

# Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

# Principal's Report

*The following is the address that Ms Linda Miller gave at our recent prize-giving.*

He mihi nui, he mihi mahana, kia koutou

Good evening members of the Board of Trustees, Staff, students and parents of Otago Girls' High School.

Tonight we meet again as the community of learners that is Otago Girls' High School. We are here to celebrate the year that has been, recognise some of the magnificent achievements of our students and to begin to map out the journey we will be on in 2015.

It is easy in the busyness that is school life to forget how special Otago Girls' High School is, so it is always gratifying to get a glimpse from time to time of how others see our school. I was recently interviewing prospective teachers for a position here at Otago Girls'. When we got to the end of the formal questions I asked this candidate the standard "do you have any questions for us?" Her question of the interviewing panel was "how do you do it?" When we looked puzzled she continued... "How do you manage to have a school that achieves excellent academic results yet provides so many opportunities and celebrates such a range of fun, girl focussed activities?" The answer I gave her is as follows. I believe there are two reasons; first and foremost it is because we have amazing teachers. Our teachers have high expectations of themselves and their students, they work tirelessly for their students and they enjoy working with them and seeing them succeed. Part of the reason for this is the calibre of staff we attract and part of it is that all of us working for and with this school know we are part of something very special. Otago Girls', with its history and tradition is a school we feel proud to be part of and want to do our best for. I got into trouble with some of the students earlier this year when I described Otago Girls' as a brand – but I stand by that label. Contrary to what some of the students believed, being a brand doesn't mean that we aim to turn out clones, it means that we are an organisation that is instantly recognisable and one that has very positive connotations. The Otago Girls' uniform, the Otago Girls' name, the Otago Girls' nautilus shell are all synonymous with the perception of an outstanding girls' school.

This year we introduced the School Wide Positive Behaviour for Learning initiative. Our core values of Respect (kia whakaute), Positivity (kia hihiri) and Integrity (kia pono) were taught, modelled, acknowledged and rewarded. Our suspension and stand-down statistics for 2014 are the lowest for many years. When students behave inappropriately the major focus becomes teaching them how to behave, not punishing them for what they didn't know how to do. The tone in the school is noticeably kinder and more positive and less time is wasted on dealing with discipline issues. Rather than a disciplinarian approach to managing behaviour we are taking a values based approach and this is paying dividends for all concerned. Another development this year was the introduction of our House System and our Allan, Benjamin, Cruickshank and Williams Houses are successfully underway with much more planned for 2015 in the way of fun and competitions. Another initiative this year



has been our participation in the World Challenge programme. As we speak 16 girls and 2 teachers are winging their way to Thailand and Laos to spend the next 28 days trekking, doing community service and relaxing in an area of the world that will take them well outside their comfort zone.

In looking towards the future we are faced with the fact that these are challenging times for schools and for young people and their families. A review of secondary schooling in Dunedin is underway, funding mechanisms have changed, social media is ubiquitous, anxiety, depression and mental health issues among young people seem to be increasing and the job market is extremely tight and changing rapidly. As a school we can focus on these negatives, or we can choose to focus on the opportunities that are available, which are many. For example, Dunedin has just won the Gigatown competition and has become one of 11 global cities to become a UNESCO Centre of Literature. I have already begun discussions with the Gigatown organisers and a group of Dunedin schools to develop a collaborative project that will involve our students next year and that will link into Gigatown, the Ministry of Education's Investing in Educational Success programme and the 100 year commemorations of ANZAC day. The Ministry of Education is also working with schools to implement the vocational pathways. These are a new tool that provides a clear framework for vocational options, supports better programme design and careers advice, and improves the links between education and employment. Supporting this framework is the opportunity for our students to be part of a Trades Academy next year which will run out of Otago Polytechnic, one day a week. Our Music Suite and access tower building development is finally underway and is due for completion mid-2015. In Term 2 next year I will be taking a Ministry of Education Principal's sabbatical which will see me developing a global leadership programme for the students of Otago Girls' with links to United Nations organisations. I plan to implement the award programme from term 3. There are three aims of the award: to develop global knowledge, build global networks and contribute to the solution of global problems. Students will gather evidence across the categories of learn, experience, communicate and act to achieve awards at bronze, silver and gold levels.

These projects will be grounded in the curriculum that we deliver in the classroom on a day to day basis and will be supplemented by the development of key competencies through our vast array of co-curricular activities. The aim is to provide more authentic learning opportunities for our girls, to promote collaboration and to provide the opportunity to be outward looking; in other words to be future focused.

The vision that we set during the establishment phase of the PB4L initiative states that Otago Girls' High School aims to develop confident, resilient, independent and responsible young women who achieve success. In looking at our girls and how we can best support them we, as a school, believe that we need to do more to do less. We want our girls to think independently, to be able to solve real life problems, to be risk takers and to be able to bounce back when things don't go their way. We will stifle the ability of our young women to become independent if we act as helicopter parents/teachers – hovering over them, waiting to rescue them from every disappointment they face, or, using the new vernacular, if we become bulldozer parents/teachers clearing their path of any possible obstacles so they never meet disappointment in the first place. Hardship and disappointment are a normal part of human existence. The ability to rationalise the degree of upset that results from any hardship is an important skill. On a scale of 1 – 10, the loss of a close family member

is probably as close to 10 as you can get. Breaking up with a boyfriend is probably more like a 4 or 5, or possibly even a 1 or 2 on the upset scale – depending on your point of view. Seeing things in proportion is an important coping mechanism and we need to support our young women to do that. We also need our young women to become more self-sufficient. They need to get themselves to school and class on time, bring the correct gear, get their assignments in for marking and ask for help when they need it. We want them to be prepared to give things a go, to try even when they aren't sure what to do and to have confidence that they have the ability to succeed without being handheld or spoon-fed. Because we believe this very strongly we have decided that "personal responsibility" will be one of the focus areas for us as a school next year. To help support this focus we are implementing a mentoring programme for all students in Years 10 – 13 with the first session for Year 11 – 13 being on the 28th and 29th of January to confirm subject selections. Girls received their interview times today. The other major focus of 2015 will be "self-review" and will see us reviewing some of our key systems in the school. As a school we are constantly striving to improve how we meet the needs of our students in order to help them become the best they can be. This, coupled with our unequalled history and tradition, is what makes us the school that we are.

Tonight is about the achievements of our young women. Girls, you never cease to amaze me with your ability, your drive and your passion. I am confident that we will see the names of many of the young women who are recognised tonight in leadership roles in the future; roles that will range from the Secretary General of the United Nations, on down!

And now for the thank-yous: firstly to the Board of Trustees whose unstinting support of me and the school I value so much, to my senior leadership team, Mr Murley, Mrs Lynch and Mrs Davidson, thank you for your hard work and support; to our teachers; you are what makes this school so special and to our support staff; you provide the environment that supports both our students and teachers to do their very best. Finally to the girls and your families; well done on another fabulous year of growth and learning. You are what make the efforts of all of us worthwhile. It is not just those who are receiving prizes tonight, it is every girl who walks through the doors of Otago Girls' High School. I love the diversity of the girls that attend our school. It

is what makes us real and keeps us honest. As a school we can proudly say that we provide an excellent education for all girls in our community, regardless of their socio-economic, ethnic or cultural background. We stand behind our motto : Recti Cultus Pectora Roborant – Through Education the heart will grow strong as oak. Or in Māori – Mā Te Matauraka Ka Tū Teitei Te Tōtara – Through education the totara tree will stand tall – girls, you are our totara.

I wish you all a restful festive season and look forward to seeing you back next year. To our Year 13 leavers; I wish you well – just remember the words of Dr Suess;

You have brains in your head  
You have feet in your shoes  
You can steer yourself  
Any direction you choose  
You're on your own. And you know what you know.  
And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

No reira  
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa



2014 Dux Shirley Zhang, who has received Scholarships to three New Zealand Universities and has also been accepted into Dartmouth College in the United States.

Photo: OGHS prizegiving, Regent Theatre, 2014. (Ian Thomson, FPSNZ)



# Janice Sinclair retires after 41 years at OGHS

1974 was a good year for New Zealand. February 6 became an official public holiday, known as New Zealand Day, the “Join Together” Commonwealth Games were held in Christchurch, the voting age was lowered to 18, Witi Ihimaera won the Sir James Wattie Book Award for the first publication in English by a Maori writer, ACC was born and New Zealand beat Australia for the first time at cricket. More significantly, for Otago Girls’ High School, 1974 was a great year, as on Monday February 4th Janice Sinclair joined our staff.



This was at a time when every school day began with a hymn, a prayer and some advice, followed by seven periods, a form time and a 75 minute lunch break (time to hit the City Hotel on a Friday!) Janice joined us when whiteboards were still black, fuelled by chalk, Google was something babies said, On-Line meant the washing was out and a hard drive was being in a bus load of juniors going on a field trip. The terminology of the time made it quite safe for a male teacher to go home and announce he’d met a really nice new mistress.

Janice quickly established herself as a competent, enthusiastic, knowledgeable teacher, popular with all of her classes. She joined us as a Social Studies teacher but added English, History, French, General Studies, Art History and Classical Studies to her repertoire. Janice has excelled in each of these areas. Her contribution to the wider area of the school has also been significant. Some research has shown Janice has been responsible for applying the make-up in 202 senior productions, ordering 455 bouquets of flowers, and was also a co-founder of the junior production. Janice has been the chair of the

Professional Development Committee, National President of the Classical Teachers Association, responsible for its hugely successful conference in 2012 and a wonderful Year 13 Dean. The purchasing of books for Prizegiving and the organising of the Graduation Ball have been Janice’s responsibility for a long time, both of course performed efficiently and with no fuss.

When Janice began teaching at OGs any teacher showing no signs of grey hair was expected to attend 4th Form (now Year 10) camp weeks held at Tautuku - a place known for mud, porridge, and disappearing hot water. Janice endured quite a few of these events, organising some. It is fair to say the arrival of her first grey hair was a relief! Janice was a true supporter of Outdoor Education as long as it was indoors! The portfolio of the “young” also included a requirement to look after a netball team and Janice was the proud and loyal manager/coach of the Senior White team for a number of years.

Janice will be remembered as a teacher passionate for her subjects and with a genuine interest in the education and welfare of her students. She has been a superb role model and mentor. When asked “how do you remember Miss Sinclair” a past student who was taught by her and was in her 5Si form class, answered “she was just so lovely - never did anything silly but was always good for discussion and debate”. Janice was always able to bring her classroom alive with her knowledge beyond the text. She is also fondly remembered for her signature tune “Right Ladies” guaranteed to empty a common room or silence a classroom.

So, Janice, as you leave your past years’ dwelling, for the new, we wish you a long, enjoyable, healthy and rewarding retirement. You certainly deserve it. We have appreciated your wit and wisdom, your sense and sensitivity, your quiet good humour, your loyalty and your friendship. Thank you. These words are for you, Janice, from all of us

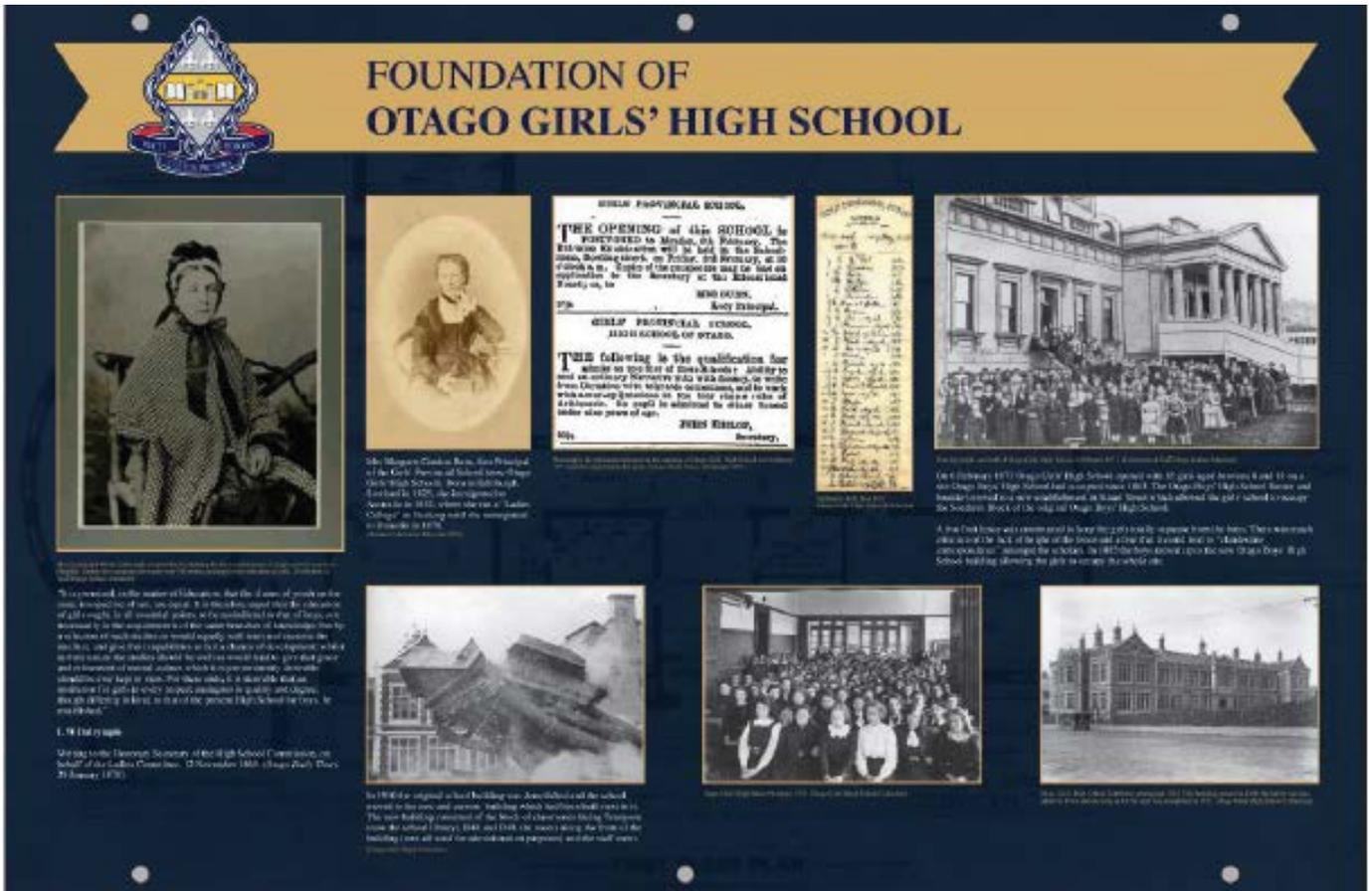
*In virtute sunt multi ascensus - magistra nostra nulli secunda est.*

*In excellence there are many degrees - our teacher is second to none.*

Ann Babbage

*Janice’s last Classics class with her Year 13 students - a Roman style lunch*





Above is the first of six panels, depicting different elements of the school's history, to be installed around the School. This panel, about the foundation of the school, was installed in the main school foyer and has been funded by the 1954 Reunion group via the Alumni Association. If you or a business you know of would like to sponsor one of the boards we would love to hear from you. The cost is approximately \$800 per panel.

**Ms Miller sworn in as Justice of the Peace**



Congratulations to our Principal Ms Linda Miller who was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace in October.



**Keen to visit Otago Girls' High School?**

Otago Girls' High School is delighted to welcome ex-girls who are visiting Dunedin to call into the school - you are always welcome and we will find the time to show you around and answer your questions.

We also welcome hearing from any groups that want to organise a reunion and use the school as a base for their celebrations. We are happy to help host these events over a weekend. If we can help you in any way contact Jane Smallfield on [sd@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sd@otagogirls.school.nz)

# OGHS Ex-Girl Branches

## Dunedin

Recently members the Otago High School Ex-girls' Association together with husbands met for their annual end of year Christmas luncheon at J Tee's Golf Club Restaurant. We were delighted that the School Principal, Linda Miller and Jane Smallfield (Librarian and Alumni Secretary) joined us on this occasion. We enjoyed a special Christmas luncheon in very pleasant surroundings with wonderful views over the Taieri Plains. As is custom we shared small presents and Season's Greetings.

Members of the Exgirls' Association meet monthly during the year for lunch and would welcome new members. Anyone wishing to join us should contact Joan Sinclair, [455 4229 or joansinclair@xtra.co.nz] for more information.



## Rosalind Helena Horsman

It is with regret we record the passing of Rosalind Helena Horsman who started Otago Girls' High School in 1965 and was Dux in her final year 1969.

She died peacefully in Dunedin on 31 August 2014 - a teacher, musician, friend and colleague to many.

# Ex-Girl Profile

## Guergana Guermanoff OGHS 1986-1990

I started at Otago Girls' in 1986 having moved from Bulgaria a few months prior. I had little English and to this day am still grateful to all the girls and staff of Otago Girls' who helped me through what was a challenging time. I remember one group of girls kindly let me sit with them at



lunch times even though I couldn't understand a word they were saying. I was also fortunate to have teachers who were able to see past my poor English to my potential. Mrs Fox, my English teacher, was particularly kind and spent many hours helping me.

After leaving Otago Girls' I completed an Honours degree in English and Russian from Otago University and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I have been fortunate to have a job that enables me to travel extensively and also change completely every few years. Some days I have written a rather dry report on New Zealand's trading relationship with Japan, but other days I've flown over a rainforest in Laos in an aging Russian helicopter, or met Sean Penn in a bar in Columbia.

Along the journey I learned Chinese and have lived in Taiwan and Beijing. I will be moving to Shanghai in January to become the Consul General. Everywhere I go in the world I come across people from Dunedin doing great things. I think those chilly winter mornings mean we have more resilience.

My mother and uncle still live in Dunedin and my family and I love heading home for holidays. Every time I drive past Otago Girls' I still can't believe my mother made me walk all the way from Halfway Bush!

## 150th OGHS Celebrations Committee members wanted.

Planning for the 150th OGHS Celebrations to be held at Waitangi Day 2021 is about to get underway.

If you would like to be part of the organising committee we would welcome your help.

Please contact :  
Jane Smallfield  
sd@otagogirls.school.nz

# OGHS ex-girls who served in WWI

Some recent research has revealed that OGHS had at least three ex-students who undertook war service during the first World War. The school intends to recognise these women at a service next ANZAC day and erect a plaque to recognise what they have done. The three women identified to date are:

## Elizabeth Ellen Alfreda “Nellie” Grant

Nellie Grant was born on 18 May 1876 and attended Otago Girls' from 1891 to 1893. She was registered as a nurse in 1908 and spent three years nursing at Dunedin Public Hospital. Nellie enlisted with the New Zealand Army Nursing Service Corps as a nurse on 6 July 1915 (#22/120). She embarked from Wellington on the Hospital Ship No.1 “Maheno” with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 10 July 1915. She was later invalided from Egypt owing to her condition of health, evidently incurred by nursing cerebrospinal meningitis cases at Trentham in June and July 1915.

In July 1916 Nellie was promoted to the role of Sister and reembarked on duty on the SS Devon for Devonport. On 18 June 1917 she was appointed Matron in Chief at Brockenhurst, England.

In 1919 she was awarded the Royal Red Cross, 2nd Class.

## Hilda Alice Burton

Hilda Burton was born in 1878 and attended Otago Girls' from 1891 to 1894. She saw 1333 days war service, including time on the N.Z. Hospital Ship No. 1 “Maheno”.

In 1919 she was awarded the Royal Red Cross, 2nd Class.

## Dr Elizabeth Catherine Gunn

Elizabeth Gunn, born in 1880, attended Otago Girls' in 1897. She completed her medical degree at Edinburgh University in 1903 and practiced as a doctor in Wellington after qualifying. In 1912 she joined the newly formed school medical service and a large part of her life was spent within the service, first under the Department of Education and then from 1921 under the Department of Health. Dr Gunn was responsible for founding the School Health Camps and her image appeared on a health stamp.

From 1915 to 1917 Elizabeth was a Captain in the New Zealand Medical Corps and was credited with improving the management and control of soldier patients at Trentham. She went to Egypt as the Troop Doctor on the “Tahiti” in 1916 - the first woman doctor to do so.

She retired in 1940 and was awarded an MBE in 1951.



# A fence to keep them apart

On 6 February 1871 Otago Girls' High School opened with 85 girls aged between 8 and 19 on a site Otago Boys' High School had occupied since 1863. The Otago Boys' High School Rector and boarders moved to a new establishment in Stuart Street which allowed the girls' school to occupy the Southern Block of the original Otago Boys' High School in what was then Dowling but is now Tennyson Street. In 1885 the boys moved up to the new Otago Boys' High School building allowing the girls to occupy the whole site.

For 14 years both schools therefore occupied the same building but to keep the boys and the girls totally separate a five foot fence was constructed between the two schools. This created much discussion around town. There was criticism regarding the lack of height of the fence and a fear that it “might be jumped over by an active urchin”. “A Father of a large family” writing to the Editor of the ODT commented that no fence would be sufficient to prevent a “clandestine correspondence between some of the senior scholars”.

An “Interested parent” also wrote concerned about the height of the fence the Government was building between the two schools. He believed “They would do well to stop the erection of the present useless fence, and put up one that will give satisfaction for those who have children to send to the school”. He was fearful that if they continued with the sham of a division fence, they would find few patrons for their establishment.

The public concern did come to notice of the authorities and the height was increase to seven feet and this fence remained in place until the school was demolished in 1910.

I wonder however, how the school authorities prevented the ‘clandestine correspondence’ and other liaisons occurring when school finished for the day. How did they manage to keep the girls and boys separate “after hours”? Did the schools finish at different times, were the male and female students chaperoned from school in different directions, or were they encouraged to exit via various routes?



OGHS students safely on their side of the wall in 1871.



Can any of you recognise yourself or a friend in this photo from the early 1980s? Oh how the technology has changed. Teachers had to pass a licence (at Teachers' College) to operate one of these film projectors.

## OGHS 150th Celebrations- Waitangi Weekend 5-7 February 2021

Planning is already underway for our 150th Celebrations in 2021. You can help us out by making sure any ex-students or staff have registered their interest in this event. If you aren't already on our database you can go to the school website and enter your details on our Alumni page. Alternatively you can email us at [alumni@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:alumni@otagogirls.school.nz)



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