Foreword

The *1st International Conference on Inverse Gas Chromatography*, ICIGC-1, was held at Imperial College, in London between 17 and 19 September 2001. This meeting was the inaugural conference on inverse gas chromatography (IGC). Unlike, conventional gas chromatography, IGC is a technique which focuses on the physicochemical characterisation of a solid phase (stationary) using known mobile phase species. The conference organisers were pleased to receive over 100 delegate registrations with over 80 oral and poster presentations. With delegates from over 15 countries this meeting represented the largest concentration of IGC researchers ever assembled in the one place. I am pleased to report that the meeting was a resounding success and reflected well on the International Advisory Committee as well as the local organisation skills of Duncan Pearse.

The International Advisory Committee was keen to encourage younger IGC researchers and the Committee organised ten full bursaries for Ph.D. students from all over the world to attend the conference. Additionally, these students made oral and poster presentations. The contributions of these younger researchers was of a very high standard, showing great promise for the future of the technique.

The oral sessions were based around the major IGC research themes and included sessions on Polymers and blends, Pharmaceuticals, Foods, Porous and heterogeneous materials, Fillers, IGC and related techniques, IGC theory and experiment. Additionally, over 50 posters were presented in a very energetic and well received poster session which highlighted the versatility and utility of the IGC method.

A noteworthy event at the conference was the invited presentation of Professor James Guillet from the University of Toronto. Professor Guillet was one of the earliest IGC researchers and studied with Professor Purnell, one of the pioneers of GC at Cambridge University. Professor Guillet was able to give an illuminating insight into both the history of GC and IGC.

In addition, a number of eminent speakers gave invited plenary lectures including: Professor Danner (Pennsylvania State University) on Bulk polymer characterisation, Professor Buckton (School of Pharmacy, University of London) on Pharmaceutical materials, Professor Katsanos (University of Patras) spoke on Reverse flow IGC, Dr. Balard (CRNS-Mulhouse) on Surface heterogeneity and Dr. Thielmann (Surface Measurement Systems, London) on IGC characterisation of amorphous materials.

The conference highlighted a clear trend in IGC research: that of the significant and increasing interest in the use of IGC for characterising materials in an industrial context. This contrasts with much of the earlier work on IGC which has been primarily the domain of academic researchers. The increasing interest of the pharmaceutical and food industries was particularly noteworthy and reflects both the unique nature and industrial relevance of the information that can be furnished by IGC. The recent advent of commercial IGC equipment is likely to further stimulate industrial interest in this technique.

This report would not be complete without reflection upon the tragic events which occurred in New York on 11 September; a week prior to the conference. We were all shocked by the loss of life and our thoughts were with our colleagues and friends in the USA who were affected by these horrific events. Consequently, a number of our North American

colleagues were unable to attend the meeting, but we were especially appreciative of those delegates who managed to travel to London under very difficult conditions. During the conference, a minute's silence was held for the innocent victims of terrorism throughout the world.

So now we start to plan the next meeting, ICIGC-2, which will hopefully be held in 2004 and we look forward to a bright and exciting future for IGC research.

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