



APPLETON LABORATORY NEWSLETTER

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5 Years Up

In the evening of Monday 15th October, the Appleton Laboratory, on behalf of various benefactors, played host to a gathering of Ariel V's creators, mentors and patrons, to mark the completion of 5 years' successful operations in orbit. Some 60 guests associated with the Ariel V project enjoyed an informal occasion with their colleagues, both past and present, from a number of establishments. Food and refreshments were provided, and during the 27855th revolution of the satellite activities were in strict contrast to the technical discipline usually engendered by such a project.

Not an occasion for mutual congratulation, it was nevertheless apt that Brian Oakley should commend the achievements of the Ariel V programme and its ability to function and sustain wide attention for so long. With a minimum of formality Peter Willmore paid tribute to the dedication of the control centre staff, and presented a small token from experimenters to Jock Gourlay for his key role in executing the observing programme.

Having fallen some 100 km during the last 5 years the satellite is likely to become increasingly difficult to control in the new year and should re-enter the atmosphere sometime in the Spring. When this occurs, Ariel V will have already left a considerable impact on the field of X-ray astronomy and on Ditton Park.

Cretan Holiday

It wasn't my idea to go to that cocktail party - I don't like them in any case, and somebody always pins you in a corner to make sure that you know all about their last holiday - the marvellous people, wonderful scenery, good food and cheap plonk, etc. And I certainly was NOT going to Crete for Easter - I said as much to my wife on the way home, what with retirement in the offing and the need to conserve - another fortnight in Cornwall was the best idea

We touched down at Iraklion about 6.30 p.m. local time, which is two hours ahead of ours in May. At first we weren't very impressed. The airport is in the dockyard/industrial area, and the first impression is of a vast slum with some very barren unattractive hills behind. And we couldn't decide whether the airport was being built, or rebuilt, or was just having its face lifted. (Later we found this

to be typical of development in Crete; there are many unfinished hotels and roads that were said to be unfinished in quite early editions of Bowman's guide. We did once see two men working on a site, or rather sitting on a barrow beside it.)

Our hire-car awaited us outside - a brand-new Fiat 127 with only 36 km on the clock. (By the time we had done with it this had risen to 1,826 km, and our respect for the car had increased proportionally!) We set off in convoy behind our guide, along the fine new motor road, and the scenery became more and more beautiful as we left Iraklion behind and moved eastwards towards Elounda, where we had hired a villa. But by the time we left the motorway it was already pitch dark, and on first acquaintance the road to Elounda dismayed us. It was often narrow and sometimes precipitous; it had huge pot-holes in awkward places, which gave us terrible jolts as we tried to keep up with the leader. (I was glad that it wasn't my car.) The commonest road sign seemed to be "Falling Rocks", and it seemed that the rocks were just left where they fell. When we arrived at Elounda we could see nothing of our surroundings. We were left at our villa with a warning not to drive the car down the slope beside it, because it went straight into the sea, and indeed we could see a few dim lights reflected in the water. However, the villa surpassed our hopes. It was roomy, attractive, well-furnished and equipped, with a balcony and maid-service. But we were glad to have a quick meal and get to bed.

Waking next morning was a delight. We were on the first floor, with a pleasant balcony almost overhanging the water. Opposite and about a kilometre distant was the long humped shape of the island of Spinalonga, and to our left, half filling the channel, a smaller island (oddly enough of the same name) with its old Venetian fort, later a leper colony and now abandoned, although it can still be visited by boat. To the right, at about the same distance, a causeway joined the island to the "mainland", with some picturesque old windmills upon it, and a small bridge to permit the passage of small boats. And so we were looking out on a "loch" of that matchless Mediterranean blue; it was clear, bright, sunny and warm, and breakfast on the balcony was a series of exclamations of delighted discovery, as little by little we took in the beauty of the place.

My wife had come mainly to see antiquities, whereas I had come to see Crete, and it is fortunate that antiquities in Crete are numerous and widespread, so that we were able to do both at once. We had come just in time for the Easter celebrations and were very glad, although this meant that for several days many places were closed, petrol was not to be had, and we had to walk for a change, (as we did when there was an island-wide electricity failure). The roads are variable in quality, but even the good roads are liable to subsidence, are often badly repaired or just filled up with earth and stones, and constant vigilance is needed. The worst roads are unbelievably bad. Returning from a trip one evening we took a 20 km detour, and darkness found us on a road little more than a cars width from cliff to precipice, rolling along from one huge boulder to another at about 2 km/hr, and of course (yes, you've guessed it) we met a car coming the other way. He scraped himself against the cliff, and I went out on to the overhang with an almost hysterical wife peering down into the black abyss. I told her to get out, but she wailed that there wasn't anything to get out onto, so we had to rock gently forward saying a prayer, and mercifully made it. That 20 km detour took 3½ hours!

We saw most of the well-known sites, some magnificent - one thinks of course of Knossos and especially Phaestos - and some less so but none the less full of interest, such as Gournia and Aghios Triada. We climbed first up and then down into

the Dhiktaion cave to see the "birthplace of Zeus" - a long climb up behind a boy who must surely be a future Dekathlon, regretting the donkey we had refused at the bottom, and then a long steep descent into the dank darkness clutching a candle, until the entrance was a pin-point of light way up above. One remembers Malia, both for its palace site, which although not so splendid is still very fine, and for its bathing beach - long, sun-drenched, rockfree and warm. And there was Kritsa, where all the women sat outside working on the handmade clothes, shawls, mats and many other things which are sold all over Crete, (but which are cheaper here). We never saw the men working. Mostly they sat about on wooden chairs on the street, drinking or in endless conversation. (On feast days they did the same thing but in their best suits.) And way up in the hills above Kritsa, the well preserved post-Minoan settlement of Lato was well worth the climb.

We visited many places along the coast - Aghios Nikolaus, Sitia and Ierapetra being the largest - colourful Mediterranean ports with their different mixtures of western and Levantine culture - with their restaurants and tavernas spilling out onto the streets and their tables and awnings covering the water front. We remember the beautiful road to Sitia, and the appalling one to Kato Zakros, with its more recently excavated site and caves, and its pleasant beach. Then there was the Iraklion museum, which we had especially wanted to see, half closed and many famous pieces not available, and the Aghios Nikolaus museum with its board outside saying "Closed for the Season". We remember the Plain of Lasithi with its countless windmills pumping water onto the fields, and the climb up to Pyrgos, and Platanos, along with some unforgettable journeying. We remember too the sawmill-like scream of our water-pump filling the roof tank, and troubles with the loo

But what was it that made Crete so magic? The light, the blue, blue sea and balmy bathing? The awareness of a long and active history, spanning the centuries between the ruined palaces and that simple stone, crudely carved, in memory of some loved comrade killed high on a remote hill during the second World War? The exuberant wild flowers everywhere along the roads - the black-swathed women sidesaddle on their donkeys, leading their goats to pasture in the mornings - the candle-lighted procession climbing through the village on Good Friday with wreaths, a bier, and mournful chanting, and over all the sound of the passing bell - the bonfires and fireworks, the shouts and clamouring bells proclaiming the good news at midnight on Easter Saturday : "Christ is Risen"?

Whatever it was, as I was telling this chap at the sherry party last night, we're going again next year and we'd recommend it to anybody, what with the friendly people, the marvellous scenery, the great food and that good cheap plonk

F. Bale

Staff News

Congratulations to :

G. H. R. Liddiard now C.O.
R.L. Henzell now P.T.O. IV

Welcome to :

| | |
|---------------------|--------|
| R. F. Warren-Smith | H.S.O. |
| Miss E. A. Willcock | S.O. |
| Miss A. J. Carter | A.S.O. |
| Miss C. McFadden | C.A. |

Resignations, etc.

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| A. Clarke | S.C.S. |
| K. Macrae | " |
| S. M. Sani | " |
| N. Leelasorn | " |
| R. Isherwood | " |
| Mrs. J. Deats | " |
| L. O'Connor | " |
| J. G. Witney | " |
| Miss P. A. Baxter | " |
| P. Barnes | Vac. Wkr. |
| A. Muzlish | " |
| B. A. King | " |
| Mrs. E. G. Robson | C.O. |
| J. Canning | S.O. |
| Mrs. M. E. Robinson | C.O. |
| D. John | H.S.O. |
| R. Pratt | " |
| M. J. Smith | " |

Other Changes

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|----------------|--|
| P. A. Eggett | S.O. to Upper Atmosphere Group (Dr. Bryant) |
| G. M. Johnston | S.S.O. to Upper Atmosphere Group (Dr. Dickinson) |

Letter to the Outstations

Dear Colleagues,

Many here stroll in the Park after luncheon. Sometimes your correspondent does so, astounding his friends by his vast fund of ignorance of matters Natural Historical. Engaged the other day in this gentle occupation I discovered a new building. It was a fair-sized red hut with attendant humans nearby. On approaching, imagine, as they say, my surprise to see, writ large upon it, the legend 'British Antarctic Survey'.

Now Continental Drift there may be but this is pushing matters a bit. Should they sack the Bransfield's navigator for confusing the Moat with the Lemaire Channel (or give him some sort of Gold Medal for having got the thing there). Could it - horror - be that Those Responsible for the Public Good are now sure of the swift onset of the next ice age and want to get their experts in on the ground floor as it were?

The cover story is that this is a test rig for the Survey's new ionosonde. This marvel will, according to rumour, present in palatable form a wealth of information about the ionised layers. It should practically reveal details of the home life of individual ions, accompanied, if so desired, by a medley of tunes of all nations contributing to U.R.S.I. We look forward to astonishing disclosures from our Polar colleagues.

Thus then the field, now the closet. A bizarre discovery the other week was that of a mummified mini-monster. This really quite presentable little creature had, it would seem, composed itself in a lifelike attitude in a warm dry corner of the telephone exchange, then decorously breathed its last. Dried out, it presented to the world an auto-ikon fit to delight Bentham himself.

My naturalist friends think it was a newt. Well-well, is someone trying to tell us something, should we invoke the name of Newton for our joint enterprise or bearing in mind that it seems a bit weird, has it been our triumph to have isolated the only known example of Maxwell's Demon. The case needs to be referred to minds far more astute than that of

Yours sincerely,

The Editor.