

BOOK REVIEW

LES FOUGÈRES D'ALSACE, D'EUROPE ET DU MONDE. ACTES DU COLLOQUE EN HOMMAGE À CLAUDE JÉRÔME (1937-2008). Publ. Société Botanique d'Alsace, 2012, 198pp., hard-back, recommended price €29.



Claude Jérôme, photo by Patrick Acock.

Claude Jérôme, the *eminence grise* of French Pteridology – a seemingly curmudgeonly figure of few words (even fewer English ones), cheroot permanently dangling from the lips of a well-worn face. A fixture at the annual excursions of the Group of European Pteridologists (GEP), he was well-known to all who attended these fascinating meetings. But behind the slightly intimidating exterior was a very special person. A man with extensive knowledge of the Alsace – a region he lived and worked in all his life – a fluent speaker of French and German (and no doubt the Alsatian dialect), he only pretended as a matter of principle not to speak English, and he freely extended his knowledge and friendship to everyone, with the added benefit of a delightfully wicked sense of humour. Claude died in 2008, and this volume reports a symposium held as a tribute to him, in 2009. The contributors are mainly from the Alsace (which includes the University of Strasbourg) and many will be well-known to those in the BPS who have attended meetings of the GEP. French pteridology has few genuine amateurs as we do, but it has a core of highly knowledgeable specialists. Their contribution, and that of the University

of Strasbourg, together with the influence of the French Office National des Forêts (ONF), which actively sponsors a knowledge of the botany and environment of forests, can be seen in this book.

By the nature of symposia, it is something of a mixed bag. A short portrait of Claude (and what a delight to see photos of Kurt Rasbach and André Labatut) opens the volume, and a list of species found on a fern excursion at the end of the symposium closes it. Of course they found four *Diphasiastrum* species! Many of the papers relate to the north-east of France, and there are three papers dealing with the herbaria (and their collectors, some of whom brought specimens from French colonies overseas) at Strasbourg, and an account of ferns in the botanic garden of the Col de Saverne (there's a place to visit!). A number of papers deal with rare or interesting plants in the region (including Franche-Comté and Luxembourg). There is an addendum to the ferns of the north-east of France which describes and illustrates, *inter alia*, *Asplenium trichomanes* subsp. *hastatum* and its hybrid with subsp. *quadrivalens*, *A. viride* var. *incisum*, and *Dryopteris affinis* subsp. (sic) *pseudodisjuncta* from the Vosges.

Fern allies are represented, and there are articles on populations of *Botrychium matricarifolium* in the Vosges. A very comprehensive paper by Michel Boudrie and Ronnie Viane deals with the lectotypification and authorities for *Asplenium foreziense*. Jakob Schneller presents a paper (in English!) in which he compares the growth at low altitude of *Athyrium filix-femina* plants collected from mountain sites.

There are a number of papers concerning tropical ferns. Serge Muller and Roger Etcheberry discuss the ecology of four species of Ophioglossaceae from Saint-Pierre et Miquelon; Michel Boudrie and Georges Cremers discuss, with illustrations, seven species (including the charming *Schizaea incurvata*) from French Guiana; there is a revision (in Spanish) of two *Blechnum* species from central and south America; and a short article on the decorative use of *Dicksonia sellowiana* in Brazil.

Nine posters were presented at the meeting, but only four were not covered elsewhere in the proceedings. I single out a poster by Gerard de Groot and others, whose results supported the idea that selection for selfing genotypes may occur during long-distance colonisation, even in normally outcrossing diploid ferns, and one by Elke Bellefroid and Ronnie Viane who report a new base number ($x = 35$) for “loxoscaploid” *Aspleniums*.

Finally I cannot resist mentioning the charming cartoons in the paper by Jean-Baptiste Gallé, who discusses the multiple, not just medicinal, uses of ferns.

For anyone who has ever attended meetings of the GEP, or who has acquaintance with at least some of the authors, and this part of France, this book is a “must-have”. Although most of it is in French, its largely technical content will appeal even to the most monoglot. It is not unreasonably priced, is well-illustrated, beautifully produced, and a fitting tribute to a lovely man.

Paul Ripley