

SRF

Society for Reproduction and Fertility

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Newsletter No. 182

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From the General Secretary

Dear Member

Firstly, please accept my apologies for the delay in sending this newsletter. As you will by now be aware, the Council of Management of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility has continued its review the Society's business activities in an attempt to continue to provide you, the members, with a vibrant environment in which to discuss your scientific achievements. We have resolved to change the way in which the Society's business is managed in an attempt to reduce our outgoings, and hope to be able to invest more in membership activities in the future. More details about this are available elsewhere in this newsletter. I would personally like to add my thanks to Dave Cole and Jenny Levitt at Granta IS and Christine Clarke, Chris Doberska and the staff at 22 Newmarket Road for all their years of dedicated service to the Society, and wish them all the very best for the future.

I hope that those of you who attended the Summer conference in Aberdeen this July will agree with me that it was a roaring success. The weather was fantastic, the science highly stimulating and the social programme exhausting! Thanks go to Paul Fowler and the members of the Local Organising Committee, Tony Michael and the BAS and BFS programme chairs, and all those who worked so hard behind the scenes (and in front of them) to achieve such a great conference.

Finally, this newsletter contains details of all the exciting developments happening within the SRF. We hope that you find this informative and would love to receive feedback as to how you would like to see the Society develop in the future.

*Amanda Pickard
Institute of Zoology
Zoological Society of London
Regent's Park
London NW1 4RY, UK*

From the Chairman

The past two years have been momentous for SRF. Firstly, there was the amalgamation of SSF with JRF Ltd. Now we are preparing for the imminent closure of 22 Newmarket Road and to move the publication of *Reproduction* to Bioscientifica, the publishing arm of the Society for Endocrinology in Bristol. Furthermore, the membership office will be transferred to Procon in Harrogate, and a revamped website is soon to be launched. Council made all of these decisions purely on financial grounds. The staff at 22 Newmarket Road continue to provide excellent support. However, SRF inherited a large overdraft that was increasing year by year, and abolished our ability to inject much needed money into activities that would support you the members.

As I wrote in my Annual Report presented to the AGM in Aberdeen this summer, Council have a number of exciting initiatives to move SRF forward, but almost all of these could not be contemplated in the then current financial situation. With the rationalisation of the infrastructure of SRF we can now look forward to regaining the financial ability to undertake these initiatives. We look forward to the future with optimism and hope that you as members will soon see the benefits of the difficult changes that we have made. I have redrafted the aims of SRF, which includes some new initiatives, and after modification of these in the light of suggestions at the AGM, these are now attached for your perusal. We are always eager to hear from you all as to any proposals for the future of SRF.

Our journal, *Reproduction*, has moved a long way forward in a short time, due particularly to the hard work of Bob Webb as Editor in Chief, the Editorial boards and the production staff at 22 Newmarket Road. Thank you all, particularly Bob. John Carroll as the new Editor will steer the journal through the next few years. The introduction of *Highwire* will take *Reproduction* into the electronic publication era, and is only one of many initiatives that will move *Reproduction* even further along the road to becoming the top journal in our class.

I thank all members of Council for their continued efforts and you as members for continuing to support SRF. Finally I want to reiterate what we as Council have said throughout these last two years of trial and tribulation, that the staff at 22 Newmarket Road have always been excellent, and we wish them well in the future. Dave Cole and Jenny Levitt at Granta I.S. have for many years been the first point of contact for members with the Society. We also appreciate their efforts on our behalf, and hope that the future brings them good fortune. We are sorry that hard decisions had to be made, but we made these solely with the future of SRF in mind, and for no other purpose. The future for SRF is now bright, and we can look forward with confidence.

Alan McNeilly

Aims of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility 2003

1. To support research and teaching in all aspects of reproductive biology.
2. Meetings: One substantial meeting per year. At present these will be a joint meeting in the UK with BFS, BAS every two years and in alternate years a joint meeting with our European partners from the Belgian, Dutch, French, German and Italian Societies.
3. Workshops: Sponsorship of workshops to discuss specific topics in detail.
4. Travel grants: To assist members to attend SRF meetings, and other meetings as appropriate.
5. Summer studentships: to provide funds for undergraduate students to undertake a research project in reproductive biology.
6. Postdoctoral fellowships: To reintroduce these as soon as financially viable.
7. Travelling scientists: To provide funds for the travel and living expenses for a senior research scientist to give a series of lectures at different venues throughout the UK, and potentially expanding into Europe.
8. Website: To provide members with an interactive website with links to disseminate information and discussions on topics of general and specific interest to members.
9. Assess and initiate as appropriate any viable new initiatives that arise which will benefit the membership.
10. To produce a monthly journal, or journals publishing top quality papers in reproductive biology.
11. To publish proceedings of meetings or symposia as supplements.

Committee News

Education and Development Committee

The main focus of the Education committee over the last 12 months has been the re-design of the Society website. As part of a co-ordinated move to provide a more integrated service for SRF members in terms of the Society Secretariat, meetings and publishing activities, Procon Conferences of Harrogate were asked to oversee the design and hosting of a revised Website that would provide a more interactive source of information and contact with the Society. Key features of the new website include:

- Direct access to new Secretariat at Procon.
- A secure password protected members area that will include a searchable (name, affiliation, interests) database.
- The ability to fully update your own details (not on line for security reasons).
- Electronic versions and streamlined procedures for membership application and renewal.
- Electronic versions and streamlined procedures for travel grant and summer studentship applications.
- The Society Newsletter and news section.
- Full details forthcoming meetings and workshops.
- Electronic abstract submission.
- Up-to-date database of job vacancies.
- Links to other societies.
- Links to Reproduction.

The new website is scheduled to replace the existing site toward the end of September 2003. The Society would like to take this opportunity to thank Leigh Silvester for his outstanding contribution in establishing the original site and maintaining it over a number of years. Despite the best efforts of Amanda Pickard, myself and the members of the Education and Development Committee, it is probable that once the site is subjected to daily use by the membership, problems and bugs will become apparent. I would therefore ask for your help over this initial period in letting us know (through Procon) of any problems you have so we can iron out the bugs quickly. Further, if you have any suggestions for improvements or additions to the site, please let us know.

Bruce Campbell (Education and Development Committee Chairman)

Meetings Committee

With a lot of effort from all members of the Meetings Committee, and strong support from SRF Council, the last year has seen major changes to the way future SRF Conferences are to be organised. The recommendations endorsed by SRF Council were detailed in the February newsletter, and I am glad to say that while not welcomed universally by the membership, there does appear to be widespread support for most of the changes that were agreed. All members seem to accept that steps need to be taken urgently to slow the decline in the numbers of abstracts submitted to SRF conferences; a trend mirrored in declining delegate numbers.

The tremendous attendance and the high quality of the science at Fertility 2003 served as proof (if any were needed) that joint conferences can attract viable numbers of delegates and high quality speakers. We realise that in participating in joint conferences, it would be easy for SRF to lose its identity. Rest assured that I am mindful of this potential pitfall, and that am working hard with the Programme Secretaries of the sister societies to ensure that this is never more than a theoretical problem. I certainly think that the identity of SRF was very much in evidence in Aberdeen!

I should like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Paul Fowler and colleagues on the Fertility 2003 LOC, support staff at Procon, and Dave & Jenny at the SRF Membership Office for all their hard work in making this latest conference in the series of Joint UK meetings so successful, both scientifically and socially. Particular thanks are reserved for Victoria Withy at Bioscientifica who did such an excellent job in her capacity as professional conference organiser.

Regrettably, due to pressures of time, it has not been possible to organise the 2004 annual conference as a full-blooded joint meeting with sister societies from across Europe. However, this will still be a "Joint European Conference in Reproduction and Fertility" in which members of VFS, DGRM, SFEF and ESDAR, as well as SRF, will participate. Procon Conferences Ltd have been appointed to assist in running this conference, so registration and abstract submissions will all occur on-line exactly as for Fertility 2003.

For a number of reasons (mainly financial), next year will see the Amoroso, Hammond and Parkes lectures replaced by a single "SRF Distinguished Scientist Lecture", and the Walpole Lecture re-branded as the "SRF New Investigator Lecture". By 2005 (which will be our next joint meeting with the BAS and BFS), we hope to introduce exchange lectures with SSR for our respective best New Investigators. While changes always bring inevitable uncertainty, I am sure that the changes recommended by the Meetings Committee and endorsed by Council will go some way to stabilising support for conferences in which SRF is partner. While it is hard to envisage SRF Annual Conferences being viable as stand-alone conferences in the foreseeable future, the Meetings Committee will keep this under review. If the level of support by SRF members were to increase substantially, we have not ruled out a return to a more traditional format for SRF Conferences. In the interim, SRF will continue to support smaller meetings and workshops (such as next year's European Testis Workshop) which we hope will appeal to SRF members.

I close this report by thanking members of the Meetings Committee for their dedication and support, particularly in such difficult times, and SRF Council for acting on the recommendations arising from that Committee.

Tony Michael (SRF Programme Secretary and Meetings Committee Chairman)

Publications Committee

The role of the publication committee is to ensure *Reproduction* is the journal of choice for scientists publishing papers in the field of reproductive biology. Whether we like it or not the current league table mentality pervading science means that this translates into ensuring that *Reproduction* has the highest impact factor in the field. The challenge for the Committee is to determine how this can be done. Obviously the publication of top quality reviews is an excellent strategy, borne out by the table topping impact factor of *Reviews in Reproduction*. Ultimately though, success will be realised when *Reproduction* is publishing the best scientific papers in highly active areas of research.

Reproductive biology is currently an exciting and topical field of research. In order to capitalise on this *Reproduction* aims to attract more papers focussed on understanding mechanisms of reproduction at a cellular and molecular level. We are in the process of increasing our editorial board to reflect this rapidly growing area. Developments in more applied areas of research such as cloning, stem cell biology and assisted reproductive technologies are also being encouraged. At the same time as attracting papers from these areas we will maintain our high reputation for publishing the best research on systems based reproductive physiology and reproductive endocrinology.

As from September 1st, Bioscientifica will begin to take responsibility for the publication of *Reproduction* and by January 2004 the full responsibility of producing *Reproduction*, from receipt of the manuscripts through to printing and distribution, will be the sole responsibility of Bioscientifica. These negotiations have been very time consuming and we are grateful to John Carroll for his significant effort in this business. This change, made for financial reasons alone, does mean unfortunately that Chris Doberska and her team at 22 Newmarket Road have become redundant. The Publication Committee wish to acknowledge the magnificent job that Chris and her team have done to produce *Reproduction*. It is a journal of outstanding quality, both in content and presentation, and SRF is indebted to Chris and her colleagues for their roles in its production. We wish Chris, Craig, Rachel, Sue, Beth, Annette, Christine and Lynda good fortune for their respective futures.

Major changes are also afoot with the electronic version of the journal. As of January 2004 the electronic version of *Reproduction* will be published by HighWire. This is the industry gold standard used by the majority of the main independent journals. Our commitment to going down this route is the realisation that visits to the library are becoming non-existent (sadly) and as such, a state of the art electronic format is an absolute necessity for the future success of the journal.

For the last five years Bob Webb has been the Editor in

Chief of first *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility*, and then following its successful merger with *Reviews of Reproduction*, *Reproduction*. Bob has been an outstanding Editor in Chief and we are grateful for the superb job he has done. John Carroll will be succeeding Bob as the new Editor in Chief. Fortunately for the Publication Committee and the new Editor in Chief, Bob has agreed to continue being a member of the Committee for one more year to facilitate continuity during the next months of the changeover. It is both the outgoing and incoming Editors in Chief's and the Publications Committee's resolve that *Reproduction* continues to maintain its high quality content and presentation.

As stated above, *Reproduction* is a journal of international standing and all involved in its production are aiming for its standing to continue to improve. In order for this to be possible we would encourage all members of SRF to consider *Reproduction* as their first choice when contemplating publication of their research. The average time for submission to publication is now less than 6 months with most first decisions on a submitted manuscript made in less than 7 weeks. Details on how to submit a manuscript can be found at <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/journal/>.

John Carroll (Editor-in-Chief elect, and outgoing Publications Committee Chair) and Jo Murray (Publications Committee Chair)

UK Life Sciences Committee and Institute of Biology

At the beginning of 2003 I described briefly the activities of SRF involved in both lobbying and informing government and its agencies. In that Newsletter I stated our intention that within the next few months information of these activities, as well as details of up-coming issues and requests for your input, would be available at our website and that details would be provided with the next Newsletter. All the changes that have occurred over the last 6 months, as described in this Newsletter, has resulted in a delay in preparing the website. It should, however, be in operation by the time the next Newsletter is sent.

In 2001 a survey, conducted by the Institute of Biology of its Affiliated Societies (of which SRF is one), identified the top priorities for Britain's Science Policy as being: the state and status of the UK research community; researchers' career structure and remuneration; the post-genome challenge; public understanding of science; science underpinning sustainability; and education. These priorities were presented in a document entitled "Science Policy Priorities 2001" and the document distributed widely amongst members of Parliament. Over the last few years all these major priorities have been discussed in Parliament and it is thought that this document has been influential in either initiating and/or informing these discussions. The Institute of Biology is asking its Affiliated Societies for assistance in identifying what should be Britain's Science Policy Priorities in 2004/5. Have the old priorities been addressed to our satisfaction and/or are there new areas of concern? If you have any comments and/or suggestions I would be grateful to receive them.

Joanne Murray, SRF's representative on the UKLSC ASG and the IoB's Biomedical Sciences and Agricultural Sciences Committees. jmurray@sghms.ac.uk

Society Honours - Call for Nominations

We are delighted to announce that the first **SRF Distinguished Scientist Lecturer** will be **Professor Ken McNatty** who will deliver his lecture to close next year's SRF Annual Conference in Ghent, Belgium on Wednesday April 7 2004.

Nominations are now invited for the following Society Honours/Awards

- Marshall Medal 2004
- Marshall Medal 2005
- SRF Distinguished Scientist 2005

Nomination for both the Marshall Medal and for the SRF Distinguished Scientist should each take the form of a letter of commendation accompanied by an abridged CV for the candidate detailing:

- the area of expertise of the nominee
- major contributions of the nominee to the field of reproductive biology
- details of any professional honours already bestowed on the nominee
- an outline of the publication record of the nominee (total number of papers, indicating year of first publication)

Although nominations can be made by any individual member of the Society (irrespective of non-statutory/statutory status), the letter of commendation should list other members of the Society prepared to formally endorse the nomination.

For reference, previous recipients of the Marshall Medal are listed on the Society's website, following the link from "Honours". The SRF Distinguished Scientist Lecture supersedes the Amoroso, Hammond and Parkes lectures. Hence, individuals wishing to nominate a candidate for the SRF Distinguished Scientist 2005 might like to consult the lists of previous Amoroso, Hammond and Parkes Lecturers,

available again via the "Honours" link on the Society's website.

In the first instance, nominations for the above awards should be submitted to the SRF Programme Secretary at the following address:

Tony Michael

Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

University College London (RF Campus)

Rowland Hill Street

London NW3 2PF

The deadline for receipt of nominations is the same as the abstract deadline for the 2004 annual conference: **MONDAY DECEMBER 1 2003**. All nominations will be considered by the SRF Meetings Committee on the morning of Monday January 5 2004, before being passed to SRF Council with recommendations from the Meetings Committee.

Members News

Members may be sad to learn of the deaths of two long standing SRF members. Dr G. Keith Benson, OBE, died on 23rd December 2002 and Dr Alfred T. Cowie passed away on 2nd July 2003. Both conducted research on the mammary gland prior to their retirement from research. The Society would like to extend its condolences to both their families.

Future Meetings of the Society

SRF Annual Conference 2004/Joint European Conference in Reproduction & Fertility (*organised in conjunction with VFS, DGRM, SFEF and ESDAR*)

Venue: Ghent University, Belgium

Dates: Monday April 5 to Wednesday April 7 2004 inclusive (Opening reception on Sunday April 4 2004)

Abstract deadline: Monday December 1 2003

Website: <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/events/>

Chair of LOC: Prof Ann Van Soom (Ghent University)

Conference Secretariat: Procon Conferences Ltd

srfsecretariat@procon-conferences.co.uk
+44 (0)1423 564488

Symposium 1: *Recent Advances in the Biology of Assisted Reproduction*

- Intrauterine insemination - Steven Verberckmoes (Ghent, Belgium)
- In vitro follicle maturation in humans and domestic livestock - Helen Picton (Leeds, UK)
- Derivation of oocytes from embryonic stem cells - Hans Scholer (Pennsylvania, USA)
- Embryo-pathogen interactions - Ann Van Soom (Ghent, Belgium)
- Embryonic genome analysis - Heiner Neimann (Neustadt, Germany)

Symposium 2: *Emerging Concepts in Reproductive Endocrinology*

- Endocrine basis of cystic ovarian diseases - David H Abbott (Wisconsin, USA)
- Glucocorticoid metabolism and reproduction - Tony Michael (London, UK)
- Peptide hormone receptor mutations: from cellular signalling to clinical consequences - To be confirmed

SRF Distinguished Scientist Lecturer 2004 - Ken P McNatty (Upper Hutt, NZ)

Plus... SRF New Investigator Lecture 2004, SRF Student Prize Session and SRF Marshall Medal 2004 (to be awarded at Conference Dinner)

SRF Annual Conference 2005/Fertility 2005 (*organised as a Joint Meeting of UK Fertility Societies in conjunction with the BAS and BFS*)

All details to be announced in or shortly after February 2004.

We would be very pleased to receive suggestions for symposia topics and potential speakers for future conferences. If you would like to propose a subject to be covered in 2005 or beyond, please send details to the Programme Secretary, Tony Michael.

Non-SRF Conferences

For the foreseeable future, the newsletter will not carry details of non-SRF conferences. Instead, details of all other conferences of potential interest to SRF members will be available on the new SRF website via the "Events" link. This list of conferences provides key details with direct links to the relevant conference websites and/or the relevant conference organiser.

(Please let us know how you find this alternative way of advertising future conferences and whether you would prefer to see full listings reinstated in the SRF newsletter).

Parkes Foundation Small Grants Fund 2004

The Parkes Foundation Small Grants Fund helps to promote research into the biosocial sciences. Priority is given to the support of fieldwork that involves the integrated study of biological and social features of human populations. Relevant disciplines are anthropology, demography and population studies, ecology and environmental studies, nutrition and population genetics.

Grants are directed particularly towards helping graduate research students meet their fieldwork costs, but others may apply. Undergraduate projects, however, are not supported. Grants are small, usually not exceeding £600.

The form on which applications must be submitted can be obtained from the Executive Secretary by post or email; instructions will be sent with the form.

The closing date for applications is 31st December 2003; applications will be considered by the Trustees, and awards will be made early in 2004.

The Executive Secretary,
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