

## Vaughn Bell Biography

My early working life in New Zealand was in banking, not science. In 1981, I started work with a large Australian-owned bank, where, for most of my 17 years in the sector, I was a lender. During that time, I observed instances of the highs and lows experienced by those who borrow and lend money. Although unbeknown to me at the time, these lessons would become valuable for an applied scientist working with horticultural practitioners.

In late-1998, I made the decision to leave banking and instead looked to a career in science. In order to satisfy an abiding interest in the biological sciences, I enrolled in a Bachelor of Science degree at Victoria University of Wellington. With a double major in Botany and Ecology, I earned my BSc in 2002. I was then invited to enrol in a Master of Science degree in Ecology and Biodiversity, which was completed with First-Class Honours in 2004.

I immediately applied for and secured employment with the government-owned New Zealand Institute for Plant & Food Research (PFR). My new home and place of employment was Hawke's Bay, an important horticultural region on the east coast of the North Island.

Within months of starting at PFR, I had the opportunity to work with the wine sector to investigate mealybugs, a sap-sucking insect described as ubiquitous in our vineyards. However, depending on who you talked to at that time, mealybugs were either of little consequence or an economically important pest.

If I'm to be honest, I had never seriously considered mealybugs and certainly did not envisage they would become an important part of my science career. Hence, with scant knowledge of this insect group, I immediately found myself on a steep learning trajectory.

During those first years, I was fortunate to meet Dr Rod Bonfiglioli, a plant virologist working with New Zealand Winegrowers, the national industry body. Rod was quick to highlight the link between mealybugs and grapevine leafroll-associated virus 3 (GLRaV-3), which was the most widespread and most destructive viral disease of grapevines in New Zealand. Consequently, with some awareness of GLRaV-3 and of its implications to wine quality, the sector sought to manage it. Thus, with Rod's prompting and the support of New Zealand Winegrowers, I started my doctoral research in 2010. My goal was to identify and test practical responses that owners could implement to manage this economically devastating disease. Fortuitously, this new career direction meant I had achieved that science / banking blend whereby I could focus on research to protect a critical asset to any winery – grapevines.

At present, I am a Senior Scientist with PFR. Having completed my PhD in 2015, my findings contributed to the development of a practical and financially sustainable virus management response. *An integrated strategy for managing Grapevine leafroll-associated virus 3 in red berry cultivars*, was the title of my dissertation. It included management recommendations that have been communicated to and widely adopted by the New Zealand wine sector.

I live with my wife, Alison, and our Jack Russell Terriers (or terrors), Jackie and Coco, in Havelock North.