

## THE LAST BRIGHTON

Brian Hicks, Editor of *Crop Protection Monthly*, and Hamish Kidd report on the 2002 BCPC Conference, held at Brighton for the last time

### Introduction

Delegates to opening ceremony of the 36th BCPC Brighton Conference were greeted by music from a lone Scottish bagpiper, a symbol of some of the changes that are happening to the most well-known fixture in the international crop protection calendar. Next year the Brighton Conference will move to Glasgow and it is unlikely to return to the Sussex seaside resort. At a reception the evening before this year's conference, Brighton's Lord Mayor wistfully expressed the hope that the event might come back, provided a plentiful supply of pleasant wine to encourage the idea and even suggested that the need for thermal underwear in Glasgow might do the trick. In reality, the high costs of the major hotels in Brighton and the warm Scottish welcome from Glasgow, now one of Europe's top conference venues, has swayed the organisers to make the momentous move after a brief dalliance with the idea of Birmingham. Glasgow's modern integrated conference centre with hotels located in a pleasant setting along the River Clyde will provide an attractive setting for next year's "international congress" under a new title, *Crop Science & Technology 2003*. Many commercial exhibitors have welcomed the move and the broadened scope of the event. The previous conference themes of *Weeds* and *Pests & Diseases* in alternate years have been dropped.

The forerunner of the Brighton Conference was a weed conference held in 1952 in Margate, another English seaside town. The organisers of that event later joined forces with the British Insecticide and Fungicide Council to form the British Crop Protection Council (BCPC) which staged the first Brighton Conference in 1967. Some fifty years later, the move to Glasgow symbolises the start of a new era where crop protection becomes increasingly allied to other elements of crop production and the food chain. In anticipation of this, BCPC is widening its remit and planning to increase the level of its input into government strategies, discussion documents and plans, as well as putting more emphasis on European affairs. Membership will be extended to cover additional areas of expertise. BCPC is also to develop a wider communication role, according to Hugh Oliver-Bellasis, its new president. He is a Hampshire farmer, chairman of the Rural Business Network and previously held various positions at England's National Farmers Union.

### 29th Bawden Lecture

This year's *Bawden Lecture*, named in memory of the first



Jørgen Schlundt, the 2002 Bawden Lecturer

chairman of BCPC, was given by Jørgen Schlundt, Director of the Food Safety Division at the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Geneva on the subject of *Risks and benefits of biological and chemical plant protection strategies – food safety aspects*. He described crop protection strategies in relation to human health. He included not only the potential health effects of the use of pesticides and GM crops, but also a consideration of how such production could influence agricultural efficiency, health and development in developing countries. Other factors which he emphasised in relation to production of food through the use of pesticides were the safety of certain levels of pesticide residues in food, misuse or accidents related to pesticides, and the broader effects of non-use of this type of plant protection. He questioned whether 192 different national agencies were really needed to regulate crop protection products and GM crops and suggested that there was scope for much wider international co-operation in this area to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. He also commented that Codex Alimentarius missed out somewhat on developing country perspectives.

### BCPC Medals

This year's BCPC medals were awarded to Professor Clive Edwards, Dr Trevor Lewis and Professor Phil Russell, world authorities on earthworms, thrips and fungicide resistance respectively. Dr Edwards has spent last the 17 years working at Ohio State University, Dr Lewis is a former director of



From Brighton . . . . . to Glasgow

Rothamsted Research and Dr Russell recently retired from Aventis CropScience.

### New insecticides and fungicides

The new insecticides/acaricides session was dominated by offerings from Bayer CropScience:

- BSN 2060 (spiromesifen) – a spirocyclic phenyl-substituted tetronic acid for whitefly and spider mite control
- clothianidin – a broad-spectrum neonicotinoid insecticide under joint development with Takeda Chemical Industries (the original discoverer of the compound) for control of corn rootworms (*Diabrotica* spp.) and secondary pests of corn.
- spiroadiclofen – a broad-spectrum acaricide with insecticidal properties against pear suckers (*Psylla pyri*) and scale insects (*Lepidosaphes* and *Quadraspidiotus perniciosus*)

In addition to these compounds there was interesting work reported from CSL in York on the possibility of developing novel orally-active insect control agents based on fusion proteins of the neuropeptide allatostatin Manse-AS and the snowdrop lectin (GNA); pyridalyl, a new 3,3-dihalo-2-propenyloxyphenyl derivative from Sumitomo Chemical Co for control of lepidopteran pests; and Scottish work from the University of Paisley, Forest Research and the University of Glasgow on a neem extract with antifeedant activity against the large pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*).

Bayer was also prominent in the new fungicides session with presentations made on its novel leaf-systemic strobilurin fungicide, HEC5725, and a DMI fungicide, JAU

6476, from a new chemical class, the triazalinthiones. Details were also presented of an interesting new fungicide for control of Oomycetes, ethaboxam, which is being developed by the South Korean company, LG Life Sciences Ltd.

### Start of a new era

At the close of the final Brighton Conference, as the strong gusts of wind blew the rain almost horizontally along the sea front, it was impossible not to feel nostalgic. The days of grand hospitality and the pioneering spirit of a growing industry in the 1970s and 1980s are long since past, as business consolidation and streamlining have become the current trend.

However, there is still considerable optimism for the future. The recently formed industry leader, Bayer CropScience AG, held a press briefing at Brighton's Royal Pavilion where more details of its new chemistry and products were revealed. The company expects to launch three new products a year over the next few years, contributing significantly to future company growth. In the longer term, Dr Rüdiger Scheitza, Head of Portfolio Management, is confident that Bayer will find many new target sites for future products and novel chemistries for control of weeds, pests and diseases. This innovation will be facilitated by the use of new genomic technologies and should provide a whole new armoury of safe products with new modes of action. These will also offer wider choice for farmers to reduce today's growing problems of pesticide resistance. Dr Scheitza is also optimistic that genetically modified crops will become more generally accepted and acceptable in the coming years.