

Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

Principal's Report



The following is the speech given by Principal Linda Miller at our recent Prize Giving.

Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou mā

Tēnā koutou

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Board members, staff, and students. And a special welcome to friends and family overseas who are joining us via live stream tonight. What an incredible year it has been. It has been a year that has tested us, as a school, and as individuals. It has certainly tested me; personally and professionally and it is a year that I hope we will never see the likes of again. Having said that, I am incredibly proud of the way we managed the crisis that was Covid-19 and confident that the vast majority of students have not had their education compromised as a result. That is due to the hard work of the teaching staff and the resilience of our students.

I am very privileged in that through my role, as a principal and as a member of the staff of this school, I have access to excellent professional development and get to meet and hear from the very finest brains and the finest people in the world. They inspire me, they lift me up when I feel myself getting mired in the negative aspects of my work, they provide food for thought, and they provide me and the school with way points on our journey together. We all need people to inspire us, to lift us up, to help us work out where we are going and what we need to do to get there.

The messages of two people in particular have really resonated with me this year and I want to share with you what I learned from them.

The first was Ian Taylor, founder and managing director of Animation Research, the Dunedin based company responsible for the computer graphics we associate with world events like the America's Cup, world class cricket matches and major golf tournaments. This company has also developed air traffic control simulators that are being used around the world and are being wooed by major sporting organisations in the US to provide coverage of events like the superbowl. Their company, based here in Dunedin, is doing amazing things. What motivates them? Yes, they are a commercial enterprise and make money from what they do but they also do things because they see a need and see themselves as being able to contribute to meeting that need. And part of that need is education.

One of the projects they have worked on has been to develop a programme that uses virtual reality to teach literacy and numeracy skills to prison inmates. This has been highly successful and is unlocking access to many opportunities to these people as a result. Animation Research has funded this

themselves. They have also invested over a million dollars of their own funds into developing an animated resource for schools to teach the history of Aotearoa New Zealand, not starting with Abel Tasman's sighting or Captain Cook's arrival on our shores as marking the 'discovery' of New Zealand, but with the planned and repeated voyages of our Pasifika ancestors to this country. Using their knowledge of astronomy, ocean currents, and their observations of bird and animal behaviour, our earliest settlers were able to sail crafts, stocked with the necessities of life, to Aotearoa, and back again to their home countries. These voyages were happening hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans.

Animation Research followed the journey of a team, captained by a woman, whose journey mimicked the methods used by their ancestors. Using modern technology, Animation Research was able to track the path of double hulled waka by satellite as they voyaged from Pacific Islands to New Zealand, guided only by the stars. It is the analogy to this journey that I want to speak of as their path showed them tacking backwards and forwards across a direct line from their origin to their destination. From time to time the conditions or circumstances required a greater deviation across the direct route than usual as rough seas or other hazards had to be navigated. And when the clouds and the fog closed in and the stars could not be seen to steer the boat by, the master mariners would say, lie in the base of the waka, feel your tipuna around you and you will know the way. That's what this year has felt like. Covid-19 created the conditions that have made us sail a little longer than usual in one direction, as we had to focus on getting students back to school and into learning, rather than on worrying about other matters that seemed less important. Our destination remains the same but the result is that we need to reset, to reboot some of our ways of working to ensure we remain on track. And that is what we will be doing at the start of 2021. Re-establishing the boundaries that create the conditions for students to thrive. Making sure uniform is as it should be, that devices are not interfering with learning, that our values are being adhered to, all so that the focus will be on learning. We will also begin the implementation of a solution focused approach, to support everyone in our organisation to recognise and build on their strengths and find their own solutions to problems. Through this approach we can build resilience and support everyone to cope with the ups and downs that are a natural and necessary part of life.

As a school we will be celebrating 150 years of girls secondary education in 2021. For 150 years we have stood at the forefront of quality education for girls. We need to ensure that we remain there for the next 150 years, by keeping our eyes on the stars and trusting our navigators and crew to apply the lessons learned by those who have gone before. Just like Animation Research, the Dunedin Company that has had an impact on the world, Otago Girls' is positioned to continue to provide a world class education to our students by adapting and changing to meet the challenges we encounter.

The second speaker I wanted to mention tonight is Judge Dominic Flatley. He spoke at the final meeting of the year for the Otago Secondary Schools Principals' Association. Judge Flatley has been a judge in Otago and Southland for the past 15 years, covering Family, Youth and Criminal cases. He had been asked to speak to our association about the social issues of youth, factors impacting on the vulnerability of youth, and how educators could respond to these. He talked a lot about the impact of social media, growing mental health concerns,

rising levels of violence and the connection between the three. He also talked a lot about the role of parenting and the impact it has on the lives of children - for better and for worse. He suggested that schools should be teaching parenting as part of their curriculum as there is such a lack of understanding among the people with whom he meets, about its importance. He described the attitude to parenting of many of the parents he meets as being like "pick and mix". The fact that their child was appearing in youth court, they believed was because they had "picked a bad one" in the great lolly scramble of life. Many showed no realisation that the way they parent makes an enormous difference to the type of person a child grows into. The thing is that most of us learnt how to parent by watching those around us parent. And back when we had larger families, there was plenty of opportunity to do just this. Whether it was our younger siblings growing up, our older siblings having their own children, our cousins or aunts or uncles; someone always had a baby. There was always a child of one age or another from whose parents you could ask advice. The world is so different now. Families are smaller, extended families live far apart. Lives are busier. Childcare is the norm. Financial, social and emotional pressures are higher and expectations of what is needed for a happy life are through the roof. The existence of social media and the ubiquitous nature of devices not only removes parents from their children, and children from their parents, at a time when they really need each other, it feeds young people with unrealistic expectations about appearance, wealth and relationships. The reliance on devices is drastically reducing the vocabulary of our young people and stunting their desire and ability to read. Parenting is a messy, difficult and highly complex task, and yet it is the thing that many people go into without much thought.

After rolling my eyes at the thought of the school having to add parenting to its already crowded curriculum, I then thought, Judge Flatley is right. Parenting is a bit like teaching, everyone has an opinion, and people are very quick to point out shortcomings. But the reality is that the reason we have fabulous students, many of whom are being recognised here tonight, is because we have fabulous parents. And how often do we thank our parents for the little but important things they do in their role as parents? So tonight I want to thank and congratulate the parents here for all the things you do that allow your children to be the best version of themselves. Those things may seem like common sense and small in the grand scheme of things, but they are important and they make the work we do as a school so much easier. So here is my Ode to Parents - it doesn't rhyme and it isn't clever - it is just a collection of thoughts about things that make such a difference for your children and that I want to thank you for.

My Ode to Parents

Here's to all the parents out there who have the courage and the wisdom to parent

To the parents who know that sleep is important and that this will not happen with devices in the room

To the parents who provide healthy nutritious food that is eaten together, around the table, and is seasoned with conversation about the day

To the parents who keep alive the wonder and the joy of learning in their children by answering their questions, by providing experiences and by talking with them rather than muffling them with headphones and gagging them with devices

To the parents who spend time with their children, doing things together, talking together, sharing the ups and the downs of life

To the parents who know that role modelling is key and that going to school everyday, even if you don't feel like it, is just like going to work everyday - necessary and rewarding

To the parents who have aspirations for their children and who encourage them to dream their own dreams and to work to achieve them

To the parents who love and accept their children for who they are, not who conventional society expects them to be

To the parents who encourage their children to take part in sport, even if they are not that good, because they see the value of the lessons learned in being part of a team

To the parents who praise their children for trying hard, rather than doing well so their children learn that achievement is much more about effort than it is about talent

To the parents who show up; at sports, at events, at the PTSA, on the Board; your children notice

To the parents who pay their school donation, even though they don't have to, because they understand that we simply can't provide the opportunities they want their children to enjoy, without it

To the parents who know what is important to them as a family and model, teach and reward these values in their children

To the parents who check on where their children are going, who they are going with and what they are doing, and who are prepared to say no when they find out something they don't like

To the parents who have their own friends outside the family, encourage their children to do the same, and do not feel the need to be their child's friend

To the parents who understand that children make mistakes and that there is more value in learning the consequences of doing the wrong thing and putting it right, than in helping them avoid those consequences.

To the parents who understand that schools do their very best for their children and that talking is the best way of sorting out any problems

And to the parents who understand that parenting is hard, and that none of us get it right all the time, but that, at the end of the day, you get out of it what you put in.

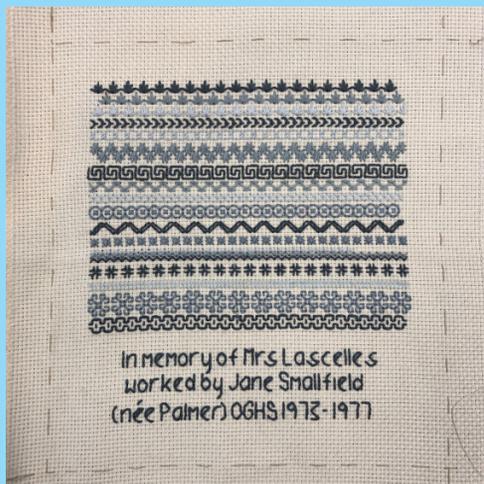
Thank you everyone for helping us get through this year and for supporting these lovely students to achieve. Thank you especially to the staff, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to support our learners through the lockdown and since our return. Thank you especially to our student leaders, led so ably by Jen and Hannah, and the Senior Leadership Team who have worked tirelessly to reduce stress and make things happen, contending with constant changes along the way. To the Board, your continued support is much appreciated. To our Year 13 graduands, we have done what we can for you, the rest is up to you. Go well. We know you will succeed. To everyone returning next year, enjoy the break. You have certainly earned it.

Before concluding I would like to acknowledge two long-standing staff members who are leaving us this year. Miss Annemarie Hutton, who is retiring after 23 years in the school as HOD and teacher of Mathematics, and Mrs Robyn Hickley who is retiring after 17 years at OGS teaching mainly PE. We wish you both well for the future and hope to see you back in the school from time to time.

No reira, Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

Linda Miller

150th Jubilee Embroidery Project



With the postponement of our Jubilee until Labour Weekend 2021 we are able to extend the opportunity for you to participate in our 150th Embroidery project. We are delighted with the various contributions we have had to this project but would love some more of you to take part.

If any other ex-girls are keen to embroider a 25cm block on either 14 Ct Aida or 28ct Cashel linen please email Jane Smallfield at sd@otagogirls.school.nz and indicate what fabric you would prefer and what your postal address is. We also ask that you pay \$10 into the 150th Jubilee account (02-0912-0351479-000) to cover the costs incurred in completing this project.

Above is an example of a block already completed - you are free to embroider anything which links to the school in some way. We now need all blocks in by the 30 June 2021.

OGHS 150th Jubilee update

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all ex-students from the 150th Jubilee Committee.

Thank you to the 100s of you who have already enrolled for the Jubilee to be held at Labour Weekend 2021. The months are going to fly by for the organising committee.

If you do intend to come but haven't registered yet we encourage you to do so soon to assist the Committee with their planning. The holiday period is a great time to get in touch with your friends from school days and encourage them to enrol too. Please do spread the word about the Jubilee. Registrations can be made on the following site

<https://150th.otagogirls.school.nz/event/DNE5BE/>

While we have postponed the celebrations from Waitangi Weekend to Labour Weekend, on 5 February the school will also mark the 150 years since the school opened. Staff and students will be encouraged to dress in costume from the 1870s and students will have a day of Victorian style teaching. A formal assembly will also be held to mark the occasion and the students will have a garden party in the afternoon.

We have a student committee working hard to plan events for students that will occur throughout the year and a 150th Prefect has been announced for 2021.

Our fundraising for the sculpture is our main Jubilee project. The beautiful sculpture by renown sculptor Helen Pollock is currently being cast in bronze and will be unveiled at the Jubilee. When you register you have an opportunity to make a donation to this project and we hope you are all able to do this to help us meet the significant cost. If you aren't able to attend the Jubilee but would still like to make a donation towards the sculpture please make your payment into 02-0912-0351479-000. Please add 'sculpture' and your surname in the reference fields.



Madeleine Grey - Dux of Otago Girls' for 2020.



Jennifer Marsh - winner of the Anna P Logan Stout cup for Best All Round Student 2020.

Donations

It is always pleasing to receive donations for our school archives or the library and over the past month the school has been given quite a mixture of objects as depicted on this page.

Dux and Sidey medals located in house

Recently I was visited by a couple from Auckland with links to the New Zealand MS Society. According to the couple the Society had been bequeathed a house by Elizabeth Purves who died in Auckland on 16 February 2018. In the process of cleaning out the house they had uncovered two Otago Girls' High School medals. They looked on the web to see if the school still existed and then decided they would call in at the school when next in Dunedin. The names on the medal meant nothing to the couple but I straight away recognised them as being connected to each other.

The Sidey medal was awarded in 1925 to Daphne Cowie (later Dame Daphne Purves) for Gymnastics, Calisthenics and Sports. The Dux medal was awarded to Dame Daphne's daughter Elizabeth Purves in 1960.

The Sidey medal is the earliest one of this type of medal we have. It was introduced in 1921 and was named after Board Member Sir T K Sidey and his wife Helena Baxter who started at Otago Girls' in 1879. She was instrumental in the early establishment of the Ex-Girl Association. Sidey medals are still awarded annually to our students who attain sporting success at a national level.

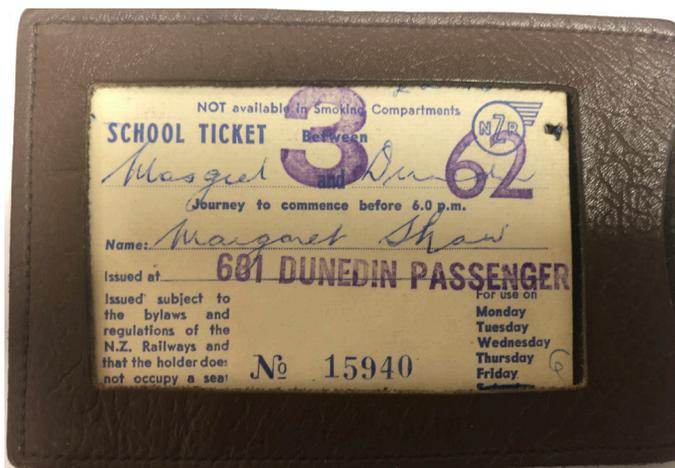


Front of the Sidey Medal awarded to Daphne Cowie in 1925.



Front and rear of the 1960 Dux medal awarded to Elizabeth Purves.

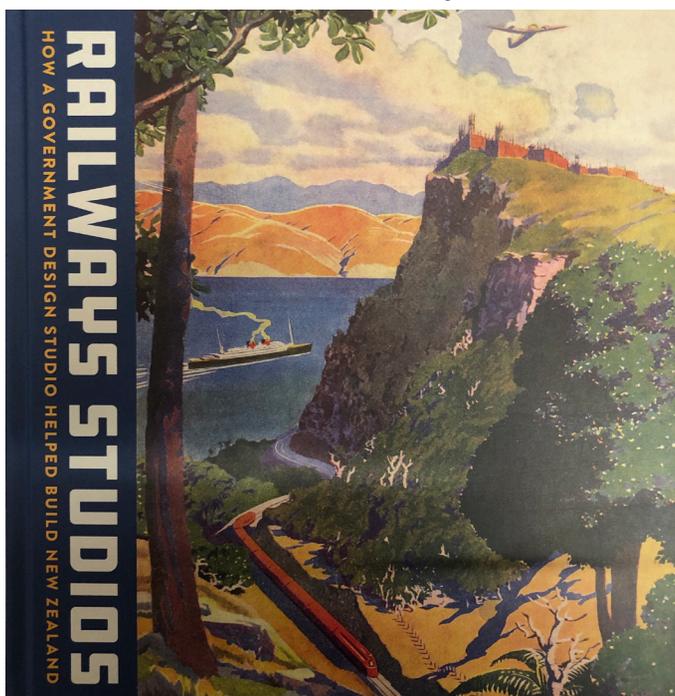
Train ticket and holder



Margaret Jones (nee Shaw) attended OGHS from 1959 to 1962 and she recently donated a train ticket she used to travel to school from Mosgiel. This ticket could only be used on Monday to Friday before 6pm and Margaret recalled how, if you had to travel on the train in the evening for a school function or for weekend sport, you had to get a letter from the Head Mistress to show to the conductor on the train.

The leather ticket wallet was well used having been used by Margaret's sister France Ferguson (nee Shaw) when she attended Otago Girls' from 1952 to 1954.

Donation of book to school library



Ex-Girl Katherine Milburn (nee Roy) who attended Otago Girls' from 1978 to 1982, kindly donated this recently published book to the Library. Katherine who is the Liaison Librarian and Curator of the Ephemera Collection at the Hocken Collections was the main researcher for this beautiful publication.

Embroidery sampler

Nyra McGavin (nee Ford) who attended Otago Girls' from 1946 to 1949 kindly donated her embroidery sampler from 1947 to the school. It is one of the earliest samplers we have in our collection.

Nyra recalled that sewing class at OGHS was not one where you hoped to relax. Standards were expected so it was heads down and achievements expected. In the fourth form in 1947, with Miss Kirkwood as teacher, the first project was a stitch sampler. For this we had a choice of stitches from those presented and also a choice of two embroidery thread colours, mine being yellow and brown. I seem to remember the material they were stitched on was huckerback and every row was evenly counted. There were twelve examples of stitches on each sampler and on completion by all there was a colourful selection on display. At one stage in between projects I took along a printed cross-stitch tapestry cushion cover. That was the one and only day that it was taken to school having been told that was not acceptable.

At a later date, when the sewing room was in the basement, Nyra made a Royal Stewart tartan kilt. She recalls it was one I wore for a long time. Personal measurements were also taken and cutting a pattern to suit was also taught that year which was really challenging.

Nyra is grateful for the basic sewing/embroidery lessons at OGHS which provided a worthwhile interest as well as at times a necessity.

Nyra is pictured below in the front row (third from left) in her 3M 1946 form class. Note the class mascot being held by Lorna Weir in the front row.



Nyra McGavin's (nee Ford) embroidery sampler from 1947.



3M 1946 (Mistress Miss Cowan)

Back row: Marion West, Lenore Coats, Nelletta Tobin, Jean Campbell, Jocelyn Batts, Elaine Fyfe, Alva Dickinson
Middle row: Pamela Davidson, Frances Dawson, Dianne More, Joan Muir, Fiona Donaldson, Noelene Robinson, Jenny Sligo, Noeline Carson
Front row: Kay Burt, Margaret Brough, Nyra Ford, Lorna Weir, Pamela Postgate, Patricia Pattenden

Mhairi-Bronte Duncan (OGHS 2010-2014) New Zealand Curler

The guest speaker at our annual Sports Awards this year was ex-girl Mhairi-Bronte Duncan. Her address at the awards has been reproduced here.

Thank you for asking me to come and speak tonight. It is a privilege to be asked back to speak at the Sports Awards because when I was a student here I remember sitting up near the back eagerly awaiting my sports blue badge and thinking I wonder if I'll ever be good enough at sports to be asked back to give a speech. So this evening I get to fulfil that dream and for that I thank you.

My journey to representing New Zealand in sport has not been straight forward. It's been full of anxiety, self doubt and disappointments but I have learnt that these things don't have to hold me back. I can still succeed in my sport and I hope that in sharing my story I can encourage you to chase your goals. Since Year 9 I had always wanted to play for New Zealand but I'd never have guessed that taking up curling in Year 10 would be the sport that would take me there. I've had the privilege of representing New Zealand in Finland, Scotland and Sweden so far and if it wasn't Covid I might have added Japan to that list. I spent six months living in Stockholm and training with the worlds best curlers living and breathing the sport until COVID brought me back to New Zealand.

I am now the New Zealand U21 Curling selector and Development Officer for Dunedin. I am currently just 14 games away from the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.

I was recently at a job interview and they asked me what sports I played in high school and I quickly listed them all and then they asked me what subjects did you study in Year 13 and to my embarrassment I couldn't recall all of them. But I think that really shows what my passion was at school.

The year was 2011 and I was ready to try yet another sport after being told by my squash coach that I would be better suited to tennis. I gave up on ball sports and started looking for a new challenge. Curling took me completely by surprise. A simple message in the school notices asking for students to express their interest in forming a team was inviting. I figured I had nothing to lose and if anything I ought to be half decent at it, being part Scottish, surely it was in my genes!

The teacher in charge came from Nasbey, the heart of curling in New Zealand. She had represented New Zealand multiple times and was keen to encourage the next generation of female curlers. When I met her she told me how I could travel the world and play for New Zealand if I stuck at it. I honestly don't think she realised how profound and life changing her words would be. I had never been on an aeroplane and had dreamt of representing New Zealand in sports.

My friends and I quickly formed a team. We had only played for a few weeks when we entered High School Nationals naively believing we would completely smash it. We lost every single game ...

But this turned out to be an awesome lesson in not letting failure stop you from pursuing your dreams. My advice to you is to learn to lose well. I've lost more games than I have won but I have learnt the most from the games I have lost. In losing so often when I was younger I developed relentless determination.

I knew from experience that when things got tough to keep pushing. We could have all given up on curling after that. We had come into it with such high expectations of ourselves and had been crushed. But we were hooked on the game.

The spirit of curling pulled us in. There are very few sports where you can be absolute enemies in the game and then once the game is over be best friends giving one another advice for the next game. I also loved that it was not only a physical game but a mental game requiring a high level of strategy.

Over the next few years, my team (Sweeping Beauties) had to fight to get recognised alongside much more popular sports such as netball and hockey.

My curling team didn't have an official curling coach but we all had a crazy work ethic which we applied to our studies and sports and ultimately it is the reason we won back to back high school Southland and National titles. As cliché as the saying is 'hard work works'. My next piece of advice to you, because I know exams are just around the corner, is take your drive to succeed in your sport and apply it to your studies.

The best piece of advice I got given from Ms Neilson was about speeches. I used to hate giving a speech at school but she said I know you hate it but you're going to be giving speeches for the rest of your life at birthdays, weddings, events, funerals and no one enjoys a bad speech so get good at it! English and Maths are so important if you want to become an elite athlete.

I've had to give speeches at events, write articles, blogs, social media posts and give live interviews. I've also had to figure out fundraising for overseas travel, create budgets, work in different currencies and tax systems. I know it can feel like maths doesn't apply to your life as an athlete right now but it definitely does when you reach the international level.

From day one my goal was to represent New Zealand, which meant I took my novice curling a little too seriously at times, treating a social club game as an Olympic final.

In 2015, I nominated myself for the U21 New Zealand women's team. I remember sitting with all the other curlers waiting for the teams to be announced. I'd had a good season and felt pretty confident that I would make the team. But growing up as a type A personality isn't easy. It often comes hand in hand with anxiety and self doubt. The desire to perform at an excellence level took its toll on me. I would get so worked up prior to sports competitions worrying I hadn't trained enough or I would throw a bad shot or the selectors wouldn't be interested in me. I became my own worst enemy in curling and I would psych myself out before I had even entered the curling rink.

I was beyond upset when my name was not read out at selections that year but I wasn't going to give up.

In 2016 I nominated myself again but when my team lost the final for U21 Nationals I knew I wasn't going to make the squad. I tried to give away all my gear believing no matter what I did, I would never be good enough. Looking back now I can see I again made the whole season purely about getting selected and didn't deal with the negative headspace I had created for myself which was ultimately my downfall.

During and after that season I'd undergone two heart surgeries because I had been told I was high risk of sudden death. At 18 years old it really forced me to challenge the way I viewed life and what mattered to me. I spent time with a sports psychologist learning how to overcome the anxiety and pressure to perform.

In 2017, I decided I would give curling one last season but my

focus had changed. Instead of concentrating on making the New Zealand squad I chose to fall in love with curling again. I didn't want to quit curling feeling bitter about not being selected. Instead, I wanted to have a season where I enjoyed myself. If I wasn't selected I could walk away knowing I had played my best. This new attitude gained me a spot on the New Zealand U21 Women's team.

Playing for New Zealand has been such an incredible privilege. Standing on the ice at Worlds wearing a silver fern was a dream that I am blessed to have made a reality. I remember the first time I put on my New Zealand jacket, I was so proud.

I look back and I am extremely grateful I did not get selected the first and second time. It wasn't easy and I had to work hard to prove myself but I believe playing for New Zealand means so much more to me now than it would have if I had just been handed a place in the team. I know why I curl and it is not to be the best (although that would be amazing), I curl because I love it and I love the experiences it has brought me.

Making the New Zealand squad came with training sessions and strategy discussions at a level I had longed for throughout my high school curling years. I wanted to learn different drills to not only help myself improve but also to help the curlers who were yet to make New Zealand teams. Knowledge is powerful but only when we share it to create positive change for the future. I realised there was a need to provide younger curlers with coaching, to encourage them to continue playing and to grow the sport.

I became a New Zealand selector this year because I want to encourage the next generation of athletes. So I'll wrap up my speech with the four key things I look for when I am selecting athletes.

Initially we do cut the selection pool down by examining individuals skill. Are they making their shots, do they understand the game on a higher level than others? This is not always outcome based. I have selected athletes that have not won at competitions because I see they have potential and good skill but are working with a group that is not on that same level.

Next I'll examine athletes attitude and coachability: I am looking for good communication with others, a real passion and a love of the sport. Do they ask for advice to improve and how do they respond to feedback? I will select an athlete with less skill but a better attitude over one that is technically better but has a bad attitude because I can quickly raise an athletes technical ability if they want to learn and improve. It's far harder when someone thinks they already know best.

I cut down my options further when I ask about commitment: I go and watch games throughout the season to see if the players are consistently showing up. I'll ask teachers and ice-makers and other athletes how often a particular athlete is at the rink and if they are doing any additional work to help improve their game.

The last thing I look at is their mental strength. I believe in order to succeed in sport you need to tackle your mind. Sports is roughly 10% physical and 90% mental. At the Olympic level all athletes are capable of winning but what separates the winners is their mental strength. How do you cope with failure? What type of confidence do you have? Is it a cocky confidence where you're at risk of making reckless decisions in the heat of the moment or is it a quite humble confidence that even if you miss a shot you know you can still win.

My challenge to you is to know your why. Why do you play

sports? If you can be honest with yourself in answering this then you will know if you need to change it or use it as the ultimate reason for pushing yourself forward to your definition of success.

Mhairi-Bronte Duncan



Mhairi-Bronte Duncan at the Sundbyberg Curling Klubb in Stockholm, Sweden.



Mhairi-Bronte Duncan, second from right in the school curling team in 2015.

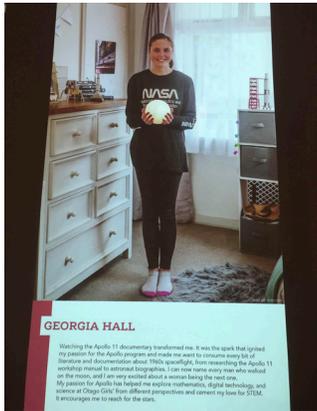
Donation to sculpture by Dunedin Ex-Girls'



Mrs Joan Sinclair of the Dunedin Ex-Girls' presents Principal Linda Miller with a payment of \$823 toward the sculpture that will be unveiled at the 150th Jubilee at Labour Weekend. The Dunedin Branch of Ex-Girls' meets for lunch on a monthly basis but the administration of the Branch is now run by the school. The funds were the balance of the Branch's bank account when it was closed.

100 Women, 100 Words ... Infinite Possibilities

This exhibition is currently showing at the Otago Museum and features women from Otago and Southland who have inspired their communities to engage with the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) that exist all around us. The exhibit features two current students and at least five ex-girls.



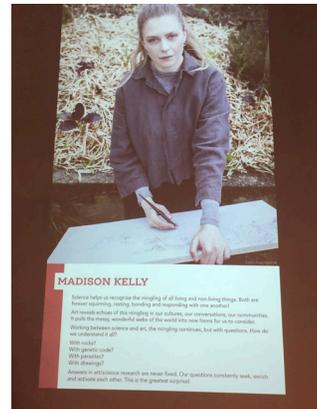
Georgia Hall - current Year 9 student.



Ruby Stretch-Treweek - current Year 10 student.



**Bryony Miller
OGHS 1997-2000**



**Madison Kelly
OGHS 2007-2011**



**Rachael Baxter
OGHS 2009-2013**



**Shaharn Cameron
OGHS 2012-2016**



Eva Leunissen OGHS 2005-2009



Congratulations to ex Otago Girls' student Hahna Nichols, who is the 2020 recipient of the New Zealand School of Dance Foundation Scholarship. Hahna was a pupil at Otago Girls' from 2015 to 2018 (Photo credit Stephen A'Court).

Emily Duncan (nee Stevens) wins \$10,000 prize.

Dunedin playwright and OGHS Ex-Girl Emily Duncan has won another prestigious award - the Bruce Mason Playwriting Award. With the Award came a cash prize of \$10,000. Emily Duncan was the 2019 University of Otago Burns Fellow and she attended Otago Girls' from 1994 to 1995.

Food and Nutrition student lands dream job

Our Head of Technology Mrs Christine Cook was thrilled to receive an email from one of her previous students.

Serena Sangster was a top Otago Girls' student in Food Technology in 2013 and she recently signed a contract with the Ministry for Primary Industries as a Policy Analyst in the Food Regulatory team. She will get to work on projects such as regulating food labelling and law reform.

Lucy Matehaere awarded University Blue

Congratulations to Lucy Matehaere, Dux of OGHS in 2018, who was awarded a University of Auckland Sports Blue for Canoe Sprint in 2020.

Bachelor of Architecture student Lucy competed at the New Zealand Canoe Sprint Championships, placing 6th in the A final for Open Women's K1 500m, and 5th in the A final for Open Women's K2 200m. She was also selected into the Invitation Squad for the New Zealand High Performance Women's Squad.

Ex-Girl now MP

Congratulations to ex-girl Rachel Brooking (OGHS 1989 to 1993) who is now a List Member of Parliament for the Labour Party. Rachel was the Head of School Council in 1993.



Reproduced with permission of Stuff Limited.

Myrtle Violet Matilda Muir (née Seque) OGHS 1915 First coach of the Silver Ferns

In September 2020 Otago Girls' High School was contacted by a journalist at Stuff wanting confirmation that a Myrtle Seque attended Otago Girls' in the early 1900s, and asking for permission to take some video of the school building. They said that Myrtle was the first coach of the Silver Ferns.

I could confirm that a Myrtle Violet Matilda Secue (sic) was a pupil at Otago Girls' in 1915 and permission was given for videoing to take place.

On the 22 November we were delighted to see the story of Myrtle as the feature article in *Sunday*, the *Sunday Star Times* supplement as well as the feature article on Stuff. The video had some good footage of the school buildings.

The article celebrated the fact that Mrs Muir was the first coach of the Silver Ferns and in 1938 she had guided the national netball side against Australia in two tests. She was also the President of the New Zealand Basketball Association from 1932 to 1949. Netball was called basketball in these early days.

However no one at Netball New Zealand initially knew Mrs Muir's first name - on the honours boards it is her husband's initials that are displayed. Dr Margaret Henley and netball historian Todd Miller decided to solve the mystery. Miller scoured through numerous netball archives and the break came when he found a programme for a 1948 Dominion Tournament and the Presidential address in it was signed by Myrtle Muir.

With Netball New Zealand's centenary coming up in 2024 the organisation decided to find out more about this woman.

Genealogical research determined that she was born Myrtle Violet Matilda Seque and that Seque was an anglicised version of the Chinese name See Que. Further investigation revealed that Myrtle's grandfather came from China and had arrived in Otago by 1868, settling in the goldmining town of Lawrence where he married Elizabeth Nesbitt and they had seven children. Their eldest son Edward, born in 1870 was Myrtle's father. In 1922 Myrtle married Harold Douglas Muir.

Otago Girls' has long been proud of its firsts - first female lawyer, doctor and Olympic gold medallist. Now we can proudly add first Silver Ferns coach to that list and keep the name of Myrtle Seque/Muir alive in the school's history.

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.



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