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**The Historical Group of
the Royal Society of Chemistry:
A History from 1975 to 2024**

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FOREWORD

Many congratulations to the RSC Historical Group on its fiftieth anniversary. The Historical Group and its dedicated volunteers have been a constant during my career with the RSC for over thirty years. In connecting RSC members, academics, teachers, professional historians and enthusiasts, the reach and relevance of the group has been unwavering. Over the last 50 years, it's grown from a small group of around 150 members to now nearly 1000. Volunteers work with over 70 interest groups and collaborate with global organisations such as the European Chemical Society (EuChemS) and the American Chemical Society (ACS), promoting public understanding of chemistry and providing a forum for discussion. I was privileged to attend the celebrations at Burlington House to mark the 50th Anniversary in March 2026 and to give thanks to its dedicated members. I hope you enjoy this publication and celebrate the Historical Group's impact, its passion and its work. Here's to the next 50 years.

Dr Helen Pain MBE CSci CChem FRSC
Chief Executive, Royal Society of Chemistry

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PREFACE

The Historical Group (HG) was formed after an article on Joseph Priestley and the discovery of oxygen appeared in the August 1974 issue of *Chemistry in Britain* written by the chemist and historian Stephen Mason. The first meeting of the group was held at King's College London (KCL) in March 1975. For many years the main focus of the group was the organisation of sessions at the Annual Chemical Congress and papers presented at the Annual General Meeting at Burlington House, London. When the Annual Chemical Congresses were abolished in 1996, a second meeting was organised each year to replace them. For several years, meetings were sometimes held outside London, especially in the North-west, but they faded away for lack of support by the mid-1990s. Another important focus for the group was the BOC Priestley Conferences, held every three years, which combined chemical sessions with parallel historical sessions. However, they too faded away after the mid-1990s. The group then settled down to a pattern of two meetings a year, one in the spring and one in the autumn, almost invariably held in London.

Stephen Mason was followed in the Chair in 1977 by Colin Russell from the Open University (OU). Russell had become friends with Alec Campbell from Newcastle, who succeeded Russell. Campbell famously gave captivating lectures which attracted many chemists to the group. In the 1990s, the HG was chaired by Noel Coley, the Treasurer of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry and a colleague of Russell. The election of Jack Betteridge as Chair in 1999 was a watershed in the history of the HG as he had not been previously involved with the running of the group although he had joined the HG in the mid-1980s. He was succeeded by Alan Dronsfield, who was followed by three long-standing members of the committee: John Hudson, Peter Morris and John Nicholson. Another stage of the HG's history began in 2023 with the arrival of five new members of the committee, for the first time elected in a ballot of the group's members.

The newsletter of the HG first appeared in 1981, initially a couple of A4 sheets which soon became an A5 booklet with a coloured cover. At first it was devoted solely to matters arising at the Annual General Meeting, news about the history of chemistry community, and the talks given to the group. Book reviews were soon added. Articles first appeared after Morris became the editor in 1996. A series of booklets

entitled Occasional Publications was inaugurated in 1997, which became a vehicle for the publication of the Wheeler Lectures when they were established five years later. These lectures were given roughly every two years by an eminent historian of chemistry until the Wheeler Fund was exhausted in 2022.

Like the rest of the country, the HG was much affected by the Covid Pandemic of 2020–21 – an event which was unimaginable when the group was first formed. Our meetings were suspended for nineteen months, but the newsletter continued to appear on schedule. When it became clear that the lockdown would not be short-lived, the group initiated a series of online lectures which have continued up to the present time.

Let us all hope that the HG will continue to flourish for another fifty years and our successors will produce a booklet to mark the group's centenary in 2075.

Peter J. T. Morris
June 2026

FORMATION OF THE HISTORICAL GROUP

There are two questions which naturally arise when considering the formation of the HG: why was it set up in 1975 and why was it founded by Stephen Mason? It appears that Stephen Mason (1923–2007), a professor of chemistry at King's College London and the author of a well-known history of science, first had the idea of setting up a historical chemistry group in 1972. At the Annual General Meeting in 1985, Mason gave a talk about the first ten years of the group, but sadly it was not summarised at the time and the text has not survived. However, a brief history of the group was published in the newsletter in July 1996 following the meeting to celebrate its coming of age. Nevertheless, the early records of the HG are sketchy at best and the minute book for this period is missing. I had wondered if it could have been connected with the bicentenary celebrations arranged by the Chemical Society and BOC in 1974 to mark the discovery of oxygen by Joseph Priestley. However, it is clear that the first steps to set up the group were taken before the organisation of the celebrations first began (remarkably the celebrations were arranged and held all within 1974). It is more likely that Mason was asked to chair the organising committee because of his prior interest in a historical group rather than the reverse.

The first record of such a group being set up in the Minute Books of the Chemical Society is in the report of the seventh meeting of the Education Division Council held on 14 May 1973. Martyn Berry (1938–2024), a schoolteacher famous for his humorous book *H₂O and All That*, told the council that Mason put the idea to the Interdivisional Committee (IDC) and the IDC referred it to the Education Division with the suggestion that the history of chemistry group could be affiliated to the division. Berry said he welcomed the idea, but felt that there was no reason for the new group to be part of the Education Division. After some discussion, the council felt that it should come under the IDC for the same reasons as the Chemical Information Group. At the meeting of the Divisions Committee held on 29 October 1974, chaired by Derek Barton, the history of chemistry group was formally approved. The committee requested that the General Secretary of the Chemical Society, John Ruck Keene (1917–2014), should write to the Society for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry to explain that there would be no conflict and hopefully 'maximum cooperation'. A letter along these lines was duly received by Gerrylynn Roberts, Secretary of the



Above left: Stephen Mason in Japan, c. 1978. Above right: Maurice Crosland, a friend of Edward Caldin and an early supporter of the HG.

Society for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry, on 8 November 1974. The letter stated that the new group would confine itself to the more recent history of chemistry, thereby implying that there would be little overlap between the two organisations. As it happens, the society was about to change its name to encompass modern chemistry at the beginning of 1975 and one wonders if Mason would have gone ahead with his plans for a history of chemistry group if this name change had occurred a couple of years earlier.

Meanwhile, Mason had published an article on Joseph Priestley and the discovery of oxygen in the August 1974 issue of *Chemistry in Britain*, as part of the celebrations of the bicentenary of the discovery of oxygen (or more accurately dephlogisticated air). In a box in the article he said ‘Readers interested in the formation of a Historical Chemistry Group of the Chemical Society are asked to contact Professor S. F. Mason, Chemistry Department, King’s College, Strand, London WC2R 2LS’. He felt that there must be many members of the Chemical Society and the Royal Institute of Chemistry (then still separate) who were interested in the history of chemistry and the chemical industry. The reaction to this call was almost immediate. In his letter replying to people who had expressed an interest in the

Readers interested in the formation of a Historical Chemistry Group of the Chemical Society are asked to contact Professor S. F. Mason, Chemistry Department, King's College, Strand, London WC2R 2LS

idea, Mason stressed that the group needed a minimum of twenty members (the Education Division had said twenty-five members). By the beginning of October 1974, 73 people had written to Mason and in his letter a month later, Ruck Keene said about 100

people had shown interest. I wrote to Mason as soon as I arrived in Oxford as a first-year student in mid-October; I found my letter in the group's records when I became the Secretary in 1988. The members of the Chemical Society who responded to this call were invited to the first meeting of the HG at King's College London on Friday 21 March 1975, which thus marks the foundation date of the group. There was a reception afterwards and I recall talking to Frank Greenaway (1917–2013) of the Science Museum who introduced me to Peter Collins of the Royal Society.

It is not known if Mason approached any other historians of chemistry about setting up the group. It is likely that he conferred with two colleagues in the chemistry department at KCL, namely Robin Spring (1952–2015) who was the first Secretary of the HG and Andrew Robertson (1921–86) one of the founding members of the committee. He may have also discussed it with Ted Caldin from the University of Kent, who was a close friend of the leading historian of chemistry, Maurice Crosland (1931–2020), also at Kent. Edward Francis Caldin (1914–99) was an English physical chemist who spent much of his career in university teaching posts. Despite opposition from some of his academic peers, Caldin believed that students should be acquainted with at least some of the history and philosophy of science. The other two pre-selected members of the committee were Alec Campbell (1918–99) from the University of Newcastle and Peter Gray (1926–2012) at the University of Leeds. Gray was Professor of Physical Chemistry at Leeds (1962–88) and later Master of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge (1988–96). They were all chemists rather than professional historians of chemistry. However, two professional historians of chemistry joined the committee at the founding meeting, namely Colin Russell (1928–2013) at the Open University and David Knight (1936–2018) of the University of Durham.

The Early Years

The theme of the first meeting in March 1975 was about 'Historical Problems in the Development of Chemical Science and Chemical Industry' (a list of all the meetings can be found in Appendix 5). The speakers were Crosland, who was the President of the British Society for the History of Science (BSHS), and Trevor Williams (1921–96), who was the Chairman of the newly renamed Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry (SHAC). The second meeting was held in June 1976, on 'Some British Chemical Institutions in the Nineteenth Century'. This was followed by a joint meeting with SHAC and BSHS on 'Avogadro's Hypothesis' in November. Many of the meetings up to 1980 were held at King's College London (KCL) and thereafter the London meetings were mostly held at Burlington House.

These meetings reveal Mason's vision for the HG, namely a group that would collaborate closely with existing professional history of science societies rather than being a meeting place for chemists to develop and showcase their distinctive approach to the history of chemistry. His view is also shown by the intellectual topics chosen (historical problems, Avogadro's hypothesis) rather than themes that would appeal to the average chemist-historian. He wanted to go even further and merge (in a manner to be decided) with SHAC. This rather raises the question of why he bothered to set up the HG in the first place, a thought which I suspect occurred to some members of SHAC Council at the time. While it is likely that many of the chemists in the HG would have been unhappy with such a merger, the coup de grâce to the idea was actually delivered by SHAC when the Secretary, Gerrylynn Roberts, wrote to Mason in January 1977 to say that SHAC was happy to consider joint meetings on an ad hoc basis, rather than having joint meetings automatically (which implies every meeting would have been jointly held).

Events in 1977 (or the lack of them) hint at a crisis which is now lost in the mists of time (or rather for the lack of documentation). After the successful meeting about Avogadro's Hypothesis in November 1976, there was no HG meeting for over a year. The Avogadro meeting had been organised by Noel Coley of SHAC and Mason may have been banking on having joint meetings with SHAC thereafter. He resigned in the summer and, according to a letter from Christine King, the new Secretary of the HG, to Roberts dated 25 August 1977, the HG held its first committee meeting on 6 July. Whether this was actually the first

committee meeting is now impossible to determine, but if this was the case, it suggests that Mason had been running the group more or less singlehandedly up to that point. The Annual General Meeting was eventually held in December with talks about the rise of physical chemistry by Ronnie Bell (1907–96) and Alex Dolby. Both the theme and the speakers (Dolby was at the University of Kent) suggest that the meeting had been arranged by Mason and originally intended to be held in June or July.

Mason Hands Over to Russell

Mason was replaced by Russell and the power on the committee now passed from the KCL chemists to a new axis between the Open University and the University of Newcastle. Such an alliance is less strange than it might seem. In this period Russell was a frequent visitor to Newcastle as he was carrying out a prosopographical study of the pioneering but short-lived Newcastle Chemical Society (a project which eventually fizzled out). In this way, he became acquainted with Campbell, who, by the power of his energy and intellect, had risen from the ranks of technicians to become a lecturer. Russell admired anyone who had got on in life through their own efforts and the two chemists clearly shared a common vision of how the HG should develop. The new Secretary was briefly Christine King (1947–87), a



Colin Russell, in an OU video (part of AST281: ‘Science and the Rise of Technology since 1800’) about the last lead chamber plant in Britain at Seaton Carew, Co. Durham, 1973.

PhD student of Russell, but she was soon succeeded by Russell's colleague at the Open University, Vance Hall. The original name of the group was the Historical Chemistry Group of the Chemical Society (which remained the group's formal title with the Natwest Bank until Peter Morris had it changed when he was the Treasurer, c. 2015, and which still appears on the RSC website), but by 1977, it was called the Historical Group, probably on the initiative of Russell when he became the Chair. The HG had now become the group as we know it today.

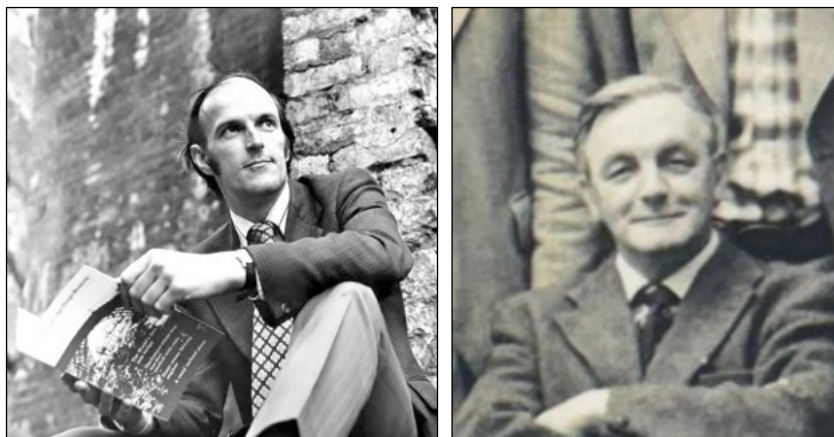
Historical Group and FECS/EuChemS

Almost since the HG were founded, it has been a member of the Working Party for the History of Chemistry (formed in 1977) of what was then the Federation of European Chemical Societies. More recently the Working Party has become the Division of the History of Chemistry of the European Chemical Society (EuChemS). The HG representative to the Working Party was originally the Chair, but the role was often delegated to another member of the HG Committee. The Working Party raised the number of representatives to two in 2005, and it became a specific post on the committee. Our representatives have been Alec Campbell (1982–88); Colin Russell (1981 and 1999–2006); Jack Betteridge (2004–09); Peter Morris (1989–98 and 2006–25); Anna Simmons (2011+) and Martin Bigg (2025+).

Early Annual Chemical Congresses

The HG took part in the Annual Chemical Congress, for the first time at the meeting in Liverpool in 1978. Almost immediately, the group found that the congresses were an ideal forum for the HG as they offered a captive audience of chemists who were present for other reasons. Chemists who did not have another session to go to would drop into one of the HG's sessions. Members of the group would talk to these dropers-in either at the meeting or in the bar afterwards hoping to recruit some as new members. Attendance at the sessions varied between 10 and 30, with a turnout of 40 being a highlight. Furthermore, the Annual Chemical Congresses brought the HG into close contact with the RSC's leadership, in particular John Gibson (1938–2022) and Angela Fish (1938–95). For example, Sir Ewart Jones (1911–2002), the RSC President at the time, gave a talk in one of the HG's sessions at the 1981 Annual Chemical Congress in Guildford.

Most of the Annual Chemical Congresses had an overall theme and the group either had sessions on this theme or about the location where the



Above left: Neil Cossons at Ironbridge, mid-1970s.

Above right: Alec Campbell, in a Newcastle Chemistry Department group photo, 1980.

congress was held. At the first symposium in Liverpool, the theme was 'Aspects of the Chemical Industry on Merseyside'. The HG was then asked from 1982 onwards to organise the open lecture for the annual congresses which was important for raising the profile of the group. These lectures, which were typically delivered to audiences of over a hundred delegates, were not always on the history of chemistry. The first HG-organised open lecture, in 1982, was given by Neil Cossons (1939–2026), Director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum (who became Director of the Science Museum in 1986), followed by an excursion to the museum. In 1984 (in Exeter) it was about the Tudor warship, the 'Mary Rose' by Peter Whitlock (1925–89), the naval historian.

A particularly notable early Annual Chemical Congress was held in April 1979 in Bristol, with the theme 'The Chemical History of Gases'. One evening, members of the group trooped along to a small house in Clifton which had been identified as the original site of the Pneumatic Institute. To the bemusement of the middle-aged couple who owned the house, David Knight declaimed (as only David could) on the history of the institute and Humphry Davy. Many of the participants of the sessions in Bristol then set off by train to a BSHS meeting in Leicester organised by Bill Brock (1936–2025) on 'Problems and Perspectives in the History of Chemistry'. Several Annual Chemical



Above left: Mary Archer, 1980s.
Above right; Stella Butler, mid-1980s.

Congresses were about regional chemistry. At the 1983 Annual Chemical Congress at the University of Lancaster, the theme was ‘North-West Chemistry’ and Russell gave the open lecture on ‘The Making of a Chemist: Edward Frankland in Lancaster’. ‘Chemistry in Scotland’ was the theme of the 1985 Annual Chemical Congress in St Andrews, and the literary historian David Daiches (1912–2005) gave a talk on Scotch whisky.

THE HISTORICAL GROUP IN THE 1980s

Russell stepped down as Chair in 1982 and was replaced by Campbell, who had been the Treasurer since the group was formed. Campbell did much to promote the group in its early period through his spell-binding lectures. The new Secretary was John Shorter (1926–2013) at the University of Hull. Robert Nuttall of the University of Strathclyde was the new Treasurer. Another leading figure in the group at this time was Mary Archer who organised several meetings. In this early period there was a policy to have someone from the chemical industry on the committee, initially Alan Nineham (1920–c. 2014), who had worked at May & Baker and he was replaced in 1985 by Michael Scott of G. D. Searle. Scott left the committee soon afterwards and the idea of having committee members specifically from industry was dropped. The late 1980s were a period of some turmoil in the leadership of the

Early Years of the HG Newsletter

[illegible]

The first newsletter (June 1981) and the fourth issue (January 1983).

Secretary. Peter Reed took over the printing of the newsletter at the National Museums on Merseyside (where he was the deputy director). He converted it into an A5 booklet with a cover for the fourth issue in January 1983, mainly to save money on postage, and the summaries of past talks appeared for the first time. These summaries were briefly hived off in the mid-1980s to a separate booklet, but soon returned to the main newsletter. With the burden of other secretarial duties (such as the organisation of meetings and membership matters), it was difficult for Shorter to spend much time on developing it.

The early newsletters covered the organisation of the group (such as membership figures), the meetings of the group and other history of chemistry meetings, recent publications and news of the history of chemistry community elsewhere, for example the development of the Center for the History of Chemistry in Philadelphia. When the summaries of the talks were included in the newsletter, it was typically about 20 pages long (as in January 1985).

Funding Crisis

For many years, a member of the RSC had to pay a subscription to join an Interest Group, but one could join as many Interest Groups as one wished. The original subscription (for CS/RSC members) was £1 pa. There was a severe funding crisis which seems to have hit the HG suddenly in 1982. This was blamed at the time on the loss of 'hidden funding' (e.g. postage) from universities. Perhaps the merger of the Chemical Society and the Royal Institute of Chemistry to form the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) in May 1980 may have also played a role.

Shorter made a poignant plea in February 1983 to Roy David Guthrie, the then Secretary-General of the RSC, for financial assistance. In his response, Guthrie stated that it was the RSC's policy that groups had to be self-financing, but suggested that an approach be made to the Annual Congress Committee for a payment for the HG's valuable activity at the Annual Chemical Congresses. It is not known if such an approach was made, but Campbell asked if a 'quiet discussion' could be held between Guthrie and the three officer bearers of the HG at the forthcoming Annual Chemical Congress at Lancaster.

These financial problems revived the idea that the HG could be combined with SHAC. In a letter to Roberts in June 1983, John Brooke of Lancaster University, who had a foot in both camps as a

member of the Council of SHAC and a member of the HG Committee, suggested that the financial difficulties of the HG presented an opportunity. He suggested a concessionary SHAC membership fee for HG members. He said that the question of the two groups' relationship would continue to come up and if their mutual financial stability would be improved by merging, the pragmatic argument would seem strong. On the other hand, he saw that the two groups had a different approach to the history of chemistry, that there was a value in having a foothold for the history of chemistry in the RSC and Russell had strong feelings about the issue (presumably he was opposed to it). In the end there was no link-up with SHAC and the subscription was doubled to £2, seemingly without much effect on membership numbers. Brooke's letter referred to the HG having to be bailed out by the RSC, which suggests that the HG had received some extra funding.

However, Shorter raised the financial issue again in December 1983, this time with Gibson, pointing out that one of the reasons why the HG was short of funds was the imperfect membership records maintained by the RSC (as the funding was then per head).

Membership

Initially, the Secretary dealt with membership issues, mainly sending out the newsletter. Shorter worked hard in the early years of the group to ensure that the hefty green-lined computer print-out of our membership produced periodically by the RSC was accurate and he did much to promote the HG overseas, especially in the USA. Campbell introduced the concept of non-RSC and overseas members when he became Chair. The category of non-RSC members was dropped in 2014, partly because by this time the RSC insisted that one had to become an Affiliate Member to join an Interest Group, but mainly because there seemed little point in having such a category as the PDF of the newsletter (see below) was free to download and there was no fee for our meetings. The cost of sending hard copies of the newsletter overseas (the main reason for being a non-RSC member of the group) had also become prohibitive.

The HG published its first List of Members in June 1986 containing around 160 names and addresses. Just over a year later, the group published a revised list, encompassing about 250 names. The pace then slackened off and the third list was produced in December 1992 with some 350 names. The final membership list appeared in 1996

with a similar total. No list has been published since then. The reason is not clear, but nowadays such a list would probably fall foul of data protection regulations. In 1991, the HG produced a membership leaflet to promote membership of the group, especially among non-RSC members. It does not appear to have had any marked effect on membership numbers.

Annual Chemical Congresses and AGMs in the 1980s

The theme of the 1987 Annual Chemical Congress at Swansea was 'metal extraction', given the importance of that industry in the area, and the outing was well-attended. The highlight of this meeting was the packed open lecture by Campbell on 'The Gold Makers' with his usual spectacular demonstrations. According to the newsletter, this conference led to 'considerable recruitment'. Another popular theme was 'chemistry and crime' (at the 1988 Annual Chemical Congress in Canterbury) which attracted audiences of over 40, seen as a remarkable attendance at the time.

The other meeting that was usually put on by the HG during this era was the Annual General Meeting (initially just called the Annual Meeting), which was moved from June or July to September in 1984. Papers were included at the meeting to ensure a good attendance at the formal Annual General Meeting. Most of the meetings up to 1992 were on a theme, including 'Fiftieth Anniversary of the Discovery of Polythene' (1983), history of electrochemistry (1984), history of dye-stuffs (1986), 'Chemical Family Trees' (1989), 'Aspects of the Life and Work of Sir James Dewar' (1992) and 'Teaching the History and Philosophy of Chemistry' (1994). Special meetings were held to mark the HG's 10th anniversary in 1985 and its 21st anniversary (the group's 'coming of age') in 1996. Mason spoke about the first ten years of the HG, before an open meeting, in 1985, and several former Chairs gave talks at the 1996 meeting. Other Annual General Meetings were open meetings with papers offered by members.

BOC Priestley Conferences

As we have seen, the Chemical Society and BOC organised a conference to celebrate the bicentenary of the discovery of oxygen by Joseph Priestley in 1774. It was held in Birmingham, where Priestley lived between 1780 and 1791, with the help of Maurice Stacey (1907–94), the fluorine chemist who had a chair at the University of Birmingham. However, it was under the umbrella of the Industrial Division, and the

only historical aspects of the meeting was an exhibition in the chemistry department and a lecture about Priestley. There was also a trip to see BOC's factory at Widnes (near Ditton). BOC clearly thought this meeting was successful, because it then set up the triennial BOC Priestley Conferences, with the first meeting in 1977. J. W. (Jack) Barrett (1912–90), who had been on the organising committee for the 1974 conference, was put in charge of the arrangements rather than Mason and there were no historical sessions at the first two conferences.



Joseph Needham,
by Walter Stoneman, 1949

Through his friendship with Barrett, Russell arranged for a historical section at the third Priestley Conference to mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Priestley in 1983 and the Priestley Lecture was delivered by Joseph Needham (1900–95) on 'The World's First Chemical Explosive in China and the West'. The HG was then invited to hold sessions at subsequent conferences. These conferences were not such rich territory for new members, but the dinner and social events at these conferences enabled speakers from the group to talk to the speakers from the parallel chemical sessions. The main advantage of these conferences was the proceedings volumes published by the RSC and distributed as part of the RSC special publication series to most libraries. Sometimes the historical sessions fitted the overall theme of the conference, but more often than not, the historical topic was completely different. For example, the Fifth BOC Priestley Conference in Birmingham in 1989 was devoted to 'The Separation of Gases', but the HG (or possibly just Russell) decided to have sessions on the history of electrochemistry. A particularly memorable meeting was the Seventh BOC Priestley Conference in 1994 to mark the anniversary of the arrival of Priestley in America. It was held at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, near Priestley's house in Northumberland. The overall theme was 'Oxidants and Oxidation in the Earth's Atmosphere' and the historical sessions were on the early history of ozone. The following BOC Priestley Conference, in London in 1997, was on the history of

anaesthesia and this appears to have been the last conference. A BOC Priestley Symposium held at Huddersfield University in 2004 organised by the Priestley Society to mark the 200th anniversary of Joseph Priestley's death was recorded in the newsletter, but it was noted that few members of the group had attended it.

Meetings Outside London

From the HG's earliest days, there was an intention to hold meetings away from London so members outside the south-east of England did not feel neglected. Much of the time, this was achieved by the Annual Chemical Congress as it was usually held outwith the capital. There was a meeting in Cambridge in 1984 and in Edinburgh in 1988; both were on the history of spectroscopy although the Edinburgh meeting (held jointly with the UV Spectroscopy Group) concentrated on spectrometers thanks to the extensive holdings of the National Museum of Scotland. There had been a plan to hold a meeting with the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1985, but there was a failure in communication with the RSE and the meeting did not materialise. To avoid disappointing our Scottish members, Russell went up to Edinburgh to give a lecture.

With the establishment of Catalyst, the chemical industry museum, in Widnes in 1987 and two active committee members (Peter Reed and Stella Butler) based in the region, there was a particular desire to hold meetings in the north-west of England. 'Chemistry in the North-West' was held in Liverpool in 1987, but in 1994, it was reported in the newsletter that a second attempt to hold a meeting at Catalyst had failed and no further efforts to hold a meeting in that region would be made. Nonetheless, a meeting on 'The History of the Chemical Industry in the Runcorn-Widnes Area' was held at Catalyst in 2013.

THE HISTORICAL GROUP IN THE 1990s

Morris stepped down as the Secretary in 1991, when he took up an Edelstein Fellowship, which took him out of the country, and a position at the Science Museum. His successor was John Green (1930–2010) of University College London (UCL), who held strong views on many issues. Noel Coley (1927–2020) became the Chair in 1993. He skilfully piloted the HG during the difficult period in the mid-1990s when the Annual Chemical Congresses were abolished and the group had to move over to a new system of two meetings a year. John Nicholson



Above left: Ray Anderson. Above right: Noel Coley on holiday.

became the Secretary (for the first time) in 1994 and Ray Anderson (1947–2024) of Carlsberg-Tetley was the new Treasurer. Towards the end of Coley's tenure as Chair it was proposed that his successor should be a chemist with a high profile and with good connections with the leadership of the RSC. Eddie Abel (1931–2021) at Exeter University was suggested; he joined the committee in 1998, but later decided that he did not want to be the new Chair.

The Annual Chemical Congress in London in 1991 marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Chemical Society. Russell gave the open lecture entitled 'Chemical Bonds 1841–1991' and the HG organised several sessions on historical highlights in chemistry since 1841. Working with the Industrial Division, under Peter Bamfield of ICI as the Chair, Campbell and Morris helped to put together a meeting on 'Milestones in the History of the Chemical Industry' which was later published as an RSC Special Publication. Two years later at the 1993 congress in Southampton, the HG organised a meeting on the theme of 'Christopher Ingold (1893–1970)' and a parallel meeting (in collaboration with the Plastics History Society) on 'The Development of Plastics', which also became an RSC Special Publication.

Regional themes continued to feature at several Annual Chemical Congresses. When the Annual Chemical Congress was held across the

Irish Sea in Belfast in 1990, 'Irish Chemistry' was the obvious topic. 'Manchester Chemists' followed at the 1992 congress in Manchester and 'Liverpool Chemistry' two years later at the 1994 Annual Chemical Congress in Liverpool. 'The History of Chemical and Chemical Industry: The Scottish Dimension' was the subject of the 1995 Annual Chemical Congress at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh and Robert Anderson gave the open lecture on 'The Chair of Chemistry at Edinburgh'.

The planned 1996 Annual Chemical Congress in Bristol was postponed and then cancelled. There was a final hurrah when scaled-down congresses were held in 2000 (Heriot-Watt) and 2001 (Manchester), but that was the end of a series of conferences which had been very fruitful for the HG both in terms of providing a suitable topic and attracting new members. The theme of the HG sessions at the 1999 congress was 'Chemistry and Health' which unexpectedly gave the group a high profile (which rather took us aback) when Walter Sneader of the University of Strathclyde gave a talk suggesting that Bayer had historically presented Felix Hoffmann as the inventor of Aspirin because the 'true' inventor Arthur Eichengrün was Jewish. The RSC Press Office was



Group photograph taken at the Chemical Congress in Manchester, 1992.
Left to right: Martin Saltzman, Peter Bamfield (ICI), John Rigg (ICI),
Tony Travis, Ken Magee (ICI Blackley archivist),
Peter Reed and John Shorter.



Above left: Robert G. W. Anderson. Above right: Walter Sneader.

deluged with queries from the press about this lecture, which even featured in that year's *Annual Report*. The following year, the conference topic was Green Chemistry and we provided a 'Historical Perspective' organised by Reed.

The HG has always made an effort to hold joint meetings with other Interest Groups of the RSC, to gain a larger audience for the meeting and attract new HG members from these groups. A 'Kjeldahl Celebration' was held with the Microchemical Methods Group in 1983, and we have already mentioned the joint meeting with the UV Spectroscopy Group in 1988. The Heyrovsky Centenary Meeting was held in 1990 in collaboration with the Electroanalytical Group, Electrochemistry Group, and UCL. Joint meetings with the Dalton Division were held in 1994 on the theme of 'Sir William Ramsay and the Noble Gases' and in 1998 on 'Chemistry at the Elephant' (see below). Outside of the RSC, there was a major meeting with the BSHS in 1989 on 'Chemistry and the Industrial Revolution – The Other Chemical Revolution', a subject close to the heart of Russell (who was the immediate past president of the BSHS) who greatly admired *The Chemical Revolution* (1952) by Archibald and Nan Clow. A joint meeting with SHAC was held in 1993 on 'Philosophy of Chemistry' which was organised by Green and Eric Scerri.

In the mid-1990s, there was a move towards having a single keynote lecture at the Annual General Meeting, but this was short-lived. In 1993, Campbell gave a talk on 'Aloes, Antimony and Opium' and two years later Coley repeated the paper on 'Ozone: Its Discovery and Molecular Structure' he had given at Bucknell University.

When it became clear in 1996 that the Annual Chemical Congress in Bristol would not be held, John Hudson volunteered to set up a replacement meeting to mark the 'Centenary of the Death of Alfred Nobel' in collaboration with SHAC. There was to be another Nobel meeting in Glasgow with the Industrial Division, but it seems that it fell through (or at least our connection with the meeting was dropped). Thereafter, the HG had two meetings a year, both held in London and mostly at Burlington House. As the Annual General Meeting was now held in March, it made sense to have the other meeting in the autumn. The Annual General Meetings now became a regular meeting rather than individual papers (or a single talk) following the formal Annual General Meeting. David Leaback (1928–2020) organised a memorable occasion in October 1998, 'Chemistry at the Elephant'. Supported by the Dalton Division, the RSC, COPUS and South Bank University, this event combined talks at South Bank University (now LSBU) with an



Eddie Abel unveiling the plaque to John Newlands at West Square, Southwark, with the Mayor of Southwark and children from the nearby Charlotte Sharman Primary School in period costume, 1998.

unveiling earlier in the day of a Chemical Landmark plaque by Abel at the birthplace, in West Square, Southwark, of John Alexander Reina Newlands (1837–98), famous for his ‘Law of Octaves’.

Forum of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine

An umbrella organisation to support the learned UK societies in this field was set up in December 1995, following a proposal made by John Rowlinson (1926–2018), an HG member, at a meeting held at the Royal Society in March of that year. This filled the vacuum left by the abolition of the British National Committee for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine of the Royal Society in 1989 (but continued to exist as the History of Science Grants Committee chaired by Desmond King-Hele until 1993). The first Chair was John Hedley Brooke, a former committee member of the HG, and Frank James, a future committee member, was the Secretary. The first meeting was held in September 1996, but it appears to have become dormant around 2004, despite an attempt at the time to reorganise it. Katherine Watson represented the HG between 1996 and 2004, and Viviane Quirke in 2004.

The Newsletter is Expanded

The newsletter first started to take something like its present format when Reed took over as the editor in 1988, but when he stepped down in 1994, it was still only 27 pages long (July 1994). After a period of caretaker editors, Morris took over in 1996 and the newsletter accepted papers for the first time. His proudest achievement was the special issue dedicated to Alec Campbell in 2000, which was 56 pages long. He stepped down in the following year to become editor of the SHAC journal *Ambix*. A high standard was maintained by his immediate successors Katherine Watson (between 2001 and 2006) and Viviane Quirke (2006–11) and they were able to obtain papers from external authors (Morris had written much of the content himself). PDQ Design & Print in south-west London took over the printing of the newsletter from Queen Mary and Westfield College in 2008 after a sharp increase in printing costs.

The modern era of the newsletter began when Anna Simmons took over as editor in 2011 and the A4 PDF version, available online, was introduced a year later partly as a cost-saving measure as our membership had doubled from 257 in 2008 to 530 in 2011. Under her fifteen-year-long editorship, the newsletter has become a bona fide history of chemistry journal covering a wide range of events and historical topics



Above left: Katherine Watson and Viviane Quirke in Belgium, 2011.
Above right: Anna Simmons, 2023.

with a consistent length of 64 pages. In 2024 a new section ‘Two books that markedly influenced my chemical career’ was introduced and the newsletter continues to showcase original research in the history of chemistry.

The First Two Occasional Papers

Mary Archer carried out an interview (in effect an oral history) with Harry Emeléus (1903–93) in 1989. It was intended to be first of a series of oral histories carried out by HG members, but nothing further came of this idea. The HG committee thought that the transcript of this interview deserved a wider audience. A grant of £2,000 from the Angela Fish Bequest enabled its publication as the HG’s first Occasional Paper in July 1997 (although it is strictly speaking not a paper). The second Occasional Paper in June 2000 was the text of an open lecture delivered by Robert Anderson at the 1995 Annual Chemical Congress at Heriot-Watt University entitled ‘Chemie to Chemistry at Edinburgh’.

The RSC Wallcharts

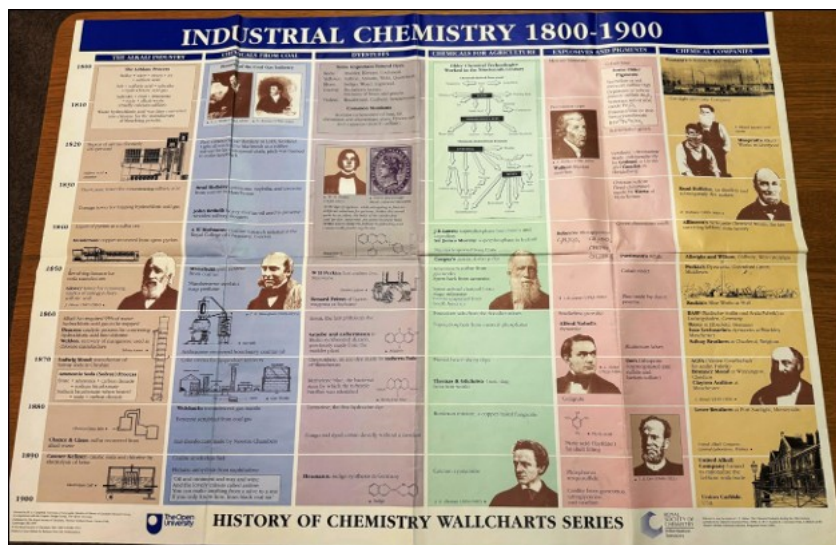
Between 1992 and 1997, the RSC published five wallcharts on the history of chemistry. They were not formally published by the HG, but existed in a zone between the HG and the History of Chemistry

Research Group at the Open University. Russell proposed the wall-charts when at a time when it was thought that a revised syllabus for the chemistry GCSE would use the history of chemistry as a way of teaching chemistry. The first chart 'The Origins of Organic Chemistry: 1800–1900' was produced by Russell. Campbell created the second chart on 'Industrial Chemistry: 1800–1900' which was expanded in 1997 to take it up to 1960. Morris did 'Analytical Chemistry: 1800–1900' in 1995 and Coley produced 'Modern Atomic and Molecular Theory: 1900–1960' a year later. They were well-designed colourful charts, but it would be fair to say that they never achieved the popularity that Russell had anticipated and they are now scarce.

Membership and Subscriptions

Morris became the first Membership Secretary in 1991, at his own suggestion, to lighten the burden on the Secretary and he was succeeded by Shorter in 1993. The following year the post was combined with the treasurership (as the Treasurer collected the non-RSC subscriptions) until Griffith became the Membership Secretary in 2012. He was succeeded by Alice Halman in 2024.

The membership subscription was raised to £3 in 1993 and reached



‘Industrial Chemistry, 1800–1900’ wallchart

£10 by 2010, when subscriptions were made uniform across all the Interest Groups. Subscriptions for Interest Groups were abolished for RSC members in 2018 up to a maximum of three Interest Groups.

THE HISTORICAL GROUP ENTERS THE 21st CENTURY

David Betteridge (usually called Jack) was elected Coley's successor in 1999. He was a newcomer to the committee who had previously worked at the University of Swansea and was now at BP Research. Peter Reed, who had just retired from the National Museums on Merseyside, was the new Treasurer and Charles Rees of Imperial College joined the committee. William Griffith of Imperial College replaced Nicholson as Secretary in 2002. In the same year, two leading professional historians of chemistry – Frank James and Ernst Homburg – were added to the committee. The presence of James on the committee enabled the HG to hold more meetings at the Royal Institution (RI) at a time when there were concerns that the RSC might start charging for the use of rooms at Burlington House. Seven meetings were held there between 1999 and 2019. Russell also rejoined the committee, but left again four years later. Betteridge was succeeded by Alan Dronsfield of the University of Derby in 2005 and John Hudson, who had joined the committee in 1992, became the Treasurer. Nicholson became the Secretary for the second time in 2012. Hudson followed Dronsfield as the Chair in 2013 and Morris was his successor as Treasurer. In turn, Morris became the Chair in 2018 and Richard Buscall, who had worked at ICI before his retirement, replaced him as Treasurer.

Libraries and Access to Online Journals

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the HG committee fought to keep the Science Museum Library open and remain at South Kensington rather than be at the Museum's remote store at Wroughton, near Swindon. A possibly decisive step was a letter that Dronsfield wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*, which apparently made Lord Waldegrave, the chair of the Science Museum trustees, choke on his cornflakes at breakfast, thereby forcing the museum's senior leadership to change course. There is still a library in South Kensington. There was a similar battle, in almost the same period, to keep the RSC's own library open and it is gratifying that it remains open at Burlington House, with full access to the library when it is not being used for conferences. The HG also campaigned for its members to

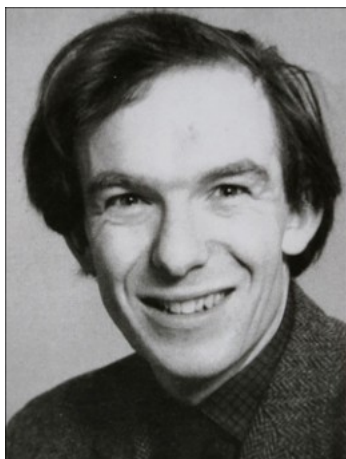
have free access to the RSC publications online instead of paying a £5 fee – the fact that such access is now available to all RSC members is at least partly a result of the HG committee's efforts, notably by Dronsfield.

The Wheeler Lectures

The Occasional Papers may have continued intermittently in their original vein had it not been for the inauguration of the Wheeler Lectures in 2002. Edgar Philip Wheeler (1915–99) was known to his family as Philip. Born in Romford, Essex, he studied chemistry at the Sir John Cass Technical Institute and obtained a BSc in chemistry from the University of London in 1940. He then worked as an analytical chemist for several employers, most notably British Drug Houses (1942–48), the Laboratory of the Government Chemist (1942–48), Thomas Morson and Son Ltd (1952–59) and NIPA Laboratories in Pontypridd (1959–80). Wheeler was a bachelor and lived in Bridgend for forty years. When his health declined in the mid-1990s, he moved to a residential home near his nephew's house in Winchester.

Wheeler was interested in the history of science and, after his death in 1999, he unexpectedly left £5,000 to the HG (and £50,000 to the BSHS). In the case of the BSHS he left the money to its library (which did not in fact exist), but did not put any limitations on his legacy to the HG. There was considerable discussion on the HG committee about what to do with the money. Morris argued that it should be used for a purpose which perpetuated his name and proposed the setting up of a Wheeler Lecture, to be given, approximately every two years, by an eminent historian of chemistry (not necessarily a member of the HG). He further suggested that a biographical lecture would have the most popular appeal and it should be published as an Occasional Paper. His proposal was accepted and after visiting a trophy shop in Holloway Road, Archway, he had the idea of giving the Wheeler Lecturer an engraved paperweight as a token of the award which had a practical purpose.

The first Wheeler Lecture was given by the American chemist-historian Seymour Mauskopf on 8 November 2002. A list of all the Wheeler Lectures and their titles can be found in Appendix 4. By 2020, the Wheeler Fund was almost depleted and the final Wheeler Lecture was given by Sally Horrocks in 2022.



Above left: David Knight, c. 1975, when he was a member of the HG committee. Above right: Bill Brock, 2009.

Joint Meetings Became Frequent

This period was remarkable for the number of joint meetings with other organisations and institutions. This probably arose because there was a growing concern about the relatively low attendance at meetings organised solely by the HG. There was a joint meeting with the History of Anaesthesia Society in 2000 and a joint meeting with SHAC and the RI in the following year on 'Historical Aspects of Electrochemistry'. A meeting at the Waltham Abbey Gunpowder Mills in 2002 on 'Life and Work of Sir Frederick Abel' was held in conjunction with the Explosives and Gunpowder History Group. The first Wheeler Lecture was given at this meeting (see above). In Nottingham in 2004, there was a joint meeting with the Department of Chemistry on the theme of 'Frederic Stanley Kipping FRS: Life and Legacy'.

Soon after Anna Simmons became the Secretary of SHAC in 2003, she was invited to join the HG committee in 2004 to strengthen the relationship between the two groups. There was a joint meeting in 2005 on 'History of Forensic Chemistry', held in collaboration with the Royal Institution, which was organised by Katherine Watson. At the joint meeting with SHAC in 2007, on 'New Chemical Elements and their Periodicity', both David Knight and Bill Brock gave their Wheeler Lectures. Two years later, there was a meeting on 'Pharmacy in History',

held jointly with SHAC and the Society of Apothecaries, organised by Simmons. Colin Russell delivered his Wheeler Lecture during the joint meeting with the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, on 'Organometallic Chemistry: Past and Present', in the same year.

The pinnacle of these joint meetings was the Anglo-Dutch conferences, organised with the help of Homburg, and the support of SHAC and the Historical Group of the Dutch Chemical Society. The first conference, in Leiden in 2003, was on the theme of 'Chemistry and Medicine in the Eighteenth Century' in collaboration with the Museum Boerhaave. Robert Anderson gave the second Wheeler Lecture at this meeting. Some of the papers at this conference were published in volume 53 of *Ambix*. The second Anglo-Dutch conference, with the additional support of the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, was held in London in 2006 on the theme of 'Innovation in Industrial Chemistry'. Another event in 2006, co-sponsored by the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, was 'A Celebration of Perkin in Greenford and Sudbury, Middlesex' organised by Leaback. A landmark plaque was unveiled at the site of Perkin's factory in Greenford, followed by a meeting in Sudbury close to the site of Perkin's home, 'The Chestnuts'.

The HG has always enjoyed a cordial relationship with the History of



Ernst Homburg, Jack Betteridge and Peter Reed at a reception at the Museum Boerhaave, during the First Anglo-Dutch meeting, 2003.



Alan Dronsfield making mauve at the Perkin event

Chemistry Division (HIST) of the American Chemical Society, publishing information about the other group in our respective journals. Morris and Paul Jones (1930–2019), the then editor of the HIST Bulletin, discussed a possible joint subscription to our newsletter and the Bulletin when they met at the annual meetings of the ACS National Chemical Landmarks Committee, but it proved impossible to implement a viable scheme with different currencies involved and the disparity in price between the two publications. Distance has prevented joint meetings, but there was a meeting held jointly with the Chilterns and Middlesex Section in 2008 to celebrate Tony Travis's Edel-

stein Award, which mirrored the award symposium held by HIST in Boston the previous year. Travis was thus able to deliver his award lecture 'What a Wonderful Empire is the Organic Chemistry' to a British audience.



Tony Travis at his SHAC Morris Award symposium, with Peter Morris (left) and Ernst Homburg, 2016.



Michael Jewess, 2015

Reed organised two meetings about the environment in this period. In 2011, there was a joint meeting with the Environmental Chemistry Group on the theme of ‘Environmental Chemistry: A Historical Perspective’ and in the following year, he organised a meeting with the title ‘Where There’s Muck There’s Brass! – The Decontamination of Chemical Sites’ with Leaback. Thanks to the involvement of Alan Dronsfield and Chris Cooksey with both organisations, we held two joint conferences with Dyes in History and Archaeology.

Between 2016 and 2019, there were three joint meetings with the History of Physics Group of the Institute of Physics through the good offices of Michael Jewess who was a member of both groups. The Moseley meeting at Burlington House in 2016 was popular with HG members, but the ‘Rutherford’s Chemists’ meeting the following year in Glasgow and the ‘Centenary of Transmutation’ meeting in Manchester were less well-attended, probably a result of their distance from London.



Speakers at the R. B. Woodward centenary meeting, 2017. Left to right: Mark Whiting, Pierre Laszlo, Tony Barrett, Jeff Seeman (holding his Wheeler Award), John Hudson, Stanley Roberts, Peter Morris.



Above left: John Hudson presenting the Wheeler Award to Frank James, 2015. Above right: John Hudson presenting the Wheeler Award to Roy MacLeod, 2018.

Other Meetings

There was a focus on British and Commonwealth Nobel Laureates from 2003 to 2022 (initially proposed by Morris) as it was believed such a theme would be appealing to our members. There have also been meetings on Nobel Laureates in Chemical Kinetics (2003); John Cornforth (2015); the Braggs (2015) during which Frank James gave a Wheeler Lecture about Thomas Beddoes (1760–1808); George Porter (2021) during which Mary Archer gave her Wheeler Lecture; and Geoffrey Wilkinson (2022). The HG had two meetings about the American organic chemist Robert Burns Woodward (1917–79). Peter Morris gave his Wheeler Lecture at the 2013 meeting and Jeffrey Seeman delivered his Wheeler Lecture at the 2017 meeting, which marked Woodward's centenary. There were also meetings about the American physical chemist Gilbert N. Lewis (2016) and William Crookes (a joint meeting with the RI and SHAC in 2019).

In 2014 and 2018, the HG held meetings to mark the beginning and end of the First World War. Both the Wheeler Lectures delivered at these meetings were connected to the controversial German chemist Fritz Haber (1868–1934). Tony Travis spoke about 'Nitrogen, Novel High-Pressure Chemistry, and the German War Effort (1900–1918)' in 2014 and Roy MacLeod gave a lecture entitled 'Chemistry in War and Peace: Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Fritz Haber' four years later. Other themes during this period included: 'The History and Chemistry of Fluorine' (2013), 'Chemistry and Anaesthesia' (2017) and 'The History of Dyes on the 150th Anniversary of the Synthesis of Alizarin' (2018).

Introduction of the Programme Committee

The last Annual General Meeting was held in October 2018 as a result of a change in the RSC's rules for Interest Groups, but it had no effect on our schedule of meetings. However, the way the HG organised its meetings changed in 2019. The RSC now mandated that any programme committee for an RSC meeting had to be gender-balanced. Up to this time, the whole HG committee had formed the programme committee insofar as this concept existed. The time-hallowed procedure was that someone would propose a theme for a meeting, which was agreed by the committee (or not as the case might be). The proposer would then become the organiser for the meeting, but the mechanics of booking the room, organising the catering, taking care of the publicity and doing the registration were the responsibility of the Secretary (this stemmed from a period when the Secretary often organised the meeting). However, the organiser was obliged to bring the proposed programme to a later committee meeting for approval. Occasionally, there were 'working parties' or sub-committees set up for particularly complex meetings or when more than one committee member was interested in organising the meeting, but they were rare and not mandatory.

The problem was that the HG committee at that time was not gender-balanced. The only possible solution was to set up small gender-balanced programme committees for each meeting. This had other advantages. The organiser was given support in developing a programme and the amount of time the whole committee spent discussing the content of the meetings, which had sometimes been of considerable length, was much reduced. This had the effect of shortening the overall length of committee meetings from three hours to sometimes only one hour.

THE HISTORICAL GROUP IN THE 2020s

The HG was affected in 2020 by the utterly unexpected Covid pandemic and the associated lockdowns. Until the beginning of March 2020, it had been assumed that a meeting on the history of chirality organised by Jewess would take place on 19 March. However, when it became clear that elderly people were more severely affected by Covid than people under 50, Morris (as the Chair) raised the possibility on 1 March of having to cancel the meeting given the age profile of the HG's membership. Once the RSC leadership had swiftly



Bill Griffith was given the RSC Award for Exceptional Service in 2020

indicated that cancellation of the meeting would be seen as reasonable, both the chirality meeting and the committee meeting the day before were cancelled on 2 March in order to give speakers time to curtail their travel. As it happens, the RSC closed Burlington House on 13 March, so it would have been impossible to have held the meeting in any case.

Some members of the committee held out the hope that the chirality meeting could be held later in 2020, but Burlington House was not opened to the public again until October 2021. When the meeting was finally held on 13 October, it was one of the first to be held there after it re-opened. The

committee meeting in October 2020 was held online and all our committee meetings since then have been online with a considerable financial saving for the HG.

Introduction of Online Lectures

While our in-person meetings were suspended, the HG continued to operate as best it could. The newsletter continued to appear as normal. When it became clear that in-person meetings would be a distant prospect, other means were used to fill the gap. Hudson offered in May to distribute one of his talks as a PDF, but was not able to offer a Zoom talk. By July, Hudson's talk on Josiah Wedgwood (1730–95) was available as a PDF and Dronsfield gave the first of two talks, 'Bichloride of Methylene' on Zoom, followed by 'Cocaine to Novocaine' in August. At first the group used Morris's basic Zoom which limited meetings to 40 minutes, but it was soon able to use Nicholson's Pro Zoom which made one-hour meetings possible. Finally, the RSC's Zoom platform became available in February 2021. The first recordings were added to the RSC's YouTube channel in December 2020 and thereafter the talks were added on a regular basis. Since then 14 recordings have received more than 800 views and the record is held by Hudson's 'Alchemy or How to Make Gold' with over 6,500 views.

Changes in the Committee

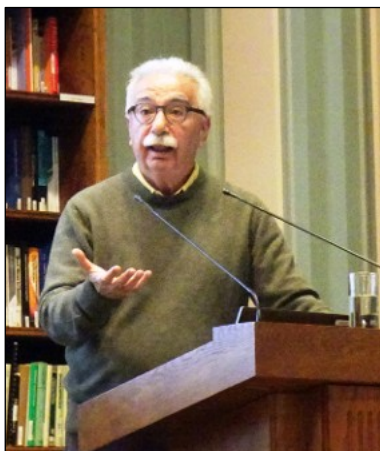
At the end of 2022, after the Covid pandemic was over, Morris and Nicholson switched positions as Chair and Secretary, and Stanley Langer (who had worked for the RSC for many years before his retirement) became the new Treasurer. Morris stepped down as Secretary at the end of 2024 and was replaced by Mike Leggett.

In June 2023, the HG held its first ever (online) ballot for new committee members. The number of committee members was declining, mostly because of the retirement of several members of long standing and several resignations were in prospect. The HG needed younger members on the committee and a better gender balance. Previously, HG members had been invited to join the committee if they attended our meetings regularly and were deemed suitable, but this procedure clearly failed to give the HG the younger committee members it desired and, in any case, a ballot was now obligatory.

Six candidates on the ballot clearly had more votes than any other candidates standing and were duly elected. One of these successful candidates, Michael Seery, resigned before taking up his post on the committee, because he had just started a new role elsewhere and felt that he had overcommitted himself. Subsequently from this new cohort, Mike Leggett became the Secretary, Alice Halman the Membership Secretary and Andrea Gallio the Social Media Representative.



Above left: Peter Morris presenting the Wheeler Award to Sally Horrocks, 2022. Above right: John Nicholson



Above left: Judith Howard talking about Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin at the 'British X-ray Crystallographers' meeting, 2023.

Above right: Kostas Gavroglu speaking about Linus Pauling at 'The Development of the Chemist's Notebook' meeting, 2024.

Post-pandemic Meetings

After the pandemic, the HG held a meeting about 'Women in Chemistry' in 2022, organised by John Hudson and Anna Simmons, in which Sally Horrocks gave the final Wheeler Lecture on 'The "Two Person Career" and the British Chemical Community in the Mid-Twentieth Century'. The themes covered included the chemical industry, women and the periodic table, and the entry of women to professional societies. As no X-ray crystallographers had featured in the programme for this one, a meeting on 'British X-ray Crystallographers' was organised by Morris the following year. While male X-ray Crystallographers were included, the majority were women, including Rosalind Franklin and Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin (by her student Judith Howard), but also less well-known figures such as Helen Megaw and Judith Milledge. Members of the group had the opportunity to present their own research at an open meeting in March 2023. 'The Development of the Chemist's Notebook' in March 2024 analysed the notebook practices of some famous chemists and considered their evolution to today's electronic form. 'Chemistry, Medicine and History,' held in October 2024, provided the opportunity to reflect on subjects including diabetes monitoring, the treatment of TB and the development of amlodipine.

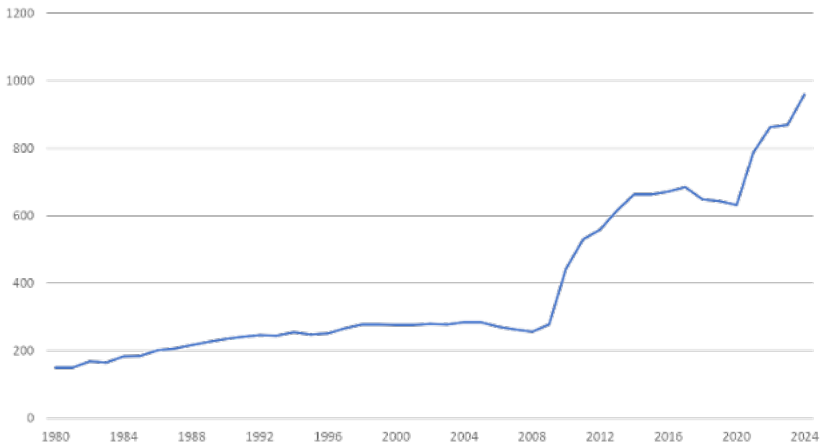


The unveiling of John Newlands's restored grave
by his descendant Peter Newlands (left)
and Peter Morris, 2024

The RSC, via the HG, financially supported the restoration of the grave of the periodic table pioneer John Newlands in West Norwood Cemetery, near Dulwich, which had fallen into a state of disrepair. This effort was led by Peter Newlands, a descendant of John Newlands, and it was assisted by the Heritage of London Trust. Morris represented the RSC and HG at the unveiling of the new gravestone in September 2024 and gave a short talk about the chemical work of Newlands.

GROWTH IN MEMBERSHIP OF THE HISTORICAL GROUP

It appears that the initial membership of the HG in March 1975 was around 100 to 120 (see page 3). One problem in the early years of the HG was the disappearance of members from the RSC's printouts of the membership. Attempts were made, notably by Shorter, to try and find out why this occurred, without any success. I was a founder member myself, but I was lost from the membership records for several years thereafter without knowing anything about it. I suspect part of the problem was that members of the Chemical Society/RSC had to indicate in the membership form every year which Interest Groups they wanted to belong to and many people did not realise this. Shorter himself thought there were gremlins in the RSC's computer program.



Graph of the number of HG members from 1980 to 2024.

In any event, the HG had 180 members in 1983, 220 in 1986 and 250 in 1987. This figures included about 25 RSC Life Members and 25 non-RSC members, so the number of members on the RSC computer print-out was around 200 in this period. Thereafter, the number of members grew steadily but slowly. There were 246 members in 1992 and 278 in 2009. Then the membership total suddenly started to take off, with 442 in 2010 and a peak of 663 in 2014. It then declined somewhat, but shot up again in 2021 when the total was 787 and reached almost a thousand (959) in 2024. This spurt is probably explained by the abolition of subscriptions for Interest Groups in 2018 and a campaign by the RSC to encourage members to join more Interest Groups. The HG benefited from this because it could appeal to almost all members in contrast to other Interest Groups which would usually only attract members with prior training and/or employment in the fields covered by these groups. Regardless of the reasons, the HG now has a membership which is almost four times larger than it was for the first thirty-four years of the group. Long may it continue to flourish!

SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE HISTORICAL GROUP

Sadly, the minute books and early records of the HG (apart from a few leaves from the 1980s in the author's possession) were lost in the mid-1990s. To aid the writing of this history, an incomplete set of minutes (in electronic form) from 2003 to 2024 has been compiled. Regrettably, with hindsight, a card index of members from the mid-1980s was destroyed in 2015 to conform with the new GDPR rules. There is also surprisingly hardly any information in the papers of Stephen Mason in the KCL archives; the only item being Mason's handwritten notes about the talks given at the 'Avogadro's Hypothesis' meeting in 1976. It is also unfortunate that the founders of the HG were not interviewed while they were alive. As a colleague of Russell and Coley (and a friend of Campbell and Shorter), I can only say it never occurred to me to do this.

Most of the information for this history has inevitably come from the newsletters, all of which are housed in the RSC Library at Burlington House, with an increasing number of issues available online via the Historical Group's digital archive hosted by the RSC: https://members.rsc.org/site/content/Community/InterestGroups/IG_Subpages/Historical_Group_Archive.aspx.

The most useful archival source is the SHAC archives, especially the records of the Secretary and other Officers, housed in the History of Science Museum in Oxford. This contains a list of applicants to join the HG in October 1974 and an amended notice of the first meeting in 1975 which shows that Colin Russell and David Knight joined the committee at that meeting. There is another copy of the notice of the first meeting in the Joseph Needham archives in Cambridge University Library. The annual minute books of the Chemical Society in the early 1970s also shed important light on the formation of the HG. Information about the pre-newsletter meetings is taken largely from a list of papers delivered to the Historical Group drawn up by Peter Morris in 1989. Some material relating to the early meetings of the HG was found in the archives of Henry McIlwain in the Wellcome Library. The online listing of the papers of Maurice Stacey at the Cadbury Research Library of the University of Birmingham showed that the committee of the Priestley bicentenary celebrations only met in 1974 (as also recorded in the Secretary's papers in the SHAC archives).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Officers of the Historical Group, 1975–2026

Chair

Stephen Mason	1975–1977
Colin Russell	1977–1982
Alec Campbell	1982–1987
Robert Nuttall	1987–1988
John Shorter	1988–1993
Noel Coley	1993–1999
David (Jack) Betteridge	1999–2005
Alan Dronsfield	2005–2013
John Hudson	2014–2018
Peter Morris	2019–2022
John Nicholson	2023 to date

Secretary

Robin Spring.....	1975–1977
Christine King	1977
Vance Hall.....	1977–1981
Noel Coley	1981–1982
John Shorter	1982–1988
Peter Morris	1988–1991
John Green	1991–1994
John Nicholson	1994–2002
William Griffith.....	2002–2012
John Nicholson	2012–2022
Peter Morris	2023–2024
Mike Leggett.....	2025 to date

Treasurer

Alec Campbell	1975–1982
Robert Nuttall	1982–1987
Alec Campbell	1987–1988
Robert Nuttall	1988–1989
Stella Butler	1989–1994
Ray Anderson	1994–1999
Peter Reed.....	1999–2005
John Hudson	2005–2013
Peter Morris	2013–2018
Richard Buscall.....	2018–2022
Stanley Langer.....	2022 to date

Newsletter Editor

Peter Reed.....	1988–1994
John Green	1994–1995
Gerry Moss.....	1995–1996
Peter Morris.....	1996–2001
Katherine Watson	2001–2006
Viviane Quirke.....	2006–2011
Anna Simmons.....	2011–2026

Membership Secretary

Peter Morris.....	1991–1993
John Shorter	1993–1994
Ray Anderson*.....	1994–1999
Peter Reed*	1999–2005
John Hudson*	2005–2012
William Griffith.....	2012–2024
Alice Halman	2025 to date
*combined with post of treasurer	

Newsletter Production

Peter Reed.....	1983–1994
Gerry Moss.....	1994 to date

Delegates to the Working Party of FECS/EuChemS

Colin Russell	1981
Alec Campbell	1982–1988
Peter Morris.....	1989–1998
Colin Russell	1999–2006
Jack Betteridge	2004–2009
Peter Morris.....	2006–2025
Anna Simmons.....	2011 to date
Martin Bigg.....	2025 to date

Appendix 2: Alphabetical List of Committee Members, 1975–2024

Edward Abel	1998–2002	David Leaback	1995–2018
Ray Anderson	1990–1999	Mike Leggett.....	2023 to date
Robert Anderson ..	1980?–1992	Stephen Mason	1975–1979?
Mary Archer.....	1980?–1986	Peter Morris.....	1988–2026
David Betteridge...	1999–2013	Gerry Moss.....	1987 to date
John Brooke	1978–1983	John Nicholson	1986–2002; 2007 to date
Ron Brown.....	1980?–1986	Alan Nineham.....	1978–1985
Richard Buscall.....	2018–2022	Robert Nuttall.....	1981?–1989
Stella Butler	1986–1994	Kevin Quinn	1978?–1981?
Edward Caldin.....	1975–1979?	Viviane Quirke.....	2002–2017
Alec Campbell.....	1975–1992	Fred Parrett	2018 to date
Chiara Ceci	2013–2015	Peter Reed.....	1988–2016
Noel Coley	1980?–2018	Charles Rees	1999–2006
Helen Cooke	2020 to date	Gordon Rintoul	1987–1994
Chris Cooksey	2002–2023	Kathryn Roberts ...	2020–2021
Vincent Daniels.....	2023–2025	Andrew Robertson ..	1975–1983
Alan Dronsfield.....	2000–2024	Stephen Robinson	2006–2013
John Emsley.....	1979?–1981?	Colin Russell	1975–1992; 2002–2006
Andrea Gallio.....	2023 to date	Henry Rzepa.....	2008–2024
Peter Gray	1975–1977?	Eric Scerri	1993–2000
John Green	1986–1999	Michael Scott.....	1984–1986
William Griffith.....	1999–2024	Andrea Sella.....	2009–2016
Vance Hall.....	1977–1980	John Shorter	1981?–1994
Alice Halman	2023 to date	Anna Simmons.....	2005 to date
Ernst Homburg.....	2002–2015	William Smeaton...	1980?–1983
John Hudson	1992–2022	Robin Spring.....	1975–1977
Frank James.....	2002 to date	Anna Taylor	2023 to date
Michael Jewess	2014–2020	Georgette Taylor ...	2008–2011
Harry Jones	1992–2002	Katherine Watson	1996–2009
Christine King	1977	Alan Wilson.....	1987–1992
David Knight	1975–1981?		
Stanley Langer.....	2022 to date		

Appendix 3: Short Biographies of HG Chairs

Stephen Finney Mason was born in Leicester in 1923 and was a contemporary of Richard Attenborough at Wyggeston Grammar School for Boys. He studied chemistry at Wadham College, Oxford and took a first-class degree in 1945. After completing his DPhil on anti-malarial compounds in 1947, he joined the Museum of the History of Science under Frank Sherwood Taylor. He then worked under Adrien Albert of the Australian National University, temporarily based in London, between 1953 and 1956, when Albert returned to Canberra. As a result, Mason took up spectroscopy and became a lecturer in spectroscopy at the University of Exeter in 1956, before moving to a chair at the University of East Anglia in 1964. He translated to a chair at King's College London in 1970 and was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1982. He became interested in chemical evolution and the origin of life. Mason published *A History of the Sciences* in 1953 which sought to combine the intellectual thought and social context approaches to the history of science. He died in Cambridge in 2007. Source: Biography in the *ODNB* by Peter Morris.



Stephen Mason,
in a KCL Chemistry
Department group
photo, 1974

Colin Archibald Russell was born in Streatham, London, in 1928. He was taught by Frank Greenaway at Epsom Grammar School and then studied chemistry at University College Hull, taking an external London BSc. He was a lecturer in organic chemistry at Kingston Technical College between 1950 and 1959, and then at Harris College, Preston, until 1970. Russell specialised in heterocyclic chemistry and considered himself to be a chemist even after he joined the Open University as a senior lecturer in the history of science and technology in 1970. He became a reader in 1973 and a professor in 1981. He published *A History of Valency*, based on his London PhD thesis, in 1971 and with his colleagues Noel Coley and Gerrylynn Roberts, *Chemists by Profession: the Origins and Rise of the Royal Institute of Chemistry* in 1977 to mark the centenary of the RIC. When he was at Harris College, Russell became interested in a local lad called Edward Frankland and published *Edward Frankland: Chemistry, Contro-*



Colin Russell on the footplate of a steam locomotive, 2011

versy and Conspiracy in Victorian England in 1996. He was also responsible for publishing two volumes of literature surveys in the history of chemistry; a guide to the archives of the chemical industry (with Peter Morris); and in 2000, *Chemistry, Society and Environment: a New History of the British Chemical Industry* (with Noel Coley, Alec Campbell and Sarah Wilmot). His final book was *Early Railway Chemistry and its Legacy*, co-authored by John Hudson, in 2011. Russell died in Bedford, where he had lived since joining the OU, in 2013.

Source: Biography in the *ODNB* by Peter Morris and the similar obituary by Morris in the *HG Newsletter* (Summer 2013).

William Alec Campbell (always known as Alec) was born in Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1917. After obtaining a scholarship to the Royal Grammar School, he became a laboratory assistant at King's College which became the University of Newcastle in 1963. Alec studied chemistry at night school at Rutherford College and became an ARIC by examination in 1942. He became a highly skilled demonstrator and analyst, and was awarded the Fellowship of the RIC in 1958. A year later, he was awarded an MSc by the University of Durham for 'The Development of Laboratory Apparatus for the Preparation of Gases (1760–1860)'. Very unusually for someone with this background, Alec was made a lecturer in 1971 with the strong support of Norman Greenwood and Ernest Aynsley; he later also worked as a tutor for the Open University. In the same year he published *The Chemical Industry* in a series of books about industrial archaeology, *Contemporary British Chemists* with Greenwood, and was awarded an MLitt by the University of Durham for 'The Chemical Analyst in English Social History during the Nineteenth Century'. In 1992, he was awarded a DSc by the CNAA for 'The Growth of the Chemical Industry and the Development of Chemical Analysis'. He was one of the editors of *Milestones in the History of the Chemical Industry*



published in 1991 and one of the authors of *Chemistry, Society and Environment*. He died at sea on a trip to the Shetland Islands in 1999. Source: obituary by Peter Morris in the *HG Newsletter* (February 2000).

Robert Howard Nuttall was born in Bolton in 1938 and studied chemistry at Imperial College. He took his PhD under David Sharp in 1962 and followed him to the Royal College of Science and Technology in Glasgow, which was later renamed the University of Strathclyde. He became a lecturer in inorganic chemistry at the University of Strathclyde, a senior lecturer in 1979 and retired in 1998. He was a spectroscopist and helped the Royal Museum of Scotland to acquire its collection of spectrometers in the 1970s. He never published in the history of chemistry, but published a paper on ‘The First Microscope of Henry Clifton Sorby’ in *Technology and Culture* in 1981. Source: compiled by Peter Morris from various sources.

John Shorter was born in Redhill, Surrey, in 1926, and after attending Whitgift School, he read chemistry at Exeter College, Oxford. He worked under Cyril Hinshelwood and graduated with a DPhil in 1950. Shorter then obtained a teaching post at University College, Hull, which in 1954 became the University of Hull. In 1966–67, he was R. T. French Visiting Professor at the University of Rochester, New York. His interests lay in physical organic chemistry, particularly correlation analysis and linear free-energy relationships. He was Secretary of the International Group for Correlation Analysis in Chemistry for over twenty years from 1982, and was a member of the IUPAC Commission on Physical Organic Chemistry from 1990 to 1997. While he wrote several books on correlation analysis, he never published any in the history of chemistry, but published papers on the fraught relationship of Sir Christopher Ingold and Sir Robert Robinson, George Downing Liveing, Louis Hammett, and Humphrey Owen Jones. After his retirement, Shorter moved to Whitby in the early 1990s and died there in 2013. Source: obituary by John Nicholson in the *HG Newsletter* (Summer 2013).

Noel George Coley was born in Hinckley, Leicestershire, in 1927. He studied chemistry at University College, Leicester and then worked as a schoolteacher at various schools in the East Midlands. After taking an MSc and PhD in the history of science at Leicester University (as University College had become) under William H. Brock and teaching the history of science at Wolverhampton Technical College, he was recruited for the Open University by Colin Russell. Coley became a

staff tutor at the South East Region office in East Grinstead in 1972 and was also a member of Russell's History of Chemistry Research Group. He was the Treasurer of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry from 1982 to 2007. A revised version of his thesis was published in 1973 as *From Animal Chemistry to Biochemistry* and Coley was also a co-author of *Chemists by Profession* and *Chemistry, Society and Environment*. He was an accomplished organist. He died in Sutton, Surrey, in 2020.

Sources: obituaries by William H. Brock in *Ambix*, 2020, **67** (3), 313–314 and by Peter Morris in the *HG Newsletter* (Summer 2020).

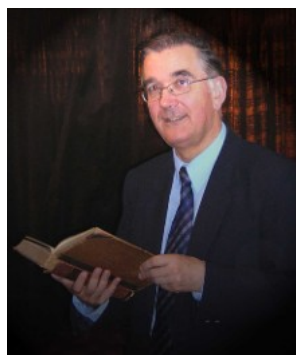


David ('Jack') Betteridge, born 1936 in Prickwillow, Cambridgeshire. After receiving a scholarship to Tettenhall School, he graduated from Birmingham University with a BSc in Chemistry in 1957 and a PhD in 1960, studying under Ronald Belcher and Thomas Summers West. He was successively Research Fellow at the University of Virginia (1960–61) with John H. Yoe, the University of Arizona (1961–62) with Henry Freiser, and the Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell (1962–63) with Albert Smales. Between 1963–84 he lectured at the University College of Swansea, becoming a professor in 1979. Betteridge was the first UK investigator of flow injection analysis. He also invented a microprocessor-controlled titrator, and a novel viscometer based on flow injection analysis. Betteridge joined BP Research Centre in Sunbury as Senior Research Associate, establishing 'intelligent instrumentation' extending the use of computers in analytical chemistry. Exploring the potential for microprocessors in analytical instrumentation he designed and built the world's first microprocessor-controlled titrator, a novel viscometer based on flow injection analysis and an automated self-optimising flow injection analysis system. He was then appointed Chief Research Associate, implementing and managing the BP International Programme in IT research. In 1994 Betteridge joined the London Business School as Strategic International Research Officer, and was a non-executive director of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist between 1997 and 2000. In addition to photoelectron spectroscopy and acoustic emissions, his research interests are the study of analytical chemistry, separations, and the history of teaching of analytical chemistry. He published papers on the history of analytical chemistry in the

late 1960s and 70s. He also co-authored two monographs on analytical chemistry in 1972. Betteridge was a founder member of the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Electron Spectroscopy*. He has served on the council of the Society for Analytical Chemistry and the RSC Analytical Division. He has lived on Eel Pie Island for many years and still plays a large part in his local community.

Source: from Jack Betteridge, based partly on the biography in D. Betteridge and M. A. Williams, "Electron Spectroscopy. Ultraviolet Photoexcitation." *Analytical Chemistry*, 1974, **46** (5), 125–133.

Alan Dronsfield was born in 1945 in Saffron Walden, Essex. He spent his childhood on the Fylde coast, mainly in Blackpool. A gift of a chemistry set started his love for our subject whilst still at primary school. He attended Baines Grammar School, Poulton-le-Fylde. Undergraduate studies at the University of Salford were succeeded by research in organophosphorus chemistry at UMIST, culminating with the award of a PhD in 1969. Following this, he taught in two independent schools. However, in 1971



the opportunity arose to start a career in lecturing in chemistry (initially at Matlock College of Education, Derbyshire). Later mergers with colleges in Derby led to a staff position in the chemistry department of what was to become (in 1992) the University of Derby. Here he pioneered research in organocobalt chemistry whilst undertaking studies in the history of chemistry, mainly as a hobby. However, publications in the latter soon outnumbered his formal papers in cobaloxime chemistry and in 1998 he was awarded a chair in the History of Science. Two years later, he formally retired and was awarded an Emeritus Professorship. He has been a member of the Historical Group of the RSC for over 40 years, serving on its committee from 2000 to 2025. His 'historical-chemical' publications now number over 150 and these have embraced the development of chemical theory between 1840 and 1925, the history of natural and synthetic dyes, and most recently, topics where medicine and chemistry coalesce. These last include the chemical history of drugs and anaesthesia. His publications range from the scholarly to missionary work aimed at bringing the history of chemistry to a wider public, beyond that of academic historians of chemistry. Source: supplied by Alan Dronsfield.

John Hudson was born near Watford in 1943. After attending Merchant Taylors' School, he studied chemistry at Oxford. He entered the teaching profession, and initially taught in Colchester. He then moved to Cambridge to lecture at what was then called the College of Arts and Technology. After several changes of name and status, this institution became a campus of Anglia Ruskin University. Hudson developed a module on the history of chemistry which was available to any undergraduate student on a science course provided they had passed A level chemistry. To accompany the course, he wrote a book which was subsequently published by Macmillan in 1992 as *The History of Chemistry*. This was also published in the USA, and to his surprise, in Korea. Hudson served as the Secretary of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry from 1994 to 2002. More or less accidentally Hudson came across the fact that in the 19th century all the major railway companies established chemistry laboratories, but there had been no proper study of their contributions to the running of the railways or to chemistry. He carried out research on this topic under Colin Russell and Gerrylynn Roberts and on the basis of his PhD thesis, he wrote *Early Railway Chemistry and its Legacy* jointly with Russell which was published by the RSC in 2011. He retired in 2002 and moved to a farmhouse in the Lake District, not far from John Dalton's birthplace.

Source: supplied by John Hudson.

Peter John Turnbull Morris was born in Romford, Essex, in 1956. He went to Forest School, London E17, where his interest in the history of chemistry was nurtured by Alan Dronsfield's programme of replicating historic chemical preparations. He read chemistry at Christ Church, Oxford, and took his Part II in the history of chemistry under Allan Chapman, the first of many students to do so, in 1978. After taking a DPhil on the development of synthetic rubber by IG Farben, Morris joined the History of Chemistry Research Group at the Open University to compile a guide to the archives of the British chemical industry which was published by the BSHS in 1988. Meanwhile, in 1985, he had joined the new Center for the History of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania to write a history of the American synthetic rubber industry (published in 1989). Morris returned to the Open University in 1987 when he was awarded the first British Academy and Royal Society Research Fellowship in the history of science. Morris became the senior curator of pure chemistry at the Science Museum in 1991 and remained there until his retirement in 2015, in which year

he published *The Matter Factory*, a history of the chemistry laboratory. He co-edited the six-volume *Cultural History of Chemistry* with Alan Rocke (published in 2022) and since then he has published *Henry Enfield Roscoe* with Peter Reed (2024) and *The Polymer Revolution* (2025). Source: supplied by Peter Morris.

John Nicholson was born in 1955 and grew up in Twickenham. He attended Thames Valley Grammar School, and studied applied chemistry at Kingston Polytechnic (now University) between 1973 and 1977. He obtained his PhD at the Polytechnic of the South Bank (now London South Bank University) in 1981. Nicholson joined the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, where he began his work on materials for hard tissue repair. He later moved to the Dental School of King's College, London, then became Professor of Biomaterials Chemistry at the University of Greenwich. Nicholson has published over 200 papers in biomaterials chemistry, and five books. He was awarded the DSc of the University of Greenwich in 2011, and the UK Society for Biomaterials President's Prize in 2014. He has had a long interest in the history of chemistry, and was on the committee of the Historical Group between 1986 and 2002, then again from 2007. His main interest is in chemistry between 1850 and 1950, and he has published fourteen papers on chemistry in this period. Source: supplied by John Nicholson.

Appendix 4: Wheeler Lectures

1. Seymour H. Mauskopf, 'Long Delayed Dream: Frederick Abel and Smokeless Powder', delivered in Waltham Abbey on 8 November 2002 (OP #3, February 2003).
2. Robert G. W. Anderson, 'Boerhaave to Black: The Evolution of Chemistry Teaching', delivered in Leiden on 23 April 2004 (published in *Ambix*, 2006, **53** (3), 237–254).
3. David Knight, 'Davy and the Placing of Potassium among the Elements', delivered in London on 22 March 2007 (OP #4, August 2007).
4. William H. Brock, 'Radiant Spectroscopy: The Rare Earth Crusade', delivered in London on 22 March 2007 (OP #5, August 2007).
5. Colin A. Russell, 'Frankland – the First Organometallic Chemist', delivered in London on 20 March 2009 (OP #6, August 2009).
6. Peter J. T. Morris, 'Robert Burns Woodward in his own Words', delivered in London on 17 May 2013 (OP #9, April 2017)
7. Anthony S. Travis, 'Nitrogen, Novel High-Pressure Chemistry, and the German War Effort (1900–1918)', delivered in London on 22 October 2014 (OP #7, April 2015).
8. Frank A. J. L. James, "'the first example ... of an extensive scheme of pure scientific medical investigation": Thomas Beddoes and the Medical Pneumatic Institution in Bristol, 1794–1799', delivered in London on 12 October 2015 (OP #8, November 2016).
9. Jeffrey I. Seeman, 'Woodward's Unpublished Letters: Revealing, Commanding and Elegant', delivered in London on 10 May 2017 (OP #10, April 2018).
10. Roy MacLeod, 'Chemistry in War and Peace: Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Fritz Haber', delivered in London on 17 October 2018 (not published).
11. Mary Archer, 'George Porter: A Peer among Scientists', delivered in London on 6 December 2021 (not published).
12. Sally Horrocks, 'The "Two Person Career" and the British Chemical Community in the Mid-Twentieth Century', delivered in London on 13 October 2022 (not published).

OP = Occasional Paper

Appendix 5: Meetings of the Historical Group

The organiser, where known, is put in square brackets after the title of the meeting. The organiser of many meetings in the HG's earlier years was the Secretary.

1975

March, Annual General Meeting, KCL, London: 'Historical Problems in the Development of Chemical Science and Chemical Industry' [Stephen Mason]

1976

June, Annual General Meeting, KCL, London: 'Some British Chemical Institutions in the Nineteenth Century'

November, Joint Meeting with SHAC and BSHS, Science Museum, London: 'Avogadro's Hypothesis' [Noel Coley]

1977

December, Annual General Meeting, London: 'The Rise of Physical Chemistry'

1978

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Liverpool: 'Aspects of the History of Chemical Industry on Merseyside' [Colin Russell]

July, Annual General Meeting, KCL, London: Open Meeting

December, Joint Meeting with the Royal Institution and Faraday Division, Royal Institution, London: 'Davy Bicentenary Symposium', published as *Science and the Sons of Genius: Studies on Humphry Davy*, ed. Sophie Forgan (London: Science Reviews Ltd, 1980)

1979

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Bristol: 'The Chemical History of Gases' [Colin Russell]

July, Annual General Meeting, KCL, London: Open Meeting

October, Joint Meeting with the Analytical Division and the Thermal Methods Group, Scientific Societies Lecture Theatre, London: 'Some Historical Landmarks in Analytical Chemistry' [Alec Campbell]

1980

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Durham: 'Developments in Chemical Education' including a joint session with the Curriculum Subject Group

July, Annual General Meeting, KCL, London: papers presented on catalysis and physical chemistry

December, Joint Meeting with SHAC, Burlington House, London: 'Sources for the History of Chemistry'

1981

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Guildford: 'The Changing Image of Chemistry'

June, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: Open Meeting

1982

March/April, Annual Chemical Congress, Aston, Birmingham: 'Chemistry in the Industrial Revolution' – Open Lecture: Neil Cossons, 'Ironbridge: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution'

July, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Centenary of Friedrich Wöhler'

September, Joint Meeting with the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, Burlington House, London: 'Chemistry in the Metropolis'

5 November, Guy Fawkes Commemoration, Burlington House, London: 'The History of Gunpowder'

1983

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Lancaster: 'Chemistry in the North-west' [John Brooke] – Open Lecture: Colin Russell, 'The Making of a Chemist: Edward Frankland in Lancaster'

July, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Fiftieth Anniversary of the Discovery of Polythene'

September, Third BOC Priestley Conference, Imperial College, London: historical sessions, held jointly with SHAC, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Priestley – Priestley Lecture: Joseph Needham, 'The World's First Chemical Explosive in China and the West'

December, Joint Meeting with Microchemical Methods Group, Burlington House, London: 'Kjeldahl Celebration' [Duncan Thorburn Burns]

1984

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Joint Meeting with Chemical Information Group, Exeter: 'History and Current State of Chemical Information' – Open Lecture: Peter Whitlock, 'The Mary Rose'

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'History of Electrochemistry' [Mary Archer]

December, Whipple Museum, Cambridge: 'History of Spectroscopy' [Mary Archer]

1985

January, Joint Meeting with Edinburgh and South-East Scotland Section, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh: Colin Russell, 'Whatever Happened to the History of Chemistry?'

March, Annual Chemical Congress, St Andrews: 'Chemistry in Scotland' [Robert Nuttall] – Open Lecture: David Daiches, 'Scottish Whisky'

September, IUPAC Congress, Manchester: 'Dyestuffs: Past, Present and Future'

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: Stephen Mason, 'Tenth Anniversary of the Historical Group' followed by an Open Meeting

1986

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Warwick University: 'A Centenary Tribute to Robert Robinson' with keynote speech by Sir John Cornforth, 'The Life and Work of Sir Robert Robinson' (talks subsequently published as *Natural Products Reports*, 1987, **4**, 1–75) and 'Chemistry in the Museum and Art Gallery' – Open Lecture: Janet Backhouse, 'Mediaeval Manuscripts'

September, Fourth BOC Priestley Conference, Leeds: 'Membranes in Gas Separation and Enrichment' [Colin Russell]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'History of Dyestuffs'

1987

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Swansea 'History of Metal Extraction' – Open Lecture: Alec Campbell, 'The Gold Makers'

June, Liverpool: 'Chemistry in the North-West' [Peter Reed and Stella Butler]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: Open Meeting

1988

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Canterbury: 'Chemistry and Crime' [John Nicholson and Noel Coley]

September, Manchester: 'History of Chemistry in Education' [Stella Butler]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: Open Meeting

November, Joint Meeting with UV Spectroscopy Group, Edinburgh: 'Absorption Spectroscopy: Past, Present and Future' [Alison Morrison-Low]

1989

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Hull: 'Century of Physical Chemistry' [John Shorter] – Open Lecture: Edwin Dawes, 'Magic and Mystery through the Ages'

May, Joint Meeting with BSHS, Science Museum, London: 'Chemistry and the Industrial Revolution – The Other Chemical Revolution' [Alec Campbell and Colin Russell]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Chemical Family Trees' [John Shorter]

September, Fifth BOC Priestley Conference, Birmingham: 'History of Electrochemistry'

1990

January, Manchester: 'Museums in Education – The History of Chemistry' [Stella Butler]

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Belfast: 'Irish Chemists and Irish Chemistry' [William Davis]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'History of the Chemical Industry'

December, Joint Meeting with Electroanalytical Group, Electrochemistry Group, and UCL, UCL, London: Heyrovsky Centenary Meeting

1991

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Imperial College, London: 'Historical Highlights of the 150 Years' [John Green and John Shorter] and 'Milestones in the History of the Chemical Industry', published as *Milestones in the History of the Chemical Industry* (Cambridge: RSC, 1991) [Peter Bamfield, with Peter Morris and Alec Campbell for the HG] – Open Lecture: Colin Russell, 'Chemical Bonds 1841–1991'

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: papers on applied chemistry

1992

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Manchester: ‘Manchester Chemists’ [John Shorter]

September, Sixth BOC Priestley Conference, Maison de la Chimie, Paris: ‘From Pollution to Protection’ [Colin Russell]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: ‘Aspects of the Life and Work of Sir James Dewar’

1993

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Southampton: ‘Christopher Ingold (1893–1970)’ [John Green] and jointly with the Plastics History Society, ‘The Development of Plastics’, published as *The Development of Plastics* (Cambridge: RSC, 1994) [Peter Morris and Susan Mossman]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: Alec Campbell, ‘Aloes, Antimony and Opium’

October, Joint Meeting with SHAC, Science Museum, London: ‘Philosophy of Chemistry’ [John Green and Eric Scerri]

1994

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Liverpool: ‘Liverpool Chemistry’ [Peter Reed]

June, Seventh BOC Priestley Conference, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: ‘The Early History of Ozone’ [Colin Russell]

September, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: ‘Teaching the History and Philosophy of Chemistry’ [John Green and Eric Scerri]

October, Joint Meeting with the Dalton Division, UCL, London: ‘Sir William Ramsay and the Noble Gases’

1995

March, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: Noel Coley, ‘Ozone: Its Discovery and Molecular Structure’

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh: ‘The History of Chemical and Chemical Industry: The Scottish Dimension’ [Bob Jones] – Open Lecture: Robert Anderson, ‘Chemie to Chemistry at Edinburgh’ (OP #2)

September, RSC conference, ‘Imperial Chemistry’, Imperial College, London: historical session organised by the HG [Bill Griffith]

November, Burlington House, London: ‘Some Nineteenth-century London Chemistry’

1996

March, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Twenty-first Anniversary Meeting' – papers on different topics by former Chairs

November, Joint Meeting with SHAC, UCL, London: 'Centenary of the Death of Alfred Nobel' [John Hudson]

1997

March, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'The Life and Work of Cyril Hinshelwood' [John Shorter]

April, Eighth BOC Priestley Conference, Scientific Societies Lecture Theatre, London: 'The History of Anaesthesia'

October, Burlington House, London: 'The Electron in Chemistry' [John Green]

1998

March, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Forensic Chemistry in Britain since the Mid-nineteenth Century' [Katherine Watson]

October, Joint Meeting with the Dalton Division, South Bank University, London: 'Chemistry at the Elephant' [David Leaback]

1999

March, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Chemistry Since 1945' [Peter Morris]

April, Joint Meeting with the Royal Institution History Group, Royal Institution, London: 'Michael Faraday: Fullerian Professor of Chemistry' [Frank James]

September, Annual Chemical Congress, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh: 'Chemistry and Health' [Jack Betteridge]

2000

March, Joint Meeting with the Education Division, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'The Value of the History of Chemistry in Chemical Education' [David Leaback]

April, Annual Chemical Congress, Manchester 'Green Chemistry: The Historical Perspective' [Peter Reed]

August, Joint Meeting with the Commission for the History of Modern Chemistry and the Scientific Instrument Commission of the IUPHS, Imperial College, London: 'From the Test-tube to the Autoanalyzer: The Development of Chemical Instrumentation in the Twentieth Century' [Peter Morris]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Changing the Name of the Game: The Impact of Mid to Late 20th Century Chemistry of New Techniques and Methods’ [Jack Betteridge and John Green]

November, Joint Meeting with the History of Anaesthesia Society, RAF Club, London: ‘History of Anaesthesia’ [Noel Coley]

2001

March, Joint Meeting with the Royal Institution and SHAC, Annual General Meeting, Royal Institution, London: ‘Historical Aspects of Electrochemistry’ [Frank James]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Chemistry and Art’ [Bill Griffith and David Leaback]

2002

March, Annual General Meeting, Science Museum, London: ‘X-rays and Crystal Structures’ [Noel Coley, Peter Morris and Katherine Watson]

November, Waltham Abbey: ‘Life and Work of Sir Frederick Abel’ [Gerry Moss]

2003

March, Burlington House, London: ‘Ancient Rome – Ancient Dyes’ [Chris Cooksey and Alan Dronsfield]

October, Joint Meeting with the Royal Institution and Fast Reactions in Solutions Group, Royal Institution, London: ‘Fast, Faster and Fastest: Nobel Laureates in Chemical Kinetics’ [Frank James]

November, Joint Meeting with RSC Food Chemistry Group and SCI Food, Ingredients and Commodities Group, SCI, Belgrave Square, London: ‘Food Adulteration: Past, Present and Future’ [Bill Griffith]

2004

March, Joint Meeting with the Department of Chemistry, Nottingham: ‘Frederic Stanley Kipping FRS: Life and Legacy’ [Bill Griffith]

April, First Anglo-Dutch Meeting, Museum Boerhaave, Leiden: ‘Chemistry and Medicine in the Eighteenth Century’ [convenor: Ernst Homburg]

July, BOC Priestley Symposium, Huddersfield: ‘200th Anniversary of the Death of Joseph Priestley’ [organised by the Priestley Society]

October, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: ‘Chemical Warfare: Past, Present and Future’ [Peter Reed]

2005

March, Joint Meeting with the Association of Anaesthetists of GB&I, Portland Place and Burlington House, London: 'Chemical Aspects of the History of Anaesthesia' [Alan Dronsfield]

July, Oxford: 'Perspectives on 20th Century Pharmaceuticals' [Viviane Quirke and Judy Slinn]

October, Joint Meeting with SHAC and the Royal Institution, Royal Institution, London: 'History of Forensic Chemistry' [Katherine Watson]

November, Liverpool Joint meeting (DHA 24) with Dyes in History and Archaeology [Alan Dronsfield and Chris Cooksey]

2006

April, Second Anglo-Dutch Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Innovation in Industrial Chemistry' [convenor: Jack Betteridge]

June, Joint Meeting with the Explosives and Gunpowder History Group, Burlington House, London: 'Sulphur and its Role in Gunpowder' [Gerry Moss]

October, Joint Meeting with the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, Sudbury: 'A Celebration of Perkin in Greenford and Sudbury, Middlesex' [David Leaback]

2007

March, Annual General Meeting, Joint Meeting with SHAC, Burlington House, London: 'New Chemical Elements and their Periodicity' [Alan Dronsfield]

September, Joint Meeting with the Priestley Society, Burlington House, London: 'Priestley: More than just a Chemist?' [Alan Dronsfield]

2008

February, Joint Meeting with the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, Burlington House, London: 'Creating a New Rainbow: Dyes after Perkin' [Chris Cooksey and Peter Morris]

July, Joint Meeting with the Royal Institution, Royal Institution, London: 'Chemistry and Conservation' [Frank James]

October, Burlington House, London: 'Chemists in Non-chemical Industries' [John Hudson]

2009

March, Joint Meeting with the Chilterns and Middlesex Section, Burlington House, London: 'Organometallic Chemistry: Past and Present' [Bill Griffith and Colin Russell]

May, Joint Meeting with the Society of Apothecaries and SHAC, Apothecaries' Hall, London: 'Pharmacy in History' [Anna Simmons]

October, Burlington House, London: 'Chemistry and the Law' [Peter Reed]

2010

March, Burlington House, London: 'The Rise and Fall of ICI' [Jack Betteridge]

November, Joint Meeting with CICAG and CSA Trust, Burlington House, London: 'Celebrating the History of Chemical Information' [Chris Cooksey]

2011

March, Joint Meeting with the Radiochemistry Group, Burlington House, London: 'Marie Curie and Aspects of the History of Radiochemistry' [Alan Dronsfield and Bill Griffith]

October, Joint Meeting (DHA 30) with Dyes in History and Archaeology, Derby: [Alan Dronsfield and Chris Cooksey]

October, Joint Meeting with the Environmental Chemistry Group, Annual General Meeting, Burlington House, London: 'Environmental Chemistry: A Historical Perspective' [Rupert Purchase and Peter Reed]

2012

March, Burlington House, London: 'Where There's Muck There's Brass! – The Decontamination of Chemical Sites' [David Leaback and Peter Reed]

September, Burlington House, London: 'Under the Influence: Famous Textbooks and their Authors' [Peter Morris and Bill Griffith]

2013

March, Widnes: 'The History of the Chemical Industry in the Runcorn-Widnes Area' [John Hudson]

March, Burlington House, London: 'The History and Chemistry of Fluorine' [Alan Dronsfield and Bill Griffith]

May, Burlington House, London: 'Robert Woodward – Chemist Extraordinary' [Alan Dronsfield and Bill Griffith]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Chemistry and Medicine: Some Historical Aspects’ [Alan Dronsfield]

2014

March, Burlington House, London: ‘A Revolution in Chemical Analysis and Instrumentation’ [Peter Morris]

June, Society of Antiquaries, London: ‘Chemistry as a Hobby’ [Peter Reed and Gerry Moss]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Chemistry and World War I’ [Peter Reed]

2015

March, Burlington House, London: ‘The Life and Work of Sir John Cornforth CBE AC FRS’ [Rupert Purchase and Jim Hanson]

October, organised with the Royal Institution, Royal Institution, London: ‘Bragg Nobel Prize Centenary Meeting’ [Frank James]

2016

March, Burlington House, London: “‘The Atom and the Molecule’: A Symposium Celebrating Gilbert N. Lewis’ [Henry Rzepa]

October, Joint Meeting with the History of Physics Group of the Institute of Physics, Burlington House, London: ‘H. G. J. Moseley (1887–1915), Lost Nobelist for 1916’ [Russell Egdell and Michael Jewess]

2017

May, Burlington House, London: ‘The Centenary of Robert Burns Woodward (1917–1979)’ [Peter Morris]

July, Joint Meeting with the History of Physics Group of the Institute of Physics, Glasgow: ‘Rutherford’s Chemists’ [Neil Todd and Michael Jewess]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Chemistry and Anaesthesia – Some Historical Perspectives’ [Alan Dronsfield]

2018

March, Burlington House, London: ‘Some Chemical Consequences of World War I’ [John Hudson]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘The History of Dyes on the 150th Anniversary of the Synthesis of Alizarin’ [Peter Morris]

2019

March, Burlington House, London: ‘Celebrating the Centenary of IUPAC’ [Gerry Moss]

June, Joint Meeting with the History of Physics Group of the Institute of Physics, Manchester: ‘Centenary of Transmutation: A Meeting to mark 100 years since Publication of “Collision of α -particles with light atoms: I, II, III, IV” by Ernest Rutherford, June 1919’ [Peter Rowlands, Neil Todd, and Michael Jewess]

October, Joint Meeting with SHAC and the Royal Institution, Royal Institution, London: ‘William Crookes (1832–1919)’ [Frank James]

Meetings suspended between March 2020 and October 2021 because of the Covid Pandemic

2021

October, Burlington House, London: ‘The Handed World: 150 Years of Chiral Molecules’ [Michael Jewess]

December, Burlington House, London: ‘Life and Work of George Porter, Lord Porter of Luddenham (1920–2002)’ [Frank James]

2022

March, Joint Meeting with the Imperial College Chemistry Department, Burlington House, London: ‘Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson: An Anniversary Celebration’ [Henry Rzepa]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Women in Chemistry’ [John Hudson and Anna Simmons]

2023

March, Burlington House, London: Open Meeting [Peter Morris]

October, with the assistance of the British Crystallographic Association, Burlington House, London: ‘British X-ray Crystallographers’ [Peter Morris and Mike Glazer]

2024

March, Burlington House, London: ‘The Development of the Chemist’s Notebook’ [Helen Cooke and Frank James]

October, Burlington House, London: ‘Chemistry, Medicine and History’ [Alan Dronsfield and Anna Simmons]

