

*Merry Christmas*

*&*

*Happy  
New Year*



FROM THE STUDENTS AND STAFF OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF

*Biochemistry*



19th December 2016

Christmas seems to have arrived far earlier than usual, we have too much to do and not enough time in which to do it. But it turns out that graduation is a week later this year, which rather explains the situation - it's not just old age catching up on us.

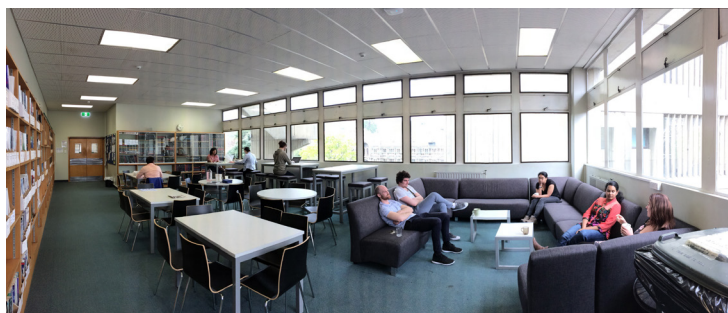
Catherine has well and truly settled in to her HOD job, and has been making some big changes around the department. In addition to the renovation of the second floor east laboratories (completed in February of 2016) we have new furniture in the Reading Room/Staff Room for the very first time since the building was constructed! We have also had a major tidy up of the theses, and put a number of pieces of old equipment on display in the shelves as a sort of mini-museum. New carpet and other changes will follow when the building is no longer a construction site. Right now much of the first floor is under development with further upgrades planned for next year.



*The new second floor labs have a window into the corridor, through which visitors can watch science being done.*



*Hardbound theses dusted, sorted, and shelved by year.*



*Comfy seating, three sizes of table, chairs and stools, and they all match!*

Construction is not confined to the inside of the building either. The landscaping around the flood protection and sewer replacement is still not finished, but with luck we may have photos next year. It will be very swish, but it's taking an awfully long time to complete. We do have a new path down to a "beach" by the Dundas St bridge (right), and a pathway all along Montgomery Ave (far right). Chemistry is being completely gutted and rebuilt, and Microbiology is getting a new entranceway, so some days it is hard to know how to get into the building!



*Catherine Day and Donna Matahaere-Atariki, the chairperson of Te Rūnanga ō Ōtākou, signing the agreement.*

In June the Department signed a relationship agreement with Te Rūnanga ō Ōtākou, outlining conditions of future research collaborations. The very first project to be covered by the agreement is Tony Merriman's research on gout. We expect this relationship to be very fruitful, and something that the department can build on.

In October Parry Guilford was appointed to the Health Research Council board, and both he and Tony Merriman were made Fellows of the Royal Society of New Zealand. This reflects the excellent quality of research coming from their laboratories, and is something of which we are extremely proud.

Both Sally McCormick and Peter Dearden have given their Inaugural Professorial Lectures. Both gave excellent presentations that were well attended and provided a high point to the year. These are available to view on iTunesU and YouTube. Tony Merriman has postponed his until 2017 due to other commitments this year.



August saw the fortieth meeting of the Department of Biochemistry Research Society, otherwise known to generations of students as “The Fourth Year Talks”. The students did a superb job of the morning tea, and we further marked the occasion by having a celebration in the Staff Club afterwards. To the left is a photograph of everyone present who had at some stage given a talk at the Research Society meeting, Chris Brown was the “elder statesman”. For those of you who remember fourth

year classes being dominated by Honours students this is something of the past, as in recent years they have been greatly outnumbered by MSc students. The associated 2-year project means that many of these students are making an outstanding contribution to the department.

The Department remains a vibrant research environment with 103 postgraduate students in 2016. Twelve PhD students completed their degrees this year, three of whom were awarded “exceptional thesis” status. It was not our best year funding wise but staff have been busy getting papers out, with a number of papers in top journals as you will see in the publication list appended. We fervently hope that the funding gods will be on our side in 2017 so we can keep the research momentum up.



*Graduates at the December function. Academics with the most spectacular regalia are in demand for photos!*

As has become traditional, we held receptions in May and December for our graduating students and their families. These occasions are most enjoyable for us, and we hope for the families. We have so many graduating each year, however, that the reception is beginning to extend out of the Staff Room and into the hallway! In addition to the twelve PhD students finishing this year, we have had six MSc, and seven BSc (Hons) complete their studies in the department.

Biochemistry staff did very well in the School of Biomedical Sciences (formerly Otago School of Medical Sciences) 2016 awards. In the photo on the right: Peter Dearden: Best Research Paper of the Year by a BMS Researcher 2016, Marilyn Merriman: BMS Research Support – Focused Contribution Award 2016, Parry Guilford: BMS Senior Researcher Award 2016, Murray Cockerill: BMS Research Support – Sustained Contribution Award 2016, and Tony Zaharic: BMS Distinguished PPF/Teaching Fellow (Professional Programmes) 2016





Murray Cockerill gave us warning at the end of 2015 that he would be retiring at the end of this year. We gave him a big morning tea for his 70th birthday in August, and hoped against hope that he would rescind his decision to retire. It was not to be, however, and he leaves us for the last time on the 22nd of December. He has plans to do more travel, and has “work to do around the house”. A number of old friends got together for farewell drinks at the newly refurbished and very up-market Captain Cook hotel on the 15th (below), another group took Murray to the new Emmersons Brewery for lunch (right, and yes it is very flash and does lunch!), and this year's Christmas party is doing double duty as his retirement function. We are certainly going to miss Murray, although he has been training up his talented and efficient (partial) replacement for most of this year.



Best wishes for Christmas and 2017,

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](mailto: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 - and test out the new chairs in the reading room

*Bronwyn Carlisle, Catherine Day  
and the Biochemistry staff and students*

## Farewell to Murray Cockerill



Murray's first attempt to escape the Department.



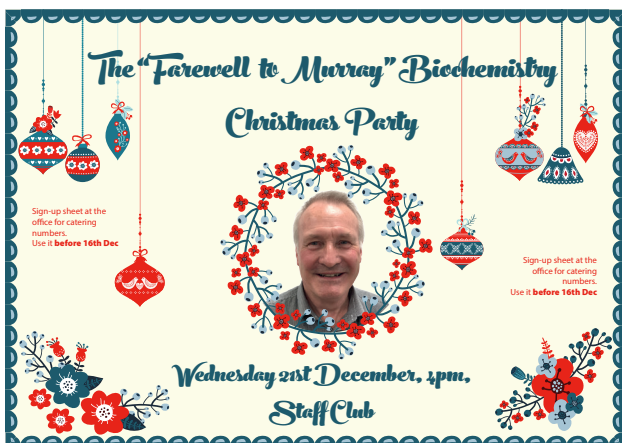
21st May 2012: Murray receives the Dunedin North Rotary Club's "Pride of Workmanship" Award.



18th August 2016: Murray is still here, celebrating his 70th birthday.



13th December 2016: Murray is awarded the School of Biomedical Sciences "Sustained Contribution" award.



21st December 2016: Murray's retirement function will be held concurrently with the Department Christmas party.

22nd December 2016,

GOODBYE & BEST WISHES  
MURRAY



## Department Publications for 2016

- Antoun, J. S., Thomson, W. M., Merriman, T. R. & Farella, M. Self-Reported Oral Behaviour Habits in Hyperdivergent and Normodivergent Facial Types. *J Oral Rehabil* (2016). doi:10.1111/joor.12452
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