



Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

Principal's Report

Prize giving speech 2017

Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou mā

Tēnā koutou

As I was considering the content of my speech tonight I reflected on a number of things: the year that has been, the world in which we live and the future for which we are preparing our girls. The quote that sprung to mind was the opening passage of Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*.



“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.”

As Dickens points out, there is a tendency in the world in which we live, to focus on the very best and the very worst of things – the superlative degree of comparison. In today's world social media fuels this focus, the media drives it and we, as readers and watchers, consume it. The news we read and the stories we retell sometimes reflect the very best that is happening in the world, but more usually the very worst. The reality of life for the vast majority of people, the vast majority of the time, however, lies somewhere between these extremes.

So how does this look for our girls as they negotiate their way through adolescence and into adulthood? How do we support them to decide between wisdom and foolishness, between hope and despair? How do we keep them growing and thriving? How do we immunise them against a view of the world that is managed, manipulated and sensationalised by the very media we rely upon to inform us? And how do we protect them from the unrealistic expectations conveyed to them by the virtual world they inhabit for so much of their day?

As educators we do this in three ways: by providing opportunities for our students to learn, through the care we provide them and by involving them in activities that they can see make a difference in the world. The education we provide teaches our girls about the world in which they live, it encourages them to think critically about the information that is put before them and it allows them to learn to use the tools of creativity and innovation in ways that make a difference. The care we provide is focused firstly around helping our students feel they belong and then around supporting them to develop the skills they will need to relate to others in meaningful and appropriate ways. Community service, public speaking, persuasive writing, and

leadership opportunities are all means by which our students learn they can make a difference in the world.

What we hope for, as a result of this learning, this care and these opportunities, is that the students of Otago Girls' High School will have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in their own lives and the courage and conviction to make things better for others. We want them to be able to be the best and to have the ability and the will to change the worst.

And that is what we see before us here tonight, hundreds of girls, some of whom will be awarded prizes and some of whom will not, but who will all contribute to making this world a better place.

This year we have witnessed a number of these superlative degrees of comparison. It has been the best of times for women in New Zealand with women currently hold three of the most influential roles in the country – Jucinda Adern is the Prime Minister, Dame Patsy Reddy the Governor General and Dame Sian Elias, the Chief Justice.

But it has also been the worst of times for women around the world as the level of sexual harassment and violence that has pervaded the world of entertainment and political celebrity in the past, has been revealed.

And what bridged these extremes – the best and the worst? Brave women and men, affected by such abuse, who stood up and launched the “#Me Too” campaign. Why did they do this? Because they knew that what was happening was wrong, because they had the skills to articulate what had happened to them and because they understood the means by which their protest could have impact. As a result TV stations, production companies and governments across the globe have been forced to make it very clear that such behaviour is not acceptable and we have seen sackings and resignations of those responsible for this abuse. Ordinary people made a difference in a world of people who thought themselves above the law. This is something our girls can do.

“It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.” The past year has seen plenty of examples of foolishness – Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un are the two that spring immediately to mind and who, worryingly, hold the future security of the entire planet in their hands. Finding examples of the age of wisdom is much harder. For me personally, I think of the late Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Al Gore and Sir David Attenborough. Environmentalists and spiritualists – people who care about the planet and providing for the people in it. But these are not the people who make the headlines. It is the aforementioned fools or those who frequent the world of celebrity who do. Who is there for our girls to look up to and seek wisdom from? Perhaps it is Lorde, or perhaps Jucinda Adern – people who spread messages of hope and who show concern for others. We need to provide our girls with the opportunity to explore the thinking of people with ideas worth sharing, and to figure out those whose actions reflect the values that are important to them, so that they can decide for themselves who is wise and who is foolish. Our girls can do this.

OGHS 150th Celebrations- Waitangi Weekend 5-7 Feb 2021

Planning is already underway for our 150th Celebrations in 2021. You can help us out by making sure any ex-students or staff you know 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

When I began exploring this topic for my speech I thought I would be saying that we need to prepare our girls to tread the path between the extremes – between the worst and the best, between foolish and wise, and between hope and despair. But the thing is, that it is those extremes that we aspire to or rail against. What we strive to do at Otago Girls' is to equip our girls to aspire to the best and give them the skills and resilience to survive and to do something about the worst. The ex-girls of Otago Girls' High School have long been trailblazers in the world. Among the girls in the hall tonight I know we have many more waiting in the wings to blaze their own trail.

Tonight I want to thank the parents, the staff and the students of this school for continuing the amazing work that was started over 147 years ago. It is our teachers who provide the learning that will enable our girls to reach the best and manage the worst. Your commitment and dedication is unparalleled and I thank you.

To the award winners this year, congratulations on the hard work and sacrifice that has gone into these achievements. To our graduands, congratulations on successfully completing five years of secondary schooling. Each and every one of you has contributed to this school and its achievements and I thank you for this.

To our Board Chair, Peter Hogan and board members, thank you for your continued support of the school throughout the year and of me personally. It has made an enormous difference.

Next year we see a number of changes in the school as we seek to continue to improve the learning and care of our students. We will be introducing Vertical Forms which will align with our mentoring and House programmes and will provide even greater support and care for the girls. We will also have a new Senior Leadership team, made up of myself, Deputy Principal Rowan Taigel, and Assistant Principals Bridget Davidson, Sue Porter and Chris Richards. I would like to acknowledge the work of a number of staff who stepped up into roles this year as we transitioned to a new Senior Leadership Team, in particular Ms Dick, Ms Nielson, Miss Pollitt and Ms Holmes.

I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as well as well-earned break after an extremely busy year. I look forward to seeing all returning students next year and wish our Year 13s well for their futures.

No reira,
tena koutou, tena koutou,
tena koutou katoa.



Principal Linda Miller talks to members of the Dunedin Branch of Ex-Girls at their AGM in March. She spoke about the Community Consultation that the school will be holding this year.

Message from our Public Relations Prefect

Hello Alumni members, my name is Blaire and I'm honoured and privileged to be this year's Public Relations prefect. A little bit about me; I love to dance and I'm heavily involved in aerobics at Otago Girls' and I hold the coordinator position for this sport. This year I'm taking Art History, Classics, Dance, English and Media Studies as subjects and next year I hope



to make the scary move to Victoria University in Wellington to study Law and Politics. I'm excited to be in this prefect role, as it is still relatively new to the prefect team which means my role as Public Relations prefect is still evolving. That's where all of you come in!

As previous Public Relations prefects have done, I hope to be attending as many Alumni events as possible to meet all of you. I also encourage all of you to come by Otago Girls' so I can give you a tour of the school. I would love to meet you and hear about your experiences at Otago Girls'. Even since I have started here in 2014 so much about our school has changed. For instance, there was the introduction of the school house system which has been integrated into the daily lives of us OGs girls. This year the school introduced vertical forms, which is where all year levels (9 to 13) are in the same Whanau Group (previously Form Class). This a new way to try and make girls at all stages of high school connect with each other and especially help the Year 9's to have an easier transition into high school.

I would love to hear all of your stories about what your life was like at Otago Girls' and how the school had an impact on you. We are a school of many firsts and I'm proud to say that I go to a school that was that first girls state school in the Southern Hemisphere. This year New Zealand is celebrating 125 years since becoming the first country to let women vote. Women in this country have been able to achieve so much and I'm honoured to go to a school that takes such pride in the women that attend this school and have helped me and so many other girls strive to our true potential. We are all a part of this school's incredible history and I think it's important that we all share our highs and lows we had here and how we have evolved from those experiences.

I look forward to connecting with many of you throughout 2018.

Blaire Hanna
Public Relations prefect.

Email addresses

Please remember to keep us updated with your current email address. Every time we send this newsletter out we find we have a large number of email addresses that are no longer active.

Letters to editor - response

Thank you to those of you who read this newsletter and respond with positive comments and also often contribute material to it. We really value your input and support.

Less welcome are emails like one we received after the publication of the last newsletter - fortunately these are very rare. This reader criticised every aspect of the newsletter and pulled the Principal's report to pieces line by line. Her final line stated that "the boasting that goes on in the newsletter must be borne out by excellence on the parts of principal and staff."

Fortunately that ex-girl wished to unsubscribe from future newsletters.

This newsletter is prepared by myself with a report from the Principal. It's preparation is not our core business - that being the education of our students. We do however feel it does have a place in building our school community particularly in preparation for our 150th preparations.

Constructive criticism and suggestions for ways we can improve this newsletter are most welcome but we hope the tone of such correspondence can be positive.

Jane Smallfield

Scientist Honoured

Pamela Young (nee Rawlinson) (OGHS 1950-1954)

Ex-girl Pamela Young (nee Rawlinson) was the first New Zealand woman to set foot on the continent of Antarctica and she has recently been honoured by Antarctica New Zealand for her pioneering work there as a scientist by having a laboratory named after her - the "Pamela Young Science Laboratory".

In 1969 she became the first Kiwi woman to work in Antarctica and she was one of the first six women to get to the South Pole. Six women flew together to the pole and linked arms as they walked down the cargo ramp, stepping on to the snow in unison.

Pamela who now lives in Nelson, already has a five kilometre long range of peaks named after her in Antarctica "The Young Peaks".

School records indicate Pamela was a Prefect at Otago Girls' in 1954 and was also awarded the Anna P Logan Cup for Best All Round Girl. A search of the prize list for that year sadly indicates that no Science (or Mathematics) subjects were recognised in the Senior Prizes awarded. How far we have come!



Pamela Young arriving at Antarctica in 1969.

Suzie Bates (OGHS 2001-2005)

Ex-Girl Suzie Bates continues to be in the news with her cricketing endeavours.

On 8 March she played her 200th game for New Zealand setting a number of records on the way.

Her unbeaten knock of 101 off 86 balls, including 13 boundaries, enabled New Zealand to a comfortable eight wicket win over the West Indies. She also took three catches in the field which tied a record.



Dayna Turnbull (OGHS 2007-2011)

Congratulations to ex-girl Dayna Turnbull who has been named Captain of the New Zealand Women's Touch team.



Dame Silvia Cartwright (OGHS 1957-1961)

Recently our Principal Ms Miller and Head Prefect Ella Rooney were invited to the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the Dunedin Branch of the National Council of Women. The guest speaker was Dame Silvia Cartwright who is an ex-girl of Otago Girls' and a strong supporter of our school.



Head Prefect Ella Rooney with Dame Silvia Cartwright.

Ethel Benjamin's toilet

Ethel Benjamin attended Otago Girls' from 1882 (aged eight) until 1892 when she won a university scholarship. In 1893 she enrolled at the University of Otago for an LLB degree, not knowing if she would be able to practice law on completion:

It is true that the Legal Profession was not then open to women, and that the franchise had not yet been granted, but I had faith that a colony so liberal as our own would not long tolerate such purely artificial barriers. I therefore entered on my studies with a light heart, feeling sure that I should not long be debarred from the use of any degree I might obtain.

Ethel Benjamin graduated in 1897, having achieved outstanding marks in her course. The Female Law Practitioners Act was passed in 1896 and on 10 May 1897 Ethel was admitted as a

barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand.

The photo below was taken outside the Dunedin Law Courts in 1902 and Ethel is still the solitary woman present on the occasion.

Earlier this year the building reopened after a \$20 million upgrade and while many parts have been updated Ethel Benjamin's original toilet remains. Ethel Benjamin was the first woman in the British Empire to appear as counsel in court, and courtroom folklore suggests that this toilet was originally for her sole use and is still referred to as Ethel Benjamin's toilet.



Left: Ethel Benjamin's graduation photograph taken in 1897.

Right: Ethel Benjamin's original and newly refurbished toilet in the Court building.



Ethel Benjamin (centre front) at the opening of Dunedin Law Courts in 1902.

Can you spot yourself or someone you know?

This two page spread shows some undated class photos from the archives. While the school magazines do have some third form photos there are years when none were published. Can you help me out? If you know the year these were taken please email me at sd@otagogirls.school.nz with the photo number and the year.

**Photograph 1
IIR**



**Photograph 2 (below)
VIB SC**



Photograph 3
IIIM



Photograph 4 (below)
IIIP



Helen Pollock (OGHS 1959 - 1962)

OGHS ex-girl Helen Pollock was recently awarded an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to art, particularly sculpture. The citation reads as follows:

Ms Helen Pollock is an artist and sculptor who has been exhibiting since the 1980s.

Ms Pollock began exhibiting with early works focussing on rights for women. Her more recent public art installations, in the medium of bronze and clay, commemorate World War One. 'Falls the Shadow' commemorating the 90th anniversary of WWI Armistice and New Zealand's sacrifice at Passchendaele, was installed initially in Auckland War Memorial Museum in 2008. The sculpture is now a permanent feature in the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917. 'Victory Medal' marks the anniversary of the Liberation of Le Quesnoy by the New Zealand Division on 4 November 1918. The work was toured around New Zealand regions and important battle sites on the Western Front, and is due for installation at Le Quesnoy to commemorate the 100th anniversary. 'As Above, So Below' is a bronze and water sculpture commissioned by the National Navy Museum and permanently installed in the WWI Commemorative Pavilion on Torpedo Bay. Locally she has promoted the Devonport Arts Festival and exhibited for more than 20 years at Sculpture On the Shore to raise funds for Women's Refuge. Ms Pollock has featured in a number of publications and was included in the Cultural Icons projects celebrating people who have contributed significantly to New Zealand creative landscape.

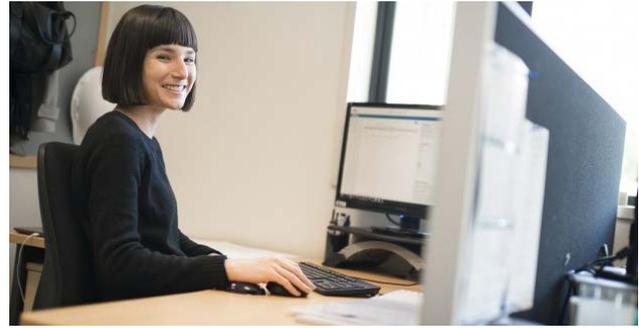
Several generations of Helen's family have attended OGHS including her mother Jean Stewart Caldwell, (started OGHS in 1923), her aunts Ella, Mary (Mamie), Louise, and Elizabeth (Bessie) Young from 1910 onwards and currently her granddaughters Lucy Pollock (Year 13) and Jemma Pollock (Year 11).

School Memories

Under the Alumni section of the school website there is now a place to add your memories of your time of school. We would love to start gathering these to use for the 150th reunion. Please visit our the website and send us some of your memories from your time at Otago Girls' High School. www.otagogirls.school.nz



Isabel Ryan (OGHS 2010-2014)



Otago Polytechnic has awarded its inaugural "Women in IT" scholarship to an Otago Girls' ex-girl. Isabel Ryan is studying for a Bachelor of Information Technology, and is delighted to be the first recipient of the scholarship. The Otago Polytechnic is keen to support women into under-represented areas of study. Isabel plans to graduate in 2019, and hopes to then start her own business.

OGHS ex-girl packs for visitors to our school

We have created some packs for ex-girls who come to visit Otago Girls' High School. We love having ex-students call in at any time and we are always available to give you a tour of the school.

Unfortunately due to postage costs the packs cannot be posted out to ex-students.

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GEORGE St. **D.S.A.** DUNEDIN.

Advertisement for the OGHS uniform in the 1933 school magazine.



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This newsletter was compiled by Jane Smallfield on behalf of the OGHS Alumni Association.