

History of the Cereal Chemistry Division

The year 2001 marked 50 years of activity for a cereal chemist's learned society in Australia, and the anniversary was celebrated at the 2001 Australian Cereal Chemistry Conference with a special Symposium on the achievements of the Division and the Profession over the previous 50 years.

The idea of forming a cereal group arose initially from discussion between Jack O'Brien, Bob Bottomley and Eric Bond in the period 1949/51. In New South Wales the impetus also came from a course of nine lectures on "The Behaviour of Flour in Baking" which was arranged in 1949 by the Sydney Technical College in co-operation with the Food Technology Association of NSW with which at the time the late Clive Graham and Wilf Bishop and Eric Bond were closely associated.

In their early discussions it was necessary to resolve whether to form an independent cereal chemists association such as the oil and colour chemists and leather chemists had done at the time, or to seek an identity as a group within the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. They recognized the range of disciplines that were encompassed by cereal chemistry and they even considered arranging the first conference under the joint auspices of the RACI and the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. However, the decision was taken to meet under the umbrella of the RACI but at the same time retaining the right to include within the group non-RACI members who have a common interest in the cereal industry and have made a significant contribution to the activities of the group.

The inaugural meeting to form the group was held in Sydney from October 17 to 19, 1951 and the planning of the meeting was the subject of much correspondence between Jack O'Brien, Lew Jones and Eric Bond. The venue was the theatre of the Old Sydney Technical College.

The conference was opened by the President of the NSW Branch of the RACI, Professor LeFevre, and was well attended with 36 registrations, 10 being from interstate. Eric Bond was elected Chairman with Jack O'Brien as Secretary and it was resolved to hold future conferences annually. Jack O'Brien was elected President and Lew Jones Secretary for the following year.

Considering the state of the Science at that time, the standard of papers was high and the program set a balance of fundamental and applied research and technology that has been maintained in all succeeding conferences. The first business session established proper priorities by applying itself to the task of setting up three sub-committees to report on physical testing, baking test and analytical procedures.

At the conclusion Dr Bottomley, in moving a vote of thanks, made the point that if that conference was an indication of what the Cereal Chemistry

Group was to be, members could look forward to a most interesting and purposeful future. And so it has proved to be.

The ensuing year was a busy one with the three sub-committees working actively in their respective fields, surveys of procedures were undertaken and check samples distributed. In this work both industry and the RACI were most supportive.

The 1952 conference was held in Melbourne. Interest strengthened and while the conference was still dependent on invited papers, the reports of the sub-committees created considerable interest and discussion by those present. There was no doubt that the Group was here to stay. The headquarters of the RACI being in Melbourne, the Group's relationship with the Institute was consolidated at this conference, and as part of the programme the Group jointly with the Organic Chemistry Group organized a meeting of the Victorian Branch. The RACI assisted in bringing guest speakers to Melbourne.

Dinners were a feature of the early conferences and provided the opportunity for light-hearted relief. A standard was set at the Sydney Conference for informality and somewhat ribald humour which was reported in the minutes in the following words - "the speeches were unrehearsed and light-hearted. The toast to interstate visitors was in the hands of Professor Alexander whilst that to the Sydney Technical College and in particular the Chemistry Department was proposed by Mr Marshall. Both these toasts needed many responses which involved gratuitous left handed compliments to most of the organizers of the function."

Most of the above account of the early history of the Cereal Chemistry Division is taken from the opening address by Eric Bond to the 32nd Annual Conference of the Division held in Canberra as part of an RACI National Convention in August 1982.

The group resolved to collect manuscripts of presented papers in 1962 and many of the presentations of the 1962 and 1963 conferences are held in the archives. At the 1964 conference it was decided to publish the proceedings and bound copies of this and all subsequent meetings have been produced.

At the 1962 meeting in Canberra the Group adopted a set of regulations that set up a Standing Committee and thus provided continuity from one conference to the next. These regulations were drawn up by a committee of Jack O'Brien, Peter Marston and Bob Bottomley and adopted with some amendments and immediate effect by the Annual General Meeting on the motion of Jack O'Brien and Harold Gluskie. The group changed its name to the Cereal Chemistry Division to conform with the new structure of RACI, on the motion of Frank Townsend and Peter Marston at the 15th AGM held at Terrigal NSW in 1965.

The Division adopted a new set of regulations developed by Wilson Lee at the 1974 Annual General Meeting in Melbourne. This resulted in the establishment of the Divisional Committee in time for the 25th Anniversary

Conference held at Newport, NSW in 1975. Many minor changes to the regulations have been made over the past 25 years but the structure has remained much the same and continues to serve the needs of the profession.

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