



# UNIVERSITY OF Otago

M A G A Z I N E

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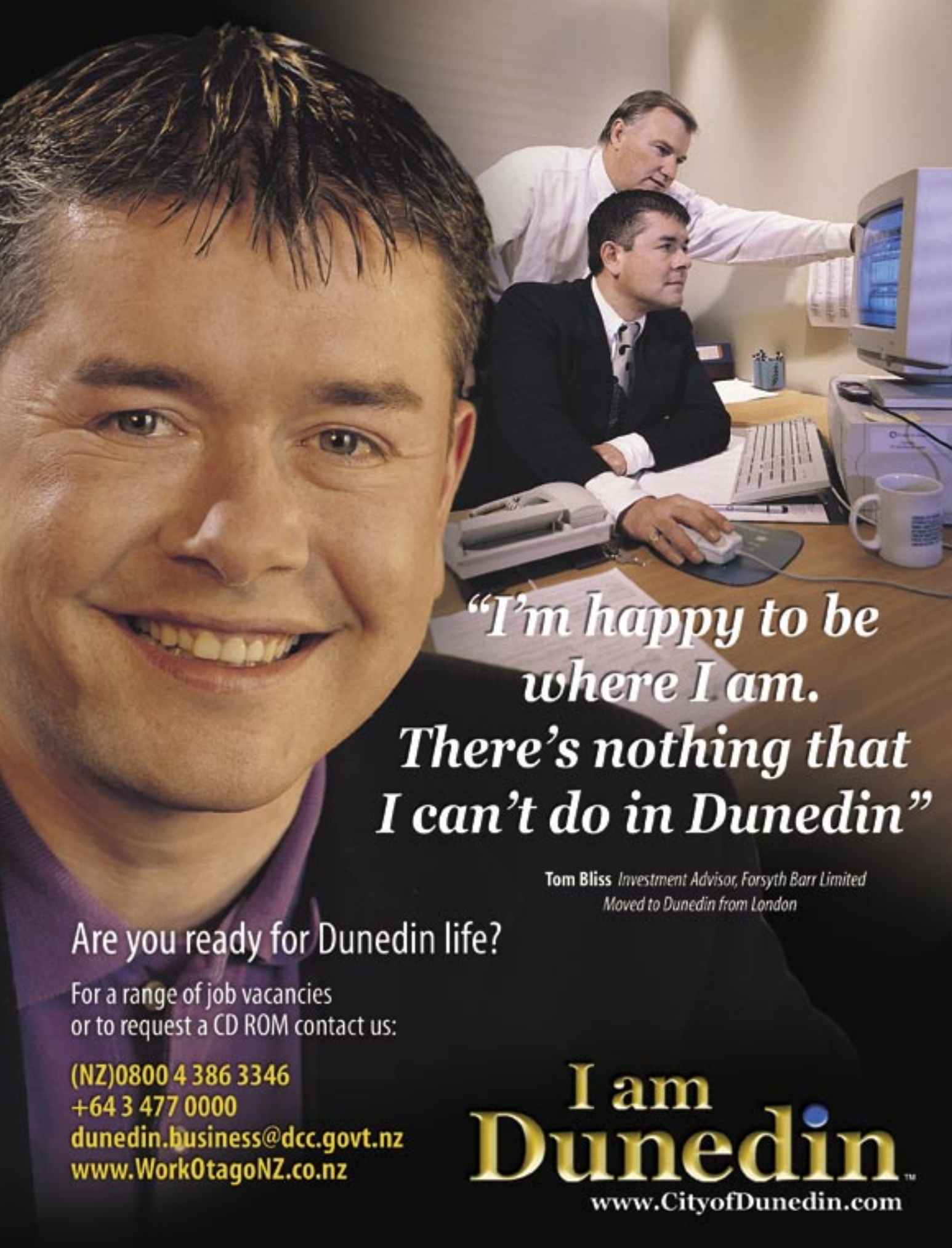
ALUMNI BATTLE THE NEWEST BUGS ON THE BLOCK  
UNIVERSITY FAREWELLS CHANCELLOR  
100 YEARS OF THE PORTOBELLO MARINE LABORATORY  
TOUCHING DOWN IN MIDDLE-EARTH

UNIVERSITY  
of  
OTAGO



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UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

# m a g a z i n e

A magazine for alumni and friends of the University of Otago

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<b>Managing Editor</b>	Gillian Thomas
<b>Editor</b>	Karen Trebilcock mag.editor@otago.ac.nz
<b>Designer</b>	Peter Scott
<b>Contributing Writers</b>	Simon Ancell Simon Cunliffe Claire Finlayson Sean Flaherty Karen Hogg Suze Jones Laura Mills Nicola Mutch Vivien Pullar Darryn Russell Jill Rutherford Ainslie Talbot Karin Warnaar Nigel Zega
<b>Photography</b>	Ross Coombes Alan Dove New Line Productions Bill Nichol Otago Daily Times Elizabeth Passuello Nicholas Scaturro
<b>Illustrations</b>	Murray Webb
<b>Advertising</b>	Ruth Mackenzie-White
<b>Circulation</b>	Alumni Office magazine@otago.ac.nz

## Contact Details

University of Otago Magazine  
Marketing and Communications  
PO Box 56  
Dunedin  
New Zealand  
Tel 64 3 479 8515  
Fax 64 3 479 5417  
Email mag.editor@otago.ac.nz  
Web www.otago.ac.nz/otagomagazine

## Cover Image:

Corona virus particles, responsible for diseases such as the common cold, gastroenteritis and SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome). They take their name from the crown of surface proteins which attach to and penetrate host cells. Once inside, the particles use the cells' machinery to replicate.

## Submissions

Contributed articles and letters should be addressed to:  
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## VC's COMMENT

BEING ABLE TO ANNOUNCE, EACH YEAR, THE PROMOTION of outstanding staff to the position of personal professor has been, for me, one of the most rewarding tasks during my time as Vice-Chancellor.

Achieving a "Personal Chair" at Otago is a true mark of academic distinction. It is not a title which is easily acquired. Our assessment procedures are rigorous; they involve input from Division Promotion Committees, the Staffing Advisory Committee, international referees and independent external assessors. All this information is then evaluated by an Advisory Committee to the Vice-Chancellor of six or seven senior academic staff members who consider the merits of each individual case.

This year 10 of our staff have been promoted to Personal Chairs and during the process we received comments such as the following:

"Among the top five in the world", "Thought he/she was already a Professor; would qualify for a Chair at a top international University". Spontaneous independent comments such as these verify that our top academic staff are truly outstanding and that we have, at Otago, academic leaders who will ensure that the University's contribution to teaching excellence, research performance and significant community service will be maintained.

Recently the University announced that Mr Lindsay Brown will be Chancellor for 2004 and that Professor David Skegg will succeed me as Vice-Chancellor in the second half of the year. I look forward to working with both men to effect a successful transition to new leadership for the University during 2004. Successful University leadership requires a strong working relationship between Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and during my time at Otago I believe we have achieved this; it has been both a privilege and a pleasure to work with two outstanding Chancellors, Judith Medlicott and Eion Edgar.

Dr Graeme Fogelberg  
Vice-Chancellor – University of Otago



# UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO WELCOMES NEW CHANCELLOR AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY'S MOST SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS  
SIGNAL BOTH CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AT OTAGO.

**LINDSAY BROWN, A COMPANY DIRECTOR** and accountant with strong local links and a long-time association with the University of Otago, is the University's new Chancellor. He replaces Eion Edgar, who retired at the end of last year. Meanwhile, internationally-renowned cancer researcher Professor David Skegg, currently the Head of Preventive and Social Medicine within the Dunedin School of Medicine, has been appointed as the next Vice-Chancellor. He takes over from Dr Graeme Fogelberg upon his retirement at the end of July.

The Chancellor's role is to chair the University Council, while the Vice-Chancellor is the academic and administrative head of the University.

Commenting on Mr Brown's appointment, Mr Edgar described him as "a true gentleman, a man of intelligence, tact and integrity".

Mr Brown, a former partner of the highly regarded accounting firm Deloitte, has been Pro-Chancellor (Deputy Chair of Council) for the University for the past five years and a member of Council for over 10. He's served as convenor of the Finance and Budget Committee since 1999, a member of the Standing Committee, and also as Council Representative on the Risk Management Committee.

A 1965 Otago BCom graduate, Mr Brown says that his governance, finance and accounting skills will complement the "really exciting leadership qualities" of the University's next Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Skegg.

Professor Skegg was selected from a "highly competitive and very impressive" list of top national and international candidates for the position, says Mr Edgar.

"He has all the qualities we were seeking in a leader: impeccable international academic reputation, sound strategic thinking, strong administrative capabilities, and excellent communication and people skills. In summary, he is an outstanding New Zealander."

"I am tremendously honoured by the prospect of leading the University of Otago as its Vice-Chancellor," Professor Skegg says. "All over the world, the roles of universities are changing rapidly. In New Zealand, as in



*Chancellor Lindsay Brown.*



*Vice-Chancellor from August, Professor David Skegg.*

other countries, we can expect an increasing differentiation between a small number of research-led universities and other institutes of tertiary education. My aim is to ensure that Otago emerges as one of the institutions of truly international stature."

Born in 1947 in Auckland, Professor Skegg gained a BMedSc, MBChB with distinction at Otago and was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. After graduating with a DPhil, he continued at Oxford as a lecturer in Epidemiology from 1976 to 1979, and, in 1980, he returned to Otago to take up the Chair of Preventive and Social Medicine.

Professor Skegg is probably best known outside the University as a leading expert on breast and cervical cancer, contraceptive and drug safety and on reproductive health. In 2002, he was a co-investigator in a major study which debunked claims that vasectomy is linked to prostate cancer, research which received world wide attention.

He currently chairs an international breast cancer research group centred at Oxford and advises a World Health Organisation programme in human reproduction. He has also played a lead role with several New Zealand government agencies and committees, having chaired the Public Health Commission, the Health Research Council and the BSE Expert Science Panel.

His outstanding record both as a researcher – with over 140 publications in academic journals – and as a strong advocate of improved public health, has earned him several of this nation's most prestigious honours. They include: the New Zealand 1990 Commemoration Medal, an OBE (1990) for services to medicine, a Fellowship of the Royal Society of New Zealand (1992) and the Sir Charles Hercus Medal (Royal Society of New Zealand, 1999). And in August last year, Professor Skegg also received the University of Otago's top honour, the Distinguished Research Medal.

### BIG BUZZ FOR BEE INDUSTRY?



Professor Alison Mercer is examining how queen bees manipulate worker bee behaviour.

The honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) is a highly social insect. Each bee plays an important role in the survival of the colony, with all activity coordinated by the sole queen bee.

Using pheromonal signals, she is able to control both the behaviour and physiology of worker bees, altering their normal patterns of behaviour in response to the needs of the colony. For example, a shortage of foragers induces young bees to begin foraging at a much earlier age, whereas a shortage of nurses induces forager bees to revert to duties within the hive.

Just how the queen controls worker bee behaviour is being studied by Professor Alison Mercer of the University's Zoology Department, research made possible by a grant from the Marsden Fund.

The key may be one of the components within the queen mandibular pheromone, which

Mercer says bears a striking resemblance to dopamine. A biogenic amine, dopamine can be found in the nervous systems of all animals (including humans) and is vital in modulating nerve cell function, enabling animals to adapt to the world around them.

She suspects that this pheromonal component is acting via dopamine receptors, altering functions within the worker bees' brain cells, and allowing the queen to manipulate their behaviour.

"Until now we have not had the technology to test this, but knowledge we have gained from the recent cloning and characterisation of three dopamine receptors gives us the opportunity to explore this further," Mercer says. "If our hypothesis is right, it could potentially be of great importance to the bee industry."

### UNDERSTANDING ADHD



Dr Brent Alsop and Dr Gail Tripp with one of the control children in the study.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a chronic and debilitating condition affecting at least 40,000 New Zealand children. Many of these children will continue to experience significant academic, occupational and social difficulties into adolescence and adulthood.

In spite of this, there are currently no medical or psychological tests for ADHD, and behavioural intervention programmes for dealing with it are based on how children without ADHD respond to the tools of reinforcement and reward.

However, research by Dr Gail Tripp and Dr Brent Alsop, of the University's Department of Psychology, aims to help psychologists, parents and teachers alike to understand and manage this disorder better.

Using a signal-detection methodology, their preliminary studies have shown that children with ADHD respond very differently to reward than "normal"

children (those without ADHD). They are particularly averse to reward delays and are more responsive to the last reward than to their previous history of reward.

Now a Health Research Council grant enables Tripp and Alsop to take this research further by testing these findings on larger groups of children. They will also measure the effects of medication (methylphenidate/Ritalin) on performance and the relevance of comorbid behavioural disorders.

"We hope that this will lead to an increased understanding of this disorder," says Tripp. "It may help us identify children who need further assessment for ADHD and ultimately to more targeted and effective behavioural management programmes that may reduce the need for pharmacological intervention."

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## DISCOVERING THE HISTORY OF OUR GRASSLANDS



Associate Professor Tom Brooking (left) and Professor Eric Pawson: *The transformation of the New Zealand landscape has been one of the most complete and rapid of anywhere in the world.*

Close your eyes and imagine a giant forest heaving with life – a tangle of trees, ferns and vines plugged into a fertile network of swamps and wetlands. Then imagine the same forest all but gone, chopped down to make way for open grasslands clipped neat and short by the mouths of millions of sheep.

You are picturing New Zealand, where the transformation of the landscape has been one of the most complete and rapid of anywhere in the world.

“We’ve drained 85 per cent of wetlands which is far more than anyone else has done, even the Dutch, who have only drained two-thirds,” says Associate Professor Tom Brooking, of the Department of History.

But how was it done, and why? Was it a giant imperial programme being pushed out of London, was it the banks or was it the farmers themselves? Perhaps, more

importantly, what are the long term consequences likely to be?

Brooking is keen to find out and will use a Marsden grant over the next three years to try to establish these and other points under the title *Empires of Grass: The reconstruction of the New Zealand grasslands 1850s - 1950s*.

The multidisciplinary team – Canterbury University geographer Professor Eric Pawson, post-doctoral student Dr Vaughan Wood, Lincoln economic historian Jim McAlloon, bio-geographer Professor Peter Holland and post-doctoral environmental historian Dr Paul Star – will be scouring small town museums and big city research libraries, devouring agricultural journals and consulting grass experts to try to build the big picture.

“We’re going to have a hard look at something which is pretty serious and the answer will be very complicated.”

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## FINDING BRILLIANT BOSSES



Professor Ralph Adler: *“A leader who can provide a vision and be respected is inspiring.”*

Some bosses are bad. Some are better. And some are simply brilliant. What makes the difference?

Professor Ralph Adler, head of Accountancy, and Professor Chang Won Lee of Hansung University in South Korea, set out to find what makes some bosses shine, and some sink without trace. Their study, funded by the Korea Research Fund and supported by the Society of Local Government Managers, looks at leadership styles among chief executive officers in local government organisations in New Zealand and Korea.

Adler’s team asked senior management teams to evaluate their leaders, trying to discover which styles were most effective, and whether there were cultural differences between the two countries.

They considered four leadership styles: initiating structure – focusing on tasks and organising to do them; considerate – spending time with employees and working with

their feelings; transactional – offering good pay for good work; and transformational – good communicators with vision who could excite employees and challenge the status quo.

Leaders’ effectiveness was judged on their employees’ commitment to their organisation and job satisfaction.

The results showed that the transformational style of leadership was effective in both countries. Consideration was highly regarded in New Zealand, while task-focused managers were close runners-up in Korea.

“There are things that are culturally important,” says Adler, “but a leader who can provide a vision and be respected is inspiring.”

Adler is now seeking funding to continue research into how local government organisations in Korea and New Zealand improve their efficiency.



## ICE MODELS



*Professor Vernon Squire is analysing the behaviour of waves and sea ice to predict global warming better.*

A lack of information has fuelled decades of scientific debate about global warming. Now, although climate change is front-page news across the globe, it's still hard to gather good data.

One of the problems is that some of the best indicators of change are in the polar regions, where monitoring is difficult at the best of times.

Although Antarctica is a frozen continent surrounded by sea, and the Arctic is a frozen ocean surrounded by continents, they're both greatly affected by global warming, and mapping sea-ice change is a useful indicator.

Professor Vernon Squire, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Division of Sciences, is trying to maximise information gathering by analysing the behaviour of waves and sea ice.

Using satellite data and statistical information about ice thickness originally obtained from submarines, Squire's team will

build mathematical models of the sea-ice cover, and explain how waves and ice interact.

"We can trace ice floes and pressure ridges, depict rivers and lakes in the sea ice, and model the way waves travel through this material," says Squire. "Then we can try to use these models to make predictions."

The work has attracted Squire's third Marsden grant, which he shares with co-researcher Dr Mike Meylan of Auckland University.

"Over several years we can see the sea ice is changing due to climate warming," says Squire. "We try to work out the properties of the ice from the way the waves behave. There is published evidence from submarines, but this gives us a few more effective ways of measuring what's happening in real time – the first time this has ever been possible."

## TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF DECISION MAKING



*Dr Paul Hansen is breaking down decision making to the easiest of choices.*

Do you have trouble making decisions? If so, Dr Paul Hansen might have an answer for you.

Hansen, a senior lecturer in Economics at the School of Business, and software developer Franz Ombler have invented *Point★Wizard*, a revolutionary new program that could take some of the stress out of decision making.

*Point★Wizard* simplifies the ranking of alternatives or individuals when there are multiple criteria to consider. Points systems are generally used for this purpose in a wide variety of applications, such as prioritising patients for treatment, or selecting immigrants.

Current approaches to working out the points for such systems struggle to cope with the enormous number of possible rankings of alternatives that arise.

"They tend not to recognise the subtleties of most decision-making processes," says Hansen.

"*Point★Wizard* is much more accurate and user-friendly, resulting in more consistent and transparent decision making."

Hansen has been fascinated with the problem for ten years, but it was only when he met up with Ombler, an ex-Otago student, that he really started to make progress.

"We combined our skills and chipped away at it, and between us we came up with some major break-throughs. We can't find anything else in the world that comes even close," says Hansen. "The beauty of our approach is that it breaks decision making down to the easiest of choices, choosing between just two alternatives at a time. And it can be used in thousands of applications. It's a dream come true."

Initial trials of *Point★Wizard* have been very successful and the inventors are patenting the software.



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## EXPLORATION INTO AUSTEN'S EXTERNAL WORLD



Professor Jocelyn Harris (left) and Dr Lisa Marr: Women were often present on ships in the Napoleonic Wars.

Her first book was a journey into Jane Austen's mind.

Second time up, Professor Jocelyn Harris is wandering happily though the constantly surprising landscape of the author's external world.

Obscure discoveries about the Napoleonic Wars, unexpected revelations in original Austen manuscripts in the British Library and an education in 19th century taxes on luxury sound more fun than research has a right to be.

Having started by compiling a critical and annotated version of Austen's novel *Persuasion*, Harris found far too much good material to be slotted into footnotes.

Instead, to complement *Jane Austen's Art of Memory*, her previous work examining the author's reading choices, she has mapped out a book about the environment in which *Persuasion* was conceived.

A Marsden grant will allow her

time next year, in conjunction with research assistant Dr Lisa Marr, to develop findings which already have her buzzing with excitement. Top of the list so far are the war stories.

The literary scholar finds satisfaction in discovering the significance of far-off battles which affected the characters. The literary historian is intrigued to learn that women were often present on ships in battle.

"Many people have said Jane Austen wasn't interested in the Napoleonic Wars but the more I looked the more I realised that she most definitely was. After all, she lived most of her life under the threat of war with France."

Keen to help shake Austen's domestic "chick-lit" tag, Harris is aware the book's title will be important in staking out its intentions. How about Great Navy Battles in Jane Austen? "Yes, that would be a challenge."

But highly unlikely.

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## NEW LEAD ON LIFE -THREATENING PROBLEM



Dr Dejan Arsic has found levels of a specific protein play a critical role in preventing oesophageal atresia.

Around 15 babies every year in New Zealand (1:4000) are born with a life threatening abnormality called oesophageal atresia.

Babies with this condition are born with part of their oesophagus (gullet) missing, while the lower end of the oesophagus has an abnormal connection or hole between it and the trachea (windpipe), which means that all food tends to go into the lungs, rather than the stomach. It can normally be corrected by surgery soon after birth, although there may be on-going problems.

The causes of this and similar abnormalities are still a mystery. Now for the first time, Dr Dejan Arsic of the Christchurch School of Medicine's Paediatric Surgery Department, has shed new light on the development of these serious abnormalities of the foregut.

As part of his PhD research Arsic has focused on a specific protein called Sonic Hedgehog which acts

as a signalling molecule for the development of the oesophagus and the trachea.

"We've discovered that the actual levels of SHH protein play a critical role in foregut development of the fetus. When the levels are too low, then the foregut doesn't develop properly," explains Arsic.

When the fetus approaches birth it is normal for the SHH protein levels to decline. Arsic has discovered abnormalities develop if this vital protein is low throughout gestation.

The next step is to identify the genes that control the development of the gastrointestinal tract in the hope that eventually it may be possible to prevent this serious abnormality from occurring.

## STROKE PROTECTION AT SNAIL'S PACE



*Dr Paul Donohoe: Snails have the ability to reduce their demand for oxygen as its supply declines.*

Stroke is the third most common cause of death in New Zealand. Irreversible brain damage occurs within minutes because human brain cells are unable to reduce their consumption of oxygen rapidly when they are deprived of it.

To date, more than 50 experimental treatments to protect brain cells chemically following a stroke have failed. However, Dr Paul Donohoe, of the University's Department of Physiology, is taking a new approach.

To find a way to protect against the damage associated with a stroke, Donohoe has turned to the snail. This common garden pest seals itself into its shell for long periods of time, surviving with little or no oxygen.

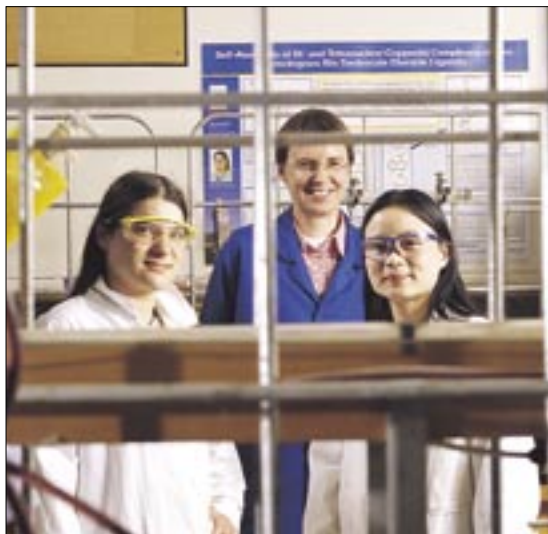
Donohoe's research has found that, in contrast to humans, snails have the ability to reduce their demand for oxygen as its supply declines. Their brains appear to

sense the availability of oxygen and slow their metabolic rate accordingly, a response, which Donohoe says, has not been seen previously in any other brain cell.

He believes that a particular cellular protein detects oxygen levels and an oxygen-sensitive pathway controls its consumption by the mitochondria within the snail's brain cells. He is now setting out to test this hypothesis with a recent grant from the Marsden Fund.

The results have far-reaching potential. "If we can find and understand the mechanisms by which the snail brain cells reduce their demand for oxygen then we may well discover new strategies to protect human brain cells against stroke."

## SMALLER AND SMARTER



*From left, PhD student Julia Hausmann, Associate Professor Sally Brooker and PhD student Yanhua Lan. Hausmann and Lan have contributed to the development of the research programme into molecule-sized switches.*

Each year computers get smaller and smarter – largely thanks to the skills of engineers and physicists who are constantly improving the silicon chips that help to make up computer memory. But the writing is on the wall for the silicon chip. Component manufacturers know that soon it won't be possible to make them any smaller, which is why Associate Professor Sally Brooker's work is so important.

Research by Brooker and her team in the Chemistry Department may lead to a potential advance on the silicon chip – a nano-component composed of organic and inorganic materials.

They're experimenting with combining metals and organic cocktails to form on/off switches that may eventually be used to make computers even smaller and more powerful.

"There's a continual growth in people's expectations of what computers can do," says Brooker.

"We're trying to squeeze more and more out of them, but we've probably only got ten years before we get to the limit of what silicon can cope with. What we're working on could lead to a partial solution to the problem."

The team has already shown that it is possible to make molecule-sized switches from an assembly of metal ions and organic molecules. Now Brooker has a Marsden grant to develop the work further.

The team hopes to produce complex structures from simple ingredients, leading to switches that will ultimately be able to retain memory so they can be used in nano-computers.

"It's a long-term goal," says Brooker. "We apply the ideas, knowledge and experience we have and work hard, but there's always an element of serendipity. It's what makes science so exciting."

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## ROGER'S CHILDREN



*Dr Karen Nairn is interested in how the economic and educational changes of the '80s have affected the outlook of today's teens.*

To many New Zealanders, the 1980s and the economic and social changes wrought by Rogernomics were a period of great upheaval. But what about those who have grown up knowing nothing else?

In the United Kingdom, their well-studied counterparts have become known as Thatcher's Children after the book of the same name.

Now, thanks to a three-year Marsden-funded study led by the University of Otago's Dr Karen Nairn, we are about to learn about the generation which may well be dubbed Roger's Children when the research is published.

"We're really interested in the group of young people who have been at school through all the economic and educational changes since 1984. They're now 16, 17 and 18 and, a little bit like Thatcher's children, we're wondering what it means to go through all those reforms and come out into the

labour market or tertiary education or face unemployment and how that ties in with young people's sense of self or sense of identity."

Sixty teenagers will be involved from three sites. Each group of 20 will be followed closely by researchers who hope the young people will help shape the questions they are answering.

The work/study split is emerging as a key stream of inquiry – a pilot study this year found school leavers relatively optimistic as they prepared to enter the job market because they were used to juggling work and school.

Nairn and co-investigators Dr Jane Higgins of the University of Canterbury and Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith of the University of Auckland, already suspect three years will not be enough "to see how that pathway unfolds".

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## IMMUNITY BOOSTER



*Professor Brian Darlow: "We need better strategies."*

One of the most challenging situations for any paediatrician working with new-born babies is managing potentially life-threatening infections soon after birth.

"Every year 2500 babies in New Zealand and Australia get a severe infection, and, unfortunately, 600 die, so we need better strategies," says head of the Paediatric Department at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Professor Brian Darlow.

Darlow is leading the New Zealand arm of a major international study to try to find conclusive evidence on ways of reducing death and disability from these infections. The Health Research Council-funded investigation is looking at whether the administration of intravenous immunoglobulin improves treatment.

The focus is on immunoglobulin proteins because these act as antibodies, helping babies to fight infection. However, newborns are

deficient in this potentially life-saving immunity booster. It has been suggested in studies involving fewer babies that intravenous immunoglobulin may reduce infection by up to 30 per cent, but there is a need for a much larger study to really prove the case. That's why this project involves 5000 newborn from New Zealand, the UK and Australia.

"We will be gathering data in a randomised, controlled trial from neonatal, intensive-care units throughout the country over three years initially. Children will then be followed up at two years to see if there are long-term benefits, and the results should be known by 2008," says Darlow. "If they're positive it's likely that IV immunoglobulin for severe infection in newborn babies will become accepted practice resulting in significant cost savings to health systems around the world."





# GERM WARF



Photo: Nicholas Saturno

## Otago graduates do battle with the newest bugs on the block

IMAGINE WALKING OUT OF A BUILDING AND INTO A CROWDED COURTYARD. Amid the throng, bodies are lying on the ground: some dead, others wounded. Every now and then, a person collapses; they have been hit by a bullet, fired from a machine gun.

In fact, bullets are flying everywhere. But they are invisible bullets, from invisible guns. And you can't hear them. And it is impossible even to tell which direction they are being shot from. Protective clothing is available, but you have no idea how much to wear, or whether it will be effective at all. People are panicking.

There is no way of knowing who will be next.

That is how Otago alumnus Dr Tom Buckley describes going to work each day for three scary months early last year. Such was life on the front line in a Hong Kong hospital as the mysterious, highly-infectious, deadly virus we now know as SARS introduced itself to the world.

And things went from bad to worse for Buckley, who had been practising medicine in Hong Kong for 15 years. No sooner was SARS brought under control at Prince of Wales Hospital where he was employed as Head of Anaesthesiology, than he was seconded to take on the role of Acting Head of Intensive Care at Princess Margaret Hospital.

"When I got the call asking me to help out at Princess Margaret, my heart sank," he remembers.

"I knew I had to do it, I knew I was going to go. But I remember thinking to myself, 'there's no way I'm not going to contract this disease.'"

There was no doubting PMH's need was real. Of the Intensive Care Unit's six doctors, four had SARS. Nineteen of their 48 nurses were infected. Plus, the hospital had just been designated a SARS hospital, despite the fact that only one per cent of its beds were in ICU, when data was showing that 20 per cent of SARS patients required this level of specialist care. The ICU ward had expanded from 13 to 32 beds, and simply did not have the staff or resources to cope.

Furthermore, says Buckley, the staff were scared. "It was complete chaos, and I had to get the situation under control fast.

"My big fear was for the other health care workers. I said to myself that if any of them contracted this illness after I had arrived and put systems in place, I couldn't blame them if they walked out."

To his abiding and eternal relief, not one got sick.

Buckley himself stopped going home altogether: "It was terrible enough being in this situation, but it would have been truly terrible to take this illness back to my family." He took his kids out of school, not because he thought they posed a risk to other children, but the opposite – he felt the health authorities were not acting fast enough to close schools and was worried his children might catch the illness from their classmates.

Buckley and his wife, a practising GP, debated whether the family should return to New Zealand, but bravely opted for solidarity. "We knew that if I got sick, they would never be able to come back to see me."

# ARE



And so, Buckley set about the business of managing this invisible monster. Rigorous infection control procedures were enforced. Isolation units for anyone with suspected SARS were established. The lift lobby became a centre for all infection control equipment. The highest grade of mask – the N95 – became the standard.

Eventually, slowly, the waves of people presenting with the illness became smaller and fewer until June when they stopped altogether for awhile.

The healthcare workers who enforced meticulous infection control measures deserve thanks for this. Hong Kong's Department of Health – criticised in a government inquiry for its poor communication and slowness to act in the early stages of the outbreak – may also take credit for bringing the disease under control, by enforcing strict quarantining policies.

Or maybe, suggests Buckley, it was the weather, dropping to the 29°C a day Hong Kong laughingly calls winter, that was the real hero.

Either way, Buckley's not relaxing yet.

"No disease has ever entered the human race and exited. It'll be back." His words, spoken in December, have proved prophetic with cases in China once again making international headlines in the last few weeks.

**WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE HIMALAYAN CIVET** could cause such chaos?

SARS is a corona virus – it looks vaguely crown-shaped under a microscope – in the same family as about two-thirds of the common colds that affect humans. But no one had seen a corona virus quite like this before, and today's best thinking suggests it may have leapt species from the hitherto barely-heard-of wild cat-like mammal, a delicacy in southern China.

And SARS is not a one-off. Indeed, Otago alumnus, Professor Robert Webster, Director of the WHO collaborating Centre at St Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, and Head of the WHO Animal Health Network, says that when new viruses are identified, chances are they will have come from an animal source.

In 2002, more than 4000 North Americans were infected and 284 died from West Nile virus which was transmitted from horses and crows via mosquito bites. In 1998, the Nipah virus infected 265 Malaysian piggy workers, killing 106. Nipah – like Hendra, which killed two Queensland men in 1994 – is a benign enough virus found in fruit bats. It became a killer when transmitted through the respiratory systems of the pigs, while Hendra infected humans through their contact with infected horses.

Virologist Dr Richard Webby, another Otago alumnus at St Jude's, works alongside Webster at the interface of animal and human health. Both researchers support animal and health surveillance programmes and closer collaboration between zoological and medical scientists. But even this, they argue, will only take us so far.

When it comes to managing the implications of such viruses, Webby explains that a large part of the problem is that "we have no idea about most of the possible viruses that are out there, or how they respond in different organisms.

"A virus that is completely benign in one animal could kill another."

But humans have long lived among animals. European farmers once lived upstairs from their cows. Jesus was born in a manger. Why are we seeing so many viruses cross species now? The answer, says Webster, is simple statistics.

"The difference now is the sheer number of people coming into contact with animals," he says. "Plus increased population density and the ability of people to travel much greater distances makes it extraordinarily difficult for a virus to be contained."

Webster recounts the opening of the conference of the US Institute of Medicine, when a speaker invoked the tale of "The Perfect Storm" – a coincidence of a range of atmospheric and oceanic conditions creating the greatest storm ever seen off the coast of Maine, bringing hurricane winds and 100 foot waves.

The metaphor for disease brewing in parts of Asia – high population density, live poultry markets, people living near birds and animals, unregulated food and animal handling techniques – is clear.

And it's Webster's view that we got off lightly with SARS last year.

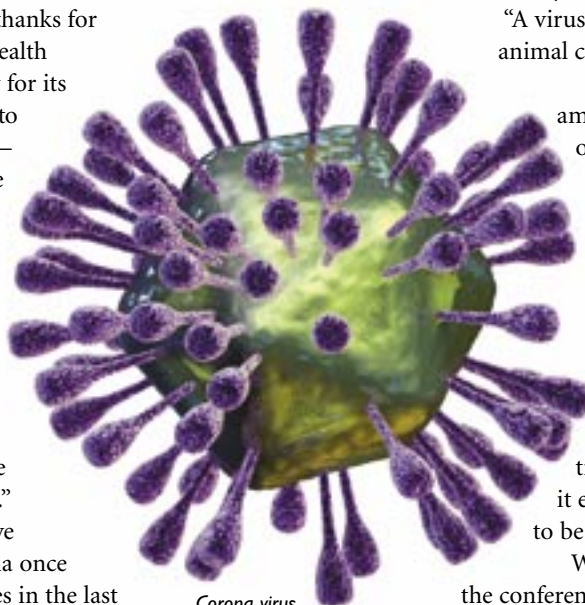
"In the end," he reckons, "it was a fizzer."

The illness was neither as lethal nor infectious as first feared, and as scientists came to understand more about the illness, the measures put in place to minimise its impact quickly proved effective.

"It was controlled by the most old-fashioned disease control methods in the world: washing hands, wearing masks, quarantining," notes Webster. What he and Webby really worry about is the flu.

"Come an influenza bug," Webster warns, "and we won't be able to control it in that fashion. We would have a situation that is much, much, much worse than SARS."

In 1997, 18 people in Hong Kong were infected with the highly virulent H5N1 "bird flu"; six of them died. Analysis of the virus showed that while normal human flus – strains of H1



Corona virus



and H3 – are generally contained in the respiratory tract, and most healthy people can fight them off, the H5 and H7 flus are far more aggressive. They travel to other parts of the body, including the central nervous system, where they start to replicate.

Once they take hold, the body has few defences.

The disease is deadly to poultry, mice, ferrets and – it was discovered in 1997 – humans.

Until then, the bird flu was not believed to have been able to be transmitted from birds to humans. When that belief proved false, the one saving grace was that the virus seemed only to spread from an infected bird to a human, but did not have the capacity for human-to-human transfer. The disease, which was rife in the live-poultry markets of Hong Kong that year, was halted by killing all the poultry in the city.

But in the early days of the SARS outbreak, health workers faced the prospect that the worst may have happened. Bird flu had resurfaced in mainland China in 2002, killing two members of one family. Next came the rumours of a mysterious killer respiratory disease in southern China. Their fear was that the avian flu had been transmitted to a person already carrying a human influenza virus – and that the gene segments had re-assorted themselves into a super-pathogen that could be transmitted from person to person.

The pressure was on, remembers Webby, to create a vaccine that might offer some protection from the virus. This he achieved, in the record time of three weeks, using a process known as reverse genetics.

The disease was eventually discovered not to be flu, but SARS. And Webby's vaccine is now on hold, awaiting human trials prior to manufacture. But it is perhaps morbidly reassuring to note Webby's bird flu vaccine is not likely to go to waste.

Says Webster of a coming flu epidemic: "It's just a matter of time."

What to do? Webster does describe one model for managing avian flu viruses that make their way into humans. When H7N7 wiped out millions of chickens in the Netherlands, causing severe conjunctivitis in more than 200 animal workers and killing a vet, the Dutch authorities recommended that at-risk people be inoculated with human flu vaccines, and take anti-flu drugs at the slightest sign of any illness. Their aim was to prevent the circumstances arising whereby avian flu genes could re-assort with human flu.

Webby recommends those people working in close proximity with animals receive regular flu vaccines for this reason.

And in preparation for the avian flu outbreak he sees as "inevitable", Webster believes health authorities around the world should be stockpiling human flu vaccines and anti-flu drugs.

Unfortunately, he notes, the present quantities of the drugs and vaccines available would be woefully inadequate to deal with such a crisis. His efforts to persuade authorities to address this issue have so far fallen on deaf ears.

"Yes, it's expensive," Webster concedes, "but what's expensive? War is expensive. It's a matter of prioritising. You have to ask yourself, 'How valuable is human life?'"



Professor Robert Webster, (left) and Dr Richard Webby outside St Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee.

# The Dunedin Experience



NEW ILLNESSES ARE DEFINED NOT BY WHAT THEY ARE, says Dr Tom Buckley, but what they're not.

And when, in August last year, three otherwise-healthy, middle-aged Dunedinites from neighbouring suburbs died suddenly within 10 days of each other and were found to have bleeding in the lungs, the list of what hadn't caused the deaths became very long indeed. The doctors, quite simply, were stumped.

Immediately, systems swung into place.

The pathologist raised the alarm with the Medical Officer of Health, who asked Otago University's Department of Preventive and Social Medicine to investigate. The question, says Otago researcher Dr Lianne Parkin, who coordinated the epidemiological investigation into the cause of the deaths, was "were we dealing with a new illness?"

Word went out to other health providers around New Zealand to check their records for any similar cases. Blood and tissue samples were sent to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta for testing.

Meanwhile, Dunedin coped with the threat of an unknown, deadly illness.

"Coming in the wake of SARS," Parkin notes, "the hospital was well set up in terms of being able to isolate patients quickly and put in place procedures to keep staff and patients safe if need be."

Thus Parkin set about the task of trying to establish any commonalities between the deceased. She developed a questionnaire, designed to identify any risk factors, including friends in common, recent travel, contact with animals, unusual foods and more.

Some questions, she acknowledges, had an added agenda: "Knowing which buses they travelled on, for example, would have been important had we needed to implement public health strategies had the crisis continued."

Thankfully, it never came to that.

Days, then weeks and months passed, and no further cases occurred. That, together with the lack of any direct links between the cases or common environmental exposures, makes Parkin believe that a common infectious or environmental cause is unlikely to be responsible for all three deaths. Instead, she expects there was a combination of factors. She doesn't think there is any ongoing risk to the public.

And while Parkin says she enjoyed the scientific sleuthing aspect of the investigation, her main motivation was to provide closure for the affected families.

"It's hard enough losing a loved one, and one of the questions grieving people usually ask is 'Why?' It's even harder when there is no answer available."

Nicola Mutch

*Otago researcher Dr Lianne Parkin believes a common infectious or environmental cause is unlikely to be responsible for the three sudden Dunedin deaths in August last year.*

# BALANCING ENERGY NEEDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



*Professor Gerry Carrington: "In New Zealand the potential for energy demand management has been known for years."*

**THE RATE OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION PER PERSON IN** New Zealand is increasing at 1.6 per cent per annum at present. It has been growing at almost this rate since the 1920s, so we have become used to it. Yet such growth is not universal. In some countries, such as Sweden and Germany, the energy use per capita is falling despite economic growth.

What drives our long-term energy inflation? First, current consumption levels tend to be locked in by existing equipment. Second, it is normally easier to be inefficient than efficient. Third, consumers have come to expect that new demands will be satisfied with little penalty. So overall it's very easy to accept that increased demand is inevitable, despite its negative environmental implications.

In this we are often encouraged by the energy supply industry, which has a commercial interest in demand growth. For example, there is good evidence that market liberalisation has encouraged the electricity industry to focus on supply, rather than user services and efficiency. Electricity utilities in the US have reduced support for energy conservation and related consumer measures by some 50 per cent since 1990. At the same time the margin between generation capacity and demand has diminished, causing price volatility and reducing reliability, a familiar story for New Zealanders. The power industry argues that additional generation and transmission facilities are needed in this situation. But more efforts to manage demand better, and improve consumer efficiency, would also address these difficulties. There is good evidence that such measures would also be more cost-effective and have lower environmental impacts.

In New Zealand the potential for energy demand management has been known for years. A report published by the Ministry of Energy in 1986 found that energy efficiency measures could save "55 per cent of the electricity, 34 per cent of the wood and coal and 42 per cent of the gas required in the nation's houses in the year 2000." This potential remains unexploited today. The reason is that nationwide energy-efficiency improvements require strong supportive Government policies. We are only just beginning to develop these in New Zealand with initiatives such as energy labelling and minimum energy performance standards.

Energy markets alone, especially in the limited form possible in New Zealand, do not promote better consumer efficiency. Project Aqua, the proposed new power generation scheme on the lower Waitaki River, is a case in point. It has the potential to contribute to the Government's renewable energy goals, but the strategy of ongoing hydro development is unsustainable.

Moreover, Aqua will hold the line for less than five years. In the meantime, by investing in additional supply rather than in demand management, the underlying problem of the sub-optimal energy efficiency of New Zealand consumption will be obscured.

Ultimately our environmental and energy policies will need to be better connected if we are to achieve both environmental sustainability and energy security.

Professor Gerry Carrington  
Department of Physics



# UNIVERSITY FAREWELLS CHANCELLOR



FOR SOMEONE NOT NOTABLY ACADEMIC, EION EDGAR has spent a very long time close to the University of Otago's bluestone towers. His final graduation ceremony as Chancellor last December marked the end of a formidable era of service to the University: OUSA executive in the 1960s, Graduates' Association in the 1970s, and from 1981, University Council, including terms as Pro-Chancellor and, from 1999, Chancellor.

This long commitment was recognised by the conferment of an honorary Doctor of Laws in December and contributed to Edgar's 2003 Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit. The honour (formerly a knighthood) was awarded for services to education, business and sport, which have all benefited greatly from Edgar's extraordinary enthusiasm and energy.

His impressive record includes his day job as chairman of retail sharebroker Forsyth Barr, around 20 directorships and trusteeships, even the post of Honorary Consul for Finland.

To Edgar, the relationship with the University has been a great personal privilege – "it's been the luckiest job I've had" he beams. Yet Otago has also gained considerably from the skills and contacts developed by his wide range of activities. Edgar thrives on building connections, a talent integral to his success in business, his primary occupation since, as a teenager, he started investing his holiday earnings. School rather got in the way of extra-curricular activities like work and sports, but at University he sailed through his BCom despite outside employment, long hours on OUSA business and a hectic social life. In London, early in his postgraduate finance career, Edgar decided investment was his preferred professional direction. Forsyth Barr's offer of a job back home in Dunedin settled matters: within months, he was a partner, working his way up to his current role as company chairman, at the same time leading the company to become New Zealand's largest retail sharebroker.

# LOR AFTER 23 YEARS OF SERVICE

His early involvement with student committees was because “I’ve always liked organising things”, but the typical understatement is a touch disingenuous. He likes to “give back”: on returning to Dunedin in 1972, civic interests also led to Edgar’s decision to devote voluntary time to the University. A strong university, he saw, was good for the city as a whole. His successor as Chancellor, Lindsay Brown (who was Pro-Chancellor) says sagely of Edgar’s natural leadership skills, “Eion knows he has a lot to offer”.

Edgar’s extensive background in University activities, his established business acumen and his huge network made him a logical candidate for Council. The previous Chancellor, Judith Medlicott, notes the business expertise he brought to the University’s governance, but his chairmanship of the Council is also much praised for its inclusiveness. Compliments from fellow councillors begin with his people skills: desires to hear all points of view, encourages others to their full potential, relates easily to everyone.

Such remarks mirror Edgar’s own immediate answer when asked for the highlights of Council: the “amazing cross section of people I’ve been privileged to meet”. Another particular favourite has been the “pleasure and excitement” of graduation. He never missed a ceremony as Chancellor, but Lindsay Brown points out that it was Edgar who initiated a profile-raising official role for the Pro-Chancellor, who now thanks the graduation speaker.

Edgar’s enthusiasm for the human side of the role is matched by his pride in the University, its institutional development over the 23 years and the status it enjoys among its peers, reflected, he notes, by the calibre of the people who wanted to be Vice-Chancellor. He rates steering the recruitment of two Vice-Chancellors as the most important work he’s done at Otago. “Getting this right is critical for the university and its future.” His enthusiasm for Professor David Skegg’s appointment comes in part from the observation that choosing one of Otago’s own, from “such a remarkable group of individuals from around the world demonstrates the depth of talent at this superb University”.

Edgar has also played a major part in the University’s Advancement Campaign, launched in late 2002. He is himself a notable community philanthropist, and his generosity isn’t just financial. Dunedin’s Edgar Sports Centre was kick-started by a personal gift of \$500,000, but he was also instrumental in raising the rest of the money and is still chairman. Similarly,

the Edgar family’s purchase of a significant Frances Hodgkins painting, which they lend to the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, certainly helped establish a dedicated Hodgkins gallery in the artist’s home town.

The University’s Campaign is important, says Edgar. “It’s clear that with ever-increasing financial constraints the University has to have more of its own money.” Unwaveringly excited about the project, he’s confident it will reach its target. These things take considerable preparation, he says, and start with a burst of “early runs”. Then there’s a lot of hard work, but “the more you get, the easier it gets”.

Among Otago’s early runs was the gift establishing the Edgar National Diabetes Centre. That the Edgars would give was never in doubt: “If you’re going to be involved, you have to show leadership,” he says, adding he was keen to do something for the University. The choice of the diabetes centre stemmed from his admiration of Professor Jim Mann’s expertise in research to combat this “silent assassin”.

Edgar hopes to continue working for the Advancement Campaign, and as an organiser to the bone, he has, of course, offered to help with alumni activities in his new base. After so many years, it will be a big change for campus not to be another home, but he’s matter-of-fact about the decision to relocate to Queenstown and move on.

Any openings in Edgar’s time created by standing aside as Chancellor have already been filled. He’s involved with Queenstown’s new resort college and, until May, is acting President of the NZ Olympic Committee. He also plans to walk more, play more tennis and other sport.

Edgar’s final graduation as Chancellor on December 13 was an emotional occasion, with the University’s tribute of the honorary degree, and friends and family present for the end of an era. The guest speaker, old schoolmate and fellow alumnus Ross Grant, was one of many who came to celebrate with the Edgars – wife Jan, sons Jonty, Hamish and Adam, Otago graduates all.

As he steps aside, Edgar muses on what his Council term has been about. “I believe the University’s a better place, in so many ways, than it was in 1981. It’s adapted well to the changing environment, it has a greater influence nationally and it’s certainly more important in the local economy. Seeing Otago achieve these things...well, if I’ve played some part, I feel good about that.”

Karin Wamaar

FEATURE

## 100 YEARS OF THE PORTOBELLO MARINE LABORATORY

*University of Otago Marine Science doctoral student Brian Paavo takes a grab sample of the harbour floor from the Portobello Marine Laboratory's vessel, Nauplius. Laboratory manager Bev Dickson is at the helm and the laboratory can be seen behind them.*

*Paavo's PhD research is the effects of the dredge-spoils disposal in Blueskin Bay and will be used by Port Otago Ltd. He is also resident night supervisor, living on site in the 100-year-old house that the laboratory's first curator, Thomas Anderton, once lived in.*

Photo: Alan Dove



# Krill-seekers and sunburnt sea urchins

ON 8 OCTOBER 1895, A MR G M THOMSON, WHO WAS one of Otago's best known pioneer naturalists, presented a paper to the Otago Institute. It was entitled "On New Zealand Fisheries and the Desirability of Introducing New Species of Sea-fish", and it mooted the question of establishing a biological station and marine fish hatchery near Dunedin.

It was a crucial moment in the genesis of marine science in New Zealand, and in particular, the establishment in 1904 of what is now a part of Otago University – the Portobello Marine Laboratory, at Hatchery Road on the Otago Peninsula. But it was also an initiative that a century on, is laced with irony.

Says Dr John Jillett, plankton expert and director of the laboratory between 1974 and 1994: "There was always a marine science investigative element to the station, but the primary justification for its establishment was the introduction of exotic species ....

"These days we're trying to raise defences against the invasion of exotic species."

In this respect, during its 100-year history, the laboratory has turned full circle.

The original hatchery ponds remain, preserved beneath the modern laboratory building, but serve now as holding tanks for experimental purposes.

Today, wide-ranging scientific research and the teaching of marine science are foremost in the centre's activities. Commercial research work is largely focused on marine resources, aquaculture, fisheries and environmental studies of various types, from pollution to sedimentology.

"We also have an ongoing contract with Meridian Energy," says Associate Professor Mike Barker, head of the University of Otago's Marine Science Department, "to monitor the effects of the tailrace extension of the Manapouri dam on changes to the hydrology and shallow subtidal marine communities of Doubtful Sound.

"Our ecological studies cover aspects of life history, physiology and community and population ecology of marine communities from the intertidal to the deep seas.

"Students and staff conduct research projects all around the South Island and as far south as Antarctica."

The laboratory's scientific activities were not always so extensive or sophisticated. In 1920, an experiment was devised at the station to ascertain the direction of ocean currents off

Otago Heads. Borrowed from the message-in-a-bottle school of research, the methodology involved screw-top jars weighted to float with the tops just above water. Inside each, a slip of paper was placed stating where and when the bottle was set adrift and asking the finder to note the date and locality of the bottle's discovery.

Of the small percentage of bottles found, most of those released within five miles of the heads washed up in Blueskin Bay, and those liberated outside the five-mile limit tended to drift further north: Shag Point, Sumner, Lyall Bay, Wellington, and even Maunganui, Chatham Island.

Wandering around the complex with laboratory manager Bev Dickson, who has 25 years of experience at Portobello, it becomes evident just how far the science has evolved in the intervening years. Scientists from all over the world – "Belgium, UK, Australia, USA, France, Italy, Germany and Japan, for example" – congregate at what has become a world-renowned marine science centre.

A group of US Antarctic scientists working on "antifreeze" mechanisms of Antarctic fish have just completed a study sojourn at the laboratory.

"Our black cod, part of the notothenoid or Antarctic fishes family, has retained some of the gene expression required for producing antifreeze proteins that protect Antarctic fish from freezing under the ice; but it also expresses heat shock responses, whereas Antarctic fishes do not. The Antarctic fishes have lost the ability to express this response," explains Dickson, adding that it makes black cod particularly relevant to such studies.

Elsewhere in the complex of wet and dry labs, a range of sophisticated research work is in progress: the effects of water flow on the growth of paua; the biology of cockles; the self-regenerating properties of starfish; the feeding strategies of blue cod; non-invasive methods of assessing the biomass of tuatuas – involving a combination of trigonometry and video techniques; and so on.

And then there are sea urchins. Barker is an authority, explains Dickson. He is working on the relationship between gonad colour and taste, research that has significant commercial implications. He and Dr Miles Lamare are also looking at the effects of UV light on sea urchin larvae in Antarctica. They have found that the increases in UV light

reaching the earth's surface during the annual spring hole in the ozone layer could be damaging to the sensitive larval stages of several ecologically important invertebrates. The long-term effects are potential damage to the Antarctic benthic ecosystem.

A visit to the research aquarium beneath the laboratory complex brings good news and bad for pot-bellied, amorous males of the species – if the habits of seahorses are anything to go by. First the good: the bigger the belly, the more attractive the male is to the female of the species. But now for the bad: in a bizarre courting dance, the male, manoeuvring beneath the female, opens up his pouch-like belly to catch her deposited eggs. They are fertilised in the pouch and then the male carries them, eventually giving birth, contractions and all, to between 200 and 300 baby seahorses.

This is just one of the fascinating tales of marine life that enthalls visitors to the complex, most of whom experience the laboratory and its work through the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre. Housed in a building completed in 1998, the centre comprises a public aquarium, board displays of the laboratory's work, lecture theatres and a small shop for aquarium souvenirs.

"The centre is striving to lead public marine education in New Zealand, and to foster understanding, appreciation and responsible management of the unique marine environment," says Sally Carson, director of the centre.

It is at the centre that students – including visiting school groups – meet and interact with scientists, working in a stimulating learning environment that cannot be created in the classroom. An attraction for the general public is that this aquarium is part of a research facility and not just for entertainment.

"For tourists in particular it's an excellent first stop on their wildlife tour of the peninsula," she says.

In 100 years, the Portobello Marine Laboratory has come

a long way. From its original brief and scope as a hatchery with some marine investigative ambitions, it has evolved into a world-class institution – through the breadth and depth of its research, and the quality of its staff and scientists.

From one curator in 1904 – a Mr Thomas Anderton – it has grown to include a staff of 10, with anywhere between 15 and 25 postgraduate students and scientists. Many are attracted by its spectacular setting adjacent to Quarantine and Goat Islands approximately halfway between the heads and the inner harbour, the special southern ocean environment, and its running seawater on tap – the lifeblood of the laboratory. In addition there is the research vessel *Munida*, and regular collaborative interaction with research efforts in other parts of the world.

And the future?

Says Barker: "As traditional fish stocks are depleted there is likely to be an increasing dependence on production of fish and shellfish from aquaculture. The Portobello Marine Laboratory has both the equipment and the scientific expertise to tackle such questions.

"Likewise we are involved in research problems involving pollution and environmental damage at a range of local regional and national levels."

In the 1890s, the visionary George Thomson saw the necessity to develop marine legislation through research-based knowledge of the sea and its species. In the 1940s Professor John Eccles, later a Nobel laureate, understood what research on the giant axons of squid could tell us about neurophysiology. Today research students and academic staff are unlocking secrets of the marine environment from the expression of genes to the productivity of the southern oceans.

From small beginnings great marine science grows.

Simon Cunliffe



Holidaying Iranian twins Nazanin (left) and Yasamin Shahidi touch a starfish at the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre at Portobello with University of Otago Marine Science master's student Ruth Arkless.

Photo: Alan Dove



The hatchery as it was in 1904. George Malcolm "GM" Thomson (right) with Thomas Anderton (centre). Anderton's wife (unnamed) is at the door to the building. The hatchery pond still exists, preserved beneath the modern laboratory building.

## MILESTONES: FROM HATCHERY TO LABORATORY

1904

**1904:** George Malcolm Thomson heads the advisory board to oversee the activities of the Portobello Marine Fish Hatchery and Biological Station. He is the first of a number of influential personalities whose commitment passes through the stages of the station's development. In the early years a number of European fish species – lobster, edible crab, turbot and herring – are bought from England and raised in the hatchery ponds before release into the harbour. None survive.

1930

**1930:** Biologist David Graham is appointed, amplifying a trend towards marine investigation activities. Although present for less than three years, Graham's enthusiasm and public work – lectures, radio talks, newspaper articles – does much to stimulate interest in the Portobello station.

1930s-1940s

**1930s-1940s:** The Depression leaves the station listing badly. It languishes and falls into disrepair until serious negotiations involving the University of Otago begin in the late forties. "The motivation for taking over the laboratory came not from within the general science faculty, but from the medical school," explains Dr Jillett.

1951

**1951:** The University takes over with scientist Dr Elizabeth "Betty" Batham as director. Batham had used the station's facilities as a zoology and botany student in the late thirties and had gone on to do pioneering work on sea anemone neurophysiology at Cambridge University. Graduating with a PhD in the late forties,

she returns to re-equip and upgrade the station, establishing an aquarium based on an English model.

1951-1974

**1951-1974:** Hatchery Road from Portobello village is constructed. Prior access had been by boat via Port Chalmers. The original laboratory building is replaced, teaching activity increased, and the sea-going research vessel *Munida* acquired. The vessel is named after the lobster krill, *Munida gregaria*, a bright red crustacean that forms huge summer swarms in Otago waters.

1974

**1974:** Batham's replacement is leading marine scientist and plankton authority Dr John Jillett as Director of the Portobello Marine Laboratory. Developments include establishing a masters' course in Marine Science and the opening of a new four-storey building in 1987 to accommodate burgeoning research and teaching.

1992

**1992:** The laboratory becomes part of the newly established Department of Marine Science with Professor Philip Mladenov as Head of Department. Its main function is to meet the marine research needs of staff and students in Marine Science and other University departments.

1998

**1998:** New building opens to house New Zealand Marine Studies Centre under Sally Carson.

2000

**2000:** Associate Professor Mike Barker is appointed Head of Department.





*Highly regarded by his students, Paul Wooding says there's really one basic secret to good relations with students: Respect them as people.*

Photo: Alan Dove

# Forty Years of Economics at Otago

TAGGED A TRAITOR BY A BLUSTERY MULDOON IN THE INTERVENTIONIST '70S,  
PAUL WOODING HAS KEPT CALM VIGIL OVER THE NEW ZEALAND ECONOMY  
FOR FOUR DECADES.

MILD-MANNERED WOODING – WHO LEFT HIS JOB AS A senior lecturer in the University of Otago's Department of Economics in January after a 40-year career in teaching and research – seems an improbable target of wrath.

So how did Wooding make then Prime Minister Robert Muldoon mad? It was the spiky topic of those whopping big export incentives that bristled Muldoon. Wooding's research

found they delivered exporters with meaty benefits of 22 per cent of total export value. He presented the research at an Australian conference in 1982, and it wasn't long before the US trade commissioner levied a countervailing export duty of an exact 22 per cent.

Traced as the source of the maths, Wooding was set upon by Muldoon in the House. He'd cost New Zealand \$65 million.

Did he have a New Zealand passport?

Wooding is philosophical. Muldoon postured a lot but he's not sure he did very much, he says.

"Some of the mystique of Muldoon was that he was seen as this economic wizard from Tamaki who had personally controlled the New Zealand economy back in the late 1960s and who'd built his reputation from that."

He was, says Wooding, "a swaggering bully".

"Views were only controversial because they crossed the expressed views of Muldoon and there were a lot of institutions in New Zealand, including universities, that were quite scared of Muldoon; without very good reason I think."

It was an edgy era for a university economist. Free thought on economic policy was almost always icily received – both outside and within university walls.

"I remember when Rod Deane, the then Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank, complained in a speech that academics were failing to speak up – that he had his hands tied as did government servants and the Treasury – economists could stop some of the Muldoon excesses, Deane said. And I had to tell him: in some ways we were less free than he was. We didn't have that academic freedom at the time."

Economists were merely doing their job, Wooding says. It was simply that often their views were out of tune with Muldoon's melody. Take, when in 1979, Wooding co-authored a journal article on export incentives. It was pulled just before publication because the last sentence seemed to imply that the New Zealand dollar was overvalued.

He was also "an unwelcome guest at the party" when again, in 1982 – the year of Muldoon's great tax cuts and wage/tax trade-off policies – his regular piece as budget commentator for the *Otago Daily Times* was not published. His views about the economy were not those of the Prime Minister.

Times change. When the Labour Government assumed power in 1984, Wooding was on the panel of economists who put together the briefing paper for the Economic Summit Conference.

Wooding graduated in economics from the University of Canterbury in 1963 and came to Otago as an assistant lecturer early in 1964. He headed to the University of Sydney at the end of 1965 where "I was offered and accepted exactly double the salary that I had here".

The uncomfortable split of Sydney's Economics Department into the disciplines of political economy and economics prompted him to return to Otago as a lecturer in 1970 "not intending to stay forever". However, family circumstances meant that he did, becoming a senior lecturer in 1975.

Legendary amongst economics students of the '80s is the Minister of Finance software program, an economic policy

simulation model that gave fledgling economists practical experience tinkering with the economy. Wooding wrote the pioneering software in 1981, in the early days of microcomputers. He drew inspiration from renowned New Zealand economist Bill Phillips' clunky 1940s hydraulic model of the economy, an "impossibly large, very leaky thing, with pipes, tubes and coloured liquids – usually consigned to the basement of an economics department, because it made such a mess".

Wooding set out to give students an opportunity to get their hands on the economy, to find out how difficult it is to manage.

"The response from students was usually 'oh, it's much more difficult than I thought', because textbooks made controlling the economy look quite easy. They manipulated the economy themselves, finding out what created side-effects such as imbalances in the economy, a budget deficit, or a heavy balance of payments deficit."

Students had "great imagination and enthusiasm" for the software, seeing it as a personal challenge to try and bust the system, something which gave Wooding wry amusement. It was a hit, in spite of a shortage of computer labs in Otago. Wooding filled the car boot with computers and took them to extension classes in far-flung parts of provincial Otago.

While the software made the disc of the month in Apple magazine, and an Australian version (Federal Treasurer) was produced to replace the mainframe macroeconomic simulation software there, the program's commercial success was thwarted by piracy. To this day, Wooding gets calls from a Spanish gentleman using a 1986 version in his classes.

Forty years is a long time. So how have things changed at the University?

The obvious one is class sizes, says Wooding. In the '70s he had six students in his third-year international-trade class; now there're 126. More students have meant longer preparation times for lecturers and the need to adapt teaching styles. A spoon-feeding culture has dribbled in as departments compete for students in a user-pays climate and teaching staff organise course material to the confinements of the semester system. Highly regarded by his students, Wooding says there's really one basic secret to good relations with students. Respect them as people, even the weak students.

"It always seemed important to me to set high standards but to have them fair enough so that a student who did the work would be able to pass, even the weaker students who came here. We have open entry in New Zealand, and we have a responsibility to the students who do qualify to come in."

So Wooding doesn't share the view that today's students are lesser mortals than those of yesteryear. While the university

“IDEALLY, IF WE SET OUT TO REFORM AN ECONOMY WE SHOULD START WITH THE LABOUR MARKET, FREE THAT UP FIRST, THEN YOU CAN FREE UP PRODUCTION, AND LAST OF ALL THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM. WE GOT THAT WRONG IN NEW ZEALAND.”

gets a lot more of what people like to call “the tail-end” and they bring their own challenges, Wooding from time to time reminds his colleagues “that these students pay our salaries”. It’s important to think about what we can offer this group, he says.

There are some questions you have to ask an economist. Is New Zealand on track? Did we get the reforms in the ’80s right? What about the current government?

“Economic reform is a very tricky business. It’s a question of balance but it’s also a question of sequencing, and we knew there was a lot wrong with the New Zealand economy in the ’70s. Ideally, if we set out to reform an economy we should start with the labour market, free that up first, then you can free up production, and last of all the financial system. We got that wrong in New Zealand.”

The Clark Government, he says, is “a meddling government”. It tampers a great deal; it’s much too paternalistic.

“It’s able to do this because we’ve stripped away the old kind of intervention, so we say that a small amount of intervention won’t do much damage. But it probably does still generate this cumulative policy intervention and run the risk of becoming once again an opaque kind of economic management, where you can’t see what’s happening.”

Yet it’s impressive how rock-solid the New Zealand economy has become.

“This was an economy that 20 years ago was buffeted by every zephyr of the world economy. Now it’s much more stable and we seem to be much more able to chart our own course.”

During his time at Otago, Wooding’s research interests have straddled monetary policy, the business cycle, international trade policy and the balance of payments. He has written many textbooks, journal articles and book chapters, and supervised countless student theses. For 20 years he’s put together a monthly index of economic indicators published in New Zealand’s *Management* magazine; for 10 years he’s compiled a similar index for Australia. Currently, he’s exploring the relative power mix of WTO nations and, in another interest, examining the effect New Zealand’s small size and geographic isolation has on its international trade.

Paul Wooding leaves the University as Head of the Economics Department, recognising that the world has changed.

“It’s been a good time here. I’ve got too involved in some things and not sufficiently involved in others, but again, well, it depends how much you know about the future.”

Vivien Pullar

## ALUMNI PROFILE





# “I never thought my life would turn out this way.”

THEY SAY A BA CAN TAKE YOU ANYWHERE BUT HOW DID AN OTAGO HISTORY GRADUATE BECOME THE ONLY WOMAN IN NEW ZEALAND CURRENTLY LICENSED TO BUY THE POISON 1080 FOR POSSUM CONTROL?

FRAN COHEN'S HOUSE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF GREYMOUTH doesn't disappoint – deer heads hung in the porch greet visitors and there's a dead possum peeking out of the truck. “It's fresh,” husband Kevin promises.

Inside everything changes. Her 10-day-old daughter Grace is sleeping by the old potbelly stove (under a possum skin blanket, of course), leaving her mother free to arrange possum monitoring operations.

Cohen has always been interested in the outdoors, but never planned on being a possum hunter. She started at the University of Otago in 1985, as Fran Power, with plans of studying economics and working for Treasury. The onset of Rogernomics and a few very average grades changed her mind and in 1990 she graduated with a BA (Hons) in History. It taught her to write and research, and the computing and statistical skills she gained proved invaluable. Her dissertation was on crime in Westport, and it helped fuel her love of the West Coast and its history.

Now, years later, when she bids for jobs, it all helps to beat off stiff competition while promoting the unique qualities of the bushman she has teamed up with.

“And I learned to argue at university, but I had to unlearn that on the West Coast,” she jokes.

Initially, Cohen put her degree to good use at the West Coast Historical Museum in Hokitika, but everything changed when she hitchhiked to visit a friend up the Grey Valley. She was left eight kilometres short of her destination – peering into the thick bush. She couldn't believe there could be any houses nearby. But she was wrong and soon enough she was picked up by a rugged bushman.

“He went on to become the father of my children.”

When he had to take a year off from pest control because of heart trouble, Cohen was left with contractual obligations and two young mouths to feed. She wasn't a great believer in taking a benefit, so picked up where her partner left off. He would take care of the kids, she would take care of the possums.

First up was a 3800 hectare job at Waipuna, in the Grey Valley. This was a Department of Conservation (DOC) inland island project – the mountain was protected by natural barriers including two rivers and an “evil” swamp. Along with two men, she crossed a waist-deep river every day to climb to 900 metres laying traps and handlaying the poison 1080. Her weight dropped from 12 to eight-and-a-half stone. It was a performance contract, so failing was never an option.

But after several months of camping in El Nino wet weather, Cohen noticed it was a place where kaka, kakareiki, and kea proliferated, beech and podocarp forest challenged each other for domination and a ground cover of orchids and fluorescent toadstools thrived.

The success was sweeter knowing they had only used 300 grams of 1080 per hectare (aerial operations use more than six times that). Five years later, the possum population in the area was still low.

In time, Cohen left her partner but remained married to the job, earning her first contract in 1998 for the Matiri Valley, near Murchison.

She had no workers, no traps – “I didn't even have a Hilux”.

Since then she's taken on a 200-hectare swamp in a remote part of South Westland and coastal bush so thick she needed to cut her way through with secateurs. Cohen may be softly spoken, but she's one tough woman.

*“You turn up at the side of the road, sort out your gear, last minute details with your crew, hop in a chopper and fly off – it's jet setting.”*



Photo: Elizabeth Passuello

*Tools of a possum hunter: A ute, pink flagging tape and a dog called Bob for company.*

“You turn up at the side of the road, sort out your gear, last-minute details with your crew, hop in a chopper and fly off – it’s jet setting.”

Cohen has remarried, to quiet hunter and team leader Kevin. It’s the synergy of their different experiences that makes their company, Scope Hunting, successful, she says. Scope Hunting assesses the performance of contractors undertaking tuberculosis vector control programmes, and DOC estate eradication, for possum levels, pre-and post-aerial dropping of 1080. It has two vehicles, four motorbikes, a small team of dedicated trappers and contracts from Blenheim to South Westland – 60 per cent of the work is in Canterbury. They lay up to 65 monitoring lines per week.

Operations are planned in the office based on random selection of trapping sites. Frequently the team find themselves placing traps in extreme and diverse places. One line could be on a rata vine snaking up a rock face, another through a series of deep ravines. The next could be along a hedge on a golf course.

More recently, Scope Hunting won a possum control contract on Stewart Island. When it was announced 1080 was to be used, the locals was divided over the controversial poison.

Cohen targets work like this. It requires an experienced crew who are sensitive to the issues and can achieve the results within political or public restrictions. On Stewart Island they had to kill the possums without killing whitetail deer or kiwi, so no tracking dogs were allowed. All traps and poisons were raised 70 centimetres off the ground and by handlaying 1080, only 580 grams per hectare were required.

But Cohen is realistic about the need for aerial 1080 operations. DOC, she says, may have 10 years or less to save some flora or fauna.

“Once it took me 11 hours to climb up a hill and put in a monitoring line, but I found a palaphanta snail population on the way.

“I also came across five snail shells possums had eaten.” The poison is also used to target possums which can infect cattle and farmed deer with tuberculosis. The best results come, she says, when large, inaccessible areas are flown with 1080 and supported with work done by ground crews. It’s also important to get the weather right and not use the same toxin too often.

“1080 is a complicated issue on farmland and positive relationships with landowners are crucial to the reduction of TB. Having a range of hunting methods to suit all situations is essential. I’d hate to see Victor 1 traps (under review regarding their humaneness) banned.”

Throughout her work, Cohen has dealt with some unforgettable characters – the alcoholic trapper who hid booze everywhere and the anti-1080 hunter who tried to lay the poison away from where deer could get at it.

“I never thought my life would turn out this way.”

Last year she travelled 50,000 kilometres through work. Her children are now showing an interest in hunting and she recently flew son Josh into the Arawhata Valley in South Westland. They then jet boated out.

“The kids have good holidays,” she laughs.

There are about 10 professional women hunters in New Zealand, and around three who manage contracts. Cohen says the “environmental job” gives her the independence to choose where and how to work. But still, even after all this time, she admits there’s one thing she’s never got used to – the smell of dead possum.

Laura Mills



JEFFREY HARRIS (1949 - ). *Vanity & Death*, 1978. Pencil on paper. Bought with the assistance of Hocken Library Endowment funds.

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## SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL

JEFFREY HARRIS' LEAD PENCILS HAVE FEW DULL MOMENTS – theirs are lives of exquisite sharpness, of carefully groomed graphite.

So fine and controlled are the lines in the beautifully drawn *Vanity & Death* that it could almost pass for a delicate copper etching. His secret? Lots of pencils, lots of regular sharpening, lots of concentration and a fair stack of hours. And no rubbing out. It was this careful and artful precision that caused pencil envy in fellow Dunedin artist and friend, Grahame Sydney: "It was when I saw those works that I realized he was something very special".

Though a mere featherweight in size (100 x 150mm) this drawing punches well above its weight with a complex chaotic jumble of images. There are figures losing their heads at the swords of strange beaked creatures (Death), a head with an arrow plunged into its forehead dangling from ropes nailed to

its temples, a coffin full of leaves, broken mirrors (Vanity), and an assortment of airborne objects.

So where, in a man of quiet and gentle bearing, does all this head severing come from? Harris says he has always been attracted to imagery that has some measure of violence to it, and suspects this owes something to the passive environment of his upbringing.

*Vanity & Death* has all the enigmatic texture of a dream. Just when you think you've grasped some shred of meaning, it slides away from you again, dodging the net of rational thought. Harris likes it that way: "No interpretation of my work is right or wrong; who really knows what they are about; the main concern is that they should keep bothering you."

With its wealth of intriguing symbolism and superb use of pencil, *Vanity & Death* has all the potential to cause much happy visual bother.

Claire Finlayson

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## HOCKEN LIBRARY GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

31 January - 10 April 2004

Digital Mosaics: an exhibition by Sara Hughes, Frances Hodgkins Fellow 2003

16 April-10 July 2004

Thomas Morland Hocken: Collector of Maori Artefacts

17 July - 29 August 2004

Representation and Reaction: Modernism and the New Zealand Landscape Tradition 1956-77



# TOUCHING DOWN



FLYING BACK HOME FROM HIS BASE IN GERMANY AS THE first *Lord of the Rings* movie opened, marine scientist Peter Croot thought he was touching down in Middle-earth. The Air New Zealand plane was all decked out in LOTR livery and the screen showed infomercials about arriving in JRR Tolkien's imaginary land.

"This was a bit strange as it seemed as if the country had been overthrown by hobbits," Croot, a University of Otago alumnus, remembers.

There's an argument that it more or less has. In addition to populating with Middle-earth creatures the already heroic landscapes of his homeland, director Peter Jackson in filming his trilogy also for a time employed 23,000 workers, making the production the largest private employer in New Zealand.

The hobbits, elves and orcs have all returned to their homes in Oamaru, Kaitaia and Hastings, but the imprint of their created existence remains on the land where numerous tours of the scenic standouts allow visitors to engage with the terrain Frodo traversed on his epic adventure.

"The impact has been huge," says Chris Tozer, a University of Otago alumnus now working as a marketing consultant for New Zealand Trade and Enterprise in London.

In common with many Kiwis, Tozer not only has a personal connection with the Jackson trilogy – two of his brothers worked on the films – but also finds it seeping into his daily work.

"The people at NZ Tourism, who work upstairs from the NZTE office in the NZ High Commission, have been

# IN MIDDLE-EARTH



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“... and there in that pleasant corner of the world they plied their well-ordered business of living, and they heeded less and less the world outside where dark things moved, until they came to think that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk.”

*Prologue, Lord of the Rings by JRR Tolkien*

extremely busy fielding calls from people interested in visiting the various locations that were used in the filming of the movie.”

Few of these visitors from the UK who doubtless regard New Zealand as the last remaining fantasy world, where they are more likely to find hobbit holes in green hills than P labs in suburban kitchens, will be aware of the circularity to the whole enterprise, the links that go beyond the landscape: That JRR Tolkien was taught by New Zealand academics who travelled to the UK to instruct the inhabitants of that ancient place about epic legends and early stories that shaped their dreamtime.

VOLUMES AND VOLUMES OF TOLKIEN'S WORK LINE THE shelves of Emeritus Professor Colin Gibson's office at the University of Otago. Facing them on the window sill stands a

thin line of Middle-earth fantasy figurines. But the action figures have something in their favour. They are multiplying, along with scholarly books and articles on Tolkien's work, whereas the originals have long since stopped coming.

The symbolism will not be lost on Gibson who teaches the Otago Summer School paper *Word and Image: The Lord of the Rings (Engl 251)* which encourages students to pull apart the layers of LOTR and look deeper, as well as exploring the films, music and art which have spun out of the book.

Tolkien was famously opposed to seeking any deeper meaning in his work, but with Jackson's movies that is now out of control, and Gibson has been instrumental in the University entering a new dimension of scrutiny with eyes wide open.

The pulsing synergy of art, tourism, big movie dollars and fantasy revivalism the trilogy has catalysed is like a spell come true for the man the university library staff have dubbed Gandalf.

"This is one of the most unusual courses in my 40 years of teaching experience, because most of the students have read the book before you start ...there was one who had read it 30 times," he says with mild amusement.

But the book is just the starting point. Peter Jackson has made a complete world, an indelible transcript of Tolkien's imagination which runs parallel to the books as well as growing from them. The apparatus which has grown around the films opens up a multi-dimensional approach which last year went far beyond thematic inquiries to include instruction in battle archery. The presence of two members of Otago staff, who worked on the film, Fiona McDonald and David Barson, brings the course bang up to date.

It helps that the films are so good. On US website rottentomatoes, which scoops up reviews from the leading American publications and posts them in a block to give readers an unbiased appraisal, *The Fellowship of the Ring* scored 94 per cent good reviews and *The Two Towers* 98 per cent.

Gibson agrees: "The film is a marvellous piece of film-making that can stand on its own without the book. But of course the book stands massively behind it."

Many students last year were surprised to find that standing just as massively behind the book, in a misty place largely forgotten by modern readers, are the great old epics, *Beowulf* and the medieval stories with which Tolkien was intimately acquainted as a Professor of Literature at Oxford University.

And this is where the other New Zealand link can be found, one which did not require computer graphics. As Gibson points out, "There's always been a wonderful connection between New Zealand and England, through English Departments, and the teaching and writing of this sort of literature. In fact one of Tolkien's tutors at Oxford was Kenneth Sisam, who was himself a New Zealander."

The connection has been firmly re-established and extravagantly embellished by Peter Jackson, and with the help of people like Gibson, will run on and on in "that pleasant corner of the world" – New Zealand, or Middle-earth, or the Shire, whatever you want to call this magical land.

Sean Flaherty



Emeritus Professor Colin Gibson of Otago's English Department – the man University staff have dubbed Gandalf.



## BOOKS

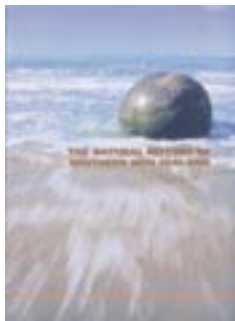
### THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SOUTHERN NEW ZEALAND

Edited by John Darby, R. Ewan Fordyce, Alan Mark, Keith Probert, Colin Townsend

*The Natural History of Southern New Zealand* is a major work combining hundreds of years of collective research and expertise. Leading scientists from the University of Otago guide the reader through the south in a profusely illustrated book that will be the ultimate work on the region's unique physical environment for some time to come.

The book considers geology, landforms, fossils, climate, biogeography, environmental change and the impact of human beings, before taking the reader through a series of habitat-based chapters. Forests and shrublands, tussock grasslands and associated mountainlands, inland waters and wetlands, the coast and the open sea are explored, and there is a closing chapter on conservation issues. *The Natural History of Southern New Zealand* provides stimulus and knowledge for the enquiring reader interested in the south's natural heritage and conservation.

The editors are experts in their fields: John Darby is a retired assistant director at the Otago Museum, and from the University of Otago: R. Ewan Fordyce, Associate Professor in Geology; Alan Mark, Emeritus Professor of Botany; Keith Probert, a lecturer in Marine Science; and Colin Townsend, Professor of Zoology.



Illustrations include photographs, satellite images, paintings and drawings, as well as diagrams. *The Natural History of Southern New Zealand* is published in association with the Otago Museum.

### DUNEDIN: HISTORY, HERITAGE AND WILDLIFE by Gavin McLean

Built on mid-Victorian gold and located in a wonderful natural environment, Dunedin was once New Zealand's largest city. Now it is a gracious old lady with a spirit of adventure, beloved by residents and visitors alike.

In this detailed guide to the city and its immediate environment, Gavin McLean gives a potted history and describes walks and trips that can be taken by visitors, all of which are accessible by public transport. There are three inner-city walks (including the famed university campus area), trips to local highlights (St Clair Beach, Cargill's Castle, Tunnel Beach, factory tours, Woodhaugh Gardens, Ross Creek, the steepest street in the world and Mount Cargill) and excursions down the harbour to Port Chalmers and on to the Peninsula (and, of course, Larnach Castle).

*Dunedin: History, Heritage and Wildlife* is the sixth title in University of Otago Press's popular Local Guide series. Other titles in this expanding series explore Arrowtown, Oamaru, Stewart Island, the Catlins and Wanaka.

### RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS OF UNIVERSITY ALUMNI & FORMER STAFF

*Change of Heart*, Barbara Anderson. Victoria University Press, 2003  
*Diet, Life Expectancy and Chronic Disease: Studies of Seventh-Day Adventists and Other Vegetarians*, Gary E Fraser. Oxford University Press, 2003

*Evolving Connectionist Systems: Methods and Applications in Bioinformatics, Brain Study and Intelligent Machines*, Nik Kasabov. Springer, 2003

*Faith Makes the Song*, Shirley Erena Murray. Hope Publishing, 2003  
*Picking Up the Traces: The Making of a New Zealand Literary Culture, 1932-45*, Lawrence Jones. Victoria University Press, 2003  
*Respected Citizens: The History of Armenians in Singapore and Malaysia*, Nadia Wright. Amassia, 2003

*The Body Beautiful: How Body Parts got their Names*, Fay Clayton. Ety Paperback Reference, 2003

*The Three Waves of Globalization: A History of a Developing Global Consciousness*, Robbie Robertson. Zed Books, 2003

### UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO PRESS

For book and order enquiries contact [university.press@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university.press@otago.ac.nz)

*The Prickly Pair: Making Nationalism in Australia and New Zealand*, Denis McLean (November 2003)

*Enduring Legacy: Charles Brasch, Patron, Poet & Collector*, edited by Donald Kerr (November 2003)

*Landfall 206: Magic*, edited by Justin Paton (November 2003)

*Dunedin: History, Heritage and Wildlife*, Gavin McLean (December 2003)

*Marilynn Webb: Prints and Pastels*, Marilynn Webb & Bridie Lonie (December 2003)

*The Natural History of Southern New Zealand*, edited by John Darby, R. Ewan Fordyce, Alan Mark, Keith Probert, Colin Townsend (February 2004)

Alumni: written a book, produced a CD or held an exhibition lately?  
Email the editor at [mag.editor@otago.ac.nz](mailto:mag.editor@otago.ac.nz)

## OTAGO WINS BIG IN RESEARCH FUNDING

University researchers won a combined total of nearly \$29 million in last year's Health Research Council (HRC) and Marsden funding rounds.

Under the Marsden Fund, which supports basic curiosity-driven research, Otago gained \$11.4 million for 25 projects, the largest number of any New Zealand institution. Last year the University received \$8.8 million.

The University also won \$17.5 million in HRC funding. Health Science and Science researchers at the Dunedin campus gained \$10.85 million for new projects, while the Christchurch and Wellington Schools of Medicine and Health Sciences received \$3.5 million and \$3.15 million respectively.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Enterprise and International, Dr Ian Smith, says the "very pleasing" outcomes reflect the depth of the University's research strength across a wide range of disciplines.

Dr Smith says the researchers' success demonstrates both the high quality of their research proposals and that Otago's international reputation as a strongly research-led university is well deserved.

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## MAJOR NETWORK UPGRADE FOR OTAGO

Work on a major \$4.2 million upgrade of the University's communications network began recently. It will give staff and students faster and wider access to current and emerging internet-based technologies.

The phased three-year upgrade will create a state of the art network, "cementing the University's position as an ICT leader in the New Zealand tertiary sector", says University Director of Information Services Martin Anderson.

Mr Anderson says the upgrade will mean progressive benefits for students, including wider access to online course materials and computing resources. Researchers will also be able to interact at "very high speeds" with local, national and international colleagues, he says.

The University's existing network is experiencing "tremendous growth" in the volume of traffic across three main campuses in Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington, he says. "This demand will only grow, so the University has decided to invest in the infrastructure vital to continuing and extending its mission as an educational leader."

## OTAGO DISTANCE TEACHING UPSKILLS SOCIAL WORKERS

The University is offering New Zealand's first distance learning postgraduate social work programme to Child Youth and Family social workers across New Zealand from this year.

This follows the October signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the University's Department of Community and Family Studies and the Department of Child Youth and Family Services (CYF).

CYF employs about 200 graduate social workers who do not have qualifications in social work, and will assist and support them to undertake the part-time two-year Postgraduate Diploma in Social and Community Work.

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## PACIFIC MENTORING INTRODUCED

Pacific students at the University of Otago will receive one-on-one academic support from this year, thanks to a new mentoring programme.

The programme aims to ensure students get the "very best academic results they are capable of" while studying at Otago, says University Pacific Island Centre Manager Nina Kirifi-Alai.

More than 20 senior and postgraduate students from each of the University's four academic divisions, including some Pacific students, have stepped forward to take up mentoring roles.

Mentors will be available to work with the students for an hour a fortnight, in tackling any academic aspect of study that they might be struggling to understand.

Mrs Kirifi-Alai says there is strong interest in and support for the programme, both from the Pacific community and from local secondary schools.

The goal is to have mentors appointed for every subject offered at the University within two years.

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## SOUTHERN TRAVERSE

Late last year, Otago scientists pushed themselves to the limits, both as competitors and investigators in the world's toughest endurance race, the Southern Traverse (see story in previous issue).

While science was the winner on the day, with valuable data gained about the effects of ultra-endurance racing on the human body and mind, there were mixed results for the three teams involved in the testing.

# TOTALLY WIRED

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Research leader Dr Jim Cotter's team, Omnigraphics, were placed third in the "unranked" category, after a team member was forced to withdraw from the race on medical advice due to a stomach illness.

The rest of the team continued on and after running, kayaking and mountain biking over a 411km course for more than 96 hours, went straight to the laboratory to undergo more testing.

Of the two other "guinea pig" teams, SBS placed a creditable sixth in the Classic Course, while Team Thunderbirds placed fifth in the Experience Course.

### SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LINKAGES GROW

The University's School of Business continues to build strong international linkages, having been recently invited to join another grouping of leading institutions dedicated to promoting international business education and research.

The School last year was invited to join **PACIBER** (Pacific Asian Consortium for International Business Education and Research), a move which follows hard in the footsteps of being formally granted membership in the elite **PIM** (Program in Management) network of the world's premier business schools.

### OTAGO PRODUCES INNOVATIVE MĀORI TEXTBOOK

A new book introducing readers to traditional and contemporary Māori life was launched at the University late last year, filling a long-standing gap in the area.

The book, titled *Ki te Whaio: an introduction to Māori culture and society* is the only single up-to-date textbook on the subject in New Zealand.

Edited by staff at Te Tumu, the University's School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies, 10 of the 18 authors are from the School, with five from other departments at the University.

The first part of the book ranges from ancient beliefs to current trends, while the second part looks at early contact with Pakeha, the Treaty and related issues, religion, sovereignty, education and literature, and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa.

While aimed primarily at students, the editors also hope that it will find a wider audience with people seeking a gateway into understanding the Māori world.

*Ki te Whaio* is published by Pearson Education NZ.

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## APPOINTMENTS

Professor **David Skegg** (BMedSc 1969, MB ChB 1972), Head of Preventive and Social Medicine, as the new Vice-Chancellor of the University.

**Lindsay Brown** (BCom 1965) as University Chancellor.

**Bruce Aitken** (LLB 1975) as University Pro-Chancellor.

**Alan MacKenzie** (BA 1966, LLB 1968) and **Forrest Miller** (BA 1978, LLB 1982) have been appointed to the High Court of New Zealand.

Professor **Vernon Squire**, Head of Mathematics and Statistics, as the new Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Sciences.

**Derek McCormack** (BSc 1974, DipSci 1975, MSc 1984), as Vice-Chancellor of the Auckland University of Technology.

**James Lindsay** as the Director of University of Otago Accommodation Services.

Bioethicist Professor **Donald Evans** as one of only two non-North American experts on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Stem Cell Oversight Committee.

Dr **David Geddis**, former senior lecturer in Paediatrics and Child Health, as the Ministry of Health's new Chief Medical Advisor.

**Graham Henry** (DipPhEd 1969) as the new All Blacks Coach.

## OBITUARIES

**Alister Penrose** (40). A health economist, Mr Penrose previously held positions at the Dunedin School of Medicine and the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

**Olga Jardine**, nee **Gloy** (103), (BHSc 1921). Mrs Jardine was the University's oldest surviving graduate and a former Associate Professor at Otago who established the first graduate programme in home sciences in New Zealand and Australia.

Dr **Michael Alexander Gemmell** (77). As director of the University of Otago Hydatids Research Unit (1958-1988), he played a major role in ridding New Zealand of the parasite.

Emeritus Professor **Geoff Baylis** (90). Head of the Botany Department (1945-1978), Professor Baylis was a world authority on soil fungi and plant roots, and made significant contributions to New Zealand botany.

**Gerald Stokes** (60). A histology technician in Zoology, he provided 35 years of dedicated service to the Department. He had also previously worked in the University's Hydatids Research Unit.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

New Year Honours recipients of the New Zealand Order of Merit were – ONZM: Dr **Sally Casswell** (PhD 1975); Dr **Beverly Lawton** (MB ChB 1983); Dr **Lesley Nicol** (BPhy

1997, MB ChB 2002); Emeritus Professor **Weston Sandle** of Physics; **Grahame Sydney** (BA 1969); Dr **Gavin Wilton** (MB ChB 1971). MNZM: **Robyn Broughton** (DipPhEd 1991); **David Lawrie** (DipSurv 1969); Dr **Arthur Lewis** MB ChB 1951; **Anna Rowberry** (BPhEd 1999). Dr **Annette Beutrais** (DipArts 1973, MA 1976, PhD 1996) and **Jane Prichard** (BA 1956) became Companions of the QSO, while **Lala Frazer** (BA 1968) received a QSM.

Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences Professor **Peter Davis** received the New Zealand Medical Association's prestigious Chairman's Award for contributions to health.

**Michael Ardagh**, (MB ChB 1984, DCH 1989, PhD 2001), Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, is the first New Zealander to win a Teaching Excellence Award from the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine.

Dr **Jo-Dee Lattimore** (MB ChB 1992) was awarded the Ralph Reader top young investigator award 2003 from the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand.

Faculty of Law Dean Professor **Mark Henaghan** (BA LLB(Hons) 1979) won lecturer of the year in the 2003 OUSA Teaching Awards, while Professor **Geoffrey White** (BSc 1968, DipSci 1969, PhD 1970) of Psychology won supervisor of the year in the OUSA's Inaugural Research Supervision Awards.

Professor **Brett Delahunt** (MB ChB 1978, MD 1995) of the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences won the Koss Medal of the International Society of Urological Pathologists for his renal cancer research.

Professors **Tim Buckenham** (MB ChB 1982) and **Justin Roake** (MB ChB 1981) from the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences won the top prize in the 2003 Quality Health NZ Awards for the establishment of a Vascular Studies Unit at Christchurch Hospital.

Poet and academic **Bill Manhire** (BA 1967, MA 1968, MLitt 1970) will be the Meridian Energy Katherine Mansfield Fellow in Menton, France, in 2004. Artist **Grahame Sydney** (BA 1969) was awarded one of Antarctica New Zealand's Invitational Arts Fellowships. Former Burns Fellows **Janet Frame** (HonLittD 1978), **Hone Tuwhare** (HonLittD 1998) and **Michael King** received the inaugural Prime Minister's Awards for Literary Achievement.

Arrowtown film producer **Julian Grimmond** (BA(Hons) 1992) won an Emmy Award for his work on the series, *The Amazing Race*.

In December, several earned higher degrees were conferred: Dunedin author **Lynley Hood** (BSc 1965, MSc 1968), LittD; School of Dentistry Senior Lecturer **Alan Payne**, DDS. **Kim Prisk** (PhD 1983) and **Bramah Singh** (BMedSc 1961, MB ChB 1963, MD 1975), DSc; Wellington School of Medicine

and Health Sciences Clinical Senior Lecturer **Jeremy Krebs** (MB ChB 1991), MD.

The University's \$47 million **Information Services Building** scooped a number of accolades in 2003 including: a City Development award from the Otago Chamber of Commerce; an Innovate NZ 2003 award from the Association of Consulting Engineers; a NZ Excellence award for the Education and Art property sector and Energy Wise award at the Property Council of New Zealand Rider Hunt Awards; and a Registered Master Builders award for its innovative use of space for students.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS/FELLOWSHIPS

The University's 2004 Robert Burns and Frances Hodgkins Fellowships have gone to Edinburgh-based novelist **Kate Duignan** and New Plymouth-based sculptor and multi-media artist **Mladen Buizumic**. **Noel Sanders** has been awarded the Mozart Fellowship for another year.

AgResearch scientist **George Davis** (DSc 2001) became a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Ophthalmology Senior Lecturer **Gordon Sanderson** has become the first optometrist to be made an honorary

Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists.

Dunedin School of Medicine Dean Dr **John Adams** (MB ChB 1976) has been made a Fellow of the New Zealand Medical Association in recognition of his contributions to the profession.

2003 OUSA Vice-President **Glenn Goldsmith** (BA LLB(Hons) 2003) has been named as Otago's 47th Rhodes Scholar. He will study towards a MPhil in Economics at Oxford.

#### HONORARY DOCTORATE


Outgoing Chancellor **Eion Edgar** (BCom 1967) was capped with an honorary Doctor of Laws (HonLLD) in recognition of his decades of service to the University.

#### PROFESSORIAL PROMOTIONS

Associate Professors **Terry Crooks**, **John Dawson** (BA(Hons) 1977, LLB(Hons) 1980), **David Green**, **Raechel Laing** (DipHSc 1965, DipEd 1975, PhD 1987), **Markus Milne**, **Roger Mulder** (MB ChB 1980, PhD 1999), **Neil McNaughton**, **Robert Poulin** and **Jeff Wickens** (BMedSc 1980, MB ChB 1982, PhD 1991) have been made personal professors, while Dr **Peter George** becomes a Clinical Professor.

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## ADVANCEMENT

### ADVANCEMENT CAMPAIGN GETS BOOST

#### GOVERNMENT MATCHES OTAGO'S \$25M RESEARCH PROGRAMME

GOVERNMENT IS MATCHING, DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR, money raised by University of Otago benefactors for Advancement Programme projects up to \$25 million.

Vice-Chancellor Dr Graeme Fogelberg says the decision, made in November last year, was a vote of confidence in the outstanding abilities of Otago researchers.

"This is about advancing Otago as a research-led university of international reputation," said Dr Fogelberg. "All of the Advancement projects are investments in people, either attracting new leaders or providing new opportunities for existing leaders. All of them reinforce Otago's significant role, as a leading university, in New Zealand's future."

"We are providing the opportunity for private and community interests to join with us as partners in these endeavours. Now we are joined by the Government as well. I am very pleased indeed."

Projects that immediately benefit include the Community Trust of Otago Centre for Trace Element Analysis, the Van der Veer Chair in Parkinsons Diseases and Movement Disorders, the McKenzie Repatriation Fellowships, the Dunedin City Council Chair in Entrepreneurship, the Edgar National Centre for Diabetes Research and Education, the South Link Health Chair in Palliative Care and the Ron Lister Chair in Geography.

A potential recipient has been identified for the McKenzie Repatriation Fellowship and an order for the mass spectrometer that will form the core of the Community Trust of Otago Centre for Trace Element Analysis will be ordered shortly.

Director of Development Dr Clive Matthewson says that the Government's agreement is "a most significant boost" and will mean "three new announcements shortly, and new momentum in the drive to make our university even better".



The Edgar National Centre for Diabetes Research and Education will be one of the many University's Advancement Projects which will benefit from Government's investment. The centre's advisory committee, with chairman Eion Edgar (front), were photographed at their first meeting in July last year.

Photo: Courtesy ODT



## BUSINESS SCHOOL TO CREATE NEW CHAIR

### WHY THE DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL JOINED THE ADVANCEMENT CAMPAIGN

THE DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL CHAIR IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP at the University of Otago will go ahead following November's Government announcement that it will match funds contributed to Otago's Advancement Campaign.

The council agreed last year to support the new Chair, as long as Government agreed to match funding dollar-for-dollar. Now the DCC and the Government will each invest \$1 million through the University of Otago Foundation Trust, enabling the Chair to be funded on a continuing basis from the derived income. Dean of the School of Business, Professor David Buisson, says the new Chair will add "a further dimension" to Otago's research and teaching and "an international search" will start as soon as possible to fill the new post.

The Business School is arguably New Zealand's finest, having the only MBA to make the Financial Times top 100 list and is the only New Zealand school invited to join the

PIMS group, a group of many of the world's finest schools.

Dunedin Mayor, Sukhi Turner says the council chose to contribute as the University is fundamentally important to the economic, cultural, sporting and social life of the city and surrounds.

"Dunedin is indisputably New Zealand's 'University City'. The University employs approximately 3000 full-time staff and the economic impact alone reaches almost \$800 million."

She adds the Chair in Entrepreneurship fits especially well with the council's goal of fostering entrepreneurial spirit and there was also the direct spin-off expected in successful businesses.

Councillor Malcolm Farry, Chair of the Economic Development Committee says "with this investment we are at the same time supporting both our largest enterprise and new start-up businesses".

*From top:*

*School of Business Dean David Buisson,*

*Dunedin Mayor Sukhi Turner,*

*Economic Development Committee chairman Malcolm Farry.*



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# ALUMNI

## MORE ALUMNI EVENTS...

A STEADY STREAM OF ALUMNI RECEPTIONS DURING 2003 wound down with events in Sydney in September and Dunedin in October.

Down at the Harbour View Hotel in Sydney's Rocks area on 19 September, the 100-plus alumni crowd were in fine Friday form. The hotel's informal atmosphere and a largely young crowd gave it a very Dunedin ambience. But it must be noted that it wasn't just more recent grads who lasted the distance after the University party headed off. Long-standing local alumni volunteer Alister Robinson (BCom 1974) reported back on a general feeling "bordering on euphoric" among those who stayed till the hotel closed, while first-time attendees kindly informed us that they were certainly on for the next one.

A month later, the Vice-Chancellor concluded the year's alumni engagements with two functions in Dunedin. Though the Council Chamber is used for numerous University meetings and receptions, many alumni haven't ever had cause to be there. Other guests, however, were able to inform us of the hours they'd spent there in their pre-1960s student days, when it was the library.

Eion Edgar spoke briefly to the last alumni audiences he'd address as Chancellor, and the Vice-Chancellor's speech covered issues of interest to the University community. As master of ceremonies, Professor Mark Henaghan stood up both as a senior staff member and as an alumnus; it was as the latter that he finished the formalities with a toast to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor thanking them for their commitment to involving alumni in the University community, a sentiment endorsed by the guests.

DUNEDIN, 7 October 2003



L to R: Elaine Donaldson, Joanne Rogers, Lyn Howe, Ian Donaldson



L to R: Peter Gilbert, Chris Worth, Lorraine Isaacs, Eion Edgar

## ALUMNI FUNCTION SCHEDULE TO JUNE

New Plymouth	Wednesday	4 February 2004
Queenstown	Wednesday	17 March 2004
Wanaka	Thursday	18 March 2004
Brisbane	Friday	26 March 2004
Hong Kong	Monday	19 April 2004
Bangkok	Wednesday	21 April 2004
Kuala Lumpur	Friday	23 April 2004
Kota Kinabalu	Monday	26 April 2004
Kuching	Tuesday	27 April 2004
Singapore	Thursday	29 April 2004
Invercargill	Tuesday	11 May 2004
Suva	Monday	24 May 2004
Apia	Tuesday	25 May 2004
Toronto	Tuesday	15 June 2004
London	Saturday	19 June 2004

You can update your address and register your interest in attending alumni events on the web pages [www.otago.ac.nz/alumni](http://www.otago.ac.nz/alumni). We look forward to seeing you again in 2004.

## IN REMEMBRANCE

THE UNIVERSITY WAS MOVED by the arrival, on the day of the Dunedin functions, of a miner's lamp given in memory of the late Gill Parata, Head of the Alumni & Development Office. In her time at Otago, Gill developed a very strong bond with a group of remarkable men who studied at Otago's renowned School of Mines in the 1950s and who have remained staunchly committed to Otago and each other. Through this commitment they grew to know Gill well. The inscription on the lamp sent by Rex Guinivere of Ohio reads: *To the Memory of Gill Parata. The miners have lost a friend. September 2003.* The lamp now hangs in Alumni House. The University looks forward to an influx of miners for their reunion in Dunedin in May.



# ALUMNI

## OTAGO CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF MĀORI GRADUATES

PETER HENRY BUCK'S GRADUATION IN 1904 MARKED THE start of a brilliant career and also the beginning of an era at the University of Otago.

Buck, later Sir Peter, and also known as Te Rangi Hiroa, was the first Māori to complete a medical degree in New Zealand and the first Māori to complete a degree at the University of Otago. In his memory, the University will this year celebrate one hundred years of Māori graduates.

After university, Buck embarked upon a successful career in medicine, politics and anthropology and we are honoured to have him among our alumni. Four years later, in 1908, Tutere Wi Repa was the University's second Māori graduate, again in medicine. Wi Repa went on to devote himself to decades of service to the people of Te Araroa and Hicks Bay on the East Coast, both as a physician and community leader.

The University is celebrating this milestone centenary of Māori participation in higher education at Otago with a range of projects, including a week of special lectures and functions that will culminate in the graduation ceremony on 21 August. One project is to compile a comprehensive roll of Otago's Māori students and to collect their stories. We invite Māori alumni to register themselves for this roll and also to register their whānau who studied here. As well we would like them to share their stories for the permanent record of the University. Please contact us via the Alumni & Development Office website, [www.otago.ac.nz/alumni](http://www.otago.ac.nz/alumni).

Further information about the centenary and its celebrations will be published in the *University of Otago Magazine* and on the Otago website as the year progresses. We look forward to hearing from you.

Darryn Russell  
Kaitohutohu Kaupapa Māori

## EXHIBITION AT AUCKLAND CENTRE

ANOTHER EXHIBITION FROM THE HOCKEN LIBRARY spent summer at the University of Otago's Auckland Centre. *Journeying South: Landscape Painting by Surveyor Thomson* was first shown in Dunedin earlier this year to showcase some of the University's collection of works by New Zealand's first Surveyor-General, John Turnbull Thomson.

For the 14 December opening, the Centre was delighted to welcome guest speaker Dr John Hall-Jones of Invercargill, whose family donated the large body of Turnbull Thomson's oils and watercolours to the Hocken Library. A descendent of Turnbull Thomson's with considerable expertise in local history, Dr Hall-Jones's lecture on the naming of the Maniototo at the opening was well received by the Otago alumni and friends present.

This is the third year that the Auckland Centre has hosted an exhibition during the summer break, and the second exhibition sourced from Hocken collections. Centre Manager Adrienne Molloy is enthusiastic about the summer exhibitions and sees them as an opportunity for Auckland alumni to appreciate some of the University's treasures, and to get together with old friends. She hopes to make a Hocken exhibition an annual event.



## WHAT'S ON FOR ALUMNI IN 2004

- The Botany Department is 80 years old and is creating an archive. Personal histories and reminiscences of people, places and events, written articles and photographs are invited. Please send material to [maryanne@botany.otago.nz](mailto:maryanne@botany.otago.nz) or Botany Archives, Department of Botany, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin.
- The University of Otago Rowing Club will celebrate its 75th anniversary on Queen's Birthday weekend, 2004. Register via the Rowing Club's website [www.ourc.org.nz](http://www.ourc.org.nz)
- Carrington Hall's 60th anniversary will be celebrated with a weekend reunion 21-23 January, 2005. Register by emailing Bill Dawson at [wh&mdawson@xtra.co.nz](mailto:wh&mdawson@xtra.co.nz) or writing to Carrington Hall Reunion, Carrington Hall, 57 Heriot Row, Dunedin.
- Registrations are open for the inaugural New Zealand Alumni Convention in Kuching, Malaysia, 8-10 July, 2004. Modelled on the successful Australian International University Alumni Conventions, this event offers alumni the opportunity to gather and network with others in the region who share the common bond of a New Zealand education, with the aim of enhancing the promotion of business, tourism, education and culture via alumni. See [www.nzcentre.biz/nzac](http://www.nzcentre.biz/nzac) or [www.nzac.net](http://www.nzac.net) for details.

Reports and photos from alumni events feature online at [www.otago.ac.nz/alumni](http://www.otago.ac.nz/alumni)

Alumni events and services are constantly under review. New information is published in the *University of Otago Magazine*, but schedules, new Departmental alumni programmes and other services are updated at [www.otago.ac.nz/alumni](http://www.otago.ac.nz/alumni)

Please keep your contact information current via the web so we can continue to let you know what's going on at Otago and what's available to alumni throughout the world.



# THANK YOU – Annual Fund 2003

HUNDREDS OF OTAGO SUPPORTERS CONTRIBUTED TO THE Annual Fund 2003. We would like to say thank you to all the alumni, current and former staff members, and friends of the University who made the following possible:

**Library Resources** The Library has been able to purchase the 60 volume print edition (including one year access to the online edition) of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. This reference work will be a valuable resource for students and staff from all areas of the University.

**Student Scholarships** The University of Otago 2003 Alumni Scholarship will be awarded in February 2004. The award will help a student with no family background of university study to experience the life-changing effects of a tertiary education. The scholarship provides accommodation in a hall or college of residence (\$8,500) for the first year, plus fees (up to \$4,500 pa) and books (\$500 pa) for three years.

**Research** Professor Rod MacLeod, the South Link Health Chair in Palliative Care has been able to purchase computer software and other materials for a project that aims to identify barriers to hospice/palliative care from the perspective of primary health care providers. The results of the work will



University of Otago Central Library

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## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...



BACK IN 1989, THEN OUSA ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR Stephen Hall-Jones, watched a movie so eye-wateringly, comprehensively, belief-beggarly awful, as to inspire an institution.

“Otago University students could do better,” he decided. And before long, the Mothra Student Video Making Competition – named after a chronically terrible Japanese film wherein a giant moth wreaks havoc in Tokyo – was born.

Soon into its history, the top prize was divided in two: Best Mothra rewards the film that honours the founding spirit of “cheap, tacky but entertaining”, while Best Video is awarded for displays of technical virtuosity.

Other categories, meanwhile, include Best Stunts, Best Death, Best Erotic Scene and Best Use of an Animal. Explains Rob McCann, Hall-Jones’s successor: “We make it easy to aim low.”

The awards are announced at a lavish “Night of Stars” ceremony where the lucky win “Fred’s” (Hall-Jones’s middle name). Full screenings, attracting up to 400 people per night, are then held over successive nights at the Union.

The competition has been emulated by universities across the country, but nowhere is it as large, varied or as woven into the student culture as in Dunedin.

And despite seeing technological advances improve the special effects and tidy up the editing over the years, McCann remains true to the Mothra’s original vision. This year he sat through a record 52 movies in search of a distillation of “that unique way of looking at the world that only students are capable of, before they become square and worried about their reputations”.

## THE MOTHRAS

And the winner was ... James Dann and Mark Montgomerie for *The Sex Lives of Androgenous Stuffed Toys*, which poses the question: What happens to the teletubbies when they’re old and no longer famous?

As a launching pad for future stars, the Mothras have had their successes – most notably Chris Stapp and Matt Heath who moved on from such Mothra masterpieces as *Vaseline Warriors* to the dubious heights of *Back of the Y Masterpiece Theatre*. McCann reckons we should watch out for the name Josh Thomson in the future.

But in the end, he says, that’s not the point.

“Being a student is about more than getting a degree. It’s about exploring being an adult and being creative. The Mothras are a chance to do that.”

Nicola Mutch







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