

## A Brief History of the International Symposia on Fish Parasites

The discipline of fish parasitology developed around the middle of the 20th Century and certainly by the 1960s, as a young PhD student, I referred to myself as a 'fish parasitologist'. However, the number of involved researchers in Western Europe and North America was small in comparison with those in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union (FSU), where the fields of aquaculture and both freshwater and marine parasitology were much more developed. Due to the facts that Soviet workers published in Russian and only a few of their books were translated, they rarely attended international meetings and there were only limited personal contacts, this discipline evolved relatively independently on either side of the 'Iron Curtain'. However, in 1983, through the perseverance and foresight of George Lom, Frank Moravec and colleagues at České Budějovice in the then Czechoslovakia, a meeting of 'ichthyoparasitologists' was arranged. This was a good site, as it was one which workers from both east and west could attend. I recall the meeting well (sharing a room with Robin Overstreet from the US), not only because of the presentations and English/Russian translations, but because of great 'names' who were there – these included influential Soviet workers, such as Oleg Bauer, Yuri Kurochkin, Alex Gusev, Amur Parukhin, Boris Kuperman and Valentina Nikolaeva, plus Kalman Molnár from Hungary, Glenn Hoffman and Gerry Esch from the US, Leo Margolis from Canada, Clive Kennedy and Jimmy Chubb from the UK, Klaus Rohde from Australia, Klaus Odening from Germany, a large contingent of Scandinavians and many others. At one barbecue I recall, along with many others being honourably assaulted by Czech fishermen armed with live carp. This very memorable meeting was such a success that it was decided to hold another meeting after four years.

The second meeting took place in 1987 at Tihany in the beautiful surroundings of Lake Balaton in Hungary, and was organised by Kalman Molnár and colleagues. Many of the same people attended this meeting, but included were more well-known names, such as Albina Gaevskaja and Anna Uspenskaja from the FSU, Ilan Paperna from Israel plus several workers from Japan and other parts of Asia.

The third meeting, certainly the most memorable, was in the Soviet Union and was organised by Eugeny Ieshko and colleagues at Petrozavodsk in Karelia. Memorable because it was 1991 and the time of the Soviet Coup d'État Attempt – tanks were on the streets of Moscow during the meeting and the Finnish contingent were all for walking for the border. In fact, although it was a worrying time for relatives, most had a really good time. At this meeting Oleg Bauer decided that the series of meetings needed a committee to discuss various aspects, such as future venues: 'David, you can be the chairman', he said to me, 'and we'll have Arthur, Ieshko, Molnár, Ogawa, Pugachev and Valtonen on the committee' – it was all very democratic. Actually, it proved to be an astute move, since the next venue fell through and the committee had to find a new one at short notice – something that has happened twice during the history of these meetings. I acted as Chairman until 1995 and was followed by Kazuo Ogawa (Japan) (1995–2003), Jo Van As (South Africa) (2003–2007) and Simonetta Mattiucci (Italy) (2007 – present). It was also at ISFP 3 in Karelia that Kazuya Nagasawa (Japan) proposed the preparation and circulation of the *International Ichthyoparasitological Newsletter*, which he edited for several years. This newsletter is currently at Issue 16 and is edited by Leslie Chisholm (Australia).

The fourth meeting in 1995 was intended to be in eastern Germany but was transferred to western Germany and organised by Rudolf Hoffman and colleagues in Munich. This was a huge and very successful meeting; perhaps the first that could really be termed truly international, with people from all continents (250 persons from 26 countries). This really put the series of meetings on the parasitological calendar, and all subsequent meetings have been well attended by fish parasitologists from all corners of the globe.

The fifth meeting, 1999, was back at České Budějovice and organised by Frank Moravec, Iva Dyková, Tomáš Scholz and colleagues. This was another well-attended and very successful meeting, although, like later meetings, with fewer delegates from the FSU countries. I recall some very nice social events.

ISFP 6 was held for the first time outside Europe in 2003. This meeting, organised by Jo Van As, Linda Basson and colleagues in Bloemfontein, South Africa, was the smallest of recent meetings and more in line with the size of the first three, but nevertheless very successful and enjoyable. Many delegates participated in wonderful pre- or post-conference holidays, taking full advantage of the spectacular scenery and wildlife for which South Africa is famous.

The most recent International Symposium on Fish Parasites took place to the north of Rome, at Viterbo in Italy, and was organised by Simonetta Mattiucci and colleagues in 2007. This was another large and successful meeting (320 people from 46 countries) sited in a wonderful ancient walled city full of places of

interest and good restaurants. The historical sites included the 'Pope's Palace', where the inauguration of the symposium took place and where the Bishop of Viterbo, in his welcome, referred to 'fish paradise' rather than 'fish parasites'. Among the social events was a concert of "Viterbo's Baroc Festival 2007" in the S. Martino al Cimino Cathedral.

The next meeting (ISFP 8), which will take place at Viña del Mar, Chile in 2011, will no doubt ensure that this well-established series continues to thrive.

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