

Mike Williamson
2009-2011



I have 'belonged' to NMRDG for almost as long as I have been doing research: my first NMR meeting was I think the International meeting in Exeter in 1981. So when Tim Claridge asked me if I would take over from him as Chair, I was very happy to do so, though with some trepidation in following in the footsteps of such illustrious forebears. I have been very ably supported by two excellent Officers in Steve Byard (secretary) and John Parkinson (treasurer): John took over from Harry Parkes who had been doing the job since 1999 and who deserves our thanks.

The job of NMRDG Chair always used to be defined by the International meeting, which was the last official duty of the outgoing chair. Now that we have merged our international meeting with Euromar, the job is simpler and less stressful, not least since much of the financial risk of the meeting now falls on the Chair personally. NMRDG has now a pretty regular pattern of meetings: the Christmas meeting about a week before Christmas in London, a Spring meeting, and a postgraduate meeting. When I first started going to NMRDG meetings, the Christmas meeting was an occasion to meet old friends (with an emphasis on the word *old*); have a proper sit-down Christmas lunch with turkey, Christmas pudding and mince pies; do some Christmas shopping; and fit in a bit of science in the middle. The meetings are now more focussed, reflecting the more hectic and goal-oriented attitudes of today. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain the varied nature of the science presented at these meetings, which therefore remain of general interest. These meetings also keep us in touch with the British Radiofrequency Spectroscopy Group (the other, more physics-based, NMR society in the UK), by awarding a joint prize, and (where possible) organising our Christmas meetings on successive days.

By contrast, the Spring meetings tend to be more specialised and aimed at a subset of our membership. The Spring meeting in 2010 was a large 2-day

meeting, organised jointly by NMRDG, the Molecular Spectroscopy Group (another special interest group of the RSC, to which we continue to be affiliated) and the British Mass Spectrometry Society. It was attended by 165 delegates and proved a great success, particularly in linking together a range of analytical techniques. In 2011 we went to GSK Stevenage for a one-day meeting on structure and reactivity, again a lively and interesting meeting though with fewer delegates.

NMRDG has always tried to support and encourage young scientists. Tim Claridge started an important initiative, in setting up a one-day meeting for postgraduates, with free registration for anyone presenting. I am delighted to have continued this tradition (if something only 4 years old can be called a tradition?). Winning speakers from this meeting receive a cash prize and are invited to speak at the Christmas meeting – and have given some excellent talks.

As I leave office, NMRDG find ourselves with more cash in the bank than we really need, so we are trying hard to give it away, by providing bursaries for young scientists to travel to NMR meetings, and (a new initiative) a travel grant for a young scientist to go to an overseas lab to learn new techniques. I am somewhat disappointed by the small number of NMR researchers from the UK going to Euromar meetings, and we particularly hope for a good takeup of bursaries to go to the 2012 Euromar meeting in Dublin.

I am delighted to be handing over to James Keeler, who will I am sure prove an excellent Chair.