

UNIVERSITY OF Otago

M A G A Z I N E

ISSUE 24: OCTOBER 2009

BIG PROBLEMS DOWN ON THE FARM
IS NEW ZEALAND'S JURY SYSTEM WORKING?
NEW WAR AGAINST INFECTIOUS DISEASE
THE SEARCH FOR HEALTHY AGEING



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David Skegg

Professor David Skegg
Vice-Chancellor
University of Otago

Universities all over the world are struggling to adjust to the global financial crisis. Some of the richest institutions, where many activities are funded from large endowments, have been among the most severely affected. Harvard University, at the start of the last academic year, had an endowment of more than \$US36 billion. This was a staggering figure, greatly boosted in recent years by aggressive investments, such as in private equity and hedge funds. Although Harvard has not updated its results at the time of writing, it has previously projected a 30 per cent fall in the value of this endowment during the last academic year. The loss of income has forced Harvard to freeze academic positions, to slow building programmes and to borrow large amounts of money by issuing bonds.

Public universities are also feeling the pinch, as state and national governments seek to trim their expenditure. At the University of California, most staff will be forced to take unpaid "furlough days" and the main library at Berkeley is now closed on Saturdays. Universities in Britain and Australia are also under pressure. The University of Melbourne is proposing large cuts in staffing, owing to factors such as abolition of the Australian scheme for accepting domestic full-fee-paying students and massive losses in investment income.

The University of Otago is much less dependent on endowments and our Investment Committee has conducted itself with exemplary Scottish prudence. Nevertheless, the fall in interest rates and other cost pressures have forced us to plan for a greatly reduced operating surplus this year. Adequate surpluses are essential to fund capital improvements, including not only buildings, but also resources such as scientific equipment, library materials and software.

Decisions in the Government's May Budget mean that our situation will become more difficult in 2010 and much more difficult in 2011. I have written

previously about the effect on universities of incomplete indexing for inflation. At this stage the Government has not committed to any allowance for inflation from 2011 onwards. It is also cancelling a contribution to university salaries called the "tripartite adjustment fund". For reasons which are quite accidental, this will affect Otago more than any other institution. Funding for scholarships has also been slashed.

I have appointed a Task Force to advise on possible responses to this situation. We need to reduce our expenditure, while also ensuring that the University does not stagnate or cease to take new initiatives. The Task Force will probably identify efficiencies that can save money without impairing our academic performance. Unfortunately, however, it seems inevitable that we will need to contemplate some reductions in the numbers of academic and general staff. This may lead to the closure of some programmes.

No one expects universities to be immune from the financial crisis facing New Zealand and other countries. We can fully understand why the Government felt the need to make urgent adjustments in the light of fiscal realities. Nevertheless, as the dust settles, we hope that the Government will recognise that investments in education and research produce large benefits for the economy as well as society. A KPMG study published in Australia in April concluded that investment in higher education, taking account of all costs and benefits, produces a real economic rate of return of 14–15 per cent, which is more than double the benchmark set for good investment at the long-term bond rate of 6–7 per cent.

Meanwhile, it has been heartening to receive support from some of the University's alumni and friends. Out of the blue, a retired couple sent a donation of \$1 million to support a research centre "in the very uncertain economic times ahead". With friends like these, how could I not be optimistic about the future of this University and its endeavours?

Peer review

IS NEW ZEALAND'S JURY SYSTEM WORKING? IS IT TIME TO RETHINK THIS CORNERSTONE OF OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM OR DOES IT JUST NEED REFINING?

IT'S BEEN a big year for the jury, remarks Law Professor Kevin Dawkins.

David Bain (historic events and the ghosts of trials past), Clayton Weatherston and Ferdinand Ambach (fatally undermining the defence of provocation), Taito Philip Field (conflicting recollections, 35 charges) have tested the ability of the jury system to manage complex evidence, emotions, time commitments – and deliver justice.

It's been a national spectacle that prompted Dawkins to dedicate his inaugural professorial lecture to a rethink of the jury system.

"Given the task required of our juries," he asked, "is the system still 'fit for purpose'?"

Dawkins admits he began his research in a sceptical frame of mind. He worried that the high rates of jurors being excused from duty – mostly for employment reasons – leads to a less-than-optimally-competent pool of potential decision-makers. He held reservations about their ability to grapple with complex laws.

His concerns reflected something of a national zeitgeist, and were echoed by bloggers, columnists and writers of letters to editors since verdicts have been delivered in the high-profile trials. Reports of over-familiarity in the behaviour of jurors towards defendants – as in attending Bain's party and giving him a hug – added to doubts about jurors' judgement.

Last year an Australian drugs trial was aborted following three months of evidence from 105 witnesses,

when five jurors were revealed to have been playing Sudoku for up to half of the trial. Their number was up when the defendants noticed jurors were taking notes not only horizontally, but vertically as well.

In light of these concerns, Dawkins is as surprised as anyone that his investigations have made him such a convert to the jury system for dispensing justice.

First, a bit of myth-busting. A 1999 Law Commission study showed that, despite employment being potential jurors' leading reason for asking to be excused, 80.8 per cent of jurors were employed, with half of these in higher professional and managerial roles. Beneficiaries accounted for 3.2 per cent of jurors, a little fewer than retired folk (4.5 per cent) and similar to those on "home duties" (3.5 per cent). Fifty-five percent of jurors held tertiary qualifications.

Recent Ministry of Justice figures show that in 2008–9, the greatest proportion of jurors – 47 per cent – were aged between 40 and 60. Only 2.5 per cent were under 20 years of age and 3.5 per cent were over 70.

It's a very different picture, Dawkins suggests, to critics' images of jurors as the dodderly and unemployable.

Faced with this, Dawkins has taken a closer look at cases where jury decisions have been especially controversial.

"Many of the problems that have arisen are not the fault of the jury at all. We have seen examples where the judges have decided to suppress evidence, presumably



Photo: Alan Dove

Postdoctoral research fellow Saskia Righarts, Professor Kevin Dawkins and Faculty of Law Dean Professor Mark Henaghan.

on the grounds juries could not be trusted to attach the appropriate weight to it.

“We have seen defences run which should have been ruled out by the trial judge. By even allowing a defence to be put forward, the judge affords it some legitimacy. This issue is compounded where laws are not well written and instructions on how to apply them are unclear.”

In other cases, judges and legal teams have not highlighted explicitly the “crunch issues” juries must decide upon. “Furthermore, the prosecution’s case and the defence’s rebuttal on a particular point – ballistics evidence, for example – can be weeks apart. That all hinders ease of understanding and judgement.”

And then there is the problem of “reasonable doubt”. Best-practice directions from the judge advise juries they need to be “sure”, but they do not need to be “certain”. To most minds

– and to most dictionaries – the terms are synonyms.

“The instruction comes from a Court of Appeal decision designed to direct jurors from taking a probabilistic approach to assigning guilt. But it’s quite confusing and research suggests jurors are often uncertain about what this means.”

But, says Dawkins, judges face exactly the same problem. Just like juries, they too are subject to prejudice, emotion, time pressures and negotiating complicated law. And if judges start making problematic judgments, it becomes an extremely difficult situation to remedy.

Say what you like about the jury system, says Dawkins, its highly devolved decision-making model means that if a miscarriage of justice does occur, it is likely to be a one-off, not a systemic, problem.

Russia, Spain and Japan have all recently overturned their judge-alone systems in favour of juries.

“Many of the problems that have arisen are not the fault of the jury at all. We have seen examples where the judges have decided to suppress evidence, presumably on the grounds juries could not be trusted to attach the appropriate weight to it.”

Dawkins’ preferred approach now is not to rethink the jury system, but to refine it. He endorses the Criminal Procedure (Simplification) Project, which seeks to raise the threshold for eligibility to elect a jury trial. Currently, the option is available for cases carrying a maximum penalty of more than three months’ imprisonment: in Canada and Australia, this threshold is five years.

He sees a place for more judge-alone trials in specific cases, “such as long, knotty, fraud cases, where they really do benefit from a concentrated mind working out the complexities of the facts”. This can now occur as a result of the change in the law this year.

But he cautions against the introduction of inquisitorial trials, as has been mooted for sexual violation cases. Inquisition is the main alternative to the adversarial justice system on which the jury approach is founded and allows a judge alone to question witnesses and determine guilt.

“The countries with judge-alone and inquisitorial systems, without lay participation, tend to be totalitarian regimes,” Dawkins points out. “Inquisition – think *the* Inquisition – does not actually have a very glowing report card as a means for ensuring justice. It puts an awful lot of power into the hands of very few. Those people then become very tempting targets for particular interests to seek to control.”

Furthermore, he adds, “You are very much at the mercy of judges asking the right questions. And we should be careful about introducing parallel systems – many cases have elements of sexual violence, along with other crimes including assault, murder and robbery. It does not necessarily make it easier for victims to face not only separate trials, but separate systems in a quest for justice.”

Juries may be an excellent bulwark against corruption and state power, and justifiable on those grounds. Strong laws exist to preserve jurors’ anonymity and it is contempt of court to ask them how they reached their decision. But how can we have confidence in a system that is fundamentally – necessarily, even – impossible to evaluate? How do we know that the guilty are held to account and the innocent set free?

It’s an inherently tricky question, both process- and ethics-wise, but attempts were made to address it within

a 1999 Law Commission study into the experiences, performance and decision-making of juries.

The commission compared juries’ verdicts in 48 high-profile criminal trials with perceptions of the presiding judges and analysis of evidence by researchers. It found that, in 35 cases, the outcomes were agreed with by the judge and/or regarded as supportable by the evidence (in one case, the researchers believed the judge would have got it wrong). Other cases were subject to compromise, where defendants were acquitted on some counts, but found guilty of others, in part to ameliorate disagreements among jurors, while five trials resulted in fully hung juries. Three trials were categorised as delivering “perverse or questionable verdicts”.

The results make interesting, if not chilling, reading. And Dean of Law Professor Mark Henaghan, a passionate defender of the jury system, wonders if the desire to seek solace in such studies is just a bit sterile.

“Our inability to evaluate juries is one of the system’s greatest strengths. It’s one of the few things in life we don’t evaluate. Juries prevent the law from being a mechanical process that could be dispensed by a computer programme or legal technician. It’s what gives the law its soul.”

But shouldn’t juries be bound by law? “Yes, directed by law, but not answerable to it. That’s its brilliance. It’s the prerogative of juries to return verdicts that reflect their conscience, if not the law, and it’s right that they should not have to answer for that.

“Remember, the case of the despairing father who returned from hospital having been told his baby daughter was one step from brain-dead and then suffocated her. Yes, it was the unlawful taking of a life, but the jury clearly did not have the heart to convict him. That tells us much more about the society we live in than the law ever could.”

Besides, he says, “If jurors had to justify their decisions, no one would ever serve on them, and I wouldn’t blame them.”

Henaghan’s comments point to a paradox within some criticisms of the jury system. Complaints tend to arise when juries make decisions that deviate from our own.

“We all think we know the answer. Of course, a system that recognises that ordinary people from all walks of life can appraise guilt by reasonable standards and under certain rules is precisely what a jury is all about.”

Juries at work

Every week, for every trial, juries arise from and out of their communities, crystallise into powerful decision-making bodies, then disperse again from whence they came.

Over the years, says Dr Saskia Righarts, postdoctoral research fellow for the University of Otago Legal Issues Centre, jurors have raised issues about what would make their role easier. But there's no one to tell, no body charged with harnessing this feedback and driving improvement in the system.

Righarts has recently received results from a nationwide survey, asking for New Zealanders' general opinions on our justice system. Despite no specific question on juries, some 150 respondents used the opportunity to air their concerns, often drawing from their own experience.

Their comments have motivated Righarts to pursue a qualitative study on the experience of jurors. She's not, she stresses, attempting to overhaul the jury system.

"Rather, the research acknowledges New Zealand's commitment to, and investment in, the jury system. This being so, how can we make it work as best as possible?"

Already, she says, she has some idea of the issues she expects jurors to raise. "Time-wasting is mentioned often. Jurors and potential jurors often feel they spend a lot of time hanging around. And when they've organised childcare or leave from work, it doesn't feel like a good use of their time."

And matters of physical discomfort are, she believes, inexcusable irritants. "I was surprised to see how small the ledge is that jurors have to write their notes against. I'm quite short and I could barely see over the barriers.

"We ask a lot from our juries. If we really see them as such a valuable cornerstone of a democratic system of justice, we could at least make sure they have a comfortable seat."

Nicola Mutch

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The new war against infectious disease

THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO IS RESPONDING TO THE INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNISED NEED FOR MORE RESEARCH INTO RESURGENT INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

WHEN, IN THE 1950s, noted pathologist Robert Petersdorf made his observation that infectious diseases had been conquered with the development of antibiotics, there was a distinct shift in focus for biomedical research.

Professor Kurt Krause, Director of the University of Otago's Webster Centre for Infectious Diseases, says it brought a noticeable move into research areas such as cancer and autoimmune disease.

"If you look at the history of antibiotic development there was a golden age in the '50s and '60s where the main classes of penicillins and erythromycins and sulphur drugs were developed. Following this period there was a whole host of what are sometimes called 'me too' drugs – they are drugs that are just another penicillin or just another erythromycin, but they are not new classes of drugs."

More recently, major drug companies became reluctant to finance new classes of antibiotics because of the development costs – sometimes more than a billion dollars – and the risk that rapidly developing drug resistance could ruin their investment.

"Even as these companies moved away from antimicrobials, the bacteria didn't stop developing and now resistance is a huge problem, even in the kind of ordinary bacteria that formerly were highly susceptible to antimicrobial drugs."

Krause says there are now four main issues with infectious diseases: emerging diseases without treatment, re-emerging diseases that had seemed quiescent, increasing

virulence in ordinary bacteria, and antibiotic-resistant bacteria, viruses and fungi.

For example, diseases such as tuberculosis are still very active, causing about two million deaths a year worldwide, with new outbreaks of highly resistant strains making it increasingly difficult to treat. New Zealand is not immune, with roughly one new TB infection reported here every day.

"In addition to these age-old plagues that are still with us, we have learned to expect new epidemics every year. Examples of recently reported new organisms include the hantavirus outbreaks in the States and coronavirus in South-East Asia.

"Now there's the worry about bird flu becoming adapted for human transmission, or of the novel H1N1 pandemic or 'swine flu' becoming resistant to Tamiflu. This is not as far-fetched as it may seem as the seasonal flu strain we were expecting this year is already highly Tamiflu-resistant," he says.

Concerns have reached the point where academics worldwide have been highlighting the need for more infectious diseases research.

The University of Otago's response has come in the form of the Webster Centre for Infectious Diseases, set up in 2006 to provide a focus for research into diagnostics, antimicrobials and vaccines.

It is a virtual centre, with no building as such, but it brings together infectious disease researchers from around the University, including Biochemistry,



Professor Kurt Krause: “Academics now have a significant role in developing new drugs.”

Preventive and Social Medicine, Microbiology and Immunology, Pharmacology, Pharmacy, Public Health and Dentistry [see sidebar page 11].

Faculty from the other Otago campuses are also involved, along with researchers from other New Zealand universities, and CRIs including AgResearch, ESR (Environmental Science and Research) and IRL (Industrial Research Limited).

It is named in recognition of Professor Robert Webster, an Otago graduate who is an international expert in influenza research, and his wife Marjorie.

There are several themes within the centre, each of which represents a strength at Otago, including mycobacterial diseases, such as tuberculosis and Johne’s disease, viral illnesses, like HIV and pox-related viruses, and fungal diseases, such as drug-resistant yeast like candida.

Krause says there is a common goal of “bench to bedside”, due to the number of researchers hoping to

develop treatments, vaccines and diagnostics that can be translated from the laboratory to the hospital.

“We have epidemiologists who can spot trends in the spread of disease in time to formulate a logical plan of action. We have microbiologists and immunologists who are working with the actual bugs and organisms to understand how they cause disease.

“Other scientists, like biochemists, structural biologists and chemists, then dissect these organisms at the molecular level to design effective treatments, and finally we have practitioners who deliver care directly to patients in hospital. This gives us the potential to go full circle,” he says.

“Further, the centre includes talented scientists in Pharmacy and Pharmacology who are able to do testing on new compounds. We even have experts in formulation of these compounds into pills or tablets, which is quite rare outside of industry.

“The centre strives to be inclusive and is interested in partnering with all New Zealand researchers who have an interest in infectious diseases.”

Although there is currently no treatment for many organisms, such as the Ebola virus, Krause says there could be.

“Academics now have a significant role in developing new drugs. When scientists, who work directly with pathogenic viruses and bacteria, partner with other scientists, like structural biologists, medicinal chemists and pharmacologists, there is a compelling synergy that may result in new compounds that can, over time, become new medicines for people.”

Any suggestion that New Zealand is immune to infectious disease issues is quickly dispelled by Krause, who cites prevalent problems caused by bacteria such as campylobacter, group A streptococcus, meningococcus, animal tuberculosis, and concerns about bird flu and swine flu.

But he can see New Zealand and the Webster Centre playing important roles in the face of drug companies pulling out of the antibacterial drug market.

“In 2002 FDA approved 89 new drugs, but none of them were antibiotics – they only had five antibiotics in the pipeline. So major organisations like the European Union-Global Health Initiative started calling for new antibiotics, vaccines and diagnostics, and calling for more academic participation in the process. New Zealand is well-poised to play a role in this research – that is, if sufficient funding were to become available,” he says.

“In 2005 Robert Webster was basically saying why doesn’t New Zealand manufacture its own vaccine for flu? We absolutely could. The scientific expertise is in place; if we put our resources together we could create an excellent vaccine.”

Funding would be an issue initially, but Krause can see situations where the activities of the Webster Centre could attract funding by the likes of the Gates Foundation or Wellcome Trust.

He says there are several examples worldwide of university groups attracting hundreds of millions of dollars through developing a new drug.

“In the future, if we were to produce one hit that resulted in the licensing of a significant compound, then the whole thing becomes self-perpetuating,” he says.

“I have this vision, or dream, that New Zealand could be involved, in a major way, in the development of new pharmaceuticals, treatments and vaccines. This could be a source of great satisfaction for the scientists working in New Zealand as well as a great source of revenue for the country.”

Mark Wright

Webster Centre expertise

The Webster Centre’s steering committee reflects the University’s wide range of infectious disease expertise.

Professor Kurt Krause (Biochemistry) is a clinical specialist in infectious diseases who was trained in the United States. His laboratory focuses on drug design and structural biology, determining the three-dimensional structure of proteins and using that knowledge to design new antibiotics.

Professor Greg Cook and Professor Frank Griffin (Microbiology and Immunology) share strengths in mycobacterial research, including bovine tuberculosis and Johne’s disease. They also enjoy a strong collaborative relationship with AgResearch.

Professor Philip Hill (Preventive and Social Medicine) is the McAuley Professor of International Health at the Centre for International Health. An expert in human TB, he has had extensive experience in the Gambia working with the MRC and is a consultant to the Gates Foundation.

Professor Andy Mercer (Microbiology and Immunology) is head of the Viral Research Unit and is part of an HRC-funded viral research programme to design new vaccines, develop a novel treatment for HIV and mine pox viruses for potentially valuable new medications.

Professor Warren Tate (Biochemistry) is an expert in protein synthesis and a particular aspect of it called frameshifting, which allows one stretch of nucleic acid to code for two proteins. Frameshifting has a particular applicability in HIV and might be used to design a new therapy.

Associate Professor Russell Poulter (Biochemistry) is a fungal geneticist of international standing, working in the area of candida and candida-related illness. He also works in collaboration with Professor Richard Cannon and Dr Brian Monk, from the School of Dentistry, whose candida programme is funded by the US National Institutes of Health.

The Webster Centre also enjoys collaborations with numerous Otago-based scientists including Professor George Lees (Pharmacology), Professor Thomas Rades (Pharmacy) and Professor Ian Tucker (Pharmacy), among others. It also works with scientists at other New Zealand universities, as well as CRIs like ESR, IRL and AgResearch.

More information about the the Webster Centre can be found at www.webstercentre.otago.ac.nz

Minding the marketers

FROM *BEOWULF* TO BRANDING, PROFESSOR JANET HOEK WOULDN'T HAVE APPROACHED HER ACADEMIC CAREER IN ANY OTHER WAY.

Professor Janet Hoek: "Understanding how words work, and how people interpret and respond to them is part of a survey researcher's craft."

Photo: Alan Dove

SOME MIGHT THINK it a stretch to move from medieval sagas to market surveys in the trajectory of one academic career – let alone part of one. But Professor Janet Hoek defies pigeon-holing.

A marketing expert who minds the marketers, she and her marketing colleagues with an interest in public policy represent the conscience (and consequence) of the marketing industry's great leap forward over the last half century.

Hoek is a recent arrival to Otago's Department of Marketing, from a professorship at Massey University, but she could easily have ended up in an English department, having initiated her academic career with a master's thesis on the epic poem *Beowulf*.

Born in the Manawatu to parents who run a cut-flower and bulb business, Hoek started out studying Botany, Zoology, Microbiology, English and French at Massey University. She enjoyed the science papers, but found the intellectual stimulation of English texts ultimately more satisfying.

The decision to focus on *Beowulf* arose from her experience of working "Oxford-style" in a class of just two people with Norse and Icelandic literature specialist Professor Russell Poole.

These days Hoek credits her English studies for skills in critical thinking that she uses on a daily basis and, given the chance again today, wouldn't tackle her early academic career any other way.

"I remember reading *The Ring and the Book*, *The Waste land* and *Ulysses*. These very challenging texts raise universal questions that we debated for hours!

"I was enormously privileged to be able to study such a rich array of subjects and I often wish my postgraduate students had followed a similar academic route.

"Studying the Humanities opens our minds to wider questions and challenges narrow discipline-based thinking. Being exposed to the ease and elegance of great writing makes us more reflective about our own writing.

"When people say 'a masterate in early medieval poetry, what an indulgence', I think, well, yes it was, but at the same time I wonder if people asking these questions underrate the skills in thinking that we acquire from studying these ostensibly esoteric topics."

A job in market research soon after graduating switched Hoek to other forms of textual analysis however, and, after completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing, Hoek transferred her critical-thinking skills to a PhD focusing on question-wording in market surveys.

"Understanding how words work, and how people interpret and respond to them is part of a survey researcher's craft," Hoek explains.

"Survey research underpins everything we do in marketing. If we're going to collect primary data, we need to know whether our respondents interpret our questions as we intended."

Hoek's work in survey research has led to requests to appear as an expert witness in intellectual property litigation, where she has dissected others' surveys and defended her own.

This line of research also underpins her extensive research in marketing and public policy, where she has particular interests in the regulation of food, tobacco and alcohol marketing.

Of course, with interests such as these, Hoek has found plenty of research synergies at Otago.

She is working with Professor Jim Mann and Dr Rachael McLean, from the Edgar National Centre for Diabetes Research, to evaluate obesity interventions, is a member of two Health Research Council-funded (HRC) groups investigating the effects of alcohol marketing and noise-induced hearing loss, and works with colleagues from the Department of Public Health on tobacco control projects.

Most recently, she has secured HRC funding for a three-year project which also involves Professor Richard Edwards and Dr George Thomson, examining how young adults see and are affected by tobacco branding, and whether larger warning labels would alter these effects.

Her work has led to her appointment to groups such as the Ministry of Health's Tobacco Control Research Strategy Committee, the Smokefree Coalition Tupeka Kore Vision Steering Group and, most recently, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority Academy.

She has also provided expert advice to the Health Select Committee Enquiry into Type 2 Diabetes and Obesity, and the Commerce Commission.

Hoek defends the work of marketing gatekeepers against those who think a free market should remain just that.

"A free market is not an ideal marketplace where consumers make unconstrained choices.

"Instead, free markets create environments in which the primary influence on behaviour is commercial, and where social and health concerns are subordinate to profit generation.

"Regulating marketing, for example, by banning tobacco retail displays or restricting alcohol marketing, attempts to introduce a balance into that environment. Philosophically, we have a choice between letting public health or commercial interests dominate decision-making. It seems to me that we haven't even begun to enter into that debate."

Food marketing and the current obesity epidemic, as Hoek explains, is an issue that exemplifies this dilemma.

“If we want to promote the ‘individual responsibility’ that is so frequently mentioned, we must examine the environments in which people make choices.”

“Unlike tobacco, which, when used exactly as directed, is extremely harmful, food is an ambiguous product. This means restricting tobacco companies’ behaviour should be much easier, although logic and evidence don’t always convince policy makers.

“However, we need food to survive and it’s an important part of many cultures. The food industry has recognised and played on that successfully.”

Hoek points to the criticism surrounding the 2008 National Administration Guideline, which required schools to sell only healthy food and beverages on their premises, as well as the justification for the Minister of Education’s 2009 decision to remove the guideline. The rhetoric, she says, was based on ideological arguments and not on evidence.

“The Minister’s press release was headed ‘Schools no longer required to be food police’, which rather overlooks the fact that many children regularly consume energy-dense and nutrient-poor foods bought at school.

“The Minister could, instead, have examined the factors that promote consumption of these foods, such as their easy availability through vending machines, their low cost and the sponsorship arrangements companies have with schools.

“It’s hardly surprising that many brands achieve extraordinary salience and uptake through these activities.

“If we want to promote the ‘individual responsibility’ that is so frequently mentioned, we must examine the environments in which people make choices.

“If those choices predispose them to obesity or nicotine addiction, we should identify the factors that prompt and reinforce behaviour, and examine how we could reduce the effect those factors have.”

Hoek is adamant, however, that any such modification – such as more stringent regulation of a product’s marketing – must be based on sound evidence.

“The real question is, what evidence is sufficient to support an intervention?

“Opponents of regulation often call for evidence that demonstrates the behaviour change regulation would

bring about. That’s an impossible standard of proof, since it requires that we introduce and evaluate the intervention in order to establish its effectiveness.”

She argues that the debate should centre on the type and level of proof needed.

“This requires a complete re-orientation away from *ad hominem*, which uses labels such as ‘nanny state’ or ‘health Nazi’ to dismiss an idea, to a situation where we debate the merits of different approaches and the strength of the evidence that supports these.”

Hoek introduces her students to the social implications of marketing decisions and when the state ought to intervene in a regulatory capacity. She endeavours to promote debate amongst them.

“This is the very best thing you can get them to do so they learn to develop and defend their own views.”

As someone whose publications have been recognised for the clarity of their writing – possibly due, in part, to her choice of undergraduate study – Hoek does express some disappointment about the writing skills of many of her students.

For this shortcoming she suggests we look to the increased use of computers for checking spelling and grammar. “I still find it hard to think of a computer as a ‘word processor’ when, really, that’s a role a person should perform.”

Ironically, the English department where Hoek spent formative years studying literature is now, she says, increasingly focused on the technical and service aspects of writing, a development no doubt intended in part to address the very issues she bemoans.

Hoek admits a degree of sadness about the seemingly inevitable loss of the so-called “uneconomic” courses like those she herself pursued.

“There’s so much students can gain from being exposed to the broad questions of meaning that Humanities’ disciplines pose,” she says. “I’m not sure students will encounter those same questions in other disciplines.”

Rebecca Tansley

Making a difference

DISTINGUISHED CANCER SURGEON DR MURRAY BRENNAN HAS ENJOYED A STELLAR CAREER IN THE US, BUT STILL CREDITS HIS UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO EDUCATION FOR MUCH OF HIS SUCCESS.

FAILING TO GET a Rhodes Scholarship changed Dr Murray Brennan's life.

After missing out on studying in the UK, Brennan won a familiarisation visit to America as one of a small group of Pacific Rim students with leadership potential.

Now he is one of the world's most respected medical professionals, a past president of the American Surgical Association, and has his name on more than one thousand publications.

"When I saw what medicine was like in the US, I realised that medical opportunities were far greater there," says Brennan.

He'd already switched from engineering to medicine, completing a mathematics science degree in his third year of medical studies at Otago in the early 1960s.

"Coming to Dunedin was one of the best things that ever happened to me," he says. "Otago gave me an education, not just academically, but socially.

"Back then we had it easy with scholarships and plenty of work available in the summertime. Medicine was a breeze – I should have worked harder – but I was president of the students' union and playing rugby for the University and Otago. The social life was demanding.

"When I qualified, all I had was a licence to hurt people so I needed to get serious about work. If I was going to be a surgeon I needed a better research background."

He jumped at the offer of a fellowship at Harvard Medical School in Boston, where he began to specialise in cancer management.

His work on relatively under-explored areas of metabolism, nutrition and endocrinology in relation

to cancer led him to the National Cancer Institute in Washington, where he spent six years developing a research programme and focusing his clinical skills on managing rare tumours.

Moving to New York, he joined the specialist Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) and in his early 40s he was offered the chairmanship of the Department of Surgery.

"Sometimes you try to avoid taking office so you can concentrate on clinical care, teaching and research. There are really only two reasons to take a job – you either want it or you don't want anyone else doing it. I chose the latter; in retrospect, a very good decision for me.

"America is a great country in that you can succeed early on, but that also means you have to perform. It was a great opportunity, but a great responsibility, too."

Brennan was in his office before 6am every working day for 25 years.

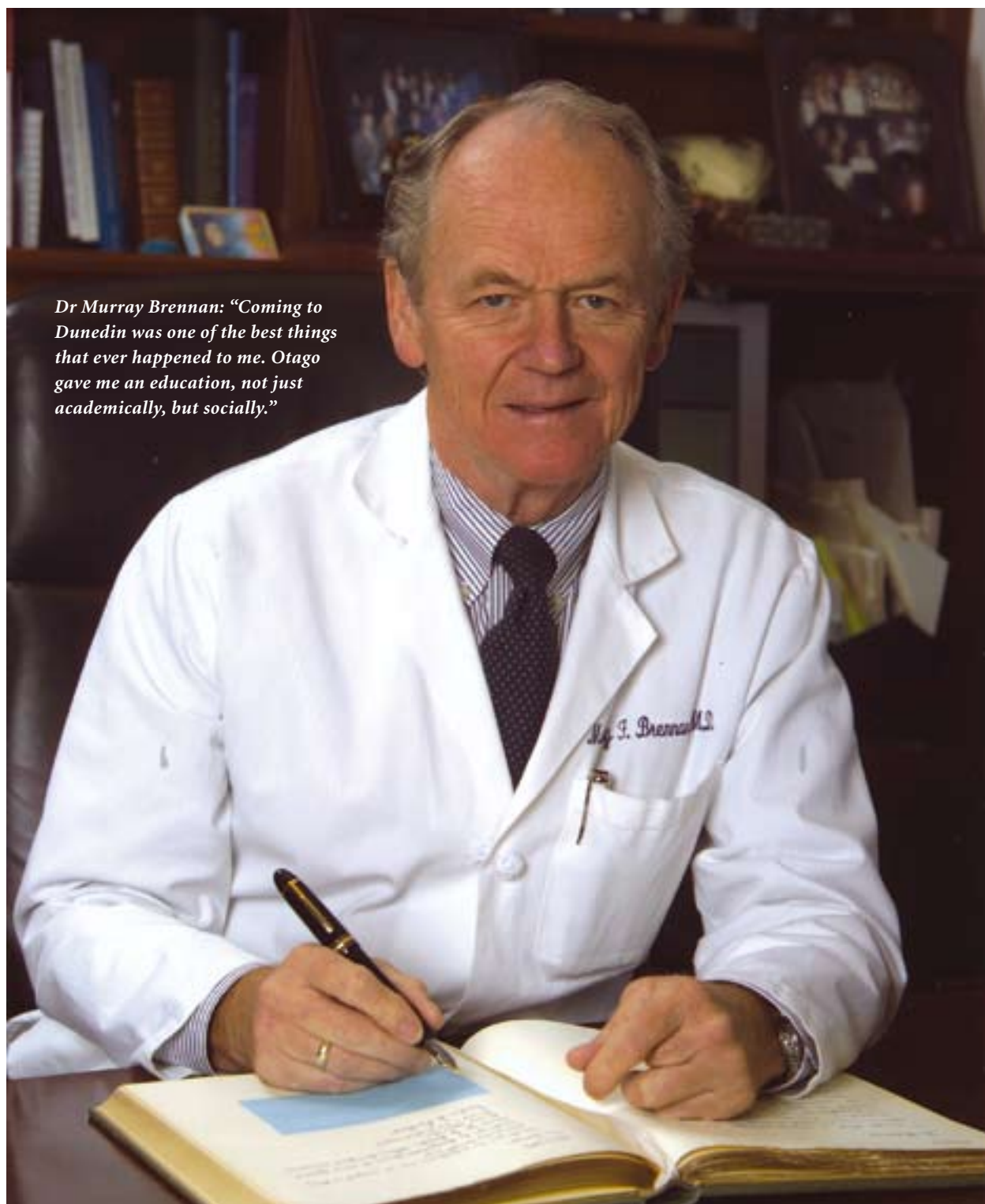
"It takes its toll on you, your family and your friends, but I barely noticed. I was doing what I wanted to do."

Brennan has been offered many other chairmanships, but stayed with the MSKCC to retain his focus on cancer, without getting sidetracked by too much administration.

At the age of 65 he chose to stand down. "After more than 20 years leading a department you've put your stamp on it. It's time to move on. Institutions need fresh leadership."

Brennan is still at the centre, practising at the highest level and operating on some high profile patients, such as Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg earlier this year.

He believes dealing with cancer requires far more than surgical skills. "I'm interested in disease management



Dr Murray Brennan: "Coming to Dunedin was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Otago gave me an education, not just academically, but socially."

“I think if you don’t want to make a difference as you practise medicine then maybe that’s not what you should be doing.”

rather than discipline management. You need to know more than just how to do an operation.

“Cancer patients want someone who understands their disease – not just a surgeon or a radiologist or any one of a number of consultants. They want someone to take care of the disease and think of them as human beings, someone who can assess the options and the downsides, too.

“I consider myself a clinical oncologist who practises surgery. I’d like to be considered a thoughtful physician, someone who is sensitive and has empathy.

“If body and soul aren’t involved with this; if you can’t take the failures along with the successes; if you don’t know how to handle them, then you shouldn’t be doing it.”

Brennan and his colleagues have charted those failures and successes to record factors that might influence the disease.

It’s the world’s largest database of sarcoma patients, with more than 7,000 patients treated at the centre since 1982, and it is used to try to improve prognoses.

“We’ve incorporated things that might otherwise be overlooked into a mathematical model that we can use to test theories and treatments, and develop important new findings,” says Brennan. “It’s a start and will be built on over the years.”

The programme may help doctors match treatments to patients better, with more aggressive intervention for those at greater risk.

Brennan still practises, researches and teaches, and promotes teamwork. “The buzzword today is translational research, but we’ve always had collaborations to get the best outcome,” he says.

“The practice of surgery and the study of disease are intimately interwoven. You have to look at your own results with great criticism and evaluation, and each year you have to try to be a bit smarter.

“I think if you don’t want to make a difference as you practise medicine then maybe that’s not what you should be doing.”

Making a difference has seen Brennan collect dozens of plaudits over the years, from honorary fellowships of all the Royal Colleges of Surgery – an unusual feat – to the American College of Surgeons’ highest honour, the Distinguished Service Award.

He retains membership of scores of medical societies, having held office in many of them.

The position dearest to Brennan was presidency of the American Surgical Association, the oldest of its kind in the US. “It’s decided by election by your peers and, for someone born outside this country, it’s a very rare privilege.”

Brennan is also proud of the honorary Doctor of Science degree conferred by Otago and of helping establish the University of Otago in America, Inc., a board that encourages connections between US-based alumni and the University.

Starting a US charity is hard – “it’s been an extraordinary struggle, but we’re getting there” – but Brennan was a natural choice for the leadership role, having assisted with advice and fundraising over the years.

He’s happy to help. “It’s called giving back. I could not have done what I have done without the kind of education I got at Otago. It’s where I learned about life and the place that gave me the start I needed.”

There are still strong New Zealand connections. The Brennan family owns a small vineyard – “a money sink” – at Gibbston. It’s being developed by his son Sean, who has already won a gold elite medal for his pinot noir. Brennan helps out on visits, but he doesn’t know if he’ll ever be back permanently.

“Emotionally, maybe I’ve never left New Zealand, but my intellectual stimulus and my life are here in the US and I can’t do what I do here part-time.”

Retirement doesn’t seem to be an option.

“I don’t want retirement to get in the way of my work. I think I still do some things well, so why would I give it all up?

“I would like to spend more time in New Zealand, but as long as I’m still active in the US I’ll be here.

“Every year we have a new cadre of bright, intelligent people coming through. They keep me young, they keep me honest, they challenge me and that’s a gift.

“My greatest pleasure is seeing the progress of people whose professional development I’ve had a part in. Their minds have enriched me and that’s very rewarding.

“But none of it would have happened without the start I was given at Otago University. I have been very fortunate.”

Nigel Zega

Cost barrier to primary care

IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC CONSTRAINT WILL A VISIT TO THE GP BECOME A DISCRETIONARY LUXURY?

NEW ZEALAND has a strong and highly functional primary care system: the country's network of general practices, dentists and associated services. But one of the system's strangest, most persistent and distressing anomalies is the toll charged at the front door. A cost barrier has been erected on the front door step, the entry point into the system – a visit to the local GP or dentist.

This is paradoxical as most conditions are dealt with adequately and cheaply in general practice. General practices are able to take care of most non-life-threatening conditions and chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma and, importantly, they keep people out of hospital.

Yet, for the entire modern history of our health system since its beginnings in 1938, successive governments have maintained charges for timely treatment of illness, preventive care and chronic disease management. This problem was recognised and rectified in England at the time the National Health Service was born in 1948 and primary care there has been free at the point of use since then.

The central role of primary care in maintaining health, treating sickness and reducing health inequalities between population groups has long been recognised. Research and policy statements from governments around the world and the World Health Organisation have affirmed these points over many decades. Moreover, health systems with strong primary care infrastructure tend to be cheaper overall.

For governments there is a win-win situation when it comes to investing in primary-care services and infrastructure: in countries with strong primary care, health status tends to improve and overall costs of health care tend to be better controlled (the converse is the case when governments invest disproportionately in specialist and hospital-based care as is the case in the US). These points were once again strongly emphasised in two recent influential World Health Organisation reports: the report of

the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, and the 2008 World Health Report titled *Primary Health Care, Now More Than Ever*.

So how does New Zealand fare when it comes to cost and access to GPs, dentists and other services?

Recently published research, based on data from a Statistics New Zealand survey of over 18,000 adults, provides some clues. The good news is that in 2005 more than 90 per cent of adults had an affiliation with a primary care provider (GP) and responded in the affirmative to the question: "Do you have a doctor, nurse or medical centre you usually go to, if you need to see a doctor?". This is an important finding as affiliation is a measure of potential access to primary care. Even more positive was the finding that those with high health needs tend to have high rates of affiliation (for example, elderly, women, Māori and those in poor health).

The findings related to access were less rosy. In 2005 15.5 per cent, 22.8 per cent and 6.4 per cent of respondents reported that they had deferred seeing their doctor/s, dentist and buying a prescription, respectively, at least once during the preceding 12 months, because of cost.

These percentages are alarming and the alarm is amplified by the fact that people with high needs (for example, those on low incomes, smokers, those with high levels of psychological distress and those in poor health) were more likely, rather than less likely, to put off doctors' visits, collecting medications and dental visits. Alarming, too, is the finding that a higher proportion of Māori and Pacific people than New Zealand Europeans did not collect a prescription because of cost.

These findings relate to 2005, and funding changes have occurred since then which have improved the situation. Higher government subsidy rates for GP visits and pharmaceuticals for all age groups were implemented



Photo: Ken George

Professor Peter Crampton: "... the overall effectiveness, fairness and cost of our health system hinges to some large extent on accessible and high quality primary-care services."

by July 2007. As a result, charges for primary care reduced substantially. For those who were previously not subsidised by the government at all, GP charges fell from an average of \$50 per GP visit to \$25 or less, and some services are provided free of charge. Prescription charges for patients of all ages fell from a maximum of \$15 per item to \$3 by July 2007.

Even though good oral health is essential to well-being and full engagement in society, unlike GP services and prescriptions – which are heavily subsidised by the government – government funding contributes only 25 per cent of dental care expenditure in New Zealand. Public funding to dental care for children up to the age 12 is offered through a school-based dental therapist system. For adolescents to qualify for publicly-funded care, they must register with private dentists paid under public contract.

However, public subsidisation of adult dental care is extremely limited and targeted at particular groups at hospital-based dental clinics. The majority of adults are responsible for the full costs of dental-care services. There are no indications that this situation is set to change at least in the near future.

The situation in 2005 was that financial barriers for primary care existed for a substantial subgroup of people in New Zealand. Our next research task is to analyse data from 2007 to see if the situation improved following the introduction, during 2006 and 2007, of more generous government subsidies for GP visits and prescriptions.

Given the more severe economic circumstances faced by many families this year, hopefully GP visits and prescriptions are, for the vast majority, affordable items of expenditure and are not viewed as discretionary luxuries, as is the case for dental care for many.

The current government would do well to take careful note of the findings of this study as the overall effectiveness, fairness and cost of our health system hinges to some large extent on accessible and high quality primary-care services.

Professor Peter Crampton
Dean, University of Otago, Wellington

Dr Santosh Jatana
Research Fellow, Department of Public Health,
University of Otago, Wellington

Healthy ageing's Holy Grail

**THE NEW CHALICE STUDY WILL SHOW HOW
NEW ZEALANDERS ARE AGEING AND PROVIDE
INFORMATION ON FUTURE HEALTH-CARE NEEDS.**

"I grow old... I grow old... I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled./ Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?"

So wrote the great English poet T S Eliot in *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, reflecting on indecision and the inevitability of ageing.

Now, almost a century on, researchers at the University of Otago, Christchurch, led by the Dean, Professor Peter Joyce, are about to embark on a wide-ranging longitudinal study to bring more clarity to complex questions surrounding ageing and health.

CHALICE, the Canterbury Health and Ageing Lifecourse Study, will track the ageing process over many years across a cohort of 2,500 people, plus 500 Māori, to determine the complex physical and psychological factors involved in healthy ageing.

"The time has come for this kind of study with New Zealand's population due to age significantly over the next 30 years," says Joyce. "Most health experts agree this is going to put huge cost pressures on the health system and it's going to need the most up-to-date information available on how to maintain good health into old age."

Joyce will be leading a group of up to 12 University of Otago scientists and senior clinicians with backgrounds in

pathology, genetics, heart disease, psychological medicine, infectious disease and depression to determine what are the factors that result in healthy ageing and those that result in increased health problems.

"In the CHALICE study there'll be the potential to examine a wide variety of complex questions: how genes, biology and nutrition impact on ageing and age-related diseases; how social, cultural and personality factors impact on well-being and ageing; the determinants of heart disease, stroke and dementia and late-life depression," Joyce explains.

"The study will also be able to examine how older people actually use the health service and the data will contribute to the future planning of these services for the elderly."

Recruitment of the first wave of Canterbury participants will start next year using the electoral roll to randomly select 500 50-year-olds and 100 Māori of the same age.

"Longitudinal studies like this are very useful for clinicians and health planners because, over the long term, they enable detailed results to be drawn. You can see this with the world-famous Framingham heart study which has been running from the late 1940s and has resulted in major findings which underpin our knowledge of cardiovascular health half a century later.



*The CHALICE team, from left:
Professor David Murdoch, Janet Spittlehouse,
Associate Professor Martin Kennedy,
Professor Peter Joyce, Professor Richard
Porter, Associate Professor Vicki Cameron
and Dr John Pearson.*

“What CHALICE produces will be directly relevant to New Zealanders and our health system.”

“This is also the case with the two best-known long-term studies in this country to date. The Christchurch Health and Development Study, headed by Professor David Fergusson, and the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, led by Professor Richie Poulton. They’ve produced a wealth of research results over the years on key child-health and mental-health issues, families and health outcomes,” says Joyce.

“The difference between these studies and CHALICE is that we’re looking at the second half of life. The other important point is that there’s never been such a wide-ranging study of health and ageing in the New Zealand population.

“What CHALICE produces will be directly relevant to New Zealanders and our health system. Other comparable studies overseas have examined particular conditions, or aren’t as broad in scope and detail.”

Joyce says one of the keys to successful longitudinal studies is that a high proportion of people randomly approached agree to participate. He says that if participation rates are low there will be questions about the robustness of the results and the ability to generalise accurately across an ageing population.

Although obtaining participants from the electoral roll has become somewhat more difficult in recent years, CHALICE will be taking a flexible approach and will try to fit around times which are most suitable for potential participants to take part.

The research process will involve more than just a survey and will cover six modules of investigation, each taking about half an hour: personal health history; attitudes to health and ageing, and social and financial pressures; assessment of cardiovascular health; cognitive functions such as memory and attention; mental health history; and lifestyle factors such as nutrition and exercise.

“There’ll be an emphasis on nutrition and we’ll be asking people to keep a diary of food and exercise as well, just before or after the study morning,” he says. “In that regard, there will be close links with nutritionists at the University in Dunedin.”

Although the really important results with longitudinal studies tend to eventuate over the long term, Joyce says there are a number of important questions to answer more immediately.

“Even at 50 we can look at how common depression is, for instance, to what extent it’s linked to heart disease and illness, who’s using what services and what’s their satisfaction rate. There’s a whole range of questions for the data at 50 years which we can start working on almost immediately.”

The study will keep in touch with participants each year, between the five-yearly recruitment intervals, with a brief questionnaire asking further health-related questions. There will also be other positive spin-offs for participants in the sense that most people in long-term studies learn a lot more about their own personal health and well-being and enjoy taking part.

“One of the questions we have is will participants actually end up by having a longer life expectancy because of the risk factors that we indentify? Of course, we’ll also be feeding back information to medical practitioners, with participants’ consent, if we find they have a serious, or potentially serious, health problem such as undiagnosed diabetes or depression.

“It’s really remarkable with both the Christchurch and Dunedin studies that a very high proportion of participants have stayed involved over a long period of time. Now that doesn’t happen if they don’t feel very positive about the research.”

For Joyce, CHALICE is a fascinating new challenge and of significant benefit to New Zealand. It also brings together the threads of a distinguished 25-year research career in Psychological Medicine which has encompassed both clinical trials and epidemiological research.

Many of these research projects are still ongoing, and that research experience will bring a clearer focus to the Canterbury Health and Ageing Lifecourse Study, producing important new information on how New Zealanders grow old in better health.

Ainslie Talbot

Acres and pains

A GROUND-BREAKING STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ON THIS COUNTRY'S FARMS HAS REVEALED SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF INJURIES, ATTITUDES AND RISKS.

ALL IS NOT WELL on New Zealand's farms.

The University of Otago's Injury Prevention Research Unit (IPRU) has just completed the most comprehensive study of occupational health in agriculture in New Zealand, with worrying results.

While industrial injury statistics are falling in many occupations, those in farming are not. Injury rates in agriculture are disproportionately high, putting farming on a par with the high-risk mining, forestry and marine industries.

It's a major public health problem. Farming involves about nine per cent of the New Zealand workforce, second only to tourism.

Project manager Dr Kirsten Lovelock, of the IPRU in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, says the two-year study broke new ground in looking at occupational disease together with injury.

The \$400,000 project, funded by ACC, the Department of Labour and the Health Research Council of New Zealand, had unprecedented buy-in from key industry stakeholders, including Federated Farmers, Rural Women New Zealand, Meat and Wool, FarmSafe™, Dairy Insight, MAF, and the Agriculture Health and Safety Council.

With their support, Lovelock and her team have now provided a comprehensive account of both injury and

disease risks and outcomes in farming.

It's the first study of its kind to involve a social scientist (Lovelock), who explored behavioural factors, and the cultural and social context that farmers are working in.

The information will be used to help develop new policies and better intervention strategies for agricultural workers.

The multidisciplinary team included principal investigator and biostatistician Associate Professor Colin Cryer, biostatistician Dr Gabrielle Davie, physiotherapist Dr Stephan Milosavljevic, physician Dr David McBride, mechanical engineer Dr Peter Davidson, public health researcher Kate Morgaine and ACC Postdoctoral Fellow Dr Rebecca Lilley.

A year-long computer-aided telephone survey of farms around the country was combined with face-to-face interviews and meetings, and two literature reviews looking at how other countries handled the problems.

"Farmers are a difficult population to survey because they work long and irregular hours," says Lovelock. "However, once contacted, they were very willing to talk about the issues and were remarkably open and honest about their own behaviour."

Researchers discovered a web of problems, risks and possible solutions.



Photo: Bill Nichol

Dr Kirsten Lovelock and Dr David McBride: “In order to help reduce hazards, we need multifaceted interventions that address education, the design of equipment and workspaces, workplace organisation, economic considerations, affordability in a diverse sector, policy and the regulatory environment.”

Men and women

Some blokes are still blokes, it seems. The “she’ll-be-right” attitude persists, with men, in particular, retaining an ingrained stoicism.

“For many farmers it’s a vocation,” says Lovelock. “They can’t imagine doing anything else – it’s how they define who they are. Injury can be devastating and there is a loss of dignity with physical harm.” A “serious” injury was one that killed you, or left you unable to work again. One man defined a head injury as serious “if you ended up a cabbage”.

There was fatalism – “when your time’s up, it’s up” – and most farmers preferred not to know about injury statistics.

Some considered receiving training on how to use machinery an unnecessary embarrassment, although they were concerned about exposure to chemicals.

The most likely spur to changing unsafe behaviour was usually personal experience – a near miss, or injury to themselves or people close to them.

There was general resistance to health and safety regulation – although one female farmer said it would help her to force her workers to wear safety gear.

Women’s roles are changing. As many now work away from the farm, there is often no one there to monitor workers, or to act if something happens.

THE PROBLEMS

ACC sees only the tip of the iceberg. Only one in three who had been injured or unable to work had claimed, which suggests that the economic losses are much greater than currently estimated.

“For every injury that is reported, there are many more that are not, and many very-near misses,” says Lovelock.

The most frequent injuries were sprains, strains, cuts, crushings and burns. Serious injuries reported to ACC included fractures and dislocations, loss of consciousness and amputation.

Most accidents happened outdoors on flat terrain and when conditions were fine and dry, and the majority took place in summer (40 per cent), with 13 per cent in spring.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, animals, vehicles and machinery were involved.

“Animals caused crush injuries and broken legs – being kicked can cause substantial damage – and some farmers cut themselves while shearing or accidentally inoculated themselves instead of the animals,” says Lovelock.

“We should be looking at better yard design and taking more care, avoiding spur-of-the-moment decisions when working with animals.”

There were respiratory problems associated with dust from animals and plants, and nearly eight per cent of farmers said their health had suffered as a result of handling chemicals.

More than half those surveyed frequently handled hazardous chemicals, mainly herbicides, and while many protected their bodies, fewer used masks and respirators and face protection.

The survey found many farmers ignored safety rules, even around machinery known to be dangerous.

Fewer than one in three used helmets on motorbikes

and, although bike use is reducing in favour of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), few used helmets with those, and seatbelt use in farm vehicles was minimal.

Other risks included working with tractors and implements run or pulled by them, shearing gear, chainsaws, firearms, workshop equipment and stock. And, while there had been significant improvements in farm safety features, not every farmer had the latest gear and not all who had it used it.

Even competence can be a potential danger when it comes to the relationship men, in particular, have with machines.

“Being in control and being competent when using machines is important, but sometimes feeling in control leads to complacency,” says Lovelock.

There has also been complacency over hearing loss, which is one of New Zealand’s most significant compensation costs, especially with an ageing farm population.

“Farmers are exposed to noise from vehicles, firearms and hand-held machinery, and yet there is a reluctance to wear earplugs,” says Lovelock. “Some older men have worked for 20 or 30 years without hearing protection.”

The survey reported 14 per cent working where “the noise was so loud you had to shout”.

“Workers in forestry and factories also face noise exposure,” says Lovelock, “but they usually have to obey rules and work in groups where compliance can be monitored. The nature of the workplace and the organisation of work are very different on farms.

“Farmers are usually self-employed and often work alone. Taking care of themselves is something that they have to take responsibility for.”

But do they? There are certainly many risks.

“We need to think carefully about how we can improve self-surveillance,” says Lovelock.

Men and women are exposed to the same dangers, but international research says that women have a greater perception of risk – and are generally more cautious than men.

Old and young

As rural populations decrease, older farmers are staying in work or being called back to help out.

Researchers found they were generally receptive to safety ideas and had begun to adopt protective gear. They understood the need to take care of older bodies.

Caring for old machinery was another matter. New, safer equipment was often too expensive, so farmers tended to modify and repair existing machines, which could involve increased risk.

At the other end of the age scale, children under five were being carried on farm vehicles, while five- to nine-year olds were operating ATVs and motorbikes, working with animals, playing around machinery and using firearms.

“Boys are exposed to more risk than girls and at an earlier age,” says Lovelock. “And when they turn into young men they take more risks. Some say that, until their hormones settle down, there will be attrition.”

THE RISKS

The kiwi attitude “she’ll be right” is only one of many things contributing to the sobering accident statistics, say researchers [see Men and women sidebar page 24].

Working alone is common, particularly among farmers who may not be able to afford help because of low profitability.

Long hours and pushing the limits of endurance are all part of being rugged, independent and self-sufficient, which is a dominant stereotype, but fatigue can lead to mistakes.

Pressures of time and money may encourage cutting corners, as can pressures from neighbours, co-workers or management.

That could mean skipping safe procedures, or working through ailments and injuries instead of taking time off to recover, possibly leading to more serious problems later on.

Reasons for not using safety gear included being in a hurry, social pressure and because it was uncomfortable.

Unsuitable equipment came in for a hammering. Some imported machinery designed for the wide-open flat plains of North America is simply unsuited to much New Zealand terrain.

Interviews revealed that equipment can be modified to make it safer to use in New Zealand, but even when governmental stakeholders are aware of these potential modifications they are not able to recommend them to the sector because of commercial politics, says Lovelock.

Another danger is the kiwi “number-8 wire” mentality, which sees farmers tinkering with machinery, changing fittings to improve performance and, sometimes, compromising safety.

Most survey participants had had no training in the past six months, except for handling chemicals, and only 40 per cent had attended the FarmSafe™ Awareness Course since its inception in 2002.

Safety programmes tend to be delivered by a variety of agencies in an ad hoc and unco-ordinated manner, and there is no long-term prevention strategy for injury and disease that specifically addresses the agricultural sector.

Few respondents had had a formal safety check on the farm in the past six months. They were more likely to have a safety check after injury.

However, says Lovelock, despite low levels of safety compliance, “most of the farmers we spoke to were genuinely concerned about the disease risk and injury rate.

“They were not naïve or complacent, for example, about issues around working with chemicals, or the dangers that both tractors and ATVs present.”

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Education is only part of the solution, says Lovelock.

“In order to help reduce hazards, we need multifaceted interventions that address education, the design of equipment and workspaces, workplace organisation,

economic considerations, affordability in a diverse sector, policy and the regulatory environment.”

Already education appeared to be making a difference.

“Rural New Zealand has changed a lot,” says Lovelock.

“You’ve got people with degrees managing farms. You have a younger generation coming up who are more likely to have participated in training programmes that include health and safety.

“Many in the sector believe there is a generational shift occurring in attitudes toward working safely.”

Legislators are also trying to hit a moving target, as farming is changing rapidly.

“Small farms are amalgamating into larger entities, employing many workers and increasingly diverse workforces with migrant workers from the Pacific and Europe.

“We need to know more about corporate farms, where there are lots of people and lots of stock and a wide range of machinery. We don’t know enough about their rates of injury and disease. It’s a completely different culture.”

So, there is still much to be done.

Lovelock hopes the team’s recommendations can help reduce injury rates, because what happens on the farm is likely to have wide repercussions.

“Nearly every New Zealander is maybe only one or two steps away from having family connections with farming,” she says.

“These strong connections are culturally and economically very important. Sustaining a healthy workforce in agriculture should be a priority in New Zealand.”

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There’s a need for an agreed co-ordinated strategy based on research evidence.

New interventions need to be piloted and tested in New Zealand field conditions to prove their effectiveness before becoming part of a national strategy.

It’s more effective to target interventions to specific exposure/hazard risks.

Multifaceted interventions beyond education should include policy, workplace organisation, engineering design of farm equipment and, where applicable, regulation.

Specific barriers to safety need to be addressed.

Interventions should consider economic constraints and perceptions of “serious injury,” and high-risk farmers or those in poor health should be identified.

Programmes are more successful if farming communities help design and implement them, and if there are sustained follow-ups such as support networks.

Safety should be an issue for the whole agricultural sector, including financial and insurance groups, commodity groups, contractors, farm workers and families.

Nigel Zega



Photo: Alan Dove



Professor Gareth Jones and Maja Whitaker: Anatomists are well positioned to contribute to ethical debates surrounding the human body.

Art and science of mortality

IS IT WRONG to take human remains, coat them in plastic, and pose them as baseball players or ballet dancers?

This is among the questions explored by Professor of Anatomy and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) Gareth Jones and Anatomy and Structural Biology research fellow Maja Whitaker in the second edition of *Speaking for the Dead: The Human Body in Biology and Medicine*. Their work builds on Jones' 2000 edition, adding chapters on contemporary phenomena such as plastination exhibitions, popularised through anatomist and entrepreneur Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds* shows.

Plastination exhibitions see human tissue preserved in resin and displayed in life-like poses. Although controversy remains, Jones acknowledges that detractors' key criticisms have largely been addressed. Bodies are bequeathed, shows have an educational focus, audiences are typically hushed and reverent. Participants' eventual poses may even have been discussed with von Hagens before they died. Copycat events, reportedly involving bodies sold by Chinese agents, have rightly been widely condemned.

Jones says anatomists are well positioned to contribute to ethical debates surrounding the human body. Further, he believes anatomists could also gain much from the exhibitions' technical advances.

"Plastination displays provide a level between gross anatomy and histology, enabling connections to be seen across whole bodies in ways that are not usually obvious."

Yet, curiously, among the staunchest critics are those who are surely the least squeamish about them: anatomists.

"There does seem to be this culture of secrecy among anatomists," Jones observes. "The exhibitions make public what anatomists usually keep private."

Photo: Bill Nichol



Drs Chris Rudd, Janine Hayward and Geoff Craig: "There was a lot of trivia and personality coverage... but at the same time a quarter to a third of the material was informative."

Media delivers for voters

DO NEW ZEALAND media provide useful coverage of election issues important to voters, or are they simply obsessed with political scandal and character assassination?

To find out, Department of Politics researchers Drs Chris Rudd, Janine Hayward and Geoff Craig set up a team to analyse how the media handled the last general election campaign.

"We went in with the view that the media were the pits," admits Rudd, "but came away pleasantly surprised."

"There was a lot of trivia and personality coverage, which we were expecting, but at the same time a quarter to a third of the material was informative."

"If you read newspapers or watched television in the four weeks leading up to the election you got a lot of fluff and padding, but you could see how the parties stood on key issues," says Rudd.

"If we had 100 per cent information, who would read or watch it? People would tune out."

"Many people may not have that much interest in politics – but gaining their interest with trivia might lead them to learn more about substantial issues."

"When the media make politicians look bad because of what they say it is important to remember that the politicians actually say these things."

Informing Voters? Politics, Media and the New Zealand Election 2008, edited by Rudd, Hayward and Craig, has just been published by Pearson.

"There have been similar studies overseas, and we find that New Zealand media are in line with Europe and North America," says Rudd. "In an international context we don't fare too badly."

Photo: Bill Nichol



Dr Ojeya Cruz Banks: “Dance embodies a cultural world view and, to understand its relevance to society, one must see how it’s related to the fabric of human life.”

Reconnecting through dance

SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION Dance Studies lecturer and choreographer Dr Ojeya Cruz Banks is examining dance’s place as a tool for recovering important cultural knowledge. She is particularly interested in how contemporary dance, developed through a diverse Māori cultural perspective, plays a role in confronting post-colonial views and attitudes in New Zealand.

Cruz Banks has spent time with the Atamira Dance Collective, a Māori contemporary dance theatre in Auckland, watching rehearsals and performances.

“Atamira’s about expressing their experience as Māori and drawing from their history, their legends and their contemporary personal whakapapa.

“While they celebrate their heritage, their work is also about encouraging experimentation and innovation in the performing art of dance and culture.”

She will also visit a company in Senegal to examine the role of dance in decolonisation there.

“What I mean by decolonisation is the reclaiming of knowledge that was oppressed in the colonial context – reaffirming the knowledge that is important to the people.

“Dance embodies a cultural world view and, to understand its relevance to society, one must see how it’s related to the fabric of human life. So dance becomes a practice in which histories are documented and people connect to their ancestors, their language and their land through the practice of dance. In that regard, dance becomes important to cultural revitalisation.

“In both contexts, I am looking at the emphasis of how there is a fluidity between tradition and contemporary dance forms and cultural influences. So I am most interested in the continuum between traditional and contemporary.”

Photo: Alan Dove



Associate Professor David Timothy Duval: “We’re planning to put together a picture of what is happening in the international aviation environment and what it means for New Zealand’s tourism sector.”

Aviation project set to fly

AN IN-DEPTH examination of the links between New Zealand’s tourism sector and the global aviation industry is to be undertaken with a FoRST grant secured by Associate Professor David Timothy Duval (Department of Tourism).

The three-year project, with partners Covec (a consultancy firm) and Dr Niven Winchester (Department of Economics), will involve dissecting the structure of air links into New Zealand and examine the operational environment and regulatory framework.

Duval says the intent of the project is to identify policy drivers and help reduce risk and uncertainty in air service provision.

“The first year will involve a comprehensive overview of dynamic supply and demand factors such as technology and business models that impact on air service provision.

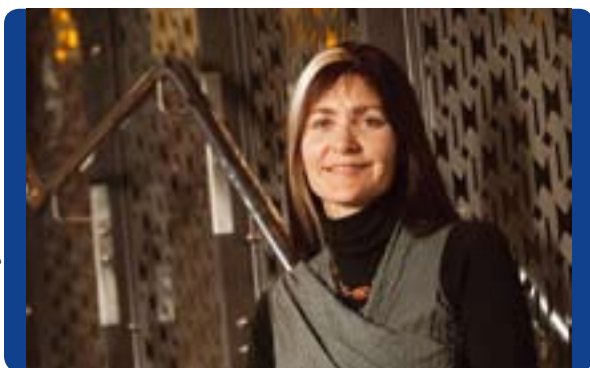
“In the second year we will be looking at the policy environment – which I call aeropolitics. For example, we will examine the regulatory conditions in New Zealand that airlines face with respect to markets access.”

Duval says the third year of the project will focus on the value of services by constructing a dynamic model of the New Zealand economy.

The model will be used to test how different changes impact the New Zealand tourism sector: for example, a carrier altering its services, or a pandemic.

“At the end of three years, we’re planning to put together a picture of what is happening in the international aviation environment and what it means for New Zealand’s tourism sector, especially in terms of long-term planning and policy responses.”

Photo: Ken George



Dr Sunny Collings: "Community-level interventions with several strands to them may be viable, but we'll only know if we can measure the outcome."

Suicide, self-harm interventions

NEW ZEALAND has a relatively high rate of suicide and deliberate self harm in adults compared to many developed countries. The reasons are complex and there is no easy solution, but, in recent years, improvements have been made through such policy initiatives as the New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Psychiatrist and researcher Dr Sunny Collings (Social Psychiatry and Population Mental Health Research Unit, Wellington) is following up this work with a three-year study, funded by the Ministry of Health, on whether complex community interventions can make a difference to the occurrence of self-harm and suicide. Similar projects have been undertaken overseas, but results have been difficult to interpret.

Learning from these studies, she is investigating a model which will compare what happens in four different district health board regions that have interventions, with outcomes in four regions without. The interventions will focus on primary care, destigmatising of help-seeking and family/whanau support. They will complement and enhance existing community, primary-care and mental-health services. For example, workplace settings may provide good opportunities to encourage vulnerable men to seek help.

"By looking at self-harm as an outcome, as well as suicide, we can also measure the effect of interventions on a risk factor for later suicide attempts and actual deaths," Collings says.

"The problem at present is that it's still unclear what really works at a population level in reducing these distressing events. Community-level interventions with several strands to them may be viable, but we'll only know if we can measure the outcome."

Photo: Bill Nichol



Dr Hugh Sloten: "At the height of the cold war the US was trying to convince other countries around the world to participate in global communications."

Communication against the odds

FIFTY YEARS AGO worldwide satellite communications were just a dream. The struggle to achieve that dream is now being researched by Dr Hugh Sloten (Media, Film and Communication). He hopes to complete a history of the US's efforts to establish a single global satellite communications system after his forthcoming fellowship as a recipient of the Charles Lindbergh Chair at the Smithsonian.

In the early 1960s the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) was set up in America. "At the height of the cold war the US was trying to convince other countries around the world to participate in global communications," says Sloten.

The effort involved technological development, space exploration, cold-war politics and commercial resistance. But by the end of the decade more than 60 countries had joined, with 28 members operating 50 ground stations.

Worldwide satellite coverage had become a reality.

Sloten's project grew from his just-published book, *Radio's Hidden Voice*, a history of radio broadcasting and the origins of the Public Broadcasting System in the US.

"I realised there had been no major study of satellite communications taking advantage of recently declassified archive material," says Sloten.

"The individuals involved in the creation of a global system recognised they could not compartmentalise such subjects as international treaties covering frequency allocation, the development of system standards, foreign aid to developing countries, national security concerns, domestic economic policy and military planning."

Intelsat succeeded against the odds, but subsequent deregulation saw the single system evolve into the complex competitive regional systems we have today.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Professor Keith Gordon and Sam Lind: They are working to develop light-absorbing and electricity-conducting liquid crystals to go inside solar cells.

Making solar cells flexible

DEVELOPING PLASTIC-BASED solar cells, rather than the conventional silicon or glass, offers a number of advantages such as lighter weight and the ability to form panels to a required shape.

But before that can happen, Professor Keith Gordon and his team of researchers in the Department of Chemistry are working to develop light-absorbing and electricity-conducting liquid crystals to go inside the cells.

“The key differential is that the materials we have been working on actually ‘self-assemble’. They come in the form of a slimy crystal, similar to an LCD screen.”

A single solar cell is made up of a sandwich of electrodes with the liquid crystal trapped between. Gordon says the microscopic crystals are a bit like a doughnut. But within each cell they are stacked up to 200 deep, almost like pillars, with hundreds of pillars next to each other, separated by a thin film of insulation.

“They work like a coaxial cable with one charge running up through the core and the other charge running back down through the outer ring of the doughnut.

“One of the major advantages is that these crystals like to be ordered and stacked like that, and if they are disturbed they self-repair.”

Gordon says they are still at an early stage in the research. They have the crystals and can stack them, but now they have to organise them into cells.

Once that is done, they will work with their Australian collaborators to make devices and test them in the field.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Dr Janet Stephenson: “There’s a tendency to assume that visibility is the key issue for those in opposition [to wind farms], but people are concerned with much more than that.”

Wind farm perceptions

DR JANET STEPHENSON (Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and Environment) supports the need for renewable energy, but she also appreciates the values of landscapes. Two of her recent projects investigate what influences people’s opinions about wind farms.

The first, with research student Jess Graham, and Dr Inga Smith and Professor Gerry Carrington (Department of Physics), looks at the perceptions of people who made submissions to three wind farm proposals.

For the second, Stephenson teamed with the Department of Marketing’s Professor Rob Lawson and research assistant Matthew Hoffman to examine how non-submitters felt.

The Graham project seems to be a first for New Zealand, and has been published in a special edition of *Energy Policy*. The Hoffman report also covers new territory, both locally and internationally. Different wind farms draw very different levels of opposition, but landscape issues are almost always to the fore. “There’s a tendency to assume that visibility is the key issue for those in opposition, but people are concerned with much more than that,” says Stephenson.

Other common concerns include the direct impacts of construction as well as environmental impacts. Unexpectedly, perceptions of the wind farm developers are also strongly influential in submitters’ overall attitudes.

Hoffman’s report revealed that non-submitters to wind farm proposals could not be counted as a silent majority for or against, but displayed ambivalence and less extreme views than submitters.

Stephenson’s current research compares the landscape qualities identified by experts with those identified by submitters. If an “assessment gap” is revealed, her research may help explain why wind farm battles can be so fraught.

Photo: Ross Coombes



Sheree Gibb: "These findings are consistent with the argument that attending single-sex schools reduces or mitigates the current gender gap between boys and girls in educational achievement."

Mitigating the gender gap

RECENT RESEARCH from the long-running Christchurch Heath and Development Study shows that single-sex schooling may help to reduce male disadvantage in educational achievement, producing a situation in which boys have a slight advantage over girls in this area.

The study was based on comparisons of the educational achievements of boys and girls who attended single-sex and co-educational schools. Follow-up of these students to the age of 25 showed that, for students attending co-educational schools, there was a clear tendency for females to have higher educational achievement than males.

This trend was evident in the attainment of secondary school qualifications, attendance at university and in the attainment of bachelors' degrees. In contrast, for students attending single-sex schools, there was a slight tendency for males to out-perform females.

These results held even after accounting for factors associated with attendance at single-sex and co-educational schools. "These findings are consistent with the argument that attending single-sex schools reduces or mitigates the current gender gap between boys and girls in educational achievement," says principal researcher Sheree Gibb.

She says this study also provides evidence that the effects of single-sex and co-ed schools on the gender gap in educational achievement continues long after students have left school, and even up to the age of 25.

The study suggests that the ways in which schools are organised and structured can have considerable impact on gender gaps in educational achievement. Gaps may be reduced by identifying the particular features of single-sex schooling that are responsible for reducing male disadvantage in achievement.

Photo: Alan Dove



Dr Malcolm Cone: "China is the world's largest and most competitive market, so if we can succeed there and learn from that, then we can probably succeed anywhere."

Exporters share information

NEW ZEALAND'S foremost exporters have been interviewed about doing business in China and India.

One of the lead researchers, Dr Malcolm Cone, the director of the Asia Institute, School of Business, says the ForST-funded project is examining two aspects of business: the extent to which New Zealand companies value the intellectual property (or IP) behind their products and how well service firms are performing in the eyes of their customers.

"Everybody knows when they are selling a bale of wool or sending a machine offshore, but what about intrinsic stuff, the IP behind the machine or the technology that creates the product?"

"Obviously, the ideas behind what New Zealand companies produce are the real value, but we haven't been measuring that."

About 50 New Zealand companies have been interviewed about these issues, exploring questions ranging from how they protect their IP to how they build trust and sustainability into relationships.

Cone says they have also begun the process of talking to their clients and partners in China and India.

"That's the valuable bit because we are going to get feedback from them as to how they view New Zealand companies' performance."

"China is the world's largest and most competitive market, so if we can succeed there and learn from that, then we can probably succeed anywhere."

Feedback on what they think New Zealand companies are doing well and what they could improve will be used in a series of seminars around the country.

Photo: Alan Dove



Professor Nicola Peart and Jessica Palmer: They will examine fundamental issues such as what is a trust, why do we need them, what are the requirements for a trust and should trusts ever be busted?

A breach of trusts

WOULD YOU CONSIDER holding a family trust meeting before you renovate your bathroom? Legally, you probably should.

Faculty of Law researchers Professor Nicola Peart and Jessica Palmer are carrying out in-depth research into the legal basis of trusts of all kinds, prompted by what appears to be widespread abuse.

Palmer says family trusts are an obvious example. Hundreds of thousands have been created because people have been told that is what they should do to protect their family property.

"But they continue to treat it as their own, as though nothing's changed, without appreciating a trust does change everything in terms of who now owns it and who benefits from it."

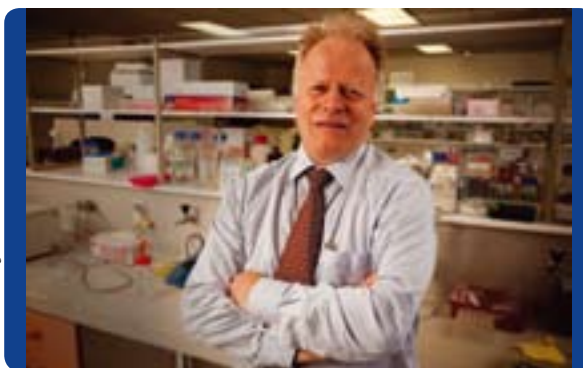
Peart says ignorance about trusts is incredibly high. "That's why we are seeing an increasing number of claims against trustees by disgruntled beneficiaries who don't get what they feel they are entitled to, because people treat the property as their own and ignore the other beneficiaries."

Trusts have also been challenged, in some cases, because they were not being run properly and it was not apparent to creditors that they had been dealing with a trust.

Palmer says it has raised detailed legal questions, such as how do you prove if a trust is a sham or a farce?

To answer such questions they will examine fundamental issues such as what is a trust, why do we need them, what are the requirements for a trust and should trusts ever be busted? They will feed their findings into a Law Commission review of trust law.

Photo: Ken George



Professor Richard Stubbs: "With the increasing use of gastric bypass surgery to control obesity, we and many clinicians overseas have discovered that diabetes is also cured ..."

The search for "factor X"

SURGEON PROFESSOR Richard Stubbs, who also heads the Wakefield Biomedical Research Unit on the University's Wellington campus, is committed to finding new ways of treating, and possibly curing, diabetes.

As a result of his clinical experience with gastric bypass surgery in obese diabetics, he is convinced that the cure for type 2 diabetes could ultimately be controlling a yet-to-be-identified gut hormone.

"With the increasing use of gastric bypass surgery to control obesity, we and many clinicians overseas have discovered that diabetes is also cured just six days after this surgical intervention," he says.

"There are now tens of thousands of cases of this internationally and we're determined to try to shed more light on why this is so, as the evidence is so convincing."

Stubbs and his team are in the process of identifying the gut hormone he calls "factor X", which he believes is probably produced in the duodenum. They now have a process in place to identify "factor X" and expect to characterise it in the next year or so.

Stubbs' key hypothesis is that this "factor X" is antagonistic to insulin and its over-production results in insulin resistance, which is the most common cause of type 2 diabetes. Stopping the over-production of insulin, or blocking the effect of "factor X", will resolve insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

Although current research is focusing on a medication to control insulin resistance, Stubbs says gastric bypass surgery may be the best and most cost-effective way of achieving this in some people with diabetes.

Spinning the wheels

OTAGO ALUMNA ALISON SHANKS KNOWS ALL ABOUT DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION. WITHIN FOUR YEARS OF TAKING UP THE SPORT OF CYCLING, SHE HAS BECOME A WORLD CHAMPION.

WHEN WORLD CHAMPION pursuit cyclist Alison Shanks waits in the starter gate for the starter buzzer to sound, time slows down.

Crowd noises fade, all activity around her falters, blurs. As the seconds flash by, she recalls the key words – “strong”, “powerful”, “breathe” – that will help power her legs for 12, muscle-screaming circuits of the track. And all she sees, beneath the stark velodrome fluorescent lights, is the thin black line stretching out in front of her.

This is her pathway to pain and back; a line to follow, no matter what.

In March 2009 this line proved to be Alison Shanks’ pathway to the title of World Champion in her specialty event, the 3,000 metre individual track pursuit, a title she will defend in Copenhagen next year.

That Otago alumna Shanks has achieved this much in the four years she has been in the sport might surprise some, but not many who know her. For the young woman who seems as relaxed about her regime as she is dedicated to it with iron-clad determination, it’s all part of a master plan which goes pretty much “one race at a time and one training session at a time”.

Quiet understatement is clearly Shanks’ style.

At the time of this interview, Shanks had just completed the Cascade Classic in the state of Oregon, America’s longest consecutively-run elite stage race. Otherwise, she spends her days cycling through the expansive landscape of northern California’s “fruitbowl”, putting in some serious road miles before a return to track training.

Together with coach Craig Palmer – “the rock in my cycling career; his daily guidance, encouragement and faith in my ability has lead me to results I would otherwise only have dreamed about” – she is preparing for a month’s altitude training in Boulder, Colorado.

She returns home this month for the national track camp in Invercargill, an event which signals the start of an intensive training and racing programme that will lead up to the World Championships in March 2010.

Alison Shanks was born a card-carrying member of the sporty-gene club to a netball-playing Mum and rugby-playing Dad in Dunedin in 1982. She remembers playing with a ball for hours in the backyard and discovered early on that she enjoyed pushing herself to improve her performance.

She was, for example, the type of person who enjoyed the beep test ... and how many of us can say that?

She agrees that traits such as a drive to improve individual performance and an ability to transcend the pain barrier make her better suited to her current sport over the netball she played for years: the opportunity cycling provided for self-determination was a big drawcard.

Shanks grew up a netballer, and aspired above all else to be a Silver Fern. She played for the Otago Rebels during her university years and made it to the New Zealand under-21 team. Increasingly, however, she became frustrated at being sidelined when match-time came.

“I was training really hard and was one of the fittest players, but I was still sitting on the bench,” she explains.

“But, with cycling, I found I had control. Come race day, I know I can line up on that start line in the best possible condition, ready to race and there isn’t going to be a coach saying ‘well, actually, you’re sitting on the bench today’.”

This drive to compete and overcome physical challenges is, of course, a defining quality for an elite athlete. And, at the pinnacle of her sport, Shanks says that where there is little difference between the physical attributes of each athlete or the technological refinements of their equipment, the deciding factor in a race often lies in the athlete’s mental stamina.

“It’s the mental preparation that goes into preparing your body to be able to hurt and the ability to push through that pain barrier that will win on the day,” says Shanks. “It’s being in that really positive mental space when you’re sitting on the start line and know it’s going to hurt like crazy.”

Shanks approaches each race strategically, dividing every circuit into bends and straights, bends and straights. Finding the rhythm, she says, is crucial. After that, it comes down to just how fast she can spin the pedals.

“The second part of the race is when your legs really start to burn. I often get fuzzy vision, especially with about three laps to go. That’s when your mental attitude comes into it. You just have to shut off the pain, keep turning those pedals over and keep talking to yourself pretty hard to fight it and push harder.”

Unsurprisingly for a person who thrives on pushing herself, Shanks doesn’t seem fazed by the pressure of being at the top of her game.

When she defends her world title next year, she doesn’t think the pressure will be any more intense than at the Polish event where she first claimed the top spot. But being a professional woman athlete has other stresses, Shanks points out.

“It’s harder for women to make a living as a cyclist because we don’t have the option of going to Europe or America where there

*Alison Shanks:
following the
thin black line.*

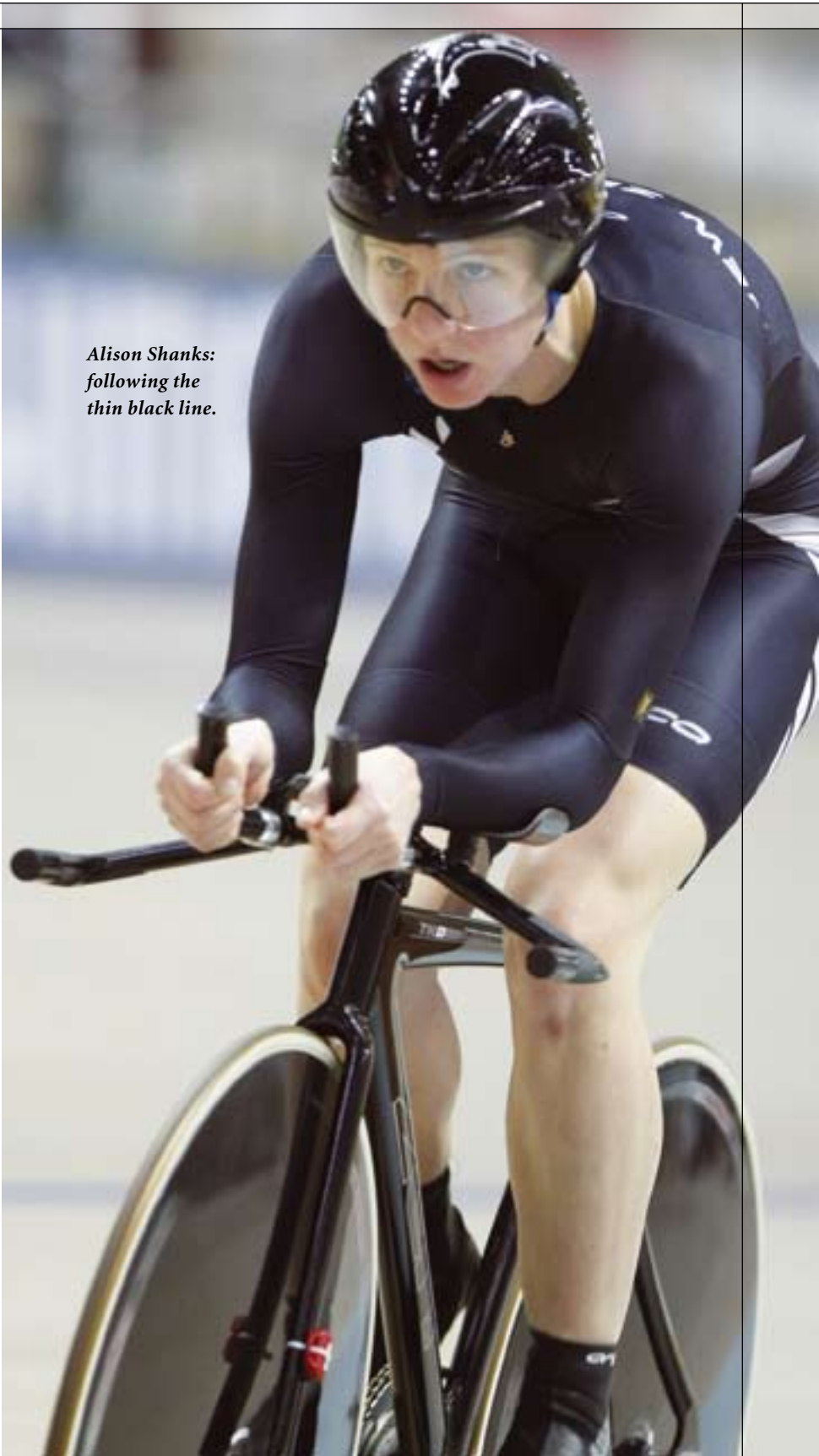




Photo: Katherine Phillips

Alison Shanks after her World Championship victory in March.

are hundreds of thousands of dollars available to guys to ride on professional teams.”

SPARC’s recently announced funding increases for elite New Zealand athletes is welcome news, but Shanks says people like her still have to attract personal sponsors to help fund the kind of training and racing lifestyle which is crucial for athletes who want to compete at the top level and earn a living from doing so.

She is hugely complimentary of her own sponsors – which include Mizone Hypotonic Sports Drink, Avanti bikes, Rainbow Print Group, 2XU performance sportswear, Oakley eyewear, Dunedin City Mazda and Classic Hits, Dunedin – and believes her Otago Marketing degree has been instrumental in helping her establish, build and maintain positive relationships with them.

“I understand what companies are after and what makes a good sponsorship relationship because I already had insight into what marketers need.”

Benefits of a different sort arise from her degree in Human Nutrition, including a sound understanding of the role of diet in the performance athlete’s lifestyle.

“Being an athlete is an all-encompassing, 24/7 job. It’s definitely not just about what happens on the bike. Your body is like the engine – everything you put into it is fuel – so making that engine function as efficiently and effectively as it can is important.

“Having studied nutrition, I definitely have an advantage. I’ve often found that something I know comes as a surprise to some of my team-mates, for example, so I realise I have a lot of underlying knowledge that helps me along the way.”

Shanks is confident she will use her degrees even more at some point in the future. Many of her peers, she notes, having concentrated solely on their sports, have no formal qualifications to help them develop a new career once their sporting careers are over.

But for now, she is focusing on being the very best she can be at her sport and seeing how far she can push herself.

“There are a few more years left in me yet,” she laughs. There’s that understatement, again.

Rebecca Tansley

Law academic wins teaching award

OTAGO FACULTY OF LAW senior lecturer Selene Mize has been named as New Zealand's top tertiary teacher.



Selene Mize

Mize was honoured with the Prime Minister's Supreme Award in the 2009 Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards, which are administered by Ako Aotearoa, New Zealand's National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence. Her awardee profile stated that "Selene is a shining example of an outstanding tertiary educator who is creative and innovative in her practice".

She was selected for an exceptional portfolio that highlighted her passion for law over a 20-year career, her contribution to the international reputation of New Zealand law education and an "absolute and unstinting commitment" to her students and their success.

Law Dean Professor Mark Henaghan said Mize's success in the awards was "richly deserved".

"Selene has been a major influence in the teaching practices at the Faculty of Law over many years. She is superb and tireless in giving constructive feedback to her students, and constantly looks at new ways of ensuring they are learning to the best of their ability."

He added that Mize was a driving force behind the development of the faculty's research and writing programme, which requires all undergraduate Law students to complete independent research and legal writing.

"I have had considerable feedback both from graduates and employers that this programme has a deep effect on students in their professional lives."

New Genetics centre launched

GENETICS OTAGO, a new University network devoted to promoting and supporting research in genetics-related areas, was launched in August.

Conceived and directed by Biochemistry senior lecturer Dr Peter Dearden, Genetics Otago aims to be New Zealand's leading centre for advanced genetics research and teaching.

Dearden says the University's considerable strength in genetics-related research has not always been

immediately apparent, as the researchers involved are spread across many disciplines.

The centre already has more than 100 members from across the University's Divisions of Health Sciences, Sciences and Humanities, as well as external organisations.

Research is focused around seven main themes covering the full spectrum of genetics research, with study being undertaken at the level of molecules, cells, embryos, organisms, populations and society.

Stadium architects appointed

THE UNIVERSITY buildings that are to form part of the new Forsyth Barr Stadium at University Plaza are now a step closer to becoming a reality.

In August, New Zealand firm Warren and Mahoney was appointed as the architect for the University's building programme at the stadium site. Dunedin architects McCoy and Wixon will assist.

The University's facilities will face Anzac Avenue, on the western side of the stadium, and open onto the urban space to be known as the University Plaza.

The first stage of the University complex will include a gymnasium and recreation space, a physiotherapy clinic, teaching and learning space for the Foundation Studies programme, and a cafeteria.

Announcing the architects' appointment, Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg says the new complex will free up space that is needed under the University's critical space plan, and will also create an important campus hub where students and citizens can mix.

It is estimated that the new facilities will attract about 430,000 visits annually.

The second stage of the building programme is likely to provide expanded facilities for Student Health Services, together with research facilities for the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit.

AgResearch collaborations funded

THE UNIVERSITY and the Crown Research Institute AgResearch recently announced a funding boost of \$500,000 to support seven new joint-research projects involving human and animal health.

The grants come from the AgResearch, University of Otago Collaborative Research Fund, which is designed to stimulate new research partnerships between the two organisations. Several of the projects involve the new Centre for Reproduction and Genomics at Invermay,

near Dunedin. This state-of-the-art centre brings together scientific teams from AgResearch and the University with a research focus on livestock and human reproduction, health and disease.

Major support for health research

OTAGO RESEARCHERS undertaking a wide range of studies aimed at improving New Zealanders' health and well-being have received major support from the Health Research Council.

In its latest annual funding round, the HRC awarded Otago researchers more than \$30 million for 25 health research programmes and projects.

These range from investigations of basic biomedical mechanisms involved in cancer and other diseases, to community-level interventions aimed at making homes healthier, and tackling childhood obesity.

The contracts comprise four multi-million-dollar, multi-year programmes, 17 projects, three emerging researcher grants and a feasibility study. Researchers from across the University's three main campuses in Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington were successful.

One major new programme involves the internationally-renowned Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, which has tracked the progress of around 1,000 people born in 1972–73.

The programme will investigate disease risk as study members move into middle age, gaining knowledge that can guide policy and practice in promoting good health and positive ageing for New Zealanders.

Other research funded includes studies into whether vitamin D supplementation reduces respiratory infections, how to reduce barriers to care for pregnant mothers and their whanau, new approaches to reducing tobacco use, and biological mechanisms involved in heart health.

Appointments



Professor Richard Edwards

Professor **Richard Edwards** to the University's Chair in Public Health at its Wellington campus. Professor Edwards is one of New Zealand's leading tobacco control researchers. Since joining the University in 2005, he has developed research collaborations and networks in New Zealand and Australasia and has led a series of tobacco control research projects.



Professor Hank Weiss

Professor **Hank Weiss** as Director of the University's Injury Prevention Research Unit. Professor Weiss comes to Otago from the University of Pittsburgh, USA, where he was Director of its Centre for Injury Research and Control. He has more than 26 years of experience in injury prevention research and has a particular interest in reducing road-crash injuries.

Dr **Brian Young** as the University's Director (Research) in its Research and Enterprise Office. Dr Young comes to Otago from New Zealand's Ministry for Research, Science and Technology for which he served as the first Science and Technology Counsellor to the United States.



Dr Brian Young

Obituary

Emeritus Professor **Hewat (Hew) McLeod** (76), Department of History (1971–1997). A world authority on Sikhism, Professor McLeod was a key figure in creating the department's vibrant research culture. His scholarship is credited with transforming understanding of Sikh history and culture.

Achievements

Professor **Cliff Abraham** (Psychology) is the 2009 recipient of the University's Distinguished Research Medal in recognition of his internationally influential work on the neural mechanisms underlying memory storage.



Professor Cliff Abraham

The University's 2009 Early Career Awards for Distinction in Research were awarded to Drs **Rebecca Campbell** (Physiology), **Lisa Stamp** (Medicine, University of Otago,

Christchurch), **Angela Wanhalla** (History) and **Sarah Young** (Microbiology and Immunology).

Dr **Rob Aitken** (Marketing), Associate Professor **Allan Blackman** (Chemistry) and Ms **Selene Mize** (Law) are the 2009 recipients of the University's Teaching Excellence Awards. Ms Mize also won the Prime Minister's Supreme Award at this year's national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards (see story page 37).

Professor **Philippa Howden-Chapman** (Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington) was co-recipient of the New Zealand Psychological Society's annual Public Interest Award.

Dr **Cheryl Brunton** (Public Health and General Practice, University of Otago, Christchurch) was named Public Health Champion for 2009 by the New Zealand Public Health Association.

In the Montana New Zealand Book Awards 2009, Dr **Chris Brickell** (Gender Studies) won the NZSA E H McCormick Best First Book Award for his illustrated non-fiction book *Mates and Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand*.

Professor **Katharine Dickinson** (Botany) received the New Zealand Ecological Society's Te Tohu Taiao Award for Ecological Excellence.

Physiology MSc student **Mickey (Jui-Lin) Fan** won the master's-level prize in the MacDiarmid Young Scientists of the Year Awards for his research into links between blood flow to the brain and breathing patterns.

Alumnus Professor **David Miller** (Institute of Neurology, University College London) received the National MS Society/American Academy of Neurology's 2009 John Dystel Prize for Multiple Sclerosis Research.

Otago graduate and former Robert Burns Fellow **Cilla McQueen** has been appointed New Zealand's Poet Laureate for 2009–11.

Queen's Birthday Honours

Current and former staff receiving honours: Master of Knox College and former University Pro-Chancellor **Bruce Aitken** was made a Companion of the Queen's Service Order for services to education and music; Professor **Terry Crooks** (College of Education) was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to education; Medical Director of the University's Te Waipounamu Rural Health Unit Dr **Pat Farry** was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to rural medicine; **Lester Flockton** (College of Education) was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to education and pipe bands.

Alumni to receive honours were: Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit – Dr Peter Thorne; Officer of the

New Zealand Order of Merit – Dr Patrick Cotter, Murray Deaker, Dr John Henley, Dr Graham Sharpe; Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit – John Gilks, Margaret Hiha, Dr Tak Hung, John Kouka; Queen's Service Medal – Lorna Dyall.

Scholarships/fellowships

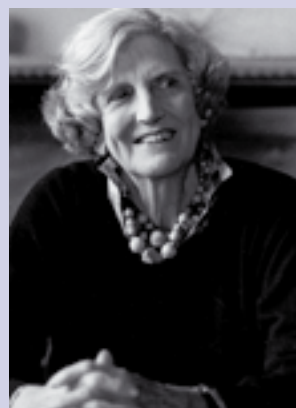
Chemistry graduate **Nick White** (BSc(Hons) 2007) has gained a Trinity College Clarendon Bursary to undertake PhD study at Oxford University.

PhD students **Tracy Josephs** (Biochemistry) and **Rebekah Scott** (Neuroscience) have received Elman Poole Travelling Scholarships.

Three Otago graduates have received Fulbright Scholarships for postgraduate study in New York. **Anna Bradley** (BA, LLB(Hons) 2006) will complete a Master of Laws degree in Criminal Law at Columbia University. **Stephen Gray** (BSc, PGDipSci 2005) will complete a Master of International Affairs degree at Columbia University. **Simon Peart** (BA, LLB(Hons) 2006) will complete a Master of Laws degree in Trade Regulation at New York University.

Steven Sutton (BA(Hons), LLB 2008) was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue a PhD in History at Cambridge University.

Honorary degree

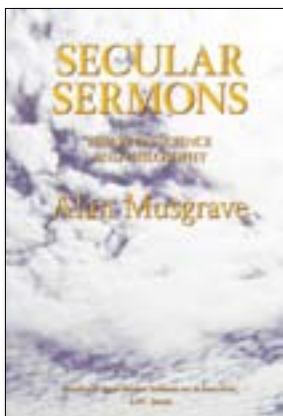


Barbara Anderson

Acclaimed New Zealand fiction writer **Barbara Anderson** (BSc 1947) received an honorary Doctor of Literature degree at the University's graduation ceremony in August. The degree was conferred in recognition of her intellectual and artistic achievements, and the high regard in which she is held nationally and internationally.

Emeritus Professor

John Langley, the recently retired Director of the University's Injury Prevention Research Unit, has been granted the status of Professor Emeritus by the University Council.



Secular Sermons

Essays on Science and Philosophy

Alan Musgrave, September 2009

DISCURSIVE, entertaining and provocative, *Secular Sermons* contains 14 essays by celebrated philosopher Professor Alan Musgrave, examining the basic assumptions of science, religion and mathematics.

Can we decide what to believe? Why do scientists do experiments and what can their experiments show? Is evolution a scientific theory? Such apparently simple questions are brilliantly investigated by Musgrave in order to interrogate the world views we inhabit – and their consequences. He brings to these questions an expansive historical knowledge, provoking his readers to enter the now-discredited belief systems of earlier ages in order to compare these with their own.



The Summer King

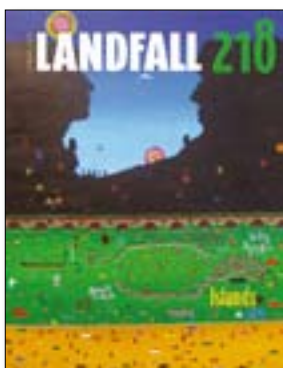
Poems

Joanna Preston, July 2009

THIS IS the inaugural winner of the Kathleen Grattan Award for Poetry, New Zealand's newest and most generous poetry prize, administered by Otago University Press.

Myth, catastrophe, family, strangers, sex, sport all make appearances in *The Summer King*. The book contains two finely-wrought poem sequences: *Cowarral*, about Preston's family farm in New South Wales, and *Venery*, which was inspired by the collective nouns ("a gaggle of geese", "a superfluity of nuns") that first appeared in the *Book of St Albans*.

Preston is a multi-award-winning poet who has been widely published in New Zealand and internationally, including in the prestigious 2007 Carcanet anthology *New Poetries IV* and *Best Australian Poems 2005*.

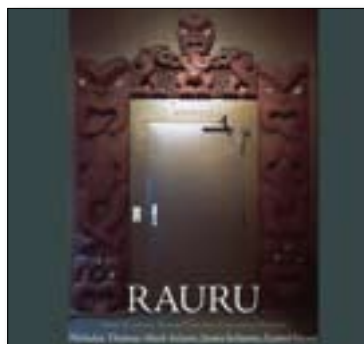


Landfall 218 – Islands

Edited by David Eggleton, November 2009

LOCATED as one point of the Polynesian triangle, New Zealand has welcomed a global diversity of migrants and settlers. *Landfall 218* will suggest something of this variety and heritage. Contributors include writers of Māori and Pacific Islands heritage, but the issue flings the net wide to explore communities, villages, self-contained entities and the currents of world culture.

Also in *Landfall 218* are the winner/s of the *Landfall* Essay Competition 2009 and a call for applications for the Seresin *Landfall* Residency 2010. C K Stead was the inaugural winner of this residency in 2009, spending six weeks in Tuscany in an inspired sponsorship by Michael Seresin of Seresin Estate, working on an autobiography of his childhood and a new collection of poetry. And a special award was made in 2009: young Wellington writer Jenah Shaw has just completed six weeks in the Marlborough Sounds working on her first novel. More details about the residency are on the Otago University Press website.



Rauru

Tene Waitere, Māori carving, colonial history

Edited by Nicholas Thomas, Photographs by Mark Adams, June 2009

THIS IS the first book about Tene Waitere, an innovative Māori artist of the colonial period. It features essays by Nicholas Thomas, Director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and two extended interviews – one with James Schuster, Tene Waitere's great-grandson, and another with Lyonel Grant, a leading contemporary Māori carver. Photographs by renowned New Zealand documentary photographer Mark Adams evoke and investigate the historic and contemporary contexts of Waitere's major carvings, from sites that are now empty in Rotorua, to museums across Europe.

Waitere's works reached global audiences decades before the globalisation of culture became a fashionable topic: Rauru, the eponymous meeting-house which arguably incorporates Tene's greatest work, is the highlight of a famous anthropological museum in Germany; Hinemihi, the carved house featured in one section of this book, sheltered survivors of the Tarawera eruption in 1886 before being removed to the park of an English country house; closer to home the magnificent carved Ta Moko panel is one of Te Papa's icons.

Beautifully presented, this book is unique as a dialogue, as well as a revelation of great works of Māori art.

For further information

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

Recently published books by Otago alumni

Eat for Keeps, by Leigh Elder, Cape Catley, November 2008.

Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Forsyth Torrance, by Myk Habets, Surrey: Ashgate Publishers, 2009.

The First Door That Opened: experiences of migrants in Wellington's volunteer sector, by Rebecca Gray, Steele Roberts, 2008.

The Yellow Middle, by Neroli Cottam, Brackens Print, Oamaru.

The Real McKay, by Graham Bishop, Otago University Press, November 2008.

The First Touch of Light, by Ruth Dianne Pettis, Penguin, March 2009.

Chance is a Fine Thing, by Philip Temple, Random House, March 2009.

Robbie: the story of Dunedin's Burns statue, by Donald Gordon, Avon Publishers, May 2009.

Archie Saves the Day, by Leonie Thorpe, HarperCollins New Zealand, May 2009.

An Enduring Savour: reflections of a woman doctor on early influences, by Margaret Guthrie, MWG Publishing, May 2009.

The Lustre Jug, by Bernadette Hall, Victoria University Press, August 2009.

High Street Shopping and High Country Farming: A history of Wardell and Anderson families in Otago, Ian Dougherty, Mahana Trust, 2009.

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

Reading between the lines

WHEN MAJOR-GENERAL Horatio Gordon Robley swashbuckled his way into the New Zealand wars in 1864, he brought a reputation as “the soldier with a pencil”.

His ability to accurately depict landforms was a strategic advantage as he scored victories at Tauranga. His paintings provide a rare record of New Zealand military history and early observations of Māori life.

But it was Robley’s fascination with moko that assured his place in New Zealand cultural history. His book, *Moko, or Māori Tattooing*, was published in London in 1894. An unpublished and greatly revised second edition of this seminal text is held in the Hocken Collections.

The works draw upon sources including d’Urville’s writings, copies of land deeds where chiefs signed by drawing their moko, Māori visiting the United Kingdom – and his collection of 35 mokomokai, or preserved Māori heads.

Despite having spent just 19 months in New Zealand (a period which included a relationship with Harete Mauao and the birth of their son, Hamiora Tu Ropere) the books were created with the urgency of one bearing witness to a dying cultural tradition. As Christianity took hold in Māori communities, the prevalence and diversity of the moko was diminishing swiftly and Robley’s concern was art historical. As Māori elders aged and died, he lamented the loss of some “really fine specimens” of moko art.

He writes extensively on the morbid economy of mokomokai trade, arguing that Europeans’ willingness to pay for the curios perverted the Māori custom of reserving the practice to commemorate high-ranking chiefs. Desperate to raise funds for ammunition, and horrified by the thought of chiefs’ heads coming into the possession of outsiders, Māori increasingly applied moko to slaves for the purposes of trade.

While Robley’s published work was widely celebrated, the second edition promised more. He intended to feature specific motifs that recur in the moko design. He has added numerous photos and sketches, and refined his spelling of Māori terms.

Dalvanus Prime, an active campaigner for the repatriation of mokomokai, explored the possibility of having the second edition published at last.

Modern readers will wonder at how Robley’s professed reverence for the Māori people and traditions could have been reconciled with his wartime duties. We might raise eyebrows that his critique of the “sordid trade” in heads barely acknowledges his complicity in the practice.

Yet some sage advice may come from Robley himself. In his notes to the second edition, Robley implores his Victorian readership not to impose their tastes and sensibilities when judging this Māori custom. He urges them not to see the practice as “barbaric” or the dying wishes of vain chiefs, but to appreciate the cultural imperatives of the time.

In revisiting Robley’s contributions to New Zealand history, we may gain most from his work when we afford him similar latitude.

Nicola Mutch



“A soldier with a pencil”, Major-General Horatio Robley was a compulsive and talented artist. The unpublished second edition of his 1896 work *Moko, or Māori Tattooing* sought to name, detail and record for posterity the many motifs of Māori facial art.

Hocken Gallery Exhibition

17 October – 21 February 2010: On Vacation – A History of Holidaying in Southern New Zealand.

This exhibition celebrates modes of transport, styles of accommodation and the variety of pastimes enjoyed at popular holiday destinations in the South Island 1870 – 1970.

A word from the Head

Otago's alumni are a remarkably mobile population, with graduates taking advantage of their Otago qualifications to seek careers all over the world. This makes communications a challenge when details on the alumni database are out of date. We realise that letting your alma mater know where you are is not top of the list of things to do when you're in the midst of moving to another city or country. However, we do encourage you to let us know your new address so we can keep in touch. You can do this by mail, email or phone, or online by taking advantage of the "Update your Details" form on the alumni website at www.otago.ac.nz/alumni/changedetails.html

The University is working to reduce its carbon footprint and the Alumni Relations Office intends to do its bit by streamlining the *Otago Magazine* mailing list. It can happen that multiple copies of the magazine are sent to the same address, particularly when



Alison Finigan

there is more than one Otago graduate in a family. If you are receiving spare copies of the magazine please let us know so we can amend our mailing list. In the interests of sustainability, you may prefer to dispense with the hard copy altogether and read your *Otago Magazine* and other alumni communications online. We can send notifications of such communications to your nominated email address.

While on the subject of keeping in touch, the Alumni Relations Office is in the process of implementing a website and communication package that will offer alumni the opportunity to interact directly with their departments, the University and each other, in a password-protected networking environment. NetCommunities will also provide every member of the alumni community with an Otago email address. For more information about this please email alumni.netcommunity@otago.ac.nz

Upcoming University celebrations

- 2009 City College 10th anniversary
- 2010 Science Big Day Out
Selwyn College reunion
Hocken Library centenary
Māori Centre 21st anniversary
- 2011 St Margaret's College centenary
Department of Home Science and Consumer and Applied Sciences centenary
Department of Preventive and Social Medicine celebrates 125 years
Aquinas College jubilee
50 years since the University of Otago became autonomous from the University of NZ.

City College 10th anniversary, November 2009

City College was opened on 25 March 2000. The first decade of operation is being celebrated with a reunion function at the college on Friday 20 November. For further information contact Joy Crawford, phone 03 479 5592, or email joy.crawford@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Selwyn College reunion, 2010

Selwyn College is holding an alumni reunion during the week beginning 29 January to 8 February 2010. All alumni are invited and there will be group events for residents of

the college 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 years ago. The reunion coincides with the Masters' Games tournament which will be held in Dunedin during the same week.

For further information about this Selwyn College event, please contact Sandra Sutherland at office.selwyn@otago.ac.nz or 03 477 3326.

Science Big Day Out, 2010

A summer family fun day is being organised for Sciences alumni living in Otago. Activities include getting out and about on the Otago Harbour, picnicking and entertainment. More details coming soon.

St Margaret's centenary reunion

St Margaret's College commemorates its centenary in 2011 and alumni and friends are invited to celebrate this at a reunion to be held the week beginning 28 February 2011. Please visit www.otago.ac.nz/alumni/reunions/stmargarets or register your interest to Alumni Director, St Margaret's College, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054.

Dr Susannah Grant (nee Kerr) is writing the history of St Margaret's in preparation for the centennial celebrations. It will trace the story of St Margaret's from its origins as Dunedin's first hall of residence for women, opening in 1911 with just three students, to its current role as a co-educational college catering for more than 200 male and female residents.

Home Science centenary and reunion, 2011



This photo shows the old textile science lab in the attic of the bluestone building opened in 1920 to house the School of Home Science. Alumni will have their own memories of time spent in the attic space, including hours spent in the Strong Library, which was also located in the attic. The 2011 reunion will provide an opportunity for alumni to reminisce and to see how today's Consumer and Applied Sciences has evolved. To register your interest, please visit www.otago.ac.nz/capsc/centenary

Department of Preventive and Social Medicine celebrates 125 years, March 2011

In 2011 the University's largest department will celebrate the 125th anniversary of public health education in New Zealand. A comprehensive and varied programme is being planned, and all alumni and friends of the department are encouraged to register their interest and to attend. If you have recollections, photographs or other memorabilia you would like to share, please contact DeptPSM100@otago.ac.nz

Aquinas College jubilee, September 2011

Following the successful reunion held in 2008, a group of Aquinas alumni are planning another celebration to mark six decades of the history of this college. Please register your interest by emailing lizzy.lukeman@otago.ac.nz or telephone 03 479 8487.

Regional Alumni Networks

For information about regional alumni networks in your area visit the Alumni and Friends website. To register your interest in becoming a regional contact or co-ordinator contact Alix Cassidy on 64 3 479 5649 or email alix.cassidy@otago.ac.nz

Reunions

MB ChB Class of 1954

18–20 March 2010, Auckland
Contact Warren Fraser at wnc.fraser@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1957

2010, Wellington
Fellow Otago graduates from the 1956 or 1958 MB ChB classes who are interested in joining us are welcome to contact Warren Austad at austads@xtra.co.nz for further information.

BDS Class of 1960

18–21 August 2010, Christchurch
Contact Kerry Sullivan at kerrysullivan@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1964

Planning underway for May 2010 and 2014, Christchurch
Contact Peter Law at peter.law@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1968

26 February–1 March 2010, Paihia, Bay of Islands
Contact Brian Spackman at fredspoons@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1979

23–25 October (Labour Weekend) 2009, Dunedin
Contact Kerry Buchan at buchans@xtra.co.nz

Studholme College residents of 1981

January 2010, Dunedin
Contact Phil Seddon at philip.seddon@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

For help organising reunions please contact Lizzy Lukeman at lizzy.lukeman@otago.ac.nz or 03 479 8487.

Reunion reports

Knox College centenary

Fun and nostalgia in equal measure summed up a hugely successful Knox College centennial celebration. Attracting almost 500 participants – including residents from the 1930s to the present day, and many from overseas – the celebrations took in the traditional College Winter Ball and included a full diary of other events over the weekend of 7–9 August.

A highlight of the weekend was the launch of the specially-commissioned *A Living Tradition: A Centennial History of Knox College*, a lavishly-illustrated 244-page history written by Otago graduate Dr Alison Clarke. This book is now available from Knox College (\$75 including GST and postage).

However, despite meticulous planning, it was an impromptu act that almost stole the show over the weekend.



Formal and fun: the Knox College centenary celebrations were a great success.

At Sunday brunch, the oldest attendee, Dr Jim Begg, a resident at the college in 1938, serenaded the crowd on a well-tempered bagpipe, crowning the performance by climbing the six flights of stairs to the college tower and broadcasting his music to most of Opoho.

University Rugby Football Club 125th jubilee

The 125th jubilee celebrations of the University Rugby Football Club were held over Queen's Birthday weekend. A crowd of more than 300 attended – many from overseas – with ages ranging from those in their 80s to those in their early 20s.

The welcoming addresses by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Skegg, the Mayor of Dunedin, Peter Chin, and the club president, Bill Thompson set the tone for the weekend. They all spoke warmly and knowledgeably about

the club, acknowledging the achievements of its members – on and off the field over its 125 years – and the special place it holds in the history of the University. The club numbers 18 Rhodes Scholars and 44 All Blacks among its members and former members.

Also among those attending were the Minister of Finance and former club member, Bill English, 11 of the club's 19 living All Blacks and five of the club's 12 Black Ferns. The President of the OUSA, Edwin Darlow, and former Vice-Chancellor and former patron of the club, Dr Graeme Fogelberg, were also present.

The jubilee programme and other jubilee material will be lodged in the Hocken Library.

Many photographs were taken during the celebrations and can be viewed at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ourfc125>



Rugby was the winner at the University Rugby Football Club 125th jubilee, attended by more than 300 current and former club members.



Alumni events 2009

London, The Kiwi Kitchen, June



San Francisco, University Club, June



Sydney, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, August



KEEP IN TOUCH

Address for correspondence:

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

Street address: Alumni House
103 St David Street
Dunedin

Tel 64 3 479 5246

Fax 64 3 479 6522

Web www.otago.ac.nz/alumni

Email alumni@otago.ac.nz

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

- register for alumni events
- update your contact details so you continue to receive publications from Otago
- view information on how to contact other Otago alumni
- find out how you can support the University
- find information about regional alumni networks in your area.

Alumni events 2009

Gisborne 5 November
Napier 7 November

For further information about these events please email functions.alumni@otago.ac.nz
telephone Alix Cassidy on 64 3 479 564
or go to www.otago.ac.nz/alumni/functions

Arana College archives room

The Arana archives room is home to photographs of hall/college year groups since 1943, as well as an interesting collection of magazines, memorabilia and artefacts tracing Arana's history. It includes newspaper articles about Arana activities over the years, including an infamous mud throwing incident at a capping parade, initiations in the Leith and photographs of young women visiting Arana during "ladies, visiting hours".

Each year the Stuart Residence Halls Council assists Arana with funding for work on the archival material. With this assistance, the hall/college photographs were recently located, restored and framed. However, the archives room is still missing year group photos from 1960, 1995 and 1996. College warden Jamie Gilbertson would be delighted to hear from former residents who may have these photographs, so that copies can be made. Please contact him at jamie.gilbertson@otago.ac.nz

Gifting to Otago

Celebrating Charles Brasch

To mark the 100th anniversary of his birth, exhibitions in the University Library's Special Collections and at Hocken have celebrated the astounding contribution of Charles Brasch to the University.

Most recently *Charles Brasch; in the company of artists at the Hocken Gallery* has featured a small selection from the 450 works he gave to the Hocken, illustrating the importance of his collection. It contains early works and works that have become national icons. The research value of the collection is enhanced with voluminous correspondence of Brasch as patron, critic and friend, and the working papers that show how Brasch used *Landfall* to showcase new creative talents.

Perhaps more than anyone apart from Hocken himself, Brasch has influenced the development of the Hocken Collections. Through his involvement in the Hocken Pictures Committee, and his gifts and bequests, he helped



Charles Brasch's patronage and bequests have been of enormous value to the University.

steer the development of the collection, advising on policy and on purchases.

Through the University fellowships and trust funds he initiated and anonymously endowed, he has enabled the University to play a role in nurturing creative talents and contributed to the richness of University life. The Hocken Endowment Trust is the only source of funds Hocken has for the ongoing purchase of archives and manuscripts, pictures and photographs. Many others have contributed to the fund but Brasch was a generous donor during his lifetime and through his will.

Through his work creating and editing *Landfall* there is now a record of the development of New Zealand art, music and literature. His literary papers and personal archives in the Hocken are a 25-linear-metre treasure trove that includes correspondence with more than 600 people and includes his own perceptive journals.

The University of Otago in America, Inc

The University of Otago in America, Inc was founded by alumni living in North America to support and promote the University of Otago, and to provide financial support to qualifying organisations for charitable, scientific, educational and scholarship purposes as defined by section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

The board of the University of Otago in America, Inc is composed of eight committed Otago alumni who work enthusiastically to encourage connections between US-based alumni and their alma mater in Dunedin, all in the context of "giving back". Members of the board are Murray Brennan (president), Jennifer Schreiber (secretary),

Neil Matheson (treasurer), William Lindqvist, Allan Portis, Andrew King, Andrew Howells, Geoffrey Nichol, Lisa Salgado and Adrian van Schie.

For more information on the work of the University of Otago in America, Inc, please contact the board secretary, Jennifer Schreiber, email jrschrei@pacbell.net or telephone 00 1 310 859 1203.

Annual Appeal

Since 2003, donations from alumni and friends have made a significant contribution to a wide range of University activities, including undergraduate scholarships and research projects.

The 2009 Annual Appeal was launched in August and, as in the past, alumni have responded generously. As a result it will again be possible to offer a number of undergraduate scholarships to assist able young students to study at Otago. Likewise, donations to the four University research centres targeted for funding in 2008/2009 have been building steadily and are much appreciated by staff and students working in these areas. The following brief reports from each centre illustrate the progress that has been made possible through your support.

Centre for Entrepreneurship

The past year has been an exciting one for researchers and teachers associated with the Centre for Entrepreneurship. Three new optional papers focusing on issues in science, arts and social entrepreneurship have been approved for introduction in 2010 for the Master of Entrepreneurship degree. The papers will be available to managers of artistic, scientific or non-profit enterprises, as well as students.

Researchers are working on projects relating to green entrepreneurship, community entrepreneurship and the commercialisation of scientific innovations. Upcoming research will focus on Māori entrepreneurship, local and international youth entrepreneurship issues, and the impact of national culture on the development of entrepreneurial enterprises.

Centre for International Health

Links have been established with the World Health Organisation in Fiji and Samoa, and the possibility of

similar links in the Philippines are being investigated. Staff are developing proposals for work in Samoa that will focus on fertility issues, which could lay the foundations of a multidisciplinary approach to the elimination of various STDs in the island nation. Secure relationships have been established in the Gambia, including a PhD scholarship to be awarded to an outstanding student.

Other proposed projects include: TB case contact study in Indonesia; development of a TB breath test in Indonesia; research into HIV in the Pacific in collaboration with the AIDS Epidemiology Group; and a diarrhoeal survey in Fiji.

Centre for Science Communication

One year after its establishment, the Centre for Science Communication has 52 masters' students, making it the world's second largest postgraduate programme devoted to science communication. The theses the students produce consist of research plus a creative component. The latter involves popularising science through films, books, websites, exhibitions or other means.

Staff are actively involved in popularising science and have begun a number of research initiatives that will contribute to a framework of understanding for science communication.

Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and Environment

The Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CSAFE) has gone from strength to strength in the last year with several large research contracts being awarded recently. These include research into Māori involvement in resource management, understanding household energy behaviours, sustainable agriculture and a project on future risks and opportunities for New Zealand's rural sector.

Thanks to the money donated by alumni through the Annual Appeal, the team has been able to engage students to work alongside these and other research projects, enhancing what these projects can achieve and developing students' research skills. This support has made a real difference to the work of the centre, with tangible outcomes that are very much appreciated by all involved in the projects.

Magazine delivery

The University of Otago Magazine can be sent to you – by post or by email – wherever you are in the world. If you would prefer to read the Magazine and other alumni communications online rather than receiving a hard copy, or if more than one Magazine is being sent to your address and you need only one "household" copy, please email magazine@otago.ac.nz so the mailing list can be amended.

Alumni story

A Band Intense

Alumni from the late 1980s may remember a group called A Band Intense that played gigs around Dunedin from 1989 to 1991.

The band recently held a reunion at the 40th birthday of founder and former Dentistry student Stacy Hunt, at which members of the original line-up – Morris Wong (Dentistry), Andrew Sansom (Psychology) and Mike Packer (Biochemistry and Marine Science) – joined Stacy to relive the glory days.

“The second we started jamming, it just felt so natural and so many memories flooded back,” says Mike, who played rhythm guitar in the original band. “We were rough and much looser than we were 20 years earlier, but we had a very forgiving audience in Stacey’s friends and family.”

The band’s first gig was in July 1989 at the Savoy as the support act for the Soulminers. For the next two years or so they played regularly in pubs and the University Union, as well as starring as the main act at several University balls at the Town Hall and Larnach Castle. Their repertoire consisted of a good deal of original material mixed in with crowd-pleasing covers.

The band was joined at various times by two other members, Jane Churton (keyboard and backing vocals) and Jim McInnies (harmonica), with Adrian Walden in support as dedicated sound man. The band never released an album, but got considerable airtime on Radio One, especially for one song, “A Good Dream”.

Mike recalls initially having reservations about the band’s name, but soon realised it was an asset when it came to promotion. Banned Intents, Abandon Tents, Banned in Tents ... the catchy permutations looked good on posters and ensured the name stuck.

He doesn’t remember much conflict between the demands of university study and the time devoted to playing, which often took up five nights a week, including practices.

“I was doing a master’s degree in Marine Science at the time and don’t recall having any difficulty keeping up with it all. I can’t speak for the others, but I wouldn’t say our academic work suffered tremendously.”

The band’s last gig together was at Foxy’s Nightclub in about October 1990. “We had a very sweet deal there for a period of about six weeks,” Mike recalls. “We could leave our gear set up, have a meal and then a quick warm up before a primed audience would flood in around 9.30. This was helped a lot in that it was one of the few venues in town that had a late licence at the time.”



A Band Intense reunites.

Postgraduate study and growing family commitments spelt the end for A Band Intense, although members have kept their music connections going to some degree over the years.

All have pursued successful careers: Stacy has developed a successful company producing cutting-edge dentistry videos working from the Centre for Innovation in Dunedin; Morris is a periodontist in Wellington; and Andrew completed a PhD in Psychology and now works for a biotechnology company also based in the Centre for Innovation. Mike completed a PhD at Otago and, after seven years in New York he returned to New Zealand and is now a research scientist at the Cawthron Institute in Nelson.

One aspect of the reunion gig graphically illustrates how far the boys have come since those heady days 20 years ago. Transporting drum kits, amps and guitars to the 2009 gig in a fleet of family-sized vehicles (including two people-movers) was a breeze compared to moving everyone’s stuff in Morris’s little hatchback, the one and only vehicle anyone owned in 1989.

Those who remember the band fondly may be disappointed to learn that there are no plans for a public reunion any time soon, though a lucky few might just catch them performing at half century birthdays over the next decade. Long live rock ‘n’ roll!

Student flat names?

Photos: Sarah Gallagher



SOME EPHEMERA are worth celebrating, even if they are created with a Sharpie pen or stolen beer advertising.

Certainly Classics alumna and former staff member Sarah Gallagher thinks so. Her one-time assignment about the illustrious – and not so illustrious – names with which Otago students have blessed their flats over the last few decades has developed into a bona fide project, complete with Facebook group, photographic exhibition and an upcoming book.

And it's a project that is reconnecting many Otago graduates from around the world with a significant aspect of their student years.

It began in 2000, while Gallagher was working at the University's Law Library and studying part-time towards a master's degree in Library and Information Studies. Familiar with the phenomenon of flat naming from her own time at Otago as a student, she began documenting the seemingly inconsequential signs as an example of print culture in the community.

"I spent a day driving around with friends in a black van called, 'Stealth'. We had a hoot crawling along the streets of North Dunedin on our drive-by, with me leaping out of

the van periodically to snap some flats with an aged, but beloved, Pentax ME Super."

In 2005, after returning from time working abroad, Gallagher set up a Facebook group so she could share the images with others.

The group now has more than 700 members, including many who have shared their own images, tagged photos with their names and contributed flat-naming stories such as the provenance of "Brucie's Beenjamin' Butchery" in Ethel Benjamin Place or "Bordello" in Clyde Street.

Probably the most famous of Dunedin's flat name signs is "Pink Flat the Door", now 21 years old and verging on respectability – there is now a clause in the flat's lease to protect it.

But there have been more than 100 others throughout North Dunedin, many dating back nearly as long. Some are small and witty; others big, bold and crass. Every one is a unique artefact representing a curious cultural phenomenon not found anywhere else in New Zealand.

In fact, Gallagher claims the sometimes roughly-made signs and slogans are more than the product of whim or the culmination of a night of excess. She believes they reflect



a sub-culture that is, for many Otago undergraduates, an integral part of their student experience.

“The majority of students who flat may not have come from Dunedin,” Gallagher says. “So I believe naming flats is one way of showing that you’re a part of a community and a way to create an identity or sense of place within it.”

A survey Gallagher undertook of the Facebook group members suggests that the naming ritual invokes a kind of fraternity. She cites the experience of former residents of “The Chamber of Secrets” who admit, with hindsight, that being one of the “Chamber boys” provided them with a sense of identity and bonding which went beyond just being flatmates and, indeed, still defines them as a group.

“The Lodge” on Union Street was certainly established to provide a fraternity-like experience.

Gallagher points to the earliest known examples of named student flats – “The Bach” on Leith Street, which dates to the 1930s, or “The Shambles” on Great King Street, apparently a notorious party house in the 1950s – to demonstrate that the practice is a relatively longstanding scarfie tradition.

It’s only been in the last three or four decades, however,

that name boards have become a feature in their own right, often reflecting the era in which they were created.

“The Bay of Pigs” appeared in the early 1970s, for example; “DSIR (Department of Student Inebriation Research)” and “Erebus: anything you hear inside is an orchestrated litany of lies” date to the early 1990s. Others, such as “The Old Block” and “Chip off the Old Block” – gracing two adjacent semi-detached houses – belong to buildings now protected by a New Zealand Historic Places Trust classification.

Gallagher’s own first-year flat was ignominiously dubbed “Mouse House” because of a rampant rodent infestation. Despite her experience, she hopes the current “gentrification” of what is affectionately known as “the student ghetto” will not lead to the demise of the student flat-naming phenomenon.

“This reflects a unique aspect of student culture in New Zealand, an important aspect of student history in Dunedin, and is also a celebration of the wit, humour and genius of young minds!”

<http://flatnames.tumblr.com>

Rebecca Tansley

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