

# ASE Annual Meeting

**2004**

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reports from the  
University of  
Reading

The Annual Meeting was back at Reading after a gap of five years. I arrived in 2004 with happy memories of the Reading Meeting in 1999. However, I also remembered the weather in early January 1999 – we had the four seasons (sun, rain, wind and snow) on each of the three days. This year, after a windy start, the elements were kinder - my woolly hat, so vital last year, was left in the suitcase. Friday was particularly mild and it was good to see so many enthusiastic delegates racing around the campus. Reading is a great venue for the Annual Meeting; it is compact and, with the well-placed signs, I found it easy to locate all venues. My well-rehearsed map-reading skills were not needed. And I only got lost once!

## **The international dimension**

The main Meeting was preceded by the International Day. The Association can be proud of the global interest and respect it has. Lynne Symonds (Chair of the International Committee) welcomed over 200 delegates from 50 countries.

At the opening seminar on Wednesday delegates had the opportunity, in an informal setting, to share science education issues pertinent in their country. It was uplifting to hear of the problems faced and the solutions being implemented. Distances may be great but many issues for science education are common across the world. Of particular note was the contribution from the Taiwanese Minister of Education at the International Dinner. Those at the dinner also heard from three of the sixth formers following their once-in-a-lifetime trip to Sydney last August, as winners of the ASE's Five for Sydney competition which is sponsored by NESTA.

## **The primary input**

Reading 2004 was full of interest for primary colleagues. Roger Mitchell (Chair of the Primary Committee) talked to me about the 10 minutes it took him each day to travel between the exhibition area and the primary welcome room. Why? Well, he had to stop to 'tickle a Tarantula' or 'massage a Millipede' *en route*. Yes, The BIG BUG Show was in town.

Once again the dedicated primary room was a great success – conference 'old hands' and first time delegates rubbed shoulders and chatted about science issues over coffee and cakes. The displays set up in the room provided a great backdrop. The success of the welcome room could be judged by the fact that I (an old hand!) had trouble getting in on the morning of primary day – it was completely full with enthusiastic primary teachers.

One highlight of the well attended primary day was the talk by Bob Ponchaud. This included the warning to teachers to 'expect the unexpected' when promoting creativity in the classroom. Many present took the opportunity to stretch balloons and stir spaghetti, and all came away with a better understanding of the structure of materials. Well done to Bob – and congratulations on his new role as a Trustee of the Association.

## **The ICT element**

Saturday brought together over 60 participants from across the country at the ASE/Becta needs analysis event. This provided an opportunity for teachers to identify their needs regarding ICT support. The services currently available were discussed and what was needed in the coming years articulated. Rob Musker gave an impressive presentation full of ideas

for ICT uses in science. What was most rewarding was the involvement – all present took part in the discussions. The outcome of the day will be a report that will help to shape developments over the next few years.

ICT is an important issue for ASE. The new website is receiving many 'hits' and was complimented by many at the Meeting. Congratulations to John Lawrence for the cyber-café – e-mails were sent from Reading by many delegates over the three days.

## **Secondary science**

The programme included many specific biology, chemistry and physics events. Being a chemist my schedule started with a talk drawn from this 'vitaly important' science subject. Oh dear, I will be in trouble with the Chief Executive – a biologist! The talk on Thursday morning by Dr Sweeney (University of Reading) was fascinating. It described how modern chemical research into anti-cancer therapy has been driven by the study and adaptation of compounds which occur in natural sources.

On Friday, however, I could not resist a physics lecture entitled Going to Mars – it was topical. I didn't know that in the summer of 2003 Mars made its closest approach to Earth since the Stone Age. That is why the Beagle 2 lander was dispatched. We gained an appreciation of the strategies being used to get to Mars but were not informed what had happened to Beagle 2! Where was the poor thing? All alone on Mars! Again the lecture was given by a member of the University staff. The use of the local expertise is a great benefit to the Annual Meeting. Thanks to all from Reading University who agreed so readily to give talks.

Saturday provided an opportunity to hear about the many new science examination specifications now available. The size of the audiences for the Applied Science talks indicated the potential for these new courses. The thoughtful questioning that followed the talks was good. Classroom teachers need to be involved in curriculum and qualifications developments.

To redress the balance, I suppose I'd better mention a biology event. The Nuffield Foundation Lecture, Cell Growth and Cell Division: What We Know, How We Know It and What We Would Like to Know, was fascinating. Dr Tim Hart (Cancer Research, UK) described research into the control of the cell cycle. He linked this area of research to what happens in school science.

### Highlights

*'Fantastic, a once in a lifetime experience.'* I overheard this remark as we filed out of the Patrick Moore interview. The Royal Society event featured Sir Patrick talking with TV science presenter Quentin Cooper. Sir Patrick told a wide-eyed audience that he had met and talked with Orville Wright, Yuri Gagarin and Neil Armstrong and went on to say that the fact their lives had overlapped indicated just how rapidly the development of flight and space travel has been.

Peter Housden (Director General for Schools at DfES) addressed the conference on Thursday afternoon. This was designated as the keynote address and was excellent in presentation and content. We were informed of the location of two further Science Learning Centres in England: North East (Durham University) and West Midlands (Keele University). A feature of his talk was the positive benefits DfES saw from strong successful subject associates. It was agreed by all that ASE was both strong and successful.

I couldn't leave this section without mentioning the Annual Dinner held on Friday evening. Dr Susie Burr (ASE Chair) welcomed all to the dinner and emphasised the social aspect of ASE meetings. The meal, company and 'craic' were great. Well done to Susie who was everywhere during the Meeting!

One more highlight to mention was *The Pirates of Penzance*. The annual G&S contribution was on Thursday evening. Once again, Phil Ramsden

## AstraZeneca Science Teaching Trust/ The Times Educational Supplement

### PRIMARY SCIENCE TEACHING AWARDS 2003

This is the 10th year of these prestigious Awards which were established to recognise and celebrate good practice in science teaching in primary schools. This year, for the first time, AstraZeneca Science Teaching Trust sponsored the Awards, together with *The Times Educational Supplement*.

Six inspirational primary teachers received awards, which comprised Certificates, £500 for themselves plus one years membership of ASE, and £750 for their school to support and develop science.

#### The 2003 Award winners were:

<b>Pauline Abrahams</b>	Brentfields Primary School, Brent, London
<b>Emma Kirk</b>	Wallace Fields Junior School, Epsom, Surrey
<b>Philippa Minto</b>	Greenlawn Junior School, Pontypool
<b>Caroline Palmer</b>	St Clement's and St John's Infants, Bournemouth
<b>Penny Smith</b>	White Notley CE Primary, White Notley, Essex

The AstraZeneca Science Teaching Trust Trustees Award for outstanding achievement in exceptional circumstances was awarded to **Loretta Kelly**, School Principal at St Teresa's Primary School, Belfast.

The awards were presented by Professor Hugh Lawlor of AZSTT.

did the organising. How he fitted this in with his role as Annual Meeting Secretary, I don't know – well done Phil!

#### Thanks

A big 'Thank you' to all the ASE staff. They worked so hard at Reading. To Belinda Blakeney (Conference Organiser) well done again – you make it all appear so simple. Oh, and before I forget, a word of appreciation to the Reading University staff. They were to a man and woman friendly and helpful.

In the space available it is impossible to report on all aspects of the Meeting, but it is true to say that the Reading Annual Meeting included something for everyone involved in science education, regardless of their interests or specialism. There were whole days devoted to sessions specifically for technicians, advisers and inspectors, earth scientists and some events such as Techniquet's mobile planetarium, Starlab, ran repeatedly over the three days enabling visitors to 'journey to the stars'. Covering 3,600 square

metres, the marquee housed the largest ever exhibition at an Annual Meeting and brought together 167 exhibitors, some of whom had travelled from the US, Canada, Australia and Singapore to take part. With so much on offer, it's hardly surprisingly we received such positive feedback from delegates on their evaluation forms.

#### On to Leeds

I look forward to next January in Leeds. Reading was great – a full programme of activities and a hectic social schedule. ASE can be proud of its Annual Meetings. As one of our international colleagues said to me after the dinner, *'I hope to keep coming to ASE (Annual Meetings) until I am no longer able'*. What an advert for us.

See you next year – don't forget the ASE is at Leeds University in 2005.

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