

APPS Honorary Member

Dr John Brown



John was educated at Hurlstone Agricultural High School and the University of Sydney, graduating BScAgr (Hons) in 1961 and PhD in 1965. In 1964 he was appointed Lecturer in Botany at the University of New England (UNE) at Armidale. Initially he taught mycology and soil microbiology but soon introduced plant pathology into the curriculum. This was the beginning of more than 35 years of teaching and research into many aspects of plant pathology. His courses, teaching ability and rapport with students quickly attracted quality honours and postgraduate students and a significant research group was formed at UNE. He interacted with many agricultural and horticultural industry groups to identify disease problems that he and his students could research and hopefully solve. He had a great ability to attract research funds to support postgraduate research. John was promoted to Associate Professor in 1973, a position he held until he retired in 1996. He continued as a Research Fellow at UNE supervising PhD students until 2000 when he moved from Armidale. John supervised and cosupervised about 26 PhD and MSc students as well as numerous honours students, many of whom served on the executive of the Society. His past students work, or have worked, in Universities, Government Departments (both State and Federal), in private enterprise as well as holding overseas posts.

His research interests have been broad and encompassed most major areas of plant pathology (etiology, pathogenesis, epidemiology, disease assessment and management strategies). His research activities can be broadly divided into five categories; diseases of temperate field crops (particularly small grain cereals and sunflower), diseases of tropical cash and subsistence crops in Pacific Island nations, microbiology of leaf surfaces, mycorrhizal symbioses and biological control of weeds using plant pathogens. However, it is in the area of epidemiology and crop loss assessment that John developed special expertise and is recognised both nationally and internationally for his contributions to this field. John has authored or co-authored about 190 publications including 10 books or book chapters, 177 scientific publications and several reports to international agencies. A highlight of his career was the publication of the 556 page textbook *Plant Pathogens and Plant Diseases* which was launched at the 1997 APPS conference in Perth. This text was specifically written to emphasise examples of diseases in the Australasian region.

John's interest in tropical agriculture commenced in 1969 when he was asked by the then Department of Foreign Affairs, to visit the Solomon Islands as an advisory plant pathologist. He spent 10 months in the Solomons between 1970 and 1974. Later, 1977 to 1981, he was involved in running a 'short course in plant protection' and initiating and monitoring follow-up research in selected Universities in Indonesia. In 1986 and 1987 he was seconded from UNE for 17 months to the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB) in Indonesia to head a project designed to improve the University's (IPB) ability to train their own undergraduate and postgraduate students in agriculture and science. His most recent involvement in tropical plant pathology (1987-94) was in the South Pacific states of Tonga, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu where a dieback disease of kava was investigated and its cause established.

In addition to his research contributions to Australasian Plant Pathology, John has contributed to the Society in many ways, particularly during the first 20 years of its existence when he acted as Chairman and Convenor of the Epidemiology and Crop Loss Assessment section for several biennial conferences as well as for the Fourth International Plant Pathology Congress held in Melbourne in 1983. He also served as President of the Society from 1995 to 1997.

In his retirement John and his wife Leonie moved to the family property on the shores of Lake Conjola on the south coast of NSW. He still maintains an interest in mycology and plant pathology and enjoys catching up with past students and colleagues.

Joe Kochman

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