

Who's Who in OUCS

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OUCS Web Page-
www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Lab/1550/oucs_web.html

A Joke - By Roma Oakes

A physicist, an engineer and a psychologist are called in as consultants to a dairy farm whose production has been below par. Each is allowed to inspect the details of the operation before making a report.

The first to be called is the engineer, who states: The size of the stalls for the cows should be decreased. Efficiency could be improved if the cows were more closely packed, with a net allotment of 275 cubic feet per cow. Also, the diameter of the milking tubes should be increased by 4% to allow for a greater average flow rate during the milking periods."

The next to report is the psychologist, who proposes: "The inside of the barn should be painted green. This is a more mellow colour than brown and should help induce greater milk flow. Also, more trees should be planted in the fields to add diversity to the scenery for the cows during grazing, to reduce boredom."

Finally, the physicist is called upon. He asks for a blackboard and then draws a circle. He begins: "Assuming a spherical cow in a vacuum..."

Open Day

Despite competing with the World Cup and a very dodgy weather forecast, this year's Open Day at Walton Hall attracted a good crowd. The chemistry department seemed to be particularly busy for most of the day.

The downstairs area had demonstrations on fragrances, ice-cream making, marshmallow molecular modelling, electric power from fruit, badge-making, computers, chemistry courses and the research carried out in the department.

The upstairs laboratories were for all the experiments that required non-household chemicals. The most popular was – surprise, surprise – the slime making. But the colour change experiments ran it a close second, with adults as well as children looking on in sheer amazement as solutions

changed from orange to green and back again. Other demonstrations included The Nylon Rope Trick, Vegetable Indicators and an art lesson that made it to



the national press, along with Ray Jones (who, we are assured, was definitely doing more than "looking on").

Check out the OUCS web site (address above) for more pix.



Student Chemical Society Conference

Bob Matthews reports.

Student Chemistry Societies, networking, membership of the RSC what has it got to do with me? A good question.

Last November on the same weekend as the OUCS AGM in Birmingham, an event took place a few miles away in another Birmingham hotel. This event was the first Student Chemistry Society Conference organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry. Why?



The Royal Society of Chemistry

In simplistic terms, the RSC wanted to know what chemistry students thought about membership of the RSC and how the RSC could help support Student Chemical Societies. The conference, attended by representatives of 53 student chemical societies, consisted of three sections.

The first section on Friday evening consisted of presentations relating to RSC activities. Professor E.W. Abel gave the first, entitled 'RSC Synopsis', the president of the RSC, Denise Rafferty, followed with a lecture, 'The Future of Chemistry in the UK'.

Two workshop sessions on the Saturday made up the remainder of the event, the delegates being split into eight syndicate groups each with a group leader. The title of the morning workshop was 'Student Membership of the RSC' and posed the following questions:

- What do you perceive as the image of the RSC?
- What image should the RSC be portraying to attract younger chemists?
- List the five most important things

about being a member of the RSC.

- List five things the Society should be doing for younger members.
- If the Society relaunched its web site, what three services should it offer?
- The following services are currently provided by the Society, free careers advice; reduced prices on books and journals; free access

The response to these questions can be summarised briefly as follows:

- The Society has a serious communication problem
- Members are not aware of the Societies activities and services
- Members do not perceive membership as value for money
- The image of the society desperately needs updating as it is seen as an elitist body for ageing academics that does not involve industry
- The Society does not appear to be in touch with younger members

The last workshop session, 'The Student Chemical Societies Network' asked the questions listed below:

- How could the network be enhanced to serve SCSs better?
- What role should SCSs have within the RSC?
- List five things the RSC should do

- The RSC would like to use the SCSs to act as a focus for recruiting student members, how should this be done?

Many of the delegates were not aware that the Network existed, nevertheless this did not prevent a flow of ideas. Two major themes developed:

- *Communication* - the SCSs want to be kept up-to-date with what the Society is doing and what events are happening. The preferred way to achieve this is via the Web. The SCSs wanted contact details for other Chemical Societies, Honorary Representatives and Local Section Committees to allow them to network.
- *Support* - a popular suggestion was the introduction of a SCS starter and information pack. This would be especially beneficial to those societies that have recently started up, but would also provide existing societies with relevant information about the Society.

There is far more detail than briefly described here but it is anticipated that many of the ideas put forward will take effect for the new academic year, not ours of course, the one that starts September/October for the rest of the universities.

What do you think?

- Are you a member of the RSC?
- Did you know that OU students are eligible for student membership?

Write to Frank Hollis (address on back page)

The Litmus Test

Mike Gagan has been President of OUCS for the last two years. He has played a very big part in the development of the ChemSoc from the very beginning.

Where did you go to school?

King Edward VII Grammar School, Sheffield - all boys

Did you go to university straight from school?

No. It was a condition of my taking up my place at Oxford that I had to do my National Service (does anyone remember what that was?) first. I spent about 19 months at a listening post in Bavaria, on detachment deep in the American Zone, where I learned to ski, drink wine and go to the opera (Munich), among other things.

Where do you work now?

Quite a lot at home; but I am officially attached to the North West Regional Centre of the OU as one of the two Science Staff tutors.



What are your outside interests and hobbies?

I still ski every year (only one broken leg), I cycle (both with my folding cycle and an old tourer that I bought in a junk shop for £10 in the early '70s), and I am fairly active in the local Methodist Church. I am also a Macintosh enthusiast. Having lived for a while in St Andrews I used to play

golf (Best handicap 16), and I used to grow border carnations. Today most of my 'hobbies' are in some way work-connected - for example, I chair the Methodist Church's Open Learning Centre Committee, and the Federation of European Chemical Societies Division of Chemical Education.

What books do you read for pleasure?

I am very fond of talking books which I buy avidly when they are reduced in the periodic book sales (or at the motorway service stations). I have a better collection than the local library, and I listen to them as I commute between Sheffield, and Manchester or Milton Keynes. For real books, I vary between classics and others, and have read Kenilworth, The Mill on the Floss, the Moonstone, Manchu, and the first 600 pages of Vikram Seth's 'A suitable boy' so far this year.

What is your favourite TV program?

I don't watch much TV. I like detectives like Taggart and Morse, classics like 'Pride and Prejudice', and I usually watch 'Match of the Day'. I don't see much of my team (Sheffield Wednesday) though.

Why did you choose chemistry?

I was fascinated by colours and crystals. I gave my first talk on 'Colour in chemistry' with demonstrations to the school scientific society, and this interest culminated in writing Book 4 Part 1, 'See, taste, smell' of 'ST240: Our chemical environment'. In the sixth form I had a wonderful

chemistry set for carrying out spot test analysis, which included such useful reagents as uranyl acetate and benzidine.

What is your current project?

I am Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the first European Conference on Chemical Education, which will take place in Budapest in August this year. This has been a big project selecting and inviting plenary lecturers, arranging the seminar programme, and liaising with the local Hungarian Committee about accommodation, excursions, public lectures and so on.

What would you like to do next?

At work, after S803, I have just about enough time left before retirement to belong to one more chemistry course team. Before then I should like to have visited every European country, but as Europe continues to expand by adding places like Cyprus and Israel, I may not make it. I hope to visit the Baltic Republics in '99 or 2000, perhaps to lecture, as I now have friends in two of them.

Where do you see your field going in the future?

Chemical education has developed enormously since I first became interested in it. The first 'educational technology' working group I belonged to used black and white reel-to-reel video recording, and talked about better design of wallcharts. Now Interactive, multimedia, resource-based teaching programs are beginning to achieve real quality teaching. I went into teaching because I was convinced that I could give better lectures and tutorials than the ones I received. With the increased emphasis on teaching quality I hope that the current generation will think the same - but that they will be starting from a much higher baseline.

Revision Events

Bristol: 26th Sept.

After many years of feeling very envious of students who were lucky (or desperate) enough to be able to pack their bags and go off to York for a revision weekend, I was the ideal candidate to undertake the OUCS's latest experiment - a revision day in Bristol.

As soon as Carol Arnold was crazy enough to suggest a revision day catering for regions 03 and 10, I jumped in with both feet. After all, the revision day at Danbury has been extremely successful, so why not hold one in Bristol for the students in the South West and Wales?

Well, I have surveyed numerous students with favourable results and, after some discus-

sion with Ruth Williams (staff tutor for region 03), the venue has been booked and the tutors coaxed into taking part. All we need now are the students!!

The revision day is to be held at the University of the West of England (site to be decided) on September 26th 1998, at a cost of £25 each for a full days tuition. The courses to be covered are: ST240, S246, S247, S342, S343 and S344. The revision day is open to all OUCS chemistry students, and not limited to regions 03 and 10.

Anyone who wishes to join us on September 26th should write, enclosing a large SAE, to me, Jan Davidge

Colchester: 19th Sept.

The Eastern Revision day has moved from Danbury to the



The Old Pump Room at Norwich

OUCS NEWS

OUCS CD-ROM

After a long wait the OUCS CD-ROM is now available. The main program on the disk is version 2.1 of ISIS/Draw but there are numerous other chemistry related programs including a couple of periodic tables, macros for MS Word, WebLab viewer and RasMol - for viewing 3D structures - and past issues of TouchPaper.

To get your copy send a cheque for £5, made payable to OUCS, to Frank Hollis (address on back page).

Chairman Elect

There was just the one nomination for the place of chairman of OUCS. Bob Matthews will be taking over at the AGM in November.

Bob has already represented OUCS - see the front page.

R06 at Norwich

Several members from the East Anglian region spent a very nice day at the Norwich water treatment and sewage treatment works.

The picture shows the Old Pump Room which has now been converted to a museum

Colchester Institute. As well as being slightly cheaper it is easier to get to. But we can't promise that the food will be as good.

Courses covered are: ST240, S246, S247, S327, S342, S343 and S344.

To book send details (name, address, courses) plus £30 and a large SAE to Sue Whitaker.

York: 2nd to 4th Oct.

The main revision event in York has expanded again. As well as all the chemistry courses listed for Colchester above the three physics courses - S269, S271, S281 - will also be covered.

Contact Carole Arnold to check if there are still places left.

All addresses are on the back page.

and training centre. After the excitement of an ozone alarm we had a pleasant lunch then on to the sewage treatment works - where some were not too keen on the smell, and others on the heights. See the OUCS web page for a full report with many photos.