



# Plant Science Laboratories

## Herbarium News No. 36

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It has been over two years since the last *Herbarium News* was issued. The problem has been that there has been so much happening that it has become too daunting a task to report it all! However, so many momentous things have occurred that it is essential to bring you up-to-date!

Stephen L Jury, Senior Research Fellow and Editor

Please continue to send in items of news to: Dr Stephen L Jury, Department of Botany, Plant Science Laboratories, The University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 6AS, UK, Telephone: +44 (0)118 931 8169 Fax: +44 (0)118 975 3676 e-mail: [s.l.jury@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.jury@reading.ac.uk)

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### **NEW PROFESSOR AT READING**

We are especially pleased to report that our established Chair of Botany has been taken by Dr Frank Bisby of Southampton. Many of you know of Frank's work on ILDIS (International Legume Database and Information System) and his recent project SPECIES 2000. Information on both projects can be found on the World Wide Web. E.mail address for ILDIS and Species 2000 are: [ILDIS@reading.ac.uk](mailto:ILDIS@reading.ac.uk) and [SP2000@reading.ac.uk](mailto:SP2000@reading.ac.uk) respectively.

Frank has been a leading player on the database front, and leading light of TDWG of which Dr Stephen Jury is currently the Chairman. [TDWG is the Taxonomic Databases Working Group, not the Telephone Deregulation Working Group which you may also encounter on the WWW!] We welcome the strengthening of Plant Taxonomy at Reading through this appointment and look forward to reporting numerous extra activities in *Herbarium News*.

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### **PROFESSOR JOHN S. PARKER**

Professor John Parker left Reading for Cambridge last year. He is now the Director of the University Botanic Garden and living in the house of the Superintendent, the late Peter Orriss, on the site. He is now established and is working on a series of schemes to improve and develop the garden. We wish John every success and congratulate him on becoming a Fellow of St Catherine's College. [He is sharing college rooms with Professor Donald Broom, sometime Professor of Zoology here].

After John's departure, the department has been ably run by Dr John Barnett who continues as Head of Department until into next year.

Professor Parker will be declared a member of the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society at their next AGM. He will continue to serve on their Science & Horticultural Advice Committee.

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### **PROFESSOR J B HARBORNE, FRS**

Since the last *Herbarium News*, Professor Jeffrey Harborne has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. We send our belated congratulations.

Jeffrey was educated at Wycliffe College and the University of Bristol (BSc 1949, PhD 1953 and DSc 1966). After a postdoctoral position at the University of California he began his long phytochemical career as a biochemist at the John Innes Institute in 1955 where he carried out some of the first studies on the genetics of flower pigments. In 1965 he moved to the University of Liverpool to work on the chemosystematics of the family Umbelliferae with Professor V H Heywood, whom he followed to the University of Reading in 1968 as Research Fellow and then Reader in the Department of Botany. He was awarded a Personal Professorship in 1976 and was appointed to the Chair of Botany in 1987. Jeffrey Harborne retired on 30 September, 1993 but has continued to play a very active role in the Department of Botany both in teaching and research as Emeritus Professor.

Readers of *Herbarium News* will be aware of Professor Harborne's world-wide reputation as an acknowledged expert in flavonoids, chemosystematics and ecological biochemistry and of his now classic book *Comparative Biochemistry of the Flavonoids*. More recently his research had become ecologically orientated especially towards the identification of

insect antifeedants and of antimicrobial substances. This work led to the production of his very popular undergraduate textbook *Introduction to Ecological Biochemistry*, which is now in its fourth edition and which has been translated into Japanese, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian. *Plant Biochemistry* edited by Dey and Harborne, has now been issued in paperback (London, Academic Press, 1998, ISBN 0 12 799214 6) and is selling well!

Professor Harborne has received five international awards in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the fields of chemotaxonomy and coevolutionary biology. These include the Gold Medal in Botany of the Linnean Society of London (1985), the first Silver Medal of the Phytochemical Society of Europe (1986), an award from the Phytochemical Societies of Europe and North America 'for outstanding lifelong contributions to the discipline of phytochemistry throughout the world' (1992), the Silver Medal of the International Society of Chemical Ecology (1993) and the Pergamon Phytochemistry Prize (1993).

At present Jeffrey is working on medicinal plants with a grant from the Leverhulme Trust to study the phytochemistry of the genus *Tanacetum*. He is also completing a two-volume work with his friend Herbert Baxter called *The Handbook of Flavonoid Pigments*.

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## **TIM UPSON**

Another Reading loss to Cambridge is Tim Upson who very recently became the Superintendent of the Botanic Garden. At present Tim will live in the house of the previous Director, Donald Piggott, but this is being done up for him and he expects to move in at the end of this year.

Tim, unlike his predecessor, will also be expected to take an active part in research. Tim has successfully completed his PhD thesis on *Lavandula* and graduated recently.

Congratulations Tim on this prestigious appointment and on your doctorate.

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## **HEAD OF SCHOOL**

Since the last *Herbarium News*, Professor H F van Emden has retired as Head of the School of Plant Sciences and has been replaced by Professor Philip John. Congratulations to Philip, but also commiserations for all the extra work of administration!

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## **5\* STATUS**

The last Government Research Assessment Exercise (after much hard work on Philip's part) resulted in the highest possible grade of 5\*. Thanks to all friends and workers who

helped, especially our research collaborators in our Associated Institutes. Now we have the tough job to maintain our position ready for the next one in four year's time.

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## **WORLD WIDE WEB**

Why not visit us on the WWW? Our address is:

<http://www.herbarium.reading.ac.uk/> The production and postage of *Herbarium News* make an enormous hole in our budget. You can help by receiving it by e.mail. Please let us have your e.mail address! Please contact Dr Stephen Jury: [s.l.jury@reading.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.jury@reading.ac.uk) to subscribe. There is no limit to the number of electronic subscriptions. Note that you can now view *Herbarium News* through our Web pages (see [INDEX](#)) and also view some back numbers.

If you receive a paper copy, please check we have your address correct and advise us accordingly.

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## **PALESTINIAN INSTITUTE FOR ARID LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, HEBRON**

Readers may remember Dr Hani Abu Sbaih (Ph.D 1995, 'The taxonomy and biodiversity of the genus *Orobanche* L. section *Trionychon* Wallr.')

who returned to the West Bank and then after a short interval, became a member of staff of this Institute. We now hear that he has become the "General Director" and congratulate him on this promotion.

Both he and Amani send their greetings to all who knew him and report that they and the children are well, though they still live in Tubas, 145km north of Hebron and Hani is having to commute weekly.

Because of Palestinian passport regulations, Hani's surname has become Daraghma, instead of Abu Sbaih!

[Hani and Amani may care to note that their efforts to teach some Arabic to me were much appreciated and have proved very helpful on recent visits to Morocco. He will be interested to know that further progress has been made since, as I have been attending some evening classes this autumn given by Mrs Samia Ibrahim, wife of another Ph.D student who also worked on *Orobanche* with Dr Don Drennen at the same time. Stephen]

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## **OUKAÏMEDEN AND THE HIGH ATLAS**

This was the name given to a plant-collecting expedition to Morocco by Mr Alistair Griffiths (Part III, Botany Hons.) who raised over £5000 for it from a series of grants and donations. Alistair was accompanied by Dr Stephen Jury (Herbarium Curator) and Miss

Sarah Darwin (Part II, Botany Hons.) from the University, and Professor Mohamed Rejdali and Mr Mohamed Ait Lafkih (technician) of the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire, Hassan II, Rabat, as well as Mr Assou Abaouz, a student at the École Nationale Forestière d'Ingénieurs, Salé.

The Reading party flew to Morocco to join their Moroccan collaborators before setting off in a Land Rover to cross the Middle and High Atlas Mountains between El-Ksiba and Tinerhir, using the mountain village of Imilchil as a base for part of the time. Mohamed Oufkir, a driver used to taking Exodus Expeditions through the area, proved to have exhaustive and invaluable local knowledge of the region and took a full part in the scientific role of the Expedition.

The route from El-Ksiba to Tinerhir was a recognised Land Rover track, though only passable with difficulty in places. Although, as expected, certain areas were overgrazed, the high altitudes resulted in many interesting plants being found in flower. These included High Atlas endemics, such as *Centranthus battandieri* Maire, *Globularia nainii* Batt., *Mentha gattefossii* Maire and *Campanula mairei* Pau, rarities such as *Daucus setifolius* Desf., *Laserpitium gallicum* L. and *Seseli nanum* Dufour (this last erroneously given as an endemic to the Pyrenees in *Flora Europaea*). The route back to Rabat was via Amellago, Assou's home village and we were delighted to join in luncheon at a happy family reunion. It enabled us to photograph and collect some of the largest known specimens of *Fedolia aretioides* (Bunge) Ulbr., a member of the Chenopodiaceae which forms rock-like cushions in extremely arid areas. A total in excess of 660 specimens was collected for the Rabat and Reading herbaria, plus duplicates for exchange.

A second phase enabled Alistair to study *Cupressus atlantica* Gaussen, a cypress tree known only from a very small area around the Oued Nfiss, south of Asni in the High Atlas, and the subject of his part III undergraduate project. Alistair was helped here by Professor Ahmed Achhal, also of the IAV, Rabat, who provided unpublished data from his Ph.D thesis, and Mohamed Ait Lafkih who was familiar with the area and a fluent Berber speaker, coming from Moulay Brahim, a nearby village. *Cupressus atlantica* statistics were taken and observations on physical condition, seed and herbarium samples from 100 trees all for analysis at the University of Reading. It is hoped that this will enable the relationship of this species to be ascertained, as recent works have regarded it as belonging to the rare Algerian endemic, *Cupressus dupreziana* Camus. These species are closely allied to *Cupressus sempervirens* L., a widely planted Mediterranean species. Correct taxonomy of this group is essential if these rare taxa are to be successfully conserved, and this is the goal of Alistair's research.

The final phase was to study the plants and vegetation around Oukaïmeden, a popular winter ski resort at 2600m, south of Marrakech, about to undergo further development. It is surrounded by a flora especially rich in endemic species.

Sarah, a trained botanical artist, not only helped with the routine processing of the scientific collections, but drew a selection of the species seen.

At Oukaïmeden the party stayed in the hotel 'Chez JuJu', providing an excellent base for operations. Daily excursions were made on foot to climb Jbel Oukaïmeden itself, the north face of Jbel Angour as far as possible, and to examine the aquatic vegetation around the lake and outflow stream, nearby cliffs and ruderal flora of the village. In all, about 340 specimens were collected, complementing collections from previous visits made earlier in the year.

The 1020 specimens are now being actively processed in Reading and Rabat. Collection data has already been entered in BRAHMS and labels are being generated and specimens mounted. After identification is complete, duplicates will be distributed.

The Reading team were delighted in fulfilling their aims and are inspired to revisit Morocco and see their good friends again.

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## **FLORA IBERICA**

We congratulate the Flora Iberica team in getting volumes five and eight published recently. Volume five covers Ebenaceae to Saxifragaceae and eight

Haloragaceae to Euphorbiaceae. (Volume six will cover Rosaceae and seven Leguminosae and are expected to be published next year.)

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## **CHOROLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN THE EUROPEAN FLORA**

This was the title of a symposium run by the Committee for Mapping the Flora of Europe, 8 - 10 August 1997, at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Professor V H Heywood and Dr Stephen Jury read a joint paper with Professor Mohamed Rejdali, 'Spanish plants of interest in Morocco'.

The *Atlas Florae Europaeae* project is based in Helsinki and has now published 11 volumes of maps of European plants. A twelfth volume completing the taxa in volume one of *Flora Europaea* will be issued next year. Work has already started on families in volume two. The work is also being made available over the WWW.

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## **OPTIMA ITER VIII, 1 - 21 JUNE 1997**

This year's OPTIMA (Organisation for the Phytotaxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area) plant-collecting expedition was held in Calabria, S. Italy and ably organised by Professor F-M Ramondo (Palermo), Professor G. Cesca (Cosenza) and Professor G. Spampinato (Reggio di Calabria). Over 2000 gatherings were made from Aspromonte in the south to Monte Pollino in the north (where the party just strayed over the border into Basilicata). Dr Stephen Jury took part on behalf of the University of

Reading, and thus our herbarium will receive a set of the specimens in due course. This is an extremely under-botanized area and this year's work has added several new records to the flora of southern Italy. No doubt many more records will become apparent as the material is sorted and studied early next year. Reading has been fortunate in participating in all but one of these itinera (S. Spain, Israel, Sicily, Cyprus, Morocco, W. Spain and E.C. Portugal, Greece, S. Italy and with specimens from our other home-based expeditions and exchanges now has an excellent collection of Mediterranean flora. Next year's Iter will be to the Black Sea Coast of Bulgaria.

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## NCCPG GRAND PLANT SALE

The local Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire group of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens held a 'Grand Plant Sale' on Sunday 25 May, 11am - 3pm, in the School of Plant Sciences car park. Over 20 stalls of professional nurseries offered a great variety of plants for sale: small alpins, herbaceous plants, shrubs and even trees.

The sunny day brought out the crowds and over £1000 was raised for charity funds. In addition, the Cystic Fibrosis Society manned a much needed refreshment stall and helped their funds to c. £125. The Friends of the Harris Garden manned our Garden gate and talked to visitors, raising some £250 for our Garden funds.

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## ALIEN PLANTS AT RNG

The richness of the herbarium at Reading University (**RNG**) in alien plant species found in the British Isles may not be known to all readers. This is primarily due to the incorporation of many sheets from the very large private herbaria of Dr H.J.M. Bowen and the late J.E. Lousley, and to a much lesser extent E.C. Wallace (who made no serious attempt at studying alien plants).

Many details about JEL's herbarium and his love of adventive plants can be found in *Watsonia*, 11:312 and 11:287-290 (1977). His collection of wool aliens, collected by himself and others, is probably the most comprehensive in the world: it starts as W001, *Medicago truncatula*, collected 15 October 1955 at Offenham (Worcs) and ends at W3771, *Digitaria diffusa*, collected 3 November 1975 from a root grown on in his own garden at Streatham (Surrey), just two months before his death on 6 January 1976. The great majority were checked by himself at **BM** and **K**, sometimes with assistance from their staff, or sometimes by experts further afield. Some are named only to genus or family, or bear only provisional specific names pencilled in: he took the greatest care to ensure that all names were as correct as possible. His remaining aliens were collected from many different sources, but noticeably include few garden escapes or relicts. He was unimpressed by seeds that had travelled only a short distance from their parent - maybe only yards - whereas the wool aliens had mostly travelled at least 1000 miles.

The specimens in HJMB's herbarium are a great contrast, and hence very complementary: they provide specimens of all those horticultural plants that JEL missed or eschewed. HJMB has visited those sites that JEL would not make an effort to visit, notably parks, estates and derelict gardens. HJMB has spent hundreds of hours in the herbarium at **RNG**, naming not only his own gatherings but those of many others, usually during breaks from his chemistry lectures. Although now retired in Dorset, there is still an annual contribution of herbarium specimens, including many aliens for incorporating in **RNG**.

Other contributors of alien plants are not in the same league. However, small but significant collections have been received over the years from E.J. Clement, Sally Foster, C.G. Hanson, T.B. Ryves and others. Indirectly, specimens from other collectors, notably D. McClintock and the late M. McCallum Webster have reached **RNG** as sheets within JEL's herbarium.

It is pleasing to report that many of these specimens have been of value in compiling *Alien plants of the British Isles* by E J Clement & M C Foster (London: B.S.B.I., 1994 : ISBN 0 901158 23 2) and *Alien grasses of the British Isles* by T B Ryves, E J Clement and M C Foster (London: B.S.B.I., 1996 : ISBN 0 901158 27 5). Both valuable works with good nomenclature, English vernacular names and references to checked illustrations for almost 5000 species.

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## **VALVONA & CROLLA, EDINBURGH**

Previous issues of *Herbarium News* have occasionally contained details of interesting places with good food for visiting botanists. Visitors to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh may well have already heard of Valvona & Crolla, for the quality of the food in this famous Italian delicatessen is legendary with its wonderful breads and enormous selection of quality olive oils. (Seen recently on TV when interviews on Scottish devolution were recorded there!) However, there is a Caffè Bar up steps at the back of the shop. So, when Sabina offered to take me there for a light lunch, the opportunity was seized with delight.

The attractive eating area is a long narrow room, well-lit and adorned with Tim Cockburn's paintings and prints of Italy (for sale). A team of pleasant staff in green Valvona & Crolla shirts and long white aprons efficiently waited on us. We ordered freshly-baked panatella (from the V & C bakery) served warm and filled with mozzarella, aubergines, roasted tomato and fresh basil, and freshly-baked focaccia (flat olive oil bread) with lightly smoked ham and fontina. Each came conveniently in two halves, so Sabina and I swapped portions. Both were excellent. Each day a different balsamic vinegar and olive oil are used in the salads, our day it was 'Dukes of Modena' and 'Fior Fiore', respectively. An interesting touch. However, it was the Torta di Cioccolata with 70% cocoa solids that I will remember. (Sabina claimed her Tiramisu was excellent as well.) With house wine, 1/2l of Monteforte mineral water, a cappuccino and a caffè latte our bill was around £10 a head. We considered this good value for a quality meal in such



a place as central Edinburgh. We did not have to wait for a table, though I suspect the establishment will become more and more popular. The only black mark given was having to wait for our bill when the computerised till seemed to crash. However, I shall return when I have an excuse to go to Edinburgh again!

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## **BOTANICAL TRANSECT OF SOUTHERN PATAGONIA**

This was an international project, sponsored and funded by the Royal Society of London, the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas, Argentina and the Instituto de la Patagonia, Punta Arenas, Chile, commenced in 1975 and was brought to a fruitful conclusion in 1981. The objectives of the programme were as follows: (1) A study of the flora and vegetation of Patagonia between 51° and 52°S. lat., and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans; (2) Preparation of a complete and critical catalogue of the flora of the region, including both phanerogams and cryptogams; (3) Determination of the vegetation communities and the preparation of a phytosociological map of the Transect; (4) Determination of correlations between the distribution of plants and vegetation with such features as climate, soils, etc; (5) A search for criteria which permit an evaluation of the degradation of vegetation and soils as a result of human influence; (6) Training of younger, less experienced, colleagues in the methods of work involving groups of professional botanists having different backgrounds, experience and knowledge.

Coloured maps were produced pertaining to items 3-5 above. They are based on 1112 relevés, undertaken by Dr Fidel A. Roig (Mendoza) and his team within the programme, which are representative of the vegetational variation within the 28,000 km<sup>2</sup> covered by the Transect. The maps follow international norms in that the gradation from red to blue reflects the progression from xeric conditions to those with increasing water-availability. Detailed descriptions of the phytosociological units shown in the maps are provided by Boelcke *et al.* (1985) and Roig and Faggi (1985). Spare copies of these maps exist at Reading and may be obtained from Dr S L Jury (address on p1).

Sadly, no spare copies of the books are available.

BOELCKE, O., MOORE, D.M. & ROIG, F.A., 1985 *Transecta Botánica* de la Patagonia Austral. Argentina: CONICYT. xxviii + 733pp.

ROIG, F.A. & FAGGI, A.M. 1985. Analisis Geobotánica de la Vegetación de la Transecta (with English translation by D.M. Moore). Argentina: CONICYT. 189pp.

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## **MEDITERRANEAN BOTANY IN THE FIELD IN SOUTHERN SPAIN 1998**

For almost thirty years, the Department of Botany of the University of Reading has run a field course for final-year students to Spain in springtime. In recent years, this has centred on the botanically diverse province of Almería in Eastern Andalucía, staying on the coast within the Parque Natural de Cabo de Gata. A spectacular range of plants is encountered,

on a comprehensive programme of visits to very varied habitats. A visit to the Sierra Nevada also allows the changes in vegetation to be seen with increasing altitude.

The desertification in "The Badlands" with its arid climate, and areas with high salt concentration or gypsum present ideal opportunities for teaching physiological ecology and plant/animal interactions. Visits to burnt areas enable plant recovery and the role of fire in Mediterranean ecosystems to be demonstrated. The resourcefulness of local farmers with crops under plastic is seen and the potential problems and economic costs for the European Union are discussed.

I believe we could accommodate a few interested naturalists, but an immediate reply is needed.

Accommodation is for eleven nights in good self catered apartments in the tiny village of Las Negra and for three nights in an hotel in the spa town of Lanjaron situated at the entrance of Las Alpujarras, the valley system of the southern flank of the Granadan Sierra Nevada. The dates are 19 March - 2 April (subject to flight availability and changes).

For further details please contact Dr S L Jury (details at top) or e.mail Dr J Ross: [J.D.Ross@reading.ac.uk](mailto:J.D.Ross@reading.ac.uk)

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## **FLORISTIC DIVERSITY OF NORTHERN MOROCCO**

Our EU-sponsored Moroccan project has now been completed and the final report accepted by Brussels. The checklist is complete and has been translated into French and is being edited for publication. Workers and visitors to our herbarium will have seen the three large volumes of the manuscript being used.

The project resulted in a number of taxonomic, chorological and nomenclatural notes being published in *Lagasalia*, 18(2) : 221-342 (1996). Five new species have been described, four of which are based on specimens collected by Reading expeditions. Another ten infraspecific taxa have been described and some 35 new combinations made. At least 14 taxa have been recorded as new to N. Morocco, plus a number of established 'aliens'.

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## **GORDON ROWLEY WRITES AGAIN...**

Almost exactly seven years ago the British Cactus and Succulent Society Convention was held at the University of Reading. Gordon Rowley and fellow enthusiast, Keith Mortimer, put on a large exhibition entitled 'A Pictorial History of Succulents'. This work has since been developed by Gordon into *A History of Succulent Plants* just published by the Strawberry Press, California, ISBN 0 912647 16 0 at \$119.

Friends will recall Gordon's enthusiastic winter talk and wonderful illustrations on succulent plants in Plant Science Laboratories. The book continues in Gordon's inimitable style and is sumptuously illustrated throughout its 424 pages with spectacular colour photographs, diagrams, figures and tables.

Gordon's book is at present my bed-time reading. However, unlike Davis and Heywood's *Principles of Angiosperm taxonomy* where one wakes up in the night as the book falls off the bed, here one reads avidly into the small hours only to oversleep in the morning!

Gordon has box files in his living room labelled "Books written", "Books in progress", "Other possible books" and "Impossible books". We hope that the second and third box-files are still rather full!

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### **ADVISORY PANEL ON NOMENCLATURE AND TAXONOMY FOR HORTICULTURE**

The Royal Horticultural Society has set up an advisory panel to provide authoritative guidance on nomenclatural and taxonomic issues. This Panel, under the chairmanship of Mr Chris Brickell, includes Dr Stephen Jury, and reports to the new RHS Science Committee which includes Professor John Parker. It is proposed that the committee will advise and act as a filter, ensuring that only those name changes which are unavoidable or which have positive value to gardeners are taken up for use in horticulture. Its aims are to provide uniformity, accuracy and stability in nomenclature.

At first, the Panel's main work has concerned problems amongst the plants listed in *The Plant Finder*, since this is now a RHS publication. (It also helps with the nomenclature for use in all publications of the Society, and including the new *A-Z Dorling-Kindersley Encyclopædia* edited by Chris Brickell). The incorporation of *The Plant Finder* database into the BG base computer system at Wisley widens the scope of the committee to encompass all plant names used in horticulture. It welcomes any queries and Dr Jury would be happy to advise and contact the secretary, Dr Alan Lesley, at Wisley. Other members of the committee are: Mr Adrian Whiteley (Wisley), Dr Tony Lord (RHS), Mr Piers Trehane (compiler of *Index hortensis*) and Ms Susyn Andrews (Kew).

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### **INDEX KEWESIS ON CD-ROM**

The Herbarium has recently acquired the updated *Index Kewensis* on CD-ROM for use on its computer. This version includes Brummitt & Powell's *Authors of Plant Names* and for a number of authors (but not all!) it is possible to click across.

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### **BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE BRITISH ISLES (BSBI) ANNUAL EXHIBITION AND PLANT COLLECTING MEETINGS**

Saturday 29 November saw over 220 botanists, amateur and professional in Plant Science Laboratories to view an exhibition of posters, plant material and computer displays. The day ended with a glass of wine in the foyer followed by a buffet supper in Park House where discussion continued.

The following Sunday saw a day of talks and demonstrations on plant collecting in our lecture theatre with some 55 participants, including our MSc students. Mr Roy Vickery of the Natural History Museum spoke on 400 years of plant collecting and Kerry ten Kate of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, outlined the legal situation following the Rio Summit. An excellent luncheon was provided by Wessex Hall, though Lady Rosemary FitzGerald successfully managed to keep everyone awake afterwards. Stephen Jury demonstrated pressing and herbarium technique, and Dr Mark Watson of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, spoke about his exploits in China and Bhutan.

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### **PhD EXAMINATION RESULTS**

We congratulated Tim Upson on page 3, but also graduating with PhDs were Shahida Sulaiman, Michael Maunder and Anning Asante. Congratulations all round!

Bill Baker has submitted his thesis on Calamoid Palms and expects to be examined next month by Mme H elene Joly of Montpellier.

Cymon Cox hopes to submit his thesis on the phylogeny of the *Bryales* early next year. (We should also congratulate Cymon on his new job at the Natural History Museum).

James Compton is racing Cymon and may even submit his thesis on *Actaea* and *Cimicifuga* first!

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### **MSc EXAMINATION RESULTS**

Congratulations to the recent graduates from our MSc courses, first the new Masters degree, *Vegetarian Survey and Assessment*: Janet Jackson, Gail Quartly-Bishop, Victoria Russell and Siobhan Skeggs all pass and Janet Burnell and Ruth Maier pass with distinction; the MSc in *Pure and Applied Plant Taxonomy*: Barbara Bulmer-Thomas, John Clennett, Andrew Doran, Ary Keim, Melissa McMahan, Donald Murray, Humphrey Muiruri, Melissa Newman, Andrea Prichard, Joanna Sawyer, Dionyssios Vassiliades and Mary Vick.

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### **BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY AT PSL**

It was the turn of the Mercia Group of the British Iris Society to organise the Annual General Meeting. Their Chairman, Fred Webbing, with myself approached Dr Stephen Jury, also a member of the British Iris Society, to hold the AGM again at Reading.

About 40 members and friends met for coffee and biscuits in the Foyer. In the lecture theatre, the first speaker Geoff Wilson from Louth, Lincolnshire, enthused about his experiences growing and breeding Orchid Irises, illustrating his talk with many slides. During a buffet lunch Geoff sold many of his irises; those left he gave to the Department. Plants from members' gardens were also on sale, as were cards, books, etc. Members also had to vote for the best photographs in three classes. I also took a few members on a short tour of the greenhouses and iris tribe.

In the afternoon session, Stephen enlightened us about his plant hunting in Morocco, and his involvement with classifying the Northern Moroccan flora. This was accompanied by slides of the area and Iridaceae found.

After tea and biscuits, the AGM took place with a change of many of the Officers. I left the Executive Committee after 30 years. The day ended at 5.45.

The Mercia Group is presenting a copy of *A Guide to Species Iris* edited by Anne Blanco-White and published by Cambridge University Press at £65, to the Herbarium library as a token of their thanks for an enjoyable day. Both Stephen and myself were contributors to this book.

*Sid Linnegar*

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## **THE ATLAS FLORAE EUROPAEAE PROJECT**

The Atlas Florae Europaeae Project (AFE), mapping the distribution of European vascular plants, is based in the Botanical Museum, Finnish Museum of Natural History in Helsinki, and has now (1972 - 1966) published 11 volumes with altogether 2927 maps of European vascular plants. The twelfth volume, completing the taxa in Flora Europaea volume one, is planned to be issued next year.

Volumes 1 to 11 of AFE were edited by Jaakko Jalas and Juha Suominen (vol. 11 together with Raino Lampinen). After the completion of AFE vol. 12, Jalas and Suominen are going to leave the editorial tasks to Arto Kurtto (responsible for text), Raino Lampinen (maps) and Tapani Lahti (database manager, programming). Kurtto has already started on Rosaceae, the first family in the second volume of Flora Europaea.

Apart from the 'classic', printed AFE volumes, the new editors are planning to make the data available in different digital formats. The maps published in AFE 1 - 11 have been scanned and digitized with custom software in order to make the distribution data available as an electronic atlas. The free evaluation version (for Windows95 and Windows NT) of this program can be downloaded through the AFE website, <http://www.helsinki.fi/kmus/afe.html>

The extremely long time span of the AFE project (approximately 150 years using the present mapping system) creates a number of problems that the database approach may alleviate. The dynamic nature of the AFE database makes it possible to update distribution data for the published taxa, as well as to make distribution data, collected from the national databases, available as preliminary maps on WWW, independently of the editorial process. Therefore, the AFE database may gradually transform into a European floristic surveillance network that expands the original mission of the AFE.

Furthermore, changes to the status categories used in mapping and the AFE grid system are being considered. Now there are several pan-European biological mapping projects (vascular plants, mammals, amphibians and reptiles, birds, invertebrates), each using different mapping grid.