

Preface

In this, the 26th volume in the series, the task of compiling the chapters has, in the main, been in the hands of authors already deeply rooted in the annual gathering of references. The swathe of material harvested is now vast and most reporters once again report expansion in the publications within their particular expertise. The first five chapters represent the current continuum from volume to volume. It is the turn of the β -lactams to be included for biennial coverage as the 6th Chapter and we are greatly indebted to Drs Schofield and Westwood for reviewing the literature for 1992 and '93. It is very revealing how the β -lactam ring has extended its boundaries beyond its 'enchanted ring' status in the antibiotic field, into the domain of enzyme inhibition and as a synthetic intermediate. Hence a change of chapter name to β -Lactam Chemistry is justified to reflect the wider scope.

While the use of sophisticated technology in structural elucidation is becoming routine in many publications, there seems to be continuing expansion, development and optimisation of solid phase peptide synthesis. The current scene is so different from the embryonic years so modestly described by Bruce Merrifield in his book 'Life During a Golden Age of Peptide Chemistry' (published by the American Chemical Society, 1993). Multiple syntheses, and the construction of large peptide libraries, have capitalised on the continuing development of the solid phase approach, but shifting the emphasis from the chemistry into bio-assaying with minute amounts of peptidic mixtures.

A continuously expanding field also demands an international forum for communication. We have recently seen the launching of new Journals in the area of Protein and Peptide Science, e.g. *Journal of Peptide Science* (J. Wiley & Sons), *Letters in Peptide Science* (ESCOM), and *Protein and Peptide Letters* (Bentham Scientific Publications). Based on the 1993 list of publications, *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters* (Pergamon) has established itself already as a popular forum for papers discussing pharmaceutically relevant peptides. These augment the previously established Journals, and the valuable books produced from the International symposia of the various Peptide Societies. One hopes that the confidence in the expansion of peptide science can be sustained, at a time when our team of Reporters all report frustrations in the availability of original source references due to library cut-backs. Hopefully an equilibrium will be achieved sometime in the future.

Sadly, one of this year's authors, Christine Bladon, has decided to make this her last report for the time being. Our thanks go to Christine for re-formatting the chapter on peptide analogues, which will no doubt remain an attractive template for next year's reporters to work on. To all my fellow Reporters and Janet Freshwater of the RSC, I offer sincere thanks for their unstinting efforts once again to get this volume into print.

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