

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: 24th International Conference on Arabidopsis Research

Travel Dates: 24th-28th June 2013

Location: Sydney, Australia

Group member(s): Michael Skelly

Aims: Present PhD research at a major international conference and network with other scientists from around the world.

OUTCOME:-

The 24th International Conference on Arabidopsis Research (ICAR) 2013 was held in the beautiful and iconic city of Sydney in Australia. The meeting took place in the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre located in the busy and vibrant Darling Harbour, an excellent venue for large scientific meetings and was attended by approximately 700 scientists working on the model plant Arabidopsis. With a programme consisting of four full days of science and numerous social events, it was a busy week in Sydney and I learnt a lot. Importantly, the ultimate goal of using a model system such as Arabidopsis is to translate any knowledge into other systems with beneficial effect. This theme ran throughout the conference and some speakers were invited that worked on other plants that have benefited from Arabidopsis research, particularly crop species.

I am currently approaching the final year of my PhD and my research is focused on understanding how post-translational modification of proteins by the small ubiquitin-like modifier (SUMO) is regulated during plant immune responses. Uncovering the molecular mechanisms of the plant immune system is vital for us to improve crop breeding and develop new technologies to improve global food security. I was fortunate enough to have my abstract for the conference selected for oral presentation during a workshop session on proteomics and cellular signalling. My talk was well-received with many people asking questions and speaking to me afterwards about my research.

Sydney was an excellent choice of location for ICAR 2013 even though it coincided with the middle of the Australian winter! Lots of rain fell during the first few days of the

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

conference but luckily it cleared up for our boat trip to the conference dinner where we enjoyed stunning views of the famous Harbour Bridge and Opera House. I made many useful contacts with other researchers throughout the week and may even collaborate on a project with one of them.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank the James Rennie Bequest for the financial support that allowed me to travel to this excellent conference, which I found to be extremely rewarding.