

## Editorial

This is the second time that *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* has devoted a special double issue to the proceedings of the International Work Group for Palaeoethnobotany (IWGP). Since 1992, *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* has been the official organ of the IWGP, which meets every three years in a different European country. The 11<sup>th</sup> symposium, which took place between 18<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1998, in Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse, was organised by Ph. Marinval and G. Willcox, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). It was attended by 148 researchers from 24 countries, mainly within Europe. In this issue of *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*, a representative selection of the 121 lectures and posters, that were presented during the course of this six-day meeting, are published. Further papers will be published in subsequent issues.

The symposium provided evidence for the rapid and varied development of this interdisciplinary field of scientific endeavour. In addition to the conventional area of study, i.e. the history of cultivated plants in relation to Old World archaeology, new branches of the discipline are constantly evolving. In particular, the understanding of the nature of past agrarian economies and their impact on landscape and natural environment have become a major goal of many large-scale projects. Thus, palaeoethnobotany increasingly assumes a pivotal role in environmental archaeology.

Papers presented at the meeting showed how research in fields such as palaeoecology, palaeogenetics (analyses of ancient DNA), the history of weed and other plant communities in relation to human development, as well as medieval archaeobotany, have expanded considerably in recent years. It is hoped that these recent developments in archaeobotany will continue to thrive even though the financial climate may not always be the most favourable. It is also clear from the Toulouse symposium that palaeoethnobotany, as an integrated part of the life sciences, is being enthusiastically pursued by a growing number of highly motivated and talented students.

*Karl-Ernst Behre*  
*George Willcox*