

establishment of the Agricultural Chemistry Laboratory at Ruakura on the outskirts of Hamilton, and culminates in Shorland's decision not to transfer to the newly established facility. Of that point in Shorland's career, Cameron writes, "What to do next? Shorland was at a point of despair! He went to see Dr Ernest Marsden, Secretary of the DSIR, and asked what he should do – meaning what could Marsden do?" (p. 83). In fact, Marsden was already well informed of Shorland's work and responded by telling him to "go home and write out a proposal for establishing a Fats Research Unit, and to give it to him next morning" (p. 84).

And so, the Fats Research Laboratory, with Shorland as its head, came to be established in old houses in Wellington's Sydney Street West. The Laboratory was ultimately incorporated into DSIR's Food Chemistry Division (p. 94),⁶ and was one of the last of a succession of government laboratories that occupied the initially impressive brick Dominion Laboratory building.⁷ These years were highly productive for Shorland in terms of his research (Fig. 2), with a trend towards an increasing interest in the nutritional value of fats, a matter which was to occupy more of his thinking in retirement (Fig. 4). In addition, he became interested in the prospects of manufacturing food from apparently inedible sources of protein. In the book, this is addressed in a section delightfully entitled 'Socks into spongecakes, feathers into food'.

Shorland was always critical of research which, although undertaken on animals, foresaw nutritional benefits for humans. This resonates with the debate about the health benefits of coconut oil,⁸ for which the testing has largely been done on animals,⁹ which surfaced during the writing of this review.

Required to retire from DSIR at the age of 60 in 1969, Shorland was one of many scientists of his era who were still able to remain intellectually active by involvement with other organisations. For Shorland this included a review on coronary heart disease for the Royal Society of New Zealand (Chapter 14), an honorary research fellowship in biochemistry at Victoria University of Wellington (Chapter 15) and an enhancement of his earlier involvement in science associations, including the New Zealand Association of Scientists (the publishers of the biography) and the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry (chapter 16). Shorland's increasing preoccupation with nutrition and health is marked by his involvement with organisations such as the New Zealand Nutrition Society and the Wellington Medical Foundation; indeed his very last paper is simply entitled 'Food for New Zealanders'.¹⁰ This period of his life also marks an excursion into somewhat eccentric self-sufficiency (pp. 150-152), Cameron's telling of which introduces a note of humour.

The last section of Chapter 17 – entitled 'Brian's last days' – is a personal reminiscence from his biographer, Joan Cameron. Here she recalls how the biography was commissioned: when she offered to write it, he pushed a pile of papers towards her, "saying dismissively 'Well, get on with it then'". She recalls the details of Brian's and her attendance at what was to be his final meeting as a mem-

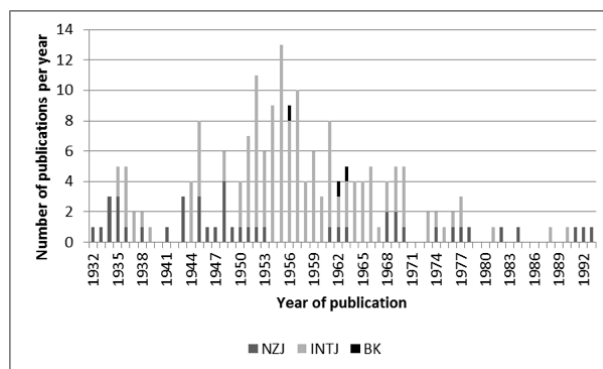


Fig. 2. Research productivity of Brian Shorland, 1932-1993, compiled from the biography's appendix (NZJ, Article published in a New Zealand journal; INTJ, Article published in an international journal; BK, Book.)



Fig. 3. The Karitane Products Factory in Melrose, Wellington, where during her employment as a laboratory assistant, Shorland's biographer probably first encountered Brian Shorland. The building, designed by prominent Wellington architect William Gray Young, is near the Karitane Hospital and Sir Truby King's residence. It has a category 1 rating on the NZ Heritage List and is currently used as residential accommodation. [Photo: <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/ChaStra-fig-ChaStra230a.html>]. For modern views of the building and its environs, see: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/4431>.

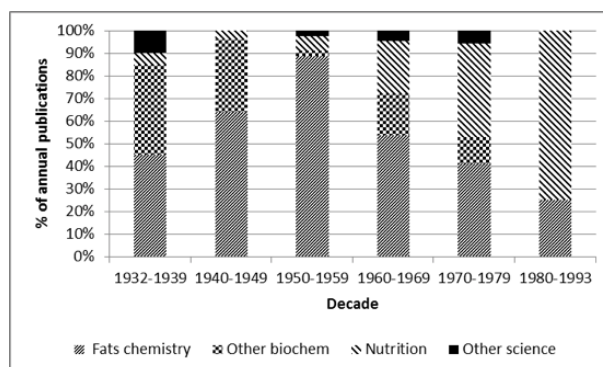


Fig. 4. Changing emphasis on research through Brian Shorland's career, compiled from the biography's appendix.

ber of the board of the Wellington Medical Foundation. Cameron must surely have been touched by the knowledge that her conversation with him during the evening two days later, in which he told her, 'You have put me in a far wider context than I had ever dreamed of. I think you're marvellous', was probably his last (p. 157).

While the end of Chapter 17 would have been a fitting point at which to close the book, Cameron (or perhaps her editors) chose to include as the book's final chapter biographies of twelve people who are purported to have influenced Shorland's scientific career. In fact, the most influential of these people are already mentioned in earlier chapters at the appropriate stages of Shorland's career, and so these biographies – if needed at all – might have been better as an appendix. Deletion of these pages might have made for a rather less cramped layout for the text, and perhaps the inclusion of additional photographs – all for the same cost of publication.

Nevertheless, the editors have produced from Cameron's work an interesting book about a twentieth century New Zealand scientist whose life and times deserve to be better known.

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