

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

## School of Chemistry Community

Part of  
THE EPS COMMUNITY



### Winter 2014

#### Greetings,

As you will see from this newsletter, it's been an exciting start to the new academic year, particularly with the construction of the [High Temperature Research Centre](#) in Coventry. Our academics have been busy developing a new way to [make nanostructured carbon using sawdust](#) and [Dr Simon Cotton has published a new book](#) on molecules. As a College we were also prominent at the very successful [British Science Festival](#), hosted at the University.

Our students have had a busy few months, working with others from across the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences developing plans to [launch their own liquid fuelled rocket into the upper atmosphere](#).

The School's undergraduate educational agenda has excelled once again. You will recall that last year I wrote about the School's number 1 position amongst the 21 Russell Group Schools of Chemistry in the National Student Survey, with 96% of our graduating students saying they were satisfied with their degree. Well this year that satisfaction has risen to 98%, and we are outright number 1 when measured against all 48 Schools of Chemistry in the UK. In addition, we have had an excellent year in terms of undergraduate recruitment, both in terms of quantity, where we hit our target of recruiting 107 students, but at the same time we have had our best ever overall quality of students: 73% obtained AAB+ or equivalent, against an offer of AAB for the 4 year MSci and ABB for the 3 year BSc. To put this in context only 4 years ago the number of AAB+ students we recruited was 28%. The School has made huge gains in the educational arena, and we are firmly a destination of choice to study Chemistry at degree level.

So as the end of the first semester in the 2014-15 academic year approaches, I would like to wish you all a pleasant and restful Christmas and I look forward to updating you with the latest news from the School and our students in the Spring Term.

#### In this issue...

[News from the School](#)

[New staff](#)

[Your School needs you](#)

[Events taking place](#)

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With best wishes,

**Professor Jon Preece**  
Head of School  
Chemistry

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## News from the School of Chemistry

### High Temperature Research Centre reaches the top



Construction of the University of Birmingham's High Temperature Research Centre reached a significant milestone recently as the University and contractor Wates Construction celebrated the development's 'topping out'. [Read more.](#)

### Cooking up carbon: sawdust and iron in the melting pot



Chemists at the University of Birmingham have found a new way to make nanostructured carbon using the waste product sawdust, according to research published recently in the Royal Society of Chemistry journal Green Chemistry. [Read more.](#)

### ChemSoc need you!



Could you mentor a Chemistry student? The Mentoring Scheme is run by the Careers Network and currently has around 150 mentor volunteers. Mentoring is about motivating a student to reach their goals, giving advice on how to get there or helping them realise their potential. Unfortunately, there is just one chemistry alumnus currently on the scheme and our undergraduates would really appreciate some new alumni stepping forward for this programme to help inspire their future careers! It is a great way to give students an insight into a particular industry or career. For more information and to get involved [visit our website](#) or [email us](#).

### Rocketry Society launches Project Chamberlain



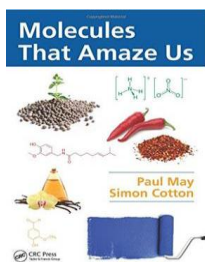
The University of Birmingham Rocketry Society (UBRS) is the newest student society within the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. The group are embarking on the significant task of launching their own liquid fuelled rocket into the earth's upper atmosphere in a challenge known as Project Chamberlain. Terry Moorton, President of UBRS and Director of Project Chamberlain, [tells us more.](#)

## Professor Zoe Pikramenou - Inaugural Lecture



Professor Zoe Pikramenou, Professor of Inorganic Chemistry and Photophysics, recently celebrated her Inaugural Lecture on 'Lighting up molecular interactions with metals: φως and energy'. In [this interview](#) Professor Pikramenou discusses her lecture and her research at the University.

## Molecules That Amaze Us



Dr Simon Cotton, together with Prof. Paul May from the University of Bristol, have recently released a new book entitled "Molecules That Amaze Us". The book includes amusing anecdotes, historical curiosities, and entertaining facts about each molecule, thereby balancing educational content with entertainment. [See more.](#)

## College of Engineering and Physical Sciences at the British Science Festival 2014: Highlights



The College shone at the British Science Festival in September with over 30 contributions to the Festival's main scientific events and workshops and the Young People's Programme. From new robot technology to HS2 and the big bang, our scientists and engineers addressed the big debates and offered interactive activity to engage young people in STEM futures. [See more.](#)

## Giving back



Did you know that College of Engineering and Physical Sciences graduates make up approximately 22% of the University's alumni population and are among the most generous donors to the Circles of Influence campaign? [Read more.](#)

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## New staff in 2014

There have been a number of appointments in the School this term. [Read a summary of our new staff online here.](#)

## Your School needs you...

Would you be able to share some of your time, expertise or connections to help our students to succeed?

We're currently looking for help and support from alumni with the following:

- Work experience placements are invaluable for our students, allowing them to learn about the world of work first-hand and apply their knowledge in a real-life setting. If you work in industry and think you could offer a work experience placement to our undergraduate or postgraduate students, please [email us](#)

There are many ways in which you can give a little back, from providing a career profile, to mentoring a student. Please [email us](#) if you would like to get involved and we'll be happy to talk to you.

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## Events taking place shortly...

### College and School events

#### **EPS Inaugural Lecture Series**

**Thursday 27 November 2014**

#### **Professor Jeremy Wyatt, Professor of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, School of Computer Science**

*Robotics is reaching a tipping point. The intelligence and robustness of robots increased hugely in the past fifteen years. This has allowed them to leave the lab and carefully controlled environments like the factory floor and enter our world. In this public lecture, aimed at the non-specialist, Professor Jeremy Wyatt will explain the achievements of intelligent robotics to date. He will also highlight some of the challenges we must meet to bring robots into our everyday lives. Finally, Professor Wyatt will highlight some of the work carried out at Birmingham over the past decade, particularly breakthroughs in robot planning, robot learning and robot manipulation. The lecture should be accessible to people from age 12 up.*

*Live robot demonstrations will be included during the evening.*

**Venue:** Leonard Deacon Lecture Theatre, Medical School Building, followed by a drinks reception in the Wolfson Common Room, Edgbaston Campus

**For more information on other lectures in the EPS Inaugural Lecture Series please visit**

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/eps/inaugural](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/eps/inaugural)

**Friday 28 – Saturday 29 November 2014**

#### **The National Engineering & Construction Recruitment Exhibition**

*Supported by the University of Birmingham, this is the largest engineering recruitment exhibition in the UK and with top companies including Network Rail, Amey, Canary Wharf Contractors, The Royal Air Force, Carillion and many more in attendance, this is your opportunity to find job vacancies, find answers to all your career-related questions and meet employers.*

**Venue:** NEC, Birmingham

**Monday 8 – Wednesday 10 December 2014**

#### **International Conference on High Speed Rail - 8th-10th December 2014**

*2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the first Shinkansen high speed line in Japan. The University of Birmingham is marking this historic occasion by holding an international conference on High Speed Rail*

**Venue:** Edgbaston Campus

**Tuesday 10 March 2015**

#### **EPS Distinguished Lecture: Prof Dr PE Seeram Ramakrishna**

*Longer life has always been a dream of human beings. Except for the recent one hundred years, the average life span was below forty for the past 10,000 years. Noticeable aging effects kick in as early as mid-twenties! More than a million medical devices have been invented to improve the quality of human life. What promise do they hold for humans to live beyond 100 years healthily and perhaps happily?*

**Venue:** EPS College, Edgbaston Campus

**Tuesday 9 June 2015**

#### **EPS Societies' Awards**

*Come and celebrate with our student societies as we recognise their fabulous achievements in 2014/15*

**Venue:** The Great Hall, Edgbaston Campus

**Saturday 20 June 2015**

**[EPS Alumni Reunion](#)**

*As a graduate of one of the nine schools in the College of Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS), you are invited back to campus for a Summer Reunion to get together with your fellow alumni to celebrate your experiences, accomplishments and friendships at the University of Birmingham*

**Venue:** Edgbaston Campus

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## **University events**

**25 November – 3 December 2014**

**[The Edward Cadbury Lectures 2014](#)**

*The theme for 2014 is 'Is the New Testament Anti-Jewish?' and will consist of a series of lectures given by Professor Amy-Jill Levine, Vanderbilt University USA.*

**Venue:** Edgbaston Campus

**Thursday 27 November 2014**

**[Chaplaincy lecture - A Quaker astronomer reflects on the Universe and us](#)**

*This year's Chaplaincy Lecture will be given by Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, a prominent astrophysicist and Quaker.*

**Venue:** Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Edgbaston Campus

**Monday 8 December 2014**

**[Festive Drinks at the University Carol Service](#)**

*Organised by the University Chaplaincy and Department of Music, this is a joyful Christmas celebration for alumni, staff, students and families followed by mince pies and mulled wine in the Rotunda at 7.30pm.*

**Venue:** Great Hall, Aston Webb Building, Edgbaston Campus

**Thursday 19 February 2015**

**[Alumni vs Students vs Staff Quiz, 6.30-9.00pm](#)**

*Put your general knowledge to the test at an informal quiz in Joe's Bar, Guild of Students.*

**Venue:** Joe's Bar, Guild of Students, Edgbaston Campus

**Saturday 12 September 2015**

**[Golden and 50th Anniversary Reunion](#)**

*Alumni who graduated in 1965 or before are welcome to join for a special reunion lunch*

**Venue:** Edgbaston Campus

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## **Do we have the right details for you?**

Please visit [your.bham](http://your.bham) or email [alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

**You have received this email from the University of Birmingham because we believe that it is relevant and of interest to you.** If you would like to opt-out of receiving information from your College, School or Department by email, please opt-out by visiting [your.bham](http://your.bham), emailing [alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:alumnioffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk), or telephoning +44 (0)121 414 2773 / 2744 / 4724. In order to further tailor the communication we send, all emails are tracked and processed; further information regarding our use of data, is available by looking at our [data protection statement](#)