

Organising Committee Report - 7th International Congress of Plant Pathology, 1998

Two thousand, two hundred and thirty delegates and 272 accompanying persons from 96 countries attended the 7th International Congress of Plant Pathology, or ICPP98 as it was styled. The top 10 countries represented were: UK - 536, USA - 470, Japan - 169, Australia - 122, Germany - 122, The Netherlands - 107, France - 75, India - 67, South Africa - 66 and Sweden - 52. The Congress proved as successful as the numbers indicated and was reputedly the largest single gathering of plant pathologists ever. It cost the organizers just over 750k to stage and was considered to benefit the local economy by over 2m. Sponsorship and donations totaling 214k were obtained.

There were 311 invited speakers and 1517 posters spread around six prestigious sites - the splendid new and purpose built Edinburgh International Conference Centre, a large marquee in the adjacent car park, the Usher Hall, and the Sheraton, Caledonian and Grosvenor Hotels. There were up to six concurrent sessions during the day and in the evenings a total of 35 meetings of special interest groups were held, including an open forum on Global Food Security. As the Congress was in effect the AGM of the ISPP several business meetings were also accommodated. There were 32 exhibitors in the Exhibition Hall.

A Royal visitor (HRH The Princess Royal, our patron, who performed the official opening), a UK Science Minister from the House of Lords (Lord Sainsbury of Turville, an Honorary President of the Congress) and a Nobel Peace Laureate (Norman Borlaug) all contributed to the sparkle of the occasion. The excitement was also enhanced with Congress coinciding with the start of the Festival Fringe, the Tattoo, and Film Festival.

Three attractive volumes of proceedings containing over 1700 abstracts were produced, plus a CD-ROM of abstracts which was considered by many to be original and valuable. All abstracts were also available via the Congress Web-site.

Seventy percent of delegates were housed in university accommodation. Forty-two per cent of delegates registered on-line and 48% of abstracts were submitted on-line.

The scientific excursions attracted the following number of delegates: Scottish Crop Research Institute - 133, Scottish Agricultural Science Agency/Scottish Agricultural College - 53, Royal Botanic Garden - 96 and Forest Research-Glentress Forest - 47.

Two Post-Congress tours were undertaken, one on cereals and potatoes with a total of 44 delegates and seven accompanied persons and a forest research tour involving 32 delegates and eight accompanied persons. The Scottish institutes considered both the excursions and tours to be a very worthwhile exercise.

The Congress ended with a banquet, in the splendidly transformed EICC exhibition hall, a ceilidh and "Beating the Retreat" by a pipe and drum band.

All who made an input to the Congress in any way should justifiably congratulate themselves on contributing to its undoubted success.

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