



## 50 years of Chemistry at York

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A number of petitions over 300 years were submitted requesting that a University be established in York, before government approval was finally granted in 1960. With the purchase of the Heslington Hall Estate and the appointment of Sir Eric James (later Lord James of Rusholme) as Vice Chancellor in 1962, work began to plan and construct the new University of York. The University opened in 1963 and Professor (later Sir) Richard Norman was appointed from Oxford to be the founding Professor of the Chemistry Department. The building was completed in July 1965 and the first Chemistry intake of 55 undergraduate students arrived in October 1965 along with a small group of PhD students.

Since the 1960s, the University of York has gone from strength to strength; in the Times Higher Education 2012 World Rankings of Universities less than 50 years old, York came First in the UK and 8th in the world. In addition, in 2012, York was invited to become a member of the influential Russell Group of leading UK universities.

The Department of Chemistry at York has also made remarkable progress over its first 50 years. There are now 57 academic staff (plus 8 emeritus) and almost 80 technical and administrative staff. Staff are mainly housed in new state-of-the-art teaching and research buildings; 2013/14 saw the opening of our new undergraduate teaching laboratories, new Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence, Centre for Hyperpolarisation in Magnetic

Resonance (CHyM, with funding from the Wellcome Trust) and Wolfson Atmospheric Chemistry Laboratory (WACL, with funding from the Wolfson Foundation). Major new NMR, MS and X-ray instrumentation ensure that research support is also maintained at the “cutting edge”.

The undergraduate intake has grown steadily exceeding an intake of 200 in 2010/11 whilst maintaining a commitment to the highest standards in teaching and pastoral care. The Department is proud of its commitment to equal opportunities and Chemistry at York was the first academic department in the UK to hold the Athena SWAN Gold award for its commitment to women in science (first awarded in 2007 and renewed in 2010 and 2014). The Department also runs many widening participation and outreach activities (the York Science Outreach Centre, which opened in 2014, is housed in Chemistry).

Chemistry research at York has also flourished and expanded. The early strengths in biological, organometallic and physical organic chemistry, as well as in spectroscopy, are still York specialities but new research strengths include analytical chemistry, atmospheric chemistry, chemical biology, catalysis, green chemistry, imaging, materials chemistry, theory/modelling and synthesis (as reflected in the papers in this special edition). The research school in 2014 consists of around 180 research post-graduates (mainly studying for PhD degrees) and around 80 research fellows. The MSc course in Green and Sustainable Industrial Technology (*ca.* 20 stu-

dents *p.a.*) also contains a significant research component.

Finally, I would like to make some acknowledgments. The Department of Chemistry at York has always valued its strong links to the Royal Society of Chemistry (in fact, in 1980 our Founding Professor, Dick Norman, was influential in the amalgamation of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, of which he was President, and the Chemical Society to form the Royal Society of Chemistry, of which he became President in 1984). Over the years, many York colleagues have supported the RSC on Council, Divisions and Committees as well as through their publishing ventures. It was therefore gratifying to receive such fulsome support from the RSC for all of the events we are organizing at York to celebrate our Golden Anniversary. I would also like to record my personal thanks to all of the corresponding authors (most from York but some having moved on) and co-authors for their contributions. I would also like to thank Professor Duncan Bruce (York) for initiating this special issue, and Professor Bruce Gilbert (York) and Dr Fiona McKenzie and Dr Andrew Shore (RSC) for coordinating the project.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of all of the academic and support staff, and students and researchers, in the Department of Chemistry at York whose dedication, enthusiasm and vision over the past 50 years have been crucial in establishing its international reputation in both teaching and research – and making it such a friendly and supportive place to work. Long may the success story continue!

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