

Cross-Institute Programme for Sustainable Soil Function

SoilCIP

Newsletter for January 2008



Plants – Air – Water workshop

There was a very profitable Centre for Soils and Ecosystem Function workshop on Plant-Air and Plant-Water interactions at N Wyke on 16th and 17th January. Ten staff from Rothamsted traveled to N Wyke, including 8 SoilCIP members. A number of potential areas for collaboration were identified. Thanks to Phil Murray for organizing it and staff at N Wyke for spending time to explain their research and take the visitors around the site. Please let me know of plans for new work as they develop.

Doctoral Training Grant (DTG)

I'm afraid that we have been unsuccessful in our bid for a second BBSRC Doctoral Training Grant. Apparently there were only 380 studentships awarded per annum, which was 70 fewer than the previous round. The competition was therefore extremely competitive, with 126 proposals received for consideration. I do not yet know how many proposals were successful but a full report of the competition, including details of the assessment meeting which was held on 13/14 December 2007, will be available on the BBSRC website (www.bbsrc.ac.uk) by the end of February 2008. Thanks to all who helped with the proposal.

Cross-Institute links and visits

Scottish Crops Research Institute 'Associate Members' of SoilCIP

Prof Peter Gregory, Chief Executive and Director of SCRI, has formally committed SCRI to 'Associate membership' of the SoilCIP. Glyn Bengough and Paul Hallett each have some of their time and that of accompanying technical assistant time allocated from SCRI's Programme 3: 'Exploring and modelling the physical architecture of soils'; Tim George and a technician each have some of their time allocated from Programme 4: 'Measuring and modelling the spatial and temporal variation of biogeochemical cycles'. SCRI would also like to develop collaborative research in nutrient transformations by microorganisms and rhizosphere microbial ecology. Peter writes 'Our "associate membership" of the SoilCIP is greatly valued and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to make a success of these

arrangements.' Please consider how you would like to take this forward and let me know if you plan any workshops or exchange visits.

Defra visit

A team from Defra visited Rothamsted on 30th January to hear about progress in the revision of the Fertiliser Recommendations and work on soil organic matter and carbon sequestration, modelling and life cycle analysis, soil structure and the sulphur and selenium nutrition of crops. David Cooper and Laura Pleasants are from the Food and Farming Group Science Team and Ruth Alban and Andrew Holden from the Nutrient Management Unit Policy Team. They were very appreciative of the visit and the work of the SoilCIP but are, as yet, unable to commit to any funding because they have no budget.

Rhizosphere Biology Discussion Group

Catriona Macdonald writes: 'The Rhizosphere Biology Group Journal Club/Discussion group is back by popular demand! We would like to extend the invitation to anyone interested in Rhizosphere Interactions to join us on the second Friday of every month from 11:30 to 12:30. It has been suggested that we alternate each meeting with discussion around a paper of interest with a more general discussion/brain storming session around a particular topic, methods etc. If you are interested, please send me an email so that I can include you in the distribution list. Our first meeting will be held on Friday 15th Feb (11:30-12:30 in the Centenary Meeting room at Rothamsted). Once I have a list of people interested I will circulate a paper round. If anyone already has a particular article in mind for discussion, please let me know.'

Although it is unlikely that those of you at North Wyke will want to attend a one-hour meeting at Rothamsted, visits here for other reasons could be planned to include participation in the Rhizosphere Biology meetings.

Publications

Andy Whitmore, Steve Jarvis and I have just has a paper published on 'Optimizing nutrient management for farm systems' in a special edition of Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, B, on 'Sustainable Agriculture', edited by Chris Pollock, Jules Pretty, Ian Crute, Chris Leaver and Howard Dalton. I have a PDF of our paper if anyone would like a copy. More details of this two-volume special edition are at:

<http://journals.royalsociety.org/content/102022/>

It would be good to highlight other new papers in this newsletter. Please send me details of any you would like featured.

New Editor-in-Chief for the European Journal of Soil Science

The following will appear in the April issue of the European Journal of Soil Science:

Professor Peter Loveland, the current Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Soil Science, will step down on 31st March 2008. At that date he will have been Editor-in-Chief for almost five years. It is time for some new ideas and direction. In that time, the Journal has expanded, widened its scope, changed its appearance and frequency of publication, and acquired a considerably larger team to act as its Editorial Board. It remains consistently near the top of the list as a widely-recognised and much cited international journal of soil science. We have been very fortunate to obtain the services of Professor Stephen Jarvis as Peter Loveland's successor.

Professor Jarvis's first degree was in soil chemistry at Nottingham University (UK). This was followed by a PhD (soil/plant relations) from Lancaster University (UK). He then joined the Grassland Research Institute and, apart from a year's sabbatical as a research fellow at the University of Western Australia, remained with that Institute and its various successors, through to the Head of Station of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), North Wyke, UK until his recent retirement. During that time he published over 150 refereed papers in international journals and some 200 other publications on aspects of soil science. Topics covered included heavy metals, soil acidity, plant nutrition, and nitrogen (and other nutrient) transformations, losses and cycling. He played a major role in making soil science an integrated and internationally recognised part of IGER's activities and in setting up a new Cross Institute Programme for soil science between IGER and Rothamsted Research. He was the Head of IGER's Soils, Environmental and Ecological Sciences Department and Head of North Wyke Research Station (Devon) at retirement, and is currently a visiting Professor at Reading University. Amongst many other roles, Steve has had formal editorial experience with *Soil Biology and Biochemistry*, *Plant and Soil*, *Forages*, and other journals as well as editing book outputs from conferences and other fora. The *European Journal of Soil Science* is thus in excellent hands for the future and we look forward to its continued success.

Good news about a former SoilCIP colleague. Congratulations Steve.

Keith Goulding, 31st January 2008