

DIOXIN 2008

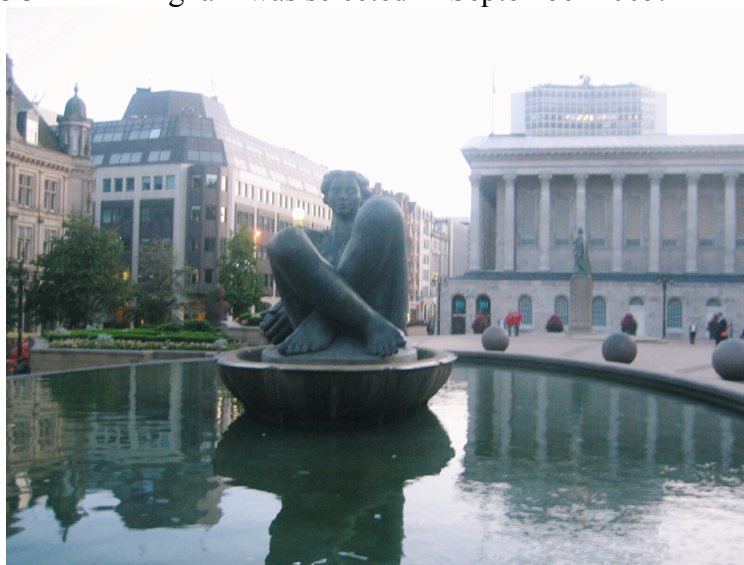


Introduction

The 28th International Symposium on Halogenated Persistent Organic Pollutants – Dioxin 2008 – was held August 17th-22nd at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham, UK.

This was the first time in the Symposium's history that it had been held within the UK, and we were therefore extremely gratified by its success. Overall, it was attended by 841 delegates and 82 accompanying persons from 46 different countries. The theme of the 2008 Symposium was "Looking to the Future: Developing the Next Generation". This exemplified our aim to encourage and facilitate the active participation of young scientists and those from developing and transition economies (DTCs). In this respect, great efforts were made to secure sponsorship to provide free registration for such delegates, and we were delighted to be able to award bursaries to 36 students (one per scientific session, 25% of all student delegates) and a further 10 scientists from DTCs.

The organisation of Dioxin 2008 grew around the activities and steering committee of the UK POPs network. Centred at the University of Birmingham, the network involved all those with interests in POPs including academia, industry, and government. At Dioxin 2005, the IAB confirmed that Dioxin 2008 would be held in the UK. However, at that point, a decision had yet to be reached amongst the national organising committee as to the exact venue. After a hectic schedule of site visits of 4 short-listed venues (Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, and Newcastle), the ICC in Birmingham was selected in September 2005.



"Floozie in the Jacuzzi", Victoria Square, Birmingham – T. Nakano

Administration of the conference was taken on by the co-chairs Stuart Harrad, Chris Wright, and Tanja Pless-Mulloli, with significant assistance with the social programme from Lesley Batty. The Symposium secretariat was based at the University of Birmingham, encompassing financial management, Symposium web-site and on-line registration. A Professional Conference Organiser Index Communication Services was appointed to manage the trade exhibition and the on-line short paper management system; while Rita Mansfield Associates took on the task of devising and managing the social programme, and the Birmingham Convention Bureau managed the on-line hotel accommodation booking system.

Scientific Programme

The opening ceremony entertained delegates with a “Celebration of British Music” who performed an eclectic mix of music composed by musicians from the Birmingham area spanning several centuries from Purcell to Duran Duran. Delegates debated whether “Flowers in the Rain” or “Mr Blue Sky” was the more appropriate theme tune for the Symposium! The scientific programme commenced with a plenary by Kevin Jones entitled “Global cycling of POPs: issues, evidence and challenges”. Over the week, there were 36 scientific sessions, with 254 oral and 375 poster presentations. The short papers on which these presentations were based were made available to delegates as a searchable CD. Topics addressed the full range of global POPs research right across the source-pathway-exposure-effects-solutions continuum. In keeping with recent trends, contaminants addressed spanned dioxins, “Stockholm” POPs, brominated flame retardants, perfluorinated chemicals, and “emerging” contaminants. Personal highlights were sessions on indoor POPs, urban contamination issues, POPs in the Developing World, and a debate on updating TDIs for dioxin-like chemicals.

We were also fortunate to have sufficient display space to enable each poster to remain on display for the full duration of the Symposium. To further underline the importance of this mode of presentation, poster socials with drinks were held on both Monday and Tuesday evenings.

In keeping with the Symposium theme, the standard of student presentations were adjudged to be of such a high standard, that 7 rather than the normal 6 Otto Hutzinger awards were made from 95 entries.

In closing, the meeting was invited to attend Dioxin 2009 in Beijing with an exciting presentation from Prof. Guibin Jiang, chair of the Beijing organising committee.

Social Programme

A key aspect of the continuing success of the Dioxin Symposia series is its social programme, and Dioxin 2008 was no exception. The Symposium commenced with the traditional Sunday early evening mixer. Held in Hall 3 of the ICC (a 3,000 m² space that was the “hub” of the conference housing the trade exhibition, poster displays, refreshment and lunch breaks), delegates took the opportunity to renew friendships from around the world and take in live entertainment consisting of “Shakespeare . . . from Stratford to Broadway” a light-hearted mix of songs with a Shakespeare theme from West End and Broadway musicals by the “Best Will in the World”.

Monday evening saw a Civic Reception at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Hosted by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, delegates enjoyed canapés, drinks and live chamber music, while taking in the over half a million exhibits at the 120 year-old building which

houses an impressive range of displays spanning Bronze Buddhas to Egyptian Mummies, the Waterhall Gallery of Modern Art, as well as the world's largest collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and drawings.

Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare, was the destination for the Wednesday afternoon excursion. Coaches took delegates on a tour encompassing the five Shakespeare Houses, the Church where the Bard is buried, Shakespeare's School, Harvard House, the Guild Chapel and other historic places of interest. Free time to take in the historic atmosphere of Stratford was also enjoyed with the help of umbrellas to fend off the British summer!



"Japanese Jester" – Y. Kunimi

On Thursday, delegates attended the Symposium Banquet. Held at Villa Park, the stadium of one of Birmingham's Premiership football clubs; delegates took a behind-the-scenes stadium tour, with many taking the opportunity to run down the players' tunnel and onto the pitch. After the meal, there was dancing until late with a Beatles tribute band, followed by a disco.



"A True 'Villan'" – T. Nakano

Acknowledgements

The organisation and staging of a major event such as a Dioxin Symposium requires hard work over an extended period from many people. Aside of my co-chairs, Chris Wright and Tanja Pless-Mulloli, and all the members of the National Organising Committee, I am particularly grateful to the following:

- Lesley Batty for overseeing the social programme and the on-site registration team
- Marian Jordan and Anita King for their work as the Symposium Secretariat
- Our PCOs, Peter Mainprice and Rebecca Lawrence-Bristol for their cheerful “can-do” attitude throughout
- Rita Mansfield and her team for devising and putting into action the social programme
- Our team of student helpers
- All the staff of the ICC

Outside of the Symposium organisation team, I extend my gratitude to the Session Chairs for their diligent work in ensuring the high standard of the short papers was maintained. We are also pleased to thank the plenary speakers (Kevin Jones, Jef Focant, Miriam Diamond, Linda Birnbaum, and Heather Stapleton) and Friday morning session summarisers for their authoritative, informative, and entertaining presentations. Finally, the Symposium is especially indebted to its sponsors and exhibitors for their tremendous financial support.

Stuart Harrad – Symposium Chair