



APPLETON LABORATORY NEWSLETTER

We are all saddened to learn of the untimely death of Dr. J. A. Saxton. News has also reached us of the death of Dr. Smith-Rose, another former Director and Mr. Kift, a well-known ex-member of staff.

It seemed appropriate to dedicate this special issue of the A.L. Newsletter to the memory of these former colleagues.

J. Houghton
Director.

Dr. J. A. Saxton

Staff were shocked to learn of the death on April 17th, at the age of 65, of Dr. J.A. Saxton, Director of the Laboratory from 1966 to 1977. His association with Ditton Park goes back many years to the days when it formed a part of the National Physical Laboratory, whose staff he joined in 1933.

After gaining first class honours at Imperial College in 1935 he remained there as a demonstrator, during which time he worked with G.P. Thomson on problems of neutron physics.

In 1938, as a member of the N.P.L. staff, he began work of a very different nature which was to occupy him in one form or other for the rest of his life.

The need to understand the role of the lower atmosphere in the propagation of very short radio waves was already engaging the attentions of scientists and communications engineers. It was in research of this kind that he became increasingly expert, deriving important results from both field and laboratory experiments which, before long, led to the establishment of an international reputation.

His expertise in what has come to be called radio meteorology had few, if any, rivals in this country and as leader of a team making valuable contributions to that discipline, he was able to visualise its application to ease the problems of an ever more crowded radio spectrum.

In 1960 Dr. Saxton was appointed the Deputy Director of the now independent Radio Research Station. Four years later he agreed to become Director of the U.K. Scientific Mission and Scientific Counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington. In 1966, on the retirement of Mr. J.A. Ratcliffe, he returned to the U.K. to become Director of what was then the Radio and Space Research Station.

In the academic world he held, at various times, the posts of Special Lecturer at Imperial College and Visiting Professor at the University of Texas and at University College London. The University of Sheffield conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Engineering and, quite recently, he was elected to the Fellowship of Engineering. He was awarded the CBE in 1973.

Retirement from the Appleton Laboratory saw a change rather than a diminution of his responsibilities. He undertook consultant duties for the Home Office and his long standing concern with international radio science, particularly in U.R.S.I. and the I.T.U., continued unabated up to the time of his death.

A prominent member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, of which he was a Vice-President, he also encouraged the work of the radio amateur and was a past President of the Radio Society of Great Britain.

Few doubted that institutions both national and international would long continue to benefit from his fund of knowledge. It was not to be.

Many present and past members of A.L. staff attended a cremation service on 23 April, and all will extend their heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Saxton and their family.

Dr. R. L. Smith-Rose

We are sorry to report the death at the age of 85, of Dr. R.L. Smith-Rose, a distinguished worker in the field of radio propagation research. He will be remembered by older staff as Director of the Radio Research Station, as our Laboratory was then known.

After graduating from Imperial College in 1914 with first class honours in physics he spent some time with Siemens Bros. before joining the National Physical Laboratory in 1919. This step marked the start of a long and successful career in scientific research, its application and its administration.

A world authority on the techniques and problems of radio direction finding, his studies contributed in no small way to the understanding of the ionosphere at a time when Appleton's brilliant crucial experiment confirmed the existence of that region. This work of the 1920's gained him the degree of Ph.D. and then D.Sc. of the University of London.

He later became Superintendent of the Radio Division, N.P.L. a post which included responsibility for the Research Station at Slough. When that Station was made a separate institution for radio research, he was appointed its first Director.

Despite increasing involvement in world scientific organisations, particularly the International Scientific Radio Union (U.R.S.I.), he continued to initiate studies into other aspects of radio propagation and of radio noise. He was President of U.R.S.I. from 1960 to 1963 and remained an Honorary President until his death. He retired from our Laboratory in 1960 but for some years to come continued to be much occupied with science as the Secretary-General of the Inter-Union Commission for allocation of frequencies (I.U.C.A.F.)

Throughout a long life he was aware of the need to apply results of various researches to the problems of radiocommunications. A prominent contributor to the work of the International Telecommunication Union, (I.T.U.) he also gave support to the world of amateur radio, becoming President of the Radio Society of Great Britain in 1959. He was Chairman of Study Group 5 of the CCIR from 1951 to

1970. He was awarded a CBE in 1952 and many other honours.

To Mrs. Smith-Rose and his family we offer our sympathies. In the nature of things, all too few remain of his generation of research workers. Theirs was a new science. The sure foundations they built form their lasting memorial.

Francis Kift

Older members of the staff were sorry to hear that Frank Kift died on 23 March at the age of 65. He joined the Laboratory from the Army in 1947 and left in 1966 to take up an appointment as Assistant Director in RAF Signals Command, Medmenham. He retired prematurely in 1973 and had been living in Exmouth for the last few years. He will be remembered best for his pioneer work with Arnold Wilkins and Ramsay Shearman on oblique-incidence ionospheric sounding, and for the fact that he had served at all four of the then RRS outstations, namely, Hillhead, Inverness, Falklands and Singapore. He never married, and is survived by his two sisters, to whom our sympathies are extended at this time.

RWM

There is little which can be added to this special edition of our newsletter. It may not be out of place, though, to consider one aspect of the careers of the former Directors commemorated here. One was born in Victoria's day, one in 1914, the year in which his elder colleague graduated. They were a generation apart. They were also both professional physicists who became eminent members of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and of international scientific organisations.

Such achievements run contrary to some thinking, which would have physicist and engineer move each in his own strict line. That transition brings problems no-one doubts; however, the example of these men and of others, happily still active in their chosen fields, shows that some of the divisions are self-imposed. To those of sufficient gifts they need not prove insuperable.

G.G.