


Massey Geographers

The New Zealand Geography Conference, with the theme of ‘Geographical Interac-
tions’, was hosted by the Otago Branch of the NZ Geographic Society in Dunedin from 1st to 4th February 2016. In excess of 200 delegates attended with Massey geog-
raphers and other PEP staff being well rep-
resented. The conference was based at the
University of Otago Campus in a lecture the-
atre block that was approximately in the mid-
dle of construction site, that portion of the
campus being redeveloped. The contractors
fortunately went to some lengths to avoid
having peak pneumatic drilling during the
actual sessions.

The conference was opened by Professor
Tony Ballantyne (PVC humanities), who was
generous in his recognition of the influence
of historical geographers on his own re-
search into imperial networks. Emeritus Prof
Dick Bedford (Waikato) gave the first key-
NOTE role, important also because he was
the first geographer to be president of the
RSNZ, and the first social scientist since
before WWII.

The conference dinner was held at Lar-
rach’s Castle, with the associated piping in
of the Haggis (novel to Dr Ye). Having
must have grappled with food options as a
co-organiser of the 2012 conference, I admited
the decisiveness of the Dunedin organisers
– all the lunches were provided at the Hari
Krishna restaurant on campus.

Assoc Prof Ian Fuller organised two special
sessions on ‘Geographies of the Anthropo-
cene’ which included presentations by Prof
Mark Macklin and himself; Dr Sam McColl
and Dr Alastair Clement organised a

session on ‘Geomorphology of past envi-
ronments’, in which they spoke along with
graduate student Goldie Walker. PhD Si-
mon Vale also spoke in one of these ses-
sions. Dr Russell Prince gave a paper on
‘Policy mobility, topology and global policy
assemblages’. Dr Matt Henry (Resource
and Environmental Planning) delivered a
paper on narratives of innovation in agri-
food new product development. Assoc Prof
Mansvelt spoke on information and commu-
nication technologies and aging in place. Dr
Jia Ye gave a paper on her work on en-
countering class difference in Singapore
while Dr Aisling Gallagher talked about
Marsden funded research under the title of
‘The business of care: constructing a child-
care market in Aotearoa/New Zealand’. For
my sins I found myself in a session called
‘Geographies of Education’ for my scintillat-
ing address on Otago Geology Prof Noel
Benson and the early history of geography
at Otago University. This necessitated
ducking out mid-way through the session
and hoping that the taxi for the trip to the
airport was not running late (fortunately
not). Also from the School of People Environ-
ment and Planning, Dr Maria Borovnik
organised a spe-
cial session on ‘mobilities research in New
Zealand’ about which she also spoke and
which Dr Matt Henry (Resource and En-
vironmental Planning) spoke about cycling
indicators and local government initiatives.

Assoc Prof Glen Banks spoke on SDG’s
private sector and development. MMR

Massey Physical Geographers played a sig-
nificant role in the New Zealand Geographical
Society’s biennial conference, held in Dunedin
1-4 February 2016. The Physical Geography
group included: Mark Macklin, Ian Fuller,
Alastair Clement, Sam McColl, plus six post-
graduates (three PhD, three MSc) who be-
tween them covered the conference ses-
sions and presented nine oral papers
(including a keynote) and four posters. Two
posters were awarded student prizes (best
student poster and highly commended). Sig-
nificant new research collaborations were dis-
cussed, particularly in nurturing a new rela-
tionship with physical geographers from the
University of Otago. PhD Student Simon Vale
was commended by the conference organis-
ers for his role in leading a very successful
pre-conference post-graduate workshop.

Another key achievement of the conference
was the five-fold increase in representation
from the wider physical geography community
compared with previous conferences. This
interest was acknowledged by the confer-
ence organisers to be the result of the efforts
of Ian in galvanising interest in the NZGS con-
fERENCE as a national forum for physical geog-
raphy research. The Massey Physical Geo-
graphers will maintain this new momentum by
organising the forthcoming Australia and New
Zealand Geomorphology Group (ANZGG)
meeting in Greytown in February 2017, the
next major meeting of physical geographers in
New Zealand.

Ian Fuller

NZGS Conference 2016
Dunedin

Physical Geography Conference Report

In November, four High School students flew
out of New Zealand bound for Tver, Russia
to compete in the International Geography
Olympiad 2015. This was an extremely long
trip as the destination of Tver was approxi-
mately 500 km North of Moscow. The com-
plex where we were to stay was a large facili-
ty called Computeria, this is where we slept,
ate and carried out the testing as part of the
Olympiad. At Computeria, I was sharing a
room through the duration of our time there
with the two male contestants from Montene-
gro. While there was some communication
difficulties, getting to know about their
country, its history and its people was truly
interestig and gave me an insight into a country
I will admit I had very little if any knowledge
about prior to the trip.

When it came to the testing, I relished the
opportunity to test my skills against those of
the top geographers from all over the world.
The testing was made up of three parts, a
written answer test that covered almost all
aspects of natural and human geography, a
field work test where we were assigned activi-
ties to do in a practical setting including ap-
proximation of population density in a set area
and finally a multimedia test which is essen-
tially done on a computer with a series of mul-
ti-choice answers covering a broad range of
geographic topics. In the down time between
testing, all the contestants went on a variety
of excursions to locations around the local
area. Prior to my arrival in Russia, I was un-
aware of the scale of this event (over 30 coun-
ties involved) and the others like it in other
subjects. However, the Geography Olympiad
opened my eyes to the importance of the
study Geography and its place in the future
development and sustainability of address-
ing serious risks in the future from which there
were teams present.

Overall, I would like to thank the New Zealand
Geographical society for their assistance in
giving me the opportunity to go to this amaz-
ing event at a much lower cost than I would
have incurred otherwise. While Russia had
some bad reputation in the media these days,
I genuinely believe I came across some of the
most caring and genuine people while there
and would gladly go back to see more of the
country and its beauty. Luke Dixon

Physical Geographers out and about

Ian Fuller and Mark Mack-
lin gave an invited talk at
the Whanganui Science
Forum on Tuesday 23rd
Feb on ‘Living with the
River – Whanganui floods:
past, present and future’.
Attended by an audience
of 100. Report in Manawa-
tu Standard / Stuff.co.nz:
http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu
standard/news/77165941/
Massey-professors-
evaluate-past-Whanganui-
 floods-to-help-pauce-
future-events

Ian Fuller, Mark Macklin,
and Kat Holt have been
working with Greater Wel-
ington Regional Council
to extend flood series in the
Hutt River using cores ex-
tracted from former chan-
el courses in the flood-
plain. This work is funded
by GWRC and also in-
volveS international collab-
oration with Aberystwyth
University via Postdoctoral
Research Fellow, Dr Wil-
lem Toonen. Fieldwork
took place mid February.