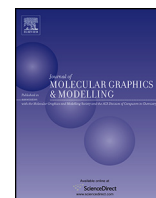




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Molecular Graphics and Modelling

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/JMGM

OBITUARY

Elizabeth Colbourn

Elizabeth Colbourn was a stalwart of field of molecular modelling and a founder of the Molecular Modelling Group of the industrial affairs division of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

I inherited her as a graduate student, since she came over from Canada to do her doctorate in the group of Charles Coulson who tragically died when she was only part way through her research. She did however retain strong links with the Coulson group including Bill Makrodt and others.

After completing her DPhil she moved to Southampton where she developed her interest in the application of theoretical chemistry and computational methods to the structure of materials.

Elizabeth then joined ICI and collaborated with John Kendrick in the area led by David Clark. This involved doing much travelling between Runcorn and Wilton which she did in her rather fast Audi. At the Wilton Research Centre she established and led the materials modelling team and in 1990 was appointed to ICI's prestigious Scientific Ladder, one of the first two women to attain this position. She played a significant role in the development of supercomputing, in the cofounded initiative involving ICI and the SERC Daresbury Laboratory initially with John Pendry and then with John Eaglesfield.

With what was essentially the demise of ICI she joined Oxford Molecular in its early days to develop the materials side of the business. We soon decided, however, that this was stretching the small company too widely and to concentrate on pharmaceutical software and to develop drug discovery. Elizabeth was encouraged and helped to set up a parallel company, Oxford Materials. Like the parent company, this was challenged legally by Oxford University Press about the use of the name of Oxford, and changed its name and location to Runcorn. The company was progressing well when their financial backers, 3i, had a sudden change of policy and without warning or indeed any logic pulled the plug and the company had to be wound up.

This work however led to the formation of Intelligensys Ltd with Ray Rowe and Peter York of Bradford University. Elizabeth was CEO. The company concentrated on product formulation using artificial intelligence. The company remained small, but successful and was contemplating mergers or joint ventures when she became ill.

Always very fit and healthy, she enjoyed sailing and lived in north Yorkshire where she was especially active in organizing serious walks on the moors. Our field has lost a very significant player.

Graham Richards