

R. S. R. S.

Newsletter

No. 55

November 1965

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

by R. L. Smith-Rose

This is not the story of a relatively new recruit to the staff of the Station; and it certainly is not connected with any mail train robbery ! It is not even an account of the experiences of your Director during his first five years at Ditton Park. It is a note from his predecessor describing some of the ways in which life has treated the writer since the responsibility of administering the work of the Radio Research Station - as it then was - was handed over in September 1960.

I have already recounted in RRS Newsletter No. 16 (August 1962), the events which occupied my attention during the first two years, and foreshadowed what was to happen in 1963. But little did I really know what was in store for me in the following year, and its successors; for I have already been out of the United Kingdom seven occasions this year (1965), including my first visit to South America. But perhaps I had better return to events following the last review in Newsletter No. 16 dated 16th August 1962.

Although the Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting had reported to the Postmaster General in mid-1962, there were still one or two meetings and talks concerning this activity during the last months of that year. Also in October the Canadian National Committee of URSI invited me to Ottawa to participate in their joint meeting with the United States Committee; and I was able to present there an up-to-date account of the progress of the Inter-Union Commission on Frequency Allocations for Radio Astronomy and Space Science (IUCAF) of which I am the Secretary-General, as readers of the previous account will recall.

Participation in international conferences started early in 1963, for in mid-January I was in Geneva at the Plenary Assembly of CCIR to carry out my

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duties as Chairman of Study Group V, which deals on an international basis with research in radio wave propagation over the earth's surface and through the non-ionised regions of the atmosphere. I also participated in the work of Study Group IV which is concerned with space research and radio astronomy, on which more later.

Mention of the 1963 Geneva meeting, calls to mind the fact that we were to have met in New Delhi; but, due to certain activities of the Chinese republic, the place of the meeting had to be transferred to Geneva. At the time of writing, it seems that history is about to repeat itself, as I am due to represent URSI at a meeting of the Executive Board of ICSU scheduled to be held in Bombay early in January 1966! I wonder!

After this CCIR Plenary Assembly, life was fairly quiet for a while, and my meetings and other activities were confined to various parts of the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland. But in May, I flew to Albuquerque in New Mexico to represent the Institution of Electrical Engineers at a three-day conference on Telemetry; and was committed to give an after-dinner lecture (American style) on the second day. The following morning I was persuaded to abandon the conference for a while by a party of three wives of my hosts. They took me on a most interesting drive into the mountains to Sandia Park at an altitude of 10,700 ft. This was very refreshing as the town of Albuquerque is virtually in a desert with a negligible rainfall. In fact, I still recall that the Albuquerque Journal for 21 May 1963 stated "This is the 141st day of 1963: the sun has shone here on 522 consecutive days." This may have been monotonous for the inhabitants, but it was very refreshing to one who lives in England.

Apart from organising a meeting of IUGRF in Paris in May, and participating in the I.E.E. summer visit to Belfast in June, and attending the Board of URSI meeting in Brussels in July, the high-spot of 1963 was probably the Plenary Assembly of URSI in Tokyo during September. On the way, Dr. Saxton, Mr. Horner and I attended the symposium and committee meeting of the International Committee on Radio Meteorology at Berkeley, California. My wife was with me on this trip and we all had an enjoyable Sunday exploring San Francisco. Two days later, when Mr. Horner had left for Australia, and Professor Beynon had joined us, we visited Stanford University and the Ames Research Centre.

With a few days to spare, my wife and I went on to Honolulu, where I had my first swim in the Pacific Ocean immediately outside the Waikikia Hotel, and where my weakness for pineapple was more than satisfied during a tour round the island. It was during this trip that we visited a Mormon temple; and this re-awakened my interest in the religion of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, with which I had first come in contact during an earlier visit to Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1957.

As there were several members of RRS present in Tokyo, I need not dwell on the details of the General Assembly of URSI of which I had the honour to be President during the period 1960-63. We were all very impressed with the efficiency and great hospitality of our Japanese hosts, and the scientific

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achievements of this meeting have been recorded elsewhere. While I was naturally very occupied with my duties at this assembly, our enjoyment of some of the functions and visits was somewhat marred by my wife's illness. After the closing meeting she spent nearly two weeks under treatment in a Japanese Catholic hospital, where none of the nurses, and few of the sisters spoke any English. During this period my successor as President of URSI, Professor I. Koga, looked after me very well indeed; and I am greatly indebted to him for enabling me first to make all the technical and other visits of interest, which I had missed during the Assembly, and secondly by facilitating and generally accompanying me on my daily visits to the hospital. Our journey home by Japan Air Lines on the Polar route by way of Alaska and Copenhagen was a memorable one. I had with me a medical certificate to the effect that my wife was unable to walk more than a few steps; and as passengers usually have to walk several hundred yards at most of the world's airports, it was interesting to see the effect of this certificate in making available a fork lift to get up from ground level to the door of the aircraft, and of wheeled chairs and even a small ambulance car at London to travel from the aircraft to the passenger's lounge.

However, all this was two years ago and my wife, after a suitable period of convalescence, has quite recovered her normal good health. She has accompanied me on several more recent trips to Florence, where I participated in a COSPAR meeting in May 1964 and to Holland on an IEE visit in the following September.

Also in September 1964, I made my first acquaintance with Greece, where in company with Messrs. Lane and Meadows, I participated in a NATO summer school on Radio-meteorology. As I recall it, we were a party of about nine "professors" responsible for lectures to, and discussions with, about twenty students from various countries in Europe. This was a most interesting experience. We lived and worked in a superior sort of holiday camp, comprising a hotel and restaurant and a number of bungalows, spread about a self-contained peninsular jutting out into the Mediterranean. For lack of any better accomodation we used the hotel's Night Club as a lecture room, after the organiser, M. Misme of the French Radio-meteorological Service had purchased a blackboard and obtained suitable projection equipment. The general timetable was to have lectures in the morning, bathe in the afternoon and have a discussion meeting in the evening. I was delighted at the opportunity to add the Mediterranean to the list of my swimming occasions. The Lagonissi Hotel was self-contained as regards recreation with its own dance band, cinema and night club. It was, in fact, only at the week-end that Meadows and I were able to spend a day exploring Athens and other historical areas. We had to play truant on Monday to visit the National Observatory of Athens and the associated Ionospheric Institute.

The first half of 1965 has been just one thing after another! Starting in January we had a meeting in Bonn of my IUCAF committee; and this was followed in February by the interim meeting of CCIR Study Group IV which is concerned with the technical basis of plans for such activities as space research and

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communications and also radio astronomy. The CCIR is not itself a frequency allocating body, but it is on the results of its technical studies that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), assigns different portions of the radio frequency spectrum to the many and diverse users who are applicants on both a national and an international basis.

At the end of the General Assembly of URSI in Tokyo, the Board of Officers were slightly embarrassed at receiving two invitations from Yugoslavia and Germany respectively for the next General Assembly in 1966. We accepted both, and at meetings of the organising committee held in Brussels in March of this year, preliminary plans were made for a Symposium on ionospheric matters to take place in Belgrade, to be followed by a General Assembly in Munich. In the meantime I have been able to pay my first visit to Munich in April of this year to attend a meeting of the Executive Board of the International Council of Scientific Unions, at which I represent both URSI and IUCAF.

After a short holiday in England, I departed in May for Argentina to participate in the meeting of the International Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) where at the instigation of Mr. Ratcliffe, I became responsible for editing the Proceedings of the conference. I travelled both ways in company with Mr. Dalziel on what was both my first visit to South America, and indeed my furthest south trip; since the town of Mar del Plata where we finished up is several degrees south of Melbourne which I visited during the URSI General Assembly in Sydney in 1952.

We were to have met in the University of Buenos Aires, but due to certain demonstrations in the town which concerned activities in San Domingo, the whole conference was moved to a large hotel at the coastal resort of Mar del Plata which had previously closed at the end of its summer season. (We were 40° south of the equator). As it transpired the arrangements were very satisfactory; for we lived in the hotel, which had some 500 bedrooms, and also several suitable lecture rooms for both the full assembly and smaller meetings.

Two weeks after my return from South America, I went to Geneva to take the chair at the interim meeting of CCIR Study Group V which in common with the other Groups is preparing for the Plenary Assembly of CCIR, due to take place in Oslo in the summer of 1966.

Apart from a short visit to the COSPAR office in Paris on editorial matters, I have been in England during July and August endeavouring to overtake several arrears of work and other commitments which have had to be set aside from time to time. One of these is the writing of the present contribution which, in my innocence, I promised to provide your Editor a month or two ago. Having completed this screed, I now have only a few days left in which to prepare an article for the Encyclopaedia Britannica before my wife and I join the immediate Past President and other members of the Institution of Electrical Engineers on a week's visit to Frankfurt.

/This

This then is retirement in my experience: and I am sometimes reminded of the occasion about ten years ago when I met the father of a former member of the RRS at the London Docks when the latter was departing for Halley Bay in Antarctica. I discovered that he (the father that is) had retired and I said cheerfully "Oh that must be fine; you are now able to do all those things you have been putting off for years". He replied in a rather serious manner: "I have done all those; it only took me six months".

R. L. Smith-Rose

STAFF NEWS

Congratulations to:

Margaret Peart and Tony Young on their engagement.

Mr. C. Clarke now M.I.E.E.

Mr. J. Bell " A.M.I.E.E.

Mr. C. Hale " Grad.I.E.E.E.

Mr. Tucker on his promotion to H.E.O.



Welcome to:

Dr. G. M. Courtier

T/S.S.O.

Dr. G. R. Thomas

T/S.O.

Miss C. Seabrook

T/A.E.O.

Mr. A. C. Soopce

T/A.E.O.

Mr. R. D. O. Marshall

T/A.E.O.

Mr. P. J. Howell

T/A.E.O. (Chilbolton)

Mr. A. G. Vincent

Labourer "

Resignations:

Mis M. V. Oliphant

T/S.O.

Mr. F. H. Venables

T/S.O.

Other Changes:

Dr. D. E. Page

T/S.S.O. on 3 years special leave, whilst on duties for E.S.R.O.

SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB

From our Own Correspondent

I have it in command from the editor to "do a lit" about the Guy Fawkes celebrations.

About 150 people congregated on a dry, cold evening to enjoy a very well prepared entertainment.

Because a new hut, containing an ESRO rocket not yet ready for firing, occupies the traditional site, the bonfire went west - about 100 yards west.

Two effigies, one rather Egyptian looking, the other true British pink, surmounted a pyre of classical outline and generous proportions, which after a lengthy flaming start, became a perfect 6500 Å cone.

A savage decree placed this cone where it subtended only 5° at the viewing point, reducing the incident comfort index by 18 dB rel. to 1 mW/sq.cm.

The two dustbins full of fireworks were well selected and competently /displayed

displayed. Several of the rockets, fired as vehicle testing rounds were worthy of payloads. Spin rate, trajectory and apogee were within spec.

Our thanks for all this and for the hot dogs and coffee which rounded off the evening, are due to the Sports and Social Club Committee.

Value for Money A sub-orbital craft with parachute recovery for three flares. 7/6d

Best Buy Margaret Peart scored "very good" for planning, organisation and execution.

A. J. H.

Camera Club

Paul Dickinson, Spur D, holds a key to the club darkroom which is available for use by members.

Anyone who can contribute prints or slides from the London Airport trip to our exhibition (29th Nov. - 3rd Dec.) is asked to contact Paul Dickinson or Henry Rishbeth. The theme for the monthly slide show, on Tuesday 30th November at 1255, is "East African Wildlife".

Henry Rishbeth

Bridge Club

The next club evening will be on Wednesday 1st December. We had an entertaining evening on October 27th when each person partnered five other people for four hands each during the evening. Dr. and Mrs. Fooks and Mr. and Mrs. Gordon-Smith played in the first match of the NPL Interdivisional League on November 2nd., and were placed sixth. In the away match against the Road Research Laboratory on October 20th, F.S.R.S. won by 1560 points; our team was:

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|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dr. and Mrs. Bain | Dr. and Mrs. Fooks |
| Dr. Dickinson and Mr. Zavody | Mr. and Mrs. Gordon-Smith |

Our next match is against the National Physical Laboratory on November 19th.

Jean Fooks

THE DISPLAY CABINET

Readers will have noticed the display of apparatus in the cabinet situated in the main entrance.

The contents will be changed from time to time in an attempt to show various aspects of the Station's work and of the general history of related subjects.

G. W. Gardiner

Bridging/

BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP.

The following letter has recently been received:

TO: The Editor,
R.S.R.S. Newsletter.

Dear Editor,

Today we recieved from Slough a copy of the Concise Oxford Dictionary labeled

SINGAPORE, Please - URGENT

I know my speling is bad but I wasn't aware it was that bad!

Yores sinsearly,

A. J. G. Moorat

Singapore

LETTER TO THE OUTSTATIONS

Dear Colleagues,

Good authority reminds us that the winter wind is not so unkind as man's ingratitude. Nevertheless an Easterly airstream has been biting with teeth keen enough. Last Monday morning, overcoats were fashionable laboratory wear.

You will see from the staff news that Mrs Oliphant, Mr. Venables and Dr. Page have left us. Our good wishes to them were expressed in the usual way. Dr. Harry Kohl, from Lindau, recently spent a few days at Ditton Park and at our first information meeting this year, Dr. Brück, Astronomer Royal for Scotland, gave a very interesting talk on 'Techniques of Modern Astronomy'.

You can't be objective about Art. The varied comment greeting our first R.S.R.S. Christmas card has emphasised this fact. It shows, say some, how reality betters the mind's idea. It shows, say others, what might have been had we not fallen from grace. Our discreet drooping willow appears, to the artist as rather more aggressive plant with oriental undertones. I know the willow is oriental too; but, as I say, everything depends on how you see it. Thanks to myopia, the twitching off of spectacles can make an Impressionist of Canaletto for,

Yours sincerely,

The Editor

S T O P P R E S S !!

Christmas Dance Stop Saturday 18th December 8 p.m. Stop Dancing to the
Hi Fi's (recommended) Stop Please come Stop