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**AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE
ANALYSIS OF THE CIRCADIAN CLOCK OF
THE BLOW FLY *Lucilia cuprina***

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Biological Sciences,
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ABSTRACT

The Australian sheep blow fly *Lucilia cuprina* is an economically important dipteran pest whose circadian behavioural rhythms have been the subject of considerable scrutiny. The underlying biochemical nature of these rhythms however, has remained a mystery. The primary objective of this thesis was therefore to investigate the molecular control of circadian rhythms in *L. cuprina* using an integrative approach. To these ends, a dynamic molecular simulation model for *L. cuprina* was formulated using existing biochemical data on insect circadian clocks. The validity of this simulation model was subsequently tested at both molecular and behavioural levels.

The basic molecular assumptions of the simulation model were tested by cloning a full length *L. cuprina per* cDNA and analysing its mRNA and protein expression levels. Isolation of the 4 Kb *L. cuprina per* cDNA revealed the conservation of three functional domains known to be important for circadian clock function; namely the PAS dimerisation motif (with 92% identity to *D. melanogaster* at the amino acid level), and the cytoplasmic and nuclear localisation domains (with 85% and 80% identity respectively). A fourth domain, the threonine-glycine (TG) repeat region, was also found to be conserved, but severely truncated in *L. cuprina*. No length variation was found in the TG repeat of flies collected from several different latitudinal zones, and no correlation was detected between sequences flanking the repeat and latitude of collection of flies. Thus, the contention that the TG repeat region plays a role in temperature compensation of the circadian clock is cast in doubt. Expression analyses (using quantitative RT-PCR) showed *per* mRNA levels to undergo diel oscillations with a period (24 h) and peak phase (Zt 12) consistent with the *Drosophila* data. PER-immunoreactive protein oscillations were also demonstrated, with peak immunoreactivity lagging approximately 3 h behind peak mRNA levels.

The behavioural predictions of the model were tested by recording adult locomotor activity under different light regimes. The simulation model successfully predicted free-run, entrainment, the effect of short light pulses, and the effects of constant

lighting on behavioural rhythms. Disparities between the simulated and real phase response curves for *L. cuprina* are hypothesised to be indicative of an earlier nuclear entry time of the PER-TIM dimer in *L. cuprina* compared with *D. melanogaster*.

The three different approaches of simulation modelling, molecular analysis and behavioural investigation are integrated in the discussion in order to help provide a comprehensive explanation of circadian function in *L. cuprina*. The benefits of an integrated approach to the analysis of circadian function are discussed, as is the relevance of the present findings to the development of a clock-based control strategy for this economically important pest species.

**Nothing puzzles me more than time and space; and yet nothing troubles me less,
as I never think about them (Charles Lamb, Letter to Southy, 9 Aug. 1815).**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Frontispiece	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Glossary of Chronobiology Terms	xv
Glossary of Molecular Terms	xix
List of Abbreviations	xxiii
 Chapter One: General Introduction	 1
1.1 An Introduction to Circadian Rhythms.....	1
1.2 Strategies for Clock Analysis.....	3
1.3 Localisation of the Circadian Pacemaker.....	4
1.4 Tracing the Clock Input and Output Pathways.....	6
1.4.1 Mammalian Clock Input and Output Pathways.....	6
1.4.2 Insect Clock Input and Output Pathways.....	8
1.5 Evidence for the Involvement of Protein Synthesis and the Role of Membranes.....	10
1.6 The Genetic Basis of Circadian Rhythms.....	11
1.7 Circadian Clock Mutants.....	12
1.7.1 <i>Drosophila melanogaster</i> Mutants.....	12
1.7.2 The <i>tau</i> Mutation in the Golden Hamster.....	14
1.7.3 <i>Neurospora crassa</i> Circadian Clock Mutations.....	14
1.7.4 Clock Mutants in the Alga <i>Chlamydomonas</i>	15
1.7.5 The <i>late elongated hypocotyl</i> Mutant of <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>	16
1.7.6 The <i>psi</i> Mutation in <i>Aedes krombeini</i>	16
1.7.7 The <i>ary</i> Mutant in <i>Lucilia cuprina</i>	16
1.8 The <i>period</i> Gene of <i>Drosophila melanogaster</i>	17
1.8.1 Isolation of the <i>period</i> Gene.....	17
1.8.2 Biochemical Characterisation of PER.....	21
1.8.2.1 The TG Repeat.....	21
1.8.2.2 The PAS Domain.....	23
1.8.3 Spatiotemporal Analysis of <i>per</i> Expression in <i>Drosophila melanogaster</i>	24
1.9 The Missing Molecular Elements of the <i>Drosophila</i> Feedback Jigsaw.....	26
1.10 The Same...But Different: Molecular Circadian Organisation in Other Species.....	30
1.11 The Molecular Basis of Entrainment.....	32
1.11.1 The Role of IEGs in Entrainment.....	33

1.11.2 Cryptochromes and Opsins, the Entrainment Panacea?...	34
1.12 Molecular Connectives to the Hands of the Clock.....	36
1.13 Quantitative Modelling of Biological Oscillators.....	37
1.14 The Sheep Blow Fly <i>Lucilia cuprina</i>	39
1.15 The Life Cycle of <i>Lucilia cuprina</i>	40
1.16 Flystrike and <i>Lucilia cuprina</i>	40
1.17 Pesticide Resistance and <i>Lucilia cuprina</i>	42
1.18 The Circadian Clock of <i>Lucilia cuprina</i>	43
1.19 Research Aims.....	44
 Chapter Two: Development of a Molecular Simulation Model for the Circadian Clock of <i>L. cuprina</i>	 45
2.1 An Introduction to Circadian Modelling.....	45
2.1.1 Models Defined.....	45
2.1.2 The <i>per</i> Feedback System: A Modelling Approach.....	46
2.1.3 Modelling the Basic Properties of Circadian Rhythms.....	49
2.1.4 Modelling More Complex Clock Behaviour: Coupled/Population Oscillators.....	52
2.1.5 Development of Clock Models Incorporating Molecular Processes.....	56
2.2 Methods of Simulation Modelling.....	58
2.2.1 The Control Systems Representation.....	59
2.2.2 Negative Feedback.....	60
2.2.3 Time Delay.....	61
2.2.4 Degradation of PER and TIM.....	61
2.2.5 The Simulation of Light Effects.....	62
2.2.6 The Threshold Concept.....	62
2.2.7 Phase Response Curves.....	63
2.3 Simulation of Free-Running Rhythms.....	63
2.4 Simulation of Entrainment.....	65
2.5 Test of the Differential Effects of Light Pulses Falling at Different Circadian Times.....	68
2.6 Prediction of the Clock Response to Constant Light (LL).....	72
2.7 A Simulation Model for <i>L. cuprina</i> Developed.....	76
 Chapter Three: Testing the Basic Molecular Assumptions of the <i>L. cuprina</i> Simulation Model	 78
3.1 An Introduction to the Structure and Function of <i>per</i> in Insects....	78
3.1.1 The <i>per</i> Red Herrings.....	78
3.1.2 Isolation of <i>per</i> from a Number of <i>Drosophila</i> Species...	79
3.1.3 <i>per</i> in Flies, Moths and Cockroaches.....	80
3.1.4 PER the Transcriptional Regulator.....	82
3.1.5 An Introduction to the Polymerase Chain Reaction.....	84
3.1.6 Rationale Behind the Analysis of <i>per</i> in <i>L. cuprina</i>	86

3.2 General Methods.....	87
3.2.1 Degenerate PCR.....	87
3.2.2 Southern Hybridisation of PCR Products.....	88
3.2.3 Cloning and Sequencing of PCR Products.....	88
3.2.4 cDNA library Screening.....	89
3.2.5 Semi-Degenerate RT-PCR.....	90
3.2.5.1 RNA Extraction.....	90
3.2.5.2 RT-PCR.....	90
3.2.6 3'RACE.....	91
3.2.7 Geographic Analysis of the TG Repeat Region.....	91
3.2.8 Quantitative Competitive RT-PCR.....	92
3.2.9 Northern Dot Blots.....	93
3.2.10 Western Blotting.....	94
3.3 <i>L. cuprina per</i> Encodes an Inferred Protein of 1037 Amino Acids.....	95
3.3.1 Degenerate PCR.....	95
3.3.2 cDNA Library Screening.....	97
3.3.3 Semi-Degenerate RT-PCR.....	99
3.3.4 3'RACE.....	99
3.3.5 <i>L. cuprina per</i>	103
3.3.6 What Does the <i>L. cuprina per</i> Sequence Tell Us About the Blow Fly Clock?.....	108
3.4 Geographic Variation in the TG Repeat Region and Flanking Sequences.....	110
3.5 Development of Quantitative Competitive RT-PCR as a Technique for Measuring Circadian Fluctuations in <i>per</i> mRNA Levels.....	113
3.5.1 An Introduction to Quantitative Analysis of mRNA levels.....	113
3.5.2 General Principles of Quantitative PCR.....	114
3.5.3 Quantitative Competitive RT-PCR (QC-RT-PCR).....	115
3.5.4 Synthesis of the <i>per</i> Competitor and Generation of the Standard Curve.....	116
3.5.5 Controlling for Changes in Overall Gene Expression.....	121
3.5.6 An Alternative Method for Quantitative Analysis of <i>per</i> mRNA Levels Developed.....	123
3.6 Analysis of <i>L. cuprina per</i> mRNA and Protein Expression.....	124
3.6.1 Diel Oscillations in <i>L. cuprina per</i> mRNA Levels.....	124
3.6.2 Diel Oscillations in PER-like Immunoreactivity in <i>L. cuprina</i>	126
3.6.3 Similarity Between the Expression Patterns of <i>L. cuprina</i> and <i>D. melanogaster per</i> mRNA and Protein....	128
3.7 Making Molecular Inroads into the Blow Fly Circadian System.....	129

Chapter Four: Testing the Behavioural Predictions of the Simulation Model.....	131
4.1 Introduction to the Analysis of Clock-Controlled Rhythms.....	131
4.1.1 Investigation of the Effects of Light on the <i>L. cuprina</i> Circadian System.....	131
4.1.2 Behavioural Rhythms of <i>L. cuprina</i>	131
4.1.3 The Effects of Light on Behavioural Rhythmicity.....	132
4.1.3.1 Effects of Short Light Pulses.....	132
4.1.3.2 Effects of Constant Light.....	133
4.2 General Methods.....	135
4.2.1 Data Logging.....	135
4.2.2 Data Analysis and Presentation.....	137
4.2.3 Lighting Conditions.....	138
4.2.4 Lobectomy and Visual Occlusion Using Paint.....	138
4.3 Testing the Newly Developed Recording Equipment.....	139
4.4 Effect of Short Light Pulses on the Behaviour of <i>L. cuprina</i>	140
4.5 Effects of Constant Light on the Behaviour of <i>L. cuprina</i>	144
4.5.1 Constant Bright Light.....	144
4.5.2 Constant Dim Light.....	148
4.6 Insight Into the <i>L. cuprina</i> Clock Provided by Behavioural Analysis..	153
Chapter Five: General Discussion.....	155
5.1 The Amalgamation of Old and New.....	155
5.2 The Endogenous Nature of the Biological Clock of <i>L. cuprina</i>	156
5.3 The Entrainment of the <i>L. cuprina</i> Clock to Light Cycles.....	159
5.4 Constant Bright Light May Stop the Blow Fly Clock.....	163
5.5 A Comprehensive Model of Clock Function in <i>L. cuprina</i>	167
5.6 The Prospects for Control of the Sheep Blow Fly Using a Clock-Based Approach.....	168
5.7 Closing Comments.....	170
Appendix One.....	171
Appendix Two.....	177
Appendix Three.....	179
Appendix Four.....	180
References.....	183

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Tabulated parallels between elements of the <i>per</i> feedback loop and its control systems representation.....	49
Table 3.1	Geographic location and latitude of collection of fly samples used for the analysis of TG repeat length.....	92
Table 3.2	Amino acid identity of the functional domains of <i>L. cuprina per</i> with those of <i>M. domestica</i> and <i>D. melanogaster</i>	103

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1	Diagrammatic representation of PER/TIM binding.....	27
Fig. 1.2	Model of the molecular feedback loop in <i>D. melanogaster</i>	29
Fig. 1.3	Archetypal circadian clock and its diversification into the <i>Neurospora</i> , <i>Drosophila</i> and mammalian systems.....	31
Fig. 1.4	Diagrammatic representation of the life cycle of <i>L. cuprina</i>	40
Fig. 2.1	Diagrammatic and control systems representation of the Hardin <i>et al.</i> (1990) <i>per</i> feedback model.....	48
Fig. 2.2	Control systems diagram of the single oscillator model for the circadian system of the weta <i>Hemidiena thoracica</i> ..	50
Fig. 2.3	Simulated actograms using the single oscillator model of Gander and Lewis (1979).....	51
Fig. 2.4	Control systems diagram of the X-Y model.....	55
Fig. 2.5	Simulation of free-run lability with the X-Y model.....	56
Fig. 2.6	Control systems representation of the PER-TIM negative feedback loop.....	59
Fig. 2.7	Phase relationships of the simulated molecular oscillations and overt activity patterns.....	64
Fig. 2.8	Simulated free-run in <i>L. cuprina</i>	65
Fig. 2.9	Simulation of entrainment with 24 h LD cycles.....	66
Fig. 2.10	Simulated phase response curve.....	69
Fig. 2.11	Simulation of a phase delay.....	70
Fig. 2.12	Simulation of a phase advance.....	71
Fig. 2.13	Simulation of the effects of constant dim light.....	74
Fig. 2.14	Simulation of the effects of constant bright light.....	75

Fig. 3.1	Diagrammatic representation of PCR.....	85
Fig. 3.2	Diagrammatic representation of cloning strategy used to isolate <i>L. cuprina per</i> cDNA.....	95
Fig. 3.3	Agarose gel of PCR products obtained from degenerate PCR.....	96
Fig. 3.4	Autoradiograph of PCR products hybridised to a ^{32}P <i>M. domestica per</i> probe.....	97
Fig. 3.5	Autoradiographs of lifts from the tertiary screen of a <i>L. cuprina</i> λ GT10 adult head cDNA library with a <i>L. cuprina per</i> fragment.....	98
Fig. 3.6	EcoRI digest of phage preparations from adult head cDNA library screen.....	98
Fig. 3.7	Agarose gel of semi-redundant PCR products.....	99
Fig. 3.8	Agarose gel of 3'RACE PCR products.....	100
Fig. 3.9	Autoradiograph of cloned 3'RACE products probed with a ^{32}P labelled overlapping <i>per</i> fragment.....	100
Fig. 3.10	Nucleotide and inferred amino acid sequence of <i>L. cuprina per</i> cDNA.....	101
Fig. 3.11	Pileup of the inferred protein sequences of <i>L. cuprina</i> , <i>M. domestica</i> , <i>D. melanogaster</i> and <i>A. pernyi</i> PER.....	104
Fig. 3.12	Cladogram generated from a region of <i>Lucilia per</i> spanning the TG repeat.....	112
Fig. 3.13	Diagrammatic representation of primer extension used to generate the <i>per</i> competitor.....	117
Fig. 3.14	Agarose gel of competitor and template PCR products.....	117
Fig. 3.15	<i>In vitro</i> transcription of the <i>per</i> competitor RNA.....	118
Fig. 3.16	QC-RT-PCR of samples containing serial dilutions of the <i>per</i> competitor.....	118
Fig. 3.17	Agarose gel of a QC-RT-PCR standard curve.....	119
Fig. 3.18	Graph of the mean <i>per</i> QC-RT-PCR standard curve.....	120

Fig. 3.19	Nucleotide sequence of a <i>L. cuprina</i> RP49 fragment.....	122
Fig. 3.20	Agarose gel showing diel oscillations of <i>L. cuprina per</i> mRNA levels in light cycles.....	124
Fig. 3.21	Graph of mean diel oscillations of <i>L. cuprina per</i> mRNA..	125
Fig. 3.22	Northern dot blot of <i>L. cuprina per</i> and RP49.....	126
Fig. 3.23	Northern dot blot of <i>L. cuprina per</i> RNA with an antisense <i>per</i> probe.....	126
Fig. 3.24	ECL autoradiograph of PER-like immunoreactivity in <i>L. cuprina</i> protein samples.....	127
Fig. 3.25	ECL autogradiograph of <i>L. cuprina</i> protein levels showing a diel oscillation in PER-like immunoreactivity..	128
Fig. 4.1	Apparatus used to record adult locomotor activity of <i>L. cuprina</i>	136
Fig. 4.2	Hematoxylin/eosin stained sections of lobectomised and sham operated <i>L. cuprina</i>	139
Fig. 4.3	Adult locomotor activity of <i>L. cuprina</i> in DD.....	140
Fig. 4.4	Phase response curve of <i>L. cuprina</i>	141
Fig. 4.5	Phase change resulting from shortened active phase.....	143
Fig. 4.6	Adult locomotor activity in constant bright light.....	145
Fig. 4.7	Adult locomotor activity in constant bright light showing ultradian rhythmicity.....	146
Fig. 4.8	Effect of constant bright light on flies deprived of visual cues.....	147
Fig. 4.9	Adult locomotor activity in constant dim light.....	149
Fig. 4.10	Adult locomotor activity in constant dim light indicating that the change in τ is not attributable to ageing.....	150
Fig. 4.11	Graph of mean τ under different constant lighting levels indicating a non-monotonic response.....	151
Fig. 4.12	Diagrammatic representation of the non-monotonic	

	response to light.....	152
Fig. 5.1	Comparison of simulated and real phase response curves...	163
Fig. 5.2	Diagrammatic representation of molecular rhythms in constant bright light.....	165
Fig. 5.3	Diagrammatic representation of resetting of the clock to Ct 12 on transfer from dim LL to DD.....	166
Fig. 5.4	Diagrammatic representation of lack of resetting of the <i>C. vicina</i> clock to Ct 12 following transfer from LL to DD.	167

GLOSSARY OF CHRONOBIOLOGY TERMS

The terminology used here is based on that of Saunders (1982) with modifications.

Active phase (α)	The time during the sleep-wake cycle during which an animal is active.
Aschoff's Rule	The period of the free-running oscillation (τ) lengthens on transfer from DD to LL in dark active animals, and shortens for light active animals.
Circadian (rhythm)	An endogenous oscillation with a natural period close to, but seldom equal to 24 h.
Circadian time (Ct)	Time scale covering one full period of an oscillation. Ct 0 is defined arbitrarily (in the present study Ct 6 is defined as the midpoint of the active phase and therefore Ct 0 occurs 6 hours prior to this point).
Desynchronisation	Loss of synchrony between two populations of endogenous oscillators involved in the generation of a rhythm.
Diel rhythm	A 24 h rhythm that has been measured only in natural or artificial day-night cycles, and not yet known to persist in constant conditions.
Diurnal	Active during the day (photophase)
Endogenous rhythm	A self-sustained rhythm which continues in the absence of external entraining factors (zeitgeber).

Endogenous oscillator	A self-sustained and temperature compensated oscillator responsible for endogenous rhythmicity.
Entrainment	The synchronisation of an endogenous oscillation to the period of a zeitgeber.
Free-running	A rhythm in its unentrained state (isolated from zeitgeber).
Free-running period (τ)	The period of a free-running rhythm.
Oscillator	The unseen 'driving' organ (the biological clock) whose influence from within the organism causes the measurable changes seen as the overt rhythm.
Period	The length of time between the same phase point on two consecutive oscillations.
Phase (ϕ)	The instantaneous state of an oscillation within a period. eg. onset of activity.
Phase advance ($+\Delta\phi$)	The shortening of the period of the rhythm in response to a light or temperature perturbation.
Phase angle (ψ).	The relationship between two phase points on the same or different oscillations (phase relationship).
Phase delay ($+\Delta\phi$)	The lengthening of the period of the rhythm in response to a light or temperature perturbation.

Phase response curve	A plot of phase shift ($\Delta\phi$) caused by a single perturbation at different phases.
Phase shift ($\Delta\phi$)	A single displacement of an oscillation along the time axis.
Photoperiod	The daylength (period of light in the daily cycle).
Photophase	The light portion of the day-night cycle.
Rhythm	A periodically occurring event.
Scotophase	The dark portion of the day-night cycle.
Shattering	Loss of a single cohesive active phase into many shorter active phases (usually with no observable rhythm).
Skeleton photoperiod	A light regime using two shorter periods of light to simulate dawn and dusk effects of a longer, complete photoperiod.
Singularity (T*S*)	A pulse of critical duration, intensity and timing, which results in the damping of a rhythm (ie. stops the clock). First proposed by Winfree (1970).
Subjective day	The first half of the circadian cycle (Ct 0 to Ct 12).
Subjective night	The second half of the circadian cycle (Ct 12 to Ct 24).
Transients	One of the more temporary oscillatory states between two steady states caused, for instance, by light or

temperature perturbations.

Ultradian (rhythm)

An endogenous oscillation with a period many times shorter than the solar day and unrelated to any geophysical cycle.

Zeitgeber

The forcing geophysical oscillation which entrains a biological oscillation.

Zeitgeber time (Zt)

Time (in hours) relative to the zeitgeber. (ie. in LD 12:12 Zt 0 is defined as the L-D transition and Zt 12 as the D-L transition).

GLOSSARY OF MOLECULAR TERMS

Base pair (bp)	A single pair of complementary nucleotides from opposite strands of the DNA double helix. The number of base pairs is used as a measure of a length of double stranded DNA.
cDNA clone	A DNA clone derived from a complementary DNA (cDNA) transcript of a mRNA.
cDNA library	A collection of phage containing complementary DNA (cDNA) clones of all of the mRNA species represented in a particular tissue at a particular developmental stage.
Cloning	The isolation and multiplication of a particular gene by incorporating it into specifically modified phage or plasmid and introducing it into a bacterial cell where the DNA of interest is replicated along with the phage or plasmid DNA and can subsequently be recovered from bacterial culture in large amounts.
Dimer	A protein made up of two subunits.
DNAse	Deoxyribonuclease: An enzyme which degrades DNA.
DNA polymerase	Any of several enzymes which catalyse DNA synthesis by addition of deoxyribonucleotide units to a DNA chain using DNA or (in the case of retroviruses) RNA as a template.

Electrophoresis	A technique for separating molecules such as proteins or nucleic acid fragments on the basis of their net charge and mass, by their differential migration through a paper, polyacrylamide or agarose gel in an electric field.
Kilobase (Kb)	Unit of length used for nucleic acids and polynucleotides corresponding to 1000 base pairs or bases.
Kilodalton (kD)	Unit of mass equal to 1000 daltons. One dalton is the unit of mass almost equal to the weight of a hydrogen atom and is used interchangeably with molecular weight.
Northern Blotting	A technique in which RNAs (usually separated by electrophoresis) are transferred to a suitable medium for subsequent hybridisation with radioactive probes for the identification and isolation of RNAs of interest.
Phage (bacteriophage)	A virus infecting bacteria, such as lambda (which infects <i>E. coli</i>).
Plasmid	Small self-replicating circular DNA independent of the chromosome in bacteria and unicellular eucaryotes such as yeast, which is maintained at a characteristic stable number from generation to generation. Plasmids typically carry genes for antibiotic resistance and are widely used in genetic engineering as vectors into which foreign genes are inserted for subsequent cloning or expression in bacterial cells.

Poly (A) tail	A stretch of polyadenylic acid residues found at the 3' ends of many eucaryotic messenger RNAs which is added in the nucleus by the enzyme poly (A) polymerase after transcription.
Reverse transcriptase	A DNA polymerase found in retroviruses which synthesises DNA on an RNA template.
Reverse transcription	The synthesis of DNA on an RNA template, catalysed by the enzyme reverse transcriptase.
RNase	Ribonuclease: an enzyme which degrades RNA or cleaves it into shorter oligonucleotides.
RNA polymerase	Any of several enzymes which catalyse the synthesis of RNA from a DNA template by the process of transcription
Southern Blotting	A technique in which DNA fragments separated by gel electrophoresis in an agarose gel are transferred by blotting to a nylon or nitrocellulose filter for subsequent hybridisation with radioactively labelled nucleic acid probes for the identification and isolation of sequences of interest.
Transcription	Copying of a DNA strand to an RNA strand by an RNA polymerase.
Translation	Process by which RNA directs the synthesis of specific proteins.
Vector	Specifically modified plasmid or phage into which

foreign genes can be inserted for introduction into bacterial or other cells for multiplication or studies of gene expression.

Western Blotting

A technique used to transfer the pattern of proteins separated by electrophoresis to a medium in which they can be further analysed.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

α	alpha (active phase)
bp	base pairs
Ct	circadian time
°C	degrees Celsius
DD	constant dark
h	hour
Kb	kilobase
kD	kilodalton
L	litre
LL	constant light
LD	light-dark cycle (numbers following indicate hours occupied by each)
μ g	microgram
μ L	microlitre
μ M	micromolar
M	molar
mg	milligram
min	minute
mM	millimolar
ng	nanogram
g	gram
<i>per</i>	period gene (italicised)
PER	period protein (uppercase, plain face)
<i>pers. comm.</i>	personal communication
pg	picogram
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PRC	phase response curve
RT	reverse transcription
sec	second
T	period of the zeitgeber
<i>tim</i>	timeless gene (italicised)
TIM	timeless protein (uppercase, plain face)
τ	tau (free-running period)
Zt	zeitgeber time
\emptyset	phase