UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO MAGAZINE

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NEW ZEALAND

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University of Otago Magazine
A magazine for alumni and friends of the University of Otago
Issue 37
FEBRUARY 2014
ISSN - 1175-8147

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Printing PMP Print

Circulation Office of Development and Alumni Relations

- To update or change delivery address
- To read the Magazine and other alumni communications electronically
- To receive just one "household" postal copy of the Magazine

Please email database.alumni@otago.ac.nz
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For many years it has been well-recognised that OUSA hosts the best Orientation programme in New Zealand. Over the past three years, the University has joined forces with OUSA to provide additional orientation events that are designed to highlight the educational opportunities and pastoral support that are available at Otago. For me, Orientation has become one of the highlights on my annual calendar; I have the opportunity to meet new and returning students, to reassure families about what lies ahead and to recharge my own internal batteries using the energy of the thousands of bright young people who have come here to study.

On February 17, I will have the privilege of joining the Mayor of Dunedin, the President of OUSA and members of Ngāi Tahu to formally welcome the incoming class of 2014 to the University of Otago. This welcome ceremony takes place at the Forsyth Barr Stadium and it provides a unique opportunity to set the stage for life at Otago. So as the Vice-Chancellor, what will I say to more than 4,000 new students as they embark on this new and exciting phase of their life?

First, I will ask our new students to take a moment to reflect on how fortunate they are. A university education, particularly an Otago education, is a life-changing event. The knowledge and skills that our students acquire during their time at Otago will not only set the stage for a productive and satisfying career, but the friendships they forge in the process will last for a lifetime. In terms of their good fortune, I will also ask our new students to reflect on the support and assistance that they have received from their teachers, families and friends. I will gently remind them that no one ever gets this far on their own.

Second, I will challenge them to be the best *students* they can possibly be. Our goal at Otago is to push students harder than they have ever been pushed before; in turn, their obligation is to work harder and learn more than they ever thought possible. I will underscore the amazing academic opportunities at Otago. I will encourage our new students to embrace these opportunities and to continue to cultivate their love of learning, long after they graduate.

Finally, I will encourage our new students to be the best *people* they can be. A university education is much more than what happens in the classroom – it is also about all the other life lessons you learn along the way. It is important for students to study hard, but it is equally important for them to stretch their wings in other, non-academic ways. I will urge them to pursue an old sport or pick up a new one, join a club, volunteer their time to help someone in need and help us in our efforts to make our campuses more environmentally friendly. I will encourage our new students to treat Dunedin like their home and to take advantage of all of the wonderful things that the city has to offer. In doing so, I will remind them that they shouldn't do anything here that they wouldn't feel comfortable doing on their own front doorstep.

In closing, as alumni, I know that each of you has a treasure trove of precious memories of your time here at Otago and I suspect that just thinking about the new academic year makes you just a little bit jealous that you can't come back and do it all over again. Fortunately, I have the opportunity to watch another year at Otago unfold. From my vantage point, the view is nothing short of breathtaking. Please join me in welcoming the incoming class of 2014.

Harlene Hayne

Professor Harlene Hayne
Vice-Chancellor, University of Otago

Home work

It's difficult for universities to see some of their most talented young graduates head overseas to advance their knowledge.

It can be equally difficult for departed alumni to return to New Zealand when they are forging glittering careers at prestigious international institutions.

So it was headline news when two researchers making names for themselves at Oxford and Cambridge both decided to return to Otago.

They came back for similar reasons. New Zealand was home, they liked Otago and the lifestyle, and they were taking up academic positions that suited them perfectly. But they were also aware of northern colleagues suggesting that a move to New Zealand might limit their options.

That was a decade ago. Ever since, Professors Stephen Robertson and Allan Herbison have been disproving the doubters and continuing to make the news.

Professor Stephen Robertson returned to take up the inaugural Cure Kids Chair in Child Health Research and establish a Clinical Genetics Laboratory at Otago.

Some three per cent of children are born with structural imperfections that impair their health, often needing significant medical intervention. A few problems are linked to known genetic or environmental causes, but the reasons behind most are unknown.

The Clinical Genetics Laboratory seeks to identify the genetic causes for some of the rarer malformations, trying to understand the connections between mutated genes and the diseases they are linked to.

Roberson (Paediatrics and Child Health) has broken new ground with research that could enable the development of therapies for babies born with brain damage.

The findings – recently published in the high profile journal *Nature Genetics* – are a significant step forwards, but Robertson cautions that clinical application is still a long way off.

"We are always encouraged to do research that has a useful goal, but at this stage our therapeutic aim lies on a far-distant horizon.

"We have found a mechanism that operates in the developing foetus that signals to neural stem cells to divide and form the mature brain. I'm uncomfortable with predictions, but it would be nice to think that one day we could fiddle with that apparatus to

use those same stem cells to repair a damaged brain in an infant."

Much basic neurogenetic research is carried out with standard lab animals. But, as there is a lot of difference between a rodent brain and a primate brain, Robertson's team studies human diseases to find genetic clues that will be relevant to human health and development.

"In the case of these brain malformations, we know that some of these developmental programmes have gone awry. We attempt to work backwards from that, trying to understand the ways the brain constructs itself during foetal and early infant life.

"Using this approach, some other groups have shown that the molecular cogs and winches that manhandle neurons into position in the brain are at fault in some instances. In this latest study we've been looking at the signals that tell them what to do – the conductors that direct the orchestra so those stem cells play the proper tune as they make a brain."

Years of hard work, international co-operation, inspiration and a little luck resulted in the discovery of genes that are significantly advancing our understanding of human brain development.

It's just the latest in a string of breakthroughs that have made Otago a respected centre for genetic research, a fact that gives Robertson cause for some satisfaction.

"Ten years ago at Oxford I knew I had chiselled out the beginnings of an area of expertise I could continue to develop. I hoped to at least maintain that at Otago but, instead, we have expanded it and developed other areas of specialist strength as well.

"I did not think it was going to go as well as it has, or as quickly, and our work now is bigger and broader than I initially thought it would be."

After studying medicine at Otago, Robertson trained and advanced his studies in Auckland and Melbourne before taking up a fellowship at Oxford to work on the genetic determinants of congenital malformations in children.

At Oxford his mentor speculated that moving to New Zealand would make his research 50 per cent more difficult – but Robertson decided to think positively.

"It was evident to me that there were some things truly in my favour, right from the beginning when I was in England applying for the post back here.

"There were legions of people at Otago who happily put their shoulders to the wheel to make my transition as smooth as possible. They just wanted to make it happen. People supported me from all over the University and that was quite exceptional.

"People in Oxford saw it happening and also realised that there was something quite special about where I was going."

Robertson credits a great deal of his success to a combination of reliable funding from Cure Kids, a cohesive and committed team, and wholehearted support from both colleagues and senior staff at Otago.

"I have nothing but praise for the leadership and the collaborative spirit that is so much a part of the Otago culture. My team can draw on experience from all over the University.

"We have a great community here in genetics with huge strengths stretching all the way from microbial to evolutionary genetics – the big picture stuff. Otago is a really exciting place to work as well as a great place to be situated."

Funding has been crucial, says Robertson. "The help we get from Cure Kids is a large reason why we are doing so well. It's a huge privilege and influence on our work to have not just one-off support, but a continuous long-term relationship with a lot of goodwill on both sides."

Goodwill is also important for international collaborations.

"Studying clinical diseases means my life blood is working with clinical geneticists all over the world. You can run an international research programme from New Zealand electronically – I've met one of my main colleagues in Germany only once – but it does take time to maintain those relationships."

Human genetics is a fast-moving field and advances in DNA testing technology are indicating a busy and bright future for Robertson and his team.

"In the last 10 years we have learned so much about genetics and much of our own work has already been translated into clinical practice. That will only increase in the coming years.

"We are on the crest of a breaking wave. Who knows where that will take us? We can only see so far ahead and continue to focus on our strengths."

"In the last 10 years we have learned so much about genetics and much of our own work has already been translated into clinical practice. That will only increase in the coming years."

Professors Stephen Robertson and **Allan Herbison**: Ten years after returning to New Zealand – and the University of Otago – their research is attracting attention around the world.
Photo: Alan Dove

Professor Allan Herbison came back to Otago to set up a Centre for Neuroendocrinology, focusing on how reproduction is controlled by mechanisms in the brain.

He started with four staff. Now he is director of nine collaborating research laboratories in a custom-designed building – the largest reproductive neuroendocrinology research cluster in the world.

Herbison (Physiology) received the University's highest research honour, the Distinguished Research Medal, in 2011 and his own team has recently made a major breakthrough in identifying signals in the brain that can turn fertility on or off.

There's worldwide interest in the work, which could lead to potential therapies for infertile couples as well as possible new methods of contraception.

In New Zealand, some 20 per cent of couples have problems with infertility, a situation that is reflected in many countries where increasing numbers of women delay trying for children until later in life.

"Our latest findings are an important step," says Herbison, "but they're just one part of our investigations into how the network of cells in the brain controls fertility."

"It was a concern when I came back that I was leaving such a high-powered institution with lots of resources, but now our centre is attracting a lot of people from all over the world. They want to work here and work with the impressive investigators that we've recruited here."

After an Otago medical degree, Herbison studied in Cambridge and France before 15 years of biomedical research at Cambridge's Babraham Institute.

His reputation was so well established that he was able to bring UK funding with him to set up his laboratory at Otago.

"Making the Centre for Neuroendocrinology a possibility is by far the biggest thing I've done," says Herbison. "[Professor] Dave Grattan and I started the key work in 2003 – he's just one of many I could mention – and now we have a centre that is leading the world.

"When I left England to return to Otago, people thought that would be the last they'd hear of me, but we turned it around and now everybody knows about what we are doing in neuroendocrinology. We are one of the power labs in the world in this field."

Herbison says he can now advise his students that they don't have to travel overseas to advance their postgraduate studies and that there are advantages to staying in New Zealand.

"It used to be that you needed to study and work at top institutions in the UK or the US. Places like Cambridge attract the top people and the best students who produce the best research. Their international reputation builds on itself like a snowball.

"It was a concern when I came back that I was leaving such a high-powered institution with lots of resources, but now our centre is attracting a lot of people from all over the world. They want to work here and work with the impressive investigators that we've recruited here. Now we're experiencing the snowball effect here at Otago."

Herbison points out that postgraduate students are more likely to connect with the supervisors and the science in more intimate New Zealand laboratories than at overseas institutions where it is easy to get lost in the crowd.

There are still negatives to New Zealand's location, with frustrating waits for supplies such as chemicals to come from overseas and too much long-distance travel.

"Collaborators do come here, but we usually go to them and everywhere is a long way away from New Zealand. But the positives make up for it.

"The people at Otago are just great. It's a pleasure to work here in an environment where you can make headway. There are no massive egos around each corner. The University has been hugely supportive. People try to make things happen for you.

"Ten years ago I had hoped that I would be able to develop a centre that was better than what I had experienced previously. But I didn't think it would be this good.

"Now we have to continue to build on our achievements. The technology has improved so much lately that we are developing exciting new tools for exploring brain function. Fabulous possibilities lie ahead."

Herbison and Robertson beat a time-honoured postgraduate path to traditional centres of excellence like Cambridge and Oxford. But they both returned to New Zealand to perform groundbreaking research and their successes are adding to Otago's reputation as a world-class university.

NIGEL ZEGA

Growing forward

Maintaining dialogue between the University and Māori and increasing Māori student enrolments are just two of the objectives of the Director of the Office of Māori Development, Tuari Potiki.

Director of the Office of Māori Development Tuari Potiki says implementing the University's vision for Māori development will be a key factor in Otago's continuing success.

Potiki, whose tribal affiliations are with Kāi Tahu, Kati Mamoe and Waitaha, says that since its inception in 2008, the Office of Māori Development's (OMD) role in leading the University's implementation of strategy has steadily gained momentum.

He is proud to be part of the University's Māori development that began in the mid-1990s following an academic audit and a University-initiated report compiled by Ranginui Walker, both of which identified the need to strengthen the relationship between the University and Ngāi Tahu.

Significant steps were taken when cultural advisors and representatives from local iwi were subsequently appointed at the University. A Treaty of Waitangi stocktake in 2005 further emphasised the need to centralise Māori development leadership within the University and led to the establishment of a separate office for Māori development.

The OMD's activities are underpinned by the Māori Strategic Framework (MSF), which was introduced in 2007 and has become the guiding document for Māori development across the University's various campuses.

"The framework covers the whole spectrum of Māori development across the University, including relationships, research, teaching, te reo and tikanga," Potiki explains. "Support for Māori development has been strong because it was implemented carefully and gently, and in a uniquely polite Kāi Tahu way. A big step forward has been establishing Associate Dean, Māori positions in all divisions to lead Māori development at a departmental level."

In a relatively short time the office's staff have achieved a great deal in their efforts to advance the University's contributions to Māori development and the realisation of Māori aspirations. Potiki was appointed into the role of Director in mid-2012 and says his priority is to build on this solid groundwork and keep the momentum going.

"We are tracking positively, but need to keep attracting quality Māori staff and students, and to continue supporting them to achieve at higher levels."

He cites recent examples of how far-reaching and integral the OMD's strategies have become to the University. The re-signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Ngāi Tahu and the University in December 2013 touched on one of his important personal objectives – maintaining dialogue between the University community and Māori (particularly Ngāi Tahu).

The re-examination of the MOU, which was last signed in 2006, also represents a continued desire from both iwi and the University to conduct negotiations in accordance with the often-evoked "spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi".

"That phrase is used a lot, but we do have a Treaty-based relationship which requires the special place of Tangata Whenua to be recognised, and that means acknowledging history and working proactively to ensure that Māori have the same opportunities to come here and succeed."

Two recent ceremonies have shown how the general precepts of the MSF introduce students to aspects of Māori culture that enhance their experience at Otago and lead to greater cultural awareness for non-Māori, which benefits the University's wider social environment.

A Māori pre-graduation ceremony earlier this year demonstrated how education can transform both the student and their family.

"During the informal parts of the pre-graduation event, graduands have a chance to speak about their experiences.

Tuari Potiki: "Support for Māori development has been strong because it was implemented carefully and gently, and in a uniquely polite Kāi Tahu way."
Photo: Bill Nichol

Some students may be the first in their family to attend university and, with the families there, it can be a very moving and profound experience for all involved."

Similarly, a ceremony held earlier this year to lift the tapu on cadavers donated to the University for research purposes was attended by more than 300 students, the majority of whom were non-Māori.

"It was really humbling to see so many students taking part, and I think they got the deeper issues [underlying the ceremony] about the Māori perspective and showing respect for people who have given the ultimate gift so that others may learn."

The OMD is involved in a wide range of projects related to all facets of the institution's activity.

A recent example was its engagement with the family of Otago's first Māori graduate to formalise the naming of a new student accommodation facility, Te Rangi Hiroa College.

"This was significant because it not only honoured a great man, but also continued an ongoing relationship with Te Rangi Hiroa's family and iwi."

An awareness of Māori culture and language is now a required area of core competency for University staff. Accordingly, the University has developed a "purpose-built" introductory course for academic and general staff designed to give a better understanding of tikanga concepts and te reo Māori.

The OMD also supported the newly established Commerce seed programme, He Kakano, which aims to promote Māori entrepreneurship in business. The five-week programme will give students "real-world" experience of planning and developing a business.

Additionally, there are close links with the Māori Centre, Te Huka Mātauraka, which co-ordinates an array of services for Māori students, and Te Poutama Māori, a networking and support group for Māori academic staff.

Potiki says that, as well as continuing to support this broad range of initiatives to promote "all things Māori at Otago", the OMD is primarily focused on increasing Māori student enrolments from their current level of about 8.8 per cent.

"The relationship with iwi is the foundation we stand on. Beyond that, I see *the* core objective as increasing Māori student achievement. Having quality academic staff and researchers creating knowledge for the betterment of society is essential to achieving that. In my view, learning is about setting people up for the future."

This pragmatic student-focused ethos is derived from two decades working in the health, justice and education sectors. Potiki was previously general manager strategic operations at the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (ALAC), and other previous roles include social development manager at the Ngāi Tahu Development Corporation and Healthlink South Kaiwhakahaere Māori – experiences that affirmed his belief in the link between educational achievement and future well-being for the individual and the wider community.

"Māori enrolments at Otago are slightly higher than they are at other universities, but I'd like to see student numbers eventually more reflective of the whole population at about 15 to 16 per cent. That will take a concerted effort on the part of the University, our iwi partners and the OMD."

Increasing the number of scholarships awarded to Māori will attract more students and offset the rising costs of attending university.

"The University gives out 50 Māori and Pacific first-entrant scholarships per year and we have been able to secure a further 15 for 2014, which is really positive.

"An increase in Māori student numbers is attainable, but to achieve that will take a lot of extra support – and not just money. We have to keep supporting and developing student support services, our Māori academic staff and offering an environment which acknowledges the student's requirements as Māori.

"The Office of Māori Development will always be striving for more. That doesn't mean it is going to come easily, but it is our job to say 'let's not limit the potential for Māori success'."

SAM STEVENS

"I see *the* core objective as increasing Māori student achievement. Having quality academic staff and researchers creating knowledge for the betterment of society is essential to achieving that."

Strategic direction set

Applied research, high-quality teaching, sustainability and good citizenship are key focuses of the University's strategy for the next seven years.

The University's new lead strategic document, *Strategic Direction to 2020*, was approved by the University Council in August last year, reaffirming Otago's positioning as a research-intensive and predominately campus-based university with strong national and international links.

It outlines a direction for the next seven years in which the focus will remain on high-quality research, teaching and service outcomes. In addition, there will be a greater emphasis on applied, outward-facing research, on helping students to become good citizens as well as great scholars, and on sustainability.

"At Otago, we know that university education is a great privilege," says Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne. "With that privilege come some very important obligations.

"As researchers, we are obliged to use our talents and our resources to help solve some the social, economic, environmental and health-related problems that are facing New Zealand and the rest of the world.

"As teachers, we are obliged to equip our students with the tools they need not only to succeed in a career but, more importantly, perhaps, to become strong and effective leaders in the world in which they live. Our *Strategic Direction to 2020* reflects these obligations."

The new strategic document has been developed with significant input from across the University. It provides a framework that all groups within the University can use for their own strategic and operational planning, and a reference point around which the University can frame its response to national and international agendas for higher education.

Director of Planning and Funding David Thomson says that a particularly pleasing aspect of the *Strategic Direction to 2020's* development was the feedback received on an initial draft from a wide range of staff, students and alumni, as well as a number of internal and external groups and organisations.

He says this feedback affirmed the new points of emphasis the University had proposed, but also challenged it to go further in its aspirations around sustainability, and to think of applied research in the context of making the world a better place as well as for commercial benefit.

Statements in respect of the University's relationship with Māori, and the voice the staff and students have within the University were also strengthened.

One particular development of interest to graduates will be the greater prominence given in the document to the University's relationship with its alumni. Consistent with the status of graduates as lifelong members of the University, there is a commitment to building enduring connections that meet the needs of our alumni and, in turn, to provide a range of avenues for them to support their alma mater.

The *Strategic Direction to 2020* will be underpinned by action plans specific to each of the seven imperatives. These are currently under development.

Building on the *Strategic Direction to 2012* document, there are now seven strategic imperatives:

Excellence in research

Already widely-recognised as one of New Zealand's leading research institutions, Otago will continue to advance its research culture to address questions of national and international importance, enhancing social and environmental well-being, human and animal health, with increasing attention given to research for economic and commercial benefit. While supporting its own established and emerging areas of research strength, the University will foster joint research programmes with other institutions, both nationally and internationally.

Excellence in teaching

Teaching excellence remains a priority. The University will strive to

"As teachers, we are obliged to equip our students with the tools they need not only to succeed in a career but, more importantly, perhaps, to become strong and effective leaders in the world in which they live."

– Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne

further improve the calibre of its student cohort and the quality of both learning experiences and educational outcomes. There will be a particular focus on the recruitment of more Māori, Pacific and international students, to embracing new teaching technologies, and to supporting and recognising outstanding teachers.

Outstanding student experiences

The Otago experience – encompassing social, cultural and sporting activities as well as the pursuit of academic excellence – is one of the defining features of this University. There is a commitment to working together with students to ensure that this continues, by nurturing healthy and sustainable lifestyles, and harnessing student altruism to produce graduates who are both work-ready and ready to deploy their talents more broadly as citizens.

Outstanding campus environments

As a primarily residential destination university, Otago must continue to ensure that its campuses provide a high-quality and safe environment for students and staff. Every campus project must reflect the University's vision for excellence, with sustainability embedded as a principle against which all developments are considered, and an area in which Otago is genuinely world-class.

Commitment as a local, national and global citizen

Embracing its role as the critic and conscience of society, the University will play an active role in debates about New Zealand's future direction and will engage internationally in areas of global betterment, with particular regard to health and well-being, society and the environment. It will continue to support under-represented groups in university study, extending its partnership with Māori and strengthening links with Pacific communities.

Strong external engagement

With Otago's main campus geographically distant from New Zealand's main centres of political and economic decision-making, strong external engagement will be an ongoing priority. The University will work to secure representation on key educational, health and research bodies; pursue regular engagement with employers; seek greater entrepreneurial opportunities; and enhance efforts to develop life-long relationships with alumni.

Sustaining capability

The University is committed to an ongoing investment in staff and the resources required to achieve and sustain excellence as a broad-based, research-led university. While advocating for adequate levels of Government funding, there is a recognition that an increasingly diverse funding base must also be found. And, as the University is likely to be operating in a fiscally-constrained environment during the coming years, activities and structures will be scrutinised for efficiency and effectiveness.

KAREN HOGG

Fortune's favours

Disappointment has had serendipitous outcomes for Dr AnnMarie Oien, who now holds a senior position with US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin.

For those pursuing doctoral degrees, answering questions is a way of life. But as the thesis nears completion, the question that emerges is "where to from here?".

Such was the question facing Dr AnnMarie Oien when, in 1996, she became the second woman to graduate from Otago with a PhD in physics.

Oien was already familiar with the good fortune that can come from seemingly unfortunate outcomes, for the former Rhodes scholarship finalist had, by then, realised that she was lucky to have been passed over for the Rhodes honour several years earlier as it led her to undertake doctoral research at Otago instead.

This research included developing the Southern Hemisphere's first laser atomic cooling facility via magneto-optic trapping – groundbreaking science that provided the foundation for a career which has answered the "where to from here" question rather spectacularly. Oien is now a senior staff project engineer and the Lean Six Sigma lead in the Space Systems division at Lockheed Martin, an American aerospace, defence, security and advanced technology company with global interests, 123,000 employees and a $US8 billion turnover.

All this is a long way from the modest lab in Otago's Department of Physics where her research took place.

Atomic cooling with a magneto-optical trap involves tuning the frequency of light from opposing lasers to slow the atoms within low-density gases. Slowing the atoms' speed to a near standstill reduces their temperature and enables their behaviour to be observed.

For Oien, this achievement took the form of an eerie flicker of light – "like a sodium streetlight" – that remains imprinted on her mind 20 years on. It was an impressive and appropriate feat for a young woman who had, as a child, enjoyed playing with Meccano and chemistry sets rather than dolls.

Oien was born in the United States to a schoolteacher mother and architect father who immigrated to New Zealand before she started school.

At the end of her first year at university she decided the bits of chemistry she liked best – atomic chemistry – were really physics, so physics became her major.

As an undergraduate she held an Association of Women in Sciences Scholarship and supplemented this with a – predictably unconventional – holiday job at the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter. Here she would don the same woollen overalls (wool being the least flammable fibre) as the men who vastly outnumbered her to manage the smelter's daily output reports.

In 1990 the budding scientist was asked to investigate the failure of one of the facility's smelting pots. After careful excavation and documentation of the pot's brick lining, she discovered a fault in some of the bricks. This investigation was to become her first root-cause analysis and a precursor to the hundreds she has since done in her job at Lockheed Martin.

Oien's career in industry is thanks to a second unfortunate outcome, this time after she had completed her doctorate. She applied for, but missed out on, a lecturer position at Otago and so tried for funding to take up a postdoctoral fellowship in England. While waiting for news on this, she attended a talk by a representative from a laser company called Coherent Technologies and became intrigued. She visited the Colorado-based firm after presenting a paper at a US conference and ended up giving a presentation on non-linear conversion lasers. A job offer soon followed.

"In the meantime I found out I had won the Marsden fellowship that would enable me to take up the postdoc," she says. "But, in the end, I decided on the US job because it had longevity and I thought there was more potential to build a career."

In her work, first as a research scientist and then research science manager at Coherent Technologies, Oien developed world-first, solid-state lasers and was co-inventor on two patents.

Then, in 2005, the goliath Lockheed Martin bought the smaller company

Dr AnnMarie Oien: "I'm really excited to contribute to the alumni association by finding new ways to engage with alumni and connect them with each other ..."
Photo: Jude McCracken

and she saw the potential to develop her career further. Her penchant for problem-solving led her to undertake Lean Six Sigma training, a waste minimisation and process improvement discipline in which she now holds a master black belt – the highest certification.

"Physics is about finding out how things work at a fundamental level. It involves scientific method, investigation and problem-solving," explains Oien. "I simply translated these skills into a new field."

These days she works with teams of between 10 and 20 people, focusing on areas of process improvement and problem-solving in the Space Systems division.

"My nickname is 'AMO'. I can be sitting in my office and I'll get a call from a VP or director a few levels up the chain from me. They tell me what they have going on and they'll say, 'can you help us out, AMO?'"

Unsurprisingly, Oien's skills were spotted by the Alumni of the University of Otago in America, Inc when she attended a 2009 gathering in San Francisco. She was invited on to the board of directors where she currently holds the position of secretary, a role which, she says, enables her to give back to the institution that has given her so much.

"I'm really excited to contribute to the alumni association by finding new ways to engage with alumni and connect them with each other, whether that's with advice on how to get a new position, help identifying a good university for postgraduate study, or finding a pub where they serve decent beer.

"It's part of a virtuous circle to go out into the world, do well, and then be able to give back. It's a very fulfilling part of my life."

REBECCA TANSLEY

"Physics is about finding out how things work at a fundamental level. It involves scientific method, investigation and problem-solving. I simply translated these skills into a new field."

The long game

In an exciting new phase in its development, the University of Otago, Wellington Women's Health Research Centre is embarking on a strategy to ensure its future sustainability.

Founded in 2005 by internationally-regarded expert in women's health Dr Bev Lawton, the University of Otago, Wellington (UOW) Women's Health Research Centre is dedicated to improving the health outcomes of New Zealand's women and children through life-saving research and initiatives.

It has an outstanding track record, with $7 million of project funding achieved in the last five years. But the nature of that funding means there can be "stumbling times" between projects, Lawton says, and the centre is exploring ways to help continue to build momentum and give the centre – and its staff – more certainty.

"It's about future-proofing. We are the only centre of our kind in New Zealand dedicated to women's health research into issues that matter to women and families. We've gained terrific momentum that we want to maintain and build on to ensure we can continue to have an impact, and achieve our mission of making a real difference to the health of mothers and babies."

That momentum has been created through work that aims to reduce inequalities and health-care disparities for women, with a particular focus on Māori health.

"By focusing on those mothers and children with the greatest disadvantage, we are more likely to find solutions to improve the health of all women and children," Lawton explains.

The essence of the centre's work is captured in its motto: "Healthy women, health mothers, healthy children, healthy communities". Already it has the unwavering support of former Governor-General Dame Silvia Cartwright, who has been patron since the centre's inception and an integral part of its support networks since then. Now the centre is enjoying the added experienced leadership of Emerita Professor Dame Linda Holloway as chair of its recently established advisory board, and former Wellington mayor and midwife Kerry Prendergast who has become a board member.

Through the support of this committed trio, the centre is beginning to strategise on ways to establish central funding that will counteract the intermittent uncertainty that goes hand-in-hand with being solely project-funded.

Having spent 25 years as a practising midwife, Prendergast knows just how important a pregnant woman's health is in the months before conception and throughout the pregnancy.

"I am honoured to have been asked to help smooth out the lumpiness in project-type funding for the centre. The research being done by this group will have huge benefits for women and children's health, particularly Māori families' health, and therefore will benefit society immensely – both in New Zealand and offshore," she says.

"This is a cause which many wealthy benefactors will support and our job will be the pursuance of them. I welcome that challenge."

Some of the centre's fundraising efforts will also be targeted at the general public: for example, through a website invitation to become a "friend" of the centre.

Lawton believes women will be interested in supporting the work of the centre, much of which is focused on systems and clinical outcomes and what can be done to improve them.

"I think a lot of women want us to be sitting there putting the microscope on the system. We're seeing exactly what's happening and how we can improve it. We're not in there just to do the data collection; we're in there to make the data make a difference – to translate it into a better service, that's accessible for people. People are really engaged with making maternal and infant health better, and our hope is that they'll see support of our centre as a very real and effective way to help achieve that."

While the centre's focus is on the continuum of health and wellness, from reproductive health to pregnancy and

Dr Bev Lawton: "We are the only centre of our kind in New Zealand dedicated to women's health research into issues that matter to women and families."
Photo: Michael Roberts

childbirth, to infant and child health, its overarching principal is taiahoahotia. Taiahoahotia is a whakataukī (proverb) gifted to the centre that says: "E Hine, taiahoahotia tōku ara i te pō" (Hineteiwaiwa, illuminate my pathway through the night). Hineteiwaiwa is the goddess of childbirth and has kaitiaketanga (guardianship) over wāhine (women) and me ngā pēpi (babies). She is also the goddess of the moon.

"This whakataukī guides our vision of illuminating those areas of Māori maternal and child health that require investigation, understanding and appropriate intervention to benefit Māori women, their children and whānau," Lawton says.

"Our job is to show the pathway to improve the outcomes – it's our responsibility to make a difference and our whakataukī has been an amazing driving force in doing this."

Lawton reiterates that, although the centre has a particular focus on Māori health, its bigger aim is to reduce inequalities and health-care disparities for all women, maternity and otherwise.

"In New Zealand we need to look very carefully at the performance of our maternity system. But we also want to improve the health outcomes for everyone – to get it right where it's not working."

To date, the centre's work on sexual and reproductive health has been widely reported and has contributed to policy changes. Phase one and two of its study of severe acute maternal morbidity (SAMM), for example, looked at severely ill pregnant women to explore how severe harm can be prevented. The review of 98 cases of SAMM in four District Health Board regions found most were either preventable or improvement in care was needed. This study has now gone national. Meanwhile, the centre's current E Hine study involves qualitative research with young pregnant Māori (under 20), and is creating new knowledge about maternal-care pathways that contradict commonly held views about Māori accessing delayed maternity care.

"It's about finding the gaps and problems in the systems, processes and providers available so we can create a systemic long-term impact for all women in New Zealand," Lawton says.

Current projects

The Women's Health Research Centre works on projects with the greatest impact for women in New Zealand. It focuses on the systems, clinical issues and processes, and providers available in New Zealand to find the gaps and problems, in order to create a systemic long-term impact. Current projects include:

Wāhine Hauora: Reducing barriers to care for pregnant mums and their whānau

Routinely collected hospital data pertaining to births over a 15-year period is being studied and linked (via NHI) to national databases to assess rates of post-natal admissions, immunisations and access to health services for Māori and non-Māori mothers and infants. Differences in outcome measures will be analysed to identify possible explanatory factors such as maternal age, parity, deprivation, smoking and a range of other risk factors. By identifying women most at risk for poor maternal and infant health outcomes, interventions can be better targeted to reduce these inequalities.

Diabetes: the impact of maternal care disparities on Māori mothers and infants

This study will explore whether Māori women diagnosed with gestational diabetes, and their babies, are more likely to have adverse outcomes than non-Māori and non-Pacific women.

E Hine: Reducing barriers to care for pregnant Māori women under 20 and their infants

This qualitative research will identify barriers to, and facilitators of, appropriate health care and wellness, and examine the social, economic and policy factors that may impact on health outcomes. The findings will inform policy and, together with results of the Wāhine Hauora study above, will provide essential information for the design of an appropriate whānau ora intervention to improve health outcomes (reduced mortality and disability) for Māori infants.

Severe Acute Maternal Morbidity – phase three (national)

This research builds on regional work already undertaken, and will explore how maternal morbidity and mortality can be greatly reduced through changes to clinical and system factors.

KARYN AMMUNDSEN

Dr Richard Hamilton (left) and Arnavon (Solomon Islands) conservation officers measure the carapace of a green turtle before tagging and release.
Photo: Lisa Park

Saving the seas

Otago alumnus Dr Richard Hamilton is combining science with local knowledge to provide a holistic approach to conservation.

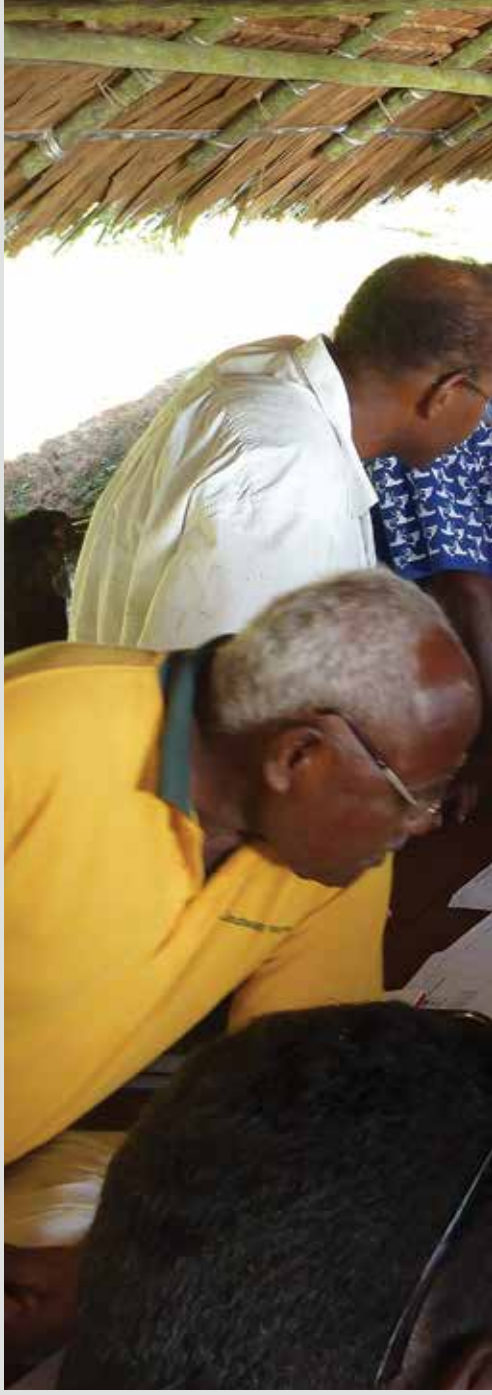
It's a busy day for marine scientist Dr Richard Hamilton. A media release has gone out about his recent research findings and, as a result, the phone is ringing more frequently than usual for a man who spends much of his time in some of the more remote corners of Melanesia.

Hamilton has uncovered an irrefutable link between logging in the Solomon Islands and a decline in the fish stocks in nearby reefs. It's a cautionary tale of ecosystem interdependence that we must now consider alongside the much simpler – though no less important – story of overfishing.

"We cannot view reefs, fish or forests as separate entities," warns Hamilton. "These systems are all connected and this research underscores just how important a complete ecosystem approach to fisheries management is."

Hamilton is a senior scientist for the Asia Pacific Division of the US-based environmental organisation The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Brisbane-based, he spends eight to 10 weeks a year in the Coral Triangle, the roughly triangular area of marine waters surrounding Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste that is recognised as the global centre of marine biodiversity. Here his research into reef fisheries has helped gain some quiet, but significant, victories for conservation.

"We cannot view reefs, fish or forests as separate entities. These systems are all connected and this research underscores just how important a complete ecosystem approach to fisheries management is."



In particular, Hamilton was instrumental in achieving local commitment to a network of ridges-to-reefs protected areas across Choiseul Province in the Solomon Islands – the first of its kind in Melanesia.

He was present at the 2009 inter-tribal gathering where more than 100 chiefs agreed to adopt TNC's recommendations to create at least one marine and one terrestrial protected area in each of the province's 12 districts. The agreement has now been ratified by provincial law, 20 protected areas have been established and Hamilton says they are seeing "good recovery of marine species".

Choiseul Province, also known as Lauru, has the largest remaining stands of lowland rainforest and more plant and animal species than any other island in the Solomon archipelago. Most of the land remains in tribal ownership and TNC has worked with communities there over the last 10 years, helping them with conservation planning and adapting to climate change.

Hamilton calls this type of work, in which scientific and local knowledge come together, "holistic, stakeholder-driven conservation".

"Stakeholders use their knowledge of customary-owned lands and seas to identify areas they would like to see protected in a process known as participatory mapping. Some of the features identified for protection include sources of freshwater, cultural heritage sites, turtle nesting beaches, important forest areas and fish spawning aggregations."

Hamilton adds that this participatory process has now been extended to include cultural heritage mapping, because identifying where sites of cultural importance coincide with important natural heritage sites can assist with securing "buy-in" to preservation measures.

"If you can identify high cultural as well as natural heritage significance, you've got a pretty good chance of securing protection," he says, citing the example of a leatherback turtle nesting beach that also has an important cultural heritage value.

Beyond these practical considerations, Hamilton also believes that conservation practitioners working in indigenous settings have an ethical responsibility to recognise and respect all the landscape values of the custodians of those places, regardless of whether these values fall outside their core biodiversity business.

In this work he is proud to work alongside his former supervisor, Professor Richard Walter from Otago's Department of Anthropology and Archaeology. Although Hamilton is a science major, he approached Professor Walter when he embarked on his master's degree in marine science as he was interested in finding out how subsistence fisheries operate in the Pacific. As a result Walter supervised his master's and doctoral theses.

"He taught me critical thinking, introduced me to social sciences and helped me appreciate the value of local ecological knowledge," says Hamilton, who is equally grateful to Professor Philip Mladenov, who backed the young science graduate for postgraduate study in marine science in spite of his average undergraduate grades.

The master's and doctoral degrees he subsequently completed qualified him for

Participatory mapping: stakeholders identify conservation priority areas on their customary lands and seas in Isabel Province, Solomon Islands as part of the ridges-to-reefs conservation planning process.
Photo: Nate Petersen

the contract work and then permanent position that followed with The Nature Conservancy. Here Hamilton's work has also included crossdisciplinary research into reef-fish larval dispersal in Papua New Guinea, where he grew up. This research, published in *Current Biology*, demonstrated that reef-fish larval dispersion is limited in distance, which provides support for the theory behind the establishment of marine protected areas. He has also co-produced two films directed by Otago Postgraduate Diploma in Natural History Filmmaking and Communication graduate Jordan Plotsky.

Hamilton's future research will involve using ancestral and contemporary genetic studies, turtle-tagging surveys and historical and ethnographic research to understand the extinction risks in iconic marine species such as the giant bumphead parrotfish, humphead wrasse and hawksbill turtle. Effective conservation measures for species such as these, he believes, are possible with a crossdisciplinary approach involving both people and nature.

"Some people might say that the work people like me do is akin to taking the pulse of a dying patient," says Hamilton, "but I have reason to be optimistic. My goal is to be able to tell my grandkids that I tried my best to make a difference."

For more information about The Nature Conservancy and the work of Dr Richard Hamilton visit *www.nature.org*

REBECCA TANSLEY

Celebration of the century

Movie stars, stolen pie carts and a cast of talented performers – Allen Hall Theatre has seen its share of drama in the last 100 years, both on and off the stage.

Theatre Studies alumni are among those receiving a callback this year to help celebrate the centenary of Allen Hall Theatre.

"There are going to be performance events and interactive events, a cocktail party to launch the reunion, a formal dinner, open mic speeches, semi-informal performance and short pieces, which will be pulled together at the weekend," says head of the Theatre Studies Programme Hilary Halba.

Nearly all the events will take place at Allen Hall Theatre – the rooms downstairs will house exhibitions and memorabilia, such as theatre posters and photographs of events and alumni, while upstairs there will be spontaneous performances by former students and others who have worked at the theatre.

"This is Theatre Studies. They're not shy," says Associate Professor Lisa Warrington. "There should be an exciting array of skills and talents there."

More than 200 people have already registered interest for the event, which will be held on September 12–14 and is open to anyone with a connection to Allen Hall Theatre.

The building, originally named Allen Hall after Dunedin politician and former University chancellor Sir James Allen, was designed by architect Edward Anscombe and served as the Student Union until 1960.

The heritage building with the distinctive red door became the centre for drama in the 1980s, and the Theatre Studies programme grew from there.

"When I first arrived, the building was locked up and virtually unused," says Warrington, who has been a major part of the programme since 1981.

"There were just a few shows in the year such as the annual show for language departments, the Music Department opera and occasional productions by OUDS – the student drama society.

"I regularly started referring to the building as 'Allen Hall Theatre' in order to put its use and function fair and square in the eyes and mind of the University and the town. This has led to some amusing moments where people assume that there was an individual called 'Allen Hall' and the joke has been used more than once that he must be Roger Hall's brother."

Allen Hall has since become one of the country's busiest theatres, at one time staging up to three performances in a day – Lunchtime Theatre, the main bill in the evening and a late night performance. It also hosts visiting performers and is a venue for the Dunedin Fringe Festival and other events.

"Allen Hall is one of the foremost theatre laboratories in New Zealand," says Halba. "It gives young actors and theatre practitioners a chance to experiment – to think out of the box – with new works, playing with form or new modes of acting. That's much more difficult for mainstream theatres to do."

Allen Hall has its own distinct personality, says Warrington. "It's a comfortable working space. It feels like anything can happen, whatever designers and directors imagine.

"It has no fixed seating so it's completely flexible. The audience can sit on the stage, you can have them sit around the action or have no seating at all. It's a continual surprise."

One of the Theatre Studies programme's biggest achievements over the years has been Lunchtime Theatre, which was established in 1977 and is a weekly event during semester time. It mainly features short, original works by students or New Zealand playwrights, which are often produced, directed and performed by Theatre Studies students as part of their course work.

"It's a great testing ground for students," says Warrington. "And it's a great learning space for people who might go on – actors, writers, playwrights and technicians."

The Theatre Studies programme has contributed plays as well as people to the industry, commissioning works to be written specially for Lunchtime Theatre. The book *Playlunch* features five such

Associate Professor **Lisa Warrington** and **Hilary Halba**: "Allen Hall is one of the foremost theatre laboratories in New Zealand."
Photo: Alan Dove

Richard Mercier, Cilla McQueen and Paul Richardson perform at Allen Hall in the 1960s.
Photo: Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago. S13-374

John Wayne Little Duck, written by Kirk Torrence, directed by Sara Georgie Tunoka, 2013.
Photo: Martyn Roberts

plays, including Fiona Farrell's *Chook Chook*, John Broughton's *The Private War of Corporal Cooper* and Simon O'Connor's *An Illustrated Death of Eddie Fivetrees*, which have been performed many times at Allen Hall and throughout the country.

The Theatre Studies programme has grown over the years and now offers a full undergraduate degree, a Diploma for Graduates, a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Theatre Studies, a Master of Arts, Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Theatre Studies, Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Studies and a Bachelor of Performing Arts, which also includes music and dance.

"It's one of the top theatre programmes in New Zealand," says Halba. "This is the only university that offers a Bachelor of Performing Arts and a Masters of Fine Arts in Theatre Studies."

Although some staff offices are now based at another facility, Allen Hall is still the heart of Theatre Studies, says Warrington, who is preparing a book for centenary attendees that will feature the history and highlights from the last 100 years, including a visit from Hollywood royalty.

"Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh were on their tour of the Commonwealth countries in 1948 and were in Dunedin to perform," says Warrington. "They came in to address the students when Allen Hall was still functioning as the Student Union. There was standing room only at the time."

Alison Finigan, head of Alumni Relations, has been collecting anecdotes from former students and other alumni about their experiences at Allen Hall.

"Before Allen Hall became the home of the Theatre Studies programme it was used for plays put on by the Otago University Drama Society (OUDS) or students in the Languages departments, or Music Department operas and

"Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh were on their tour of the Commonwealth countries in 1948 and were in Dunedin to perform. They came in to address the students when Allen Hall was still functioning as the Student Union. There was standing room only at the time."

Pond Life, written by Zoe Deverick, directed by Martyn Roberts, 2008.
Photo: Martyn Roberts

concerts of various sorts. It was also used regularly for student dances or 'hops' as they were called," she says.

"I remember someone telling me about how one evening, many years ago, the students from the School of Mines hijacked the horse-drawn pie cart, which was parked up in the Octagon, and brought it to Allen Hall to provide pies and chips for the hungry revellers at one of these hops," says Finigan.

"The horse was allowed to graze on the lawn outside the Registry while the pies were heated via a hook up from the cart to the gas tank in the School of Mines. This story has become a legend, but I'm not sure of its veracity."

Another unproven tale is that of the theatre's ghost – a shadowy figure who does "wonky" things, says Halba. "It did something to the lighting board once that mystified the technical manager who came down to check it out. It came right the next day."

The centenary will provide a unique opportunity for people to share their own favourite memories and moments.

"Allen Hall Theatre is certainly one of the oldest working theatres in the country and one for whom a great many people have a huge fondness," says Halba. "This centenary is going to be an extraordinary occasion."

LAURA HEWSON

To register for the centenary celebrations or submit an anecdote, email Alison Finigan at the Development and Alumni Relations Office: *alison.finigan@otago.ac.nz*

The Theatre Studies programme has nurtured many talented students over the years. Some of its successful graduates include:

Clare Adams – has performed in a number of shows at the Fortune Theatre, is a tutor in Theatre Studies and is also a member of Wow! Productions

Vanessa Alexander – film director and screenwriter

Tamsin Cooper – clothing designer

Patrick Davies – theatre director and actor. Patrick will direct the play *Peninsula* by Gary Henderson at the Fortune Theatre in 2013

Erina Daniels – theatre director and actor. Erina recently directed *Hui* at the Christchurch Festival of the Arts

Nick Dunbar – actor. Nick has been nominated for both stage and screen acting awards

Jeremy Elwood – comedian

Tim Foley – actor (*Shortland Street, The Blue Rose, Nothing Trivial*)

Leo Faber – producer

Pip Hall – playwright

Zoe Hobson – television and film producer

Arthur Meek – playwright and actor. Arthur was the 2011 recipient of the Bruce Mason Playwriting Award. He is also the recipient of the Arts Foundation Harriet Friedlander New York Residency

Ryan O'Kane – actor. Ryan won the Qantas TV Award for best actor for his performance in the television series *Insider's Guide to Love* in 2005

Robyn Paterson – documentary maker. Robyn's documentary *Finding Mercy* received multiple nominations in the 2013 NZ Film Awards

Te Radar – presenter, comedian

Anna Samways – writer

Duncan Sarkies – playwright and screenwriter

Robert Sarkies – film director (*Out of the Blue, Two Little Boys*)

Danny Still – actor

Josh Thomson – comedian, director, writer and actor. Josh appears on *7 Days* on TV3.

Election engagement

Politics lecturer and political commentator Dr Bryce Edwards will be helping inform public opinion and debate during this year's general election campaign through his Otago Elections Project.

The 2014 general election will be an incredibly hard-fought and close campaign – and the University of Otago will be an important participant in this.

Drawing on the expertise of staff and students – from first-year Politics students to professors from a variety of disciplines – the University will contribute many services to the public debate. Much of this will happen through an endeavour that I'm organising, entitled The Otago Elections Project (*www.elections.ac.nz*), which is an attempt to harness the significant capacity and excellence in the University.

The project is fostering a variety of ventures and experiments this year.

Co-ordinating student and staff research promotion

In an election year there is huge public interest in expertise in the analysis of the election campaign and public policy discussions. The media, in particular, are voracious in wanting feedback and opinion from those who have some background understanding of the issues. The Otago Elections Project will act as a one-stop shop for directing public attention to staff and students who can give quality analysis of the election and the issues.

Vote Chat 2014

Campaigning politicians will be descending on campus throughout the year and, when they do, they'll be directed into the University's first-class film studio, where we'll be interviewing them in front of a public audience. These professional, high-definition recordings will be live-streamed over the internet via the *New Zealand Herald* website, and also available there for later viewing.

During the 2011 general election, I interviewed some 15 campaigning politicians when they visited the University of Otago campus (including people such as Bill English, David Cunliffe, Winston Peters and Hone Harawira). The interviews were live-streamed over the internet and made available to watch on YouTube. This year, the interviews will be conducted weekly, from April.

Political Roundup column on the New Zealand Herald website

I write a regular Political Roundup column for the website of the *New Zealand Herald* – about three days a week. The column is an attempt to discuss the main political stories of the day from a more scholarly point of view than is usually in the media, and to point to the most important and interesting relevant items from various media and blogosphere sources.

New Zealand politics daily email

Everyday, Monday to Friday, I send out an email containing the most important items relating to New Zealand politics. The service is free to anyone who is interested. It is currently sent to about 1,000 subscribers – made up mainly of journalists, public servants, academics, politics students and researchers.

Websites

Politics students are establishing a number of incredibly useful websites as part of researching the 2014 general election. One of the most impressive is the New Zealand Election Ads website (*www.electionads.org.nz*), created by Ashley Murchison, who is writing her PhD on election advertising in New Zealand. The site is a repository of New Zealand election advertising for the benefit of researchers and voters alike.

Two honours students are building a policy comparison website to help voters understand the differences between what the political parties are promoting. We are also attempting to build a fact-checking website that will play a part in helping adjudicate over election-related policy disputes, drawing on the wealth of expertise across the University.

Undergraduate blogging

Many Politics students will be contributing to the project as part of their course assessment. In particular, two papers that I'm teaching this year (POLS 102: Introduction to New

Dr Bryce Edwards: "The Otago Elections Project will act as a one-stop shop for directing public attention to staff and students who can give quality analysis of the election and the issues."
Photo: Alan Dove

Zealand Politics; and POLS 221: New Zealand Political Parties and Elections) will require students to publish regular blogposts that relate to scholarly analysis and the election campaign.

Conference and publications

The Otago Elections Project will culminate in a conference or symposium immediately after the election. This will be a chance for both students and academics to share their research about the election campaign and the results. This and other aspects of the project will result in numerous journal articles and book chapters.

A staff and student venture

While I'm the director for the project, on a day-to-day basis it's being co-ordinated by Ashley Murchison. James Meager (a Māori student co-ordinator in the Division of Health Sciences) is the events producer, and Megan McPherson from the Division of Marketing and Communications is managing the promotion of the project.

So, if you're interested in being involved or just want to follow what we are doing, please go to our website, or follow me on Twitter *(@bryce_edwards)*, or email me at *bryce.edwards@otago.ac.nz*

Dr Bryce Edwards
Department of Politics

Amber secrets

Dozens of new species of insects, spiders and nematodes (roundworms) have been discovered beautifully preserved inside blocks of New Zealand amber.

Associate Professor Daphne Lee and postdoctoral fellow Dr Uwe Kaulfuss (Department of Geology) have found the fossils inside amber (kauri resin) unearthed in lignite mines in Otago and Southland.

Kaulfuss explains that, sadly for the subjects, but fortunately for science, the tiny animals would have become stuck to and then encased in resin oozing out of ancient kauri trees that once grew in the south.

The oldest animals identified to date are 25 million years old, but the researchers hope to discover further new species in amber that has been buried for up to 70 million years.

It's the first time that animal fossils have been revealed inside amber in New Zealand; the only other similar discovery in the Southern Hemisphere has been at Cape York Peninsula in Australia.

"It's a fossilised treasure trove," Lee enthuses. "We are getting information that we couldn't possibly get from any other source and it is immensely important in terms of understanding New Zealand's past biodiversity."

The work is being undertaken in conjunction with Alexander Schmidt of the Amber Research Group at the University of Goettingen, in Germany. It is part of a wider Marsden Fund project led by Lee and Dr Dallas Mildenhall from GNS Science that has previously found numerous new species of fossil plants and animals in southern lake, swamp and river deposits dating back 23 million years.

Dr Uwe Kaulfuss and **Associate Professor Daphne Lee**: "We are getting information that we couldn't possibly get from any other source and it is immensely important in terms of understanding New Zealand's past biodiversity."

On the cards

Every time we "put it on the plastic" we contribute to a fast and accurate indicator of the state of the New Zealand economy.

That's according to research undertaken by former University of Otago research assistant Corey Allan for his Master of Commerce degree.

Allan notes that New Zealanders are among the most frequent users of electronic-funds-transfer-at-point-of-sale technology in the world. In 2012 we collectively swiped our credit and debit cards about 1.2 billion times and spent more than $66 billion, accounting for about three quarters of our consumption spending.

Allan says the volume of these EFTPOS transactions is often reported in the media as a measure of our economic performance. His thesis explored the usefulness of this data as an economic indicator.

Allan concluded that electronic card transactions data closely mirrors other indicators of the overall state of the economy, such as gross domestic product and consumer spending, but does so more quickly.

"Since complete and accurate spending information can be collected from New Zealand's EFTPOS network in real time, policy-makers and researchers need not wait several weeks to make informed decisions, or to assess the current and forecast the future state of the economy.

"Electronic card transactions data therefore makes faster responses to economic conditions possible, potentially improving the quality of macro-economic policy-making in New Zealand."

(Allan is now working as a research analyst with a non-profit research institute, Motu Economic and Public Policy Research, in Wellington.)

Corey Allan: "Electronic card transactions data ... makes faster responses to economic conditions possible, potentially improving the quality of macro-economic policy-making in New Zealand."

Fungi fun guy

A secret botanical world has been discovered in the treetops of West Coast beech forests.

A team headed by Dr David Orlovich (Department of Botany) has made two significant finds: that old southern beech trees send roots into the soil that accumulates on their branches; and that communities of fungi live in this "aerial canopy soil", including species that only grow on tree roots and would normally be expected to be found only on the ground.

It's a symbiotic relationship – beech trees rely on fungi for nutrients.

Orlovich explains that canopy soil develops from falling plant debris trapped in nooks and crannies in the branches of beech trees, which then – remarkably – put roots into the canopy soil. He speculates that the fungi get into the canopy soil via the wind, birds or insects.

"We will now do DNA sequencing of all of the canopy fungi and compare them to the ground fungi and look for species or communities that specialise in being in the canopy rather than being on the ground.

"I think the fact that any fungi grow up in the canopy is pretty cool, but it would be a most exciting thing if we discovered new species that were only in the canopy."

Orlovich has previously discovered several new species of fungi in New Zealand and points out that there is plenty of scope to identify more.

"It's been estimated that there are about 25,000 species of fungi in New Zealand, of which only about 5,000 are named."

Dr David Orlovich: "I think the fact that any fungi grow up in the canopy is pretty cool, but it would be a most exciting thing if we discovered new species that were only in the canopy."

Rethinking heart disease

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in New Zealand and the leading source of adult disability.

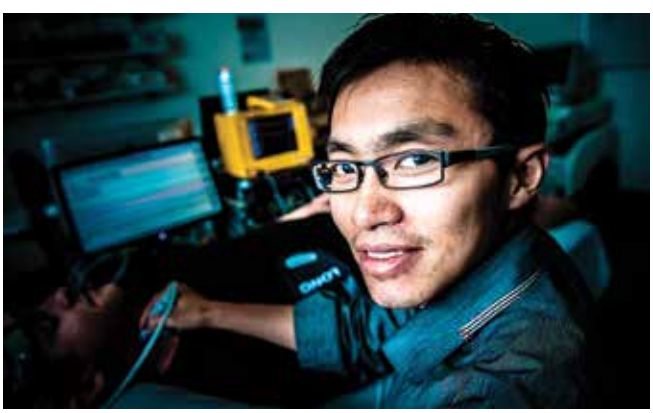
University of Otago Wellington (UOW) researchers are advancing revolutionary approaches to understanding this area of medicine that explore our physical diversity – with potential to enhance diagnosis and treatment for tens of thousands of New Zealanders each year.

Leading the research is Dr Shieak Tzeng, director of UOW's Centre for Translational Physiology. In collaboration with the International Research Network on Cerebral Hemodynamic Regulation, Tzeng's team is challenging current understanding of how blood flow to the brain is regulated, so treatment of patients with brain blood flow-related problems can be individualised.

"It has become fashionable to talk about 'individualised medicine', but most scientists still apply reductionist approaches to this problem," he explains. "We are saying that reductionist data can bear little resemblance to what happens in a conscious living system where all processes are happening simultaneously. We want to explain why there is physiological diversity and we do that by understanding how different physiological systems integrate at a whole-organism level to achieve a function."

For example, poor blood pressure control does not necessarily mean poor blood flow control. "Some people rely on different physiological mechanisms to maintain blood flow that we don't routinely study or, until recently, didn't know existed."

The lack of variation in the way patients are managed, despite all patients being different, is a major clinical problem, he says. "Delving into people's different physiological mechanisms for maintaining blood flow is absolutely key to achieving truly individualised care."



Dr Shieak Tzeng: "Delving into people's different physiological mechanisms for maintaining blood flow is absolutely key to achieving truly individualised care."

Ladies before gentlemen

A study of how some fish change sex has potential benefits spanning aquaculture through to regenerative medicine.

Professor Neil Gemmell (Department of Anatomy) has received a grant from the Marsden Fund to investigate changes in fish that are "sequential hermaphrodites" – that is, they begin life as one sex and later reverse sex. Often this sex change is socially controlled, with the absence of a dominant male from a social group resulting in the largest female reversing sex to replace him.

The research project is investigating the molecular basis for what Gemmell calls "this stunning transformation", which is unknown.

The research focuses on three species of fish that change sex from female to male: the common New Zealand spotty and two distant tropical relatives, the bluehead wrasse and the three-spot wrasse. Gemmell says in bluehead wrasse, the entire sex change – which entails a complete restructuring of the gonad – takes only about three weeks.

Gemmell says many valuable commercial species, including blue cod and snapper, change sex during their life cycle.

Understanding the process could be useful in terms of being able to manipulate sex in farmed fish and wild fisheries to help improve stock management and production.

He says there are also possible medical benefits from understanding how the gonad in sex reversing species is completely re-engineered from an ovary to a testis. "It may be that the pathway can be manipulated in other contexts so that we can ultimately change one human organ to another."

Professor Neil Gemmell: Understanding sex change in fish could be useful for manipulating sex in farmed fish and wild fisheries to help improve stock management and production.

Belief and death

Popular ideas about religion and death are being tested in a research project based at the University of Otago's Department of Psychology.

Professor Jamin Halberstadt has received a Marsden Fund grant to research the role people's religious beliefs play in managing their anxiety about death. He is working with one of his former Otago PhD students, Dr Jonathan Jong (University of Oxford), and a former research fellow, Dr Matthias Blumke (now at the University of Heidelberg).

"We are interested in putting to the test the intuitive idea that people hold religious beliefs because they have a powerful psychological benefit in moderating their fear of death," Halberstadt says.

"This idea that death, anxiety and religion are linked has been around for thousands for years and we are now able to systematically use the tools that science gives us to answer the question in a rigorous way," Jong adds.

The research is additionally looking at the related effects of religious belief on discrimination between national, ethnic and religious groups. "Fear of death has been shown to make people close in on their own groups and derogate other groups. So, if religious belief relieves death anxiety, then it is a way to intercede in anti-group discrimination," Halberstadt explains.

The three-year research project will include laboratory tests using Dunedin and international volunteers, and is expected to contribute to a book and generate academic articles and addresses.

Halberstadt says they expect to make significant advances in understanding how belief helps or hurts individuals and societies.

Professor Jamin Halberstadt and **Dr Jonathan Jong**: "We are interested in putting to the test the intuitive idea that people hold religious beliefs because they have a powerful psychological benefit in moderating their fear of death."

Emotional reality check

In an age in which many people snootily regard reality television as the media equivalent of junk food, a University of Otago lecturer not only studies reality TV, but also is a huge fan who watches very little else.

Dr Rosemary Overell (Film, Media and Communication) is researching the emotional responses generated in viewers by reality television programmes. She is focusing on a United States show called *Intervention*, available online, in which addicts believe they are taking part in a documentary, but are being set up for an intervention by family or friends and a stint in rehab.

Overell says the research arose out of the emotional effect that watching all 13 seasons of the show had on her.

"It was so emotionally raw that I couldn't go back to watching produced dramas like *Mad Men* because they just seemed simulated or fake. And I wondered why the programme elicited that kind of response and was so emotionally engaging, even though I am not an addict."

She is gauging emotional responses to the programme by checking out social media.

"I am interested in looking at how addicts respond to the programme through social media such as Tumblr to work through their own processes of recovery."

Overell says the research is part of a wider interest in television and social media.

"I am setting out a theoretical approach to looking at not just how viewers engage with televisual media via social media networks, but how we study that engagement."

Dr Rosemary Overell: "I am setting out a theoretical approach to looking at not just how viewers engage with televisual media via social media networks, but how we study that engagement."

Virtual surgery

Anyone, from aspiring surgeons to serious gamers, can now use an iPhone to try their hand at surgery using the Bonedoc app from the University of Otago.

Bonedoc is the brainchild of Dr Phil Blyth, senior lecturer in eLearning in medicine and a practising emergency medicine doctor. He combined his surgical skills with his coding skills to develop the app in conjunction with Otago Innovation Limited, the University's commercialisation arm.

The app enables the user to step into a virtual operating theatre to repair a hip fracture, realigning bones, fitting a plate and screws, and getting immediate feedback via Bonedoc's x-ray function. When the operation is completed, the user's efforts are automatically scored.

Blyth says inspiration for the app came while he was working as an orthopaedic registrar, learning surgical procedures by first watching and then being guided through the process.

"But I began to wonder why was I learning on a patient? Wasn't there a way I could work out what I was doing outside of the operating theatre so that when I was there I could just do it?" he says.

"When you are operating, there are so many other distractions, but in the game you see what is actually making the difference without all those pressures," he says. "It gives you feedback that is not possible in the real world.

"A big part of it is seeing all the steps and practising them over and over."

Bonedoc is available from *www.bonedoc.org* or the Apple AppStore. An android version is to be released this year.

Dr Phil Blyth: "Wasn't there a way I could work out what I was doing outside of the operating theatre so that when I was there I could just do it?"

Talking sense

How our brains convert the information they gather from the world into language is probably not something most people have ever thought about, but it is the focus of a research project based at the University of Otago.

The research is being undertaken by Associate Professor Alistair Knott, Dr Lubica Benuskova and Dr Martin Takac (Department of Computer Science), with support from a three-year grant from the Marsden Fund.

"We can talk about the things we see and the things we do but, even though it seems so easy, we don't know how it happens," Knott explains. "We don't know how information that arrives in our senses, or in our motor system, gets converted into language.

"An obstacle for our understanding is that language and the sensorimotor system are traditionally studied in different disciplines – theoretical linguistics for language, neuroscience for sensorimotor processing. The goal of the Marsden project is to make connections between models of development in these separate areas."

In a recently published book, Knott argued that language is closely connected to the processes by which we experience the world.

"The project will test this hypothesis by building a computer model of how babies learn to express their perceptual experiences in language," he says.

The researchers believe the project can make significant contributions to our knowledge in both linguistics and neuroscience. By way of example, Benuskova says, "the models we develop may improve our understanding of language disorders such as aphasia and language delay".

Associate Professor Alistair Knott and **Dr Lubica Benuskova**: "We don't know how information that arrives in our senses, or in our motor system, gets converted into language."

Trading partners

With New Zealand's bilateral trade with China overtaking that with our long-time trading partner Australia, International Business doctoral researcher Pramuk Perera predicts China will become this country's most important business partner going forward.

He says that during the decade ended 2012, New Zealand's bilateral trade with China more than doubled, while trade with Australia grew by only 30 per cent. Further, from January to September 2013, the value of trade between China and New Zealand was over $NZ12.5 billion, $NZ1 billion more than trade with Australia.

Small and remotely located, international trade contributes nearly two thirds of New Zealand's economic activity. Free-trade agreements (FTAs) play a vital role in this, providing a gateway to foreign markets for New Zealand exporters and investors.

The importance of the FTA with China, which became effective in October 2008, has been well understood at both national and local levels, he says.

"New Zealand Trade and Enterprise conducts China business training courses at the national level. The Dunedin City Council has taken initiatives to connect with China under its 'linkage beyond our borders' strategic theme, and 'Project Shanghai and China', led by the Otago Chamber of Commerce, specifically focuses on bilateral trade and investment opportunities."

With a GDP of more than $US8.3 trillion, population exceeding 1.3 billion, expected average growth of seven per cent and high demand for agricultural products, he believes China will be an important strategic partner for New Zealand. However, he also believes that New Zealand should be considering potential benefits from a proposed FTA between Australia and Japan.

Pramuk Perera: He believes the importance of the FTA with China has been well understood at both national and local levels.

Bluff history buff

The Southland town of Bluff appears small and remote to many New Zealanders, but Dr Michael Stevens (Department of History) believes his historical case study of the port will re-shape thinking about New Zealand's economic development and race relations.

Stevens has received a Marsden Fund Fast-Start grant to research the history of Bluff between the years 1800 and 2000. He says his approach will challenge what he describes as "the insular approach that tends to shape thinking and writing about the Māori past".

Stevens says Bluff was a key entry point for goods, people and ideas and, in return, dispatched primary products to points throughout the British Empire.

"Its relatively large and robust Kāi Tahu population was therefore shaped by living in a surprisingly multicultural setting and being a part of the British world superstructure.

"A close study of Bluff represents a unique opportunity to uncover a set of Māori responses to colonial capitalism and its long-term consequences," Stevens argues.

"We know about late 19th-century landlessness and its resultant poverty, but the positive consequences of agriculture for Bluff-based Māori and the relationship between land and sea in the colonial economy are not well understood. Here is a real sense in which southern Māori were not just victims of, but also participants in, the British Empire."

A proud "Bluffie", Stevens is descended from some of Bluff's oldest Māori and Pākehā families and grew up in the port town. He intends to weave the experiences of his and other such families into the port's wider history.

Dr Michael Stevens: "A close study of Bluff represents a unique opportunity to uncover a set of Māori responses to colonial capitalism and its long-term consequences."

Good news for tiny babies

People born weighing less than 1500gm (very low birth weight, VLBW) tend to be shorter, have fewer friends and achieve fewer educational qualifications than their peers by the time they reach their 20s, a University of Otago, Christchurch study shows.

However VLBW babies score similarly at age 20 to their peers on a range of other measures of health and social functioning.

Professor Brian Darlow led the research, studying VLBW infants born in New Zealand in 1986, involving more than 200 people now aged 22 and 23.

Darlow says that while VLBW participants tend to be more socially isolated and achieve less academically, they were as happy with their quality of life as their peers.

"This study is good news because it shows that, with some exceptions, these young people are doing pretty well despite serious hurdles early in life."

He says the hard work of many parents is likely to play a part.

Darlow's study showed VLBW babies were, as young adults, on average 5.6kg lighter and 4.2cm shorter than their peers, half as likely to have a tertiary qualification, less likely to engage in romantic partner relationships and almost a third more likely to have been welfare dependent.

However, the study found no significant differences between high school completion, involvement in paid employment and after-tax income, close family relationships and quality of life.

Darlow says the next step for researchers is investigating whether there are health discrepancies, such as in premature ageing, between VLBW people and their peers.

Professor Brian Darlow: "This study is good news because it shows that ... these young people are doing pretty well despite serious hurdles early in life."

Anika Tiplady: "You have to be prepared to knuckle down in order to succeed."
Photo: Alan Dove

Running with the ball

Anika Tiplady balances the demands of her medical studies with a career in the New Zealand Defence Force and success as a representative rugby player.

University of Otago Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery student Anika Tiplady likes a challenge, which is just as well, as the fourth-year student successfully balances top-level sport commitments with the demands of studying medicine and a part-time military career.

At the 2013 University of Otago Blue and Gold awards Anika received a University Blue and was named Sports Woman and Māori Sportsperson of the Year.

While she will continue to balance competitive sport with study, the fourth-year MB ChB student says working towards a career in medicine is now a priority.

"Medicine is a natural progression from my first love, the sciences." [In 2003 she graduated with a Bachelor of Science majoring in physiology and anatomy and structural biology].

"I enrolled again for a challenge and, while I was initially very apprehensive, I love it. When you are 30 and you change career it can be daunting, but the last few years at Otago have confirmed that it was absolutely the right decision. There is a broad spectrum of ages, and people from different backgrounds and ethnic groups studying and I've found my classmates very supportive – it helps to know you are not alone studying a demanding, yet rewarding, course."

She has also enjoyed assisting several students with course work through the University's Te Roopu Māori mentoring programme. Another associated organisation which has provided numerous positives for Anika, who is of Ngāi Tahu descent, is Te Oranga ki Otakou – the University of Otago Māori Medical Students' Association.

"All the Māori students in our class get together. We share notes and it's a supportive environment. I've also taken a lot from Te Oranga where we meet medical students from other campuses to broaden networks."

Anika believes her time in the New Zealand Defence Force helped her develop the skills necessary for academic success. After secondary school, she joined the Army and gained her first degree at Otago through an Army scholarship. She then completed officer training before serving for eight years in the regular Army.

During a 2011 deployment to the Middle East, she gained first-hand insight into the complexities of not only the culture, but also the multiple sources of conflict in the region.

As part of a multinational United Nations force she was tasked with observing peace agreements between Israel, Syria and Lebanon by monitoring a zone of separation between Syria and the (Israeli) occupied Golan.

"We were there strictly as observers. Syria was calm for a very long time and then the internal political situation became increasingly turbulent. We saw more weapons and vehicles deployed in certain areas by the Syrian Army inside their own borders, which was no threat to us, but was for the rebels. It was a very interesting mission and fantastic opportunity – there is such a depth of history there that is beyond comprehension."

She plans to continue in her current role as an Army reservist captain.

In addition to success in the Army, Anika is an equally talented sportsperson.

Like many of her family members, she enjoyed competitive sport from an early age but, in 2000, she became the "random apple that fell far from the tree" by being the first to take up rugby. The game's on-field intensity and the team environment appealed to her competitive nature. Her skill and dedication has seen her develop into a utility back who prefers wing or fullback positions.

In the past decade she has progressed from club to representative level and has captained the Otago Women's NPC team. Other career highlights include playing for the Otago Spirit for three years from 2001 to 2003. During her time in the Army she played representative rugby for Manawatu and Canterbury, and had a season playing club rugby in England. More recently she was selected for the New Zealand Black Ferns tour of England in 2009 and 2012, and played against Australia in 2007.

"Touring is tough, especially the three games against England, but playing at the top level is also a great test of how far you've come. After more than a decade I felt it was time to hang up the boots after the 2012 tour. But I couldn't stay away and rejoined Otago for the 2013 season – we finished third in the women's National Provincial Championship."

Adamant that her days of top-level rugby are finally over, Anika plans to redirect her energies into competitive track cycling and rugby sevens.

She says that her experiences in sports, the military and academic life have all helped form a straightforward personal philosophy.

"You have to be prepared to knuckle down in order to succeed."

SAM STEVENS

Kaiwhakahaere of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Sir Mark Solomon and University of Otago Chancellor John Ward re-sign the Memorandum of Understanding between Ngāi Tahu and the University.
Photo: Sharron Bennett

MOU re-signed

The University and Ngāi Tahu have re-signed their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was first agreed to in 2001.

The re-signing was an occasion to demonstrate how far Otago has come over the past decade to embed Ngāi Tahu goals and aspirations into its research and teaching activities, giving rise to higher numbers of Māori graduates than ever before.

Kaiwhakahaere of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Sir Mark Solomon and University Chancellor John Ward re-signed the MOU after a special blessing and ceremony. The event was attended by representatives from three Ngāi Tahu rūnanga.

Speaking at the ceremony, Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne emphasised that the MOU had to remain a "living and breathing" document, noting that the University had embedded Māori culture into its work, with some 678 research programmes involving Māori underway at the current time and a strong commitment to pastoral support of Māori studying at the University.

The University Office of Māori Development Director, Tuari Potiki (Ngāi Tahu), said it was clear that "an amazing success story is quietly happening" at Otago, and he hoped to have continued discussion over plans to further deepen the relationship between Ngāi Tahu and the University at meetings with rūnanga in the near future.

Otago gains Fairtrade status

Otago has been granted Fairtrade accreditation, becoming the first New Zealand university to enjoy this distinction. The University joins more than 100 other universities around the world that have become Fairtrade institutions.

Announcing Otago's new status, Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne congratulated staff and students on the accreditation.

"The Fairtrade ethos fits well with our strategic plan and there is no doubt that Fairtrade is a positive and growing movement. It is proof that we act in an ethically, socially and environmentally responsible manner."

New teaching master's

Otago is at the forefront of a new initiative that allows high-performing graduates to become primary or secondary teachers and gain a master's degree within a year.

The new Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLn) is a first for New Zealand. The Universities of Waikato and Otago collaboratively designed the programme, which draws on the research strengths and staff expertise of both institutions.

Each institution will award its own master's degree. The MTchgLn has a major school-based component that focuses on raising the achievement of learners.

Visitors' Centre opened

The University has opened a Visitors' Centre to provide an easily accessible "front door" to the Dunedin campus from Cumberland Street. The centre is located on the north-western side of the St David Lecture Theatre complex and features displays, merchandise, interactive screens and general information for visitors. Photo: Melanie Middlemiss

Performing arts degree

The University has launched a Bachelor of Performing Arts (BPA) degree for students whose career aspirations involve music, theatre and dance.

The three-year degree is available for the first time at Otago from this year. A collaboration between the Theatre, Music and Dance programmes at Otago, it is designed to give students the opportunity to study and train in the different performing arts as part of the same qualification.

Marsden Fund success

Otago researchers were awarded $13 million in the Marsden Fund's latest annual round to carry out world-class research in their respective disciplines.

A total of 22 research projects at Otago received $13 million (excl. GST) in the funding round, which is announced each year for research in science, technology, social sciences and humanities.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) Professor Richard Blaikie warmly congratulated the successful researchers and their projects.

"They are outstanding in their fields, continuing the proud tradition at Otago for excellence in research that contributes to both national and world knowledge across a wide spectrum of disciplines. They have done extremely well to successfully attract the funding in a round that is so highly competitive."

Obituary

Donna-Rose McKay
Head of the University's Disability Information & Support Service

The University is mourning the loss of a highly respected staff member who was a national trailblazer in the area of disability issues and support.

Donna-Rose McKay died in December after a short illness. Donna-Rose began her work at the University in 1992, when she was appointed to a newly-created part-time position of disabilities co-ordinator, a first for any New Zealand university.

Donna-Rose McKay surrounded by members of the Disability Information & Support team.

In a eulogy, University Director of Student Services Mr David Richardson described Donna-Rose as a "determined and fearless woman [who] took on anybody or any institution that had, or created, barriers for students with a disability" and noted that she was the founder and driving force behind the establishment of ACHIEVE, the national post-secondary education disability network.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne paid tribute to Donna-Rose as being a fierce advocate for the students in her care and living her life committed to the notion that every student had the right to study at Otago.

"She reminded the rest of us each and every day that it was our collective responsibility to make sure that happened. I know that Donna-Rose changed the lives of many – her personal strength empowered a whole generation of students."

Appointments

Professor **Alison Heather** to the Chair in Physiology. Dr Heather comes to Otago from the University of Technology, Sydney. Her research areas include anti-doping in sports and investigating how inflammatory processes contribute to the development of atherosclerosis.

Professor **Michael LeBuffe** to the Baier Chair in Early Modern Philosophy. Dr LeBuffe focuses primarily on the moral theories of Hobbes and Spinoza. He joins Otago from the University of Texas A&M Department of Philosophy, where he was Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Top of New Zealand

The University of Otago flag, held by Dr Nicolas Cullen (Department of Geography), flies high near the top of New Zealand's tallest peak Aoraki/Mount Cook. However, the expedition by Otago researchers last November has shown that Aoraki is not as high as previously thought. The project (led by Surveying's Dr Pascal Sirguey) has shown that the mountain is only 3,724 metres at its highest point, 30 metres less than previously thought.
Photo: Geoff Wayatt

Awards/ Achievements

Six Otago academics were among the 13 leading New Zealand researchers and scholars in basic and applied science

and the humanities recently elected as Fellows of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Professor **Antony Braithwaite** (Pathology, Dunedin) Professor **Gregory Cook** (Microbiology and Immunology), Professor **Jörg Frauendiener** (Mathematics and Statistics), Professor **Philippa Howden-Chapman** (Public Health, Wellington), Professor **Lisa Matisoo-Smith** (Anatomy), Professor **Richard Walter** (Anthropology and Archaeology).

Professor **Gerald Tannock** (Microbiology and Immunology) was awarded a James Cook Research Fellowship to support his innovative studies into bacterial communities in the gut and their role in health and disease.

Professor **Michael Baker** (Public Health, Wellington) has been awarded Health Research Council's Liley Medal, which is presented annually to recognise an individual whose recent research has produced a significant breakthrough within the health and medical fields. Professor Baker was honoured for a 2012 study showing a dramatic rise in the incidence of serious infectious diseases and rising inequalities across populations in New Zealand.

Professor **Richard Blaikie** (Physics and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)) was presented with the 2013 Hector Medal for the advancement of physical sciences in recognition of his fundamental and wide-ranging contributions to the field of nano-optics. His achievements include providing a world-first experimental demonstration of a controversial superlens system using sub-wavelength techniques.

Professor **Jim McQuillan** (Chemistry) received the Royal Society of New Zealand's T.K. Sidey Medal, which recognises outstanding scientific research in the field of electromagnetic radiation. Professor McQuillan co-created the surface-enhanced Raman scattering (SERS) analytical technique and has developed infrared spectroscopy to examine wet metal oxide nanoparticles.

Professor **Brett Delahunt** (Pathology, Wellington) has received the rarely awarded International Academy of Pathology Distinguished

Pathologist Medal. He was also awarded the Grawitz Medal in recognition of his distinguished contributions to the advancement of urological pathology internationally, and his key role in enabling formulation of new guidelines for the classification and reporting of prostate and renal cancer.

Three Department of Chemistry staff were recently awarded national prizes by the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry. Its Easterfield Medal went to Dr **James Crowley**, the Maurice Wilkins Centre Prize for Chemical Science to Emeritus Professor **Rob Smith**, and the Shimadzu Prize for Applied and Industrial Chemistry to Associate Professor **Nigel Perry**.

Japanese programme teaching fellow **Haruko Stuart** took top honours in the Otago University Students' Association 2013 teaching awards. He was one of 10 finalists selected from more than 300 student-nominated teachers across the University. The awards also featured an Inclusiveness in Teaching award section, which this year had three recipients: Associate Professor **Leigh Hale** (Physiotherapy), Dr **Gill Rutherford** (Education) and **Tony Zaharic** (Biochemistry).

Dr **Suetonia Palmer** (Medicine, Christchurch) and Dr **Angela Wanhalla** (History and Art History) gained Rutherford Discovery Fellowships to help them develop their research careers in New Zealand. The fellowships are valued at $800,000 over five years.

Otago BSc (Hons) Physics graduate **Edward Linscott** has been awarded a Cambridge-Rutherford Memorial Scholarship to the University of Cambridge to undertake doctoral study into the often bizarre behaviour of condensed matter systems.

Associate Professor **Takashi Shogimen** (History and Art History) won Japan's 2013 Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities (History and Civilisation Section), for his book in Japanese, *Yoroppa Seiji Shiso Tanjo* (*The Birth of European Political Thought*).

Ms **Ceri Warnock** (Law) received New Zealand's premier legal research award, the 2013 New Zealand Law Foundation International Research Fellowship. The fellowship is awarded annually to enable an individual of outstanding ability to undertake legal research that will make a significant contribution to New Zealand.

Otago Geography master's graduate **David Gawith** has gained a Woolf Fisher Scholarship for University of Cambridge doctoral study into the impact that climate change-induced changes in water availability will have on livelihoods.

Ben Abraham, a recent BA (Hons) Politics graduate, was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship for postgraduate studies at Oxford University, where he intends to pursue Development Studies.

Honorary Doctorate

In December, the University conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Science on Professor Sir **Peter Gluckman**, one of its most distinguished medical graduates. Sir Peter is a world-leading medical researcher focusing on human growth and development and was appointed as the first Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor in 2009.

Professorial promotions

The following leading Otago academics have been promoted to full professorships, effective 1 February: **Blair Blakie** (Physics), **Stephen Cranefield** (Information Science), **David Gerrard** (Dunedin School of Medicine), **Mark Hampton** (Pathology, Christchurch), **Tony Harland** (Higher Education Development Centre), **John Knight** (Marketing), **Craig Rodger** (Physics), **Philip Seddon** (Zoology), **Richard Troughton** (Medicine, Christchurch), **Michael Williams** (Dunedin School of Medicine), **Steve Wing** (Marine Science), **Michael Winikoff** (Information Science).

New Year Honours

Otago alumni and staff to receive New Year Honours include:

Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM): Mr **Peter Townsend**, for services to business and the community.

Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM): Mrs **Jane Annear**, for services to local government; Mrs **Elizabeth Chesterman**, for services to the Cancer Society of New Zealand; Dr **Stephen Goldson**, for services to science; Dr **Tearikivao Maoate**, for services to Pacific health; Professor **Stephen Munn**, for services to health.

Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM): Mr **Barry Clarke**, for services to the community; Dr **Gary Evans**, for services to science; Mr **Alexander Familton**, for services to local body government; Ms **Patricia Hubbard**, for services to early childhood education; Dr **Allan Panting**, for services to orthopaedics.

Companion of the Queen's Service Order (QSO): Mr **John Pike**, for services to the law.

Queen's Service Medal (QSM): Dr **Logan McLennan**, for services to health and education; Mrs **Janice Taouma**, for services to early childhood education.

Professor **Glenn Summerhayes** (Anthropology and Archaeology) was made an Officer of the Order of Logohu (OL) by the Government of Papua New Guinea for service to the community through his significant contribution to the archaeology of Papua New Guinea.

Q&A

WITH

Josh Jenkins

Josh Jenkins thinks Dunedin is the greatest place in the world – and every day he gets to tell people about it. With a Bachelor of Tourism, he began his career with Monarch Wildlife Cruises on Dunedin's Otago Peninsula, where he learnt about the region's unique and rare wildlife. From there, he went to Tourism Dunedin. Beginning in a research role, he moved to the position of digital marketing co-ordinator, responsible for managing, developing and marketing Dunedin's digital assets. Highlights for Josh include developing *dunedinnz.com*, launching the Insiders Dunedin website *insidersdunedin.co.nz* and hosting Dunedin surfing trips for international surfing photographers Chris Burkard and Eugene Tan.

Responsible for Dunedin's social media, he says: "Yes, I get to spend a lot of time on Facebook and Twitter. I also help develop mobile applications and implement marketing campaigns. The greatest thing of all is that I work with people from all walks of life and companies from all over the world. I never get bored as no two days are ever the same. I couldn't have asked for a better entry into my career in tourism!"

Now at The Digital Office (*www.digitaloffice.co.nz*), Josh's latest project is Gigatown Dunedin, a competition to win the fastest internet in the Southern Hemisphere.

How did Otago help shape your life and career success?

The skills I learnt at Otago set me up for the "real world". But I think the University of Otago helped shape my life and career more than most because I met my wife while studying and we've started a family here in Dunedin. Now I'm hoping to help give something back with Gigatown, a competition to win the fastest internet in the southern hemisphere. If Dunedin wins then it'll change the digital landscape for Otago and students studying here.

Highlights or best memories of your university days?

I have so many wonderful memories of my uni days and, at the heart of all those memories, are the people I enjoyed them with. A few standouts include flatting in The Growler on Clyde Street, the valley cats and numerous parties.

Recollections of favourite or stand-out lecturers?

My third-year lecturer David Duval always had time for me and other tourism students. He always had something positive to say, but challenged my thinking with critical feedback. We are still in contact, which is cool.

What do you remember about your residential college or flatting experience?

The social interactions I got from flatting in Dunedin have helped shape me into the person I am today. I don't think that experience could have been replicated anywhere else in New Zealand.

Do you have memories or impressions of Dunedin that you'd like to share?

Choosing to live in Dunedin after graduating helped me realise how great this little city is. I never really got out of the north end of town while I was studying and I know a lot of other students didn't. I'd recommend that alumni come back to Dunedin and spend at least a week here exploring the wider area, including Otago Peninsula.

What do you remember of your graduation day?

For me graduation was a day to celebrate my successes with family.

Walking across the stage and shaking the Chancellor's hand was very satisfying.

Personal highlights?

Personal highlights since leaving University include starting a family, buying a house, overseas travel and, most recently, winning a Mixed Martial Arts Fight.

Plans/goals for the future?

Dunedin's bid for Gigatown is the focus for the next year. Winning this competition will help students, the business community, and the University in years to come. I'd also like to start a business and head back to Otago to complete a master's degree.

Check out photos of your old uni flats on the "groups" page at *insidersdunedin.co.nz*

Q&A

WITH

Mark Orton

Mark Orton is an alumnus of Film and Media Studies and has a Postgraduate Diploma inNatural History Filmmaking and Communication. He's learned about the history of filmmaking and how to make films for a TV audience. He's worked behind the camera and the editing desk on documentaries for Natural History New Zealand, the Discovery Channel, National Geographic and TVNZ-screened shows such as *High Country Rescue*. Now, he's on location for four months, working on a series for the Al Jazeera network on life in the Manila slums.

With the working title *The Slums*, Mark says the series is about "the lives of people living in an area called The Tondo. It's gritty, gnarly, heartbreaking, and incredibly amusing all at the same time.

"The living conditions of the urban poor in a mega city like Manila is such a cultural shock. But, you can't but help admire these people. Not only are they incredibly tough and resourceful, they are really warm and love to laugh. Yes it's dangerous, but the people are so welcoming and curious that it's easy to forget that the camera I am holding is worth more than they will earn in a very long time.

"Hopefully, by allowing some of them to tell their stories through this medium, people will not only realise how lucky they are, but think of ways to help rather than pretend that this scenario doesn't exist."

How has your Otago degree prepared you for what you're doing now?

My undergraduate degree in film and media, with a bit of English, history and communication studies thrown in was great preparation. Generally, you can teach anyone with half a brain to use the equipment; what is rare, though, are people that can problem-solve on the spot, think outside the square and tell stories without having their hand held every step of the way.

I particularly value the thought-provoking lectures that I had in the Department of Film and Media Studies, firstly by Thierry Jutel and then by Brett Nicholls, Vijay Devadas and Paul Ramaeker. I often think that the modern generation of film editors (myself included) have so much to learn from those that did the hard yards splicing celluloid and the great thing about learning film and media the way I did at the University of Otago was that it wasn't a technical course on how to press buttons. It taught me to look at images, deconstruct film texts and, importantly, understand how sequences were constructed.

What did you enjoy most about your studies?

Being exposed to new ways of thinking and introduced to texts that I might never have found on my own. A door was opened to critical thinking that can never shut and it gave me the confidence to think that I could pretty much do anything if I was never afraid to ask questions. I muddled though my 20s in a number of totally soul-deflating jobs, so I have had to make up for lost time once shown the door into a world infinitely more interesting.

What piece of advice would you like to share with students?

Get stuck in, don't be afraid to ask questions and, importantly, don't view your undergraduate years as a stepping-stone to employment. That will happen soon enough, but this might just be the last chance that you get to think freely, try stuff, surround yourself with an eclectic mix of people without the worries of mortgages etc. Dunedin is a very cool town and, surprisingly, it is a lot larger than the North Dunedin student ghetto – so get out, explore and soak up the amazing natural beauty of the place. Even better, get to know people in the city that aren't students and respect the city.

What does Otago mean to you now?

It's home now. The University enticed me to Dunedin and, in many respects, I have never left. Until recently, Dunedin was still my home, but my University of Otago experience had another profound effect on me. I met my partner Tracy (who was working at the University) while I was an undergraduate student and 10 years later we haven't really moved too far away – just to Clyde, Central Otago.

For the full feature, Q&A and video with Mark, visit our website *alumni.otago.ac.nz*

FROM THE GAMBIA

Working with children in the Gambia, Dr Uzochukwu (Uzoh) Egere is doing what he loves: caring for children and easing "the intolerable burden of disease" around him, "especially … among our precious children".

Uzoh is the Centre for International Health's first Master of Public Health graduate, describing this as the springboard he needed to do the work he loves, giving him "lifelong tools for tackling health challenges in the developing world".

Uzoh's life now is a quantum leap from earlier, haunting days of caring for sick and dying children. Then, he felt helpless because, while he was beginning to understand the multi-faceted causes of disease in African children, he could only offer bedside care. Now, however, he works with "zeal" in a team investigating vaccines for pneumococcal diseases, which are major killers of children in Africa.

He also works on the African Medical Research Unit's tuberculosis team in the Gambia, improving the diagnosis and management of childhood tuberculosis. "This brings together my 'bush' and 'bedside' skills which have been shaped over the last six years through my public health training at the University of Otago and my work at the Medical Research Unit in the Gambia".

Uzoh's passion for his vocation is palpable. "I aim at continuing to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for making quality contributions to local and global efforts to reduce the burden of disease on children, especially in places where this is needed the most."

FROM QUARANTINE ISLAND

Riding a motorboat to the nearest road, no broadband internet, no other humans within driving distance, and little shags nesting near the doorstep are all part of life for alumna Anna Hughes and partner Wayne Johnson.

As official caretakers of Quarantine Island, situated in Otago Harbour, Anna and Wayne live on land otherwise uninhabited by humans – however, their constant companions are 33 sheep, hens and an abundance of relatively tame native wildlife. The island's only – and quite docile – predator is the Norwegian rat, which keeps mice and the more aggressive ship rat at bay.

Caretaking is only part of Anna and Wayne's job – they spend much of their time hosting local education groups, planting and caring for native trees, farming, and ensuring that the water and waste systems are working effectively.

"There have been some lowlights such as winter," says Anna. "Climbing down a steel ladder on frosty mornings, pumping water out of the boat and getting it started can be chilly. Living in an uninsulated house built in the early 1900s and maintained on a budget is also a challenge. However, this has provided some ideas around retrofitting the old cottage to show it can be made to be energy efficient. A future goal perhaps!

"It's been a real privilege," she says. "We now agree with St Martin Island Community Founder Rev. James Matheson's belief that 'Every city needs an island'."

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE YOU?

Email your 100-word "postcard" to *alumni@otago.ac.nz*
We want to stay in contact with you wherever you are. Visit *alumni.otago.ac.nz/where-in-the-world-are-you* to find out where Otago graduates take their place in the world.
While you are there you can update your profile, find lost friends and check for almuni events in your area.

Alumni events 2014 (details tbc)

Perth	Melbourne
Kuala Lumpur	Nelson
Hong Kong	Blenheim
Shanghai	Invercargill
Kuching	London
Brisbane	USA
Sydney	Canada
Dunedin	

Check the alumni website ***alumni.otago.ac.nz/NewsEvents*** for more details or email: *functions.alumni@otago.ac.nz*

Upcoming celebrations and reunions

Physiotherapy class of 1956	MB ChB class of 1974
MB ChB class of 1957	Cumberland College 25th
MB ChB class of 1959	MB ChB class of 1966
BDS class of 1969	MB ChB class of 1964
Botany Department 90th	Studholme College 100th
MB ChB class of 1979	Carrington College 70th
BDS class of 1974	

For further information please go to ***alumni.otago.ac.nz/Events*** or telephone 03 479 4516

Alumni benefits

Library membership

With an alumni library card you can use the University libraries for reading, writing, research and relaxation.

Reunion organisation

Do you need help organising your class/college/flat/University sport reunion? Contact ***reunions.alumni@otago.ac.nz***

Career development and advice

Whether you are currently searching for a position, considering a career change, or are seeking fresh talent for your business, Otago's Career Development Centre can help, ***otago.ac.nz/careers***

Contact alumni

Get back in touch with lost friends, flatmates and colleagues from your student days by emailing ***alumni@otago.ac.nz***

Executive Residence

Stay in the heart of campus at the University's Executive Residence at an exclusive alumni rate. Telephone 0800 685 685 or go to ***otago.ac.nz/execres***

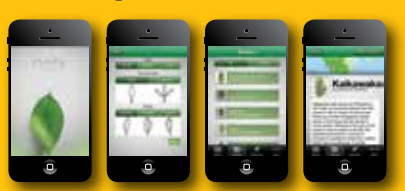
FLORA FINDA **GIVEAWAY**

Flora Finda is a new mobile app created at Otago, providing snappy identification of New Zealand native plants using a smartphone camera. It builds a collection and identifies the plant's location.

Developed by the University's Otago Innovation Ltd, the Botany Department and MEA Mobile, there are 87 species in the app. If your plant isn't one of those 87, a pic can be emailed to the Botany Department for identification.

Botany alumnus and Otago Innovation commercialisation manager Graham Strong says: "This is an amazing additional service for an app that will cost only $4.99. Not only do you get an app that will identify New Zealand native plants, it will also give access to Otago experts."

(Watch the Flora Finder video at***youtube.com/watch?v=rzK8Bj5SAAg***)



Otago Innovation is giving away Flora Finder to 10 lucky alumni. To enter the draw, email *alumni@otago.ac.nz* with the subject line "Flora Finder".

Stay current for Otago communications

Please email ***database.alumni@otago.ac.nz*** to:

- Update or change your postal address
- Receive email notifications (instead of post)
- Receive one "household" copy of the Magazine

Reunions + Events

Philadelphia: Aboard the *Moshulu*, Delaware River, Saturday 9 November 2013

San Francisco: University Club, Saturday 2 November 2013

School of Surveying 50th anniversary reunion and 125th NZIS conference: Thursday 29 – Friday 30 August 2013

Dallas: Old Parkland Hospital, Tuesday 5 November 2013

Toronto: Hemmingway's Restaurant, Friday 15 November 2013

Arana 70th anniversary reunion: Arana College, Friday 22 – Sunday 24 November 2013

GRADUATION DECEMBER 2013

Congratulations to all new graduates

2,715 graduands and seven Town Hall ceremonies meant Dunedin was in celebration mode throughout December.

At the Saturday, 14 December graduation ceremony, Professor Murray Brennan – a leading cancer surgeon and Otago alumnus – gave an inspirational address encouraging graduates to make life a journey, rather than a destination: "Look around, look beside you, in front of you, behind you, embrace the differences that you share and look inside as to how you may become fulfilled, both in profession and in life.

"What advice then can I offer? You have received what I received, the educational tools to grow, and if you can continue to grow, your life will indeed be rich and rewarding. No need for relentless pursuit of some lofty goal or aspiration. If you can make your life a journey and not a destination, then every day becomes an opportunity for growth.

"As you leave today," he urged graduates, "be willing to say thank you to your parents, your family, your friends, your teachers for they have provided you the 'tools to grow' and if you continue to grow each day, each month, each year, your life and the lives of others will be enriched beyond compare."

Highlights of each graduation day included a brunch at the Link for graduands and their guests; escorted tours of the Clocktower; the time-honoured parade down George Street; the graduation ceremony itself, followed by drinks and live entertainment in the Octagon.

Photographs: McRobie Studios
www.mcrobie.co.nz

University of Otago Chancellor, Mr John Ward, confers the honorary degree of Doctor of Science on Professor Sir Peter Gluckman.

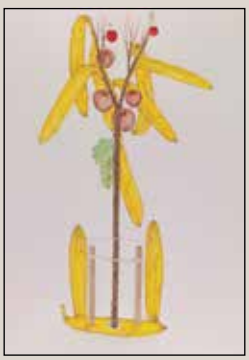
Professor Murray Brennan addresses graduands.

Town & Gown

Jane Goodall with Associate Professor Phil Bishop during her visit to the University in 2011.

Jane Goodall
June 2014

Primatologist, ethnologist and anthropologist Jane Goodall is visiting the University this year and will be giving a lecture at the Regent Theatre. Her 2011 visit was so popular that 2,000 people on campus watched her in nine lecture theatres via live video. While here, she hopes to encourage young people to join her Roots and Shoots conservation programme. *rootsandshoots.org*



Zina Swanson, *I dream that I have fruit (Can anybody hear me?)*, watercolour on paper, 2013.

Zina Swanson: No Need for Water
Hocken Gallery,
15 February – 13 April

Surrealism, hypnotism and pseudoscientific experiments that claim plants feel pain, have informed the recent botanical works of Frances Hodgkins Fellow, Zina Swanson. Swanson's imaginative watercolour images and installations intersect with the world of plants and bring the natural, unnatural and supernatural into close proximity.

Rare Delights III
Special Collections Exhibition, de Beer Gallery, Central Library, until 14 March

Rare Delights III highlights just some of books recently gifted to or purchased by the University's Special Collections. Traditional collecting fields such as 18th century literature and garden history bump up against new areas of collecting such as "popular culture" genres like pulp fiction and science fiction. This exhibition is an opportunity to thank individuals who have kindly donated materials over the years.

Orientation 2014 – Six60
17 – 22 February

Six60, the alumni band named after band members' flat at 660 Castle Street, is headlining Orientation 2014. Other entertainment includes David Dallas, the Daylight Robbery, Chet Faker, and a live filming of *7 Days*. Alumni are welcome to attend Orientation 2014 events. Tickets and information are available at *otagoori.co.nz*

DUNedinburgh
Toitu Otago Settlers Museum, until 13 July

DUNedinburgh showcases Dunedin's close historical ties with Scotland. Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies Professor Liam McIlvanney is a key curatorial advisor for the show, and exhibition developer Will McKee is a history and politics graduate.

Making a New Land

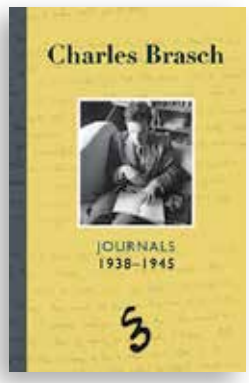
Environmental Histories of New Zealand (New edition)

Edited by Eric Pawson and Tom Brooking

***Making a New Land* presents an interdisciplinary perspective on one of the most rapid and extensive transformations in human history: that which followed Māori and then European colonisation of New Zealand's temperate islands.**

This is a new edition of *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, first published in 2002, brimming with new content and fresh insights into the causes and nature of this transformation, and the new landscapes and places that it produced.

Its 19 chapters are organised in five broadly chronological parts: Encounters, Colonising, Wild Places, Modernising and Contemporary Perspectives. These are framed by an editorial introduction and a reflective epilogue.



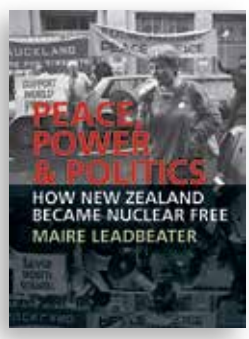
Charles Brasch

Journals 1938-1945

Transcribed by Margaret Scott, with a dramatis personae and annotations by Andrew Parsloe, these are the journals of an intelligent young man, just 30 when they begin, living through World War II in Britain.

In entries that quickly become a daily habit/necessity, Brasch struggles with relationships, what part he can play in the war effort, what he should do with his life, whether he should return to New Zealand ... and creates a moving and always interesting document. Hundreds of people – especially emerging writers and artists, both British and Kiwi – appear in these pages.

This diary gives a close-up view of the self-defining years of a young man whose quiet presence continues to radiate through New Zealand's literary and art scene.



Peace, Power & Politics

How New Zealand Became Nuclear Free

By Maire Leadbeater

This is a story of how ordinary people created a movement that changed New Zealand's foreign policy and our identity as a nation.

The story of peace activism from our pre-recorded history to 1975 was told in *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* (1992) by Elsie Locke. In this new book her daughter, Maire Leadbeater, takes the story up to the 1990s in an account of the dramatic stories of the colourful and courageous activist campaigns that led the New Zealand Government to enact nuclear-free legislation in 1987.

Books by Otago alumni

Subordinate Legislation In New Zealand, by Ross Carter, Jason McHerron and Ryan Malone, LexisNexis, July 2013 (also available in eBook).

A History of State of Origin, by Will Evans, Slattery Media Group (Melbourne), October 2013.

Survey Marks: A 2013 Celebration – 50 years of the School of Surveying and 125 years of the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors, edited by M. S. Strack, Dunedin, 2013.

Creating a New Zealand Prayer Book: A Personal Reminiscence of a 25-Year Odyssey 1964-89, by Brian Carrell, Theology House (Christchurch), 2013.

The Peril and Promise of Medical Technology, by D. Gareth Jones, Peter Lang Publishers (Oxford, Bern), 2013.

Lan Yuan: A Garden of Distant Longing, by James Beattie and Duncan Campbell, Shanghai Museum and Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust, September, 2013.

The Contested Terrain of the New Zealand All Blacks: Rugby, Commerce, and Cultural Politics in the Age of Globalization, by Jay Scherer and Steven Jackson, Peter Lang Publishers (Oxford), 2013.

Creative Perfektion: The Why and How of Creative Thinking, by M. Kilgour and E. C. de Run, Penerbit UNIMAS (Malaysia), 2013.

Peace in Action: Practices, Perspectives and Policies that Make a Difference, edited by Raymond King, Victor MacGill and Roger Wescombe, 2013.

Argula von Grumbach. 1492-1554/7: A Woman Before Her Time, by Peter Matheson, Cascade Books, Eugene, OR, 2013.

The Battlecruiser HMS New Zealand our "Gift Ship", by Denis Fairfax, NZ Defence Force, November 2013.

Above the City: A History of Otago Boys' High School 1863-2013, by Rory Sweetman, Otago Boys' High School Foundation, November 2013.

International Law as the Law of Collectives: Towards a Law of People, by John R. Morss, Ashgate Publishing, 2013.

Alumni:

If you have recently published a book email the editor at **mag.editor@otago.ac.nz**

For further information and more books: Otago University Press
Email *university.press@otago.ac.nz* or visit *www.otago.ac.nz/press*

Collective representation

The Mona Edgar Collection

Rudi Gopas, *The Bridge*, 1961, oil on prepared board, 584 x 685mm, Acc. No.: 19,733. Mona Edgar Collection, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.

When newly-wed artist Charlton Edgar immigrated to Dunedin with his wife Mona in 1931, the city was a hotbed of artistic endeavour.

The Dunedin School of Art at King Edward Technical College had been re-invigorated with the arrival of R.N. Field and W.H. Allen, art teachers from England who advocated the tenets of modernism.

Replacing Allen as painting instructor at the school, Canadian-born Edgar instilled in his students, who included Doris Lusk, an enthusiasm for landscape painting and an appreciation of Central Otago. After moving to Auckland in 1941, where Ralph Hotere, Para Matchitt and Stanley Palmer were among his pupils at the Auckland Teachers' College, he returned to Dunedin to take up the position of director at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 1965.

The legacy of this cosmopolitan couple lives on at the University of Otago through a substantial gift of 347 artworks donated to the Hocken Library. Edgar's wife had stipulated the gift before her untimely death in 1961. Named the Mona Edgar Collection in her memory, their art collection reflects the pair's wish to acquire the best representative works by New Zealand artists of the era with a bias towards the contemporary.

Works in the collection range in date from the early 1920s to the late 1950s, incorporating, as Edgar stated, "all the 'isms', particularly expressionism in its various manifestations".

Although Edgar credited his wife with shaping the collection, he would later donate a further 46 paintings and three pieces of sculpture to the Hocken to help "fill out" their initial holdings.

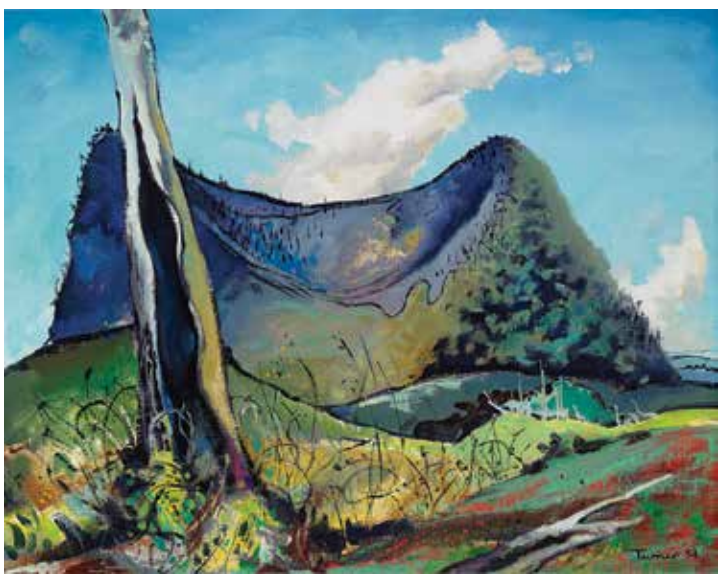
The Bridge, a semi-abstract painting by the Lithuanian-born artist Rudi Gopas who taught at the Canterbury School of Art, is one of the most daring works acquired by the Edgars. Its striking use of colour and crude distorted form recalls the work of the influential group of German expressionist artists known as Die Brucke (The Bridge).

Echoing Edgar's predilection for landscape painting, the Mona Edgar Collection is dominated by images of the New Zealand countryside and its iconic vegetation. It includes a substantial oil painting of cabbage trees by Russell Clark, Dennis Knight Turner's *King Country Landscape* and James Turkington's *Bus Stop, Taranaki*.

The collection contains a representative assortment of Edgar's paintings as well as several portraits of Charlton and Mona and landscapes by R.N. Field in his characteristic post-impressionist style.

A selection of lithographs by the Wellington-based artistic couple, Juliet Peter and Roy Cowan, and five wood-cuts by Dunedin artist Rona Dyer provide

James Turkington, *Bus Stop, Taranaki*, 1957, oil on board, 559 x 711mm, Acc. No.: 19,723. Mona Edgar Collection, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.



Dennis Knight Turner, *King Country Landscape*, 1954, oil on canvas on board, 595 x 740mm, Acc. No.: 19,697. Mona Edgar Collection, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago.

HOCKEN EXHIBITIONS

Zina Swanson: No Need for Water
15 February – 5 April

Peeps of Life: Photographs by John Halliday Scott
11 April – 12 July

evidence of how art education embraced print-making in the 1950s.

The Edgars' remarkable gift was instrumental in transforming the historical character of the Hocken's foundation pictorial collection gifted by Dr T. M. Hocken.

More than half a century later works from the Mona Edgar Collection remain invaluable aids for teaching and research, and the Pictures Collection Development Policy encourages the ongoing acquisition of contemporary art.

The Mona Edgar Collection continues to be showcased in exhibitions including the popular *Place Makers* show that has recently concluded at the Hocken Gallery.

NATALIE POLAND
Curator, Pictorial Collections, Hocken Collections

... Otago's stories?

Lighthearted anecdotes and interesting insights, together with historical facts, will form the basis of Dr Ali Clarke's book to celebrate the University's 150th anniversary.

Don't expect a lot of dry details when Dr Ali Clarke writes a history of the University of Otago to mark the 150th anniversary in 2019.

Expect, instead, a wide-ranging history with plenty of strong characters, interesting anecdotes and fascinating insights into the many and diverse aspects of the life of such an influential institution.

"If you just write facts in a chronological manner it will be dull. Readers are most interested in stories about people and interesting things that have happened, so I really want to marry up the two. I think what I will end up writing is a history that is not chronological, but a theme-based project."

It is early days yet in terms of planning the book, but those themes could range from sections on how the University was founded and run, through to a chapter on buildings, and stories about the student life and experience.

As an experienced historian and author, one of the first things Clarke did was examine what had already been written and scope out the range of information already available.

"Quite a lot of parts of the University have already published histories and sometimes there is unpublished information. When departments are reviewed they have to put in a self-written document which often give fantastic little concise histories," she says.

"So I've been hunting out things like that to get a feel for what's out there and to also prioritise my research because, for example, so much has already been written about the medical school and so little has been written about other parts of the University. So I am trying to concentrate my research on those under-researched areas."

Clarke has launched a blog, *University of Otago 1869-2019 - writing a history* to help her uncover more information and help her to identify people in photographs. It has already proved to be a useful tool, allowing Clarke to tell some interesting stories that may not necessarily make it into the book. This has also generated spontaneous approaches from people who have heard about the project and come forward with information and anecdotes.

"One of the things I am really interested in at the moment is the history of the University Extension Department. It was a real force out in the community so there were tutors in all these little country towns and they would be running courses on history and philosophy at Macandrew Bay and a counselling course in Invercargill and world affairs in Balclutha."

It was mainly learning for enjoyment, although, later, degree-based programmes were started. After enjoying a heyday through the '50s, '60s and '70s, it was wound up in the 1990s.

"It was a really important base for the University out in the community and its history seems to have been a bit lost."

Clarke is also interested in tracking down early international students, especially Pacific Islands students. She would like to know more about their experiences.

The earliest Pasifika student she has found so far is Ratu Jione Dovi who began at Otago in 1929 and graduated MB ChB in 1935.

Residential colleges are also likely to get a chapter, including the now defunct Helensburgh House – a temporary hall of residence set up between 1984 to 1991 in the former nurses' home at Wakari Hospital.

"It's been forgotten because it was short-lived. Because it's gone, the past residents have got no location to centre their nostalgia on, so I think they were really pleased to have the story written up in my blog."

Her blog has already unearthed a few lighter moments, including the perpetrators of a prank involving a Colin McCahon painting in the Student Union. A group of chemistry students hid it in a cupboard for a couple of days after putting up their own copies.

After a few sleepless nights worrying about the safety of the original, it was returned to its rightful place under the cover of darkness.

Clarke is making great use of the University archives kept at the Hocken, where she is employed when not working on the book.

Dr Ali Clarke: "Readers are most interested in stories about people and interesting things that have happened, so I really want to marry up the two."
Photo: Alan Dove

Individual schools and departments have also been supportive, although she has found that some of the more historically-inclined departments have actually been the science departments. Professional schools, such as the Schools of Home Science, Physiotherapy and Pharmacy, have also tended to have recorded more of their own history.

"I think it has to do with their graduates who retain strong links to the school because it is related to their professional careers afterwards – whereas people who study arts and sciences tend to move on to a really wide range of careers and they don't retain quite that same conscious link as alumni of a particular part of the University."

Clarke's blog can be followed at *http://otago150years.wordpress.com/*