

# Newsletter

## Mathematics & Statistics

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### UPDATE ON NEIL WATSON

We are pleased to report that Neil's condition has improved significantly and he is now out of intensive care and starting to receive visitors.



### FAREWELLS

A farewell dinner was held on 27 March to mark the retirement of **Dr Allan McInnes**, whose graduate students include Rick Beatson, Garry Newsam, Patrick van Berkel, Loi Loi, Richard Brooks and Easwaran Balakrishnan. In the course of the dinner, this historical photograph was circulated! Your challenge is to spot the following "bright young things" of 30 years ago – David Wall, Allan McInnes, Bob Long, Easaw Chacko, Bob Broughton, Neil Watson, Bill Baritompa, Peter Renaud, Bill Taylor, David Robinson, Brian Woods, Ann Tindall and Bev Haberfield! The following message has since been received from Dr McInnes:

*I would like to thank all those members of the department who helped to make my retirement dinner such an enjoyable evening. I very much appreciate all the flattering comments and the very generous retirement gift. I am continuing with my mathematical research and so I hope to still be around the department from time to time.*  
*With thanks, Allan McInnes*

**FAREWELLS (contin.)**

Another staff member to leave us at the end of March was Post-Doctoral Fellow **Simona Vita**. We wish Simona all the best in her new position as a Senior Researcher at the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research in Wellington. In the meantime, she has left us with these parting words:

*Just a brief note to thank **Douglas Bridges** for his supervision of my PhD studies, for the great scientific collaboration, constant encouragement, and friendship over the past 9 years. A big thank you to all my colleagues in the department, and to Julie for her kind assistance and sense of humour! I wish you all the best of luck for the future.*

*Sadly yours, Simona*

**CONFERENCE / RESEARCH FUNDING**

**Rick Beatson:** research visit to Otago

**Charles Semple:** research visit to Durham University, England

**In Kang and Jean Gong:** abstracts accepted for the NZ Statistical Association Conference in Auckland from 3-6 July 2006.

**Qui Bui** (for Richard Laugesen): funding for flights to support collaborative research, from December 2006 to January 2007.

**PROFESSOR DEREK LAWDEN**

Courtesy of **Ian Coope** comes news regarding **Derek Lawden**, formerly Professor of Applied Mathematics at Canterbury and Head of Department until 1967, and now Emeritus Professor at Aston University in Birmingham. In a recent letter to Professor Tee, he wrote that he was pleased to have been brought up-to-date on the history of the NZ Mathematics Colloquia since 1967 and to read of the contributions of former Canterbury students and colleagues, such as Gillian Brown, David Robinson, John de la Bere, the late Brent Wilson, Peter Bryant and Robert Bull. Professor Lawden is now 86, in reasonably good health, and still involved with mathematics. He sends his kindest regards to everyone.

**PROBLEM CORNER**

Andrew Richens and Michael Langton solved last month's problem of the prime number spiral path, which boiled down to finding consecutive primes  $a, b, c, d$  such that the differences  $(c-a)$  and  $(d-b)$  are part of a Pythagorean triple. Their answer was 67, 71, 73, 79, giving the triple 6, 8, 10. Amazingly, these are the only primes that give this triple, and the only triple that can be so attained; for primes tested up to around 1500 or so. Remarkable that there is only one easy case!

This month's brain teaser:

A corner is a figure of 3 unit squares in an exact L shape, (i.e. a  $2 \times 2$  square missing a quarter).

A 5 by 7 checkerboard is to be multiply covered by corners, so that every cell is covered by the same number of corners. Is this possible? (Prove or disprove.)

*Bill Taylor*

## DEPARTMENTAL VISITORS



Welcome to our latest departmental visitors who arrived at the beginning of April. **Dr Vincent Berry**, from the University of Montpellier II, is visiting us for two weeks. His background is in computer science with a particular interest in developing algorithms for solving contemporary problems in evolutionary biology. **Charles Semple**, Vincent's host, visited him last year in the course of his Erskine leave and this visit to Canterbury is a follow-up to work they did last year.

**Dr Balchandra Thatte**, is visiting us for 6 months from Massey University. He is an Allan Wilson Centre Post-Doctoral Fellow and is sharing Room 720 with our other AWC Post-Doctoral Fellow, Oliver Will.

**Laura Ciobanu**, University of Auckland, visited the department for a week in March. During her stay she gave a talk at a one-day meeting on group theory held here. The other speakers were **Sean Cleary**, who is visiting from the City University of New York, long-term visitor **John Holt**, and **Ben Martin**.



Erskine Fellow **Professor Daniel Huson** doing 'field work' at Arthurs Pass

Visitors	Name of Organization	From	To	Room	Extn
Ramona Schmid	Tübingen University, Germany	6 Jan 2006	6 Jun 2006	620	7431
Erick Matson	Harvard University, USA	8 Jan 2006	26 April 2006	620	7431
Dr David Borchers	University of St Andrews, Scotland	23 Jan 2006	11 Aug 2006	501	8376
Simone Linz	University of Dusseldorf, Germany	24 Jan 2006	30 Apr 2006	605	8028
Dr John Newell	University of Ireland, Galway	1 Feb 2006	24 Jun 2006	501	8376
Prof. Domenico Piccolo (E)	Univ. of Napoli Federico II, Italy	7 Feb 2006	6 May 2006	605	8028
Dr Sean Cleary	City University of New York, USA	9 Feb 2006	10 Apr 2006	607	8875
Dr Katherine St John	City University of New York, USA	9 Feb 2006	10 Apr 2006	607	8875
Prof. Daniel Huson (E)	Tübingen University, Germany	15 Feb 2006	30 Jun 2006	624	8877
Dr Balchandra Thatte	Massey University	1 Apr 2006	1 Oct 2006	616	8876
Dr Vincent Berry	Univ of Montpellier II, France	3 Apr 2006	14 Apr 2006	724	7691
Thierer, Tobias	Auckland University	24 Apr 2006	16 Jun 2006	620	7431
Prof. Stephen Gardiner (E)	University College Dublin, Ireland	01 Jul 2006	31 Aug 2006	605	8028
Prof Christian Robert (E)	Université Paris Dauphine, France	8 Jul 2006	20 Aug 2006	607	8875
Prof. Jeremy Levesley (E)	University of Leicester, England	9 Jul 2006	14 Sep 2006	605	8028