

*Emeritus Professor Michael Cable*  
1934 - 2016

Emeritus Professor Michael Cable, age 82, died 20th August 2016 in St. Luke's Hospice, Sheffield. The Society of Glass Technology has lost a most productive and erudite member. The funeral service, 3rd September at Hutcliffe Wood Crematorium, was led by Revd. Captain Mike Reeder, CA Senior Chaplain at the Hospice; Celebration of Life Tributes were by Dr Richard Hulme, Professor K.D. Bardhan, and Professor David Pye.

Overseas visitors attending the Society of Glass Technology Centenary Conference, in Sheffield, joined family and friends to pay respect to a scholar, whose reputation was truly global. The Celebration of Professor Cable's life continued at Halifax Hall, Sheffield University.

Michael Cable was born on 6th July 1934 in Stourbridge, Worcestershire. From 1939 to 1943 he was educated at St Judes School, Isle of Man, then until 1952 at Solihull School, Solihull, Warwickshire. He accepted an offer of a place to study Glass Technology at the University of Sheffield. He completed his Bachelor's degree in 1955, by which time he had become Chairman of the University's Student Society of Glass Technology, and he gained first class honours in 1956. In that year he was awarded the Wood Medal by the University and the Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers' Premium Award. Also he was awarded a three year Scholarship by the Glass Research Association Trust.

In 1959 Michael achieved the degree of PhD. Then he accepted an offer to become a Research Associate in the Ceramics Division of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, a position which he held until 1961. He immersed himself in the life of that institution, amongst other things becoming a member of Sigma Xi - an organisation working to promote interdisciplinary undergraduate research within the MIT community.

He returned to Sheffield in 1961 to take up a lecturing position in the Department of Glass Technology at the University, and he was to continue there until his retirement.

From these foundations Michael built a prestigious career both as a researcher and as a teacher. In research he had the reputation for careful and deep analysis of the fundamental aspects of glass melting

and forming, applying physicochemical principles and the full power of mathematics to model the behaviour of glass and glassmaking processes. His results were always underpinned by careful experimentation and this required a well run glass melting facility that proved an immensely valuable asset to the whole department.

Not only did his results demonstrate an immense degree of care but his write-ups were the product of a man well-versed in the idiosyncrasies of the English language, and his neat diagrams demonstrated an artistic skill in presentations. During the 1960s he produced a monograph about how slides should be prepared and projected, with guidance about font sizes and the angle subtended at the eye by words and numbers. In 1997 he became a consultant to the Oxford English Dictionary in respect of the definitions of glass-related words. Over his career Michael produced more than 150 high quality research publications.

Teaching, helping and developing students remained an on-going theme in Michael's professional life. He supervised 25 PhD, 14 Masters and around 40 Bachelors projects. All his students benefitted from the same careful attention to detail that permeated his work, and many of them subsequently achieved high positions in the glass community, in both industrial and academic contexts. His teaching too was immensely popular. Although a demanding lecturer he crafted beautifully illustrated and well written notes and expected students to research and struggle with the material presented until it was deeply engrained in their thinking.

Research students admired the quality of his thinking, but recognised him as a demanding taskmaster. Michael did not suffer fools gladly! But he was unstinting in the time, creative energy and support he gave to those he supervised. His ability to derive significant scientific insights from simple experimental concepts was outstanding, as was his capability of applying his understanding to the real-world problems of glass manufacture. Perhaps not quite so publicly obvious was his empathy with and compassion for his students - a demanding taskmaster, yes, but at moments of stress or anxiety he became a supportive friend. Research under the supervision of Michael Cable was for many a life-changing experience.

His success was marked by rapid advancement within the University; a senior lectureship in 1968 and a professorship in 1986. For a while in 1984 he was acting head of department (then Ceramics,

Glasses and Polymers). The quality of his research led to the award in 1976 of the degree of DScTech at the age of 42 - a remarkable achievement. In 2006 he was awarded the prestigious Otto Shot Medallion by the Deutsche Glastechnische Gesellschaft (DGG)

Michael Cable was respected the world over. He was an external examiner in six countries, and he applied his expertise in the industrial sector, undertaking consultancies for at least twenty nine companies in ten different countries. He spoke widely too, presenting 368 lectures in 13 different countries, to audiences including both academics and industrial practitioners of glass technology. He was awarded the Honorary Doctorate of Technology (TkD) by Åbo Akademi, Finland, and received the ICG's prestigious President's Award.

Within the Society of Glass Technology Michael's research contributions led to early recognition and he became a Fellow in 1967. He was for a number of years an editor of the Society's Journals, and in 1997 the SGT honoured him by electing him to the select company of Honorary Fellows (of whom there are only twelve at any one time).

His notable linguistic skills gave him a working knowledge of several languages, both in spoken and written forms. So for 24 years he assisted German Glass Society (DGG) in the production of abstracts for their Journal, and latterly as a member of their editorial board. His love of things Scandinavian influenced his choice of cars too and many will recall the blue Volvo that he continued to drive for a decade after most owners would have confined their cars to the scrap heap!

In later life Michael was committed to the history of glass-making, giving many interesting presentations on the development of furnaces, heat recovery systems and the sources of different batch materials over the centuries. Latterly these threads were combined as he translated a number of important historic glassmaking texts for publication under the SGT banner, and as Professor Emeritus he gave the 17th Turner Memorial Lecture entitled; "The development of glass-melting furnaces and South Yorkshire's pioneering role", on 10 May 2007. He had chaired the committee responsible for this series of Turner Memorial Lectures from 1980 until 2006.

Michael had a distinguished academic career and a wonderful family life in spite of his debilitating health problems. His indomitable spirit and his many personal qualities will be sorely missed by the international glass community. We are very

fortunate that his writing skills have left such a rich and extensive literature from which the next generation can learn. Those of us who were privileged to know him well will also be aware of the extent to which he has challenged our own understanding of the subject of Glass Technology and enriched our lives through his friendship.