

UNIVERSITY OF Otago

M A G A Z I N E

ISSUE 23: JUNE 2009

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EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS

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OF LANGUAGE

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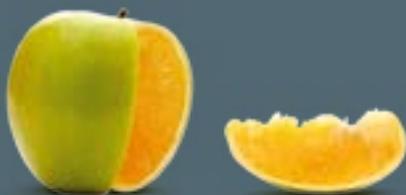
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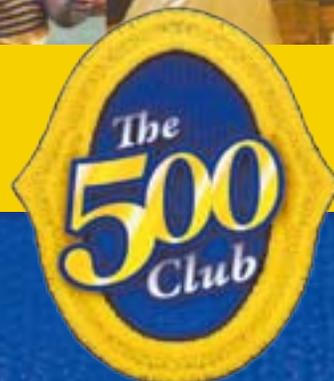
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University of Otago Magazine

A magazine for alumni and friends of the University of Otago

Issue 23 ~ June 2009

ISSN - 1175-8147

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COVER

Replica of the jaws of the extinct dolphin *Waipatia maerewhenua*, found in limestone in North Otago, and on display at the University's Geology Museum. The original is on loan to the Otago Museum.
Photo: Bill Nichol

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APN Print

CIRCULATION

Office of Development and Alumni Relations

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For nearly three years, Dunedin has been torn apart by controversy about whether to replace Carisbrook with a multi-purpose covered stadium next to the University campus on Anzac Avenue. While some people with long memories feel an atavistic sense of loyalty for Carisbrook, anyone who has used the place recently knows that it has become embarrassingly outdated. Even to retain the present low level of use would have required an upgrade costing ratepayers tens of millions of dollars. The proposed new stadium offers many exciting opportunities, but the Dunedin City Council and the Otago Regional Council first had to decide whether such a community facility was affordable.

That decision has now been taken, and excavations have started to prepare for construction of a stadium that should be ready before the 2011 Rugby World Cup. The stadium will have many uses beyond rugby, or even other sporting events. Consider, for example, the opportunity for large concerts in a fully enclosed venue that will take New Zealand's fickle weather out of the equation – with over 20,000 young people living nearby. This new campus stadium will be unique in New Zealand and,

after Melbourne's Telstra stadium, the second largest in the southern hemisphere.

The University will be a key partner in this development, constructing its own buildings as part of the stadium complex. The buildings will open on to an urban space to be known as the University Plaza. Our buildings will provide the campus centre for student fitness, health and recreation, as well as educational and research facilities. This plan replaces an earlier proposal for a large multi-purpose building to be squeezed into the existing campus, to provide accommodation urgently needed under our Critical Space Plan.

The new buildings and the public plaza should form a busy and attractive campus hub. The decision to build the stadium, however, carries far greater significance than any enhancements to our Dunedin campus. Successful research universities are virtually always based in, or near to, vibrant cities with strong economic activity. In the face of determined and vitriolic opposition, our political leaders have confirmed their ambition for the future of Dunedin as a vibrant university city.

David Skegg

Professor David Skegg Vice-Chancellor – University of Otago

Family unit

THE NEW CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CONTINUES OTAGO'S COMMITMENT TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND THE WELL-BEING OF FAMILIES IN THIS COUNTRY.

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD boy spills some milk. His parents yell at him, tell him not to do it again. The parents argue loudly. Sometime later he repeats the mistake, spills milk once more. His parents scold him. Then they announce they are breaking up.

This was the tale that unfolded during a family interview, part of a research project conducted at Iowa State University in the 1990s and being observed by then graduate student Gordon Harold. In the mind of a troubled little boy, one event had led to the other. His clumsiness had caused his family to fall apart.

While Harold's heart melted, his scientific mind planned action. What effect, he wanted to know, does parents' arguing have on children? Or rather, how does adults' management of conflict in their personal relationships affect children's developing brains and, in particular, how do these experiences affect children's long-term development? It's a research theme that's stayed with him, in one form or another, for the rest of his career.

Now, as the newly-appointed Alexander McMillan Professor of Childhood Studies and Director of Otago's Centre for Research on Children and Families, Harold explains it's not the arguing, it's how we're arguing that matters.

"Conflict is normal. It is not unhealthy for children to understand that their parents may disagree, sometimes strongly. Where the reasons for the quarrel are understood by the child and don't threaten the child, they can usually cope pretty well."

What should be avoided, however, is conflict that is frequent, intense and poorly resolved. "In particular, children are very sensitive to whether they perceive the

family unit to be under threat and, especially, where they see themselves as having caused the conflict."

Harold adds that not quarrelling is not always the solution: parents giving each other the silent treatment can be just as bad. "Children generally know there's something wrong. It's the emotional resources required to deal with the situation that is taxing to the child. Not speaking can have negative effects for some children in the same way that frequent and intense shouting can have for other children."

The priority Otago has long placed on studies in children's well-being saw the establishment of the Children's Issues Centre in 1995. Led by Professor Anne Smith until she retired in 2006, the centre developed an international reputation for research, ranging from children's experiences of the Family Court to the quality of early childhood education in New Zealand.

Now, the newly-established Centre for Research on Children and Families has become the University's latest commitment to understanding ingredients of a happy childhood and also positive family life. Led by the chair, a position created through the Leading Thinkers Initiative and a \$1.4 million donation from the Alexander McMillan Trust, the centre is directed toward "conducting world-class research aimed at informing practice and policy in the areas of child development and family well-being".

For Harold, who also holds a personal appointment as a professor in the Department of Psychology, the centre will become home for his continuing interest in "the family as a context for examining processes that underlie differences in children's normal and abnormal emotional and behavioural development". He sees scope for studies "specifically in relation to promoting understanding among practitioners,

policy-makers, welfare professionals, educators and, most importantly, parents as to ‘what hurts’ and ‘what helps’ children develop normally across all ages”.

He holds an ongoing fascination with research methodologies that enable the respective role of genes and the environment – nature and nurture, if you will – to be examined in a way that “overcomes some of the limitations inherent in more traditional research designs”.

Harold is presently involved in several ongoing longitudinal projects looking at issues including the interplay between genetic and family environmental factors on children’s mental health, the early origins of childhood aggression and disruptive behaviour disorders, the long-term impact of domestic violence on children’s psychological development, and the implementation of effective intervention programmes aimed at assisting children in the context of parental separation and divorce.

Building on this research platform, he is committed to creating a postgraduate and postdoctoral training forum that would ensure “the next generation of international calibre researchers within New Zealand”. And he refers to the rich community of researchers already at the University working on topics of relevance to children and families in disciplines including psychology, law, education, sociology, social work, paediatrics and medicine as well as groups such as the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit, the Christchurch Health and Development Study and the newly-established National Centre for Lifecourse Research.

“Building links across these areas and research groups constitutes immense opportunity to promote the study of children and families in New Zealand,” Harold says.

Professor Gordon Harold:
“Genuine opportunity is at hand to create a bridge between research and its real-world applications that promote welfare and well-being among New Zealand children and families.”



Photo: Alan Dove

“In so doing, genuine opportunity is at hand to create a bridge between research and its real-world applications that promote welfare and well-being among New Zealand children and families.”

Today’s children are tomorrow’s adults, he points out. “If we take a lifecourse approach to the study of well-being, we know that many of our adult qualities – our ability to communicate effectively, participate in successful relationships, enjoy a positive worldview – may be sourced in childhood. Rather than starting with adults and looking back, our task is to understand what is happening with children’s developing minds and personalities as they process life’s events. What sends children on different trajectories? Why do some children cope well with challenges, such as parental divorce, while other children develop long-term, serious emotional and behavioural problems as a result? This is the type of fundamental question that research at the centre will address.”

Born in Dublin (and, incidentally, attending the same school as Thomas Barnardo, founder of Barnardo’s Children’s Charity), Harold describes himself as having been raised in the whanau-like, clan model of Irish family life. “Virtually every adult in the community saw themselves as being able to tell you off if you did anything naughty.”

A talented middle-distance runner, he originally travelled to the United States on an athletic scholarship, with the intent of returning to Dublin to study history at university. Instead, his career took a different course as he was introduced to the scientific discipline of psychology at Iowa State University. There, he commenced postgraduate study at the Institute for Social and Behavioral Research working on a landmark study known as the Iowa Youth and Families Project, examining the impact of economic pressure on families and children.

He moved to Cardiff University in Wales in 1995, where he completed his PhD and was appointed lecturer in psychology in 1998 and professor of psychology in 2008. He

moved to the University of Otago later the same year to take up his position as holder of the Alexander McMillan Chair.

His studies have left him convinced of an important way to improve children’s lives and put them on a path to well-adjusted adulthood: “Invest in the parents’ relationship”.

He cites a Cardiff study that looked at how to improve family relationships and household harmony. While one group of families undertook steps designed to focus on the relationship between parents and their children, another group concentrated on ways to improve the interaction between couples (parents).

“What we found was that where the couple’s relationship was nurtured, the benefits were long-lasting for the whole family. Where the parents focused on their children, the benefits for the children were present, but short-lived, and the normal pattern of family tensions resumed quite quickly.”

But clever studies have never been enough for Harold. His determination is to forge strong links between evidence-based research and real outcomes in children’s lives. His record for doing so is impressive.

His work has directly informed the United Kingdom’s latest Domestic Violence Policy Framework Document. He has also developed a risk-assessment instrument aimed at allowing Family Court practitioners to assess the psychological impacts of witnessing inter-parental conflict and violence on children. Commissioned by the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service in Wales (funded by the Welsh Assembly Government), the approach is presently being used in Family Courts across Wales, with the possible extension to family justice applications in New Zealand.

The Family Court work is very promising, admits Harold, but he thinks the value of such a risk assessment tool could go further still. “Child protection services have systems designed to pick up indications of physical abuse. What about children who are at risk of psychological damage?

“The WHO predicts depression will become the world’s second greatest cause of a loss of Disability Adjusted Life

“The term ‘family’ carries a lot of currency in New Zealand ... The very fact there is a Families Commission signals that the family is a highly valued entity ... Couple this with the recent appointment of a new Children’s Commissioner and things look very promising indeed.”

Years (DALYs) by 2020, highlighting the significance of mental health to overall global quality of life in future years. We know the conditions for depression can be set up in childhood. The right support at the right time can change a life.”

These successes in achieving real-world outcomes conceal another story, however, which is of the difficulty and, sometimes, sheer luck involved in having research acknowledged, much less acted upon, by relevant decision-makers.

He contrasts this challenge for any applied researcher with the invitation, soon after he arrived in New Zealand, to meet with relevant policy-makers in Wellington, facilitated by the Families Commission. “You can spend years trying to get an audience with the appropriate minister or policy-making office in the United Kingdom. My very first lecture in New Zealand, aimed at an academic audience, was attended by our electorate MP Pete Hodgson; that speaks very favourably of the level of commitment evidenced by politicians and policy-makers in relation to matters that pertain to children and families in New Zealand.”

These are the experiences that have left Harold with the heady feeling that, through the research programme being established at the University of Otago, it might just be possible to make a difference here.

“The term ‘family’ carries a lot of currency in New Zealand,” he comments. “That has been very apparent to me. The very fact there is a Families Commission signals that the family is a highly valued entity and I find that very encouraging. Couple this with the recent appointment of a new Children’s Commissioner and things look very promising indeed.”

This impression was reinforced by the family-issues packed news agenda during Harold’s first few months in New Zealand. He arrived amid the fall-out from the repeal of Section 59, closing parents’ legal defence against disciplining their children through force, and during the nationwide cries of grief, anger and disbelief at the cruelty inflicted on Rotorua toddler Nia Glassie.

Child welfare was “certainly on the front pages”, acknowledges Harold, adding that he was “impressed that New Zealanders appear to care enough to have the debates”.

But he noted that the polarities engendered by the “smacking debate” may have obscured deeper issues. “Does smacking a child inevitably cause long-term harm? Probably not. Is that a reason to do it? No.”

The real issue, believes Harold, is around discipline. “Parents have a responsibility to discipline their children. Those who do smack their kids usually regret doing so.

What the very real interest and concern expressed about this most challenging aspect of parenting says to me is that the conditions are right for a good public discussion about effective, non-violent ways of managing children’s behaviour.”

Is New Zealand a good place to bring up kids? Given his professional interest and credentials, we can perhaps be reassured by the fact that Harold, a father of two young boys, has voted with his shipping container.

“The most important thing for children is a secure environment. This means being able to experience freedom while feeling safe. This is possible in New Zealand. When I was offered this job, aside from the outstanding professional opportunity, we knew we couldn’t pass up the chance to provide the quality of life that is still attainable for children – and parents – in New Zealand.”

For all New Zealanders’ anxieties that children today lack time, space and independence, he calls for perspective. “Imagine these concerns multiplied exponentially and you’ve got life for children in other parts of the world.”

And he reflects also on a study of UK families and children he conducted. “When asked ‘what have you learned by taking part in this project?’, a parent commented that participation had allowed her to conclude that they were a ‘normal’ family.”

The comment signals an important starting point for those committed to ensuring future generations benefit from having had a good start in life, he says.

When working with parents, educators, practitioners and policy-makers, highlighting what helps children is as much a priority as focusing on what hurts them.

“Most parents do an excellent job at raising their children and most children contend well with the everyday challenges of family life,” believes Harold. “It is understanding when parents and children may benefit from support, which support works best for particular individuals and families and how best to deliver that support that should be a primary focus of contemporary research in this area.”

For researchers, as for children, a good environment is part of healthy growth. At Otago, says Harold, he’s pleased to be in the right position to pursue these questions.

“Generating and disseminating high-quality research on these matters is what the newly established Alexander McMillan Chair and the research programme has been established to facilitate. It’s an exciting and privileged situation to be in.”

Nicola Mutch



Dr Brendan McCane: "Technology has changed – but the fundamentals have not. The theory of computer science – questions like how long is it going to take to complete this computation and is there a better way of doing it? – changes only slowly."

Photo: Alan Dove

Computer Science 25 years on

A RELATIVELY YOUNG DEPARTMENT, COMPUTER SCIENCE HAS SEEN ENORMOUS CHANGE AND EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS.

AS COMPUTER SCIENCE celebrates its first 25 years at the University of Otago, staff can look back on a roller-coaster ride driven by technological changes that were unimaginable when the department began.

They can also reflect on an enviable record of successful research, often linked with the progress of high-flying graduates.

Now, as the discipline settles down into some kind of normality, if not predictability, it's a good time to take stock of what happened and plan for steady growth.

Possibly the greatest challenge faced by this young department was an unprecedented worldwide surge in student numbers. Computer science enrolments at Otago doubled between the mid 1990s and 2004, a year that saw a record 86 students graduating. Then numbers fell rapidly until stabilising last year.

Current Head of Department Dr Brendan McCane joined the University as a lecturer as numbers started to skyrocket.

“Neither position was comfortable,” he says. “We either had too little space and too few staff, or we had too many

A new world

Chris Butcher graduated in computer science at 16, gained his MSc at Otago at 18, and was diverted from his PhD to the US to help create one of the most popular video games of all time.

Halo, from Bungie Studios, sold more than 6.5 million copies of its first version, set an industry record by earning more than \$US125 million for the sequel and broke its own record with Halo 3, the most pre-ordered game in history.

Butcher was responsible for the artificial intelligence that helped to make Halo such a success.

Most first-person shooter games are based on a graphical engine, creating the effect of moving through a world as if on a train, watching things slide past the window.

Halo creates a world where characters use virtual senses to gain information about their surroundings and navigate through them – more artificial intelligence than graphics.

This difference has made Halo the reason for many gamers to choose Xbox over the Sony Playstation and, at any one time, up to half a million people can be playing online.

Butcher can take credit for that, too, being responsible for the online multiplayer facility for Halo 2 and 3 on Xbox Live.

“Halo was the first online console game that really broke through to a wide audience,” he says. “We think of it as a global community, where people from all around the world can play with each other online from the comfort of their living rooms.

“We try to keep the game fresh by updating it and releasing new things for our players to do. It seems to be working because people keep coming back to play even though Halo 3 has been out for over a year now. I love that my dad plays Halo even though the time zones make it hard for us to play together online very often.”

Award-winning animation

When TVNZ reduced its presence in Dunedin, many former staff didn't want to leave Dunedin. Ian Taylor wanted to continue working in television, so he started Taylormade Productions.

staff. We can't be certain what caused the spike in numbers, but it may well have been a global fad.

"We don't really know what caused the drop either, but the dot-com bubble bursting in 2001 probably had a knock-on effect, and there is still a common misconception that there are not many jobs and they are not well paid.

"In fact the opposite is true – the number of job vacancies is up and the number of skilled people is going down – especially as the older people in the industry start to retire. There is a global shortage of graduates, from New Zealand to the US, UK and Europe."

As numbers steady, the department can move into a new era – and a new building. Rapid growth had seen different sections being housed all over campus, but this year the Department of Computer Science will unite everyone in the Owheo Building in Lower Union Street.

"It will be great to have everyone under one roof," says McCane, who took over in 2007 from Ian McDonald, who, in turn, had taken over from founding head Brian Cox in 2000. Cox arrived at Otago as a lecturer in mathematics and, in 1964, he was appointed "lecturer in charge of the computing centre" because of his experience with EDSAC 2, an early British computing device.

He heard about Geoff Wyvill's Graphics Lab and visited the Department of Computer Science to see if they might be able to work together.

"I was absolutely blown away by what I saw," he says. "I talked to Geoff and we realised that if we combined what they were doing with what we were doing we could have some fun and do good things. It was where the world was headed at that time, but I had no idea that the ability to do it was so close at hand.

"I don't believe it would have happened anywhere else in the world. It's an old Dunedin story of a few people getting together and doing a deal on a handshake."

The University soon pulled back to concentrate on its core business rather than what was seen as a risky commercial enterprise, although the combination has proved to be a winning one.

Wyvill is still on the board and computer science students have staffed Animation Research Limited since

In 1966 programming and numerical analysis were taught as part of applied mathematics. In 1968 computer science began to be mentioned and in 1970 the first computing paper was taught in the Faculty of Commerce.

A year later the Computing Centre was recognised as an independent entity with Cox as director.

Within a decade the Minister of Education was being advised of a chronic shortage of computing people and the Computing Centre was pushing for support for a dedicated graphics laboratory under the influence of senior lecturer Geoff Wyvill.

In 1984 the centre became the new Department of Computer Science in the Faculty of Science, with senior lecturers Wyvill and McDonald, and the subject available as a postgraduate diploma as well as a major for the BSc and MSc.

Any lingering doubts as to the need for an organised centre for computing expertise were largely quashed when a working party found that computer-related courses were already appearing in Science, Arts, Commerce and Medicine.

Students were also starting to make their mark in the later 1980s. Michael Macknight's third-year project



Animation Research's real-time animated graphics now extend to Formula One.

"I don't believe it would have happened anywhere else in the world. It's an old Dunedin story of a few people getting together and doing a deal on a handshake."

on digital storage of analogue data coincided with departmental interest in using Apple Macintosh computers, and proved to be a major success.

Macknight earned an A+, received the Otago Award in Science and used his research to set up ADInstruments, a highly successful Dunedin company manufacturing data acquisition systems for biological data (see page 16).

Otago students also started competing in the international Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) programming contest. Paul Sharp and Andrew Trotman were part of New Zealand's first entry, and their 10th place was the highest achieved by any non-American team.

Sharp entered again, with Otago's John Gee, Craig McNaughton and Bruce Warrington. They beat CalTech and UCLA to reach the final, where they fought off Stanford and Harvard to claim overall victory.

The *Otago Daily Times* trumpeted: "This is truly a world-class performance that raises the mana of Otago University – and all Otago – to staggering heights."

Over the next four years Otago showed consistent style with two more teams placing in the top five in the world.

Paul Sharp and Craig McNaughton were also involved with Geoff Wyvill's Graphics Research Group, starting an

Animation Research Unit with Ian Taylor of Taylormade Productions, and developing award-winning innovations in televised sport, documentaries and commercials (see below).

The Graphics Research Group was raising less positive publicity at its Albany Street home. Suspicions were raised by the comings and goings of mainly young men all day and all night, and the front window contained a lingerie-clad skeleton. Brothel rumours circulated until the group moved to Castle Street.

Andrew Trotman, one of the group's students, gained further dubious fame when a Dunedin City Council programmer died unexpectedly, leaving an anti-theft program blocking the use of an important computer program. Trotman took just 12 hours to break the security – to the great relief of the council. He is now a senior lecturer in the department.

On the business front, in 1994, the department formalised a developing commercial arm by setting up Black Albatross, the Computer Science Applied Research Centre.

Three years of successful work with Alliance Textiles were followed by projects with New Zealand Aluminium Smelters, Radio Otago, documentary producers NHNZ,

day one. Out of 12 animators, eight have at least a BSc in computer science from Otago.

Paul Sharp and Stuart Smith, two of the first three to join, now head the team that has created award-winning television commercials, sports graphics packages and computer-generated material for documentary films and education.

Aside from advertisements featuring water-skiing penguins, seagulls on fast ferries and gannets forming korus in the sky, there are real-time animated graphics for sports such as yachting, golf, cricket, gliding, adventure racing, air races and now Formula One.

They keep the plaudits coming in – and the company at the forefront of commercial computer graphics.

Winning way

Mark Williams doesn't need computer games to get a feel for Formula One fantasies. He's been at the forefront of world motor racing for a decade.

Soon after Williams completed his PhD at Otago he joined British American Racing (BAR) to develop on-car embedded control software.

He moved to the Jaguar Formula One team to run their PC software group before returning to BAR, which

was first renamed Honda and this season became Brawn GP, providing a stunning one-two finish in the opening Australian Grand Prix, and a first in Malaysia.

He managed on- and off-car software groups, then ran projects integrating systems across the team, including video analysis, GPS data and track surveys, and he is currently working on a driving simulator.

At Otago, Williams developed a technique for analysing digital video streams to extract three-dimensional co-ordinates of objects, which set him up for his career.

"Two key lessons from Otago have shaped my time since," he says. "Firstly, the PhD process taught me how to produce solutions: defining a problem, understanding it and solving it are crucial for any engineering enterprise, and that ability is surprisingly uncommon.

"Secondly, Professor Brian Cox taught me about attention to detail. It may be commas, apostrophes or software testing: if everything is treated with rigour it will always produce better results."

And you don't get better results in Formula One than first past the post.

“Computers are ubiquitous. Even phones are little computers now, more powerful than the desktops of 10 to 15 years ago.”

AgResearch, the University and an ongoing relationship with Toyota.

In 2000 health issues saw Cox hand over to his colleague of 20 years, Ian McDonald. The dot-com boom was at its height and students had been flocking to computer science with visions of making entrepreneurial fortunes.

But within a short time the dot-com bubble burst, student numbers peaked and began a swift decline.

Changing times also took the wind from underneath Black Albatross's wings and the company was let go for a nominal sum.

McDonald decided the way to tackle the situation was to put renewed effort into teaching with new papers and new subjects, several pitched at Summer School activities. Students appreciated the efforts, with OUSA Teaching Awards going to senior lecturers Dr Willem Labuschagne (2004) and McCane (2005).

With student numbers rising again, McDonald retired and McCane took over as head of department. He's seen a few changes over the years.

“Computers are ubiquitous. Even phones are little computers now, more powerful than the desktops of 10 to 15 years ago,” he says.

“Technology has changed – but the fundamentals have not. What we teach students is still similar to when we first started. Programming languages have changed, but we still teach similar ways of thinking and solving problems.

“The theory of computer science – questions like how long is it going to take to complete this computation and is there a better way of doing it? – changes only slowly.”

McCane sees strength in the collegiality of the department and in its teaching.

“Our teaching is strong overall. We've tried very hard to provide a supportive environment for students, especially

Pushing the boundaries

Each new animated movie we see seems to break new ground in realism – and Alexis Angelidis is one of the people we have to thank.

Angelidis completed his PhD at Otago's Graphics Lab and, after work with Dunedin companies Character Animation Technology and Animation Research Limited, he joined Pixar Animation Studios in California as technical director.

At Otago he had developed shape-modelling tools including sweepers and swirling-sweepers, and animation techniques for fluid simulation.

At Pixar he created smoke and vapour rendering technology used in *Wall-E* and *Up*, as well as 3D clouds and some special effects for *Up*. Now he's working on *Cars 2*.

Angelidis reckons he learned more than just computer science at Otago.

“The environment in Geoff [Wyvill]'s Graphics Lab was enriched with a community of resourceful and imaginative people,” he says. “It taught me to enjoy my work and the work of others.

“Now I develop and use software to push the technological boundaries, meet the visual requirements and help our artists make great movies.”

Reaching the stars

Lots of kids enjoy playing with remote-controlled toys. Dave Ferguson is no exception – but he's no longer a kid and his toys are currently trundling across the surface of Mars.

Ferguson's interest in artificial intelligence and robotics started at Otago.

“Computer science at Otago was a fantastic experience,” he says. “The quality of the professors there was extremely high, and they instilled in all of us the sort of number-eight wire can-do attitude that inspired me to attempt seemingly ridiculous things throughout my academic studies and career.

“The honours programme, in particular, was an incredible opportunity to work closely with, and learn from, members of the department.”

Ferguson moved to the USA for a PhD in robotics at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), where he developed a long-range navigation system for NASA's Mars Exploration Rovers, Spirit and Opportunity.

That went far beyond remote control as the rovers are completely autonomous, like many of the robots Ferguson has worked on.

In 2006 he joined computer giant Intel's robotics laboratory at CMU, where he was motion-planning lead for

in our labs, largely due to the efforts of our teaching fellows. The people are good and it's a good place to work, and our research groups are world-class."

- The Graphics Lab is still led by Professor Geoff Wyvill, whose ray tracer work led to the early competitive advantage of Animation Research.
- The Theory Group, headed by Professor Mike Atkinson and Associate Professor Michael Albert, explores permuting patterns and machines. Permuting machines modify the order of items in a stack or queue: for example, given a forklift working with two stacks of pellets, can the stacks always be rearranged into a given order?
- The Artificial Intelligence Group works with neural networks and neuroscience, focusing, in particular, on the mechanics of memory and language. Dr Alistair Knott is developing a language learning system where the computer acts as a teacher of foreign languages – it's already been applied to Māori.
- The Systems Group is developing parallel programming to help speed up computers. Current

technology has reached physical limits and, although multiple computers in one chip may help, some serial processing can't go faster. Parallel programming is much more difficult than serial programming so the challenge is to make it easy and effective.

- The Information Retrieval and Data Mining Group seeks to improve how we find information in documents, and ways to describe data and extract information from it automatically to generate more information. This is already in evidence when we seek something over the net and are offered other things that are related to our queries.

While 25 years may not be a long time in the life of the University, it has been a complex and changing time for the Department of Computer Science.

Records show almost 1,300 Otago graduates and looking at some of their success stories tends to suggest that the department's future should be a bright one.

Nigel Zega

With thanks to Dr Willem Labuschagne for assistance in gathering information for this article.

a team entering the DARPA Urban Challenge for driverless vehicles.

Entries had to obey Californian road rules while navigating 60 miles of paved and unpaved roads, intersections, parking lots and obstacle fields, as well as interacting with more than 30 human-driven vehicles and, perhaps more terrifying, each other.

Popular opinion reckoned the task was too difficult to win the first prize of \$US2 million, but 153 teams entered. Just 35 made it to the qualifiers and only 11 reached the final.

Five fell by the wayside, but, after four hours, Ferguson's vehicle romped home a clear winner, half an hour faster than the second-placed car from Stanford.

Recently Ferguson moved to New York to do artificial intelligence research for a computer-science-based hedge fund, trying to understand the nature of financial markets to reduce the risk associated with investing.

Otago Computer Science graduate Dave Ferguson and his Mars rover.





*Michael Macknight:
He turned his
university project into
an internationally
successful company.*

Global success

Photo: Alan Dove

MICHAEL MACKNIGHT turned his computer science project into an international company with 14 offices and more than 40 distributors worldwide.

ADInstruments is a world leader in data acquisition solutions for life scientists and educators.

It began with a third-year project to enable the then new Apple Macintosh computers to replace expensive paper-based systems being used in the Department of Physiology, where Macknight's father Tony was head of department. The "Macintosh digital storage oscilloscope" was a success, which Macknight built on for his MacLab MSc project and developed into a Dunedin-based company that now spans the globe.

ADInstruments has more than 23,000 systems in universities, hospitals, research institutes, pharmaceutical companies, contract research organisations and other private industry research sectors.

Macknight had no idea of the future when he started in the mid 1980s. "I was always interested in making things and it was good to make something that would be useful. It was also partly being in the right place at the right time," he says. "The Mac had just come out that year and was a better computer than any before in terms of ease of use. It made sense to use computers rather than dedicated instruments for recording data in life sciences."

When Tony Macknight showed the new system to the world at a trade exhibition in Washington, there was immediate interest.

MacLab and its associated software were initially sold only in New Zealand, but soon spread to the US and elsewhere, with offices following demand.

Customer demand also spurred the writing of new software to work with Windows and the resulting cross-platform PowerLab led to further expansion.

ADInstruments provides slightly different products for education and advanced research, but the connections are invaluable.

"People who learn as students on our equipment go on to research on that equipment because they know its potential," says Macknight.

"Another reason for our success is that we are truly international. We have a big US market, but we are not US-centric. We have always had to sell all over the world – we have products for China, Japan and Germany, for example – so we are still in a good position.

"We also have huge advantages working from Dunedin. We've never felt technologically disadvantaged by being where we are. We can do more with less here – the Kiwi attitude – and we have very loyal staff.

"Our connections with the University are strong. Most of the 35 staff we have in the Dunedin office came to us through the University, as either students or staff, and we have equipment in many departments."

Macknight sees changing technology as a challenging opportunity to respond to in order to maintain a competitive advantage.

"We are constantly developing new products for both scientists and educators. Their needs change all the time and so do we.

"We have no shortage of ideas for staying ahead in the game – we just haven't got the time to do all the things we would like to do."

Developing research

**OTAGO'S NEW CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL
HEALTH IS HELPING TO BUILD HEALTH RESEARCH
CAPACITY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.**



Professor Philip Hill: "... it's actually working to identify those who have the research talent and then helping them develop that ability to be able to compete on the international stage."

Photo: Alan Dove

LIKE MANY people who travel to Nepal, Professor Philip Hill was seeking some sort of enlightenment when he went there on his three-month medical elective in 1991.

He expected inspiration from the mountain grandeur, but was also hoping to understand the challenges of providing effective health care in a developing nation and how he might play a role. It led him to turn his mind towards community health.

It is a path that ultimately saw him appointed the inaugural McAuley Professor of International Health and foundation director of the University of Otago Centre for International Health, officially opened in March.

Both the chair and the centre were established under the Leading Thinkers Initiative through a significant \$1.5 million gift, made through Mercy Hospital by the Sisters of Mercy and matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government under its Partnerships for Excellence Programme.

A clinical epidemiologist with a strong track record in infectious disease research in the Gambia, Hill's focus is increasingly on training international students, equipping them to pursue much-needed research into the medical problems affecting their local population.

The new centre's vision statement talks about being a centre for international health with an international reputation and Hill says that is reflected in their two key objectives. "One is to help build the research capacity of the countries we are involved with, to do research.

"The second is to do projects in genuine partnership with local investigators, which ask research questions that are relevant to their countries – and that those projects actually lead, either directly or indirectly, to changes in policy that might affect health outcomes."

One of the key challenges is identifying individuals with a research make-up, he says.

"It's not just about helping someone gain a degree – it's actually working to identify those who have the research talent and then helping them develop that ability to be able to compete on the international stage."

New programme

The Master of Public Health (MPH) is one of the centre's key programmes as it looks to develop new research talent.

The first MPH student has been brought here as a result of a generous donation from an Otago alumnus. Hill developed a proposal to leverage that money to create a scholarship working with the MRC in the Gambia.

Under the arrangement, the centre pays the fees while their Gambian partners pay for flights, accommodation

Hill hopes that this will be a point of difference for the centre because, even though western institutions host many students from developing countries on scholarships, very few become internationally competitive researchers, and even fewer do so back in their own countries.

"In the developing country setting, a much lower proportion of the population actually train to a postgraduate level and, then, only a small proportion of these have the right mix of gifts to thrive in research.

"It also depends on whether there is a career track. Many countries have so little money to spend on health in general so earmarking money for health research is not something that is on their priority list."

Hill's own CV illustrates just how long that career track can be, even for someone from a developed nation.

The son of a surgeon who had spent time working in missionary hospitals, he himself was not surgically inclined and his interest in the health needs of developing countries burgeoned on his elective in Nepal when he was exposed to community health intervention programmes.

"I had to persuade the surgeon that I was working with in Nepal to let me go – that I wasn't enjoying the surgery and would prefer to look at some other things. He had the vision to do this."

After Nepal he worked to tailor his training, eventually undertaking advanced clinical training in infectious diseases, at the same time as completing a Master of Public Health and advanced training in public health.

That path led him to the Gambia in 2001 as a clinical epidemiologist for the UK Medical Research Council (MRC) Laboratories.

Eighteen months into his time there he was asked to step into the breach and co-ordinate the tuberculosis research group after the head left.

"It worked out very well. We put in a five-year plan for the TB programme which was accepted with very positive reviews and we produced a very successful project that yielded a lot of publications."

and living expenses. In the scholarship recipient's second year, the fund pays them a salary back in the Gambia.

The two-year MPH includes papers on health economics, health statistics, epidemiology and clinical trials during the first year in Dunedin before recipients return to their country to carry out research in the second year.

So much so, they have now published their 50th paper from their Gambian work, a study that shed new light on factors affecting access to health care for sick children.

This work also brought him into closer contact with the Gates Foundation, which included a project to develop a surveillance system to monitor the introduction of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine. This vaccine is being introduced to the Gambia ahead of any other African country.

That association is set to continue, with Hill serving on an advisory board for the Gates Grand Challenges Programme – a multi-centre collaboration between American and European institutes and a variety of field sites across Africa.

The Centre for International Health has forged ahead since Hill arrived at Otago in February. This includes gaining official University Theme status for the Otago International Health Research Network of researchers across the University, and a growing research and training reach with projects and students in several developing countries.

Hill is involved in supervising PhD students in the Gambia, Botswana and Cambodia, and the centre has just begun a new case contact study in Indonesia. This will assess a new diagnostic test for TB with plans for more studies, including a study looking at the reasons why people stop taking TB medication.

They have put a proposal into the Gates Foundation, in collaboration with the University of Otago, Christchurch, to assess a new breath test for TB, a project that won an Otago Innovation grant.

They have funding towards a junior research fellow there and have found funding for an Indonesian student to undertake an MSc in Epidemiology through the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The centre is also involved with nutrition research in Cambodia.

Closer to home, Ministry of Health funding has enabled them to employ Samoan-based senior research fellow Dr Tamasailau Sua'alii, who is beginning work on a project on traditional birth attendants in Samoa.

“There is a philosophical thing in all of that. It’s a statement of intent actually to put a Samoan into that job and to develop Pacific Island researchers. I think it is going to bear huge fruit in time as we were fortunate to attract someone of Dr Sua’alii’s calibre.”

Mark Wright



Photo: Alan Dove

Professor Philip Hill and Dr Uzoh Egere.

Community-based research opportunity

You would go a long way to find a more eloquent advocate for community-based public health research than Dr Uzoh Egere, the inaugural Master of Public Health candidate at the Centre for International Health.

A trained paediatrician, he had moved into the pneumococcal research field in the Gambia, working closely with Hill.

“I realised, when working as a paediatrician in Nigeria, that most of the problems I was seeing by the bedside had their roots in the community, so I was looking forward to having an opportunity to be part of a research team to get to the people in the communities.

“The bedside gives a very limited picture of the problem and when you get into the community, and do community research, you see the larger picture.”

Egere says pneumococcal disease is a major problem worldwide, causing about one million deaths every year through diseases such as pneumonia, meningitis and blood infection, with most of the cases in Africa.

He says programmes such as Otago’s teach vital skills they simply don’t learn at medical school, where the focus is on developing clinicians.

“We could generate data from the bedside, but in the end we have to get epidemiologists and statisticians to make head or tail of it.

“But getting involved in research and getting training in research, as I am now, gives me more control over the information I come across and to work alongside the community to proffer lasting solutions,” he says.

“One of the ways to solve the problem would be to understand it. It is really not just about poverty. I think it also has to do with understanding these diseases in the context of the environment where they are found, and coming up with appropriate and reasonable intervention methods.”

A voice of one's own

POET CILLA MCQUEEN TALKS ABOUT HER LIFE BETWEEN CULTURES, HER LOVE OF LANGUAGE AND HER NEED TO WRITE.

“EDGE,” says poet Cilla McQueen, “is a word I am interested in. ‘Between’ is another.”

McQueen, who lives and works in Bluff, has had a long association with the University of Otago, a rich connection which saw her awarded an Honorary Doctor of Literature degree by the University last year. She has also, since the mid 1980s, chosen to eke out a living as a poet rather than pursue an academic career.

“I am often asked ‘how can you be away from the centre of the University?’. But the edge of the academic world is also a ‘between’. I’m grateful to have the connection and contact – and yet to be creatively free.”

Just as she moves easily between the academic and everyday worlds, McQueen occupies a comfortable space between languages, between cultures and between the roles of observer and participant.

“Here in Bluff, I live not just on the edge of the land, but between the land and the sea,” she says.

“I was lucky to have a hugely interesting and stimulating time at university early on. I am full of things to think about. I like to find out how my brain reacts to information I can find out for myself.”

McQueen studied at the University of Otago, graduating in 1970 with an MA with first class honours in French. In what she calls “that lovely student time”, she performed in Otago University Drama Society productions as well as in plays at the Globe Theatre.

However, McQueen gave up acting when she decided to concentrate on writing.

“I felt the plays I absorbed as a student may have influenced my first books,” she says. “A kind of received language. Since then I have followed a process of refining that language – to see if I might have something of my own to say – something original and authentic.”

“Although,” she says laughing, “nothing is original and authentic.”

McQueen’s poetry evolved not from a desire to be a writer, but from the need to write. “I didn’t intend to be a writer. I intended to be a teacher. I thought I was a person who was going to be around the arts, not in them.

Cilla McQueen: “I get such pleasure out of writing. I’ll sit down with a blankness. Words arise out of the environment around me, distilled out of being me at that point in time.”

“By 1973, I had met and married Ralph Hotere. During the 1970s and early ’80s I taught English, French and Latin at Columba College and St Hilda’s [Collegiate]. I took the role of keeping the house going, looking after our daughter, Andrea, so Ralph could paint. I was the amanuensis to Ralph’s art – and I enjoyed that very much.”

McQueen says she began writing in a diffident way and was surprised when her first manuscript was accepted for publication – and even more so when the collection, called *Homing In*, went on to win the New Zealand Book Award for Poetry. She has published 10 collections and a CD of her poetry, and won two further New Zealand Book Awards for Poetry – in 1989 for *Benzina* (1988) and in 1991 for *Berlin Diary* (1990).

McQueen, though, is quick to point out that, “like a potter working with clay, the real excitement is not the pot, or that it’s on exhibition; the real excitement is that you’ve drawn a shape out of earth.

“After all this time I realise I am not interested in the creation of something. My amazement and delight is in the language we’re made of – what it makes us do.”

She is captivated by the process of writing.

“I get such pleasure out of writing. I’ll sit down with a blankness. Words arise out of the environment around me, distilled out of being me at that point in time.

“I don’t begin with a fixed idea of where I’m going. For me, writing is an exploration – finding out as you write. The act of writing solidifies a piece of experience into a form.

“I don’t see poetry as a kind of crossword puzzle that only a select few can hope to solve. For me, poetry is a way of putting down what I might know as clearly as I can.”

Or, to quote from one of McQueen’s own poems:

*“poetry’s a
voice to talk with
and a language
for the voice to speak
in nearest words to net the dream
and hold it long enough to see.”*

– from *The Disappearance of a Car, Wild Sweets* (1986)

“I have always been involved in language. When I met Ralph I became more aware of the intensity of the visual artist, the intuitive quality of working because, like writing, it is coming out of apparent nothing.”

McQueen likens writing poetry to painting with watercolours. “It’s about transparency,” she says. “Less is more. You don’t know what you’re going to come up with. You have to trust in your own abilities – the development of your own philosophy about the world and about the medium you’re working with.

“These days, there are a tremendous number of creative writing courses. My own work has had no overall direction from a single mentor. Perhaps that’s why my work shoots off into different styles – but always in an attempt to find my own poetry.”

McQueen says Māori language and culture informs her life and has a huge bearing on her world view. Another “between”.

“As a first generation New Zealander, I think I embraced my New Zealandness with the fervour of an adopted child, she says. Te reo and the experience of Māori were deeply impressed on me with Ralph and, in the 1990s, in coming to Bluff and being connected here to a large whanau.”

Another important connection was her friendship with the late Hone Tuwhare. A man great, she says, “in stature, generosity and warmth”.

“It’s hard to believe he’s not still just up the road. He had a great understanding of my place between cultures. I feel I belong to both. I am able to move fairly comfortably between one and the other.”

McQueen’s love of language has taken her to unfamiliar places, including translating poetry from the original Russian, a language she doesn’t speak. In 2007, she worked with Dr Jacob Edmond, from Otago’s Department of English, translating poems by Dmitry Golyenko.

“A translator is a transparent sliver between two things,” she says. “The challenge for me, both as a poet and a linguist, was to put across both the meaning and the Russianness of the poetry. My delight was in using the simplest form of my own language to give the best and closest approximation of the tone, feeling and meaning of the Russian.”

It’s another illustration of how much she values her connection with the University. A connection which, with the award of the Robert Burns Fellowship in 1985 and 1986, launched her career as a professional poet.

“The Burns Fellowship gave me the impetus to concentrate seriously on writing,” she says.

It’s an experience that has drawn many of New Zealand’s finest writers to Dunedin. Last year, McQueen attended a reunion celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Burns Fellowship.

“It was a wonderful occasion. Spending time with people you know, whose work you know, all with one point in common, all in one place; people who have developed an enduring and abiding fondness for Dunedin; people who have added to the artistic life of the city and whose contribution has, in turn, been appreciated by Dunedin.”

Michael Metzger

True calling

**REVEREND DR PETER NORRIS, ACADEMIC AND PRIEST,
HAS BEEN THE POPULAR WARDEN OF
ST MARGARET'S COLLEGE FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS.**

IN AN EMPLOYMENT era where five-year tenures are generally considered long haul, 20 years in the same job is something of an exception. But then, being warden of St Margaret's College – as becomes apparent during the course of an exceedingly pleasant chat with the incumbent, Reverend Dr Peter Norris – is not your average job.

Nor is Norris your average employee. A Catholic priest, he holds two bachelor's degrees, a diploma in teaching, a diploma for graduates, a Master of Arts and a PhD from Notre Dame University – all of which makes him eminently qualified to teach alongside his academic colleagues at the University of Otago as, on occasion, he has done.

But his true calling, as he discovered in 1989, is the pastoral care and academic support of the residents at St Margaret's College, a role he has diligently fulfilled for two decades, as countless former and current "wards" will attest.

Norris was destined – or at least he thought he was – to teach at a seminary, until fate intervened rather prosaically in the form of a Presbyterian minister friend who saw the St Margaret's job advertised and sourced the application documents for his co-denominational friend.

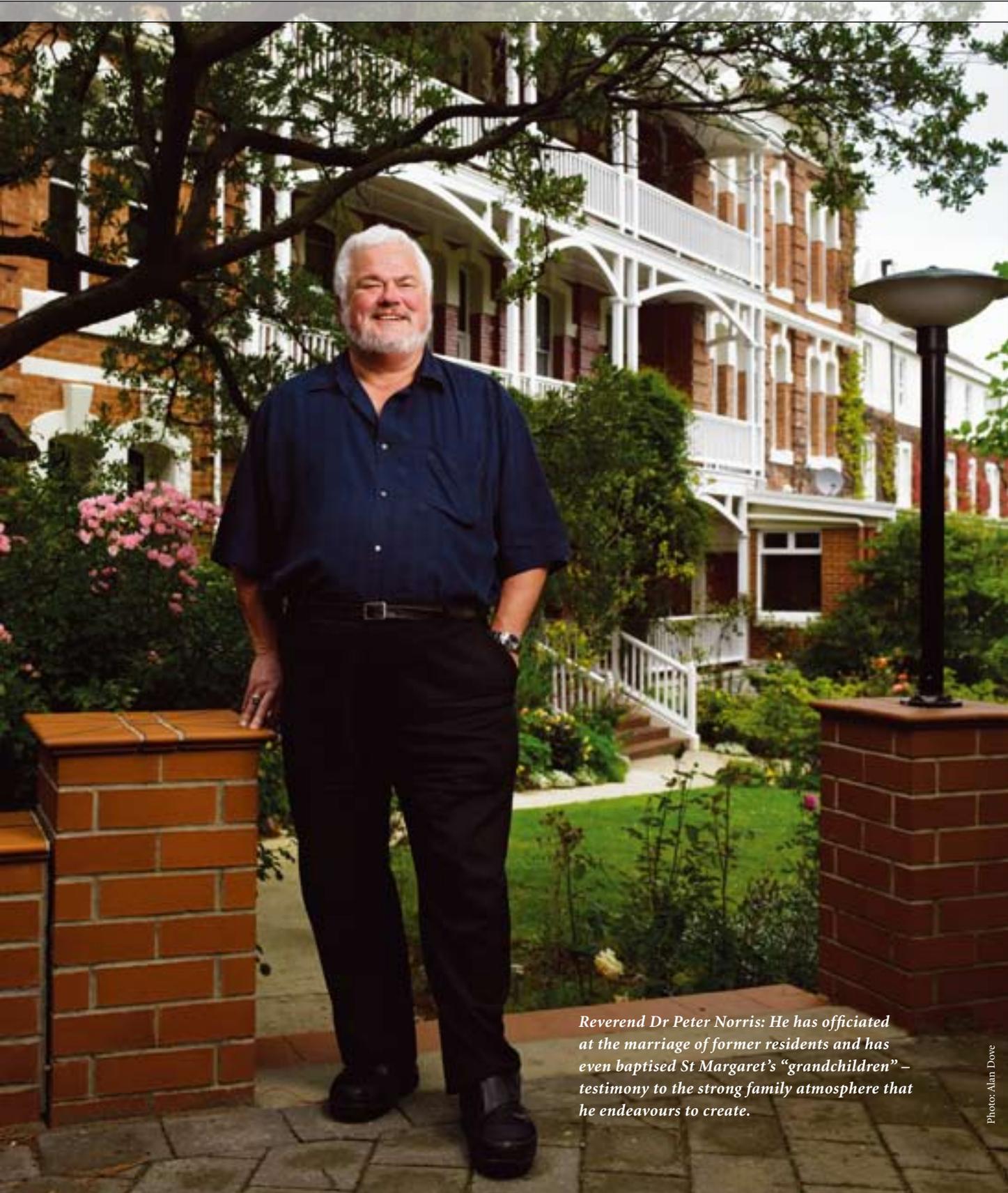
It might, on the face of it, seem an anomaly: St Margaret's was established in 1911 as a Presbyterian college "for the care and protection of young women", and Norris laughingly recalls how he became "persona non grata" for the then Bishop of Christchurch when he accepted the warden position in 1989. But then Norris has made a point of being ecumenically-minded ever since he was ordained and one doubts whether an elderly senior cleric would ever stop him from anything he set his mind to.

Peter Joseph Norris was born in Westport in 1950 to a father who worked in the railways and a mother who stayed at home with the kids. He thought a church career would provide him with a means of helping people, so he joined the priesthood in 1976 and pursued postgraduate study in Christian history. He has conducted research at the Vatican libraries, and even met the Pope Benedict XVI, whom he credits with "total concentration". ("Sixty thousand people around you and it's just like the two of you are in a room by yourselves," he recalls.) Norris is, by many measures, an achiever.

Little surprise that one finds in him an inquiring intellect and a gentle, but steadfast, strength. These qualities lend him a gravitas that is, in turn, tempered by infectious warmth and a genuine interest in people; all traits that have informed his commitment to the college with which his identity has become almost indistinguishable.

"Peter is an extremely caring person, a very able administrator and a true academic," says his former neighbour and long-time colleague Ashley Day, previously warden at Unicol and now warden of Carrington College. "He runs his college superbly. I don't think there'd be any amongst us [fellow wardens] who would spend the same amount of one-on-one time with students that he does."

This personal touch is something Norris believes sets St Margaret's apart from many other colleges. Early in the year he meets with every new resident (although St Margaret's reserves between 30 to 40 per cent of its places for returning students) to get to know them and discuss their course of study and other aspects of university life, for example. He



Reverend Dr Peter Norris: He has officiated at the marriage of former residents and has even baptised St Margaret's "grandchildren" – testimony to the strong family atmosphere that he endeavours to create.

Photo: Alan Dove

“We aim to provide a more rounded educational experience through our art, for example, the garden, the choir, and we try to get good mentors in.”

also retains contact with many former residents long after their time as “SMAGgies”, as they are affectionately known, has ended. He has officiated at the marriage of former residents and has even baptised St Margaret’s “grandchildren” – testimony to the strong family atmosphere that he endeavours to create.

He acknowledges that it has become more difficult to maintain this approach as the college has grown – he has overseen its development from the 150 beds he inherited to its current capacity of 226 – and he believes it will be almost impossible to sustain if the college expands further. Nonetheless, he accepts expansion is probably inevitable.

“Economies of scale are the main driver,” he explains. “These days things like health and safety and building compliance come at a huge cost, so the bigger you are the lower the unit cost for amortising that. I’d be negligent if I didn’t prepare for expansion in terms of our infrastructure, but I don’t want it to happen while I’m still here.”

Another of Norris’s passions is the provision of rounded educational opportunities for St Margaret’s residents, most of whom are Health Sciences students. He sees this as an important role that the college can fulfil.

“The Health Sciences first-year course is fairly brutal,” says Norris. “It’s one of the toughest courses I’ve seen, so it’s easy for the kids to become fixated on grades and for their learning to take on a narrow focus. We aim to provide a more rounded educational experience through our art, for example, the garden, the choir, and we try to get good mentors in. We try to stimulate kids and get them thinking about something different from their studies.”

Mentors include regular dinner speakers and guests with whom residents can discuss anything from US national security policy to the spiritual elements of general practice. It’s an aspect of life at St Margaret’s of which Norris is very proud. Dr David Gerrard, Associate Dean of Medicine for the last 10 years and now Director of Development and Alumni Relations, is one of the Sunday evening dinner guests at St Margaret’s and attests

that the collegial atmosphere there has definitely resulted in many enhanced admissions to second-year medicine.

Recognising the value of humanities-based learning, Norris also supports student-run language suppers where residents practise languages learned at school or overseas.

“Just because our kids are doing Health Sciences, I don’t want them to let their French or Japanese turn to custard. And languages stimulate them in different ways.”

Unsurprisingly, Peter Norris is a fervent advocate for (and prime example of) lifelong learning and he believes travel is an integral part of this process. He encourages students to take advantage of exchange electives and postgraduate study opportunities overseas.

“I’ve the old-fashioned view that if world peace is going to come, it’s not going to be because a lot of elderly gentlemen got round a table, but because people from different places, religions and cultures learn from each other. It’s going to be because students in places like this have studied together, travelled together and have become friends.”

All people, Norris believes, are fundamentally good, a belief regularly reinforced by the young adults he meets in the course of his work, many of whom, he points out, undertake charity initiatives or go out of their way to assist other residents who might be in need of support.

“There’s a lot said in the media about kids being vandals and so on, but it’s really not the case. Of the 20,000 students here at Otago, the problem ones are a very small percentage. It’s minuscule really.”

So when, one wonders, might the unceasingly optimistic and energetic Peter Norris think about retiring? His response, usually measured, comes very quickly.

“When I stop relating to the students. I’ve told friends to tell me when that happens. I can still joke and it’s still a lot of fun. If it stopped being fun that’d be a good sign that I was no longer relating to the students, and if I was getting out of touch then I wouldn’t be effective, would I?”

Rebecca Tansley

To the ends of the earth

DR ERIK MONASTERIO IS JOINING THE BIPOLAR EXPEDITION, TREKKING TO THE SOUTH POLE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF BIPOLAR DISORDER.

It began with an advertisement on a website and now University of Otago alumnus, lecturer and Christchurch forensic psychiatrist Dr Erik Monasterio is about to take part in one of the most difficult challenges of his life.

In November, he and 11 others are trekking to the South Pole and back on foot, hauling all their supplies overland in the harshest climate on earth. The aim of such an extraordinary expedition is not just to reach the South Pole, but to raise awareness and funds to assist those who travel through life carrying a serious psychological burden – the disabling mental condition known as bipolar affective disorder.

“When I saw the ad for the Bipolar Expedition it had an immediate appeal. It linked into both my professional life as a psychiatrist and the fact that I’ve spent years on various expeditions, mountaineering and working as a guide in remote areas such as the Himalayas and Latin America,” says Monasterio.

Certainly he looks the part; fit and tanned with strong

hands that have climbed more than a few rock faces. Over the last few years Monasterio has climbed more than 40 new routes in the Andes, the Southern Alps, Tibet and the Himalayas. He has also scaled the daunting 910 metre rock wall, El Capitan, in Yosemite National Park, the highest peaks in Bolivia and Peru, and spent months in the Amazon jungle of Bolivia on a 1,000km exploratory trek.

“I’m really excited by this challenge because, on a daily basis, I manage and treat people, both in and out of prison, trying to cope with being bipolar, dealing with huge mood swings, from mania to depression. I feel strongly that we need to make the public much more aware of this condition and this expedition will hopefully catch people’s attention. I also want to do something that will reduce the negative and stereotypical preconceptions about mental illnesses generally,” he says.

Bipolar disorder is a major mental health problem worldwide. One in 200 people is affected and it is the

Temperatures will plunge to minus 20°C as they traverse more than 400 kilometres of frozen landscape, sometimes over very rough terrain.

sixth leading cause of medical disability among people aged 15 to 44 years. What's worse is that 70 per cent of patients are misdiagnosed, and one third of patients wait a decade or more before they are correctly diagnosed. Every untreated patient costs an average of \$10,000 a year in lost productivity.

Monasterio says that because of these delays in diagnosis, problems associated with the disorder, such as alcohol abuse, often become much worse and, consequently, more difficult to treat. And then there are all the co-morbidities, other illnesses such as diabetes that can be associated with bipolar disorder.

The Bipolar Expedition is just as its name suggests. The organisers, based in Australia, are raising funds to send two separate teams to the coldest, most dramatic and inhospitable places on earth, the South and North Poles.

The South Pole team leaves in November from the Patriot Hills area in the south of Argentina and will haul sledges for three weeks to the pole and then return via a different route to Scott Base. The journey will take around five weeks. The North Pole expedition is scheduled for April next year.

Monasterio says there is no doubt that it will be a huge challenge for the team members, most of whom have never before been to such a hostile environment. Temperatures will plunge to minus 20°C as they traverse more than 400 kilometres of frozen landscape, sometimes over very rough terrain.

"In total we'll have 12 members in our team, both men and women, two of whom will be people with bipolar disorder. Some of the members, like myself, will have experience in alpine and remote environments, but others, like the Channel 10 TV crew from Sydney, won't," he says. However, the presence of television will be nothing new for Monasterio as he has been involved in several TV productions over the years.

He says the participation of two people with bipolar disorder was one of the main things that attracted him to this adventure and believes the expedition will force them to develop inner strengths which may then help them to better manage their disorder. He thinks it likely they will find

their well-being improved because of the physical demands they will have to meet – the need to survive in a hostile environment, to get organised and the daily discipline of sledge hauling.

People with mental health problems who set goals outside themselves often make a quicker recovery, he says. Too often these patients don't have goals, and the focus of their attention is on themselves.

"Professionally I'm interested in how clear goals help those with mental illness. I firmly believe that mental illness does not need to define you as a person, that you have to fit it into the context of your whole life, and that those people with specific goals often do better in managing their illness.

"I've also researched personality characteristics associated with risk-taking, as seen in prison populations or people who take part in extreme activities such as mountaineering and base jumping. I have also published on the links between mental illness and health problems such as diabetes and other metabolic complications."

A risk-taker himself, Monasterio was born in Argentina, brought up in Bolivia and Spain, and came to New Zealand with his parents in 1979, when it was "unimaginably different" from Latin countries in almost every respect. "It was like the other side of the moon to a 13-year-old from Bolivia," he says with a laugh. "I couldn't get over how deserted it felt – a bit like Antarctica in fact!"

In hindsight, he believes these changes and exposure to different cultures probably had some influence on his decision to specialise in psychiatry after completing a medical degree at Otago in 1992. He thinks they also had an influence on his interest in mountaineering and other endurance pursuits which have taken him to some of the toughest places on earth, and now the most remote, the Antarctic.

Ainslie Talbot

Dr Erik Monasterio is trying to raise funds for the Bipolar Expedition and improving recognition of a mental disorder which blights the lives of thousands, both in New Zealand and worldwide. To make a donation please contact: www.bipolarexpedition.org or orko.MEM@xtra.co.nz



Seasoned adventurer Dr Erik Monasterio: “I feel strongly that we need to make the public much more aware of this condition [bipolar disorder] and this expedition will hopefully catch people’s attention.”

Photo: Ross Coombes

Doing theology in the public square

AGAINST ALL predictions, religion is back on our radar. When distinguished US sociologist Peter Berger predicted in 1968 that by the end of the century religion would disappear, few disagreed with him. Yet, when he wrote more recently that the world was as “furiously religious” as it ever was, that seemed right too.

It’s not so much that there are more believers, but that religion is again a force to reckon with. Statistics show that coverage of “religious” stories in the Western media has increased enormously in the last decade. Governments serious about social cohesion now have to understand the major faith traditions. The leaders of some of these governments – Rudd, Obama, Brown – are speaking about faith and its influence on them. Religion is now under greater attack than it has been for years: why would UK author Richard Dawkins bother attacking the “God Delusion” if God were not making a comeback?

Partly this comeback has been triggered by developments casting religion in a negative light – 9/11, the Madrid, London and Bali bombings, the equally unjustifiable responses at Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. But religious believers have also become high profile in progressive social movements – campaigning around third-world debt, sex trafficking and climate change, for example. The Hiko of Hope and more recent Walk 4 the Planet exemplify “faith in action” within a specifically New Zealand context.

Religion’s unexpected renaissance has caught us struggling to find the grammar to make sense of it. Ill-informed talk in the Western media about “Muslim fundamentalism” and “militant Islam” has served both to confirm suspicions about the destructive potential of religion when it goes public and to close off space for intelligent debate about that public role. This is a challenge for those who understand faith as a force for *good*, who believe that the answer to bad religion is not (*pace* Dawkins) *no* religion but *good* religion.

A conviction that religion can contribute positively to public discourse is behind the University’s decision to establish New Zealand’s first chair in Theology and Public Issues. As Otago scholars Rex Ahdar and John Stenhouse note in their book *God and Government*, even in a relatively secular state like ours religion retains its capacity “simultaneously to inspire, animate and offend”. But how can specifically Christian theology speak constructively into a New Zealand context?

The core texts of Christian theology show its inherently *public* nature. In the Hebrew scriptures, the creation narratives demonstrate the equal worth of all human beings and mandate us to “steward” the earth.

The “jubilee” passages call on communities to operate just economic and social arrangements and give practical rules to prevent slavery and inequality becoming entrenched. The Psalms and prophetic books promote “speaking truth to power” and the importance of communities sharing a “vision”.

The New Testament recounts the early Christians preaching and debating in public, challenging governors who usurped God, “turning the world upside down”. It shows their identification with Jesus himself, whose promotion of alternative values and public denunciation of a socio-economic system he saw as corrupt led to his execution as a subversive. It describes core doctrines and practices of the Church, like the Trinity and the Eucharist, which highlight the *public* dimension of theology by symbolising the value of relationship, community and interdependence.

The challenge for public theology is to draw upon these resources to inform contemporary debate. Quoting the Bible may cut no ice in itself, but it can inform arguments, vision and policy that can contribute constructively to contemporary thinking.

Reflection upon concepts such as “stewardship” and “custody” can deepen our commitment to combat climate



Photo: Graham Warman

Professor Andrew Bradstock: “Quoting the Bible may cut no ice in itself, but it can inform arguments, vision and policy that can contribute constructively to contemporary thinking.”

change. Links identified by the prophets between just economic arrangements and national stability are strikingly contemporary as we seek the roots and causes of terror. The fundamental issues of economics have been constant from earliest times to today, so a biblical perspective on the current global recession can be pertinent.

Christian theology has much to contribute to our struggle to make sense of the present economic situation. As influential commentators like Ann Pettifor are acknowledging, the crisis is at root a *spiritual* one. It will need fresh solutions from fresh sources, and biblical insights about the need for markets to operate ethically, the merits of generosity over acquisitiveness, the perils of unrestrained borrowing and the social consequences of economic inequality can all nudge the debate in helpful new directions.

More important than helping us pick over the past, theology can prompt reflection on the sort of society we want to build in the future. What values should underpin our refashioned economy? What regulations need to be imposed on our economic institutions? What is the overall *purpose* of our market activity?

Theology encourages us to think beyond traditional categories – for example, whether capitalism should be replaced by socialism – and explore how all agents in society, government, business and the voluntary sector can work together for the common good. It reminds us that the blame for our crisis rests not just with “greedy bankers”, but all of us who have benefited from past arrangements. It challenges us *all* to undergo a *metanoia* – a radical change of heart rooted in a spirit of repentance – in our economic and social behaviour.

Theology also deals in *hope*, the sort that anticipates resurrection after the darkest Good Friday. President Obama is right to speak, in the present climate, of the “audacity” of hope, but we have seldom needed it more. Hope in the theological sense is not a vague optimism that things will improve but – as the Epistle to the Hebrews suggests – believing despite the evidence then watching the evidence change.

Theology has a vital role in giving shape and content to our hopes. It can also help us realise them.

Professor Andrew Bradstock
Professor of Theology and Public Issues



Photo: Graham Warman

Professor Tony Binns: “The aim is to see to what extent the project is contributing to poverty alleviation ...”

Budding project

A PROJECT aimed at improving the livelihoods of poor rural communities in South Africa is the focus of research by Professor Tony Binns and Associate Professor Etienne Nel (Department of Geography).

Together with their UK-based research assistant, David Bek, the pair is studying the export of wild flowers from Flower Valley in the Western Cape to the UK. The flowers – grown, harvested and packed by Cape Coloureds, historically disadvantaged under the apartheid system – are sold in bouquets in 350 Marks and Spencer stores across Britain, generating revenue of about £700,000 annually.

“The main aim of our research is to see to what extent the project is contributing to poverty alleviation among the poor rural communities,” says Binns.

The Otago geographers are also interested in the networks involved in the project.

The project eventuated after a visit to South Africa in 2005 by Marks and Spencer, who saw a market for the flowers in the UK, and later teamed up with the Shell Foundation, established by Shell Oil to foster development projects. Also involved are environmental groups seeking to preserve the biodiversity of the unique Cape Floral Kingdom, where Flower Valley is located, and nearby Greenfutures Agricultural College, which is offering training for the workers.

It’s early days for the project, but the signs are promising. An early childcare centre and new housing have been built, more farms are joining as “out-growers” and, says Binns, “all the workers [about 200 in total] say they’re better off than before”.



Photo: Graham Warman

Rebecca Brookland: The IPRU study has explored parents’ views on their role in the learning-to-drive process and their own risky driving behaviours.

Parents as driving models

THE UNIVERSITY’S Injury Prevention Research Unit (IPRU) is examining parental influence on adolescents’ driving as part of the New Zealand Drivers Study (NZDS), a prospective cohort study of 3,992 newly licensed drivers funded by the Health Research Council, ACC and Road Safety Trust.

IPRU researcher Rebecca Brookland says international research shows parents can have considerable influence on their adolescents’ driving, by limiting access to vehicles, enforcing driving restrictions and by modelling driving behaviours. Consequently, the main aim of the parent component of the NZDS is to examine the influence of parents’ driving-related attitudes and experiences on their adolescents’ driving experiences and traffic-related outcomes.

Brookland says the study has explored parents’ views on their role in the learning-to-drive process, their knowledge of licence restrictions and how they enforced them, and involvement in young driver programmes.

“We also obtained information on parents’ risky driving behaviours – such as speeding and dangerous lane changes – and their self-reported crashes, traffic infringements and convictions in the previous five years.”

These will be compared with their adolescents’ risky driving behaviours and official crash records later in the project.

This research will be used to identify ways to help parents be more effective supervisors, develop resources and young-driver programmes for parents and, ultimately, to help reduce the incidence and severity of motor vehicle crash-related injuries experienced by young New Zealanders.

Some 1,200 parents and their young drivers (2,400 in total) have participated in the study, due to be completed in 2012. Early findings should be available later this year.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Dr Janice Lord: She has compiled a resource kit about the mountain daisy (*Celmisia*) for museum conservators.

Documenting daisies

CURATOR OF the Department of Botany's herbarium (collection of dried plants and lichens), Dr Janice Lord has a particular interest in alpine plants. So, when work began on a kete (basket) of dried leaves documented as mountain daisy (*Celmisia*), Lord was called in to identify the species.

And so began a new research journey.

"The kete was found at Puketoi station in the Maniototo with a number of other artefacts. The collection was photographed and documented in the 1890s and that was about it. The *Celmisia* leaves were very soft, almost like suede: a bit stretchy and still supple. The size of the pieces suggested certain *Celmisia* species, but at that stage we had no idea how the leaves had been processed to get them like that."

Contacting mātauranga Māori consultant Rua McCallum, she discovered the leaves had been stripped, separating the tough top layer from the felt-like underside of the leaf.

"Traditionally, the whole leaf would be used to construct shin protectors and rain capes, but the felt from the underside of leaves, called wharawhara, was also highly prized for making cloaks."

As there may be many artefacts made of *Celmisia* in museums around the world, Lord has now documented distinguishing features of different *Celmisia* species. Drawing on the herbarium's collection she has compiled a resource kit giving species' leaf dimensions, whether or not the leaves can be stripped, and broad geographical distributions. She hopes this information will make it easier for conservators to correctly identify and preserve these artefacts.

Photo: Graham Warman



Dr Hongzhi Gao: Guan xi "gatekeepers" act as go-betweens for New Zealanders doing business in China.

Schmoozing the dragon

UNDERSTANDING the concept of guan xi and how it works in practice is vital for New Zealand companies doing business in China, according to University of Otago Department of Marketing lecturer Dr Hongzhi Gao.

In Chinese, guan means "gate" and xi "tied together" or connected, so guan xi networks consist of "insiders". Foreign business practitioners are essentially outsiders in this context, Gao says.

He adds that interpersonal relationships are crucial in the Chinese environment. However, understanding cultural differences can be difficult and this is where using guan xi "gatekeepers" to bridge the divide is essential.

As part of his research, in 2006 and 2007 Gao interviewed 58 Chinese and New Zealand business managers from a diverse range of industries.

He discovered guan xi "gatekeepers" act as go-betweens who facilitate and harmonise the relationship between the Chinese and New Zealand parties. These people are not appointed from a formal organisational point of view – they simply emerge from business and social interactions.

He found that gatekeepers perform a number of important functions on behalf of the New Zealand party and vice versa; for example, socialising (a key to doing business in China), providing crucial market intelligence and smoothing the waters if disputes arise. Through their connections, they can also help New Zealand businesses expand in China.

Conversely, his research found that while many New Zealand managers follow normal business fundamentals when setting up in China – such as developing contracts and technology transfer – they overlook the importance of these special guan xi gatekeepers.

Photo: Ross Coombes



Professor David Murdoch: “This study enables us to be more definitive about the causes of this disease and how to better treat it.”

Ending endocarditis

PROFESSOR David Murdoch (University of Otago, Christchurch) has led a ground-breaking international study redefining how clinicians approach endocarditis, or infection of heart valves.

The study has shown that infective endocarditis (IE) is more likely to be an acute disease with relatively quick onset and should be treated as such with either antibiotics or surgery in order to save lives.

“What this study does is enable us to be much more definitive about the causes of this serious disease, and how to better treat it and reduce the stubbornly high mortality rate,” says Murdoch.

Endocarditis has an in-hospital mortality rate of 18 per cent – unchanged in the last 25 years. The one-year mortality rate is even worse, approaching 40 per cent. It also has other serious health impacts including stroke, blood clots and heart failure.

The strength of the study is that it is the first to examine the presentation, causes and outcome of endocarditis with 2,781 patients from 58 hospitals in 25 countries, making it the largest study of this disease so far.

About 300 people are hospitalised every year in New Zealand with IE and internationally 50 per cent undergo heart-valve replacement surgery.

The study shows the bacterium *Staphylococcus aureus* is the most common cause internationally and that IE often follows degeneration of the heart valves caused by ageing. One of the more interesting findings is that 25 per cent of patients contracted the infection following health care, particularly in the US.

Photo: Graham Warman



Dr Nicola Taylor, Professor Mark Henaghan and Megan Gollop: Their study takes a world-first look at the impact of relocation after parental separation.

Relocation or dislocation?

THE RELOCATION of families after parental separation is regarded as one of the most controversial and difficult issues in family law.

The courts have discretion to do what’s best for the child so it can be hard to predict the outcome. And, while parents often have sound reasons for wanting to move, the other parent frequently opposes relocation because it will severely limit contact with their children.

Yet, surprisingly, there’s been little research in this area, particularly on the quality of family relationships following relocation within New Zealand or overseas.

That’s about to change, with a world-first Otago study nearing completion that aims to explore the impact on families when one parent relocates with the children, or when their application has been refused by the court.

The three-year research project is being conducted by Dr Nicola Taylor and Megan Gollop (Centre for Research on Children and Families), and Professor Mark Henaghan (Faculty of Law), with funding from the New Zealand Law Foundation.

Interviews have been completed with 114 parents and 48 children throughout New Zealand, and follow-up interviews are underway.

Taylor says the study is investigating parents’ and children’s experiences of relocation disputes, and how the decisions made affect the parents’ relationships with each other and their children.

She believes there is a vital need for this research.

“Knowing what happens for parents and children in the aftermath of a relocation dispute will help families, lawyers and judges make better decisions in the future.”

The study is due to be completed at the end of 2009.

Photo: Ken George



Dr Shieak Tzeng: He is looking at the relationship between breathing and heart rate, and the role this plays in heart disease.

The rhythms of life ...

DR SHIEAK TZENG (Physiology Rhythms Unit, Wellington) is breaking new ground exploring the inter-relationships between the short cycles and rhythms of the body – such as breathing and heart beat – and the role they play in health and disease.

With the relationship between the body's rhythms and the healthy functioning of key organs such as the heart and the lungs already recognised, Tzeng's research is focused on two areas.

The first is the change in heart rate cause by breathing. Several studies have found that the loss of the breathing/heart rate relationship after heart attack or heart failure is associated with increased mortality risk. However, the reasons are still not clear and this information would be useful in diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and heart failure.

"We have several studies underway looking at whether the fluctuation in breathing/heart rate plays a role in optimising the ability of the heart and lungs to transport oxygen, and to remove carbon dioxide. We're doing this by comparing healthy individuals against patients with a pacemaker with a fixed heart rate," he explains.

The second area of focus is how the relationship between heart rate and breathing is maintained and regulated, and whether the loss of this inter-relationship plays a part in the progression of heart disease.

Initial results suggest that a previously unrecognised process may be involved in co-ordinating heart rate and breathing rhythm to optimise heart and lung function. The next step is to find out if there are links to heart disease.

Photo: Alan Dove



Ian Chapman aka Dr Glam: "You don't necessarily have to be yourself on stage."

Glamour research

WHEN DULL grey suits in an even duller, greyer government building coined the term performance-based research it's a fair bet they didn't have Dr Glam in mind.

Mild-mannered Department of Music lecturer Ian Chapman by day, Dr Glam emerges at night.

The bringing together of two contrasting music forms – jazz and glam rock – through visual performance and persona is an overarching theme for Chapman's research.

He also has a passion for one of the world's newest and rarest instruments, the hang drum. Until now it has mainly been used in new-age "world music", but Chapman uses the instrument's UFO-like appearance and Dr Glam imagery to combine the 1950s sci-fi and 1970s David Bowie/Ziggy Stardust looks with his other great love, jazz.

"Glam rock has been wrongly accused of using extreme imagery to hide poor musicianship. I don't agree. Each factor is equally important in such an interdisciplinary undertaking. There's as much theatre in my shows as there is music."

Whatever style of music is being performed, Chapman counters such criticism by using top musicians, many with international experience. *Dr Glam's Freaks Cabaret*, featuring many artists of varying musical styles, attracted more than 200 people during Dunedin's recent Fringe Festival.

The key lessons for his students are exploring the potential that lies in creating a performance persona and developing the ability to critique the notion of "musical authenticity", he explains.

"You don't necessarily have to be yourself on stage. You can consciously select and over-blow aspects of your personality and reinvent yourself."

Photo: Bill Nichol



Professor Colin Campbell-Hunt and Dr Michelle Thompson-Fawcett. They have been comparing specialised business clusters in Dunedin and Christchurch.

Comparing advantage

THE CONCENTRATION of specialised businesses in regionally-based clusters is believed to be a key factor in international competitiveness. Professor Colin Campbell-Hunt and Dr Michelle Thompson-Fawcett (Management) have been exploring this process by comparing firms in Christchurch and Dunedin.

Looking at the Dunedin engineering and Christchurch electronics industries, they found that Christchurch firms tended to specialise on a stage in the value chain – for example, specialist metalworkers supply a number of local electronics firms. The small scale of the Dunedin industry precluded this form of “vertical” co-specialisation. Dunedin engineering firms have instead specialised on products in which they have a competitive advantage, a process described as “horizontal co-specialisation”. Some of these – such as Fisher and Paykel’s famous DishDrawer – have had great success, but the advantage remains with the firm and does not spread to the region as a whole.

Research comparing the fashion sectors of Dunedin and Christchurch found that clustering does not contribute to the competitive advantage of the Dunedin industry in the way traditionally anticipated. Christchurch better demonstrates key clustering elements such as a supportive local demand, vertical interdependence between firms, pooling of knowledge, service and support activities, and internationalisation within the industry. The Dunedin sector is more loosely connected with the primary contribution of clustering efforts relating to the fostering of collective identity and its use in place marketing. They found the scale of the industry, combined with size and relative isolation of the city, have hindered the value of concentrating firms into clusters in Dunedin.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Keith Payne: His tiny tracking devices will enable scientists to find out more about where our native birds fly.

Birds on track

SOME OF our native birds are quite small – even tuis are not very large – and yet Otago student Keith Payne is developing tracking devices tiny enough to fit these native species, so we can learn more about where they travel in the course of their day-to-day lives.

“We use newly developed GPS algorithms to log positions regularly throughout each day in order to build up a clear picture of daily movement patterns,” says Payne. “Our new ultra-low power technologies will also allow us to track larger birds for much longer periods of time.”

Payne completed a master’s degree in electronics, developing tracking devices. A slightly larger version of the device is even cleverer, incorporating cellphone technology as well.

This means that as soon as the bird comes within cellphone coverage, the information logged by its GPS system is automatically transmitted to the server in the electronics lab in the Department of Physics.

“Keeping tabs on the birds once they’ve been translocated – for example, to the Orokonui Ecosanctuary – is a significant expense. So, if we are able to get better data for less effort, then we can make more informed choices about future translocations and assist the birds more effectively.”

The trackers are still in the lab, but should soon be ready for test deployment.

The next challenge is to decide which of the many species they’d like to track: who comes first? Juvenile albatross, kaka at Orokonui, fairy prion, buff weka, brown teal – the researchers are spoiled for choice.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Associate Professor Sally McCormick: She has won a Heart Foundation grant to investigate how the antibiotic Bacitracin may inhibit Lipoprotein(a).

New use for old drug?

A BACTERIAL-BASED antibiotic identified in the 1950s could be given a new lease of life reducing a lipoprotein implicated in cardiovascular disease.

Associate Professor Sally McCormick (Biochemistry), who has won Heart Foundation of New Zealand funding for the project, says Bacitracin was used topically to fight skin infections in humans, but has been superseded by other antibiotics.

She and her team have been screening a range of peptide-based compounds to see what effect they have on Lipoprotein(a) (Lp(a)) – a derivative of low density lipoprotein, the so-called “bad cholesterol”.

Researchers have only more recently turned their attention to Lp(a) as a potential drug target. It appears to carry oxidised lipids into artery walls, causing heart disease.

“Bacitracin came out as being a good inhibitor of Lp(a) formation in our in-vitro assays and this grant will allow us to test it further to understand the mechanisms behind why it inhibits Lp(a).

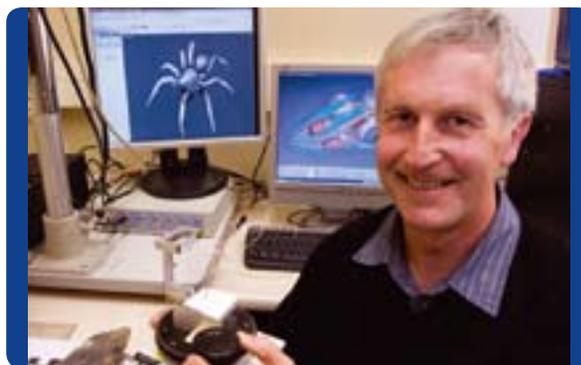
“If we want to go into animal studies we need to know how it is working.”

McCormick says it is a complex antibiotic as it includes at least 15 variations of the active peptide – or short chain of amino acids – and there could be more.

“We want to be able to identify the most active one.”

They are working closely with Drs Ralph Jack and Torsten Kleffmann, who have done a lot of work separating and identifying the known peptide variations. Much of the project’s research work will be undertaken by postdoctoral fellow Dr Anne Kleffmann and PhD student Nina Dickerhof.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Associate Professor Mike Paulin: “In computational biology, our theories are not words or equations. They are virtual organisms.”

Spiders, sharks and robots

A VIRTUAL shark swimming in a virtual ocean and a spider scampering across a screen could help researchers build better robots.

Associate Professor Mike Paulin (Department of Zoology) says computational models are helping us to understand how animals move. One of his projects involves a virtual shark model, complete with sense organs and a brain, which lives in a virtual ocean.

“We can do virtual experiments, but instead of just spitting out numbers and graphs we can see the shark react to different stimuli, and what is happening in its brain.”

In collaboration with NASA, Caltech and Northwestern University, the model is being used to design an autonomous submarine, drawing on the shark’s ability to navigate and detect objects without visual cues.

Paulin says sharks detect weak electrical fields and may use variations in the geomagnetic field like a map. They can pick out objects and prey using electrical fields and subtle water movements.

“These sensory systems will allow an autonomous submarine to operate in environments where a human would be completely disoriented.”

In collaboration with the Kyushu Institute of Technology, he is also building virtual spiders.

“Evolution has discovered designs for efficient movement in different environments,” he says. “I work with mathematicians, physicists, computer modellers, engineers and biologists to try to understand the underlying design principles.

“Computational models have been called the ‘third way’ of science. In computational biology, our theories are not words or equations. They are virtual organisms.”



An Otago-led team of archaeologists at work on the site of a 14th century village on Marlborough's Wairau Bar.

New insights into New Zealand's first people

OTAGO RESEARCHERS have played leading roles in a major project to shed new light on the lives and health of some of New Zealand's earliest people, who settled the Wairau Bar near Blenheim, around 700 years ago.

The project involved archaeological investigation of the site of a 14th century village and a biological study of the Rangitane iwi's tupuna (ancestors) before their reburial at the site in April.

A memorandum of understanding regarding the research was signed by Rangitane, the Canterbury Museum and the University earlier this year. The tupuna's repatriation followed an agreement between Rangitane and the museum for their return after decades at the museum.

As part of preparations for the reburial, the Otago-led archaeological investigation uncovered a large amount of information about the settlement. Among their discoveries were the remains of several house sites, a large hangi pit, a basalt adze and the bones of a giant Haast's eagle.

Initial findings from the biological analysis of the tupuna, which is also being led by the University, has shed new light on the settlers' health and lifestyle.

Findings from macroscopic analysis of their bones include the first evidence of gout amongst ancient Māori, as well as severe joint degeneration that likely resulted from the physically demanding nature of a seafaring lifestyle.

Further ancient DNA and chemical testing is currently under way to learn more about the diet and health status of tupuna.

Architectural award for Wellington campus

A DEVELOPMENT of the University's Wellington campus has gained the New Zealand Institute of Architects' 2009 award for interior architecture.

The \$18 million project was designed by Athfield Architects and constructed by Naylor Love.

Work on the Mein Street building included upgrading and enlarging lecture and seminar rooms, adding research and study spaces, and extending the library.

The convenor of the awards jury, Gerald Parsonson, said the design "brings light into central areas, introduces clear circulation and creates fabulous spaces for students".

Rowing High Performance Centre

A HIGH PERFORMANCE Centre for rowing will be established at the Otago University Students' Association Aquatic Centre following an agreement by the University and Rowing New Zealand (RNZ).

The new centre will be the preferred training venue for the development of young New Zealand rowers.

Otago's Development and Alumni Relations Director, Associate Professor David Gerrard, says the new relationship will promote the careers of many young rowers and have mutual benefits for both the University and RNZ.

"We are delighted by the move as this recognises the status of the University's rowing club as an elite national club in New Zealand."

A team from the club recently won the 2009 Xinjin Water City International University Rowing Regatta in Chengdu, China, beating the Sydney University, Trinity College (USA) and Peking University teams in the final.

In addition to the University of Otago men's rowing eight victory, Otago's Fergus Fauvel won the regatta's 2000m erg race.

Campus Master Plan

A CAMPUS Master Plan is being developed to ensure that the University's outstanding campus environment remains one of its most defining features.

The plan, which is being put together with the assistance of international consultants DEGW, covers the Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington campuses. It will establish a cohesive framework to guide new initiatives and future development. The last comprehensive Campus Plan was produced in 1980. The new plan will guide the University over the next 20 years.

Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg says the decision-making around the plan is one of the University's most important priorities over the next two years.

"We want all of the campuses to provide excellent environments for students and staff."

Overall, the plan will consider the multitude of elements that make a university campus successful, including size, landscape, teaching and learning environments, social spaces, student and staff services, accommodation, linkages with the city, vibrancy, transport and parking.

The preparation of the plan involves close consultation with staff, students and external stakeholders. It is expected that the final document will be presented to the University Council in January 2010. More information can be viewed at www.otago.ac.nz/news/masterplan/

Scottish piping and drumming scholarships



OTAGO STUDENTS wishing to undertake study within the Department of Music's new Scottish piping and drumming performance programme will next year be able to apply for one of three scholarships made available by generous donations from Dr Peter Grant, Otago alumnus and resident of Toronto (above left), and Mrs Hilary Allison, of Dunedin.

The scholarships are named in memory of Alexander Leith, a forebear of Mrs Allison and pioneer Otago farmer, and David A Grant, Dr Grant's uncle who died on the Western Front in 1918. A ceremony to launch the scholarships was held on campus on 7 April, the 91st anniversary of David Grant's death, and in his memory two Scottish airs were played by New Zealand champion piper and Otago piping tutor Greg Wilson (above right).

Appointments

Professor **Vernon Squire** as the University's next Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International). Professor Squire is currently Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Division of Sciences and will take up his new position in February 2010. He is an applied mathematician leading a group renowned for research on ocean wave/sea ice interactions and hydroelasticity.



Professor Vernon Squire

Dr **Astrid an Huef** as Professor of Pure Mathematics. Dr an Huef comes to Otago from the University of New South Wales, Sydney. Her research programmes involve collaborations with colleagues from Australia, the United States, Scotland and Brazil. She has published in highly ranked international journals and has been successful in obtaining grants from the National Science Foundation (USA) and the Australian Research Council.



Dr Astrid an Huef

Professor **Kim Economides** as the inaugural Director of the University's Legal Issues Centre. Professor Economides was previously based at the University of Exeter. He is a former head of Exeter's School of Law and, in 2006, was appointed as specialist adviser to a UK Parliamentary inquiry into legal services reform legislation.



Professor Kim Economides

Dr **Mauro Farella** as Professor of Orthodontics in the Faculty of Dentistry. Dr Farella comes to the University from the Centre for Oral Medicine and Maxillofacial Surgery at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. He has published extensively in international peer-reviewed journals and has taught at European universities and worked as a clinical orthodontist and instructor since 1993.

Dr **Indrawati Oey** as Professor of Food Science. Dr Oey comes to Otago from the Centre for Food and Microbial Technology at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Her research focuses on the kinetics of health-related food components during processing.

Professor **Robert Love** (Oral Diagnostic and Surgical Sciences) as Chair of the New Zealand Dental Council.

Obituaries

David Symon (88). The founding Master of University College, he headed the residence from 1968–85. Mr Symon was devoted to making the college a viable and attractive accommodation option for the 4,331 students who lived there during his tenure.

Emeritus Professor **Richard Sutton** (70). Former Dean of the Otago Law Faculty (1981–85, 1998–99), Professor Sutton was noted as a brilliant legal scholar and an outstanding teacher.

Emeritus Professor **John Johnston** (92). Taught prosthetic dentistry in the Faculty of Dentistry (1947–82), with periods working in dental institutions in Nigeria and Papua New Guinea.

Achievements

Dr **Chris Brown** (Biochemistry) is part of an international collaborative team granted more than \$US1 million by the Human Frontier Science Program to study mRNA localisation and anchoring mechanisms.

Dr **Rogelio Guedea** (Languages and Cultures) has been awarded Spain's highest poetry award – the Premio Adonáis de Poesía or Adonais Prize for Poetry. Dr Guedea received it for a book of poetry titled *Kora*.

Postdoctoral researcher Dr **Emma Coddington** (Physiology) gained a 2009 Grass Fellowship to carry out neurobiological research at the Grass Laboratory at the Marine Biological Laboratories (MBL) in Massachusetts.

Emeritus Professor **Gerry Carrington** (Physics) received an award for his outstanding contribution to sustainable energy from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.

Scholarships/Fellowships

Dr **Hugh Slotten** (Media, Film and Communication) has been awarded the Charles A Lindbergh Chair in Aerospace History at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington. Dr Slotten will use the 12-month fellowship to write a book on satellite communication.

Professor **Brett Delahunt** (Pathology, Wellington) has been awarded the Distinguished Fellowship and Gold Medal of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia in recognition of his sustained outstanding contributions to pathology research and practice.

Music PhD student **Rachel Swindells** (MusB (Hons) 2007) has been awarded the first Elman Poole Residential Fellowship at Knox College. The fellowship, worth

\$28,000, pays for two years' full residence in the college and a study trip to anywhere in the world

2008 MacDiarmid Young Scientist of the Year Dr **Rebecca McLeod** (Chemistry) and Dr **Fiona Jack** (Psychology) were awarded Postdoctoral Fellowships by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. The fellowships are designed to foster the development of New Zealand's emerging and future science leaders and build greater research capability and knowledge.

In April, Top Achiever Doctoral Scholarships administered by the Tertiary Education Commission went to PhD students **Kate Amore** (Public Health), **Samuel Lind** (Chemistry), **Kirsten Dawson** (Theology and Religious Studies), **Matthew McNeil** (Microbiology and Immunology), **Deane Galbraith** (Theology and Religious Studies), **Jamie Howarth** (Geography), **Morgan Bruce** (Information Science), **Rowan Herridge** (Biochemistry), **Philippa Struthers** (Psychology) and **Richard Souness** (Chemistry). These scholarships recognise and reward excellent postgraduate New Zealand students.

Dr **Katja Schweikert** and PhD students **Rebecca Lodge**, **Nicolas Hay** and MSc student **Robert Win** have gained Te Tipu Pūtaiao Fellowships from the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. The fellowships aim to help improve New Zealand's scientific knowledge and enhance Māori involvement in scientific study.

Emeritus Professors

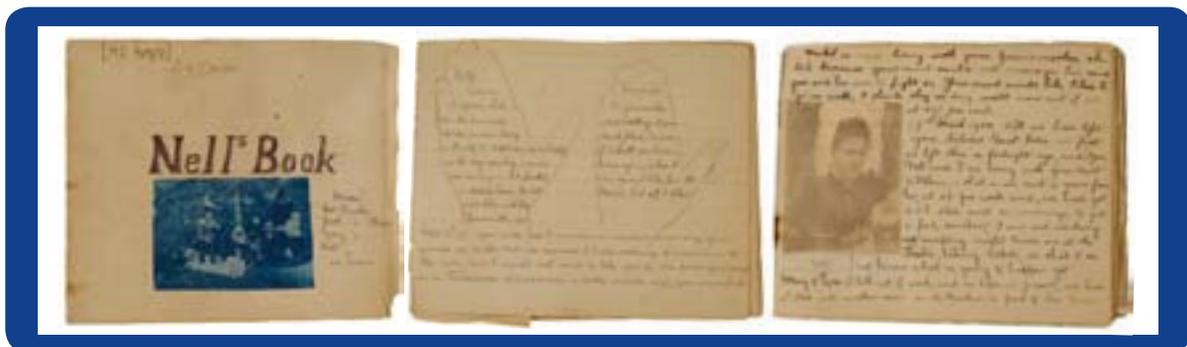
Professor **Rick Sibson** (Geology) and Professor **Derek Holton** (Mathematics and Statistics) have been granted the status of Professor Emeritus by the University Council.

Honorary Doctorate

The Reverend Canon **Paul Oestreicher** (BA 1953) received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University in May. Throughout his long career, Canon Oestreicher has fostered peace and reconciliation across many parts of the world. He is a Canon Emeritus of Coventry Cathedral and a retired director of its Centre for International Reconciliation. He has also served as Amnesty International's UK chairperson and is currently a vice-president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament UK.



Reverend Canon Paul Oestreicher



Nell's book

“I, NELLIE By Father, have resolved to keep this book for her untill [sic] she is old enough to keep it for herself, and enter in anything, I think, will interest her when she has grown up ...”

So begins a curious memoir of Ted Howard, best known as one of New Zealand’s first Labour MPs, holding the Christchurch South seat from 1919 until his death in 1939. His daughter Mabel, Nell’s sister, would follow in her father’s political footsteps, becoming New Zealand’s first woman cabinet minister in 1947, holding portfolios in women’s and children’s welfare, and driving legislation including the Animal Protection Act 1960.

But the story told through anecdotes, observations and words of wisdom for his infant daughter – embellished with drawings, photos and letters – speaks little of a politically ambitious family.

Rather we join the Howards in 1894, when the young family is based in Australia, hoping to return to live near Ted’s bride Harriett’s family in Christchurch. Nell has just turned two.

And so, Nell’s book becomes Ted’s book. A story of a young father attempting to eke out a living in a nascent colony. Vignettes of family life are captured, frequently featuring a bossy baby sister: “One day is much like another, you and Babs [Mabel] seem to be always fighting.”

Harriett records the family’s involvement with the temperance movement: “So if you do not keep a teetotaller all your life it won’t be my fault.”

Ted recounts several attempts to settle in Christchurch, thwarted by poor work opportunities, a churlish local community and the realities of living with his in-laws.

Only when Harriett dies of tuberculosis, leaving Ted with three small daughters and sick with loneliness, does he settle with his extended family permanently in New Zealand. There, his sense of responsibility and lack of opportunity only compounds his grief. “I never seem to get on in New Zealand,” he laments. “The people ... seem to have a lot of the Yankee in them, they think the world is spun around by New Zealand.”

By 1903 his disappointment in life’s hand is being extended to his daughter: “Your sister Mabel is turning out much smarter than you and if she beats you in life remember it is your own fault.” In 1908 he chastises Nell for “slyly going around with a boy ... and you are only 16 ½”. His next entry, made in 1924, reports the book’s owner, Nell, has died. She left three children.

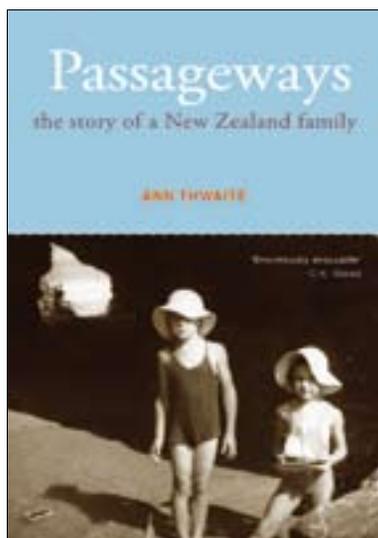
A decade later, aged 65 and with an unknown audience in mind, Ted returns to this project, reflecting expansively on his life and updating the reader on the state of the family. Mentions of his political career remain few and cursory, however. He suffices to take modest pride in a successful life, observing simply, “no matter what job I took on I seem to get to the front which proves I must be above the average”.

Nicola Mutch

Hocken Gallery Exhibitions

Until 25 July: At Home – The Interior World of Patricia France. Gary Blackman’s photographs of Patricia France’s house, with selected works from her art collection.

Until 25 July: A Private Eye – Guy’s Photographs of Dunedin. *Otago Witness* photographs by Guy Morris (1868-1918), together with personal studies of the Dunedin coastline and Morris family portraits.



Passageways

The story of a New Zealand family

Ann Thwaite, April 2009

ANN THWAITE is a distinguished British biographer who won the Whitbread Prize for her biography of A A Milne in 1990. She is also an Anglo-New Zealander, the daughter of A J Harrop, a New Zealand historian who was the University of New Zealand's UK representative from late 1930 into the 1940s. Her parents also founded and published the long-running weekly *New Zealand News*.

Now Thwaite has departed from biography to tell the story of her family. All eight great-grandparents arrived in New Zealand between 1858 and 1868. Their family names were Harrop, Sales, Campbell, Brown, Valentine, Maxwell, Jefcoate and Oliver. She looks at their reasons for migration, how they fared once settled, and at their participation in gold-digging, farming, road-making, school-teaching and surveying. She also tracks them to the many parts of New Zealand that they spread to – the West Coast, Otago, Canterbury, Taranaki, Timaru, Wellington, New Plymouth and Auckland – demonstrating the richness family history can have in skilled hands.

Thwaite explains how she and her brother David came to be born in England and how early in World War Two they were taken to their New Zealand relations for safety, returning to the UK five years later with a deep love for the country where David later became a farmer. This is an engaging portrait of a brilliant and unconventional New Zealand-British family.



Politics in the Playground

The world of early childhood in New Zealand

Helen May, February 2009

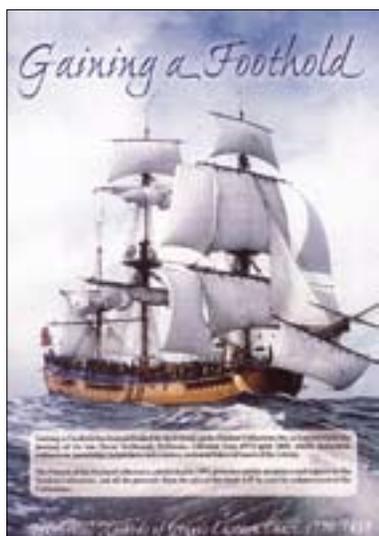
A NEW EDITION of this classic account of early childhood education and care has just been published. It follows the author's study *Discovery of Early Childhood* (1997), which traced the origins of institutional care for young children in Europe and New Zealand.

The provision of care and education for young New Zealand children expanded significantly after 1945: whereas some 2,000 children were attending free kindergartens in 1944, there were 171,138 in early childhood education by 2007, representing about 96 per cent of children aged three and four. For Māori, early childhood education institutions emerged in the 1960s, but evolved dramatically with Te Kohanga Reo in the 1980s.

The place of children in our social history also makes this book a remarkable record of social movements. The post-war search for security, the radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of feminism, the role of the state in social issues, increasing employment of women – all have impacted on early childhood education. The language of the debate has shifted from “social progress” in mid century, to the economic terminology of the 1990s, and some cautious consideration of the young child citizen in the 2000s. This account of critical issues for children will interest parents along with policy-makers, teachers and students.

For further information

Email university.press@otago.ac.nz or visit www.otago.ac.nz/press



Gaining a Foothold

Historical Records of Otago's Eastern Coast 1770–1839

General editor: Ian Church, February 2009

A REMARKABLE collection of records of early European explorations, sealing, whaling and interaction with the resident Kai Tahu people was recently published by the Friends of the Hocken Collections. The documents include Māori sources, archaeological records, logs, journals, reminiscences of explorers, sealers, flax-gatherers and whalers, court cases, old land claims, newspaper and shipping reports. The material provides new insights into European placenames, the causes of friction between Māori and Europeans, and the effects of European diseases on the indigenous people.

While many of the early records come from the Hocken Collections, they have been hugely expanded by documentation from Hobart, Sydney and elsewhere to provide comprehensive coverage of Otago history prior to the establishment of the first European settlement at Waikouaiti in 1840. Many of the papers on sealing vessels from Sydney and Boston have not been previously published. The book offers students of whaling history an unparalleled resource. And the documents published include many drawings, paintings, maps and diagrams, 32 of which are in colour.

Gaining a Foothold shows how the South Island and Stewart Island became involved in the outside world of the late 18th and early 19th centuries without the intervention of missionaries, with the development of trade and commercial enterprises. The comprehensive index, comprising some 3,000 entries, together with an extensive bibliography, makes this book an extremely valuable reference work for anyone interested in the history of Otago.

For more information or to secure a copy of the limited edition, email barton.hill@xtra.co.nz or contact Friends of the Hocken Collections, PO Box 6336, Dunedin.

Recently published books by Otago alumni

Consumer Behaviour: Applications in Marketing, by Robert East, Malcolm Wright and Marc Vanhuele, Sage: London, 2008.

Timaru at Last! South Canterbury's Strathallan Immigrants, by Alan McKenzie, South Canterbury Museum, November, 2008.

The Tram Conductor's Blue Cap, by Michael Harlow, Auckland University Press, 2008.

Tom: A Novel in Verse, by Mark Pirie, Poets Group, Christchurch, 2009.

Voyagers: Science Fiction Poetry from New Zealand, edited by Mark Pirie and Tim Jones, Interactive Press (IP), Brisbane, Australia, 2009.

As Others See Us: Historic Dunedin Through Visitors' Eyes, by Ian Dougherty, Saddle Hill Press, 2009.

Time in Antiquity, by Robert Hannah, Taylor & Francis Inc., February, 2009.

Before ANZAC, Beyond Armistice: The Central Otago Soldiers of World War One and the Home They Left Behind, by Keith Scott, Activity Press (NZ), 2009.

Alumni: If you have written a book lately email the editor at mag.editor@otago.ac.nz

A word from the Head

THIS YEAR marks the 140th anniversary of the founding of the University of Otago and the beginning of a special decade of celebration as we approach our 150th anniversary in 2019. Over the next 10 years many academic departments, residential colleges and University clubs will celebrate significant milestones (see below). We expect that large numbers of alumni with affiliations to these entities will come from near and far to join in the celebrations, taking advantage of the opportunity to meet with old friends and revisit old haunts, while affirming the influence that Otago has had in their lives. If your department or college has a celebration coming up and you



Alison Finigan

are interested in attending, contact the Alumni Office for more information. And, when you are in Dunedin, please call in and see us at Alumni House, where you can be assured of a cup of good coffee and a warm welcome.

This invitation applies equally to alumni who live in Dunedin, as well as those from further afield. Local alumni are able to attend at any time University events of interest that are open to the public: to help you to identify these we are developing a web page with a comprehensive list of what's happening on campus. This will be able to feed events of interest to your email address. Look out for this new feature on our website at www.otago.ac.nz/alumni

Upcoming University celebrations

- 2009 Knox College centenary
 - Department of Computer Science 25th anniversary
 - City College 10th anniversary
 - Department of Tourism 20th anniversary
- 2010 Selwyn College reunion
 - Hocken Library centenary
 - Māori Centre 21st anniversary
- 2011 St Margaret's College centenary
 - Department of Home Science and Consumer and Applied Sciences centenary
 - Department of Preventive and Social Medicine centenary
 - Department of Pharmacy centenary
 - Aquinas College jubilee
 - 50 years since the University of Otago became autonomous from the University of New Zealand

Knox College centenary

Registrations are rolling in as Knox College's celebratory weekend approaches, with residents from the 1940s to the present day planning to attend. The weekend of 7–9 August is packed with activities, including a Friday night buffet and cocktails at the college, a ball and formal dinner.

The guest speaker at the Sunday night dinner will be Dr Chris de Hamel, who heads the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and is an alumnus of both Otago University and Knox College. A history of the college, titled *A Living Tradition* and written by local historian Dr Alison Clarke, is to be launched. Other events include the annual Cameron Shield rugby match with Selwyn College,

a Sunday "elevenses" buffet at Knox and a service at Knox Church. Contact: Warwick Johnson, telephone 03 473 0787, alumni@knoxcollege.ac.nz



Knox residents on the college roof in 1913.

From left: Harold Barrowclough, Archibald Stuart, William Nichol, Arnold Petrie. Barrowclough, later the Right Hon. Sir Harold Eric Barrowclough, had a distinguished military career, became Chief Justice of New Zealand in 1953 and was made a member of the Privy Council in 1954. Stuart and Petrie also served in World War 1, with Petrie dying of wounds in France in 1918.

Otago celebrates Pacificana

On Thursday 10 September 2009, the University is hosting a reception in the Banquet Hall of Parliament for all Pacific Islands alumni, to celebrate the achievements of Pacific Islands graduates over the decades. To register your interest please email Alix Cassidy at alix.cassidy@otago.ac.nz

Department of Computer Science 25th anniversary

The Department of Computer Science is celebrating its 25th anniversary and invites all alumni as well as current and former staff to join the celebrations on Saturday 12 September.

The programme includes a tour of the department's new building and the opening of the departmental museum. There will be a formal dinner in the evening, at a charge of \$50 per head. For more information visit

www.cs.otago.ac.nz/csnews/25th

Department of Tourism celebrates 20 years

The Department of Tourism is celebrating 20 years of excellence in 2009. A staff publications and graduate research celebration with drinks and nibbles, followed by a dinner, will be held on Friday 21 August 2009 in Dunedin.

All alumni and friends of the Department of Tourism are welcome to join in these celebrations. For further information please visit www.otago.ac.nz/tourism or email diana.evans@otago.ac.nz

Selwyn College reunion 2010

Selwyn College is organising a reunion for alumni from 29 January to 8 February 2010 (coinciding with the Masters' Games also being held in Dunedin that week). All alumni are invited; group events for Selwyn residents of 10, 20, 30 and 40 years ago will also be organised through the college.

Plans include an opening cocktail event, and a midweek formal dinner. Other opportunities are being arranged for alumni to indulge in fine dining in some of Dunedin's top restaurants with past residents from their year groups.

For an authentic "scarfie" experience, reunion attendees are invited to stay at Selwyn for a bed and breakfast service. Alternatively, bookings at nearby motels can be arranged.

For further information contact Sandra Sutherland at office.selwyn@otago.ac.nz or 03 477 3326.

Department of Preventive and Social Medicine centenary, March 2011

To register your interest, or if you have recollections, photographs or other memorabilia you would like to share, please contact DeptPSM100@otago.ac.nz

Home Science centenary and reunion 2011

To register your interest please visit www.otago.ac.nz/capsc/centenary

Aquinas College jubilee, 2011

To register your interest please email lizzy.lukeman@otago.ac.nz or telephone 03 479 8487.

Alumni events 2009

San Francisco	20 June
London	27 June
Sydney	14 August
Pacificana, Wellington	10 September
Gisborne	5 November
Napier	7 November

For further information about these events please email functions.alumni@otago.ac.nz, telephone Alix Cassidy on 64 3 479 5649 or visit the Alumni and Friends web page www.otago.ac.nz/alumni/functions

Reunions

MB ChB class of 1950

4–6 August 2009, Dunedin

Contact Wyn Beasley at alwynbeasley@hotmail.com

MB ChB class of 1954

18–20 March 2010, Auckland

Contact Warren Fraser at wnc.fraser@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB class of 1957

2010, Wellington

Contact Warren Austad at austads@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB class of 1964

May 2010, Christchurch

Contact Peter Law at peter.law@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB class of 1979

"Thirty years on and still improving!"

23–25 October (Labour Weekend), Dunedin

Contact Kerry Buchan at buchans@xtra.co.nz

Studholme College residents of 1981

January 2010, Dunedin

Contact Phil Seddon at philip.seddon@stonebow.otago.ac.nz



"The Insanity Club" – Studholme residents 1981.

1959-1963 Sextet reunion



In May, 15 Sextet alumni and their partners gathered in Dunedin for a reunion. Photographed in 1959 are (from left) Alastair Brown, Jim Cleland, Peter Foreman, Bob McKegg (at rear), Meikle Skelly (middle), Peter Chin (front), Tom Tothill, John Burton.

1968 Dentistry graduates



Then and now: Top: 1968. Above: As they were 20 years later when about half the surviving members of the class gathered on the weekend of 4-5 October 2008 for a reunion at the Coolum Resort, Queensland, Australia.

Are you interested in holding a class reunion? For assistance contact Lizzy Lukeman at 64 3 479 8487 or email lizzy.lukeman@otago.ac.nz

Regional alumni groups

There are a number of alumni groups around the world who get together for a wide variety of activities and social pursuits. Each of these groups is co-ordinated by a local volunteer or committee who work with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations in Dunedin.

For information about regional alumni groups in your area visit www.otago.ac.nz/alumni/regionalgroups or contact the co-ordinators below if you would like more details. To register your interest in becoming a regional contact or co-ordinator contact Alix Cassidy on 64 3 479 5649, email alix.cassidy@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Melbourne Chapter

Trevor Moyle, chairman/secretary
melbourne.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Sydney Chapter

Alister Robinson, chairman
sydney.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Canberra Chapter

Marie Carroll, convener
canberra.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Perth Chapter

Helen Skellet, convener
perth.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni Association of Malaysia

Ms Siew Yoon Serene Chong, convener
chongsy@myjaring.net

University of Otago Alumni UK and Europe Chapter

Sir Paul Beresford, chairman
beresfordp@parliament.co.uk

Washington DC

Joe Manickavasagam, convener
j.mv@verizon.net

University of Otago groups in China

alix.cassidy@otago.ac.nz

Wall of Fame

The School of Physical Education is seeking nominations for its 2010 Wall of Fame. Recipients must be graduates of the school and have achieved national or international standing in their field. Nominations close on 31 October 2009.

For more information go to <http://physed.otago.ac.nz/wof> or email wof@pooka.otago.ac.nz

Alumni events 2009

Nelson, Seifrieds Vineyard, March



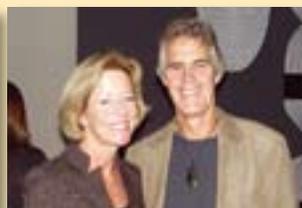
Melbourne, University House, University of Melbourne, April



Hamilton, Waikato Museum, April



Tauranga, Tauranga Art Gallery, April



Annual Appeal



Congratulations to the 11 University of Otago students who received Alumni Scholarships in 2009, made possible through donations to the Annual Appeal. They are (from left): Sarah MacIndoe, Lewis Williamson, Courtney Jones, Jonathan Thom, Laura Overton, Stephen Trebilco, Lewanna Pentecost, Mahoney Turnbull, Stephanie Yung, Katherine Jull, Elspeth Craig.

Royal Over-Seas League

For 100 years the Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) has offered travellers a home-base in London and Edinburgh, and membership is available to Otago alumni for just \$50 per year. This enables full use of the league's clubhouse facilities in London's West End and Edinburgh's Princes Street, as well as at 80 reciprocal clubs throughout the world.

The ROSL has a long association with the University of Otago through the scholarships it offers to support postgraduate students in music and the arts. The league is bringing the Barbirolli Quartet, an international prize-winning ensemble, to Marama Hall this November for a performance and masterclass prior to the annual ROSL/Pettman International Chamber Music Scholarship.

See www.roslnz.org.nz or email royalo-s@extra.co.nz

Blog Scholars - Blogging at Selwyn College

The Selwyn College website has become home to a number of bloggers. Selwyn warden Dr David Clark writes regularly on the site about college events, alumni happenings and college history. The student president provides a different perspective of college life and the college chaplain contributes occasional pieces.

Three Blog Scholars will soon be appointed from the student body as the inaugural recipients of a scholarship targeted at returning students with links to the alumni community, the Anglican Church, or with a unique take on college life as the first in their family to attend University.

Blog Scholars will make an important contribution to the college website. They will not only help to maintain a healthy and well-connected community within Selwyn, but will also be part of the college's public presence.

www.selwyn.ac.nz

Limited edition prints

Some years ago, former Arana College warden John McKean had the foresight to purchase for the college a baby grand piano that had at one time belonged to a well-known Dunedin music teacher and concert pianist, Mr J Giesen.

The piano, a Bechstein, was placed in what was the front room of Sir James Allan's home and has become a focal point of the college today.

Over the years many Arana residents have enjoyed the use of the piano for practice, performance and fun. In 2008, in particular, it was the centre of some highly-spirited group sing-alongs.

The piano, in its setting, is the subject of a beautiful painting by Neil Driver (right), an acclaimed Central Otago artist and Otago alumnus. The painting hangs at Arana in the room alongside the piano.

The college has now agreed with the artist that 20 signed and authenticated limited edition prints of this artwork will be made available to Otago alumni. Those who are interested should contact Arana warden Jamie Gilbertson at jamie.gilbertson@otago.ac.nz



KEEP IN TOUCH

The Development and Alumni Relations Office offers several options for receiving Otago communications. Instead of receiving a hard copy of this magazine you can be sent an email at the time of publication with a link to the magazine online. If there are a number of alumni living at the same address, we can arrange for a "household" copy to be sent that can be shared. Please let us know the most convenient way for you to receive communications from us.

Address for correspondence:

Development and Alumni Relations Office
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054
New Zealand

Street address: Alumni House
103 St David Street
Dunedin

Tel 64 3 479 5246

Fax 64 3 479 6522

Web www.otago.ac.nz/alumni

Email alumni@otago.ac.nz

The Alumni and Friends website carries information on what's happening for alumni around the globe. Via the website you can:

- receive updates about what's on for alumni
- register for alumni events
- update your contact details so you continue to receive publications from Otago
- view information on how to contact other Otago alumni
- find out how you can support the University.

Alumni story

The Wrong Crowd

I doubted I was university material. Though I was *proxime accessit* to the dux in my last year at school, I had begun secondary school at Epsom Girls' and moved to the smaller Waitaki Girls' in the sixth form. I knew I wouldn't have scored highly if I'd stayed in the larger environment. At Otago, I imagined I would lead a quiet, slogging life.

In my second week at Carrington Hall a medical student asked me out with him. A lowly arts student like me? I laughed at what I thought was his clever sarcasm and refused. My best friend took me aside, told me I'd hurt his feelings and should say yes. Bemused, I did. A few weeks later I was going out with another med student – the best friend of that first misunderstood young man. And that was it – in with the wrong crowd.

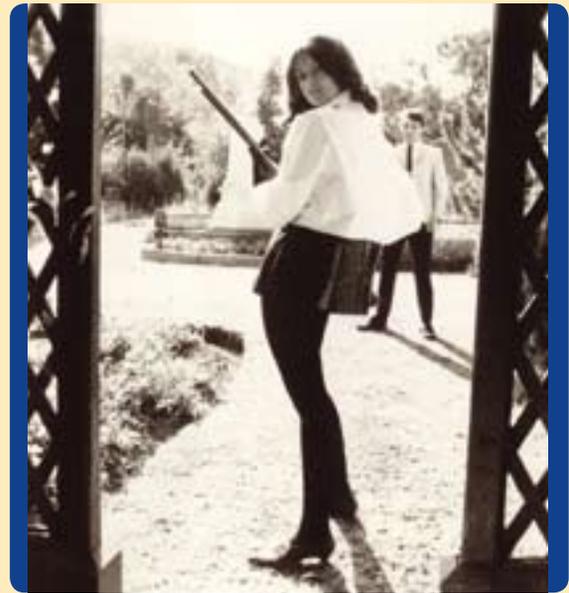
The first flat I had, 115 Clyde Street, was mainly with phys-ed students. It was one of the early concrete block buildings. Within weeks, our clothes went mouldy in the wardrobes. One night my boyfriend visited me bearing 100 daffodils he'd stolen along the way. In some spirit of competition, the Arana guys tore off a huge branch of apple blossom and dragged it in to us – it pressed against the ceiling.

The next year I moved into The Pink House at 29 Queen Street with two science students, Noela and Jenny. The roof was a sieve. So was the bathroom floor. We got soaked in any storm and the flat beneath suffered when our toilet cistern leaked.

The boyfriend was my social life. Like any good girlfriend in those supposedly liberated sixties, I listened to med student one-up-manship and smiled prettily. When I wasn't doing that, I studied by myself. I didn't mix with other arts students as I should have, arguing, exchanging ideas, debating literature and expanding any intellectual horizons. Too shy – too scared – too big a boyfriend.

I broke out of the shell only twice. The first time, I auditioned for Capping Revue in 1967. I thought it would be just an interesting afternoon at the auditions, but was accepted. How would I cope with Revue as well as studying? I couldn't say no. Theatre had always been important to me. I loved the feel of it again, the chaos of rehearsals, the slow building of satiric stories, the costumes, greasepaint, the huge stage of His Majesty's, the audience, applause.

The second time was one spring afternoon. I was basking in the sun in the tiny porch of 29 Queen Street translating Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* when a guy



Barbara Else as “Emma Peel” and Murray Jamieson as “Steed”.

from Carrington strolled down. He asked if either of my flatmates would like a burl on his motor bike. They were off to lectures and suggested that I go. Me! No. But – would I ever again be asked to ride a motor bike?

We roared out to Long Beach, walked to some rocks, climbed up, jumped back down Despite my insisting I was okay, the guy carried me back to his bike in a fireman's lift. We rode to Casualty. I had three weeks in hospital, and a pin and screw inserted in my ankle. I sat my final BA exams with my leg in a bloodied plaster cast. I should have stuck with Chaucer.

My last student flat was 755 Great King Street. It was also my first married home. It was gloomy, shabby, with a mean-spirited Hoovermatic washing machine. There were only two rooms as well as the miniscule kitchen and bathroom. When my parents saw the place, they paled with shock. That year I sat my MA exams seven months pregnant. After a very few weeks of dealing with nappies, the Hoovermatic broke irretrievably. Washing nappies in the bath is not good for hygiene or the soul. We moved on, to 10A Chambers Street.

Sixteen years later, when Jim and I brought our daughters down to Dunedin and showed them the outside of 755 Great King, they blanched – even reeled – at the thought of their parents in such a place. Another 20 years and 755 looks just the same: I shudder as I drive past.

Barbara Else, author and alumna

Whatever happened to our rocks and fossils? The Geology Museum



A crab with asymmetrical claws from Eocene times (around 40 million years ago). Found in Westland.

ONCE UPON A TIME the large room on the ground floor at the southern end of the Geology building – originally home to the University’s Medical School – was dedicated to the pursuit of “experimental physiology”. These words can still be made out – just – beneath the slick of varnish that has latterly been applied to the room’s rimu doors.

Indeed, Associate Professor Ewan Fordyce, whose office is adjacent, recalls an early photograph of the room in which skeletons and various parts thereof punctuate the space, alongside students busily acquainting themselves with the function of the human body.

Today the room is still utilised by students studying specimens, but these specimens are somewhat more senior than the bones once used by the medical school, by up to 530 million years. For the room is now home to

the Geology Museum, a treasury of rocks, minerals and fossils which offers unique insights into the formation and ancient flora and fauna of prehistoric New Zealand and its geological antecedents.

Refurbished in 2005, the Geology Museum is primarily used for undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, the storage of departmental field specimens and as a resource for geological and paleontological researchers.

It is also open to the public every weekday, and proves a fascinating destination for lay observers and school groups alike.

Some specimens date back to the second half of the nineteenth century, including a handful arising from James Hector’s New Zealand Geological Survey. However, the collection began in earnest following



The extinct nautilus Aturia which lived around 25 million years ago. Found in North Otago.

the appointment of the University's founding Professor of Geology, William Noel Benson, in 1916. The research of Emeritus Professor D S Coombs and, more latterly, Professor Alan Cooper and Dr Michael Palin extended the rock and mineral collection further, while the paleontological collection is largely associated with the field research of Fordyce and Associate Professor Daphne Lee and their students.

Today the Geology Museum hosts the largest collection of its kind in the South Island and its fossil specimens, particularly of marine vertebrates, attract researchers from all over the world.

Stepping into the museum is, as Fordyce quips, like walking into "a museum within a museum". Glass cabinets display the intriguing remnants of long-extinct species, evoking a time when fantastic creatures roamed the southern seas and strange-shaped molluscs abounded on the seabed.

From the late Oligocene period (about 25 million years ago) comes a large dolphin skull (currently a cast, as the original is on loan to Otago Museum, see cover), found near Duntroon. Nearby lie the exquisitely beautiful, pearly teeth of an extinct giant white shark, embedded – as if casually scattered by a careless giant – in a chunk of limestone. Every specimen has a story to tell, whether it be of prehistoric predation or of the extreme forces which have shaped our planet.

One of Professor Fordyce's recent finds is the skull of a mosasaur, a marine lizard which coexisted with dinosaurs about 65 million years ago. Its crocodilian-like jaws can be seen emerging from the siltstone in which it has, over millennia, become concretised. Recounting its discovery, Fordyce recalls his search through the remotest corners of North Canterbury's Waipara Valley – an area well picked over by fossil hunters – before he glimpsed an ancient tooth protruding from the centre of a behemoth rock that had been cleft in two.



The mineral manganocalcite (Ca,MnCO_3) found near Waihi.

The subsequent retrieval operation included seven days of precision drilling to carefully cut the fossil-bearing stone into sections. The largest section, which contains the upper part of the skull and weighs 120 kilograms, still awaits preparation in the storage area directly beneath the museum floor.

The fossil preparation laboratory, where this painstaking work is done, runs alongside one side of the museum. Windows enable museum visitors to view the cutting, polishing and cleaning, which is carried out as funding allows by fossil preparator Andrew Grebneff. In some cases, casts are made to facilitate analysis of delicate or brittle fossils that could be damaged by handling. In others, facets of rock in which fossils are embedded are polished smooth to reveal their interior beauty.

Specimens sometimes travel. The Geology Museum played a key role in the development of Otago Museum's Southern Land exhibition and has a close association

with the Vanished World attraction near Dunroon. It has also provided cetacean fossils or replicas to Te Papa, GNS Science and a major exhibition in Japan.

One specimen not behind a glass case is the old table standing at one end of the room, initials scarring its well-worn surface. Fordyce ventures that it dates back to the room's Medical School days; perhaps students who tired of physiology busied themselves by carving their names into the wood with their pen knives. The symmetry to be found in this University relic sitting amidst all the geological ones is pleasing. Presumably some geology students' names have been added to the medical ones and their traces will be discovered by other students in years to come, just like the fossils around them.

Rebecca Tansley

The Geology Museum is open to the public, Mondays to Fridays, 8.30am to 5pm.



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*Tertiary Education Commission. PBRF Quality Evaluation 2006. (Wellington, 2007)