

John White Symposium



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John White and neutron scattering, how it all began

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In 1964 John White was a fellow of St Johns College Oxford working with Rex Richards on electron nuclear double resonance spectroscopy (ENDOR). A recent chance meeting with Peter Egelstaff from AERE Harwell had interested John in the uses of neutron scattering spectroscopy in chemical sciences, and particularly in the possibilities of using deuterium labelling. At the time Julia S-D (now Julia Higgins) was a final year physics undergraduate in Somerville College, Oxford looking for opportunities to study for a DPhil. Her tutor introduced her to John and, believing a physicist was more likely to take to neutron scattering than a chemist, he offered her a studentship despite her chronic lack of experience in chemistry. Thus some 60 years ago (almost to the day) began two long careers using this novel technique. The presentation will describe the experimental design and initial results, noting how a physicist successfully grappled with deuterating her own samples. It will then briefly mention the next steps they each took in their long careers in the field, how their scientific interests diverged and set them on their subsequent paths.

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