This week Micro-News incorporates profiles of Bruce Todd, Barbara Clark and Jan Hesketh. Also featured are entertaining items on the 1st Annual Virus Unit golf tournament and a background to Frank Griffin's Departmental Seminar to be given this afternoon. Our historical sketch is of Professor John Miles, the 3rd Professor of Microbiology (Bacteriology) at Otago.

We hope that Micro-News will be able to incorporate some special items about our 3rd year, 4th year, MSc and PhD students before the end of the Semester. Any ideas for this? Also, please don't forget to jot down those "Magical Microbiological Moments", "Quotes of the Week" and "Recent Publications" so that they can be shared sometime with your colleagues.

"Golf is a lot of walking, broken up by disappointment and bad arithmetic"

- John Tagg

Meetings this Week

Departmental Seminar 4 pm Monday
4th floor
Assoc. Prof. Frank Griffin
"Deer get TB
but can they tell you why?"

Journal Club 12.10 pm Wednesday
8th floor
Uta Riedel and Vernon Ward

Post grad colloquia 4.15 pm Friday
8th floor
Rachel Elliot

Seminar Preview

As one who has lived his life in equal parts in two of the world's most unique habitats, I consider myself to have had a charmed existence. My developmental years were spent in the Emerald Isle; one of the World's special social institutions; The only open-air lunatic asylum in the world. This conditioned me to enjoy in full measure my subsequent sojourn in Godzone, which is unquestionably nature's unique biological laboratory. Having seen fees in 1963 in Ireland which match in real $ terms, the excesses being visited on New Zealand students in 1993, one continues to experience that (redundant) human emotion 'The triumph of hope over experience' (borrowed from Oscar Wilde; the only Irishman ever to be on record (and jailed) for his homotrophic proclivities).

At my age, one thinks in decades rather than years, so I'll relate my background in (relatively) large bites. To cut a long story short, I arrived in Dunedin in January 1973 as a fresh-faced post-doc knowing everything about nothing and have progressed in the subsequent two decades, realising that now I know practically nothing about everything. As my father predicated at an early age; 'You have all the attributes of one who started life on the bottom of life's ladder, and are destined to go down' - hence my gravitation from 44°N to 44°S.

I spent the 70's grappling with the challenges of conveying the concepts of ever changing scientific models (immunological)
deer as a quarry (for the hunt) or a super source of venison (for the consumer), the ever-present Colin, and a generation of farmers and vets who were convinced that 100 year old technology for Tb diagnosis, though relevant, needed to be refined. In contrast with these highs, there have been the inevitable troughs [bureaucracy - where, as the only autonomous laboratory in NZ, we were destined to live with their reaction to our challenges (of their being challenged)].

My experiences in this special area of science has taught me many lessons:

1. NZ and Dunedin (OU) is blessed by the challenge that accompanies isolation.
2. OU is remarkably pro-active in sustaining the entrepreneurial ethic.
3. Nature (Biology) abhors (will not tolerate) soft scientific outcomes. The Kiwi Jocker is not overly impressed by stats or p values. Rather their imperative is, does it work (for me 100% of the time)?
4. Providing you offer realistic expectations, people will forgive you for your mistakes, but won’t necessarily reward you for your success (it is the expected outcome for a job properly done). We need their confidence to live through the reality that ‘overnight success is usually founded on twenty years of solid input’.
5. My mother defined the parameters which circumscribe the term ‘what’, it is the scientist’s imperative to elucidate ‘why’.

See you for the continuation Monday 4 p.m.

-J Frank T Griffin.

[Apologia: This rambling outline has been precipitated, more from my respect to contribute something to sustain John’s BLISFUL effort, rather than any attempt to overtly inform, promote or confuse the readership].

**Micro-News Flashes**

* Stephen Hainstock has been playing in the orchestra for the smash hit “Les Misérables” currently wowing them at the Regent Theatre.
THE GREAT VIRUS UNIT GOLF TOURNAMENT
A Good Walk Spoiled

The day dawned clear and sunny with a touch of spring in the air. The cherry trees were laden with blossom and the Taieri lambs bespoiled themselves in the warm, green fields. The Twelve Oaks Golf Course near Mosgiel looked a picture of bucolic peace. The fairways were a well-grassed, luscious carpet, the greens beautifully manicured with just a touch of a challenge, and the hazards gave no hint of threats to come. Then several car loads of golfers (16 starters in all) arrived and everything changed. Staff, spouses, partners, students, and offspring unloaded a wide variety of what could loosely be called golfing gear, some of which could well have once graced the Royal and Ancient, if age had anything to do with it. The Virus Unit Golf Tournament was about to begin.

After serious discussion about whose fault it was so many car loads got lost due to false directions, teams were selected and the course was invaded by a rabble of hackers and near-hackers who proceeded to spend the next four hours altering the meaning of the sport as we know it. The more serious golfers (and there were a few who laid claim to actually having a 'handicap') were mixed up with the more social players and much of the fun came from the colourful (but well-meant and useful) advice offered.

Some interesting and unusual strokes were seen, along with numerous air shots (and at least one double air shot), but, by prior agreement, they did not count. Certain players learned that electric fences can help to really charge their game up, not to mention their dance technique. Off the 2nd tee one player was seen to send three consecutive balls into the creek. At least three 'birdies' (i.e. one shot under par for the hole) were recorded and one or two of the more experienced players (note: 'experienced' does not necessarily mean 'good'), recorded reasonable scores, the best being a net 63. A couple of clubs were broken, by unknown means. Nobody claimed the highest score award, but numbers like 200 were mentioned. Probably the most unlikely shot of the day was seen off the 1st tee where a ball heading for the out-of-bounds paddock on the right of the fairway hit a single strand of wire and bounced back onto the fairway. At least three players stopped for alcoholic refreshments after only nine holes, the rest period lasting for an hour or more. On the positive side, one or two of the new players actually found they were able to play the game surprisingly well and they may take it up as a serious sport.

A great day's fun on the course was rounded off by a social hour and a meal at the Fairfield Tavern. The first annual Virus Golf Tournament was judged a success and worth repeating next year.

-Terry Maguire

Happy Birthday

Neil Fraser  September 27
James Kalmakoff  October 1
Bruce Todd  October 2

P.S. Do we have your birthday on our list? Please give the date to Racheal so that we can wish you a Happy Day.

Departmental Vehicle

Please park the van as far forward as possible in the dept. park. Recently the oil truck could not make a delivery because the van was too close to the sump.

When booking the van, include your name, destination, departure and returning time. On your return please clean out any rubbish, don't just tuck it down between the seats etc.

Anyone planning a longer journey is recommended to use the Toyota van housed in the Science library basement. This is a pool vehicle so you will need to book it out from Ron Caley(7744).
Profile - Jan Hesketh

I was born and raised in Alexandra and lived there for the first 18 years of my life. I grew up on an orchard so I always had plenty of holiday jobs. I spent half the time at the top of a 12 foot ladder with a 20 pound case of apricots hanging from my shoulders. I probably would have been several inches taller otherwise.

I made the big move to Dunedin in 1982 to study Commerce and computer science but I found that I hated accounting and economics (what a pity as that is where the big money is!). I changed to science and completed my BSc in Micro in 1985.

My first job was at the Cancer Research Unit at the Medical School, studying bladder cancer and tumours in rats. Unfortunately the Unit closed down after a year and I was without a job. After a brief period of making sandwiches and packing fruit (I was desperate), I began work in the class preparation lab here in the Microbiology Department. After 3½ years, I was ready to have a change and made the big move to work in the Consulting lab on the 5th floor. This lasted for 3 months until the work ran out and again I was out of a job. Luckily I was able to start straight away in the Deer Research Laboratory and have been here ever since apart from 6 months maternity leave which I took last year.

I am married to Dennis and we have an 17 month old son called Matthew and a huge dog called Arnie. (He was just a puppy when we got him and was not supposed to grow so big!). We live in Mosgiel and are about to shift to another house, at East Taieri. (Any volunteers to help us shift?).

I enjoy working even though it is only part time. I decided after being home for 6 months that I could not be an "at home mother". The rest of my time is taken up with squash and entertaining Matthew. He is pretty energetic and its pretty tiring keeping up with him all day. I come to work for a break!

Sixth Floor

A message from Vernon Ward

The program cards for the omnigen thermal cycler have arrived. These enable each lab to store their own set of programs for which they are responsible. If your lab would like to have their own card then come and see me. I will show you how it works (it is simple don't worry!) and give you a card. Instructions will be posted by the thermal cycler. If you are not doing much PCR work then you probably don't need one of these. We have a limited number and they are very expensive so don't come to get one just so you don't miss out. The idea is for each lab with multiple PCR users to be able to store and control their own set of programs rather than clog up the main module or have other people come along and change their programs for them.

Immunising Animals at Animal Sciences

There is now a form to fill out before immunisation can be done. I have got copies of the form if you want to fill them out before you take across your antigens.

-BT
Profile - Bruce Todd

Part of the “Baby Boom,” I was born in 1950 at Redroofs Hospital. The youngest in the family, I spent my first eight years living on my grandparents’ dairy farm. My father drove a Ford customline, we had just bought our first fridge (second hand), had a telephone installed and on the radio we listened to "Life with Dexter", "Dad and Dave", "Aunt Daisy" and "Portia Faces Life".

When Christmas came we tied the 9x9 tent to the front bumper, poles to the door handles and headed off to Bull Creek or Te Anau. Summers were better than now, and the Kingston Trio, Perry Como and Doris Day were singing hits on the airwaves. Boxing Day 1959 we left Dunedin at two in the morning and drove to Kaiteriteri. From then on this was our holiday destination.

In 1955 I started school at North East Valley and pupils of this period were bonded by the terror instilled by Miss Hill (she was old enough to be someone’s grandmother), who strapped kids as a matter of routine - some on their first day at school. I must have been unlucky in this regard as when I made it to High School I also struck a teacher who caned all new boys at least once in the first month.

This teacher was a former All Black who had devised this system to knock the stuffing out of potential troublemakers. It proved very effective - once was enough for most of us.

By 1958 we had shifted to Maori Hill and I discovered that school need not be a time of perpetual suffering. I and many others am indebted to the most humane teacher I ever encountered, "Mungo" Park. Mungo (no one knew his real name) had fought in the trenches in the First World War. Each week we drew maps and studied parts of Asia, Europe and North Africa. He called it Geography, but I suspect it was more than that.

I can still hear him reading poetry aloud - Kipling, Shelley, and all the others. When he read us the Hobbit, normal time stopped for four weeks. He never had a strap, because he never needed one.

Who could forget the hula hoop craze that swept schools in 1959, or seeing the Vulcan bomber fly over the city. We stood in the playground for about an hour to see that plane. That first jet over Dunedin created more excitement than the moon landing a decade later. Each week a new hit played on the radio and I can remember the excitement of hearing in the mid to late 50’s Jailhouse Rock, Johnny be Good and countless others that later became classics of rock and roll. In 1962 it was the Beatles and lines of children were skipping around the playground singing "I want to hold your hand, yeh yeh yeh etc" until it was banned. I think the headmaster thought he’d lost control of the school.

High school was Kaikorai Valley, famous for discipline, and girls underwrite checks. The girls walked across a stage while the headmistress looked up their skirts to check the colour. Only white or green were allowed. Most of us boys took more than a passing interest in these checks. In 1967, when I left school, there was a choice of jobs. The week before I left I had a real dilemma about which jobs to apply for, because I might get one I didn’t like. As it turned out, I got that bit wrong. I got a job I thought I’d love, but hated it. In 1970 I took a temporary job with the DSIR, located in the Microbiology Department and the rest (as they say) is history. From Microbiology to the Hospital to the Paediatrics Department and then back here to Microbiology. I’ve quite literally ‘been around’.

-Bruce Todd
Historical Notes

MILES, John Arthur Reginald

John Miles, a virologist from England, became the third professor of bacteriology (now microbiology) at Otago University. Born in Kent in 1913, he graduated MA MD from Cambridge University and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps during the second world war. After the war he returned to Cambridge and taught for a period before moving to Australia where for the next five years he headed the Division of Research at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Research in Adelaide. In 1955 he was appointed Professor of Microbiology at Otago, and in view of his interest in virology and epidemiology he also became honorary director of the Medical Research Council's Virus Research Unit in 1960. He retired in 1979 and now lives at Lake Hawea. He was made a CBE in 1970.

Under John Miles' guidance the expansion of the microbiology department continued. Additional courses and a rapid increase in student numbers enabled further staff positions to be established and filled by lecturers whose interests lay in the fields of microbial genetics, soil microbiology, immunology, medical entomology, medical microbiology, zoonoses, molecular biology and biological control. The interest in Pacific Island medical microbiology continued with staff members carrying out investigations into filariasis, bacterial and mycotic skin infections, respiratory virus infections, dengue and viral hepatitis. These studies were facilitated by the erection in 1963 of a virus laboratory at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, Fiji which was directed for the first ten years by staff seconded from the Microbiology Department.

By 1970 the department had again outgrown its accommodation in the Medical School. A decision in 1972 to further increase the intake of medical students was used as leverage to improve conditions. The outcome was that in 1975, in order to obtain the extra teaching space which was required in the Medical School, the Microbiology Department moved out of its overcrowded quarters there into a new eight-storeyed building on the university campus.

John Miles was an active researcher, some of his particular research interests being arboviruses, respiratory virus infections and viral hepatitis. In pursuing these interests he set up and participated in a number of field programmes in New Zealand, the Southwest Pacific and Antarctica.

During the 24 years that he was Professor of Microbiology the number of permanent full-time teaching positions was doubled from five to ten, teaching and research evolved to keep pace with the changes in contemporary microbiology and the department moved from its accommodation in the Medical School, which had become overcrowded and congested, to a new building dedicated to microbiology.

- Frank Austin

Quotes of the Week

"A well-adjusted person is one who can play golf as if it were a game"
"Most of the people who do great things in life are alone, especially on a golf course"

MICRO WORKSHOP

TOOLS ARE PROVIDED FOR "MINOR ADJUSTMENT" REPAIRS ONLY

NO ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING WORK OR OPENING UP OF EQUIPMENT -SEE GREG FOR THESE JOBS

TOOLS MUST NOT BE REMOVED FROM THE WORKSHOP

PORTABLE DRILL AND TOOL KIT AVAILABLE FROM BRUCE -806A

PLEASE DON'T DUMP OLD EQUIPMENT IN THIS ROOM
P.S. Incidentally, it was recently revealed that early childhood memories can indicate a high IQ - ie the earlier the memory, the higher the IQ!

Two professors and a student were discussing this and the first professor said he could distinctly remember being breast fed as a baby. The second professor was adamant that he could remember the trauma of being born. After a pause and looking thoughtful, the student said he wasn't sure about his earliest memory - but he does remember going to a dance with his father and coming home with his mother.

-B.T.

Profile - Barbara Clark

I was born in Bath, Somerset, England and came to New Zealand with my parents and sister at the age of 9.

My first job was as a junior typist in the Chemistry Department, where I worked for five years. I then transferred to the Dental School as a receptionist, assigning new patients to the 4th year dental students. After two years I left there to have my daughter, Stacey.

When Stacey was one year old I worked nights at Andy Bay Woolworths, stacking shelves. It was hard, heavy work, five hours a night and five days a week - I sure built up a few muscles then.

When Stacey turned 5 and went to School I left Woolworths and started work here in the Microbiology Department and now enjoy working in the Deer Lab. Stacey is now 11 and is at Intermediate School. She loves horses and aims one day to own her own. She also enjoys playing hockey and has managed to make the Otago under 13 team.

My hubbie, Steven, and I have been married 17 years (as of last Saturday). He loves building up bikes and recently finished a Harley-Davidson Sportster, which he will be exhibiting at the bike show in Ashburton this November.

My own interests include horse riding (I learnt to ride at a riding stables in England at the age of 5), reading, walking and my biggest love is dog showing and cat shows. I own a Staffordshire Bull Terrier (Ziggy), a Persian cat (Canzee), a part Siamese cat (Bo, who is 16 years old) and 4 gold fish (Flip, Flop, Herbie and MC).

My biggest aims in life are to purchase a farmlet, buy Stacey and myself a horse, breed dogs and cats and possibly open up some Boarding Kennels. Maybe one day!

-Barbara Clark

"Dang, that gives me the creeps. ... I wish she'd hurry up and scoop that guy out."
Menu

Not the Usual Annual Dinner

Soup du Jour
BRAIN HEART INFUSION BROTH

Huitres
OYSTERS KILVIBRIO
Served on a bed of crushed cocci.

Entree
HEPATE B
Fresh Pale, made from prime Australian Antigen,
served on toasted Monolayer fingers.

Main Course
CHICKEN SALMONELLAE
Tender chicken prepared in a light agar glace,
kicked to perfection in the serogroup of your choice;
served with garden fresh vegetables:
New Potatoes, Asparagus, Brussels Sprouts and
creamy Cauliflower Mornay.

Dessert
BRANDIED PATHOGENS
Our own selection of only the finest cultured pathogens,
plumped up overnight in the best Napoleon, served with
“fresh” cream, lightly spiced with Staph.

Afters
GONOCOFFEE WITH AFTER DINNER HELMINTHS

(Submitted by Sue Bennett of N.S.W. — ? the Bicentennial Dinner?)