

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Contributions of a scientific nature intended for this section should be submitted to the Editor or any of the Co-Editors of Acta Crystallographica or Journal of Applied Crystallography.*

*Acta Cryst.* (1992). **A48**, 411–412

### Stuttgart honours Ewald

BY G. HILDEBRANDT

*Katzwanger Steig 2, D-1000 Berlin 22, Germany*

*(Received 20 February 1992; accepted 17 March 1992)*

Since 1985, various plaques have been unveiled on houses in Stuttgart to commemorate famous past inhabitants. One of the most recent in this series, above the entrance of the old 'Röntgeninstitut' (Seestrasse 71, now belonging to the Max Planck Institute for Metal Research), has the following inscription (Fig. 1):

PAUL PETER EWALD

Physicist

Born 23 January 1888 in Berlin  
Died 22 August 1985 in Ithaca/USA

Professor Ewald was a pioneer and promoter of crystal structure research. He held the Chair of Theoretical Physics at the Technical University from 1921 to 1937, resigned 1933 as Rector and later taught at universities in England and the USA.

Donated by the Faculty of Physics  
of the University of Stuttgart  
1991

After lecturing for three years at Munich University, P. P. Ewald accepted in 1921 an offer of an Assistant Professorship at the Technische Hochschule (TH), or Technical University, in Stuttgart. He was soon promoted to a Chair of Theoretical Physics, having declined another offer from Münster. Years of efficient work in a small group, headed by an assistant for theoretical work, followed. In 1928, he declined an offer from Hanover, which gave him the chance to ask for a second assistant – for experimental work! – and for a small building of his own, for a combination of theoretical and experimental work. This *Baracke*, consisting of one floor above ground level for the theoreticians and another one below ground level for experimental work, was completed in 1930 (and unfortunately destroyed during an air raid in World War II, so nothing remains today).

During these years, Ewald gained an increasing reputation in Stuttgart. He played a major role in organizing the celebrations in 1929 for the 100th anniversary of the TH. In 1931, he became Director of the Physical Sci-

ences Division and in 1932 he was elected Rector. However, owing to increasing difficulties with National Socialist members of the faculty (whom he opposed with much personal courage), he resigned in the spring of 1933, one year before his term of office expired. In spite of the escalating political tensions, Ewald continued in his position as Professor, gathering a number of excellent co-workers around him. Almost without exception, these later became famous names in physics or crystallography. In late 1936,

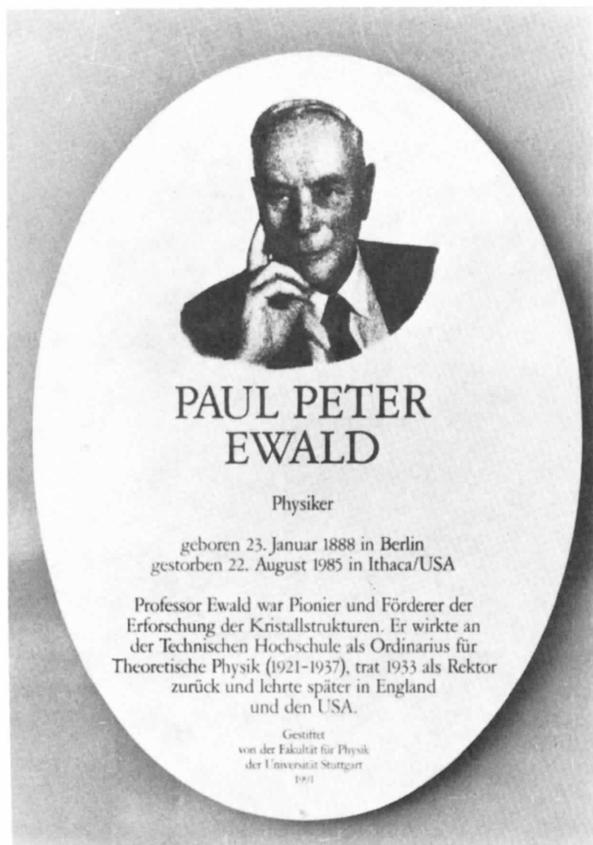


Fig. 1. Photograph of the memorial plaque for P. P. Ewald.

however, after Ewald had left a faculty meeting in silent protest, he was summarily retired. Some time later, an invitation to Cambridge took him to England and early in 1938 his family followed (Hildebrandt, 1992). His later life in England and the USA is well known (Bethe & Hildebrandt, 1988).

The Faculty of Physics of Stuttgart University honoured Ewald soon after his death with an academic commemorative colloquium (in July 1986). One of the speakers was H. A. Bethe, who described his father-in-law's life and work. On 8 May 1991, the unveiling of a commemorative

plaque made it possible to inform a larger public about Ewald's life and work in Stuttgart.

#### References

- BETHE, H. A. & HILDEBRANDT, G. (1988). *Paul Peter Ewald 1888-1985*. In *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, Vol. 34. Cambridge Univ. Press.
- HILDEBRANDT, G. (1992). *P. P. Ewald - the German Period*. In *P. P. Ewald and his Dynamical Theory of X-ray Diffraction. A Memorial Volume for P. P. Ewald, 23 January 1888 - 22 August 1985*, edited by D. W. J. CRUICKSHANK, H. J. JURETSCHKE & N. KATO. Oxford Univ. Press. In the press.