

**THE UNIVERSITY OF READING
School of Plant Sciences**

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Our photo shows Janet Cubey (left), Senior Botanist at Wisley, with Nicola Beharrel, our first RHS MSc Scholar in one of the Reading greenhouses.

Herbarium activities

New website

A new website for the Herbarium was planned by Messrs Jury and Rutherford and the computer work undertaken by Mr Tarik El Atechi and Mr Hassan Rankou. The site was launched by Professor Sir Ghilleen T. Prance on 16th February at a reception in the Herbarium. This had a follow-up when British Satellite News came and made a three-minute news video for broadcast in the Middle East. The website allows the data of about 32,000 specimens held in BRAHMS, our Herbarium database, to be queried over the Internet, as well as the 976 Jill Smythies paintings to be viewed and queried (they had data on cards which is entered into BRAHMS). Also available for consultation are data on some of the individual collectors represented, plus surplus books for sale and exchange, and our *index seminum*. To save on costs, the Moroccan websites (Moroccanplants.net [English version] and Plantesdaumaroc.net [French version]) have been moved to the Herbarium site. They have

Orobanchaceae. There were also several hundred British gatherings by Ivens, a former WRO employee.

Progress on Ron Payne's grass herbarium

Ronnie continues to go through this collection, repairing and remounting some of the specimens before laying in. We are simply recording the numbers of specimens made by the most represented collectors and the geographical regions as to enter into BRAHMS at this stage would be beyond our resources.

Committee on Archives and Collections

Stephen Jury now meets each term with the curators of the other major University collections (The Museum of English Rural Life [<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/rhc/index.html>], The Ure Museum [which houses the largest collection of Greek ceramics in Britain: <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/Ure/index.php>], The Cole Museum of Zoology [<http://www.ams.rdg.ac.uk/zoology/colemuseum/>], Department of Typography collections [http://www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts/lt/home.html?centres/ephemera_studies/index.html], The University of Reading Main Library and Archives [

Menorca. He also was given permission to collect in the Tara Mountains of Serbia on the OPTIMA excursion and an export permit, so added another 100 gatherings to RNG. This is probably the first significant Serbian collection for our herbarium and includes a sample of *Picea omorika*, the Serbian Spruce.

Spain and Morocco

Obituaries

John Whiteman

We are very sad to report the death last September of MSc student, John Whiteman, just two weeks before submitting his project. John was awarded his MSc posthumously at the recent graduation. The congregation gave him a long dignified applause. After the ceremony, members of the School went to The Harris Garden with John's son and planted a *Magnolia wilsonii* in his memory.

John's family kindly gave the University his botanical books which have been placed in the University Main Library and MSc Laboratory collection. John had been Treasurer of the Saxifrage Society and had some runs of their *Magazine* which the Society said should be offered to interested students. I am pleased to report they were rapidly snapped up.

Robert (Bob) A. DeFillips (1939—2004)

Bob DeFillips died suddenly of heart disease last July. I knew him as one of the Research Assistants on *Flora Europaea* in Reading in the early 1970s. I remember his triumphal appearance in the Herbarium Prep Room for afternoon tea (those were the days!) announcing 'Here's *Cyperus*!' as he threw down his completed *Flora Europaea* manuscript. I also remember another afternoon teatime when the plumber was trying to unblock the herbarium sink, Bob appeared from the next room in a white shirt covered in dark splashes to announce: 'There's been some sort of explosion in our room'. Bob returned to Washington in 1974 to a distinguished career of 30 years in taxonomy and conservation at the Smithsonian. Their journal, *The Plant Press*, 7(4): 6 (Oct–Dec) contain a fuller obituary.

Past Meetings organised in Reading

Conference to facilitate and support the contribution of PlantNet members to the Global Strategy

This conference was attended by over 100 delegates and took place 7–8 January.

Molecular systematics short course

The usual spring molecular systematics short course, 23 March–5 April, was again full with 20 participants. It will be repeated again this year.

Legume workshop

This informal gathering took place 23rd September with Julie Hawkins in the chair. Current work on legumes was reviewed and presentations given, including by our Dawn Edwards: Systematics of the Genistoids with emphasis on the South African genus *Aspalathus* and Peter Brewer: Biodiversity World's legume demonstrator projects.

Making databases interoperable

13–16 July, an advanced workshop sponsored by the EU ENBI (European Network of Biodiversity Information) Programme and GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility).

Carnivorous Plant Society Meeting

The 18th September saw the Carnivorous Plant Society here again for a lecture on *Nepenthes* by Robert Cantley, proprietor of Borneo Exotics and now living in Sri Lanka.

Fern Meeting

A one-day symposium for students and visitors was held on Saturday 20th November on Reproduction in Ferns. The meeting was sponsored by the British Pteridological Society who provided the lecturers and demonstrations. Dr Fred Rumsey and Dr Johannes Vogel of the Natural History Museum both gave presentations.

Reading systematists around and about

Dr Stephen Jury presented a joint paper with his colleague Mr Tarik El Atechi and Mr Abdoun Otman at the PlantNet meeting held in the School of Plant Sciences on a collaborative project to set up a botanic garden in Morocco, 7th–8 Jan. Professor Heywood and Dr Alastair Culham also gave presentations.

Dr Stephen Jury gave a joint paper (with Dr Fred Rumsey) at a COST meeting on parasitic plants in Córdoba, Spain, 18th–22 Feb: *“A new system for *Orobanch*e taxonomy in Europe”*

Dr Stephen Jury and Mr Ronald Rutherford help Dr Jim Ross run the annual part III field course to SE Spain, 18 March–3 April.

At the 2nd World Botanic Gardens Congress held in Barcelona 19–23 April, Professor Heywood co-chaired a session on *“The botanic garden as a cultural and scientific heritage”* and presented a paper on *“The changing cultural and scientific heritage of botanic gardens”*. Dr Etelka Leadley, a former MSc and PhD graduate of the School arranged a dinner for other Reading graduates at the Congress, most of them students of Professor Heywood, including: Professor Sir Peter Crane (Kew, UK), Professor and Dr Al Eisawi (Jordan), Dr David Bramwell (Las Palmas, Spain), Dr James Cullen (Cambridge, UK), Dr Mike Maunder (Florida, USA), Dr Wendy Strahm (Gland, Switzerland), Dr Tim Upson (Cambridge) and Professor Benito Valdés (Spain).

Dr Stephen Jury attended as an advisor the Plant Genetics Research Forum (an EU-funded

Professor Vernon Heywood gave an invited Master Lesson on "Conserving species *in situ*" a review of the issues at the IV Planta Europa European Conference on the Conservation of Wild Plants held in Valencia, Spain, September 17-19. On 19 September at a special ceremony to celebrate the anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

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