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Liquid Crystals

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A chemical physics approach to liquid Crystals: a symposium held in honour of Geoffrey Luckhurst

Southampton, 29–30 July 2004

Geoffrey Luckhurst celebrated his 65th birthday in 2004. When we looked at the list of past PhD students, colleagues and friends that would wish to attend a dinner to celebrate this, it was clear that they would not all fit in Geoffrey's favourite restaurant in Southampton. It therefore seemed appropriate to hold a scientific meeting in Geoffrey's honour to discuss our fundamental understanding of liquid crystals, with input from colleagues past and present. Although the meeting was initially intended as a birthday celebration only, it soon became clear that a triple celebration was in order. During spring of 2004, it was announced that Geoffrey was to be made an Honoured Member of the International Liquid Crystal Society at the Ljubljana ILCC; he was also awarded a prestigious Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship by the Leverhulme Trust.

The defining feature of Geoffrey's career has been the combination of experiment and theory to enhance our understanding of liquid crystals. He has contributed to the development of molecular field theories for liquid crystals, at the same time as performing NMR and ESR studies on orientational ordering. He has been instrumental in the use of simulation for modelling liquid crystals, while synthesizing novel mesogens to demonstrate the importance of shape and flexibility. He has contributed greatly to these fields individually, but by contributing to them all, often in a single paper, has also helped to smear the boundaries between them. To honour Geoffrey's contributions in these fields, eighteen speakers were invited to discuss their own work, past and present. Topics ranged from the shape of molecules necessary to form mesophases, to theories of dimeric molecules, to the formation of the biaxial nematic phase, to rotation experiments on nematics and smectics, to pretransitional effects, and so on. Although the speakers were discussing their own work, it soon became clear that the understanding of liquid crystals at a molecular level would not be as developed as it is if not for Geoffrey's inputs throughout his career.

Of course, a *Liquid Crystals* issue dedicated to Geoffrey would not be complete without mentioning his exceptional contributions to publishing, not just as an author but as an editor. He spent four years as editor of Taylor and Francis's *Molecular Physics*. He was

instrumental in persuading Taylor and Francis to establish this journal and acted as one of the first editors, along with Ed Samulski, in its fledgling years. Indeed, Geoffrey's contribution to the editing of these journals was honoured by Keith Courtney, of Taylor and Francis, in a pre-dinner speech. Additionally Geoffrey has edited, to his exceptionally high standards, many volumes of Conference Proceedings. Perhaps the most famous amongst these is *The Molecular Physics of Liquid Crystals*, edited with George Gray, which recorded the proceedings of the landmark NATO Advanced Study Institute held in Cambridge in 1977.



This issue contains part of the proceedings of the meeting. However, given that many people were not able to speak at or attend the symposium, we opened the invitation to contribute to this issue to other colleagues.

It is a pleasure to thank David Dunmur, Jim Emsley and Tim Sluckin for their help in selecting the speakers to give a balanced programme of synthesis,

theory, magnetic resonance experiments and simulation at the symposium. I finally wish to acknowledge financial support from Merck (Chilworth, Southampton), Taylor and Francis and Unilever Research Port Sunlight.

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