

**Gareth Morris**  
**Chair, 2013-2015**



When James Keeler approached me in 2013 to ask whether I would be willing to accept nomination as the next Chair of the NMRDG, he reassured me that the role of the Chair was decorative rather than functional. I was relieved to find that he was quite correct, the officers and committee of the NMRDG shielding the Chair from all but the lightest and pleasantest of duties. In particular the Secretary, Stephen Byard, who shoulders much of the burden of keeping this very active organisation running, combines formidable efficiency with great patience.

Previous Chairs in recent years have commented on the reduction in stress levels caused by the decision to combine the biennial RSC International NMR Meeting with the European ENC and Colloque Ampère, to form the annual EUROMAR meeting. The NMRDG does nevertheless still organise and co-organise major international meetings from time to time, with great success. With the two-day Cambridge meeting on *NMR in Structural Biology* in April 2014, James Keeler and colleagues delivered the rare double of an excellent scientific programme and an excellent conference dinner. In September 2015, the RSC's NMRDG, the British Radiofrequency Spectroscopy Group of the Institute of Physics, and the Fachgruppe Magnetische Resonanzspektroskopie of the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker organised a joint four-day meeting across the whole field of magnetic resonance, at the Technical University in Darmstadt, that set a new attendance record for the FGMR.

Among the speakers at the Darmstadt meeting were the two prizewinners, Giulia Bignami of the University of St Andrews and Davy Sinnaeve of the University of Gent, from the Postgraduate Meeting held in Manchester in June

2015. This series of annual meetings, of which the seventh was held at the University of Nottingham in 2014, continues to provide a salutary reminder to the more experienced academics present of just how standards have improved since their day.

The 2015 Spring one-day meeting, organised by Melanie Britton and colleagues at the University of Birmingham, was on *Diffusion NMR*. Again this was a popular and well-attended event, with a number of attendees suggesting that there is a demand for more frequent meetings on this topic.

The annual Christmas meeting is both a scientific and a social fixed point in the NMRDG calendar; in recent years we have arranged that the BSRG and NMRDG Christmas meetings fall on successive days, enabling a significant number of members to attend both. While the 2014 meeting followed the usual pattern of a mix of UK and European speakers plus talks from NMRDG prizewinners, the 2015 meeting celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emsley, Feeney and Sutcliffe's *High resolution nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy*, the starting point of the review journal *Progress in NMR Spectroscopy*. We are grateful to Elsevier, publishers of *Progress*, for the sponsorship that enabled us to hear talks from a distinguished list of former pupils and colleagues of these three pillars of the UK NMR community, all of whom have in their time served as Chair of the NMRDG.

While organising meetings remains the major part of the NMRDG's activities, the small financial surpluses returned by these, coupled with the generosity of sponsors and of the RSC, has increasingly enabled us to support the attendance of younger members at international meetings. Bursaries were awarded to more than a dozen recipients in 2015, enabling attendance at the NMRDG/FGMR meeting in Darmstadt, SMASH, EUROMAR and the Alpine Conference on Solid-State NMR.

NMRDG members assembled a remarkable collection of RSC awards and prizes in 2015, including the Marlow Award (Dr Flemming Hansen), the Bourke Award (Prof Lyndon Emsley), two Interdisciplinary Prizes (Profs Elaine Holmes and Tony Watts), and the Corday-Morgan Medal and Prize (our incoming Chair, Prof Sharon Ashbrook). The NMRDG's own Annual Prize for Excellent Contribution to Magnetic Resonance for young researchers, awarded jointly with the BSRG, was won by Dr Gavin Morley of the University of Warwick in 2014, and by Dr Giuseppe Pileo of the University of Southampton in 2015.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to chair the NMRDG for the last two years, and I am very happy to see it in capable hands and rude health as it enters its fifty-third year.