

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

School of Plant Sciences



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Christmas and New Year Greetings

Sue Rumsey has completed data entry into our Botanical Research and Herbarium Management System (BRAHMS) of the 2000-odd specimens collected by Ronnie Rutherford in Bulgaria in June 1999 and mounting of the specimens nears completion. Much of this was done by Dr Elspeth Beckett, a volunteer who came regularly from Oxford to help us. We are extremely grateful to Elspeth for all her assistance over the years and sorry she is no longer able to make the journey. Sue Rumsey, assisted by Sue Mott, has recently been entering specimen data into from the **WRO** collection into Brahms.

The Herbarium Website: www.herbarium.rdg.ac.uk

Our website contains a number of useful links that members of the School may appreciate for details on trains, airports, currency conversions, etc. We are pleased to note that we have received over 226,900 hits so far this year. A number of upgrades have recently been made to the Herbarium website. Recent additions to our BRAHMS database will also soon be available, making almost 33,000 records searchable (4000+ were also added last May). The chief upgrade has been to add details and images of the 970 paintings and drircfrlso

Casablanca. Mr Tarik El Atechi then extracted the data to create an Access database and make this available to all via the Herbarium website, together with all the illustrations using the Centre for Plant Diversity and Systematics Server. It can be viewed at www.herbarium.reading.ac.uk/queries Further information on this collection and Jill is also available through this link.

Weeds

The weed herbarium of the Long Ashton Research Station (**WRO**) at Bristol, U.K. (though originally at Begbroke Hill, Oxford) was transferred to The University of Reading (**RNG**) earlier this year, following the recent closure of the Research Station. It is estimated to contain some 8000 specimens of weeds worldwide, but mainly tropical, with especially good collections of parasitic Scrophulariaceae, Cuscutaceae and Poaceae. These last number 1760 specimens and have already been entered in our BRAHMS database by Sue Mott and Sue Rumsey. The rest of the collection will be added before being incorporated. It will support the work of our weed scientists, especially in taxonomy and identification.

Hassan Rankou

Mr Hassan Rankou, an MSc graduate in crop production of the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Rabat, Morocco, arrived in the School 14th February to work with Dr Stephen Jury on his Darwin Initiative and has continued his training in the Herbarium by assisting with several computer-based projects, including editing BRAHMS data. Hassan is interested in the use of databases in managing floristic and taxonomic data and displaying this over the internet. He was one of Tarik's contemporaries at University in Morocco and has the same facility for the rapid learning of English, promising to beat Dr Jury at Scrabble in the near future.

Euro+Med PlantBase

This EU-sponsored project is actively seeking funding to continue following the end of phase I last August. The Flora Europaea Trust Fund (now wound up) has paid its last monies to the University to employ Mr Tarik El Atechi for a further 12 months until September 2004. Dr Max Coleman has returned to Edinburgh. Mrs Judith Stephen (Née Heald) continues work on the database until Christmas. Euro+Med is creating an on-line plant information system for Europe and the Mediterranean and will deliver a new synonymic checklist of the plants of Europe, to be available both in printed form and over the internet (see www.euromed.org.uk). Co-ordination meetings of the partners were held 1—2 March in Paris at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle and 2—3 May at the Institute of Botany and Botanic Garden of the University of Vienna with the Reading team (Dr Max Coleman, Mr Tarik El Atechi, Ms Judith Heald, Dr Stephen Jury and Professor Vernon Heywood) attending en masse. Tarik is still talking about his encounter with French restaurant loos and that Messrs Heywood and Jury insisted on a visit to the Paris Mosque for lunch!

At present, the data is being converted from Richard Pankhurst's Pandora to the Botanic Garden Berlin Model with an internet editing system designed for Euro+Med and created by the Computer team there under Professor Walter Berendsohn. Further editing will then take place to complete the work. Tarik visited Berlin for a demonstration and training in the use of this new system, 12—15 November.

In January, Dr Stephen Jury attended a meeting of the Dutch project SynBioSys at the European Topic Centre for Biodiversity and Nature Conservation, Paris. This project, led by Dr Joop Schaminee of Wageningen, has a database of European vegetation and landscape and will develop links with Euro+Med.

PGR-Forum

Dr Stephen Jury and Professor Vernon Heywood have been appointed Advisors to this new EU Framework V Thematic Network concerning the conservation of the wild relatives of crop plants co-ordinated by Dr Nigel Maxted at the University of Birmingham. Earlier this year Stephen attended workshops held near Thessaloniki and in Prague, and Dr Nigel Maxted and his team visited Reading. Euro+Med will supply data on the

taxonomy of the wild relatives and liaise with Dr Helmut Knupffer at the Institut für Pflanzengenetik und

We wish her a long and very happy retirement.

Professor Chris Payne

Staff and postgraduates gathered together for a tea party in the School on 25 September to wish Professor Chris Payne, the Professor of Horticulture well for his forthcoming early retirement. Chris is looking forward to spending his garden centre/book tokens and to possibly writing a novel with his new pen!

Sami Rabei

Plant Sciences welcomed Professor Mohamed El Demerdash, Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Mansoura, New Damietta, Egypt, on a supervisory visit to his a PhD student, Mr Sami Rabei, who has been working in Reading under Dr Stephen Jury's supervision, but who now has returned to Egypt. Sami has been based in Lab. 103 where he was working on computer assisted identification of Egyptian Umbelliferae. We congratulate Sami and his wife on the recent birth of their second son.

Congratulations to the new PhDs

This time we are pleased to congratulate a long list of recent PhD graduates since our last News, including:

Prashant Mishra, Liz Kungu, Roger Kanton, Hossam Saleh, Josephene Tooley, Mathew Grant, Melpomeni Skoula (Mrs Chris Johnson), Riffat Malik, Hanan Tahir, Mark Spencer, Dana Jawdat, Sarah Bearchell, Nadia Haider, Wilbert Phillips, Elspeth Haston, Ian Keary, Ali Al Khatib, Mohammed Munir and Habibah Al-Menai.

This December sees The School of Plant Sciences with largest number of PhD graduates of any school!

Dr Liz Kungu is now working at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh and will soon be joined by Dr Elspeth Haston who will be a Sibbald Fellow working on the floral ontogeny of the Gesneriaceae.

WEDDINGS

Congratulations to Judith Heald on her marriage on November 1st to Tim Stephen in Sevenoaks. The reception was held in Tonbridge Wells. Judith has returned from her honeymoon and is again working for Euro+Med until Christmas on Professor Frank Bisby's grant. Judith works mainly from her home in Biggleswade.

Congratulations to Louise Dyga who married Adrian Cross in Meare, Somerset on the 8th November before a honeymoon in Barbados.

GBIF

The Electronic Catalogue subcommittee of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility recently met in Reading in Black Horse House. They were treated to six presentations on our bioinformatics projects in Lab 106 and downstairs in the Lab A Bioinformatics Room: EuroCat, Euro+Med, Biodiversity World, Peter Brewer's PhD project, ILDIS and Species 2000. GBIF seemed impressed by our activities and hosted a dinner at the Highwayman for some of the Centre for Plant Diversity and Systematics. It was good to meet some friends on this committee and welcome them to Reading, including Dr Karen Wilson (Sydney).

cannot count the times I have heard her referred to as a lovely person. It was this aspect of her character that explains why she constantly played down the seriousness of her battle with ill health. She just didn't want her

Carol Hora (1915—2003)

Jeffrey Harborne was a quiet, unassuming man, a likeable father-figure around the School of Plant Sciences, always prepared to help and never bearing grudges. He will be remembered in the Reading School of Plant Sciences as a very great teacher. This is remarkable, as at the John Innes Institute he was too nervous to even give lectures, something he forced himself to overcome. He was happiest in his white lab coat. At Reading Jeffrey Harborne developed a phenomenal research output, made possible by the very successful partnership with his distinguished colleague, Dr Christine Williams. He published over 40 scientific books and authored over 270 review articles and research papers. He founded the journal *Phytochemical Analysis* and was executive editor of the journal *Phytochemistry* since 1972 and its editor-in-chief 1986—1999. The Linnean Society of London awarded him their Gold Medal for Botany in 1985. He was awarded the first silver medal of The Phytochemical Society of Europe in 1986 (he had been their secretary 1967—1972). The tenth silver medal of the International Society of Chemical Ecology in 1993 and the Pergamon Phytochemistry Prize in 1993. His outstanding research was crowned by him being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in March 1995.

Jeffrey was also a devout Anglican and great servant of his local community, being churchwarden at Christchurch for many years, sometime member of the Deanery Synod and Foundation Governor of the local church school, something most people knew nothing about.

Royal Horticultural Society

We offer our congratulations to Dr David Grey, formerly Head of Horticulture Research International, East Malling and Wye, on being appointed the Director of Horticulture, following the retirement of Joyce Stewart.

The RHS is funding a studentship to enable a student to study our MSc in Plant Diversity in autumn 2004. The award will provide financial support while inspiring students to contribute much needed research into the identification, classification and conservation of garden-worthy plants. The student will work with botanists at Wisley and Reading and will be provided with a choice of research project, which will form part of their course. Further details are available at www.rhs.org.uk/research and for course enquiries, write to Dr Alastair Culham at the address at the end of this News. Dr Stephen L. Jury, the Curator has been reappointed for a further term of five years to the RHS Science and Horticultural Advice Committee.

Meetings



Implementing the Global Strategy for Plant

The 2004 programme (view in [HTML](#) or [PDF](#) format) brings together a range of experts in the field of molecular systematics. Contributors include:

Dr Daniel Barker (School of Animal and Microbial Sciences, University of Reading), **Professor Richard Bateman** (Department of Botany, Natural History Museum, London), **Dr Neil Caithness** (Department of Botany, Natural History Museum, London), **Dr James Cotton** (Department of Zoology, Natural History Museum, London), **Dr Alastair Culham** (Course Organiser -School of Plant Sciences, University of Reading), **Professor Jim Dunwell** (Department of Agricultural Botany, University of Reading), **Ms Ruth Eastwood** (Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford), **Dr Peter Foster** (Department of Zoology, Natural History Museum, London), **Mr George Gibbings** (School of Plant Sciences, University of Reading), **Dr Julie Hawkins** (Course Organiser - School of Plant Sciences, University of Reading), **Dr Robert Hirt** (Department of Zoology, Natural History Museum, London, to be confirmed), **Dr Andrew Meade** (School of Animal and Microbial Sciences, University of Reading), **Professor Mark Pagel** (School of Animal and Microbial Sciences, University of Reading), **Dr Vincent Savolainen** (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew), **Dr Mark Wilkinson** (Department of Zoology, Natural History Museum, London, to be confirmed).

The practical element of this course includes guided project work involving the downloading and editing of DNA sequence, sequence alignment, analysis and interpretation of data. This work is assessed through a presentation for those wishing to gain credits (10 ECTS, 20 credits for Reading students).

Please email molecular.systematics@reading.ac.uk to be added to our short course mailing list, or for more information. The fee for the course is £550 including lunch, tea and coffee. Accommodation is available separately.

Bookings for the course are now open. Please send enquiries to:
molecular.systematics@reading.ac.uk

The Herbarium and Plant Identification Service Contacts

Please visit www.herbarium.reading.ac.uk or: www.collectionsgateway.org.uk