

9th International Conference on Ferroelectric Liquid Crystals 2003 (FLC 2003).

The 9th International Conference on Ferroelectric liquid crystals (FLC 2003) was held on the campus of Trinity College, University of Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland from August 24th to 29th, 2003. It was the 9th in a series of biennial meetings. The first was held in Arachon, France, in 1987, the aim of the conference was to bring together Chemists, Physicists, Materials Scientists, Engineers and students in these disciplines, in the field of ferroelectric liquid crystals and related topics to present and discuss recent developments in the area.

The program consisted of six plenary lectures, thirteen invited talks, 32 contributed talks and 121 posters in two sessions. My contribution to the conference was a poster in the first session and contribution to a talk given by my supervisor, Prof. Helen Gleeson. The poster was well received and I found the session particularly useful as it gave me the opportunity to discuss my work and approach with others working on similar things, and indeed with those who were simply interested in what I was working on. In addition to discussions on my own poster I was also involved in discussions on the contents of a number of relevant works during both poster sessions. I found this a useful and easy way of approaching people, as it was possible to ascertain how relevant their work was before speaking to them, and the posters gave a good focus for discussions.

Following the talk given by my supervisor, Prof. Gleeson, on the third day of the conference, some interesting discussions developed, about collaborations and theories explaining some of the effects. This seems a fruitful development and indeed was in agreement with the ideals of the conference, in our case at least, it fostered good discussion between us, as physicists, theoreticians and mathematicians and also chemists. During some of the chemistry talks we learned of materials with properties it would be interesting to investigate with some of our experimental techniques.

For me, one of the highlights of the conference was the opportunity to meet Prof. George Gray, a pioneer in the field of liquid crystals. Members of the group George founded, which still continues at Hull University gave a number of the chemistry talks. George gave the closing speech at the conference dinner, which was very well received. Another important face in the field of liquid crystals is that of Sven Lagerwall, who gave the evening discourse preceding the conference dinner, which was again full of insights into new applications for ferroelectric liquid crystal displays.

Overall the conference was a positive experience, giving me a good insight into the areas of interest in liquid crystals today. In particular the conference gave me the opportunity to discuss my ideas and experiments with others working in my field, and to make some interesting contacts with people working in areas relevant to me.

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