

# JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

## REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/Conference Title:** Gordon Research Conference 'Plant and Fungal Cytoskeleton' .....

**Travel Dates:** 2-9th August 2008 .....

**Location:** Il Ciocco, Barga, Italy.....

**Group Member(s):** Victoria Miller .....

**Aims:** 1] To present a poster containing the results of my PhD

2] To learn about up-to-date results in the field.....

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### OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The 10th Gordon Research Conference on Plant and Fungal cytoskeleton was held at Il Ciocco Hotel, near Barga, Italy from 2nd-9th August 2008. I was lucky enough to be able to attend, thanks in part to the travel award made to me by the James Rennie Bequest Fund.

Gordon Research Conferences have been held for over 75 years, and aim to bring together the forerunners of a field in an environment that fosters communication. A key part of this is the requirement that all attendees present data (with an emphasis on unpublished data), whether it is in the form of talks or of poster presentations. There is also a strong policy of confidentiality in order to foster open communication and so no public use can be made of data presented and no abstract books are supplied. In contrast to other conferences I have been to I found it surprisingly easy to talk to people, not only in the poster sessions but also during discussions over meals and late into the evening. The limited number of attendees (this was a 'large' conference with around 120 people present) and the isolated nature of the conference centre, with everyone staying on site, made it easy to strike up conversations with the added bonus that everyone was interested and worked in my general research area of cytoskeleton!

The conference covered a wide range of topics within the general area of cytoskeleton, and I found it fascinating to learn more about the role of actin and microtubules in plants (which in some cases is very different indeed from yeast). Of the many interesting talks I especially enjoyed a talk by James Mosley from the Nurse lab, who spoke of a new pathway that co-ordinates cell size with cell division (how do cells sense how big they are and use this information to trigger cell division?). More relevant to my own work, a talk by Dan McCollum included a new protein (Etd1) in the Septation Initiation Network in *S. pombe*, and described a potential role for this protein in relaying information about mitotic spindle length to the cell during cell division. This was of particular interest as I am currently studying whether this pathway regulates the localisation of my protein of interest.

The key attraction of the conference for me was the chance to present the results of my PhD to a wider audience. I presented a poster, 'Recruitment of Mto1 to the equatorial MTOC in fission yeast', describing the findings of my PhD. I was scheduled to present at 2/4 sessions, but ended up talking people through my poster at all four of the sessions (in between looking at other posters). I found it very encouraging to show my work to people; the feedback I received was very positive, including questions about future results that I am currently in the middle of doing the experiments for, and so was able to mention preliminary findings that were not on the poster. Dan McCollum came to see my poster and we had an interesting discussion on the role of the SIN pathway in microtubule organising centre assembly. I also had the chance to meet Mohan

Balasubramian who has given me a number of useful strains and who also had some interesting comments on my work.

To summarise, attending this conference has been a very valuable experience for me. I was able to present my findings to a wider audience and also to learn about new research within the field. This has left me motivated and excited to complete the final stages of my PhD. I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest Fund committee for funding my travel to this conference.