Young Persons’ Lecture Competition

The final of the Institute’s UK Young Persons’ Lecture Competition (YPPLC) saw six competitors vying for the top prize at the Armourers’ Hall in London on 28 April.

The annual contest is designed to help young engineers and scientists develop their presentation skills and is co-sponsored by The Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers, The Midland Institute of Mining Engineers (MIME) and IOM³.

Nineteen local societies held heats across the UK, and the winner from each region went forward to the final. The format of the competition where finalists, aged 28 and under, test their presentation skills, was a 15 minute lecture followed by questions from the panel of judges. The judges were Dr Phil Bischler, Chair of the Local Affairs Board, Ileigo Akagwu of the Younger Members’ Committee, and Bob Leeming, Past President of MIME. The finalists were judged on ‘well structured presentations, use of visual aids, enthusiasm, clarity and confidence in delivery’ among other criteria.

The winner of the competition was South East finalist Katie Moore, who is in the third year of a DPhil at the University of Oxford. Her presentation was titled ‘NanoSIMS Analysis of Arsenic and Selenium in Cereal Grains’. Selenium deficiency is a major problem in the UK with the majority of the population only consuming about half of their recommended daily amount. Conversely the flooding of rice paddy fields in areas such as Bangladesh with arsenic contaminated water has resulted in rice containing significant amounts of this toxic and carcinogenic element. NanoSIMS can be used to locate the key trace elements, arsenic and selenium, in rice and wheat grains respectively, which is a serious analytical challenge for any other technique. Katie impressed the audience and judges with her knowledge and eye catching presentation. She will go on to represent the UK in the Young Persons’ World Lecture Competition (YPWLC) later this year.

In second place was Michael James, representing South Wales and the South West. He is in his final year of the Engineering Doctorate scheme at Swansea University’s Steel Technology Centre. He won £400 for his lecture entitled ‘Radiant Tube Failure Mechanisms and Design’. Process reliability, component longevity and cost savings are hot topics in a steel industry enduring a difficult financial climate. Findings from this project will provide knowledge on radiant tube failures and recommendations to improve life and reduce replacement costs. Michael told the audience that his work was already producing savings.

Andrew Wilson from the North East took third place and £200. He is Area Technical Manager for Rail Finishing at the Medium Section Mill, Corus Scunthorpe, and delivered ‘An Introduction to the Pre-cambering Process for Ultra Long Rail Manufacturing’. He spoke with real passion about a project that clearly meant a lot to him.

Not placed were Midlands winner Anqi Wang who covered ‘Bacterial Biominalisation of Hydroxyapatite on Titanium’, North West finalist Kate Thornton whose topic was synthetic scaffolds for the culture of stem cells, and Scottish winner Brian Mees who spoke about channelling cement in offshore oil wells.

Chair of Judges Phil Bischler commented that once again the quality was extremely high, and improving year on year. ‘The standard of presentation here is higher than at many international conferences – all the competitors are to be congratulated!’

The prizes were presented by David Chapman, Master of The Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers, and Barry Lye as the IOM³ President. Katie won £750 plus an Armourers and Brasiers Company medal. She said, ‘I am delighted to have won the YPLC – the whole competition was a fantastic opportunity for me. I am looking forward to representing the UK at the world competition, visiting Kuala Lumpur and meeting the other competitors from all over the world’.

Chief Executive of IOM³, Bernie Rickinson, thanked all those who had made the evening a success and wished Katie good luck in the YPWLC.

Heats for the 2011 UK competition will start in January 2011 with the final taking place on 13 April. For further information, contact Sarah Boad at the e-mail address below.

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