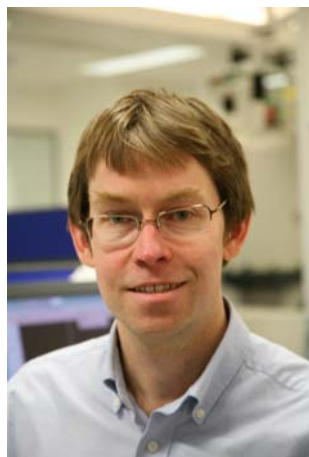


Tim Claridge
NMRDG Chairman 2006-2009



At the time of writing this article I am the current chair of the NMRDG committee, until I hand over to Prof. Mike Williamson, our chair-elect, at the end of 2009. I served on the committee initially from 1999 to 2002 after which I was on the organising committee for the RSC International NMR meeting in 2003, held at Cambridge University. It was at this meeting that I agreed to take over the chairmanship of the NMRDG from Duncan Farrant after the next International Meeting. In the interim, developments across the European NMR community meant the meeting in 2006 was to be the first of the new annual EUROMAR meetings and, in effect, became the last of the (traditionally biennial) International meetings organised by the NMRDG in the UK.

Without the traditional focus of the biennial meeting, the NMRDG has shifted the focus of its operations, the intention still being to bring together members of the UK NMR community, young and old, to present their science and share ideas at a variety of meetings held throughout the year. The traditional one-day Christmas meeting remains a popular event and the focus of official NMRDG business each year, with meetings covering diverse topics across solution- and solid-state NMR.

We have also turned our focus to develop a regular meeting held in the spring, when it tends to be easier to avoid clashes with the myriad of other focussed NMR meetings that now proliferate. Modern times place increasing pressure on peoples' time, and money, and my sense has been that the ability to attend longer meetings, covering a full working week, has diminished. Nevertheless, the desire to provide informative meetings that include time to mix with friends and colleagues in the field still remains, and the work of the NMRDG more recently has been to arrange more compact meetings covering 2-days. These provide for opportunities such as poster sessions (in my view often the most valuable parts of meetings) and the traditional vendor booths, that cannot readily be accommodated in one-day meetings. This approach was exemplified by the highly successful 2008 Spring meeting on *NMR in Structural Biology* held at Cambridge University and organised by David Neuhaus, a past Chairman, and James Keeler, then a committee member. This two-day template is being carried forward for our Spring 2009 meeting on *Advances in Structure Elucidation*, a joint venture with the RSC Molecular Spectroscopy group and the British Society for Mass Spectrometry where the focus moves more toward smaller molecules of relevance to pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals. The joint meeting format was also adopted for our one-day meeting in Spring 2007 (with the RSC Analytical Division, East Anglia Region) and, given the interdisciplinary nature of NMR spectroscopy, I envisage such combined events may become a more common format in future years.

On the topic of collaboration with other groups, we have also established greater links and collaboration with our “sister” group at the Institute of Physics, the British Radiofrequency Spectroscopy Group (BRSg). Both our 2007 and 2008 Christmas meetings have been “piggybacked” and the programs aligned to a degree to provide members the opportunity to attend both meetings, especially for those travelling from further afield, in addition to catering for the traditional opportunities for post-meeting Christmas shopping! From 2009 we also plan to award a joint NMRDG/BRSg annual prize recognising significant achievement in Nuclear Magnetic Resonance for mid-career researchers.

2008 also saw new venture for the NMRDG in the form of a one-day *Postgraduate Meeting* aimed at and presented by “early career researchers”, which we defined for the purpose as being postgraduate students, those in their first postdoctoral position and those within the first two years of an industrial post. The meeting was held in June at the AstraZeneca Charnwood site in Loughborough, and combined short presentations and a poster session. A prize was awarded for the best presentation (oral or poster), having been considered by a small committee of established scientists. This was awarded to Toby Athersuch of Imperial College London for his presentation on “A study of *Flucloxacillin* Biotransformation using Heteronuclear ^{19}F - ^1H Statistical Total Correlation Spectroscopy”. We were able to provide travel bursaries to RSC members following a successful application to the RSC Travel Grant fund. The quality of presentations and posters matched that seen at any NMR meeting and the day proved to be a great success, producing very positive feedback from the participants. My hope is that this will become a regular feature of the NMRDG calendar and a way of bringing together and promoting mixing between younger scientists within NMR, perhaps before they become focussed in one area of our now highly interdisciplinary field.

2008 also represented a landmark year for the NMRDG with the retirement from the committee of its long-standing Secretary, Dr Irwin Jones, who has been replaced by Stephen Byard of Sanofi-Aventis. Irwin served in this role for an astonishing 30 years from 1978 and his contribution to the committee and the wider UK NMR community is to be recognised with the dinner in his honour.

As current NMRDG Chairman I must also recognise the work of Profs John Lindon and Les Sutcliffe, both former Chairmen themselves, in compiling this history of the NMR Discussion Group from its inception in 1964 to the present day. On behalf of the NMR community I thank them for their devotion to this project and the preparation of what I am sure will prove to be a fascinating record documenting the progression and development of NMR spectroscopy in the UK and beyond. I for one will look forward to this charting the future success of the NMRDG.