



The New Zealand Statistical Association

# Newsletter

Number 46

May 1998

## 49th Annual NZSA Conference

The forty-ninth NZSA Conference will be held at Massey University, Palmerston North, on September 4. The theme of the conference will be **Statistics in Practice**. The theme allows presenters to concentrate on why the particular work was done, as well as how. It is expected the papers will report on investigations into various problems of interest to the wider community. It is hoped that many secondary school teachers will attend and the talks will provide them with ideas to inspire and motivate their students. The AGM of the NZSA will also be held that day.

At present the conference is still being planned, but registration is expected to be about \$50. The conference is planned to start around 9:30 and the AGM will be about 3:30. A registration form and full details will be available in the July Newsletter.

Discounted travel to Palmerston North is available through Massey Campus Travel at Massey University (Ph. 354-0354, Fax: 354-0159 or email: campus@yha-travel.co.nz).

As no university hostel accommodation is available attendees will be expected to make their own arrangements if they need to stay in Palmerston North overnight. The times of the conference papers and the AGM are planned to allow most people to fly to Palmerston North just for the day of the conference.

So mark the day in your diary, and start preparing that talk on your work!

## 14th Biennial Australian Statistical Conference

Registration for the 14th Australian Statistical Conference (ASC14), to be held at Jupiters Casino, Gold Coast, 6-10 July 1998, is open. There will be an overlapping day with TIES (The International Environmetrics Society), who will be holding their conference at the same venue 3-6 July.

The theme of this conference is **Statistics in Context**.

The keynote speakers are:

Norman Breslow	University of Washington
Tim Brown	Melbourne University
Tim Hartigan	Yale University
Trevor Hastie	Stanford University
Frank Kelly	Cambridge University
David Siegmund	Stanford University
Alan Welsh	ANU
Doug Zahn	Florida State University

It is not too late to register. Electronic registration is the *preferred mode* and may be made at the conference website

<http://www.math.qut.edu.au/asc14.html>

Accommodation at Jupiters Casino and discounted domestic fares with Ansett Australia can be arranged when registering.

The editor of the Newsletter is looking for a correspondent to provide a commentary on this conference, so any volunteers?

### Important Notice

Every year we have been publishing in the Newsletter a list of the email addresses of the statisticians in New Zealand. This has been held over to the next Newsletter to allow any statistician who does **not** want their email address to be published to make this known. If you do not want your email address published please send an email to the editor by June 30.

*Good times at the 1997 Conference. P. Graham and P. Graham discussing probability and coincidence*

## President's report:

Many thanks to the members of the association who expressed their best wishes to me during my recent illness. Your thoughts were greatly appreciated. Hopefully I'm now back to full strength and can get on with business.

In the last president's report I discussed an NZSA submission on the Ministry of Education's Green Paper "A future qualifications policy for New Zealand: A plan for the National Qualifications Framework". As the draft was not prepared in time to get adequate feedback from members on its content by the deadline (and a number of the issues contained in the paper were controversial) I made a last minute decision to make an individual submission rather than one on behalf of the association.

A number of association members are attending the 14th Biennial Conference of the Australian Statistical Society at Surfers Paradise on the Gold Coast of Australia from 6-10 July 1998 (see details elsewhere in the newsletter). The executive committee has, therefore, decided to hold only a one-day annual conference in New Zealand. This will be held at Massey University on Friday 4 September 1998 from 9.30am - 5pm. A theme for the meeting will be Statistics in Practice but we expect to also have general presentations, Young Statistician's events and student papers as usual. Registration forms will be in the next newsletter but in the meantime please remind students and colleagues that they should start planning their presentations.

Over the past couple of months Stan Roberts has been hard at work on his history project and it is hoped to present this work as part of the association's Jubilee Conference to be held at Victoria University in 1999.

By now many of you will have received the preliminary draft of the "Report on the Mathematical Sciences in New Zealand" prepared under the convenorship of Professor Jeff Hunter. As a minor point I personally think it could have made a greater push for statistics but this is just my bias showing and Jeff and his team are to be congratulated on an excellent in-depth document. If you haven't done so already I encourage you to get a copy from either Jeff or David Vere-Jones and peruse.

1998 heralds the beginning of the new *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics* and Murray Jorgensen would welcome further applied statistics papers so that the journal doesn't become dominated by the more theoretical papers that have traditionally been submitted to the *Australian Journal of Statistics*.

A couple of our younger statisticians have suggested that we go back to having regional seminars so that local members, especially teacher members, feel that they are getting more for their membership. If you are interested in organising one or more of these contact the treasurer, Philippa Graham, at Statistics New Zealand who will supply you with a local address list of members.

If any other members have ideas about how the association can better serve its members the executive would gratefully receive them.

Sharleen Forbes  
sharleen\_forbes@stats.govt.nz

## Note from the treasurer:

Thank you to those who have paid their subscriptions promptly. If you are a telebanking person you may want to set up bill-payment facilities for the future. To arrange this with your bank you will need the NZSA account number:

020500 0019525 00

The message I would like to see on the statement is your equivalent of "subs from Philippa M Graham".

I will soon be doing a purge of those people whose subs are two years in arrears. If you are unsure of your status you can email me (pmgraham@stats.govt.nz), or phone me at SNZ Christchurch (03 374 8700), Auckland (09 358 4588), or Wellington (04 495 4600) and ask for extension 8752, or fax me (03 374 8899).

Philippa Graham

### Deadline for next Issue

All submissions for the next *Newsletter* to me by 30 June.

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## Editorial

You may have noticed that Statistics New Zealand has in the last 12 months “taken over” the NZSA. The President, Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter editor all work in SNZ. However I can assure you that it isn’t as monolithic as it may appear as two of us are in Wellington and two in Christchurch. The treasurer, Philippa Graham, works in the next cubicle to mine, so I’ve had the opportunity to discuss with her some of the problems that come from running the financial affairs of the NZSA, and I’d like to raise an issue for discussion.

Philippa has had very little trouble from members. In fact you have all been very cooperative and for that she is very grateful. For example, those of you who are using the credit card facility for membership payment, mainly those overseas, have been most concerned about whether this will cost NZSA too much. No, the issue comes from the increasing complexity of the services that are being offered to you. One of the big differences all of you will have noted is that we no longer receive the *New Zealand Statistician* twice a year but the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics* four times a year. How many of you noticed that it is now published by Blackwells, rather than the University of Waikato?

So what’s the difference? When it was university printed Murray Jorgensen could pretty well handle the simple aspects of publishing and the university was pretty patient with us. However Blackwells is a business. That in itself is not bad as they provide an excellent service at a price far cheaper than a New Zealand publisher. They also are committed to ensuring the journal has a much wider circulation than before. Therefore I think the change will be for the better.

It also means that your treasurer has to deal with a business, and they expect her to respond in a business-like fashion, and to a timetable. So those of you that wonder why we have started asking you why you haven’t paid your subscription for the last four years now know why this has happened. We simply cannot carry any excess.

So where is this leading? Consider the people on the executive. All of us have paid jobs. Fortunately our employers are good at allowing us time to do NZSA work. Unfortunately we still seem to get the same job load as everyone else, so we somehow fit

the NZSA work in. But if the workload that is attached to fulfilling a role in the NZSA executive increases, the person with that responsibility has to either find someone else to help or else find extra time themselves. The former option is not easy, mainly because the helpful people have already been allocated tasks for the NZSA. Now Philippa has taken on the extra tasks associated with being treasurer and de facto membership secretary with the assistance of Harold Henderson, but can we continue to rely entirely on volunteer labour? Or labour cribbed from our employers (e.g. secretaries)?

Those of you that are members of other statistical societies will know they have paid employees. Obviously when they were small and providing a limited range of services to their members they would have relied on volunteers. However at some stage they must have decided to start paying people to do some of the more administratively oriented tasks, and let their volunteer workforce concentrate on the central task of the organisation. In my opinion we need to raise the profile of statistics in New Zealand. The education committee, ably led by Mike Camden, has worked hard to raise the profile of statistics in schools, and there was a considerable number of hours there too! We need to do the same for statistics in general. Should we pay someone to handle our membership and general administration tasks and let our volunteers concentrate on statistics?

*Richard Penny*

### Submissions to the Newsletter

The Newsletter welcomes any submissions of interest to members of the New Zealand Statistical Association. News about New Zealand statisticians, statistical organisations, statistics in education, or statistical curiosities are suitable for inclusion. Letters that raise issues of importance to statistics in New Zealand are also welcomed. Text files are the preferred mode of submission, unless a particular layout is required. Photographs of past and present statisticians and statistical gatherings are of particular interest. All photos will be copied, added to the NZSA photographic archives, and returned.

### Advertising In the Newsletter

The Newsletter accepts advertising of interest to statisticians in New Zealand. Advertising is placed subject to space considerations. Personal advertising by NZSA members will be published free. Other advertising is \$250 per page, \$140 per half page, and \$75 per quarter page. Other sizes can be quoted on request. All advertising requests should be directed to the editor.

# What Do Statisticians Do?

*One of the questions I am asked by non-statisticians is, "What exactly do statisticians do?" Another question that gets asked is "Why did you become a statistician?" Most people find it difficult to understand how anyone can willingly work in an area which they found incomprehensible and boring when they did it at high school or university.*

*From talking to the many statisticians around the world the only thing that seems general about us is our friendliness, keenness to find out what's going on, and a passion to communicate how interesting is the work we're doing.*

*For the benefit of those who wish to let the rest of the world know how interesting statistics is I wanted to have statisticians from many areas provide me with a chatty article about why they became statisticians and why they like being a statistician.*

*So here is the first from Alex Hawke, with thanks to Jennifer Brown who asked Alex for this.*

*Alex Hawke at work*

## Profile of a Statistician

Alex Hawke is a Biometrician in the Resource Evaluation and Planning Department at Forest Research in Rotorua.

Most people balk a little when I tell them I'm a Biometrician, (that's if they actually know what I'm talking about!), and I've found it's a pretty good conversation stopper when you're at a party! In fact, if the truth be known, I don't readily admit to it in social situations ... perhaps biomagician (as my flatmate introduces me to people) would be more appropriate!

My interest in statistics probably stems from the fact that I have inherited my father's methodical approach and my mother's practicality. Statistics lets me draw on both of these attributes, requiring a methodical approach to solving problems, and practicality in drawing conclusions from the results and interpreting them in a biological context.

I began my statistics degree in 1992 at Otago University, at that stage with the intention of becoming a secondary school teacher specialising in maths and biology. My course also included papers in Botany (mainly plant physiology and pathology) and eventually this evolved into a BSc (Hons) combined in Statistics and Botany. This turned out to be a useful combination, and I was able to apply my statistics skills in a biological context when completing a dissertation in my final year.

During my degree I discovered there were many opportunities for statistics graduates aside from teach-

ing. At the end of my final year, I sent my CV off to a number of organisations who were known to employ statisticians (thanks to a list I was given at the NZSA Workshop for Young Statisticians!). As a result I was offered a short-term position at Forest Research in Rotorua, modelling forestry growth data. This has since been extended and has also enabled me to work part-time on a Masters thesis.

Research at Forest Research covers many aspects of forestry science, and the data which I deal with may originate from tree breeding programmes, forestry trials of alternative species, testing of wood properties, or forest fire and wind risk research.

As my job involves working on both my own projects and also providing biometrics support for other scientists there is really no typical day for me at Forest Research. It might include meeting with fellow scientists about new projects, or performing statistical analyses (from fitting, selection and validation of growth models for forestry data; performing ANOVA on field trials; to constructing databases and accessing and analysing data in them). I also spend time preparing results for group meetings (to receive and make comments on future analyses) and refereeing the statistical aspects of scientific papers. Occasionally I even manage to escape the office to measure a few trees!

My job as a Biometrician at Forest Research therefore contains a lot of variety in both the projects I work on and the people I work alongside. On top of all this Forest Research has an awesome working environment with supportive staff and a large campus which borders Whakarewarewa Forest and is only minutes from a number of beautiful lakes!

*Alex Hawke*

## Education Committee

We've had 1 of our 4 planned meetings, with 3 there, 3 apologies, and others interested. We're planning a joint evening seminar for Maths teachers in Wellington, probably Wednesday 20 May, 7pm at the Wellington Polytechnic. The seminar is to see and discuss the new case studies on Statistics New Zealand's web page. This will involve NZSA as well as Statistics New Zealand and the Wellington Maths Association. For details contact Mike Camden. Other cities could do something similar!

NZQA: all is quiet re Maths Advisory Group and the National Standards Body. However, NZQA have asked NZSA for an Industry Representative on a committee to review "Quantitative Business Methods" for NZ Diploma in Business. The NZSA Executive voted that Mike do this.

At NZAMT last year, a person who was on the team that wrote the Mathematics in the NZ Curriculum pointed out that we had had a big input into the statistics, which I take as a compliment to all in the NZSA who made inputs.

At NZAMT and elsewhere, we hear teachers expressing regret that the 'meat' (i.e. hypothesis testing) got pulled out of the Statistics school sandwich. While I feign innocence when this topic arises, I think someone should write a note for NZ Mathematics Magazine, explaining why it is not there, and in what context it should be done.

*Mike Camden*

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## Government Statistician to Talk

Len Cook is giving the second of the "Winter Lecture Series" talks at the National Library Auditorium lunchtime (12:00-13:00) on Tuesday June 9. Admission is free, no bookings needed.

The series' theme this year is: "Heritage, Technology and You". Len's address is "The Ageing Kiwi in the Technological age". It's being chaired by Dr. Robin Williams, retired Chairman of the SSC, and of course a statistician in background. All members who will be in Wellington are cordially invited to attend.

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## GENSTAT 99

### Applications, Advancements and Enhancements

The Australasian Genstat Conference will be held in Lorne, Victoria, Australia, from

3 - 5 February 1999.

Lorne is a scenic drive of about 2 hours from Melbourne heading south west along the Great Ocean

Road. It is a relaxed beach resort and fishing village with a variety of cafes and restaurants, two pubs, art and craft galleries, and a picture theatre. Lorne is often used as a base for visitors who wish to explore the Otway Rainforests, the Shipwreck Coast and the Twelve Apostles.

Transport from Melbourne to Lorne (leaving Melbourne on the afternoon of Tuesday 2 February) will be arranged for conference delegates. Return transport will also be arranged for the afternoon of Friday 5 February.

The venue for the conference is Erskine House, a "Country House Hotel" on the beach at Lorne. Erskine House, one of the first conference centres in Victoria, was constructed in 1868 and has had a series of additions and alterations, most notably in the 1930's.

The rambling buildings are nestled in 6 hectares of gardens which include five lawn tennis courts, two all-weather tennis courts, 18-hole putting green, four lawn bowls greens, and four manicured croquet lawns. From the private gardens there is direct access to the beach - great for an invigorating early morning walk or a body-surf before lunch.

### The Conference

Australasian Genstat conferences attract an interesting mix of enthusiastic statistical practitioners drawn largely from the biological, agricultural, environmental and food sciences. Informality is the keynote. The conferences not only bring the developers of Genstat into direct contact with users, they also represent real opportunities for applied statisticians with varied backgrounds to share experiences and to explore applications and advances in statistics utilising Genstat.

The conference is being hosted by the Biometrics Group of Agriculture Victoria, a division of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE).

### Program and Workshops

The organisers intend to facilitate one or more Genstat-related workshops or short courses in Melbourne before the conference (1-2 February) and welcome comments and suggestions concerning topics for the short courses and the conference program. Information about the conference is available on the web site:

<http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/science/genstat99>

Suggestions and requests for further preliminary information should be sent to:

Convenor, Local Organising Committee: John Reynolds (email: [genstat99@goldy.agvic.gov.au](mailto:genstat99@goldy.agvic.gov.au) or fax +61-3-9742-0201)

## Workshop for Australian Young Statisticians

On September 30 last year two 'young statisticians' headed out of the country for their first time, which required getting passports in two weeks, on their way to Melbourne. Frances Krsinich and Lisa Jones were on their way to attend a Workshop for Australian Young Statisticians (WAYS97). You may wonder why two kiwis were heading over to an Australian workshop. Well, our kind bosses at Statistics New Zealand wanted to send us, the organisers didn't complain, and we definitely weren't complaining, so off we went.

The workshop was held at Melbourne University with 51 participants - the other 49 all Australian.

The workshop got underway with introductory drinks and dinner. With the help of freely flowing wine, it was off to a good start. The workshop ran over two and a half days and consisted of a series of talks presented by most of the participants. Frances spoke on "Balancing Respondent Burden Against User's Needs" and Lisa spoke on "Using CHAID Analysis to Predict Maori Descent". These talks were both presented at the 1997 NZSA conference in Auckland. Frances received a prize for the best first time speaker at WAYS. Her prize was a book about how to lie with statistics - very handy!

There was also time set aside to meet with a strategic planning group each participant had been assigned to, where we discussed an issue we had been delegated. One of these issues was about accreditation for statisticians. The Statistical Society of Australia Inc. had put together a draft Application for Accreditation as Chartered Statistician (CStat) Information Sheet. Various issues with the accreditation process were raised. For example, how much will it cost, will the society be liable if a CStat makes an expensive mistake, and what happens if an applicant's work is confidential? It will be interesting to see how this works if it goes ahead.

WAYS has been held annually since 1991 with the next workshop being held in Canberra this August. We found the workshop to be very enjoyable and valuable. Everyone was very enthusiastic and it was fun meeting lots of Aussie statisticians. The practical focus of many of the talks made them accessible and interesting. One thing we realised was that we're lucky to be working with quite a large group of statisticians. A lot of the people who attended were the sole (or one of very few) statisticians in their organisation. There was a good showing from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (5 or so), and a surpris-

ingly large number of people who'd been through the ABS, about half the attendees!

We also managed to squeeze in a bit of sightseeing. Frances found some bargains in the factory shop district of Melbourne, while Lisa decided to blow all her money at the Casino. We ate some very nice kangaroo but couldn't find anywhere that sold koala. Next time perhaps!

*Lisa Jones & Frances Krsinich*

*Murray Jorgensen and Simon Sheather hard at work on the premiere issue of the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics*

## Novartis Foundation Symposium Bursary

Jennifer Brown has been awarded a Novartis Foundation Symposium Bursary for 1998. This award will take her to London in May to attend the Novartis Foundation symposium on Environmental Statistics: Analysing data for Environmental Policy. As part of the award she is hosted by one of the symposium participants for up to 12 weeks following the meeting. Larry Cox, of the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) in North Carolina has agreed to act as host, and Jennifer will be based with the statistics team in North Carolina until July. The opportunity to work with the US EPA ties in well with her current interests in statistics for environmental monitoring.



# Local News

## AgResearch

David Baird (Lincoln) spent two weeks in the UK in September, attending the International Genstat Conference and working on new developments as part of the Genstat team. Lesley Hunt (Lincoln) has been granted an AgResearch PhD scholarship; she is investigating the social impacts of the change from sheep to dairy farming.

Neil Cox, Martin Upsdell and Harold Henderson from Ruakura, David Baird, Lesley Hunt and Dave Saville from Lincoln, and Peter Johnstone from Invermay participated in the Australasian "Biometrics 97" conference in Adelaide in December. Paper titles to hand are: Harold Henderson and Dennis Cook "On graphing paired data"; Dave Saville "Is normality necessary?"; Lesley Hunt "Why do we do it? What statisticians enjoy about the practice of statistics"; David Baird "Statistical aspects of the tussock moth eradication program".

Tatiana (Tanya) Soboleva, previously Professor of Mathematical Physics at the Donetsk State University in the Ukraine, has joined AgResearch at Ruakura to work on the dynamical systems underlying gene expression. An aspect of this work concerns the expression of the myostatin gene which controls double muscling in cattle. Recently she, Graeme Wake and Tony Pleasants solved a problem in the evolution of a truncated probability density with covariance structure which was left by Fisher in the 1940's. This involved a new approach through stochastic differential equations. Tanya is also working on the evolution of the bivariate probability density of lamb liveweight and fat GR measurement. Tony has just had a paper published in Animal Science which derives the probability density of a calving distribution from first principles.

*Harold Henderson & Tony Pleasants*

## MAF Applied Statistics Group

Well, you haven't heard from us for a while, basically because we haven't been there any more. Some time ago the group was split up, essentially because we weren't being a "viable business unit." June went to the MAF Quality Management Dairy Food Business, based in Hamilton, although she works from home in Paraparaumu. Liz Viggers retired (for the third time, or was it the fourth?). Soo left and ended up at the Athsma Research Unit, where she is enjoying herself. This left John Jowett to mind the shop at

MAF Head Office, where he continued to find plenty of interesting, though not financially viable, things to do. He has now left to set up his own shop as an applied statistician (phone 04 570 2246 - all enquires gratefully received).

So then there were none.

*John Jowett*

*Some graduate students and staff at Waikato*

## Waikato

Nye John has recently returned from 13 days in China. He was an invited member of the Statistics Delegation and visited Shanghai, Hangzhou and Beijing. The purpose of the visit was to share information with Chinese statisticians in a series of meetings and informal discussions.

1998 will see the launch of a new journal "The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics". This will be an amalgamation of the New Zealand Statistician and the Australian Journal of Statistics. The new journal is to be jointly edited by Murray Jorgensen and Simon Sheather from the University of New South Wales, the current editors of the existing publications, respectively. Simon recently visited the department for editorial discussions with Murray on setting up the new journal.

Dave Whitaker has been on leave at the University of Lancaster working with Michael Wright on methods in optimisation.

It is with regret that the department farewells two members. Jane Andrew is returning to England after two years as a full time tutor. Jocelyn Dale left in December, but will remain in Hamilton working as a statistical consultant. She will continue to contribute to the University in the capacity of honorary lecturer.

Judi McWhirter has successfully defended her DPhil thesis entitled "Modelling Pulsatile Data: Estimation of Parameters and Dispersion Matrix."

## Recent Seminars in the Department

Simon Sheather (from the Australian Graduate School of Management, University of New South Wales) “A robust dimension reduction technique based on inverse regression”

William G. Warren (Scientist Emeritus, Dept of Fisheries & Oceans, St Johns, Newfoundland) “Spatial Analysis of Marine Populations”

Lyn Hunt (University of Waikato) “Fitting a mixture model to three-way data with categorical and continuous variables”

*Judi McWhirter*

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## Canterbury

Malcolm Faddy has been appointed as Professor of Statistics. He will be joining us in August in our new building.

We also had the retirement of Frank Lad, whom I quote “Last chance to leave school before 50!”, as his reason for retirement at his farewell diner. At the dinner Frank was presented with, among other things, a years membership to a local golf course (to practice the t-test?).

Jennifer Brown was awarded a prestigious Novartis Foundation Bursary (see page 6) to travel to Britain and the United States to continue her work on environmental monitoring. She will attend an international symposium in London in May on “Environmental Statistics: analysing data for environmental policy”. She will then spend 12 weeks at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in North Carolina working on improving efficiency in environmental monitoring.

Dr Chacko has been very busy over the last few months on the building committee, along with several others in the department organising one thing or another, getting ready for the move to our new building. Finally the Mathematics and Statistics department moved on the 27th of April. Over the weeks preceding we have been flooded with boxes in which we can place all our books, etc. This has proved to be a varying challenge depending on whether you are a student who can pack all their stuff into 2-3 boxes, or a lecturer who needs 12-30 boxes. Some are seeing it as a good opportunity to throw away years of collected material (e.g. “What, notes for Math 306 from 1985? Yup that can go.”).

During the two weeks prior to the move they were still laying the carpet and moving in the new furniture (often at the same time). The tumblers for the locks had not arrived and the Maths department

computer labs were far from finished (we will be using one of the computer science ones in the mean time). Julian has been given the fun job of picking up the odds and ends during the move (e.g. the library, the museum).

Julian, as part of the national research project into the history of statistics in New Zealand, has been exploring the history of statistics in the Maths department at Canterbury, where the rest of the history has already been researched by Stan Roberts. There seems to be a lot of confusion as to who taught statistics first, but the conclusion has been that it was a joint effort of all the lecturers of the time. Ironically the text book they used was written by a lecturer who lectured here back in the 1930's, which coincidentally was when Mary Hardings was a student. She later became one of the lecturers in 1953 who lectured statistics.

Irene Hudson looks forward to her first complete academic year at Canterbury. Irene is to travel to a forestry conference in Australia in May to present joint work from her previous employment at the Cooperative Research Centre for Hardwood Fibre and Paper Science (School of Forestry, University of Melbourne) with a postgraduate student. It is on vessel morphology in Eucalyptus trees ; with impact of these results on conductivity, breeding and genetic engineering discussed.

With the move to a new building (views of the Southern Alps to look forward to) and new Professor of Statistics, 1998 promises to be an interesting year.

*Julian Visch*

## Lincoln University

We in the Centre for Computing and Biometrics await our fate as the University 're-aligns'. Ever the academic wallflower, we seem reluctant to hitch up with other departments (and there's no shortage of suitors) lest we lose not just our maiden name, but our identity. Still a name change is probably a good idea, since a recent Press editorial defined biometrics as the science of identifying individuals from body parts.

Amidst the chaos, these body parts continue to function. Chris Frampton muses on the effects of density and aggregation on measures of species richness. I think this is an observational study, since there's always several ecosystems in Chris' office at any one time. Chris has been sentenced to QMET103, the two stream first year paper for commerce students and even when he's not teaching it, he cannot escape its dark underworld of aegrotats,

exemptions, partial waivers and cross-credits.

Out in the light, Richard Sedcole teaches biometrics - and wonders whether we should teach biometrics entirely from a GLM perspective? He has a large collection of moth counts from the MacKenzie Basin to keep him happy. An unbalanced design - but then, show me a statistician who isn't?

Alison Lister and I survived 'The Haze', teaching QMET103 in KL last year. It sounds like a B-grade horror, but was more like *Bladerunner* - quite sobering to be surrounded by people wearing face masks. Tutor Peter Lyman looked a very fetching Darth Vader in his twin canister 'chemical spill' number - very industrial chic. I guess I've seen the future and it needs a lot of work.

*Jim Young*

## Otago

Richard Barker has just arrived from the sun-baked pastures of Canterbury, having been tempted away from Landcare at Lincoln. Richard, Lynn and their three children have settled in, enjoying the sun-drenched delights of Otago Harbour (we keep reassuring him that our summers are always this warm...). They have been renting a house in St. Leonards - close enough to work for Richard to run home from the department. He's already organized a workshop on MARK, the new Windows-based software for mark-recapture. This will take place just after Easter and will be led by Gary White, from Colorado, who developed the software (contact Richard on rbarker@maths.otago.ac.nz for more details). Richard is also a keen fisherman, and has even bought a gold pan for those in his family who don't share his enthusiasm for the sport - quite fitting as we approach Otago's 150th Anniversary Day on 23rd March. Richard's first two days of work here were at the Statistics Group's retreat at Denzey's Pass - a fine initiation into the blessings and burdens of Academe.

Bryan Manly has returned from yet another overseas trip, advising the Alaskan Wildlife Centre on studies of migratory birds. He also attended a marine mammal conference in Seattle. Rumour has it that he also has another couple of books in the pipeline. On the teaching front, we have a new first-year course called "Introduction to Biostatistics" aimed at health science students. This is being run by John Harraway and Katrina Sharples. John has been enjoying the challenge of organizing a large new course whilst we're in the midst of changing our computer laboratory system!

*David Fletcher*

