

IOP | Institute of Physics

Women in Physics Group

Newsletter 2023-24

News from the Chair

Hello and welcome to the Women in Physics Group (WIPG) newsletter. We have had a good year in the WIPG, and the events that we have held are summarised here. In the past year, we have looked at having events away from IOP HQ, and we had a successful event in Newcastle upon Tyne for the Jocelyn Bell Burnell Award and Prize ceremony and two influencers events, one at Royal Holloway and the other at Cardiff University. Our joint events with the Nuclear Industry Group and the returners event were also well attended. We will continue to hold some events outside London to ensure we can get as much participation as possible.

The events we've had can only go ahead with volunteers' time and effort, so a big thanks must go to the WIPG Committee and the IOP organising teams, who have really worked hard to ensure we have good, well-attended events.



Dawn Watson, Chair WIPG

WIPG Contacts and social media

Chair

Miss Dawn Watson, CPhys FInstP

Secretary

Dr Josie Coltman, CPhys MInstP

Treasurer

Dr Tracey Berry, MInstP



Jocelyn Bell Burnell Award Ceremony and Winner 2023

By Juna Sathian (Ordinary member, WIPG committee)

The Jocelyn Bell Burnell Award is an IOP Bronze Award for women at the start of their careers who have made a substantial contribution to physics and who support and encourage others in the field. The prize is £1000 and the winner also receives a bronze medal and a certificate. This award originally started as an early career group prize called the Very Early Career Female Physicist of the Year back in 2007 before being renamed the Jocelyn Bell Burnell Award and becoming part of the IOP Bronze awards in 2016. The award winner is announced each year as part of a ceremony organised by the IOP WIPG committee, which includes presentations from the finalists as well as a talk from another speaker.

Last year's event was held on 2nd November 2023 at Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, and organised by the WIPG. The finalists were Virginia D'Emilio and Raquel Lopez-Rios de Castro. The event included a presentation by one of the finalists and the announcement of the 2023 winner. Only Raquel Lopez-Rios de Castro was able to attend the ceremony.



Raquel participated in a panel discussion session, during which the audience could ask questions and hear about current physics research and routes into physics-related careers. The panellists included Dr Dominique Morrison (Independent Technical Consultant), Chi Onwurah MP (MP for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, Shadow Minister Science, Research & Innovation), Caitlin Tracey (Lead Management Specialist, LGC Biosearch Technologies), and Prof Clare Watt (Professor of Space Physics, Northumbria University).

The event was attended by several schools in Newcastle upon Tyne. It was truly inspiring to have so many A-level students and undergraduates in attendance. The students asked some great questions and enjoyed the event. Raquel Lopez-Rios de Castro, a PhD student in theoretical biophysics at King's College London (KCL) was awarded the 2023 Jocelyn Bell Burnell Medal and Prize for exceptional contributions to improving the inclusivity and diversity within postgraduate research programmes in the UK while developing



multidisciplinary techniques for the design of next-generation anti-cancer therapeutics. Raquel received a book from WIPG, the £1000 prize, and the Bronze Award from the IOP. Congratulations Raquel!

This year's event will be held at the University of Manchester on 6th November 2024. Further details will follow.

Returners events 2023-24

We have held two successful events aimed at supporting individuals who are planning, on, or returning from a career break. A webinar on Wednesday, 21st June 2023, from 1:00 to 2:30 pm, and a workshop on Tuesday, 30th January 2024, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, offered extensive resources and expert advice from various sectors such as industry, academia, teaching, and clinical settings. These events delved into the challenges and solutions for returning to the field of physics, with the second event focusing on sharing experiences and improving support for returners. We are excited to announce that the IOP will soon launch a dedicated section on its website for returners, providing information and free access to IOP conferences for those on a career break. These initiatives aim to assist returners in maintaining their networks, rebuilding skills through CPD, and exploring options like concessional fees and formal returnships, ensuring they have the support they need.

Networking with Leading Influencers in the Physics Community 2023

May 2023

On 3rd May 2023, Royal Holloway University of London hosted a dynamic networking event featuring prominent figures from the physics community. Dr Kate Shaw, a particle physicist associated with the Atlas experiment at CERN, engaged attendees with discussions on top quarks, gravitons, and her advocacy for open scientific data despite the challenges posed by cerebral palsy. The event also highlighted educational outreach, with speakers from the Royal University of Bhutan and the ICTP Physics without Frontiers program sharing their experiences promoting physics in underrepresented regions. Additionally, Reneth McKenzie-Schoetz from Saborium Consulting and Dr Lucy Cunningham of Boult Wade Tennant provided insights into the practical applications of physics in industry and patent law, respectively. Professor Helen Gleeson discussed her innovative work on liquid crystals for optical applications, underscoring the diverse applications and challenges of modern physics.

March 2024

The IOP Women in Physics Group recently hosted a successful networking event at the Queen's Buildings of Cardiff University, designed to inspire and guide the next generation of physicists. The event, which took place on the 6th March 2024 from 12:30 to 5:00 pm, welcomed a diverse group of attendees, including school students aged 16-18, undergraduates, postgraduates, and anyone with a keen interest in physics. Participants had the valuable opportunity to engage with prominent figures in the field, such as Meghna De from CSA Catapult, Wendy Sadler of Cardiff University, Juna Sathian from Northumbria University, and Dawn Watson, Head of Strategy and Technical at Sellafield. The afternoon featured a networking lunch catering to various dietary requirements and insightful talks from the invited speakers who discussed their career trajectories in physics. This provided a platform for students to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of the diverse career paths within the physics landscape. The event was accessible both in-person and online, ensuring that all interested individuals could participate. This gathering not only enriched the participants' knowledge and networks but also highlighted the vibrant possibilities in physics careers.



Successfully Managing Career Transitions

The first joint Women in Physics – Nuclear Industry Group event had a simple objective; to facilitate discussions about positively managing career transitions in the STEM environment and share learnings. The day was launched enthusiastically by Emma-Jayne Gooch (CEO – Plain Purpose) who shared some



of her personal and professional transitions with an infectious authenticity. This set the tone for the day – open and empowering perspectives for how we can all successfully manage career transitions. Hannah Wynne (Risk Director - Nuclear Decommissioning Authority) shared her career journey to date with some of the conscious challenges and opportunities she

sought, as well as how she has managed to balance professional and personal life. Heather Beaumont (Head of Profession for Physics, Nuclear Waste and Environment -Jacobs) and Jen Barnes (Radiometrics Lead, RPA, Corporate Radiological Safety & Dosimetry Manager -Jacobs) shared some of the challenges faced in physics-based roles and how they have help manage career transitions. The afternoon saw Emma-Jayne Gooch facilitate a workshop, exploring whether the attendees suffer from imposter syndrome, followed by an open discussion about how people will manage their next career transitions differently.

Future Events

This year we are planning the following events:

- A stand at the Celebration of Physics event in June – please come and say hello!
- JBB Event on 6th November at Manchester University
- Working with the History of Physics group on a series of lectures
- Event with Thin Film and Surfaces Group
- Being part of CUWiP in Limerick

If there are any events that you would like to collaborate with us on, please get in touch!