I am writing this in a coffee shop in Hong Kong airport en route to Melbourne, for a few days with a research collaborator in Monash funded by a Royal Society International Exchange grant, followed by a day in Sydney to give a talk, and then a few days in China at a supramolecular chemistry conference. When I was wondering what to write about for the latest Orbital edition, it occurred to me that a trip of this kind is a very pleasant but entirely routine facet of academic life. The fact that such a trip – and the personal interactions that underpin it – is so unremarkable provides, quite precisely, the best possible illustration of the importance of international links with scientific colleagues all over the world in the pursuit and development of our subject. The juxtaposition of these international co-operations – which we take for granted and contribute immeasurably to scientific research – with the current political mess in the UK concerning the possibility of reducing our ties beyond our borders, is stark. Science is global, and education is becoming increasingly so. Our department has staff of many different nationalities (the most recent appointee is from Brazil - welcome Marcio) and our international student applications, especially for PGT students, is increasing (with many thanks to Vas and Nikola who are - don't tell anyone - both foreign). More funding opportunities than ever are available for international partnerships: not just like my small Royal Society grant but much larger possibilities through the Global Challenges Research Funding scheme.

However the current political mess surrounding Brexit is resolved, the international diversity of our staff, student body, and research partners is a major strength of Chemistry at Warwick: and long may that continue.

STEM for Britain successes

Warwick was well represented at the Houses of Parliament where the STEM for Britain competition took place on Wednesday 13 March. After being shortlisted, Sean Ellacott presented his research to a range of politicians and a panel of expert judges. Sean's poster about the interaction of self-assembling cyclic peptide-polymer nanotubes with biological models, which are currently being considered for the delivery of anticancer drugs, was judged against dozens of other scientists' research in the only national competition of its kind. He was shortlisted from hundreds of applicants to appear in Parliament on that day.

On presenting his research in Parliament, he said, “I decided to take part in STEM for Britain to raise awareness of some of the exciting research that is being done by our research group at the University of Warwick. I believe it is important, as a scientist, to be able to engage non-specialist audiences, especially when a non-negligible amount of the funding we receive comes from taxpayers.”

“The competition went very well, I was fortunate enough to meet a lot of other researchers from diverse horizons, as well as a few MPs, despite the second meaningful Brexit vote that was taking place on that day. I would definitely encourage fellow PhD students and postdoctoral fellows to apply to take part in this event.”

John Sidda, a PDRA working jointly in Chemistry and the School of Life Sciences also presented his work: ‘Regaining the ashes: finding chemical ‘clues’ to mitigate the impact of ash dieback’ in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences category.

John’s work involves high-throughput processing of mass spectrometry data to compare 1000s of features in ash leaf extracts to identify disease biomarkers for ash dieback. The poster competition brought together early career scientists from across the physical and biological sciences for lively discussions with a panel of leading academics, representatives of learned societies and policy makers.

STEM for BRITAIN is a poster competition in the House of Commons - involving approximately 180 early stage or early career researchers - judged by professional and academic experts. All presenters are entered into either the engineering, the biological and biomedical sciences, the physical sciences (chemistry), the physical sciences (physics) session, or the mathematics session, depending on the researcher’s specialism. Each session will result in the award of Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates.
**Peter’s visit to India**

During his trip to India in February, Prof Peter Sadler received an award (right) at the Royal Society of Chemistry Symposium on Advances in Chemical Sciences held at Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), where he gave a lecture.

Peter also lectured at the 24th CRSI National Symposium in Chemistry, held in Chennai, where he was awarded Honorary Fellowship of the Chemical Research Society of India (left).

Finally, Peter also gave a lecture entitled “150 Years of the Periodic Table – the Elements of Life and Medicines” to about 400 students of Stella Maris College, Madras Christian College and Loyola College, Chennai, with the support of the RSC and CRSI.

**Visit to China**

In March, Professor Peter O’Connor and Prof Ron Heeren (Maastricht University, Netherlands) were invited to present lectures and discuss collaborations at the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Sun Yet Sen University in Guangzhou, China by Prof Huilin Li (Warwick PhD graduate, 2012).

As part of this visit, Prof Li organised a “Science and Philosophy of Life” discussion between us and her 30 first year personal tutees (below) where they were inspired to consider a career path in chemistry.

**Grant award**

Many congratulations to Dr Binuraj Menon, Warwick Integrative Synthetic Biology Center (WISB) career development Fellow who has recently been awarded with a Royal Society research grant.

The funding will ‘seed’ a new biocatalysis/biophysics research project on novel oxygen-sensitive free-radical halogenase enzymes and for identifying new methods to exploit the biocatalytic potential of these enzymes. As part of the grant, chemical biology research facility (CBRF) will acquire a fast protein liquid chromatography (FPLC) equipment.

The Royal Society research grant will further support Dr Menon’s research portfolio and his future grant applications to BBSRC and EPSRC.

**Nev Haskins Prize**

Congratulations to Dr Diana Catalina Palacio Lozano, a postdoctoral researcher within the Barrow Group, for winning “The Nev Haskins Oral Prize” for her Early Career Researcher talk at the “Advances in Hyphenated Mass Spectrometry” conference at King’s College London on 9 April.

The meeting was organized by the British Mass Spectrometry Society and honoured the life and legacy of Prof Dai Games. Diana’s talk was entitled “Revealing Greater Complexity by Coupling of Gas Chromatography to Ultrahigh Resolution Mass Spectrometry for the Analysis of Bio-Oils.” Based upon collaborative work with researchers in Colombia on the subject of bioenergy, the talk described the production, upgrading, and molecular characterization of bio-oils, produced from the pyrolysis of biomass.

**RSC ORGANIC DIVISION MIDLANDS REGIONAL MEETING**

On Tuesday 19 March, we hosted the 2019 Midlands Regional Meeting with 145 delegates attending and 36 poster presentations. The meeting was generously sponsored by the RSC Organic Division, Asynt, IKA, Fluorochem, Manchester Organics, TCI Chemicals and Charnwood Molecular, who contributed to the prizes won by James Grayson (1st prize - Sheffield) and Jacob Sargeant (Warwick) and Colum Breen (Loughborough) who were joint runners-up.

The regional speakers included Dr Brian Cousins (Loughborough), Dr Sarah-Jane Richards (Warwick), Dr Giovanni Bottegoni (Birmingham), Dr Timothy Craggs (Sheffield), Dr Warren Cross (Nottingham Trent), Dr Richard Doveston (Leicester) and Dr Nicholas Mitchell (Nottingham), presenting on the latest research from their groups.

The plenary speaker was Prof Bradley Moore from the University of California at San Diego, who was the recipient of the RSC Natural Products Award 2018. Bradley presented on his research “Connecting Genes to Chemistry to Empower Natural Product Discovery and Synthesis”. 

**Professor Bradley Moore receiving the RSC Natural Product medal from Dr Paul Davies**
News from Charlie, Senior Careers Consultant
Panel Discussion – ‘What Can You Can Do Next?’ – Friday 26 April 10.00am – 11.15am in MS.03.

Chemistry Alumni from industry and academia will talk about making decisions about the “next move” at the end of your Chemistry degree and answer questions.

Panellists confirmed include Robert Morgan (Science Teacher), Ruth Mary Chipperfield (RuthMaryJewellery) and Josephine Dimbleby (Contract Manager).

Please book your place here. (ALTHOUGH THE TITLE SAYS UNDERGRADUATES ONLY, POSTGRADUATES ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND – A NUMBER OF PANELISTS DID AN MSC OR PHD.)

IWD celebration

The newly established Postdoctoral Society of Chemistry hosted a mini-symposium to celebrate International Women’s Day (IWD) on Friday 8 March.

The event began with opening remarks by Ann Dixon and then was comprised of short talks by Manuela Tosin, Minkyung Kang, Samantha Lau, and Nicola Rogers that covered topics from their diverse research endeavours to their exciting career pathways.

The second half of the IWD event included a round-table discussion on the topics of equality and diversity in the Department. We were very excited about the high attendance and stimulating dialog. We collected notes and comments from each table, and we are working to collate them and will produce a full report very soon.

We look forward to hosting more events in the near future and we certainly welcome suggestions for future events that you (i.e. ECRs, PDRAs, PhDs, PGs) would like to see happen in the Department.

Also, stay tuned for upcoming announcements, in addition to the PSoC Newsletter, displayed on our new advertisement board on the 5th floor of Chemistry (C-block corridor).

If you have any questions about the IWD event or queries for the committee, please contact us at warwickPSoC@warwick.ac.uk. Thank you all for a wonderful inaugural event!

BABY CONGRATULATIONS

Many congratulations to Russ and Dom on the safe arrival of their baby boy, Tomáš Edward Kamil who was born on March 24 weighing 8 lbs 10 oz. Liv is happily taking on her sisterly duties!

#RSCPoster winner 2019

Congratulations to Zoé Ayres who recently won a prize at this year’s RSC Twitter Poster conference.

Dates for the diary

Tuesday 30 April:
The Warwick Chemical Biology Lecture, Professor David Craik

Monday 20 – Wednesday 22 May:
Pint of Science Festival

Wednesday 22 May:
Women in STEM Conference

Wednesday 29 May:
The PG Symposium 2019

Departmental Seminar Programme 18/19

The next, and last, Departmental Seminar to take place this academic year will be on Thursday 2 May at 4pm in PLT, preceded by refreshments.

2 May – Dist Prof Margaret Brimble

Please check here for full details.

What’s happening?

For an update of all future Chemistry events, please see here.

Updated committee membership and meeting dates for 2018/19 are available on ChemIntra (for staff view only).
Arrivals .....  
We extend a warm welcome to the following:  

Staff  
Dr James Ablitt – Research Assistant  
Mrs Jade Barrett – Administrative Assistant  
Mr David Capper – Administrative Assistant  
Dr Marcio Dias – Assistant Professor in Biomolecular Structure  
Miss Lucy Goodreid – Administrative Assistant  
Mr Stuart Henry – Research Assistant  
Miss Jessica Pereira – Research Fellow  

Visitors  
Mr Andrew Leeson – Visiting Research Fellow  

.... and Departures  
We say thank you and goodbye to:  

Dr Samya Banerjee – Visiting Research Fellow  
Miss Mareike Herrmann – Research Technician  
Mr Brooke Longbottom – Researcher in Chemical Engineering  
Dr June McCombie – Honorary Professor  
Dr Edward Spence – Research Fellow  
Dr Martje Van Agthoven – Research Fellow  

It’s now or never  

It started fifteen years ago. In Amsterdam, cycling to work was not a choice, but the only practical way to move in a city designed around two wheels. I quickly picked up the local habit of shouting abuse in Dutch to unaware tourists clogging the cycleways (“rot op” if you really ask). In Holland you never purchase bicycles of any value, as they get stolen frequently. The lock is often the asset you invest in. And despite having a top of the range lock, my bike got stolen and replaced with a rusty brown one. At least the thief left the valuable, if not so secure lock! When such occurrence happens, it is considerate to throw the rusty metalwork in the nearest canal.  

Back in the UK and things proved somewhat different. A landscape of urban neglected bicycle lanes, demarcated by fading lines and so called “super highways”, which barely meet the Government guidelines on recommended width. That didn’t stop me from covering a daily twelve mile commute from Richmond upon Thames to Uxbridge. London had one secret cycle superhighway: the Grand Union Canal towpath. From Brentford, it takes you all the way out of the M25 and if you have time, you can cycle to Leamington Spa and Birmingham. You see the changing seasons, the morning frost, the daffodils and the bluebells. You see water birds: from the shy herons and coots, to the feisty swans and geese. And rubbish, of course, lots of rubbish, I will never understand the fascination for throwing “stuff” in waterways 😊  

When we moved to the Midlands, maintaining my twelve mile commute became a choice. I found out it is the only way to avoid piling on the pounds at Christmas. The Greenway, a disused stretch of railway that connects Kenilworth to Burton Green, is quite handy to avoid the rush hour traffic around the University, but if you need to travel further, you have to negotiate the road network. Fortunately, there are plenty of underused lanes, and drivers in the Midlands for the most are well behaved. I can count on one hand the number of times I have shouted abuse to a driver, and never in Dutch.  

I can definitively recommend cycling to work, not only as a way to stay fit, but also as an opportunity to “slow down” your lifestyle. Cycling gives you the chance to look around: witness the changing seasons, see how pheasants are suicidal in spring, whereas squirrels are suicidal in autumn. And then of course it saves you money. Every six miles is a pound in fuel, every day you drive to work is a pound in parking… it all adds up, pounds off the wallet become pounds on the waistline.  

Buy a bicycle, use the cycle to work scheme, summer is coming. It’s now or never!  

Paolo Coppo  

I don’t like cricket, I love it!  

The cricket season is fast approaching and we are looking for players for the chemistry team this year. Games are friendly and will be played in a 20-20 format on a Tuesday or Thursday evening between the end of April and July in a small inter-departmental league. Staff and students of all abilities are welcome and all equipment will be provided.  

If you are interested in playing or would like further information please email uwmccc@outlook.com.  

Bake sale bonanza  

Nat das Neves Rodrigues recently organised a very successful bake sale which was well attended by all.  

The money raised will go to The Ups of Downs, a local charity established in 2006 which celebrates Down Syndrome.  

A huge thanks to all bakers and eaters.