

John Lindon, Chairman NMRDG 1993-1995



(Jan 2008)

I took over the reins of the NMRDG from David Davies after the International Meeting at Swansea University, notorious for the Welsh male voice choir that failed to sing. For the first time it had been agreed in committee to have a speaker following the Conference dinner and then conclude with some traditional local “entertainment”. However the speaker did go on a bit and the choir, despite being fed beer and sandwiches, decided to withdraw their labour.

Whilst I was Chairman I realised really for the first time how large a bank balance the Group had and, since we were supposed to be a charity, I suggested that we use some of the surplus and at least the interest to fund student bursaries, so that someone who had obtained matching funds could go to NMR conferences including the ENC in the USA. This scheme was welcomed and soon got off the ground. We awarded around 4 such bursaries each year. Also, at least one industrial company added to the funds by making a specific donation for the bursary scheme.

In 1995-96, the Science Museum, in conjunction with the RSC, were considering an exhibition based on NMR and MRI, and as current chairman of the NMRDG, I was invited to be part of a working party, chaired by Rex Richards. We had a couple of “brain-storming” meetings and produced a document but nothing ever came of it to my knowledge.

As Chairman, my main efforts was to organise the next International meeting that had been fixed some time previously to be at UMIST, an institution now combined with the University of Manchester. The committee at the time was very supportive and we had a good atmosphere at our meetings held at Burlington House. In general the session chairpersons that we selected were not on the committee but they put together an excellent and wide-ranging program.

The local arrangements turned out to be a bit more difficult because we were in a city centre location and building security had to be tighter. This led to a potentially huge problem when it became clear that the hospitality suites would have to close early so that the building could be locked. I believe John Gibson found some suitable and unofficial way (I never asked what he did!) to persuade the security staff to keep the building open and thus to allow the delegates to have their expected relaxation until the early hours. On the other hand, the civic reception sponsored by the city was very enjoyable and some of us had a pleasant private meeting with the Lord Mayor

(actually a woman, whose husband was a nuclear physicist, I believe). The only thing that marred the evening was a sign by the main door to the Town Hall that saying that this was a nuclear-free zone (not good for a nuclear magnetic resonance conference).



The picture, taken at the conference in 1995, shows myself (right) with the previous chairman David Davies (second left) and a later chairman, Jeremy Nicholson (left). The other person (second right) is Prof Alexei Veselkov, one of David's collaborators from the Ukraine. He sadly died at an early age recently. However, given the closeness of the NMR community, his elder son Dennis has already completed a PhD with David at Birkbeck College and his younger son Kirill is currently (2008) finishing writing up his PhD thesis supervised by myself and Jeremy Nicholson at Imperial College.

After the 1995 Conference, my nomination for the new Chairman was Ken Packer, who agreed to accept, and this was ratified by the committee.