

Professor Alwyn G. Davies

My first encounter with Alwyn Davies was as an undergraduate at University College London (far too many years ago to be precise about the exact date), where he lectured on organometallic chemistry. Like many people before and since, I was immediately struck by the lucidity and clarity of his lectures. More importantly, by the enthusiasm which he projected in his lectures he instilled an interest in chemistry in general and organometallic chemistry in particular which has left a permanent mark. Alwyn's career started with a first class honours degree in chemistry in 1946 followed by a Ph.D. in 1949, both from University College London. His initial work for his Ph.D. with Christopher Ingold involved studies of the mechanisms of heterolytic reactions of organic compounds, and his activity in this field was further developed during a period with Joseph Kenyon at Battersea Polytechnic on problems concerning optical resolution and reactions involving carbonium ion intermediates. His transition into organometallic chemistry resulted from this work via organic peroxide chemistry, at that time a relatively unexplored (and potentially explosive!) area. His initial forays into organometallic chemistry involved the preparation of the first organoperoxymetallic compounds by nucleophilic substitution, but he also showed that similar peroxy compounds were formed by the autoxidation of certain organometallic compounds. From this point his work blossomed to the full and expanded in many directions: organotin chemistry, homolytic reactions, radical ion chemistry, and most recently 'ene reactions. In all this work he has applied most elegantly a large number of spectroscopic techniques, most notably ESR spectroscopy, but also Mössbauer spectroscopy and solution and solid-state ^{119}Sn NMR spectroscopy. In recognition of his work, Alwyn was awarded a D.Sc. by the University of London in 1969, received the Medal and Award in Organic Reaction Mechanisms of the Royal Society of Chemistry in 1981, was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1989, and awarded the Ingold-Albert Medal of the Royal Society of Chemistry and an Alexander von Humboldt Award in 1992. By any measure Alwyn's contributions to chemistry have been substantial, and I among many consider it an honour and a privilege to have worked with him. Finally, I would like to thank the contributors to this Special Issue that commemorates Alwyn's retirement, and on behalf of them all and of all his other friends and colleagues wish him and Margaret a very happy retirement. However, I suspect that, like many other people in their position, they will be busier than any time before! Alwyn and Margaret, we all wish you well.

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