

Papers of M H F Wilkins: correspondence with Francis Crick, with reference to DNA research

Contributors

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Medical Research Council Unit
CAVENDISH LABORATORY
FREE SCHOOL LANE
CAMBRIDGE

19th October, 1957

Dr. M. Wilkins,
MRC Biophysics Unit,
King's College,
Strand,
London, W.C.2.

Dear Maurice,

We have Seymour Benzer here this year. He is anxious to get some understanding of stereochemistry and model building. In particular he would like to build for himself a model of DNA. It would be more realistic if he could do this to your latest coordinates. If you could let us have a copy of them we'd be most grateful.

When are you coming to Cambridge again? Odile and I will be back from Copenhagen by 8th November. Would you like to give a talk to the Unit some time?

yours ever,

Francis

F.H.C. Crick

15th January, 1958.

Dr. Francis Crick,
Cavendish Laboratory,
CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Francis,

Thank you for your card. My worries about the television were of rather a different kind than you supposed but fortunately it turns out that I need not be involved in more than a very small part. They are now trying to get Jim, and Harriet Ephrussi; and Leonard (!) has agreed. Quite a crowd altogether.

About Brussels, I have put in brackets (in collaboration with Sloan-Kettering Institute, N.Y.) after the name of our lab. I assume you will not mind. It has all taken the hell of a lot of time at this end but you will be glad to hear that our show will, I think, look very well.

Have you any news about unpublished work on structures of nucleic acid components? If so please let us know.

All greetings for the New Year to your and Odile.

Yours

(M.H.F. Wilkins).

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20 January 1958

Dear Maurice,

I'm very glad to hear that you got the Brussels exhibit finished, and as you surmised I am quite happy about the reference to the Sloan-Kettering. I have no definite news of any published work on structures of nucleic acid components, though I know of two which are in progress. However I want to talk to you about the puckering of pentose rings, as this problem has come up in relation to poly A. Incidentally I have a feeling that you have overdone the pushing-in of the bases in DNA, and that a little tilting might be preferable. I have to be in town several times during February and hope to drop in to see you then.

Yours ever,

Francis

F.H.C. Crick

Dr M.H.F. Wilkins,
Biophysics Research Unit,
King's College,
Strand,
London, W.C. 2.

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CAMBRIDGE

3 March 1958

Dear Maurice,

Very many thanks for the lunch and for all your news. I am enclosing the details of our latest model for poly A - here labelled poly A (F) - to give you some idea of our bond distances and angles. The last figure is of course just to avoid rounding off errors. May I have it back as soon as possible, please, as it is my only complete copy.

My main reason for writing is that I have just had a letter from Professor Emil L. Smith, The Laboratory for the Study of Hereditary and Metabolic Disorders, College of Medicine, University of Utah, Salt Lake City 12, Utah, U.S.A., whom I expect you know. He writes "I am planning to include in the new edition of the Principles of Biochemistry, which is now in preparation, a figure showing the two stranded helix of DNA. I would be very grateful if you could supply me with a print of a suitable figure showing clearly the pairing of the bases and the dimensions of the unit. I know that there has been some revision of the exact figures since your first publication and I have been unable to locate these. Naturally, in using this for publication, I would give credit to wherever this figure has appeared or to you if it is unpublished material."

I have replied saying that he should apply to you, and that I am writing to you. His text-book is supposed to be quite a good one, so it would be worth your while to give him a good figure.

Yours ever,

Francis



BIOPHYSICS RESEARCH UNIT,

KING'S COLLEGE,
STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2.

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13 March 58

Dear Francis,

Thank you very
much for the MSS. The structure
seems fine to us (100' your NH ~~band~~ O
band might be a little short?) but
I suppose this could be altered easily.

I sent something to Emil Smith.

Spencer is writing some notes on the
sugar ring distortion he has made on
purines & pyrimidines & we will send
this along to you (He had spotted
Furberg's 10° error). There seems to be very
little difference between your conclusions
& his on sugar rings.

greetings

M.

M.H.F. Wilkins

CAMBRIDGE MA
MAY 29
11 14
1959



AIR LETTER
AÉROGRAMME

VIA AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

Mr. Maurice Wilkins F.R.S.
MRC Biophysics Unit,
Cambridge College,

ENGLAND

Strand,
London

NO TAPE OR STICKER MAY BE ATTACHED
IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED, THIS LETTER
WILL BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL

FIRST FOLD

SECOND FOLD

TO BE FOLDED IN THIS MANNER
TO BE SURE TO BE
PROPERLY SEALED

The Chemistry Department,

Harvard,

Cambridge, Mass.

28th May 1955

Dear Maurice,

I was very touched by your nice letter. It's true that I have been offered jobs over here, and that I have not yet refused them. You ask what we need in England - the answer is adequate lab. space in which to work. We hope that this is going to be provided at Cambridge, though I am afraid not in the centre of Cambridge; so it's rather unlikely that I shall stay here.

We leave in two weeks for California, and hope to be back in Europe by September. Very glad to hear you are married. Give our love to

Gigi*

Yours ever,

Francis.

*? Spelling?

FOLD SIDES OVER.
MOISTEN FLAP WELL AND
NO OTHER ENVELOPE.

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DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

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M.R.C. Unit.

28th April, 1961.

Dr. M. H. F. Wilkins, F.R.S.,
Medical Research Council Biophysics Research Unit,
King's College,
Strand,
London, W.C.2.

Dear Maurice,

yes
Thank you for your very nice words about our collagen paper. Please excuse the delay, but I was away at Easter and since then have been very busy on phage genetics. I have made the alterations suggested with two exceptions. I would prefer to leave the survey as it stands, unless you insist, and I don't know for certain whether Alex used the Wyckoff method as well as the Elliott method. I am writing to ask him, and could put in a sentence in proof if you agree. If the other alterations are not satisfactory, let me know and I will try again or, better still, add a line or two yourself!

I may be coming up to town shortly. If I do I would like to drop in to see you about the business of "standard" bond distances and angles etc. I have done some work on this but do not easily see my way to finishing it. Perhaps one of your young men might like to take it over.

In any case it would be nice to see you again. I will ring you up when my plans are more definite.

Yours ever,

Francis

F. H. C. Crick.

*P.S. I have given the figures
to John's secretary.*