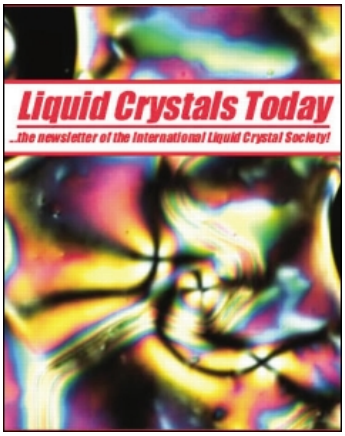

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British Liquid Crystal Society Annual Conference, 28-30 March 1994, University of Hull, UK

Founded in 1985, the British Liquid Crystal Society organises an annual conference, and this year the 9th Annual Conference was held at the University of Hull in March 1994. A distinctive pattern has been established for this meeting of invited speakers, usually from abroad, together with a large number of short contributions from young liquid crystal scientists.

The conference was organised by John Goodby and Mike Hird with members of the liquid crystal group at Hull, and they provided an exciting scientific programme covering all aspects of liquid crystals. Attendance this year exceeded 200, reflecting the high level of UK research activity in liquid crystals. Invited lectures were given by ***Ron Pindak*** (AT&T Bell Laboratories), "Twist Grain Boundary Phases", ***Klaus Praefcke*** (Technische Universität Berlin), "Synthesis of Liquid Crystals: Multiols, Radial Multiynes and Multinuclear Metal Organyls" and ***Jay Patel*** (Bellcore), "The Role of Liquid Crystals in Optical Communication and Image Processing Devices".

A special guest was ***Professor Helmut Ringsdorf*** who gave the Sturgeon Memorial Lecture, which was founded in recognition of the contributions made by Dr Ben Sturgeon, former Research Director of BDH Ltd (now Merck UK) to the successful commercial exploitation of liquid crystals, especially the cyanobiphenyls. The title of Professor Ringsdorf's lecture was "Functional lipid membranes as biomimetic liquid crystals: specific recognition, enzyme function and protein docking at monolayers and liposomes", and it was delivered with his characteristic flourish and enthusiasm, but no wine (!). An important point made during the lecture was that liquid crystal science was now a mature subject with corresponding advantages and disadvantages. He urged researchers to seek the unexpected and look for novel areas where liquid crystal expertise could reveal new discoveries. Ringsdorf's theme of the biological interface of liquid crystals was taken up by John Lydon in a thought-provoking talk on the mesophases of nucleic acids. His assertion that all components of a cell either are liquid crystals, or have been or could be liquid crystals, remains unchallenged.

Reinforcing its role of encouraging young scientists, the BLCS awards a prize each year to the most promising liquid crystaller under 30. This year's award went to **Cliff Jones** (Defence Research Agency, Royal Signals & Radar Establishment, Malvern), and he gave his award lecture at the conference on "Ferroelectric liquid crystals and the problem with chevrons". A varied programme of lectures and nearly 100 posters embracing synthesis, theory, computer simulation, device physics and molecular biology was made even more palatable by good food and drink. The experience will be repeated next year in Exeter, and liquid crystallers from home and abroad will be warmly welcomed.