

International Advances in Plant Virology, Arnhem, The Netherlands, 5-7 September 2010

The latest meeting in the series of 18-monthly Advances in Plant Virology conferences took place from the 5-7 September 2010 at the Papendal Hotel and Conference Centre, near Arnhem in The Netherlands. This meeting was co-organised between the AAB Plant Virus group and the Dutch Circle of Plant Virologists, with Dr Rene van der Vlugt (PRI, Wageningen), who is a member of both groups, being the principal organiser.

The scientific part of the meeting started in the evening of 5 September with a lecture from one of the invited speakers, Dr Sven Behrens (University of Halle, Germany), who described his use of a cell-free system derived from tobacco protoplasts to study the virus and host proteins that are involved in virus replication. After the lecture the conference participants retired to the restaurant for a meal and the chance to meet up with one another. During the rest of the meeting a further three invited speakers gave guest lectures, these being: Dr Carole Caranta (INRA Montfavet) who spoke about the involvement of host translation factors in virus infection, Dr Michael Taliansky (SCRI Dundee) who spoke about the role of the plant nucleolus in infections caused by several different viruses, and Dr Miguel Aranda (CEBAS-CSIC Murcia) who spoke about mechanisms of recessive resistance to virus infection in melon plants.

The meeting also included a full-day programme of offered talks on Monday 6th and a half-day programme of offered talks on Tuesday 7th. In total, 15 talks were given by established researchers (post-doctoral) and eight talks were given by post-graduate students. The subject areas of these talks included detailed studies of the molecular interactions between virus and plant proteins, mechanisms of virus spread by vectors, mechanisms of host defence against viruses, identification and behaviour of viruses in the natural environment, and the use of viruses as biotechnological tools. As is customary at these meetings, competitions were held for the Bryan Harrison Prize (best student talk) and the Raymond and Roger Hull Prize (best student poster). Each competition was judged by a panel of "experts", and prizes were awarded to a winner and two runners-up for each category.

For the Bryan Harrison Prize the winner was adjudged to be Christina Geerts-Dimitriadou (Wageningen University: Does the Tomato spotted wilt virus S RNA-encoded hairpin structure play a role in translation?) and the runners-up were (2nd prize) Pooja Saxena (John Innes Centre, Norwich: Exploiting P19, a virus-encoded suppressor of silencing, to enhance protein expression in transgenic plants) and (3rd prize) Annerie Liebenberg (RLP Agroscience, Neustadt: Molecular analysis of *Apple stem grooving virus*). The poster competition (Raymond and Roger Hull Prize) was made very difficult by the extremely large number of entrants (of the 44 posters presented at the meeting, no fewer than 17 were prepared by

PhD students). The winner of this competition was Simon Groen (University of Cambridge: *Cucumber mosaic virus* manipulates interactions between plants and the insect community) and the runners-up were (2nd prize) Dryas de Ronde (Laboratory of Virology, Wageningen: Towards durable tospovirus resistance in *Capsicum annuum*: identifying the avirulence candidate gene in TSWV against the Tsw resistance gene) and (3rd prize) Laurence Ouibrahim (INRA Montfavet – Towards the identification of new host factors required for plant susceptibility to potyviruses: novel routes to resistance).

In the evening of Monday 6th the conference participants visited the local Burger Zoo where, after a tour of the different animal enclosures, everyone moved to different parts of the zoo (tropical house, aquarium and desert environment) for drinks and a (self-cooked) barbeque buffet. No obvious cases of food poisoning were reported the next day, and the scientific programme continued until mid-afternoon.

The facilities at the Papendal Conference Centre were excellent, the rooms were very comfortable, the food was of a very high standard, and even the weather was warm and sunny for most of the conference.

In total, 74 delegates, from 14 different countries (9 EU, 5 non-EU), attended the meeting. The largest contingents were from the UK (33 delegates) and The Netherlands (18 delegates). The furthest-travelled delegate was Arnoud Blouin from New Zealand. This wide-spread of attendees shows that we are being successful in spreading the word about the AAB plant virology conferences, and will encourage us to continue to make links with virology societies from other countries. In this context I would like to say that the committee members are already planning for the next Advances in Plant Virology meeting, which will be held in March 2012 in Dublin, in association with the Society for General Microbiology's Spring meeting.

AAB, September 2010



A small and blurry photograph of George Lomonosoff at the Papendal, Arnhem, The Netherlands. Captions welcome..!