

Tom Mulvey, 1921-2009

The world of electron microscopy has lost one of its most colourful and well-loved figures. Born in Manchester, Tom Mulvey took a first degree in engineering at Manchester University, before joining the Navy where he served in the Far East. After the war, he joined Metropolitan-Vickers (later AEI) and made his first contribution to electron optics, an M.Sc. dissertation on electrostatic lens properties. He then spent several years at Aldermaston Court, the M-V research establishment, where he came into contact with Gabor (he is co-author of a very earlier paper on electron holography), Archard and M.E. Haine. His comprehensive treatment of polepiece design remained the standard source for many years. Later he moved to the University of Aston, Birmingham, where his kindness and hospitality earned him the gratitude of many students from the Middle East and Egypt: "If Professor Mulvey travels in the Middle East, he need never sleep in a hotel", said one of his students. He also acted as a lifeline to many microscopists and electron opticians in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, cut off by the Iron Curtain from the rest of the world. He will be remembered for his invention of a whole family of miniature electron lenses and for his contributions to the history of electron microscopy – as well as historical studies, he wrote biographies of V.E. Cosslett, Ernst Ruska and Jan Le Poole. His last years were spent near Oxford, close to one of his sons. He died on 16 July 2009.

These few lines give a very inadequate picture of Tom Mulvey, a humane and humorous scholar with friends in many countries. A much more detailed account of his life can be found in the Proceedings of the Royal Microscopical Society (vol. 39, Part 2, 2004, 206–233).

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