Ken Seddon—obituary

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On the 21st January, we learned the sad news that Prof Ken Seddon OBE, a giant in the field of ionic liquids, had died. Ken's contributions to the field cannot be overstated. He was a prolific author, with over 400 papers to his name with well over half of these being on ionic liquids and their applications, but his influence went well beyond these.

Ken told me that he stumbled upon ionic liquids in the early 1980s in the now old-fashioned way of finding these the subject of the paper next to the one that he had originally looked up in a paper journal. He soon realised that these chloroaluminate ionic liquids had the potential to be the ideal solvents in which to study the UV-vis spectra of transition metal chloride complexes, which became the subject of his first few papers in the field, most in collaboration with electrochemist Chuck Hussey, (e.g., "Room-temperature ionic liquids as solvents for electronic absorption-spectroscopy of halide-complexes", D. Appleby, C. L. Hussey, K. R. Seddon, J. E. Turp, *Nature*, 1986, **323**, 614–616). However, he was undoubtedly better known for linking ionic liquids to the growing field of Green Chemistry. Indeed, one of his papers was published in the very first edition of the RSC journal *Green Chemistry*, ("Diels-Alder reactions in ionic liquids - A safe recyclable alternative to lithium perchlorate-diethyl ether mixtures", M. J. Earle, P. B. McCormac, K. R. Seddon, *Green Chem.*, 1999, **1**, 23–25).

Ken was best known for being an enthusiastic advocate for the potential of ionic liquids to revolutionise almost any area of science or technology. He did this mainly by travelling the

world to tell anyone who would listen about ionic liquids, whether in one-to-one discussions or presentations to meetings of hundreds of people. This, together with his generosity of spirit, led to many collaborations on a remarkable range of subjects and to Ken being the co-author of the first paper of many people who are now well-known members of the ionic liquids' community. He also brought ionic liquids and their potential to a great number of companies, which led to the formation of QUILL (Queen's University Ionic Liquids Laboratory) as the first university-industry collaborative research centre dedicated to ionic liquids research in 1998.

Ken was a larger than life character, both physically and figuratively. With his long hair and sideburns, once seen Ken was never forgotten. Equally as memorable was his loud and frequent laughter. Ken did not suffer those he thought to be fools gladly and was perfectly willing to let them know. He could be difficult, dismissive and at times plain rude, but most will remember him as generous and supportive and a true enthusiast for science. Without Ken, the world of ionic liquids would have been a smaller and less exciting place to be.

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