



Historical Group

NEWSLETTER and SUMMARY OF PAPERS

No. 69 Winter 2016

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RSC Historical Group Newsletter No. 69 Winter 2016

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Lewis on Structure and the Chemical Bond
12.15-13.45 Lunch
13.45 Second Session Chair: John Hudson
Professor Alan Dronsfield (UK)

are widely used as fluorescent probes for mitochondria in living cells. The early history and current biological applications are sketched briefly and an account of the ambiguities, complications and confusions concerning dye identification and nomenclature are discussed.

RSC Historical Group member and former Treasurer, Peter Reed, has recently published *Entrepreneurial Ventures in Chemistry: The Muspratts of Liverpool, 1793-1884* with Ashgate. The Muspratt family form a fascinating dynasty in the history of British commerce and manufacturing. Associated principally with the development of the chemical industry in Liverpool - James Muspratt (1793-1884) was the first person to make alkali on a large scale using the Leblanc Process – the three generations of the family also contributed to wider Victorian and Edwardian culture through their interests in politics, education (founding the Liverpool College of Chemistry in 1848), art, literature and theatre. This is the first study to present the history of the Muspratts as a family group and to consider the entrepreneurial spirit they brought to chemical manufacture in Britain and to their many other ventures. A review of the book will appear

Mitteilungen Now Online

The History Group of the German Chemical Society is proud to announce that its journal *Mitteilungen* (as reviewed by William Brock above) is now online and openly accessible.

The content of all back issues from 1 (1988) to 24 (2014) is available from the Group's homepage:

<https://www.gdch.de/netzwerk-strukturen/fachstrukturen/geschichte-der-chemie/mitteilungen-der-fachgruppe-online.html>

Permanent electronic versions of the journal are hosted by the German National Library and linked in the Electronic Journals Library.

appear in Finn Aaserud and J.L. Heilbron Love,

For further information please contact the designers John Perkins, jperkins@brookes.ac.uk, and John Stewart,

Sources: R.F. Bud, *The Discipline of Chemistry: The Origins and Early Years of the Chemical Society* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1980).

R.F. Bud and G.K. Roberts, *Science Versus Practice. Chemistry in Victorian Britain* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1984)

The Jubilee of the Chemical Society of London, 1801 (London, 1896). Most of the archival material published in this volume is now freely available online to members of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

S.W.F. Holloway, *The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain: a Political and Social History* (Pharmaceutical Press: London, 1991)

William H. Brock
University of Leicester

Romance, Murder and Mystery: Frederick Penny and the Murders by Poisoning in Glasgow

Frederick Penny: Training and Career

Frederick Penny (1816-1869) was born in London and suffered a childhood injury which affected his appearance and health for the rest of his life [1-3]. He was apprenticed at the age of fourteen to Henry Hennell, F.R.S., "Chemical Operator" to the Society of Apothecaries and during the latter years of his pupillage he received additional training at the Royal Institution under Brande and Faraday. In 1843, after he had settled in Glasgow, he

indeed his reputation [3]. This was a great pity because Penny's analytical skills had helped found Young's fortune

procedures. Mrs Taylor's organs were examined with similar results. Mrs Taylor had been in the habit of taking "Battley's Sedative Solution", an opiate solution, for neuralgia.

Penny was also supplied with a vast number of items from the Pritchard household. In a sample of tapioca, he found soluble tartarised antimony. From the Battley's solution he isolated aconite, detected by the effects on the tongue (prolonged numbness). He, along with Dr James Adams, experimented with rabbits, determining the composition of the Pritchard's sample of Battley's solution by examining its effect on rabbits with those of a series of mixtures of

only his selected dyes, and also supplied yarns dyed in this way to his company alone. He placed his new fabrics on
t

Morton was now committed to becoming a dye manufacturer as well as a weaver. The progress he had made in less than eight months after the outbreak of war was truly remarkable, but he now needed to employ chemical experts. Early recruits were a female chemist, Grace L. Reynolds, Arthur Davies MSc, who had several years' experience working at BASF, and Robert Fraser-

In 1928 Scottish Dyes Ltd became part of British Dyestuffs Corporation, which shortly became part of the newly formed ICI. In February 1929, less than fifteen years after the outbreak of war, Morton gave a lecture in which even he seemed to be stunned by the rapid progress which had been made. He said "...I sometimes rub my eyes even yet, and wonder if it is not all a dream and if it is really true that one has been responsible for what is now known as Scottish Dyes, with its huge buildings and railway avenues spreading across fifty odd acres of land, dealing with thousands of tons a year of raw products to be converted into intermediates and dyestuffs of the most complicated types, by dozens of skilled chemists, with hundreds of chemical process men, and employing something like a million sterling of good capital".

Morton can be forgiven for his lack o

**National Chemical Landmark in honour of Sir Edward Frankland
Lancaster Royal Grammar School, 3 November 2015**

The plaque is located on the wall adjacent to an entrance to the school. Prior to unveiling it, former RSC President Jim Feast spoke

get deeper into the specific essence of the science. By asking “Who Doesn’t Get a Biography in the History of Chemistry?”, Michael Gordin (Princeton University) analysed the reason why certain important figures such as Paul Walden, or Wilhelm Ostwald, as well as other less known but nevertheless crucial actors, are still missing a decent biography in his keynote lecture on the Friday.

The remaining part of the two and half days was split into parallel sessions that hosted fifty papers, concentrated on a wide range of themes, including Translation, Textbooks, Oral and Digital Sources for Recent History, Controversies and Autobiographies, Myths and Misrepresentations, Prosopography, Dictionaries and Sets of Biography, Historiography, Discipline Building, Biography and History of the Laboratory, Biographies and History of Chemical Engineering. The detailed program and conference book can be found at <http://10ichc-2015.web.ua.pt/>.

The social programme included visits to the beaches of Costa Nova and Barra, a ‘moliceiro’ boat ride through the canals of Aveiro as well as the traditional conference dinner. The high point was the visit to the Museum of Science in Coimbra, the former Laboratorio Chimico, the Cabinet of Physics (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries instruments beautifully preserved) and the University chapel and library, as well as

Bragg Meeting, Royal Society of Chemistry, Burlington House, London, 12 October 2015

The Early Career of Kathleen Lonsdale in X-ray Crystallography Working with Sir William Henry Bragg

Jennifer Wilson, University College London

The presentation focussed on the early career of Kathleen Lonsdale in which she progressed from student researcher to becoming a prominent researcher in the field of crystallography. A key influence was the support, advice and guidance Lonsdale received from Sir William Henry Bragg evidence of which was demonstrated throughout the presentation using extracts from the original correspondence between them and from Lonsdale's own writings.

Born Kathleen Yardley in Ireland to a family in very poor circumstances, she moved to England following her parents' separation. Her academic ability enabled her to obtain a place at Bedford College where she graduated with a first class honours. As a result, Bragg, who had been her examiner, offered Yardley a position in his team at University College London and she started her career in X-ray crystallography. A year later Yardley moved with

televising of a C.P. Snow discourse in 1963 and the first complete series of Christmas Lectures in 1966 – the latter is a television tradition that still continues today. Despite political obstacles such as the aftermath of the Andrade affair and the so-called ‘Victorian’ attitudes of the RI’s Managers, Bragg successfully instituted television at the RI, paving the way for his successor George Porter to further develop the BBC-RI relationship!

