

welcome to issue 18

Feb was pretty busy, but March is here now, and surely spring is on its way! For those of you getting your AS results this month, I hope they are all that you worked for. I know it's hard waiting for them to arrive. How were they? Better than you expected, worse?

If you want to vent a little, away from school, why not use the *ChemNet* discussion board? If you haven't registered yet, just email me at chemnet@rsc.org and I'll get you signed up. It's completely confidential and offers a great way to contact other *ChemNet* members.



February also saw **Katarina Stefkova**, a *ChemNet* member from Northern Ireland visit the RSC at Burlington House. She recruited 12 new members last year as part of a promotion we ran and won a two day trip to London as a reward for her enthusiasm about *ChemNet*. We may well be running this promotion again this year so keep your eyes open.

R. Bowles

Robert Bowles – Editor



This month

Interview with: Dr Graeme Jones

A lecturer at Keele University

CAREERS SPOT

Q What's your job and how did you get there?

Until two years ago, I was a senior lecturer in chemical ecology at Keele, doing research, teaching and administration. It was fun, but I always had a hankering to be on the stage, and I luckily landed a NESTA dreamtime award fellowship. This gave me a year to explore my creative side. I got to Keele via a music school in Manchester, a chemistry degree at Liverpool, a PhD at Cambridge and a post doc in Lausanne Switzerland.

Q Aside from lecturing, are you involved in chemistry in any other way?

I will do anything to promote chemistry, I put on shows, exhibitions and have the largest molecular models in the world – MEGA MOL.

www.makeitmolecular.com The thing I am most proud of is an exhibit called *make it molecular* where people come along and

make a model of a molecule and have their picture taken with it.

Q Aspirations at age 17?

To be a medical doctor; but that all went out of the window when I missed most of my second A-level maths paper. I thought it was in the afternoon; it wasn't, it was in the morning! I didn't get the results for medicine, so I signed up for a chemistry degree with the option of changing to medicine after year 1 if I did well, but I never did. I was enjoying the chemistry too much and stuck with it.

Q Can you sum up chemistry in 3 words...

Learning to love molecules (sorry, that's 4!)

Q Anything extra...?

My chemistry degree has allowed me to globe trot around the world building DNA models. I got 900 people all at once to dance like a molecule and I have landed a Guinness World Record and a Nature paper all with Chemistry. It's a laugh, have a go.

Website of the month

Well it's got to be *sense about science* really hasn't it? As we are sending you some info from them about peer review in science and we've got another publication from them next month too. They've got a whole range of publications written by scientists, aimed at dispelling a few myths about chemistry and science as a whole.

<http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/>



chemnet events

Last month saw a group of students visiting the Horseshoe Forensic Laboratories near Newmarket. They learnt more about the analytical techniques used by HFL, got hands on in the lab and did some mass spectrometry analysis using data provided by HFL.

There are spaces on a tour of Croda Chemicals in Hull on 17th March and we are setting up more events all the time. Let me know if there is anywhere local to you that you'd like to visit.

Spaces are still available for the Imperial Chemistry taster day on 24th June, but are filling fast so get in touch if you want to join us for this one.

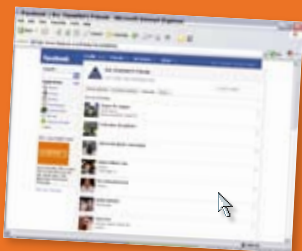
Don't forget *Meet the Universities 2008* which we will be holding in London on 5th July.



ChemNet members at HFL

TEXT US
ON 07825
186 304

chemistry on the web



Time for another plug for the *Chemnet* Facebook page I think. Go on search us out, we're listed as *RSC ChemNet*. We've got photo's, links to other members of *ChemNet* and groups such as the *Chemistry World* group. Go on give us an add! And while you're at it, there's the *myspace* page too: <http://www.myspace.com/chemnet>.



There's not much need for chemistry while surfing the web despite its use in producing ever faster computer processors and the energy they use, but what about when you're doing a cutback in a barrel? This site shows the how important salt is to great surfing. <http://www.chem.com.au/science/everyday/surf/>

Chemistry in the news



As you know, we keep our finger on the nation's scientific pulse here at *ChemNet*. I thought I'd send you the enclosed leaflet "I don't know what to believe..." giving information about how to make sense of chemical and science stories which often flood the media with little or no real consideration of the scientific facts. I'm not talking about the "Here's the science bit" in certain cosmetic adverts, I'm talking about celebrities giving their "opinion" on serious science issues. As I was getting the info together the organisation who produced it <http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk> suddenly found itself thrust into the limelight with its report on celebrities citing "science facts" in ill conceived interviews. The report was reported in several newspapers including *The Guardian* here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2008/jan/03/sciencenews.pseudoscience> and *The Telegraph* here: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/01/03/nceleb103.xml> It's interesting stuff. The good news is that the numbers of them doing it is down. The bad news is that some of them still do. I mean why do they feel they have to spout off their "views" which are often

non-scientific, scaremongering and just reflect what they've read in another paper or been told. Or do they just come to a decision based on what they "know" to be true.

My own particular favourite is Sarah Beeny in Channel 4's "How toxic are you?" (says it all really!), who talked about "lovely makeup and moisturisers which don't have any chemicals in them". What do they contain then? What's left once you remove the chemicals from anything? Yet the papers and media latch on to these utterances and re-transmit them to the wider world, and so the story goes around and around until no-one is eating anything because they don't want to get cancer and everyone is living in plastic bubbles (made of chemicals by the way!) to escape a world full of "chemicals"! Just another example of the word chemical having a totally unnecessary negative connotation. Let's have some more stories about the positive impact of chemicals on our lives. Let's face it, without them we'd be dying of malnutrition, as a result of our food rotting or being eaten by insect pests while we huddle frozen in dank, dark caves waiting for our teeth to rot before nasty bacterial infections kill us all. Not a rosy picture!

The full "celeb" report can be found here: <http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/PDF/celebrityreview2007.pdf>

If you want to register to use the discussion board email chemnet@rsc.org

“To book a place on a ChemNet event email: chemnet@rsc.org or call 01223 432340”

free stuff!

Those of you starting to think about university for 2009 entry (Crikey! Seems a long way off doesn't it?) can start doing your homework using the *Guardian Good University Guide 2008* (rrp £15.99 – although we all know you can get it cheaper on the net). We've got just one to give away.

The winner will be the person who emails me at chemnet@rsc.org or writes to me at www.rsc.org/chemnet, who I think offers the best answer to the question – *Why should I have the Guide?* in less than 50 words. Make it as creative and witty as you can, and get some chemistry in there for extra bonus points. Send it to me by 21st March.

Other guides are of course available, but *The Guardian* sent me theirs for free!



HAVE YOUR SAY!
Would you like to see your article in the next issue? If it's good enough we'll print it! Submit your article to chemnet@rsc.org

CHEMISTRY FACTS

This month some slivers of knowledge about silver. Man has used it since ancient times for money. Before 1797, British pennies used to be made out of silver and the ancient Persians used silver to make coins between 612-330 BC. In 2001, 25% of all new silver on the market was used in the production of photographic film - before it all went digital!



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