

# Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

## Principal's Report

It is with delight that I read Yvette Corlett's (nee Williams) name in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. Finally she was given the accolade she so richly deserved. While it was a pity that she had such a short time to enjoy her knighthood, it was wonderful that her hard work and her achievements were finally acknowledged at the highest level. It was with great pride that I represented Otago Girls' High School at her recent funeral and you will find my address contained within this newsletter.



As we work our way through the gloom and cold of winter, we are approaching the 'silly season'. This is the period when schools across the city market themselves to prospective students and parents in readiness for new enrolments for the following year.

Every year schools spend an enormous amount of time, money and energy on promoting themselves. This is so that rolls will be filled, staffing assured and funding secured. Despite our history, our traditions and our track record of achievement, we must compete with the rest in attracting and securing the enrolments of new girls for 2020. While we know that the quality of what we offer is outstanding and the opportunities vast, we must still be on our mettle to ensure these messages get out to those we want to hear them. In doing so we need to adapt to the technologies and modes of communication that today's students and parents use.

Usually, our best advertisements for the school are our students. Today I read a letter one of our current Year 9 students wrote to her parents after attending Open Morning here at Otago Girls' last year. Her purpose was to convince them that Otago Girls' was the school for her, a plea that was at odds with their desire for her to attend their neighbourhood school. What she outlined to them was a list of attributes, qualities and achievements of the school that read as if I had written about them for the purposes of marketing the school! I was astounded that a twelve year old girl could write so eloquently and persuasively about what made Otago Girls' a great school, based on the research she had done and the experiences she had had over the 'silly season' last year. I am delighted to report that she is indeed flourishing during her first year at Otago Girls'.

Coping with change is an inevitability these days, with the education sector subject to more change than most. The challenge for us as educators is knowing what to hold onto and what to change so that we can be confident of retaining the best of our practice whilst remaining current. Ultimately we want to ensure that our students are prepared for the ever changing world of the future. There is much about our

school that provides reassurance that we are keeping the balance right with our history and our connection with ex-girls' an important touch-stone in terms of signalling what is important. The fact that our students continue to excel on the local, national and world stages while at school and after they have left, signals the success of our approach. This newsletter highlights some of these successes.

Preparations for the 150th continue and we welcome your input - please see the notices in the newsletter. I would also like to remind you that Otago Girls' High School will be hosting the Anne Frank Exhibition from 23 September to 18 October this year. Please let us know if you are planning to attend the exhibition as we would be happy to incorporate a tour of the school or a meeting with key staff and students.

Linda Miller  
Principal

Otago Girls' High School  
**OPEN NIGHT**  
7-9PM TUESDAY 30 JULY

*If you know of students considering enrolling at OGHS next year please draw their attention to the date of our Open Night.*

## Muychheng Oeng



Muychheng Oeng left Otago Girls' the end of 2018. One of few Cambodian students we have had at OGs she was unwavering in her determination to become a pilot. She is now following her dream and undertaking pilot training in Texas.

## OGHS 150th Jubilee - Waitangi Weekend 5-7 Feb 2021

Planning is already underway for our 150th Jubilee 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 register your details via the countdown clock on the home page. Alternatively you can email us at [alumni@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:alumni@otagogirls.school.nz)

## Yvette Corlett (nee Williams)

(The following is the address given by Principal Linda Miller at Yvette Corlett's funeral).

Kia ora tatou

My name is Linda Miller and I am Principal of Otago Girls' High School in Dunedin, the secondary school Yvette attended and the school that proudly proclaims her to be among our most famous alumnae.

Yvette attended Otago Girls' from 1942 to 1945. These were of course, war years and this impacted hugely on life at school.



Yvette Corlett (nee Williams)

During Yvette's years at OGS tea and sugar rationing was introduced, exercise books were to be used as "economically as possible" and girls at the senior dances were allowed to wear short frocks instead of long ones in light of the shortages. Practical gardening was introduced to the syllabus and girls knitted balaclavas and sent parcels to soldiers and prisoners-of-war. Like every other student Yvette was required to carry an identification label sewn into her gymfrock, cotton wool for her ears, and a cork or rubber to bite on in case of air-raids. Students practised evacuations to their homes or a nearby park. But more regular activities took place too with the school having a gardening circle, a ramblers club, and a combined services league. School sports were held annually and included tabloid events and relay races. There were interform drill competitions and an annual Shakespeare competition.

Basketball was very popular with strong inter-form competitions and inter-school exchanges all over Otago.

The school was also affected by infantile paralysis, or polio, epidemics, which forced closure from time to time.

This was the context in which Yvette was immersed during these years and in which she excelled. Yvette started in IIIAL in 1942, winning the class prize that year. This resulted in her being moved to the top academic class IVS the following year (the S believe it or not standing for 'special'). Yvette also won the Clark Embroidery Shield in her first year - embroidery being a compulsory subject back then. In 1944 a new principal was appointed, new publications in the library included Readers' Digest and Popular Mechanics, and Yvette made the A Basketball team. In 1945 she was appointed to the role of class Sports Captain, played in the A Basketball team again and gained School Certificate. School magazines of the time, however, give no indication as to her potential athletic ability which clearly blossomed on leaving school.

In 1952, after her Olympic success, Yvette returned to OGS where she spoke to students and cemented her position as a role model. She returned again in 1954 after competing in the Empire Games, spoke at our 1999 prizegiving and her last visit occurred in 2009 when we were honoured to have her as a guest at the unveiling of our Olympic honour board.

Otago Girls' prides itself on being a school of firsts. We were the first state secondary school for girls in the Southern Hemisphere. Among our ex-girls are the first New Zealand woman to become a lawyer, Ethel Benjamin, the first New Zealand woman to practise medicine, Margaret Cruickshank and, of course, the first New Zealand woman to win an Olympic gold medal, Yvette Williams.

When we introduced our House system in 2014, the decision to name the houses after ex-girls was an easy one. Deciding on who these ex-girls should be, not so much. We looked to our 'firsts' and sought to reflect a range of disciplines. However we received advice from numerous sources that we should be wary of choosing people who were still alive, as it could be very awkward if they did something disgraceful subsequent to their appointment, or if skeletons emerged in the future. But we felt we were safe with Yvette and we were delighted when she told us via a phone-call, that she would be happy to have a house named after her. And so we now have houses named Allan (after Flora Allan, the first ex-girl to become principal of the school), Benjamin, Cruickshank and Williams. The Williams banner and images of Yvette adorn our hall, the school corridor and the gym. Girls in Williams House wear their green Williams House badge with pride and each year a new cohort to the school learn who Yvette was and her contribution to sport, to her gender and to her country.

The news of Yvette's death was greeted with much sadness by the staff and students of Otago Girls', especially those in Williams House. The following tribute is from Jo Nielson, the Head of Williams House:

*Yvette Williams is a daily inspiration for all the students and staff in Williams House.*

*We affectionately call ourselves 'Williams Winners', as we aspire to emulate Yvette's courage, determination and perseverance in our daily lives at school.*

*We also remember Yvette's extraordinary athletic achievements as a long jumper. Our house motto is to 'jump in' in remembrance of her Olympic winning jump, but also of her determination to set new standards for women in sport and in life. In that vein, we endeavour to 'jump in' and participate fully in all aspects of school life, always trying to do better than before.*

*Yvette Williams will always be remembered at Otago Girls' High School, but those in Williams House will remember her with particular fondness and affection. We are inspired by, and are proud of our namesake, and we hope that our daily actions and efforts do this extraordinary woman justice.*

Rest in peace, Yvette Williams. Your memory and your legacy live on at Otago Girls' High School.

Linda Miller  
Principal

### 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.

**Speech given by Yvette Williams at the OGHS Prize-Giving, Regent Theatre, Dunedin, 9 December 1999.**

Good evening to you all and thank you for the very warm welcome you have extended to me on the return to my home town.

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since I was a pupil at your School and today Mrs Anderson has escorted me on a nostalgic tour of the school bringing back many memories of my time spent here way back in the war years.

I would like to thank Mrs Anderson and the Board of Trustees for the invitation to return to my Alma Mater to present the Sports Awards and the Prestige Awards at the Schools' Prize-giving this evening.

When I attended Otago Girls' High School from 1942 to 1945, I recall receiving prizes for Mathematics and Clothing NOT as you may expect for Physical Education or Sport. In looking through your magazine today I was amazed at the numbers of sports available to you, whereas we had only five of those activities on offer to us.

My main sporting interests in those years were horse-riding, netball (then known as outdoor basketball) also dabbling in tennis, roller-skating and swimming. It wasn't until I left school that I was introduced to athletics (as that did not feature in the School sports programme then), never dreaming that I would one day become an Olympic competitor much less an Olympic gold medallist, break a world record, be honoured by the Queen, become a Member of the Sports Hall of Fame etc.

I am mentioning this to illustrate that one never knows what life has in store or what lies ahead. Success did not come immediately but latent talent was apparently there to be developed.

Many of you here tonight may also have the underlying ability to be successful whether it be in sport, the arts, the sciences or in the business world. BUT to reach the top one must have more than potential. There are many other factors involved. Success in anything does not come without a struggle. Sir Edmund Hillary did not get to the top of the world's highest mountain without climbing smaller peaks first and enduring numerous setbacks. It is the years of training and dedication which decides whether or not one will be successful. As well as dedication one must exercise discipline, have determination and the desire. The inner determination - the will to win - is something which only you possess. The desire to succeed must also come from within the person.

Reach for the sky. Don't be satisfied with 2nd best. Only with patience, perseverance and practice will you attain your goal. Whichever course you decide to follow be single-minded in your pursuit of excellence in order to fulfill your ambition.

Have confidence in your ability but always be prepared to listen to and have respect for your parents, your teachers, your family and your elders - for they have many more years of experience and wisdom which they can pass on to you.

Be loyal to your school, your coach, your friends and they in turn, will reciprocate with their support and encouragement.

Always be modest with any success which comes your way and likewise gracious in defeat.

Youth look forward to the the future with hope, with dreams, with aspirations. To those who are leaving school this year, the new millenium awaits you with open arms. May you accept the challenge as you go out into the world and become our worthy citizens of tomorrow. Keep up with your sport throughout your

life for you will continue to make great friends, as I have done, from all around the world.

In conclusion my very best wishes to you all and good luck. Enjoy your holidays and have a very happy Festive Season with family and friends.

Thank you.



*Yvette Williams winning the long jump at the 1954 British Empire and Commonwealth Games held in Vancouver.*



*Yvette Williams (at left) with Jean Stewart, dressed in their New Zealand uniforms leave the Otago Girls' High School on 20 August 1954 after a visit to the school.*

## **Molly Brown (nee McPhail) OGHS (1929-1930)**

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Molly Brown (nee McPhail), possibly our oldest ex-girl, who died recently in Mosgiel aged 103. Molly attended Otago Girls' in 1929 and 1930 and was heart broken when she had to leave school to help support her widowed mother and her siblings during the Depression.

In 2016 Molly came back to OGHS for a visit. Because she had only spent two years at Otago Girls', Molly had always felt she wasn't a true Otago Girls' student but Principal Linda Miller helped Molly rid herself of the inferiority complex she had carried for all the intervening years.

Molly you will always be an OGs girl!



*Molly on her visit back to OGHS in 2016,*



*Molly wearing her OGHS uniform c1930.*



*Molly McPhail is on the left of the group of five in the front row of her 1930 form class..*

**OGHS Alumni AGM  
5.00pm Monday 24 June  
in the school library**

Drinks and nibbles provided

At the conclusion of a brief AGM Principal Ms Linda Miller will speak about developments at the school this year and there will be an update on the planning for the 150th Jubilee.

Please RSVP to [sd@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sd@otagogirls.school.nz)

## Report from Public Relations Prefect Mika Cottle

Kia Ora Alumni Members, my name is Mika Cottle and I have the privilege of being the Public Relations prefect this year. As part of this role I take tours around the school for anyone interested in having a look. This can be new families with daughters planning to attend, or ex students coming back to see where the school is at now, and how much it has changed. I have loved meeting families looking at Otago Girls' as a potential school for their family members and I have already taken a number of tours as the enrolment season for 2020 begins. It was awesome to meet a group of Ex Girls who all came back together to celebrate their 80th birthdays and as part of this they visited the school. Hearing all their school memories and finding out about the history of the school relating to their personal experiences was interesting and enlightening. Times have changed so much!



Mika Cottle  
Public Relations Prefect

My plans this year include designing a sign which will say "Welcome" in all the different languages students at Otago Girls' identify with. I am really enjoying the design process of the sign. The plan is to mount this on the fence by the front gate to make entry more inviting. 2019 is flying by, and so far a few highlights of the term for me have included the school cross country and Library Day. It was great to see, on both these days, the spirit all the students showed in their enthusiasm and participation. Cross country was a huge success with so many girls collecting participation points to put towards the House competition and others breaking personal bests. The costumes for Library Day were outstanding and I know how much I enjoy dressing up as a book character for a day! I am also looking forward to the end of term school production which I am heavily involved with. This year we are putting on "Hairspray" which is a comedy with a lot of song and dance items. It is on in the last week of June and tickets can be purchased at the school office.

Otago Girls' has set me up well for the future as it has for many strong, independent women before me. I am excited to push my learning even further next year when I hope to go to Otago Polytechnic to study nursing. I am confident that with the foundations school has provided for me I will be able to achieve my dreams. As I have said, I love to meet people and take tours around our school, so please feel welcome to contact the school and ask for me to take you for a tour. I love to listen to your stories and hear about OG's in days gone by.....This all makes the school what it is today.

Mika Cottle  
Public Relations Prefect

**Congratulations to ex-girl Jenna Thorne who has been selected for the New Zealand Volleyball team.**

## Kelsey Mee OGHS (2011-2015) Volunteer with Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA)

Via Instagram staff at OGHS were drawn to some posts by Volunteer Services Abroad relating to recent ex-girl Kelsey Mee.

After leaving Otago Girls' in 2015 Kelsey went to university and studied full time doing a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Geography and minoring in anthropology and sociology.

Her interest in becoming a volunteer abroad was sparked in 2014/2015 when she went on the OGHS World Challenge trip to Thailand and Laos. On this trip it was the "Project" phase, in a small village called Ban Kok, where the team did volunteer work, that was Kelsey's favourite component of the trip. Since then Kelsey knew that volunteering and living in a different community was something she wanted to do. This interest was only enhanced by the Development geography papers she took at University. When the chance arose to apply for the VSA UniVol programme it was the perfect opportunity for Kelsey to not only do some volunteering but also to apply the knowledge she gained in Development Studies.

Currently Kelsey is living in Vanuatu and volunteering for seven months as an Administration and Data Officer with the Vanuatu Family Health Association as part of the VSA UniVol programme. She loves the work in the clinic, particularly spending time on reception with her colleagues and practising her Bislama with her clients. Kelsey is also enjoying taking part in community activities.

We are proud to see one of our recent ex-girls moving out of her comfort zone and making a difference in the world.



Kelsey Mee, above and below, volunteering in Vanuatu.



*let me be myself*

# ANNE FRANK

~ an exhibition ~



24 September to 18 October 2019

Otago Girls' High School

41 Tennyson Street, Dunedin

**GOLD COIN DONATION PER PERSON**

Group bookings essential (10+ persons)

Opening hours: Mon to Fri 9am to 4.30pm

Weekends 10am to 2pm

For bookings email [moranfrac@xtra.co.nz](mailto:moranfrac@xtra.co.nz)

Other enquiries to [sw@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sw@otagogirls.school.nz)



## Dr Emily Duncan (nee Stevens) Speaker on Library Day (OGHS 1993-1994)

We were privileged to have ex-girl Dr Emily Duncan, the current Robert Burns Fellow at Otago University, talk to us on Library Day. Emily spoke about the books that influenced her during her 'teeny toddling years to my sometimes turbulent teens', books that planted her first writing seeds and have stayed with her.

She divided these books into five categories:

### Reading to know we're not alone

*In the Night Kitchen*, Maurice Sendak

### Reading for aspiration

Nancy Drew and Patricia Cornwell's Scarpetta series

### Reading for emulation

*Wednesday to Come*, play by Renee

### Reading as an act of rebellion

*The Fifth Child*, Doris Lessing

### Reading for forewarning

*The Long Walk*, Stephen King

The following is some advice Emily gave at the conclusion of her speech:

*I also included a Stephen King novel in my lineup because if you want to write, you could do worse than follow some of his tips.*

*Three fundamental highlights:*

1. *First write for yourself, and then worry about the audience.*
2. *Write one word at a time.*
3. *You become a writer simply by reading and writing.*

*Another excellent piece of advice for writing and for life comes from Doris Lessing: "Whatever you're meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible."*

*Even if you don't have a hankering to put pen to paper, if there is one message that I want to leave with you all in this hall today, it's that: There is a place for all of your individual stories.*

*Joan Didion wrote, "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." We also tell ourselves stories to laugh, grieve, understand, and connect. And we need to be able to do this now more than ever. Stories are the antidote to isolation. Isolation in how we think, how we feel, and how we live.*

*Explore and connect with the stories around you. Venture into other worlds and points of view. Banish any sense of shame about what you want to read or write.*

*Give yourself permission to be curious, to use your voice, and tell your stories.*

*You can and you must.*

## Safaato'a (To'a) Fereti Chairperson of the Nursing Council of New Zealand. OGHS (1981-1986)

Safaato'a (To'a) Fereti was a Ministerial appointment to The Nursing Council of New Zealand in June 2014 and earlier this year she was made Chairperson of the Council.



Safaato'a (To'a) Fereti

She was born in Samoa, grew up in Dunedin, was educated at Otago Girls' and has had a long and distinguished career as a nurse. Over the last 28 years, To'a has worked as a clinician, educator, and manager in nursing. She is currently the Clinical Nurse Director, Division of Medicine and Clinical Support Services, Counties Manukau Health, which requires her to provide professional governance and leadership for nurses within her Division.

She is undertaking her Doctorate of Health Sciences and is the President of the Pan Pacific Nurses Association. She has a particular interest in Pacific health and Pacific workforce, drawing on her clinical leadership and managerial experience combined with her Samoan cultural values, to influence and affect change for positive Pacific health outcomes.

(Information above taken from <http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Council>)



Dr Emily Duncan addressing students at the beginning of the annual Library Day assembly.

## Are you in position to help sponsor the 150th Jubilee?

The 150th Jubilee Committee is seeking sponsorship from businesses (or individuals) for the OGHS 150th Jubilee. The main reason for the need to attract sponsors is the Committee's commitment to set the registration fee at \$60. This would enable any ex-student to be fully involved in the celebrations. Attendance at user pays activities such as the dinner would be additional. While the sponsorship categories below have been designed for businesses we would obviously also welcome any individual sponsorship. If you are in a position to assist us please contact Jane Smallfield at [sd@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sd@otagogirls.school.nz) as soon as possible.

### **Gold sponsor (1 only) \$4000**

Sponsorship at this level ensures the sponsor of key sponsorship of the dinner held in the Town Hall and includes:

Logo displayed on large screen at the dinner in the Town Hall.

Acknowledgement in speeches given at the dinner.

Acknowledgement on dinner programme.

Opportunity to display company flags at the dinner.

Free advertisement (100mm x 110mm) in the special ODT supplement celebrating the event.

Advertising material in the Registration pack.

### **Silver sponsor (1 only) \$2500**

Sponsor of Sunday morning tea and provision of Jubilee cakes.

Free advertisement (100mm x 110mm) in the special ODT supplement celebrating the event.

Acknowledgement of sponsorship at cutting of the cake.

Opportunity to have publicity flags displayed at the school at the Sunday functions.

### **Bronze sponsor (any number) \$1000**

Free advertisement (100mm x 110mm) in the special ODT supplement celebrating the event.

Acknowledgement as Bronze sponsor of the event.

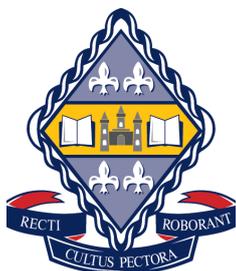
### **150th Jubilee planning update**

The 150th Jubilee Committee is now meeting monthly to plan for this event to be held at Waitangi Weekend 2021.

We have recently commissioned New Zealand sculptor Helen Pollock to produce a piece of work to mark the Jubilee and this will be located in the school grounds. We believe that her piece, which will be unveiled at the Jubilee, will be an inspiration for generations to come. There will be an opportunity to make a donation towards this project when you register for the Jubilee.

We hope that registrations will open in January 2020. Registration and payment will be done on-line but there will be an opportunity to receive a paper copy of the registration form if you don't have computer access.

The committee are also investigating an embroidery project with an opportunity for ex-students to contribute a piece of work to the project. Details will be in the next newsletter.



Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

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