Merry Christmas

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A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

from the staff and students at the Department of

BIOCHEMISTRY

University of Otago

16th December 2015

It is Christmas again, and time for our annual alumni newsletter.

In January we said farewell to Kurt Krause and welcomed Catherine Day as new Head of Department at a dinner function at the Dunedin Club, then in February Catherine took over the reins of the department, while Kurt headed off on a year's sabbatical.

Kurt Krause and Deputy HOD Julian Eaton-Rye hold up Kurt's retirement-from-HOD gift.

Vernon Ward (Dean of the OSMS) saying nice things about Catherine and Kurt

The year began quietly. With the flood protection works by the Leith finally completed, the sound of earthmoving machinery became a distant memory and we could enjoy our new view and picnic spot.

Just weeks after its completion, however, the flood protection was put to the test by the worst floods in decades. It did its job splendidly, and while houses in South Dunedin were very badly flooded (some inhabitants are still not back in their homes), the student flats in North Dunedin were virtually unscathed.

Mid year the earthmoving machinery returned to replace all the sewers in Castle St, and what was once Castle St, from Dundas St all the way through campus to the front of the Richardson Building (ex Hocken Building), down Union Place to the west, and across the Memorial Bridge to the east. With the existing large trees and landscaping features all being dug up, the University is taking the opportunity to re-landscape this entire area, and it is supposed to be finished around April next year. Our grassy knoll has been half excavated, and there is to be seating installed facing the registry. The large rata outside the building has been saved though, and will continue to make our summers beautiful.

Seating will be installed here facing the registry across the Leith.

The day after the final laboratory class of the year, the research labs in the central second floor moved into the teaching laboratories for the summer, and workmen moved into the area they had vacated. By the time the students return in 2016, the Day, Lamont, and Brown labs will have moved back into a beautiful purpose-designed workspace, with separate write-up and computer areas for all students. We are all looking forward to this a great deal. It has been very noisy.

We had an excellent year for promotions, with Sally McCormick, Peter Dearden, and Tony Merriman to become professors in February. Three new professors in one promotion round is unheard of, and we are very proud of them.

An impressive number of students have completed their degrees - we had celebratory functions in May, August and December to farewell the many graduating students. In particular I wish to highlight the 12 MSc completions and 9 PhD oral exams that have been held this year. Not only have they graduated but a number have gone onto positions here and abroad, and have exciting futures ahead of them – this is very gratifying. We also had fifteen new PhD students begin their studies this year, which promises well for the future.

At the December graduation function

It has been a good publication year with close to 100 publications. Perhaps more important than the number is that many of these were published in quality journals. We also had a successful year for research funding with over $7m received in a challenging environment. Securing grants is getting tougher every year and maintaining a vibrant research environment will depend on staff accessing new funding sources in the years ahead.

Other highlights of the year have been Steph Hughes's work being the beneficiary of the CureKids All Blacks Rugby World Cup supporters song "Team Ball Player Thing", and Peter Dearden's "Lab in a Box" launch in October. Lab in a Box is a shipping container that has been cunningly converted into a mobile teaching laboratory, and can be transported on the back of a truck to schools in remote areas that have limited practical science teaching resources.

Lab-in-a-Box launched at Kaikorai Valley School in October

We said goodbye to Lyn Dowsett this year. Lyn joined the Biochemistry Department in 1980, initially for three years to provide teaching relief, then as a Senior Teaching Fellow, and ultimately as Professional Practice Fellow, teaching a wide range of biochemistry laboratory programmes in science and the professional schools. Lyn became the departmental interface for Maori and Pacifika students, co convenor of Staff Woman's Caucus, President of the Association of Woman in the Sciences, President of the Otago Branch of the National Council of Women, President New Horizons for Women Trust, she is a Justice of the Peace, and now is the President of the Otago Association for Justices of the Peace of NZ. She was awarded the Queens Service Medal in 1997 for her work with the Yellow Eyed Penguin Trust. We miss her, but know she is very much enjoying the next phase of life.

Lyn cuts her cake

Best wishes for Christmas and 2016,

As always, we do hope you will keep in touch, and send us your own news on your careers and your life adventures.

Email your news to: biochemistry@otago.ac.nz or

Post your news to : The Secretary, Department of Biochemistry, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

"Like" us at http://www.facebook.com/Biochemistry.Otago

And if you are ever in Dunedin, do pop in for a visit

Catherine Day
and the Biochemistry staff and students

The empty Day Lab

Day, Lamont, Brown labs stripped of everything, including walls.

New walls going in. To the left are write-up spaces, offices are at rear left.

Department Publications for 2015

Ahmadi, O., Stringer, M. D., Black, M. A., & McCall, J. L. (2015). Clinico-pathological factors influencing lymph node yield in colorectal cancer and impact on survival: Analysis of new Zealand cancer registry data. *Journal of Surgical Oncology*, 111(4), 451–458.

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