

PREFACE

In the early summer of '89 a very informal meeting on the bulge of our Galaxy was held in Leiden. During that meeting Michael Rich proposed to hold a more properly organised symposium on "Galactic Bulges" in a few years time. After some discussion a Scientific Organising Committee was founded and after some manoeuvring a chairman was chosen, a local organiser was assigned and two editors were given instructions. A good thing about the location of the meeting was that Ghent is a very beautiful city and had never before hosted an IAU symposium. It could be that this, plus the fact that he is a very keen amateur astronomer led H.M. the King of Belgium to offer his patronage to the meeting – an offer that we gratefully and – we hope – gracefully accepted.

The meeting took place at a resort some 15 km outside Ghent. Most participants were housed on the premises – a very convenient situation. This feeling of togetherness made up for the small shortcomings of the lecture room, which is normally used as a sports hall. The weather was fair, except on the day of the barbecue when pouring rain forced us to go inside. We want to thank the local organisers and all their helpers for the enormous amount of work they put into the organisation, the success of which can be measured by the importance of the only major disaster: on the first day no poster would stick onto the wall. We especially would like to thank the two conference secretaries, Nicole Baeck and Monique Schaetsaert. Thanks are also due to P. Batsleer who edited the book of abstracts and to M. Winsall for his help in transcribing the tapes containing the discussions.

As for these proceedings: we thank all invited speakers for finally sending in their reviews – we could not help but notice that the reviewers from the other side of the ocean obeyed the deadline more strictly than those from this side. Unfortunately, two reviewers missed all deadlines – and these proceedings. Scepticism made us decide not to schedule a separate session on the possible triaxiality of the bulge – or in other words, about the bar. The subject index to these proceedings shows that the participants corrected automatically for this mistake. We printed a few Russian contributions, although the authors were not able to participate in the meeting; we felt justified by the very special circumstances of these authors. Ideally all contributed papers should be of equal length. However, although all scientists are equal, it happened that some contributions are more equally long than others. A novelty was provided by the portraits of speakers drawn during their presentation by L. Debrouwere, who agreed to work under the poor lighting conditions of a lecture room. The results are true caricatures: the victims refuse to recognize what all others do.

For the cover we selected a diagram discussed by Harding and Morrison in their contribution. Large data bases have always been valued in astronomical research; so have data of high quality. New is the possibility to obtain large data bases with entries of high quality. Old problems suddenly take on a new appearance; read the discussion of the diagram on the cover and of other similar diagrams elsewhere in this volume.

We hope that these proceedings carry with them the atmosphere of an enjoyable and fruitful meeting, and that they will be of use for some time in the future.

Ghent and Leiden, April 15, 1993

H.Dejonghe and H.J.Habing

Scientific Organizing Committee:

H.J. Habing (the Netherlands, Chair), C. Chiosi (Italy), H. Dejonghe (Belgium), M. Feast (South Africa), K. Freeman (Australia), G. Gilmore (United Kingdom), F. Hartwick (Canada), J. Melnick (ESO), I. Novikov (Russia), M. Rich (USA).

Local Organizing Committee:

H. Dejonghe (Chair), N. Baeck, M. Luwel, M. Schaetsaert, P. Smeyers, H. Steyaert, B. Van der Walle, F. Verheest.

Sponsoring IAU Commissions:

28 (Galaxies), 33 (Structure and dynamics of the galactic system),
35 (Stellar constitution).

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