



University of Kentucky  
UKnowledge

---

Plant and Soil Sciences Presentations

Plant and Soil Sciences

---

1-11-2021

## The History of the International Grassland Congress 1927-2020

S. Ray Smith

*University of Kentucky, raysmith1@uky.edu*

Vivien G. Allen

*Texas Tech University, vivien.allen@ttu.edu*

Roger Wilkins

*Rothamsted Research, UK, rogerwilkins1@btinternet.com*

Garry D. Lacefield

*University of Kentucky, garry.lacefield@uky.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/pss\\_present](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/pss_present)



Part of the [Plant Sciences Commons](#), and the [Soil Science Commons](#)

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Smith, S. Ray; Allen, Vivien G.; Wilkins, Roger; and Lacefield, Garry D., "The History of the International Grassland Congress 1927-2020" (2021). *Plant and Soil Sciences Presentations*. 12.

[https://uknowledge.uky.edu/pss\\_present/12](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/pss_present/12)

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Plant and Soil Sciences at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Plant and Soil Sciences Presentations by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact [UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu](mailto:UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu).



# THE HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL GRASSLAND CONGRESS 1927-2020

S. Ray Smith, Vivien Allen, Roger Wilkins, and Garry Lacefield

Forage Specialist, Univ. of KY (raysmith1@uky.edu); Paul Whitfield Horn Professor Emeritus, Texas Tech Univ.; retired Deputy Director of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, United Kingdom; Professor Emeritus, Univ. of KY.

## Overview

Grasslands cover 27% of the world's land area and 70% of agricultural land. They form an important foundation for agriculture and livestock husbandry and contribute to the livelihoods of more than 800 million people. The International Grassland Congress (IGC) began as a meeting of a small group of forage researchers in Europe in 1927. It has now expanded into a gathering held every 3-5 years with over 1000 delegates from 80+ countries who represent research, extension, and primary production. The newly released IGC history provides not only an overview of the IGC Congress over the last 93 years, but highlights the people, events and changes in grassland agriculture around the world during this period. This current edition is an expansion and update of 'A Brief History of the International Grassland Congress' presented at the XX IGC in Ireland in 2005 by Professor Ross Humphreys, Australia. The authors have worked diligently to highlight the major individuals that shaped the IGC since its inception, including excerpts of presentations by world grassland leaders. They even included part of the welcome address from Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who was President of the XIII IGC held in Reading, United Kingdom, in 1960. The IGC History describes the two Congresses held in the United States, the XI IGC in State College, PA in 1952 and the XIV IGC in Lexington, KY in 1981. It also provides details on the formation of the Forage and Grassland Foundation by Dr. John Baylor and Mr. Warren Thompson (Kentucky) from the \$100,000 profit of the XIV Congress.

The IGC History will be available for viewing and downloading on the IGC website early in 2021 at <https://www.internationalgrasslands.org/publications> .



2<sup>nd</sup> IGC Participants: Grassland Institute - Uppsala, Sweden



Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh  
President Eighth IGC

## Words of Wisdom from Voices of the Past

It is difficult to show the breath of a 400+ page history in a few words, but perhaps the importance of the International Grassland Congress can best be captured in the words of past IGC Presidents, Continuing Committee Chairs and Speakers.

**Seventh Congress** "Grasslands of the world stand twixt a world of plenty and a world of famine; between a land surface of green oases and a land of desert; between surface soil stability and accelerated erosion." B. Levy (New Zealand)

**Ninth Congress** "The greatest enemy of men is hunger, and the IX International Grassland Congress could establish directives for programs designing the survival of mankind." H. Leme (Brazil)

**XVII Congress** "It's now up to you, the speakers and delegates, to debate the issues and provide the world with your recommendations and conclusions. Make them good and meaningful because perhaps the world has not got much time left to ensure the sustainability of its grasslands." R. Brougham (New Zealand)

**XXI Congress** "From the earliest of beginnings, our global grazing lands have been essential to human survival. Our relationship with grazing lands has been increasingly exploitive, but there is now a slow reawakening of our interdependence with the many services provided by grazing lands." J. T. O'Rourke (USA), G. Sheath (New Zealand), and V. Allen (USA.)

## Going Forward

The need for continued international collaboration and the sharing of information and ideas is now more important than ever. This history shows the relevance of the International Grassland Congress over the last 93 years. Many of the problems raised at the first Congress are still relevant, but the answers are ever evolving and new issues continue to emerge.

"Throughout history, the inseparable relationship between grasslands and human survival has been demonstrated. In the words of Strecker (1913), "The origin of all human culture can ultimately be traced back to the grasses." The relationship between grasslands and humanity has escalated and broadened in its importance over the years. Grasslands now address issues beyond the imagination of the founders of the IGC, and yet, today, grasslands are among our most endangered ecosystems. The sense of urgency to recognize the importance of grassland agriculture and its role in food security felt by the men who gathered in Leipzig in 1927 has lost none of its urgency today as we deal with the environmental impact of climate change, a diminishing natural resource base, an escalating population and food demand, and spiraling economic incentives to convert grasslands to other uses."

(excerpt from Challenges and Opportunities, IGC History)

Number	Location	Year
1	Leipzig, Germany	1927
2	Uppsala, Sweden, and Denmark	1930
II	Zürich, Switzerland	1934
Fourth	Aberystwyth, Wales	1937
Fifth	Noordwijk, Netherlands	1949
Sixth	State College, Pennsylvania, USA	1952
Seventh	Palmerston North, New Zealand	1956
Eighth	Reading, England	1960
Ninth	São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil	1965
X	Helsinki, Finland	1966
XI	Surfers Paradise, Australia	1970
XII	Moscow, USSR	1974
XIII	Leipzig, German Democratic Republic	1977
XIV	Lexington, Kentucky, USA	1981
XV	Kyoto, Japan	1985
XVI	Nice, France	1989
XVII	Palmerston North, New Zealand, and Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia	1993
XVIII	Winnipeg and Saskatoon, Canada	1997
XIX	São Pedro, São Paulo, Brazil	2001
XX	Dublin, Ireland, and United Kingdom	2005
XXI	Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, China	2008
XXII	Sydney, Australia	2013
XXIII	New Delhi, India	2015
XXIV	Nairobi, Kenya	2021