1966 – 1969 John Elvidge

In 1966 I was persuaded by David Whiffen to chair the NMRDG meetings. At the meeting at ERDE Waltham Abbey, I was asked to make the following announcement before the meeting began -"Those who wish to smoke can do so in the buildings, but smoking outside is strictly prohibited". Outside there were tethered rockets and other explosives! This meeting was notable because it was when the Group decided to abandon the tau scale in favour of the delta scale for chemical shifts.

A second recollection was from the International Meeting in Birmingham in July 1969, when I had foolishly failed to vet a student's notes given to me for the occasion, and so I gave an incorrect account of why tritium NMR chemical shifts are the same as proton shifts. The error was corrected from the audience, and so the subsequent publication (JCS, Perkin Trans II, 1974, 1635) was accepted without trouble. The meeting was notable for the presentation of results from superconducting–magnet spectrometers and for contributions on spectral analysis. This was the first international conference held by the Group and it was a great success, having attracted speakers from over a dozen countries: it was also blessed with glorious weather.

I think it was at the International Meeting at Surrey in 1972 that John Gibson organised a Champagne Breakfast for those staying in one of the residences. By the afternoon there were a number of delegates who wished they had not attended the breakfast!

In 1968, Dr. John Jones (later Prof.) and Dr. E.A. Evans (Tony) of The Radiochemical Centre at Amersham approached me about the feasibility of taking tritium spectra. Knowing that the spin 1/2 nucleus of tritium was the best NMR nucleus in the Periodic Table (apart from its radioactivity) I said we should proceed. Tony would give us details of radiochemical safety precautions and John Jones would be doing research techniques to complement Amersham's programme. Fortunately, I knew that Eric Mooney had persuaded Perkin-Elmer to make him a tritium probe operating at 64MHz for their R10 instrument. As Eric was about to depart from Birmingham University for industry, the unused probe was being returned to Perkin-Elmer and so we were able to buy it with the aid of a grant from Amersham.

In 1973, the University of Surrey gave me a grant with which I acquired a Bruker 90 MHz electromagnet pulse spectrometer with a computer for fast Fourier transform of the interferograms into conventional spectra. The field strength allowed 90 MHz for protons and 96 MHz for tritons. The tritium spectra were usually taken with broadband decoupling of the protons. The field was deuterium locked to either deuterochloroform solvent in the sample or some other deuterated solvent. So we were using all three isotopes of hydrogen most of the time.