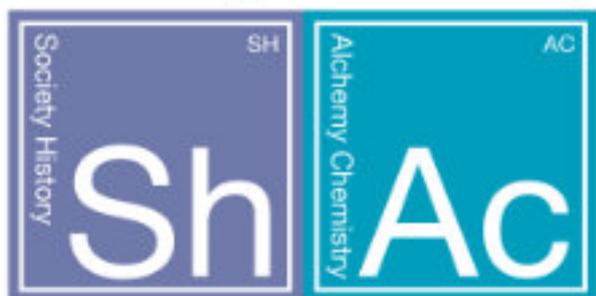


Chemical Intelligence Winter 2026 issue

Society for the History
of Alchemy and Chemistry



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Table of contents

News from SHAC/Ambix

HIST Award for Annette Lykknes p.4-7

New Editorial Team of *Ambix* p.8-9

Meet our new reviews editors
Hannah Elmer and Sarah Hijmans p.10-13

Meetings

Dates for the diary:

SHAC Spring Meeting: Remembering Bill Brock p.16-19

Fifty Years of Chemistry - Celebrating the 50th Anniversary
of the RSC Historical Group p.20-21

Boyle @ 400 p.22-23

Chemists as Politicians p.24-25

SHAC@SHI October 2025 p.26-27

Awards

SHAC Award scheme p.28-31

News from RSCHG

Winter 2026 RSCHG newsletter p.32-33

SHAC Project Reports p.34-43

Ambix

Book Reviews p.44-45

Sources in Alchemy and Chemistry p.46-47

Double Special Issue: Fire Arts p.48-51

New books p.52-53

Membership p.54

Contribute to *Chemical Intelligence* p.55

HIST Award for Annette Lykknes



The winner of the Joseph B. Lambert HIST Award for Outstanding Achievement in the History of Chemistry for 2026 is Annette Lykknes for her outstanding contributions to the advancement of the study and communication of the history of chemistry. In her nominating letter, Brigitte van Tiggelen lauded Professor Lykknes: "She acts as a figurehead for our discipline, embodying the values and ideals that make our field vibrant, creative, beneficial and inclusive."

Professor Lykknes is a true daughter of Norway, but she has become a mother of the European community of the history of chemistry. She was educated at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). She received a Masters degree in Chemical Education and taught mathematics and science for two years. While her interest in education remains a driving force for her, she decided to pursue a Ph.D. in the history of chemistry and obtained this in 2005 at NTNU under Prof. Lise Kvittingen, with thesis titled "Ellen Gleditsch: Professor, Radiochemist, and Mentor." Now she combines both pillars of her profession as Professor of Teacher Education at NTNU.

One of the secrets of her success is her commitment to an interdisciplinary approach to her scholarship. In her own words: "Over the course of my academic career, I have collaborated extensively with chemists and other natural scientists as well as with educators within these fields, with historians, philosophers and sociologists of science, with pedagogy scholars and with language experts and researchers of the Norwegian language, and even with a political scientist. The result of this is a foot in different fields and knowledge of quite distinct research methods and theoretical perspectives."

The Award committee noted: "Professor Lykknes has contributed to an amazing array of research topical areas including: history of women scientists, studies of the collaborations of couples in science, history of the periodic table, discovery of the chemical elements, history of chemical education, how twentieth-century chemical engineers shaped the relationships between the academy and industries, and the application of the history of science to teach science."

Alan Rocke especially noted her treatment of the work of Marie Curie as "revealing the complex nature of scientific discovery itself."

Annette Lykknes is at the center of the worldwide community of historians of chemistry. She is now the Editor-in-Chief of the flagship journal *Ambix*. She is currently the Chair of the Division of the History of Chemistry of the European Chemical Society. While her publication record is sterling, and her research is groundbreaking, her greatest achievements have been as a leader.

HIST is thrilled to honor Professor Annette Lykknes with the 2026 Joseph B. Lambert Award for Outstanding Achievement in the History of Chemistry.

New Editorial Team of *Ambix*

In January, **Annette Lykknes** assumed the role of editor of *Ambix*. Lykknes studied chemistry and chemistry education in the 1990s, and in 2005 she completed a PhD in the history of chemistry with a dissertation titled *Ellen Gleditsch: Professor, Radiochemist, and Mentor*. She is now a professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Her research has centred on the 20th-century history of chemistry, including the discovery of chemical elements and the development of the periodic system, the history of radioactivity, engineering education and institutional histories, as well as women and gender in science. She has also contributed to studies of collaborative scientific couples, the use of historical collections in the history of chemistry, and the integration of history of science into science teaching.

Lykknes is currently Chair of the Division of the History of Chemistry within the European Chemical Society and has extensive experience editing books and special issues. She was named the 2026 Joseph B. Lambert HIST Award recipient for Outstanding Achievement in the History of Chemistry by the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry.

Peter Ramberg, whose work has focused on conceptual and institutional history of chemistry in nineteenth century Germany, continues in his role as Associate Editor. Two new Associate Editors have also been appointed, both specialists in the Early Modern period: **Stephen Clucas**, who is emeritus professor of Early Modern Intellectual History at Birbeck, University of London, and **Carmen Schmechel**, postdoctoral researcher at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam. Schmechel is Vice-Chair of the Division of History of Chemistry of the European Chemical Society and her current research examines Early Modern theories and practices of fermentation in the Low Countries from 1600 to 1800.

Meet our new reviews editors: Hannah Elmer

Hannah Elmer is a historian of late medieval and early modern Europe. Her current research investigates technologies of fire and their relationship to the wider built environment. Previous projects include a co-edited collection of sources on German identity (ca. 1500-2000) and her doctoral dissertation, which examined questions of human agency and the boundaries of nature in infant reanimation in late medieval Central Europe. She was guest editor (with Tillmann Taape) of "Fire Arts: Heat Technologies, Matter Theory, and Agency in the Premodern World," *Ambix* 72 (issue 3-4) (August-November 2025).

Hannah received her PhD from Columbia University and holds a master's degree from the Freie Universität Berlin. She has taught at Purchase College and Baruch College and has been a postdoctoral researcher at the Leibniz Universität Hannover since 2021. She is an organizing member of the Arbeitskreis Geschlechtergeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit and is involved in public history endeavors in Hannover.





Sarah Hijmans

Sarah Hijmans is lecturer in history of science at Université Paris Cité, specializing in the history of chemical composition in the nineteenth century. In 2023, she defended her PhD thesis on the identification of chemical elements in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also at Université Paris Cité. Sarah has previously been a fellow at the Science History Institute and the Royal Institution of Great Britain, and held a postdoctoral position at the Technical University of Berlin. She is also a co-founder and editor of *Jargonium*, a website on the history and philosophy of chemistry which is supported by SHAC.

Dates for the Diary



Pieter Bruegel the Elder - The Alchemist

SHAC WEBINARS

The next webinar is scheduled for Thursday 26 March 2026 at 5pm GMT. Look out for details in SHAC member emails, social media, Chem-Hist and Mersenne.

Recent talks include Michael Bycroft on "Gems and the Crafts in the Chemical Revolution," Stefania Buosi-Moncunill on "From Sacred Plants to Golden Wine: The Alchemist's Art of Healing" and Francesca Antonelli on "Family historians? Women and the construction of scientific memory, from Mme Lavoisier (1758-1836) to Lucie Laugier (1822-1900)". These can be viewed on the SHAC YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/SocietyforHistoryofAlchemyandChemistry>

SHAC webinars are also scheduled for Thursday 21 May, 24 September and 26 November.



SHAC Spring meeting

Remembering Bill Brock: Chemistry and Culture

10 April 2026

Arranged with and at the Maison Française d'Oxford, 2-10 Norham Road, Oxford, OX2 6SE

This meeting is being held to commemorate the life, work and legacy of William Hodgson Brock (1936-2025), who spent his entire career at the University of Leicester. Sometime chair of SHAC and editor of its journal *Ambix*, Brock was one of the leading historians of chemistry in his time, writing the Fontana/Norton *History of Chemistry*, as well as biographies of William Crookes, Justus von Liebig and Henry Edward Armstrong. (An extended obituary can be found at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00026980.2025.2489298>). The papers to be presented at this meeting take their starting point from Brock's work and historical interests.

Registration and Coffee

9.30

9.55 Welcome from **Stéphane Van Damme**, MFO, and **Frank James**, SHAC

10.00: **First Brock Award Lecture:**

Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, Université Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne The history of chemistry through the lens of materials. A very short introduction

10.45: Session 1

Alan Rocke, Case Western Reserve University: The Best of Frenemies: Liebig and Dumas (A Tribute to William H. Brock)

11.15 Coffee

11.45 Session 2

Eira H. Bethell (Booth), University of Essex: From Laboratory to Library: Bill Brock's Prolific Writing as Chemical Practice

Matthew Daniel Eddy, Durham University: A Context for Colonial Chemistry: Thinking with Bill Brock about the Biomedical Relevance of Dr J. A. B. Horton's Experiments on the Soil of Sierra Leone

Georgiana D. Hedesan, University of Oxford: The Foundation of the Society for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry in 1935: Between Historical Research and the Transmutational Paradigm

Michael Jewess, Independent Scholar Working with Bill: Robert Fergus Hunter (1904-1963)

13.15 Lunch. Not provided but there are some good pubs nearby

14.30 Tribute from the Brock family. **Susannah Ahluwalia, Gareth Brock and Benjamin Brock**

14.40 Session 3

Julia Carr-Trebelhorn, University of Cincinnati: Burning Diamonds: Lavoisier, Guettard, and the 1771 Development of Reduction Firing and Hard-Paste Porcelain in Paris

John R.R. Christie, University of Oxford: Commerce, Manufacture and Practical Chemistry in 18th Century Britain

Robert Bud, Science Museum/UCL: Poison gas and Art Deco: analysing early 20th century ambivalence about chemistry

16.00 Coffee

16.20 Session 4

Robin Mackie, Open University and **Gerrylynn K Roberts**, Independent Scholar: Counting the British Chemical Community, 1881-1971: Opening the 'Black Box'

Annette Lykknes, Norwegian University of Science and Technology: Crookes' *Vis Generatrix* in teaching and learning

17.15 Closing remarks

17.20 End of meeting

There is no charge for this meeting, but please let Frank James, frank.james@ucl.ac.uk, know if you wish to attend.

Fifty Years of Chemistry - Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the RSC Historical Group

This one-day in-person meeting organised by the Historical Group will take place on **Tuesday 10 March 2026**, 10.00-16:45, at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BA. The Historical Group was founded by Stephen Mason, the Professor of Chemistry at King's College, London and a historian of science, as a result of an announcement put in *Chemistry in Britain* in August 1974. The first meeting of the group was held at King's College in March 1975, followed by a reception. While the history of the Historical Group is not without interest, it is felt that a meeting about the social and scientific changes in chemistry since 1975 would be more attractive to a broader group of chemists. The meeting will consider the recent history of the main branches of chemistry (inorganic, physical, organic and analytical) alongside the changing role of women in chemistry and the development of green chemistry. The speakers are drawn from the ranks of past presidents of the RSC and leading textbook authors. It should thus prove to be a landmark event in the history of the Historical Group.

Titles of talks will be available nearer the time. For more information please visit:

<https://www.rsc.org/events/detail/82723/fifty-years-of-chemistry-celebrating-the-50th-anniversary-of-the-rsc>

Programme

10:00: Coffee and tea

Session One (chair: John Nicholson)

10.30: Welcome from John Nicholson, Chair of the Historical Group

10.45: History of the Historical Group, 1975-2025
- Peter Morris

11.30: Women in Chemistry
- Lesley Yellowlees

12.15: Lunch (not provided)

Session Two (chair: Anna Simmons)

1.30: Inorganic Chemistry - Gill Reid

2.00: Organic Chemistry - Jonathan Clayden

2.30: Physical Chemistry - Peter Atkins

3.00 Tea and coffee

Session Three (chair: Peter Morris)

3.30: Analytical Chemistry - James Barker

4.00: Chemistry, the Environment and Sustainability - Keith Smith

4.30: Closing remarks by John Nicholson

4.45: Meeting ends

To book please email Mike Leggett, Historical Group Secretary, directly at leggett189@btinternet.com, giving your name, email address and any special requirements. The event is free of charge. Coffee and tea will be available, but lunch is not included, although there are plenty of cafes nearby in Piccadilly and adjoining streets.

Boyle@400 - 25 January 2027

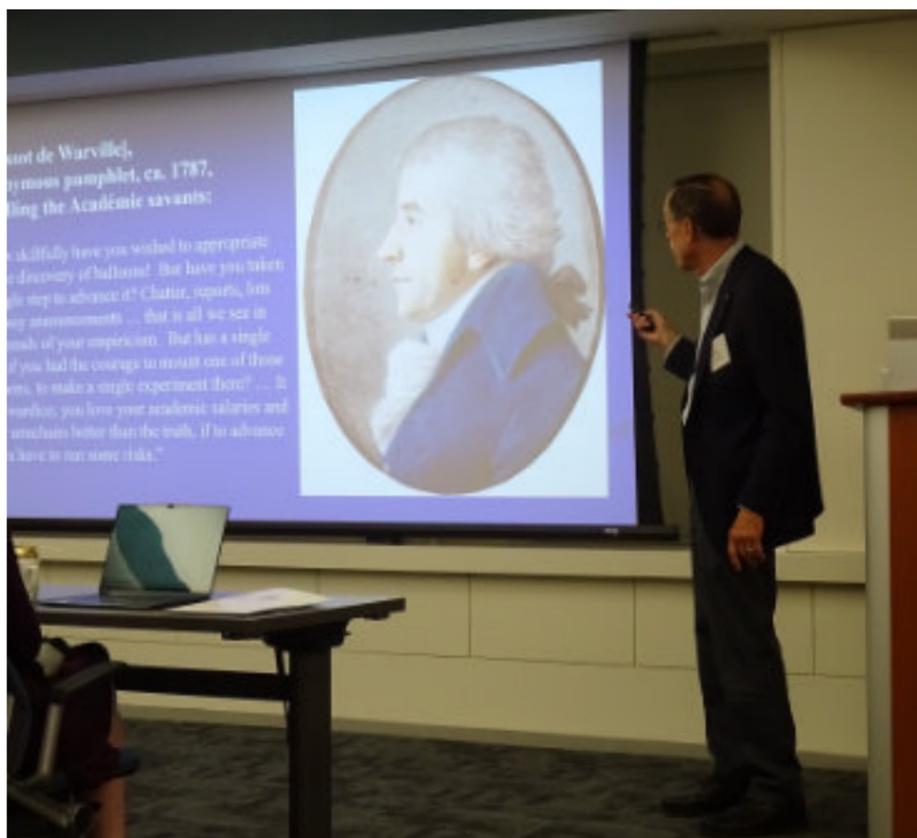
In association with other organisations, including the Royal Society of Chemistry Historical Group, SHAC is organising a meeting to mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of Robert Boyle (1627-1691). The meeting will be held on the date of Boyle's birth at the Royal Society of Chemistry at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. Further details available nearer the time.





Chemists as Politicians

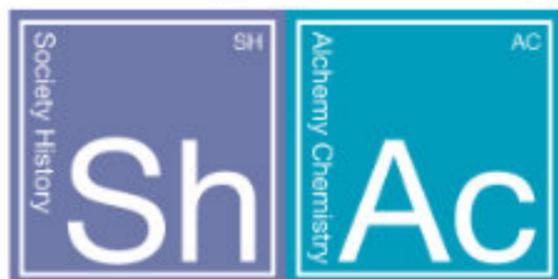
This one-day in-person meeting organised by the Historical Group will take place on **Friday 16 October 2026**, 10.00-16:45, at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BA. The theme of the meeting is chemists who then became politicians (mostly MPs) rather than chemistry and politics which is a broader topic. The first half of the meeting will include talks given by historians on Lyon Playfair, Henry Roscoe, Stafford Cripps and Margaret Thatcher. The second half will be talks given by living chemists who became MPs. This is still provisional, but the group is hoping that Brian Iddon (Labour) and Julian Huppert (Liberal Democrat) will speak and we are seeking a Conservative counterpart. The meeting will end with a talk about being a political advisor to the RSC by Stephen Benn, Viscount Stansgate. Further information on the meeting will be available in the summer 2026 issue of *Chemical Intelligence*.



SHAC@SHI

16-17 October 2025

Society for the History
of Alchemy and Chemistry



Following the discovery that SHAC has as many members in North America as it does in Britain, it was decided to hold its autumn/fall meeting on the other side of the Atlantic. So, in close collaboration with the Science History Institute in Philadelphia, SHAC arranged a two-day meeting on the broad theme of 'The History of Alchemy and Chemistry' held in the Institute's building. SHAC is enormously grateful to SHI for all their support in making the meeting run so smoothly. Topics ranged from Roger Bacon, through computational analysis of alchemical texts to twentieth-century chemistry. The keynote lecture was delivered by Alan Rocke (pictured) on Gay-Lussac's ballooning exploits and how this helped him build a career in Napoleonic France. Following Rocke's lecture there was a reception kindly supported by Taylor and Francis (whose American office is in Philadelphia) for which SHAC and SHI are very grateful.

It is sometimes said, unfairly in my view, that SHAC is a society of two halves (alchemy and modern chemistry) who don't really talk to each other. This meeting illustrated that such simplification is very wide of the mark. Everyone at the meeting gained much from hearing about work in specialties other than their own which has to be a good thing. At the end someone asked me when the next one would be!

Frank James

Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry Award Scheme 2026

Opening date:

1 March 2026

Closing date for
applications:

31 May 2026

The Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry invites applications for its Award Scheme for 2026. SHAC offers two types of award: support for research into the history of chemistry or history of alchemy by both new and independent scholars and support for Subject Development of either history of chemistry or history of alchemy. It is expected that applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application by 31 July 2026. The Awards are most suitable for activities planned to be undertaken during the period 1 August 2026– 30 September 2027. In exceptional circumstances applications may be considered for activities which occur between the deadline on 31 May and 31 July, but this must be brought to the attention of SHAC when submitting the application for the Award. A two-year window for completion of all Awards will be given.

Research Awards are open to post-graduate students (both masters and doctoral students), those who have obtained a PhD since 1 January 2016 and also to independent scholars. *Given that the circumstances of independent scholars differ we are letting members 'self-define' and if there are any unclear cases it will be left to the discretion of the Awards Panel.*

Awards of up to **£1000** will be made to cover research expenses, including travel, accommodation, subsistence (at the discretion of the award panel), the copying or scanning of documents, and library fees. Applications may also include the costs of reproducing images for publication. The Scheme does not fund the purchase of equipment or course fees. It does not cover the costs of Open Access publication.

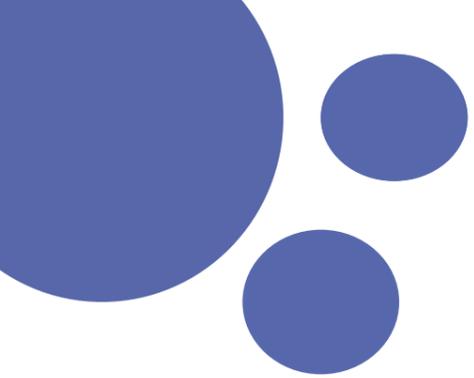
In addition, those who have obtained a PhD since 1 January 2016 and independent scholars may apply for the costs of travel to conferences and accommodation, but only in order to give a paper. There is an expectation that awardees will attend the entire conference, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Scheme does not pay conference registration fees.

Subject Development Awards of up to **£1000** may be made to support activities such as seminars, workshops, colloquia, lecture series, conference sessions, conferences, exhibitions and outreach activities that support either the history of chemistry or history of alchemy as academic subjects. The Awards do not cover the costs of refreshments or catering for these events or honoraria for speakers. The Scheme does not cover the costs of Open Access publication.

Please note that activities covered by the Awards do not have to occur in the UK, and that the Awards are open to members of the Society resident both in the UK and elsewhere. Members who have applied to the Scheme in previous years, whether successfully or not, are entitled to make an application in 2026.

Applicants must be members of the Society in good standing at the time of making an application, and, if successful, throughout the period of an award. For more information and application forms, please contact grants@ambix.org. Membership enquiries should be made to newjoiner@ambix.org.

An activity report must be submitted at the end of the Award. This will usually be published in SHAC's *Chemical Intelligence* newsletter.



Winter 2026 Royal Society of Chemistry Historical Group Newsletter

The **Winter 2026 Royal Society of Chemistry Historical Group Newsletter** is now available online to read. It includes a selection of short historical articles as well as news from the history of chemistry community and details of the group's activities.

The newsletter can be downloaded from the Historical Group's webpage (it will download in a separate window).

[HistoricalGroup](#)

It is also available from the Historical Group's publications archive, which includes back issues of the newsletter from 2010 and also edited texts of lectures on the history of chemistry.

[Historical Group Archive](#)

The contents of the Winter 2026 Newsletter include a brief history of the Historical Group Newsletter by Peter J.T. Morris; John Nicholson's reflections on two books that influenced his chemical career; and a discussion of the usage of the dye methylene blue in medicine by Alan Dronsfield and Pete Ellis. Inspired by the recent commemorations of the 200th anniversary of benzene, former Staveley Chemicals Ltd. employee, Ronald Presswood explores the benzene refinery products made at Staveley Works in Derbyshire. Anthony Travis looks at the implications of the Discovery of PFAS ('Forever Chemicals') in Biological Materials, whilst Michael Jewess discusses concepts of chemical bonding in the first half of the twentieth century. There is also a review of Peter Morris' recently published book, *The Polymer Revolution - A Journey Through Polymer Science* and a report of the group's meeting on the History of Astrochemistry, plus summaries of its webinar series.

Project report

Yuuka Sawai

I am a second-year doctoral student at Hitotsubashi University in Japan. Thanks to the SHAC Research Award, I spent two weeks in the United States in December 2025 conducting archival research at the National Archives (NARA), the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian Institution Archives, all in Washington, D.C., as well as the Science History Institute (SHI) in Philadelphia. The purpose of this visit was to gather primary materials essential to my doctoral study on the historical development of international chemistry conferences in the nineteenth century.

My dissertation investigates how such conferences emerged and what impact they had on the advancement of chemistry. During the nineteenth century, international conferences on science, culture, and related fields were frequently organized in conjunction with major world expositions. My current focus is the World's Congress of Chemists (1893), held from 21 to 26 August during the Chicago World's Fair. It represented the first international chemistry conference organized in the United States. Notably, the initiative for planning the conference came from Harvey Washington Wiley (1844–1930), who at the time served as Chief Chemist of the United States Department of Agriculture and as President of the American Chemical Society (ACS). To contextualize the event and clarify its

historical significance, I sought to examine documents not only concerning Wiley himself but also relating to the USDA, the Chicago Exposition, and the ACS.

At NARA, I consulted the *Records of Harvey W. Wiley, 1890–1906* within the USDA collection. Although initially puzzled by the complexity of the document access procedures, I succeeded in consulting the collection concerning preparations for the Chicago World's Fair and in verifying Wiley's statements regarding preparations for the 1893 congress. At the Library of Congress, I examined the collection titled *Harvey Washington Wiley Papers*. Among materials documenting Wiley's participation in various international scientific gatherings, the pamphlet for the 1893 congress proved significant for my research, as it clarified the structure and agenda of the conference.

I then visited the Smithsonian Institution Archives, where I reviewed the correspondence of Henry Carrington Bolton (1843–1903), one of the congress participants. His letters discussed the project of "International Chemical Bibliography", a topic debated during the congress, revealing its continued relevance in the following years. Finally, at the Science History Institute, I surveyed materials concerning the ACS, including documents suggesting the reorganization of the society and Wiley's involvement immediately before the congress. I also reviewed portions of the IUPAC collection, which offered insight into the subsequent development of international chemistry conferences in the twentieth century.

I am especially grateful for the assistance of SHI archivist, Mr. Kenton G. Jaehnig.

The findings obtained through this project will significantly shape my dissertation and future scholarly work. The archival materials I was able to consult—many of them unpublished—deepened my understanding of the organization and outcomes of the 1893 congress and broadened my perspective on nineteenth-century American chemistry. I am sincerely grateful to SHAC for making this productive archival research trip possible, which was my first research experience abroad.

Project report

Karoliina Pulkkinen

The support from SHAC allowed me to attend the History of Science Society meeting in New Orleans in November 2025. I presented on a panel titled “From Trust to Crisis: 'Scientific Credibility and Institutional Legitimacy in the 20th Century”, which was organised by Jan Surman and Doubravka Olšáková. The panel gave me the perfect setting to discuss my research on how science and technology helped to legitimise the Soviet political project. In my talk, I especially focused on the Soviet research into chain reactions.

In 1956, Soviet physical scientist Nikolai Semenov became the first Soviet citizen to be awarded Nobel prize for his research into the theory of branching chain reactions, an honour he shared with the Oxford chemist Cyril Hinshelwood. Although Semenov’s work on chemical kinetics, combustion, and chain reactions is well-known, it is not as widely acknowledged that his work into chain reactions was prompted by something of a crisis in credibility. An experiment conducted by two of his PhD students, Zinaida Valta and Yulii Khariton, attracted the critique of the famous German chemist Max Bodenstein. Semenov’s response to Bodenstein’s concerns was an important point in the future development of the reaction in terms of branching chains.

This was my first time visiting an HSS meeting, and gave me the valuable opportunity to interact with many historians of science whose works I have recently engaged with. I am especially grateful for my co-panelist for a fruitful discussion. Without the support of SHAC it would not have been possible to gain the valuable feedback to further develop my work and to attend several excellent sessions on history of chemistry and alchemy. I remain sincerely grateful for SHAC’s support.

Project report

Sean Coughlin

Thanks to support from the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry, the Alchemies of Scent project held the international workshop “From Ancient Egypt to Modern Fragrance Chemistry” in Prague on 29-30 October 2025. The event brought together historians of science, chemists, perfumers, artists, Egyptologists, and botanists to examine fragrance materials through historical analysis and sensory evaluation. The Society’s contribution enabled the participation of two fragrance chemists from Symrise, Dr Philip Kraft and Dr Johannes Panten, whose involvement was crucial for the workshop’s interdisciplinary aims.

The workshop aimed to delineate how smell can be used to understand chemistry’s past. By examining how scents change with different ingredients, processes, or durations, and by comparing these shifts to ancient descriptions, we asked what kinds of historical insight the nose can provide: how it can illuminate choices, uncertainties, and techniques embedded in ancient chemical practice.

The first day, hosted at the Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, focused on modern fragrance chemistry. Presentations on the synthesis of aroma molecules established the framework for

understanding how raw materials and molecular design shape modern perfumery. Participants smelled representative materials and accords discussed by the speakers, linking contemporary molecular design to its sensory consequences. This nose-on engagement served as a bridge to the second day, demonstrating how chemical reasoning and olfactory judgment intertwine in both modern practice and historical reconstruction.

The second day turned to ancient fragrance chemistry and experimental historical methods. Participants examined six historical perfume reconstructions produced within the Alchemies of Scent project: Stakte, Mendesian, Metopion, Susinum, and two plague-remedy-inspired compositions by Klara Ravat (Smell Lab Berlin). Historical and chemical introductions preceded each session. Marie Urban (Urban Scents / Osmothèque) contributed remotely, while Prague-based olfactory artists Markéta Baňková and Eva Fajčíková joined in person.

The central aim was to use sensory evaluation to explore interpretive uncertainties in ancient recipes. Many technical texts omit parameters such as maceration time, processing steps, or botanical identity. To understand the material consequences of these gaps, we prepared variants of the same recipe. When maceration length was not specified, short and extended extractions were produced. For “resin” (retine), we compared raw resin with cooked resin whose volatiles had been removed through heating. For the base oil known in Greek as balanos, two plausible candidates, Moringa

and Balanites, were prepared.

Participants evaluated these samples to determine whether the differences were perceptible and historically significant. These contrasts often proved more revealing than instrumental analysis, making the impact of divergent textual interpretations directly evident to the nose.

Together with Philip Kraft, we also explored his concept of "odor value," a quantitative ratio used to analyse harmonious fragrances. If certain variants smell disharmonious, in a manner comparable to discordant musical intervals, odor-value analysis may help identify when a reconstruction has gone materially wrong.

The SHAC award enabled this interdisciplinary encounter and advanced sensory approaches in the history of chemistry. The workshop has informed the development of the documentary *Searching for Susinum* and set the stage for future collaborative research and publications.

Project report

Pieter T.L. Beck

In 1772, Joseph Priestley (1773-1804) published an article detailing his discovery of a new gas, which he called "nitrous air" (nitrogen monoxide or NO in contemporary terms). A striking feature of this gas was that when it combined with atmospheric air, it turned into an orange-brown gas (NO₂). When nitrous air was combined with a sample of atmospheric air kept under a glass jar over water, it seemed to reduce the volume of atmospheric air. Most importantly, this reduction was proportionate to the "breathability" of the air. This discovery marked the start of 18th-century "eudiometry", the practice of testing the quality of the air using so-called "eudiometers".

A couple of years now, I have been collaborating with a colleague from the chemistry department, prof. Mieke Adriaens, to replicate historical chemical experiments, with a focus on nitrous air eudiometers. We performed these experiments together with chemistry students, not only as a way to introduce these students to the history of chemistry, but also to make them reflect about experimental practice in chemistry. During our work on the eudiometry of Jan Ingenhousz (1730-1799) we noticed that our results deviated from the results that were mentioned by Ingenhousz. We investigated the matter experimentally and tried to follow Ingenhousz' procedure more closely. To do this, we also had a replication made of Ingenhousz' eudiometer by the people of the Science Faculty's technical

workshop. We published our findings and experience in a paper: Beck, Pieter T. L., Ruby Cornand, Wannes De Turck, and Mieke Adriaens. 'Replicating the Fontana-Ingenhousz Eudiometer: Incorporating Historical Experiments in Undergraduate Chemistry Education'. *Science & Education* 34, no. 3 (2025): 1703-29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-024-00533-z>.

The award was used to film (and edit) performances of these eudiometrical experiments, especially the experiments involving the use of the replicated instrument. The final aim of this is to disseminate the results of our replication work to a broader audience. In a first step, the video material that was produced using the SHAC grant will be put online via YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@BeckInTheLab>). The video will be shared through existing communication channels of the university. Further valorization funding was acquired from Ghent University's Arts & Philosophy Faculty. This will be used for the second step: to put the video-material on a designated website, alongside information on the experiments and the historical background. In the past, the Sarton Centre for History of Science and Humanities has already collaborated with the Ghent University Museum to perform and film replications of Christiaan Huygens' air-pump experiments. This video material has been put online, with accompanying textual commentary: <https://airpump.ugent.be/en>. The existing structure of the website would be used to share the video-material of the experiments with the eudiometer.

Book reviews for *Ambix*

Book reviews are an important part of *Ambix* and of our scholarly community. Please feel free to contact joint book reviews editors Sarah Hijmans and Hannah Elmer (bookreviews@ambix.org) with any books that you would like to see reviewed, that you would like to review yourself, or simply to register your interest in reviewing books for *Ambix*, with a note of your preferred topic areas.

Sources of Alchemy and Chemistry - Book of the Light of the Great Magistry

Lawrence M. Principe's critical edition, English translation, and detailed study of the *Book of the Light of the Great Magistry* by the Franciscan friar, alchemist, and prophet of the antichrist John of Rupescissa (ca. 1310-1366) forms the third volume of *Sources of Alchemy and Chemistry*. Based on over one hundred surviving manuscripts, many recently discovered, this critical edition restores substantial original text omitted from the printed editions and corrects longstanding textual errors. In the accompanying study, Principe explores John's sources and ideas, and follows the transmission, reception, vernacularization, and multiple modifications of John's text over the next three centuries. Modern experimental reworkings, fully illustrated and explained, complement the textual analyses and provide a more vivid understanding of the friar's practical and

and observational skills. John intended this book to provide his Franciscan brethren with the financial means, through production of the philosophers' stone, to rebuild a devastated Christendom after the fall of the antichrist whom he predicted would arrive in 1366. The new critical text and analyses reveal John as an innovative practitioner and theorist, and provokes a close re-examination of the conditions of his nearly twenty-year confinement at the papal prison in Avignon where he wrote his *Book of Light*.

This edition of *Sources* will be published later in 2026. Look out for further information in member emails.



By Jean de Roquetaillade - Manuscrit de 1350, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15353617>

Double Special
Issue:

Fire Arts: Heat Technologies, Matter Theory, and Agency in the Premodern World

Edited by Hannah
Elmer and Tillmann
Taape

**Vol. 72, issue 3-4, August and
November 2025**

Hannah Elmer and Tillmann Taape, "Working Fire: Cosmologies, Agencies, and Methods".

Tillmann Taape, "Subtle Fire: Distillation as Low-Heat Technology and the Agency of Human Art".

Carmen Schmechel, "The Goldilocks Moment: Fire, Material Change, and Critical Time in Medieval Metallic Transmutation".

Tianna Helena Uchacz, "Fire Technologies of the Low-Heat Artisan in Early Modern Europe".

Andrés Vélez-Posada, "Blowing Fire: Exploring Ancient Amerindian Metallurgy Through a Furnace Model".

Hannah Elmer and Thijs Hagendijk, "The Historical Furnace as Assemblage: Space, Circulation, and Early Modern Fire Management".

Peter Oakley, "Fire Management in Practice: Building and Managing Charcoal-Fired Assay Furnaces as Experimental Reconstructions".

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Katharina Vones and Peter Oakley, "Rounding Up: Undertaking Experiential Research on Granulation Techniques in a Charcoal-Fired Furnace".

Márcia Vilarigues, Thijs Hagendijk, Andreia Ruivo, Alexandra Rodrigues and Carla Machado, "Powder, Fire, Glass: The Reproduction of Blue Enamels and the Role of Fire in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Instructions".

Yijun Wang, "The Goddesses of Metal and Fire: Artisanal Knowledge, Embodied Experience, and the Reframing of Smelters' Cult in China, Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries".

Further details on all the articles, many of which are available open access can be found at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/yamb20/72/3-4>

New Books

Chemical Intelligence launches a new section on recent books that may be of interest to SHAC membership.

Please contact the editor if you know of a title that would be good to include to the summer 2026 edition of our newsletter.

William H. Brock (2025). *Fifth Business: A Life of the Chemist and Educationist Henry Edward Armstrong*. University of Chicago Press

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/F/bo246539079.html>

Michael Bycroft (2026). *Gems and the New Science. Matter and Value in the Scientific Revolution*. University of Chicago Press

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/G/bo258300470.html>

Peter J T Morris (2025). *The Polymer Revolution: A Journey Through Polymer Science*. Royal Society of Chemistry.

<https://books.rsc.org/books/monograph/2378/The-Polymer-RevolutionA-Journey-Through-Polymer>

Tillmann Taape (2025). *Artisans, Knowledge, and the Common Man in Hieronymus Brunschwig's Books on Surgery and Distillation*. University of Chicago Press

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/C/bo254560672.html>

David Singerman (2025). *Unrefined: How Capitalism Reinvented Sugar*. University of Chicago Press

<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/U/bo251837774.html>

See the full list of books published by *Synthesis* series by University of Chicago Press [here](#).

Membership

The Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry has a longstanding tradition in the field, organising colloquia, publications and promoting the interdisciplinary study of the history of alchemy and chemistry from its early beginnings to the present. The Society offers support to its members, including an award scheme, regular meetings and events, graduate network, and the triennial Partington prize for original academic writing on any aspect of the history of alchemy and chemistry. It offers a forum for advertising forthcoming events, both within the United Kingdom and internationally, and its website provides a portal to resources relating to the history of alchemy and chemistry. Members receive the Society's journal *Ambix*, the leading scholarly journal in the field of history of alchemy and chemistry. *Ambix* is published by Taylor & Francis and appears quarterly. Members also receive the Society's newsletter, *Chemical Intelligence*, twice yearly, and any new editions from the Sources of Alchemy and Chemistry volume.

Application forms and membership information may be found on the Society's website, <http://www.ambix.org/>, under 'Membership'. For all membership questions, please contact the Membership Secretary, Dr. Carolyn Cobbold: cacobbold@gmail.com.

Contribute to Chemical Intelligence

We welcome any contributions that newsletter readers might wish to make to *Chemical Intelligence*. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Publications
- Upcoming Conferences or Meetings
- Conference or Meeting Reports (these should not normally exceed 1,000 words)
- News Items or Announcements
- Grants, Fellowships or Awards
- Reviews of Websites, projects or blogs of interest (up to 500 words)

The Editor retains the right to select those contributions that are most relevant to the interests of the Society's members. We also wish *Chemical Intelligence* to provide a platform for interaction between members. We therefore encourage you to submit:

- Questions you may wish to put to other members
- Materials that you are working on and wish to share
- Suggestions for improvement

For any queries regarding the content of *Chemical Intelligence*, or to propose material for inclusion in future issues, please contact the editor, Dr. Karoliina Pulkkinen: karoliina.pulkkinen@helsinki.fi