

# Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

# Principal's Report

As I reflect on the year to date I am continually amazed by the wonderful diversity that exists at Otago Girls' and the opportunities that are available to all our students to become more culturally aware.

Over the past month we have had four of our Year 13 students undertaking global pursuits in different parts of the world. Lucy Matehaere competed in the Junior World Kayaking Championships in Bulgaria in the New Zealand under-18 women's K4 500m team. Not only did she compete at the top level in her chosen sport, but she also reported that she was the envy of her team-mates for her ability to converse with the German and Swiss competitors. On completing her kayaking campaign Lucy travelled to London to participate in the International Youth Science Forum. Two more of our girls have just returned from Europe; Sabrina Swerdloff represented New Zealand at the World Schools' Debating Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, and Lucy Pollock went to Germany on one of three New Zealand Padagogischer Austauschdienst Scholarships. Anna Thomas has just returned from China where she attended the Shanghai International Sister Cities' Youth Camp. Year 12 student Sophie Wilson has also been abroad spending her holidays doing volunteer work in Fiji with the Projects Abroad organisation. It is encouraging to see our students make the most of all the opportunities open to them on a global scale.

At the end of July a number of our students expanded their global connections by hosting a student from a party of 30 that visited us from Yasuda Girls' High School in Japan. The visiting students and their two staff were delightful and made the most of all the opportunities on offer to them as did their host families who increased their knowledge of Japanese culture.

As the number of international students at Otago Girls' reaches 57, the day to day diversity of school is something of which we are very proud and it reflects a major change in the school over the past few decades. In the first eight months of this year we have had international students studying with us from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, and India. We also have a lovely group of young women from Syria who have assimilated well in to life at OGS.

A number of these international students have shared their life experiences with our Global Leadership Group and it has given our domestic students a much broader understanding of the backgrounds and often hardships of some of their peers.

A highlight of recent months was having visits from three of the four Chen sisters who attended Otago Girls' in the late 1970s/early 1980s. Mindy and Mai both spoke to the girls on separate occasions and were an inspiration to all our students and staff. The content of their speeches is published elsewhere in this newsletter. We are grateful to all four Chen sisters for donating \$1000 to the school to sponsor the historical panel "Sports through the ages" which will be part of our series of panels depicting various aspects of the history of the school.

I hope you enjoy this latest Alumni newsletter which covers ex-girls from the 1880s up until 2017 and also gives you the



opportunity to perhaps reminisce on your time at Otago Girls'. I encourage you all to continue to spread the word about our 150th Celebrations, the planning of which will step up a notch next year as Waitangi Weekend 2021 quickly approaches. Please share this newsletter and encourage your OG's friends to register their interest [here](#) for our 150th Celebrations.

**Linda Miller**  
*Principal*

## Message from our Public Relations Prefect

Hi everyone. I hope you all are having a great 2018 - so much has happened since the last time I spoke to you. I have had the privilege of meeting some of you this year and hearing about what your time was like at Otago Girls'.

Throughout the year I have been taking some potential future students on private tours of the school. Everyone is always so impressed by the facilities and subjects we offer at Otago Girls', and it's made me stop to think about how much Otago Girls' has given me. Sometimes I think students forget how lucky we are to attend a school like OGS and how impressive we are to an outside eye.



One thing that has been really important to me while attending Otago Girls' has been the school's Aerobics team. Aerobics is a high impact sport that incorporates dance and intense physical fitness into a competitive routine. I started in Year 9 and have been heavily involved in it ever since, including being a coach and for the last two years being co-ordinator for the sport. Some of my best friendships have formed while doing aerobics at Otago Girls' and it's something that I will always value. We just competed at our regional competition and I thought it was so cool to see Year 9s interacting with Year 12s and 13s. We all have so much fun together and everyone is supportive of each other when we compete and it makes me proud to be an Otago Girls' student.

Making interactions between year levels has also been helped by the introduction of our new vertical whanau class system which involves girls from all year levels being in the same whanau class. This is a strategy to help make Year 9s transition into high school easier but to also make all year levels socialise with each other.

Suddenly we are almost halfway through Term 3 and Year 13s are starting to have many lasts which is quite upsetting. But from taking people on tours and starting to experience my lasts, I have started reflecting more on how much this school has offered me and how much I have evolved as a person while attending Otago Girls'. These halls that I have been walking through for the past five years are full of history, achievements and wonderful experiences which I'm sure you'll agree is priceless. I encourage you all to come to the school anytime to have a tour, I'm always up for a good chat and would love to show you around. After all, who wouldn't love to step back in time to their high school days?

**Blaire Hanna**  
*Public Relations Prefect*

## Opening of Siedeberg Science Block February 1967.

### Were you there?

On 17 February 1967 her Excellency Lady Ferguson opened the new Science block at Otago Girls' - the building to be named after distinguished ex-girl Dr Emily Siedeberg McKinnon.

Many of us at the school are familiar with the early image of Emily Siedeberg when she graduated as the first woman with a medical degree from Otago University in 1896 but more recent photographs of her have come to light in our school archives.

Dr Emily Siedeberg McKinnon aged 93 attended the official opening of the building named after her and can be seen at lower right holding her walking stick aloft.

The photograph below shows her Excellency Lady Ferguson arriving at the school with Principal Ruth Upchurch at rear left. In the photograph at top right her Excellency Lady Ferguson is addressing the crowd with Dr Siedeberg McKinnon sitting second from left.

I would love to hear from any of you who remember the occasion.

Jane Smallfield, Archivist



### Madison Campbell (OGHS 2013-2017)



Madison Campbell (no. 6) playing in Vietnam.

Congratulations to ex-student and 2017 Head Prefect Madison Campbell who competed for New Zealand U19 at the Asian Volleyball Championships in Vietnam. Current student Jenna Thorne was also a member of the team. They came away with five wins and one loss - the best result a New Zealand team has had at an Asian Champs in a long time!

**OGHS Alumni AGM**  
**School Library**  
**Monday 17 September 5pm**

**Come along for a brief meeting  
followed by nibbles and a drink.  
There will be an opportunity to tour the  
school if you would like to do so.  
RSVP to [sd@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sd@otagogirls.school.nz)**

## 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](mailto:alumni@otagogirls.school.nz)

## Mindy Chen-Wishart (OGHS 1974-1978) & Angel Nicholson (nee Chen 1975-1979)



Mindy Chen-Wishart finding her name on the Dux Board. She was co-dux with Morag Cunningham in 1978.

We were delighted have ex-girls (and sisters) Mindy Chen-Wishart and Angel Nicholson join us at Otago Girls' in the first week of this term when Mindy addressed the girls at a school assembly.



Mindy Chen-Wishart addressing students at assembly.

Born in Taiwan like her sisters, Mindy attended Otago Girls' High School from 1974 to 1978, and then the Otago University where she became a Senior Law Lecturer. From 1992 to 1994 she was a Rhodes Visiting Research Fellow at St Hilda's College in Oxford and she is currently a Professor of the Law and Associate Dean of Graduates at Oxford University. She is also the Senior Fellow in Law at Merton College. She holds a fractional professorship at the National University of Singapore and holds or has held visiting professorships at Hong Kong University, the National University of Taiwan, Otago University, Auckland University, Canterbury University, Gottingen University and Renmin University in Beijing. She is the author of a number of legal papers and has lectured to the Judicial College of England and Wales and the Judicial Academy in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Mindy spoke to our students about four things she had learned during her life. The first was that Plan B (or C, D, E) is ok and that path of life is not linear. She recalled personal examples of how she made mistakes, built up resilience and accepted change.

Secondly she suggested students be bold and creative in solving problems and encouraged us to be like water which flows and finds its way away around any obstacles in its way.

Thirdly she encouraged students to look after their head - it's a place where many of life's challenges are won or lost. She told students not to put themselves down and to be your own best friend. Don't worry about what others think about you - they probably aren't thinking about you at all and are more likely to be thinking about themselves.



Angel and Mindy with some of the OGHS ex-girls on the staff:  
L-R: Angel Nicholson (nee Chen), Jane Smallfield (nee Palmer), Rowan Taigel, Jeanette Chapman, and Mindy Chen-Wishart.



L-R: Principal Linda Miller, Head Prefect Ella Rooney, Mindy Chen-Wishart and Angel Nicholson (nee Chen).

Finally Mindy stressed the importance of relationships and encouraged us all to be nice, be kind, get along with people, and remember how important the support of others is.

She ended her speech with the following quote from Maya Angelou:

*People will forget what you said,  
People will forget what you did,  
But people will never forget how you made them feel.*

After the Assembly Mindy and Angel were given a tour of the school which is now very different from the one they experienced.

### Jane Smallfield

#### 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.

## The view down View Street

At least twenty times a day for the past 16 years I have passed the Shona McFarlane water colour (pictured below) which hangs in the school corridor of the main Dalrymple block.



Shona McFarlane's painting of the view down View Street.

I have read the inscription on the plaque a number of times:

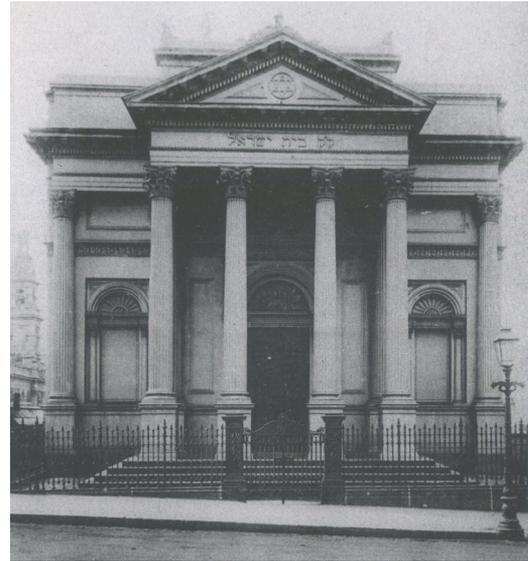
*In memory of  
Helen Jean Crawford (1896-97)  
Mother of Daphne Cowie (1923-26) and Olga Cowie (1928-31)  
Grandmother of Hilary Purves (1955-59) and Elizabeth Purves  
(1956-60)  
Presented at the Centenary*

Recently another staff member had reason to wait by the painting and came to me with questions which made me realise I had never really looked at the painting. She asked what the elaborate building with the columns at the bottom of View street was in the painting and when was it demolished. I had to admit I had no idea and then wondered if the building had still been there when I was at Otago Girls' in the 1970s. St Paul's Cathedral is clearly visible in the background as is the tower of

*Left: View taken in the early 1880s looking up View Street. This photograph shows the vacant land in the foreground where the synagogue was about to be built. The large building at front left is the YMCA and the original Otago Girls' High School building can be seen at the top of View Street. At the time this photograph was taken both the Otago Boys' and Otago Girls' High School were sharing this site and building. Below: view down View Street 2018.*

the Municipal Chambers. The Church on the left still exists. Research indicates that the building with columns depicted in the painting was the Jewish Synagogue which was the home of the Jewish community from 7 February 1881. It replaced a smaller synagogue built in Moray Place and used by its Hebrew congregation since 1864.

The new synagogue designed by Boldini was considered one of the finest buildings in Dunedin at the time. In 1965 it was sold to the YMCA who occupied the site next door and was demolished in the same year. Today the site is occupied by the carpark building visible in the recent photograph below.



Jewish Synagogue featured in McFarlane's painting (nd)



## Mai Chen (OGHS 1977-1981)



L-R: Principal Linda Miller with Mai Chen (centre) and teacher Moira Young.

Mai attended Otago Girls' High School between 1977 and 1981 and was Head Girl, Dux and Best All Round Student of the school in 1981. She went on to obtain a First Class Law Degree from Otago University and a Masters degree from Harvard Law School. Along with many other accolades, Mai is currently regarded as one of New Zealand's top constitutional and administrative law experts. She is also an impressive public speaker and had staff and students spellbound for her entire presentation which was sprinkled with life lessons for us all.

Mai talked to the students about what she considered to be the three essential elements to success; technical ability, character, and diverse thinking. She stressed that academic achievement (technical ability) alone is not enough in today's world. When appointing employees for her law firm, as well as looking at qualifications, she looks for character. Building character comes from taking opportunities and risks, experiencing failure and coming through the other side. Mai talked about the importance of sport in developing her character. Sport provided an authentic learning environment in which team-work, collaboration, competition and problem solving are key skills.

The changing demographics of New Zealand society have resulted in a greater need for diverse thinking. Mai talked about the advantages recent migrants to New Zealand have in their ability to think in ways that embrace the diversity of race, religion and nationality that exists now in our work-places and organisations. Mai talked about the challenges she faced as a new migrant to New Zealand with only two words of English to her name and how those experiences helped shape her ability to thrive in situations where she may be the only woman or the only person of Asian descent. She challenged the girls to think in ways that take diversity into account and to ensure that if they were appointed to positions in which they are in the minority, that they are there because they have the skills and dispositions required, not just because of their gender or ethnicity.

Mai left us in no doubt that she was a person who experiences failures and upsets like any other. Rather than dwelling on such failures, when her perfectionism threatened to stall her progress or if things had gone against her, she learned to deal with this. She dealt with such failures by learning from them and accepting and acting on feedback, and by "letting things go" - like Winnie the Pooh and his balloon! She also talked about the importance of exercise in her life as a way of dealing with stress.

The support of family, school and community was another

thread of Mai's speech and reaffirmed what we know to be true about the importance of connections in the lives of our young people.

### Ex-Girl Emeritus Professor Helen Leach (nee Keedwell) honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

At the recent Queen's Birthday Honours list ex-girl Emeritus Professor Helen Leach was made an Officer New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for Services to culinary anthropology.

For more than 50 years Helen has researched the history of New Zealand, the archaeology and anthropology of Oceanic culture, and the social history and anthropology of horticultural practices.

Helen has lectured at the University of Otago since 1969, has written 22 books and contributed chapters to many others. Two of her critically acclaimed books are *Kitchens: The New Zealand Kitchen in the 20th Century*, and *The Pavlova Story: A Slice of New Zealand's Culinary History*.

The study of culinary traditions in New Zealand has been one of Helen's passions and she recently completed a decade long project studying these traditions. For this project Helen collected more than 2000 cookbooks reflecting culinary changes in New Zealand.

Otago Girls' High School Senior Art Exhibition

# Activate



13 - 19th August

Dunedin Community Gallery 20 Princes St

## Visit by ex-girl and Black Fern Victoria Subritzky-Nafatali



Ex-girl Victoria Subritzky-Nafatali holding the Women's Rugby World Cup.

Last term we were fortunate to have three of the World Cup Champion Black Ferns visit our school, ex-girl Victoria Subritzky-Nafatali, Toka Natua and Aroha Savage. They brought the World Cup trophy with them and shared with us some of the experiences that they had while they were at the World Cup last year. They told us about where and when they started their rugby careers and the challenges they face juggling their rugby commitments with work and their personal life.

## Visit by ex-girl and Black Fern Seven's player Kelly Brazier

On 1 August we were delighted to have three Black Ferns visit Otago Girls' to meet with our school rugby players. Hot on the tail of their World Cup 7's win in Los Angeles, Tenika Willison, Alena Saili and ex-girl Kelly Brazier answered questions from students and staff about their lives on the 7's circuit.



Ex-girl Kelly Brazier with current Sports Prefect Gemma Millar.



Ex-girl Kelly Brazier (centre) with current Otago Girls rugby players.

## Straw boater donated



Kindly donated by Clare Kennelly this straw boater was worn by her mother Mabel Paul when she was a pupil at Otago Girls' from 1926 to 1928. This boater or straw hat was introduced in 1887 and remained part of the school uniform until the panama hat became regulatory in 1927.



Taken in 1902, this photograph of boarders at the school is the earliest image we have of girls wearing the boater.

## Nicola Beatson (nee Mitchell, OGHS 1989-1991)

In Term One we were privileged to have ex girl Nicola Beatson talk to our students in assembly about her educational journey and her research findings. She is currently completing her PhD at Otago University, as well as teaching some accounting classes there.

Her research relates to the impact that self-efficacy has on achievement and success. In 2017 she won the "Three Minute Thesis" challenge at Otago University. This is the link to her winning presentation called "[Confidence Matters](#)".

Nicola's research has identified three types of self-efficacy which all have an impact on student learning: confidence to achieve academic success, confidence to ask for help and confidence to be organised.



Head Prefect Ella Rooney, Nicola Beatson and Deputy Head Prefect Lucy Matehaere. Below is Nicola addressing students in assembly.



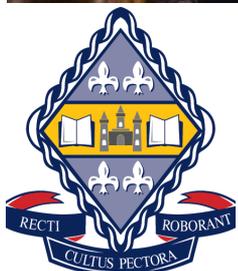
## OGHS ex-girl packs for visitors to our school

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.

## 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 website and send us some of your memories from your time at Otago Girls' High School.



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