

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST REPORT ON CONFERENCE

**Alex Lichius**

**Final year Ph.D. student, Fungal Cell Biology Group, ICB**

**Conference Title: 10<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Fungal Genetics including the *Neurospora* Satellite Meeting**

**Travel Dates: 28<sup>th</sup> March – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2010**

**Location: Leeuwenhorst Conference Centre, Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands**

**Aims: Presenting parts of my Ph.D. work in two invited talks, updating with novelties in the field and getting in touch with potential labs for further carrier development.**

---

## **OUTCOME :**

Although slightly overshadowed by our global financial crisis, **Cees van den Hondel** and his team excelled by putting together a scientifically and socially memorable 10<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Fungal Genetics in Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands. Thanks to the financial support from The University of Edinburgh I was able to attend and contribute to this meeting.

**The Conference Centre Leeuwenhorst** is located about 15km north of Leiden and within convenient range of Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam. The conference centre itself provided all amenities of a modern hotel complex and very good conference facilities. This included massive space for the presentation of posters which were up and easily accessible throughout the meeting. A definite plus to ensure constant scientific exchange. Apart from flower nurseries covering most of the surrounding area and just starting to bloom, there was not much else to do or see, without having to travel. Which was great from a scientific point of view, as most of the people were present and approachable most of the time. On the other hand, it unfortunately very much restricted contact with the Dutch culture. Nevertheless, a nearby forest area provided opportunities for relaxing walks.



**Conference Centre Leeuwenhorst**

The international organizing and scientific committees did an incredibly good job in putting together a program that included all major fungal model organisms covering the great diversity of modern fungal research. **Topics comprised:** 'Phylogeny and the Fungal Tree of Life', 'Fungal-Host Biology', 'Regulation of Gene Expression at the Genome Level', 'Physiology and Biochemistry', 'Sex and other Encounters', 'Cell Biology', 'Fungal and Oomycete Effectors' and 'Fungal Biotechnology'. The meeting was scheduled with five plenary lectures in the morning followed by seven talks in three parallel sessions in the afternoon. The keynote lecture was delivered by Arturo Casadevall, entitled 'Thoughts on the origin of virulence of pathogenic fungi', in which he tried to convince us that a global rise in temperature lead to explosive growth of fungi, including pathogens which ultimately lead to the extinction of the dinosaurs. Although he presented very little experimental evidence I fully believe him. Credits are due to all speakers who presented leading edge research on a level that was equally attractive and accessible for senior and junior scientists.



The '**Fungal Way of Living: Cell Biology**' session provided a lot of information directly applicable for my own work, and was also the session in which I had the pleasure to present parts of my Ph.D. project, entitled 'Tip-focused Rho GTPase activity and the actin cytoskeleton regulate directional tip growth of *Neurospora crassa* germlings'. I had the impression the talk was well received and triggered very interesting discussions on the following day - it was the last evening session, concluding at 11.05pm. It also resulted in a number of requests from other labs for plasmids and strains I've presented.

Besides the informal meetings in the evening, the **social program** included a mixed reception on the first evening and a fantastic closing party with live band on the last evening. All arranged in a lovely Indonesian ambience, including the food which was excellent.

Finally, the ***Neurospora* Satellite Meeting**, organized by **Martha Merrow** the day before the actual ECFG10 meeting, deserves special mentioning. As we were a small crowd – only about 15 people were able to attend – everything took place in a very relaxed and familiar way. It was an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and detailed information on experimental problems, which often proves difficult during the bustle of big meetings. For me it was great, as I had another chance to present my work by giving a seminar on ‘The *Neurospora* cell wall integrity MAPK MAK-1 in cell fusion and early fruitbody development’. Furthermore, it was nice to meet a few individuals from the *Neurospora* community that I haven’t had the chance to meet before.



A. Lichius (2010)

In summary, I had a successful and very enjoyable time. My personal outcome from this meeting is a long list of ideas and things to do, as well as practical tips which will have an important impact on my future work; especially to get my data ready and completed for publication. It was a fantastic meeting to conclude my time as Ph.D. student.

**Many thanks to everybody involved in making this possible, especially to the James Rennie Bequest Committee for awarding me a second time, which I regard as exceptional. Thanks!**

**Alex Lichius**

University of Edinburgh  
Institute of Cell Biology  
Fungal Cell Biology Group  
[A.Lichius@ed.ac.uk](mailto:A.Lichius@ed.ac.uk)