Society news

Society Medal and Awards Winners for 2006

Congratulations go to the following scientists who will be recipients of the Society's Awards in 2006.

Professor Martin Raff

Sir Gregory Winter, FRS

The Biochemical Society Award

Two scientists are being presented with this Award in 2006. Martin Raff is an Emeritus Professor in the Biology Department and the MRC Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology and Cell Biology Unit at University College London. He is best known for his work on immunology, cell biology and developmental neurobiology. He and his colleagues were the first to use antibodies against cell-surface antigens to distinguish and separate T- and B-lymphocytes and to show that antibody binding causes a redistribution and endocytosis of cell-surface proteins. He has studied the intracellular programmes and extracellular signals that control the survival, growth, proliferation and differentiation of specific cell types of the developing rodent nervous system.

Sir Gregory Winter is joint head of the MRC's Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB) Division of Protein and Nucleic Acid Chemistry, and Deputy Director of the MRC Centre for Protein Engineering (CPE). Building on Nobel Prize-winning work by Cesar Milstein and Georges Köhler at LMB, Dr Winter's research has made pioneering contributions to unlocking the huge medical potential of monoclonal antibodies. It brings the prospect of customized treatments for cancer, transplant rejection, autoimmune diseases and infections closer to reality. Sir Gregory has pioneered the translation of basic research advances into the biotechnology industry. He won the Society's Colworth Medal in 1986 and was knighted last year for his services to molecular biology.

Dr Phillip Hawkins

The Morton Lecture

…given to a scientist who has made an outstanding contribution to the cell biology of inositol lipids.

Phillip Hawkins has been making fundamental contributions to the field of the cell biology of inositol lipids for more than 20 years, often with his colleague Len Stephens, a Colworth Medal winner in 1994. His career in phosphoinositide research began in the 1980s, just before phosphoinositide-based signalling emerged as a major research area. His first involvement was in the identification of PtdIns(4,5)P_2 as the target *in vivo* of receptor-regulated phosphoinositidase C action. It was at this time that he developed the first methods for making precise metabolic measurements of the individual phosphate groups in phosphoinositides, a discovery that made possible much later work.

His more recent work, carried out in the Inositide Laboratory at the Babraham Institute, has focused on the description of the PI3K

(phosphoinositide 3-kinase) signalling pathway and its role in regulating cell response, particularly in neutrophils.

Dr Kim Nasmyth

Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins Memorial Lecture

…assessing the impact of recent advances on developments in biochemistry.

Kim Nasmyth has made fundamental and far-reaching discoveries in fields ranging from the regulation of the cell cycle to the control of transcription. He is arguably the leading researcher in chromosome cohesion and meiotic segregation. As a PhD student, he helped in the first screen for cell-cycle mutants in fission yeast and used these results to make important contributions to the understanding of DNA replication. He subsequently discovered silencing when studying mating-type switching in yeast, before his own switch to cell-cycle control, for which he is probably best known.

Recently, he has identified several of the mechanisms that allow the cell to carry out meiotic, as opposed to mitotic, divisions, discoveries that will have a profound effect on our understanding of human reproductive biology. He has recently been appointed to the Whitley Chair of Biochemistry at the University of Oxford.

Professor Seamus Martin

GlaxoSmithKline Award

…given for distinguished research leading to new advances in medical science.

Seamus Martin has made an outstanding contribution to our understanding of apoptosis, and is one of the ten most-cited scientists in the field of cell death. His work has provided fundamental insights into the disease process of cancer and inflammation.

His initial contributions were made as a PhD student in the laboratory of Professor Tom Cotter at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He moved to London as a post-doc and then on to La Jolla, CA. He set up his own laboratory in Ireland on his return from the USA, and it is here that he has made his major contributions, such as introducing the annexin V labelling methods for detecting apoptotic cells and developing the first human cell-free system for the study of cell death. In the late 1990s, he showed how tumour necrosis factor could act as a survival signal and his laboratory also deciphered the complex proteolytic cascade of caspase activation events that is triggered during apoptosis. He is Smurfit Professor of Medical Genetics at Trinity College Dublin.

Professor James Barber

The Novartis Medal

…awarded in recognition of outstanding contributions to the development of any branch of biochemistry.

James Barber has made outstanding contributions to the study of photosynthesis during his research career. It is hard to overestimate the importance of his most recent achievement; the determination of the highest-resolution structure to date of photosytem II, the enzyme that plants use to convert water to oxygen and which makes the planet inhabitable. This involved heroic biochemistry: purifying to homogeneity a 650-kDa dimeric membrane protein complex of at least 19 protein subunits and 35 transmembrane helices and producing a high-resolution X-ray structure. In addition to this, he continues to make groundbreaking discoveries; that of new light-harvesting protein structures around the photosystems of marine algae necessitated a re-writing of textbooks.

Professor Barber is the Ernst Chain Professor of Biochemistry at Imperial College London.

Dr Simon Boulton

The Colworth Medal

…awarded for outstanding research by a young British biochemist.

Simon Boulton is a young biochemist active in cancer research. His graduate studies in the laboratory of Professor Stephen Jackson at Cambridge concerned DNA recombination enzymes in lower eukaryotes and yielded two important papers and a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School. He entered the field of proteomics and protein–protein interactions using *Caenorhabditis elegans* and was soon offered a post as laboratory head at the Clare Hall Laboratories, Cancer Research UK London Research Institute. There he has provided new information about the much-studied BRCA2 and BRCA1, again using *C. elegans.*

All of the presentations will be plenary lectures at BioScience2006 in Glasgow, 23–27 July 2006.

Call for nominations for Awards in 2007

The Awards Committee would be delighted to have the opportunity to recognize promising and successful researchers in your department, your group and in collaborative teams.

These prestigious awards not only bring deserved recognition to the individual, but also increase the profile of your research teams. You are invited to nominate leading scientists for the following awards to be made in 2007.

- The Colworth Medal
- The Novartis Medal and Prize
- The Keilin Memorial Lecture
- The AstraZeneca Award
- The Jubilee Lecture

The Thudichum Medal Lecture

(awards previously made by Special Interest Groups)

Thudichum Medal Lectures were inaugurated in 1974 to honour eminent scientists who had made outstanding contributions to neurochemistry and related subjects. Professor J.L.W. Thudichum (1829–1901) was a pioneer of brain chemistry over a century ago.

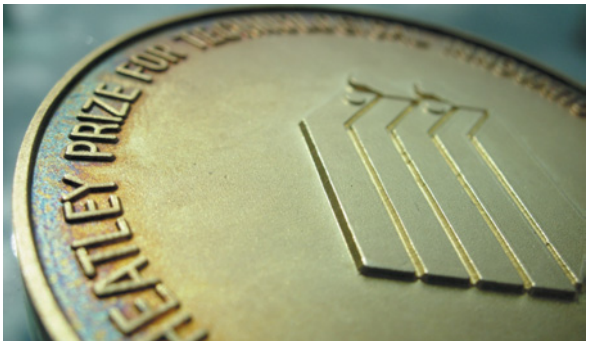
The medals, so far as we can trace, have been awarded to:

- H. Blaschko (1974)
- H. McIlwain (1975)
- M. Vogt (1976)
- H. Kosterlitz (1980)
- V.P. Whittaker (1983)
- P. Greengard (1996)
- J. Watkins (2000)

The Heatley Medal

The Heatley Medal is awarded for exceptional work that makes biochemistry widely accessible and usable, or for achievements that enable widespread progress and understanding.

Dr Norman Heatley is known as the scientist who overcame wartime shortages to make the production of penicillin possible and his role in paving the way for mass production was well documented in his obituaries early in 2004. Dr Heatley worked closely with the Society's Industrial Biochemical and Biotechnology Group and they sought nominations for the Medal. Their natural successors are the members of Theme Panel VI — Biotechnology and Bioinformatics.



Three Heatley Medals have been awarded:

- Dr Keith May for his work in making immunoassay technology available to and usable by the general public (1994).
- Professor Peter Dunhill for his work on developing production technology for recombinant organisms (1996).
- Dr Roger Sayle in recognition of the value to researchers of the development of RasMol and making it freely available (2000).

Making a nomination

For all of the awards, the Society requests that, in nominating an individual, you submit the following:

- a letter from the nominator which summarizes the nominee's **principle** achievements and clearly describes the context in which these meet the criteria for the award.
- the individual's current CV and list of publications.
- two supporting letters from eminent colleagues confirming suitability for the award.

For awards with age limits, the Awards Committee will exercise considerable discretion when considering nominees with significant breaks in their careers.

Please send nominations to Sheila Alink-Brunsdon, Director, Society Activities
Third Floor, Eagle House, 16 Procter Street, London WC1V 6NX
Tel.: 020 7280 4132 Fax: 020 7280 4167
The closing date for nominations is Friday 16 December 2005.
If you have any doubts about the eligibility of your nominee, please contact Sheila Alink-Brunsdon.

