

Newsletter No: 188 January 2006



Society for Reproduction and Fertility

SRF Business Office, Procon Conferences Ltd., Tattersall House, East Parade, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 5LT, UK.

Tel: +44 (0)1423 564488 Fax: +44 (0)1423 701433

E-mail: SRFSecretariat@procon-conferences.co.uk

SRF Chairman's Thoughts

The New Year is upon us so it is time to review the activities of the SRF over the last few months. Since our AGM in Warwick in April 2005 a number of SRF members have been elected to join Council. A list of Council members is detailed in this newsletter. Members of Council have a varied scientific background which reflects the broad spectrum of research interests of the Society and which also supports the interests of the younger members of the Society. We have taken on board many of the comments and suggestions raised at the AGM and now have European representation on Council. John Parrington has agreed to take on the role of SRF General Secretary from Lisa Thurston who has been acting in this role following the completion of Amanda Pickard's term of office on Council. Many thanks to both Lisa and Amanda for their hard work on behalf of the Society.

The hand over of secretarial responsibilities from Lisa to John has unfortunately delayed the preparation and distribution of this newsletter, which normally accompanies the circulation of SRF membership renewal forms, and we apologise for this delay. As you will see from the reports in this newsletter Council has been working hard to support the membership of SRF in a number of ways. A snap shot of some of these are provided here. The good news is that SRF membership fees and *Reproduction* journal prices for members have remained frozen for 2006 as part of our drive to support existing members and to recruit new members.

The New Year will herald the introduction of a new grant scheme to encourage student and postdoctoral members of the Society not only to attend the SRF conference on an annual basis but also to present their work. This agenda has proved feasible following a financial review of our accounts and investments conducted by Martin Luck and the Finance Committee. The details of who is eligible for

these grants and how to apply are available on the website.

Henry Jabbour and his team on the Meetings Committee have put together a varied scientific programme for the next SRF annual meeting to be held in Leeds in July 2006. The programme should appeal to all members with lectures from international speakers as well as leading scientists from the UK. Following the success of the post grad-doc quiz at last year's meeting, Bob Robinson plans to test members knowledge of science and trivia at a post grad-docs quiz night following the Welcome Reception. For the first time our annual conference will be held back-to-back with the National Ovarian Workshop to provide added value for money for delegates and to promote attendance at both meetings.

Following Fertility 2005 two major considerations for the SRF conference in 2006 has been cost of registration and the number of delegates attending the meeting. The annual conference for the SRF is only sustainable if SRF members attend on a regular basis. So I would encourage you to come to Leeds in 2006; to register early to take advantage of early bird reduced registration fees; to submit abstracts and engage in the scientific discussions; and for those who are eligible, to use the new SRF grant scheme to underwrite the cost of attending. SRF abstracts books will be circulated to all who attend the meeting, but in addition abstracts will also be accessible to all members via the SRF website.

Continuing with the theme of our conferences, work is already underway to plan the next joint UK Fertility Societies meeting, which will be held in York in 2007. An exciting recent development has seen SRF involved in discussions with our sister societies in the USA (SSR) and Australia (ARB) with a view to contributing to a joint world conference on reproductive biology to be held in Hawaii in 2008.

Finally, I would like to encourage all members of the Society to contribute articles and ideas to John Parrington for publication in our next newsletter. As you will see from the article provided by John Clark in this newsletter, the Society has a colourful history, which we hope will translate into a vibrant future.

I will look forward to seeing you in Leeds in July 2006.

Helen Picton, December 2005

Members of SRF Council

Chair:	Helen Picton
Treasurer and Company Secretary:	Martin Luck
General Secretary:	John Parrington
Programme Secretary:	Henry Jabbour
Editor in Chief:	John Carroll

Committee

Chairs:

Finance:	Martin Luck
Meetings:	Henry Jabbour
Education & Development:	John Parrington

Ordinary members:	Richard Anderson Joanne Murray Keith Jones Paul Fowler Colin Duncan Franchesca Houghton Eduardo Roldan
--------------------------	--

Post-grad/doc Rep:	Bob Robinson
---------------------------	--------------

From the Treasurer

One of the Society's main sources of income is its investments. During the Summer, the Finance Committee undertook a review of our investment strategy, to ensure that best use is being made of the Society's assets. We consulted a number of investment houses and looked at the best approach to dealing with capital and income.

The outcome was that we will be retaining our current investment managers (Credit Suisse) but slightly altering the instructions by which they work. The result of this will be that we maximise the income which the Society receives. This will enable us to promote the Society's work and help it to grow and develop.

The first tangible effect is the increased support we are able to offer to postgrads and postdocs attending the conference in 2006. I hope you have seen details of this scheme and that you and members of your research group will be able to benefit from it. Council's aim is to increase conference attendance and Society membership, so

we feel this is a worthwhile investment in the Society's future.

Income from investments will also be used to support developments in the production of our journal, *Reproduction*. The adoption of new technologies, including those for efficient handling of submissions, and dealing with moves towards wider distribution, requires financial support especially when new systems are being put in place. Support in these areas will complement the efforts of the Editorial Board to increasing the journal's stature and reputation.

The Society is in a relatively strong financial position when compared with many smaller scientific societies. This reflects the generosity and far-sightedness of its founders as well as the good management of previous Treasurers and Councils. In reviewing investments, we recognised the need to protect this legacy whilst encouraging the Society to grow. We also recognised the general ethical responsibilities carried by a charitable and scientific organisation such as ours. The Finance Committee hopes that members will notice some valuable changes but also feel that the Society's future is well secured.

Martin Luck, December 2005

General Secretary

As explained by the Chairman, this newsletter comes after a substantial delay due to changing personnel. However, in future I will be aiming to produce a newsletter every quarter. A major factor in such a plan is the input I receive from members of the Society in terms of news and reports. Please keep such items coming – your input is vital and much appreciated. I'd also like to thank my predecessors Lisa Thurston and Amanda Pickard who have provided such a good base from which to begin. I look forward to working with you all!

John Parrington, January 2006

Travel Grants and Vacation Scholarships

All non-statutory members of the Society are eligible to apply for travel grants to attend conferences organised by the SRF or other bodies. For further information including an online application form, please visit the website (<http://srf-reproduction.org>) or contact the SRF Business Office.

Last year travel grants were awarded to Dr Nazir Ahmad, Dr Nicola Bourne, Mr James Bowe, Professor William Breed, Dr Evonne Chin, Mr Inchul Choi, Miss Joanne Coleman, Dr Remi Dumollard, Dr Aisha El-Bareg, Dr Alison Forhead, Dr Ali Fouladi-Nashta, Dr Janet Frayne, Dr Antonio Gonzalez-Bulnes, Dr Guillaume Halet, Miss Janet Holt, Miss Rebecca Hudson Davies, Mr Richard Kelly, Dr Tasawar Khan, Mr Justin Luther, Ms Lacey Lutz, Mr Walid Maalouf, Dr Suzanne Madgwick, Ms

Rosemary Manser, Miss Kerry Miller, Dr Kevin O'Byrne, Dr Mick Rae, Dr Arif Siddiqui, Dr Alexander Sirotkin, Dr Edita Sostaric, Miss Abby Taylor, Dr Rachel Webb, Dr Katie Woad.

The Society also sponsors Vacation Scholarships which help to fund promising undergraduate students who wish to carry out research projects in their Easter or summer holidays. If you have a project, or know of a suitable student, please visit the website for further information about how to apply.

Last year vacation scholarships were awarded to Vasileios Floros, Victoria Sharp, Sahuquillo Silvia, Ashley Thomson and Jose Angel Rici Falco.

From the Programme Secretary

Our next SRF conference will be held at The University of Leeds and is organised in conjunction with the National Ovarian Workshop (NOW). NOW will run on July 3rd with the SRF conference commencing with our Welcome Reception in the evening of July 3rd and continuing over the following two days.

The scientific programme of the SRF conference will comprise two symposia entitled "Endocrinology of Reproduction" and "Hormones of Reproduction". The talks within these symposia will be delivered by excellent speakers invited from within UK, Europe, USA and Israel; the topics should appeal to a large section of our SRF membership. Hopefully, you will all have seen the advertisement to the 2006 conference either on our website or in the renewal of registration package which was mailed to you in November. The conference will also include the Distinguished Scientist Lecture entitled "Oestrogen Action in the Ovary" which will be delivered by Professor Jock Findlay from Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, Australia. The Marshall medal will also be presented at the conference (see item below).

The post-grad/doc quiz will be hosted again next year (Monday evening after the Welcome Reception) and both junior and senior members of our society are invited and encouraged to attend. This is a great opportunity for our young members (especially those attending from far afield) to meet and mix with our more senior scientists. Similar to last year, the winner of the quiz will receive a free subscription to *Reproduction*.

This year, Council has decided to enhance the society's support of its junior members. All conference delegates who are registered for a postgraduate degree (including PhD, MSc or MD) and all conference delegates who are postdoctoral researchers of less than 5 year standing and who are presenting data (first author on an abstract) will be able to claim up to £300 towards the cost of attending the conference in Leeds provided they are

non-statutory members of our society at the time of the conference.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is March 1, 2006. Abstract and registration to the conference can be done online via our Society's website: www.srf-reproduction.org. The abstracts will be published in our abstract book, which will be distributed to conference delegates in Leeds. Copies of the abstracts will also be available online via our website.

I look forward to receiving your abstracts and to welcoming you all to what promises to be an excellent scientific gathering in Leeds 2006.

Henry N Jabbour, December 2005

Marshall Medal

The 2006 recipient of the Marshall Medal will be Professor Anthony Flint from The University of Nottingham. Professor Flint will be presented with the Medal at our conference dinner on Tuesday 4th of July hosted at The Refectory of The University of Leeds.

Council is always happy to receive nominations for future Marshall Medallists and for the SRF Distinguished Scientist Award. Each should 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 publications, indicating year of first publication)

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

In the first instance, nominations for the above award should be submitted to the SRF programme Secretary via the Business Office. Please send any nominations you may have for our 2007 conference by March 1, 2006.

Membership Renewal

The Society's membership year runs from the 1st December until 30th November. Unfortunately, members who join the Society part way through a year will be served with a renewal notice before they have received 12 months member's benefits.

However, in the interests of keeping administration costs to a minimum it is not possible to allow members to renew on the anniversary of their application being approved.

In order to allow members the opportunity to renew, the Members Only area of the website will remain accessible using your existing password until the end of February 2006, when new passwords will be issued to those who have returned their renewal forms. If you have any difficulty in renewing your membership, or would like new copies of the renewal form to be issued, please contact the Business Office.

Postgraduate / Postdoc Corner

Calling all postgraduate students and post-docs! Would you like an excellent opportunity to become part of a new and exciting scientific and social programme? An extra bonus is that SRF is offering £300 towards conference costs to all conference delegates who are registered for a postgraduate degree and post-docs (less than 6 years standing) who are presenting data (for further information see article in this newsletter).

Further to last year's phenomenal success of the post-grad/doc's quiz, this event will be repeated at SRF 2006. This will take place on the Monday evening after the Welcome Reception (details to follow).

Following on from last year's Council baby photo competition further secrets of the Council will be revealed. To keep you all guessing details will be announced at the quiz. The main objective of this fun event is to allow post-grad/docs to mingle with other SRF members from different institutions. We feel that it is important that everyone gets the opportunity to see the Council members in a new light. As it is not an experience to be missed!!! *The No-Namers* won the last quiz, however it is a must that their reign must come to an end and a new team crowned champions!

At SRF 2006, your new post-grad/doc representative will be elected. In our opinion, this is a fun and challenging role. It is also an integral part of the society. The newly elected post-grad/doc rep will hold office for 2 years and sit on the Meetings committee (which is quite an experience!!).

Finally if you have any competition ideas, issues which you feel need raising or general queries about the Society, post-grad/doc elections then please contact myself or Suzanne:

Bob Robinson, University of Nottingham (Bob.Robinson@nottingham.ac.uk) or Suzanne Madgwick, University of Newcastle (suzanne.madgwick@ncl.ac.uk)

Bob Robinson, December 2005

Publications

If you have not already done so then now is the time to either renew or take out for the first time your personal subscription to *Reproduction*. On-line access to *Reproduction* is only available through institutional subscriptions so if you do not have on-line access to the latest issues of *Reproduction*, please ask your librarian to subscribe.

The first of our Supplements to be produced and published by Nottingham University Press (NUP) will be released in January 2006. Society for Reproduction and Fertility Supplement 62 is the seventh volume of the "Control of Pig Reproduction" series (more details listed below) and is a product of the 7th International Conference on Pig Reproduction. Cheryl Ashworth and Bob Kraeling, the editors of this Supplement, are to be congratulated on their dedication (which included lots of hard work) to ensuring both a timely and high quality publication. Several more Supplements are now in the pipeline.

Control of Pig Reproduction VII

C.J. Ashworth and R.R. Kraeling (Eds.)
Society for Reproduction and Fertility Supplement 62
2005 Hardback ISBN 0-904761-33-X
£75.00

The 7th International Conference on Pig Reproduction (ICPR) was held on 12-15 June 2005 in Kerkade, The Netherlands. In keeping with the ICPR's tradition of providing a forum for the cross-fertilisation of cutting-edge science and applied research developments in pig reproductive biology, the organising committee once again brought together expert speakers from around the world to share the latest advances and technological breakthroughs.

Consisting of six sessions, the manuscripts of the main scientific programme's 24 invited papers are collected into a single volume - *Control of Pig Reproduction VII*, fully edited by Bob Kraeling and Cheryl Ashworth and published by Nottingham University Press for SRF. Thus the book reviews recent research in the relationship of the brain-pituitary-adipose tissue axis to reproduction; gonadal function; uterine-embryo interactions; nutrition/environmental effects on reproduction; controlled reproduction and the (potential) application of innovative reproductive technologies. This volume will be an invaluable resource for students, teachers, veterinarians, consultants and technologists with an interest in all aspects of pig reproduction.

For more information or to place an order, please contact Nottingham University Press, Tel: +44 115 9831011; Fax: +44 115 9831003; email orders@nupsales.co.uk or visit www.nup.com.

Gems from the Journal

We would like to include a selection of inspirational scientific publications in the SRF newsletter and on the website over the coming years. If any members have suggestions for classic manuscripts that have influenced them during their research careers please write to the SRF General Secretary and we will attempt to include them in the newsletter.

Honorary Members

Would you like to nominate a colleague for the distinction of becoming an Honorary Member of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility? If you consider someone to be worthy of this tribute, please pass their details forward to the General Secretary, giving justification for your nomination and the name of a second, supporting member of the Society. Proposals for Honorary Membership may be put forward by both Statutory and Non-Statutory members of the Society.

National Science Week

Each March sees National Science Week (which runs 10-19 March 2006), a celebration of the role of science in our lives. The BA, which coordinates the week, is looking for ways to raise the profile of science and the role of scientists. National Science Week is an excellent opportunity to raise the profile of reproductive biology and of the SRF. If you are interested in taking part, for instance talking to the media about exciting new developments in your field, please contact the SRF General Secretary, who will pass on your details to the BA.

History of the SRF

The History of Three Scientific Societies: the Society for the Study of Fertility (now the Society for Reproduction and Fertility) (Britain), the Société Française pour L'étude de la Fertilité (France) and the Society for the Study of Reproduction (USA). John Clarke, Department of Zoology, Oxford University, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS

How did the Society for the Study of Fertility arise?

A quintet of people, Margaret Jackson (Obstetrician & Gynaecologist), Clare and Leslie Harvey (Zoologists), Arthur Walton (Agricultural Scientist) and G.I.M. Swyer (Obstetrician), had an informal meeting in Exeter in the summer of 1944, out of which arose the Society for the Study of Fertility. Shortly after this Alan Parkes (Experimental Biologist, trained in Agriculture) joined this small group. Arthur Walton wrote of the meeting "We all had a common interest in problems concerned with

reproductive physiology and the diagnosis, prevention and cure of impaired fertility."

Annual, informal meetings, under the auspices of the Family Planning Association, followed from this. The first was at the Animal Research Station in Cambridge in July 1945. The participants were Margaret Jackson, John Hammond, Clare and Leslie Harvey, Arthur Walton, Alan Parkes and, as the latter wrote, "one or two others".

In 1949, 30 or 40 people attended a similar meeting in Edinburgh. It focused on clinical problems as well as fertility and infertility in domestic animals and at it the *Society for the Study of Fertility* was formally set up. The inaugural conference of the SSF took place in 1950 at the Zoological Society, London. Fifty people participated and Alan Parkes became its first Chairman. By 1997 the Society had grown to about 1288 members of which between one third and a quarter were women (as judged by "given" names in the Society's handbook).

The Creation of a Journal.

In the late 50s Alan Parkes proposed the creation of a quarterly journal dedicated to papers dealing with the study of fertility. He gave four reasons for the establishment of yet another journal: (i) Consolidation of the literature on reproduction; (ii) Increase in the world's population demands that scientific studies of its control needs a single medium for their publication; (iii) Scientific treatment of clinical problems, and research bearing on increased productivity of farm animals, requires a focused outlet; (iv) Investigation of the reproductive biology of species from the wild, giving insight into their ecology and conservation. A new journal would help consolidate study of these related problems.

The *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility (JRF)* was set up in 1959 as the official Journal of the SSF. The aims of the Journal (edited by C.R Austin) were made clear in the first volume (1960): "The Journal of Reproduction and Fertility publishes original papers, abstracts of Proceedings and occasional reviews and bibliographies, dealing with the morphology, physiology, biochemistry and pathology of reproduction in man and other animals, and with the biological, medical and veterinary problems of fertility." Alan Parkes chaired the editorial board of which 6 out of 17 included were medically qualified. Volume 1 comprised a total of 414 pages, with 33 papers and 48 Proceedings from SSF meetings. Contributors were from Britain, USA, Australia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Ireland and Sweden and papers dealt with reproduction at a high level of physiological organisation, for example pre-natal mortality, but extended down to germ cells. Since 1988 Proceedings have been published as an *Abstract Series* of the Journal. The SSF merged with the Journal of Reproduction and Fertility Ltd in 2001, became the *Society for Reproduction and Fertility*, and the journal was called *Reproduction*

Unsurprisingly the analysis of reproductive physiology has been considerably transformed since that first issue. Questions have become more and more precisely formulated with increasingly refined techniques, enabling processes often to be examined at a subcellular level. Problems of early development, involving germ cell and early embryo culture and preservation, were significantly assisted by two serendipitous advances made by Chris Polge, arising from the mislabelling of reagents, and through going to a pub for longer than planned!

The aims of *Reproduction*, as stated in Volume 128 (December 2004) are to publish "... quality (what else?) research and topical reviews on reproductive biology. We publish papers on cellular and molecular mechanisms of reproduction, reproductive physiology and endocrinology and on emerging and applied topics including ART, cloning and embryonic stem cell biology. We are interested in papers from (sic!) all species, particularly model systems and humans". The journal has, of course, also greatly increased in size. Volume 128 (2004) had 863 pages made up of 90 papers whose contributors, and also the Editorial Board, are strikingly international. Investigations have very often been carried out on conventional laboratory and domestic animals, but clinical and also comparative studies are also found in the journal.

The comparative approach to reproductive biology was promoted earlier by Alan Parkes through his creation of *Symposia on the Comparative Biology of Reproduction*, linked to SSF. The first was called *Comparative Biology of Reproduction in Mammals*, was held in London in 1964. second (again *Biology of Reproduction in Mammal*), was held in Nairobi in 1968, the third (*The Environment and Reproduction in Mammals and Bird*) took place in Edinburgh in 1972 and the final one (*Reproduction and Evolution*) in Canberra in 1976, under the auspices of the *Australian Academy of Science*, the *Australian Society for Reproductive Biology* and the SSF. These symposia demonstrate vividly Parkes' commitment to a comparative approach to reproduction.

Scientific Meetings of the Society

Meetings of the SSF were for some years biannual, often jointly with one of a number of corresponding scientific societies, whether in Britain, Ireland or the mainland of Europe, having shared scientific interests with the SSF/SRF. This most notably occurred as a meeting of the *UK Fertility Societies* – the SRF, *British Andrology Society*, *British Fertility Society* -- at Warwick University, April 2005.

The first involving a group on the mainland of Europe was in Tours, March 1975, with the *Société Française pour L'étude de la Fertilité (SFEF)*. There have been further Franco-British meetings, and others with corresponding German, Dutch, Flemish Societies. The coming together of the SSF/SRF with

related scientific societies has been very fruitful scientifically and socially. Some on the mainland of Europe have had unexpected dramas, for example losing one British participant in Dieppe on our way to a Chateau in Normandy for meeting with the SFEF! The lost person spent three winter days in Dieppe, joining us for the return cross-channel journey.

A number of special, named lectures have been given annually at meetings of the SSF/SRF, honouring those who had made special contributions to the study of reproduction and to Society's proceedings: an Arthur Walpole lecture, supported by a fund created by his I.C.I colleagues, partly in recognition of his work developing "the Pill"; a Hammond lecture, an acknowledgement of the very important contributions made by John Hammond to the understanding of breeding in domesticated animals; an Amoroso lecture, in memory of E.C. Amoroso, a ubiquitous participant in the Society's meetings and in the management of the *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility*; and a Parkes lecture, honouring Alan Parkes' crucial role in the establishment of the Society. These lectures now appear to have been replaced by an annual Distinguished Scientist Lecture, and a Patrick Steptoe Memorial Lecture.

Alan Parkes had been responsible for the creation of the Marshall Medal in memory of F.H.A. Marshall whose great book *The Physiology of Reproduction* (1910) created the framework for a great deal of subsequent research on reproduction. The medal is awarded annually by the SSF/SRF to a scientist who had contributed significantly to the understanding of animal reproduction. It is not confined to members of the Society (whose membership, anyway, is international). Of the 40 recipients only four have been women : this is a surprising sex bias. Most appropriately the four includes Margaret Jackson (1979), a member of that founding group which met in Exeter in 1944, as well as Hilda Bruce (1974), Anne McLaren (1985) and Hannah Peters (1992).

Formation of the Société Française pour L'étude de la Fertilité (SFEF)

Its formation in 1954 was by a small group of gynaecologists and obstetricians in Paris concerned with fertility and sterility. Raoul Palmer and Paul Funck-Brentano proposed that a *Société Nationale pour L'étude de la Sterilité et de la Fecondité* (the should be formed: it later became the *Société Française pour L'étude de la Fertilité*. The executive was set up, with Professor Funck-Brentano as its first President. The founders wanted to incorporate not only those research workers tackling problems of fertility and sterility in humans but also those concerned with domestic animals, to form a learned society comprising gynaecologists, veterinarians and biologists. By 1955 there were 240 members, including Charles Thibault (Marshall Medal, 1980), biologist by training, and apparently, even then, clinicians from Italy, Morocco, Mexico, Paraguay, Sweden, Syria, and Vietnam (shades of French Indo-China?).

Its first colloquium (on the oviduct in women) was held in 1955 with 100-150 clinicians and scientists participating. Others followed annually, bi- or tri-annually with increasingly strong though not exclusive participation of those working (for example in the CNRS and in INRA) on the physiology of reproduction of domestic animals. These dealt with a wide range of problems in reproductive physiology of mammals, including the epidemiology of infertility, and the clinical and non-clinical, agricultural, veterinary aspects of reproduction, so maintaining the initial objectives, concluding in the last 3 years with "Age et reproduction", "Dysimmunité et reproduction", and assisted fertility focused on "Insemination Intra-utérine: Quand, Comment et Pour qui, Pourquoi? "

Charles Thibault played a very important part in the development of the SFEF, promoting a broader biological approach to reproduction. He shared some personality attributes with Alan Parkes. Their careers to some extent came together, but they had rather different starting points: Alan Parkes' original training was in Agriculture but he moved to a more general approach to reproductive physiology, while Charles Thibault began as a biologist and moved into mammalian reproductive physiology with a strong emphasis on domestic animals.

Formation of the Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR)

The idea of forming the SSR was due to the efforts of Philip Dziuk (University of Illinois). In 1966 he wrote to some scientists doing research on problems of reproduction, suggesting that there perhaps should be formed a Society, structured after the model of the Society for the Study of Fertility ".....established in England in the late 1950s and managing to amalgamate diverse interests and groups." Just before this he had been working in Chris Polge's laboratory in Cambridge: Chris was already a dedicated member of the SSF. Philip proposed the formation of what became the SSR in June 1967 at a meeting in Champaign, Illinois, of the American Society of Animal Science. In spite of some opposition, the Society was organized formally in June 1967. Its aims were spelled out ".....to provide a forum in the form of annual meetings and eventually a journal for all research workers interested in reproduction..., regardless of whether their research interests are with wild animals, laboratory species, domestic animals or man".

The first scientific meeting of the SSR was held in 1968 at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. There were 312 participants and 85 abstracts of papers. By 1969 the membership was 740 and the Society has since flourished, as is clear from its membership (in 2004) of 1790, the annual meeting of that year having 1268 participants and 824 abstracts.

The SSR started a new journal, *Biology of Reproduction*. Volume 1 (1969) consisted of 410 pages covering 52 papers from laboratories in USA, Australia, Canada and France covering a wide range of physiological problems, using conventional laboratory and other domesticated animals as well as less usual ones. Volume 71, 2004 totalled 2,108 pages containing 257 papers submitted from laboratories all over the world. The subject matter of the *Biology of Reproduction* has been essentially the same as in the *JRF* and *Reproduction*.

Concluding Remarks

The membership of the SSF/SRF rose from 20 or 30 at its beginning to about 1288 in 1997 with membership from many parts of the world. Since then there has been a decline to a little over 600. Potential or existing members have been drawn to more specialist societies such as the *British Fertility Society (BFS)* and the *British Andrology Society (BAS)*. The SSF can perhaps be regarded as a parent society. The coming together of the *BAS*, *BFS* and *SRF*, as *UK Fertility Societies* at Warwick University in April 2005 was a very important undertaking which more obviously allowed the clinical and non-clinical approaches to reproduction to come together. There had been some dissatisfaction amongst some clinical members of the *SSF*, who felt that the proceedings of the Society were too focussed on non-clinical problems of reproductive physiology. Perhaps the Warwick meeting heralds a new synthesis of the subject and may be a way forward as the *UK Fertility Societies* rather in the way that the *British Endocrine Societies* together the various subdivisions of endocrinology. In this combined form the investigation of fertility and reproduction, in its clinical and non-clinical aspects, seems to be thriving. The combined membership of the three societies is 1642. On the other hand the formation in 1985 of the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) must certainly have diverted clinical and non-clinical scientists from the *SSF/SRF*, the *BAS* and the *BFS*. The total present membership of ESHRE is 4,500 people, from 101 different countries. Of these, 314 are from Britain. Its size is apparent from the programme for the 2003 meeting, which runs to more than 50 pages.

Since the creation of these three societies the investigation of reproductive physiology has comprised epidemiology and the study of whole animals and their organs, the measurement in tissues and body fluids of levels of hormones, enzymes and other metabolites, and the investigation of subcellular events embracing in some cases the genome. Yet it has to be remembered that genes, sperm, oocytes and early embryos occur in an integrated whole organism.

There were differences between the origins of the *SSF/SRF*, the *SFEF* and the *SSR*. The *SSF* arose from concern with clinical conditions bearing on fertility and sterility of people, with some linkage to veterinary and agricultural problems. It then

diversified, embracing reproductive problem in mammals more generally, and encouraging a comparative approach. The SFEF at its inception focussed exclusively on human fertility, and sustained this for some years before spreading to encompass also domesticated or farm animals. The SSR emerged seemingly fully formed from a group of scientists for the most part interested in the reproductive physiology of livestock, but amongst whom the aspiration was to consider mammals more generally. What all three societies had in common was that each arose from the initiative, enthusiasm and commitment of a small number of people with particular viewpoint bearing on reproductive biology.

Note: This an abridged version of a paper given on April 29 at a one-day workshop held in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge University, entitled *Between the farm and the clinic: agricultural and reproductive technology in the twentieth century*, organised by Sarah Wilmot and Nick Hopwood
