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Inaugural Prescriptions of Academic Dress in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1877–1879

By Bruce Christianson

Abstract

In August 1877, Canterbury University College became the first institution in Aotearoa New Zealand formally to prescribe academic dress for its members.

The prescription took the form of 'a black stuff gown, similar to that worn by Oxford scholars, and a trencher cap with tassel'. All members of the College, undergraduates and graduates, including the academic staff, were required to appear in this academic dress 'at all lectures, examinations, and public ceremonials of the College or University, and also within the precincts of the College'.

Photographic evidence shows that the College gown was indeed very similar to the contemporary scholar's gown at Oxford illustrated by Shrimpton in 1870: full-length, and with open bell-shaped sleeves coming to the wrist, similar to those of the modern Oxford doctor's full-dress robe.

In March 1879, the University of New Zealand, to which Canterbury University College was affiliated, finally made regulatory provision of academic dress for its graduates—based on the contemporary patterns of Cambridge—but none for undergraduates, who at Canterbury College continued wearing their 'scholars' gowns' well into the following century.

We trace the adoption of these 'academical fashions' through the eyes of the Colonial press.

The closing years of the New Zealand Civil War[1] saw the foundation of the colony's first two universities.

The University of New Zealand (hereafter UNZ) was founded in 1870 by the central (*scilicet* federal) government,[2] with the intention that UNZ should be a secular federal institution, along the lines of London University. The UNZ would conduct examinations and award degrees; teaching would be provided by affiliated institutions, to be set up in each of the major population centres.[3]

The fly in the ointment for this federal plan was the University of Otago, founded the previous year by the provincial government of the Presbyterian province of Otago,[4]

1 Traditionally referred to as the Māori War by Pākehā, and as the Pākehā War (Te Riri Pākehā) by Māori, although the reality was much more complicated: for an excellent account see James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflic*t (1986, reissued by Auckland University Press, 2015).

2 The national capital of New Zealand had moved to Wellington from Auckland in 1865, in large part to bring the central government closer to the southern provinces.

3 These affiliated institutions were initially for the most part high schools prepared to offer evening lectures at the level of the University syllabus.

4 With the encouragement of the Free Church of Scotland, which funded the chair of mental and moral philosophy.

in the provincial capital Dunedin. In contrast with UNZ, Otago was intended to be a teaching university, providing *inter alia* appropriate preparation for the Calvinist ministry. Otago and UNZ would remain the only two universities in Aotearoa until 1961, when the federal UNZ was dissolved.

Canterbury University College (hereafter CUC) was founded in 1873 in Christchurch, the provincial capital of Canterbury, and affiliated to the UNZ the following year, at which point it took over teaching the students of the Canterbury Collegiate Union.[5]

Otago University was (with some reluctance) persuaded by CUC to place its own degree awarding powers in abeyance, and to apply for affiliation to UNZ at the same time as CUC, albeit on the basis that Otago would retain its original title as a university rather than become a university college.[6] In 1876, UNZ was granted a royal charter, which meant that its degrees were recognized throughout the British Empire.[7]

The Canterbury University College gown 1877

Neither Otago nor UNZ was at all keen on academic dress at first, and so it fell to CUC to take the lead. Academic dress makes an appearance at the annual meeting of the Board of Governors of CUC held on 10 July 1877:

> ACADEMICAL DRESS. A letter was read from Professor Cook,[8] that the matter of academical dress, about which he had previously written, might be settled by the Board at once, as a fresh term was about to be entered on, and the new buildings would shortly be occupied.[9]

At the next meeting, on 3 August 1877, the following motion was proposed by the Secretary to the Board, Frederic de Carteret Malet:

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5 The Canterbury Collegiate Union (CCU) was formed in 1871 jointly by Christ's College, which at that time provided post-seventeen education as well as being a grammar school; and the Canterbury Museum and Library Trust, which, in addition to being responsible for the museum and the library, was also incorporated as a provincial school of technical science. In 1872 the CCU affiliated with the UNZ, and successfully petitioned the Canterbury provincial council to establish a University College in Christchurch. In 1874, when CUC was granted affiliation with the UNZ, the CCU promptly handed over its students to CUC and dissolved itself.

6 Otago did award one degree before placing its powers into abeyance until 1961, a BA to Alexander Watt Williamson in June 1874. See <https://grokipedia.com/page/alexander_watt_williamson> [retrieved 25 May 2026].

7 Otago University had made an unsuccessful attempt to gain a royal charter in 1870. Otago's affiliation to UNZ in 1874 did not inhibit it from two further unsuccessful applications for a royal charter as a university in its own right, in 1879 and in 1887 respectively. Alexander Williamson's degree certificate was re-issued by the UNZ in 1876, after UNZ gained its royal charter. Also in 1876, the central government celebrated the end of the civil war by abolishing all the provincial governments, including those of Otago and Canterbury, *tout court*.

8 Charles Henry Herbert Cook (1843–1910), BA (1866), LLB (1868) (Melbourne), BA (1872) (St John's Cambridge), 6th Wrangler, appointed Foundation Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at UCC in 1874. See <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c30/cook-charles-henry-herbert> [retrieved 25 May 2026].

9 *Press*, 28, Issue 3735, 11 July 1877, p. 5 (Supplement): The *Press* became the first daily paper in the province of Canterbury in 1863. The 'new buildings' are those of the original gothic CUC campus in Worcester Street, officially opened a month before the Governors' meeting.

> That the Board approves of the recommendation of the professors that undergraduates, members of the University, on the books of the Canterbury College, should appear in academical costume within the precincts of the College. The College committee, in conference with the professors and lecturers, to be empowered to decide what costume shall be worn. The motion was agreed to.[10]

News of this development occasioned feverish speculation in the editorial column of the *Press* two days later:

> That the tailor makes the man is in many instances only too true, and we may infer that *pari passu* the costume frequently makes the academical student. … Granted then that an intimate relation exists between the 'earthly cerements' and the soul within, a heavy weight of responsibility lies on the shoulders of the Board of Governors of the Canterbury College, who have just passed a resolution with the view of deciding what costume shall be worn by undergraduate members of the University on the books of the College. There lies a wide field of choice before them.
>
> Between the short and simple bachelor's gown and the flaring scarlet robes of the Doctor of Music, between the plain black cap of the ordinary undergraduate and the gold tasseled head piece of the Gentleman-Commoner, there exist possible combinations which to any man with a turn for landscape-gardening might prove irresistably [*sic*] seductive. But we trust that should any such gentleman sit on the Board of Governors, he will be immediately crushed by an overwhelming majority.
>
> To launch a weak-minded youth upon the sea of academical thought, clad in the crimson vestments of the musical proficient, might have results as disastrous as they would be startling. Though the colour might brighten up the walls of the Canterbury College … we would hardly recommend the Board to sacrifice everything to pictorial effect. No doubt late experiments have shown that the influence of colour has frequently an invaluable effect in cases of mental derangement, … But the students of the College are presumably sane, and require no artificial stimulant or sedative. All that is necessary is that their garments and surroundings should remind them that they are searchers after the hidden gold of knowledge, and not after the dross of pleasure.
>
> But the Board … must be on their guard. Above all, let them not place before themselves certain books we wot of, which depict in glowing colours the various dresses of the different Universities, or they are lost. Reason and all sense of propriety will be swept away, and we shall see careering through our College precincts sage professors and bands of students clad in vestments of such weird design and colour that the heart will shrink with fear …[11]

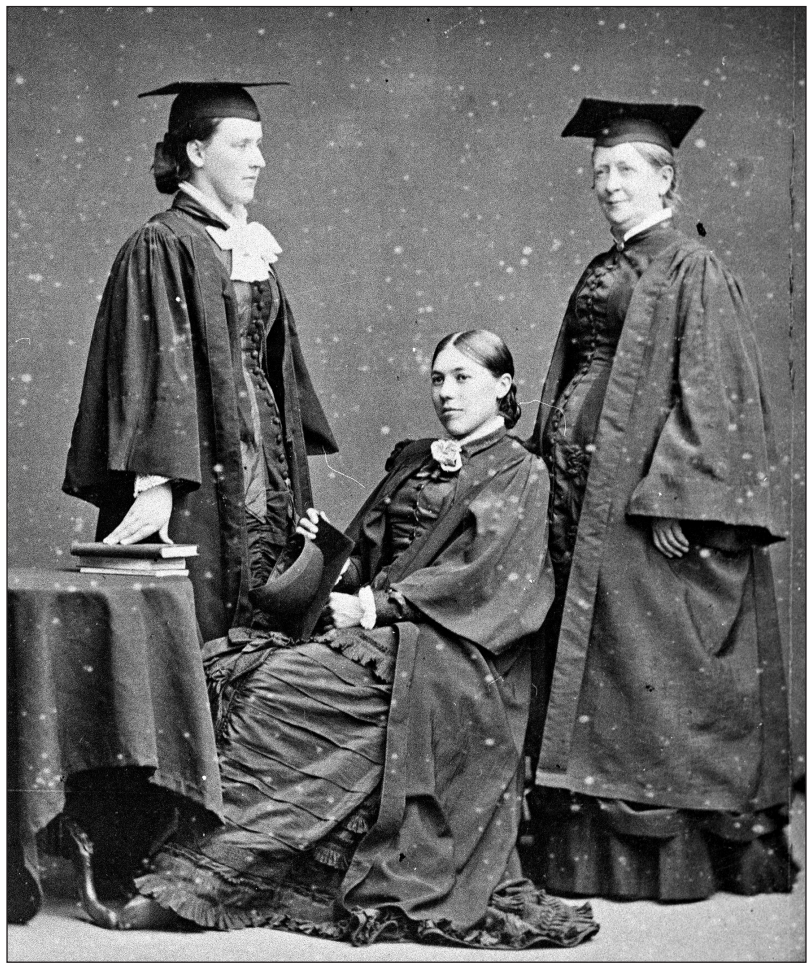
The reference to 'the flaring scarlet robes of the Doctor of Music' is interesting, as it would seem to indicate familiarity with London.[12] However, the costume agreed in 1877 by the professors turns out to be rather less flash. When the CUC published its first official Calendar, which was for the academic year 1879,[13] it included the regulations for academic dress. The Calendar was reviewed with approval by the gossip column 'Passing Notes', which observed:

10 *Press*, 28, Issue 3756, 4 August 1877, p. 3.

11 *Press*, 28, Issue 3757, 6 August 1877, p. 2.

12 London had prescribed a scarlet robe for its DMus in the academic dress regulations (which were printed in the Calendar) since 1862, although the first one was not awarded until 1885.

13 In the southern hemisphere the academic year and the calendar year are aligned, so that the long vacation falls in the summer.



Peter Schourup photograph, from file copy neg E1073/30, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago Otakou Whakaihu Waka

Fig. 1. Three CUC undergraduates wearing the College Gown in 1878: Mary Connon, Gertrude Hannah Grierson, Anne Jane Bolton.

The 'Canterbury College College [*sic*] Calendar for 1879' is the first attempt, worthy the name, made by any College in New Zealand to give a complete Syllabus and programme of its work in a book form. … The volume is apparently without a fault … The Greek accents have been successfully negotiated, and the calculus vagaries of the advanced mathematical papers seem unimpeachable … The College regulations are also collected, and give much valuable information to the intending student. … Under 'Academic Dress' he will learn that 'at all lectures, examinations, and public ceremonials of the College or University, and also within the precincts of the College, graduate and undergraduate members of the College shall appear in academic dress,' and that this dress 'shall be a black stuff gown, similar to that worn by Oxford scholars, and trencher cap with tassel.'[14]

14 *Timaru Herald*, 30, Issue 1389, 4 March 1879, p. 2. The columnist also notes that in March 1879 the members of the College consisted of four professors, four lecturers, and twenty-four undergraduates. CUC had many more students than this attending lectures out of inter-





Fig. 2 (left). Shrimpton's Oxford Scholar in 1870.

Fig. 3 (right). Loggan's Oxford Scholar in 1675.

Figs 2 and 3:
Collection of Dr Alex Kerr

Photographs of the gown adopted by CUC (Fig. 1) show that it is indeed similar to the 1870 version of the scholars' gown at Oxford University, as illustrated by Shrimpton (Fig. 2):[15] the gown comes almost to the ankles, with a gathered yoke and bell-shaped open sleeves falling to the wrist, similar to the modern Oxford pattern for the doctors' full-dress robe.[16]

The CUC gown would remain fixed in the form originally adopted for it in 1877, thus preserving a snapshot of the long, slow process of abbreviation to which the scholars' gown was being subjected at Oxford: two centuries earlier, in the time of Loggan,[17] the gowns worn by Oxford foundationers were floor-length, with fingertip-length sleeves worn turned back at the wrist, in accordance with Dr Fell's 1666 instructions to tailors (see Fig. 3); eighty years later on, the 1957 scholar's gown at Oxford will come only to the knee, and the sleeves barely to the elbow.[18]

We can only speculate why the Oxford scholar's gown was chosen as the model for the CUC gown. Of the foundation professors, Macmillan Brown was the only Oxford alumnus,[19] matriculating at Balliol in 1869, and he is known to be responsible for many of CUC's academic traditions.[20] However, there is a tantalizing reference to a 'scholar's gown' in a *Press* article of October 1877, dealing with the history of Christ's College:

est, but the requirement to wear cap and gown applied only to graduates and to matriculated students of the UNZ. No members of CUC had yet graduated from the UNZ, although some had been admitted to UNZ degrees *ad eundem*.

15 A. Thomas Shrimpton, *Shrimpton's Series of the Costumes of the Members of the University of Oxford*, 1st edn (Oxford: T. and G. Shrimpton, *c.* 1870).

16 [d2] in the Groves classification. Peter Schourup photograph, from file copy neg E1073/30, Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago Otakou Whakaihu Waka.

17 David Loggan, *Oxonia illustrata* (Oxford: the engraver, 1675), Plate 10, Fig. 3.

18 D. R. Venables and R. E. Clifford, *Academic Dress of the University of Oxford*, 1st edn (Oxford: Shepherd & Woodward, 1957), p. 29.

19 John Macmillan Brown (1845–1935), educated Edinburgh, Glasgow, Oxford; appointed Foundation Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at UCC in 1874. See <teara.govt.nz/e/biographies/2b41/brown-john-macmillan> [retrieved 25 May 2026].

20 Loc. cit.

> Christ's College Grammar School. The school list—calendar it can scarcely be called—of this flourishing institution has just been received from the publishers, and we take the opportunity of drawing attention to some of its contents. … Prefixed to the list of names is a short history of the founding and progress of the School and College from the year 1852 to the present time. It is drawn up by the Very Rev. the Dean of Christchurch, who is the present Sub-warden of the College. … from the very first the promoters intended to have two distinct departments of the College, a collegiate and a grammar school department… —[the latter] for boys of all ages, from seven to seventeen; and [the former] for young men above the age of seventeen. … the sub-warden goes on to say— '… after the establishment of the Somes' scholarships in 1858, the Somes' scholars were always regarded by me as students of the Collegiate Department; they wore the academical cap and scholar's gown, and worked with three others in what was known as the students' class, being quite distinct from the sixth form of the Grammar School, although they necessarily sat in the same room.'[21]

The Collegiate department of Christ's College had formed a component of the CCU that preceded the CUC, as we mention above.

The University of New Zealand statute 1879

By the beginning of 1879, the UNZ had admitted to its degrees a total of just nine graduates by examination, although there were considerably more who had been admitted *ad eundem*. Five of the nine were from Otago, and none from CUC.[22]

As the first cohort of CUC students approached graduation in 1879, pressure increased on the UNZ to make some provision of academic dress for its graduates.

The *Press* had previously commented unfavourably on the 1878 graduation ceremony held at Christchurch[23] in the Council Chamber:

> If it is worth while to have a public ceremony at all, it ought to be worth while to make it imposing. There is one more point in which a change would not be undesirable. The Senate have not as yet decided that there should be, in the University of New Zealand, an academical costume. We are sure that all members of the Universities will agree in thinking that this severe striving after simplicity is a mistake. A University ought, we imagine, to place itself, as it were, upon an imposing pedestal: and there was little imposing in the varieties of morning costume exhibited in the Council Chamber on Tuesday. A few graduates from Oxford and other Universities appeared in their gowns, and the professors and students of the Canterbury College wore their academical dress. But, as far as the New Zealand University was concerned, there was nothing to show outwardly that it had any connection, officially, with the business in hand. Dress, of course, is but a small matter; yet it has its power and influence sometimes and … a grave University ceremonial would seem to require a somewhat different character.[24]

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21 *Press*, 28, Issue 3814, 12 October 1877, p. 2. Several of the early CUC students were previously Somes Scholars at Christ's College: Hight and Candy, pp. 172 ff.

22 Kate Edger made history in 1877 as the first person to graduate from UNZ who was not an Otago student. Her degree was gained by study at what is now the Auckland Grammar School, one of the eight high schools affiliated with the UNZ in the 1870s. By the end of 1885, the UNZ had admitted 102 BAs by examination: forty-seven of them from CUC and thirty-one from Otago; no high schools remained affiliated to UNZ; and Otago and CUC had been joined by Auckland University College.

23 Although the first CUC students did not graduate until 1879. UNZ graduation ceremonies were also held in Auckland and in Dunedin during 1978.

24 *Press*, 29, Issue 4020, 13 June 1878, p. 2.

At its meeting on Wednesday the 12 March 1879, the UNZ Senate at last took action:

> THE NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITY SENATE.
> Wednesday, 12th March. The Senate met at 10 o'clock. Present: The Chancellor, Rev. Mr Bruce, Dr Roseby, Professor Brown, Dr Hector, Hon. Dr Grace, Professor Sale, Professor Shand, Rev. Mr Andrews, Mr Curtis, Dr Stuart, Mr Heale, Mr Rolleston, Rev. C. Fraser, and the Hon. H, J. Miller (registrar). ...
>
> Professor Brown moved—'That the Chancellor, Dr Grace, Dr Roseby, Professor Sale,[25] and the mover be appointed a committee to select the form and colour of the robes for the graduates of the New Zealand University.'—Agreed to.[26]

The newly appointed committee reported back to the same meeting, when the Senate resumed its sitting, just two days later:

> FRIDAY, 14th MARCH. The Senate of the New Zealand University resumed its sitting in the Museum Library at 2.30 p.m. Present: The Chancellor (H. J. Tancred, Esq); the Revs. D. Bruce, Dr Roseby, Andrew, Johnstone, and Fraser; Professors Shand and Sale; Messrs Heale, Rolleston, Curtis; the Hon. Dr Grace, and the Hon. Mr Miller. ...
>
> ACADEMIC DRESS. The following report was brought up by the Committee on Academic Dress :—' Your Committee recommend—1. Graduates must appear at all public ceremonials of the University in the academical costume proper to their degree, 2. The gown for Bachelors of Arts is the same as that of Cambridge Bachelors of Arts; the hood is of the size and shape of the Cambridge Master of Arts hood, lined with pink silk, and bordered with white fur. 3. The gown for Masters of Arts is the same as that of Cambridge Masters of Arts; the hood is of the size and shape of Cambridge Masters of Arts hood, lined with pink silk, 4. The gown for Bachelors of Laws is the same as that of Bachelors of Arts; the hood is of the size and shape of the Bachelors of Arts hood, lined with [light] blue silk, bordered with white fur. 5. The gown for Doctors of Laws is the same as that of Masters of Arts; the hood is of the size and shape of the Masters of Arts hood, lined with light blue silk. 6. The cap for all graduates is a black trencher, with tassel.'—Carried. [27]
>
> The Rev. Mr Fraser said he considered it was a pity they should copy the costumes of another University.
>
> The Rev. Dr Roseby explained that there was a difference of colour.[28]

25 We have already met Professor John Macmillan Brown. Henry John Tancred (1816–84), Matriculated 1834 Balliol, Oxford; Chancellor of UNZ 1871–84: <teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/6t14/tancred-henry-john>. Morgan Stanislaus Grace (1837–1903), MD (1858) (Jena); UNZ Senate 1871-1903: <teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2g15/grace-morgan-stanislaus>. Thomas Roseby 1844-1918, BA (1869), MA, LLB (1871), LLD (1873) (Sydney); UNZ Senate 1878–85: <adb.anu.edu.au/biography/roseby-thomas-4505>. George Samuel Sale (1831-1922), BA (1854), MA (1857) (Trinity, Cambridge); appointed Foundation Professor of Classics at Otago 1870; UNZ Senate 1877–1908: <teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2s1/sale-george-samuel>.

26 *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 5325, 14 March 1879, Page 5.

27 The word 'light' is omitted from the blue lining in clause 4 by the *Otago Daily Times* version of the report, but it is present in the reports of the Senate meeting published by the *Globe*, the *Auckland Star* (which carried the report under the heading 'Academical Fashion Notes'), and other newspapers; and it has always been in the UNZ's printed regulations. Scarlet gowns for doctors 'on special occasions' did not appear in the regulations until 1938. Eventually, the LLD hood came to be made entirely from light blue silk, to distinguish it from the hood for a master's degree.

28 When I graduated, one hundred years later, the tradition in the New Zealand Fed-

Mr Rolleston said he did not think the gown would cost more than 30s, and was not, therefore, likely to inflict a hardship upon anyone.

The report was then put and adopted.[29]

It is not clear from this account exactly how the Committee on Academic Dress came to its recommendations, but a good deal of informal deliberation may have occurred prior to the Senate meeting, with the appointment of the named members to the committee being a formality.[30] Sale of Otago was the only Cambridge alumnus, but Roseby would be familiar with the Cambridge full hood pattern from his time at Sydney.[31]

Whatever the truth of the matter, 'Passing Notes', as usual, had a diversive view on what might have been going on behind the scenes:

> We have down here a fashion—a somewhat ungracious fashion—of asserting that the New Zealand University is a farce, and that its ruling body never does anything in particular. Now this is, plainly, a libel. Those erudite and worthy gentlemen have transacted a considerable amount of academic business, and settled quite a host of not unimportant questions. And by no means last among the most interesting and delicate of these was the settlement of the academic costume. It took a committee of the Chancellor, two professors, and two doctors to do the matter justice; and no wonder, for the points involved were of a character not usually considered to be within the special provision of savants. Imagine the dismay of a profound classic when called on imperatively to express an opinion upon the respective merits of serge, silk, and satin; or the embarrassment of an eminent divine on being asked the relative proportions of 'fair' and 'dark' among an average assemblage of Colonial students, with a view of deciding whether blue or red would be the most generally becoming tint for their hoods; and yet in about two days every knotty point was solved, and the committee's report presented, defining all particulars with the utmost confidence and inflexibility. The feat could never have been accomplished by that committee unaided. Self-reliant and experienced as those gentlemen are, they dare not have talked in that confident fashion of silks and furs, pinks and blues. You may depend upon it, a sub-committee of ladies has had a hand—a very large hand—in these important decisions; and, with the assurance, we may all feel satisfied that the thing will be a success. … Just conceive the importance and solemnity of a body of blue-stockings specially convened for such a task. Would even the Chancellor himself venture to show his nose inside the door, think you?[32]

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eration of University Women (which *inter alia* sewed academic hoods to raise money for their scholarships) was that UNZ had combined 'Cambridge patterns with Oxford colours': see my 'In the Pink', *TBS*, 4 (2004), p. 54, n. 7. On the one hand, Gutch, 'University Hoods', clearly gives the Oxford MA a crimson lining: *Notes & Queries*, 2nd series, 6 (1858), pp. 211–12. On the other hand, in 2001 at St David's College, Lampeter, the late Nicholas Groves and I were able to inspect an Oxford MA hood dating from the 1890s: it was an [s5] pattern, and the lining (including the relatively unfaded part behind the stitching at the bottom of the liripipe) was a bright pink, and not crimson. Law has been blue for a long time at Oxford, at least for bachelors, although the hue has varied tremendously over the centuries. At UNZ law has always had a very light blue: dark blue was given to science in 1889.

29 *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 5326, 15 March 1879, p. 1 (Supplement).

30 Or they may just have been very decisive people.

31 Sydney offered its graduates a free choice between Oxford and Cambridge pattern gowns, but the hoods were all Cambridge full shape.

32 'Passing Notes', *Otago Witness*, Issue 1425, 22 March 1879, p. 16.

Gentle Reader, lest you consider the scenario envisaged by 'Passing Notes' too fanciful, be reassured that it would actually come to pass at Melbourne University fifteen years later:

> Recently several changes in the academic dress of the University have been contemplated, with a view to making the hoods and gowns more pleasing to the eye and more distinctive in the matter of colour. This involved the exercise of artistic taste in the blending of colours. As a rule the learning of the average man of books and precepts does not extend to this branch, and so the University authorities found themselves in the dilemma of having either to call in the services of the women they had deemed unfit to act as members of the Senate or run the risk of adopting an academic dress which might be artistically shocking. They accepted the lesser of the two evils and submitted the matter to a sub-committee of ladies, with the result that yesterday Professor Allen was in a position to assure the Senate, with every confidence, that [a hood of] moss-green silk … trimmed with white fur would look positively fetching. Indeed, so becoming did a certain 'sweet girl graduate' deem the new grown [hood] that she went so far as to outrage all university privilege by donning one before it had received the senatorial approval.[33]

The University of New Zealand ceremonies 1879

In August 1879 the first two CUC students graduated from UNZ, wearing the new regalia, to general acclaim:

> After a great deal of unnecessary delay, the ceremony of conferring the New Zealand University degrees for the present year came off at Christchurch on Tuesday last with every mark of success. … the presentation … has marks of individuality that make it a great advance on anything of the kind that has taken place before. It is the first occasion in the history of New Zealand on which the graduates and undergraduates of a college have assembled in full academical costume at a public ceremony, and given outward signs of University life. Indeed a large section of the public were quite ignorant that there was anything in New Zealand corresponding to the student class at Home, and it astonished many to see the undergraduate's [*sic*] muster in full insignia. We never were among those who under-value such distinctions of dress as make the students feel that they have some special function, and show to the public a new species of intellectual life rising in their midst. There are scores in the Colony who affect to despise academic dress; but, in its place, it has a large influence in uniting the students and sustaining their corporate vitality. Canterbury College, among the University institutions of New Zealand, is still alone in conforming to the traditions of older Universities in this matter of millinery. To put the head under the time-honored [*sic*] mortar-board is to Otago as good as to put the head under the yoke… The New Zealand University now compels all who graduate to find a wedding garment suitable to the dignity of the occasion. … We hope soon to see all colleges following the lead of the Canterbury one in the matter of suitable academic dress. … Altogether, the celebration was a great success, and Canterbury has the credit of having inaugurated a system of conferring degrees that smacks less of the amateur than any previous experiment.[34]

33 *Nelson Evening Mail*, 28, Issue 124, 30 May 1894, p. 2, reprinting an article from the *Melbourne Age*. Melbourne University admitted women to degrees from 1883, but (unlike UNZ) did not allow them to serve on the University Senate. The hood described is the new hood for the BSc.

34 *The Colonist*, 22, Issue 2588, 14 August 1879, p. 3.

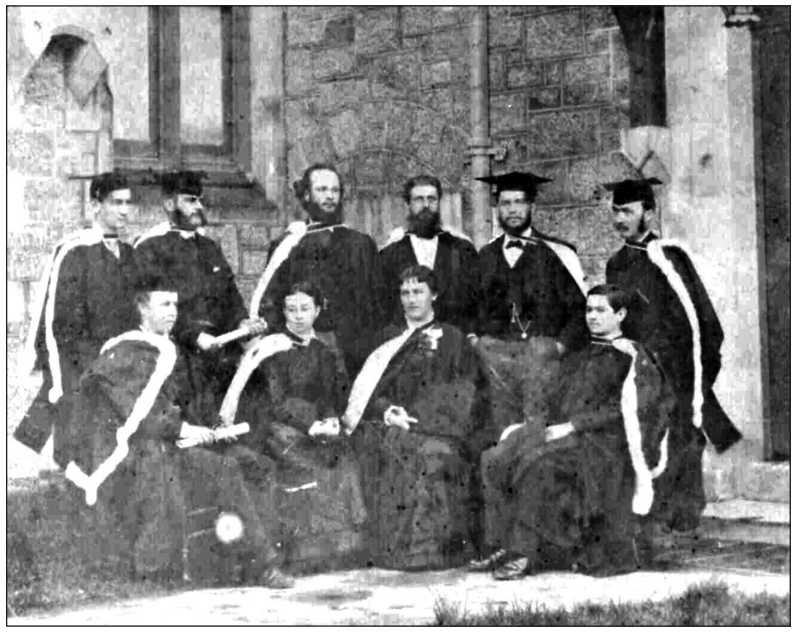


Fig. 4. The 1881 UNZ graduates from CUC, a mixture of bachelors and masters. The fur border on the bachelors' hoods clearly extends around the edge of the cape, as well as of the cowl.

Figure 4 shows clearly that the fur trim of the bachelors' hoods originally bordered the cape edge, as well as that of the cowl. The wording of the UNZ regulation never changed, but at some point its hoods lost the fur from the cape.

Other newspapers give fuller, albeit more narrowly factual, accounts of the ceremony, including transcripts of the speeches and of the form of presentation. The latter is of interest to us, because it involves hooding the graduands, rather than capping them:

> The Chairman called upon Frederick Fitchett and James Hay, who ascended to the dais and stood there side by side, and facing the Chairman. Dr Julius Von Haast then stepped forward and said: I have the honour, as Chairman of the Professorial Council of Canterbury College, to present Mr Frederick Fitchett a student of arts of Canterbury College for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the University of New Zealand. ... At the close of Dr Haast's address, Mr Fitchett approached the Chairman, who invested him with the Bachelor's hood, at the same time addressing him as follows: By virtue of the authority entrusted to me by the Chancellor and Senate, I now admit you to the degree of Bachelor of Arts of the University of New Zealand, and in token thereof you receive this hood, and this diploma duly signed by the Chancellor.[35]

The Colonist's dig at Otago toward the end of the passage quoted previously was fully justified by events at the ceremony held a few days later at Otago University, at least in the opinion of 'Passing Notes':

35 *Lyttelton Times*, 52, Issue 5755, 6 August 1879, p. 6. James Hay was then admitted with the same form. Oddly, graduation in Aotearoa New Zealand has always been referred to as 'capping'.



Fig. 5. Mary Campbell Aikman matriculating at CUC in 1883, wearing the College Gown.

The degree-conferring was undeniably a slow affair. … The crowd of ladies who attended expecting a display of academical millinery, met with disappointment. Chancellor[36] and Professors appeared in their ordinary togs, and the only wearers of hood and gown were the two young men to be 'capped.' Caps there were none, and the time-honoured 'mortarboard' is still a thing of the future. The profound moral significance of what Carlyle calls the 'Philosophy of Clothes' is not understood in Otago. They do these things better in Canterbury. Was the ostentatious disregard of academical proprieties significant of the Otago Council's attitude of revolt against the New Zealand University? On that view, there was probably a symbolism in the extraordinary fashion in which the two graduates had indued themselves with their newly-acquired vestments. One of them wore his hood upside down, or inside out, and the other had thrust his arms, not through the sleeves of his gown; but through two supernumerary holes lower down! In days to come, when the Chancellor sits throned and robed in the great College Hall with the togated Senate around him, when Professors have ceased to lecture in shooting-coat and tweed pants, and when

36 This is the Chancellor of Otago University, not of UNZ.

> undergraduates in gown and trencher throng the precincts, may someone arise to tell the story of the first capping in the University Library! If the Otago Council cannot manage these affairs better, the Chancellor of the New Zealand University and his Registrar will have to come down from Christchurch, and confer their own degrees.[37]

The academic dress regulation of CUC was not altered in the light of the UNZ prescription, so from 1979 onwards graduates of UNZ who were members of CUC were in theory subject to two incompatible sets of regulations—the College regulation vi, which required them to wear the College gown at public ceremonials of the University, and the University regulation chapter vii regulation v, which required them to wear their UNZ costume on such occasions. Both sets of regulations were printed in the CUC calendar.

Photographic evidence shows that in practice UNZ graduates wore the UNZ costume at CUC, but that the College gown continued to be worn by undergraduate members of the CUC well into the twentieth century.[38] Figure 5 is a typical example of a CUC matriculation photograph from 1883. A few academic staff of CUC also wear the College gown in group photographs, but with a hood; perhaps because they do not possess the gown prescribed for their non-UNZ degrees.

UNZ was always quite relaxed about graduates of other universities wearing their own academic dress, an announcement for 1882 reading:

> University Degrees.—The annual ceremony of presenting diplomas to graduates of the University of New Zealand will take place in the new hall of Canterbury College at noon on Tuesday next. The ceremony is open to the public, and a special invitation is extended to all who are engaged or interested in the work of education. Graduates of the University are required by regulation, to appear in academical costume, and graduates of other Universities are asked to do the same.[39]

Indeed, by 1882 the UNZ regulation requiring UNZ graduates to wear UNZ academic dress had been amended to conclude 'but graduates admitted *ad eundem* may wear the academical costume of their own University.'

Aotearoa New Zealand now has eight universities, each with its own system of academic dress. Of the eight, six (if we include Otago) were University Colleges affiliated to the federal UNZ at the time when the latter was dissolved in 1961. Curiously, it is Otago University whose scheme remains closest to the academical fashion first set by the vanished UNZ.

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37 *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 5458, 16 August 1879, p. 2 (Supplement). Capping ceremonies at Otago improved over the next decade.

38 Wearing gowns became optional for students in 1937, and the practice was all but defunct by the end of the Second World War. See <https://digitalvoyages.canterbury.ac.nz/omeka-s/s/canterbury-college/page/academic-day-gown>.

39 *Lyttelton Times*, 58, Issue 6705, 24 August 1882, p. 4.

Online references

Papers Past has an amazing searchable online collection of newspapers from 1839 to 2001, including the Māori language ones: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>.

The Macmillan Brown Library at the University of Canterbury has an eclectic collection of digital photographic images, including many of people wearing academic dress, and which is searchable online via Kā Kohika o Macmillan Brown: <https://kohika.canterbury.ac.nz/>.

The University of Otago hosts Uare Taoka Hākena The Hocken Collections: <https://hocken.recollect.co.nz/>.

The Canterbury College Calendar for the Year 1886 is available online as part of the Pamphlet Collection of Sir Robert Stout, Volume 50: <https://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Stout50-t12-front-d1.html>.

The New Zealand University Calendar for 1887, Volume 15, is available online via Google Books: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ns4AAAAAYAAJ>.

There is a wealth of information about the early days of Canterbury University College, including biographies of the first graduates, in: James Hight and Alice M. F. Candy, *A Short History of the Canterbury College* (University of New Zealand): with a 'Register of Graduates and Associates of the College', (Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1927); available online at: <digitalvoyages.canterbury.ac.nz/omeka-s/s/uc-in-print/page/cc-history>.

For public figures, see Te Ara Dictionary of New Zealand, Ngā Tāngata Taumata Rau Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: <teara.govt.nz/en/biographies>.

Even more about Macmillan Brown: Erica Schouten, 'The "Encyclopaedic God-Professor": John Macmillan Brown and the Discipline of English in Colonial New Zealand', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 23 (1) (2005), pp. 109–23. Available online at JSTOR: <www.jstor.org/stable/20112388>.

The definitive work on academic dress in Aotearoa New Zealand in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continues to be: Noel Cox, 2000, 'Academical Dress in New Zealand', at <www.geocities.ws/noelcox/Introduction.htm>.