we were there? Shirley did and you can just imagine it.* Thanks, Annette.

During Shirley's life at school she made the most of every day. She played hockey, and she was a Prefect in her final year. She was at secondary school during the war years and maybe there was something comforting and secure about being in the classroom during that time.

As well as her love for her school, Shirley loved Christchurch Ex Girls' (her favourite organisation), which she joined in April, 1969 - a remarkable 50 years of involvement and service. No doubt it was a wonderful way for her to keep her memories close to her.

She soon joined the committee and as you might guess in the subsequent years she held nearly every office from Secretary,

Vice President, President, and Archivist. She was made a Life member, elected Vice Patron and then Patron.

Shirley always recognised the contribution made by others and didn't take anything for granted. With a call, a card, a letter, she would thank, affirm, congratulate so that all contributors felt valued, appreciated and important.

A former president said, *When I was first president Shirley always had time to listen. She had an ability to be calm and wise when I felt uncertain about how to handle something. She had a very good philosophy of letting things take their course. I remember how right she was more than once!*

Another member stressed that *Shirley was a very caring person, always concerned for everyone else, and she was great at networking. She would arrive at Ex- Girls, be it a meal or an ordinary meeting, dump her bag on a chair, and she was off to work the room. On the way home she would be worrying about the ones she didn't get to talk to and likely, as not, she would write to them the next morning. She was a terrific letter and card writer sending off messages to all who were reported as ill or had sent apologies for some reason.*

I have only been privileged to share the last nine years of Shirley's Ex-Girls life but I am so glad our paths have crossed. With her charming, smiling, warm greeting she always made you feel she was so pleased to see you - that you were important to her. It's been a privilege, Shirley. We shall all miss you.

She is certainly a woman with a "Heart of oak".



1943 Prefects. Shirley Kroon is second from right in the front row.



1941 VS. Shirley Kroon is in the middle of the 3rd row.

Farewell Ada Crowe

Ada Crowe has served the students and staff of Otago Girls' High School for nearly 30 years. She came to the school from Taieri High School where she taught Home Economics, Clothing, Science, Human Biology, Health, and Social Education. It was while at Taieri that Ada began her training as a counsellor, beginning the extra mural studies



and acting as a relieving Guidance Counsellor in the school. After taking up the role as Guidance Counsellor at Otago Girls', Ada completed her counselling qualifications through Massey University in 1992. After gaining experience in the role, she went on to play a major role in her profession, taking part in national research projects, presenting at international conferences, and being appointed to the role of President of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors from 2000 to 2003.

On completing her tenure in this role Pauline Templeman, National Secretary for NZAC said this: "Ada was an inclusive and encouraging leader with a meticulous eye for detail. Along with her sense of humour went a keen sense of justice and a passion for the benefit of counselling in today's world. She represented us well in all her meetings with national bodies, government agencies, and Ministers of the Crown. During her term of office, Ada assisted the Association to move further down the path towards a practical enactment of our commitment to bicultural partnership."

Ada's contribution to the school was not limited to her counselling role. She was a regular member of the Annual OGHS Ski Camp, managed a netball team every year, was Pasifika Dean for a period, was a key member of the Positive Behaviour for Learning team, and was always engaged in professional development that kept her current with increasingly complex issues of concern to adolescents, along with best practice in counselling. In 2005 and again in 2018 Ada was the recipient of an OGHS Board Fellowship, enabling her to attend international conferences. She was also awarded a Sabbatical in 2013.

Over the years the role of school guidance counsellor has become increasingly complex and demanding and Ada has done an incredible job of keeping those in her care safe. This is no mean feat in today's world.

Ada's commitment to the students and staff in the school, her advocacy for all who needed a voice, and her sense of humour will all be missed. We wish her all the very best for a long and happy retirement.

Ms L Miller
Principal

Snippets from the ODT

Ella Spittle

Ella Spittle, Head Prefect in 2006 won this year's Young Tourism Export Council (Young TEC) award. Ella is the marketing manager of Southern Discoveries. The judges emphasised Ella's "initiative with sustainability and her holistic approach to innovation in all parts of the business". (ODT 7 December 2019).

Madison Kelly

Artist extraordinaire has recently been working on a Keep New Zealand Beautiful nature mural at Orokanui Ecosanctuary. Her design features native flora and fauna.

Suzie Bates

Suzie Bates has become the first women cricketer to play 300 T20 Games. She is also the leading all-time scorer in women's international T20 with 3100 runs at an average of 30.69

Mel Webster

Mel Webster recently competed as part of the New Zealand IMMAF Lightweight team at the World Championships in Bahrain, where she won a Silver medal. Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) include boxing, kickboxing, wrestling and jiu jitsu. Mel will be another name to add to our National Sports Representatives board.

University of Otago Sports Blues

Lucy Matehaere - Sprint Kayaking and Surf Lifesaving.
Gemma Millar - Rugby Union
Mikayla Garforth - Surf Lifesaving

Why are we celebrating the 150th Jubilee in 2021?

Over the past year a number of ex-girls have contacted me asking why we having the 150th Jubilee in 2021 and not 2020, given that the Centenary was celebrated in 1970.

The Centenary was in fact held 100 years from the founding of the school in 1870 - it was founded in August 1870, but the school was not in fact opened until the 6th February 1871. The 150th Jubilee will be held 150 years to the day that the school actually opened.

The 125th Jubilee also based the date of its celebrations on the year the school opened and held these celebrations in 1996.

Celebration

Our annual Celebration Service (formerly the Thanksgiving Service and originally the Carol Service) continues to be a highlight of the school year and was held on 30 October.

The evening celebrated the life of Otago Girls' and in particular some notable events from our school year both celebratory and poignant. Held at Knox Church due to our historical links with the establishment, the service includes a myriad of inclusive and diverse performances. Again we were ably supported by our amazing staff and students from the music department, matched in talent by entertaining student instrumentalists and singers. Our five Speechfest winners read readings from inspirational people who came across our paths literally and figuratively in 2019 like Elizabeth Eckford, Melinda Gates, John Boyne, Jacinda Ardern and Anne Frank. We remembered the late Yvette Williams and the victims of the tragic events in Christchurch in March. Our moods were lifted by a number of massive hits from years gone by and the night didn't go without its dose of humour from our hilarious Year 13 Medley.



Choral director Kathryn Dick being acknowledged by Year 13 students at the Celebration service.



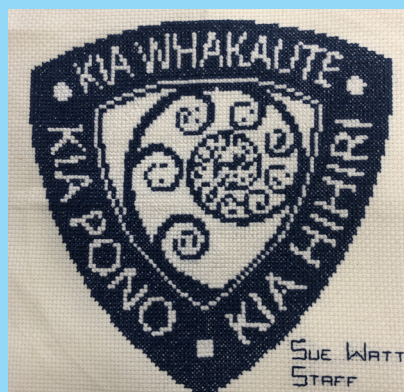
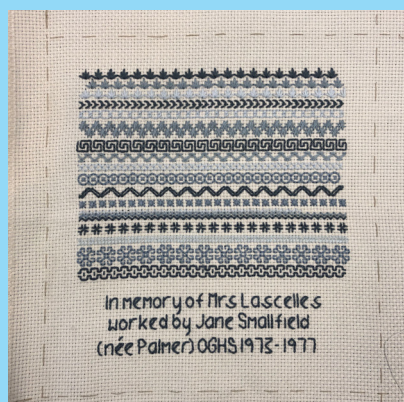
Full school at the Celebration service in Knox Church.

150th Jubilee Embroidery Project

Our embroidery project for the 150th Jubilee is underway. A number of ex-girls have had their instructions and fabric posted out to them and we look forward to seeing the results.

If any other ex-girls are keen to embroider a 25cm block on either 14 Ct Aida or 28ct Cashel linen please email alumni@otagogirls.school.nz and indicate what fabric you would prefer and what your postal address is. We also ask that you pay \$10 into the 150th Jubilee account (02-0912-0351479-000) to cover the costs incurred in completing this project.

At right are two examples already completed - you are free to embroidery anything which links to the school in some way.



Are you in position to help sponsor the 150th Jubilee?

The 150th Jubilee Committee is still seeking sponsorship from businesses (or individuals) for the OGHS 150th Jubilee. The main reason for the need to attract sponsors is the Committee's commitment to set the registration fee at \$60. This would enable any ex-student to be fully involved in the celebrations. Attendance at user pays activities, such as the dinner, will be additional.

If you are in a position to assist us please contact Jane Smallfield at sd@otagogirls.school.nz as soon as possible. Thank you to ex-girl Sally McMillan of McMillan & Co for being prepared to provide generous sponsorship, along with the ASB Bank and The University Book Shop. We still need sponsorship for the following categories (or donations of lesser amounts).

Silver sponsor (1 only) \$2500

Sponsor of Sunday morning tea and provision of Jubilee cakes.

Free advertisement (100mm x 110mm) in the special ODT supplement celebrating the event.

Acknowledgement of sponsorship at cutting of the cake.

Opportunity to have publicity flags displayed at the school at the Sunday functions.

Bronze sponsor (any number) \$1000

Free advertisement (100mm x 110mm) in the special ODT supplement celebrating the event.

Acknowledgement as Bronze sponsor of the event.

Lucy Matehaere (Dux 2018) named University of Otago Māori Sports Person of the Year

Lucy is highly accomplished in two sporting disciplines. In sprint kayaking she has had many achievements in 2018/2019. She won silver in the Open Women's K2 500m at 2019 Sprint Kayaking Nationals. She was also selected into the New Zealand under-21 team to compete at the Asia Pacific Championships, where she gained gold in the K4 200m, bronze in the K1 200m, bronze in the K2 200m and silver in the K4 500m. Lucy raced with world champion Lisa Carrington last year and gained gold in the K4 500m and K4 200m in December last year. Lucy has also recently been selected for the Pathway to Podium squad. In surf lifesaving Lucy is also blazing a trail. Lucy gained silver in the ski race at the TSB New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships earlier this year. She was then selected into the New Zealand Development Squad. (Extract from Otago Bulletin Board 14 Oct 2019).

From the archives



Androcles and the Lion production 1977



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