

## Regional Newsletter, June 2015



## In this issue

MICHAEL SWEETING & ROLAND LANGROCK

Welcome to the June 2015 edition of the BIR newsletter. This edition includes the regular offerings from our regional officers and announcements of upcoming meetings. Do make a note of our forthcoming events in your diary, and we'd love to hear from you if you have items you'd like to share with the society in future newsletters. As usual, clicking on text in blue should link you to the appropriate website or email address.

## Young Biometrician Award

We are delighted to announce that the 2015 Young Biometrician Award has been won by David Robertson of the MRC Biostatistics Unit in Cambridge, for his paper "Correcting for bias in the selection and validation of informative diagnostic tests" published in *Statistics in Medicine* (2015, Vol 34, pages 1417-1437). The judges commented that "The paper provides an accessible and valuable approach to an important biostatistical problem. The development shows an impressive grasp of the practicalities of the issues involved, as well as a mastery of highly appropriate methodological techniques which, although well-established, are seldom seen nowadays." The award includes a diploma and a prize of £1000 and will be presented at a BIR meeting in the autumn (details will appear on the BIR website in due course).



*David Robertson, winner of the Young Biometrician Award*

The panel of three judges comprised Professors Michael Kenward (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, representing the Fisher Memorial Trust), John Matthews (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, representing the BIR) and Ørnulf Borgan (University of Oslo, Norway, international judge). The judges commented that all the entries were of a very high standard. In coming to their decision they considered: the statement made by the nominator about the conduct of the research; the importance of the problem addressed and the understanding of the underlying biometrical issues demonstrated in the paper; the merits of the paper both in terms of technical skill and exposition; and the applicability of the research to the biometrical problem investigated.

The award is a joint venture between the British and Irish Region of the IBS and the Fisher Memorial Trust (<http://www.senns.demon.co.uk/FisherWeb.html>). It is awarded once every two years, and members of the BIR within 5 years of completing their full-time education (including PhD studies) are eligible to be nominated.

## President's corner

JOHN MATTHEWS

I notice that I concluded my previous President's Corner by looking forward to the Channel Network Conference hosted by the Dutch Region in Nijmegen in April. I was right to look forward to the conference because it was an excellent event on all fronts. The talks were all of a very high standard and covered a bewildering array of topics, from clinical trials to genomics to population estimation. The organisation was first-rate, the facilities were good and Nijmegen was a very attractive and historic location. The weather was very kind and so warm that the evening boat trip on the River Waal to where the conference dinner was held was very pleasant indeed.

There was, of course, a strong attendance from the Dutch Region but there were many from other parts of our Society, with the British & Irish Region being the most numerous contingent after the hosts. Part of the attraction of this conference is that it is not a massive event, such as ISCB or JSM, so has a much more relaxed



and convivial atmosphere. But nor is it parochial, with many opportunities to meet with colleagues from the Channel Regions and also from other Regions: it is an excellent use of the Channel Network and one to be actively supported in Belgium two years from now.



CNC 2015

Our programme this year has a definite conference flavour, as the next meeting will be held jointly with the RSS as part of their conference in Exeter. Dan Jackson and Daniel Farewell have put together what promises to be a very interesting session on stratified medicine, which will be held in the afternoon of 8 September. The afternoon concludes with the Campion Lecture, when Professor Scott Zeger will also talk on this theme. While the Region frequently holds joint meetings with RSS Sections, involvement with a full RSS conference is much rarer and allows us to reciprocate for the RSS's involvement with the IBC, where RSS read papers have occasionally been presented.

Over the last few weeks a number of you have been kind enough to agree to act as champions for the Region in your local area. While we have growing coverage, there are still gaps and it will be a little while before the network is as comprehensive as I would like. In the meantime, please do try to respond positively if you are contacted. For those who have responded — we haven't forgotten you, please be patient while we try to build up the rest of the network!

## Secretary's Corner

SUE WELHAM

### Committee members wanted!

It's the time of year where we start to look for new members of the regional committee. Committee members serve a three-year term, with two new members elected each year. Responsibilities include contributing to the administration of the region (two meetings per year with phone attendance permissible, contributions to regional newsletter, etc.) and organising scientific meetings. Please email me if you're interested in getting involved.

### Student members wanted!

The BIR usually sponsor the Research Student's Conference in Probability and Statistics, this year from 3-6 August in Leeds. We'd like to find a volunteer member or two to represent us at the Sponsor's Wine Reception on 5th August in the late afternoon (currently expected 3:30-5pm) to recruit new student members. We provide a poster and leaflets and ask our representative to sign people up there and then online, as student membership is free (we don't provide a laptop!). If someone makes a special trip for this then we can pay travel expenses, but ideally it would be someone attending the conference anyway. If you can help us with this then please let me know.

### International news

My term on the Representative Council comes to an end on 30 June 2015, and the BIR have nominated Daniel Farewell (Cardiff) as our new member, alongside the existing BIR representatives (Rachel McCrea, Kent and Ruth King, St Andrews). The Representative Council represents the IBS membership and is the forum for interaction between the regions and the International Society. Council members must be able to represent the views of their region and so BIR representatives are automatically members of the regional committee.

Plans for the next IBC are now well underway. The conference will take place at the Victoria Convention Centre in Victoria on Vancouver Island (British Columbia, Canada) from 10-15 July 2016. The conference website is now in place at <http://biometricconference.org/> and will be updated as plans unfold.





## Perspectives on stratified medicine — invited session at RSS Conference

The British and Irish Region has organised an invited session at the RSS Conference in Exeter on 8th September. The topic is 'Perspectives on Stratified Medicine' and the session is on the same day as the President's Invited Lecture by Scott Zeger on 'Statistical Problems in Individualized Health'.

Session program:

- Introduction to Stratified Medicine by Brian Tom and Daniel Jackson (MRC-BSU, Cambridge);
- Statistical Regulation in Stratified Medicine by Deborah Ashby (Imperial);
- Industry Aspects of Stratified Medicine by John Whitaker (GlaxoSmithKline);
- Methodology in Stratified Medicine by Frank Dondeinger (MRC-BSU Cambridge).

Reduced fees for single day registration (25% discount) on that day only are available for BIR members who wish to attend but are not also RSS members – use code IBS at the end of the registration process on the payment screen. Note that this code cannot be used to obtain a discount on rates for RSS members.

Conference registration and further information: [http://www.rss.org.uk/RSS/Events/Conference/2015\\_conference.aspx](http://www.rss.org.uk/RSS/Events/Conference/2015_conference.aspx)

## Food Security: The Role of Biological Modelling

The British and Irish Region will be hosting an afternoon meeting on "Food Security: The Role of Biological Modelling" on Thursday, 8th October 2015, at Fowden Hall, Rothamsted. The event will take place between 13:30 and 17:00, with the Region AGM beforehand at 13:00. There will be a small charge, with a reduction for IBS members.

The speakers confirmed are:

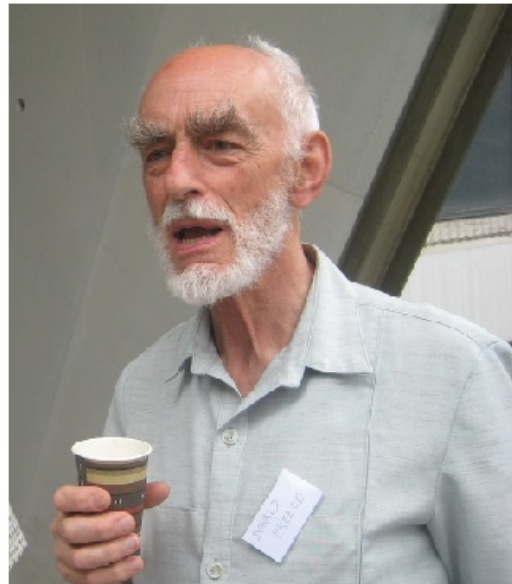
- Professor Jim Smith (University of Warwick), 'Decision Support for Addressing Food Poverty in the UK: from production to consumption';
- Dr Nicole Augustin (University of Bath), 'Space-time modelling of blue ling for fisheries stock management';

- Dr Nik Cuniffe (University of Cambridge), 'Mathematical models for the spread and control of plant pathogens';
- Dr Stephen Parnell (University of Salford), 'Surveillance strategies for invading plant pests and diseases; finding the needle in the haystack'.

Registration will open soon and more details can be found on <http://bir.biometricsociety.org/events/food-security-20151008>.

## Donald Preece Memorial Day

On Thursday, 17 September, at Queen Mary University of London, there will be a memorial day for Donald Preece, statistician, combinatorialist, and organist. The meeting is supported by Queen Mary University of London and the British Combinatorial Committee, in association with the BIR and RSS. Registration is now open and further details can be found at the meeting website: <http://www.maths.qmul.ac.uk/~pjc/dapday.html>

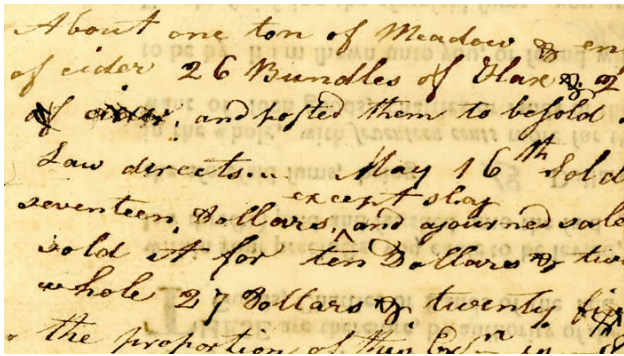


Donald Preece



## Regional Rules

JOHN MATTHEWS



You should all now have had a draft of the changes to the Rules of the Region which the Committee has proposed. By the time you read this any comments from the membership will have been incorporated into the proposals. The final version of the proposed new rules will be sent out, together with the ballot paper, I hope around mid-July. If the changes are accepted this will be the last time such an exercise will have to be conducted by post. These days postal ballots are the cumbersome alternative, which inhibits our democratic practices and drains our resources. The option to hold ballots electronically

will be a great advantage, which will justify the substantial effort our Honorary and Membership Secretaries, Sue Welham and Diana Cole, have put into the process.

## Meetings in 2016

A number of meetings are being planned by the BIR for 2016. Some dates are yet to be confirmed, but here is a flavour of what to expect!

- Jan/Feb: A joint meeting with the British Ecological Society and RSS Environmental Statistics Section
- April: A meeting to celebrate 30 years of the DerSimonian-Laird methodology for random-effects meta-analysis
- July 10th–15th: The 28th International Biometric Conference in Victoria, Canada
- November: The Presidential address on the topic “Experimental Design in Medicine”

## Subscriptions

Please advertise the society widely amongst your colleagues! Any new members can join the society by visiting <http://bir.biometricsociety.org/membership>.

