



Robin Shirley

It is with great sadness that I have to announce that Robin died in hospital on Sunday, 27th March 2005. He had been suffering from liver problems since contracting Hepatitis A last November and this finally proved fatal on Easter Sunday.

Robin was born in Harrow on 1st July 1941 and graduated from UCL in 1964 with a BSc in Chemistry. He joined the Department of Chemical Physics at Battersea College in 1967 as an Assistant Lecturer in Crystallography and moved to the Guildford campus shortly afterwards. Robin commenced a secondment to Psychology in 1988 as a Senior Research Fellow in Information Systems. This was combined with a collaborative arrangement with the Clarendon Laboratory at Oxford to allow for the continuation of his crystallography research activities in x-ray powder diffraction and crystallographic computational methods. The Psychology secondment continued until 1997 when Robin formally transferred over to Psychology in the new School of Human Sciences.

Robin assumed responsibility for teaching undergraduate statistics. Despite this being an unpopular subject, he was much loved by the students who valued his genuine concern to help them and his willingness to spend that extra bit of time explaining things. Robin was accessible to students and his student feedback often expressed gratitude for the pastoral role he willingly assumed. As well as his software development work for his crystallography research, Robin produced a complete integrated suite of instructional programs intended to promote understanding of statistical theory. It is unfortunate that more was not made of the software which

was very innovative for its time. Robin was always keen to make improvements and he never regarded it as finished.

Although based in Psychology, Robin continued to develop and disseminate his work on powder indexing presenting his ideas around the world. He organized and contributed to the Crysfire 2001 suite of programs for determining powder structures which is widely used in the academic community and available in an industrial version. He continued to develop and demonstrate the programs up to the time of his death. Robin probably contracted the Hepatitis A during a visit to Egypt last November for a 5-day International Powder Diffraction Workshop at Assiut University. There his lectures went well but running his software for the lab sessions proved to be difficult because the computers were running an Arabic version of Windows!

In various committees and boards of studies Robin was notable for arguing strongly for what was just and right. Unwilling to sit back and let events pass him by if he thought something was not being dealt with properly, he was sometimes in conflict with colleagues but his views often prevailed and he gained respect as a man of principle. These qualities were carried over into his Union activities. As Chair of the local AUT branch Robin was intimately involved in a wide range of activities and came into contact with many people across the University. Initially a reluctant Chair, he became an effective negotiator on behalf of AUT members. He was able to bring a rational, logical approach to union activity and negotiations without ever losing sight of his responsibilities to the members.

Robin will be remembered by many as someone who was very intellectually sharp. He had an endearing habit of arriving late for Psychology seminars yet would still be able to ask (usually the first) penetrating questions that often got to the heart of the debates at hand. This was all the more impressive as he was not, until relatively recently, trained as a psychologist and still saw himself as a crystallographer, computer scientist, and English poet. He had a genuine enthusiasm for ideas of all kinds.

Away from work he was External Activities Coordinator and then Chairman of the Wey Poets (Guildford & West Surrey Centre of the Poetry Society) and he organized and took part in poetry readings and participated at various festivals. He also lectured, published and broadcast on the subject of computer poetry and the programmed generation of

language generally. He was a member of the Computer Conservation Society and used to maintain a gallery of micro-computer exhibits at the Computer Museum, Bletchley Park.

He will be remembered as someone who was always to be seen at social events whatever they were. He was a Father Christmas at the staff-student Christmas parties for a number of years and also the target of many a fond student 'sketch' in the annual party review. He was always portrayed sympathetically (not the norm for many staff) reflecting the warmth and esteem with which the students regarded him.

Robin was one of the great characters of the University and he will be missed.

Chris Fife-Schaw, HoD Psychology

Calendar of Meetings

Donald R. Petersen
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Midland, MI 48640-2724, USA
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25–30 September 2005

ICXOM-XVIII International Conference on X-ray Optics and Microanalysis. Frascati (Rome), Italy. [Contact: Donatella Pierluigi, Tel: 39 (06) 9403 2317; Fax: 39 (06) 9403 2559; E-mail: icxom05@lnf.infn.it; Info: <http://www.lnf.infn.it/conference/2005/icxom/main.html>].

9–13 October 2005

32nd Annual Conference of the Federation of Analytical Chemistry and Spectroscopy Societies (FACSS). Quebec, Canada. [Contact: FACSS, Post Office Box 24379, Santa Fe, NM 87502, USA. Tel: 1 (505) 820 1648; Fax: 1 (505) 989 1073; E-mail: facss@facss.org; Info: <http://www.facss.org>].

17–19 October 2005

MECA SENS III Third Conference on Stress Evaluation by Neutron and Synchrotron Radiation. Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. Supported by the Los Alamos National Laboratory. [Contact: Info: <http://www.lansce.lanl.gov/mecasens2005>].

28 November–2 December 2005

International Conference on Neutron Scattering. Sydney, Australia. [Contact: Brendan Kennedy, School of Chemistry, Building F11, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia. E-mail: b.kennedy@chem.usyd.edu.au; Info: <http://www.icns2005.org>].

28 May–3 June 2006

9th International Conference on Synchrotron Radiation Instrumentation. Daegu, Korea. Co-hosted by the Pohang

Accelerator Laboratory (Pohang, Korea) and the Japan Synchrotron Radiation Research Institute (Harima.) [Contact: Info: http://sri2006.postech.ac.kr/bottom_sri.htm].

9–13 July 2006

SAS2006 XIII International Conference on Small-angle Scattering. Kyoto, Japan. [Contact: SAS2006 Secretariat, A Cluster, Katsura, Kyoto University, Kyoto 615-8510, Japan. E-mail: SAS2006@alloy.polym.kyoto-u.ac.jp; Info: <http://www2.scphys.kyoto-u.ac.jp/sas2006/index.html>].

16–23 July 2006

7th International Conference on the Occurrence, Properties, and Utilization of Natural Zeolites. Socorro, New Mexico, USA. [Contact: Robert Bowman, New Mexico Institute of Technology, Socorro, New Mexico, USA. E-mail: bowman@nmt.edu].

22–27 July 2006

American Crystallographic Association Annual Meeting. Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. [Info: <http://www.hwi.buffalo.edu/aca>].

6–11 August 2006

23rd European Crystallographic Meeting. Leuven, Belgium. Held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (founded 1425.) The official language of the meeting is English. [Contact: Organizing Secretariat Momentum, Grensstraat 6, B-3010 Leuven, Belgium. Tel: 32 (16) 40 45 55; Fax: 32 (16) 40 35 51; E-mail: info@momentum-pco.be; Info: <http://www.ecm23.be/GeneralInformation.htm>].