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## Preface to Tobacco mosaic virus: pioneering research for a century. A meeting held on 7 and 8 August 1998 by the Royal Society of Edinburgh in association with the Royal Society of London

The Royal Society

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## Preface

Although symptoms which can reasonably be ascribed to virus diseases were recorded many centuries ago, it was not until after the establishment of the Pasteurian view of bacteria as pathogens that the distinctness of viruses began to be discerned. The single most crucial event in this process was the publication of W. M. Beijerinck's (1898) study on the cause of tobacco mosaic disease, in which he reported that the infectious agent had properties unlike those of bacteria, and put forward his concept of the *contagium vivum fluidum* for this new category of pathogen. Being able to pass through bacteria-retaining Chamberland filters, these agents came to be known as filterable viruses, later abbreviated to viruses.

This year therefore marks what many would consider to be the centenary of the birth of virology as a science. Moreover, in the past 100 years, research on tobacco mosaic virus (TMV), as it is now known, has continued to play a leading part in the progress of virological study. This period of achievement was celebrated in August by a Symposium entitled *Tobacco mosaic virus: pioneering research for a century*, held in Edinburgh under the auspices of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in association with the Royal Society. The papers in this Theme are based on those presented at the meeting. This unique set of articles includes personal accounts of important earlier discoveries by those who made them, extending through to the latest advances in plant virology made by work on TMV. Together, the papers illustrate the great contribution of TMV research, not only to the advancement of virology, but also to aspects of molecular biology, the resolution of macromolecular structures, immunology, biotechnology and other related sciences.

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B. D. Harrison  
T. M. A. Wilson

### Reference

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