

## Meeting Report 2002

The venue for the 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of the European Histamine Research Society was the beautiful historic town of Eger in Hungary. Eger is situated in the foothills between the Bükk and Mátra Mountains which are in the north-east of Hungary. The area is renowned for its wine and thermal waters. Eger has a unique and historical character that was explored by the delegates between conference sessions. The meeting was at the kind invitation of Professor Andras Falus of the Semmelweiss Medical University, Budapest. This year there were nearly 100 participants representing 20 countries most from European countries, both North and South Americas as well as Japan. As expected the largest contingent was from the host country [23] with the UK [14] and Germany [11] having the next largest delegations. Some of the regular EHRS attendees could not be there and they were missed but a big welcome was given to all the new visitors, who we hope will return to future meetings. As most delegates arrived by air the organisers had arranged for coaches to transport them from Budapest airport to Eger and during the two hour coach trip there was much greeting of old friends and acquaintances and exchanging of news as well as welcoming the new delegates.

We started the meeting on the Wednesday evening with a welcome party (a barbeque) at the Hotel Flora. The conference took place in the Lyceum, a most impressive building in the centre of Eger which was originally built to be a university in the 1770s but is now the Eszterházy Károly Teachers' Training College. It is the biggest Baroque building of its kind in Hungary and contains an astronomical observatory tower and a magnificent library that contains a letter from WA Mozart of 1787. Professor Andras Falus welcomed everyone to the third meeting to be held in Hungary. He talked about the scientific research in Hungary and then the great support and enormous help given by Diamond Congress Ltd in organising this meeting. Both Professor Andras Falus and our president, Madeleine Ennis in her welcoming speech talked about the unique family feel to this society. We were informed that this year the society had been able to award 10 student bursaries, each of € 500 and sponsored by Maxim Pharmaceuticals, Novo Nordisk and UCB Pharma. The annual G.B. West lecture was then given by Professor Robin Ganellin of University College London with a lecture entitled 'Getting away from histamine'. He talked about the evolution of antihistamines; firstly the H<sub>1</sub> antagonists, then the H<sub>2</sub> with 'a rusty pestle and mortar' being used for the synthesis and then to the non-thiourea H<sub>3</sub> antagonists. He stressed that importance of collaboration in research and made the chemistry seem so very logical and easy. At the end of the lecture he was awarded a hand-painted Hungarian plate and the autobiography of G.B. West. Then the first of the 5 sessions commenced and we spent the rest of the morning hearing about histamine receptors. After lunch the next session was on clinical research and this was then followed by 2 of the poster talk sessions (Mast cells and basophils and Neurobiology). In the evening we were taken to Eger's 19<sup>th</sup> century cathedral which was surrounded by giant statues of some Hungarian saints and the apostles. After the beautifully played organ recital, we had a 'medieval' dinner complete with our own bibs and accompanied by Hungarian music. Much wine flowed and guessing as to what we were actually eating!

Friday started with a plenary I entitled 'The histamine – cytokine connection' by Dr Michael Dy, Paris Hospital Necker, France who showed us that histamine is a 21<sup>st</sup> century mediator. Then poster talks from the Metabolism and Receptor sessions were given before the coffee break. Then the third session on Immunology and Metabolism took place. After lunch our excursion took us to the Riding Hall and Horse Museum at Szilvásvár where we were able to see these magnificent Lipizzan horses. Then we were driven by horse and trap to see the mares and their foals grazing before travelling in an open carriage train up the wooded Szilajka valley. Here we supped on a barbecued trout meal complete with its 'yard of wine'. The countryside was truly breathtaking.

The final day of the meeting began with the plenary lecture on 'Histamine uptake by non-neuronal cells of the brain: properties and function' by Professor Zsuzsanna Huszti of the Semmelweiss Medical University, Hungary who explained the importance of histamine in the brain. This was followed by the remaining 2 poster sessions (Receptor pharmacology and Histidine Decarboxylase and Knock Out Animals). Then the final 2 oral presentation sessions on Neurobiology and Inflammation took place.

The General Assembly quickly followed this. We were very pleased to hear that our society had been certified as an international one. It was with sadness that we heard that after many years that both Professor Wolfgang Schmutzler, our treasurer and Professor Eddie Neugebauer, our representative on the editorial board of Inflammation Research were resigning. They were both thanked for their work for our society. We then heard from Professor Rob Leurs about the arrangements for our next meeting in The Netherlands. Then we were off to our Farewell Dinner with its excellent Hungarian foods and wine. We were given an excellent display of dancing; both classical and modern, with the final display being from local children who performed Irish dancing! Madeleine Ennis then presented the poster prizes. The first prize went to Self et al. (Nottingham, UK), second prize to Petersen et al. (Innsbruck, Austria) and third prize to Meier et al. (Berlin, Germany) with 2 more being highly commended (Fox et al. (Illinois, USA) and Kozna et al. (Budapest, Hungary). After the firework cake came to time to sing our anthem.

Everyone agreed that this had been an excellent meeting with outstanding organisation. Thanks were given to all the Hungarians. The next meeting will be held in Noorwijkerhout, The Netherlands between May 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003) at the kind invitation of Professor Henk Timmerman,