



Honour for Al Rae

Al Rae at the A.C. Aitken Centenary Conference in 1995

Professor Al Rae, CNZM, OBE, MAgSc, PhD, FNZIAS, FAAABG, FRSNZ, a member of the NZSA, has recently been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit as announced in the latest New Zealand Honours at Queen's Birthday weekend. This honour recognises Professor Rae's achievements in animal genetics.

Professor Rae was born at Eltham Taranaki. Al completed his BAgrSc from Massey in 1944 and his MAgSc thesis with first Class Honours in 1946, and then headed for Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa to undertake his PhD. At Iowa, Al was obviously greatly influenced by his supervisors Drs Lush and Hazel, who credit him as one of the brightest and hard-working of their students. Many people feel that Al's ability to read and understand Lush was a key to the development of his career. But perhaps one of the most important features of the Lush influence was his both feet on the ground approach - never too far away from animals.

Al gained his PhD in 1950 and returned to Massey in 1951 to occupy the foundation Chair as Professor of Sheep Husbandry. Over four decades he played a key role in improving the genetic quality of the na-

tional flock, particularly the Romney breed. Sheep production improved as a result.

He retired in 1988, but carried on his links with Massey University through the former Animal Science Department (now Institute of Veterinary, Animal & Biomedical Sciences) and as a trustee of The NZ Animal Breeding Trust.

In 1993, the A.L. Rae Symposium on Animal Breeding and Genetics was attended by delegates (including many of Al's 43 current or former post-graduate students and colleagues) from around the world. He is a recipient of the McMeekan Award for animal production research, and also received the Sir Ernest Marsden medal for outstanding service to science.

Prof. Rae said many of his achievements would not have been possible without the team at Massey.

It's a great honour to receive the award, but at the same time I'm aware that much credit should go to my colleagues and students who worked or studied in the Department of Sheep Husbandry, later the Department of Animal Science.

Congratulations Prof. Rae from all of your friends, colleagues and students around the world. More details are available in an article by Dorian Garrick at <http://www.beef.org.nz/al.htm>.

1998 NZSA Conference Massey University September 4

The 1998 NZSA conference and AGM will be held at Massey University on September 4. There will be a broad range of talks focusing on the idea of **statistics in practice**. Papers received so far cover such diverse topics as dolphins, longitudinal surveys, QGDP, earthquakes, surveying Maori, and sex/gender classification. Also to be held is the NZSA AGM (see page 7 of this Newsletter). It is still not too late to register, so pull out the registration form that was in the last Newsletter and fill it in and send it to Massey. If you can't find it, email Frances Krsinich (nzsa@stats.govt.nz) and she will arrange for your registration.

President's Column

Sharleen is away in Perth working on her PhD. In her absence, she asked me to write the President's column. I willingly agreed.

By doing so, I might even be clearing a debt to Sharleen, since it was she (rather than me) who faced the press when the SAPQC report on the proposed Code of Family and Social Responsibility was released recently. National Radio and Radio Pacific tried to contact me without notification while I was on the Palmerston North to Wellington commuter train!

Sharleen had not been directly involved in writing the report, although like other members of the Executive she had been asked to give feedback to the SAPQC on an earlier draft, and she did have a final copy (a summary of the report is given on page 7 of this Newsletter). From what I heard later, she did an excellent and level headed job in explaining the professional concerns of NZSA about the statistical methodology used in the proposed Code discussion documents and questionnaire.

It has been suggested that given the continued public profile of the SAPQC, and that it makes efforts to represent your views as members of the Association, I should use this column to detail some of the SAPQC's background and method of operation.

The SAPQC, or more fully the Survey Appraisals and Public Questions Committee, is a standing committee of the New Zealand Statistical Association, and has been in existence for about 20 years.

The objects of the SAPQC are:

To raise the standard of practice and the level of public understanding of statistics in New Zealand by:

- (a) conducting independent appraisals of sample surveys, opinion polls and other statistical statements in relation to their statistical validity, and to the needs of the users of the survey results;
- (b) conducting examinations of statements made in the public domain and of significant public interest, that have statistical content, or whose validity depends on statistical considerations.

In making an appraisal, it is usual for the SAPQC to attempt to discuss the substantive issues with all parties involved. However in circumstances where the required appraisal is focused on a particular docu-

ment already in the public arena, and where the number of groups and individuals involved or affected is large, this extensive procedure is not usually followed due to resource constraints.

Comments made in an appraisal are focused on statistical assessment, as with the appraisal of the methodology used *Towards a Code of Social and Family Responsibility: Public Discussion Document, February 1998*. The emphasis in that appraisal, as with others, is on the statistical methodology used. In this case the methodology consisted of the methods used to develop and distribute the document (which included a booklet and questionnaire), and the appraisal focused on limitations to the analysis of the questionnaire, given the document's form and content, likely response rates, and coverage. The summary of the SAPQC appraisal on the proposed Code is given elsewhere in this newsletter, so I will not dwell on its details here.

More recent applications to the SAPQC have included a request for an appraisal for a survey of mental health priorities carried out by North Health, and a request from the Downtown Community Ministry in Wellington to assess the statistical basis for the Department of Social Welfare statistics, reported to Parliament, that claim that there is over \$60 million a year in benefit fraud. The issue here is whether and to what extent this figure includes unsolicited Department (and later recovered) overpayments to beneficiaries. The figure of \$60+ million has been used in recent DSW television advertising on benefit fraud. You may have seen the advertisements.

Members of the SAPQC for 1997/98 (in alphabetical order) are:

Professor Peter Danaher, University of Auckland.
Alistair Gray, Victoria University of Wellington
Associate Professor Stephen Haslett, Massey University (Convenor)

Dr Katrina Sharples, University of Otago

Members of the SAPQC receive no fee.

Generally, the SAPQC responds to a written request by producing a written appraisal. For the SAPQC to become involved, the issue on which an appraisal is sought must have a substantive public interest component. The SAPQC itself does not have a set fee structure, and in certain circumstances no fee is charged. Fees are charged where the party making the request is likely to benefit financially from the results of the appraisal, as happened for a request several years ago from Telecom for an appraisal of methodology for a Commerce Commission report on the Telecommunications Industry. For this report the fee was \$10,000. Such fees have in the past been donated to charity.

Stephen Haslett, Convenor SAPQC, 28 July 1998

Education Committee

Summary of NZSA Education Committee meeting number 2 of 4 for 1998 on 28 May.

Speaker for NZAMT99 in Dunedin

An appreciative interim reply to our offer has been received. Suggestions for getting speakers include (and we welcome reader's ideas):

- Mike ask Pamela Shaw about possible speakers from Australia
- Sharleen may like to approach possible speakers at ICOTS
- people going to Gold Coast conference should keep an eye out
- that we need to start making offers to possible speakers soon after ICOTS.

Since NZAMT99 has a history focus we should encourage Stan Roberts to attend and speak.

Maths in Schools

A possible letter to Minister re resourcing for the statistical part of maths in schools. A timely idea. There's a \$2.5M development fund. Statistics needs its profile raised in Ministry seminars, etc.

NZSA/SNZ/Wellington Maths Assoc evening

Happened successfully on 20 May. Lesley Hooper presented SNZ's Web page (www.stats.govt.nz) to a keen but small audience. Sharleen and Mike did an NZSA commercial break.

Learning Media's New Scientific School Journal

Desirable to arrange some statistical input to this.

The recent booklet "Assessment for Success in Primary Schools"

(Parents' version of the Green Paper.) Could do with NZSA or SAPQC input or analysis in future. Contains boxplots!

NZSA Conference 1998

We suggest that Manawatu Maths Association are asked to invite their members.

NZSA Conference 1999

Should have an education day and/or sub-theme. If Maths Colloquia have them, why can't we? Committee could contribute, but would not be the core organising group.

Review of QBM for NZ Diploma of Business (nee NCB)

The group of four, with Mike as NZSA representative, has met for 1.5 days, and made a draft. QBM is taken by hundreds of students over 17 "providers". Issues include:

- inserting software use and simplifying other things to allow this
- replacing z by t
- inserting Statistics in Quality, which means leaving other things out
- omitting Probability
- making indices more useful
- making PC Infos almost compulsory
- replacing regression by fitting models.

I've accepted defeat on trying to do this!

Mike Camden

Deadline for next Issue

All submissions for the next *Newsletter* to me by 31 October.

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Honour for Ken Jury

Ken Jury was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to the Dairy Industry in the NZ honours announced at Queen's Birthday weekend. Ken retired as General Manager of the Dairying Research Corporation in 1996 and featured then as the cover story for the June 1996 issue of this Newsletter. Ken began his career as a statistician at Ruakura in 1958 and became director and Animal Research in 1979. Ken led the NZ delegation to the 1990 International Biometric Conference in Budapest and chaired the local organizing committee for the 1992 conference when 500 statisticians converged on Hamilton. Congratulations Ken from your friends and colleagues.

New Zealand Statistical Association (Inc)

1997 Annual General Meeting

Summary of the AGM held on July 10, 1997 at The University of Auckland

The meeting opened at 5.15pm.

(Chaired by the President, Jeff Hunter)

Present: Rod Ball, Elizabeth Bradford, Jennifer Brown, Len Cook, Robert Davies, Sharleen Forbes, Michael Ford, S. Ganesalingam, Siva Ganesh, Jiti Gao, Philippa Graham, Harold Henderson, Jeff Hunter, Fraser Jackson, Murray Jorgensen, Frances Krsinich, Frank Lad, Alan Lee, Brian Niven, Richard Penny, James Reilly, Alastair Scott, David Scott, Richard Sedcole, Niki Thorne, Wiremu Solomon, Caryn Thompson, Jean Thompson, Martin Upsdell, David Vere-Jones, Julian Visch, Ian Westbrooke, Jim Young, Xiaogu Zheng.

Apologies: Greg Arnold, Mike Camden, Gary Dunnet, Steve Haslett, Donal Krouse, Hugh Morton, John Waller.

Motion: The apologies be accepted.

Hunter/Ganesh *carried*

Minutes of the 1996 AGM

A copy was distributed.

Motion: The minutes be accepted.

Henderson/Brown *carried*

Matters arising from the minutes

There were none.

President's report

This was distributed and Jeff Hunter highlighted a few points on the report. The main points were:

the merger of *Australian Journal of Statistics* and *The New Zealand Statistician* into *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics*
the MoRST review of Mathematical Sciences
the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Treasurer's report

This report was distributed, and spoken to by Philippa Graham (proxy for the treasurer Gary Dunnet).

Motion: The report be accepted.

Graham/Ganesh *carried*

Matters arising from the Treasurer's report

Some points noted:

Grants for 1997 Conference - \$4,000 (from SNZ and NZ Aluminium Smelter)

Increase in subscription rate: NZ\$5 for the year 1998/99 and the justification was given in the report.

Motion: The subscriptions for 1998/99 be raised by NZ\$5.00 to all membership categories except for the joint SSA/NZSA membership.

Hunter/Penny *carried*

Motion: The Executive Committee be given the authority to set the subscription for joint SSA/NZSA membership.

Hunter/Ganesh *carried*

Election of Office Bearers

The following nominations were received:

President: Sharleen Forbes Hunter/Henderson

Secretary: Frances Krsinich Forbes/Hunter

Treasurer: Philippa Graham Penny/Brown

Committee: Harold Henderson Cook/Ganesh

Rod Ball Jorgensen/Ganesh

Wiremu Solomon Hunter/Forbes

David Scott Hunter/Ganesh

Jeff Hunter Ganesh/Henderson

Jenny Brown (co-opted)

Corporate Representative:

James Reilly Ganesh/Cook

Editors:

The NZ Statistician

Murray Jorgensen Hunter/Ganesh

Newsletter Richard Penny Thompson.J/Hunter

Subcommittee Convenors:

Education: Mike Camden Forbes/Hunter

Publications: Denny Meyer A.Scott/Ganesh

Science Fair: Jenny Mason Hunter/Ganesalingam

Standards: Jeff Hunter J.Thompson/Henderson

Young Statisticians:

James Reilly C.Thompson/Ball

SAPQC: Stephen Haslett Hunter/J.Thompson

All the above positions were elected unopposed.

Election of Auditor

President thanked P.J. Maxwell for his work as auditor.

Motion: P.J. Maxwell be retained as auditor

Hunter/Cook *carried*

Election of SAPQC

Motion: Steve Haslett continue as convener of SAPQC

Ganesh/Thomson *carried*

Merger of AJS and The NZ Statistician to form ANZJS

Murray Jorgensen spoke on his report (as Editor, The NZ Statistician). Major points were,

Policy on application section of the journal

Panel of Associate Editors to be 'searched'
Must try to achieve international recognition for
ANZJS

"Invited papers" for the first issue
email comments and ideas to Murray.

Establishment of the "NZSA Campbell Award"

Jenny Brown distributed a document and briefly discussed the contents.

Motion: The AGM approve in principle the guidelines specified in the document circulated.
Hunter/Penny *carried*

1998 Annual Conference and NZSA AGM

In conjunction with ASC14, Gold Coast, Australia for which Jeff Hunter and Harold Henderson are on the organising committee. A one day meeting (for AGM etc.) to be held at Massey University, Palmerston North. In-coming Committee to liaise with Hugh Morton. The first Campbell Award to be presented at this meeting.

1999 Annual Conference and NZSA AGM

This will be the Jubilee Conference and held in Wellington.

General Business

NZSA History Project

Application for Grant from Lottery Environment and Heritage Fund, by H.S. Roberts, Hon. Historian. A letter from Stan Roberts was read out by Ganesh. Sharleen and Jean spoke on the matter and appreciated the efforts of Stan.

Motion: The AGM approves in principle the request from Hon. Historian H.S. Roberts to go ahead with the application for funding from the Lottery Commission for the 'History Project'; and the incoming president takes part in the process.
Penny/Sedcole *carried*

Motion: The 'History Project' be regarded as a 'Jubilee Project'.
Westbrooke/Penny *carried*

NZSA Constitution

Motion: The incoming Executive Committee be invited to look into the amendment of the constitution.
Forbes/Sedcole *carried*

The AGM closed at 6.15pm.

Siva Ganesh

Notice of 1998 AGM New Zealand Statistical Association (Inc.) Massey University 3:30 pm, Friday, September 4, 1998

AGENDA

Apologies

Minutes of the 1997 AGM

Matters arising from the minutes

President's report

Treasurer's report

Matters arising from the Treasurer's report

Election of Office Bearers

President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee (6 members), Corporate Representative, Applications Editor A&NZJS, Editor Newsletter, Subcommittee Convenors (Education, Publications, Science Fair, Standards, Young Statisticians, SAPQC)

Election of Auditor

Election of SAPQC

Proposed amendment to the rules in the constitution

Section 6: EXPULSION OF MEMBERS
the current clause

Any member two years in arrears with subscriptions will forfeit membership and may be re-admitted to membership only by method of rule 3, or by payment of arrears.

be amended to

Any member whose annual subscription is not paid within 3 months of invoices being first posted out will forfeit membership and may be re-admitted to membership only by method of rule 3, or by payment of arrears.

Proposed: Philippa Graham/Richard Penny

General Business

Appraisal of *Towards a Code of Social and Family Responsibility: Public Discussion Document, February 1998*

SUMMARY

- 1 *Towards a Code of Social and Family Responsibility: Public Discussion Document, February 1998*, signed by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, was sent to New Zealand households, Post Office Box holders, and selected non-government social agencies in February 1998.
- 2 The proposed Code contained one information booklet and one questionnaire per household, Post Office Box, or social agency. A separate survey later claimed that approximately 90% of households had received copies. Not all Post Office Boxes or social agencies may have received a booklet and questionnaire. Individuals, households and groups could obtain additional copies by phoning an 0800 number. Final return date for questionnaires was initially set at 24 April 1998, and later amended to 8 May 1998.
- 3 There may be some debate on whether the questionnaire should be interpreted as part of a census, or of a probability based sample survey, or of a self-selecting survey forming part of a process of public submissions. Irrespective of how the discussion document and questionnaire are categorised however, there are severe constraints that will need to be placed on the interpretation of responses to its questionnaire.
- 4 Because the design cannot be categorised either as a sound census or as a sound probability based sample survey, the questionnaire responses are not able to provide any clear indication of the extent to which the options expressed in the questionnaire are supported by the general public. The responses may however be able to indicate the range of public opinion, or in particular cases to provide pertinent comment.
- 5 The decision to send a single questionnaire and booklet to every household, while having the benefit in principle of allowing every household to respond, does not ensure unbiased responses from every household member. A similar comment applies to Post Office Boxes and, possibly to a lesser extent, to returns from social agencies.
- 6 The particular mode of delivery to households has meant that only one person per household can respond, and this means individuals in larger households have less opportunity to respond to the proposed Code; conversely for people who have contributed to more than one response through both a household and group questionnaire. This individual level response bias applies regardless of whether the response rate overall is high, or whether the format and content of the questions is regarded as balanced.
- 7 The absence of an adequate, properly designed, public, pilot study carried out before the bulk of questionnaires were sent, has meant that the subject coverage in the questionnaire has almost certainly emphasised the interests and concerns of government. Given public response since the release of the proposed Code, it is clear that the questions used do not reflect the range of public opinion on the subject of social and family responsibilities.
- 8 The choice of topics for questions within the questionnaire does not reflect government expenditure on family and social issues.
- 9 Because each set of questions on the eleven family and social issues in the proposed Code is preceded by an "Expectation", there are strong grounds for concluding that the questions are leading rather than balanced. If the response rate is low, there are strong grounds for concern that the question format may have influenced response rates, and that some sizeable body of community opinion which does not conform easily to that format is not well represented in the questionnaire responses.
- 10 Further response bias is highly probable if the response rate for the questionnaire is very low when judged by acceptable and accepted statistical standards. No callbacks, direct reminders, or follow up have been provided and this has almost certainly compounded the response problem.
- 11 There are no sound statistical grounds for using the questionnaire responses in other than a qualitative and preliminary manner. Because there are extensive methodological flaws, there can be no possible basis for using the questionnaire responses alone for any mandate to government on the need for, or contents of, any future Code of Family and Social Responsibility.

*Survey Appraisals and Public Questions
Committee*

New Developments in Statistics New Zealand

This semi-regular column is to inform statisticians in New Zealand of any new developments undertaken by Statistics New Zealand that may be of interest to them.

Statistics New Zealand has received funding to carry out a feasibility study for a Longitudinal Survey of Income Dynamics. The funding covers the development and testing of a survey methodology. No funding has been assigned for carrying out the survey at this stage.

The survey objectives are currently being discussed with users but will focus in the areas of income dynamics, labour market dynamics, assets and savings and major contributory factors such as labour market experience, health, disability, caring responsibilities and household characteristics. The aim will be to provide information that assists in policy formation in the areas of income adequacy, retirement income provision, labour market participation and support to families. The development project began in August 1997 and will be completed in June 2000 with the production of a report recommending survey design options. The project will include development of: Sample design; Classifications; Questionnaire design; Collection methodology; Database design; Processing systems; and Estimation methodology.

A major design consideration will be panel length, which will be determined primarily on final agreed objectives and testing experience with non-response, response fatigue, recall ability etc. Also to be determined is what cross-sectional data should be produced each year as well as longitudinal data.

A wave pilot study will be undertaken preceded by cognitive testing of the questionnaire and testing of tracking and other methodologies.

For further information contact: Jenny Sanders at Jenny_Sanders@stats.govt.nz

The New Zealand Government has asked Statistics New Zealand to undertake a feasibility study into the costs and benefits of integrating administrative data across sectors to produce new social statistics. Administrative data results from the interactions of individuals and groups with government departments. Information can be collected for, or as part of, service delivery, an application, membership, regulation or registration.

For the purposes of the study, data integration is defined broadly, from the application of common tools, practices and definitions to enable data from multiple datasets to be relatable, to statistical matching where

it is not possible to use unique identifiers to link datasets, to linking of records based on unique identifiers. This definition includes linkages between administrative and survey data.

Statistics New Zealand has been chosen to do the study because of its legislation and practices relating to protection of confidentiality, and will be the custodian of any linked data providing access to researchers. One means of providing this access will be through the newly established Data Laboratory.

The five key tasks in the feasibility study are to: identify and assess barriers to data integration; produce a "road-map" of data sources which could usefully be integrated, identifying those that can and cannot be integrated and suggesting ways of overcoming barriers to integration; address the issue of access to integrated datasets by individuals and organizations outside Statistics New Zealand (this will include consideration of suitable protocols, procedures, software, technology and legislative, ethical and privacy requirements); undertake a focused case study investigating the integration of two datasets from two government agencies (the Department of Social Welfare and the Inland Revenue Department); and identify other examples of possible dataset integration.

Statistics New Zealand has reported back to government on the outcome of the feasibility study. Because of the time and resource constraints imposed on the study, it has been decided to focus on the six sectors of government encompassing the critical social policy areas. These are the education, employment, welfare, health, housing and justice sectors. The most important administrative collections held by agencies operating in those sectors are examined as part of the study.

For further information contact: Anne Spellerberg at Anne_Spellerberg@stats.govt.nz.

Local News

Statistics New Zealand

It's been a long time since you've had a report from Statistics New Zealand and considering how many of your executive work there this is a little remiss. This report is about the two areas that contain the mathematical statisticians, Survey Methods and Analytical Support (SMASH as they are collectively known - the H is just to make us feel good).

We have had a few overseas visitors in the last few years. Jim Durbin came last year, and we have the photos to prove it! This year we have been vis-

Jim Durbin at SMASH 1997 Staff Training Week

ited by Estela Bee Dagum, who provided us with lots of discussion on various aspects of seasonal adjustment. It certainly livened the place up to have someone who believed in greeting everyone with a hug and interesting to see how various people reacted. Also this year we had David Morgenstein from the American survey company Weststat visiting and many attended his seminars on quality in official statistics organisations and estimation from complex designs.

Sharleen Forbes, your president, is Chief Analyst, which means she manages Analytical Support. She actually hasn't done much management lately as she has been in Perth for eight weeks working on her PhD.

Many in SMASH have been overseas lately for various presentations. So many I'm sure that I'll miss someone out, but I need to show that we are a well-travelled lot in SMASH. Andrea Piesse and Tracey Gilmour went to the recent ASC get together on the Gold Coast. A report from them is elsewhere in this august publication. Also this year Michael Eglinton went to a conference on longitudinal surveys in Ottawa and Keith McLeod and Max Wigbout went to a conference on confidentiality in Lisbon.

Last year we had Lisa Jones and Frances Krsnich going to WAYS in Melbourne (see last Newsletter) and Tracey Gilmour and Ian Westbrooke going to Istanbul for the ISI conference. By the time you read this Matt Berger will be in Mexico or Canada, provided the Americans give him a visa in time for his transit in Los Angeles, and Chris Zingel and Steve Johnston will have been and returned from this year's WAYS in Canberra. A cosmopolitan bunch we have. It's amazing how many have had to get passports to do SNZ work!

As to the big boss, Len Cook, he's recently returned from several weeks working in Europe, mainly being based in Paris. We're all sure it was entirely coincidental that the World Cup was on at the time!

Richard Penny

AgResearch

Join AgResearch and see the world! Peter Johnstone (Invermay) is travelling in Thailand & Pakistan for 5 weeks. Dave Saville (Lincoln) spent two weeks in June experiencing the heat and humidity of Asia, en route to ICOTS-5 in Singapore where he presented a paper on the geometry of the p-value, met famous people, and picked up some new ideas. Mick Roberts (Wallaceville) has just returned from a workshop on The Ecology of Infectious Diseases of Wildlife in Trento, Italy, where he presented an invited paper, followed by a week of collaborative work at Wageningen in the Netherlands. Harold Henderson (Ruakura) enjoyed a week on the Gold Coast at ASC14.

On the home front Rowland Kao and Mick Roberts (Wallaceville), Ken Louie (Grasslands) and Simon Woodward (Ruakura) attended the mathematics colloquium at Victoria University and presented papers, and Tanya Soboleva and Tony Pleasants (Ruakura) were present in spirit as Graeme Wake's co-authors.

Mick Roberts

Applied Maths, Industrial Research Limited

Kit Withers spent two weeks in June working with Prof Quintana-Gomez on climate change modelling in Barinas, Venezuela and two weeks in July doing similar work with Dr Saralees Naraleesan at Plymouth University. Kit's trip to South America was paid in part by the Bilateral Research Aid Programme. While at Plymouth he had the opportunity to fit the generalised extreme value distribution to annual maxima for NZ climate series. The fitted models allow for changing variability, in order to predict future extremes.

Robin Willink recently attended the 14th Australian Statistical Conference in Brisbane where he presented his paper "Closed sequential Monte Carlo tests for a rapid decision". Rob found out that one of the plenary speakers David Siegmund, who taught Kit at Stanford, was involved at the genesis of the 'detecting hot-spots in random images' work that Keith Worsley presented so well at last years NZSA conference.

Donal Krouse

Deaths

The Association records with regret the recent deaths of John Revfeim and David Nightingale and extends condolences to both families.

Lincoln

Hold the front page. We're now part of the Applied Computing, Mathematics and Statistics Group, in the Applied Management and Computing Division. I think. Anyway we're much more efficient now. And we've all moved offices. Chris Frampton has been allocated a special office complete with a waiting room for the scores who queue outside his door. He's away giving a paper on species richness at an ecology conference in Florence. But we've started collecting old copies of Punch and Women's Weekly for him - so that those waiting will have something to read if the doctor can't see them immediately.

Alison Lister and I are preparing for the next episode in the continuing saga of teaching statistics in KL. This year there's a water shortage. I think I'm going to enjoy this more than 'The Haze'.

Jim Young

Waikato

Several members of the department have recently travelled overseas to conferences. Bill Bolstad was a participant at the 6th Valencia International Meeting on Bayesian Statistics, held in Valencia, Spain in June, and Lyn Hunt attended the 1998 Joint annual meeting of the Classification Society of North America and Psychometric Society, held at the University of Illinois, Urbana also in June. In July, Nye John and Murray Jorgensen, together with Harold Henderson (an Honorary Lecturer) and Samuel Manda (a DPhil student), attended the 14th Biennial Conference of the Statistical Society of Australia, held at Jupiters on the Gold Coast.

Judi McWhirter has returned from leave. During her sabbatical she spent some time at Invermay, Dunedin, working with Roger Littlejohn on fitting models to Pulsatile data via the EM algorithm. Ray Littler is currently visiting Larry Weldon at the Department of Mathematics & Statistics at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada.

The department is currently advertising a position for a Lecturer or a Senior Lecturer. It is hoped that an appointment will be made to commence at the beginning of the 1999 academic year.

Recent visitors to the department have included Emlyn Williams from CSIRO, Australia, working with Nye John and Dave Whitaker, and also Roger Littlejohn, working with Judi McWhirter. Also visiting was Professor Fred Smith, of Southampton University, who gave a seminar to the department.

Recent Seminars in the Department

Professor Fred Smith (Southampton University) "100 Years of Survey Sampling."

Gareth Ridall (Senior Student, University of Waikato) "A cross-curricula contextual approach toward teaching of data analysis."

Professor Nye John (University of Waikato) "CycDesign: Future directions."

Judi McWhirter

Otago

David Fletcher and Richard Barker ran a successful (and thoroughly enjoyable) workshop on Statistical Methods in Pest Monitoring in June. The workshop was requested by the National Possum Control Agencies, and arose out of a review by David and Richard of the statistical aspects of the national pest monitoring protocols. The workshop lasted three days and was attended by scientists and managers from regional councils, the Department of Conservation and private organizations. A second workshop, for North Islanders, is planned for later in the year at Massey University. These look set to become annual events.

Bryan Manly went to ICOTS 5 in Singapore and caught up with various colleagues from New Zealand and Australia. He is just getting ready to go off again to teach a workshop at Woods Hole Marine Laboratory (USA), and then attend the Statistics Joint Meetings in Dallas. Bryan has also taken on the job of editor of the Journal of Agricultural, Biological and Environmental Statistics for 1999-2002. He hopes this will encourage more New Zealanders and Australians to submit papers to the journal!

David Fletcher has just returned from a conference of the Society for Conservation Biology, held in Sydney in July. He was there as part of the Otago University team working on a FoRST-funded project concerned with the sustainable harvesting of titi (muttonbirds or sooty shearwaters). Interestingly, some of the best talks at the conference were given by those who started life as mathematicians (Hugh Possingham, from the University of Adelaide, being a notable example).

David Fletcher

Geoff Jowett is looking for a good home for his Royal Statistical Society journals (now known as series A, B and C), which cover about 50 years starting from 1946. He would be happy to donate them to some library or to someone working in the field who could make good use of them. His address is 37 Lynas St, Outram (tel 03-486 1778).

Australian Statistical Conference Gold Coast, 6-10 July

Some of the 30-strong NZ contingent at ASC14. We welcome Graham Wood and Malcolm Faddy back to NZ as they take up their chairs at Massey and Canterbury, respectively.

Thirty from New Zealand attended the 14th Australian Statistical Conference from 6 - 10 July 1998. From Statistics NZ, Sean Keefe, Tracey Gilmour, Matt Berger and Andrea Piesse each presented a paper. This was a great opportunity to meet and re-unite with statisticians from different countries, as well as those from other organisations within NZ. The theme of the conference was 'Statistics in Context' and focused on a broad range of contexts in which statistics and the statistical profession operates. There were 10 keynote speakers spread out over the week, and between two and five concurrent sessions at other times, covering areas such as quality, sampling, consulting and statistics in education.

Further information about the conference program can be found on the following website:<http://www.math.fsc.qut.edu.au/asc14.html>

The conference was held at Jupiters Casino on the Gold Coast of Australia. This proved to be a very comfortable venue, but not a particularly successful one for Tracey's and Matt's flutters at the tables. The casino was in walking distance from our hotel so we made the most of our escape from the NZ winter to stroll there and back each day in short sleeves and sunglasses. (We also lived up to the reputation that the only people who swim at that time of year on the Gold Coast are Kiwis, by taking the plunge into the hotel pool.) Although conference going kept us busy for most of the week, we did find time to sample some of the local cuisine. One of the highlights would have to be 'The Copper Pan' restaurant. Matt was presented with sizzling prawns and a 'carpet bag' steak, Tracey tried the beef 'n' bugs (which looked like something out of 'Alien'), Andrea enjoyed the barramundie and Sean had chicken

florentine. We also dined out one evening in a dry dock ship and got to know a group of staff from the ABS. The four of us were joined by recent SNZ visitor, David Morganstein, at the mid-week conference dinner. This included an entertaining show called 'Illusions' that left us puzzling over how a number of the tricks were performed.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our week at the Australian Statistical Conference, both socially and professionally, and encourage more NZ statisticians to attend the next one to be held in Adelaide from 3 - 7 July, 2000.

Andrea Piesse

Hoare Research Software and SPSS Prize at ASC14

Hoare Research Software donated \$500 for the best paper presented by a student from a NZ university at ASC14. Alain Vandal, University of Auckland, won the prize. NZSA appreciates the support of Hoare Research Software.

Students from NZ at ASC14. Stephen Odundo Nyangoma (Auckland), Samuel Manda (Waikato) and Alain Vandal (Auckland)

Together by design at ASC14: Emlyn Williams, John Eccleston, Ken Russell and Nye John

