

Nomination of Emeritus Professor Robert Miller Kirk for Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Award 2013

Nominated and cited by Dr David L. Harrowfield, and Dr Maree Hemingson (NZGS, Canterbury Branch).

Citation

Emeritus Professor Robert Miller (Bob) Kirk has made an outstanding and sustained contribution to the New Zealand Geographical Society, Physical Geography in New Zealand and the University of Canterbury and the Community, by way of:

- Scholarship of national importance to the University of Canterbury and other tertiary institutions
- Scholarship of high international standing and significance in Physical Geography by way of original field work and publications in books and peer-reviewed journals
- Community oriented services as a former Member of Canterbury Regional Council
- Contributions to Policy as Regional Councillor and at a national level
- Sustained contributions to the New Zealand Geographical Society
- Contributions to University leadership in roles of Head of Department; Pro-Vice Chancellor Research; Deputy Vice Chancellor; Acting Vice Chancellor
- Providing inspiration for up and coming geographers

Bob Kirk has dedicated his research and publications as physical geographer specialising in the science of coastal landforms and lakeshores, and the physical processes that form and change them to the science of Coastal Geomorphology since 1965. He has a deep interest in the relationships individuals and communities have with the sea and coastlines and associated issues as concerns coastal management. This work over 35 years has included coastal and lake planning and management matters, as much in policy, planning, management and conflict resolution as in technical work with coastal processes.

A Past President of the Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Geographical Society and national President for the New Zealand Marine Science Society, Emeritus Professor Kirk has made a remarkable contribution to the Science of Geography and many from Secondary School teaching to Tertiary education levels have benefited from this. He is a firm believer that “proper appreciation and sound, sustainable uses of our natural environment are rooted in a clear understanding of the physical processes that form it” and this is reflected in his many years of teaching, research and publications in the science of physical geography.

So far, Professor Bob Kirk published 86 papers in international and national peer reviewed scientific journals, such as *Progress in Physical Geography*, *Coastal Engineering* and *Nature*, books and conference proceedings and 145 technical reports. He has frequently appeared in Court as an expert witness leading to precedents that have influenced coastal management in New Zealand. Bob has also written

the definition for river mouths, which affects how all such features and estuaries, these part of the coastal zone, have since been managed.

Fieldwork has included 150 projects throughout New Zealand, in the Pacific and also in Antarctica. Studies have included mixed sand and shingle beaches, the physical development of lakeshores, shore platform erosion, coastal housing and port developments.

Bob Kirk headed the Coastal Research Group in the Department at the University of Canterbury for 35 years, and in doing so building on work begun by the late Professor George Jobberns (1895-1974) CBE, LL.D (HON), who founded the Department of Geography. During this time more than 120 Masters and PhDs were completed by students in that group of which 109 theses have focused on coastal subjects and nine in Resource Management.

Professor Kirk became Head of Department and subsequently Pro-Vice Chancellor Research supporting staff and student research across the university. He also served as Deputy Vice Chancellor to two Vice Chancellors and for a time, as Acting Vice Chancellor. His responsibilities included Research Grant and Departmental Equipment Grant funding rounds; the prestigious Erskine Fellowship, as Chair of 18 university boards and committees. He oversaw a successful financial recovery programme for the university and structural reform into four colleges and the School of Law. He has served as Chair for 18 university boards and committees and while Pro-Vice Chancellor, he had oversight of 17 research centres within the university and presided over the creation of six of these.

IN 2004 Professor Kirk was elected to Environment Canterbury (ECAN) from Christchurch South constituency and served for five years until May 2010. He also qualified as an RMA Hearing Chair, in particular the Chairs of the Regional Planning Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee. While Chairman, he reviewed the Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plan. Professor Kirk also held various roles in ECAN including completion of four and a half years of a Regional Plan (the "Water Plan") subsequently adopted by Government appointed Commissioners who replaced the Council.

Early Career

Emeritus Professor Bob Kirk acquired an interest in the landscape and geography of New Zealand at an early age. As a direct result of his passion for the outdoors and decision to major in geography at the University of Canterbury, he became a member of the New Zealand Geographical Society and developed a special interest in New Zealand's coastline and in coastal processes. This led to completion of his MA Thesis titled "Beach erosion and coastal development in the Canterbury Bight" and PhD Thesis titled "Swash zone Processes: An examination of water motion and the relations between water motion and foreshore response on some mixed sand shingle beaches, Kaikoura, New Zealand.

These important theses marked a continuation of work in physical geography at the University of Canterbury and were followed by original fieldwork and associated publications in national and

internationally recognised journals including the journal *Progress in Physical Geography* and in *Nature*. Two projects concerned with beach re-nourishment (Washdyke-Timaru) and formation of an artificial beach (South Beach-Timaru) were published in *Coastal Engineering*.

Following Post-Doctoral research overseas the young academic Bob Kirk was appointed to the teaching staff of the Department of Geography at the University of Canterbury, where his involvement in course teaching, with the exception of Climatology, covered the entire spectrum of physical geography from undergraduate to PhD level. In addition to this substantial teaching load, he continued research, publications and planned, equipped and developed the laboratory and workshops of the Department's physical laboratory at the new Ilam Campus. With establishment of the Department at Ilam, Bob oversaw duties of technical staff, including the Stage 2 fieldtrip and assisted colleagues along with senior students.

Interests in the physical evolution of coastal landforms, coasts as a habitat in a range of cultures and morphogenetic environments with his work entailing coastal processes and human modifications to them, mixed sand and gravel beaches, port studies, lake shores, coastal planning and management along with interdisciplinary studies in Antarctica have each helped cement New Zealand's reputation in these fields. This in turn has been of considerable benefit to Geography. Emeritus Professor Bob Kirk's work in Antarctica, early in his career, was pioneering research for mixed sand and gravel beaches. It was following return from Cape Royds on Ross Island where he investigated processes for Black Sand Beach and also undertook synoptic meteorological observations that he decided to become a coastal geomorphologist. Further Antarctic fieldwork then followed.

Academic achievements and career history

- 1963-1965 B.A. in Geography, University of Canterbury
- 1965-1967 M.A. (1st Class Hons.) in Geography, University of Canterbury
- 1968-1970 Ph.D. in GEography, University Grants Committee Doctoral Scholarship
- 1970-1971 Post-Doctoral studies, Canada, USA, UK and Sweden
- 1970-1993 Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor, Department of Geography University of Canterbury
- 1978 Study leave (1 year) with Morris and Wilson, Consulting Engineers, Christchurch)
- 1990 Study leave (1 year), Visiting Fellow, Department of Geography and Oceanography, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra
- 1991 Promoted to Associate Professor of Geography
- 1992 Elected to University of Canterbury Academic Staffing Committee
- 1993-1998 Head of Department of Geography
- 1993 Elected to University of Canterbury Research Committee
- 1994 Appointed to Chair of Geography

- 2005 (onward) Emeritus Professor, appointed by Council of the University of Canterbury teaching Coastal Management, Department of Geography, College of Science, University of Canterbury. Establishing the appointment of Adjunct Professors as a means of recognising responsible to external organisations.
- 1995-2000 Honorary Research Fellow in Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington, also a Fellowship in Geography at Massey University
- 1998-2000 Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) for three years.
- 1998-2004 Member, NZVCC Standing Committee on Research
- 2001 Member of Council of the University of Canterbury and Chair of various Sub-Committees and Committees
- 2002-2003 Acting Vice Chancellor of the University of Canterbury
- 2003-2004 Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Canterbury
- 2004 Elected Councillor Environment Canterbury for three years; Chair for various Committees and Director of organisations, such as Founder, and Managing Director Land and W Studies International Ltd, Your Business Channel Ltd and Canterprize University of Canterbury, Chair of the University of Canterbury's Academic Board
- 2007 Elected by ECAN Council to Chair the Finance and Audit Committee and Regional Planning Committee, Hearing Commissioner for Proposed Natural Resources Regional Plan, Water Chapters (completed in 2010).
- 2009 Writing Resource Management Act Decisions for the University of Auckland
- 2009 Certified Resource Management Chair for the Ministry of Environment, Local Government New Zealand.
- Since 2010 Semi-retirement. Qualified Resource Management Act Hearing Chair, Coastal and Lake Consultant.