

Intermolecular organisation of triphenylene-based discotic mesogens by interdigitation of alkyl chains†

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Two series of hexakis(alkyloxy)triphenylenes have been synthesised and characterised. All materials contain two different lengths of *n*-alkyloxy chains. *Series I* (C_mC_n) materials contain three $-OC_5H_{11}$ chains and three $-OC_nH_{2n+1}$ chains. *Series II* (C_mC_n) materials contain three $-OC_mH_{2m+1}$ chains and three $-OC_nH_{2n+1}$ chains, such that $m+n=10$. Hexagonal columnar mesophases are observed in *Series I* for $n \geq 3$ and, in *Series II*, for C_5C_5 and C_6C_4 . Investigation by XRD shows that, within *Series I*, increasing the C_n chain length increases the intercolumnar spacing. Furthermore, the intercolumnar spacings for constitutional isomers are identical. The difference in the lengths of the two types of alkyl chain at the periphery of the molecules is defined as the Interdigitation Length (IL) and is a measure of the maximum extent of interdigitation that is possible between neighbouring molecules. *Series I* and *II* materials have been studied to probe the effect of IL on the change in enthalpy (ΔH_{Col-I}) and entropy (ΔS_{Col-I}) for the mesophase to isotropic liquid phase transition. In contrast to C_xC_x materials, which show a decrease in ΔH_{Col-I} and ΔS_{Col-I} with increasing chain length, *Series I* and *II* mesogens all exhibit ΔH_{Col-I} and ΔS_{Col-I} values similar to those of long chain C_xC_x materials, irrespective of chain length.

1. Introduction

Since their discovery in 1977 by Chandrasekhar,¹ discotic mesogens have been of great interest to the liquid crystal community. The first discotic liquid crystal was a hexa-substituted benzene derivative¹ and now there is a wide range of discotic cores, including, for example, triphenylene,^{2,3} phthalocyanine⁴ and pyrene⁵ derivatives. Discotic molecules can form a variety of mesophases. The least ordered phase is the nematic discotic (N_d),^{6,7} in which the molecular directors are aligned but with a random distribution of the molecules parallel to this director. More ordered phases are the hexagonal columnar (Col_h),⁸⁻¹² rectangular columnar (Col_r)¹³ and oblique columnar (Col_{ob})¹⁴ phases.

Many potential applications for discotic mesogens aim to exploit the phenomenon of photoconductivity,¹⁵ in which electrons are excited to conduction bands yielding a photocurrent.¹⁶ Photoconductivity has been observed in inorganic materials¹⁶ such as crystalline and amorphous silicon, selenium–tellurium alloys, cadmium sulfide and zinc oxide. Silicon, for example, exhibits charge mobilities in the range of $0.5-1.5 \times 10^3 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$. Examples of organic materials that exhibit photoconductivity include crystalline anthracene¹⁶⁻²⁰ and the charge-transfer complex of poly(vinylcarbazole) and trinitrofluorenone (PVK : TNF).²¹

Liquid crystalline materials have been shown to exhibit photoconductive properties.⁸ For example, hexakis(alkyloxy)-

triphenylenes form the Col_h mesophase²² and have been shown to exhibit photoconduction.⁸ Charge mobilities for hexakis(pentyloxy)triphenylene are in the region of $10^{-3} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (see ref. 23). In contrast, hexakis(hexylthio)triphenylene forms a helical Col_h phase, which provides increased order of the mesophase²⁴ and a charge mobility of $0.1 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ is observed, the highest charge mobility for a triphenylene-based photoconducting system (for comparison, we note that several one-dimensional organic metals are known,²⁵⁻²⁷ the prototypical material of which is the co-crystal formed between tetrathiafulvalene and tetracyano-*p*-quinodimethane (TTF : TCNQ), which exhibits a charge mobility of $1 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ and a conductivity of $5 \times 10^2 \Omega^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$ (*cf.* Si which has a conductivity of $1 \times 10^{-3} \Omega^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$)¹⁶). An important aspect in using liquid crystalline materials as the basis of photoconductive systems is the fact that, on aligning the mesophase due to an external stimulus, the grain boundary defects (which trap charge in crystalline samples) do not exist. The liquid nature of the mesophase allows for a self-repair¹⁶ mechanism and also provides good contact to the surface of metals, which is essential for device applications.

In view of the fact that increased charge mobilities appear to be associated with increased ordering of the columnar mesophases, the thrust of much research on triphenylene-based liquid crystals has been to introduce chemical modifications designed to increase the columnar ordering in terms of the average length of ordered stacking arrays along the column. Many examples of structural variations based on the simple hexakis(alkyloxy)triphenylenes⁸⁻¹² have been reported, including hexakis(alkylthio)triphenylenes,^{28,29} polymer systems³⁰⁻³³ and triphenylene oligomer formation,^{34,35} as well as halogenation³⁶ and nitration^{37,38} of the aromatic core. However, none of

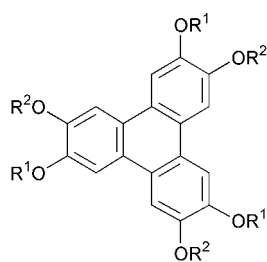
†X-Ray diffraction data, quantities of reagents used in the syntheses and spectroscopic data for C_5C_n compounds are available as supplementary data. For direct electronic access see <http://www.rsc.org/suppdata/jm/b0/b006916g/>

these chemical modifications has led to an increase in the columnar ordering with a commensurate increase in photo-conductivity. Recently, some of us have studied the adhesive forces generated by the interdigitation of alkyl chains³⁹ using atomic force microscopy. It was shown that by tailoring the interdigitating alkyl chains, the adhesive force between two surfaces could be controlled. Clearly it may be possible to use the idea of interdigitation of alkyl chains to influence the ordering in the hexagonal columnar mesophase of hexakis(alkyloxy)triphenylene liquid crystals. In this regard, the aim of the work described in the present paper has been to design and prepare appropriately derivatized hexakis(alkyloxy)triphenylenes such that the alkyl chains in one column interdigitate into the alkyl chain region of a neighbouring column.

In order to design an interdigitated system, at least two different chain lengths are required,^{40–44} alternating around the triphenylene core (Fig. 1) and leading to an idealised network of molecules interlinked in a cog-like fashion (Fig. 2).

Here we report the first synthesis of two systematic series of such molecules, *Series I* and *Series II*⁴⁵ (Fig. 1), together with characterisation of their structural and thermal properties using polarized optical microscopy (POM), differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) and X-ray diffraction (XRD). The two series differ in the selection of the two types of alkyl groups at the periphery: C_mH_{2m+1} and C_nH_{2n+1} . In the notation adopted here, C_mC_n refers to a triphenylene molecule containing C_mH_{2m+1} and C_nH_{2n+1} alkyl chains. *Series I* materials contain three C_mH_{2m+1} ($m=5$) chains and three C_nH_{2n+1} chains ($n=1-9$), whereas *Series II* materials contain three C_mH_{2m+1} chains ($m=5-8$) and three C_nH_{2n+1} ($n=10-m$) chains. For comparison, we note that hexakis(alkyloxy)triphenylenes, which contain six C_xH_{2x+1} alkyl chains (C_xC_x in the notation adopted here), exhibit Col_h mesophases for $x \geq 4$. It may be envisaged that the mesophases of *Series I* and *II* materials may also display Col_h mesophases. Furthermore, the synthetic route adopted allows for the production of a C_mC_n molecule with C_3 symmetry (denoted by the suffix ‘.sym’, e.g. C_mC_n .sym) and an asymmetric isomer (denoted by ‘.asym’, e.g. C_mC_n .asym), Scheme 1. The difference between the alkyl chain lengths in a molecule C_mC_n ($|m-n|$) is called the Interdigitation Length (IL) and is a measure of the extent to which two molecules may interpenetrate each other through interdigitation. In summary, *Series I* provides a family of materials with an increasing number of alkyl carbon atoms per molecule. *Series II* provides a range of constitutional isomers, with varying interdigitation lengths.

For C_xC_x triphenylenes, a space filling model shows that the



Series I C_mC_n .sym

$$R^1 = C_mH_{2m+1} \quad (m = 5)$$

$$R^2 = C_nH_{2n+1} \quad (n = 1 - 9)$$

Series II C_mC_n .sym ($m + n = 10$)

$$R^1 = C_mH_{2m+1}, \quad (m = 5 - 8)$$

$$R^2 = C_nH_{2n+1}, \quad (n = 10 - m)$$

Fig. 1 Molecular structures of *Series I* and *Series II* materials: *Series I*: C_mC_n ($m=5$, $n=1-9$); *Series II*: C_mC_n ($m=5-8$, $n=10-m$; such that $m+n=10$).

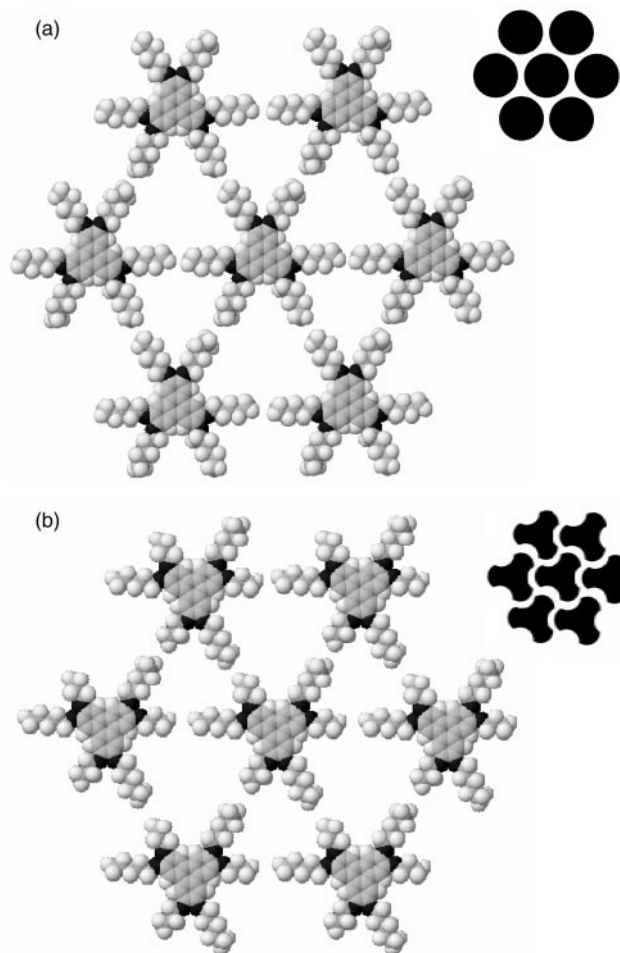


Fig. 2 Idealised packing of triphenylenes in the Col_h mesophase: (a) non-interdigitated C_5C_5 ; (b) interdigitated C_5C_3 .sym.

mesophase packing object can be approximated by a disc (Fig. 2a). Clearly the *Series I* and *II* materials represent a modification of this disc, with protrusions in the region of the longer alkyl chains and voids in the region of the shorter alkyl chains, and the packing object thus resembles a propeller (Fig. 2b). In order to establish efficient packing, the protrusions of one molecule should be directed towards the voids of its neighbours (Fig. 2b). In effect, the short chains of one molecule should be close to the longer chains of its neighbours, thus interdigitating the alkyl regions of the two molecules. The potential for interdigitation varies both within *Series I* (for example, for C_5C_3 IL=2, for C_5C_5 IL=0 and for C_5C_9 IL=4) and *Series II* (IL increases from 0 (C_5C_5), to 6 (C_8C_2)).

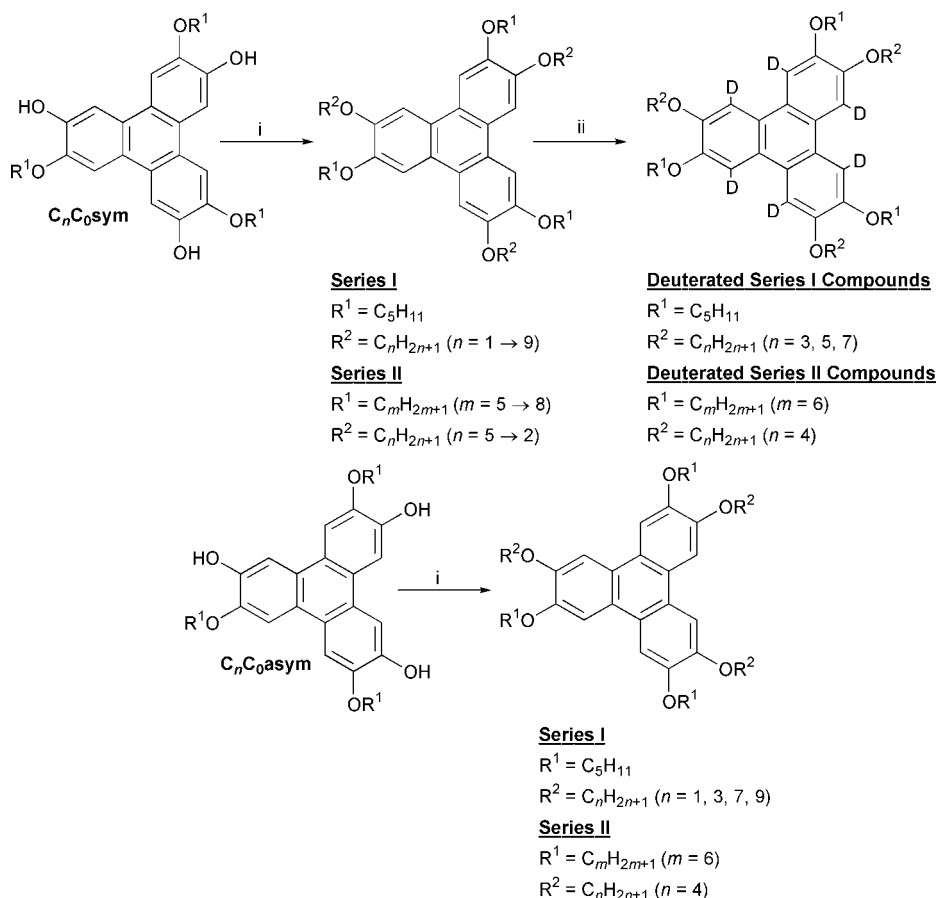
Clearly the formation of interdigitated arrays of triphenylenes may be expected to affect the mobility and packing of the molecules within the mesophase in terms of intracolumnar ordering (Fig. 3a), intercolumnar lateral slippage (Fig. 3b) and rotational motion (Fig. 3c), which may depend significantly on the intercolumnar interactions.

In this regard, we may define two contrasting effects arising as a result of interdigitation:

(1) As the extent of interdigitation determines the extent of interlocking of molecules in neighbouring columns, interdigitation may promote the lateral slippage of molecules from column to column (Fig. 3b), and may therefore *decrease* the stability of the mesophase.

(2) Interdigitation may be expected to hinder the rotational mobility of the molecules (Fig. 3c), which may lead to an increase in the intracolumnar $\pi-\pi$ interactions, and may therefore *increase* the stability of the mesophase.

Depending on the balance of these competing factors,



Scheme 1 General procedure for the synthesis of *Series I* and *Series II* compounds: the trihydroxytris(alkyloxy)triphenylenes were synthesized following preparations described in the literature.^{46–49} i, R^1Br , K_2CO_3 , CH_3CN , $82^\circ C$, 20 h.; ii, D_2SO_4 , D_2O , $MeOD$, $80^\circ C$, 30 h.

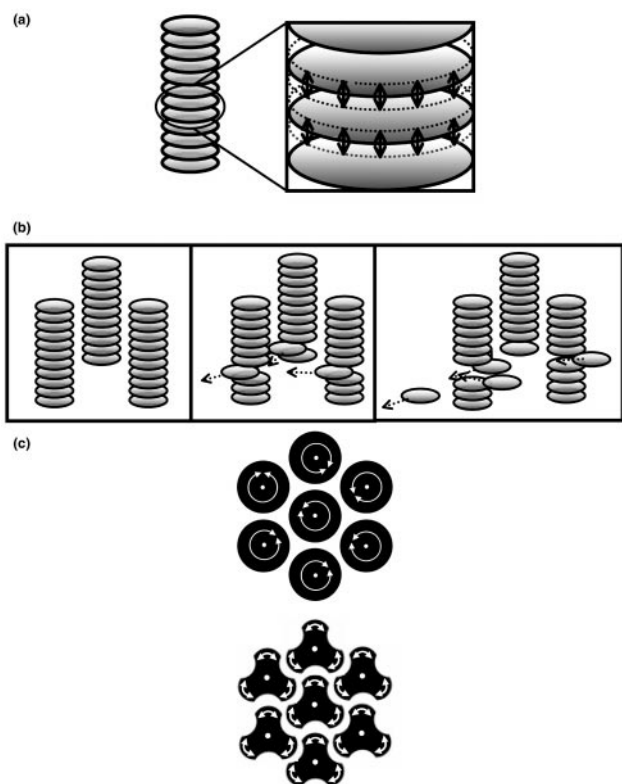


Fig. 3 (a) Intracolumnar molecular motion. (b) An illustration of the concept of intercolumnar 'slippage'. (c) An example of the difference in packing of D_{3h} and C_{3h} symmetry objects in a triangular array and the effect on axial rotation.

interdigitation of the alkyl chains may be expected either to increase or decrease the mesophase order. Thus, within a series of molecules with increasing IL, the mesophase order may vary in a non-linear fashion, depending on the relative contributions of these competing factors for each member of the series.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Synthesis

The two series of triphenylene-based mesogens are illustrated in Fig. 1.

Series I materials comprise the triphenylene core, surrounded by two different n -alkyloxy chains, $-OR^1$ and $-OR^2$.

In *Series I*, $R^1 = C_mH_{2m+1}$ ($m = 5$) and $R^2 = C_nH_{2n+1}$ ($n = 1-9$). *Series II* materials again contain six n -alkyloxy chains: $R^1 = C_mH_{2m+1}$ ($m = 5-8$) and $R^2 = C_nH_{2n+1}$ ($n = 10-m$) such that $m+n=10$. *Series I* compounds were synthesised following the general synthetic route shown in Scheme 1. Catechol was alkylated with 1-bromopentane as described in the literature.⁴⁶ Hexakis(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C_5C_5 (D_{3h} point group), was prepared by the trimerisation of 1,2-bis(pentyloxy)benzene as described in the literature, using both the ferric chloride⁴⁶ route and molybdenum pentachloride⁴⁷ route. The formation of the two trihydroxy constitutional isomers (Scheme 1), C_5C_0 -sym (C_{3h} point group) and C_5C_0 -asym (C_s point group), was achieved using 9-bromobicycloboronane, 9-Br-BBN,⁴⁸ to effect the selective tris-dealkylation. The two isomers were separated by silica gel chromatography, allowing subsequent alkylation of C_5C_0 -sym and C_5C_0 -asym to yield the constitutionally pure compounds C_5C_n -sym and C_5C_n -asym. *Series II* compounds were synthesised in a similar manner to *Series I* compounds, and the general procedure is shown in Scheme 1. Trimerisation of the 1,2-bis(alkyloxy)benzene was achieved,

using either ferric chloride⁴⁶ or molybdenum pentachloride⁴⁷ and the hexakis(alkoxy)triphenylene was dealkylated using either 9-Br-BBN⁴⁸ or *B*-bromocatecholborane,⁴⁹ to afford the trihydroxy constitutional isomers C_mC_0 .sym and C_mC_0 .asym. Separation of these isomers was achieved by silica gel chromatography and the subsequent re-alkylation yielded the constitutional isomers C_mC_n .sym and C_mC_n .asym.

Aromatic deuteration of triphenylene materials has been carried out for the purposes of investigating mesophase motion by ²H NMR. The triphenylene material was refluxed for 72 hours in a mixture of D₂SO₄, D₂O and MeOD. The degree of deuteration, analysed by mass spectrometry, showed that, on average, five to six aromatic protons had been exchanged for deuterium.

2.2. Series I

2.2.1. Optical characterisation. POM studies show that the *Series I* materials exhibit a mesophase for $n=3-9$. These materials display characteristic defect textures for the columnar hexagonal (Col_h) mesophase, examples of which are shown in Fig. 4 for C_5C_3 .sym, C_5C_7 .sym and C_5C_9 .sym. The materials C_5C_1 .sym and C_5C_2 .sym do not exhibit transitions to mesophases.

2.2.2. X-Ray diffraction analysis. Structural analysis in the mesophases by X-ray diffraction has been carried out using photographic and, for C_5C_3 .sym and C_5C_9 .sym, diffractometric methods.

The X-ray diffraction photographs (Fig. S1 in Supplementary Information) confirm the formation of a Col_h mesophase for the materials from C_5C_3 .sym to C_5C_9 .sym. From the X-ray diffraction photographs (Fig. S1 in Supplementary Information) the intercolumnar spacings for each material can be determined. The *d*-spacing (denoted d_{100}) of the intense, sharp (100) peak at low diffraction angles gives the perpendicular distance between adjacent lattice planes (Fig. 5). The intercolumnar spacing for a hexagonal lattice is obtained by division of d_{100} by $(\cos 30^\circ)$. For the members of *Series I* that form mesophases, there is a monotonic increase in the intercolumnar spacing as n increases, as illustrated in Fig. 6a and 6b. The increasing intercolumnar spacing is expected on the basis of the interdigitation model (Fig. 2), as the total alkyl chain length for the shorter and longer chains increases from 8 carbon atoms (C_5C_3 .sym) to 14 carbon atoms (C_5C_9 .sym) within *Series I* and, assuming that the densities of the materials in their mesophases are similar, should give rise to an increasing intercolumnar spacing (Fig. 6a and 6b). Note that the densities of all *Series I* and *II* materials, estimated from the unit cell volumes, are close to 1 g cm^{-3} (Fig. 6a), with evidence for a small odd-even effect. Comparison of the intercolumnar spacings for constitutional isomers of the *Series I* materials and for the corresponding C_xC_x materials (C_4C_4 ⁸ and C_7C_7 ⁵⁰ plotted in Fig. 6b) show very similar intercolumnar spacings for C_5C_3 .sym and C_4C_4 (18.5 Å) and for C_5C_9 .sym and C_7C_7 (22.2 Å and 22.6 Å respectively). This observation is consistent with the interdigitation packing model being adopted in the mesophases of the *Series I* materials.

For C_xC_x discotic compounds, it is not common to observe the (210) reflection for the mesophase, with the exception of C_4C_4 , which displays several reflections in the mesophase.⁵¹ However, the (210) reflection is observed for the following C_5C_n materials in *Series I* (Fig. S2 in Supplementary Information): C_5C_3 .sym, C_5C_4 .sym, C_5C_7 .sym and C_5C_9 .sym. Furthermore, C_5C_3 .sym also exhibits the (200) reflection (Fig. S2 in Supplementary Information).

The X-ray diffraction photographs for the mesophases (Fig. S1 in Supplementary Information) also provide information about the intermolecular spacing within a column and thus gives information on the nature of the π - π stacking. The broad

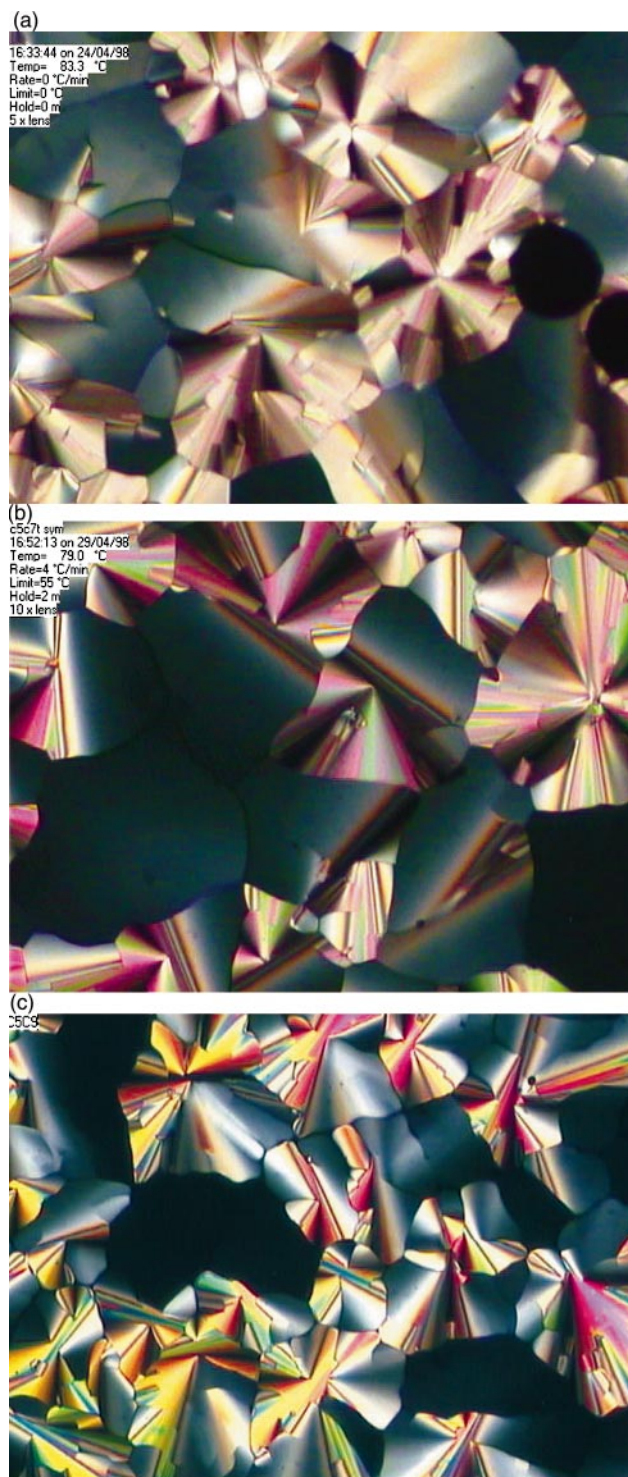


Fig. 4 Mesophase textures for (a) C_5C_3 .sym, (b) C_5C_7 .sym and (c) C_5C_9 .sym, viewed through crossed polarizers.

(001) peak at $\theta \approx 12.5^\circ$ corresponds to the repeat distance ($d_{\text{intra}} = d_{001}$) of the triphenylene cores along the columns. The observed values of ca. 3.6 Å are typical for π - π stacking.⁸ The position of the broad (001) peak is temperature dependent, such that d_{intra} increases on increasing temperature. For *Series I* materials, the value of d_{intra} is 3.55 Å at the low temperature end of the mesophase, whereas close to the clearing temperature d_{intra} is ca. 3.65 Å (Fig. 7). In addition, the peaks become broader with increasing temperature, indicating a decrease in the degree of ordering along the columns (for example, Fig. 3a). This observation may be interpreted on the basis that the average length of the ordered domains along the column decrease as temperature is increased. Furthermore, on

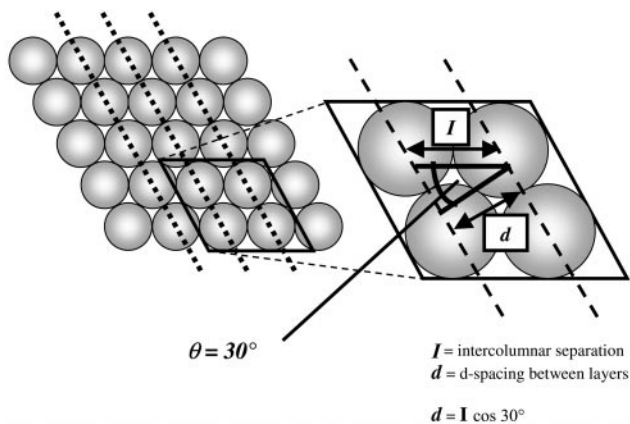


Fig. 5 Definitions of d_{100} and intercolumnar spacing for the Col_h mesophase.

increasing n , we note that the width of the (001) peak increases (Fig. 8) and exhibits an odd–even effect.

2.2.3. DSC Analysis. The phase transition temperatures were initially established from the POM studies and then measured accurately by DSC. The mesophase ranges of the *Series I* and *II* materials are shown in Fig. 9a–d, and transition enthalpies ($\Delta H_{\text{Col-I}}$) and transition entropies ($\Delta S_{\text{Col-I}}$) are shown in Fig. 10a and 10b. Table 1 details the phase transition data for *Series I* materials. Mesogenic behaviour is observed for C_5C_n materials with $n \geq 3$. This observation is interesting because C_5C_3 is the constitutional isomer of C_4C_4 , the member of the C_xC_x series with the smallest value of x that forms a mesophase. Fig. 9c illustrates an increase in clearing temperature from C_5C_3 .sym ($T_c = 105^\circ\text{C}$) to C_5C_4 .sym ($T_c = 129^\circ\text{C}$). On further increasing n , the clearing temperature decreases to 122°C (C_5C_5) and finally to 59°C (C_5C_9). This decrease in clearing temperature is similar to that observed in the C_xC_x (for $x \geq 4$). C_4C_4 exhibits the highest T_c for the C_xC_x series, with T_c decreasing as x increases (Fig. 9b).²⁷ Fig. 9b also shows that the mesophase ranges vary with n for C_5C_n materials. The mesophase range reaches a maximum for C_5C_4 .sym (74°C) and is then depressed as n increases. Additionally, direct comparisons of constitutional isomers in the C_xC_x and C_5C_n series reveals in all cases that the C_xC_x compound displays a larger mesophase range and a higher clearing temperature.

On comparing the ‘sym’ and ‘asym’ isomers of the compounds in *Series I*, it is apparent that the molecular symmetry has little effect on the melting points and clearing temperatures, with the exception of C_5C_9 .asym, which exhibits lower melting and clearing temperatures. It is interesting to note that C_5C_9 .asym exhibits a mesophase at room temperature, which could provide the basis for potential applications under ambient conditions.

Comparison of Fig. 9b and 9c highlights the difference between the C_xC_x materials and the C_mC_n .sym isomers of *Series I* materials. Looking at the crystal to mesophase transition (K– Col_h), for C_mC_n .sym materials in the range $n = 3–8$, there is an odd–even effect in the temperature of the transition. This behaviour is not apparent in the C_xC_x series, and may indicate one (or both) of the following effects: (i) the crystalline packing dictates the melting to the mesophase, with more favourable packing for the ‘even’ (combined number of carbon atoms in the two types of alkyl chain is even) compounds and/or (ii) the mesophase interactions are more favourable for ‘odd’ compounds. Fig. 9c and 9d illustrate the differences in the transition temperatures between C_mC_n .sym and C_mC_n .asym materials. Although some differences are observed in the mesophase range and transition temperatures between the C_mC_n .sym and C_mC_n .asym isomers, they are not as significant as the differences between the C_mC_n .sym and the

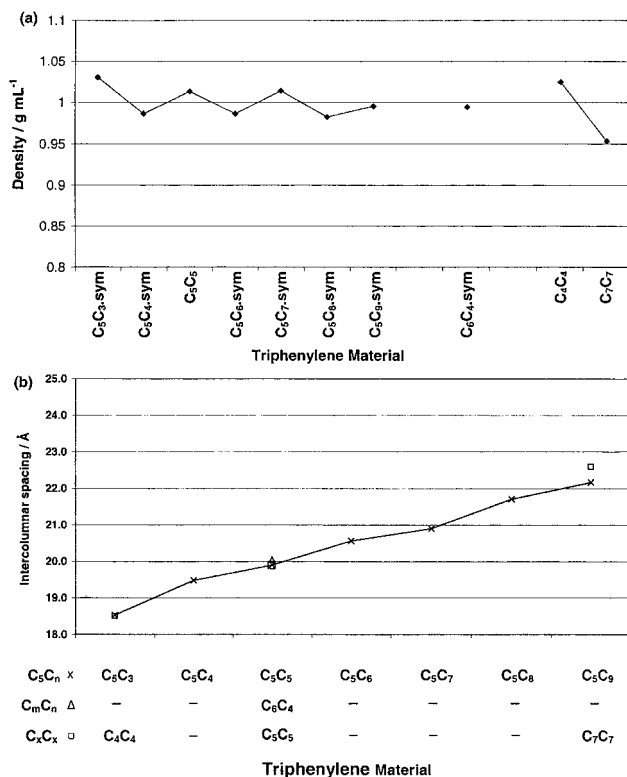


Fig. 6 (a) Calculated densities for C_mC_n .sym (*Series I* and *II*) materials and C_xC_x materials. (b) Intercolumnar spacings for C_mC_n .sym (*Series I*) materials (x, fullline), C_mC_n .sym (*Series II*) materials, C_6C_4 .sym (Δ), C_xC_x triphenylenes corresponding to the average chain length of the C_mC_n .sym material (\square).

C_xC_x materials. Presumably, at least at short range, the ‘asym’ isomers are able to interdigitate to approximately the same extent as the ‘sym’ isomers. However, this interdigitated arrangement may not be so readily propagated to long range in the ‘asym’ isomers. It would appear that, due to the fluid nature of the mesophases, the short range interdigitation of the ‘asym’ isomers is sufficient to obtain similar thermal properties to the ‘sym’ isomers.

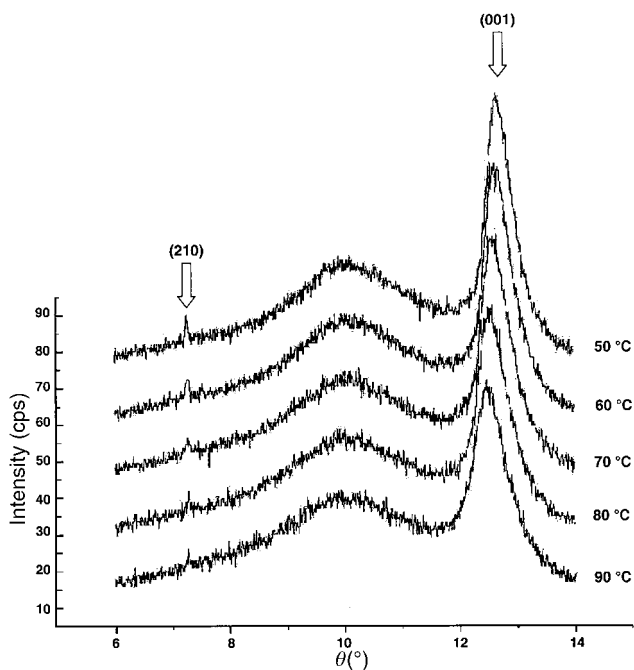


Fig. 7 The temperature dependence of the (210) and (001) reflections and d_{100} for C_5C_3 .sym.

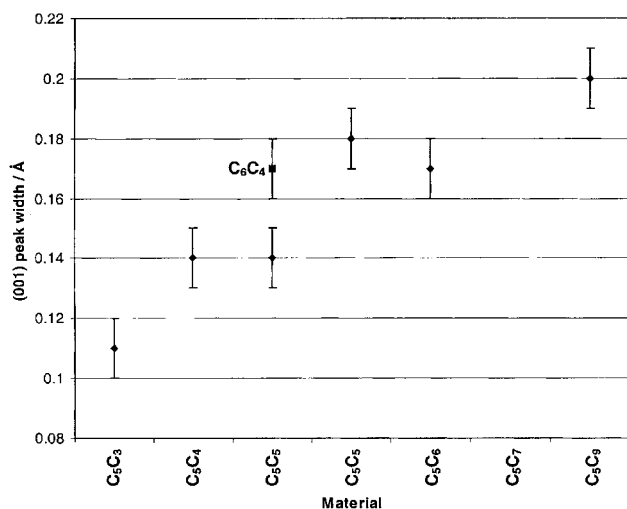


Fig. 8 Widths of (001) peak for *Series I* and *Series II* materials, measured from photographic film.

Analysis of the enthalpy and entropy data of *Series I* materials for the Col_h→I transition shows interesting patterns. As shown in Fig. 10a, C_mC_n.sym and C_mC_n.asym materials from *Series I* and *II* have similar values (~3 kJ mol⁻¹) of the enthalpy change for this transition. In comparison, the enthalpy change for C_xC_x materials is higher than that of their constitutional isomers in *Series I* at short chain lengths, but is similar (converging to ~3 kJ mol⁻¹) at longer chain lengths. The same pattern exists for the entropy changes for the

Col_h→I transition (Fig. 10b). These results suggest that, relative to the isotropic liquid, the C_mC_n mesophases and the higher homologues of the C_xC_x series have low enthalpic stability and a low degree of order. We suggest that the interdigitation may decrease the mesophase stability primarily through the slippage process (Fig. 3b). This process may become available to the longer chain members of the C_xC_x series due to the fact that the amount of available 'free space' between the adjacent alkyl chains increases, and may be filled by the alkyl chains of neighbouring molecules. In Fig. 11a, the intercolumnar spacings^{8,50} of C_xC_x materials are plotted as a function of the chain length *x*, and shows that the relationship between intercolumnar spacing and *x* is not linear. In particular, as the alkyl chain length (*x*) increases, the increment in intercolumnar spacing per methylene group decreases (*i.e.* the gradient of the plot in Fig. 11a decreases, although still remains positive, as *x* increases). This observation is consistent with the fact that, as shown in Fig. 11b, there is an increase in the 'free space' between alkyl chains in a C_xC_x molecule as *x* increases, with the proposal this free space becomes filled by alkyl chains of neighbouring molecules to a greater extent as *x* increases. Thus, the mesophase stability of C_xC_x materials may be expected to decrease as the alkyl chain length increases.

2.3. Series II

2.3.1. Optical characterisation. Only two members of *Series II* exhibit mesogenic behaviour, namely C₅C₅ and C₆C₄.sym. In POM studies, both of these compounds exhibit a defect texture typical of the Col_h phase, Fig. 12a and 12b.

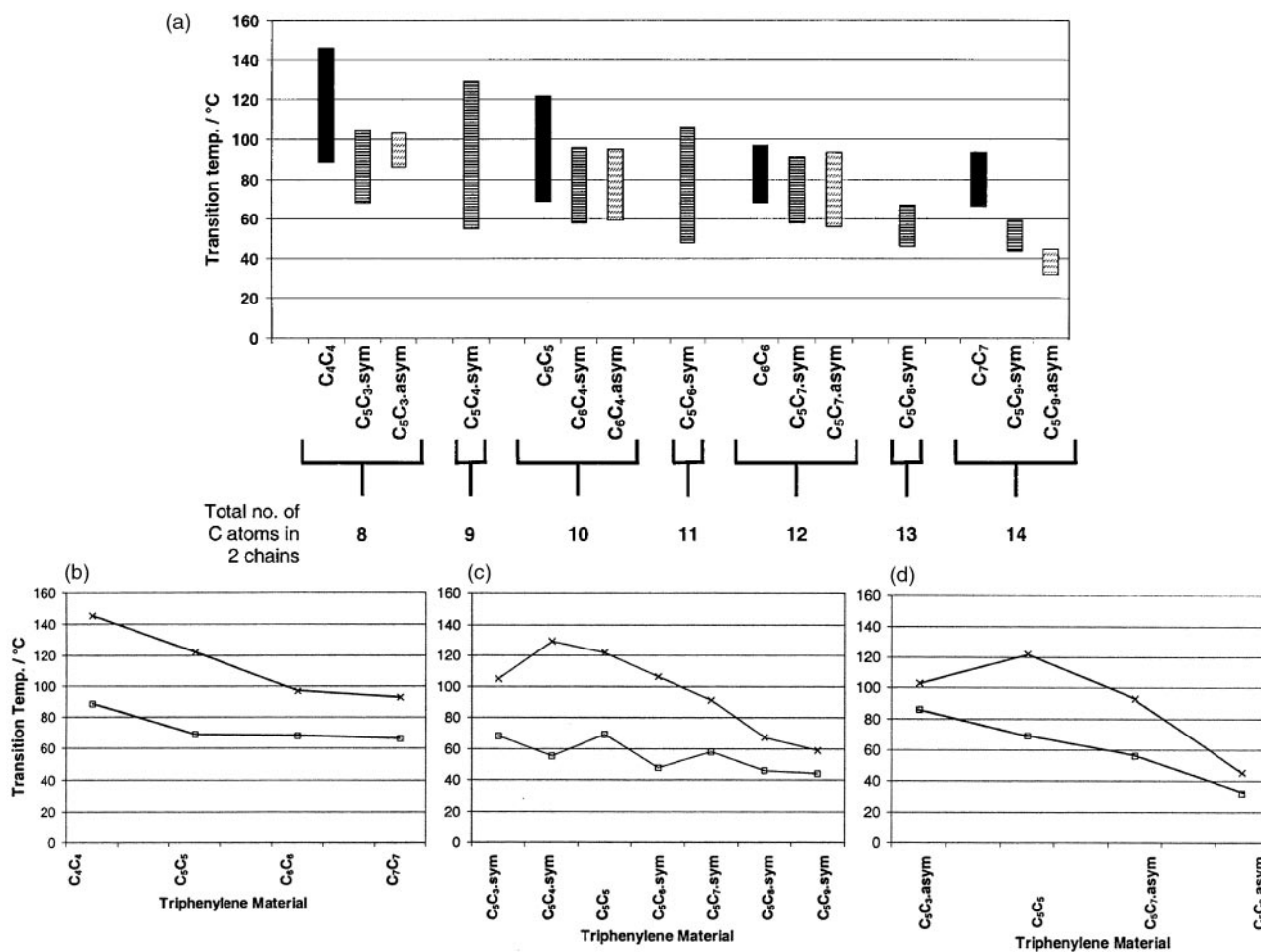


Fig. 9 (a) Mesophase ranges for *Series I* and *II* materials ('sym' and 'asym'), and their C_xC_x constitutional isomers. (b) Phase transitions of C_xC_x triphenylene materials. (c) Phase transitions of symmetrical isomers of *Series I* and *II* mesogenic materials. (d) Phase transitions of asymmetrical isomers of *Series I* and *II* mesogenic materials.

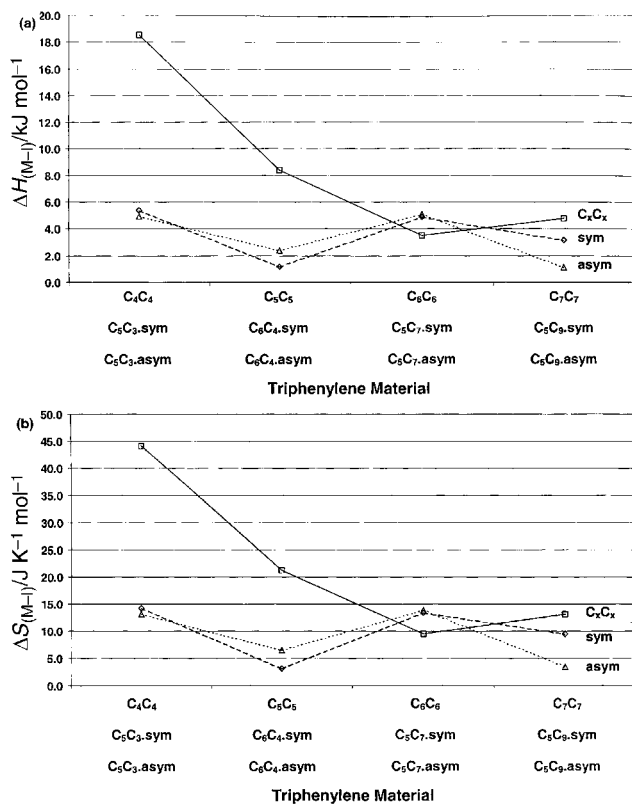


Fig. 10 (a) Phase transition enthalpy data for *Series I* and *Series II* materials, compared to literature values for C_xC_x materials. (b) Phase transition entropy data for *Series I* and *Series II* materials, compared to literature values for C_xC_x materials.

2.3.2. X-Ray diffraction analysis. Identification of the mesophases of *Series II* compounds by XRD also verifies that they are Col_h in nature. The intercolumnar spacing for C₆C₄.sym, calculated from the *d*-spacing of the (100) reflection, is 20.1 Å, which is very similar to the intercolumnar spacing for C₅C₅ (19.9 Å), a constitutional isomer of C₆C₄.sym. This observation suggests that the molecules adopt a reasonably effective space filling motif, achieved by interdigitation of alkyl chains.

Table 1 Averaged thermal data for *Series I* and *Series II* materials. Transition temperatures, enthalpies and entropies were recorded by DSC on heating, at rates of 5, 10 and 20 °C min⁻¹. The heating cycles gave phase transition data which agreed to ± 2%

Compound	Transition	Transition temp./°C	ΔH/kJ mol ⁻¹	ΔS/J K ⁻¹ mol ⁻¹
C ₅ C ₁	Cr→I	142	56.03	134.03
C ₅ C ₂	Cr→I	108	40.66	106.68
C ₅ C ₃	Cr→Col _h	68	30.71	89.02
	Col _h →I	105	5.44	14.38
C ₅ C ₄	Cr→Col _h	55	21.71	66.16
	Col _h →I	129	10.09	25.22
C ₅ C ₅	Cr→Col _h	69	34.48	100.81
	Col _h →I	122	8.20	20.75
C ₅ C ₆	Cr→Col _h	48	28.28	82.65
	Col _h →I	106	5.76	15.19
C ₅ C ₇	Cr→Col _h	58	31.73	95.18
	Col _h →I	91	4.87	13.28
C ₅ C ₈	Cr→Col _h	46	21.61	65.26
	Col _h →I	67	2.11 ^a	6.21 ^a
C ₅ C ₉	Cr→Col _h	44	61.27	191.44
	Col _h →I	59	3.15	9.41
C ₆ C ₄	Cr→Col _h	58	38.95	117.62
	Col _h →I	96	1.17	3.17
C ₇ C ₃	Cr→I	66	45.17	133.19
C ₈ C ₂	Cr→I	65	47.71	141.09

^aData recorded on cooling cycle at 10 °C min⁻¹.

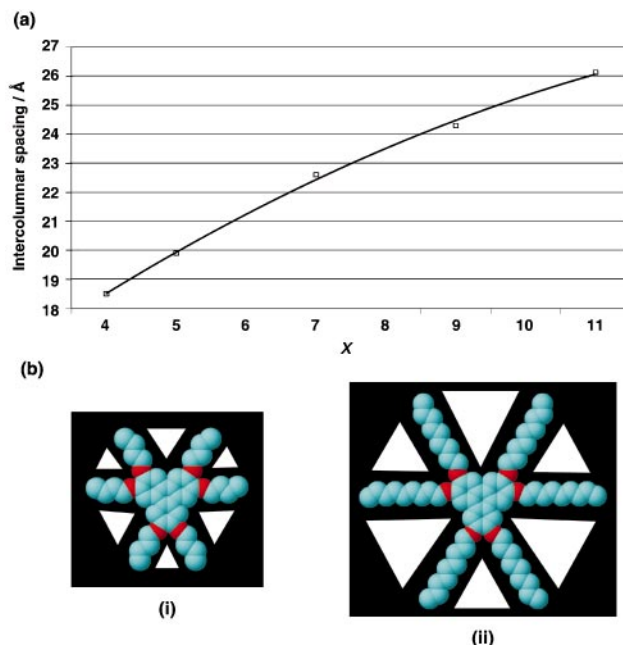


Fig. 11 (a) Intercolumnar spacing of C_xC_x materials as a function of chain length, *x*. (b) An illustration of the increase in 'free-space' (indicated by the white regions) between alkyl chains with increasing alkyl chain length for (i) C₄C₄ and (ii) C₉C₉ triphenylene materials.

The intracolumnar stacking distance, determined from the *d*-spacing for the (001) peak is ~3.6 Å, with similar peak widths for C₅C₆.sym (IL=1) and C₅C₇.sym (IL=2), as illustrated in Fig. 8.

2.3.3. DSC Analysis. Phase transition data for *Series II* materials are shown in Table 1. Thermodynamic data are included in Fig. 10a and 10b. The mesophase range of C₆C₄.sym is comparable with *Series I* materials. Indeed, the mesophase range and *T_c* value of C₆C₄.sym is similar to C₅C₇.sym, which also has IL=2. The fact that only C₆C₄ and C₅C₅ exhibit mesophases within *Series II* reflects the delicate balance between anisotropy and isotropy. Clearly, when three heptyloxy chains are present, three propylloxy chains are not sufficient to stabilise the material to the degree required to exhibit a mesophase. Indeed, perhaps the additional interaction present through interdigitation may prevent the formation of a mesophase. Enthalpy and entropy arguments are similar to those for *Series I*. Thus, the enthalpy change for C₆C₄ is around ~3 kJ mol⁻¹, similar to that for interdigitated materials in *Series I*, with a slight difference between the symmetric and asymmetric isomers.

3. Concluding remarks

In this paper we have presented the first examples of triphenylene-based liquid crystals, which interdigitate by design. The successful synthesis of two systematic series of materials has allowed structural and thermal properties to be rationalised on the basis of the effects of varying the relative and absolute lengths of the two types of alkyl chain in the molecule. X-Ray diffraction and differential scanning calorimetry have highlighted several interesting issues, which may be interpreted on the basis of the effect and influence of interdigitation of alkyl chains. From these results, we conclude that the interdigitation leads to a decrease in mesophase stability, which may be interpreted in terms of the effects of the slippage process dominating over the rotational dynamics.

Further aspects of these materials are under investigation, including studies of dynamic properties by means of ²H NMR spectroscopy of the mesophases. Photoconductivity measurements will also be made in the near future on *Series I* and *II*

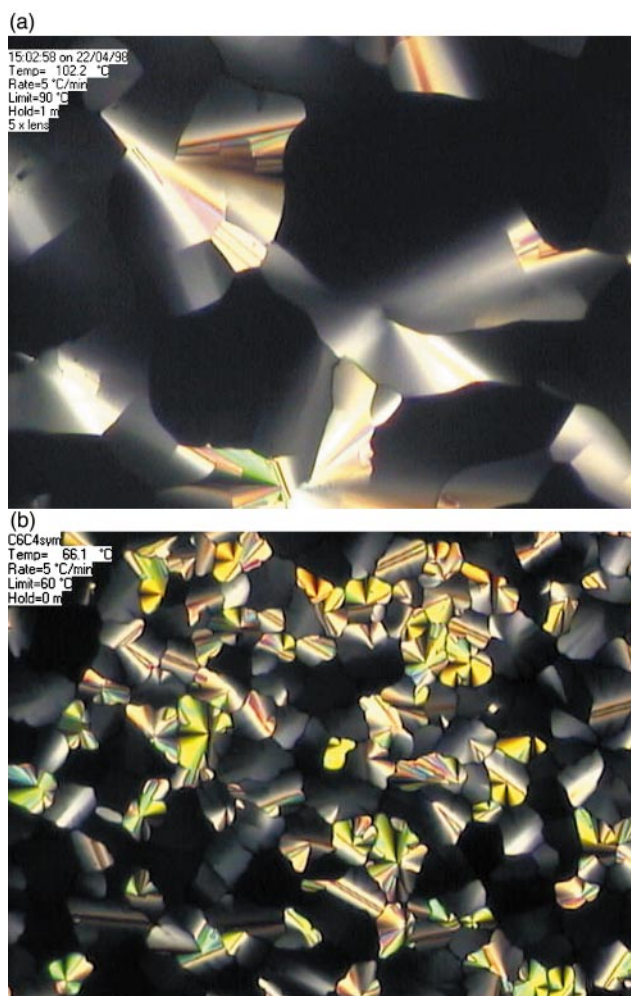


Fig. 12 Mesophase textures for (a) C_5C_5 and (b) C_6C_4 , viewed through crossed polarizers.

materials. In addition, we are currently synthesising a third series of materials, which are constitutional isomers of C_9C_9 (i.e. $C_{10}C_8$, $C_{11}C_7$, $C_{12}C_6$ and $C_{13}C_5$), analogous to *Series II*. It is anticipated that this series should generate a greater number of mesogens than *Series II*, and will contribute substantially towards progress in developing a complete understanding of the structural and thermal effects introduced by incorporating interdigitation as an organisational motif.

4. Experimental

General procedures

All chemicals were purchased from Aldrich and used without further purification. Dry CH_2Cl_2 was prepared by distillation over CaH_2 under a N_2 atmosphere. Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) was performed on aluminium sheets coated with silica gel 60 F₂₅₄ (Merck 5554, 230–400 mesh). Initial inspection of TLC plates was by use of UV light, and subsequent development by iodine vapour or 5% $CeSO_4$ solution in EtOH, followed by heating. Column chromatography was carried out using silica gel 60 F₂₅₄ (Merck 9385, 230–400 mesh).

1H NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker AC300 (300 MHz) spectrometer. ^{13}C NMR were recorded on a Bruker AC300 (75.5 MHz) spectrometer using the pendant pulse sequence. All chemical shifts are quoted in ppm on the δ scale, with all coupling constants expressed in hertz (Hz), using residual solvent as the internal standard.

Mass spectra were obtained using Electron Impact Mass Spectrometry (EIMS), from a VG ProSpec mass spectrometer, or Liquid Secondary Ion Mass Spectra (LSIMS), from a VG

ZabSpec mass spectrometer, equipped with a caesium ion source.

Optical microscopy experiments were carried out using a Boetius hot stage microscope. Photographs were taken on a Nikon Optiphot 2 polarizing microscope, equipped with a Mettler FP 82 HT heating stage and a camera. In addition, video capture images were recorded on an Olympus BX40 optical microscope, with crossed polarizers, equipped with a Linkam LT350 hot stage.

Differential Scanning Calorimetry (DSC) results were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer 7 Series and a Perkin-Elmer Pyris thermal analysis system. All samples were subjected to 2 heating and cooling cycles, heating to 150–180 °C (at least 30 °C above a sample's T_c) and cooled to –30 °C, at a rate of 10 K min^{-1} .

Mesophase X-ray diffraction was carried out on a Huber Guinier Pulverkammer 621 variable temperature diffractometer, using $Cu K\alpha$ radiation. Both photographic and diffractometric measurements were used.

1,2-Bis(pentyloxy)benzene, **1**

To a stirred solution of catechol (25.0 g, 0.227 mol) in MeCN (500 mL) was added K_2CO_3 (160.0 g, 1.140 mol). The slurry was heated under reflux for 30 minutes under a N_2 atmosphere. A solution of 1-bromopentane (76.0 g, 0.500 mol) in MeCN (100 mL) was added dropwise to the slurry, maintaining the reflux and stirring. The mixture was heated under reflux for 20 hours. The reaction was cooled to room temperature and filtered. The inorganic residue was washed with CH_2Cl_2 (2×50 mL). The filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo* and dissolved in CH_2Cl_2 (100 mL). The organic layer was washed with NaOH solution (0.5 M, 50 mL), followed by water (2×50 mL). The organic layer was dried ($MgSO_4$). The drying agent was removed by filtration, the inorganic residue washed with CH_2Cl_2 (2×25 mL) and concentrated *in vacuo*, yielding a light brown oil, **2** (48 g, 83%). m/z (EI) 250 $[M]^+$; δ_H (300 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 6.89 (4H, s, Ar-H), 3.99 (4H, t, $J=6.6$, OCH_2), 1.82 (4H, quintet, $J=7.4$, CH_2), 1.32–1.52 (8H, m, CH_2), 0.92 (6H, t, $J=7.2$, CH_3); δ_C (75 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 149.2, 121.0, 114.0, 69.2, 29.1, 28.3, 22.5, 14.1.

2,3,6,7,10,11-Hexakis(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C_5C_5

A solution of **1** (5.30 g, 21 mmol) in dry CH_2Cl_2 (40 mL) was degassed with N_2 for 15 minutes. The reaction flask was covered in aluminium foil and the solution stirred under a N_2 atmosphere, with a $CaCl_2$ drying arm attached. $MoCl_5$ (6.37 g, 23 mmol) was added to the solution quickly but with care. The reaction was stirred at room temperature for 20–30 minutes and was carefully monitored by TLC [eluent: petroleum ether (bp 60–80 °C)–acetone (5:1)], until all of **2** had reacted. The reaction vessel was placed in an ice bath and the reaction quenched with ice-cold MeOH (75 mL). The mixture was stirred for 60 minutes at 0 °C, precipitating a white solid. The reaction mixture was filtered and the residue washed with ice-cold MeOH (2×15 mL). The precipitate was purified by 2 recrystallisations from MeOH, yielding a white, flaky solid of C_5C_5 (3.35 g, 64%). m/z (EI) 745 $[M]^+$; δ_H (300 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.85 (6H, s, Ar-H), 4.25 (12H, t, $J=6.6$, OCH_2), 1.92–1.99 (12H, m, CH_2), 1.42–1.67 (24H, m, CH_2), 0.99 (18H, t, $J=7.4$, CH_3); δ_C (75 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 148.9, 123.6, 107.2, 69.7, 28.4, 22.6, 14.2 {Found: C 77.31, H 9.72. Calc. for $C_{48}H_{72}O_6$: C 77.38 H 9.74}.

2,6,10-Tris(pentyloxy)-3,7,11-trihydroxytriphenylene, C_5C_0 -sym; 2,7,10-tris(pentyloxy)-3,6,11-trihydroxytriphenylene C_5C_0 -asym

A solution of C_5C_5 (2.23 g, 3.00 mmol) in dry CH_2Cl_2 (25 mL) was degassed with N_2 for 15 minutes. A solution of 9-Br-BBN

in CH₂Cl₂ (1.0 M, 13.5 mL, 13.5 mmol) was added dropwise to the solution over 60 minutes under an atmosphere of N₂, whilst the solution was stirred at 0 °C. The reaction mixture was stirred for a further 8 hours at 0 °C. The reaction vessel was then transferred to the freezer for a further 30 hours. The reaction was carefully quenched with 2-aminoethanol (25 mL). The mixture was diluted with water (25 mL) and the products extracted into CH₂Cl₂ (2 × 25 mL). The organic layer was dried (MgSO₄). The drying agent was removed by filtration and the filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo*. The two constitutional isomeric products were isolated from the crude mixture using silica gel chromatography [eluent:CH₂Cl₂–MeOH (100 : 1)].

C₅C₀sym. (0.67 g, 42%); *m/z* (EI) 534 [M]⁺; δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.91 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 7.78 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 5.91 (3H, s, OH), 4.24 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂), 1.89–1.98 (6H, quintet, *J*=7.1, CH₂), 1.38–1.62 (12H, br m, CH₂), 0.98 (9H, t, *J*=7.2, CH₃); δ_C (75 MHz, CDCl₃) 145.7, 145.2, 123.8, 122.8, 106.9, 104.5, 69.0, 29.0, 28.2, 22.6, 14.1.

C₅C₀asym. (0.48 g, 30%); δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃); 7.70–7.95 (6H, m, Ar-*H*), 5.87 (3H, t, *J*=5.46, OH), 4.25 (6H, m, OCH₂), 1.76–2.00 (6H, br m, CH₂), 1.38–1.70 (12H, br m, CH₂), 0.97 (3H, dt, CH₃); δ_C (75 MHz, CDCl₃) 145.3, 122.9, 107.7, 107.4, 107.2, 104.3, 104.2, 104.0, 69.1, 56.4, 28.3, 22.6, 14.1.

2,6,10-Tris(pentyloxy)-3,7,11-tris(alkyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C_{*n*}

Typical quantities for this homologous set of reactions are shown in Table S1 in Supplementary Information.

K₂CO₃ was added to a solution of C₅C₀sym in MeCN. The slurry was heated under reflux for 30 minutes under a N₂ atmosphere. A solution of (R¹-Hal) in MeCN was added dropwise to the slurry, maintaining the reflux and stirring. The mixture was heated under reflux for 20 hours. The reaction was cooled to room temperature and filtered; the residue was washed with CH₂Cl₂ (2 × 25 mL). The filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude, white solid was subjected to two recrystallisations from MeOH or EtOH, yielding white/yellow solids of the triphenylene derivatives. Spectroscopic data are shown in Table S2 in Supplementary Information.

2,6,10-Tris(hexyloxy)-3,7,11-tris(butyloxy)triphenylene, C₆C₄

The synthesis of 1,2-bis(hexyloxy)benzene, **2**, was carried out in a similar fashion to 1,2-bis(pentyloxy)benzene, **1**, replacing 1-bromopentane with 1-bromohexane yielding a dark brown oil, **2** (9.1 g, 72%). The synthesis of hexakis(hexyloxy)triphenylene, C₆C₆, was carried out in a similar fashion to hexakis(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C₅, using **2** in place of **1**, yielding a flaky, white solid, C₆C₆ (0.89 g, 43%). The synthesis of 2,6,10-trihydroxy-3,7,11-tris(hexyloxy)triphenylene, C₆C₀sym, was carried out in a similar fashion to 2,6,10-trihydroxy-3,7,11-tris(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C₀sym, using C₆C₆ in place of C₅C₅, yielding a fine, white powder, C₆C₀sym. (0.21 g, 35%); δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.92 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 7.79 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 4.25 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂), 1.93 (6H, quintet, *J*=7.1, CH₂), 1.35–1.56 (18H, br m, CH₂), 0.94 (9H, t, *J*=7.0, CH₃). To a solution of C₆C₀sym (0.20 g, 0.35 mmol) in CH₃CN (10 mL) was added K₂CO₃ (0.41 g, 2.97 mmol). The slurry was heated under reflux for 30 minutes under a N₂ atmosphere. 1-bromobutane (0.21 g, 1.48 mmol) was added dropwise to the slurry, maintaining the reflux and stirring. The mixture was heated under reflux for 20 hours. The reaction was cooled to room temperature and filtered; the residue was washed with CH₂Cl₂ (2 × 10 mL). The filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude, white solid was subjected to two recrystallisations from EtOH, yielding a pale yellow solid, C₆C₄ (0.23 g, 89%). *m/z* (LSIMS) 745 [M + H]⁺; δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.83 (6H, s, Ar-*H*), 4.23 (6H, t, *J*=6.4, OCH₂), 4.22 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂),

1.88–1.98 (12H, br m, CH₂), 1.03 (9H, t, *J*=7.4, CH₃), 0.93 (9H, t, *J*=7.0, CH₃); δ_C (75 MHz, CDCl₃) 149.0, 123.6, 107.3, 69.7, 69.4, 25.9, 22.7, 19.4, 14.0 {Found: C 77.74, H 9.49. Calc. for C₄₈ H₇₂ O₆: C 77.42, H 9.68}.

2,6,10-Tris(heptyloxy)-3,7,11-tris(propyloxy)triphenylene, C₇C₃

The synthesis of 1,2-bis(heptyloxy)benzene, **3**, was carried out in a similar fashion to 1,2-bis(pentyloxy)benzene, **1**, replacing 1-bromopentane with 1-bromoheptane, yielding a brown oil, **3** (4.8 g, 68%). The synthesis of hexakis(heptyloxy)triphenylene, C₇C₇, was carried out in a similar fashion to hexakis(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C₅, using **3** in place of **1**, yielding a flaky, white solid, C₇C₇ (0.91 g, 30%). The synthesis of 2,6,10-trihydroxy-3,7,11-tris(heptyloxy)triphenylene, C₇C₀sym, was carried out in a similar fashion to 2,6,10-trihydroxy-3,7,11-tris(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C₀sym, using C₇C₇ in place of C₅C₅, yielding a fine, white powder, C₇C₀sym (0.08 g, 30%); δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.91 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 7.79 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 4.25 (6H, t, *J*=4.3, OCH₂), 1.93 (6H, quintet, *J*=7.0, CH₂), 1.34–1.59 (24H, br m, CH₂), 0.91 (9H, t, *J*=6.8, CH₃). To a solution of C₇C₀sym (0.07 g, 0.11 mmol) in CH₃CN (20 mL) was added K₂CO₃ (0.13 g, 0.90 mmol). The slurry was heated under reflux for 30 minutes under a N₂ atmosphere. 1-bromopropane (0.07 g, 0.57 mmol) was added dropwise to the slurry, maintaining the reflux and stirring. The mixture was heated under reflux for 20 hours. The reaction was cooled to room temperature and filtered; the residue was washed with CH₂Cl₂ (2 × 10 mL). The filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude, white solid was subjected to two recrystallisations from EtOH, yielding a pale yellow solid, C₇C₃ (0.06 g, 74%). *m/z* (LSIMS) 745 [M + H]⁺; δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.83 (6H, s, Ar-*H*), 4.23 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂), 4.19 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂), 1.89–2.03 (12H, br m, CH₂), 1.33–1.61 (24H, br m, CH₂), 1.14 (9H, t, *J*=7.4, CH₃), 0.90 (9H, t, *J*=6.8, CH₃); δ_C (75 MHz, CDCl₃) 149.0, 123.6, 107.4, 71.2, 69.7, 31.9, 29.2, 26.2, 14.2, 10.7 {Found: C 77.62, H 9.71. Calc. for C₄₈ H₇₂ O₆: C 77.42, H 9.68}.

2,6,10-Tris(octyloxy)-3,7,11-tris(ethyloxy)triphenylene, C₈C₂

The synthesis of 1,2-bis(octyloxy)benzene, **4**, was carried out in a similar fashion to 1,2-bis(pentyloxy)benzene, **1**, replacing 1-bromopentane with 1-bromooctane, yielding a brown oil, **4** (8.8 g, 58%). δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.88 (4H, s, Ar-*H*), 3.99 (4H, t, *J*=6.8, OCH₂), 1.81 (4H, quintet, *J*=7.0, CH₂), 1.28–1.51 (20H, br m, CH₂), 0.88 (6H, t, *J*=6.8, CH₃). The synthesis of hexakis(heptyloxy)triphenylene, C₈C₈, was carried out in a similar fashion to hexakis(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C₅, using **4** in place of **1**, yielding a flaky, white solid, C₈C₈ (1.07 g, 49%). The synthesis of 2,6,10-trihydroxy-3,7,11-tris(octyloxy)triphenylene, C₈C₀sym, was carried out in a similar fashion to 2,6,10-trihydroxy-3,7,11-tris(pentyloxy)triphenylene, C₅C₀sym, using C₈C₈ in place of C₅C₅, yielding a fine, white powder, C₈C₀sym (0.18 g, 27%); δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.91 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 7.78 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 4.24 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂), 1.93 (6H, quintet, *J*=7.0, CH₂), 1.25–1.57 (30H, br m, CH₂), 0.90 (9H, t, *J*=6.8, CH₃). To a solution of C₈C₀sym (0.15 g, 0.22 mmol) in CH₃CN (20 mL) was added K₂CO₃ (0.30 g, 2.17 mmol). The slurry was heated under reflux for 30 minutes under a N₂ atmosphere. 1-bromoethane (0.18 g, 1.63 mmol) was added dropwise to the slurry, maintaining the reflux and stirring. The mixture was heated under reflux for 20 hours. The reaction was cooled to room temperature and filtered; the residue was washed with CH₂Cl₂ (2 × 10 mL). The filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude, white solid was subjected to two recrystallisations from EtOH, yielding a pale yellow solid, C₈C₂ (0.10 g, 58%). *m/z* (LSIMS) 745 [M + H]⁺; δ_H (300 MHz, CDCl₃) 7.84 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 7.83 (3H, s, Ar-*H*), 4.31 (6H, q, *J*=7.0, OCH₂), 4.23 (6H, t, *J*=6.6, OCH₂), 1.90–1.99 (6H, q,

$J=7.2$, CH_2), 1.25–1.58 (39H, br m, CH_2 , CH_3), 0.89 (9H, t, $J=6.8$, CH_3); δ_C (75 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 149.0, 148.7, 123.7, 123.5, 115.5, 107.5, 107.0, 70.9, 70.8, 69.8, 69.6, 65.3, 31.9, 29.5, 29.4, 26.2, 22.7, 15.9, 14.2 {Found: C 77.55, H 9.83. Calc. for $C_{48}H_{72}O_6$: C 77.42, H 9.68}.

Acknowledgements

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