

# Annual Report for 2009

## Officers and Council for 2009

**President:** John Skinner  
**Vice Presidents:** Jane Carruthers, Don Cowan  
**General Secretary:** Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman  
**Foreign secretary:** Tony Ribbink  
**Treasurer:** Pierre Janssens  
**Editor:** John Skinner  
**News Bulletin editor:** Soorya Sasidharan  
**General members of Council:**  
Edith Elliot, Jill Farrant, Ian Glass, Jannie Hofmeyr, Perry Kaye,  
Ed Sturrock, Rudi van Aarde  
**Co-opted Members:**  
Doug Rawlings

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## Report of the General Secretary for 2009

### SPECIAL PROJECTS

#### 2009 RSSA SCIENCE ESSAY COMPETITION

In late December 2008, the entry forms for the 2009 Science Essay Competition were posted to about 550 schools across the country, to arrive in time for the schools opening in mid January. The closing date for entries was 13th April 2009 and because of the various public holidays, the closing date was extended by a week.

To make the quantity of marking more manageable, schools were requested to pre-select the best essays and submit no more than three per topic. A total of 91 essays were received, for some reason the Primary school entries were lower than in previous years. Two essays were selected for publishing in Volume 64(2) of the *Transactions of the Royal Society*.

Professor Edward Sturrock FRSSAf, the Council nominated convener of the Essay Competition, arranged for the following markers: Professors Susan Boume and Bette Davidowitz and Drs Anwar Jardine and Dawn Webber.

#### 2009 RSSA Science Essay Competition Winners (\* published in *Transactions* 61(1))

**Topic: 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy. Why do you think Astronomy is important for South Africa?**

1. \*Abigail Janisch (Grade 10) – Kings School, Linbro Park, Sandton, Gauteng.
2. Prudence Makololo (Grade 12) – Taxila Secondary School, Limpopo.
3. Cameron Dinnic (Grade 10) – St David's Marist, Inanda, Gauteng.

*Merit Awards:*

1. Evonia Mabitsetla (Grade 12) – Harry Oppenheimer Agricultural High School, Limburg, Limpopo.
2. Buhlebethu Hlatshwayo (Grade 10) – The National School of the Arts, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, Gauteng.
3. Julian Mamabolo (Grade 12) – Capricorn High School, Polokwane, Limpopo.
4. Cara Nicoll (Grade 9) – Oakhill School, Knysna, Western Cape. Siphesihle Ndamase (Grade 12) Umtata High School, Eastern Cape.

**Topic: Biofuels versus Food Security: discuss these topics in the context of present day South Africa.**

1. \*Michael Gustavo (Grade 10) – St David's Marist, Inanda, Gauteng.
2. Laurryn Ah Yui (Grade 11) – Kingswood College, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape.
3. Remofilwe Motlhabane (Grade 10) – Letsatsing Science High School, Mmabatho, North West.

*Merit Awards:*

1. Cindy Stephens (Grade 11) – Danville Park Girl's High School, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.
2. Abigail Branford (Grade 11) – Kingswood College, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape.

**Topic: The world is undergoing a crisis in energy supply: can we find a practical alternative to hydrocarbon fuels?**

1. Jessica Stamp (Grade 11) – Epworth High School, Scottsville, KwaZulu-Natal.
2. Kelly Evans (Grade 11) – St Mary's DSG, Kloof, KwaZulu-Natal.
3. Robyn Daniels (Grade 11) – Danville Park Girls' High, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

*Merit Awards:*

1. Lauren Kirk-Cohen (Grade 11) – St Cyprians School, Cape Town, Western Cape.
2. Abigail Davies (Grade 11) – St Mary's DSG, Kloof, KwaZulu-Natal.
3. Stuart Ingledeew (Grade 10) – St David's Marist, Inanda, Gauteng.

**Primary School Topic: What are the best ways of protecting South Africa's unique animal and plant life?**

1. Amber Godsell (Grade 6) – Kings School, Linbro Park, Gauteng.
2. Shassie Janisch (Grade 6) – Kings School, Linbro Park, Gauteng.
3. Kerry Bellairs (Grade 7) – Bryandale Primary School, Bryanston, Gauteng.

*Merit Awards:*

1. Kayla Rix (Grade 7) – Bryandale Primary School, Bryanston, Gauteng.
2. Shannon de Vries (Grade 6) – Bryandale Primary School, Bryanston, Gauteng.
3. Jamie Cottrell (Grade 7) – Kings School, Linbro Park, Gauteng.

Nine out of the twelve prizewinners were presented with their prize and certificate by members of the Royal Society, namely Professors Mary Scholes, Michael Perrin, Dean Goldring, and Michael Davies-Coleman and Drs Andrea Fuller and Carola Niessler. Professionally printed certificates were posted to the other prizewinners.

**Interesting features of this year's competition:**

- The Society offered free membership for one year to the teachers of the winners - four teachers have taken up this offer thus far.
- Amber Godsell (Grade 6) of Kings School, Linbro Park, Gauteng won first prize for the second year in a row;
- Abigail & Shassie Janisch, winners from the Kings School, are sisters.

Cash prizes were awarded to all prizewinners of each essay category. 1st Prize - R2 000, 2nd Prize - R1 250 and 3rd prize – R750. Total prizes amounted to R16 000. The essay markers received an increased stipend of R20 per essay marked, amounting to a total of R1820. The professional printing of the 25 certificates cost R526.68. The Society's administration expenses which included postage, photocopying and organising certificates, and the time of the Office Administrator amounted to R7 400. The total expense was thus R25 746.68, the grant from the Claude Leon Foundation was R25 000.

**The titles for the 2010 Competition are:**

*For Secondary School entrants:*

- Stem cell research: What, in your opinion, are some of the opportunities and challenges?
- 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. Write an essay on 'Biodiversity: why does it matter to South Africa?'
- Will nanotechnology revolutionise the way we detect and cure disease in South Africa?

*For Primary School entries only:*

- South Africa has a wealth of medicinal plants. How best can these plants be exploited for modern medicine while still protecting our biological resources?

The Royal Society of South Africa thanks the CLAUDE LEON FOUNDATION for its kind and magnanimous donation towards the science essay competition. The Society receives numerous letters of thanks and appreciation from teachers and pupils alike.

## **YOUNG ROYALS**

### **Young Royal Committee 2009**

**Chair:** Adwoa Ankoma  
**Vice Chair:** Kabwela Chisaka  
**Treasurer:** Neo Khanyile  
**Secretary:** Pulane Mokoena  
**Public Relations/ Marketing:** Tom Holder  
**Community Engagement:** Trevor Kana  
**Media Liaison:** La Schandre Coetzee  
**Fundraising:** Fikile Phaliso  
**Website Development:** Vacancy  
**Events:** Jovan Kent  
**Young Royals-Royals Liaison:** Anthony Ribbink

### **Feedback**

The Young Royals (YR) was successful in cementing its role on the Rhodes campus, and has made inroads into becoming an essential resource serving the science faculty and students generally interested in Science and Technology. A balance between activities centered on the members, and activities centered on the broader goal of promoting and engaging with the scientific community was maintained. The YR hopes to establish solid relationships with other science related societies, thus making community engagement easier.

### **Activities**

- The YR aimed to grow its membership and presence under the Rhodes SRC body. The committee participated in all the events available for recruitment, including the Societies Extravaganza and the Sign-up Evening. The YR recruited 84 members including undergraduates and postgraduates.
- The first Royal Affair was held on 12 March 2009 at Maxwell's in Grahamstown. Approximately 60 members attended the event and it was used as an opportunity for the new and old members to get to know the committee, to clarify the objectives and activities of the society, and for the members to socialise and connect.
- The YR participated in Scifest Africa held from 25 March to 31 March. The society exhibited a stall entitled 'The Art of Science' which aimed to use visually interesting science photography and imagery to showcase various scientific disciplines.
- A Science v Media forum was hosted on 19 March 2009. The speakers for the event were Rod Amner and Brian Garman, both of whom are lecturers in the Rhodes University Journalism Department, respectively a lecturer on scientific journalism and a lecturer with an extensive scientific background. The forum was well attended by members (approximately 45 people in attendance) and the discussion was informative and stimulating.
- A second scientific forum entitled "Bigger, Better Smarter" was hosted on 20 May 2009. The speakers were D. Carmen Oltman, a lecturer from the Rhodes University pharmacy department and Jono Davy, a masters student in Human, Kinetics and Ergonomics. The forum was attended by approximately 40 people.
- The Young Royals Society received an award recognising its contribution to the promotion of Science and Technology on campus during a Societies Awards Evening on 12 August 2009 that was organized by the Rhodes University Student Representative Council
- A fundraiser entitled 'Purple Day' on 14 August 2009 was organized. The event was a relative success as quite a few people on the campus incorporated the colour purple into their dress for the day and it was conspicuous. However, the charity aspect was not efficiently advertised: very little money was raised, and did not even cover the cost hosting the event. Nonetheless, given the number of people who took the time to incorporate purple into their dress for the day, it was agreed that with the right marketing, the event could be a significant fundraiser in 2010.
- The society hosted its second Women in Science evening on 22 August 2009 at Maxwell's, a restaurant in Grahamstown.
  - Key Address was given by Prof Ric Bernard - Rhodes University Dean of Science
  - Prof Janine Adams (NMMU) - Environmental flow requirements,
  - Estuarine botanist, Estuary ecology)
  - Dr. Nadine Strydom (NMMU- Zoology), 2007 recipient of the "Best

- Emerging Young Woman Scientist" of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan
- University Science Faculty.

The AGM was held on 29 August 2009 at the Mouse and Budgie. A new committee was elected in.

### **CLAUDE LEON FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS**

Doug Rawlings reported that 136 applications for Claude Leon Foundation Fellowships had been received. Although these post-doctoral fellowships are advertised nationally, a disproportionately large number of applications (61%) were for universities in the Western Cape. After a process of review by subject-specific assessors, the final selection committee met on the 25 October and submitted a list of 50 names for funding.

### **ANNUAL DINNER 2009**

The Society's Annual Dinner and New Fellows' Induction ceremony was held on 29th September at the Lord Neethling Restaurant, Stellenbosch. It was attended by 45 people. The following Fellows were inducted: Geoffrey Garrett (2000); Anna-Lise Williamson (2005); Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan (2006) as well as New Fellows: Len Barbour; Michael Davies-Coleman; Bert Klumperman; David Richardson; Andre van der Walt.

Professor Renfrew Christie FRSSAf, Dean of Research, University of the Western Cape delivered a dinner speech entitled "Leave 'arf a brick at 'im: 'e be a foreigner': Why are South African universities xenophobic?"

Dr Daryl Codron of the School of Biological and Conservation Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal and winner of the Meiring Naude Medal for 2008, presented the pre-dinner public lecture entitled "The Origins of Ecological Specialization in African Herbivores" at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) Stellenbosch.

### **PROGRESS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY IN 2009 (awaited)**

## **BRANCH ACTIVITIES**

### **Eastern Cape Branch**

#### **Committee**

**Chair:** Perry Kaye

**Treasurer:** Alan Whitfield

**Secretary:** Mike Davies-Coleman

**Young Royals Liaison:** Tony Ribbink

Ms Adwoa Ankoma (Young Royals Chair) sometimes attends our meetings and the committee has the right to co-opt further members as necessary.

#### **Changes**

- After a number of years of sterling service, Dr Tony Ribbink stood down as Chair of the Eastern Cape Branch of the Society and Dr Derek Henderson retired from the position of Honorary Treasurer. Professor Alan Whitfield assumed duty as Branch Treasurer and Professor Perry Kaye as Chairman.
- In order to facilitate financial arrangements, the Branch cost-centre was moved from SAIAB, where it has been very efficiently controlled by Mrs Edlyn Wolhuter, to Rhodes University, where it will be controlled by the Chemistry Departmental Administrator, Mrs Benita Tarr.
- At a recent meeting of the Branch Committee it was agreed that Branch reports and budgets should, in future, cover the period 1 January -30 December each year, in line with RSSAf Council practice. Consequently, this report will cover the period, 1 January -30

December, 2008.

### ***KwaZulu-Natal branch***

#### ***Committee***

**Chair:** Edith Elliott

**Vice-chair:** Guy Bate

**Treasurer:** Robyn Hillebrand (co-opted)

**Secretary:** Charmaine Ahrens (co-opted)

**Members:** Dean Goldring (new member), Carola Niesler (new member), Stefan Schmidt (new member), Theresa Coetzer, Mike Perrin, Trevor Hill.

#### ***Meetings***

The committee met twice in 2009 to discuss: the lecture program; nomination for Fellowships and medals; to decide who would award the essay prizes (Dean Goldring, Mike Perrin and Carola Niesler volunteered and duly made the awards).

#### ***New Members and nomination procedure***

Our region registered at least six new members, with Prof Fanie van Heerden being nominated and awarded a Fellowship.

#### ***Public Lectures***

- 5 May 2009: Dean Goldring, *Malaria*.
- 14 May 2009: Fanie van Heerden, *Plant poisons and medicinal plants*.
- 4 June 2009: Stefan Schmidt, *Microbes, small but powerful*.
- 29 July 2009: Ricky Taylor, *Problem of fresh water in the St Lucia Estuary*.
- 20 August 2009: Mike Henning, *Hypergraphs, total domination and cycles*.
- 3 September 2009: Allan Connell, *Ocean currents, fish eggs and DNA barcoding*.
- 15 September 2009: Salim Karim, *HIV in South Africa*.
- 30 September 2009: Deresh Ramjuganath, *P.E.T. and fluorine containing pharmaceuticals and the fluorochemical expansion initiative in South Africa*.
- 29 October 2009: Prof Sturm, *Multi-drug resistant TB*.
- 11 November 2009: Jason Londt, *Our concrete jungle (living with wildlife)*.

### ***Northern Branch***

#### ***Committee***

**Chair:** Rudi van Aarde

**Vice chair:** Jane Carruthers

**Treasurer:** Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman (Treasurer)

**Secretary:** Lilian Scholtz (co-opted)

**Members:** Nigel Bennett, Rudolph Bigalke, Andrea Fuller, Tim Partridge, Sasi Sasidharan.

#### ***Public lectures***

- 4 March 2009: Mike Bruton, *1000 Years of Islamic knowledge rediscovered*.
- 30 March 2009: Graham Mitchell, *Evolution of Giraffes*.
- 4 August 2009: Tony Ribbink, *Africa's evolutionary enigmas: Coelacanth, humans & cichlids*.
- 9 November 2009: Fiona Baker, *Mysteries of the sleeping brain*.

### ***Western Cape Branch***

#### ***Public lectures***

- 18 February 2009: G. Avery, *The role of birds as indicators of the behaviour and technology of early modern coastal humans*.
- 18 March 2009: I. S. Glass, *Galileo and his legacy*.
- 15 April 2009: P. D. van Helden, *Science versus dogmas in combating the TB scourge*.

- 20 May 2009: C. Lang, *Platinum - from metal to market*.
- 17 June 2009: D. Stein, *How the Brain-Mind Works: Lessons from the anxiety disorders*
- 19 August 2009: R. Penrose, *Twistor Theory: its basic ideas and a new revival*.
- 16 September 2009: E. Rybicki, *Pharming Vaccines: using plants to produce and deliver badly- needed vaccines?*
- 29 September 2009: D. Codron, *The origins of ecological specialization in African herbivores*.
- 14 October 2009: M. Kotze, *Genetic structure of African populations and some implications?*
- 18 November 2009: P. Martinez, *South Africa's emerging Space Programme*.

## MEMBERS AND FELLOWS

Fellow and Membership Numbers – 2009 [449]

### Fellows

- Total Ordinary Fellows: 206
- Total Hon Fellows: 35
- New Fellows 2009: 6
- New Honorary Fellows: 0
- Arrearists removed : W Gevers, C W Holzapfel, M Peisach, L Underhill,
- Deceased Fellows: DW Ewer, D Henderson, T C Partridge.

### Members

- Total Members: 191.
- New Members 2009: Dr N F Abdala, Dr Danita de Waal, Prof R.A.Dorrington, Ms J J Dugard, Dr Adrienne L Edkins, Mr K J Ferguson, Dr L C Foxcroft, Prof. J.P.D. Goldring, Mr F M Jacobs, Dr A Maslyanko, Prof. Ivan R May, Mr A J Molteno, Dr J P Moore, Dr C U Niesler, Ms C Piek, Prof B I Pletschke, Mr F Roelofse, Prof S Schmidts, Dr I M Tuffin, Ms R A Verrinder.
- Members who became Fellows: A J G Ribbink, F Thackeray
- Members Resigned: L Parolis, R Hart, D Beerman, S K Jacobs
- Arrearists Removed: A H Bok, G.Bolt, F. Brombacher, J A Cambray, T M Crowe, J T du Toit, I J Eidelman, R J Fincham, R Hendricks D C Levendis, G T Mills, N W Nossel, P A Scott, W T Selkirk, F A Shillington, R I. Stewart, R B Veale, M H Villet, T H Wooldridge, W Zemaney.
- Complimentary Members: 6 (5 Teachers, 3 Medallists): Ms I Bunge, Dr L Du Plessis, Ms N Glanville, Mrs S Hardman, Mr W A Rathbone
- Deceased Members: 0

### Student Members

- Total Student Members: 19
- New Student Members: 9: Ms Dominique E Anderson, Mr Alexander Richard Brackowski, Mr Thulani P Makhanyane, Ms Mandy Mason, Mrs Natasha R Mavengere, Mr William N Mavengere, Mr Colin W Ohlhoff, Mr Kyle R Pears, Ms Naadia van der Bergh.
- Became Full Members: 4 : Dr M J Marakalala, Ms Lucy E P Scott, Mr M Singo, Dr C M Zvinowanda
- Resigned: 1
- Arrearists removed: 2

## NEW FELLOWS 2009

### Kelly Chibale

(Professor of Chemistry)

His research has focused on the medicinal chemistry of lead compounds for the treatment of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, hypertension and cancer. The research programme has involved the development of: target-directed inhibitors; single agents that provide target-directed inhibition of multiple disease-causing organisms; and single agents that provide maximal anti-infective and anti-cancer activity by acting against multiple targets. His earlier work has included asymmetric synthesis utilizing sulfur and organolanthanide chemistry and the total synthesis of natural and designed biologically relevant molecules. In 1992 he completed his PhD on the asymmetric synthesis of heterocyclic and spirocyclic compounds. After winning a Sir William Ramsay British Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, he spent two years at the University of Liverpool working on chiral organolanthanide reagents with Nick Greeves. He then won a Wellcome Trust International Prize Travelling Research Fellowship and spent the following two years at the Scripps Research Institute working on the total synthesis of natural and designed molecules of medical significance with K. C. Nicolaou, one of the world's leading synthetic organic chemists. He returned to South Africa in 1996 to start his independent research career at the University of Cape Town being promoted to associate professor in 2004 and full professor in 2007 – both *ad hominem*. During the past eight years he has emerged as an internationally acclaimed researcher with more than 60 publications in international peer-reviewed journals, graduating 12 PhD and 17 MSc students. He received an NRF South African Research Chair in drug discovery and is a recipient of several research grants, notably two Innovation Fund grants, a European Union AntiMal grant and a Medicine for Malaria Venture (MMV) grant. He served on various advisory and editorial boards and was involved with numerous NRF assessment and advisory panels. He is an advisor to the WHO on drug discovery and a member of the MMV Expert Scientific Advisory Committee, and a member of the EU AntiMal consortium management committee. He was invited to present plenary lectures at international conferences and has won several prestigious awards eg US Fulbright Senior Research and a Pfizer Sabbatical Research Fellowships during 2007 and 2008. He is also acting as a founding and steering committee member of the South African Malaria Initiative and acting as a scientific advisor to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Biosciences.

#### **Lesley Alison Cornish**

(Deputy Dean of Research in the Faculty of Engineering at Wits)

Lesley Cornish has been deriving phase diagrams of alloys related to the Platinum Group Metals and undertaking alloy development work for nearly 20 years. Apart from four years working at the UKAEA and six years as Section Head at Mintek, she has been at the University of the Witwatersrand. Here she has lectured on Physical Metallurgy and supervised over 32 postgraduate students. Many of these have continued in research, e.g. at the CSIR and Mintek. She has also worked with steels, hard metals and aluminium alloys. She has written over 70 papers in journals, one provisional patent and is instrumental in the development of a thermodynamic computer database for superalloys. These alloys are based on Pt-Al and are being developed for application at elevated temperatures in highly corrosive environments. She has been working with Materials Science International for 10 years, and contributed to seven books on phase diagrams, a chapter in the ASM Handbook on Metallography, 2004. She was invited to take and is presently the Director of the DST/NRF Centre of Excellence in Strong Materials, and established the African Materials Science and Engineering Network (AMSEN) in 2008. This network has nodes in five different African countries and is funded by Carnegie. She is also presently Deputy Dean of Research in the Faculty of Engineering at Wits. She won the Vice-Chancellors Teaching Award (Wits) in 1998 and has won the best published electron microscopy paper prize from the Microscopy Society of Southern Africa four times.

#### **Tony J Ribbink**

(Retired)

Tony Ribbink worked on freshwater and marine ecosystems in Africa, and understood processes and the manner in which people interact with and are part of these systems. For much of his career he has been leading programmes from bases in Malawi and South Africa, with the active collaboration of researchers and institutions in Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Comoros, Madagascar and Namibia. Two recent programmes in this regard were the "SADC/GEF Lake Malawi/Nyasa Biodiversity Conservation Project" from 1995-1999 and the "African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme" from 2001-2007. In both these programmes Dr Ribbink focused on bridging the gap between science and people, particularly the youth. In a similar vein he has been instrumental in developing the "Young Royals" within the Eastern Cape. Following his

retirement from SAIAB in 2007, he continued his close association with southern African marine science and coastal communities by becoming CEO of the Sustainable Seas Trust. He has published more than 100 papers during his scientific career, but he should really be judged not by what he personally has contributed, but by what others have contributed as a consequence of the opportunities and encouragement that he gave to them. As the recipient of the WWF Gold Medal for Contributions to Conservation and Environmental Education (1997), the RSSAf Centenary Medal (2008) and Vice President of the Royal Society of South Africa (2006 – present), we have direct and indirect evidence of his service to science, education and the environment on the subcontinent.

**Louis Scott**  
(Professor in the Department Plant Sciences)

Louis Scott received his PhD in 1979 for a thesis entitled 'Late Quaternary pollen analytical studies in the Transvaal (South Africa)'. After a short period with the Southern Oil Exploration Corporation (SOEKOR), Johannesburg, he joined the staff of the University of the Free State, where he has remained. He single-handedly kept South African research on palynology (spores and pollen) firmly on the international map and pioneered the reconstruction of past environments in dry areas of Africa based on analysis of pollen from fossil hyrax and hyena dung. He is a B2 rated scientist with the National Research Foundation and his long-standing collaborations with colleagues in numerous countries. He studies stratigraphic palynology, long-term continental environmental change during the Cainozoic, and interpretation of palaeo-environmental records associated with archaeological sites applied in numerical models of vegetation change in Africa and globally. The results of these studies are relevant across the fields of botany, geology, climatology, archaeology, anthropology and palaeontology. He has a prodigious publication record. He reconstructions of vegetation and climatic history in various areas of southern Africa, including the Tswaing Crater with a record of 200 000 years, and give insights into environmental conditions during the Last Glacial Period and the subsequent development of modern conditions. His observations provide key baseline information, which contributes to understanding past human and environmental contexts and climatic change and the effects of global warming. He is member of the prestigious Association pour l'Etude Taxonomique de la Flora d'Afrique Tropicale (AETFAT) Regional co-coordinator for Southern Africa for IGBP/PAGES Pole-Equator-Pole palaeo-environmental transects (PEPIII). He is a long-serving member of the Southern African Society for Quaternary Research (SASQUA), having been its President in 1991-1993. He also served the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA) in various capacities and been Guest Editor and Editorial Board Member for many journals and is currently Guest Editor of the *Journal of Arid Environments*. He has published 122 refereed papers or chapters in book, made 105 congress contributions and trained seven post graduate students.

**John Francis Thackeray**  
(Director of the Institute of Human Evolution)

Francis Thackeray is an internationally known and respected scientist for his research in the field of palaeoanthropology. In 2009 he was appointed as the first full time Director of the newly established Institute of Human Evolution (IHE) at the University of the Witwatersrand. He popularizes his subject palaeontology and palaeoanthropology to a broad audience. He has an objective to ensure that every school in South Africa has a cast of Mrs Ples and understands the important scientific implications of this iconic fossil hominid. His ability to popularize high quality science has led to his co-ordination of several international and national exhibitions on fossil hominids. He was an invited speaker, and participated in four of the National Science Festivals in Grahamstown, while working in the Palaeontology Department at the Transvaal Museum under the guidance of Dr Bob Brain. He studied at UCT completing a BSc in Zoology (1974), BSc (Hons) in Archaeology (1975), and MSc in Environmental Studies (1977). He completed his PhD degree at Yale University studying the Wonderwerk Cave. He worked as a research assistant in the Archaeology Department at Stellenbosch University, a researcher in the Archaeometry Laboratory at UCT, before taking up a position of Archaeologist at the Transvaal Museum. Dr Thackeray has undertaken excavations at numerous famous fossil hominid-bearing sites including Kromdraai, Swartkrans, Plovers Lake and Bolt's Farm in the Cradle of Humankind and also Late Quaternary sites of Wonderwerk Cave and Blinklipkop. He received the Order of Merit (Chevalier) of the Republic of France in 1998; the Fitzsimons Award from the South African



Museums Association in 2000. He published widely over a broad range of topics. He has been a regular attendee at both national and international conferences, often as an invited speaker. A feature of his research career is the passion he has for research and his ability to enthuse other people in the numerous projects he has undertaken.

### **Fanie Retief van Heerden**

(Deputy Head of the School of Chemistry Elect)

Fanie van Heerden completed her BSc with triple majors *cum laude* in 1974 and completed her Hons and MSc both *cum laude* in 1975 and 1976 and her PhD (Organic Chemistry) in 1980 at the University of the Free State. She was awarded the Konrad Taeuber Science Memorial Fellowship and the South African Association of Women Award for Top Female student at UFS, and later, a Special Merit bursary from the CSIR. A productive 6 years (1982-1988) followed at the National Chemical Laboratory (CSIR) during which she honed her expertise in the study of Natural Products and Synthesis and authored, or co-authored, 36 research papers in top international journals (Journal of the Chemical Society, Tetrahedron, Phytochemistry, Journal of Ethnopharmacology). It was also during this time that she was part of the team which isolated, and patented, the active component of the much publicized appetite suppressant found in *Hoodia* species, something which put South Africa on the world map for outstanding achievement, and caused quite a sensation. She is the co-author for the book *Poisonous Plants in South Africa* (Briza Books 2002). The book received an honourable mention for the prestigious NOSA award. From 1989 to 2004 Prof van Heerden was at the Rand Afrikaans University teaching and researching in her chosen field. In January 2005 she was called to the Chair of Organic Chemistry at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. She has rapidly established this Department as the leading institution in South Africa for the isolation, analysis, and synthesis of Natural Products. Her relevant expertise in these fields, coupled with a state of the art HPLC/Mass Spectrometry Laboratory has attracted enthusiastic research students from far and wide (mostly black, and female) and today she is consulted by colleagues from her own university, overseas researchers, and scientists in the fields of plant physiology, ecology and biochemistry. Her eminence in the field is well-illustrated by her two seminal papers in the recent Special Edition of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology (2008, Volume 119) namely *Hoodia gordonii* - a natural appetite suppressant and *South African Helichrysum species: a review of traditional uses, biological activity and phytochemistry*. Prof van Heerden is currently C-rated by the NRF, has published 90 papers, and has today made her mark in Natural Products worldwide as evidenced by invitations to conferences in Australia, Switzerland, Britain, Germany, the USA, Belgium, Holland and Japan.

### **MEDALS**

- **John Herschel Medal 2009**  
None
- **Meiring Naude Medal 2009**  
Darryl Codron

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### ***Transactions***

*Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa*, Volume 64 (1) and (2) are available from [http://www.journals.co.za/ej/ejour\\_royalsa.html](http://www.journals.co.za/ej/ejour_royalsa.html)

#### **News Bulletin Report for 2009**

Dr S P Sasidharan continued as Editor of the Bulletin and published eight editions in the year. The Editions featured:

- Awards and Achievements
- Society Events and Lectures
- Profiles
- Book Releases and Reviews
- Meetings and Conferences

- Opportunities - for study and employment.

#### **Highlights**

- March Edition : SPECIAL ISSUE: CELEBRATING DARWIN'S BICENTENNIAL
- November Edition : SPECIAL ISSUE: Speech to the Annual Dinner of the Royal Society of South Africa in September 2009 by Renfrew Christie FRSSAf entitled :
- 'Eave 'arf a brick at 'im; 'e be a foreigner': Why are South African universities xenophobic?

#### **Profiles**

- Darryl Codron (Meiring Naude Medal Winner)
- Edward Sturrock (Council Member)
- Patricia Berjak (Fellow)
- Pierre Janssens (Hon.Treasurer)
- Don Cowan (Vice-President)

The Society is indebted to Dr Sasidharan for the time and effort he takes in producing a newsletter which receives praise from the membership.

### **COOPERATION WITH OTHER BODIES**

The Society maintains contact and has representatives on the following bodies:

- National Science and Technology Forum including the Scientific, Engineering and Technological Societies and Allied Professions Group of SA: Northern Branch Committee
- Claude Leon Foundation – Prof D.E. Rawlings FRSSAf
- Frank Warren Memorial Trust – Prof B. Warner FRSSAf.
- South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement – Prof M.N. Bruton FRSSAf.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Office Administrator, Sandra de Villiers-Soltynski is thanked for her efficient administrative services to the Council and membership. We wish to thank all the chairpersons and committee members of Branches for voluntarily giving of their skills and time, as well as organisers of lectures, speakers and those who delivered votes of thanks at lectures as well as the Director of the South African Astronomical Observatory for lending the boardroom for Council meetings. The Dean and staff in the Science Faculty Office at the University of Cape Town are thanked for kindly accommodating the national office and for sharing faxing and photocopying facilities.



Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman  
General Secretary