



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



National Committee of New Zealand  
Te Komiti o Aotearoa mo Nga Mahara o te Ao  
Memory of the World

## Nomination Form

### Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register

Dr Muriel Bell Papers (c.1911-1974)

#### Section 1: Nominator Details

This section is for information about the source of the nomination and the authority under which it is made. A copy of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World programme's privacy policy is available on its [website](#).

##### 1.1 Name of nominator (person or organisation)

Full name of the person(s) or organisation(s) making the nomination. *The nomination may be submitted jointly by more than one person or organisation*

Anna Blackman

##### 1.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Explain the nominator's relationship to the documentary heritage. *For example, the nominator may be a responsible officer of the library or archive which owns it; or he/she may be a private individual with a research interest in it.*

Head Curator Archives, Hocken Collections

##### 1.3 Contact person

Provide the name of the person who is responsible for the nomination process.

Anna Blackman

##### 1.4 Contact details

Provide sufficient details to allow easy communication with the contact person.

**Email:** anna.blackman@otago.ac.nz  
**Phone:** 03-479 8867

## Section 2: Identity and Description of the Documentary Heritage

### 2.1 Title of inscription

If the nomination is successful, what do you want it to be titled (e.g. for certificates)? Please use a maximum of 6 words.

Dr Muriel Bell Papers

### 2.2 Description of the documentary heritage

This should include a full description of what is included in the documentary heritage, its scope and its size. Include details of the type of documents e.g. letters, film, images etc.

The collection is 2.5 linear metres in size.

Document types include correspondence, pre-prints of publications, publications, articles, research notes and reports, photographs, interview transcript, an audio tape and a Master's thesis.

There is particular emphasis on research on the nutritional aspects of vitamins, milk, fish oils, diabetes, cholesterol and fatty acids. Other areas of research are nutrition in the Pacific, the nutritional requirements of the NZ Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1956-57, vitamin D, dental health, coronary heart disease and healthy diet.

The collection includes Bell's papers relating to the Nutrition Committee and Nutrition Research Unit of the Medical Research Council, including minutes, correspondence, history and reports.

Personal papers consist of transcripts of interviews with Bell and material relating to her Honorary Doctorate, CBE and other honours as well as photographs of Bell both during her University education and later in life.

### 2.3 Catalogue, registration or bibliographic details

This should include any bibliographic, registration, inventory, classification and/or call numbers that uniquely identify the documentary heritage.

ARC-0449, MS-1078, Misc-MS-0087, 06-025, MS-2482.

### 2.4 Visual documentation

Where available and appropriate, supply photographs or videos of the documentary heritage. Please provide images that can be used for the purposes of promoting of the World.

Dr Muriel Bell at work, 1950s. MS-1078/111

Sheet promoting School Milk, 1950s, MS-1078/001.

## 2.5 Bibliography

This should be, where possible, a list of 3-6 published sources that have been produced using (i.e. drawing heavily on) the documentary heritage to attest to the item/collection's significance.

Diana Brown, *The Unconventional Career of Dr Muriel Bell*, Otago University Press 2018.

Phillipa Mein Smith, "Muriel Emma Bell", *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4b21/bell-muriel-emma>. Originally published 1998, updated 2012.

The recent publication of the biography is likely to spur further research.

Bell's published writing is well cited in publications such as:

Dorothy Page, *Anatomy of a Medical School : A History of Medicine at the University of Otago, 1875-2000*, Otago University Press 2008

Derek A. Dow, *Safeguarding the Public Health : A history of the New Zealand Department of Health*, Victoria University Press 1995.

## Section 3: Assessment Against the Criteria

### 3.1 History/provenance

Provide a summary of the provenance of the documentary heritage. For example, how and when was the material acquired and integrated into the holdings of the institution?

Misc-MS-0087 was donated by Dr Bell in 1971, MS-1078 was donated in late 1974 by Mr G.G. Dunkley of the Biochemical Research Group, Medical Research Council of NZ, MS-2482 was donated by Mr Dunkley in 2005.

### 3.2. Uniqueness of the documentary heritage

Give a brief explanation of why the documentary heritage is unique and irreplaceable.

The papers document the work of a brilliant and energetic early woman medical researcher whose life-long interest in many aspects of research on nutrition led her to make many significant contributions to improve the health of New Zealanders today.

Collections of papers of women scientists and researchers are rare, there are few held in publically accessible archival collections in NZ.

### 3.3 Assessment against the significance criteria

Provide an explanation of what criteria the documentary heritage meets and why it meets those criteria. The documentary heritage must meet at least one of the criteria in this section. An explanation of each criteria is given on the front page of this form.

**Time:**

The collection is evocative of a period of time, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when great advances were made in the understanding of the role of nutrition in good health and prevention of disease. The period 1910s to 1950 is recognised as the great era for the discovery of the role vitamins play in health.

Bell's trailblazing research in a broad range of nutritional and public health topics began in the 1920s. Her research on deficiencies of vitamins and minerals such as calcium, iodine, vitamins A, C and D, fluoride led her to campaign for the addition of these vital nutrients to the average NZ diet, and to educate both through her work lecturing and in the publication of nutritional advice.

**People:**

Bell was one of the first women medical academics in NZ at a time when it was unusual for female medical graduates to pursue a research career. In 1926 she became the second woman to be awarded the research degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD) in NZ. After a period overseas she returned to NZ to take up a Lecturer position at the Dunedin School of Medicine.

Bell was the first NZ Nutrition Officer in the NZ Department of Health, appointed in 1940 to a position that she held for 40 years, and was Director of the Nutrition Research Department at the Dunedin Medical School.

She was a foundation member of the NZ Medical Research Council, and also the sole woman on the NZ Board of Health.

The breadth of Bell's activities is outstanding. She campaigned for the addition of fluoride to public water supplies, for free milk in schools, for improvements to milk handling and hygiene, for the addition of iodine to domestic salt and to improve the nutritional content of bread flour. She communicated the results of the research in many popular pamphlets on family nutrition, through the publication of articles in magazines, radio talks etc. She provided public health related nutritional advice to the NZ government on many topics including rationing during WW2. Her instructions for making vitamin C rich rose hip syrup during WW2 were well known through publication in the NZ Listener.

**Subject and Theme:**

The collection represents much of NZ's contribution to the development of nutritional knowledge. While Bell had a great capacity for original research she also collaborated with others, both within NZ and internationally, particularly in public health campaigns to improve the nutrition and prevent common diseases and health conditions. The collection includes her correspondence with others involved in these campaigns.

Vitamins and minerals, dietary fats and cholesterol, dental health, cardiovascular health, food safety, nutrition in Pacific countries, nutritional supplementation of food and special diets to support treatment of particular conditions are all strong themes in the collection.

An equally important theme is nutritional education; the collection documents her work lecturing at the Otago Medical School and in the publication of nutritional advice in pamphlets, magazine articles and radio talks.

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**3. 4 Testimony of at least two independent experts**

The committee requires testimony from at least two independent people or organisations who can give an informed opinion about the significance and provenance of the documentary heritage.

The informed opinion should focus on the criteria for inscription provided above and on the front page of this form. Please provide up to one page from each expert in support of your submission.

**Expert One**

Name	Professor Barbara Brookes
Qualification(s)	Academic Qualifications 1982: PhD (Modern History) Bryn Mawr College 1978: MA (Modern History) Bryn Mawr College 1976: BA (Hons) (History) University of Otago
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	See attached letter.



To Whom it May Concern  
New Zealand Memory of the World Register

**Significance of the Papers of Dr Muriel Bell**

Collections relating to women scientists are of great significance because of their rarity. In the Year of the Periodic Table, Muriel Bell's papers warrant particular attention since they record her commitment to understanding bio-chemical processes in order to improve nutrition. It was her detailed work on goitre that led to the introduction of iodised salt, for example.

Muriel Bell's papers provide insights into a woman driven by research questions into how nutrition could improve health. Her studies led her to advocate for the provision of milk in schools and to campaign vigorously for fluoridation of public water supplies. Bell's work on vitamins and minerals helped prevent dietary deficiency diseases, especially in children. In addition, her work on dietary fats and cholesterol helped shed light on coronary heart disease. Not only did Muriel Bell conduct painstaking work in the laboratory but she also led educational campaigns through her work as State Nutritionist and through educational writing as this collection of papers attests.

Preventive medicine receives far less attention than dramatic treatment breakthroughs just as the work of women scientist has frequently gone unremarked. By recognising the significance of Muriel Bell's papers, attention would be drawn both to a woman scientist and to her essential work between the laboratory and the kitchens of the nation.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Brookes  
Professor

**Expert Two**

Name	Diana Brown
Qualification(s)	MA (History) Otago
Contact number	N/A

Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>Hannover Germany</p> <p>29 August 2019</p> <p>Anna Blackman Curator of Archives and Manuscripts Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo - University of Otago PO Box 56 Dunedin 9054</p> <p>Dear Anna,</p> <p>It gives me great pleasure to write this letter in support of the nomination of the papers of Dr Muriel Bell to be added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. My biography of Dr Bell, <i>The Unconventional Career of Dr Muriel Bell</i>, published by Otago University Press last year, was largely based on the archival material held at the Hocken Library.</p> <p>The papers of Dr Muriel Bell are an important record of New Zealand's closely intertwined histories of public health and medical research, and in this instance, the history of nutrition research. Her significant contribution to the public health of New Zealanders is uniquely captured in her collection of research reports, research notes and committee reports. In turn, her immense personal commitment to her profession is reflected in her personal papers comprised of conference addresses, lecture scripts, interviews and correspondence. Moreover, biographical information relating to Dr Bell reveals her private relationships with key political leaders in Labour government positions, including Peter Fraser, Arnold Nordmeyer and Walter Nash.</p> <p>Having shown an early talent for research in deficiency diseases, Dr Muriel Bell went on to develop a wide-ranging nutrition research portfolio spanning her career of over 50 years. A key member of the emerging medical research community at the Otago Medical School in the 1930s, Bell went on to become New Zealand's first state nutritionist. She held this unique position, in combination with her work as a nutrition researcher, for the remainder of her career. Her official correspondence on public health problems sheds light on the often-difficult middle ground between economic rationalisation and public expenditure on medical research. Her converging roles were representative of the common purpose of state-funded medical research and public health measures that was such a defining feature of public science of the time. Such measures to remedy deficiencies in the New Zealand diet included the introduction of iodised salt, rosehip syrup, milk in schools and water fluoridation.</p> <p>Dr Bell's papers are also uniquely intertwined with international archival repositories. Her early fieldwork into cobalt deficiency in sheep connects her</p>

	<p>research with the repositories of the Royal Society of Medicine Archives, London. The exchange of research findings on trace elements with leading international scientists and nutritional experts showed Dr Bell to be a valuable colleague among her scientific peers. Her professional papers provide evidence of New Zealand's unique contribution to further understanding of nutrition research on an international stage.</p> <p>I would be happy to provide any further information or elaboration on the points mentioned above.</p> <p>Kind regards, Diana Brown</p>
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The above experts have given their written permission to provide this information to the Memory of the World Committee and they have agreed that the provided information can be published without email and contact details and that they can be contacted by the Register Subcommittee if required. Yes

#### Section 4: Legal Information

##### 4.1 Owner (name and contact details)

Provide the name and full contact details of the owner or owners, whether an institution or an individual.

<p>Hocken Collections University of Otago PO Box 56 Dunedin 9054</p>
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##### 4.2 Custodian (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Provide the name and full contact details of the custodian, whether an institution or an individual. Sometimes the custodian of the documentary heritage may not be the same as the owner. It is essential to establish both before a nomination can be added to the Register.

<p>As above.</p>
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##### 4.3 Legal status

State whether the documentary heritage is owned privately, or by a public institution, or by a commercial corporation. Details of legal and administrative powers for the preservation of the documentary heritage should be the name of the Act, or other instrument of administrative power, that gives the owner and/or the custodian the legal power to preserve the documentary heritage.

<p>The papers are owned by the University of Otago, having been donated to the Hocken Collections, University of Otago Library. The papers come under the provisions of the Hocken Collection Deed of Trust 1907.</p>
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#### 4.4 Accessibility

Provide a brief description of how the documentary heritage may be accessed. All access procedures and restrictions should be clearly stated.

There are three levels of access:

- access to verify the significance, integrity and security of the material. This is the minimum condition for inscription
- access for reproduction, which is strongly encouraged
- public access in physical, digital, or other form

The collection is catalogued to item/folder level on the Hākena online catalogue. It is available to view free of charge at any time during the public opening hours of the Hocken Collections.

Researchers using the collection are able make their own digital copies for research purposes, and to order digital reproductions of items from the collection.

The Hocken provides a written reference service for researchers unable to visit in person.

#### 4.5 Copyright Status

For documentary heritage items that are subject to copyright, details should be provided on the relevant copyright legislation and copyright owner(s). Any other factors affecting the legal status of the documentary heritage should be noted. For example, is any institution required by law to preserve the documentary heritage in this nomination?

Bell's own unpublished and published work is in copyright. Other items in the collection may be copyright to other authors.

### Section 5: Stakeholders

The nominating institution is accountable for consultation with all relevant stakeholders before submitting the nomination.

#### 5.1 Owner

The owner(s) of the documentary heritage has been consulted: Yes

#### 5.2 Custodian

The custodian(s) of the documentary heritage has been consulted: Yes

#### 5.3 Significant Stakeholders

Stakeholders with a significant interest in the content of the documentary heritage e.g. iwi, family members, have been consulted, if relevant: No particular stakeholders are known.

### Section 6: Care and Preservation and Risk Assessment

Identify any risks to the survival of the nominated documentary heritage. We understand if you have not done a formal risk assessment.

Note: a successful inscription may assist you to obtain funds to preserve and care for the nominated documentary

heritage.

If your nomination is successful we may request additional information on the care and preservation of the inscribed documentary heritage.

All collection items are stored in preservation quality packaging.

The collection is kept under the general policies and practices of the Hocken Collections in relation to preservation and access.

The Hocken Collections Deed of Trust prevents the collection being disposed of, and stipulates that the originals are normally only available for consultation within the Hocken Collections reading rooms. Items from the collection may only be loaned to other institutions or individuals for specific purposes – exhibition and conservation.

Fire : Low – building is protected by early warning smoke detectors, alarms and sprinklers.

Water damage: Low – Presence of sprinkler system notwithstanding the collection is stored in archival containers on shelves with canopies. Shelving policy means nothing is allowed to overhang shelves.

Theft: Low – Archive is housed secure stack with security card access to limited range of library staff, high level of security and management of tradespeople. There are monitored and recorded CCTV cameras in staff and public areas. All material is issued folder by folder to a secure reading room to registered researchers. Researchers are monitored from the nearby service desk.

Reader/staff handling: Low/Medium – staff are trained in care and handling. Researchers use materials in closely-supervised reading room and are given pillows and other supports to minimise harm to fragile items.

Preservation copies are issues in place of originals where they exist.

Deterioration through inherent vice: Low – Archive is housed in archival folders and envelopes and kept in a controlled environment designed to extend the life of the materials.

Natural disaster: Medium Although Dunedin is a lower risk for earthquake or volcanic activity than elsewhere in NZ – it is still a possibility. The University has recently assessed earthquake risk of its buildings and compiled a list of those requiring remedial action to bring to acceptable % code

## Section 7: Summary

Provide a brief summary describing the documentary heritage and how it meets the criteria for inscription on the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register.

Keep your summary to no more than 300 words as, if successful, it will be used on the website

([www.unescomow.org.nz](http://www.unescomow.org.nz)) to describe why the documentary heritage has been inscribed on the New Zealand Register and given UNESCO recognition.

Dr Muriel Emma Bell's papers document the work of a brilliant and energetic early woman medical researcher whose life-long interest in many aspects of nutrition research has improved the health of New Zealanders today.

The papers document her trailblazing research on nutritional deficiencies of vitamins and minerals and her campaigns for the addition of vital nutrients to the average NZ diet. Bell campaigned for the addition of fluoride to public water supplies, free milk in schools, improvements to milk handling and hygiene, the addition of iodine to domestic salt and to improve the nutritional content of bread flour. The other side of her work was nutritional education, lecturing at the Otago Medical School and in the publication of nutritional advice in pamphlets, magazine articles and radio talks.

Bell was one of the first women medical academics in the NZ at a time when it was unusual for female medical graduates to pursue a research career. She became the second woman to be awarded the research degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD) in NZ. After a period overseas she returned to Dunedin to take up a Lecturer's position. She became the first NZ Nutrition Officer in 1940 in the NZ Department of Health, was Director of the Nutrition Research Department housed by the Dunedin Medical School, was a foundation member of the NZ Medical Research Council, and was the sole woman on the NZ Board of Health.

The collection includes correspondence, conference addresses, lecture scripts, interviews, subject files and research notes as well as copies of key publications, committee and research reports.

### **Section 8: Promotion of documentary heritage**

Inscription to a UNESCO Memory of the World register provides an opportunity to promote the importance of documentary heritage.

Give a brief overview of how your institution will use the opportunity of a successful nomination to promote the Memory of the World programme and the importance of documentary heritage. You may wish to consult with communications staff in your organisation to provide an answer to this question.

We will do a press release, and also share any publicity that the MOW NZ Committee may promote. In the past local media has picked up this release and it has resulted in stories in local newspapers and in University news on website such as the Otago Bulletin.

We will also promote the inscription on Hocken social media streams.

The certificate of inscription will be displayed in a prominent place in the Hocken public spaces.

A note of the inscription will be added to the collection record on the online catalogue.

Notes of the inscription will be displayed at appropriate positions in the storage stacks where they may be seen by people taking our regular public tours of the Hocken and by other visitors.

### **Section 9: Permission to use visual documentation**

The Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Committee will also work with you and your communications staff to obtain publicity for the programme and for the successful inscriptions.

Do you give permission for the Committee to use the visual documentation you have provided for Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World publicity purposes (e.g. for brochures/website)?

I would like to be consulted first.

### **Section 10: Declaration of Authority**

I am authorised to nominate the above documentary heritage to the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register.

Name: Anna Blackman

Date: 29 August 2019