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## Liquid Crystals Today

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## Liquid Crystals - Present, Past and Future

George W. Gray FRS

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# Liquid Crystals – Present, Past and Future

Symposium Held in Honour of George W. Gray, FRS

**T**hat liquid crystal science could celebrate its first hundred years in 1988 was a well established fact when it happened. It came as a surprise to most of us, though, as rumours spread that one of its most devoted, successful, and influential workers, George W. Gray, was about to complete his seventh decade in September 1996. A group of GWG's friends and admirers headed by Sven Lagerwall, decided to do something about it. What could have suited the spirit of GWG better than a gathering of people closely related to his own work in the past, at present, and in the foreseeable future. Despite short notice, causing a few close friends to regret their absence due to engagements elsewhere, an impressive number of leading people in fields close to GWG's interests found their way (hindered or not by the local mafia operating on Naples' highways) to the conference site. Capri, this scenic, historic and gastronomic rock in the Gulf of Naples, formed the perfect stage for the meeting.

Throughout four days of hard work in the conference room (balanced by late nights with an excellent cuisine and wines and an outing with a concert at Villa San Michele at Anacapri) GWG remained in the centre of discussions: according to the theme of the symposium, the past of liquid crystal science, of which GWG holds an astonishing share; present day projects so many of which stem from his own initiative or from his students and co-workers (or at least depend for their success on materials synthesized by GWG or descending from these or from his school); and finally a future of liquid crystals that surely will see many branches develop from the GWG tree. After a memorable and amusing account of his path through the garden of liquid crystals by the father of biphenyls himself, some of his fellow veterans appeared before the audience: Alfred Saupe with a view on the development of elasticity theory in liquid crystals,



GWG leading the Liquid Crystal Choir after a hard day's work

Chandrasekhar reviewing the state of biaxial nematics, and Jean Billard recollecting the evolution of mesophase structures from a French point of view.

To the reviewer, it seems unfair to pick out any of the fine contributions made to the meeting, between the opening talk of GWG and David Litster's 'physical entertainment' closing the symposium late on Saturday evening, 14 September. The written-up contributions to the symposium will appear as regular articles in forthcoming issues of *Liquid Crystals*.

**Bengt Stebler**

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Most of the Capri Meeting participants (those missing were trying to find the other missing ones!)