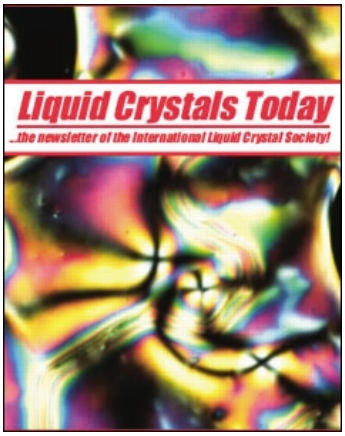

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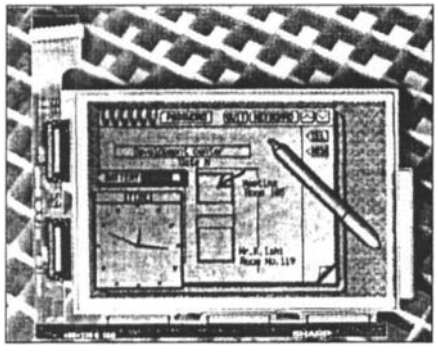
COMPANY NEWS

Merck moves to Southampton

Merck KGaA, the German speciality chemical company, has moved its UK R & D facility from Poole, Dorset, to Southampton University's Highfield Campus, while it constructs a purpose-built laboratory on the University's Chilworth Science Park. The new laboratory will provide facilities for up to 30 research staff working on new functional materials, including liquid crystals, advanced inorganic materials and superconductors.

Sharp celebrates 25 years of liquid crystal technology

Twenty five years ago Sharp manufactured the world's first pocket calculator with a liquid crystal display, and triggered a wave of innovation, the end of which is not yet in sight. Liquid crystal displays have become a key technology, and are used in a wide range of instruments and devices. 'The liquid crystal display has become a universal user interface, without which the use of complex digital functions would be impossible', said Martin Beckmann, press spokesman for Sharp Electronics (Europe). 'For this reason Sharp are focusing a large part of our world-wide research on the further development of this technology'. Recently (see *Liquid Crystals Today*, **8**, No. 4) Sharp produced an extremely light and robust plastic liquid crystal module (see figure).



The new extremely light but also very robust plastic LC modules do not need a costly frame especially in the case of much used equipment like cell phones and pagers.

Sharp researchers are working hard in a bid to realise their vision of a paper-thin computer, using a new technology which will allow the integration of switching circuits in a wafer-thin layer on the glass of a liquid crystal display. The vision is of a foldable computer: a type of electronic paper for the next century. Speaking with 25 years of experience of liquid crystal technology, Atsushi Asada, management consultant with Sharp, said: 'You should never lower your technological expectations'.

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CRL to manage new European display project

CRL, a Scipher company based in Hayes, London, UK, is to manage a new European display project: HELICOS (Hand-held Reflective Colour Displays). The 4 MECU project will run over 2 years, and involves major players from the European display industry, including ASULAB, Thomson LCD, IMEC, ALCATEL, the University of Stuttgart and Tecdis. The main objectives of the project are to develop and demonstrate passive matrix and active matrix reflective liquid crystal displays for use in portable IT products such as palmtop computers and emerging computer/telecommunications products. The main developments will take place in the optimization of liquid crystal display technologies. Approaches based on the use of dichroic dyes, light scattering effects and stabilized cholesteric textures, none of which require the use of polarizers, will be investigated.

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