



Minutes of meeting of EuCheMS' Working Party on History of Chemistry Leuven, August 31, 2007

Chairman: Ernst Homburg

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Referee: Annette Lykknes and Ernst Homburg

Agenda (distributed by E-mail prior to the meeting):

- 1. Opening, and Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Minutes of second last General Meeting, Friday 9 September Estoril and Minutes of last General Meeting, Sunday 3 September 2006, Gödöllő**
- 3. News and reports**
- 4. 6th International Conference on the History of Chemistry, 28 August – 1 September 2007, Leuven, Belgium**
- 5. Venue and organization of the 7th International Conference on the History of Chemistry**
- 6. Teaching History of Chemistry**
- 7. Membership of the Working Party**
- 8. Date of the Next General Meeting**
- 9. Any Other Business**

1. Opening, and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Jack Betteridge (UK); Anita Kildebaek Nielsen (Denmark); Ursula Klein (Germany); Roman Mierzecki (Poland); Horst Remane (Germany); and Ana Simoes (Portugal).

2. Minutes of second last General Meeting, Friday 9 September Estoril and Minutes of last General Meeting, Sunday 3 September 2006, Gödöllő

There were no remarks to the minutes.

3. News and reports

i) The chairman urged the chairs of the local history of chemistry groups to keep on sending their reports. These have a twofold function: a) alerting people about events and b) generate knowledge of how the different groups operate, to learn from each other. The chairman will put the local reports in a new newsletter.

ii) The Steering Committee of the Working Party (Anita Kildebæk Nielsen, Eva Vámos, Carsten Reinhardt and Ernst Homburg) has been established as a small forum for discussions and planning making in between Working Party meetings, to secure continuity. The Committee has not been in function yet.

iii) The proceedings from the History of the food chain conference (Gödöllő 2006) have been published: *History of the Food Chain: From Agriculture to Consumption and Waste. 31 August – 3 September 2006. Gödöllő, Hungary. Proceedings*. Edited by Éva Vámos. Pp. 136, illus. Hungarian Chemical Society: Budapest, 2006. ISBN: 978-963-9319-63-9. For information on how to order a copy, contact Éva Vámos: vamos.eva@chello.hu.

iv) The book on the European Chemical Societies, edited by Anita Kildebæk Nielsen and Soňa Strbáňová is soon to be published under the title *Creating Networks in Chemistry. The Founding and Early History of Chemical Societies in Europe* by the Royal Society of Chemistry. Soňa Strbáňová reported on the progress. The prize of the book will be £64, though a reduced prize of £46 is offered to the members of the societies that have contributed. The book will be published in about 6 months.

4. 6th International Conference on the History of Chemistry, 28 August – 1 September 2007, Leuven, Belgium

The Chairman of the Programme Committee, José Ramon Bertomeu-Sanchez, and the Chairwoman of the Local Committee, Brigitte Van Tiggelen, briefly reported on their experiences from the current conference. After their reports, other members of the Working Party had the chance to add their comments.

Comments by José Ramon Bertomeu-Sanchez:

- E-mail communication is okay, but the Programme Committee should have a genuine meeting at least once, esp. for the selection of papers and/or for defining the conference theme.
- It was sometimes difficult to select papers as the abstracts were short and the authors sometimes unknown.
- The idea of symposia, put forward by Anders Lundgren, giving the organizers of the symposia autonomy, worked well. But the papers of symposia should be evaluated as well, so that entire symposia might be declined.
- This year information on the conference was announced on pharmacy and medicine lists as well as chemistry and history of science lists. Perhaps we should also address local chemistry teachers? This year information was passed too late to the local groups.

Comments by Brigitte van Tiggelen:

- Information was passed to the local audiences [history of chemistry groups and, later, chemistry teachers], but few attended the conference
- About chemistry teachers: Few teachers from the French-speaking part of Belgium understand English. Maybe a general lecture, in the language the local people might be of interest?
- This year there was only one true local person in the Local Committee (Geert Vanpaemel), so the group mostly communicated by e-mail. The group cooperated nicely with the Programme Committee
- The Local Committee communicated well with the Portuguese organizers from 2005. It is important that such a handing-over of experiences takes place from one organizer to the other
- About the deadlines: A lot of people registered before the first deadline, which was good, but some withdrew their registration after the deadline. Which caused problems to the Local Committee.
- Some work needs to be done to make the poster sessions more attractive to the scholars giving the posters as well as the other participants

Comments by other members of the Working Party:

- Hendrik Deelstra: Sessions like the one on macromolecular chemistry should be stimulated. Deelstra objected to presentations that were just “read”, without audiovisual support. People should be urged to show illustrations with their presentations.
- Ernst Homburg: This year we had key note speakers who did not use illustrations, and this worked well. We have to accept that there are different traditions of presentation, among chemists and historians.
- Peter Morris expressed the wish to have internet access at the venue.
- Annette Lykknes: Would a (less than) 5-minute presentation of each poster be possible? This could make the poster sessions more attractive/interesting to both the authors and the other participants

Proceedings of this meeting:

José Ramon Bertomeu-Sanchez, Brigitte van Tiggelen and Duncan Burns will edit the proceedings of the 6ICHS; if the Conference budget allows. Editor of *Ambix*, Peter Morris, emphasized the possibility for the speakers to submit their papers to *Ambix*.

5. Venue and organization of the 7th International Conference on the History of Chemistry

The WP meeting in Gödöllő raised three possible solutions for the next ICHC conference; to include the 7ICHS into the Budapest Congress in 2009, or to organize it at separate conference in 2009 or 2010 in either Vilnius or Istanbul. The chairman invited Eva Vamos (Budapest), Birutė Railienė (Vilnius) and Emre Dölen (Istanbul) to write down their proposals, but only Eva Vamos responded. In Leuven she presented three options for a history of chemistry conference in Hungary:

- i) A history of chemistry conference to be held inside the 23rd IUHPS Congress, which will take place in Budapest during 26-31 July 2009
Comments by EV: Just one conference fee, duration e.g. 2 1/2 days, no extra social programme, scientific programme needs to be settled by the end of 2008.
- ii) A separate conference in Budapest immediately following, or preceding, the IUHPS Congress in Budapest
Comments by EV: Separate arrangements, separate fees
- iii) A separate conference in Sopron, 200 km west of Budapest, before or after the IUHPS Congress
Comments by EV: Beautiful venue, hotel with 86 rooms and swimming pool, efficiently organized by the Hungarian Chemical Society

The discussion following Eva Vamos' presentation revealed in particular two views:

- i) Those in favor of a conference inside the big IUHPS conference argued that such an arrangement will make the history of chemistry WP visible to the large history of science community; furthermore that this is a chance to also visit other sessions, benefiting from just one fee. In this way we do not have to compete with the big congress as a lot of people can't stay for both.
- ii) The ones in favor of a separate conference, either in Budapest or in Sopron, argued that a small group such as the WPHC will be "lost" inside a big congress, and raised doubts whether attending the big congress would attract more people to our sessions – people have more obligations and will probably "shop" sessions instead of sticking to one. It was furthermore argued that a big congress on the history and philosophy of science wouldn't appeal to chemists.

Some suggested a half-combined, half-separate conference to make us known inside the big congress and at the same time maintain a social and scientific programme as a group.

In the end the chairman asked the members of the WP to vote for one of the following alternatives (votes between brackets):

- i) a conference inside the IUHPS (5 votes)

- ii) partly overlap in Budapest (5 votes)
- iii) a separate conference in Sopron just before or immediately following the big congress (8 votes)
- iv) a separate conference in Sopron separated in time from the big congress (1 vote)

Then the members of the WP voted for the following dates:

- i) 23-25 July (8 votes)
- ii) 1-3 August (5 votes)

Conclusion: The next History of Chemistry Conference is to take place in Sopron, Hungary, during 23-25 July 2009.

Eva Vamos emphasized that our conference will be a satellite conference to the 23rd IUHPS, which means our conference will be announced in the main programme of the 23rd IUHPS.

Peter Morris was elected as Chairman of the Scientific Committee. Suggestions for conference topics should be sent to Peter Morris (peter.morris@ScienceMuseum.org.uk). The Scientific Committee will decide on the topics.

Future meetings

In September 2008 the large Second European Chemistry Congress will take place in Torino. The Division of Chemical Education has suggested to organize a joint session on the popularization of chemistry as a part of this congress (on historical and contemporary aspects). Moreover, Gerhard Pohl and Luigi Cerrutti have suggested to organize a session on the history of (Italian) chemistry. Ernst Homburg will contact the Congress chairman, Igor Tkatchenko (France), to see what is possible.

The Chairman suggested the 2011 ICHC to be held in one of the following countries:

- i) Scandinavia (Sweden or Norway? Or a joint Local Committee, as in the Belgium-Dutch LC in the case of Leuven?)
- ii) Greece
- iii) Germany (semi-overlap with the annual meeting of the German history of chemistry group)
- iv) Britain

6. Teaching History of Chemistry

José Ramon Bertomeu-Sanchez has edited an extensive report on the status of the history of chemistry in Europe. The Editor and the Chairman will discuss on the best way of bringing this report to the attention of the Chemical Societies and the Historical Groups.

The Chairman advised the WP members to present the report in their local chemistry societies to support the teaching of the history of chemistry.

7. Membership of the Working Party

There was no time to discuss this issue.

8. Date of the Next General Meeting

There was no time to discuss this issue. Most probably the next General Meeting will take place in Sopron, Hungary during July 2009.

9. Any Other Business

Soňa Strbáňová asked the Working Party to give its moral support to the founding of a Sugar Museum in Prague. The members of the Working Party supported this initiative.