

Otago Girls' High School Alumni Association

Happy 150th Birthday Otago Girls' High School

Principal's Report



The following is an abridged version of the speech given by Principal Linda Miller on 5 February 2021 at the school assembly to celebrate the 150th birthday of the school.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today as Tumuaki, Principal, of Otago Girls' High School, as we begin our celebrations to recognise not just 150 years of education at Otago Girls' but 150 years of state secondary education for girls in New Zealand. How fitting it is that we begin these celebrations with the installation and blessing of our pare. The pare serves as a passage between the world outside our school and the world of education and learning within our school and it is particularly poignant that all ākonga in this school have passed under the pare today. I feel very grateful for the love, support, skill and goodwill of our manawhenua as they support us here today, as always, in spirit, in body and in action. In particular I would like to pay tribute to Matua James for his vision and his ability to take what we told him about our context and history and integrate it with te Ao Māori to produce a piece of art that will be a legacy that will remain for the next 150 years of this school's life.

I am sure the ideas of installing a pare to sit at the heart of our school and celebrating 150 years of the school's existence were nowhere in the minds of those who were here at the beginning of this journey, but how appropriate it is that we begin the next installment of the history of this school with a visible reminder, every day, of the partnership between the school and manawhenua and of the role, value and importance of tangata whenua in our shared history and future. Maybe it was more than a coincidence that the birthday, or Founders Day, of this school is the same date as that of the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi. Over the next 150 years may we continue

to strengthen and grow this relationship.

OGHS was opened on February 6, 1871. I want to take you back in time to the 1860s. The city of Dunedin, which was established in 1848 by the Free Church of Scotland, had been settled and had a population of around 15,000. With the discovery of gold at Gabriel's Gully in 1861 a gold rush followed that led to the rapid growth of Dunedin and established its place at the heart of economic development in New Zealand. When it came to education, there was a system of district schools throughout Otago, while in Dunedin at that time there were three main primary schools, an industrial school and numerous small private schools. Otago Boys' opened in 1863. But there was no secondary school for girls.

Enter Miss Learmonth Whyte Dalrymple - a face you hopefully recognise from the painting hanging on your right. Miss Dalrymple grew up and was educated in Coupar Angus, Scotland. She attended a boarding school but she received less education than she would have liked. She was particularly disappointed that she was not allowed to study mathematics - because her father considered it unfitting for girls. After spending time on 'the continent' Miss Dalrymple sailed with her family for New Zealand in 1853, ending up living in the Clutha area in 1857. It was from there that Miss Dalrymple began her campaign for a public secondary school for girls in Dunedin. She started by connecting with those who would help her achieve her goal. Her first ally was the *Otago Daily Times*, which published a "leader" in August 1863, around the time Boys' High was opened, suggesting that there should be an equivalent school for girls. There was little interest from the readership however, with only one letter of support in reply.

So why were there no secondary schools for girls at this time? It was due to a widespread and powerful prejudice against higher education for girls - not just in New Zealand but in Great Britain and all the British colonies. Here I will read from Eileen Wallis' book on the history of OGHS, "A Most Rare Vision".

It was generally considered that girls were not equipped either mentally or physically for intensive studies - though looking back it seems likely that the fainting of Victorian schoolgirls was caused more frequently by tight corsetting than by over-study. The place of woman was the home, her task to care for her husband's physical needs, and to produce and raise a family, and what husband wanted a wife more knowledgeable than himself? The idea of any intellectual companionship between husband and wife seemed to appeal to comparatively few men.

The aim of most middle-class mothers was to find a suitable husband for their daughters, and, with this in view, their stress was on showy accomplishments rather than higher standards of learning. Indeed such learning was liable to frighten off any prospective husbands, and, if acquired, must if possible be concealed, at least until after marriage. In poorer families, money available for education was spent on the boys not on the girls where it would be "wasted" when they married.

That was the context in which Miss Dalrymple was operating. She considered the education system of the time an utter failure, decided that the demand for higher education must come from the women themselves, and set about organising her campaign. It was a campaign that was waged via letter and face to face meetings. These letters were all written by hand. There were no computers, no photocopiers, not even phones. Transport was via horse and cart or walking. No cars, no trains, no scooters, no bicycles, at least not for 'decent women'. Everything took time. Over the course of her seven year campaign, it is estimated that Miss Dalrymple wrote between 700 and 800 letters, to people all over New Zealand and the British Isles. And those letters were not short!

Another of Miss Dalrymple's greatest supporters was Major John Larkins Cheese Richardson. He was a neighbour of Miss Dalrymple and a member of the Provincial Council - which acted like the government for the province of Otago. He suggested Miss Dalrymple draw up a petition from "the ladies of the Province of Otago" that outlined how poor the educational facilities for girls wishing to pursue further learning were and therefore the need for a high school for girls. The petition had to be copied out (by hand) and distributed to people who would go out and gather signatures. Miss Dalrymple and a friend got together and got writing, managing between 10 and 12 copies each day. They then had to send them out to people who were willing to go out and get signatures. The response they got was very varied. They received much ridicule - people laughed at them for being so stupid as to think girls should be educated beyond primary school. It wasn't just men who thought this, many women considered a public school for girls 'intolerable'; others said the schools were good enough already; that girls would be worse off for being learned; and that the idea was ahead of its time.

Most women felt positively scared to sign the petition. It is reported that, when the men of the families were consulted, many lost their temper and became really antagonistic - in other words they

opposed the idea of a girls school strongly. Many women displayed the same reaction. To understand the reason for this it is important to remember that in the mid-19th century a married couple was a single financial and legal entity, controlled by the husband. All of a wife's money and property, whether she came by it before or after marriage, was her husband's. A wife had no right to a share of her husband's (or their joint) earnings or property during marriage, or to part of his estate after he died. Divorce was virtually unobtainable, and fathers had legal authority over children. Generally speaking, what the men said, went.

Meanwhile, Major Richardson continued to push the idea of a girls' school at the Provincial Council. The motion to establish a school or to have qualifications or awards that girls could achieve, was approved unanimously. But nothing happened. Major Richardson claimed this was a victory, however, and advised Miss Dalrymple to start inspiring other women to see it as a worthy cause. He said she needed to win people over one by one, and reminded her that the country didn't have much money to build a new school.

After many conversations via letter with people she thought could help, Miss Dalrymple organised a public meeting to be held in Dunedin. And then she couldn't find a chairwoman to run the meeting. She felt she couldn't chair it because she was a single woman and as such, her place was in the background - another indication of the ideas of the time. Eventually Mrs Thomas Dick, wife of the Superintendent of the Provincial Council chaired the meeting. But it was far from a success. There were interruptions - reporters, the custodian of the building checking on them, a latecomer who came to tell them her husband disapproved of what they were doing, a report of an accident outside and finally a brass band started playing right outside the venue meaning no-one could hear a thing. The meeting had to be stopped. Miss Dalrymple didn't even get to deliver the speech she had so carefully prepared. She did get it published in the ODT the following year however. Her petition was presented to the Provincial Council in December 1865 and was referred to a select committee on education which commented on its great value and recommended the establishment of a girls school should go ahead, but.....nothing happened.

Over the next two years Miss Dalrymple continued to write letters, collect information and keep the matter before the Provincial Council and the general public. She convinced Mr Julius Vogel, the Provincial Council's

Treasurer, (and later Prime Minister of New Zealand) to pledge £1000 to establish the school. His motion did not pass. Another of Mr Vogel's roles however was as a partner in the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Otago Witness*, both newspapers providing strong support for establishing a girls' school through editorials and articles. Major Richardson gave speeches on the topic. He also advised Miss Dalrymple to speak with Mr Macandrew (of Macandrew Bay fame) who was then the superintendent of the Provincial Council. It was unthinkable that she approach him directly, so she set about lobbying Mrs Macandrew who duly invited Miss Dalrymple to visit and speak with the Superintendent. So persuasive was she that Mr Macandrew instructed the secretary of the Education Board to come up with a proposal which was presented to the Provincial Council in 1868. Progress was beginning to happen.

As money was tight, it was figured that if buildings could be found, teachers could be obtained 'easily and cheaply'. The only person they needed to appoint at the beginning was a 'lady principal' and she would appoint others as needed. They would advertise in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. They could use 'visiting masters' from the boys' school. We need to remember of course that there were few women educated enough to teach the higher levels of high school, because there were no public high schools, no university would grant degrees to women and very few would even let them attend lectures - all due to the prejudices I mentioned before.

The superintendent set up an education commission to determine the best site and plan for a high school. Another petition was organised, and another meeting was held. By this time there was much talk among the public about the issue and there were many letters to the paper.

At the next meeting of the Provincial Council in 1870 it was reported that the recommendations were approved and the Lady Principal and Assistant Governess roles were advertised. Otago was getting a Girls' High School.

Mrs Margaret Burn was appointed to the role of Lady Principal on 9 June 1870. Born in Edinburgh, and later settling in Australia, Mrs Burn later opened a private school and it was her success in this work that led to her appointment to Otago Girls'.

After seven years, over seven hundred letters, dozens of meetings and hundreds of conversations and speeches, Miss Learmonth Dalrymple finally got to see the fruit of her labours when Otago Girls' High

School, then known as the Provincial School for Girls', was opened on 6 February 1871.

On opening day the school had a roll of 78 students and the school itself was located in the South Wing of the Otago Boys' High School building with a fence built to separate the boys from the girls.

Since those first students walked through the doors the school continued to grow and to change. The boys moved up the hill to the current Otago Boys' site in 1885, enabling the girls to take over the entire building. Initially there was no uniform, although there was a dress code.

In 1910 the old, extremely substandard, school building was demolished and the new one - which still stands today and is appropriately named the Dalrymple Block - was built.

The gymfrock became the official school uniform in 1926, until the introduction of the A line skirt in 1980. The current kilt was introduced in 1985 and the current summer uniform in 1999.

Meanwhile buildings were added, subjects changed, principals, teachers and students came and went and Otago Girls' High School kept producing amazing women who changed the country and the world. Those are stories for other days.

As I was writing this speech I couldn't help but reflect on our OGHS Malaga and the role each of those elements played in the history of Otago Girls' High School. Miss Dalrymple had a dream, she was inspired and inspired others to fight for the right of girls and women to be educated. She empowered and challenged women around the globe to be more than just wives and mothers but to be independent changemakers who have improved the world for others. She cared, she connected, she collaborated, she innovated. She displayed confident leadership, compassion, an open mind, clear communication, problem solving abilities, resilience and critical thinking in order to get the job done. It is now our job to celebrate her achievement and the achievement that has followed, to grow our minds, our abilities and our skills, to continue to innovate and to value diversity so that we, in turn can dream our own dreams and have the capacity to realise those dreams. Miss Dalrymple's victory was but a small one in the global context of women's rights.

Ms L Miller, Principal

OGHS 150th Jubilee registrations

Thank you to all of you who have already registered for this event to be held at Labour Weekend this year. Registrations close on 31 July 2021 and can be made at the following site:

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

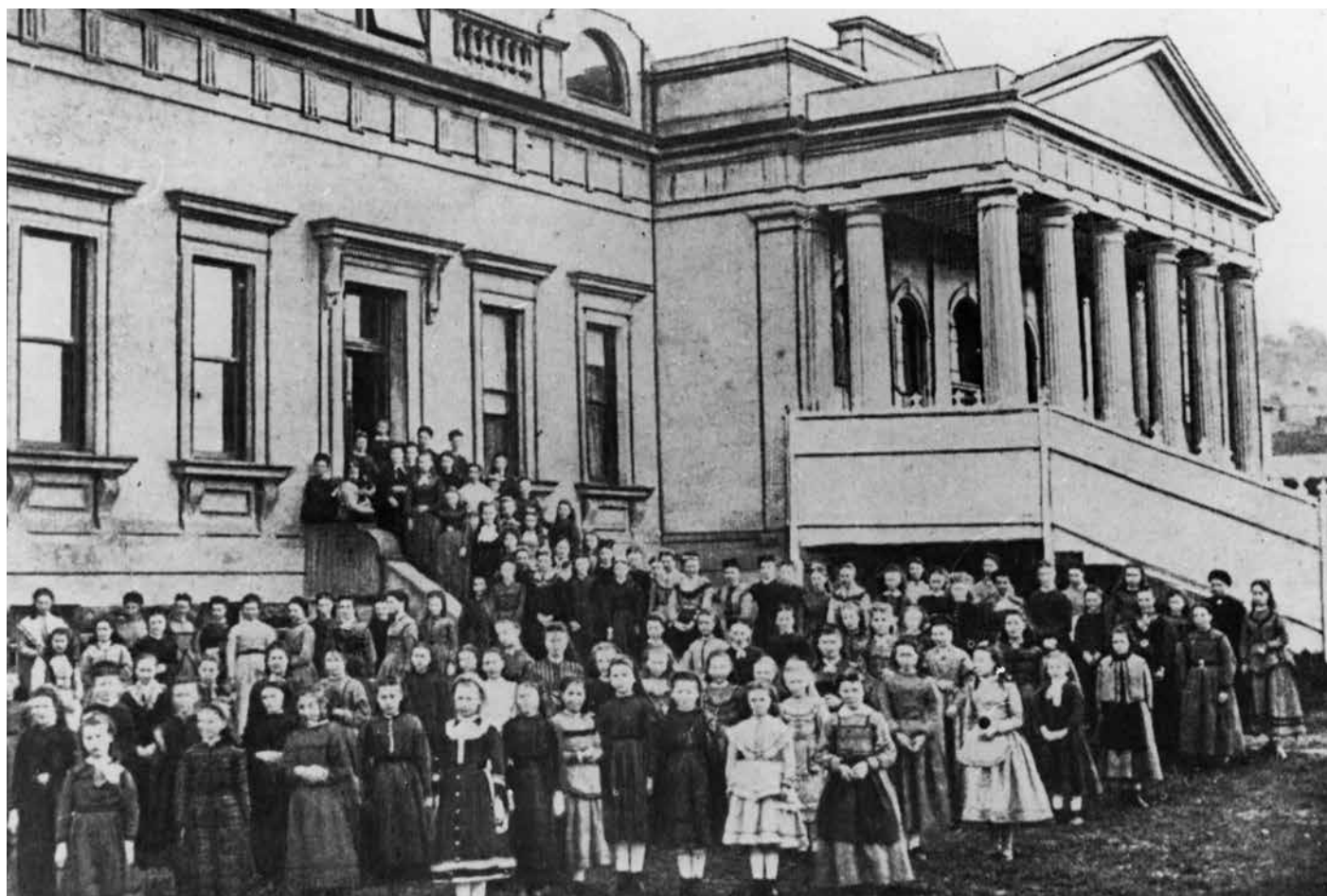
Make sure you register soon to ensure a place at all events especially the dinner which has limited places.

Please spread the word amongst ex-girls you know who may not subscribe to this newsletter.

Our fundraising for the sculpture is our main Jubilee project. The beautiful sculpture by renowned 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 contact sd@otagogirls.school.nz

Jubilee advertising signs

Do you live in or near Dunedin and have you got a fence/gate etc on your residential or business property where you could display one of our 150th Jubilee corflute signs? They measure 60cm x 75cm. If you can help us out please email sd@otagogirls.school.nz



First day pupils at Otago Girls' High School 6 February 1871.

Unveiling of Pare 5 February 2021

It was 150 years ago on 6 February 1871 that Otago Girls' High School first opened with 78 girls (aged between 8 and 19) and staff and students celebrated this event on 5 February. It is a big year in the life of our school with our official 150th Jubilee celebrations for ex-girls being held at Labour Weekend.

The celebrations on 5 February began with a special ceremony to unveil and bless our new pare, carved by master carver James York. This carving sits across the archway in our foyer and marks the passage into our school and our place of learning. All staff and students passed under the pare and into the hall. This installation reflects our partnership with manawhenua and the value and importance of our bicultural heritage. It also reflects our history, the mana of the school and the achievement of our 150th "birthday".

The blessing was followed by our special 150th Founders Day assembly which started with an explanation by James York of the significance of the various elements of the pare. Our 150th Prefects spoke about some of the celebratory events that will be happening this year at the school, and Head Prefect Jemma Wilson read some recollections from a first day pupil. Ms Miller gave an address (published

in this newsletter) outlining the foundation and history of our school. On leaving the assembly all students were given a 150th badge to mark this historic occasion. In the afternoon students enjoyed a garden party to continue the celebrations. It was a lovely day in the life of the school!



150th badge distributed to students on 5 February.



Newly installed pare in the school foyer.



Current students dressed in period costumes and old school uniforms during the School's 150th celebrations held for students on 5 February (Photo reproduced with permission of the Otago Daily Times).



Principal Linda Miller in period costume.

*As the school archivist, and being an ex-girl it is not really surprising that I still have my school uniform in pristine condition. Sadly I would have needed to lose 10kg to wear it to our celebrations on 5 February. While I dressed in a more traditional manner, Year 13 student Isabella Sanders (at left) was more than willing to wear my uniform for the occasion.
Jane Smallfield (nee Palmer)*

Flora Sophia Barry (née MacSwain) OGHS 1932-1935

The following article on the remarkable life of Flora Sophie Barry was contributed by her daughter Brenda Nori.

Flora Sophia Barry née MacSwain was born in Montreal, Canada in 1919 and died near where she lived in Eildon Village in the Scottish Borders, on 3rd January 2017, aged nearly 98.

After crossing the Atlantic a few times, back and forth from Canada to Scotland to be shown off to her grandparents, and the birth of a baby brother in 1921, the family finally moved to Dunedin, New Zealand in 1925. There, both Flora and her brother, Angus, grew up. Flora went to Otago Girls' High School and Angus attended Otago Boy's High School. Flora had many school friends but her best friend, another Otago Girls' High School pupil, was Beatrice Miller whose father, Rev. Thomas Miller was the Minister of St. Stephen's Church, North Dunedin, another important landmark in Flora's life. The two families, the MacSwains and the Millers, were great friends – a friendship that has been handed down and continues to this day. Other New Zealand friends,

including the Wallace, Allan, Rae, Smee, Small, Bell, and Yule families, to name a few, also kept in touch with Flora and her family.

Flora always talked fondly about her wonderful outdoor life in New Zealand and at Otago Girls' High School, with swimming, tennis, riding and cycling among her favourite activities. Unfortunately this was not to last. In 1935, at the age of sixteen, family problems saw Flora, her mother and brother leaving Dunedin forever and returning to Edinburgh, Scotland.

Life was now very bleak, living with aunts and trying to finish an education which was very different to that experienced at Otago Girls' High School. However, she persisted, and continued with a secretarial course at night school, before landing a job with a very prominent legal firm based in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, home to the city's elite legal and medical professionals.

But her heart wasn't in it. Her one ambition was to become a missionary, preferably medical, and her sights were already set on China. In preparation, she spent two years at the Mount Hermon Missionary Training College which had been evacuated to the south of England during the Second World War. At



1932 I.I.C. . Flora Barry front row 4th from left with her best friend Beatrice Miller on her left.

this time, Flora very sadly lost her beloved brother, Angus, aged just 19, reported as 'missing, believed drowned' when his ship was torpedoed.

Once back in Edinburgh, her next step was to enrol for a nursing career although in her heart of hearts she wanted to be a doctor. She hadn't had the opportunity of studying advanced physics and chemistry for entry to university, so she decided to opt for the second best - a nursing career. As an introduction, as she was waiting for the term to start, having applied and been accepted to Nursing School with her uniform already purchased, she decided to volunteer to roll bandages at the Cowgate Dispensary run by the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society (EMMS) in one of the poorest parts of Edinburgh. There she was to meet the Director, Dr Lechler, of the EMMS, himself a missionary just back from 30 years in China, and it was he who was to change Flora's life completely.

One of the EMMS primary objectives was to train and partially finance students to become medical missionaries. Dr. Lechler discovered that Flora's real aspiration in life was to become a doctor as well as a missionary. Although she was about to start at the School of Nursing, the EMMS strongly encouraged her to change her mind, and study for exams in her two missing subjects, physics and chemistry, at night school - and then enrol for medicine. This Flora did in 1941 and qualified in October 1946.

After qualifying, Flora went out to Ethiopia to join her husband, B. Oscar Barry, a medical missionary whom she'd met and married during her studies. They were posted to various parts of Ethiopia with the Sudan Interior Mission. They also worked for the United Nations Refugees War Relief Fund and for the Quaker Society in the Gaza Strip, assisting Palestinian refugees, as well as in Omdurman, Sudan with the Church Missionary Society, before returning to the United Kingdom in 1953.

However, settling down was not in their minds. Back they went to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1960 with their three children – the eldest having been born in Ethiopia and the other two in the Gaza Strip. Not only did Flora work in Ethiopia with the Ethio-Swedish Pediatric Clinic, but she was Doctor-in-Charge of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Clinic in Africa House, Addis Ababa. Here, she also wrote dramatized radio scripts about health issues for Radio Voice of the Gospel. Flora went on to run a baby clinic in Aden, and finally returned to Edinburgh,

Scotland, in 1967 as a Registrar in Edinburgh's Central Microbiology Laboratories. She later worked for many years as a GP in Bo'ness, Scotland until she retired to Eildon Village in the Scottish Borders.

During her long and remarkable life, Flora met and knew many well-known international figures. Just to mention two of the more famous - Eric Lomax, The Railway Man of film and book fame. In her student days, Eric and Flora attended youth prayer meetings and bible class together at the same Edinburgh church. Another notable acquaintance was Australian, Dr. Catherine Hamlin AC, twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and downstairs neighbour of the Barry Family in Addis Ababa during the 1960s. Together with her New Zealand husband, Reginald, Catherine established the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, or, as it is named in her book, *The Hospital by the River*, providing free and pioneering obstetric fistula repair surgery to poor women suffering from devastating childbirth injuries. To this day, contacts and friendship between the Hamlin and Barry families continue.

Embroidery sampler

Below is the earliest sampler we have in our collection of those produced by students while they were students at Otago Girls'. This one was worked by Joan Margaret Wilson (later Crawley) when she was a pupil at the school between 1933 and 1935. It was recently donated by her daughter Susan Bremner (née Crawley) who attended Otago Girls' in 1956 before departing for Australia.



Visit by ex-girls

We were delighted to have a visit from a group of ex-pupils who have remained in contact since they began at Otago Girls' in 1951. They were also accompanied by some students with links to them who started a few years later. Some of our lovely Prefects enjoyed giving them a tour of the school.



Back row: Becky de la Harpe, Grace McLeay (née Fraser, 3R, 1951), Janice Madden (née Borrie, 3S, 1951), Linda Miller (Principal), Ngaire Sutherland (née Edwards, 3M, 1956), Cicely Turner (née Doust, 3R, 1951), Margaret Burton (née Campbell, 3R, 1956), Sonia Potter (née Doust, 3R 1957), Charlotte Hewson
Front row: Jemma Wilson, Ada Garrett (née Pero, 3S, 1951), Joy Edwards (née Pope, 3S, 1951), Joan Ledgerwood (nee Wards, 3R, 1951), Noeleen Johnston (3S, 1951), Andrea Dale.



Embroidery samplers
donated by Grace
McLeay (née Fraser, 3R,
1951).



Lucy Davidson (OGHS 2015 - 2019)

Recent ex-girl Lucy Davidson was recently selected for a Blake Inspiring Environmental Leadership Award and was due to travel to the Kermadec Islands in March. Sadly the change in Covid alert level prevented this happening but we are proud of Lucy being selected for this prestigious event.



The Blake New Zealand website www.blakenz.org published the following profile on Lucy.

Lucy is a second-year undergraduate student at the University of Otago, completing a Bachelor of Science in geology and geography. From 2015-2019 she attended Otago Girls' High School where she was a prefect and leader of the school's environment group. In 2019, she led an application with the group for the Zayed Sustainability Prize focussed on making renewable energy accessible to young people within the Dunedin community. The school was selected as a finalist and in 2020 Lucy attended the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week and World Future Energy Summit along with conjunctive forums in the UAE. Throughout high school Lucy was involved in citizen science projects including Healthy Harbour Watch which is run in conjunction with the University of Otago. She attended the Untouched World Foundation's Waterwise held in Central Otago and from this went on to be chosen for the foundation's Advanced Leadership Programme. Lucy has volunteered for

DOC in the Mackenzie Basin monitoring native bird populations on the Godley River. In 2019, she was selected for the Royal Society of New Zealand's Powering Potential programme. Most recently, Lucy was a virtual participant of AINSE's 2020 Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship (WISE) School. Lucy is interested in pursuing a career in glaciology and using her passion for conservation and sustainability combined with her passion for the Earth Sciences to provide solutions for the future.



Lucy Davidson and Brynn McBurney in Abu Dhabi in January 2020.

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