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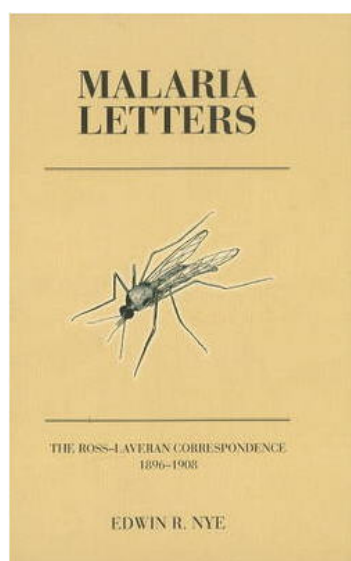
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Malaria Letters. The Ross-Laveran Correspondence 1896–1908

Edwin R Nye. Published by [Otago University Press](http://www.otago.ac.nz/press/), 2010. ISBN 9781877372667. Contains 64 pages. Price \$45.00

I feel I cannot comment on the book *Malaria Letters*,¹ without first talking about its author. I first came across Edwin Nye's name during my PhD research, when I read his 1962 Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand note that first described the presence of the Australian mosquito *Aedes australis* in the South Island of New Zealand.² It was only years later that I had the opportunity to meet him in person.



Ted, whom I believe is approximately 85 years-old now, is one of those doctor-scientists with a different investigative mind, the sort of breed that appears to be nearly extinct today, whose scientific interests venture into a wide range of fields. In the case of Ted, it was Entomology that attracted his interest, during his younger days at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, no doubt inspired by the work of men like Alphonse Laveran and Ronald Ross.

It is therefore no surprise that Ted has written another book on doctors like himself, i.e. Laveran and Ross. Laveran was a *parisien* medical doctor, who won the 1907 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his work demonstrating that protozoa were the causative agents of malaria.

Ross was an Indian-born doctor who followed on from Laveran's work, eventually showing that mosquitoes were responsible for the transmission of the malaria parasites. Ross' work won him the 1902 Nobel on the same category as Laveran.

This short book is remarkable in its simplicity, as it transports us to a forgotten time of a relatively recent history. To a time that it is difficult for those leaving medical school today to imagine. As Ted highlights in the chapter *The Correspondence*, those were times when communication across vast distances was an obvious challenge. One could argue that then, words sent away via mail were more carefully thought through, and not simply regurgitated in a matter of minutes. Further, as these letters would often take weeks to reach their addressees, they represented the writer's ideas and feelings over a much longer period of time, in comparison to the brief moments represented by email communications. Thus, I read with great interest this exchange between two scientists, in particular Ross' detailed and exciting account on the progress of his work, until he eventually proved that birds bitten by parasite-infected mosquitoes would become themselves infected.

These letters give the reader an insight into the work of two great scientists. Even if you do not have a particular interest in vector-borne diseases, I think these letters would be of interest as a window to the past.

It is a pity that the book does not contain a glossary of technical terms, which would have made it more accessible to a wider audience. Nonetheless, the book is a short and very interesting read. Personally, I see only one flaw in it: that it lacks a brief biography on its author (beyond a couple of sentences on the back cover), a man with a no less interesting life than his predecessors...

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References:

1. Nye ER. Malaria Letters. The Ross-Laveran Correspondence 1896-1908. Dunedin: Otago University Press; 2010.
2. Nye ER. *Aedes (Pseudoskusea) australis* Erichson (Diptera: Culicidae) in New Zealand. Trans Roy Soc NZ Zool 1962;3:33–34.