

International Advances in Plant Virology meeting held at the SportsPark, University of East Anglia, Norwich from 25-27 September 2013



George Lomonosoff presenting Jenny Robel with the poster prize on behalf of Roger Hull and right: Christina Dickmeis, winner of the Harrison Prize for the best platform presentation



This meeting was a continuation of the Advances in Plant Virology series of scientific meetings that are organized by the Virology Group of the AAB and take place at about every eighteen months. These meetings are not themed (apart from being related to plant virology) and aim to encourage PhD students and young researchers to present their work and to build-up contacts within the professional virology field. The meeting in Norwich was very well attended, with sixty seven delegates attending. From these, thirty six were UK-based, with the remainder coming from twelve other countries, principally Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Italy. The long-distance travel "prize" was claimed by two students from Brazil.

The programme included thirty seven presentations, most of them short talks but also including three longer talks from Invited Speakers. These were Dr George Lomonosoff (John Innes Centre, Norwich), who talked about the development and use of Cowpea mosaic virus as a tool for nanobiotechnology, Dr Isabelle Jupin (Institute Jacques Monod, Paris), who described the role of ubiquitination in the replication process of Turnip yellow mosaic virus), and Dr David Karlin (Oxford University), who described in a very instructive and entertaining way the best methods and practices that should be used for bioinformatics analysis of virus protein structure/function.

Among these talks were seventeen presented by PhD students, describing research on a wide range of viruses in both fundamental and applied areas of plant virology. This is perhaps the largest number of student talks we have ever had at one of our meetings, and the high quality and confident delivery of these talks was a particularly pleasing aspect of this meeting. A similar number of posters were also presented, so that virtually all

of the attendees at the meeting were able in some form to describe and discuss their work with the other attendees.

As is traditional at these meetings, a prize for the best student talk was decided upon and presented by Professor Bryan Harrison (and his hand-picked team). The winner of this competition was Christina Dickmeis from Aachen, Germany, who described her experiments to improve the utility of *Potato virus X* as a gene expression vector. Hadrien Peyret (John Innes Centre, Norwich), who described his work using viruses to produce vaccines in plants, was also commended for the high quality of his presentation.

Unfortunately, due to personal reasons, Dr Roger Hull was unable to attend and present the prize for the best student poster. George Lomonosoff took over the role of poster judge and, with the help of his "team", selected Jenny Robel (Humboldt University, Berlin) as the winner of this competition. Jenny's poster described her work to detect the EMARAV virus in new tree species from the *Sorbus* genus.

The UEA SportsPark was a very modern and attractive venue for the meeting, providing us with a meeting room and tea/coffee and lunches all in the same location. For the conference dinner we visited the Vista restaurant on the UEA campus who provided us with good food and wine and an excellent relaxed atmosphere to encourage conversation between all the delegates. The dinner was so good that I even received praise for the food from one of the Italian contingents. In fact, everyone at the meeting seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, and we will have to work hard to ensure that our next meeting reaches the same standards.

-Stuart MacFarlane
Virology Group Convenor