

News story: GC history and role explained at RSC meeting

The Government Chemist was invited to speak at a meeting of the Peninsula section of the Royal Society of Chemistry at Plymouth University

Selvarani Elahi, the Deputy Government Chemist, was invited as a guest speaker at the Annual Open Meeting of the Peninsula section of the [Royal Society of Chemistry](#) held at Plymouth University in May 2017.

Selvarani gave a presentation that began with the origins of the Government Chemist in the mid-19th century when professional chemistry was in its infancy. At the time eager debate took place within the newly founded scientific societies, such as the Chemical Society (now the Royal Society of Chemistry), on new discoveries and how to communicate these to demonstrate the benefits of chemistry to society.

Government first established a laboratory in 1842 with a single scientist to determine the adulteration of tobacco for excise purposes. From these humble beginnings the laboratory grew and official recognition of the importance of chemistry was established by the appointment of a Government Chemist. The Laboratory of the Government Chemist, as it was subsequently called, grew in stature to provide government departments with accurate chemical measurements and sound scientific advice to underpin a modern industrialised society.

Peninsula section of the Royal Society of Chemistry

Selvarani took the audience through the different types of cases that the Government Chemist has had to deal with over the years. She explained the work behind recent food safety and food fraud events such as the “horsemeat scandal” and the presence of peanut in a nut-free factory.

For more information about the work of the Government Chemist please contact us.