



The
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Chemistry Newsletter

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Prof Chris Hunter, FRS



Prof. Chris Hunter FRS

A member of our department had joined an exclusive club whose members include such distinguished scientists as Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin. Already a ERSRC Senior Research Fellow, Chris Hunter was recently invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society. As the world's first national academy of science, the four hundred year old Royal Society has been a leading light in the advancement of science since the beginning of the Enlightenment. Its original President Robert Hook

(of Hook's Law fame) received the Society's seal of approval from King Charles II. Since then its invitation only fellowship has read like a Who's Who of science through the ages. Chris's fundamental studies on the interaction between molecules have led to his early election into the scientific elite. Accompanied by his family, he was recently invited to the Society's headquarters off The Mall in London to sign the Fellowship book, which has been maintained from its first days.

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During the ceremony Chris noticed that although most of the signatures in the book were very clear, one had almost faded. But then he noticed; "the signature above it was Charles Darwin's and everyone was pointing it out to friends and family." Chris later celebrated his award with a reunion party for former members of his research group that brought researchers back to Sheffield from all round the world.



The celebration went into the night.

New Teaching Labs

In the last few years, the University of Sheffield has invested tens of millions of pounds in the Department of Chemistry. This investment continues to grow: the University has recently announced that a new £1.25 million state-of-the-art teaching lab especially for third year practical projects is to be built. The new facility, to be completed by summer 2009, will be in addition to three existing recently refurbished and well-equipped teaching labs used by the first and second years, and the research labs used by fourth year students in their project. Taken together, this will create some of the best undergraduate lab facilities in the country.



Recent Fourth Year project students at work in the research lab



Walking in Wonderland



Tony Ryan and part of the dissolving dress exhibition in Meadowhall

Tony Ryan, the ICI Professor of Physical Chemistry, is committed to communicating the excitement of science. He is an in-demand speaker at schools, colleges and many public events - he even recently presented the televised Royal Institution Christmas Lectures. His latest project is in collaboration with the innovative fashion designer Helen Story, who is also a Professor at the London College of Fashion.

Wonderland - an ongoing project that combines products and exhibitions - is; "Shining light on sustainability and ethical living."

To highlight issues surrounding waste plastic, Tony and Helen have designed plastic bottles that once finished with dissolve under hot water to form a gel in which seeds can be grown. Tony says he eventually wants; "to see the supermarkets sell basil-fragranced washing up liquid which then turns into a bowl of basil."

In another aspect of the project, a recent exhibition in Sheffield's Meadowhall shopping centre (one of the biggest malls in Europe) focused on dresses that dissolved in water producing a riot of vibrant colours.

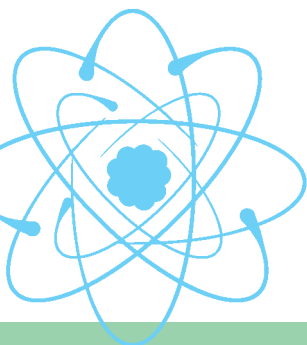
The exhibition was designed to provoke questions on the environmental sustainability of the fashion industry and what happens to used clothing.

The second leg of the Wonderland project was a series of events during October and November in Belfast. More information on the whole project and its participants can be found at:

www.wonderland-sheffield.co.uk/

Poison and Dark Deeds

Watch out for a TV appearance by our Honorary Professor Robert Forrest, an expert in toxicology and forensics. He takes part in a forthcoming ITV program on Victorian poisoners presented by Matthew Kelly that was partly filmed in labs within the department.



Matthew and Robert inspect the evidence



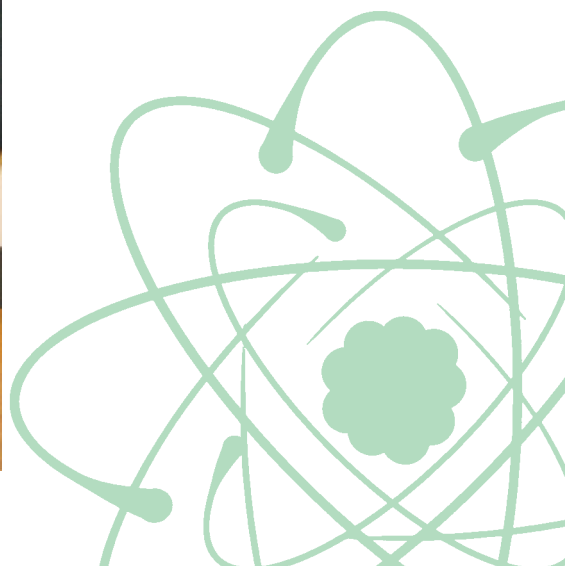
Further honours for former staff member.

Professor Sir Fraser Stoddart is currently Professor of Chemistry at Northwestern University in the United State, and he is often tipped to gain a Nobel Prize for this work as one of the leading lights in nanotechnology research. However the starting point for this distinguished career was his twenty-year period as a member of staff in the Chemistry Department in Sheffield.

To celebrate his achievements and his recent knighthood, in July the University of Sheffield presented Fraser with an honorary degree. After the ceremony Fraser caught up with old colleagues and friends at a party held in his honour and presented prizes to our highest achieving chemistry graduates



Prof. Sir Fraser Stoddart, left, with our graduate prize winners





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University
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Contact: Admissions Office
Email: admissions-chemistry@sheffield.ac.uk

Department of Chemistry
Brook Hill
Sheffield
S3 7HF

Chemistry at Sheffield: *An International Reputation*

With an annual intake of around 160 undergraduate students a year, Chemistry is one of the biggest departments in the University of Sheffield and over thirty full or part-time students are from outside the UK, proving that our teaching and research reputation stretches across the globe.

Find out more at:

www.shef.ac.uk/chemistry/



Our Head of Department, Prof Mike Ward (centre back) with other members of staff and some of our international students at a recent event