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**Remarkable source of funding should be an example to modern companies**

British company bosses would do well to study the historic generosity of Worcestershire Sauce heir Mr Dyson Perrins to correct their own disinterest in supporting science, according to the Chairman of Chemistry at the University of Oxford.

The remark by Professor Graham Richards CBE came days before the Royal Society of Chemistry commemorates the work of the famed Dyson Perrins Laboratory at the university. The Dyson Perrins Laboratory was established almost a hundred years ago thanks to the businessman Dyson Perrins and to the success of the internationally-recognised brown relish, the (Americanised) name of which is sufficiently established to be defined by the Oxford English Dictionary. \*

Scientists at the University of Oxford and other guests will mark on Friday the achievements of the Dyson Perrins organic chemistry laboratory. The Royal Society of Chemistry is collaborating with the Department to commemorate its role as a pioneering centre from 1916 – 2003, at which time it gave way to a new building opened in 2004. The original Dyson Perrins Laboratory was set up as result of Worcestershire Sauce's success and Perrins' altruism but the new laboratory which this year replaced it was created without any significant support from the British commercial community despite fund-raising efforts to recruit their involvement.

"The lack of interest demonstrated by firms approached in the programme which raised £64.5 million for the successor laboratory is a matter that should be addressed urgently," said Professor Richards. "We received only a quarter of a million pounds from the corporate sector," he said this week. "The bulk of the money came from public sources and from an innovative venture with a city bank. This diffidence is not just shocking – it is a sad state of affairs of which the companies in the UK should be concerned."

He added: "Almost a century ago Dyson Perrins funded the whole laboratory and over the following nine decades the people working here made a remarkable contribution to the health and wealth of this nation. The 1947 Nobel Prize winner Sir Robert Robinson carried out ground-breaking work on natural products and his contribution was just one of a host of advances. Now, when challenges to science are as great and various as ever, very little was offered when we turned to companies for support. It was only due to other funding sources that we were able to build the new laboratory opened earlier this year. I feel that science has been let down appallingly by a sector which profits greatly from the commitment of chemical scientists here and in many universities around the UK. It is nothing short of disgraceful and firms which ignored our appeal should be ashamed."

Among the organisations which did offer large amounts of money were the Joint Infrastructure Fund of the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council and The Wellcome Trust; the Higher Education Funding Council for England; the Wolfson Foundation; the E P Abraham Research Fund, and the family of Landon T Clay. The sole industrial benefactor was Thomas Swan & Co.

Worcestershire Sauce, today an English cultural and culinary icon around the world, was created early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by chemists John Lea and William Perrins at the request of Lord (Marcus) Sandy of Worcestershire, ex Governor of Bengal who returned from India with a taste for Indian sauce. They had accepted the commission to produce a formula in 1835 but gave up on the brew, leaving it barrelled in a cellar; after two years they tasted it again to discover that it had improved and matured like fine wine. With its new piquant taste the now legendary Lea and Perrins sauce was launched commercially in 1838.

**The Royal Society of Chemistry asked to celebrate the Dyson Perrin Laboratory's work by placing one of its Historic Chemical landmark plaques, which will be unveiled in the Wolfson Seminar Room at 11.15 am on Friday 24 September by the Vice-Chancellor of the university Sir Colin Lucas.**

\***Worcester Sauce** n. a pungent sauce first made in Worcester (Worcestershire)

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*The University of Oxford Chemistry Department is the largest in the western world. It graduates 180 chemists each year after a four year course which includes a full year of research and some 80 doctorates. It has a dozen active Fellows of the Royal Society and has produced four Nobel Laureates. It has a particularly strong record in creating spin-out companies, three of which have become public companies.*