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56) Cuneiform Texts in The Otago Museum^{*)} — The brief note below is to announce the beginning of research on the cuneiform collection of the Otago Museum in Dunedin on the South Island of New Zealand. This collection is one of the most important in the Southern Hemisphere, and includes over 150 separate items. Most of the collection was assembled by Dr. Lindsay Rogers, a Dunedin born and Otago Medical School trained surgeon who served in the Royal Army Medical Corps during the Second World War, and then was Professor of Surgery at the Royal School of Medicine, Baghdad, in Iraq, before returning to New Zealand in 1950.¹⁾ These tablets bear registration numbers dating from 1947 to 1952, coinciding with Dr. Roger's stay in Iraq and the years immediately following his return. There are also a few tablets that were registered at the Otago Museum long before 1947 and after 1952. To date only one text in the collection has been published, an Old Babylonian tablet with a childbirth incantation and ritual that was published by G. Farber in JNES 43 (1984) 311-316.

A majority of the tablets in the collection are administrative texts, mostly from the Old Akkadian to Old Babylonian periods, with the clear majority being from the Ur III period. There are also the usual royal inscriptions including tablets, cones, and bricks from the Ur III and Isin-Larsa Periods, and the time of Gudea and Nebuchadnezzar II. Other finds in the collection include a set of duck weights in black diorite stone, an inscribed statuette, and what appears to be a large three column tablet with a god-list. There are also two tablets of medical interest, the aforementioned tablet with the childbirth incantation, and a medical tablet with prescriptions against the *Lamaštu*-demon. Given that the *Lamaštu*-demon attacked women in childbirth and new born babies, one may suspect that the two medical tablets may have been recovered together and sold as a matched pair to Dr. Rogers due to his interest in medicine.

Study of the collection began in earnest with a two day visit to the collection by Wayne Horowitz and Larry Stillman in the early fall of 2013. Peter Zilberg joined the project soon after. We intend to publish some of the more interesting pieces as a series of articles in the near future, with full publication of the collection in monograph form to follow.²⁾

*) The authors wish to thank the Director of the Otago Museum, Dr. Ian Griffin, and Ms. Moira White, Research and Interpretation Coordinator – Humanities, Mr. Scott Reeves, Collection Coordinator – Humanities, and Beth Rees, then Collection Officer at the Museum, for their gracious hospitality during our visit, and their permission to research and publish the collection.

1) For a brief overview of the life of Dr. Rogers see e.g. Dr. Rogers' auto-biographical work *Guerilla Surgeon, A New Zealand surgeon's war-time experiences with the Yugoslav Partisans*, and a number of web-sites which document his activities during and after the war. Dr. Rogers also donated a collection of still unpublished cylinder seals to the Museum, as well as a number of other purchases including notably a head of Alexander the Great (see R. Hannah, "The 'Otago Alexander'," in P. Wheatley and R. Hannah eds., *Alexander and His Successors, Essays from the Antipodes*, 2009: 299-309, with a photograph on the book's cover).

2) This study is part of a larger project to identify, catalog, and publish all the cuneiform finds now in Australian and New Zealand collections which includes the authors of this note, and their colleagues Christopher Davey of The Australian Institute of Archaeology, Russel Hobson of the University of Sydney, and Luis Siddall of Macquarie University. A preview of this project appears in the 2013 volume of *Buried History*.

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