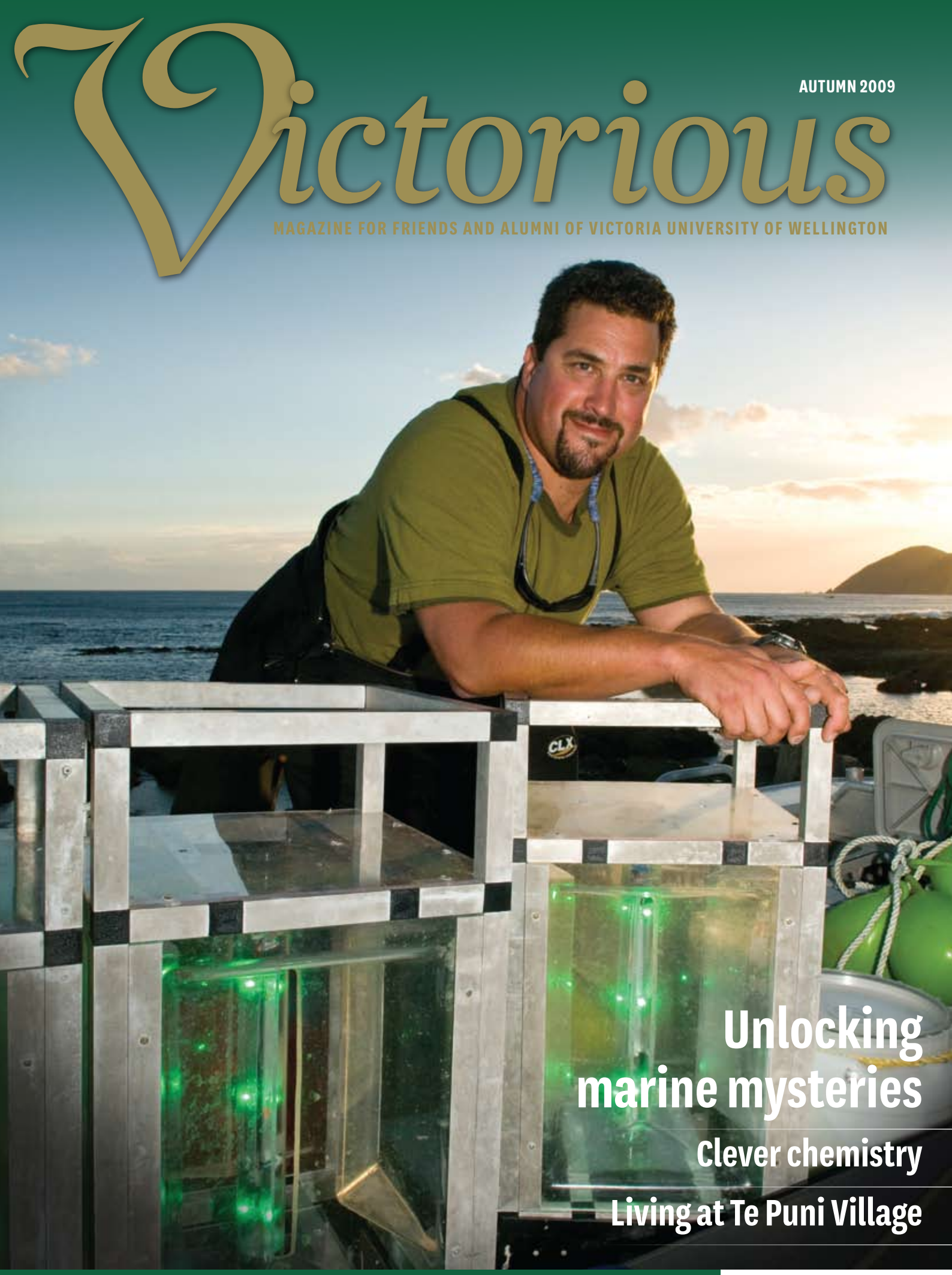
Victorious

AUTUMN 2009

MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS AND ALUMNI OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON



Unlocking marine mysteries

Clever chemistry

Living at Te Puni Village

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI
VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Reducing possum fertility

They're New Zealand's number one vertebrate pest, but possum numbers look set to be controlled by contraceptive methods in the not-too-distant future.

New research aimed at reducing reliance on 1080 poison as a method of pest control uses both vaccines and other compounds to render possums infertile for up to two years.

Associate Professor Doug Eckery, from the School of Biological Sciences, says a possum breeding colony has been established at Wellington Zoo to allow his research team to gauge the effectiveness of contraceptives on possums in captivity.

"First we identified a hormone produced in the brain that is a key regulator of fertility in possums. In subsequent studies, we've been able to successfully disrupt the actions of this hormone by the use of both vaccines and chemical implants, which has resulted in possums becoming infertile for up to two years."

The brushtail possum is an introduced marsupial that has become New Zealand's leading pest, in both ecological and economical terms. Approximately $110 million is spent annually to control the species, primarily using poisons.

But Doug says the current global trend is for the management of invasive wildlife species using non-lethal methods of control.

"Following the recent reassessment of 1080 poison in New Zealand by the Environmental Risk Management Authority, a recommendation was given for more research into alternative methods of possum control. In line with this requirement, part of the reproductive biology research programme at Victoria is focused on developing methods of fertility control for the management of possums in New Zealand."

The research, which is carried out in association with the National Research Centre for Possum Biocontrol, is focused on three key areas.

"We've looked at how and when the ovaries are formed and what regulates the processes involved, the regulation of reproductive hormones and the mechanisms required for the growth and maturation of healthy eggs.

"A major challenge now is to develop practical methods to deliver these vaccines and compounds to possums in the wild."

Wellington Zoo Chief Executive Officer Karen Fifield says applied conservation research is a key component of the Zoo's conservation strategy that seeks to utilise Zoo resources and foster partnerships that will benefit conservation.

"We are thrilled to partner with Victoria University for the protection of New Zealand fauna and flora," she says.

From the Vice-Chancellor

Last year we launched a recruitment campaign that calls on prospective students to 'Get Amongst the Best'. We believe this captures the essence of what it means to be a Victoria University student.

While studying at Victoria in New Zealand's capital city, our students are surrounded by some of New Zealand's most influential people from creative industries, business, government and science and technology organisations.

For our students, being part of Victoria University's community begins the moment they enrol and attend their first lecture, and continues long after their graduation as they enter our growing alumni network.

Our latest strategic plan focuses on ways to enhance students' cultural, social and academic experiences while they study. It's what we call the student experience.

This is an area Victoria excels in. We provide a first-rate experience through high-quality and challenging academic programmes, excellent facilities, responsive student services and opportunities for stimulating social and cultural experiences.

The 2009 academic year is well underway and we've been working to enhance university life for our students even further—and not just through orientation week events!

This year almost 400 students moved into their home for 2009—a brand new accommodation complex called Te Puni Village on the Kelburn Campus.

For the first time, students are living on campus and, I'm sure, enjoying the opportunity to be just a few minutes' walk from lecture theatres and campus facilities, and having some of Wellington's best views.

Developments like this are a major step forward for the University, and come in response to a desperate need for additional student accommodation and facilities to address a significant shortage of space.

Where our students live is just one part of our providing a first-rate university experience.

We offer students two exciting extra-curricular leadership development programmes to complement their degrees, add to their university experience and help them prepare for the future. The Victoria International Leadership Programme and Victoria Plus Award are open to all students, and are proving to be exceptionally popular, with more than 400 students enrolled in each programme in their first year of operation.

For our valued PhD students, we have recently established the Faculty of Graduate Research. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Neil Quigley discusses this development on page 10.

Every New Zealand university works hard to capture the hearts and minds of students. I am proud to say that developments like Te Puni Village give students yet another reason to 'Get Amongst the Best' and make Victoria their university of choice.

Professor Pat Walsh, Vice-Chancellor

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Content

→ Victoria's academic staff are leaders in their fields of research expertise. If you have a project that requires the skills and knowledge of our staff, contact Professor Charles Daugherty. Email: Charles.Daugherty@vuw.ac.nz Tel: +64-4-463 5572.

Changing the face of America

Around half a million undocumented migrants, many from Mexico, arrive in the United States each year seeking a better life. But thousands of others die in the desert along the US-Mexico border on the way.

"Those people come despite a huge wall that pushes them out into the desert. They face a large chance of dying through either hypothermia or dehydration—but they come because they get paid at least four times as much as they do at home," says Kate McMillan, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Political Science and International Relations.

With an estimated 12 million undocumented migrants in the country, immigration is an issue that can decide the outcome of elections while changing the face of America.

A chance to study the controversial issue, in the context of America's historic 2008 election, was one Kate couldn't pass up. Nominated by Fulbright New Zealand, she was among 18 participants from around the world attending a six-week study of the US Institute programme on American Politics at the University of Massachusetts in 2008.

To attend the Institute in the year of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton's historic runs for the Democratic candidacy was "incredibly exciting—a real privilege" according to Kate.

Following the programme, Kate was a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California, San Diego for four months, where she compared how presidential candidates discussed immigration issues in their campaigning.

She says that despite the enormity of the immigration issue, John McCain and Barack Obama had similar views on it, so it tended to be underplayed.

But she says the underlying issue was still crucial in the result.

"The Republican administration alienated a lot of Latinos, and politicised an entire generation. Latinos were crucial to Obama's win in some American states—the Latino Get Out the Vote effort boosted turn-out, and they voted for Obama two-to-one."

A jubilant voter on election night, San Diego, 4 November 2008

She wonders if the campaign signalled a swing away from immigration as a 'wedge issue' for parties of the Right. Similar trends have been observed in Australia and New Zealand—countries she is comparing the United States to in her current research.

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Helping soon-to-be mums

Senior Lecturer Paul Teal has developed a less invasive way of monitoring foetal heartbeats.

Based in the School of Engineering and Computer Science, Paul is aiming to find a more passive method than that currently used by physicians and midwives.

Midwife Suzanne Miller and mum-to-be Maryanne Shearman

"A popular method used in New Zealand is the SonicAid, which is a Doppler device that puts an ultrasound pulse into the mother. You can tell what the baby's heart is doing from the change in frequency of the reflected sound."

Paul says most clinicians believe that Doppler ultrasound is perfectly safe, but anecdotal evidence suggests many mothers don't like this method, as it actively puts energy into their bodies, and many midwives report that babies aren't too keen on it either.

"So I've been looking at a passive way to measure the foetal heart rate. You can do this either by putting electrodes on the mother and then detecting the electrocardiogram signal, or by listening with microphones, which is what my research has focused on."

The microphones are embedded in a device that looks like a very wide belt and can be wrapped around the mother's mid-section.

Paul, who previously worked at Industrial Research Limited (IRL) in Lower Hutt, has been collaborating with his former colleagues to develop a method of using microphones to separate out the mixture of signals emitted from the womb by using a technique called Blind Source Separation.

"This isolates the foetal heart rate from the mother's heart rate and the background noise. It's also a more passive method of monitoring that doesn't negatively impact upon either the mother or the baby."

Paul says he and his IRL counterparts are now working closely with Wellington midwives to collect data from mothers using this less invasive method.

"We've proved the method works in the last few weeks of pregnancy, but we're hopeful that eventually we will be able to use it from when a foetus is 18 weeks. Doppler ultrasound can work from about 12–14 weeks, but the important stages are later in the pregnancy."

Victoria's Graduate School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health has also been involved in the research.

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A settler revolution like no other

James Belich thinks New Zealand can be a laboratory for historical research, developing new ideas and theories and exporting them overseas—a reversal of the traditional approach of New Zealand historians.

It's that belief that has seen the Professor of History at Victoria's Stout Research Centre tackle one of the world's most astonishing settler revolutions for his latest book.

Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1780–1930 explores the historical process that now sees English as one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

James says his research gives a new answer to why that is the case, investigating the explosive settlement of the American West and its forgotten twin, the British West, comprising the settler dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

"Between 1780 and 1930 the number of English-speakers rocketed from 12 million in 1780 to 200 million, and their wealth and power grew to match. Their secret was not racial, or cultural, or institutional superiority—as undoubtedly some of them liked to believe—but an unprecedented intersection of historical changes."

Some of those changes included the rise of mass transfer across oceans and mountains, a revolutionary shift in attitudes to emigration, the emergence of a settler 'boom mentality' and a flowering of non-industrial technologies—wind, water, wood and work animals—especially on settler frontiers.

"These factors, combined with the Industrial Revolution, transformed settlement into something explosive. It was capable of creating great cities like Chicago and Melbourne, and correspondingly large societies and economies, in a single generation."

This is James's first foray into global history. He is adamant it is time for New Zealand historians to start exporting their ideas, rather than continuing to import overseas theory.

"People tend to think history is only interesting if it is long, but that's not the case. New Zealand is a small, young and isolated society—and in some ways that makes it more historically translucent than other societies. You can watch fundamental processes happening with a greater degree of clarity than in other societies."

In *Making Peoples* and *Paradise Reforged* James introduced the concepts of explosive colonisation and recolonisation to explain New Zealand history and the creation of Pākehā and Māori identities. In *Replenishing the Earth* he applies those ideas to a wider global context, reinterpreting European colonisation in groundbreaking fashion.

"In the 18th century under a million British and Irish people left Britain for parts of the world outside Europe. In the 19th century the number was more like 20 million. From about 1815 there was a sudden huge upward shift in the number of people that poured out from Europe."

He calls this a settler revolution—one capable of creating societies like New Zealand "in a blink of history's eyelid".

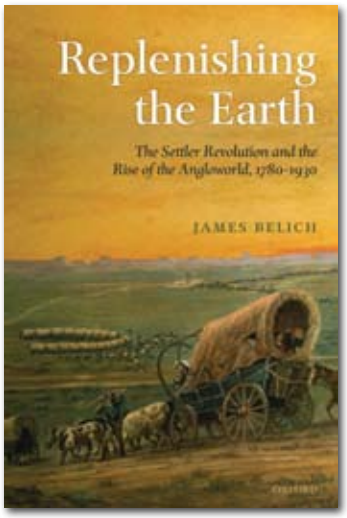
James says the evidence of explosive colonisation is startling. In 1835 Chicago had 100 people—by 1890 it had 1.1 million. European

settlement in Melbourne began in 1835—by 1890 it had half a million people.

"Under the old system you get a colonial city growing to 20,000 over a couple of hundred years. Under the new system you get a city growing to half a million or a million in 50 years. How do these cities just explode from nowhere like volcanoes?"

The evidence of explosive colonisation is also seen in New Zealand.

"Between 1840 and 1880 the European population of New Zealand grew from about 2,000 to about 500,000. If that rate of growth continued, New Zealand would now have at least the population of Great Britain."



Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1780–1930 *is due out in May 2009.*

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Micael-Lee is researching Facebook

Does the title above look familiar to you? Do you update your Facebook status every day too?

If so, you're one of 45 million people worldwide using the rapidly growing social networking website Facebook to keep in touch with friends, family and co-workers.

Facebook allows people to create profiles about themselves, post photos and videos online and send messages to people they've added as their 'friends'. Users can also update their status—a short description of what they are doing at that very moment—for all their friends to see.

School of Marketing and International Business lecturer Micael-Lee Johnstone and her colleagues from the University of Otago have been exploring how and why people incorporate social networking sites like Facebook into their daily lives. They conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with people aged 22–38.

The study reveals that participation on Facebook is viewed as an extension of offline communication rather than a replacement of it—something that critics had previously questioned.

Other interesting findings to emerge from the study involve gender differences and the use of Facebook as an icebreaker.

"We found that Facebook was a useful tool—or icebreaker—when participants came into contact with people they didn't know very well, especially if they were shy or had language barriers. We found that some of the applications available on Facebook and virtual gifts encouraged bonding for these people."

She says the research also shows that male participants learnt more about their friends' lives online in a shorter space of time than they would have offline, due to the ease of reading status updates, looking at photos and reading profile information.

Despite Facebook's sudden success, Micael-Lee says there's a potential conflict between its owners and users.

"Users like Facebook because it enables them to keep in touch with friends more easily. They don't view it as a commercial space for marketing paraphernalia. And yet, Facebook's owners have placed a great deal of value on its ability to collect data about its users, which can then potentially be sold on to advertisers."

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Enhancing New Zealand's future

Understanding how energy and water resources are used in New Zealand's commercial buildings is the focus of a study by students from the School of Architecture and staff from the Centre for Building Performance Research (CBPR).

Entitled 'Building Energy End-Use Study' (BEES), the six-year project is a collaborative study that will give policy makers and New Zealand businesses a good indication of resource use in New Zealand's 50,000 or so commercial buildings.

Nigel Isaacs, Teaching Fellow at the School of Architecture and BRANZ Ltd Principal Scientist, who leads the BEES team, says understanding how water and energy are used will make it possible to utilise commercial buildings more efficiently.

"It will also help us meet our Kyoto targets and enhance New Zealand's resources for the future," he says.

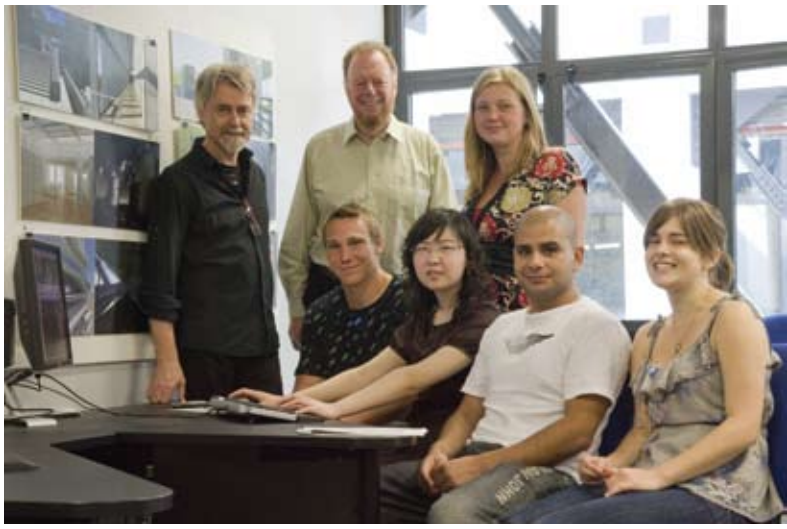
"An efficiency improvement of 10 percent would give us $90 million in fuel and at least $2 million direct greenhouse gas savings per year."

Seven senior building science and architecture students from the School of Architecture spent the summer working on the project—checking valuation data, working on a literature review and developing specialist monitoring equipment.

"A small pilot study is looking at how to best monitor water and energy resources in a large number of buildings. The data from the monitoring of all fuels (electricity, natural gas, LPG, oil and possibly solid fuel) and water will be combined with end use data (space temperature, lighting, hot water and appliances) in an integrated database and analysis system."

The BEES project complements BRANZ's Household Energy End-use Project, which finished in 2005 and explored the use of energy in New Zealand households. It also builds on the work of CBPR on commercial buildings in the 1970s and 1980s.

Led by BRANZ Ltd with the CBPR, Energy Solutions Ltd and the Centre for Research Evaluation and Social Assessment, the work is funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, the Building Research Association of NZ Inc, the Department of Building and Housing and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.



Back row (left to right): Teaching staff Dr Mike Donn, Nigel Isaacs, Alex Hills

Front row (left to right): Honours students Shaan Cory, Kaiyi Zhang, Mina Nour, Claire Dykes

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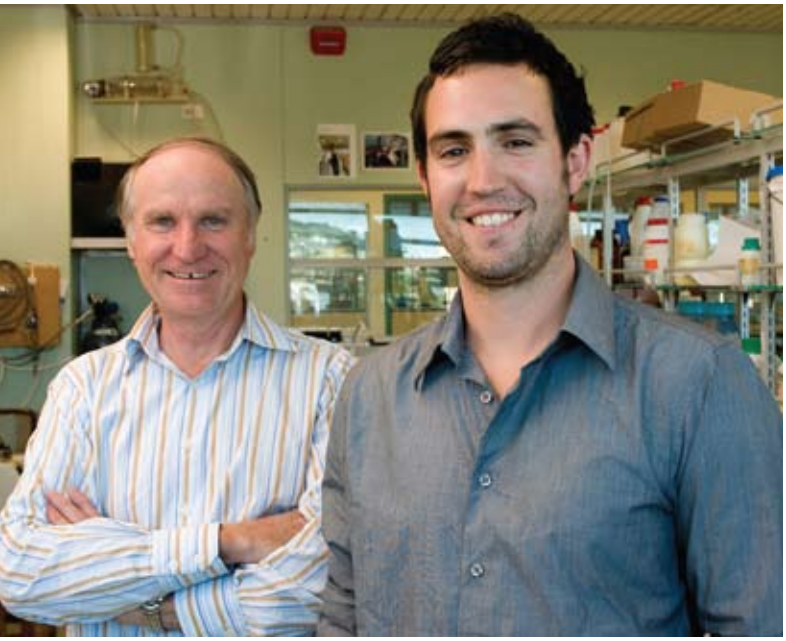
Clever chemistry



Jim Johnston (left) and Aaron Small

Nanomaterials displaying their different photoluminescence properties under UV light

Warm, soft and silky New Zealand merino wool is exported around the world. But how do you know whether that lightweight knit jersey you've bought is pure merino like the label says? In the not-too-distant future, it may be as simple as checking for a logo that is invisible to the naked eye but appears under Ultra Violet light.

Called security labelling, this is just one application of new research that could prove vital for New Zealand's valuable paper and textile industries in the future.

Recent PhD graduate Dr Aaron Small and supervisor Professor Jim Johnston, from the School of Chemical and Physical Sciences, investigated cost-effective methods of printing or coating nanomaterials, which are 10,000 times thinner than a strand of hair, onto paper or packaging materials to make specialist paper products.

Jim says although nanoscience is not new, the equipment used to look at nanomaterials has improved dramatically over the past two decades.

"'Nano' simply refers to the size of the matter we are working with. Once you get particles down to a very small size they display different properties. During this research we've integrated nanomaterials onto a natural material such as cellulose fibres, paper and wool and in this case one of those properties is photoluminescence under UV light."

Such products are called hybrid materials—when two different materials are integrated to form a new material with interesting new properties.

"You can't photocopy the encoded paper or the material; the words or logo are actually bonded to the fibres of the paper and are only visible when stimulated by UV light. A security encoded product will not look any different under normal light," says Jim.

Aaron says the intention of his PhD research was to use 'clever chemistry' to add value to raw materials such as wool and paper and provide a greater return for the New Zealand producer.

"You can buy paper or wool from any country in the world and I think it's important that New Zealand tries to set itself apart from those countries if it wants to be successful."

While Professor Johnston's research group have developed ways to use gold and silver nanoparticles as colourants for textiles, this is the first time the related technology has been used with a New Zealand-grown and produced material such as Kraft board fibres (*Pinus radiata*), which are exported as newsprint grade paper.

Aaron says there are several ways that coating this paper could benefit New Zealand's exports.

One is creating anti-static cardboard that could be used to package sensitive equipment such as computer components. The board could also be used to shield equipment sensitive to inference from cellular and wireless network frequencies, such as navigation equipment or scientific instruments, replacing the need for expensive copper sheets.

Other possible uses include the ability to print a label that changes colour once the use-by date of the product has passed.

New Zealand exports more than $600 million of paper products a year and new markets in higher value printing and packaging are expected to emerge over the next 10 years.

"It is likely that the technology will add a new dimension to products which rely on attractive packaging for marketing purposes, such as cosmetics. With these products there is a perceived relationship between the quality of the packaging and the quality of the goods," says Jim.

Aaron's research complements other research Jim has underway making hybrid materials at the MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology and in collaboration with other organisations.

He is working with Crown Research Institute SCION to make functional packaging materials that buffer temperature fluctuations to keep a product chilled while in transit and control moisture content. As you read this article, a pilot shipment of New Zealand mussels is making its way to New York in this speciality packaging.

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→ Victoria's academic staff are leaders in their fields of research expertise. If you have a project that requires the skills and knowledge of our staff, contact Professor Charles Daugherty. Email: charles.daugherty@vuw.ac.nz Tel: +64-4-463 5572.

State-of-the-art lab on south coast

Unlocking the mysteries of fish larvae—and how that can help us manage the world's depleted fish stocks—just got a step closer, thanks to the new $5 million Victoria University Coastal Ecology Laboratory (VUCEL).

VUCEL Director Dr Jeff Shima says the opening of the multi-level, 816sqm facility in Island Bay, Wellington, marks a watershed in the University's growing marine biology and ecology research programmes.

"As one of New Zealand's leading centres of scientific research and teaching in marine biology and coastal ecology, we needed a lab that was able to accommodate our expanding programmes. Since 2002, we've made six new permanent academic appointments in marine biology, and we've increased the number of our marine biology postgraduate students from six to 48," he says.

"The former marine lab served us well for many years but it was far too small and was never designed as a research laboratory. Also, surveys undertaken in 2005 revealed that it suffered irreparable structural problems, so we're thrilled to have secured such a modern, technologically advanced facility."

VUCEL, which was opened in March, is designed to support ecological research in both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and it caters to a wide cross-section of researchers within the School of Biological Sciences.

It provides a state-of-the-art research laboratory, two wet-lab facilities with access to both raw and filtered flow-through seawater, a substantial staging area for coastal and subtidal research and office space for up to 30 research students and staff.

The new facility makes use of the latest 'green' design features, including pumping natural seawater to both heat and cool the lab and office spaces, using computer-controlled windows to maintain the passive temperature of the building, and using reclaimed rainwater for toilets and boat-washing facilities.

"We've also recycled timber from the previous marine lab to construct the building's impressive 'ribs'—an architectural feature that both defines the structure and connects it with the previous building," says Jeff.

Designed by Wellington architects Pynenburg and Collins/Labworks, the building's exterior is intended to align with the natural surroundings of the rugged south coast. At the building's entrance stands a kaitiaki, or guardian of the house, carved by artist Tamatea Kopua of Tolaga Bay.

VUCEL's Māori name, Te Toka Tū Moana, was suggested by Te Ripowai Higgins and means 'the surf-beaten rock that stands firm in the ocean'.

"The name is both a description of the VUCEL building—with natural design elements that give the appearance of a building rising from the rocks of the south coast—and a representation of the strong connections between land and sea that is the focus of much of the VUCEL-supported research."

The new facility replaces the University's former marine laboratory that was originally built in the 1940s by the Glaxo Company as a shark liver oil refining plant for the extraction of vitamin A. It wasn't until the 1960s that the University developed the site into a marine laboratory. For many years, the Island Bay Marine Education Centre leased space in the laboratory from the University until growth in the number of Victoria research students outgrew the available space.

Jeff says that although the facility is not normally open to the public, it will host special events that showcase its scientific activities, such as a recent open day during New Zealand's annual Sea Week campaign.

www.victoria.ac.nz/sbs/research/vucel

Unlocking marine mysteries

Skyrocketing global demand for seafood and technological improvements to fishing fleets are proving a deadly combination for the world's fish populations.

According to Dr Jeff Shima, Director of the new Victoria University Coastal Ecology Laboratory, chronic overfishing can have catastrophic social, economic and environmental consequences.

"One of the primary goals of fisheries management is to minimise these risks, but sadly, limited scientific understanding can sometimes lead to poor management decisions," he says.

"Indeed, one of the greatest challenges facing fisheries managers is uncertainty about the locations of breeding populations that might be critical to the replenishment of harvested fish stocks. Such knowledge could, for example, allow managers to place marine reserves in the most appropriate locations."

It's this issue that's at the heart of research Jeff and his team—including colleagues from the University of Melbourne and NIWA—are undertaking, with help of a Marsden grant from the Royal Society of New Zealand.

"We need to understand where baby fish—known as larvae—come from. Many types of fish produce larvae that develop in offshore waters and possibly drift in ocean currents for many weeks before settling back down to a reef, where they grow into adults. The birthplaces of these animals are difficult to identify because larvae are too small to be fitted with tags or tracking devices that are used successfully on larger fishes and sharks."

So the team pioneered an approach that uses 'environmental fingerprints' which are found, oddly enough, within the ear bones of larvae.

Jeff says this approach uses an analytical technique that has been popularised by television shows such as *CSI: Miami*.

The team's initial focus on the common triplefin, a small reef fish found on shallow reefs and tide pools throughout New Zealand, has caused them to rethink conventionally held notions of larval fish movements.

"We've determined that triplefins typically require about 50 days to develop in coastal waters, which gives them ample time to be moved over large distances by currents. However, we've found that long distance movements of triplefins are relatively rare events, and when they do occur, our experiments suggest that they may be further challenged by an increased mortality rate. So breeding stocks might be fairly localised in many cases, and management of some species of harvested fish may be better accomplished with more localised management plans."

Jeff says such new insights are likely to have significant impacts on the management of coast fisheries both within New Zealand and globally.

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Antarctic ice stability

Carbon dioxide concentrations only slightly higher than those present in the atmosphere today could affect the West Antarctic Ice Sheet's stability.

The new research is based on a 1,280-metre long core taken from under Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf and was published in prominent scientific journal *Nature* in March 2009.

The ANDRILL (ANtarctic geological DRILLing) research programme is led by a team of researchers internationally, including Director of Victoria's Antarctic Research Centre Professor Timothy Naish and Professor Ross Powell from Northern Illinois University.

Professor Naish says new information gleaned from the rock and sediment core shows that changes in the tilt of Earth's axis have played a major role in ocean warming.

"It has driven repeated cycles of growth and retreat of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet for the period in Earth's history between three and five million years ago," he says.

"It also appears that when atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations reached 400 parts per million around four million years ago, the resulting global warming enhanced the sensitivity of the ice sheet to changes in the Earth's tilt, causing major fluctuations in its volume.

"Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is again approaching 400 parts per million. Geological archives highlight the risk that a significant body of permanent Antarctic ice could be lost within the next century as Earth's climate continues to warm. Collapse of the entire West Antarctic Ice Sheet is likely to occur within 1,000 years."

The research refines previous findings, and may be used to help the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change update its predictions of sea level rise.

The collaboration involved scientists from Italy, Germany, the US and New Zealand, including Dr Richard Levy from GNS Science and Professor Gary Wilson at Otago University.

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Learning languages

The teaching of languages could be revolutionised thanks to research by recent PhD graduate Dr Paul Sulzberger.

Paul says the best way to learn a new language is through frequent exposure to its sound patterns—even if you haven't a clue what it all means.

Language learning is traditionally made up of a mix of writing, reading and listening. Students start by listening to basic recordings of the language that they can understand, progressing to slightly more challenging ones as their vocabulary expands.

But Paul says students should listen to any recordings at every opportunity they get, regardless of their understanding of the language.

"However crazy it might sound, just listening to the language, even though you don't understand it, is critical. A lot of language teachers may not accept that," he says.

"Our ability to learn new words is directly related to how often we have been exposed to the particular combinations of the sounds which make up the words. If you want to learn Spanish, for example, frequently listening to a Spanish language radio station on the internet will dramatically boost your ability to pick up the language and learn new words—even if you can't understand a word of it."

Immerse yourself: Exposure to music or film is a great way to learn a foreign language

Paul's main hypothesis is that simply listening to a new language sets up the structures in the brain required to learn the new words.

"Neural tissue required to learn and understand a new language will develop automatically from simple exposure to the language, which is how babies learn their first language.

"Language learning is not like learning a fact. If you want to be a weightlifter, you've got to develop the muscle—you can't learn it from a book. To learn a language you have to grow the appropriate brain tissue, and you do this by lots of listening—songs and movies are great."

He was prompted to undertake the research after spending seven years teaching Russian to New Zealand students and attempting to understand why students dropped out along the way.

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How curiosity kills the kea

Alpine parrots found only in New Zealand's South Island are at risk because of their mischievous and explorative nature.

According to Master of Science student Clio Reid, kea at Mount Cook National Park are getting more than they bargain for when sneaking into wheelie bins and nibbling away at buildings.

"Many kea live near human-populated areas so they are at risk from all sorts of hazards when they go exploring, the main one being lead poisoning. Young kea are like little kids—they'll get into anything. Exposure to lead paint or nails in old buildings can kill them."

Clio's recently completed study focuses on the relationship between the personality traits of kea and the level of lead in their bloodstream. Once lead is in their bloodstream, it can do a lot of internal damage and even kill them.

She found that although those with explorative personalities are more likely to have high levels of lead in their blood, the less explorative ones are still at risk.

"You'll often find that a really explorative kea will take the first step and check out new objects like lead head nails, and then the others will follow the leader."

She says potential hazards need to be removed to ensure the kea population doesn't decline. They have been categorised as nationally endangered by the Department of Conservation.

"Replacing lead nails in old buildings, refraining from feeding kea and securing objects like wheelie bins will help keep them healthy and safe."

Photo: Clio Reid

She says predator control is also very important as stoats prey on kea eggs and chicks, and possums compete with kea for the best nesting areas.

Clio, who is originally from Canada, wanted to do a behavioural study on kea since she first saw one after moving to New Zealand.

"They are always doing things that you don't expect—they are hilarious. They do somersaults, play tug of war and do all these crazy things. They are a unique species and most people know them for their clownish behaviour."

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Go-getter gets award

Taking a lead role in VicCom, Victoria University's Commerce Students' Association, led Mala Govind to becoming one of the first Victoria Plus Award graduates.

She says she is pleased her voluntary work for the association as Vice-President and then President, as well as other student support roles, has been recognised through this award, and strongly encourages any students thinking of signing up for the Victoria Plus Award to 'go for it'.

The Victoria Plus Award is one of two leadership development programmes offered to all students at Victoria University.

Both programmes—the first of their type in New Zealand—are completed outside of timetabled academic study, and offer students the opportunity to develop their leadership and social responsibility skills, and enhance their employability.

To complete the Victoria Plus programme students undertake volunteer work, attend workshops and seminars and submit a reflective written electronic portfolio (e-portfolio). The award is noted on their academic transcript.

Mala, a commerce and arts graduate, was one of the first 20 students to complete the award in 2008.

Although the programme is expected to take two years to complete, she worked hard to fulfil its requirements in her final year of study.

She says she found the hardest part of the programme was completing the written e-portfolio and considering how her experiences had improved her leadership, problem-solving, communication and analytical skills.

"Being part of this programme has made me realise just how much I gained from university life.

"I've now built the skills to reflect on my experiences more quickly and summarise what I've learnt in a situation."

She expects this ability will be useful for learning quickly on the job in her new graduate position with accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Mala says she wouldn't hesitate to mention the award on her CV in future.

www.victoria.ac.nz/victoriaplus

FROM THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH) PROFESSOR NEIL QUIGLEY:

Attracting the best and brightest

A dramatic increase in PhD degree enrolments over the last five years is part of the changing face of Victoria University.

The PhD is the highest degree awarded by the University and a key part of our research activity. PhD theses are evaluated by international standards, usually by examiners from around the world, so the award of this degree is a mark of a truly global contribution to knowledge.

Many of our PhD graduates find employment as academics, but many others find roles as leaders in business or government.

The total number of PhD students enrolled at Victoria increased almost 70 percent from 2004 to 2008. Interestingly, the number of international PhD students at Victoria over the same period rose more than 480 percent, largely resulting from the introduction of government policy allowing these students to pay only domestic tuition fees in New Zealand.

The fact that so many domestic and international students are choosing to undertake their PhD at Victoria illustrates our international standing as a research-led institution with world-renowned scholars, and one that continuously creates new knowledge with major social, economic and scholarly impact.

Our postgraduate students are offered a unique academic, social and cultural experience in the heart of New Zealand's capital city. Our location provides students with many opportunities to collaborate with, and learn from, partners in government, the public sector, science and technology organisations and with the local business community. In particular, collaboration with the Malaghan Institute (New Zealand's largest private medical research institute) and Wellington's Crown Research Institutes has allowed us to broaden the scope of the research that we are able to supervise and the number of staff available.

In response to the increasing importance of PhD students in the life of the University, our Research Strategy suggested the creation of a Faculty of Graduate Research. During 2008 I brought forward a range of issues and proposals for discussion, culminating in the Academic Board and Council approving the creation of the Faculty in December.

The new Dean of Graduate Research, Professor Laurie Bauer, will lead this Faculty. It will enable centralised coordination of decisions on admission and financial support of the PhD degree and the Faculty Board, even though the substantive academic decisions on applications to the PhD programme will still be made in the schools and academic faculties.

The benefits of centralised coordination include greater consistency of practice across all disciplines, a clearer web presence, simplified processes for applications for admission and financial support and coordination of new student orientation programmes and workshops.

The Faculty will be like a 'virtual' faculty—the academic faculty with which the students are associated will still be responsible for supervision. Students and staff will not be placed in the Faculty of Graduate Research, nor will the Faculty of Graduate Research intervene in the normal relationship that a student has with their school.

One key change will be in the times at which PhD students can enrol. In the past, students have been able to enrol for a PhD at any time. This has the advantage of flexibility, but means there is no alignment between enrolment and offers of scholarships, is out of line with the increasing practice of asking PhD students to undertake coursework during the provisional enrolment period in the PhD and makes it difficult to run an orientation or induction process. With the establishment of the new Faculty, there will be three intakes per year aligned with three rounds of scholarship funding.

Above all, we hope that every PhD student's experience at Victoria will be a well-rounded one, and one that will be enjoyable, intellectually stimulating and ultimately rewarding. The staff in the Faculty will work hard to ensure students have a seamless experience from when they first consider enrolling until their final examinations.

I believe this development will enable us to admit even more outstanding students to the PhD degree at Victoria.

Using fear to control the masses

The political manipulation of fear is as old as history itself. Its use in ancient times can teach us much about modern politics, according to Woolf Fisher scholarship recipient James McNamara.

James, 24, hopes to explore that idea when his three-year scholarship takes him to Cambridge University this September.

One of only three Woolf Fisher recipients nationwide for 2009, he will be working towards a PhD in Classics at Cambridge, researching the historiography of the great Roman historian Tacitus, and focusing on Tacitus' representation of fear as a means of control in the Roman Empire.

"As far as Tacitus was concerned, a lot of the most successful leaders were the ones who employed fear, and yet he despised those leaders whom he considered tyrants. Fear will always be a powerful source of power for leaders. Since September 11 terrorism has become one of the major political catchwords of our time. In the Roman Empire it was the threat of barbarian invasion or civil war. Threats like that tended to justify political actions," says James.

James' Master's research included time in Germany where he investigated how Latin sources have been adapted for use in school textbooks in different ways under different political regimes.

He says he has no doubt about the modern relevance of Classics.

"Latin texts continue to influence modern thinking because, apart from the quality of the literature, the Romans faced many of the same issues that we do today."

Professor of Classics John Davidson says: "James is an outstanding student of Latin and Roman history who has carried on the strong tradition of Latin studies in Wellington."

James is looking forward to throwing himself into all aspects of Cambridge student life—academic, sporting and cultural. The Victoria University representative fencer and cricketer has long dreamed of playing cricket on an English green, and is also a keen musician, with particular interest in traditional Celtic music.

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An edible Eiffel Tower

Once a year, students in the Faculty of Architecture and Design swap tools for aprons, spatulas and mixing bowls for a bake-off. The only rule of the latest cake design competition, organised by architecture student group STUDiO, was that jelly had to be used.

Guest judge Associate Professor Marine Lommerse, from Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia, awarded the grand prize of dinner for two at Logan Brown to students Alana Thorn and Ari Stevens. They created an Eiffel Tower from toffee, sitting on four cake and jelly pedestals.

The next bake-off is scheduled for Trimester Two, 2009.

Victorious survey

Go in the draw to win a Kirkcaldie & Stains gift hamper by filling out our short *Victorious* readership survey online by 1 June 2009.

We made changes to *Victorious* following previous readership surveys and would like to ask you once again for your thoughts on the magazine. This is your opportunity to tell us what you enjoying reading about, what you think is missing and/or what you'd like to see more of.

The time you take to fill out the survey will be invaluable in assisting us to make *Victorious* both relevant and interesting in the future.

www.victoria.ac.nz/alumni/survey

Breaking down barriers

New Zealand's growing relationship with China is being strengthened by a pioneering new course that is taking Victoria students behind the red curtain.

Late last year 24 Political Science students spent three weeks researching and observing first-hand the workings of government and politics in China.

Course coordinator Professor Xiaoming Huang says the field trip is helping to break down barriers and challenge misconceptions about China.

"Once you are actually there things don't seem so abstract any more. You can actually see how a Communist government operates."

The three weeks are spent at the China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, where students are given morning lectures on Chinese politics and government.

In the afternoon they visit such sites as the National People's Congress, the Ministry of Commerce, the Foreign Ministry and local government—as well as other significant sites such as the Great Wall, the Imperial Palace and Tiananmen Square.

Fellow course coordinator Professor Stephen Levine says many students describe the trip as a 'life-changing' experience.

He was amazed by the amount of change brought about by the 2008 Olympics.

"We saw vast changes in the two years since the course's inaugural trip in 2006, including the completed National Centre for the Performing Arts and the National 'Bird's Nest' Stadium."

Xiaoming Huang is also Director of the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre based at Victoria.

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Who's New

Professor Laurie Bauer

As Dean of the new Faculty of Graduate Research, Laurie Bauer will lead its establishment and the Faculty Board, while continuing with his teaching and research part-time. His appointment reflects five years' experience as Chair of the former Research Degree Committee, responsible for considering all university PhD applications. Laurie, a professor of linguistics, has a distinguished record as a scholar and is known worldwide for his research into word formation and international varieties of English. His text *English Word-formation* is considered the starting point for the study of this topic. Laurie has done much to popularise linguistics, including writing a regular column in *The Dominion Post*. He obtained a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Edinburgh in 1975, and taught in Denmark before joining Victoria University in 1979.

Professor Colin Wilson

One of the world's leading volcanologists, Colin Wilson, joined the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences this year. Colin's reputation is based on his detailed field observations of ancient volcanic deposits and reconstructions of past eruptions. His research into the Taupo Volcanic Zone has contributed significantly to understanding how New Zealand's largest volcanoes behave. A fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand and the American Geophysical Union, Colin has a PhD from Imperial College, University of London, and was a professor at the University of Auckland for four years from 2005. Colin will enhance understanding of how volcanoes work using Victoria's state-of-the-art geochemistry laboratory and new microprobe. He is the principal investigator of a new Marsden Fund project focusing on magma forensics in New Zealand's supervolcanoes and will lead a new 400-level course in volcanology.

Professor Penny Boumelha

One of Penny Boumelha's roles as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is to implement the University's learning and teaching strategy and to develop an equity strategy. Penny brings a wealth of academic and management experience to this role from a distinguished career at the University of Adelaide in Australia. She was Jury Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Adelaide from 1990 to 2008, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost from 1999 to 2005. She holds an MA and a DPhil in English from the University of Oxford, and has published widely on 19th century fiction and narrative theory. In 2003 she was awarded the Centenary Medal by the Australian Government for service to Australian society and the humanities in English language and literature.

Farewell

Professor David Mackay

After an outstanding contribution to the scholarly record and academic management of Victoria University, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor David Mackay retired in January 2009. A Victoria alumnus with a BA(Hons) in History, he went on to University College London, where he completed a PhD in 1970. He returned to Victoria in 1971 to join the Department of History. His academic advancement from this date onwards rested upon a distinguished record of achievement in teaching and research. He is a scholar of international standing and a committed, innovative and enthusiastic teacher. In 1995 he was appointed Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and in 2003 as Deputy Vice-Chancellor. In this role he managed both academic and central service areas of the University. David's remarkable contribution has enriched Victoria University's culture.

Finding a cure

Photo: The Dominion Post

Dianne Sika-Paotonu's part in developing a ground-breaking cancer vaccine could turn her girlhood dreams into reality.

"When I was eight years old, a close family friend died of cancer. He and his wife had befriended my parents when they first came over to New Zealand from Tonga. I remember at the time saying 'I want to find a cure' to my mum."

The award-winning researcher is part of a large team of people, based at the Malaghan Institute for Medical Research at Victoria University's Kelburn Campus, designing a cancer vaccine that may be able to activate a patient's immune cells to destroy the cancer in their body.

Dendritic cells—a rare type of immune cell that everyone has—activate another type of immune cell, called T-cells, which are capable of destroying cancer tissue. However, in a person who has cancer, the dendritic cells often don't work as they should.

A therapeutic cancer vaccine is made by loading properly functioning dendritic cells with tumour fragments and injecting them back into the body. Although this prompts the T-cells to become cancer fighters, this treatment is not yet powerful enough to act as a frontline cancer therapy.

"This isn't a vaccine that you get when you are young and therefore means you will never develop cancer. It's a treatment for someone who already has cancer, but it's still called a vaccine," she says.

Dianne's breakthrough strategy involves coating the dendritic cells with a sea sponge extract that causes the dendritic cells to work harder at turning the T-cells into cancer killers, promoting a more potent tumour-killing response than cancer vaccines currently being trialled.

She says it is hoped there will be a clinical trial of this vaccine in New Zealand within five years.

The research has seen her win four awards including the Advancing Human Health and Wellbeing category of the 2008 MacDiarmid Young Scientists of the Year Awards, and the 2008 Colmar Brunton New Zealand Research Excellence Award.

After studying science at secondary school, Dianne came to Victoria and completed a BSc in physiology, a Bachelor of Biomedical Science in molecular pathology and a Master of Biomedical Science degree awarded with first class honours.

"I had to be doing something I felt would make a significant difference within the field of cancer research. I started with my Master's work which involved studying a family of kidney cancers called the renal cell carcinomas and was about to finish my thesis when an opportunity became available to join the cancer vaccines team at the Malaghan."

She's also a senior mentor in Victoria's Te Rōpu Āwhina mentoring programme for Māori and Pacific Island students, and is heavily involved in her church.

"Nobody gets to where they are on their own. I've been helped in the past, and I'm happy to do my part—whether it is promoting science as an option at information days or talking with and encouraging individual students. No matter what help you can offer, this mentoring programme gives you an opportunity to do what you can to make an impact or make university easier for someone else."

Funded by the Health Research Council and New Zealand Cancer Society until the end of 2009, Dianne hopes to explore potential overseas postdoctoral opportunities next.

"I would like to be able to come back to New Zealand afterwards and utilise the knowledge and the skills that I have acquired in order to contribute to the research community here."

Although Dianne is a Victoria PhD student, most of her research is carried out at the Malaghan Institute which has close ties with the School of Biological Sciences.

"Being at both Victoria and the Malaghan is fantastic. It's as if I get the best of both worlds, I have access to not only the expertise of the Malaghan scientists but also those at Victoria."

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A new era in student accommodation

If you build it, they will come.

And so they have to Te Puni Village, the University's new 389-bed student accommodation complex that was officially opened in February by the Prime Minister, the Hon John Key.

Featuring three interlinked buildings—and offering residents some of Wellington's best views—Te Puni Village is the first Hall of Residence to be built on campus and only the second to be wholly owned by the University (after the 75-year-old Weir House).

Te Puni Village's 13,850sqm offer a mix of single catered rooms with shared facilities, self-catered studios and two-bedroom apartments. The commercial kitchen seats 200 and it is estimated more than 280,000 meals will be provided onsite each year.

Speaking at the complex opening, Vice-Chancellor Professor Pat Walsh said Te Puni Village was a welcome addition to Wellington's accommodation situation.

"The number of accommodation applications we've received in the last few years is almost twice the number of beds we've had available," he says.

"Last year, we saw accommodation applications from domestic students rise by 19 percent and more than half of those were from outside the Wellington region. Students from across New Zealand want to study at Victoria, but we're struggling to find places for them to live. Te Puni Village will go a long way to providing suitable accommodation for those students."

He says it took only 18 months to create the purpose-built complex.

Prime Minister Hon John Key meets Te Puni Village residents at the official opening

Te Puni Village will house mainly first-year students from across New Zealand, as well as international students from Sweden, Germany, the US, Malaysia, Samoa and Japan.

Student amenities also include an internet lounge, music room, TV rooms and social spaces throughout.

Professor Walsh says the name Te Puni was chosen because its meaning was significant to the complex.

"The name is derived from two elements quite commonly found within Māori culture and society, including 'Puni' which means a company of persons, in this case a company of students, and 'whare puni', a principal guest house of a kainga or village. Out of all the University buildings that students will visit during the course of their day, Te Puni Village will, no doubt, prove to be the most important."

The name also refers to the Rangatira Honiana Te Puni who ensured British settlers in the Port Nicholson region were sheltered and protected; hence, the name Te Puni has come to mean providing shelter, hospitality and accommodation to students of all nations.

www.victoria.ac.nz/tepuni

Living the Te Puni experience

Sarah Hewitt didn't know what to expect when she applied for a place at Te Puni Village.

The first-year student says she had seen other hostel rooms so imagined she'd be in for something similar.

"I was a bit hesitant to be one of the first Te Puni residents because I didn't know what it would be like. But the reality has turned out so much better than I'd expected! I thought I'd be getting a cupboard, but my room is really nice," she says.

So too are Te Puni's facilities, which include common rooms on every floor, SKY TV lounges and a large deck.

"The facilities are amazing and everything is brand new, which is a bonus."

It's the first time the 17-year-old has lived away from her Carterton home, but she says homesickness has been kept at bay by the fact that 10 of her fellow students from Wairarapa College are also Te Puni residents.

"It's also been good to meet people from all over the country, and the world. There's a great bunch of people here."

She says friends are jealous of the view she enjoys from her bedroom window.

"I must have the best view in Wellington, right across the city. I'm so glad I chose to come to Te Puni and I'm already working out how I can stay here for another year!"

Royal reception for Victoria alumna

Performing in front of the Queen at Windsor Castle on live television—it's enough to give anyone the shakes.

But for Victoria alumna Mereana Hond, that was the least of her concerns. She focused on the responsibility and honour of delivering the karanga—or traditional Māori call of farewell—at the memorial service for Sir Edmund Hillary last year.

"It was one of the most extraordinary things I have ever done. There's no doubt that all I'd done in my life until that moment was what prepared me for one of the most challenging performances of my life."

And she says part of that special preparation goes back to her student days at Victoria.

The 39-year-old graduated from Victoria in 1996 with a BA with first class honours, and an LLB. She went on to lecture in both the School of Māori Studies and Faculty of Law.

In 2003, she made a career change to journalism. She was a reporter for 3News Wellington for three years, winning the Qantas Junior Reporter of the Year Award, and taking the opportunity to reshape how Māori issues were covered.

Then she made the move to London to accelerate her professional development—a move that's already delivered.

She's currently News Editor for one of the world's largest international news agencies—Associated Press Television News. If you happen to catch a story on President Barack Obama, peace negotiations in the Middle East, maybe even conflict in Tibet, chances are she's had a hand in getting those pictures to you.

Mereana and partner Ben Gibbins just after performing a karanga for the Queen at the Rugby World Cup

But she says it's the performance of kapa haka—Māori performing arts—at special events like Sir Edmund Hillary's service that sustains her when she's away from home.

She's a member of Ngati Ranana, the London-based club which, this year, celebrates 50 years of supporting New Zealanders in the United Kingdom.

"London is truly the land of opportunity. You can only really handle the ride if your backbone is strong and your feet are grounded. Ngati Ranana was my strength when I performed for Sir Ed and until I get back home it will keep me strong as a Māori and New Zealander."

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A burning passion for theatre

Willem Wassenaar's burning desire to be a director took him all the way from The Netherlands to Wellington where he is now making waves in the local theatre industry.

A graduate of the Master of Theatre Arts in Directing at Victoria University and Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School, Willem has fashioned an impressive portfolio since his graduation in 2006, and in 2007 received the Chapman Tripp Award for Most Promising Director of the Year for *Angels in America* at Downstage Theatre. He was nominated again in 2008 for *The Little Dog Laughed*.

Willem is now co-director of Almost A Bird Theatre Collective and artistic director of Long Cloud Youth Theatre, which caters for talented 16- to 21-year-old actors. He also works as a freelance director.

A scholarship to study abroad was his ticket to leaving behind his life in The Netherlands in 2005 and gaining the kind of training that could complete his dream.

The prestigious two-year course is limited to only six people per intake, who all have to audition for their places. Willem says working closely with such a small group was an intense experience.

"We were not only challenged intellectually but also emotionally, which was pretty intense at times. And also being so far from my friends and family back home—I missed their support network sometimes—but it made me really strong."

He credits the course with the expansion of his career, and the ability to work full-time.

"I'm really happy I can do this full-time. That is really hard to be honest—sustaining yourself financially in this industry, as there is not a lot of work. It takes a lot of courage and dedication—but it is also a matter of being at the right time in the right place, and having some luck."

Willem (left) in action as a theatre director

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Making science accessible

Rebecca Priestley gives credence to the saying that if you want something done, give it to a busy person.

Along with finishing her PhD in the history and philosophy of science, the Wellington-based science writer is also mother to three children, pens science features and reviews for the *New Zealand Listener* and various newspapers, and recently launched two science books on the same day—*Atoms, Dinosaurs and DNA: 68 Great New Zealand Scientists* (Random House) and *The Awa Book of New Zealand Science* (Awa Press).

While the former evolved from an exhibition Rebecca co-curated at the National Library Gallery which highlighted the achievements of New Zealand scientists, the latter is a landmark anthology of writings by and about New Zealand science and scientists.

"I hope this book will raise the awareness of the fact that there are scientists in our history as well as rugby players, politicians and artists. They have made a huge contribution to our body of knowledge about our country and ourselves," she says.

People like Charles Fleming, one of New Zealand's greatest naturalists, or Charles Cotton, Professor of Geology at Victoria University and author of internationally acclaimed books, are featured alongside well-known scientists Ernest Rutherford and Peter Gluckman, a world leader in the biology of the foetus and the newborn child.

Rebecca says she's always had a dual passion for writing and science. After completing a BSc (Hons) in Earth Sciences at Victoria in 1991, she was co-founder of a communications company that worked predominantly for clients in the scientific arena.

While working on her thesis and freelancing as a columnist and reviewer of science books, Rebecca was approached by Awa Press to write an anthology of New Zealand science.

"I had to do it because I would have been hideously jealous if someone else had!"

The long time Wellington resident is currently working on a book about New Zealand landforms which has, ironically, taken her full circle.

"One summer 20 years ago, I worked as a research assistant at Victoria compiling an inventory of New Zealand landforms, so it's been wonderful to revisit this fascinating topic."

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Remembering Weir House

In what turned out to be one of the University's most popular alumni functions of 2008, former Weir House residents spent a weekend in Wellington reliving memories and catching up with old friends.

Left to right: Ex-residents Murray Lints (and wife Effie), Mike O'Connor and John Wehipeihana. John wore an old Weir House blazer from his university days

Victoria University law lecturer and ex-resident of Weir House Dean Knight peruses some old photographs with fellow ex-residents Glenn Wilson and Emily McKenzie

David Shand, who was Deputy Warden of Weir House in 1970 and 1972, and Acting Warden in 1971, points himself out in an old photograph

The Hindu School Performance group performed at the international dinner. Other performers included Cook Island group Atiu Mapu and a dragon dance troupe from the Wellington Chinese Cultural Centre

Victoria's newest alumni

More than 1,000 graduates from all disciplines celebrated successfully completing their studies late last year over two days of graduation ceremonies.

A highlight of December's graduation was the awarding of 29 PhD degrees. These alumni epitomise the desired attributes of a Victoria graduate—creative and critical thinking, leadership and communication skills. The research produced by this latest group provides a wealth of new knowledge for the University.

Topics included a revolutionary approach to learning foreign languages, differences in retirement saving between New Zealand and Australia and the secondary effects of a compound under development at Victoria as an anti-cancer drug.

Graduation is an education milestone and an unforgettable day for thousands of graduates, families, whānau and friends. The next graduation ceremonies will be held in May 2009, with up to 2,000 graduates expected.

Honorary doctorates

Two honorary doctorate degrees were awarded in December 2008.

Emeritus Professor David Mullan, Doctor of Laws

This Victoria alumnus is one of a small number of New Zealand legal academics who have achieved outstanding distinction overseas. He left Wellington in 1970 to undertake further postgraduate work at Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario, and embark on what was to be a distinguished career in teaching, research and service to the profession. Four decades later, he is renowned as one of Canada's foremost scholars in administrative law.

Richard Nunns, Doctor of Music

Traditional Māori musical instruments—or Tāonga Puoro—were considered lost forever in the early 20th century. Today they are a central icon of New Zealand music. Richard Nunns' lead role in the instruments' transformation from a vanished tradition to one that once more reverberates in the musical consciousness of New Zealanders is astonishing. He is a living authority on our oldest and most precious Māori instruments, and by bringing them back into the light, he has changed the face of New Zealand music.

Left to right: Jeff, Henrietta and William

Talented trio graduate together

Three Hunkin family siblings graduated in the same ceremony on the same day in December 2008.

Accomplished barbershop singers Henrietta (aged 24), William (23) and Jeff (21) graduated with Bachelor of Art degrees and say that finishing their studies and graduating together was never planned.

Henrietta studied Music and Samoan part-time, William majored in International Relations after taking a range of courses in his first two years of university and Jeff studied Music and Media Studies.

All three found the time to sing and compete in barbershop quartets during their studies. Henrietta sings with quartet Even Time and William and Jeff with The Musical Island Boys.

The Musical Island Boys have performed at Victoria's graduation ceremonies and at the 2007 Alumni Awards Dinner. They say they get a buzz from watching the smiles on their audiences' faces, and were dedicated to continuing singing while they studied.

"We had to be really productive with the time we had at university. If I came to the library and only had an hour to spare then I couldn't stuff around," says Jeff.

Their musical talent was nurtured early and they'd often sing together with father Galumalemana Alfred Hunkin, a Senior Lecturer at Victoria in Va'aomanu Pasifika. Henrietta says their mother Ane Hunkin is their biggest supporter and attends all their performances.

All three plan to keep singing in 2009. The Musical Island Boys travelled to Sydney in March to coach and performed in local high schools, and then visited South Korea as members of a cultural diplomacy programme. Even Time will compete at regional competitions with the aim of making the international championships in Seattle in 2010.

www.musicalislandboys.wellington.net.nz

→ If you are interested in supporting students and staff with a donation of funds, resources or time, we'd like to hear from you. For financial contributions contact the Victoria University Foundation Executive Director, Tricia Walbridge. Email: Tricia.Walbridge@vuw.ac.nz Tel: +64-4-463 5109.

Lifelong learner leaves gift for future students

A much cherished opportunity to go to university at age 60 prompted Claire Palmer-Jones to establish an endowed scholarship through the Victoria University Foundation.

"She was so grateful that she could study at her later age. She wanted to do something to support and encourage those who were disadvantaged financially to perhaps come to university later in life," says close friend Professor John Davidson.

He says Mrs Palmer-Jones actively supported numerous causes, activities and clubs during her full 97 years. Fluent in German, Italian, French and English, she supported Amnesty International, Women for Peace, Action for the Environment and the Samaritans, among many others, and practised yoga and ballroom dancing until age 79.

"Her friends all joked that she was like a sponge—soaking everything in. She was extremely interested intellectually and had an absolutely unbelievable memory."

Mrs Palmer-Jones emigrated from Germany to New Zealand after World War II and married a renowned New Zealand entomologist, Trevor Palmer-Jones, who specialised in studying bees. After spending 16 years living in Upper Hutt, she moved into Wellington City to be closer to all the cultural activities she loved.

She began studying at Victoria University aged 60, completing a few courses a year between life's activities and overseas travel.

She studied Religious Studies, Classics, Italian, German and French, frequently earning top marks for her efforts, and graduated with a BA in April 1977, at age 67.

Claire Palmer-Jones

John, who was also her Classics teacher, says she was a highly intelligent and questioning student.

In her memoirs she writes: "I met a woman who I thought was not particularly bright who studied French at Victoria University as an adult student. I realised that if she could go to university then so could I."

The Claire Palmer-Jones scholarship will be awarded to a second- or third-year student studying Literature or Modern Languages and experiencing financial hardship.

Mrs Palmer-Jones' desire to assist mature-age female students will be taken into account when deciding on a recipient but will not limit who can apply for the scholarship.

The Victoria University Foundation was delighted to be notified recently that Chancellor Emeritus Professor Tim Beaglehole and Vice-Chancellor Professor Pat Walsh have both made provision for Victoria University in their wills. Both have chosen to make untied bequests, which will be invested in the Victoria Trust Fund. Untied bequests are valued by Victoria as they provide the University with the flexibility to respond to special opportunities as they arise.

Understanding New Zealand

Twenty-five years since it began, the John David Stout Fellowship has enormously enriched knowledge of New Zealand society, history and culture by giving scholars the time to undertake large research projects.

The fellowship was created in 1984 and offers a researcher 'of standing' the opportunity to work in an academic environment for a year at Victoria's Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies.

The appointment of John and Hilary Mitchell as the latest recipients of the fellowship marks a number of 'firsts' for the Centre.

The Nelson-based researchers are the first married couple to jointly receive the prestigious fellowship and John, who is of Ngāti Tama and Te Atiawa descent, with affiliations to several Tainui and other Taranaki iwi, is the first person of Māori ethnicity to hold the fellowship.

"Hilary and John have authored many books, articles and reports, the best known of which are the first two volumes of *Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka: A History of Māori of Nelson and Marlborough*," says Professor Lydia Wevers, Stout Centre Director.

Volume three is complete and soon to be published, and Hilary and John have been awarded the fellowship to work on volume four, 'Ngā Rangatira o Te Tau Ihu—The Chiefs of Nelson-Marlborough'.

"The Stout Centre has had 25 fellows and they've produced some extremely notable and even paradigm-shifting books," says Lydia.

This year also marks 25 years since the establishment of the Stout Research Centre. To celebrate this occasion the Centre is hosting various events throughout the year, including a seminar series on the future of New Zealand Studies.

Lydia says the work produced by the Centre is a constant testimony to the value of humanities thinking. "It teaches you to not only find new sources of material, though it does do that because research is very interested in archives, but it also teaches you skills of interpretation to understand the world we live in."

The fellowship is funded by the Stout Trust, which is managed by the Guardian Trust, and administered by the Victoria University Foundation.

www.victoria.ac.nz/stout-centre

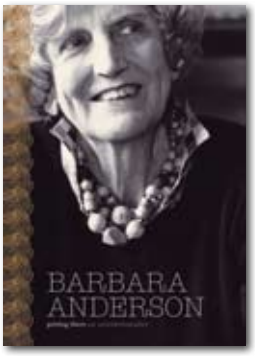
Off the Press

Getting There: An Autobiography and *The Love School: Personal Essays* are two works recently published by Victoria University Press (VUP) and reviewed for *Victorious* by Sarah Jane Barnett.

Details of forthcoming publications by VUP can be read at **www.victoria.ac.nz/vup**

Getting There: An Autobiography

By Barbara Anderson

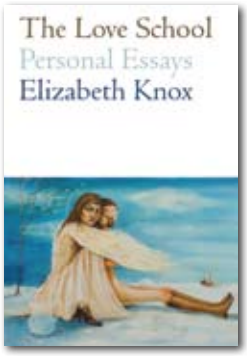


Well loved for her books filled with humour and clever observations of human relationships, Barbara Anderson has finally given readers the opportunity to read her life story. The three-part autobiography includes a selection of photographs, and journeys through her early years in Hawkes Bay, a degree at Otago University, work as a teacher and her marriage to naval officer Neil Anderson. After years of travel and family joy, Anderson returned, in her 50s, to study English and Creative Writing at Victoria University. This was followed by success as the author of bestselling and award-winning books.

With the tone and humour of her fiction, Anderson's autobiography is a work of memory and imagining that never fails to be sincere. She allows the reader to experience the tragedy of family loss as well as what has been a charmed life. She is not afraid to show her true personality from the socially unsure girl to the successful writer. Spanning more than 80 years, the book has a sense of place and history that will especially be enjoyed by those who lived through each time. Although the book tells the story of Anderson's life it is really a celebration of family, friendship, good luck, conversation and the written word.

The Love School: Personal Essays

By Elizabeth Knox



I was excited to read *The Love School*, a selection of Knox's personal essays from the last 20 years. As an incredibly talented writer of imaginative novels such as *The Vintner's Luck*, Knox's essays are both strange and familiar. Exploring a variety of subjects, from family and childhood, to the beginnings of writing, leaving home and the struggle of shelving two novels before her prize-winning debut, *After Z-Hour*, the essays also speak about the incredible novels that followed.

Beautifully written, the collection stands well as a whole and is an addictive trip through Knox's inner world. The event that reoccurs throughout the collection is The Game: a fantasy role play that consumed the lives of Knox, her sisters and friends. The Game appears to have been a distraction from family turmoil but was also the inevitable expression of Knox's imagination. Sincere without being sentimental, the essays allow the reader to deeply enter Knox's world where the lines between real and imagined are blurred. Passionate and honest, the essays also reinforce the importance of creativity and play, the value of family and of working with your own strengths to chase a dream. This is a collection not to be missed.

Sarah Jane Barnett is an IT professional and writer in Wellington. Her work has appeared in a range of literary journals such as *Landfall*, *Sport*, *Takahe* and *JAMM* and in the e-zines *Blackmail Press*, *Snorkel* and *Turbine*. Sarah has a Master's in Creative Writing from Victoria University and is currently finishing her first book of poetry. Her poem 'The Drop Distance' was selected for the collection *Best New Zealand Poems 2007.*

→ Take a look at the University's online database of varied and exciting events available to members of the University community at www.victoria.ac.nz/events

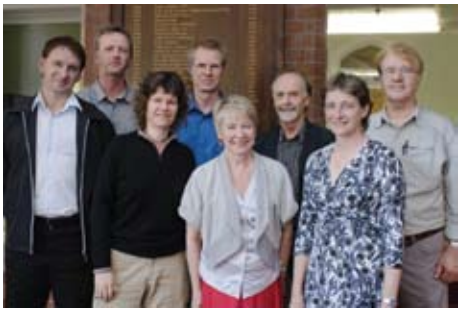
Two hundred people donned frocks and cycled to Parliament to meet politicians in 2008

350 Aotearoa

A group of Victoria University students have started 350 Aotearoa—New Zealand's contribution to a global climate change movement called 350.org. The current concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is 387 parts per million (ppm). They say the safe concentration for Earth is 350 ppm, hence the name 350 Aotearoa. Victoria University student Aaron Packard, who helped start the New Zealand group, says the recent Climate Change Action Festival in Wellington built a lot of momentum for the team. "The themes of connection, action and celebration encouraged people to connect to each other and our environment, to take and commit to action and ensured that we had one heck of a good time celebrating this."

www.350.org.nz

Our newest professors



A group of professors at the new professors' welcome function in February 2009

Victoria University's inaugural professorial lecture series proved particularly popular last year—with as many as 300 guests attending one of the seven lectures. Each of Victoria University's newly promoted professors is invited by the Vice-Chancellor to give a public lecture in celebration of their promotion. The audience is typically made up of family, friends, colleagues and members of the public, with lecture topics last year ranging from anti-cancer drugs to parliamentary architecture. These lectures are an opportunity for the University to showcase its academic leaders to the community. Another great line up of inaugural lectures is planned for the rest of 2009.

www.victoria.ac.nz/events

Summer Shakespeare

When Summer Shakespeare returned to Victoria in January, audiences saw battle scenes of a scale rarely scene on stage. The historic themes of war and nationalism were given modern relevance as director and recent Victoria University theatre tutor David Lawrence set the play *Henry V* very close to home: right here, right now. *Henry V* tells the story of a newly crowned king waging war on an 'enemy' to promote nationalism in his country. David says the play struck a familiar chord with today's audience. "In our times of soaring oil prices and a credit crunch, this play was a timely reminder that history does indeed repeat." Summer Shakespeare has a long history in Wellington. In this, its 26th year, it returned to the heart of Victoria University—the Studio 77 Amphitheatre on the Kelburn Campus.

summershakespearewellington@gmail.com

An historic election

Parliament, Wellington

Politicians, journalists and political scientists offered their perspectives on New Zealand's historic 2008 election at a conference hosted by Victoria University at Parliament. Conference organisers Professors Stephen Levine and Nigel Roberts noted the heightened interest in the University's eighth consecutive post-election conference, which had more attendees than any of the previous conferences. The day-long conference was particularly interesting as there had been a change of government and a new prime minister, with the National Party winning more seats than any party has under the MMP system thus far. The Chatham House rule applied during the sessions to encourage open discussion from political participants. A book on the election, including chapters from conference participants, is being edited by Nigel and Stephen—who edited *The Baubles of Office* following the 2005 election—and will be published by Victoria University Press this year.

www.victoria.ac.nz/pols

Billy Apple, Negative condition situation: cleaning: windowpane, 28 April 1973
161 West 23rd St, New York
(photo: David Troy)

Billy Apple, New York, 1969-1973

A key figure in the history of contemporary art, New Zealand's Billy Apple is in focus at the Adam Art Gallery until 17 May.

Curated by Gallery Director Christina Barton, this exhibition showcases work Apple produced between 1969 and 1973 in New York. He lived and worked in a space at 161 West 23rd Street, using it as an experimental site for his artistic practice.

All the work he produced during this period consisted of actions in and on the space. The Adam Art Gallery show consists entirely of visual documentation and a few surviving artefacts to offer audiences an insight into his work.

"This period of Apple's work has not been seen in New Zealand in any concerted way, and will build on the 1974 survey exhibition of Apple's work at the Serpentine Gallery in London," says Christina.

She says that in the period addressed by the exhibition Apple tested and redefined the nature of sculpture.

"By the end of this intensive period Apple was treating routine activities—sweeping, wiping, mopping, vacuuming—and bodily processes as the basis upon which to explore the negative condition of sculptural activity. The discovery of this period was that the process of subtraction did not result in elimination; as he put it: 'if you wipe a dirty spot off a wall you've removed it ... but you're stuck with a dirty rag you didn't have before'."

The exhibition opening coincided with a major international symposium on temporary, site-based public art (organised by the Litmus Initiative, Massey University, Wellington). This has brought together artists, curators, writers and commentators interested in the newest developments in public art practice.

Also currently underway is a year-long, nationwide series of temporary public art works, each with a duration of no more than 24 hours, collectively titled *One Day Sculpture*. Apple created an artwork in late March for the series—see **www.onedaysculpture.org.nz**

The Adam Art Gallery is a purpose-built public gallery based at the University's Kelburn Campus. For more information visit **www.victoria.ac.nz/adamartgallery**

What opportunities could you open up?

You can help New Zealand's brightest students achieve their academic dreams by making a bequest to Victoria University. You can choose to create a scholarship in a subject of your choice, direct your bequest towards research or simply leave a gift to be shared in the future. Whichever you choose, it will open doors that will change their lives forever. If you'd like to know more about how to make a bequest to Victoria University, contact Diana Meads at the Victoria University Foundation, in confidence, on +64-4-463 6030 via email at **diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz** or by mail at Victoria University Foundation, P O Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.

For more information visit www.victoria.ac.nz/foundation

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