



Alumni Newsletter

School of Physical Education Te Kura Akoraka Whakakori



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Changing Hearts and Minds

Peter Howat DipPhEd 1970

An early change of heart brought Peter Howat to Otago and Physical Education, and fired an academic interest in changing public attitudes towards health and physical activity, which has taken him from the West Coast of the South Island to an enviable lifestyle in Western Australia



Professor Peter Howat

Peter Howat completed the first year of a BSc at Canterbury University in 1967, but was persuaded to transfer to Physical Education at Otago in 1968, a decision he's never regretted: "Dunedin was a great place to be a student and, looking back on my three years of study, I believe the quality and the value of the course was vastly under-rated by others at the time. On reminiscing with fellow graduates from that era, we believe that PE School helped us develop a wide range of skills that we could draw on in our future employment, studies and everyday living".

Following graduation, Peter taught for four years at Greymouth High School: geography, social studies, health and some PE, plus coaching rugby and athletics. "I enjoyed the community and social life there, and was actively involved with several community groups and some successful business ventures."

“I married Jeanette, a Greymouth kindergarten teacher originally from Timaru, at the end of 1975, and whilst we were reluctant to leave the West Coast lifestyle behind, we were keen to travel, and headed for the USA”.

Friends and fellow-Phedders **Grant and Penni Cushman** (both DipPhEd 1970) and Peter’s twin brother **Gary Howat** (DipPhEd 1969) were already enrolled at the University of Illinois. **“Thanks to them I was able to enter the graduate program in January 1976 with a Teaching Assistantship and an apartment on campus.”** Peter was particularly interested in health promotion, and completed a MSc and a PhD. **“We enjoyed the time at Illinois - a wonderful faculty, a great social life and sporting opportunities - and we used the vacation periods to travel and camp in the vast and spectacular landscapes of the USA, Canada and Mexico.”**

At the end of 1979, Peter accepted a job offer from Curtin University in Western Australia as a Head of Department. **“I saw great potential in Health Promotion, and over the next 25 years I was given free rein to develop undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.”** A measure of Peter’s success is that Curtin now has one of the largest academic Health Promotion programmes of any university in the world.



Peter (far right) with some of his staff at Curtin

Since 2006 Peter has been Professor and Director of the Centre for Research in Cancer Control at Curtin University: **“I now have the opportunity to build on the research I’ve been conducting the previous two decades”**. A major focus of his recent research is on health promotion interventions in community settings, and the planning, implementation and evaluation of experimental programmes in areas such as physical activity, nutrition, cancer prevention, social isolation/social support, road safety, asbestos, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. He also has substantial experience in public health advocacy and policy-related practice and research. **“Thirty years ago many other health professionals claimed that prevention was a waste of time. Now, through the resounding health promotion successes in tobacco, road safety and HIV-AIDs prevention, there is growing recognition of the vital role prevention plays in our health systems - but we still have a long advocacy battle ahead of us to convince governments to allocate sufficient resources to it.”**

He is a member of the National Drug Research Institute Research Group, as well as Co-Director of the WA Centre for Public Health, Co-Director of the WA Centre for Health Promotion Research, a board member of the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA, and a Professor in the ATN Universities Centre for Metabolic Fitness.



Peter and Jeanette

Unsurprisingly, this doesn't leave Peter with much time for the sports he used to do, but he still enjoys regular weight training, walking and golf, and occasional swims at the beautiful WA beaches. He also put in a 15-year stint as a rugby referee and coach for other sports during his children's school years. Son Glenn and daughter Jodie are now in their late twenties, and last year Jodie had her first child, Arielle, making Peter and Jeanette proud grandparents.

The Western Australian lifestyle clearly suits Peter: **"We came to Perth in 1980 for a 2-year trial ... and we're still here 30 years later"**. The climate is one of the world's most favourable, with winter temperatures constantly exceeding 20°C, and minimal rain. **"Summer can be a little tedious, with virtually no rain from December to April!"** But what about the 'isolation' factor? Perth is a long way from any other city. **"No problem"**, according to Peter. **"Perth has a steady stream of visitors who are international experts in areas like public health and health promotion. I've also been lucky in having the opportunity for international travel most years, especially to Europe, Asia and North America where we have many ongoing collaborations."**

Summer holidays and long weekends for Peter and Jeanette are spent in the local wine region and beaches of the south west, and year-round alfresco dining adds to their relaxed and pleasant lifestyle. **"Job offers in other parts of Australia, NZ or the USA can't be taken too seriously when weighed against the wonderful WA lifestyle"**.

Is It A Deanery?

Just what *do* you call a gathering of Deans, both past and present? A gaggle, a nuisance, a gang, a conflagration?

Last November, sixty-one years of Physical Education leadership and vision was celebrated at a public ceremony.



L to R: Dr Bruce H. Ross, Professor David Russell, Professor John W. Loy, Dr Michael Boyes, Professor Douglas Booth
Photo: Otago Daily Times

Since 1948, ten academic leaders have been in the decision-maker's seat, and thus directly influenced physical education in New Zealand. The five leaders present, and representatives of those absent, unveiled their portraits and vignettes, and shared memories of their time at the School.

Supreme Award for Liz

Liz Thevanard DipPhEd 1970

A life spent in the Great Outdoors, as a dedicated volunteer and a professional educator, was celebrated when Liz Thevanard won the **SPARC Award for Outstanding Contribution to Outdoor Recreation & Education** in 2009.

Liz is a senior lecturer in Physical Education, Health and Education Outside The Classroom at Victoria University in Wellington, and she is an inspiration to the College of Education students there .



Liz Thevanard

Her research is informing practice around the training and qualifications for teachers. Inclusive leadership, integrity and a consultative approach characterise all her work.

As a volunteer for over 25 years, Liz has given her time and expertise to Disabled Skiing NZ, and has been made a Life Member of their Wellington Branch. Since 1993 she has been supporting, coaching and encouraging women climbers, and she is currently in her third term as the chair of Education Outdoors NZ.

Liz 's love for the outdoor life was formed during a childhood spent on the family farm near Kimbolton in the Ruahine Ranges: she travelled to and from school on horseback, and enjoyed family holidays spent skiing, camping and sailing. The focus was on a healthy lifestyle and local, low-cost activities, an ethos that Liz passes on to her student teachers today.

Coming to PE School at Otago was a logical step for Liz as a school-leaver, and experiencing Camp at Trotter 's Gorge motivated her to pursue a career in Outdoor Education. She has been inspired and encouraged by several Physedders: [Dr Mike Boyes](#) has been a particular friend and mentor over the years.

“ I love all aspects of my work: being in the outdoors allows us to connect and value natural places and communities, to experience and appreciate ‘ real ’ environments, to be challenged, manage risk and adventure, to develop competence and confidence in our abilities, to build friendships and work together, to really appreciate what is at our backdoor and to look after our precious resources. ”

An Inspiration in High Performance

by **Keith Roberts** DipPhEd 1971

As a fresh-faced graduate and new husband and father, Keith Roberts started out in teaching, but really found his *métier* as a high performance trainer of international standing. He squeezed some time out of his recent hectic travel schedule to tell us all about it.



Keith Roberts at Yamaha RFC, 2008

‘ PAS ’ Smithells described the Class of 1969 “ *the most social year I ’ve experienced* ” , and I think he was right: we were are very close-knit group of students, and we ’ve stayed in touch over the years. I ’ll never forget my time at PE School for another reason - my wife Marj gave birth to our first child, Paul, during my third year of study, and he achieved ‘ Most Visited Baby ’ status at the maternity home, despite the fact that he arrived the night before our finals started!

We “ Infamous 69ers ” have maintained our strong links: last year twelve of us met up for my 60th birthday and next year we ’re gathering to celebrate 40 years since our graduation. The late **Brian Maunsell** was an inspirational mentor to me at PE School and in my early years of teaching. **Stan Mair** was a good friend, and **Bruce and Bev Ross** also influenced me greatly. I ’ve never lost the passion to help people improve their physical well-being that dear old PAS inspired in me. Whether it ’s children or adults with physical or intellectual disabilities, remedial PE classes, community exercise groups or elite athletes, I love helping anyone to be better than they were before.

After Otago, I trained at Auckland Teachers College and was a High School teacher for 14 years in Auckland, Kerikeri and Te Puke. In 1981 I was awarded a Teaching Fellowship back at Otago to work on integrating people with disabilities into mainstream school PE classes, as part of the International Year of Disabled Persons. A whole new world away from teaching opened up for me in 1985, when I was appointed as the National Director of Coaching for Athletics NZ (then NZAAA). It enabled me to further my knowledge of sports science & experience international athletics in many countries around the world. My association with NZAAA continued through until the Commonwealth Games in Auckland in 1990, then I lectured for the IAAF as a coach educator in the South Pacific from 1990 to 1993.

“If you find a job you really love, you’ll never have to work another day in your life”

[old Chinese proverb]

I lectured at Bay of Plenty Polytechnic in the country ’ s first specialised elite athletes programme in 1991 & 92 and also taught on Waikato University ’ s first Sport & Leisure Studies course. I had a long association with NZAHPER and the NZ Federation of Sports Medicine, lecturing at conferences & workshops around the country in a variety of health, sports, remedial & physical education issues, and was a Fitness Consultant for Sport Northland from 1993 to 1996. I then went out on my own operating as “ High Performance Training ” for 4 years, until I took up a full time position with Bay of Plenty rugby in 2001 as their High Performance Manager for 6 years.

The “Japanese Way”

In September 2006 I was offered a position in Japan with the Yamaha Rugby Club in Iwata, a small town of 140,000 people half way between Tokyo and Osaka. I spent 3 years and 3 months as their Strength & Conditioning Coach, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

It took most of the first season to adjust to the “ Japanese way ” , as foreigners describe the language and unique culture of Japan. It was a wonderful experience for me and my family, which brought new challenges and stimulated professional growth .



Photo: the annual Daimiyo Parade in Iwata, Japan. The new rugby boys and I carry the "Shogun ’ s Box" along the street, recreating the old tradition of taking the Provincial Sheriff all the way to Tokyo (some 350kms away) - fortunately we only have to carry it for about 2kms (with nobody inside it either)!!



Keith and wife Marj

Just recently I ’ ve accepted a contract in the Cook Islands to work with rugby players and other athletes - in fact, I ’ ve been writing this article during the flight from Auckland to Rarotonga! Throughout my travelling career I ’ ve been wonderfully supported by Marj, my wife of 41 years. We were married in my first year at PE School and we ’ re still together, which is a real blessing. Our sometimes nomadic lifestyle might not suit everyone, but we believe our family has only benefitted from all the varied experiences. Both our children are adults now, and have successful careers in engineering & physical fitness respectively.

“You’ve never had a proper job in your whole life - all you do is go out and play!”

[my late father-in-law]

During my career there have been many sporting highlights - here are a few stand-out memories:

Being head coach to 35 athletes for 3 weeks at the Pacific Conference Games in 1985, especially as I was the youngest appointed head coach & all the 6 staff were first-time appointments too!



Keith and NEC player Ryota

Coaching the Oceania Track & Field team to the 1989 World Cup in Barcelona: 12 staff & 60 athletes travelling around Europe for 4 weeks was an exercise in organisation to say the least.

Winning the first Rugby 7 's gold medal at the 1998 Commonwealth Games and the 2001 Rugby 7 's World Championship were highlights during my 11 seasons as NZ Rugby 7 's fitness trainer.

Ranfurly Shield triumph with Bay of Plenty in 2004, beating Auckland at Eden Park!

Working with the Hurricanes for 4 seasons in the original Super 12 rugby competition.

Working with the All Blacks squad in NZ during 1994 & 1995, and being part of a Christian Sports Chaplains touring party in South Africa for 4 weeks during the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

I have been privileged to travel to over 30 different countries through my various sporting roles. I 've attended 4 Commonwealth and 3 Olympic Games plus World Junior & Senior Track & Field Championships in a variety of roles from observer coach, Coach, Trainer & Team Chaplain.

Most of my appointments have come from direct approaches or offers from various sources. I 've only ever applied for a handful of jobs from my own initiative (and I 've been unsuccessful in a few) but the saying that “it 's who you know ” is certainly the case for me; however I think that striving towards excellence in all that you do certainly adds value to what you do, and your reputation does precede you (which PAS taught us back in 1969). PAS also taught us that we Physeders are the “exercise specialists ” who can and should contribute to the health and well-being of the nation more than any other group of professionals, and I 'm a great believer in that philosophy.

Keith is about to embark upon writing his autobiography, which will include insights into high-level competition in sport and behind-the-scenes stories about some of our top sportspeople - we wish him luck with this new venture.

OUSA Supervisor of The Year

Jim Cotter BPhEd 1988, MPhEd 1992

The Otago University Students Association have made School of Physical Education senior lecturer Dr Jim Cotter their Supervisor of the Year for 2010, in recognition of his outstanding supervision of research students.



Dr Jim Cotter

During the nomination process, Jim 's postgraduate students each wrote a 250 word submission describing why they thought he should receive the award. One of the students, **Matty Graham** (BPhEd 2008), wrote:



Matty Graham

“ Jim is the most dedicated supervisor of all time. He 's constantly busy with a million things going on, yet always has time to answer questions, read over work, help out in the lab or just have a chat about what 's going on. His knowledge of physiology is overwhelming, but some of the most insightful lessons I have learned from him are about life, and have been away from the lab during lunch time runs or dinner with his family at their home. Jim invests so much in his students and goes above and beyond any job description imaginable. The impact he has on us as students will be with us for life. ”

Dr Cotter obtained his BSc (1987, Physiology), BPhEd (1988, Distinction) and MPhEd (1992, Distinction) at Otago before heading to Australia and completing his PhD in Environmental Physiology at the University of Wollongong (1998). Following a lectureship there in 1997, he worked as a Human Factors Research Scientist in Australia for three years (1998 - 2001), investigating human performance under adverse ergonomic and environmental conditions. Now at Otago he advises on High Performance Sport, such as for the Athens and Beijing Olympics, and has served on the Executive Board of Sport & Exercise Science NZ since 2005.

He has three broad research interests. Firstly, what stimuli are important for health-related and performance-related fitness adaptations, especially the separate and interactive roles and dose : response relations of different forms of strain; secondly, the limits of ultra-endurance, especially within exercise tasks lasting multiple days; and thirdly, thermoregulatory and cardiovascular control and determinants of tolerance under heat stress, and the effects of physical and physiological strategies on reducing heat-related strain and maximising work tolerance.

Jim has collaborated with some excellent Honours, Masters and Doctoral research students (some of whom are now colleagues) including [Evelyn Parr](#) (BPhEd 2008, MPhEd 2010), [Sam Lucas](#) (BPhEd 2001), [Troy Merry](#) (BPhEd 2007), [Stacy Sims](#) (PhD 2007), and [Becky Lucas](#) (BPhEd 2005, PhD 2010). Other academic collaborators include [Dr Nancy Rehrer](#) and [Dr Elaine Rose](#).

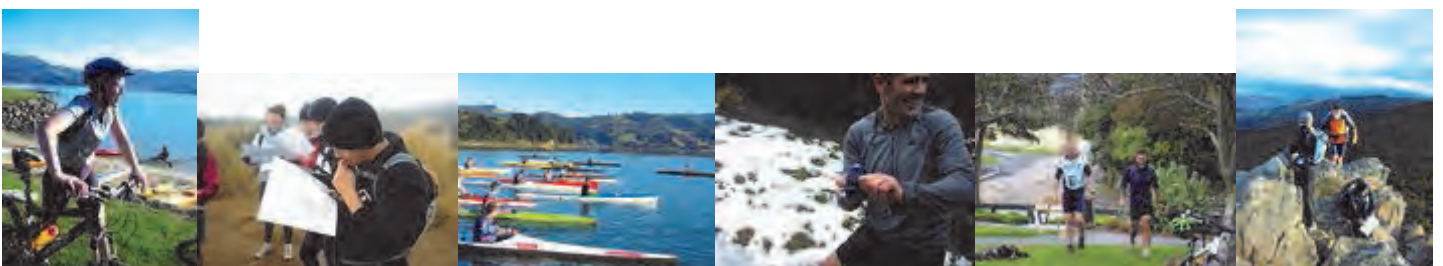
Going to Extremes for Research



As part of Dr Sam Lucas 's PhD project a few years ago, Jim used the gruelling Southern Traverse Adventure Race and various 24-hour exercise sessions to evaluate whether there is “too much of a good thing ” when it comes to exercise. Using colleagues, students and other athletes as test subjects, most aspects of the athletes ' function were measured, including their heart rate, body core temperature, blood energy levels, stress hormones, immune status, brain function, blood volume changes, movement capabilities, and mood state before, during and after the ultra-endurance exercise. As a regular competitor in these races, Jim also served as an ideal guinea pig for the tests.

“Sam and his testing team quite literally got their ‘pound of flesh’ from our willing volunteers, as thigh muscle biopsies were also undertaken. We’re immensely grateful to the volunteers for giving so freely of themselves – in every respect”, says Jim.

Dr Cotter is well-known on campus and beyond for his tireless exploits in endurance events, and only an unsuspecting innocent or wannabe ironman would accompany him on a ‘gentle’ run or ‘casual’ kayak trip ... he has been leading the Multisport practical course for the past few years: only the super-fit and the mad-keen sign up for that one!



PHSE 231/232 Multisport 2010: course leaders Jim Cotter and Matty Graham joined students to complete as a team in the Braemar Race in the Southern Alps

Following Her Own Star

Nicole Karl BPhEd 2009

Nicole wrote this article for inclusion in the 2011 PE Student Guide, to give current students an insight into a possible career option after graduation.



Nicole Karl

My inspirational PE teacher at school was the main reason I chose the BPhEd programme – but I arrived in Dunedin with no expectations of what the course would be like. I majored in Sport and Leisure Studies and particularly enjoyed working one-on-one with clients for PHSE 313 Exercise Prescription, and benefitting from my lecturers' wealth of knowledge and experience – and PHSE 104 Camp at Paradise was also a highlight.

After graduation, I got a job with Back in Motion Physiotherapy & Pilates as a Pilates Instructor. I had no prior Pilates experience and did all of my training with the company, which was great. I also undertook further study for an international qualification in Polestar Pilates, an area I wished to specialise in. After 18 months' solid experience in Dunedin, I was keen to travel, experience a new culture, and to work alongside Polestar trained instructors, so I applied for a job in Singapore at The Moving Body Pilates Studio, where I am now. One of the directors is a musculoskeletal specialist and the other has a background in fitness and personal training, so I hope to learn a lot from them. I'm working with individual Pilates patients on the mats and machines and writing programmes for them, and also taking group fitness classes - I'm loving it!

This is the final PE Alumni Newsletter for 2010.

Thanks to everyone who has provided feedback on the articles or made suggestions on what and whom we should write about in 2011 - it's been great to hear from you.

Na reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa