

Analytical Proceedings

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Analytical Proceedings (ISSN 0144-557X) is published monthly by The Royal Society of Chemistry, Burlington House, London, W1V 0BN, England. All orders, accompanied by payment, should be sent to The Royal Society of Chemistry, The Distribution Centre, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts., SG6 1HN, England. 1984 Annual Subscription price if purchased on its own: UK £53.00, Rest of World £56.00, US \$106.00, including air speeded delivery. Air freight and mailing in the USA by Publications Expediting Inc., 200 Meacham Avenue, Elmont, N.Y. 11003. USA Postmaster: Send address changes to: *Analytical Proceedings*, Publications Expediting Inc., 200 Meacham Avenue, Elmont, N.Y. 11003. Second class postage paid at Jamaica, N.Y. 11431. All other despatches outside the UK by Bulk Airmail within Europe, Accelerated Surface Post outside Europe. PRINTED IN THE UK.

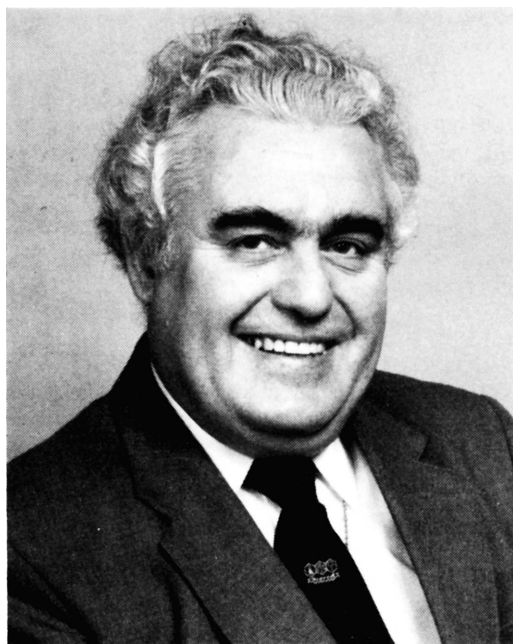
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The New President

Peter Cobb was born in 1930 at Beeston, Nottingham, and attended various schools in and around the City. He completed the standard elementary school education, leaving Cottesmore Senior Boys' School as Head Boy and School Captain in October, 1944. This was his last experience of full time education and he is grateful for the solid grounding in reading, writing and arithmetic provided which has laid the foundation for his subsequent career. Along with so many young people in those war years, he had developed a powerful interest in aviation and he hoped to make a career in aeronautical engineering. However, his Headmaster advised him that, as the war drew to its close, there would be a surfeit of engineers and the profession of accountancy would offer better opportunities. At that time a Chartered Accountant friend of the Headmaster was looking for an office junior and Cobb was interviewed and appointed to the post. Although he enjoyed the work, and valued the opportunity to work with top class professionals, he did not feel that his long-term career needs would be satisfied by accountancy because of his interest in science, even though he had received no education in it. In the course of reading about science, he had developed an interest in forensic science and, upon learning that there was a forensic science laboratory in Nottingham, obtained an interview there with the help of the local policeman (this was before community policing was re-invented). Thus, in May 1946, Peter Cobb began work at the Nottingham laboratory as a Laboratory Attendant and he has spent the whole of his subsequent scientific career in the Home Office Forensic Science Service.

He had earlier set about improving his educational qualifications by following a correspondence course for London Matriculation, which he completed in 1949 before undertaking his National Service in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He served in Egypt and Jordan, and he was particularly pleased to return to the latter country 30 years later to advise on the organisation of forensic science there. Following National Service, he studied for his "A" levels by evening classes and subsequently was allowed day-release

to study for, and pass, the Associateship of the Royal Institute of Chemistry examination in 1956. He then commenced study for the postgraduate diploma of the RIC (Branch A) in general analytical chemistry, which he obtained in 1960. He feels that satisfying the demands of Drs. Chirnside and Haslam over 5 days of written, oral and practical examinations allowed him to be regarded as a professional analytical chemist. He found it hard to forgive the Royal Institute of Chemistry for not recognising such diploma holders with designatory letters but can now regard with amused cynicism the forms for the RSC remuneration survey which fail even to recognise their very existence! In 1964 he obtained a Diploma in Government Administration from the Local Government Examination Board.



Peter Cobb progressed through the ranks of the Forensic Science Service, moving from Nottingham to the Birmingham Forensic Science Laboratory in 1954, whence he transferred to the Aldermaston Forensic Science Laboratory in 1972 to become Director. He moved to become Director of the Harrogate Laboratory in 1976, but his prime responsibility there was to set up the amalgamation of that laboratory with the Newcastle laboratory at Wetherby in 1977. In 1982 he became Director of the Central Research Establishment (CRE) in order to apply his long

operational experience to the management of the research programme. CRE is acknowledged internationally to be the finest of its kind in the world and Cobb is honoured to be its Director.

He joined the Society for Analytical Chemistry in 1960 and became a member of the Midlands Section Committee in 1964, at the same time as his Presidential predecessor, Stan Greenfield. They became close friends and their careers within SAC and the Analytical Division followed similar courses. Service as Programmes Secretary, Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Midlands Region and as an elected member of Council was followed by election to the post of Honorary Secretary of the Division. After serving the statutory 6 years, he became Vice-President and, ultimately, President Elect. He has served on the local committee of the North East Region and on the committees of the Microchemical Methods Group and the Joint Pharmaceutical Analysis Group. He has been Divisional Member of RSC Council for the past two years and was appointed to the Professional Affairs Board last year.

He has served on the Council of the Forensic Science Society and is active in the affairs of the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT). He is a member of the organising committee of the VII Triennial Meeting of TIAFT, to be held in September, 1984, with responsibility for the scientific programme. He has acted as external examiner to the University of Strathclyde MSc course in forensic science and as a visiting lecturer at the University at Swansea. He is a member of the chemistry advisory committee of Sheffield City Polytechnic. He has been a member of the Horserace Anti-Doping Committee since 1975.

Peter Cobb is married with two sons. His wife, Audrey, is known to many members of the Division through her attendance at SAC Conferences and other social events. She was a member of the SAC 77 Social Committee and acted as a courier at SAC 80. Audrey looks forward to meeting many old friends and making new friends whilst accompanying him on his Presidential duties. They take pride and pleasure in the activities of their two sons, the elder being a research scientist in industry and the younger being a Tornado pilot in the RAF.

Mr. Cobb sees the coming years as a period of challenge for both the science and the profession of analytical chemistry. He is pleased and proud to be asked by the Division to lead it to meet those challenges and welcomes the support of his many friends within the Division in discharging the responsibilities of office.