

Where are they now? Scholars from 2007 to 2014

The Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship
at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha



University of
Canterbury
Foundation

Introduction

Brian Moore, Benefactor

The Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust was initiated through the generosity of Mr Brian Moore who was born in 1923. He was a Chartered Accountant practicing in Riccarton and joined the Rotary Club of Riccarton in 1956.

Mr Moore had a particular interest in youth and had the desire to use some of his personal funds to create a foundation which could be available to provide financial support to needy youth. The main objective as outlined in the original documents was “to promote and assist in the promotion of the education training advancement and benefit in life of children and young persons”. This philosophy was supported by many other members of the Rotary Club, who provided both financial and administrative support.

The first Trustees, in addition to Mr Moore, included two other members of the Rotary Club of Riccarton, Mr Richard Harrington (then Mayor of Riccarton) and Mr Lyall Hobson. Originally known as the Riccarton Youth Foundation the name was changed in 1999 to the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust.

The Trust now distributes in excess of \$150,000 annually, with around \$100,000 being given in relatively small amounts to children for such items as clothing, school trips and fees, which assist these children to realise their ambitions. In addition, some \$40,000 annually is provided in scholarships for students attending the Universities of Canterbury and Lincoln as well as to Ara Institute of Canterbury. In recent years significant sums have been provided to Koru Care, vehicles for Hohepa Canterbury and the Christchurch City Mission, and recently to Endometriosis New Zealand for the production of a video for use in schools around the country.

There is no doubt that the foresight of Mr Moore has added a great deal to the lives of many children and young people.

Mr Moore died in December 2019, at the age of 96.

The Scholarship

The Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust established the scholarship in 2007 and can be awarded to a student who is studying at the University of Canterbury Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, Lincoln University Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki and Ara Institute of Canterbury Ara rau, taumata rau. The purpose of the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust is for the betterment of the education, training, advancement and benefit in the life of young persons in New Zealand.

The following are the stories of the first 7 recipients of the scholarship. The scholarship wasn't awarded in 2009.

Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship awardees

Letitia Stenberg – 2007

Stephen Blair – 2008

Alannah Jeune – 2010

Olivia Rowley – 2011

Dean Smith – 2012 (no story)

Jack Palmer – 2013

Miriam Capill – 2014

Letitia Stenberg – 2007

Letitia said that the scholarship had allowed her to focus on and prioritise her study above anything else.

Letitia has fond memories of studying for her degree of Bachelor of Laws (LLB), which she gained in 2011, not only the excellent lectures that she attended at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (UC), but also the fun events and being able to enjoy the UC's beautiful campus.

Letitia is currently working as a (senior associate) lawyer for Greenwood Roche in Auckland, a firm specialising in projects law, and it is her ambition to become a partner in the future.

Notwithstanding the financial benefit of the scholarship, Letitia said that she was so proud that she was awarded it, and her mother was even prouder.

“I always felt embarrassed and disadvantaged by our family's financial situation growing up – for example, attending the most affordable school camps, or seeking subsidies in sports team membership fees – nothing was ever easy or without difficulty. The award of the scholarship was probably the first time that I stopped worrying about this and I felt like I was properly established for the career that I had always wanted to pursue,” she says.

“I was very grateful for how welcoming the Riccarton Rotary Club was when I attended the Monday lunch sessions and spoke to the members. Interacting with professionals, in itself, is an invaluable lesson that a lot of people do not have the opportunity of doing until they embark on their career.

“I am exceptionally grateful for the generosity of the club, and it has set me up for my career and my adult life. Further, the generosity of the club was very humbling, and has encouraged me to be grounded in my post-university life. Consequently, I am very motivated to return the favour to the community in other ways, I am trying my best to do so.”

Letitia (2nd from left)
with friends outside courthouse



Stephen Blair – 2008

Stephen was awarded the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship in 2008 and had the support of the Trust from 2008 to 2010. He completed a Degree of Bachelor of Laws with Honours (LLB (Hons)) and BCom (Finance) at UC, graduating in 2013. He has said that one of his study high points was being admitted into the LLB honours programme and achieving a first class honours degree.



When asked what difference having the scholarship made in his first years at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, Stephen replied “that in addition to the invaluable financial support that the scholarship afforded me, which allowed me to pursue and achieve my goal of completing an LLB/BCOM, the scholarship allowed me to meet a wide array of different people through the Rotary network.

“As part of the scholarship, I attended many Rotary meetings and presented at a number of these. In my second

or third year, I also gave a speech to the new cohort of UC scholarship recipients.”

“These opportunities allowed me to speak to large, diverse groups of people and to build confidence that has proved valuable throughout my career to date. In hindsight these opportunities and early insights into network-building have proved to be unexpected long-lasting benefits of the scholarship.”

Stephen has many special memories of his time at UC, however the friends that he made during his time at UC remain an integral part of his life to this day. Some of his most distinct and special memories from his time at UC occurred in the aftermath of the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes. The earthquakes were a significant disruption to the newly commenced academic year, but in the following weeks he had many diverse and unique experiences, including assisting with the efforts of the Student Volunteer Army and studying in the network of tents and temporary study spaces that arose throughout the campus.

The earthquakes had the positive effect of bringing the university (and surrounding) community closer together and some of his fondest memories can be traced back to this time.

Stephen is currently employed as an associate (lawyer) in the financing group at Slaughter and May (a law firm) in London. He is involved in a diverse range of financing work across a number of sectors, notably energy and infrastructure. Before moving to London, he worked for three and a half years in the financing team of Minter Ellison Rudd Watts (a law firm) in Auckland.

Stephen said “thank you once again for the support that you provided during the first years of my university experience. Without it, it is difficult to imagine that my life would have followed the same course that has led me to where I am today”.

Stephen on a hiking trip in Ethiopia,
November 2018



Alannah Jeune – 2010

Alannah Jeune studied for a double degree at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (UC) – a Bachelor of Music majoring in performance, and a Bachelor of Arts with a major in history and a minor in classics. She graduated with a MusB and BA in 2013.



Alannah worked throughout her degrees in a variety of jobs, principally as a music teacher. Because of the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust's generous scholarship, she was able to save her earnings and use these to fund a future Masters course in the United Kingdom.

Alannah said she thoroughly enjoyed her course work and all the opportunities that study opened up to her. She mentioned that some of her high points were the summer paper she took on the history of Christchurch where she was able to devise her own research essay question; exploring the beginnings of Methodism in Canterbury; performing in the Akaroa International Music Festival with her recorder tutor from UC; and having the opportunity to perform with a chamber group from the Christchurch Symphony through her trumpet tutor.

Alannah spoke about her special memories at UC. "I began my study at UC in 2010, so I am part of the cohort whose university years were dominated by the earthquakes. While this was a highly difficult time for everyone in the city, many of my memories of UC are linked to how the university community rallied round and dealt with this situation. I was a member of the Student Volunteer Army and it was an incredible sight to see bus-loads of students clearing entire streets of silt in a matter of hours. Most of my classes were held in the 'tent-city' on the Arts Road carpark, and while slightly uncomfortable at times, this was an amazing solution to the issue of teaching space, and I had some lovely times sitting on the pavement outside the tents chatting to my classmates while we completed our assignments."

After her graduation, some members of the UC history faculty suggested to Alannah that she might like to consider postgraduate study, comments which she took on board and explored options. She was particularly interested in the social history of religion and was thrilled to be accepted onto a masters course at The Queen's University Belfast studying modern history, focussing on religion,

conflict and identity. She moved to Northern Ireland in September 2014 and has had a wonderful time at Queen's, both academically and socially. She really appreciated the opportunity to live and study outside Aotearoa New Zealand, especially since she had never been very far from Christchurch prior to that, and she found being in Europe absolutely incredible. Alannah graduated from Queen's with Distinction in September 2015, and then worked in Northern Ireland until her return to Aotearoa New Zealand in February 2016.

Alannah returned to UC as a tutor in the history faculty in February 2016, and then in March 2017 she enrolled as a PhD student under the supervision of Professor Katie Pickles. She feels incredibly fortunate that she was awarded one of the UC Doctoral Scholarships which supports her studies for three years. Her thesis looks at children, race and gender in the British Protestant mission movements of the nineteenth century. Essentially, she is using juvenile literature produced by various mission organisations, to examine how concepts of race and gender were communicated to children.

In addition to the UC Doctoral scholarship, she was also awarded the Edward Gibbon Wakefield Trust Scholarship for 2017. This scholarship, which is only awarded every three years to a student from UC, supports a year of postgraduate study at the University of Oxford, attached to Christ Church



Alannah performing with Downshire Brass (NI) at the European Brass Band Championships, Germany, 2015

College. Alannah went to Oxford in September 2017, and had a year that exceeded all expectations. "To live and work in an environment so steeped in history is alone incredible, but the access to lectures, seminars and libraries was invaluable to my study. My thesis required access to sources only available in archives in the UK, so being based in Oxford was wonderful. I was also able to attend conferences both in Oxford, and further afield, which gave me the opportunity to engage with respected academics in my subject area. I returned to Oxford after my year as the Wakefield Scholar as an associate member at Christ Church and have enjoyed the chance to continue my research here but also to become involved with other aspects of university life. I work as a Junior Dean at Magdalen College, providing emergency welfare support to students, volunteer for Nightline – an overnight listening support service for students, and manage the Christ Church College Choir. Within the wider Oxford community, I'm a volunteer for the Oxford Winter Night Shelter which provides housing for rough sleepers in various church venues around Oxford every night through winter."

Alannah is aiming to submit her PhD in March 2020 and her goal is to continue to work in academia, an area where she can combine teaching and research, two of her major passions.

On a final note, Alannah's message to the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust is one of special thanks. "I'd like to thank all the members of the Riccarton Rotary for their support and generosity during my undergraduate years. It was an honour to be awarded the Youth Trust Scholarship, and while I was incredibly grateful at the time, it is with the benefit of hindsight that I can see just how invaluable this support truly was. I would never have been able to pursue further study overseas, had I not been supported by the Rotary and able to save my earnings throughout my undergraduate years. But the support from the Riccarton Rotary was not just financial, being offered this scholarship as a 17 year old gave me such confidence. It was wonderful to have a group of people, who didn't even know me, so sure that I would succeed at university and beyond, and for that I really thank you all."

Olivia Rowley – 2011

As a result of being awarded the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship in 2011, Olivia feels that she was able to have a true university experience. She was able to stay in one of the University Halls of Residence and through that was able to enjoy all that university life had to offer. Olivia was also fortunate to have her scholarship extended for a fourth year to assist with her expenses during her honours year at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (UC).



Olivia studied biology | mātauranga kōiora and geography | matai mātawhenua and graduated in 2014 with a BSc (Hons) first class. Some of her most treasured moments at UC were when the class went on field trips and the amazing friendships she made while at university.

When asked about any special memories of her time at UC Olivia said, “Earthquakes of course! I was in my first year when the big one hit, and

I remember all of us ‘out of towners’ sleeping on the floor of our dining hall together because our buildings had not been declared safe yet.

“Academically I loved the last few years of my degree when classes got smaller and your lecturers got to know you. Coming from a very small south island town and attending a high school with only around 400 other students made for quite the shock sitting in classes with 300 plus other students.

I also made some amazing friends that I still keep in contact with today.”

Olivia is currently in her third year of her PhD at James Cook University in Cairns, Australia where she is studying the ecology of the deadly Irukandji Jellyfish. Olivia describes her study as “the big question”: Is it likely they are going to get further south? What this really means is 1) I get to go out on the Great Barrier Reef diving and snorkelling all in the name of science and 2) at conferences I get to sound much cooler than I actually am!”

Olivia is using a mixture of physiological experiments and mathematical modelling to model



Left: Snorkeling in the Great Barrier Reef. Above: jellyfish

success and believed in me enough to achieve it. This quickly snowballed changing my mind-set along the way to ‘well if they can believe in me I should back myself too’. I carried this thought with me and as a result I achieve well beyond what I thought I was capable of.”

“I now find myself in that very same (very lucky) position again, having a full scholarship for my PhD. However, it all started upon applying for the Riccarton Rotary Trust Youth scholarship. Your community changes not only the financial situation of those that are blessed enough to receive this support, but self-confidence and as a result lives. “Thank you for believing in me.”

the ecological niche of this jellyfish and using this data to project into the future distribution and abundance of these animals.

“I am also lucky enough to work part-time while studying. I work as a marine educator and take high school students from all over the world out to the Great Barrier Reef. While out there I hold lectures aboard boats about the reef and the animals that live there, and we also complete citizen science programs to monitor the health of the coral and the animals that live within it. I was lucky enough to spend two days last year with 9 girls from Tauranga Girls’ College teaching them not only about marine science but also about being a female scientist, and what it means to work and study abroad.”

Olivia hopes to have a long career in marine research and she maintains

that her love for the outdoors and all things biology have set her up well for a career in this field. She hopes to finish her PhD in October 2020 and to continue to travel and experience new places during her postdoctoral years. She would love to come back to Aotearoa New Zealand at some stage as an academic and use her skills to mentor and educate the next generation of marine lovers.

“Whenever I have been asked about my scholarship there is always one thing I tell everyone. The biggest thing the Riccarton Rotary club gave me cannot be measured in dollar value.

To have a group of people believe in you to the extent of investing money is potentially the biggest asset that you can give someone. While I was afforded a tertiary education free of financial burden I was also afforded a network of people who wished me nothing but

Jack Palmer – 2013

The Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship allowed Jack the opportunity to undertake university study without having to take on a student loan. Jack said the scholarship gave him a head start in his life, for which he is incredibly thankful. Helping with his university fees and living costs, the scholarship allowed Jack to focus on his study rather than working a part time job.



Jack (2nd from left) in Croatia during the world cup final 2018)

One of the high points while studying towards a Bachelor of Engineering specialising in Forestry, was gaining a great network of University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (UC) lecturers and colleagues, whom he still remains in touch with today. Jack values the camaraderie built during his forestry and engineering field trips and through the degree programme.

Jack finished his study towards his degree in November 2016 and celebrated his graduation in April 2017. He works as a full time Forest Engineering Consultant based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington however spends time contracting around Aotearoa New Zealand. One of his

recent contracts was helping a client implement a new environmental monitoring and automated GIS system within their forestry business. This is a very important issue for the Aotearoa New Zealand forestry industry at the moment with the new National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry implemented in May 2019.

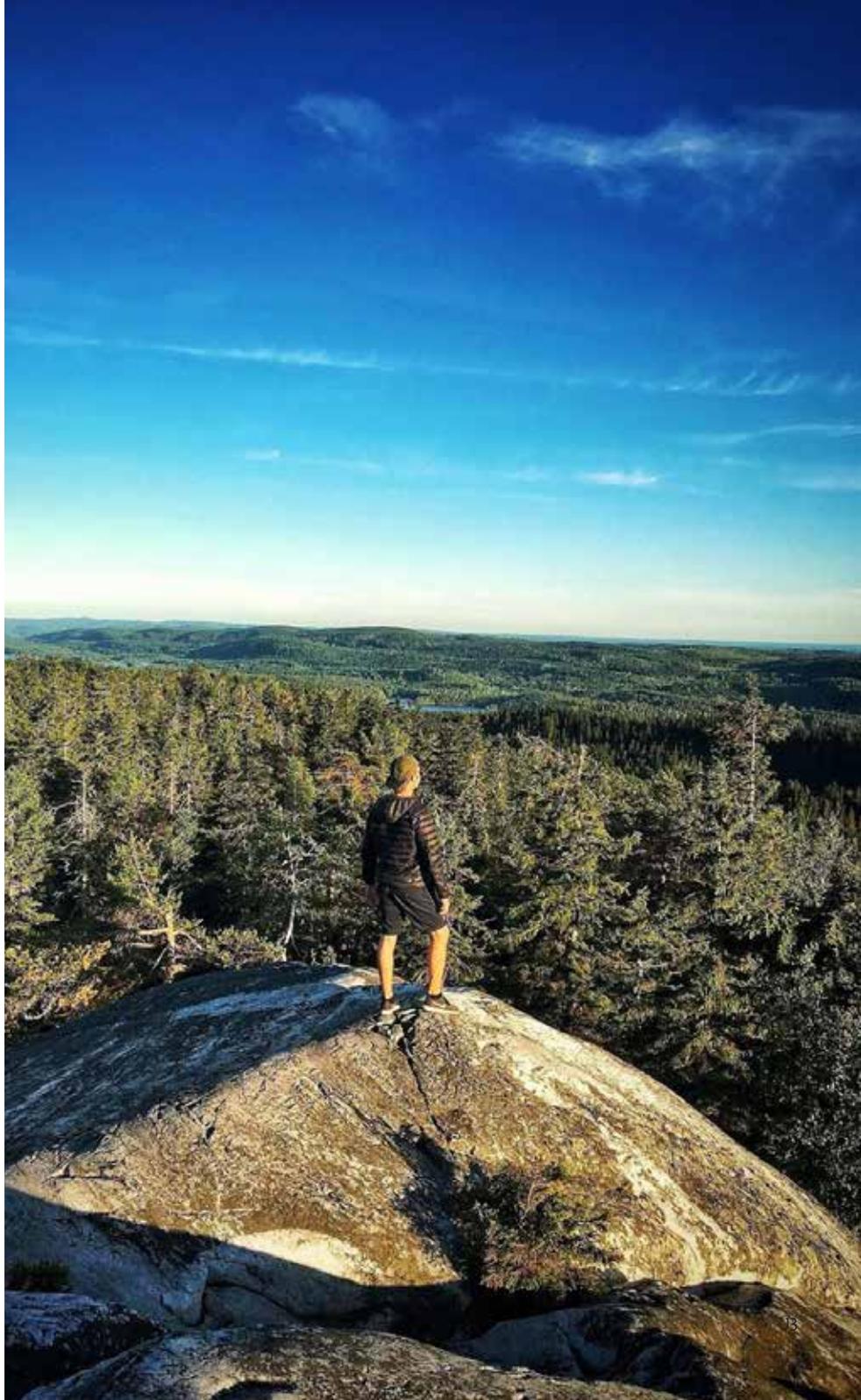
Jack is hoping to spend some more time travelling overseas combining his love for the outdoors with his career development. He would like to work in the forestry industry in North America or Europe to learn new skills and gain more knowledge in his chosen field. He hopes that any knowledge gained while overseas will be of benefit to the

Finland: Two favourites
– forest and travel

Aotearoa New Zealand industry. He would love to progress his career and become an operations manager or regional manager somewhere within the forestry industry in Aotearoa New Zealand.

When asked what he would like to say to the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Jack replied, “I would like to sincerely thank the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust for the opportunity they gave me through their support of my scholarship for all four years of my time at UC. It was a huge change in my life and provided me with a step up to really tackle the forestry industry and New Zealand head on once I left university. I will forever remember what it has done for me and would love to catch up with the members again sometime when I next get some time in Christchurch – although that doesn’t happen as much as I would like at the moment!

I think the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust is a fantastic group of people and I look forward to hearing more about any other recipients of the scholarship in the future.”



Miriam Capill – 2014

Miriam studied for a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (Primary) at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (UC), graduating in 2016. Being awarded the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship was a huge relief for Miriam as she was also trying to help support her mother and two younger siblings, as well as cover her university expenses.



Miriam often had to drive her siblings to and from school and so the money she earned from part time work allowed her to run a car while the scholarship money allowed her to purchase extra things necessary for a university degree such as a laptop, folders and materials.

When asked to describe her high points at UC, Miriam says, “I loved the school placements where we were able to work with children and teach. There is no learning quite like actually doing! The placements were full-on, but incredibly valuable.

“I also loved building strong relationships with a number of my lecturers. Many cared not only about my academic wellbeing, but also my mental and emotional wellbeing too.”

“One of the biggest highlights of my time in teacher training was our year two marae visit. I found this experience both culturally enriching and incredibly beneficial for building relationships with others in my year.”

Miriam was fortunate to receive a permanent position at Wharenui School in Christchurch where she is teaching year 1–3 students, and absolutely loves it.

“I know that my calling is definitely working with children so my plan is to stay in education. However, I would love to work with under-privileged children or maybe even youth in prison further down the track. I also have interest in working with special needs children though. So I guess I will have to see what doors open....but it's very exciting!

“I would like to emphatically thank you with all my heart for choosing me to receive the Riccarton Rotary Youth Trust Scholarship 2014–2016. This was an invaluable gift to both me, and my mother and siblings. It made a big difference to not have the stress and pressure of having to pay for my education. I am still overwhelmed to think of how amazing it has been!

“I hope to pay forward the gift that you gave me through working with children, and particularly if I get the opportunity to educate underprivileged children here in New Zealand.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!
“Although all the thanks would never be enough.”

On the marae trip



Celebrating with some of the great friends made at UC



