

# Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

## Principal's Report

As Term Three draws to a close, I reflect back on a very busy term. One of the many highlights of the term was the visit of one of the most inspirational women I have ever met - Elizabeth Eckford.

In August, our History students had the privilege of listening to Elizabeth, one of the Little Rock 9, speak to students from across Otago and Southland in our school hall. The Little Rock 9 were the first African



Linda Miller, Principal

American students to enrol at Little Rock Central High School, a previously racially segregated school. In 1954 the US Supreme Court ruled that all laws relating to the segregation of schools were unconstitutional, but it took three more years until the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) managed to enrol students in a previously all white school - Little Rock Central High School. Enrolling was one thing, actually attending was another. Elizabeth has written about the first day she attempted to enter Little Rock Central High School.

*I expected that I would go to school as before on a city bus. So, I walked a few blocks to the bus stop, got on the bus, and rode to within two blocks of the school. I got off the bus and I noticed along the street that there were many more cars than usual. And I remember hearing the murmur of a crowd. But, when I got to the corner where the school was, I was reassured seeing these soldiers circling the school grounds. And I saw students going to school. I saw the guards break ranks as students approached the sidewalks so that they could pass through to get to school. And I approached the guard at the corner as I had seen some other students do and they closed ranks. So, I thought; 'Maybe I am not supposed to enter at this point.' So, I walked further down the line of guards to where there was another sidewalk and I attempted to pass through there. But when I stepped up, they crossed rifles. And again I said to myself; 'So maybe I'm supposed to go down to where the main entrance is.' So, I walked toward the center of the street and when I got to about the middle and I approached the guard he directed me across the street into the crowd. It was only then that I realized that they were barring me, that I wouldn't go to school.*

Elizabeth Eckford was turned back by 270 soldiers from the The Arkansas National Guard. The armed guards had been sent in by Arkansas's Governor who was opposed to integration. As if the armed guards weren't enough, Elizabeth was shouted at, had stones thrown at her and had her life threatened by students and members of the public who opposed their presence at the school. After 18 days of being unable to go to school, President Eisenhower intervened, sending in the elite 101 Airborne Division to ensure the 9 could enter class.

The Little Rock 9 attended school at Little Rock Central High School for one year and for every day of that year they endured physical and verbal attacks. When one of the 9, Milliejean Brown, fought back, she was expelled. And yet the others continued

to attend every day, because they knew that their best chance in life, the best chance to have a better life than their parents, was to get an education from this school. At the end of the 1958 school year Ernest Green, one of the 9, became the first African American student to graduate from Little Rock Central High School. But that didn't mean the battle was over. When Governor Orval Faubus won the 1958 election, rather than permitting desegregation to continue, he closed down state schools and implemented programmes that subsidised white students to attend private schools that were exempt from the Supreme Court's ruling.

While she was at Otago Girls' Elizabeth directed part of her address to those students in the audience who don't do their best at school. Her message to them was clear. The effort you put into your education is your investment in your own future. It's not about your parents, or your teachers, it is about you and the type of life you will be able to live. That is very wise advice from someone who placed such value on education that, as a 15 year old she was prepared to be spat on, sworn at and abused in order to attend school.

Linda Miller



Principal Linda Miller with Elizabeth Eckford



Elizabeth Eckford

## 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)

## Ex-Girls who have become Dames

We are in the process of preparing a further historical panel to go with the series being displayed around the school. This panel profiles ex-girls who have gone on to become Dames. Extensive research has gone into determining who these women are but we would be grateful if you would peruse this list to see if you know of any omissions. Please email me at [sd@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sd@otagogirls.school.nz) if you know of any one else who should be on this list.

1930	Harriette Joanna Vine	For services to St John	(OGHS 1994)
1979	Daphne Purves (nee Cowie)	For services to the International and NZ Federation of University Women	(OGHS 1923-1926)
1989	Silvia Cartwright (nee Poulter)	For services to women	(OGHS 1957-1961)
1992	Norma Restieux	For services to cardiology	(OGHS 1948-1952)
1998	Elizabeth Hannan (nee Walsh)	For services to the community	(OGHS 1952-1954)
2001	Patricia Mary Harrison (nee Thomson)	For services to education and the community	(OGHS 1946-1950)
2002	Judith Mayhew Jonas (nee Mayhew)	For services to the City of London	(OGHS 1962-1966)
2004	Lois Joan Muir (nee Osborne)	For services to sport	(OGHS 1950)
2010	Alison Margaret Holst (nee Payne)	For services to the food industry	(OGHS 1951-1955)
2019	Yvette Corlett (nee Williams)	For services to athletics	(OGHS 1942-1945)



### Mika Cottle, Public Relations Prefect

Kia Ora Alumni Members, these past few terms have been very busy ones! With students preparing for parallel exams, the finishing up of winter sports, the school haka competition, production and Dancing with the Staff just to name a few! There is never a lull or lack of opportunities to get involved in! 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 I feel very proud to be able to show it all off just as I am sure all of our students were to show it off on open night.



*Mika Cottle  
Public Relations Prefect*

Open Night was a huge success, and the school looked gorgeous all lit up with so many new smiling faces roaming around. The positivity, integrity and respect that was shown was outstanding, not only from current pupils but hopefully next years Year 9s! It was awesome to see so many girls are interested in attending next year. I have had a few follow up tours with students who were so impressed by Open Night and the range of opportunities that we offer here at Otago Girls' that they had to come back to see it all again! If you are interested in what we have to offer

or just want to come back for a look I encourage you all to come to the school for a tour.

One thing that has been a huge part of my time here has been Music. When I came to the school as a little Year 9 I could barely strum a guitar and I had no idea that I enjoyed singing or would ever have the confidence to perform in a show. Now as a Year 13 who has taken music all the way through, picked up singing lessons and been in the school production for three years it is crazy how much Otago Girls has boosted my knowledge and confidence. Without being pushed by such wonderful teachers to develop my potential and find my talent I would have never found my passion. I can't wait to carry on with music and help others to find their passion in the future.

As the days roll by it feels like only yesterday I was waiting outside the gate on my first day of Year 9 not knowing what it was going to be like on the other side. Otago Girls' has exceeded my expectations and I have experienced so much in just five years of schooling. 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 am sad to leave but know that I am always welcome back just as all of you are!

## Rita Blakeley (nee Mackay) OGHS 1940 - 1944

We love having ex-girls calling in for a visit but it's not every day we get a 92 year old arriving. Last term we had the delightful pleasure of a visit from Jessica (Rita) Blakeley (née Mackay) who started at OGs in 1940. She went on to come a prominent New Zealand artist and we are privileged to have one of her pieces of art hanging in the school.



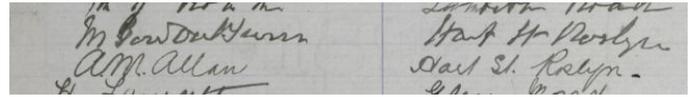
Rita Blakeley enjoying being in Principal Linda Miller's office.

## First Principal Margaret Burn signed the New Zealand Suffrage Petition in 1893.

I started delving into Margaret Burn's entry on the 1893 New Zealand Suffrage Petition after receiving an email from Andrea Holmes (nee Curwood) who attended OGHS from 1981 to 1985. Andrea and her mother had been assigned Margaret Burn as the subject of their embroidered panel for an exhibition honouring the 27000 women who signed the New Zealand Suffrage petition which is currently showing at the Wellington Museum. Being an ex-girl Andrea felt a connection with Margaret Burn as did Andrea's mother who had attended Waitaki Girls' where Margaret had gone on to be Principal on leaving Otago Girls'.

Mrs Burn's entry on the Suffrage Petition indicates she was living in Hart Street, Roslyn and that she was a teacher (probably giving private lessons at this stage). Margaret was presumably living with her daughter Annie McLeod Allan, of Hart Street, whose signature is next to Margaret's on the petition.

I encourage you to search the Suffrage Petition and see if your family members signed it.



Signature of M Gordon Burn and her daughter A M Allan on the 1893 Suffrage Petition.



Rita Blakeley art work hanging in the school presented by the Christchurch Branch of OGHS Ex-Girls in 1992.



## Georgina Elsie Zellan-Smith - aka Georgina Elsie Bruce (OGHS 1945-1946, 1948-1949)

We were saddened to hear of the recent death of prominent ex-girl and pianist Georgina Zellan-Smith.



Georgina's childhood was spent in Milburn, south of Dunedin where she was born on 26 September 1931. Her father was from a Shetland Islands crofter family and he became a carpenter and general handyman at the Milburn Cement works after immigrating to New Zealand.

She credits her mother for her musical ability. It was she who decided the family needed a piano in the house. The young Georgina took to it avidly from a very young age, at first tapping out tunes by ear.

In 1945, after some time with a local piano teacher, Miss Pender Bryce, Georgina enrolled at Otago Girls' and learnt from Rona Thomson, a renowned and skilled teacher. While at Otago Girls' she was awarded both the Junior and Senior Southland Branch OGHS Ex-Girls' Association Accopanist Prize while at Otago Girls.

As a teenager, Zellan-Smith became a teacher herself, taking on the overflow of Thomson's expanding book

of pupils.

At the end of 1953, Georgina went to London to study at the Royal Academy and she stayed there for most of her performing life. She had a successful career in classical music rubbing shoulders with many prominent people.

She gave recitals several times at Wigmore Hall, performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded for the BBC, and engaged in masterclasses with Alfred Cortot, Geza Anda, Guido Agosti, and Nadia Boulanger.

Georgina eventually returned to New Zealand and in retirement would still be involved in various ways in the development of young musicians.

In 2009, she became a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to music.

Georgina Zellan-Smith died peacefully at her home in Red Beach, Auckland, on 3 July 2019.

### 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.

*Special Choir 1946, with Georgina Smith in front row.*



## Snippets from the ODT

### *Class Act where are they now?*

It was great to catch up with what ex-girls Kelsey Brown and Crystal Diong are doing 10 years after they received the Class Act awards in their last year at OGHS.

Kesley is now a senior advisor at the Office of the Childrens' Commissioer, where she leads the Mai World Child and Youth Voices work - a national mechanism through which children and young people can exercise their right to have a say in matters that effect them. Kelsey has also been admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the High Court and has completed a postgraduate certificate in children's issues.

Crystal has been a doctor at Whangarei Hospital and this year is spending time travelling. Currently she is a visiting doctor at the Hyperbaric Medical Centre in Egypt where she treats patients who have had diving accidents.

### *Passing of Helen Churchman (nee Somerville) OGHS 1935 to 1939*

The ODT of 31 August had a lengthy obituary for Helen Churchman (nee Somerville) who attend Otago Girls' from 1935 to 1939. After leaving OGHS Helen went on to train as a teacher as did her husband Jock Churchman and the family around the lower South Island where he took up various teaching positions, finally settling back in Dunedin.

Both the Churchman's were conscious of working towards a better world and were actively involved in Nuclear-Free New Zealand and Amnesty International. Helen also enjoyed gardening, poetry writing, Scottish Country Dancing and visiting and entertaining residents of rest homes.

An interesting and major incident in Helen's life was published in the ODT in 2007. In 1946 Helen gave birth to a son but it wasn't until 57 years later that the family discovered through DNA tests that Helen's son had been accidentally switched at birth. Her natural born son Fred George had been raised by a Lebanese Catholic family but while their son Jim was raised by the Churchman family. Both families came to be friends as the sons grew up. The ODT reported that when the switch was discovered Helen "took the discovery of a new son with courage, dignity and, largely great happiness".

Helen died on 12 July aged 98.

## Other Snippets

Ex-girl Kiana Pelasio (OGHS 2012-2016) has been selected in to the Southern Steel as an official training partner to join the pre-season phase of the 2020 ANZ premiership.

Ex-girl Juliette Lequeux (OGHS 2011-2015) rowed for France in the U23 World Championships in Sarasota-Bradenton, USA.

We are searching for ex-girl Stacey Clark who visited Yasuda Girls' High School probably in 1993 with the first group visiting from OGHS. Her host sister Tomoko Nagese is keen to make contact with her again. Stacey possibly lived in Roy Crescent at some stage. If you know where she is could you please get her to email me at [sd@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:sd@otagogirls.school.nz)

### **Why are we celebrating the 150th Jubilee in 2021?**

Over the past year a number of ex-girls have contacted me asking why we having the 150th Jubilee in 2021 and not 2020, given that the Centenary was celebrated in 1970.

The Centenary was in fact held 100 years from the founding of the school in 1870 - it was founded in August 1870, but the school was not in fact opened until the 6th February 1871.

The 150th Jubilee will be held 150 years to the day that the school actually opened.

The 125th Jubilee also based the date of its celebrations on the year the school opened and held these celebrations in 1996.

**Fazeley Read  
(OGHS 1955-1958)**

It was lovely to have ex-girl Fazeley Read call in for a visit while she was over in Dunedin visiting from Sydney. Fazeley had happy memories of her time at OGHS when Miss Fitzgerald was Principal and we were delighted to be able to give her a tour of the school. Fazeley's mother Mabel Watson also attended Otago Girls' from 1923 to 1925.

The 1953 IIR class photograph below shows Fazeley Read at the left hand end of the second row.



*Fazeley Read with Principal Linda Miller, during her visit to her Almer Mater.*



**IIR 1955 - Miss Voller**

- Back Row: Alison Harbour, Caroline Cotton, Robin Leask, Elizabeth Wilkinson, Edith Kidd, Margaret Johnson, Jean Craig, Bobbie Meldrum
- Third Row: Catherine McFarlane, Heather Stuart, Suzanne McCrae, Alison Troughton, Marjorie Weaver, Judith Fleming, Judith Dixon
- Second Row: Fazeley Read, Patsy Matheson, Jenepher McKague, Judith Korner, Mary Gammon, Ann Fox, Lyn Elliot, Toni Patton
- Front Row: Pamela Fitzsimmons, Jill Bennett, Beverley Jarvis, Susan Nicholson, Azlyn Boatwood, Judith Geeson, Judy Hale, Margaret Wilkinson

*let me be myself*

**ANNE FRANK**

~ an exhibition ~



Open to the Public

28 September to 13 October 2019

Opening hours: Mon to Fri 9am to 4.30pm

Weekends 10am to 2pm

Otago Girls' High School

41 Tennyson Street, Dunedin



GOLD COIN DONATION PER PERSON



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

The 150th Jubilee Committee is still 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, will be additional.

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. Thank you to ex-girl Sally McMillan of McMillan & Co for being prepared to provide generous sponsorship, along with the ASB Bank and The University Book Shop. We still need sponsorship for the following categories (or donations of lesser amounts).

### **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 Embroidery Project**

As mentioned in a previous newsletter we are planning a wall hanging made of individual embroidered squares for the 150th Jubilee. We hope ex-girls will be prepared to embroider these squares for us on either 14 Ct Aida or 28ct Cashel linen. We will provide those interested with fabric and instructions. There will be a \$10 charge per person to cover costs. At this stage we are trying to determine what the interest would be like amongst our members. Please email [alumni@otagogirls.school.nz](mailto:alumni@otagogirls.school.nz) with embroidery in the subject line if you are interested and we will get back to you. Below are two squares already worked on 14 Ct Aida.



Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

41 Tennyson Street, Dunedin 9016

03 474 0496

[www.otagogirls.school.nz](http://www.otagogirls.school.nz)

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



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