

## EDITORIAL

# Gems from the *Heredity* Archive

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The first issue of *Heredity* appeared in July 1947. The opening pages provided an overview of 'Genetical Research in Britain', which demonstrates how some of the same topics that are covered in *Heredity* now were already occupying the minds of geneticists in the 1940s. For example, RA Fisher's department in Cambridge was interested in the genetic basis of style length polymorphisms and the theory of inbreeding, the Galton Laboratory had ongoing work on the genetic basis of human psychoses, while EB Ford and colleagues in Oxford were studying the genetics, biochemistry and fitness effects of colour polymorphisms in moths, and the John Innes Institute was already a leading centre for analysing the quantitative genetics of crop plants.

Over the intervening years, *Heredity* has published many influential papers in these and other areas of genetics. They are all available in the free archive at <http://www.nature.com/hdy/archive/index.html>. The accolade for the most cited article to date goes to Kenneth Mather's 1971 Fisher Memorial Lecture 'On Biometrical Genetics', with citations continuing through 2009. Other famous papers include Bateman's 1948 'Intra-sexual selection in *Drosophila*' and, more recently,

'Indirect measures of gene flow and migration:  $F_{ST} \neq 1/(4Nm + 1)$ ' by Whitlock and McCauley in 1999. Of course, these fields have moved on, with new ideas and new technologies, but many of the older papers remain relevant. It is worth looking back to them to follow the development of ideas, to compare the folklore that has developed around these seminal contributions with what the authors actually said, and to consider how far we have come in addressing the issues that they raised. Often these papers were beautifully written, and we may well have something to learn from the manner in which science was conducted and presented in the past.

For all of these reasons, we have initiated an occasional series of commissioned commentary articles on 'Gems from the Archive', the first of which appears in this volume. We hope that these will be enjoyable and stimulating glimpses into the past, as well as re-emphasizing challenges for current research.

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