

## Norman Trevor Clare – 1912-2005

Norman Trevor Clare was born at Waitara, Taranaki, in 1912 and educated at New Plymouth Boys' High School, where he gained a Taranaki Scholarship in 1930. This took him to Victoria University College, with lodgings at the then newly established mens' hostel - Weir House. He was in residence for its first day, attended its first lunch, and lived-in for two years.

As a Scholar he was expected to be a full-time student although he often doubted that that was advantageous. He expressed the opinion that part-timers, like the cadets in the Agricultural Department such as Brian Shorland, had the advantage. Despite this he did very well at chemistry, becoming Professor PW Robertson's 'lab boy', Departmental demonstrator, and his personal assistant; Norman graduated MSc (Hons.) in Chemistry in 1934. During his course, which overlapped that of Brian, Norman wanted to establish a Victoria Harrier Club. He and Brian Shorland became the inaugural President and Secretary, respectively, and remained involved in an honorary capacity until the club amalgamated with the Athletics Club.

After two years on the university staff, Norman decided to leave academia, preferring in 1936 to join Brian Shorland at the Agricultural Department's chemistry section in Sydney Street (opposite Parliament Buildings in Wellington) because of its interestingly wide range of investigations using chemistry. The Agricultural Chemistry laboratory had been established in 1903 by Barney Aston to investigate problems associated with farming and agriculture, and the last scientist he appointed to the staff before retiring was Norman Clare.

Norman became particularly involved in the problem of facial eczema, and in 1938 transferred from the city laboratory to Wallaceville Animal Research Station in Upper Hutt where much of that work was centred. This interest led him into other diseases involving photosensitivity, the chemistry and metabolism of porphyrins and other animal pigments, and the metabolism of phenothiazines (anti-worming drugs) with which photosensitivity was associated. Norman authored some 40 papers on these subjects and was commissioned by the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau to publish a review on *Photosensitisation in Diseases of Domestic Animals* (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau Review Series, No.3, 1952), still cited as a reference veterinary text and which established his world-wide reputation. He had intended to extend this review and submit it for a doctorate, but never quite got around to doing so; undoubtedly it was a work well deserving of such recognition.

In 1947 he was appointed Chief Biochemist at the newly established Ruakura Animal Research Station in Hamilton. Norman then visited research establishments in South Africa, United Kingdom and the USA as his role was to oversee the chemical analyses for a wide range of projects in animal breeding, nutrition and management. However, he continued his work on facial eczema that ultimately led to the isolation of the fungal toxin, sporodesmin, by Singe and White. From 1965 to 1967 he was seconded to

the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation to work on their sheep diseases project at Pendick (Turkey) where he established chemical facilities, trained Turkish scientists, and guided research on copper deficiency around the Black Sea and selenium deficiency in Anatolia.

Norman Clare played a significant role in NZIC affairs since becoming a 1934 member of the Wellington Branch; he served on the National Editorial Committee, the Examinations Committee, and the Wellington and Waikato Branch Committees. He was elected to Fellowship in 1947, and was instrumental in establishing the Waikato Branch in 1952 of which he became its Chairman. He was Journal Editor 1961-62 and organized and chaired several conferences during his time at Ruakura.

He married Eunice Wall, another member of the scientific staff, in 1941. She was much involved in the studies on bush sickness (ultimately found to be due to cobalt deficiency) and other trace element investigations. They had two sons, John - who follows in their analytical interests - and David; sadly, Eunice pre-deceased Norman in 1970.

Norman retired in 1972 and cultivated his interests in trout fishing, bird watching, poetry, and the history of Richard Pierce's first flying machine in NZ; he was working on material for its celebration this year. He was one of nature's real gentlemen maintaining pleasant and successful relationships with individuals whom most others found difficult. He was a life-long friend of Brian Shorland appreciating his peculiar sense of humour and his habit of switching the basis of his argument to taking the role of devil's advocate when he could see he was not going to win. Others found this disturbing; Norman understood what was going on, and was amused by it! He was kind and thoughtful with a keen sense of humour and a love of poetry and literature. His most loved possession was the copy of Professor PW Robertson's own publication *In Search of Beauty* which PW had presented to him when he left for the Agricultural Chemistry laboratory. Norman himself produced delightful poems for celebrations at the Harrier Club and for special NZIC activities.

I first met Norman Clare when I took over editorship of the NZIC Journal from him in 1962. We renewed acquaintance during the last four years of his life when he became a mine of information with stories of Victoria University College in the 1930s, the Chemistry Department, Professor PW Robertson, and Brian Shorland, whose biography I have been constructing.

For the last several years of his life Norman was in a wheelchair, in a rest home across the road from the shore in New Plymouth on the paddocks where he had played among the gorse as a child. He was partly deaf but his mind and memory were active and working well. He died in New Plymouth in June 2005.

I am already missing his contributions to our memories of those early days of the NZIC and its personalities.

**Joan Mattingley**