



**TAIERI**  
COLLEGE

*Alumni*

## July 2021

Welcome to our July newsletter. In this issue, we are focusing on the 150th reunion at Labour Weekend. A small but hardworking committee is organising the three-day event, and we'd love to see you there – see below for more details. Also in this newsletter, we feature a face that will be familiar to many – retired school teacher and sixth form dean Huia Ockwell, now living in Chatsford, who has some fabulous reminiscences. And let us know if you are able to help in any way with the Reunion, or have any reminiscences you'd like to share.

## The 150th reunion!

The 150th celebration events will be held at Taieri College on Green Street, Mosgiel over Labour Weekend 2021 – October 22-24. We are looking forward to catching up with old acquaintances, celebrating the successes of education on the Taieri, and showcasing Taieri College. Get your old classmates together and make a weekend of it – we will have a large marquee to host some of the main events. It's going to be awesome!

Registration is via our website

<https://www.taieri.school.nz/alumni-reunion/150th-anniversary-registration/>

or contact the school for a form to fill out. You can attend all events or pick and choose the individual events you would like to go to. We suggest you book soon to avoid missing out.

**If you have already pre-registered for the reunion you will receive an email with a special link to book the events you want to attend.**

## REUNION EVENTS

**Friday October 22, 6pm - 11pm:** A 'Mix and Mingle' evening in the marquee (\$50)

Finger food will be provided, and there is a cash bar.

Pick up for registration packs from 5pm.

**Saturday October 23, 11am - 2pm:** Formal welcome at 11am then a 'High Tea' (\$35)

You will be welcome to look around the school, view displays and catch up with friends.

Pick up for registration packs from 10am. Decade photographs will be taken from 2pm.

**Saturday October 23, 7pm - 11.30pm:** Gala night in the marquee (\$100)

Buffet dinner, live band and a cash bar. Music is provided by Girl Friday.

Pick up for registration packs from 6.30pm.

**Sunday October 24 12pm - 3pm:** Sunday Funday - an informal get-together (\$20)

There will be a food truck area for you to buy your lunch and a cash bar available. You are welcome to bring along your family.

A guided bus trip around the Taieri is also planned for Sunday (no charge)

Please note that there is a \$30 administration fee to pay when you register, which is non-refundable.

## ALUMNI NEWS

The Taieri College alumni committee AGM was held at Taieri College on March 15, 2021. John Cuttance was re-elected as Chair, with committee members Sue Brinsdon, Claire Grant, Aroha Wylie, Judy Southworth and Kristy Compton. Please let us know if you'd like to be part of our Alumni team.

A big thanks goes to Bob Hill who is preparing electronic copies of the TTHS school magazines. Great work and thank Bob for doing this, much appreciated. Copies from 1957, 1959, 1962 and 1963 have been uploaded on the Taieri College website under the Alumni/Reunion tab. Check these out!

## TAIERI COLLEGE NEWS

It is with profound sadness that we share the news of the recent passing of Sue Craigie. Sue worked at Taieri College for 15 years prior to her retirement at the end of 2019. Sue was our Careers Advisor during the latter part of her tenure and through her caring nature had an incredible influence on so many. Sue will be remembered by those who had the privilege of working with her as loyal, committed and someone who always had the best interests of her students at heart. Our sympathies to Grant, Philippa, and extended family. Me te aroha nui ki a koutou katoa.

There is a lot happening at Taieri College at present. The swimming pool roof, built in 1993, is being replaced. The greatly anticipated upgrades of the netball and tennis courts is also underway, and work on the new hockey turf has begun.

## TEACHER PROFILE – Huia Ockwell (1974-87)

Huia Ockwell was a well-known and loved accounting teacher at The Taieri High School from 1974 to 1987, but it's his role as Sixth Form Dean that he now looks back on with the most satisfaction.

Huia mixed full and part-time university study, student holiday jobs, teaching accounting at Otago Boys High School and four years as a public company secretary/accountant and oil company trainee from 1953 to 1960.

He graduated from the University of Otago with a Bachelor of Commerce in 1961, qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in 1963. But rather than progressing up the ranks in the business world as most of his peers did, he switched to using his business studies to teach, back at his old Dunedin high school King's.

He then took a six-year break from teaching, serving as a paymaster for the 1 Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment in West Malaysia and Borneo, followed by Finance Officer and Treasury Representative, NZ Army Force Far East, Singapore. This military interest stemmed



*Huia Ockwell*

from school cadets, compulsory military service and volunteering; he became Captain in the 3 Field Regiment RNZA and 1RNZIR and equivalent to Major in Singapore.

"Southeast Asia was a great experience for me, my wife Ngaire and our two young children Patrice and Paul, but the pull of family and Dunedin was too strong," he recalled.

After five further years back at Kings, TTHS principal Ian Murdoch lured him to Taieri as HOD Commerce and to teach school certificate, University Entrance and Bursary accounting, and also a junior class in Social Studies. Having not taught at a co-ed he was initially surprised by the large department of typing and shorthand, all in the care of a first-class trio of teachers.

A year later he was talked into applying for the position of Sixth Form Dean, and immediately set about developing systems for recording advice and course placement information into the one place. His record keeping was meticulous during that 10-year service, but his finest contribution was less public - it was the pastoral role, the concern for individuals, and talking face to face that he particularly enjoyed. He put two periods aside a week to talk to his students.

"I liked talking to our senior students, to discuss their progress, to check they had home support to study, and to broaden their outlook and open their eyes to vocational ideas. I kept notes in a large new ledger each year so I could monitor the progress of every sixth former; this helped immensely to write a personal line in the sixth form reports and also at parent teacher nights.

"I was generally the last teacher to leave the hall on those nights – Deputy Principal and good friend Pat Thyne would often remain for company and he and caretaker Karl Christensen (clutching a prodigious bunch of keys) would be chatting quietly in the far corner of Hislop Hall."

He also recalls long hours agonising over accrediting recommendations, then talking to each of the students who missed accreditation to mentally prepare and instil confidence for their exams. "I told them the school had their back and that made all the difference to some of them," he said.

As Dean, he says he was lucky to draw on the experience of fellow sixth form teachers – Brian Shanks, Margaret Cotton, Ian McMillian, Pat Scott, Betty Fraser, Jimmy Sutherland, and Tim Foster.

Huia was the teacher representative on Taieri's student council, which he enjoyed immensely, and supervised the "Tai Hi Fundi" Taieri student fundraisers. There was even a light truck used for pick-up nicknamed the "Ockmobile." "They were incredibly successful but also loads of fun – we had some great fundraising events over those years, as I'm sure everyone at the school at that time will recall."

He also remembers the collegial and fun times in the staffroom, particularly the very many "gaff" of the week stories. Huia, along with Bill Purdie, Jimmy Downes, Alf Bathgate, Ian McMillian, Barry Hassall and Bob Madill were known as the "Top Table" rebels – this came about because they steadfastly refused to give up their dining table in the staffroom when

they were replaced with coffee tables during a renovation. He prizes an engraved silver platter awarded each of the non-conformists when they retired.

Other responsibilities included overseeing school photos and managing photobooks, sports days, and running prizegiving events – with military precision. He remembers one mother asking why her son had to put his shoes in the fridge – the answer being that cold shoes are easier to polish to a high shine, a tip he picked up in the army.

He had a firm, gently persuasive manner and many people benefited from his advice, but humour was important. Perhaps it was best said by the 1987 School Magazine tribute that said there was hardly an area of school life where Mr Ockwell has not made a contribution through his enthusiastic participation or gifts of leadership.

In 1987, Huia retired from full-time teaching, but then spent many years as an exam supervisor and relief teacher including at John McGlashan and some time teaching in the UK which allowed Ngaire to pursue her passion for genealogy research. There is always a demand for reliable relievers, and his love of history, and the geography papers he took at University gave him a wide knowledge - he was able to teach across 18 subjects, including PE, at Taieri. Some teachers were even reluctant to be sick if they knew Huia wasn't available to take over their class.

He fully retired from relief teaching in 2004 after serving 12,251 hours, and he and Ngaire are still in Mosgiel, now living in Chatsford Retirement Village.



*Huia Ockwell and pupils from 1978 in a Tai Hi Fundi, Five Roads Corner, Mosgiel*

## 125th JUBILEE REMINISCES



## FROM THE ARCHIVES



*7th form 1972*

*Back Row: Jan Murray, Henry Schakelaar, Ross Hill, Kee Young, Graeme Ferguson, Malcolm Wong*

*Middle: Sally Carmody, Michael McLennan, Christine Young, Desiree Rogers, Gillian Thomson, Helen Sew Hoy*

*Front: Dayle Schwartzfeger, Glenn Shephard, Tom Hyslop, Mark Winefield, Charles Hakkaart, Robert Luke, Fraser Magee, Margaret Wilson.*

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If you have any stories or photos of interest to share or have any questions about the reunion, please contact us at [alumni@taieri.school.nz](mailto:alumni@taieri.school.nz)

