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XVIII Conference on Liquid Crystals (Chemistry, Physics & Applications)

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CONFERENCE REPORT

XVIII Conference on Liquid Crystals (Chemistry, Physics & Applications)

The 18th Conference on Liquid Crystals (Chemistry, Physics & Applications), 'XVIII CLC', was held from 14 to 18 September 2009 in Augustów, located in the Masuria region referred to as 'a land of a thousand lakes', being the historical and ethnographic northern part of Poland. The conferences on liquid crystals (CLC) in Poland, initially organised by the researchers of the Military University of Technology in Warsaw, have been held every two years since their start in 1979 in Jedlinia (at this time in the Polish language only), and they are now international, with English being the conference language since 1987. Since that time the CLC conferences have had the aim of promoting basic science as well as technology related to all aspects of liquid crystal research and applications, providing a biennial international and interdisciplinary forum for scientists in this field.

the conference included six invited lectures, 20 oral presentations and 74 poster presentations, which were categorised under eight topics: Synthesis and new materials; Chiral phases, ferroelectric and antiferroelectric liquid crystals, bananas; Macroscopic and microscopic properties; Phase structure and phase transitions; Electro- and thermo-optical effects; Polymer liquid crystals and composite; Applications; and Theory and molecular modelling. Participants could attend two morning and one afternoon session, each with oral presentations. The 74 poster presentations were divided equally into four sessions, each exhibited for one evening before dinner. Each day, a set of invited 45 minute long oral presentations was arranged. These talks were intended to provide overviews and to set the tone for the following discussions.



Figure 1. Participants at the 18th Conference on Liquid Crystals in Augustów, Poland, a biannual meeting organised by members of the Polish Liquid Crystal Society.



Figure 2. Discussions at one of the well attended poster sessions of the conference.

The XVIII CLC conference was organised jointly by the Institute of Applied Physics and the Institute of Chemistry at the Faculty of Advanced Technology and Chemistry of the Military University of Technology in Warsaw under the auspices of the Polish Liquid Crystal Society. For five days in September the 'Warszawa' hotel in Augustów, which is located in a scenic post-glacial landscape with the Augustów Forest (Puszcza Augustowska) and many lakes in its vicinity, hosted 110 participants from 15 countries. The programme of

The XVIII CLC was officially opened by the Chairman of the Scientific Committee Professor Roman Dąbrowski, who delivered the keynote address at the opening ceremony and stressed that the CLC conference concept was developed to go beyond a passive approach and to encourage dialogue among attendees and build collaborative international partnerships. The scientific programme was opened with the invited lecture 'Vertically aligned nematic displays and photonic devices', given by Jose M.

Otón from Spain, in which the speaker showed state-of-the-art applications of vertically aligned nematics in display devices, as well as in photonics. On the first day, the afternoon session was opened by Kristiaan Neyts from Belgium with an attractive invited talk on the possible application of light-induced non-linear effects in liquid crystals enabling the switching of light beams between optical fibres. During the second day two invited lectures were presented. Firstly, Vladimir Bezborodov from Belarus talked about a new method of synthesis yielding smectic and nematic liquid crystalline compounds for promising display applications. A very well received invited lecture entitled 'Biaxial nematic phase of bent-core systems' was then given by Lech Longa from Poland, wherein the speaker showed that the stabilisation of biaxial nematics in bent-core systems should strongly depend on the strength of the central dipole moment. Ravindra Dhar from India opened the third day session with his interesting invited talk concerning how gamma, ion and electron beam irradiation influences the physical properties (dielectric anisotropy, conductivity and electrooptic switching) of liquid crystalline materials and showed that in some cases it is possible to actually enhance these properties. The last invited lecture on the last day of the conference was given in a very attention-grabbing way by Damian Pocięcha from Poland. The speaker talked about two-dimensional, density modulated structures of bent-core mesogens and showed that, based on X-ray studies, two types of these structures exist, and moreover in some compounds both types of modulations can be found within the same temperature range. In each session every invited lecture was followed by a 25 minute long oral presentation given by contributors from Poland, Germany, India, Slovenia, Spain, USA and Oman. As usual, at the heart of the conference were the discussions that took place during the poster sessions and the quality free time provided. The organisation of the daily schedule together with meals and coffee breaks gave frequent opportunities to have discussions among all participants. The poster sessions were especially exciting for Polish students, as there was a 'Best Poster' competition announced and awarded by the Polish Liquid Crystal Society (PLCS). The members of the selection board (J. Chruściel, W. Piecek and A. Kapanowski) held discussions with all Polish student participants at their posters to choose the best presentation. The board awarded prizes to four PhD students: M. Żurowska (first prize), A. Modlińska (second prize), M. Wierzejska-Adamowicz and Ł. Szczuciński (ex aequo third prize).

It is worth pointing out the rich social programme that was put on, starting with the welcome party with a



Figure 3. Polish organised conferences are well known for their superb social programme. The photograph shows the participants enjoying the boat trip.

traditional glass of wine, followed during the next few days by a bonfire with traditional polish food and music, a boat trip excursion and the conference banquet. The half-day boat sightseeing tour with beautiful weather and landscapes also included a visit to the Museum of Canal (the Augustów Canal was built from 1824 to 1839). The conference banquet was especially important for Polish students as the PLCS prize for the best Master's Thesis was announced and presented to the awarded PhD students, who were M. Salamończyk from the University of Warsaw (first prize) and M. Czerwiński from the Military University of Technology (second prize).

The closing remarks at the end of the conference were given by Ravindra Dhar who summarised the scientific programme and stressed that the relaxed atmosphere, the diversity, enthusiasm and interaction among the conference participants were among the notable successes of the conference.

The XVIII Conference on Liquid Crystals was closed by the Chairman of the Organising Committee, Professor Jerzy Zieliński, who invited all participants to attend the next Conference on Liquid Crystals in Poland in two years time. This year's conference papers will be published in a special issue of *Optoelectronics Review*.

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