

T.A. Stephenson
(12.11.1940-5.1.1986)

Dr. Tony Stephenson was one of the liveliest people you could imagine. His natural vigour, his enthusiasm for his subject, his warm good nature, and his whole-hearted commitment to everything he undertook made him a first-rate chemist, an admirable colleague, and an excellent friend; his sudden and unexpected death at the early age of 45 came as a terrible shock to all who knew him. He was born and brought up in Yorkshire, and was extremely proud of his roots; but the beginnings of his career as an academic chemist were in London. After taking his first degree at University College, he moved to Imperial College and took his Ph.D. under Professor Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson. From this he derived his deep interest in and knowledge of the chemistry of the heavy transition metals, most particularly of ruthenium and platinum. His early work on heavy metal carboxylates was important and innovative, defining these compounds and indicating their potential importance. It was essentially synthetic chemistry, coupled with perceptive use of physical methods; this remained the hallmark of Tony's work through the rest of his career. After finishing his Ph.D., he worked as a postdoctoral research associate in Case Institute of Technology, Cleveland, Ohio, under the direction of Professor T.J. Swift; he then returned to a post of limited tenure at the University of Newcastle, and was appointed to a Lectureship at the Chemistry Department at the University of Edinburgh in 1969. At that time, the Chemistry Department at Edinburgh had no transition metal organometallic chemist on the staff. Tony had to establish himself in the equivalent of an academic green field site, and he did so brilliantly. The directness of his teaching rapidly attracted the attention of a substantial proportion of the best undergraduate students, and so he soon built up a large and productive research school. His natural liveliness of mind made sure that he was aware of developments in modern instrumentation and able to make use of them; his work has drawn on a wide range of physical techniques, and has made particularly perceptive and subtle use of NMR spectroscopy. In recent years, he had become interested in electrochemistry, and did much important and novel work on binuclear metal complexes in collaboration with Dr. Graham Heath. But at heart he remained an intelligent synthetic chemist; physical methods were useful to him in helping to tell him what he had made and helping him to understand its reactions. The excellent quality of his work led to his D.Sc. in 1978 and to his promotion first to Senior Lecturer in 1982 and then to Reader in 1985. It also brought

him invitations to give lectures at major international meetings in the United States, in Mexico, and in mainland Europe. He was a first rate organizing secretary for the Platinum Metals Meeting in Edinburgh in 1984, and was elected a member of the Council of the Dalton Division of the Royal Society of Chemistry in 1985.

But this account of his contributions to research in transition metal chemistry gives a narrow perspective of a man with great breadth. Tony was an outstanding teacher. He had little patience with late-comers to his lectures, and was not noted for teaching for less than the statutory time; to him, it was the subject that mattered, not escaping a minute or two early for a cup of coffee. The undergraduates responded with great enthusiasm to his own enthusiasm for what he taught them, and he won the combined respect and affection of generation after generation of them. As a Director of Studies in the Department, with responsibility for advising students about their courses and looking after their general welfare, his humanity, his sensitive kindness, and his strong sense of justice made him a firm but fair champion. He made many other contributions to the life of the University, particularly in connection with sport, and to the life of his own local community. He was a man who lived very fully.

His family meant everything to him. His colleagues and research students all remember with gratitude the friendly hospitality so often extended to them by Tony, his wife Margaret, and their children. None of us can fully share in the loss that they have suffered, though we all extend our deepest sympathy to them. For us, it has been a pleasure and privilege to work with him as a colleague and a friend.

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