

## Brighter future for cataract sufferers thanks to UC researchers



(Clockwise from back left) Adjunct Professor Bill Swallow, Professor Jim Coxon, Professor Andrew Abell and postdoctoral fellow Dr Stephen McNabb hope the research will improve the quality of life for those with cataracts.

### Researchers at the University of Canterbury are pioneering an eye drop to halt the development of cataracts.

Cataracts are the major cause of blindness worldwide. Until now, the only option has been corrective surgery.

However, researchers from the University's Chemistry Department are trying to identify a compound which would act as an inhibitor and prevent cataracts from developing.

Cataracts cause the lens of the eye to become cloudy and prevent the passage of light. Scientists believe that an increase in activity of calcium-dependent proteases, or calpains,

break down the major lens proteins, the crystallins, leading to opaque lenses.

The Canterbury team – led by Professor Andrew Abell and Professor Jim Coxon – believe the inhibition of calpain activity could halt cataract formation.

“It is our goal to develop a compound to treat cataracts that can be incorporated into an eye drop and prescribed to treat cataracts,” said Professor Abell.

The UC researchers have been working closely with colleagues at Lincoln University who have developed an animal model to allow a study of the progression of cataracts.

The Lincoln study has focused on a flock of sheep genetically predisposed to cataracts.

A calpain inhibitor has been tested on the lambs. It was applied as eye drops and slowed, but did not prevent, the development of cataracts.

“These results are promising as they support our hypothesis that calpain activity is important in the development of the cataract and showed that inhibitors could interfere with cataract progression,” said Professor Abell.

Professor Coxon said the research put the University of Canterbury at the forefront of a new way of developing drugs.

“What we are doing is very different from the rest of the world. We are trying to develop a paradigm that is new and unique. This involves using computational methods to carefully define a peptide  $\beta$ -strand geometry and then use the information to design molecules that mimic it and have selectivity for specific proteases.”

Professor Abell said the team was now working on developing new and improved inhibitors of the target calpains.

“We have also recently established the capability to test compounds in a lens culture system. This allows further screening of compounds before they enter sheep trials.”

The Canterbury team is working with Douglas Pharmaceuticals (NZ) to develop more efficient eye delivery systems and has links with Senju,

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## Brighter future for cataract sufferers thanks to UC researchers continued from page 1.

a Japanese pharmaceutical company which specialises in eye-care products.

“Once we are able to prevent cataracts in the animal model, the next stage would be testing the calpain inhibitors in humans.

“Long waiting lists exist for cataract surgery

in most affluent countries and one of our goals is to improve the quality of life of those that currently face blindness while awaiting a cataract operation. This is of even greater importance to third world countries.”

Professor Abell said the research provided a

basis for developing related inhibitors for the treatment of other disorders associated with overactive calpains including muscular dystrophy, traumatic brain injury and Type II diabetes.

## Budding entrepreneurs ready for business



Dr Grant Ryan.

**Business can be anything but dry and stale, according to entrepreneur Dr Grant Ryan, who told guests at the launch of the University of Canterbury Entrepreneurship Challenge (entré) that it can be an amazingly creative source of personal freedom.**

He said any competitive person with a good idea could achieve great things.

Dr Ryan, who is a Canterbury University alumnus, was a co-founder of Christchurch company GlobalBrain, which had significant

international success developing internet search engine technologies.

He is currently involved with five companies and is responsible for distributing \$500 million worth of science and technology seed capital.

UC Vice-Chancellor Professor Roy Sharp told guests at this month's function that a competition like entré had benefits for the wider university community and beyond.

“It helps the development of educated people who can make a great mark on the world.”

The business plan competition, which has a prize pool of \$50,000, is modelled on similar successful competitions run by a number of universities around the world.

Competitors will take part in two events. The first will see 10 people rewarded with \$1000 each for having the best business ideas.

The second event will see teams competing for funding to set up their businesses.

The prize pool has been funded by sponsors, the principal among who are PriceWaterhouse Coopers and Duncan Cotterill Lawyers.

As well as funding, the entré programme will provide guidance on how to turn an idea into businesses.

The Fast Track Business Course will provide inspiration for competitors. The course will feature presentations by members of Christchurch's business community.

Chief executive of entré, Chris Hartley, said he had already benefited from close contact with business leaders.

“It has been my job to present to these people to get them involved. Selling a product to people who have squeezed you in between meetings has required me to be confident and forthright in a way I've never had to before.

“It has been satisfying to make entré a reality. Now I'm looking forward to seeing the ideas of the competitors.”

## New prayer room provides centre for Muslim students

**Muslim staff and students at UC now have a dedicated space on campus for their daily prayers.**

A Muslim prayer room has been created on Forestry Road, behind the International Student Support Centre. The space previously housed Audio Visual's television studio, Garage Productions, which has found a new home in the James Hight building.

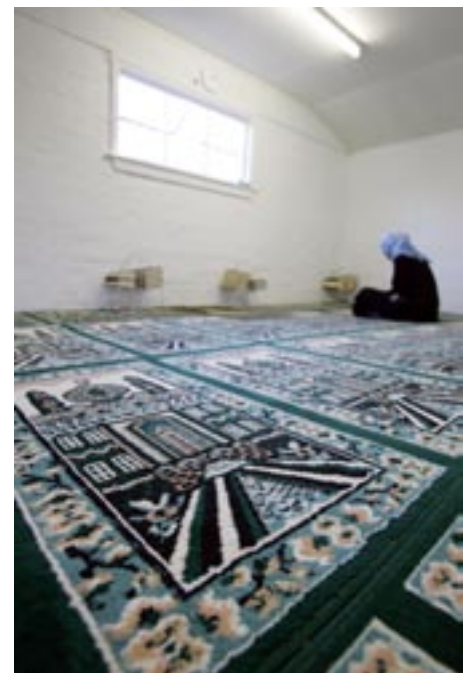
International Student Support manager Bex Gilchrist said since the space became available late last year many of the University's Muslim students had been “really proactive” giving the space a makeover. The students have painted the room and furnished it with prayer rugs facing to the west, in the direction of Ka'bah in Mecca, the holy city.

The prayer room is used on a daily basis by a diverse group of Muslims for both prayer and also as a meeting place.

“It is really important to their religion to have that space. A student told me last year, ‘It is good to have this space and have our spirit back!’” Ms Gilchrist said.

Muslims demonstrate their faith by the five daily ritual prayers called Salah and, for students, often it can be difficult to get to the mosque in town for prayers, hence the importance of the new space right on campus.

First-year student Nooraysha Jones said that while Muslim students could pray anywhere on campus, it was excellent that the University had provided a special place for them to join in prayer.



A student takes time out for prayer.

## Chronicle

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# University gifted 'unique' image of early rector

**An exquisite miniature of Sir James Hight, painted by his long-time friend and colleague Sir James Shelley, has been donated to the University of Canterbury.**

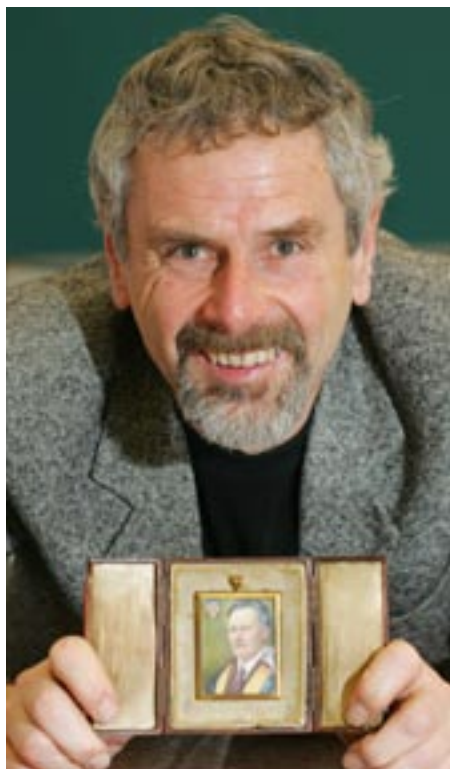
The miniature, dated October 1930, was presented to the Macmillan Brown Library by Glyn Strange in accordance with a deathbed wish from Hight's niece, Eileen O'Malley.

Dr Strange got to know Mrs O'Malley while researching material for his book on the University's Little Theatre, which Shelley founded in the 1920s. Hight was the second rector of Canterbury College, the predecessor of the University of Canterbury, from 1928 to 1941. He first joined the staff as a lecturer in 1909 and by 1919 was professor of history and political science. His long service to the college ended in 1947.

Shelley joined the staff in 1920 as professor of education and was to pioneer educational change in New Zealand. He also lectured in art history and dominated Christchurch dramatic circles founding the Canterbury College Drama Society in 1921 and the Canterbury Repertory Theatre Society in 1928.

It is believed the miniature was painted as a token of friendship. Measuring just 62mm by 49mm, it is painted on the reverse of the glass and encased in a silk-lined leather box with hand-tooled decoration. The painting also features the University's coat of arms.

UC Registrar of Art Collections Ms Terri Elder said the miniature was in very good condition and features "incredibly fine brushwork". She said the miniature was "unique" as there were



*Dr Glyn Strange with the miniature of Sir James Hight.*

no others of similar format in the collections. She also said it complemented the other three images of Hight held by the University: an etching by James Fitzgerald; a pencil portrait by Rosa Sawtell; and the formal portrait by Elizabeth Kelly which hangs in the Council Chambers.

The University also holds two images of Shelley in its art collections: a cartoon by

William Baverstock; and a photograph by Steffano Webb.

Dr Strange said there had been talk of the miniature going to the Christchurch Art Gallery but said "the University is the right place for it".

He hoped that one day when the biography of Hight was written, that the image drawn by a friend 75 years ago may adorn the cover.

## Scholarships help eight on academic path

**Eight University of Canterbury first-year students facing financial hardship will not have to pay any tuition fees this year, after being awarded Bright Start scholarships.**

The scholarships are awarded annually to students at Canterbury University, Lincoln University, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and Christchurch College of Education. They are designed to help students from the South Island who have the ability to study at tertiary level but lack adequate financial resources.

The scholarship scheme is administered by the Canterbury Tertiary Education Millennium Trust, a not-for-profit organisation established in 2002 by Canterbury's four main tertiary institutions.

"Students are increasingly facing hardship when entering tertiary study and these scholarships support those students who may otherwise miss out on their first step to a qualification," says Ali Hughes, chair of the trust.

Twenty-two scholarships were presented at a function last week at Boaters Restaurant, in the town hall, by trust patron Sir Angus Tait.

He told the gathering it was heart-warming to see the opportunities the trust had created for students since the awards were established three years ago.

Sir Angus said the awards have had an impact beyond the boundaries of the four participating tertiary institutions and the benefits of students being financially assisted in their first year of study were immeasurable.

"Might I add that the trustees' money is doing better here than it might elsewhere," he quipped.

The eight Canterbury University recipients are Zainab Al-Alawi, Bachelor of Arts (Spanish and Linguistics) and Bachelor of Law; Katie Beardsley, Bachelor of Arts (Psychology); Nicola Blackmore, Bachelor of Science (Biochemistry); Fraser Dennison, Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical); April Habershon, Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Commerce (Management/Marketing); Sarah Reid, Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Arts (Political Science & French); Nicole Rudin, Bachelor of Science (Geography); Stephanie Smith, Bachelor of Law.

## Merger web site established

**A web site has been set up to keep staff and the wider community informed of progress on the proposed merger between the University and Christchurch College of Education.**

It provides details of the merger project structure and personnel, the terms of reference and membership of the various project working groups, an archive of communications about the proposed merger and information on other joint projects such as continuing discussions on the alignment of the libraries and information technology departments.

It includes a section answering frequently asked questions and also provides mechanisms for informed comment and questions, on an anonymous basis if desired. The site will be updated regularly and can be viewed at <http://merger.cce.ac.nz>.

The Councils of the University and the College have both resolved to support in principle the proposed merger between the two institutions

to a timeline of not later than 1 January 2007, and to try and get the Minister of Education's approval for it before the end of this year.

The academic and business case for the merger is being developed by the merger project group for consideration by the academic bodies of both institutions prior to going to the two Councils at the start of June. This timing is driven by the need to get it to the Minister early in June if it is to be considered before the general election and implemented before 2007.

If both Councils agree to merge there would be a formal consultation process initiated by the Minister and if he gives his approval there would be formal consultation with staff and unions using established protocols in respect of proposals for change.

A joint letter from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roy Sharp, and the College Principal, Dr Graham Stoop, has been sent to stakeholder groups of both institutions to keep them informed and to invite feedback.

# Awash with poetry



Credit: John Newton.

Poets gather at New Brighton beach as part of the Fugacity 05 poetry symposium.

## High tide brought a recent University of Canterbury-hosted symposium to a poetic close.

Poets gathered on the beach at New Brighton for the final events of the Fugacity 05 poetry symposium late last month and watched as the word “Fugacity”, inscribed in giant letters in the sand, was slowly washed out to sea.

It was a dramatic end to a dynamic three-day symposium organised by Claire Hero and Dr John Newton from the University of Canterbury English programme in conjunction with the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre (nzepc) at the University of Auckland.

“It was the first time many people had watched a tide coming in,” Ms Hero said. “It was fitting as I think that’s what poetry does – it makes you slow down and pay attention. Its difficulty requires your time, patience, attention and engagement.”

The symposium’s title, Fugacity 05, was drawn from one of the famous “Garden” poems of Canterbury poet Ursula Bethell for whom UC’s residency in creative writing is named. The idea of the fugacity, or transience of life, lent itself as a theme for many of the symposium activities.

As part of the programme an online poetry anthology was produced from poems submitted at events and emailed from around the globe.

Ms Hero said the digital anthology was a chance to “concretise” the moment in time. The Fugacity 05 anthology, launched at New Brighton after its three-day creation, attracted contributions from more than 100 poets.

The symposium began with a collaborative writing event at which poets joined forces to create a contribution for the online anthology.

“I like to think of poetry as collaborative instead of personal. The poet in an ivory tower or as solitary muse is a tired and not very useful idea. The collaborative time was a great way to start out the event as it launched us into this mindset that poetry could be something larger than the individual,” Ms Hero said.

Other features of the poetry festival were a digital poetics seminar, poetry readings by students in UC’s creative writing poetry course and by established Kiwi poets, and the launch of nzepc author pages for Canterbury poets Bernadette Hall, Michael Harlow and Ursula Bethell.

Ms Hero was especially proud of her poetry students who gave a reading on opening night at SOFA Gallery and showcased the talent being nurtured in the creative writing programme at UC.

“I can give them encouragement in class, but there is nothing like standing up in front of 75 strangers and following their reactions, where their attention flags and where it sparks. The students worked really hard.”

The digital poetry session which included UC English tutor Dave Ciccoricco speaking on kinetic poetry was also popular, Ms Hero said.

“Most people weren’t familiar with digital poetry, but by the end people were excited and energised by the possibilities of what can be done with poetry online. Digital poetry offers new ways of expressing oneself, as it incorporates not only language but sound and image. This kind of poetry potentially can attract a much wider audience.”

The online anthology created for Fugacity 05 can be viewed on nzepc’s website: <http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/features/fugacity/fugacity05.asp>.

## Canterbury welcomes new staff

**Dr Tom Cochrane** has been appointed a lecturer in Natural Resources Engineering in the Department of Civil Engineering. Dr Cochrane has a BSc, MSc and PhD from Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA.



From 2003 to 2004 he was a consultant on a water and gas project in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, looking at the feasibility of using natural gas or LPG as an alternative energy source for the irrigation of crops using water from deep aquifers. Prior to that, he worked for two years as a consultant and project executor on a hydroelectric project in Brazil and Paraguay.

**Dr Ray Kirk** has joined the Health Sciences Centre as a senior lecturer and Deputy Director. Dr Kirk will be responsible for the Health Information Management Endorsed Option. Dr Kirk has a BSc,



MSc and PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Canterbury.

He has worked at the Department of Public Health and General Practice at the Christchurch School of Medicine since 1996 as a clinical senior lecturer, senior research fellow, foundation director of the NZ Health Technology Assessment unit and, most recently, as co-director of the New Zealand Centre for Evidence-based Research into Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

**Dr Camilla Obel** has been appointed a lecturer in the School of Sociology and Anthropology where she lectured on a fixed term from 1999 to 2004. Dr Obel completed a BA in sociology at Copenhagen University, Denmark, and an MA and PhD in Sociology at Canterbury University.



She has published in the areas of bodybuilding, rugby union and rugby league. Her dissertation research focused on the restructuring of rugby union following the introduction of professionalism in 1995 and involved interviewing rugby union players, coaches, administrators and sponsors.

# Army's loss was Canterbury's gain

**The 33-year UC career of Human Resources Manager David Towns may never have started but for the dawning realisation that a military posting to Waiouru was not highly prized by New Zealanders.**

As a new immigrant from South Africa in 1972 he accepted an offer from the New Zealand Army to serve as an education officer on the volcanic plateau.

"It was only after I had signed up that I found out what Waiouru was really like, but fortuitously for me, a suitable position at the University was advertised."

His interview for that position was with a very august panel comprising the chancellor, pro-chancellor, vice-chancellor, registrar and dean of engineering, the reason being that the position was for organising secretary for the University's 1973 centennial celebrations.

"It was like a baptism of fire," he recalls, with information coming from every quarter until his head spun.

"But in fact it was probably the most wonderful introduction anyone could ever have to a new country, a new city and a new institution."

The centennial celebrations of May 1973 were a great success and David's rapidly acquired knowledge of the University and its people helped him move into a more settled job as a faculty administrator.

His boss was the current Registrar Alan Hayward, "a true friend and mentor to me over all these years." Alan Hayward continued to be his boss for 27 years as he became assistant registrar (academic) in 1981 and then staff registrar in 1987 and later human resources registrar.

The first few years were on the town site working from an office in a Gloucester Street house where his daily duties included bringing in *The Press* each day and in winter lighting and tending the fire.

It was a smaller and more intimate university where most staff knew each other and the God-like professors still held sway in the senior common room downstairs at what is now the Dux de Lux.

The knowledge acquired through his centennial induction was supplemented with faculty administration in the law, commerce and music and fine arts faculties. Sporting activities, especially badminton and volleyball, and various staff social activities provided further means to bridge divides between general and academic staff and the various academic disciplines.

It was ideal preparation for the human resources role to come, which also took him into all corners of the University.

David was closely involved with the shift from the town site to Ilam and instrumental in setting up the Arts Centre Trust Board, the



*David Towns is showered with presents at his retirement party.*

structure through which the University gifted the old site to the city of Christchurch.

A particularly fond memory is of his involvement in introducing the Certificate of Liberal Studies, a qualification established to enable mature students to start university study outside the traditional degree framework. Many of those who started with the certificate went on to be very successful degree students.

"I still get people coming up and telling me how much those studies meant to them."

His 18 years in an HR role saw his involvement in many difficult and sensitive issues but his discretion and loyalty are legendary and his wise handling of tricky issues meant the University seldom appeared in the Employment Court.

"It was like a mantra. I would say to people, whatever you say within these four walls remains between us unless you do or say something to reveal it."

As he said at a farewell, "your secrets are safe with me. My HR training, as well as a fear of prosecution, will keep my lips sealed to the grave."

High standards have always been a part of the Towns style: things such as good grammar, proper use of the apostrophe, politeness, an insistence on punctuality and high personal standards.

Long-serving staff members still remember his 1980s efforts to stop the staff in his area from chewing gum, wearing ultra-casual clothes such as jeans and jandals, and

affixing a variety of posters to office walls. The upshot of this was the carefully-planned and good-natured "revolt" one morning when staff arrived at work wearing the scruffiest of clothes, chewing gum and having plastered the office with posters. David took this in good humour and his campaign to introduce a dress code was abandoned forthwith.

In 33 years, David served under four vice-chancellors, a number of acting VCs and three registrars.

In 2000 the administration was restructured and David chose to take the role of Employee Relations Manager and worked closely and happily with HR Director Associate Professor Bruce Jamieson — "we operated 'good cop — bad cop' in industrial relations; it became second nature to us".

In retirement, David and his wife Ruth have travel plans, including visiting their son and grandson in Australia. He has also rejoined the Staff Club committee, following a long period of membership in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and as a former church organist has taken on the position as secretary of the Friends of the Christchurch Town Hall Organ Trust in order to stimulate interest in the organ — roles which will give him plenty of opportunity to continue using the familiar fountain pen given to him by Ruth as an appointment gift 33 years ago.

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## Printmaker's works on show at SOFA Gallery

**SOFA Gallery's latest exhibition, *Sweet & Sour/Then & Now*, showcases the work of leading New Zealand printmaker Barry Cleavin.**

A recent recipient of an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from the University of Canterbury, Barry Cleavin's status as a printmaker of significant stature within the New Zealand art scene is widely recognised.

The exhibition, *Sweet & Sour/Then & Now*, provides an opportunity to engage with the work of an artist committed to communicating complex and varied ideas, and it also provides an excellent opportunity to better appreciate Cleavin's considered use of the printmaking medium itself.

Currently living and working in Christchurch, Cleavin graduated from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts with honours in 1966. Since then he has taken part in many exhibitions both in New Zealand and internationally.

The works selected for his latest show are representative of more than 20 years of printmaking.

The exhibition at SOFA Gallery in the Arts Centre closes Sunday 29 May.

# Girl power movies grab academic attention

**A love of scary movies and strong female protagonists steered Dr Bianca Nielsen towards her chosen thesis topic.**

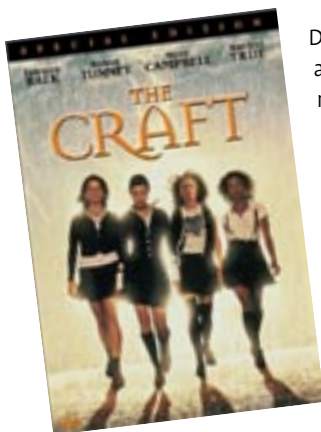
Dr Nielsen graduated last month with a PhD in American Studies. Her doctoral dissertation, titled *Werewolves, Mothers and Femmes Fatales: Girl Power Movies*, analyses the feminist potential of recently produced “girl power” movies and the impact these films have on popular interpretations of feminism.

Girl power became a phenomenon in the mid to late 1990s when a whole range of cultural products — television, film, music — became interested in portraying strength in individual women and communities of women.

Dr Nielsen equates the girl power phenomenon in mainstream movies with “popular feminist development”.

“Active female protagonists represented in many of these recently produced girl power movies reinvent the binaries that code our cultural understandings of women-as-consumers and women-as-consumed-objects,” she says in her thesis.

“The circulation and negotiation of feminist ideas in the lived experiences of women and girls will be ignored should academia dismiss mainstream films as valid expressions of feminism.”



Dr Nielsen studied a collection of more than 20 contemporary girl power movies made in America including the *Scream* movies, *Legally Blonde*, *Single White Female*, *The Craft*, and *Cruel Intentions*.

Encompassing drama, film noir, horror, occult films and comedy, the common denominator in all her chosen girl power films was female actresses in the lead roles.

“All women, regardless of the outcome of the film, tried to articulate something against patriarchal culture — whether fighting against chauvinistic males, murderers, or against social institutions.”

Dr Nielsen says that the importance of her research was in developing the ideas of earlier feminist film theorists and, rather than taking a holistic perspective as had been done by previous critics, concentrating more specifically on the different portrayals of girl power in films.

“Basically I tried to point towards how these films have moved on from previous films that previous feminist film theorists have looked at.”

One of the important revelations in her thesis, which she believes has been largely overlooked by theorists, is that films targeted at female audiences today are beginning to more explicitly target diverse groups of female viewers, giving rise to group spectatorship and a sense of group solidarity.

Dr Nielsen says she has always been a big fan of scary movies and began her research by looking at strong female protagonists in horror flicks. However, studying the films frame by frame over the course of four years has taken a little of the enjoyment factor out of the experience for her.

“I can’t really go to a film with a female lead now without thinking how it fits in with the frameworks in my thesis.”

Dr Nielsen is currently teaching media studies and English at Tokomairiro High School in Milton, near her home town of Dunedin. Her love of horror films has not taken a back seat and her latest film project has been making a movie with her media studies class, which stars a killer penguin.

# Poet’s exhibition shows depth of Macmillan Brown collection



Christchurch poet Bernadette Hall and Auckland University PhD student and curator Bronwyn Fletcher, take a look at the Ursula Bethell display.

**Ursula Bethell may have died 60 years ago but her work lives on and is the focus of exhibitions and web pages.**

Paintings, photographs, letters and manuscripts relating to Ursula Bethell will be on display in the Macmillan Brown Library reading room until 21 May.

The display was put together by Archivist Jeff Palmer and Art Collection Registrar Terri Elder to coincide with the Fugacity 05 poetry symposium held at UC.

Much of the material in the Ursula Bethell collection was donated in the 1970s by Lawrence Baigent, a former English lecturer at the University of Canterbury and Bethell’s literary executor.

Bethell’s papers at Macmillan Brown regularly attract arts scholars from other centres to the University who come and spend days poring over them.

As part of Fugacity 05 (a title drawn from one of Bethell’s poems) a historic author web page was launched on the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre (nzepc) website for Ursula Bethell, which draws on the archives of the Macmillan Brown Library.

Auckland poet Michele Leggott, who was at UC for Fugacity 05, referred to “the riches”

contained in the Macmillan Brown collection and thanked the staff for opening it up to the nzepc.

“The University graciously made available a huge range of material from the collection, opening a gateway to a cyber Ursula Bethell,” she said.

The Ursula Bethell web page, which can be found at <http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/authors/bethell/>, contains an extensive selection from Bethell’s published career including her entire collection of Garden poems, plus photos, letters, critical articles and responses, and an online exhibition of 14 of her watercolours.

## People

**Professor Peter Joyce** has been appointed Adjunct Professor in the Department of Psychology, initially for a three-year term.

Senior fellows **Dr Deb Chattopdhyay** (Management) and **Dr Gordon Spence** (Culture, Literature and Society) have had their appointments renewed for a further three-year term.

# UC marketer is hitting a high note

**From marketing to Marktoberdorf – Brigitte Murray aims to make her mark in whatever she undertakes.**

The UC marketing director is heading to Germany this month to sing at one of the world's most prestigious choral competitions.

She will join in song with the 28-strong Tower Voices New Zealand at the 9th International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf.

Ms Murray says it is a fantastic opportunity for the choir to compete at Marktoberdorf and even to be selected was a "coup" as only 14 choirs are selected for the event from more than 60 applicants.

"This is the way to put this choir on the world stage. Last year, Voices did a recording with Naxos which was on the Top 20 Classical Chart in the UK, so it is starting to get an international reputation but it has got to back that up with live performances, and then doors open for many other things."

Ms Murray has been a member of Tower Voices since 2000, having "graduated" from the New Zealand Youth Choir, of which she was a member from 1994 to 1999.

During her last year with the New Zealand Youth Choir they won Choir of the World in a competition in the UK which she rates as "the greatest highlight of (her) life to date".

Tower Voices, formed in 1998, is New Zealand's only professional-level chamber choir. Ms Murray is the sole Christchurch member of the nationally auditioned group which usually meets three times a year to perform.

"It is a privileged group to be a part of. You get to make great music and sing at the top level with top musicians."

In Germany, Tower Voices will perform a 25-minute programme comprised of set pieces and own selections chosen to showcase a diversity of styles plus the unique musical offerings of Aotearoa.

"We usually take the opportunity to sing works by New Zealand composers. We are not just ambassadors for our country overseas but New Zealand music too."

Ms Murray's singing career began at the age of seven when she started singing in her church choir, which she still does. However, she says her real "entrée into choral singing" was at Burnside High School where she was a member of the girls' choir, Bel Canto.

In recent years the soprano has been having weekly singing lessons from Mary Adams-Taylor.

Choral work is just one facet of her singing life. She also performs in musical theatre, has a number of recording credits to her name and frequently appears as a soloist in concerts and recitals throughout the country.

In late 2002 she became involved with



Brigitte Murray singing at her friends' wedding accompanied by Maurice Till.

Canterbury Opera. She has had a number of minor roles to date and considers herself an opera "apprentice" relishing the challenge to grow as a performer.

"It is all about blend and balance singing in a choir but it's every man for himself in opera which I found quite strange at first. You just have to belt it out singing over the top of an orchestra!"

Ms Murray says that singing is her "sanity".

"It is really important to have a creative outlet.

I think it makes me more interesting and balanced and stops my life becoming work-orientated. Singing adds a richness to my life."

- *The Chronicle is running a series of stories on the unique and unusual pastimes of University of Canterbury staff. We are looking for staff – academic and general – who have interesting hobbies or passions out-of-the-ordinary, or poles apart from their day job. Please email details to [comms@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:comms@canterbury.ac.nz)*

## Scholarship for UC librarian

**Law Library Assistant Manager Karen Wilyams is to attend an international conference in Italy later this year after being named joint winner of the New Zealand Law Librarians International Scholarship for 2005.**

Ms Wilyams and fellow winner Lisa White of Bell Gully, Wellington, will each receive \$2750 towards attending IALL's annual conference on international law librarianship, entitled "The European Union in the 21st Century: new challenges in law and legal information". It will be held in San Domenico di Fiesole in early September.

The University of Canterbury Library has been New Zealand's sole European Documentation Centre since 1984. Along with the heightened profile of the International Law Group within the School of Law, and an increasing volume of research and teaching in this area, has come a growing need to enhance the Law Library's capacity to support this speciality.

Ms Wilyams is involved in teaching students how to locate and use international legal materials. "With the honour of housing the document centre comes an obligation to show researchers how to make full use of the resource," she said.

## Scholarships

Scholarships awarded for 2005 include: **Rachel Cleaver**, Dow Agrosociences Bursary in Chemical Engineering (\$2500); **Luke Fenwick**, Joan Burns Memorial Scholarship in History (domestic tuition fees for one year); **Jarrod Gilbert**, C Wright Mills Scholarship in Sociology (\$2000); **Claire Grant**, Friends of the Christchurch Art Gallery Scholarship (\$1500); **Amanda Gutsell**, UCSA Lloyd Lilley Scholarship (\$1000) and **Kathryn Jessamine**, Helen Macmillan Brown Bursary (\$2500 per annum for three years).

# Prime Minister visits Canterbury



Associate Professor Richard Blaikie (left) outlines Canterbury's nanotechnology research to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Town, Vice-Chancellor Professor Roy Sharp and Prime Minister Helen Clark, during the PM's visit to the campus.

**Prime Minister Helen Clark spent 90 minutes touring the campus last week, visiting three research centres and talking with staff, doctoral researchers and members of the Senior Management Team.**

Miss Clark spoke to more than a dozen students and their staff supervisors in a relaxed tour of the Centre for Bioengineering, the Nanotechnology Laboratory and the Geohealth Laboratory.

At the Bioengineering Centre host Professor Tim David introduced the PM to the inaugural MacDiarmid Young Scientist of the Year, Andrew Rudge, who described his award-winning biomedical research into "agitation and sedation sensing".

She also discussed a project, funded by the Neurological Foundation and undertaken in collaboration with NASA, which models the

performance of astronauts in space as part of a wider investigation of how humans regulate the supply of blood to the brain.

At the MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology host Associate Professor Richard Blaikie outlined the research team's work on the science and engineering of nanometre-scale structures and introduced Miss Clark to staff and student members of the research team.

One of the lighter moments of the tour was a viewing of the infamous window via which former National Government Education Minister Dr Lockwood Smith exited the campus in 1999, after being trapped by protesting students. Staff had labelled the window the "Lockwood Smith exit, to be used only in emergencies".

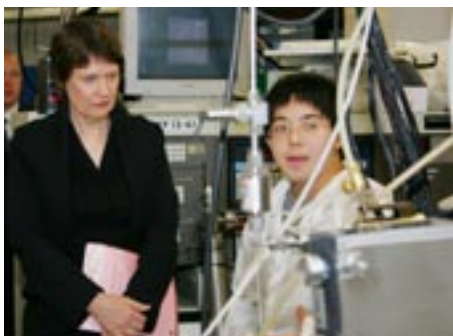
A walk to the Geohealth Laboratory via

Okeover Stream provided a chance to highlight the environmental restoration work which last year won the stream enhancement project a Gold Medal in the Environment Awards.

Geography Department Head Dr Wendy Lawson described the Geohealth Lab's work, in collaboration with the Public Health Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Health, on the geography of health outcomes and health provision and its use in the development of informed public policy.

Lab Director Dr Jamie Pearce and a number of research students described projects ranging from the health implications of geohazards in the Rotorua region to a space and time analysis of crime and a study on the implications of location on access to health care.

The visit ended with an afternoon tea and discussion with members of the SMT.



PhD student William Lee shows Prime Minister Helen Clark the Molecular Beam Epitaxy (MBE) equipment that he uses to study zinc oxide crystals as part of his PhD research.



Vice-Chancellor Professor Roy Sharp and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Ian Town accompany Prime Minister Helen Clark.



Masters student Catherine Tisch shows Prime Minister Helen Clark research looking at pollution and health among school children in Christchurch.