

Bob Broughton



Bob with his daughter Fleur and grandson Christian in Dominica.

Robert (Bob) Broughton came to the University of Canterbury in November 1967 (by ship) from the University College of North Wales (Bangor), having been appointed as the ninth member of staff of this Department. There were still seven vacancies when he arrived so he was immediately put to work on five full courses at 1st, 2nd, 3rd and honours level. This was like being thrown in the deep end for a 24 year old straight from university. As a computational mathematician with a background in Algol on an Elliot 803 computer, he took on the role of IT co-ordinator and systems analyst, and, eventually, IT Manager. Bob has thoroughly enjoyed the many challenges involved in establishing, with limited funds, the Department IT system with his fellow IT fanatics and a great technical staff. He recalls the changes from punched paper tape and cards, serial terminals, hand-cranked calculators through solid state electronic calculators to HP scientific and then programmable calculators, a series of UNIX machines, and being presented with a roll of Ethernet cable to wire up the old building (including crawling round the under-floor space).

Bob recalls the enduring friendships he made through teaching Engineering Mathematics. In those days Dr Mary Harding ruled and was much beloved by the Engineering students. Bob taught accountants (in suits) in the evenings in the old room D on the town site (now the air space in the Court Theatre). He also recalls four 8am lectures a week with a computer science and a numerical course. Despite the workload, he found the Department to be a great place to work in and, as more staff arrived, it became a wonderfully collegiate environment.

In 1973 Bob went on leave to Essex University where he completed a second Masters degree, with Professor Charles Broyden, a world leader in numerical linear algebra. On his return to Canterbury, he introduced modern applied linear algebra courses to this Department. He notes that in many instances he worked up numerical course notes, often from journal articles, to be subsequently pleased when the numerical gurus produced textbooks mirroring his efforts.

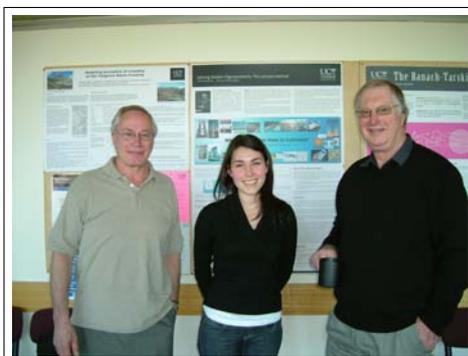
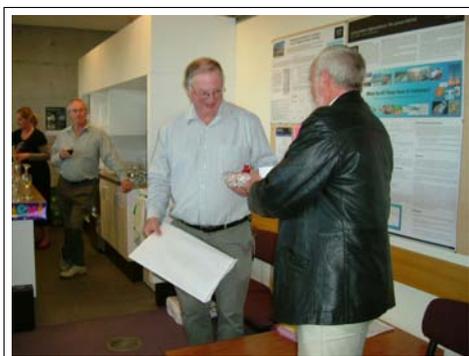
Bob has had a long connection with mathematical education and served on the former National Curriculum Steering Committee for many years, being heavily involved in syllabus construction for the Mathematics Bursary courses. He co-authored textbooks and was an examiner for Bursary Applied Mathematics and Chief Examiner for the NZEST Scholarship Mathematics with Statistics paper for 5 years. He also introduced the innovative Keller Plan teaching programmes in his courses and recalls the exceptional student response.

In 1982, as a result of attending an international workshop on numerical mathematics in Toronto, Bob brought MATLAB to New Zealand and instituted a teaching programme using MATLAB here at Canterbury.

In addition to his teaching duties, Bob has been our Library Liaison Officer for the past 30 odd years and takes considerable satisfaction at the current state of the Mathematics and Statistics collection. As Chair of the Facilities Committee, Bob has been heavily involved in the administration of this building, including the planning and monitoring of the Erskine building project itself. He has also been secretary of the staff club. On the sporting side, he has had many years of involvement with soccer, as a player, coach and administrator, and is still actively involved in social tennis.

Memorable characters during Bob's time with the Department range from the larger-than-life HoD Professor Gordon Petersen to Hubert, the equally large cat who lived in the old Maths Building alongside an English sheepdog and sundry rats, courtesy of the neighbouring Psychology Department! He remembers a very social department with regular tennis sessions, office cricket, interdepartmental cricket and bridge contests, and on a more cultured note, morning and afternoon tea breaks in the old common room with such doyens of the NZ art world as Bill Sutton, Doris Lusk, Don Peebles and Tom Taylor. On a sadder note Bob recalls the pain felt with the tragic losses of colleagues who passed well before their time - Peter Bryant, Brent Wilson and Derrick Breach.

Bob feels the years have flown by and suddenly it is time to retire. He bows out in the knowledge that the Department is in good hands with the enthusiasm and abilities of the new generation of staff. Despite his official retirement, Bob is not lost to us yet. He remains as an Adjunct Senior Fellow and will continue with teaching and administrative commitments for the rest of this year in a temporary capacity.



(Left Image) Bob receiving his retirement present from former HoD David Wall. (Right Image) Ian Coope (left) and Bob (right) with their PhD student Rachael Tappenden (middle).



(Left Image) Bob and his son Roland in Hong Kong. (Right Image) Bob with Professor San Shing Choi at Nan Yang University in Singapore.