

Federation of European Chemical Societies

Working Party on the History of Chemistry

Chairperson:

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Activities September 2003 - September 2004

- (1) The 4th International Conference on History of Chemistry, on "Communication in Chemistry in Europe, across borders and across generations", organized by the Working Party (local organiser: Dr. Eva Vámos), was held 3-7 September 2003 in Budapest, attracting over 80 chemists from 20 countries, including colleagues from the United States, Japan and Taiwan. There were sessions on textbooks, journals, research schools, Liebig's international network, chemical technology, physical chemistry, biochemistry, and on the role of museums and (secondary) schools in the transmission of chemistry and its history.
- (2) During a meeting of the Working Party at the Budapest Conference, Ernst Homburg succeeded Hendrik Deelstra as chairman of the WP. It was decided that the next European conference on the history of chemistry will be held in Portugal in 2005. The WP is also planning to organise joint sessions at the First European Chemistry Conference, Budapest 2006, together with the Division of Chemical Education and the Division of Analytical Chemistry.

A small task force was formed which will collect information on "chemical heritage" in Europe, as a preparation to organising a conference on that topic.

- (3) During last year, WP members Anita Honkala (Finland) and Dr. W. Gerhard Pohl have been in frequent contact with Dr. Peter E. Childs of the FECS Division on Chemical Education. Together they are organising a symposium on "Teaching Chemistry - Past, Present and Future", to be held at the 1st European Chemistry Congress, Budapest 2006. The Division on Chemical Education will invite two speakers, and the WP on the History of Chemistry will invite another two. Next to that there will be contributed papers.
- (4) Recently contact has been established between the Working Party and the FECS Division on Analytical Chemistry. Professor D. Thorburn Burns, who is member of both organisations, will take initiatives for joint activities. The first of these joint activities probably will take place at the 5th International Conference on History of Chemistry, to be held in Lisbon-Estoril in September 2005 (see below).

- (5) The small task force on “Chemical Heritage“ has not undertaken concrete activities yet.
- (6) The most time consuming activity of the WP during last year has been the organisation of the 5th International Conference on History of Chemistry, on “Chemistry, Technology and Society“, to be held in Lisbon and Estoril (Portugal), 6-9 September 2005. The first circular of this conference will be distributed before the end of October 2004.

A major aim of the conference is to facilitate communication between historically interested chemists and historians of chemistry from all over Europe.

Under the large umbrella of the theme “Chemistry, Technology and Society“, the present conference will mainly focus on three topics, which all have attracted public and scholarly attention in recent years. By discussing the cultural and material influences on chemistry on the one hand, and the practical and cultural impacts of chemistry on the other hand, the conference aims at improving our understanding of the place of chemistry in its technological and social environments. Some special sessions will also be devoted to the development of Portuguese chemistry.

The main topics of the conference are:

- * The material culture of chemistry: laboratory practices and instruments
- * Applied chemistry: the chemical industry, military technologies, technological processes, agricultural and food chemistry, and the environment
- * The popularization of chemistry: practices, spaces, audiences
- * Portuguese chemistry.

The local organisation committee is chaired by Dr. M. Elvira Callapez (Lisbon); the International Programme Committee is chaired by Prof. Ernst Homburg (Maastricht).

- (7) In August 2004 the chairman of the WP distributed a seventeen page Newsletter on the History of Chemistry to the WP Members, which has been placed on the website of the FECS.

The chairman aims at sending such Newsletters about every four months.