University of Otago

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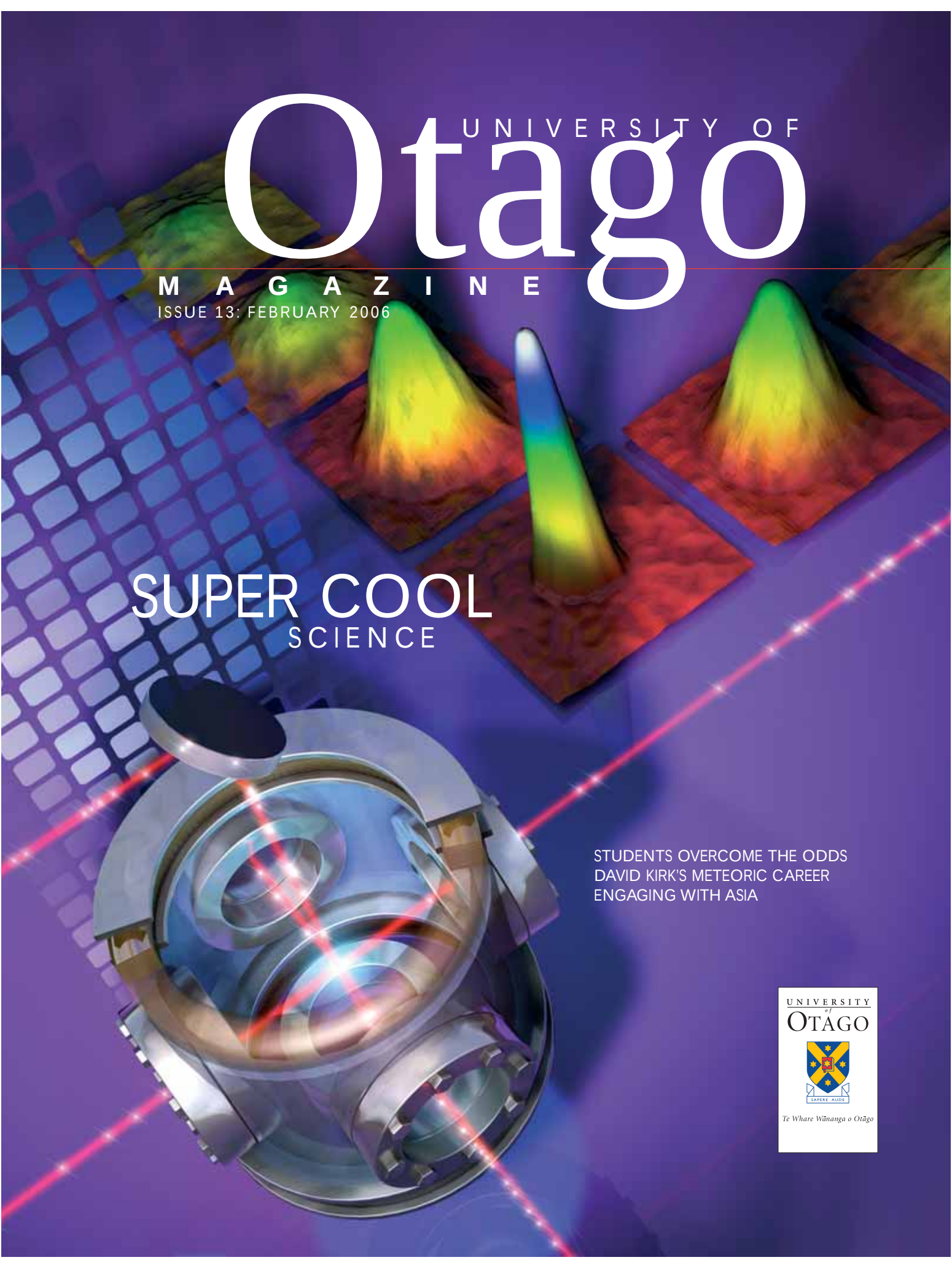

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A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

University of Otago Magazine
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VC's COMMENT

The University of Otago has been involved in the education of teachers since its earliest days. In 1887, for example, 68 out of a total of 167 University students were teachers. Education has been taught as an academic discipline for more than a century, with the first lecturer in education appointed in 1904. Important research has also been conducted in this field, and today we are especially proud of the Educational Assessment Research Unit which has been built up by Professor Terry Crooks and his colleagues.

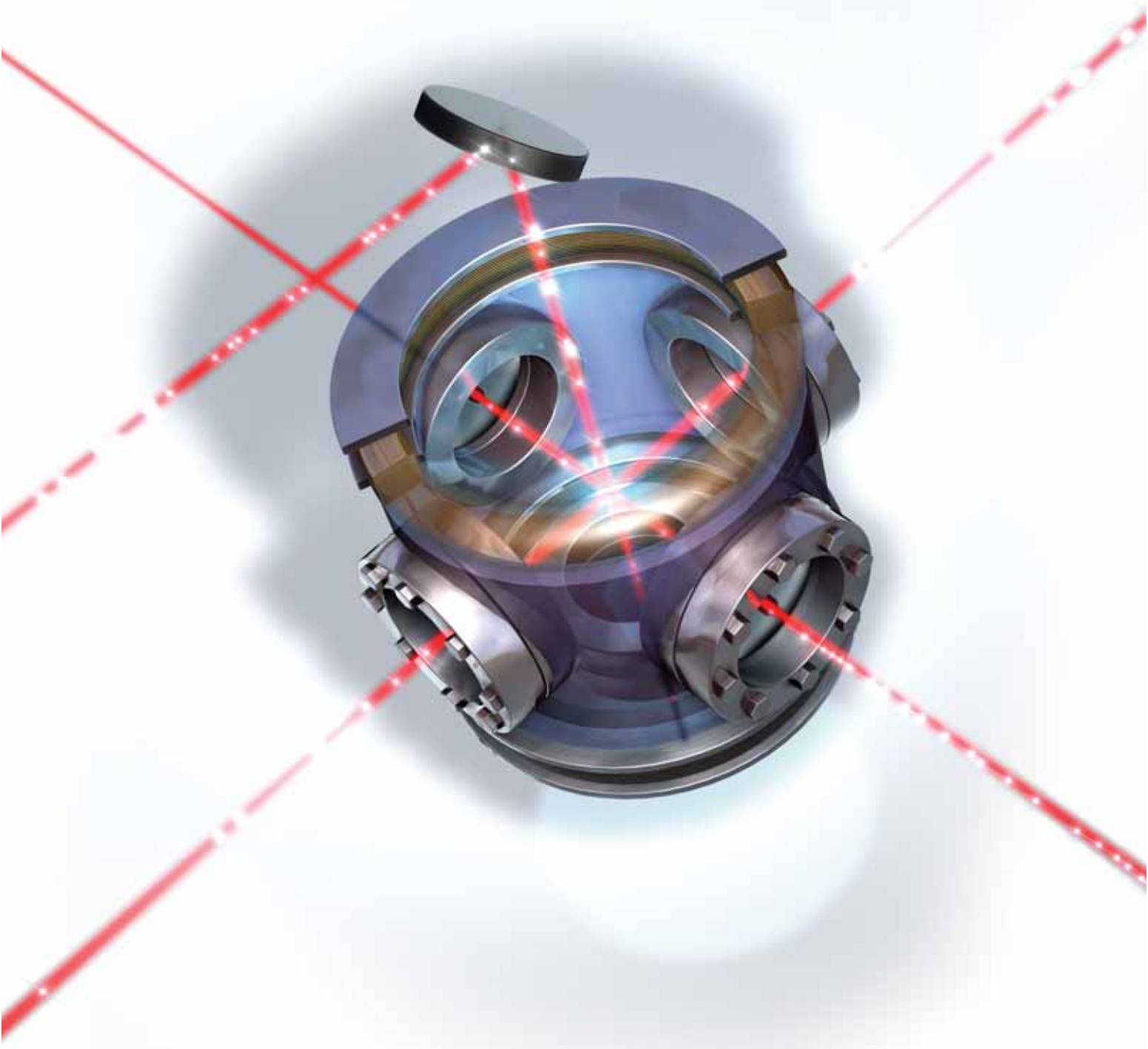
For most of our history, however, the professional training of teachers has been conducted at the Dunedin Teachers' College which was opened (as New Zealand's first) in 1876. Its name evolved from the Normal School, to the Training College, to the Teachers' College, to the Dunedin College of Education. For most of the past 130 years there has been a close and symbiotic relationship between the University and the Teachers' College. Many of our alumni attended both institutions. A famous example was the writer Janet Frame, who died recently.

In this issue (page 44) it is reported that the Councils of the University and the College of Education have approved the case for a merger of the two institutions. Provided this gains Ministerial approval, the new University of Otago College of Education will be established in January 2007. By a quirk of fate, the present Minister for Tertiary Education, Dr Michael Cullen (formerly a senior lecturer in history at Otago), was involved in drafting the regulations for New Zealand's first Bachelor of Education degree taught jointly by a University and Teachers' College. This was launched at Otago in 1976. It ushered in an era of unprecedented co-operation and collaboration which unfortunately came to grief during the late 1990s, as a result of changes in Government funding and the promotion of a competitive model for tertiary institutions. The proposed merger will bring together excellent staff and resources from our own Faculty of Education and the Dunedin College of Education. The result should be an institution of national and international distinction.

At the heart of the University are departments committed to the advancement of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences. But we are also directly involved in education for a wide range of professionals including accountants, dentists, dietitians, doctors, lawyers, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists, public health specialists, radiation therapists, social workers and surveyors. There is no profession more crucially important for the future of our society than teaching, and I am delighted that the University will continue to have a major role in the education of teachers as well.

Professor David Skegg
Vice-Chancellor – University of Otago

SUPERCOOL



The University of Otago's Ultra-Cold Atoms Group is making waves at the cutting edge of quantum science, a field in which the potential applications defy the imagination.

IN THE SPRING OF 2005, NOBEL LAUREATE PROFESSOR Carl Wieman, of JILA, University of Colorado, spoke to a packed house in the University of Otago's largest lecture theatre. His subject? The Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC), a new state of matter that he created in 1995 in a massive breakthrough that has taken him to the pinnacle of scientific recognition.

After almost a decade of painstaking work, he and his team, including Professor Eric Cornell, had cracked one of science's teasing totems. It had been 70 years since Albert Einstein had predicted that at temperatures just infinitesimally above absolute zero, the laws of quantum mechanics could force matter to take the form of a single quantum wave. Scientists had tried for decades to prove him right – or wrong. Against extremely long odds and working at temperatures of about a millionth of a degree above absolute zero (-273 degrees C), Wieman succeeded in producing a Bose-Einstein condensate. In this new state of matter the counter-intuitive behaviour of the quantum world is magnified a million-fold, enough to be viewed through a microscope.

It was no accident that Wieman was visiting Otago. He was here to work with the University's Ultra-Cold Atoms Group, which has been committed to the field for the last decade. In his lecture Wieman referred to the prominence of the group and the important theorists working in it.

The experimental team, working in a laboratory on the third floor of the University's Physics Building, had been one of the first in the world to duplicate Wieman's achievement. Coming just three years after Wieman's initial discovery, this was a moment of triumph and vindication for head of the Otago Ultra-Cold Atoms Group Professor Rob Ballagh and his colleagues who, three years earlier, had taken a calculated risk.

In 1995 when the Colorado experiment succeeded, Ballagh was on sabbatical and on his way to Oxford University in England. Once there he and experimental physicist Dr Andrew Wilson, an Otago graduate on a postdoctoral fellowship, put their heads together and explored the idea of Bose-Einstein work in Dunedin.

"We could see that it would be a huge challenge. A very high level of technical sophistication was required, and our lab would need a major increase of resources … but it was something we were both hugely excited by.

"We were committed to trying to get some serious world-class physics going in Otago, to doing something that would put us on the map."

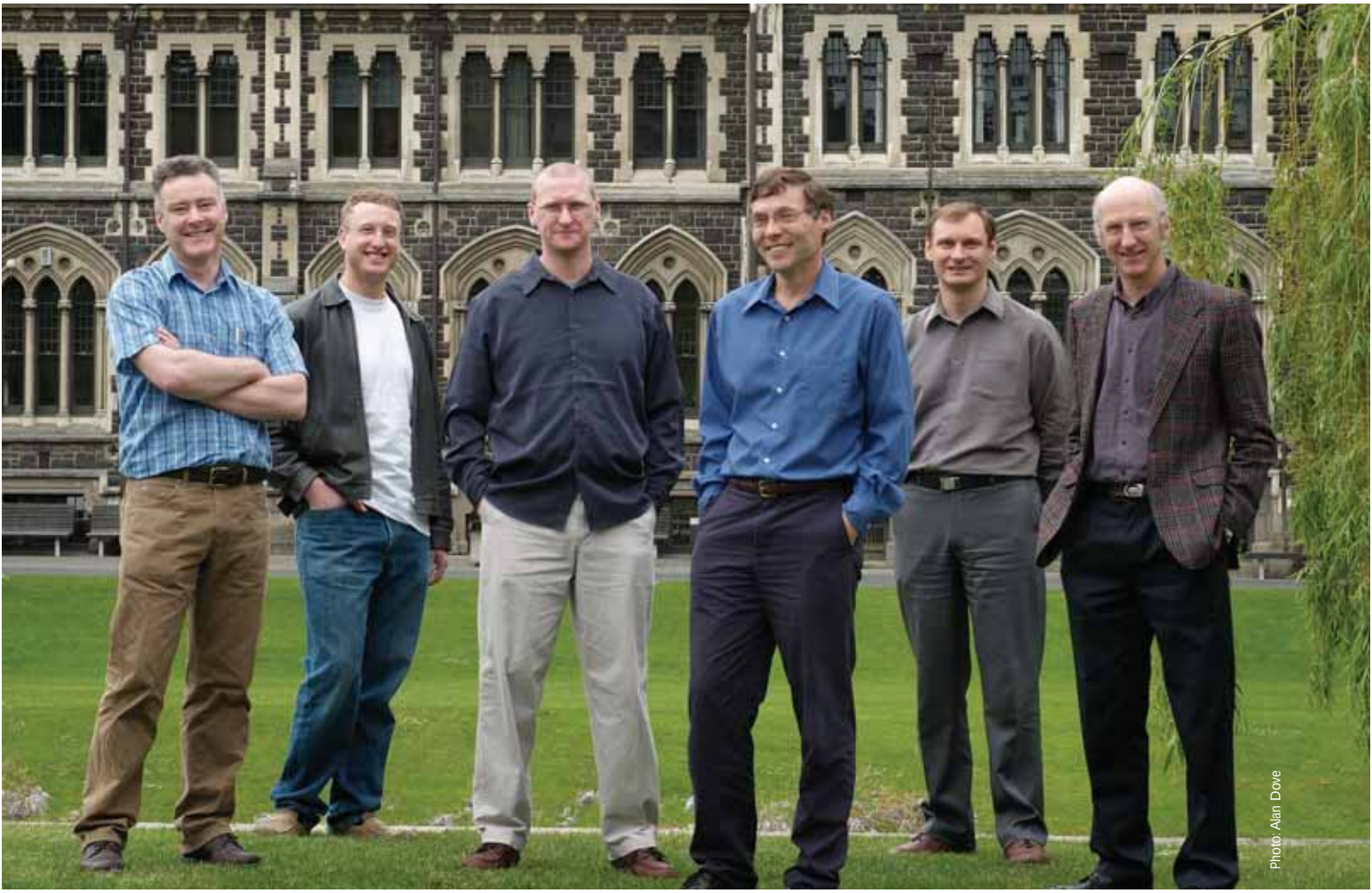
The pair spent six months scheming, writing research grant applications, and treading a path well travelled to the funding agencies.

"There were several factors that came together that were critical to our success," says Ballagh. "The Marsden Fund was established that year with the explicit goal of supporting just this sort of fundamental science. We were awarded our first grants from it in 1996, and our group has now won a total of 12 grants, which has been absolutely crucial."

The then head of department, Wes Sandle, immediately saw the significance of the proposal and put his weight behind it; and the University's research committee was very supportive in the early days when prospects were far from certain.

"They backed us financially at critical times when we would otherwise have fallen over," adds Ballagh.

By the beginning of 1997 Wilson arrived and hit the deck running. "He welded his team together and knew exactly what he had to do, and of course there were ups and downs, but there was also tremendous excitement.



Nobel laureate Professor Carl Wieman visited Otago's Ultra-Cold Atoms Group in October. From left: Associate Professor Andrew Wilson, Dr Warwick Bowen, Dr Murray Barrett, Wieman, Dr Blair Blakie and Professor Rob Ballagh. Absent: Professor Crispin Gardiner, Dr David Hutchinson.

"The theory team was already making an international impact, and the development of the experiment gave a real focus to everything. Every morning tea there would be this huge buzz of enthusiasm."

Ballagh was heading the theory effort, working in collaboration with distinguished theoretical physicist Crispin Gardiner – now Research Professor at Otago, but who at the time was based at Victoria University. "Crispin and I had been publishing work that was at the forefront of the theory and the field was just exploding … it was just a total revolution in atomic physics – a revolution comparable to the invention of the laser."

Ballagh draws on the laser to tease out some of the implications of BEC. "One way to describe ordinary lasers is to say they can provide the most precise control over an optical field that nature is going to allow.

"Now we had this BEC, a very special state of matter, a near-perfect wave, so the question was, could we develop something comparable to the optical laser? Could we do the same with matter as the laser allows us to do with light?"

The Ultra-Cold Atoms Group was entering the exotic new area of coherent atom optics – the counterpart of the usual optics with light. "Matter is a wave and light is a wave, so we should be able to do similar things with them. However, we need to understand how to manipulate matter waves with the equivalent of lenses, mirrors, beam splitters, diffraction gratings, prisms etc. What we are trying to do is achieve coherent control of matter."

What is BEC good for and where might it lead? The prospect of the coherent control of matter throws open possibilities that extend the imagination. One sure bet is super-sensitive gravity interferometers for use in geological/geochemical exploration. It should also lead to vastly improved atomic clocks, a technology that underpins increasingly ubiquitous and sophisticated global-positioning-system navigational aids.

Moving further into the realms of the speculative, atom lasers might be used to revolutionise "nanofabrication", laying down single atom layers in the most intricate of circuits.

Or the science could find practical expression in the development of quantum computing or teleportation, areas that Dr Murray Barrett, a recent appointee in the Ultra-Cold Atoms Group, is working on.

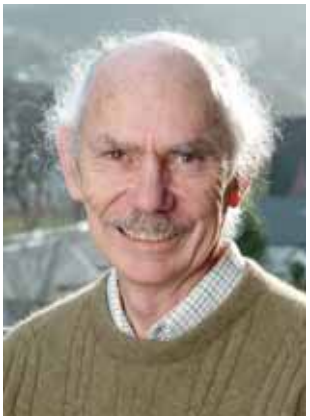
Says Ballagh, sounding a note of caution: "We learnt how to control light coherently 40 years ago. Now we're starting on matter and it could be a much longer path. It could be 30 years, or 50, before anything comes of it."

But that doesn't deter him, nor his colleague Professor Crispin Gardiner.

"You have this new material you can deal with," Gardiner says. "You may not make a motor car out of it, but you may well make a number of subtle devices that involve things like very sensitive sensors. It's a whole new field whose practical application is still not clear."

What is clear is that the rest of the atomic physics world will retain an interest in what's going on at Otago.

"We are very well known round the world," says Ballagh. "We were among the first dozen or so establishments to get a condensate. People take a very serious interest in what we are doing. We have had several Nobel prizewinners visit, two in 2005 alone. Our students work in their labs, we work in their labs, they visit us. We work with them on planning international conferences."



Professor Crispin Gardiner: "It's a whole new field whose practical application is still not clear."

In fact, in terms of putting New Zealand science on the map, the University of Otago's Ultra-Cold Atoms Group would appear to have taken something of a quantum leap.

Useful websites

Ultra-Cold Atoms Group: http://www.physics.otago.ac.nz/research/uca/index.html

BEC Homepage: http://www.colorado.edu/physics/2000/bec/index.html

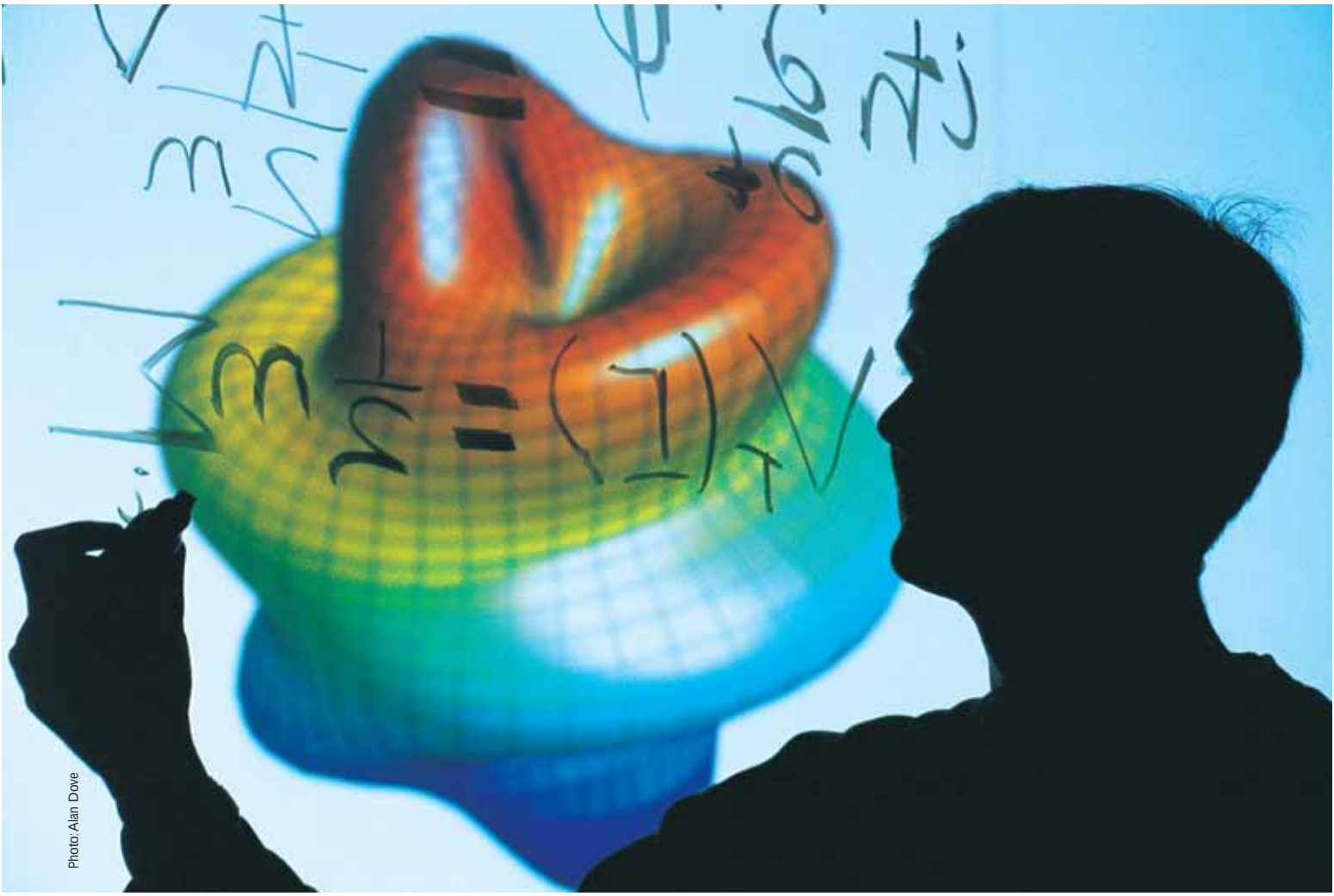


Photo: Alan Dove

"We are very well known round the world.
We were among the first dozen or so establishments to get a condensate.
People take a very serious interest in what we are doing."

BEC for dummies

WHAT IS IT?
Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC) is a state of matter formed at ultra-cold temperatures when atoms take on quantum properties and form matter waves.

WHEN WAS IT DISCOVERED?
It was predicted by Einstein in 1924 and first produced at JILA in Colorado in 1995 by Professors Carl Wieman and Eric Cornell.

WHEN WAS IT FIRST CREATED IN OTAGO?
August 1998.

WHO WAS BOSE?
Bose was a young Indian physicist who used the new ideas of quantum physics to explain certain behaviours of light. Einstein then postulated what would happen if atoms behaved according to Bose's equations.

HOW IS IT MADE?
With great difficulty! Atoms are held in a vacuum and cooled with laser technology and evaporative cooling to temperatures of less than a millionth of a degree above absolute zero (-273 deg C). Magnetic fields, radiowaves and imaging technology add to the complex array of equipment and techniques required.

HOW SIGNIFICANT IS BEC?
In theoretical terms, very. It confirms yet again the validity of quantum mechanics as a theory.

IN PRACTICAL TERMS?
The jury is still out and it may be some decades before the full implications are worked through. In the meantime, the development of "atom lasers" may give rise to instruments for high precision gravitational and inertial measurements; to improved nanofabrication techniques; to better atomic clocks; and even, possibly, to super-powerful "quantum computers".

WHERE TO NOW?
The vibrant worldwide BEC community is making strides in many directions. One is the drive to produce a condensate of molecules. If successful this could lead to a new field of "superchemisty", where both the reactants and products are coherent quantum fields.

EUREKA!

AUGUST 1998. IT'S A DATE ETCHED INTO ASSOCIATE Professor Andrew Wilson's goal-oriented brain.

"I only remember it because my daughter was born a month or so beforehand and I had a little note up on the fridge that said: 'Get Bose-Einstein condensate' and 'Have family'. Have family came afterwards on the list because I knew things were going to be a bit grim in the lab until we got things to work. Unfortunately the timing didn't quite work."

The baby came first, followed six weeks later by the eureka moment most skeptics had written off as an impossible dream. So even for an experimental physicist described by colleagues as a brilliant organiser, the mistiming was understandable.

Producing Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC), for several decades the holy grail of quantum physics and first achieved a mere three years earlier in the United States, certainly put Otago in the international frame.

Says Wilson: "I had people email me and say: 'Look, we're trying to find the University of Otago, but we can't find the Otago on the New Zealand map. Where the hell is your lab?' "

Anybody who is anybody in the slightly arcane world of cold atoms now knows exactly where the University of Otago is and several leading lights have come to visit.

For all the surprise that such a stunning achievement be realised in a tiny laboratory at the bottom end of the world, there was a certain logic to what Wilson admits was a pretty big gamble.

"I had said to Rob [Professor Rob Ballagh], well, to be honest, I don't think the BEC experiments look all that hard. Well, not hard exactly – they *are* all technically extremely difficult, no doubt about that – but they're the sort of experiments well suited to the New Zealand research environment. You don't need a $3 million machine to make it work and you don't need a team of 50 dedicated full-time salaries …"

Ballagh himself calls the achievement "a triumph of optimism and youth over common sense".

"When you look back, most people would have thought we were absolutely crazy to do this. We just refused to accept that it wasn't going to happen."

"We did our homework," says Wilson. "We didn't presume that we knew how to do this. We presumed it was difficult and we asked lots of questions and looked carefully at what had gone on in Colorado where they had been successful. I think

Making Bose-Einstein condensate at Otago

Photo: Alan Dove

Associate Professor Andrew Wilson: "It's a chain of technologies. You've got lasers, magnetic fields, vacuums and other bits and pieces . . . and there are diagnostic checks along the way that will tell you whether you are on the right track."

those guys were geniuses at working out what things matter and what things don't."

Wilson describes the process of building the experiment by analogy to constructing a state-of-the-art racing yacht: component by component, testing each individually along the way, then connecting with other components, testing again and tweaking and so on.

"It's a chain of technologies. You've got lasers, magnetic fields, vacuums and other bits and pieces – radio frequency technology, imaging technology – and there are diagnostic checks along the way that will tell you whether you are on the right track.

"You end up with about 10 different things in a row, all of which have to be working well and working with each other. Then you make tweaks and that's where the problems come in.

"But we knew we just had to get in there and make it work. We knew we were working on something good, and we knew if we could make it work it would make a big difference to ourselves and to Otago.

"Ultimately it was a bet on our own abilities. There were elements of luck, but basically it was just planning … and hard work."

Like a proud dad, Wilson basks momentarily in recollection of the eureka moment; the moment when all the planning and fund-raising and graft and self-belief paid off.

"Yeah, it was pretty amazing, really."

Simon Cunliffe

Overcoming the odds

Otago has more than 20,000 students, all of whom are striving to achieve. But for those with disabilities, even more effort is required. With the help of the University's Disability Information & Support Office, these inspirational young people determinedly confront their challenges head-on.

michael

TEXTING AWAY IN THE ST DAVID ST CAFÉ, FIRST-YEAR student Michael May looks like any other young student without a worry beyond his immediate social calendar.

You wouldn't pick that this smiling 24-year-old works almost full-time as a supermarket sales rep to support his studies, nor that he plunged hand-in-hand into a teaching degree with his wife Nirvana immediately after they were married.

"Lots of people thought we were mad because we only just got married at the start of the year and then went straight into studying. So people were thinking we'd see each other all the time in the same classes and everything, but it's fine."

On top of this, both he and Nirvana are Deaf, and make use of Otago's support systems such as the two dedicated sign-language interpreters, one of whom sits in at this interview.

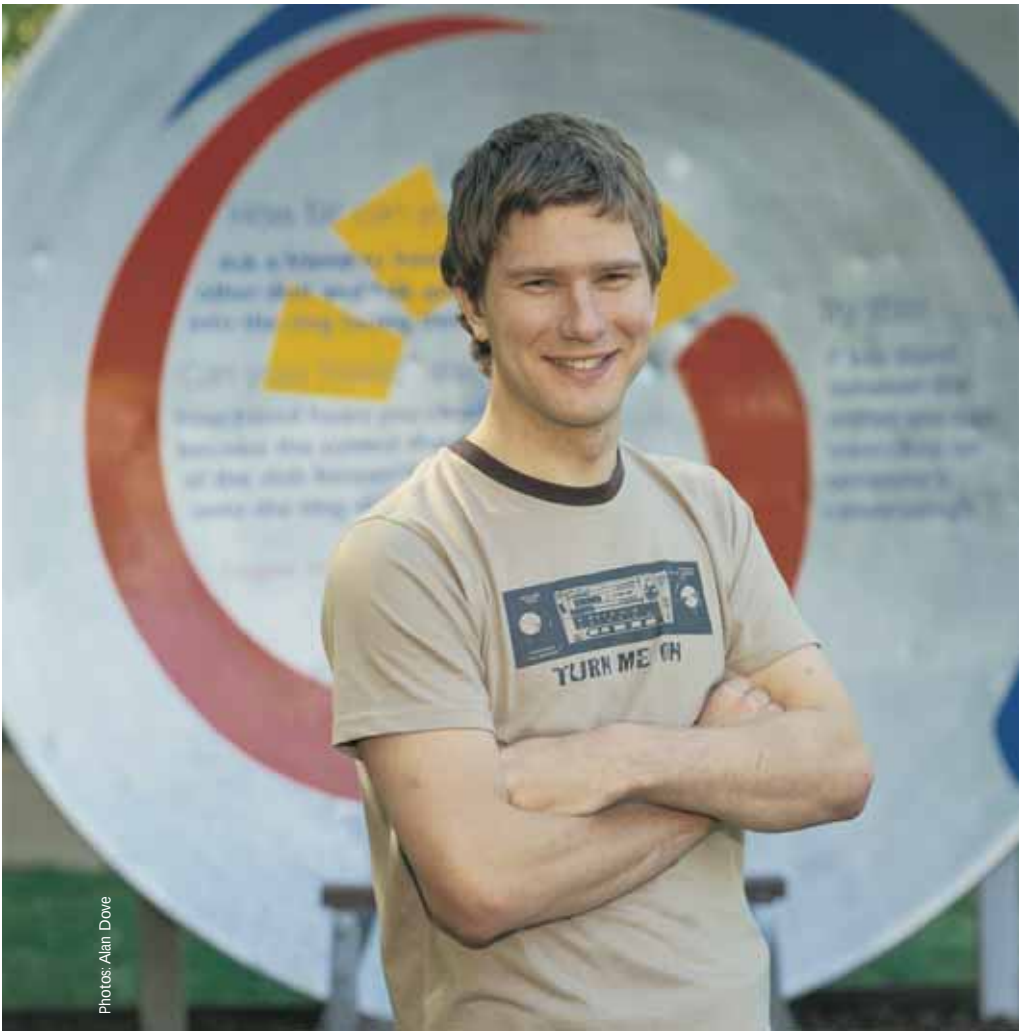
"The capital D means a person is culturally deaf. That's their culture. They're involved with the Deaf community, use sign language and have a Deaf identity by seeing themselves as being Deaf the same as others. It's quite in-depth."

In the past, particularly at school, being Deaf for Michael meant being told what he couldn't do. It's been a pleasant experience at Otago that the opposite is true.

"I was often told I couldn't do anything as I was growing up, and I really didn't have good access to education.

"There's definitely more access through University than through school. And I'm actually putting my hand up and speaking up more because we've got interpreters so it enables me to do that. I feel more involved and definitely think I've learned more through my time here than I did through school."

His quest to get a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) degree and then study a further year in Auckland to become a teacher of the Deaf – which would make him one of only about five Deaf males in New Zealand with this qualification – didn't



Michael May: After completing his Bachelor of Teaching (Primary), he plans to study to become a teacher of the Deaf.

start positively when another teacher-training institution turned down the newlyweds.

The rejection came despite Nirvana having almost four years' experience in schools as a Deaf resource person teaching Deaf studies and NZSL (New Zealand sign language), and Michael having worked for a couple of years as a teacher aide.

"They said they felt Deaf people couldn't become teachers, so that was really offensive and shocking to us. But here [Otago] it was fine. It was the only University that happily said yes."

Apart from the interpreters, who stand at the front of the lectures to give real-time access to the same information everyone else is hearing, and the use of note-takers, the only concession is extra time in exams in recognition of English being their second language.

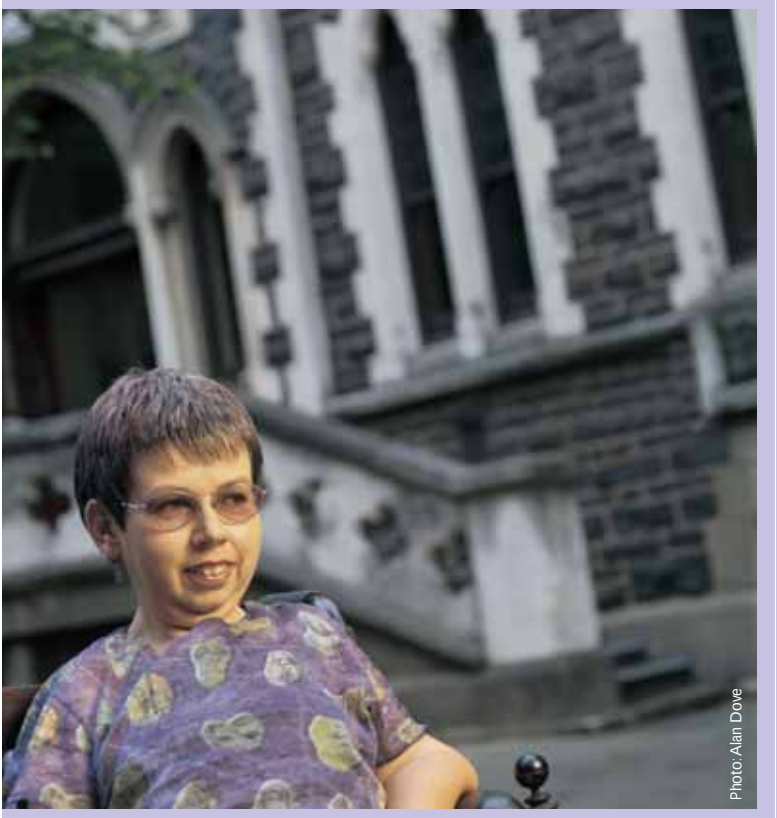
Michael's enjoying the course, but it isn't without its perplexing aspects.

"There's quite a lot of theory involved and sometimes it's a little bit difficult to see how the theory will benefit the children directly. I've certainly learnt new information in the assignments and things, although I sometimes wonder how they directly relate.

"Overall there's nothing to worry about; we're still passing."

In the past . . . being Deaf for Michael meant being told what he couldn't do. It's been a pleasant experience at Otago that the opposite is true.

Beyond the disability dark ages . . .



Donna-Rose McKay: "If we create an environment . . . that meets the needs of all students and staff with impairments, you're damn sure you've got an environment that meets everyone's needs."

IT'S ABOUT RAISING THE BAR FOR EVERYONE ON CAMPUS, says Donna-Rose McKay.

The manager of the Disability Information & Support office fires off a couple of quick examples.

Perhaps you've been out Highland dancing and ruptured your Achilles' tendon and are struggling to get up and down stairs.

Or maybe you want to bring your twin babies into work to show them off and they're in that smart new double buggy; one of those extra-wide, door-challenging ones.

How thrilled would you be to find the campus was not really equipped to deal with your situation, which, let's face it, is hardly an extraordinary circumstance?

Not that thrilled at all, is McKay's guess. Improve conditions for the few, she says, and you improve them for the many.

"What other people forget – sometimes us as well – is that if we create an environment, physically and attitudinally, that meets the needs of all students and staff with impairments, you're damn sure you've got an environment that meets everyone's needs."

The University of Otago is pretty well up to speed in creating this physical environment, with guidance and prodding from the Disability Information & Support office which was created in 1992. But it's an ongoing effort. The Commerce building met the relevant building codes, but still ended up with a "disabled" toilet on the far side of two 90-degree turns that wheelchair users could not negotiate independently. Even the sleek Information Services Building needed "a few tweaks". Funding has just been confirmed for a University-wide disability audit.

lisa

LISA'S* DISABILITY IS HIDDEN AND IT HINDERS HER IN hidden ways.

She can't do honours despite being an A-grade student because she can only manage part-time study.

Sometimes the subject matter of lectures has been too much, but she hasn't been able to walk out because that would be drawing attention to herself.

She can't even tell the department if she's struggling with her work because nobody there knows and she doesn't want anybody to know.

Mental illness, she says, carries a stigma. And she's not prepared to live with that on top of everything else.

She's cheerful and funny. She drinks a coffee as she tells her story of "daily, sometimes hourly, survival".

"I get depression and when my stress levels get really high I become psychotic, which is really difficult to handle. But I've got quite a bit of experience now so I know that the spiders which are coming to get me aren't real, whereas when they first came to get me I was quite happy to go to hospital and never come out because I knew that wasn't right."

The hospital gave her medication, but it made her so tired she'd drive to University and slump over the wheel, start crying and drive home again. She now takes a smaller dose.

She doesn't remember how she met student advisor Melissa Lethaby at the Disability Information & Support office because ECT (electroconvulsive therapy) had destroyed her memory.

But since then Melissa has become a crucial part of the system Lisa has constructed to get herself through an academic environment she is passionate about.

"Melissa would just listen to me on a bad day and I'd think, 'Oh, someone cares, someone's listening today'.

Access issues are close to McKay's heart as they remind her of her struggles as a wheelchair-using student 30 years ago, back in the disability dark ages when she relied on friends to pull her up three flights of stairs to her twice-weekly maths and stats lectures.

"Lecturers refused to move lectures. The University campus was a nightmare – you had steps all around. It was quite nerve–racking in a wheelchair getting around.

"By the time I graduated they had a ramp into the Registry building, but you couldn't get through all the doors. To get my bursary cheque I had to sit in the pouring rain and wait for someone to come and bring it out to me."

The ability to get around the campus remains a vitally-important concern for some students. But for many others the assistance needed is quite different. Witness the two sign-language interpreters who can be found relaying lectures to Deaf students.

Voice-recognition software is available for students who have difficulty writing, and spoken books for students with vision impairments. The office can provide tutors and liaise with lecturers. It can also assist in managing the workload of students, such as those struggling with mental health conditions.

The bottom line, McKay says, is helping the students break through any barriers to the basic mechanism of their education – accessing, processing and presenting information – at the same rate as their peers.

Disability Information & Support directly employs two student advisors – the first point of contact for students – two administrators, the two sign-language interpreters and a resource co-ordinator for the Deaf.

McKay does a quick count-up of the rest. "By the end of the year we'll have employed 265 casual staff as well – note-takers, laboratory assistants, general assistants, one-to-one tutors. . .

"We also employ a lot of external contractors with specialist knowledge, such as voice dictation and learning support… It's grown like topsy from when we started."

Since 1998 universities have been able to access a supplementary funding grant if they made a commitment to students with disabilities in their charter. Needless to say, Otago did this, and the University itself also funds the office.

In 2004, 599 students used the confidential service. That is by no means all the Otago students with disabilities or impairments. Some don't use Disability Information & Support, and others might use it only for a year until they get their own systems in place.

"The traditional, mainstream disabled group is actually the smallest group. We see a lot of students with different medical conditions. Students who've had meningitis, head injury, breaks, arthritis … everything you can think of.

"One of the biggest groups we're seeing that concerns us the most are students with mental health conditions – those that are coming in with them or having their first mental health episode while they're studying."

In the 13 years McKay has worked at Disability Information & Support this is perhaps the fastest growing group, and strategies keyed toward pressure-reduction have evolved to help them.

"OK, they might have to drop two papers, but we can help them complete the third one and pass it, whereas without our help they would have had to drop everything, forfeit most of their fees and have a wasted year – and how depressing is that?

"We can't work miracles, but sometimes we can salvage situations."

Sean Flaherty

"I'm not leaving. I want to do my master's and my PhD. I'm extremely strong-willed and I am going to beat it."

"She's helped me work out what my workload should be and also helped me get tutoring – which I haven't used this year except during Summer School," she says with some pride.

Also to be proud of are the three scholarships she has gained to help her study, including the University of Otago's N G Stuart scholarship, which involved a panel interview she found extremely difficult.

"I came out of the interview feeling like I'll never get it [the scholarship]. How can I compete with someone in a wheelchair? How can I compete with someone who's blind? It was horrible.

"They were fine, but I just thought I'm begging for money and having to tell them how bad my life is."

The battle goes on. "Two weeks ago I was feeling great, thinking I'd beaten it, then I saw the spiders, so that's a big slap in the face."

But she is expecting to graduate this year.

"I'm not leaving. I want to do my master's and my PhD. I'm extremely strong-willed and I am going to beat it."

**Lisa's name has been changed.*

abby

IT TAKES ONLY TWO SECONDS WITH ABBY MOIRA BRIGGS to realise she is wise beyond her years.

This articulate 24-year-old political studies graduate has had an interrupted life, but says she's been fortunate in being able to regain a perspective on the roadblocks that have been thrown up in front of her.

It's been a tough curve since she suffered a head injury playing sport as a fourth former, and had to re-integrate into both academic and social life in the seventh form after missing most of high school.

"People don't just naturally welcome you in. You have to re-learn the rules of social engagement, which take a bit of learning. Learning how to invite yourself into a group takes a lot of confidence at times, and then I came to University and was completely unprepared."

Not only did Abby fall sick with glandular fever soon after starting her first semester, but the first-year environment was too hectic and she initially crashed and burned.

"I was quite the social wee person – with head injuries you lose a lot of insight. You don't have actions or consequences. You come up to Dunedin and there are nightclubs and things to go to, and it didn't occur to me that I didn't need to see it all at once."

Her grades have been consistently good, but in the three years she has been at Otago a parallel learning experience has also had to occur.

Mainly this has been gaining knowledge – with the invaluable help of Student Health and the Disability Information & Support office – of how to, as she puts it, moderate herself.

"Throughout most of my uni time I've been on an up and down thing – most people move in a smooth wave, but with a head injury it's a vicious boom and bust cycle. Mum would always say when I'm feeling better is my most dangerous time – then you do too much and you crash again."

She had wanted to do honours but decided, after being badly affected by several family tragedies, to postpone it.

Rather than a backward step this has been something of an advance, she says. Instead of loading up the pressure on herself, she's stepped aside from study for now and is applying for jobs.

"The reality for students with disabilities is that a lot of unexpected things come up that can have quite detrimental effects on physical and mental health, and dealing with that on top of study can be very difficult.

"This is the first time things have gone wrong and I've been like, no, I need to sort out the long term plans for my life, not just limp from one disaster to the next."

Sean Flaherty

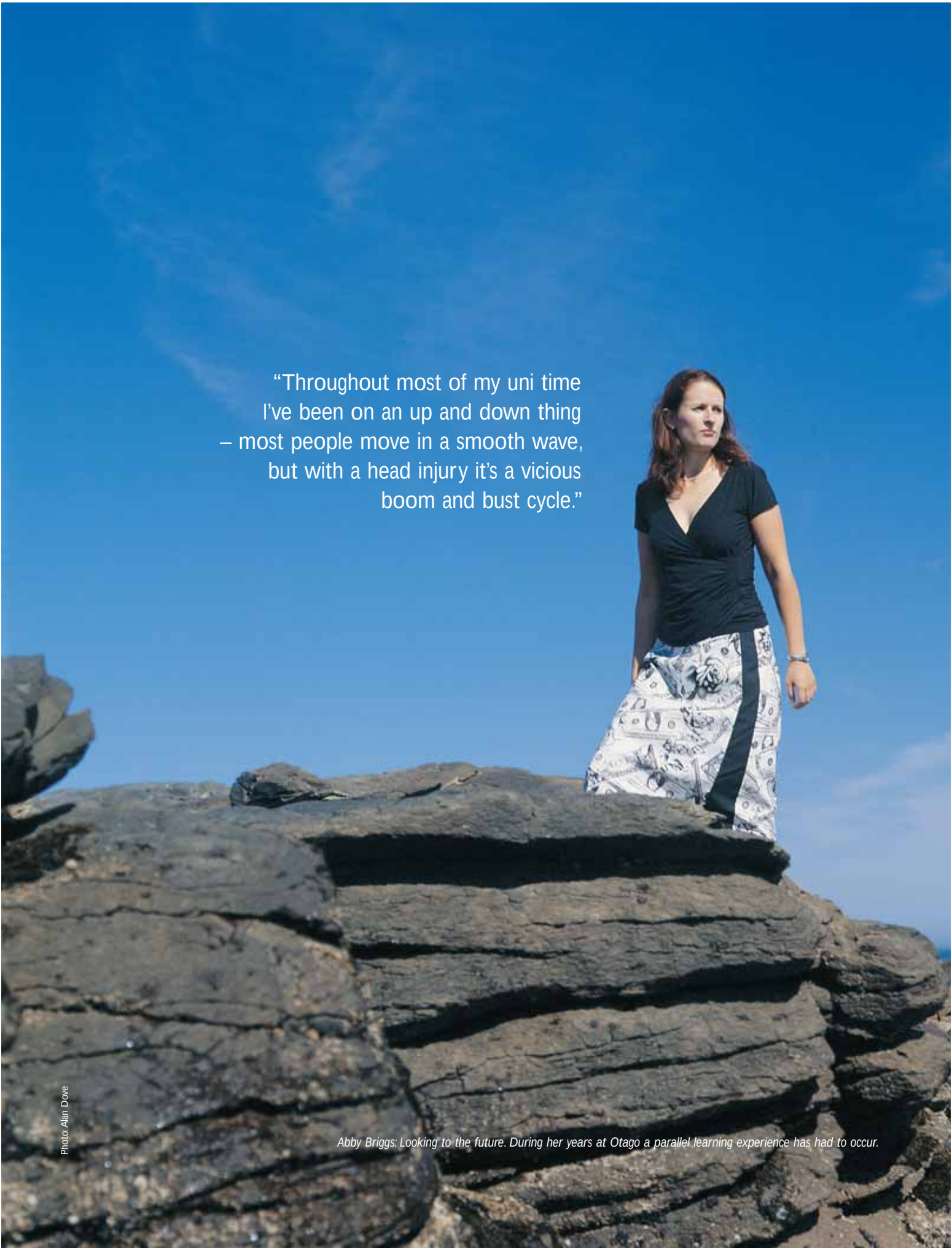


Photo: Alan Dove

Abby Briggs: Looking to the future. During her years at Otago a parallel learning experience has had to occur.

The rise of "Captain" Kirk

Rhodes Scholar and World-Cup winning All Blacks captain David Kirk is now a captain of industry. The varied career of this Otago medical graduate has been meteoric.

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN AN OTAGO MEDICAL graduate, a World-Cup winning All Blacks captain, a prime minister's policy analyst and a leading Australasian businessman?

They're all the same man. The multi-talented David Kirk has filled all of these roles in a meteoric and varied career, culminating in his recent appointment as CEO of Australasian media giant Fairfax.

Kirk never anticipated the directions his life would take when he signed up for medicine at Otago. Studying in Dunedin was a family tradition. Kirk's father and grandfather were both doctors and his mother was a physiotherapist, so it was no surprise when he studied medicine and his younger sister studied physiotherapy.

There was no family pressure. Kirk simply wanted to become a doctor. He did well at Otago, gaining a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford. Even then Kirk's independent streak was emerging. He put the scholarship on hold, initially to work at Auckland Hospital to finish his degree, and then for what some sports fans might consider even more important business.

Kirk's rugby career had advanced alongside his studies, and his performances with the University of Otago club had gained him a place in the All Blacks in 1983. He played for Otago and Auckland, and was able to postpone his Oxford scholarship for a second year to attend the first Rugby World Cup.

After captaining the All Blacks in their historic win in 1987, Kirk decided it was time for sport to give way to study. He left for Oxford with every intention of returning to New Zealand to take up his medical career, but already the seeds of a business career had been sown.

In between qualifying as a doctor and the World Cup, Kirk's thirst for variety had led him to try something different and he had worked as a business analyst with Fletcher Challenge. "I actually wanted to be a doctor," says Kirk, "but I couldn't really progress my career further before going to Oxford so I took some time out. It was a bridge between medicine and Oxford."

Kirk had also decided to try a different tack for his second degree, and studied politics, philosophy and economics in the UK. "It was a great undergraduate degree, and offered great breadth as well as a coherent body of study." It also widened Kirk's horizons after years of medicine.

"The Otago medical degree provided the logic of diagnosis and treatment. Medicine teaches you how to think analytically and logically, narrowing down a wide range of options. That disciplined way of thinking is extremely valuable. The Oxford degree was more big-picture thinking – more conceptual – and that is useful too, especially when married with the hard-nosed analytical thinking of a medical degree."

When Kirk left Oxford he faced a dilemma. Should he return to New Zealand, to even more study for postgraduate

Photo: Supplied

David Kirk: "The more senior you get in business the more you have to hold a lot of things in balance, and live with ambiguity and trade-offs. Tertiary education is very important for developing a capacity for that sort of thinking."

medical qualifications, or should he look at a new career? Like many top sportsmen, he hadn't had the work experience of many of his peers. He'd given several years to rugby, so it was fitting that rugby had a part in starting him off in a new direction.

A former top international rugby referee, Norman Sanson, was a senior partner in McKinsey and Co., a leading business consultancy firm in London. He offered Kirk a job.

"It could not have been a better opportunity," says Kirk. "If you are going to move into a business career you have missed a lot at 28. McKinsey was accelerated business learning for me."

Rugby now took a back seat. Kirk had played for Oxford, and taken advantage of invitation games to visit glamorous locations such as Bermuda, Monte Carlo and Paris, but now settled down to working in and learning the business world.

Together with an understanding of economic philosophy, the Oxford degree had awakened a strong political awareness. In a move that Kirk admits was opportunistic, he left McKinsey to return to New Zealand to stand for selection in the safe National seat of Tamaki on the retirement of the incumbent, former Prime Minister Sir Robert Muldoon.

He missed out when the selectors chose a safe local candidate over Kirk's untested talent. He has no regrets. "I didn't get into Parliament, which in retrospect was a great blessing." But he wasn't finished with politics. He was invited to join Prime Minister Jim Bolger's office as an executive assistant and rose to chief policy adviser within three years.

"It helped me to really understand the way parliament and government work. You do see just about everything that happens in a nation," says Kirk. "But I didn't want to become a politician or a long-term public servant."

He joined the management team of Fletcher Challenge Energy. It was a sharp learning curve. "Initially I didn't have day-to-day management experience, so the energy industry suited me. I was responsible for joint ventures in major gas fields, and selling gas and liquids. I could find my feet as a manager without having to manage large sales forces or production operations."

He moved on to another of the country's largest assets as director of marketing and supply for Fletcher Challenge Paper, and then to Fletcher Challenge Paper Australia as chief operating officer. When Norske Skog took over the company in 2000 Kirk became regional president, and in 2003 he moved to become CEO of the Australian printing and media services company PMP.

He's learned that politics and business require many different skills. "There are some parallels, but you have to be careful. Both need you to be highly motivated, hard-working, resilient, and keen to learn and progress. You need to take a humble view of what you are capable of early on in a new role. You have to compete on the terms of the business you join. You cannot expect previous successes to guarantee success in the next role. You have to learn the rules of the game, whether it is sport, politics or business – and the rules of business can differ from industry to industry.

"The more senior you get in business the more you have to hold a lot of things in balance, and live with ambiguity and trade-offs. Tertiary education is very important for developing a capacity for that sort of thinking."

Is it necessary to work abroad to develop new skills? "It's helpful for graduates to go overseas for experience, but you don't need to do that. A New Zealand education is first class, particularly for undergraduates. Postgraduate study suffers from a lack of money, which is a limitation of the size of the economy and the country, but New Zealand produces some very good raw material. We are creative thinkers, adaptable and hard-working. New Zealanders tend to do very well overseas.

"The reality is that there are not very many large companies in New Zealand in business. There is much more opportunity in places like Australia, Europe and North America where there is a great deal of variety, and the remuneration is higher too. It's just a fact to bear in mind depending on how you value success. You can do very well in New Zealand on a smaller scale."

Kirk has just taken over the reins at Fairfax. Where once he was a celebrity being chased by the media, he's now running the media. How does it feel?

"Fairfax feels great. I'm happy where I am. I've always felt that a career is about making where you are a success. I have never focused on getting somewhere else. It's a fantastic privilege to be with such a great company. We have a lot of opportunities for the future.

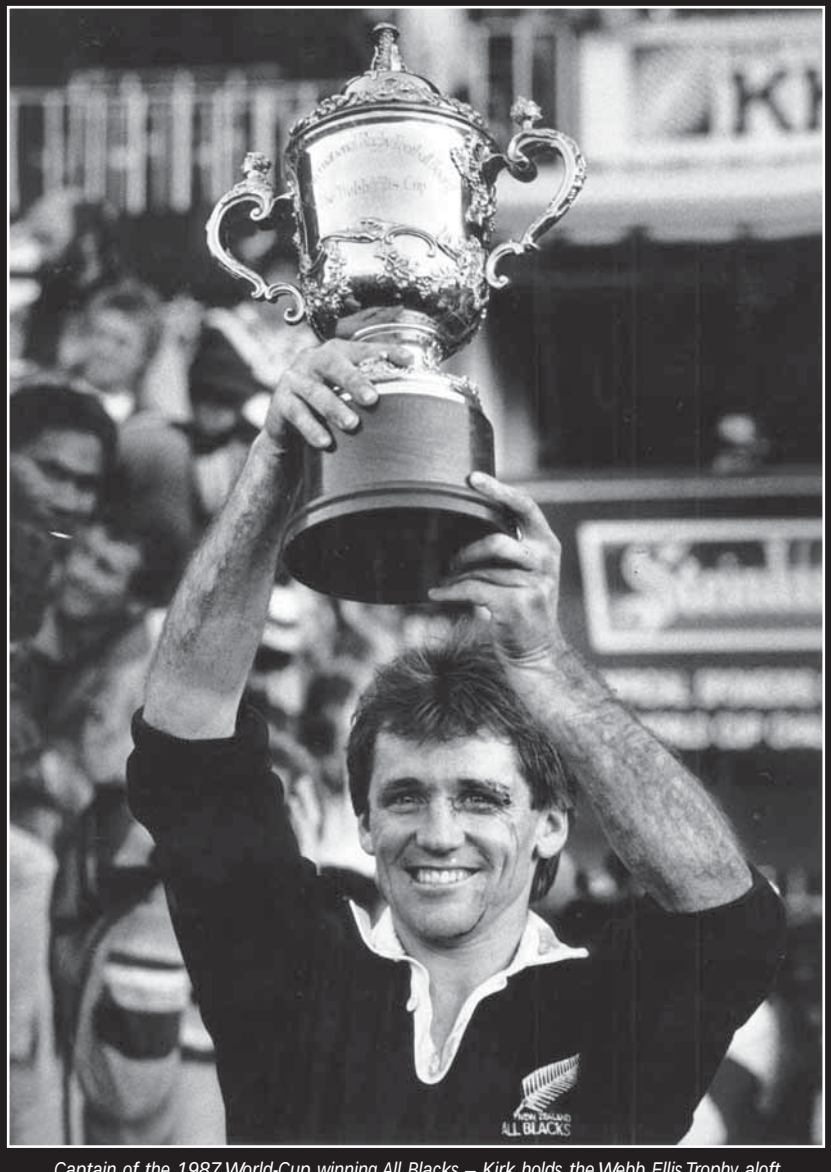
"The business is endlessly dynamic – we create a new product every day. Media companies have very important roles to play in a democracy and market economy. There is a strong public and community service aspect to what we do. Of all the Australasian media companies, Fairfax has the highest reputation for independence and integrity in its journalism. We are very proud of that and we intend to uphold our heritage."

Does he think the media has dumbed down? "Saying the media has dumbed down is tantamount to saying that society has dumbed down. Yes, there is a cult of celebrity, and we do have a much less discriminating society in terms of news values. A lot of young people would think Paris Hilton is as important as Helen Clark.

"Our challenge is to cater for a wide range of society. We need to provide an effective vehicle for our advertisers, so we need to appeal to a broad cross-section of society while still positioning our papers for our core audiences. We need to report the news and produce opinion and comment, all of which add to editorial and community connection and leadership. It's challenging to find a balance, maintaining fairness and integrity."

You sense that for the doctor, the sportsman, the politician and the businessman, there are still many challenges ahead, but David Kirk wouldn't want it any other way.

Nigel Zega



Captain of the 1987 World-Cup winning All Blacks – Kirk holds the Webb Ellis Trophy aloft.

Photo: New Zealand Herald

"You cannot expect previous successes
to guarantee success in the next role.
You have to learn the rules of the game,
whether it is sport, politics or business . . ."

Herd words

Photo: Alan Dove

Joyce Herd: Quiet, firm action behind the scenes has always been her way. "I think I've always been a bit of a rebel . . ."

Joyce Herd completed her Otago degree one unit a year over a 10-year period. This same determination and a strong belief in equality have been her guiding principles over the past 84 years.

SHE'S A WOMAN WITH A FINE TALENT FOR DEFYING AGE, IS Joyce Herd. At a stage of life when many seek quieter intellectual waters (she's 84) Herd has just written *Cracks in a Glass Ceiling: New Zealand Women 1975-2004* – a book commissioned by the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (Otago Branch) and based on research conducted by Claudia Bell, senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Auckland.

"I find it quite difficult to say no to things," Herd says. "It was a challenge – especially at my age. I thought to myself, 'I'm mad!' But then I thought, 'gosh I've lived through all this' and I found it quite fascinating remembering all those heady times."

A firm belief in the equality of the sexes (and, for that matter, equal rights among all peoples) has been her life's guiding principle. It certainly wasn't the prevailing societal stance during her earlier years, so where did the seeds of her egalitarian outlook come from?

"I don't know," she says. "I suppose I've always wanted to *not* rely on other people. In our family there were two girls who came before the boys so perhaps we felt we were superior to them or equal to them. And my mother was a very egalitarian woman – she'd won a scholarship to some teaching college, but wasn't allowed to teach during the Depression."

Born in England, Herd left school at 16 and went straight into the public service. These were straitened times of course – squeezed miserably between the Depression and a looming war – with little emphasis on educational advancement. So she found work at the office of Customs and Excise in both London and Derby, and it was there that she first experienced the deliberate inequities visited on women in the workplace. Though she did exactly the same work and overtime as her male counterparts, she was horrified to discover that the men were rewarded with a much fatter pay packet. And then there were the withering, sexist barbs.

"I wasn't very happy in the Derby office," says Herd. "There were a lot of very chauvinistic, very embittered men. There was one man who actively worked against me just because I was a woman. If I was doing something that linked in with him he would make it as difficult as possible – he was a deliberate saboteur."

Unwilling to remain in this soul-stifling environment, she volunteered for the women's army and was placed in the repair and maintenance unit of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. As part of the war effort, women were conscripted from every conceivable pocket of society and given tasks usually reserved for men. This gave them a powerful taste of what they *could* have if society allowed women greater freedom, but it wasn't without its abrasions.

"The men used to call us 'Mickey Mouse mechanics' and they tried put-downs, but one or two of the women officers were very intelligent and quite fierce and they stood up for the women against the men, so there was an uneasy truce. You had to stand up for yourself or else you got squashed."

Towards the end of World War Two she married Eric Herd and left the army when she became pregnant with the

"I think the women's movement needs to be remembered because some would like to take back the concessions that women have won at great pains."

first of their three children. When Eric was offered a lecturing position in German and French at the University of Otago, the couple left their quiet English village and moved to Dunedin. That was back in 1953 when the cultural landscape was still rather muted.

"New Zealand was a bit backward," says Herd. "There was no decent coffee and there were very few restaurants (there were two or three in the whole town), but then of course it was much the same in England. I think it took both England and New Zealand a long time to get over the war; to get over the shortages and so on."

Once their children were a little older, Herd was finally able to satisfy her desire for tertiary study and duly enrolled at the University for a BA degree in English and History (she completed a unit a year over a 10-year period). She also worked part-time in the University Library, did a spot of teaching in the History Department, and began to flex her egalitarian muscle as a member of the National Council of Women (NCW), a group she joined in the mid 1950s.

"The National Council of Women is looked upon as a very conservative body, but it isn't really. It's made up of a whole lot of different people so you get tensions within it, and they always consulted the membership. If there was a submission to go in they didn't just do it from the top – they circulated all the branches and gave them an opportunity. I liked that."

These were hugely stimulating times for Herd. While a member of the NCW she wrote regular submissions on topics such as jury service, childcare, equal pay, maternity services, contraception, sterilisation, abortion and homosexual law reform.

While delivering one such submission on equal pay at a meeting in Wellington, her choice of attire caused a bit of a stir. "I was wearing a mauve-ish sort of trouser suit – this was in 1972 – and the person in charge said, 'I don't think you should wear that'. It was too modern!"

She also took part in street marches, joined the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women, and co-authored several publications: *An Index to "Tomorrow"* (the radical New Zealand periodical of the 1930s); *What Price Equality? Women and Work in New Zealand*; *Women at Home;* and *Women in Trade Unions.* She adds that it's not *just* women's organisations that have won her active support – she's also been closely involved with the Dunedin City Council, Ecology Action, Historic Places Trust and Abbeyfield (a housing project for lonely people).

Of the women's movement she says: "It was quite an exciting time, but I never really got involved with the ultra feminists because some of them were very bitter towards men. I'd never had this sort of hang up because I'd never felt myself inferior to men. I suppose Eric and I felt we were equals, so I was never afraid of men or afraid of saying things and speaking out. In my day quite often husbands thought they controlled the money. We never did that in our marriage. I must've been stroppy from the beginning because I wouldn't promise to obey in the marriage service. I didn't think that that was right. We just left it out – I didn't believe in it. People are terrible for following fashion – I think I've always been a bit of a rebel and I don't know why. I don't really care if I'm not in fashion or doing what other people do. And now I'm older I don't care, you see. I think, well now I can say anything I like!"

Quiet, firm action behind the scenes has always been the Herd way. One of her hopes in writing *Cracks in a Glass Ceiling* was that the huge ground-breaking efforts of the past do not now slip past the attention of younger generations.

"I think the women's movement needs to be remembered because some would like to take back the concessions that women have won at great pains. I mean look at Don Brash threatening to close down the Ministry of Women's Affairs."

After a lifetime of helping to keep that glass ceiling well cracked, Herd insists she really *is* retiring now. This leaves plenty of time for good detective novels, cryptic crosswords and weekly games of scrabble.

And the stroppiness? Where will that go? One suspects the Letters to the Editor section of the *Otago Daily Times* (long a favourite repository for this octogenarian's thoughts) might receive a few more Herd-ish bites.

Claire Finlayson

Facing the sun

Otago lecturer Anne Sinnott enjoys the best of both worlds – an academic career and an idyllic rural lifestyle.

IT'S DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT ANNE SINNOTT'S students are imagining when they pick up the phone or engage in an email dialogue with her.

But they may not guess that their link with the University of Otago, the Wellington-based Rehabilitation Teaching and Research Unit (RTRU) and Christchurch's Burwood Spinal Unit can mostly be found at a vineyard in the heart of rural Waitaki.

Distance-taught programmes are regularly celebrated for the educational options they offer those living in remote locations. Now, Sinnott is demonstrating that the advantage can work both ways.

The lecturer begins her days by attending to her vast vegetable garden. Her calendar year considers events such as thinning, harvesting and bottling. She worries about frosts.

Although Sinnott has been teaching on the RTRU programmes since 1999, she made the shift to North Otago in early 2004, two years after 92 acres of limestone-influenced soils with a north-facing aspect won the hearts and minds of Sinnott, her husband (former director of Otago's Student Health and Counselling Service) Jim Jerram and, critically, Sinnott's winemaker brother Jeff.

The move to establish Ostler Vineyard gave Jerram the chance to live out his long-held dream of returning to the the land – he had worked on high-country stations before embarking on a medical career.

And already, Sinnott and Jerram have seen the fruits of their labour – packaged in 75 cl bottles – with the release of Ostler Vineyard's 2004 first vintage of pinot noir. This season the vineyard will also produce its first pinot gris. The pinot noir thus far produced was grown on the Caroline Block, named after Caroline Plummer whose life was claimed by cancer in 2002, and to whom the University's dance fellowship is also dedicated.

While Sinnott says she was much more involved in the hands-on tasks of the vineyard in its earlier days, the operation now employs a staff of six and Sinnott is able to enjoy the location while pursuing her academic career.

She heads to Wellington four or five times a year to teach at student seminars and catch up with one of her research subjects. She's in Christchurch approximately six times a year carrying out research work and spending time with the research and clinical teams at the Burwood Spinal Unit, under the leadership of Professor Alastair Rothwell at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences. And she goes to Dunedin once a month. Sinnott estimates she's travelling about one week in three.

Is this level of juggling really manageable? "Yes. It is. With careful time-management," laughs Sinnott. Indeed, rather than driving her crazy, Sinnott suspects the balance between rural and city living, between stimulation and relaxation, is keeping her sane.

"I never saw myself doing the rural thing," she explains, contrasting her life now with her time spent practising as a physiotherapist in places including London and Tokyo. She grew up thinking of herself as "a city slicker from Suva".

It was "an unusual childhood", she concedes. Her father took up a post with Fiji's Department of Education when she was four, and they stayed for her childhood years. But despite Sinnott and her sister having two of the three white faces at the multicultural school they attended in Suva, Sinnott says the islands are not where she has felt the most foreign in her life.

Rather, it was coming to Otago to study physiotherapy when Sinnott really felt like she was "on a different planet" to the others in her class.

"We were taken around the hospital as a way of introducing us to suffering and deprivation. But for me, I had seen the consequences of poverty. When I was eight, I had a friend whose mother was in a tuberculosis hospital – I grew up knowing about illness and its implications in real terms.

"Deprivation was normalised for me," she continues. "There were 63 kids in my class at school, and I remember asking my mother to make me 10 peanut-butter sandwiches to take to school so I could help feed the kids who didn't have lunch – and of course trade for more interesting lunches! It was in Fiji as a child that I developed my very strong sense of social justice – this has never left me."

But more interesting for Sinnott than looking at how people suffer has always been how they survive.

After more than a decade as a practising physiotherapist, Sinnott began her academic life with a master's degree,

exploring why it was that different people with the same condition – paraplegia – can have such widely differing rehabilitation outcomes. She focused specifically on issues surrounding aging and the secondary shoulder problems that are an inevitable consequence of living life in a wheelchair.

"It was my master's thesis project, undertaken on-site at Burwood, that led me to broaden my career beyond physiotherapy," she says. From then on, her interests would remain irrevocably on the path of exploring the psycho-social components of rehabilitation interventions.

"You can't make someone walk," she explains. "You have to know why they want to walk."

Her recent research aims to tell the stories of people who have lost the ability to use their hands through tetraplegia, but who then have had some level of function restored through surgery and rehabilitation. It's humbling work.

"These are people who have had everything taken away, and then have a little bit given back."

And it was Sinnott's belief that documenting these patients' progress could never be adequately achieved by simply measuring how much stronger their grasp was becoming, for example.

"I wanted to know what these gains actually meant in terms of the realities of their lives. I wanted to take a much broader view of 'function' to include their qualitative experiences."

This approach to assessing hand-function outcomes was to become a perfect match for international directives on the matter. In 2001, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published the International Classification of Function (ICF), embracing the idea that patients' subjective experiences are central to understanding and defining their condition, and that personal and environmental factors must be taken into account.

Sinnott has been responsible for introducing this model to the Burwood Spinal Unit. The ICF framework forms the basis of the RTRU's certificate, diploma and master's programmes, leading New Zealand to become one of the few countries in the world where qualitative research in tetraplegia outcomes is undertaken.

"It's intriguing to think that so few countries are looking seriously at patients' experiences in terms of spinal-cord injury outcomes. But New Zealand has long valued patients' perspectives within the health-care system. Our follow-up care is excellent here. And we're small – we're much less likely to 'lose people'."

Now, the progress being made in New Zealand has attracted some international attention. Sinnott has been invited to participate in a project at the WHO's ICF Research Centre in Munich, significant for its inclusion of qualitative inquiry, and where her RTRU colleague Dr William Taylor is leading the ICF Core Set Development Project for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

All of which seems a long way away from the spur-winged plovers and heavy nor'westers of the Waitaki Valley. But according to Sinnott, it's all connected, in a roundabout kind of way.

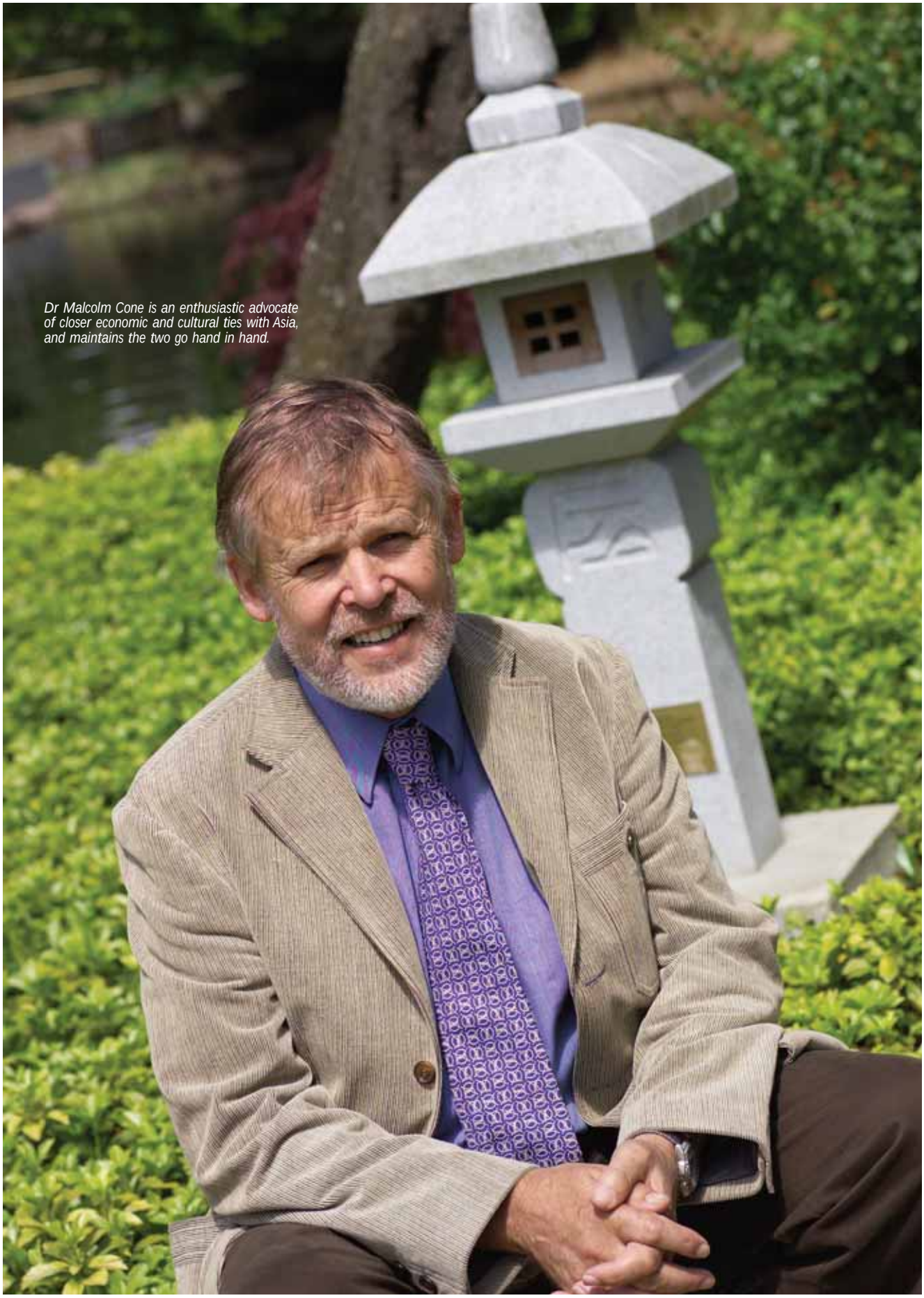
"I think I have always inherently understood the rehabilitation process – how we make the best of what we've got. I grew up with my eyes wide open to the fact that life is not always fair, and that advantage is not always permanent. I have come to the conclusion that life is about balancing well-being with satisfaction with fun.

"And right now," she says, smiling, "we are having fun."

Nicola Mutch

Photo: Bill Nichol

Anne Sinnott with her husband Jim Jerram on their Waitaki Valley vineyard: "I have come to the conclusion that life is about balancing well-being with satisfaction with fun."



Dr Malcolm Cone is an enthusiastic advocate of closer economic and cultural ties with Asia, and maintains the two go hand in hand.

Photo: Bill Nichol

Engaging with ASIA

The University of Otago's Asia Institute is well positioned to promote relationships with economic powerhouses such as China and India.

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST SITS IN HIS OFFICE WITHIN THE University of Otago's Department of Management teasing out the hierarchical relationship between culture and economics.

"Culture follows economics, I believe," says Dr Malcolm Cone. "Different aspects of your cultural practice will be reinforced by your degree of economic success."

It's a point he makes to reinforce his view that we in the West are sometimes ignorant, occasionally arrogant, and frequently naïve in our assumptions about the East.

"The argument goes that as countries modernise they become like us. That's the big myth. It's pervasive, especially in the business sector," he says.

"Everyone expects it to happen. You know: get China into the WTO, get them to conform, get them to set up a system of rules that we'd like, and everything will be fine. Well, it's not going to happen."

Cone is director of the Asia Institute, set up from within the University of Otago's School of Business with a view to strengthening pure and applied research linkages between Asia and New Zealand. He is an enthusiastic advocate of closer economic and cultural ties with Asia, and maintains the two go hand in hand.

"New Zealanders are very well regarded in China, considered to be honest, open, friendly and innovative. We need to hold on to those attributes. And if we behave in that way, and if we understand that in China you only interact with people at any depth with whom you have a good relationship … then we're well off first base.

"But if we think business is a cold arms-length contractual matter, then we're going to run into all sorts of difficulties. People in China personalise their business relationships. They don't separate the public and the private, but then neither do we if we look at ourselves closely. We pretend that the boardroom is separate from the golf course, but of course it is not."

The Asia Institute (formerly the North-East Asia Institute) aims to enhance New Zealand's capabilities at the level of policy formation, practitioner education and research, in building and sustaining long-term relationships in the Asian region, and to increase understanding of the Asian business environment. It also seeks, where possible, to act as a conduit for partnership facilitation between businesses in Asia and enterprises in New Zealand.

It is guided by a board comprising members from the University and from industry, with directors from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE), and Investment New Zealand. It has partners at Keio University in Tokyo, Yonsei University in Seoul, and Huazhong University in Wuhan, China.

For all that, it is a lean organisation that exists primarily on the strength of its academic relationships, but one that is able to flex commercial muscles as occasion demands.

"New Zealanders are very well regarded in China, considered to be honest, open, friendly and innovative. We need to hold on to those attributes."

"We've grown like Topsy, but what we don't want to do is build a bureaucratic administrative structure that requires a lot of maintenance," says Cone. "If you're not careful, all of a sudden you are spending more time maintaining the organisation than doing the work."

The institute's typical modus operandi when contracted to carry out on-the-ground research is to work through its established relationships. "We are able to preserve those relationships because of the academic projects that are going on parallel to the commercial ones. We simply buy in expertise from whatever business school is appropriate," explains Cone. Often that local expertise is superior and better informed than the international variant.

He cites the example of a recently completed paper on the Market for Tourism in New Zealand from China. It came to the institute from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and Tourism New Zealand who "recognised that all of their information on China had been done by international survey companies", the kind, he says, who typically gather their information in international airport lounges.

Cone's initiation to Asia came when he studied for his PhD in Indonesia. He turned his attention to China in the late '90s, travelling to Jilin University north-east of Beijing, CIEBS School of International Business, Shanghai, and Huazhong University in Wuhan in south central China. Since then both research and teaching links have been strengthened by Cone and Department of Management colleagues Dr André Everett, Associate Professor Graham Elkin and Liz Hall.

At the outset there was a degree of inertia to the story the institute had to tell.

"I went to a conference in the States in 2001 to talk about China and development," says Cone, "and the level of disbelief to what I said was happening there was extraordinary. So we made a film on the same topic in 2003. I thought it might represent more adequately the realities [of modern China]."

The initiative paid off. As a result of seeing the film, NZTE came knocking on the institute's door and several research projects have followed.

"It is no longer controversial that India and China are going to be significant in our part of the world," says Cone. "It's just necessary that we engage."

Part of the question for the Asia Institute is the nature and degree of that engagement: identifying sectors that are natural fits for joint ventures between Chinese or Indian interests and New Zealand industries.

"The greenfields opportunities today are in China and, perhaps, even more so in India. With India, the development is right up there with the best in the world in some industries, but it's all in silos. The public sector infrastructure is not in place yet."

The space between the silos is where New Zealand might fit in, reckons Cone. He points to a relationship with a business school in Delhi, for example, established 18 months ago, out of which has come a project looking at India as a future development partner with New Zealand.

"We're building academic linkages, research linkages, teaching linkages all at the same time."

In April, Cone is making a film with pre-eminent American China scholar Professor Roger Ames. The aim of the film is to explore how Confucian and Taoist perspectives inform contemporary Chinese practices; or, to put it more simply, to elucidate the Chinese world view.

Why should we care?

Cone is passionate on this. "We do not have a New Zealand Inc brain in our heads. In China it's China Incorporated. But it's not because its people are a great pile of ants all crawling over each other and pointing in the same direction because the Communist Party tells them to.

"It's because they have such a strong sense of their own history and a powerful desire to re-engage with the world and retake their position as a pre-eminent civilisation. And I've no doubt they will."

The way Cone sees it we can turn our back on the inevitable, or go along for the ride. And if it's the latter, the Asia Institute is well positioned to help navigate us through the intricate cultural and economic pathways that lie ahead.

Simon Cunliffe

Human life decisions

FOR MANY PEOPLE THE SPECTRE OF DESIGNING OUR CHILDREN or even ourselves raises immense problems. And yet we see no problem in designing furniture or clothes or bridges. We actually pay for good design. But the very thought that other humans may have some part to play in our own design is anathema to many. That is to be left to God, or nature, or genetics; this is the one place where human design is off-limits.

These concerns are real, stemming from a fear that biotechnology is becoming far too powerful, especially where the object of attention is the human person. Not surprisingly, these concerns are repeatedly tinged with theological overtones, let alone imbued with a host of pressing ethical dilemmas. A frequently-asked question is whether we should attempt to improve and enhance human beings, rather than simply treat them for known diseases. No matter how theoretical and intriguing such a question may appear, it is also an intensely practical one. Many ordinary people now have to answer it when confronted by the possibilities opened up by procedures like pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), which is often (misleadingly) described as leading to "designer babies".

While considerations of theology, ethics, science and clinical practice routinely overlap in one intervention after another at the beginning of human life, they are also encountered in other clinical areas. One of these is neuroscience with its array of means of manipulating people's brains. Faced with such possibilities, scientists and clinicians are routinely accused of "playing God", as though it is self-evident that some intrusions are going too far by threatening central features of what makes us human.

In writing *Designers of the Future* (Monarch, Oxford, 2005), one of my aims is to critique concepts such as designer babies and playing God. While accepting the legitimate fears of many, my aim is to demythologise these terms, by directing attention at the rationale and limitations of the science underlying them. It is a tragedy that discussion of the clinical potential of stem cells and genetic advance, let alone of the boundaries between health and disease, or between normality and abnormality, has become mired in such misleading and grandiose concepts. On the other hand, scientists have to be very careful that they do not oversell tentative advances with unjustified hype, and society has to be careful that human persons are treated as more than fragmented assortments of genes and organs.

Another book of more general coverage is *Medical Ethics* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne), the fourth edition of which appeared in 2005. Written with Grant Gillett (Bioethics Centre) and Alastair Campbell (University of Bristol), it is an introduction to many of the ethical questions doctors and other health professionals face in their work. While ranging far and wide beyond the above issues, it cannot avoid touching on contentious matters since modern-day bioethics is replete with them. Bioethics ensures that life is never dull!

Professor Gareth Jones
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International)
Department of Anatomy and Structural Biology.

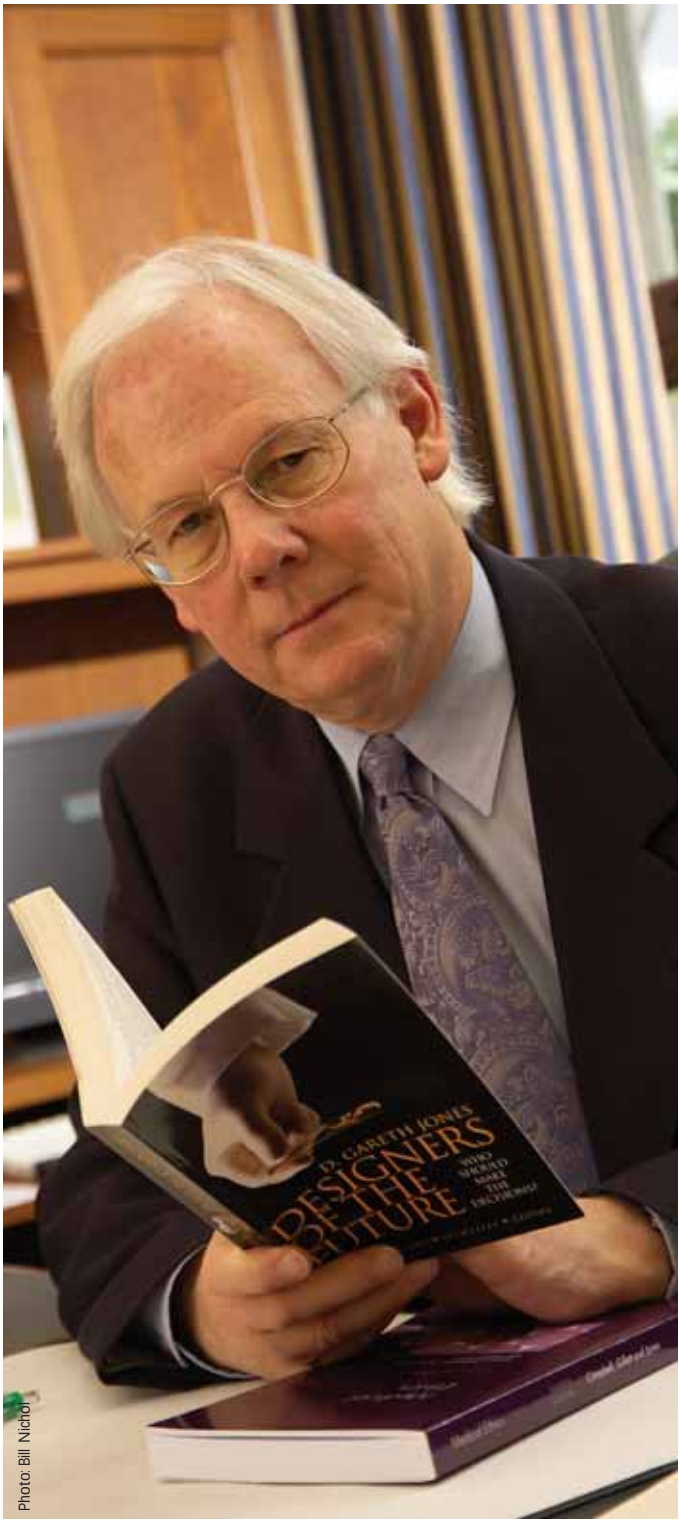


Photo: Bill Nichol

Professor Gareth Jones: "It is a tragedy that discussion of the clinical potential of stem cells and genetic advance, let alone of the boundaries between health and disease, or between normality and abnormality, has become mired in such misleading and grandiose concepts."

Claudine Stirling: "It [the centre] has the potential to complement a lot of work that is going on here at Otago, to raise its profile and, most importantly, to extend it."

Photo: Alan Dove

Elemental research

Isotopic geochemist Dr Claudine Stirling has returned to New Zealand to head the new Community Trust of Otago Centre for Trace Element Analysis.

THE NEWLY-APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF THE COMMUNITY Trust of Otago Centre for Trace Element Analysis, Dr Claudine Stirling, is excited about her new job for a whole host of reasons.

Not only will the centre offer a new dimension to research at the University of Otago, it has enabled this highly-qualified scientist to return to her home country and to be involved in establishing the facility "from scratch".

One of only a handful of Kiwi isotopic geochemists in the world, Stirling originally left this country after undergraduate studies at Victoria University. She completed her PhD at the Australian National University then moved on to the University of Michigan where she began working with what were then new techniques to measure isotopes.

"Michigan had taken a risk in acquiring the first multi-collector mass spectrometer, machines which are now used in labs around the world."

This in turn led to five years' research at one of the world's leading isotopic chemistry facilities, ETH Zurich. However, Stirling never lost her desire to return to New Zealand.

"I've always strongly identified myself as a New Zealander and came home to visit every year. At conferences I used to meet up with other New Zealanders and we would talk about how we'd love to come home if only we could get work here."

Now she has.

The Community Trust of Otago Centre for Trace Element Analysis is a project of the University's *Leading Thinkers* initiative. It has been established under the aegis of Professor Keith Hunter and made possible by a generous donation of $800,000 from the Community Trust of Otago towards the estimated $2 million set-up costs. The donation is matched by the Government under the Partnerships for Excellence scheme.

This is the first centre of its kind in New Zealand, dedicated to the measurement of heavy element isotopes, neatly complementing the existing Iso-trace facility which operates within the University's Centre for Innovation and concentrates on lighter isotopes.

The new centre will be able to measure almost all elements, but particularly those above oxygen on the periodic table. Key to this will be quality of the equipment due to be installed this month – a state-of-the-art multi-collector mass spectrometer with an inductively-coupled plasma source (MC-ICP-MS) for precise isotopic analysis, a quadrupole inductively-coupled plasma mass spectrometer (ICP-MS) for rapid acquisition of concentration data, and a laser ablation system that can be used with either machine.

Selecting this equipment was one of Stirling's first tasks after taking up the directorship in October and, at $1.5 million (without peripherals), she says it was "a good deal".

"One of the great things about being involved in

something like this right from the start is getting the chance to set things up the way you want them to be. Starting from scratch is challenging, but a unique opportunity."

The centre includes three "clean" labs with hepa-filtered air to avoid contamination of samples. And, while it is being established within the Department of Chemistry, it is already attracting interest across a range of disciplines, particularly the geo-sciences, human nutrition, zoology, forensics and archaeology, as well as the biological and chemical sciences.

"For example, those working in the geo-sciences can use isotopic analysis for tracking earth processes and climate change. Marine chemistry is interested in tracing metal cycles in various aqueous environments and there is real interest from those working in the field of fisheries for tracing fish migration – where fish populations have come from."

Isotopic analysis can give vital information about where, when and what processes have been at work.

"It is by measuring the small changes in the isotopic composition of archives that we can get this information," Stirling explains.

This is as equally applicable in the human body as in the environment and even the solar system. Take, for instance, iron: it metabolises within the human body and oxidises in the environment.

As another example she uses uranium, one of her own areas of research. "Uranium decays to thorium and can be used as a radiometric clock to date a wide range of geologic and environmental processes by measuring the tiny amounts of ingrown thorium relative to uranium."

Until now Otago researchers have had to outsource isotopic analysis overseas. "But this places limits on what researchers can achieve. By having this resource on-site, Otago researchers will have far more options and flexibility," she says.

"It has the potential to complement a lot of work that is going on here, to raise its profile and, most importantly, to extend it. It adds an important new dimension to research possibilities."

She will be continuing her own research here, including a number of international collaborations on subjects as diverse as cosmochemistry, Earth surface processes and paleo-climatic change, the latter pushing techniques to the limit, dating the uranium series of isotopes back as far as 600,000 years.

However, her most immediate challenge is to promote the centre and train people how to use it, encouraging them to think in different ways and, perhaps, attacking problems from different angles. Initially she envisages the centre being primarily research-based, but presenting opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations both within and outside the University.

"There are a lot of people who have been waiting for a resource such as this. There are still some issues to be worked through, but I welcome inquiries and am here to talk about how we can help."

Karen Hogg

All in th

Otago's newest Rhodes Scholar, Nick Douglas, follows in the footsteps of his older brother, Tom.

NICK DOUGLAS SAYS HE IS STILL WALKING ON AIR AFTER winning a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. The affable and relaxed 23-year-old medical student, who is starting his sixth year at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, is one half of a remarkable familial double act. Just three years ago his older brother, Tom, was also granted a Rhodes after completing a medical degree at Otago.

It is only the third time in the 100-year history of Rhodes Scholarships in New Zealand that two brothers have received the award, and is the 48th Rhodes to be awarded to the University of Otago.

However, as far as Nick is concerned, being one of three New Zealand Rhodes Scholars for 2005 is nothing to do with the pure artesian water in his home town of Christchurch. Rather it is all about being brought up in a supportive family, coupled with hard work at University and Medical School.

"No, my parents didn't push me, they simply encouraged me to follow my interests. At Burnside High I was right into sport and music, but also managed to do quite well on the academic side," he explains. "I think the key was my parents' encouragement of a broad education, giving all of us every opportunity to get involved in things we enjoyed."

It certainly seems to have worked. Nick carried off a raft of sporting and musical awards from Burnside High School where he was head prefect, and has since gained many academic prizes at the University of Otago.

Each year, 85 Rhodes Scholars are chosen from the Commonwealth, the USA and Germany, with the University of Otago winning at least a quarter of all New Zealand Rhodes

e family

Nick Douglas: "I think the key was my parents' encouragement of a broad education, giving all of us every opportunity to get involved in things we enjoyed."

Photo: Ross Coombes

Scholarships since 1904. The director of Research Higher Degrees and Scholarships, Dr Charles Tustin, says this strong track record partly demonstrates success in attracting top students, and also reflects well on the merits of a University of Otago education with a strong tradition of successful involvement in sports and cultural pursuits.

Talking to this fit young New Zealander, with his easy sense of humour and engaging manner, one can understand how he was a national sport-climbing champion and representative badminton and hockey player while still at school, a keen chorister in the Tower New Zealand Youth Choir and Capping Sextet, and now a member of Cantores (a Christchurch Chamber Choir) and competitive squash player.

"Singing is still very important for me in terms of relaxation, social contact and maintaining my interest in wonderful music," he says.

This pattern continued at Otago, where he thrived in the University atmosphere. He says the Otago experience was very positive, encouraging and enjoyable, and they were four great years of his life. A key event in these years, as far as the Rhodes success and his future interests, was the completion of a BMedSc research year with first class honours in 2004, with a thesis on Childhood Cancer Survival in New Zealand 1990 to 1993.

"This really sparked my interest in the field of paediatric oncology which I hope to continue at Oxford," he says. "I had an inspiring supervisor in Dr John Dockerty in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine in Dunedin, and as the year progressed I became more and more fascinated in this subject area."

Nick probably won't be at Oxford for long while his brother is still there as he is hoping to defer departure until late 2007, in order to complete his medical degree in this country. He says Tom was very helpful with advice regarding the crucial interview in front of a panel of seven, including the Governor-General, when selection ran down to the wire with 10 New Zealand finalists. His brother is now studying for a DPhil (PhD) in philosophy, having switched from medicine.

"The interview was an intense half-hour of questioning involving some fairly contentious issues. Needless to say, I was thrilled, but also quite surprised when I was selected," he says. "I'm certainly a bit nervous about Oxford, and realise I'll have a tradition to uphold."

However, Nick Douglas is a young man who is clearly aware that he is going to make his own choices, define his own existence and not be too overawed by the traditions of Oxford or anywhere else. He says that perhaps this was part of the reason he was successful in his application, that he has a career goal which will benefit the community and the determination to achieve it.

But there is another dream, too; rock music. "Yes that's one of my continuing fantasies," he jokes. "I'd love to be a rock musician and tour for a year. That would be wonderful!"

But right now the demands of the wards at Christchurch Hospital await Nick Douglas the trainee intern, before the challenges of Oxford and a Rhodes Scholarship in 2007.

Ainslie Talbot

EVELYN PAGE (1899-1988) *Point of Departure* 1944-45
Oil on canvas on board: 429 x 760mm
Gift of Mona Edgar 1961

VITALITY AND COLOUR: THESE WERE THE HALLMARKS OF Evelyn Page's art. Whether painting a nude or a cityscape, it was the dance of shapes and the play of light that she most ardently chased.

Page said it was her elder sister who nudged her towards a bolder approach to paint simply by suggesting that she try using pure colour.

"It was the whole excitement from her remark that a world had opened up; a world of light and colour."

Trips overseas gave her the chance to see what the bold colourists of European modernism were achieving, but she always kept to her own idiosyncratic path.

After her marriage to musician Frederick Page in 1938, she moved to the small village of Governor's Bay at the head of Lyttelton Harbour, and it was near here (on the steep hills above Norwich Quay) that she painted *Point of Departure*.

Unlike the nearby town of Akaroa, Lyttelton possesses a more rugged beauty. As one local put it, Lyttelton is a "tough and muscular town, not pretty like Akaroa, a town used to working hard for its living handling Canterbury's imports and exports".

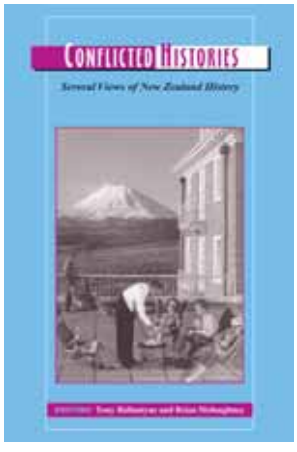
This was just the sort of busy bustling energy that Page loved to paint. Not for her the more sedate charms of an isolated rural environment (a subject favoured by many of her peers). She preferred scenes that would yield to the spontaneity and brio of her brushstrokes.

This verve with which Page tackled paint was also central to her personality. When in her late eighties and nearing death, she apparently insisted that those who came to her funeral should be treated to a sumptuous post-service champagne luncheon. On canvas, as in life then, spiritedness was the Page way.

Claire Finlayson

HOCKEN COLLECTIONS GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

Until 17 March 2006	Rohan Wealleans: An installation by the 2005 Frances Hodgkins Fellow.
25 March –13 May 2006	Fanny and Me: An exhibition of paintings by local artist Liz Abbot responding to nineteenth-century watercolourist Fanny Brunton.



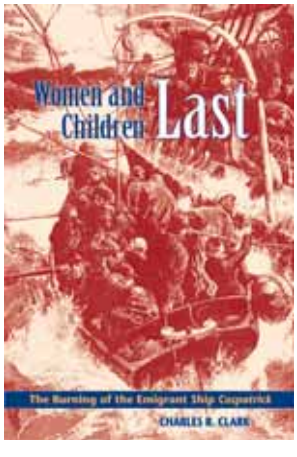
CONFLICTED HISTORIES: SEVERAL VIEWS OF NEW ZEALAND HISTORY

Edited by Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney

Some of the country's finest historians have contributed to an important book that explores new ways of understanding New Zealand history. Edited by Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney from Otago's Department of History, *Conflicted Histories: Several Views of New Zealand History* features research by Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, Barbara Brookes, Bronwyn Dalley, Miles Fairburn, Erik Olssen, Michael P J Reilly and David Thomson.

The essays recount New Zealand's many pasts and how historians have imagined those pasts; they also reflect concerns about New Zealand today and the role of history as a discipline. Many delve into new archives and sites of historical inquiry. Atholl Anderson reflects on what recent archaeological finds show about Māori origins in Aotearoa. Barbara Brookes' study of 1970s gender politics utilises a largely untapped archive, while Bronwyn Dalley looks at photographs as historical evidence. These approaches enable the historians to recover stories otherwise obscured by national histories, which tend to prioritise the state and national identity.

This collection was occasioned by the retirement of Professor Erik Olssen from the University of Otago. His work has been at the forefront of New Zealand historical research and methodology, and the final essay is based on an interview with him.



WOMEN AND CHILDREN LAST: THE BURNING OF THE EMIGRANT SHIP *COSPATRICK*

Charles Clark

In *Women and Children Last*, former University of Otago research scientist Charles Clark takes the reader on a horrifying voyage across the ocean.

A sea voyage in the nineteenth century was not for the faint-hearted. Hazards were many and accidents commonplace. Of the ways a ship might meet its end, destruction by fire was perhaps the most feared. Wooden sailing vessels were particularly vulnerable and, without breathing apparatus, it was almost impossible to fight a fire below decks.

The period saw a number of catastrophic shipboard fires, but that involving the New Zealand-bound emigrant ship *Cospatrick* was one of the most destructive. When she burned and sank off the coast of Southern Africa in 1874, nearly 500 people lost their lives. There was a desperate battle to quench the fire, a huge death toll as the vessel was being abandoned, and acts of cannibalism in the one lifeboat that remained afloat. While the book relates the story of the *Cospatrick* and the nightmare survival of only three people, it also considers the larger picture of safety at sea.

Charles Clark began his working life as a seaman in the British Merchant Navy and later became a research chemist, with a doctorate from the University of Stirling, Scotland. He has worked at the Australian National University and the University of Otago, from which he retired in 2002.

Reflecting perceptions amongst its readers and in the book trade and media, University of Otago Press has changed its name to Otago University Press.

RECENT TITLES FROM OTAGO UNIVERSITY PRESS

Books & Boots: The Story of New Zealand Publisher, Writer and Long Distance Walker, Alfred Hamish Reed: Ian Dougherty, November 2005

Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives: edited by Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney, February 2006

For further information contact university.press@otago.ac.nz

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS OF OTAGO ALUMNI

Free Time and Leisure Participation: International Perspectives: Grant Cushman, Tony and Zuzanek Veal, Jiri (eds), CABI Publishing, UK, 2005

Netball 90: A History of Netball in Otago 1915-2005: Margaret Bruss, Otago University Press, June 2005

Tourism: Change, Impacts and Opportunities: Geoffrey Wall and Alister Mathieson, Pearson Education, November 2005

Health Psychology: Theory, Research & Practice: David F Marks, Michael Murray, Brian Evans, Carla Willig, Cailine Woodall and Catherine M Sykes, SAGE, 2005

Anton Oliver – Inside: Anton Oliver with Brian Turner, Hodder Moa Beckett, 2005

Alumni, have you written a book lately? Email the editor at mag.editor@otago.ac.nz

Fertile possibilities

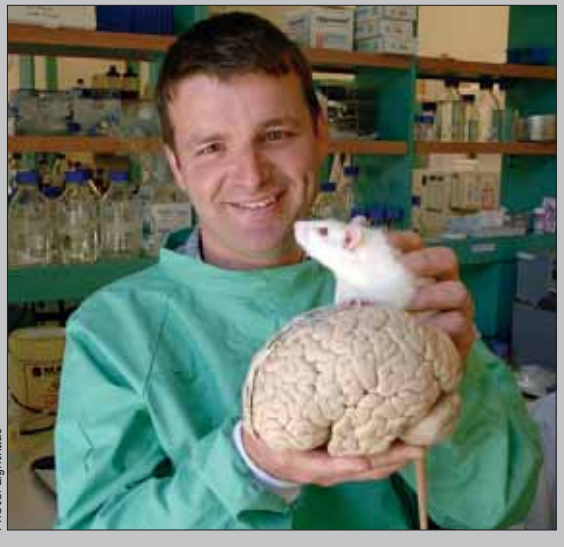


Photo: Lighthaus

Dr Greg Anderson: "The premise is that if GnIH is present in birds and rodents, it's probably in all species, and our preliminary work suggests it is important."

A chance meeting with an avian neuroendocrinologist has led to a fascinating journey of discovery for Dr Greg Anderson (Anatomy and Structural Biology).

This avian researcher had found a "new" neuroendocrine hormone controlling fertility in birds – gonadotrophin inhibitory hormone (GnIH) which appeared to be working in an opposite way to its co-regulator, gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH).

While GnRH has long been known as the driver of fertility in all animals, including humans, Anderson says an inhibitory hormone from the brain was previously unknown.

Obtaining sparrow GnIH, Anderson tested it on rodents, with positive results. GnIH nerve cells were identified in the mouse brain, and the hormone rapidly suppressed their fertility.

He now has a three-year Marsden grant to take the research further.

"The premise is that if GnIH is present in birds and rodents, it's probably in all species, and our preliminary work suggests it is important."

The next stage is to have mammalian GnIH synthesised. "I predict it will be much more potent because it will be specific to mammals."

The research could have clinical potential, both as a contraceptive and as a treatment for infertility. Some existing contraceptives work by blocking GnRH, but can have the unwanted side effect of reducing libido (which is also controlled by GnRH). "There is huge potential for something that can block fertility but not libido," says Anderson.

Conversely, some infertility could be caused by excess GnIH. "If we could somehow tip the balance of these two hormones in favour of GnRH it's likely fertility could be increased."

Consumers and service logic

Photo: Alan Dove

Associate Professor David Ballantyne: The service-dominant logic has the potential to change the way businesses think about marketing.

Consumers should soon benefit from a radical shift in marketing theory – the service-dominant logic in which consumers (not producers) determine the value of a product, based on experience of its use.

Although not new, demands for an over-arching, service-based marketing theory are gaining momentum and were the subject of The Otago Forum at the School of Business in November, attended by world-leading marketing academics.

Associate Professor David Ballantyne says a production-line view of marketing has tended to prevail since the Industrial Revolution, with a producer- or goods-dominant view of resource allocation and product value.

However, these days may be finally over as many marketers now advocate a service-dominant logic emphasising the interaction between businesses and their customers – service values, service-ability of products and value-in-use.

They argue that *all* businesses are service providers and all products deliver service; that customer value is created through service experiences and relationships; and that rather than businesses marketing *to* customers, they market *with* customers.

"The emphasis is on what customers do in using the products they buy, not just on what customers say they need.

"You could say the customer determines what is of value and all else comes from that. The dominance of services in our national economies has forced a reappraisal of how this can best be done."

Ballantyne says the service-dominant logic, therefore, has the potential to change the way businesses think about marketing, encouraging innovation with the sharing of ideas and knowledge among business, customers and suppliers.

Theories in time

Photo: Lighthaus

Dr Heather Dyke: " . . . why should we think that one time is more real than the other?"

We spend time, we waste time, we save time . . . but what is time?

Dr Heather Dyke (Philosophy) says there are two theories: the A-theory depicting time as flowing from future to present to past, with the present being privileged over the past and future; and the B-theory which states that time does not flow, and all times and events are equally real, simply occurring earlier or later than each other.

"Think of a film reel laid out, with every frame representing the state of the universe at one time," Dyke explains. "The B-theorist says the film reel represents time, but the A-theorist has to add a projector to highlight one frame as the present."

The A-theory is often regarded as the common-sense view of time, reinforced by our experience of time as flowing. However, Dyke is a B-theorist.

"Think of a spatial analogy. When we use the words 'here' and 'over there' to refer to different places, we don't think one place is more real than the other. So if we use the words 'now' and 'yesterday' to refer to different times, why should we think that one time is more real than the other?"

As a philosopher, Dyke aims to find the truth about the world, recognising the need to reconcile philosophy and science. "The best current scientific theory about time is the special theory of relativity, which is in tension with the A-theory of time."

In 2004 her work earned her an Early Career Award for Distinction in Research and has led to her new book about language and reality.

Targeting kina consistency

Photo: Bill Nichol

Pat Silcock, Associate Professor Phil Bremer, Associate Professor Mike Barker: Being able to market kina of consistently acceptable standard will make the fishery more valuable and, arguably, more sustainable.

Kina (sea urchin) roe has a complex, creamy, layered flavour, moving through fresh marine, to sweet, then rich savoury flavours finishing with an oystery aftertaste…

Roe is a delicacy in Japan. However, as kina roe varies dramatically in flavour and colour, greater consistency is required before its export potential can be realised.

Associate Professor Phil Bremer, Dr Conor Delahunty and Pat Silcock (Food Science) and Associate Professor Mike Barker (Marine Science), in conjunction with Dr Mary Sewell at the University of Auckland and industry partners, are analysing biochemical compounds responsible for flavour in order to understand the relationship between diet, handling and quality. The programme, which uses sensory panels, is the most comprehensive study conducted on sea-urchin roe enhancement.

Being able to market kina of consistently acceptable standard will make the fishery more valuable and, arguably, more sustainable.

"At present, there's no way of knowing which kina will have good roe," Bremer says. "If we can guarantee roe quality, there'll be better return for fewer kina taken, which means more kina left in the wild."

The programme is also developing processing guidelines. "In order to obtain the best prices you have to start with premium quality roe and ensure quality is maintained," Silcock adds.

Barker is exploring the kina life cycle. "We are looking at how to lessen the long-term environmental impacts of harvesting in order to prevent overfishing, which is something that's occurred in almost every other sea urchin fishery around the world. It's a great team effort!"

Neolithic life uncovered

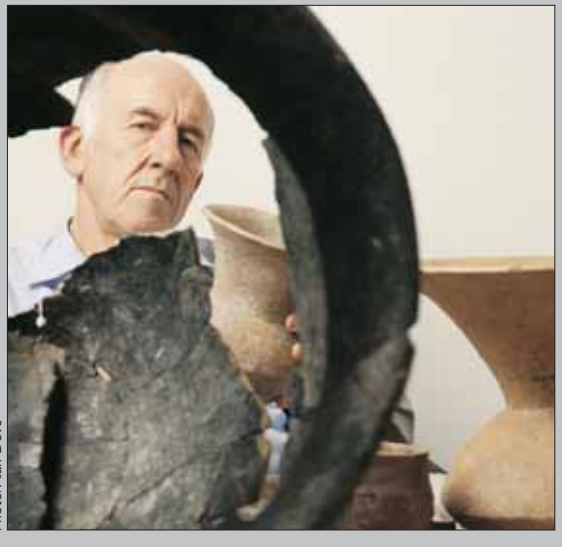


Photo: Alan Dove

Professor Charles Higham: " . . . we hope to find out who these people were, when they arrived, their culture and the implications for the cultural development of South-East Asia."

The transition from hunting and gathering to farming – the Neolithic revolution – is one of the most significant changes in human history. Its beginnings have been traced back more than 10,000 years to two old-world regions – the Levant from where farming spread throughout Europe, and the Yangtse basin in China.

But while early farming in Europe has been extensively researched, little has been known about the early farmers of South-East Asia – until now.

While working at the prehistoric site of Ban Non Wat in north-east Thailand, a team led by Professor Charles Higham (Anthropology) uncovered lustrous black potsherds bearing incised patterns, immediately identifying them as Neolithic and at least 4,000 years old.

Further excavation revealed the burial ground of an ancient rice-farming people, the first Neolithic cemetery of any significance uncovered in South-East Asia. Now Higham has gained a three-year Marsden grant to investigate further the Neolithic revolution in this region.

Higham describes the site as "extraordinary", one that is not only significant in its own right, but which should be able make an enormous contribution to the Neolithic revolution debate.

"With the help of DNA and isotope analysis we hope to find out who these people were, when they arrived, their culture and the implications for the cultural development of South-East Asia. The people of every modern South-East Asian state are the descendants of these rice farmers.

"From what we have found already we know that these were not only farming people, but they were also weavers and traders, and that they made superb pottery."

Cataract research "encouraging"

Photo: Bill Nichol

Dr Tony Wells: "We found that it [celecoxib] made a difference to the thickness of the retina after surgery . . ."

Collaborative research between the Ophthalmology Unit (Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia) at the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Wellington Hospital's Eye Department has the potential to make a real difference to patients recovering from cataract surgery.

Even more impressive is the fact that the study was carried out with no funding, borrowed equipment and by a group who had previously never undertaken research.

Dr Tony Wells explains that up to 30 per cent of cataract patients may suffer from cystoid macular oedema (retinal swelling) following surgery. For five to 10 per cent of patients the swelling is clinically relevant, affecting vision for a number of weeks. Of even greater concern, about one per cent don't recover from this.

However, in a small, randomised pilot study in 2003 Wells and his team treated patients with a short course of the COX-2 inhibitor celecoxib, an anti-inflammatory drug.

"We found that it made a difference to the thickness of the retina after surgery, which is a measure of the amount of swelling. The difference was small, but definitely enough to be encouraging."

They have now set up a much larger study of about 800 patients. Ethics approval has been gained, funding obtained from the Lottery Grants Board and equipment purchased.

"The principle will be the same as the earlier study. Some patients will be given a placebo and others an anti-inflammatory, and they will be scanned before and after surgery."

The team's findings so far are to be published in the journal *Clinical and Experimental Ophthalmology.*

Battling resistance

Photo: Alan Dove

Dr Greg Cook: His team has identified a novel protein that activates antibiotic resistance in poultry.

More than 26,000 kilograms of the antibiotic bacitracin are fed to poultry in New Zealand each year. The purpose is to promote growth, but research at Otago's Department of Microbiology and Immunology has shown high levels of resistance to the antibiotic in bacteria isolated from these animals.

"We studied the bacterium *Enterococcus faecalis* in the chicken gut as an indicator organism and found that 99 per cent of those bacteria were resistant to bacitracin," explains Dr Greg Cook.

There were no existing explanations for bacitracin resistance in *E. faecalis* so, using molecular genetics, the team identified, cloned and sequenced the genes encoding for this resistance and found that one of the central genes responsible was a novel regulatory protein, BcrR.

BcrR is unusual in several ways. It is a DNA-binding protein attached to the cytoplasmic membrane of the cell – most of these types of proteins are found in the cytoplasm. It also combines two regulatory functions in that it is both a sensor and transducer of bacitracin – it senses the presence of the antibiotic and activates genes encoding resistance to it.

"We have patented the protein and our objective now is to determine its structure and find out how it works," says Cook. The protein will be purified, crystallised and crystals will be sent to collaborators at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology for synchrotron measurement.

The commercial possibilities are enormous.

"If we can understand the structure of BcrR and how it interacts with bacitracin we can ultimately design a drug that will knock out the regulatory protein. When this new drug is combined with bacitracin, the antibiotic will become effective again."

Heavy metal goes marine

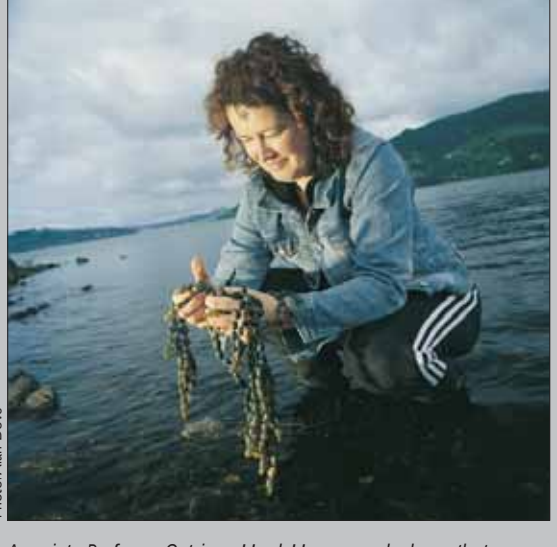


Photo: Alan Dove

Associate Professor Catriona Hurd: Her research shows that seaweeds such as Neptune's necklace can act as effective bio-monitors of pollution in the sea.

Seaweeds need the right nutrients to grow… and to get a wide variety of seaweed species, which in turn support a wide range of other marine life, the right amounts of a wide range of nutrients are needed.

Associate Professor Catriona Hurd's research shows that oversupply of some nutrients (e.g. nitrogen) can limit the diversity of seaweeds, while promoting an abundance of a few seaweeds adapted to grow in high nutrient environments. This can limit the diversity of other marine life further down the food chain and create a lot of weedy overgrowth.

Seaweeds need iron to assimilate nitrogen, in the same way that humans need vitamin C to assimilate iron. As Hurd explored the metals in the nutrient mix, she found something else. Seaweeds such as Neptune's necklace (*Hormosira banksii*) can act as effective bio-monitors of pollution in the sea – both the presence of pollutants and their effects.

"Many heavy metals are essential for maintenance functions in seaweed, such as photosynthesis," Hurd says. "In the case of Neptune's necklace, excess heavy metals are stored in the plant. This accumulation is crucial in a bio-monitor for heavy metals. Neptune's necklace also lives for a relatively long time – three to four years – and, given that the seaweed grows from the top with the older portions at the base, it may be possible to do time-line studies on the same plant."

While this project is a sideline to her main research, Hurd says the idea of using seaweed as a monitor for environmental pollution is being regarded with considerable interest.

Measuring aid

Photo: Alan Dove

Professor David Fielding: He and his colleagues have used household-wealth data, not GDP, to examine development indicators.

Economists have long been exercised by the interactions between economic development and social development, and Professor David Fielding, of Otago's Department of Economics, is no exception. However, he is adopting a different approach.

In examining the impacts of aid on developing countries he and fellow researchers Sebastian Torres (University of Leicester) and Mark McGillivray (UNU / WIDER) have used household-wealth data, not GDP as most others have done.

"Looking at national data such as GDP shows only average income figures and therefore tells you most about wealthy people and almost nothing about the poorest 20 per cent – the people donors want their aid to reach," Fielding explains.

However, by looking at household data, they have been able to look at development indicators such as education, health, child mortality and fertility for different income groups within 48 countries – from the poorest through to the wealthiest.

Their results show that aid does alleviate household poverty – there are positive correlations between wealth and education and lower child mortality, between health and wealth, as well as between education and lower mortality. This highlights the importance of the interaction or "knock-on effect" between indicators. For example, providing education alone to the poor has little impact – they still cannot afford to have their children not earning. But if you bring them out of poverty they are more likely to send their children to school.

Now they are planning to tease this information out further – looking within the poorest 20 per cent at the impacts of aid on the even poorer.

Mental time travel

Photo: Alan Dove

Professor Harlene Hayne: "Our findings will have important theoretical implications for current views of memory development . . ."

Do you remember your wedding day or the birth of your first child? What about where you left your keys or what you need to do tomorrow?

Professor Harlene Hayne (Psychology) says these kinds of memory tasks are universally familiar to adults: we reflect on events from the past and plan for events that we know will happen in the future.

"We accomplish this kind of mental time travel using a special kind of memory commonly referred to as episodic memory."

But, although memory researchers agree about the cognitive value of episodic memory, there is heated debate about when episodic memory might emerge during the course of human development. At what age do children first show signs of episodic memory skill, and how do these skills change with age and experience? When do children begin to use what they have learned in the past to make predictions about events in the future?

With a three-year Marsden grant, Hayne will research age-related changes in episodic memory during childhood and adolescence. Participants of different ages will be tested using a series of experimental procedures to measure verbal and non-verbal episodic memory.

"We predict that the ability to recall the past will emerge very early during childhood, but that the ability to use the past to plan for the future will continue to improve over a prolonged period of development.

"Our findings will have important theoretical implications for current views of memory development, and important practical implications in settings in which children must rely on their memories, including clinical, legal and educational contexts."

Global poetics

Photo: Lighthaus

Dr Jacob Edmond: " . . . in a relatively elite art form like poetry there are parallels and real similarities which may suggest the emergence of a new global poetics."

It might be assumed that poetry written in the United States, China and Russia in the latter decades of the last century would be significantly different. These were, after all, countries with dramatically dissimilar social, political, economic and technological structures.

However, as Dr Jacob Edmond (English) points out, they were also countries that went through major geo-political and social transitions from the late 1970s onwards.

Edmond has been awarded a Fast-Start grant from the Marsden Fund to explore the new global poetics. In a two-year project, he aims to show points of correlation between poetry from these countries, assessing the degree to which these correlations arise out of a shared sense of cultural change and an increasingly globalised poetic culture.

He has chosen six innovative poets who "pushed the boundaries" of poetry within their respective countries between the late 1970s and early 1990s – Charles Bernstein and Lyn Hejinian (United States), Bei Dao and Yang Lian (Mainland China), and Dimitrii Prigov and Arkadii Dragomoshchenko (Russia).

Fluent in both Chinese and Russian, Edmond will analyse and compare original-language texts, and expects to find remarkable points of correlation which will challenge existing understandings of postmodernist poetry.

"There has been a tendency to think that because China and Russia have been so different socially and politically, both from each other and the West, they must also be very different culturally. But in a relatively elite art form like poetry there are parallels and real similarities which may suggest the emergence of a new global poetics."

World-first concussion assessment

Photo: Ross Coombes

Dr Marcus Heitger: "Around 20 per cent of people have significant ongoing problems following concussion. It's not an injury to be ignored."

Every year more than 20,000 New Zealanders sustain mild head injury or concussion. However, often it is difficult for clinicians to determine how badly they have been injured, how well they will recover and how quickly.

Researchers at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences have developed a world-first computerised assessment programme to measure the effect of concussion on brain function, and how this type of injury might affect patients as they recover.

Dr Marcus Heitger, Professor Tim Anderson and Associate Professor Richard Jones at the Van der Veer Institute for Parkinson's and Brain Research have found two things: eye movements and eye-hand co-ordination can be affected following concussion. By measuring these motor functions in the week after injury, scientists can gauge how severely brain function may be affected. The aim is to predict how well patients will recover over the next year and whether they need to be managed more closely.

"Around 20 per cent of people have significant ongoing problems following concussion. It's not an injury to be ignored. Existing diagnostic methods often find it difficult to predict who is likely to have ongoing problems," says Heitger.

These can occur as headaches, sleep disturbance, dizziness, fatigue, anxiety, and problems with memory and concentration. Often people don't understand why they are not functioning normally.

Heitger and his colleagues are now looking to extend their programme. Using MRI scans, they are investigating the link between impairment in motor performance and neural damage after concussion, and examining eye movements in people having problems longer than four weeks after injury.

MERGER PLAN AGREED

In December the councils of the University of Otago and the Dunedin College of Education approved the business case for a merger of the College with the University.

The merger would result in the disestablishment of the current Dunedin College of Education and the establishment of the University of Otago College of Education as a professional school within the University's Division of Humanities.

The business case now goes to the Minister for Tertiary Education for consideration. A final decision is hoped for by the end of April for a merger to take effect on 1 January 2007.

The new University of Otago College of Education will be located at the current College site, with University staff joining their College colleagues in those purpose-built facilities. The College's Invercargill Campus and Central Otago facility in Alexandra will also be incorporated in the new University of Otago College of Education.

Key benefits of the merger for staff and students will include greater opportunities to study for double degrees, increased career options for students and staff, and the opportunity to relate to a broader group of colleagues with a wider range of expertise. While staff and students of the College will have the advantages of belonging to a research-led University with extensive international links, Otago's own education programmes will be enhanced by the depth of practical teaching expertise and the supportive culture for which the College is renowned.

OTAGO'S MBA COMES UP TRUMPS

The University's School of Business has been officially recognised as the leading provider of MBAs in New Zealand.

The Economist Intelligence Unit, the business arm of The Economist Group which publishes the *Economist* newspaper, named the School of Business's Otago MBA in its latest Top 100 MBA programmes. Otago is the only New Zealand MBA to be mentioned in the rankings.

The Otago MBA sits alongside the renowned international business schools Stanford Graduate School of Business, Yale School of Management, Columbia Business School, London Business School and HEC School of Management (Paris) in the prestigious rankings, and is ranked among the top five business schools in Asia and Australasia.

OTAGO'S 2006 ARTS FELLOWS

Sarah Munro of Auckland is the recipient of the 2006 Frances Hodgkins Fellowship. Munro has been exhibiting works since 1989 and this year completed her doctoral studies at the Elam School of Fine Arts.

In August, Dianne Ruth Pettis – whose 2004 novel *Like Small Bones* was short-listed for the Best First Book section of last year's Commonwealth Writers' Prize – takes up the Robert Burns Fellowship for the second half of its tenure.

Pettis will use the opportunity to work on her third novel, in which the landscape itself will be a major character.

Georgina White, the curator of First Dance (National Library Gallery) and an image researcher from Te Papa in Wellington, has been awarded this year's Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Community Dance. She aims to produce a book based on the exhibition which gives a historical overview of social dance events in New Zealand.

The University's 2005 Mozart Fellow, Rachel Clement, returns for another year while Catherine Chidgey, the 2005 Robert Burns Fellow, continues to hold the fellowship for the first six months of its tenure.

WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE LAUNCHED

A new University of Otago research centre focusing on women's health needs has been officially launched by its personal patron, the Governor-General, Dame Silvia Cartwright.

Based at the University's Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Women's Health Research Centre will look at women's health issues, including post-menopausal health, diabetes, heart disease, sexual and reproductive health, and maternal health.

Centre director Dr Bev Lawton said the centre aims to contribute positively to the health of women and families in the community, with an emphasis on wellness.

NEW MĀORI AND PACIFIC ISLANDS SCHOLARSHIPS

The University has set up new scholarships to promising Māori and Pacific Islands secondary school students to encourage them to take up university study at Otago.

The scholarships, of which 30 have been awarded this year, are worth $10,000 and cover accommodation in a residential college or hall, and/or tuition fees for the recipients' first year of study. Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg said the initiative formed part of the University's efforts to help promising Māori and Pacific Islands students overcome some perceived barriers to their studying away from home.

CARMEN TO SHOWCASE OTAGO'S BEST

The University will this year present a professional production of Bizet's *Carmen*, building on the success of *Madama Butterfly* staged in 2003.

Executive producer Judy Bellingham said that once again a number of Otago graduates will perform in the opera. These include Deborah Wai Kapohe as Carmen, Anna Leese as Micaela, Andrew Rees as Don Jose, together with Philip Rhodes, Roger Wilson, Brendon Mercer, Rebecca Ryan, Sarah McOnie and Anthony Sandle in supporting roles.

Tecwyn Evans will return to conduct the opera, with Holly Mathieson as assistant conductor and Alistair Watson as repetiteur. The opera will open at Dunedin's Regent Theatre on August 24.

APPOINTMENTS

Dr **Bret Morris** as the University's enterprise director. Dr Morris was formerly the Biotechnology Sector Investment manager at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise.

Dr **Kerry Shephard** as director of the University of Otago's Higher Education Development Centre (HEDC). Dr Shephard comes to Otago from the University of Southhampton.

Professor **Alan MacGregor** as acting dean of the University's School of Business for 2006, following Professor **David Buisson's** recent retirement.

Dr **Karen Poutasi** (MB ChB 1973, PDPHeal 1980, MBA 1985), as CEO of New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

OBITUARIES

Dr **Douglas Girvan** QSO (HonLLD 1994) (75). An internationally highly-regarded former Registrar of the University, Dr Girvan provided Otago with over 20 years of outstanding service (1975 - 1995). His special interest in the well-being of students was recognised in 1995 when the OUSA made him an honorary life member of the association.

PROFESSORIAL PROMOTIONS

The following academics have been promoted to full professorships: **Sally Brooker** (Chemistry), **Terence Dennis** (Music), **Stephen Dobson** (Economics), **Robert Hannah** (Classics), **Geoff Hall** (Law), **William Harris** (Political Studies), **Philippa Howden-Chapman** (Public Health, Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences), **John Highton** (Medical and Surgical Sciences, Dunedin School of Medicine), **Robert Love** (Oral Diagnostic and Surgical Sciences, School of Dentistry), **Andrew Mercer** (Microbiology and Immunology), **Nicola Peart** (Law), **Doug Sellman** (Psychological Medicine, Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences), **Hamish Spencer** (Zoology), **Christine Thomson** (Human Nutrition), **Murray Thomson** (Dental Public Health, School of Dentistry).

HONORARY DOCTORATES

In December, Professor **Bill Manhire** (BA 1967, MA 1968, MLitt 1970) and Natural History New Zealand managing director **Michael Stedman** received respectively an honorary Doctor of Literature and an honorary Doctor of Laws from Otago.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Physiology senior lecturer Dr **Fiona McDonald** won the New Zealand Association of Scientists Research Medal for her work exploring a cellular mechanism in the kidney that helps control

blood pressure.

Nick Fancourt, a fourth-year medical student at the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, became the first student ever selected from a New Zealand university to be a World Health Organisation (WHO) intern.

Biochemistry senior lecturer Dr **Julian Eaton-Rye** received the New Zealand Society of Plant Physiologists' Outstanding Physiologist Award for his innovative research aimed at unravelling some of the mysteries of photosynthesis in plants.

Grant Watson (MBA 2001), vice president operations for McDonald's Restaurants (NZ) Ltd, was named the 2005 New Zealand Institute of Management Young Executive of the Year.

Tourism senior lecturer Dr **David Duval** was the overall winner of the 2005 OUSA Teaching Awards.

School of Physical Education senior lecturer Dr **Mike Boyes** was named the 2005 top postgraduate supervisor by the OUSA.

Anatomy and Structural Biology Associate Professor **Dave Grattan** won the Physiological Society of New Zealand's Triennial Medal for distinguished physiological research. The award was based on his research into the hormonal mechanisms by which the maternal brain adapts to pregnancy.

Dr **Catherine Day** (Biochemistry) and Associate Professor **Richie Poulton** (Preventive and Social Medicine) both receive the University's 2006 Rowheath Trust and Carl Smith Medal, which recognises outstanding research performance by early career staff.

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

New Year Honours appointments to the New Zealand Order of Merit – CNZM: Professor **Atholl Anderson** (MA 1973); Most Rev **Peter Cullinane** (MTh 1981); Assoc Prof **Clifford Tasman-Jones** (MB ChB 1956). ONZM: Dr **Robert Beaglehole** (MB ChB 1968, MD 1977, DSc 1995); Dr **Carrick Devine** (PhD 1968); Emeritus Prof **Robin Fraser** (MD 1987); Prof **Anthony Molteno** (staff); **Elspeth Sandys** (BA 1960, Burns Fellow 1995). MNZM: Dr **Grant Christie** (PGDipSci 1975); Dr **Roderick Ellis-Pegler** (MB ChB 1965); **Robert Veale** (BSc 1988). QSO: **Rosemary Carruthers** (LLB 1980), Dr **Lance Jennings** (BSc 1970, MSc 1972, PhD 1977); **Stuart Strachan** (staff); **Ian Tulloch** (BCom 1971). QSM: **Douglas Lovell** (BDS 1963); **Donald Waugh** (BA 1953, MA 1956). ONZM (Additional Officer): Major **Charmaine Rene** (DipSptSt 2002, PGDipHealInf 2005).

Events and Reunions

The 2005 alumni event programme finished on a high note with lively events in Auckland and Melbourne. About 500 alumni and their partners enjoyed the waterfront ambience at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron during two September functions. In Melbourne, the alumni chapter's annual dinner allowed for leisurely mingling and well-received speeches from the Vice-Chancellor and local alumnus Julian Haszard (BDS 1999), who spoke briefly about how his student days led him to an ascent of Everest and an ongoing Himalayan dental care project.

MELBOURNE




2006 Event Schedule

Organising receptions around the world so alumni can catch up with the University and with each other has been a major part of our alumni programme for the last few years. That won't change, but there will be some differences in 2006, with a range of guest speakers and some smaller events aimed at alumni with specific interests.

As always, we encourage you to update your contact details so we can include you in mailings for events close to you. If you're not on the mailing list for an event, but are able to attend, please do let us know, as you'd be most welcome to join in.

Event dates for this year are at right. At press time, dates for further events in Suva, Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington had yet to be confirmed. Details will be posted on our web pages as soon as they are available.

Invercargill	Friday 24 March 2006
Dunedin	Friday 21 April 2006
Melbourne	Friday 28 April 2006
Christchurch	Wednesday 17 May 2006
Kuala Lumpur	Wednesday 31 May 2006
Kuching	Tuesday 6 June 2006
Sydney	Friday 4 August 2006
Whangarei	Friday 25 August 2006
Hamilton	Thursday 7 September 2006
Tauranga	Friday 8 September 2006
Napier	Friday 22 September 2006
Nelson	Friday 13 October 2006
Wellington	Tuesday 7 November 2006
London	November 2006

What's on in Dunedin?

Otago's graduates were certainly seduced by last year's offer of tickets to *The Graduate* at the Fortune Theatre, and we're delighted to be able to do it again.

The next alumni performance will be the opening night of *The Shape of Things*, by Neil LaBute. This story of a young man's transformation by a new girlfriend is "no ordinary romantic comedy" and promises "wrenching twists and thought-provoking turns". The Otago alumni night will be Friday 21 April. Free tickets (maximum two per request) will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Please email functions.alumni@otago.ac.nz or telephone 03 479 5649 by 20 February to reserve seats.

KEEP IN TOUCH
www.otago.ac.nz/alumni

Updates about what's on for alumni
Your link to an online change-of-address form
Information on how to contact other alumni and reconnect with old friends
Links to virtual postcards and desktop wallpaper

Events and Reunions

Scenes from Student Life

Dunedin without students is unimaginable, so the Otago Museum is devoting nearly half a year to celebrating campus culture in its exhibition, Scarfies, featuring images and memorabilia depicting the way we used to live (and some still do). If you're in Dunedin between 18 February and 2 July, check out the exhibition to remind yourself of the best and the worst of those special years.

New Zealand Alumni Convention 2006
Connecting Asia with Aotearoa New Zealand

Registrations of interest are open for the second New Zealand Alumni Convention to be held in Wellington, a follow-up to the successful inaugural convention in Kuching, Sarawak, in 2004.

As well as celebrating the lifelong connections that alumni and students from overseas, particularly from Asia, have made with New Zealand, the 2006 convention aims to highlight business opportunities and innovations, and provide a starting point for visiting alumni to reconnect with their own universities.

Further details about Otago's part in the convention will be confirmed later in the year. However, initial information, including preliminary registration details can be found at www.wellington.govt.nz/about/international/alumni.html

Reunions

Visits to old haunts at the Dunedin Medical School, trips on the Otago Excursion Train to Middlemarch and Palmerston, food and talks were the order of the day in November, with three medical class reunions held over two successive weekends. Participants travelled from as far as the UK and North America for the pleasure of catching up with old classmates and the Otago campus, sometimes for the first time since graduation in 1965 and 1975 (12-13 November) and 1955 (19-20 November).

Full reports and photos are available online at http://medicalalumni.otago.ac.nz/

Planned medical class reunions for 2006 are: 1971, 1986, 1992 (Feb 2006), 1976 (Apr 2006), 1956 (Oct 2006).

Halls

St Margaret's College enjoyed several more alumni events during 2005, while Selwyn followed its roadshow at University events with well-attended reunions in Singapore, Sydney and Auckland. If the now-and-then slideshow went down a treat, it was nothing compared to the ballet video, which kept the former residents buzzing until late. Thanks to Larry Gui (Singapore), Alister Robinson (Sydney) and Simon Moore (Auckland) for their help.

Salmond Hall is planning its 25-year reunion in August 2006. For further information visit Salmond's website www.salmondhall.ac.nz/students/ex_residents.php for details as they are confirmed.

Microbiology

World-renowned virologist Professor Robert Webster (BSc 1954, MSc 1956) was a keynote speaker at the NZ Microbiology Society's 50th anniversary conference, hosted in November by Otago's Microbiology Department. But the conference wasn't all work, as the department took the opportunity for a reunion to follow. Webster is one of the department's earliest graduates and many from his era were among the 75 who made it to Dunedin to catch up with former classmates.

MICROBIOLOGY




Let us know what you think

Our relationship with alumni is important to us. Your feedback on our events and your ongoing relationship with Otago is always welcome.

Contact us

Email: alumni@otago.ac.nz
Alumni and Development Office, PO Box 56, Dunedin
Telephone: +64 3 479 5246 Fax +64 3 479 6522

Otago Appeal

Making a difference

They write of opportunities and possibilities, of the challenges of being away from home and living with a couple of hundred other people, of the range of activities and courses available to them. Of making new friends, mastering the operation of washing machines, enjoying hostel food, finding their way around Dunedin, expanding their sporting interests and keeping up training, and studying a range of options to help steer them in their ultimate direction.

The quintessential Otago first-year experience, in short, with a significant difference. The 11 students concerned were the inaugural intake of University of Otago Appeal Scholars. The willingness of Otago's former students to support future students took care of course fees, removing one pressure as they embarked on their new paths. In return, the 11 young people took advantage of the complete Otago academic and lifestyle package, but they also worked hard and achieved outstanding results.

Grace Brown, from Wellington, lived at Carrington, studying humanities, hopes to continue with a BA/LLB. *"Knowing I had the ability to receive such a scholarship has given me invaluable confidence in my academic ability, allowing me to tackle challenging assessments and subjects."*

Philip Drennan, from Christchurch, lived at Carrington, Health Sciences first year.
"My academic pursuits this year have not managed to stifle the many friendships I have formed, and the myriad interesting events (several involving the Captain Cook/Gardies) that have occurred that will make this year so memorable."

Alana McCrossin, from Westport, lived at Cumberland, is studying arts and design studies. *"Living with 440 other people took a little getting used to, but now I am loving the company and will miss having so many friends around next year."*

Andrew Tringham, from Wellington, lived at Carrington, studying law and commerce. Represented the University at the Virtual Trade Mission New Zealand Trust New Zealand Voices of 2005 Programme in Auckland, and later a similar APEC event in South Korea. *"I am proud to be representing the University on the world stage and I can't wait to increase my knowledge on the issues even more."*

Yeshe Dawa, Dunedin, studying humanities. *"Thank you very very much...hopefully I can continue on the cycle of generosity in years to come."*

Otago has been inviting its former students to contribute to scholarship, library and research funds for three years, and the University continues to be delighted by the response. The financial support makes a difference that's easy to count: 11 new Appeal Scholars and continuing support for 2004's two Alumni Scholars, another research project funded, another good set of new reference works. This spirit of giving – of continuing to want to be part of the University community – is a priceless measure of just how Otago's former students value their experience here.

The 2005 Otago Appeal Scholars will be announced early this year, and information on the distribution of the funds raised will be included in the Annual Appeal mailout in April.

For further information visit www.otago.ac.nz/alumni or email annualappeal@otago.ac.nz

APPEAL SCHOLARS


Grace Brown


Philip Drennan


Alana McCrossin


Andrew Tringham


Yeshe Dawa

Visa card

Carry Otago with you – with the University of Otago Westpac Visa card. The card features the Clocktower, is a continually-reviewed credit facility, and makes an automatic payment to the University every year at no extra cost to you. The minimum $10 per card per year Westpac contributes to Otago is added to our Otago appeal scholarship fund and gives you a very distinctive purchasing power.

Alumni Update

Congratulations to:

Poet **Bill Manhire** (BA 1967, MA 1968, MLitt 1970, HonDLitt 2005) and New York-based opera singer, **Simon O'Neill** (MusB 1993), New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate awards for 2005.

Farah Palmer (BPhEd (Hons) 1995, PhD 2000), International Rugby Board Women's Personality of the Year.

Phillip Gibson (BA (Hons) 1971), New Zealand's next Ambassador to Indonesia.

John Austin (BCom 1978, LLB 1975, MBA 1981), new CEO of the Asia: NZ Foundation.

Graeme Taylor (MB ChB 1964, MD 1991) one of 2005's recipients of the Mary S Sigourney Award for distinguished contributions to the field of psychoanalysis.

Otago graduates in Parliament

Cabinet ministers: Hon **David Benson-Pope** (BA (Hons) 1972) Social Development and Employment, Environment; Hon **David Cunliffe** (BA (Hons) 1987) Immigration, Communications, Information Technology and Associate Economic Development; Hon **David Parker** (BCom 1981, LLB 1982) Attorney-General, Energy, Transport, Climate Change.

Also re-elected to Parliament last September were Hon **Bill English** (BA 1983, BCom 1984) (National, Clutha); **Paul Hutchison** (MB ChB 1970, DipComH 1983) (National, Port Waikato); **Sue Kedgley** (MA 1972) (Green, List); **Katherine Rich** (BCom 1989, BA 1992) (National, List).

Richard Keenan (BCom 2000, LLB 2001) has graduated from Oxford, where he completed his MSc in nature, society and environmental policy with the Ian Tucker Memorial Scholarship from Keble College, for postgraduate students who excel in rugby union.

Richard represented Oxford in rugby and cricket, and at the Harvard World Model United Nations in Heidelberg in 2003.

The skyrocket wars?

Illustration by Alex Gilks, from *Justice & Jellybeans*, by Ron Chambers.

OH YES, THE NOSTALGIA! FIREWORKS, PROJECTED VIA vacuum-cleaner pipes, hurtling through windows into 100-year-old timber flats. What heady days they were!

Throughout the 1970s, skyrocket wars were annual events in scarfie-ville. Lasting for up to a week on the evenings near Guy Fawkes' night, the "wars" most famously involved confrontations between residents of Unicol and Arana Hall and those in the facing flats on Clyde Street, but Castle and Leith Streets were also known hotspots.

Damage included the usual: broken windows, small fires. One student received hand injuries after being hit by a rocket; another was showered in glass when his window was blown in; others were knocked from their motorcycles. In 1974, some 400 spent rockets were collected from the grounds of University College following a night of cross-fire. In 1975, two students were charged under the Arms Act after ripping a 2.8-metre length of drainpipe from their flat and using it to propel rockets.

Former University Proctor Ron Chambers says the skirmishes continued through the early '80s before reaching a dramatic crescendo on 5 November 1986.

In his soon-to-be-released book, *Justice & Jellybeans*, Chambers likens the scene on that night – only a bit jokingly – to his hometown of Belfast. He recalls several hundred people assembled on Clyde Street, with hundreds more cramped onto Unicol's 10-storeys of balconies across the road, while rockets – and projectile beer bottles – were exchanged freely. Meanwhile, the innovation of the evening was the new-found rocket-launcher, "namely the tubular steel rail installed in each room's wardrobe", reports Chambers.

Police were quickly called, while the explosion of "petrol-bomb-type devices on the street" brought the Fire Service, which beat a hasty retreat after becoming a target for both the battling sides.

Remarkably, only one injury was reported on the night, but it was a serious one. A female student permanently lost the sight in one eye when she was struck by a rocket.

Since then, fireworks in North Dunedin have led to regular incidents and court appearances, but the 1994 ban on the sale of skyrockets is credited with minimising the scale and harm of the events.

Now (touch wood), the days of institutionalised battles between halls of residence and neighbouring flats appear to be the stuff of the shuddering memories of alumni.

Nicola Mutch

What does the average frog have that you don't?

Well apart from the obvious, the green slimy skin and a taste for bugs, frog tadpoles can regrow their tails, limbs and the lenses of their eyes and despite us sharing a lot of the same developmental genes, it's something that humans can't do.

Frogs have the ability to switch on genes that usually control limb development in embryos, thus enabling them to regrow the extra bits that they need. And while University of Otago researcher Dr Caroline Beck doesn't think limb regeneration for humans is a likely outcome from her research, she does think that there could be therapeutic benefits for wound repair, and scar-free healing.

Our humble, small, green friend could well hold some answers that may have significant applications for humans.

UNIVERSITY of OTAGO

Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo

The University of Otago, researching tissue regeneration, first.

www.otago.ac.nz/news