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George Gray Medal to Professor Roy Sambles

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at his request, on that very departure day. He never complained about physical problems, but instead he talked of science and of his many cultural interests, from history to nature, with the usual enthusiasm, strength and inspiration. His wife Francesca, his daughter Daria and sons Claudio and Michele should be rightly proud of his memory and can be sure that he will be remembered in the Italian and international scientific communities.

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Professor Frank Leslie presented the G. W. Gray Medal to Professor Roy Sambles of Exeter University, UK at the annual British Liquid Crystal Society Conference which took place in Leeds in April 1998. The George Gray Medal is awarded from time to time to eminent scientists in the field of liquid crystals by the British Liquid Crystal Society, and previous recipients include Professor John Goodby and Professor Frank Leslie.

Roy Sambles is best known in the liquid crystal community for his work on the optics of liquid crystals, and his first paper in the area published in 1987 demonstrated the potential of using guided waves in order to explore fully the alignment in liquid crystal cells. This was the forerunner for the subsequent development of the half-leaky and fully-leaky techniques developed by Roy and Fuzi Yang, which allow very

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accurate determination of alignment in thin cells. Roy initially exploited these techniques in liquid crystal research primarily with Steve Elston (now at Oxford) and latterly with Fuzi Yang, shedding genuine light on the otherwise rather murky chevron textures in ferroelectric smectics. In addition, at Exeter,

Roy initiated the first studies in the UK of gratings and liquid crystals, work continued successfully at DERA Malvern by two of his students, Guy Bryan-Brown and Emma Woods. Recently, Roy has recorded another notable first through his work in molecular electronics on molecular rectifiers, succeeding in demonstrating such a device which has long been the aim of other international groups.

During the presentation of the medal, Frank Leslie commented that for any society or community to remain active and enthusiastic it must attract from time to time new members with fresh ideas and new techniques. He went on to say that Roy and his co-workers at Exeter have proved a very good example of this in the context of the British Liquid Crystal Society. Peter Raynes and Mike Clarke were responsible in the early days of Roy's research in liquid crystals for persuading him that it was a fruitful area for his waveguided techniques. How right they were!