

History of Meteorology and Physical Oceanography Special Interest Group



Newsletter 1, 2008

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Do you believe everything you read in newspapers? I certainly don't. Do you believe everything you find on the Web? I hope not. Information from the Web should be checked very carefully. All too many websites contain mistakes. Do you believe everything you read in History Group newsletters? I hope so. We do our best to get things right. Please forgive the odd typo, but do please tell us if you find any other mistakes.

You would think that books and papers that have been peer reviewed would be reliable, but some are not. Of course, the longer ago a book or paper was published, the less reliable it is likely to be now, given that knowledge and understanding increase year on year. The book or paper may have been wholly reliable when published but since overtaken by scholarship. What concerns me is the number of books and articles published recently that contain errors that could and should have been avoided. Let me give some examples, without naming any of the publications in question.

There were two distinct Meteorological Societies of London, one which existed from 1823 to 1850, the other from 1848 to 1850. The former lay dormant from 1824 to 1836 and 1844 to 1850. Two books written in the past ten years cited a paper about these societies which I published in *Weather* in 1993 (Vol.48, pp.364-372) but still gave the impression that these two societies were one and the same. Did the authors actually read my paper?

Another book published a few years ago states that international meteorological congresses organized by the Permanent (later International Meteorological) Committee were held in Paris in 1878, Berne in 1880, Copenhagen in 1882 and Paris in 1885. They were not, and the author in question should not have made this mistake because the author cited works which are official histories of the International (later World) Meteorological Organization and contain the correct information. There was indeed a meteorological congress in Paris in 1878, but it was organized by the French Meteorological Society and intended to be part of the Universal International Exposition that was held in the French capital in 1878. The meetings in 1880, 1882 and 1885 were meetings of the International Meteorological Committee. They were not congresses.

All too many mistakes occur because authors quote books or papers which contain incorrect information and do not themselves check original sources. A case in point is a figure often quoted for the residual speed of an ocean current near Land's End: 130 cm/sec. The original source correctly gave the figure as 2.5 miles per day, but then someone made the mistake of taking the figure as 2.5 miles per hour and metricating it. Whoops! The 130 cm/sec figure was very unlikely but went unquestioned because reputable oceanographers had quoted it.

And on page 4 of the *Proceedings of the British Meteorological Society* (Vol.1, No.1, 20 November 1861), the President of the Society, Nathaniel Beardmore, used the words "your Vice-President, Admiral FitzRoy". Thus, we may conclude that FitzRoy was a Vice-President of the British Meteorological Society. He was not. There is in the archive of the Royal Meteorological Society a letter from FitzRoy to British Meteorological Society Honorary Secretary C.V.Walker, dated 12 March 1862. It is reproduced overleaf and reads as follows:

"My dear Sir

In the *Proceedings of the British Meteorological Society* I find myself mentioned as Vice President. Pray be good enough to state to the Council that I never consented to be a Vice President – and that it is now my desire to have my name removed from the Council.

A free, working member of the Society – paying my subscription – I have no objection to remain – provided that, in the next arrangements I am not included as a Vice President or as one of the Council.

For reasons I need not parade – it seemed to me right to decline the Presidency of two Societies, besides the Meteorological – and though willing to be a humble occasional contributor – I will not undertake any official position – even as a merely honorary one.

Believe me, Faithfully yours, Rob.FitzRoy."

Alexander Pope thought it human to err, divine to forgive. What were his thoughts on carelessness?

Malcolm Walker

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Rev. Henry
1862 March 12
MetSoc
12 March 1862

Meteorological Department
2, Parkman Street, London, S.W.

My dear Sir
In the Proceedings of
the British Meteorological
Society I find myself
mentioned as Vice President.
Pray be good enough
to state to the Council
that I never consented
(V. Walker Esq. Secy. to
Secretary B.M.S.)

2

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one. Believe me
Faithfully yours
Edw. Pitt Rivers

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE NEW HISTORY GROUP CONTACT DETAILS

The postal address of the History Group is now:

c/o Royal Meteorological Society
104 Oxford Road
Reading RG1 7LL

Please address the envelope to History Group
Secretary, Chairman or Treasurer, as appropriate.

The new email address of the Group is:

MetSocHistoryGroup@gmail.com

The Group's Hon Secretary has a new job. She
leaves the Met Office on 18 January 2008, so her
Met Office postal and e-mail addresses cannot

thereafter be used. We wish Sara well in her new
job in Kingston University.

THE HISTORY GROUP'S WEB PAGE

Please note that the Royal Meteorological
Society's website has been revamped. The
address of the History Group's page is now

[http://www.rmets.org/activities/groups/SIG/detail.p
hp?ID=9](http://www.rmets.org/activities/groups/SIG/detail.php?ID=9)

and the address of the History page on the
Society's website is now

<http://www.rmets.org/about/history/index.php>

A WHITE EASTER 100 YEARS AGO

People wonder every year if there will be a White Christmas, but how many people ever wonder if there will be a White Easter? They somehow don't expect snow at Easter, yet it happens surprisingly often, though rarely on the scale of 100 years ago.

Easter was quite late in 1908, Sunday 19 April. Snow showers fell in East Anglia that day, and by the morning of Easter Monday snow lay 7 cm deep in Bury St Edmunds, but that was only a prelude to what was to come. Later in Easter Week, after a few days of mild weather, an area of low pressure tracked south-eastwards from Ireland to the English Channel and thereafter north-eastwards across the Thames Estuary. All day on Saturday the 25th, snow fell heavily over many parts of southern England, the counties worst affected being Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Hampshire. By the morning of 26 April, the depth of level snow was 23 cm in Coventry, 37 cm in Southampton, 45 cm in Oxford and 60-75 cm in the Andover-Newbury-Swindon triangle.

Easter is almost as early as it can be this year, Easter Day being Sunday 23 March 2008. Will there be snow? Who knows? We can but wait and see!

Malcolm Walker

FANCY A PINT....?

If you ever find time to spare in Westminster, London why not take some refreshment in 'The Strutton Arms', an old pub in Strutton Ground just at its junction with Victoria Street (almost opposite New Scotland Yard). It is not the most salubrious of hostleries, probably little changed from at least Edwardian times. As you sup your pint of mild ale or whatever is your preferred tippie, you may just begin to imagine this pub in late Victorian times with a bustling street market outside (it is still there most weekdays) and probably a 'German' band in the street 'umpaahring' for a few pennies. With the imagination of a second drink you may even begin to see the ghostly images from the turn of the 19th/20th century of Messrs Gaster and Brodie discussing the weather with one of their colleagues Mr Chas. Harding or Mr E.J. Hood whilst imbibing a hurried pint or two. Their weather knowledge was not limited to that in the street outside for they had at their fingertips daily information from all over the British Isles and Europe. For these gentlemen were none other than some of the staff from the London HQ of the Met Office which was located just alongside the pub from 1869 to 1911.

The Met Office rented the upper floors and the building from 1869. Initially it was designated No 116 Victoria St but was re-numbered in 1889 to No 63. The building formed the western corner of Strutton Ground at its junction with Victoria St. (see note below). The street level entrance was in Victoria St. and for many years was sandwiched between a piano shop (which was below the Met Office accommodation) and the premises of the 'Sanitary Survey Office'. That entrance still exists, albeit re-modelled somewhat. The Met Office's upper floors faced to Victoria St but also at the rear overlooked Strutton Ground. Consequently when the 'German' band was playing it was sometimes necessary to send a clerk down to ask them to 'soften their music' as the Director's office overlooked Strutton Ground. Daily weather reports from coastal stations were displayed on boards on the balconies overlooking Victoria St.

Mr A.T. Bench, a staff member from early 1898 until late 1910, recorded in great detail the daily life at No 63 Victoria St in a fascinating article issued in 1962. It was he who records that several staff would regularly 'pop out' or want to 'call at the Stores' both euphemisms for visits to the pub referred to by Bench as 'The Grafton Arms' (it was also at one time 'The Kings Arms') but now known as the 'The Strutton Arms'.

For over 40 years the Met Office's modest building in Victoria St. was the source of Gale Warnings to those far away at sea and the production of the increasing volume of weather forecasts and data published in the newspapers. It also painstakingly analysed vast amounts of data returned from ships and land stations to produce the early climate summaries and atlases. The Royal Met. Soc.'s HQ was coincidentally at No. 70 Victoria St. for many years, further along on the 'evens' side of the street.

So refreshed from your pint or two, just take a moment to absorb the atmosphere of this little corner of London and the part it played in the history of the meteorological services in the UK.

Note: Jacobs in his article in Met Mag 1973 about former homes of the Met Office, 'removed' the Met Office from the western to the eastern corner of Strutton Ground, but without justification. I have recently examined documents at Westminster Archives, including Kelly's Street Directories of 1880 and 1900 and the Met Office was definitely on the western corner of the junction of Strutton Ground and Victoria St (nearest Victoria Station).

Alan Heasman

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Royal Meteorological Society had a telephone before the Meteorological Office had one?

Fascinating details of life in the Office a century ago can be found in two articles by A.T.Bench: *The Meteorological Office: 63 Victoria Street, Westminster, London, S.W., January 1898-November 1910* (*The Marine Observer*, 1963, Vol.23, pp.79-84); and *Reminiscences of the Meteorological Office, 1898-1910*, (*Meteorological Magazine*, 1981, Vol.110, pp.323-329). Bench entered the Office on 24 January 1898 as a Boy Clerk in the Autographic Records Branch and became a Probationer in the Forecast Division in September 1902. He retired from the Office on 12 March 1947, having reached the age of 65 (which was then the Office's retirement age).

The first telephone was installed in the Meteorological Office in 1903. Its installation caused such great excitement, Bench said, that "discipline was temporarily relaxed and a crowd of seniors and juniors stood around as the Post Office engineers fitted it to the wall in the office-keeper's little room". When the first call was made, by the Chief Clerk, to the Royal Meteorological Society, there was a hushed silence as he informed them that the Meteorological Office was now 'on the telephone', with the number 'Victoria 153'. Thereafter, according to Bench, members of staff rushed to use the telephone "as a novelty to ring up friends, and a few expressed surprise and indignation when asked to pay for private calls"!

Before the introduction of telephones in the Office, communication between rooms was carried out by means of speaking-tubes, with a whistle at each end for attracting attention. In the days before there was a telephone in the Office, communication with the outside world was by means of letter, telegram or 'by hand', with messages conveyed by boy clerks. Journeys could often be made wholly or in part by the horse-drawn buses which passed 63 Victoria Street three times every hour, and occasionally boy clerks were sent to the London Docks to deliver barometers, such journeys being made partly by the Underground Railway. In a case of urgency, the use of a hansom cab would be authorized.

Malcolm Walker

SLIP FIELDERS?

There was extremely cold weather in central and eastern England in January, February and March 1855. So cold was the winter that in King's Lynn harbour a number of ships were trapped in ice for twelve weeks; and on the tidal River Ouse sailors walked along the ice to reach their ships. The monthly-mean Central England Temperature for February 1855 was minus 1.7°C, making the month the coldest February on record up to that time, colder even than February 1740.

During the Great Frost of February 1855 – on 12 February to be precise – a cricket match was played on ice at Ely. Information about the game can be found in the 1909 volume of the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* (Vol.35, pp.296-298), the information supplied by Mr.Harold Archer of Ely.

According to Archer:

"The wickets were stuck into beds of clay about 4 inches in depth that had been soaked in salt and water. On the crease a deep cut had been made in the surface of the ice about 6 inches deep, and the bowler used to skate up to this cut, put his skate into it to stop himself from going farther, and then deliver the ball overhand against the batsman."

"A deep cut was made in the surface of the ice where the batsman stood. His right foot, or rather the skate upon it, was shoved down into the crack to steady him as he struck at the ball that was bowled at his wickets. Sometimes the batsmen struck so hard at the ball in passing that the swing of their bodies brought them down on to the ice."

"In making the runs the batsmen developed far too much speed, and used to dash into some of those behind the wickets (notably the unfortunate wicket-keeper), and clutched them so wildly that in many instances both fell together on the ice."

"When the ball was hit by the batsmen off the ice on to an adjoining field, those who were fielding had to go after the ball as best they could with their feet encased in their skates."

We don't find gems like this in the *Quarterly Journal* today!

And for the record, February 1895 and February 1947 turned out to be even colder than February 1855.

Malcolm Walker

WHO WAS THE FOURTH?

In the last issue of the Group's Newsletter (No.2, 2007), we saw that Alexander Buchan (1829-1907) was the first recipient of the Royal Meteorological Society's premier award, the Symons Memorial Gold Medal. He received it at the Society's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in January 1902.

We tend to remember those who were the first to achieve something, but how many of us can name the second to achieve it, let alone the third or fourth? How many readers of this Newsletter can name the second recipient of the Symons Memorial Gold Medal, or the third or fourth?

Well ... the second recipient (1904) was the Austrian meteorologist Julius Ferdinand von Hann (1839-1921) and the third (1906) Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Strachey FRS (1817-1908). Hann published a great many contributions to meteorology and climatology, among them studies of Ben Nevis observations and a number of books, notably *Handbuch der Klimatologie* and *Lehrbuch der Meteorologie*. One of his studies of Ben Nevis data was published in the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society (QJRMetS)*, in 1912 (Vol.38, pp.51-62). Strachey was for many years Chairman of the Meteorological Council, the Royal Society body which controlled the Meteorological Office. He became Chairman in 1883 and held the post until 1905, when the Council was abolished. Obituaries of Hann and Strachey were published in the *QJRMetS* in, respectively, 1922 (Vol.48, pp.75-76) and 1909 (Vol.35, pp.115-117).

The fourth to be awarded the Symons Memorial Gold Medal was the French meteorologist Léon Philippe Teisserenc de Bort (1855-1913), who received it at the Society's AGM in January 1908. As stated in the citation for the award (*QJRMetS*, 1908, Vol.34, pp.149-151), he was best known for his investigations of the upper air by means of sounding balloons and kites. Napier Shaw gave him the credit for naming the layer of the atmosphere above the troposphere 'stratosphere' (see the obituary of de Bort published in the *QJRMetS*, 1913, Vol.39, pp.159-161). He also gave him the credit for coining the name 'troposphere' (see Volume 1 of Shaw's *Manual of Meteorology* (1926, page 226).

Investigations of the upper air by de Bort and Assmann were made in the closing years of the 19th century and opening years of the 20th but there is some dispute over exactly when the names 'troposphere' and 'stratosphere' were introduced. However, it is widely accepted that the name 'stratosphere' first appeared in 1908, so we may consider 2008 the centenary year.

And who was the fourth President of the British (later Royal) Meteorological Society? Samuel Charles Whitbread was the first, George Leach the second and John Lee the third. The fourth, for the years 1857 and 1858, was the railway engineer and bridge designer Robert Stephenson (1803-1859), son of the famous engineer George Stephenson. For a pen portrait of Robert Stephenson, written by History Group member David Pedgley, see the February 1995 issue of *Weather* (Volume 50, pp.57-59).

Malcolm Walker

BOOKS BY HISTORY GROUP MEMBERS

Anita McConnell and Philip Collins have recently published books.

Anita's book is called ***Jesse Ramsden (1735-1800): London's Leading Scientific Instrument Maker*** (Ashgate, 2007, £60.00, 496 pages, ISBN 978-0-7546-6136-8).

In the words of the book's description: Jesse Ramsden was one of the most prominent manufacturers of scientific instruments in the latter half of the eighteenth century. To own a Ramsden instrument, be it one of his great theodolites or one of the many sextants and barometers produced at his London workshop, was to own not only an instrument of incredible accuracy and great practical use, but also a thing of beauty. In this, the first biography of Jesse Ramsden, Dr Anita McConnell reconstructs his life and career and presents us with a detailed account of the instrument trade in this period. By studying the life of one prominent instrument maker, the entire practice of the trade is illuminated, from the initial commission, the intricate planning and design, through the practicalities of production, delivery and, crucially, payment for the work. Chapter 7 deals with Ramsden's work on domestic portable and mountain barometers, while Chapter 13 illustrates Berge's mountain barometer and Worthington & Allen's marine barometer.

The book will naturally be of immeasurable interest to historians of science and scientific instruments but, as it also sheds light on the increasing commercialisation of the scientific trade on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution, should also interest social and economic historians of the eighteenth century.

Anita was awarded the Group's Jehuda Neumann Memorial Prize in 2005.

Ashgate are offering Ramsden at 25% off for orders placed before the end of February 2008.

Philip's book is called *FitzRoy and his barometers* (Baros Books, 2007, £9.95, viii+144 pages, ISBN 978-0-948382-14-7).

In this book, in the words of the blurb: Philip links Robert FitzRoy's early-learned weather knowledge to his appointment in 1854 as chief of the newly-formed Meteorological Office. He investigates the first barometers that FitzRoy issued and those he helped to design in order to begin weather forecasting in Britain and protect lives around the coast. He also describes, through numerous illustrations, the domestic barometer that acquired a legendary association with the name of Admiral FitzRoy, and gives advice for anyone wishing to acquire a 'FitzRoy' barometer.

Philip is Director of Barometer World Ltd, Merton, Devon.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY LOCAL METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETIES

How many readers of this Newsletter know that there were meteorological societies in Bournemouth and Norwich in the nineteenth century?

Reference to the **Bournemouth Meteorological Society** can be found in Volume 5 of the *Proceedings of the Meteorological Society* (21 June 1871, Vol.5, No.56, pp.349-350), where it is reported that "this Society has been established three years, and has printed for each year a very interesting Report, including essays by some of its Members on special questions". It is also reported that "the Society has five stations, at which meteorological observations are carefully taken, and monthly Reports are supplied regularly to the *Bournemouth Visitors' Gazette* and the *Christchurch Times*".

Copies of the second and third annual reports of the Bournemouth Meteorological Society (for May 1870 and March 1871) are held by the National Meteorological Archive in Exeter (respectively, record numbers 824814 and 987910), as well as a paper by P.H.Newnham on *The climate of Bournemouth* read before the Bournemouth Meteorological Society on 8 February 1869 (record number 251439).

Reference to the **Norwich Meteorological Society** can also be found in Volume 5 of the *Proceedings of the Meteorological Society* (21 June 1871, Vol.5, No.56, p.349), where it is reported that the Society, "although only in the second year of its existence, is progressing very satisfactorily". The members of the Society numbered 66 in 1871, an increase of 17 on the previous year. It is reported, too, that "the

anemometer works very well" and that "much interest is taken in the recording powers of the instrument by the local public".

Information about the Norwich Meteorological Society can also be found in Issue No.50 of the *Proceedings of the Meteorological Society* (15 June 1870, Vol.5, No.50, pp.181-182), where it is reported that a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science had been held in Norwich in August 1868 and the Local Committee had had a balance in hand of more than £300 after all expenses had been defrayed. Of this surplus, £100 had been voted for the purchase of meteorological instruments, and the three trustees of the surplus, Mr.Gurney Buxton, the Rev.Joseph Crompton and Mr.C.Mends Gibson, had met at Messrs Gurney's Bank on 3 December 1868 and at their meeting resolved to form a Society to be called 'The Norwich Meteorological Society'.

Yet another reference to the Norwich Meteorological Society can be found in the third issue of the *Quarterly Journal of the Meteorological Society* (1873, Vol.1, No.3, p.88), where it is stated that "the meteorological observations have been continued, and registered regularly during the past year". And further information about the Norwich Meteorological Society can be found in *Meteorology for Norwich for the years 1870-74 being results from the instruments belonging to the Norwich Meteorological Society*, a copy of which is held by the National Meteorological Archive (record number 819272).

We see in Kelly's Directory for Cambridgeshire, Norfolk & Suffolk (1883, pp.403-411) and in *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Norwich Public Library established In 1608 and the present Public Library opened in 1857* by G.A.Stephen (published in 1917) that the Norwich Meteorological Society's anemometer was fixed on top of this Library.

If readers of this Newsletter have any further information about the Bournemouth and Norwich Meteorological Societies, please get in touch with the Group's Hon. Secretary, Sara Osman, c/o the Royal Meteorological Society, 104 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7LL. And also, if you know of any other local meteorological societies, do please get in touch. Was there ever, for example, a Derby Meteorological Society?

Malcolm Walker

THE TOWER OF THE WINDS EMBLEM



It was agreed at the meeting of the Royal Meteorological Society's Council held on 19 June 1901 that, in memory of George James Symons, who died in 1900, a gold medal would be awarded

from time to time for distinguished work in connection with meteorological science. A representation of the Tower of the Winds at Athens would appear on the reverse side of this medal. The medal was designed by Mr Frank Bowcher of Chiswick and the dies for it were furnished and executed by Mr John Pinches of 27 Oxendon Street, London SW. The design, showing the Tower of the Winds has the inscription 'Royal Meteorological Society' around it. It was adopted as the emblem of the Society in 1902 and appeared on the title page of the *Quarterly Journal* from 1903 to 2004, when the current RMetS logo was introduced. The Tower of the Winds design is still used on the back of the Symons Medal.

Whose idea was the Tower of the Winds? We do not know for sure. It is not recorded in the minutes of the Society's Council and committee meetings or in the Society's annual reports. In an obituary of Richard Bentley, however, the Society's President for the years 1905-06 and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, we find the following (*Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society*, 1936, Vol.62, pp.295-296):

"Although Mr. Bentley was interested in most branches of meteorology, it was perhaps in its historical and utilitarian aspects that the science made its chief appeal to him. This is evidenced by the titles of the Presidential Addresses – models of their kind – which he delivered before the Society during his tenure of office: "The growth of instrumental meteorology"; "Meteorology in daily life"; and "Weather in warfare". It was doubtless when he was engaged in the preparation of the first of these that he conceived the happy notion of the Society's adopting as its emblem a representation of the Horologium, or Tower of the Winds, erected at Athens by Andronikos Kyrrhestes in the 2nd century BC."

There is, for sure, a reference to the Tower of the Winds in Bentley's paper on the growth of instrumental meteorology, which he delivered on 15 March 1905 and published in the 1905 volume

of the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* (Vol.31, pp.174-192), but the emblem was in use before he became President. If, therefore, he was indeed the person who suggested the Tower of the Winds he surely did so some while before he prepared his paper on instrumental meteorology. As he was a member of the Society's Council and a number of committees in 1901, it is possible that he was the person who suggested the Tower of the Winds, but nowhere is it recorded explicitly that he was.

Malcolm Walker

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Saturday 19 April 2008 at Radley College

The Group's next meeting, which will include the Annual General Meeting, will focus on "**Public Weather Services during the past 50 years**". The programme and booking form will be sent to Group members very soon.

Radley College is on the outskirts of Abingdon, not far from Oxford, its postcode OX14 2HR should you wish to find it via Multimaps. Trains on the line between Oxford and Didcot stop at Radley and the station is about 600 metres from the college. The campus of Radley College is superb. If you have never visited this famous public school, now is your opportunity. There is plenty of car parking space on the campus.

Saturday 28 June 2008 at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton.

The Group's summer meeting will take place in the Henry Charnock Lecture Theatre of the National Oceanography Centre.

The subject of the meeting will be "**The meteorology and physical oceanography of the Southern Ocean and Antarctic Edge during the 1920s and 1930s**", with particular reference to the *Discovery* Investigations and the Second International Polar Year (1932-33); and the meeting will include an exhibition of *Discovery II* memorabilia and other material.

Again, we have a superb venue for a meeting, with spectacular views from the Centre's cafeteria across the River Test and Port of Southampton. A great deal of important meteorological and oceanographic work was carried out in the region in question during the 1920s and 1930s. The programme and booking form will be sent to Group members in due course. Meanwhile, please note the date in your diaries.

26-29 June 2008 in Naples (Italy)

The meeting at Southampton clashes unfortunately with **ICHO-VIII, the Eighth International Congress on the History of Oceanography**.

The Congress will focus on the history of oceanography in the Mediterranean but at the time of writing further details were not available.

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2008 at the University of Exeter

The **42nd Maritime History Conference** will take as its theme “**Climate Change and its effects on the maritime world**”. As the word “maritime” indicates, the conference will be concerned with seafaring and seafarers. The term “climate change” will be interpreted loosely. This promises to be a fascinating meeting. Further details can be obtained from the University of Exeter’s Centre for Maritime Historical Studies (telephone 01392-263289).

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

The Royal Meteorological Society owns many hundreds of old photographs. They are all now in the National Meteorological Archive at Exeter.

Among them are photographs of clouds, rainbows and other atmospheric phenomena taken by Charles John Philip Cave (1871-1950) and George Aubourne Clarke (1879-1949) in the early part of the twentieth century. Cave lived at Ditcham Park, Petersfield, Hampshire, while Clarke was an observer at The Observatory, King’s College, Aberdeen. Until the coming of colour photography, these were the best photographs of clouds ever taken and were reproduced in many Meteorological Office, Admiralty and other publications, including *Cloud Study*, a classic work by F.H.Ludlam and R.S.Scorer (John Murray, 1957).

Many of the photographs are in the form of glass negatives, some half-plate, others quarter-plate, some smaller; and they are accompanied by prints of many of the photographs and a typed catalogue which is arranged by cloud type, with the quality of each photograph given as “Outstanding”, “Satisfactory” and “Others”. In one box containing photographs by Cave, each negative is in an envelope on which is written details of place, time, cloud type, etc. The first photograph in this box is labelled “the first cloud photograph I ever took” and is dated 1898. The last was taken in 1950, the year Cave died.

A pen portrait of Cave was published in *Weather* in October 1993 (Vol.48, pp.326-327). He was President of the Royal Meteorological Society twice, from 1913 to 1915 and 1924 to 1926. An obituary of Clarke was published in the 1949 volume of the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* (Vol.75, pp.439-441).

Later in life, as mentioned in the pen portrait, Cave turned his photographic skill, using telephoto lens and spotlights, to the study of roof bosses on church buildings. He published a book entitled *Roof bosses in medieval churches: an aspect of Gothic sculpture* (Cambridge University Press, 1948), as well as books on the roof bosses of Lincoln and Winchester Cathedrals and the medieval carvings in Exeter Cathedral.

The picture below is from the Clarke and Cave Collection. It shows a complex pattern of cirrus cloud over Aberdeen.

If you wish to visit the National Meteorological Archive, you should make arrangements by telephoning 01392-360987 or sending an email to metarc@metoffice.gov.uk. The photographs are currently being cleaned and restored so are not available just at the moment.



Malcolm Walker

GEMS IN THE ARCHIVE

There are many old weather diaries and registers in the National Meteorological Archive (NMA) at Exeter. Among them are registers owned by the Royal Meteorological Society. Here is a page from one of them, showing the weather recorded by James Stockton at New Malton in Yorkshire in December 1824.

This register can be found in a folder of incoming correspondence received by Britain's first-ever meteorological society (i.e. the Meteorological Society of London which was founded in October

1823). The register's NMA record number is 989874 and the register contains data for only three months: October, November and December, 1824. To view the register, contact the NMA – telephone 01392-360987 or email metarc@metoffice.gov.uk.

Malcolm Walker

Meteorological Table for December, 1824.

Mon.	Day.	Winds.	Barometer.			Thermometer.			Char.	Rain.
			Max.	Min.	Mean.	Max.	Min.	Mean.		
1.	S. W.	29.39	29.14	29.265	36	29	32.5	Snow.		
2.	Var.	30	13	215	34	24	29.0	?		
3.	N.	57	30	435	30	23	26.5	Fine		
4.	N.	64	57	605	32	27	29.5	Snow.		
5.	N.	71	56	635	34	23	28.5	Fine.	.16	
6.	W.	56	28	420	36	30	33.0	Fine.	.13	
7.	S. W.	66	28	470	38	32	35.0	Cloudy.		
8.	S. W.	66	66	660	39	32	35.5	Rain.	.41	
9.	W.	80	61	705	40	27	33.5	?	.10	
10.	W.	30.04	80	905	37	27	32.0	Fine.		
11.	W.	03	30.04	30.020	48	36	42.0	Cloudy.		
12.	S. W.	18	03	105	52	46	49.0	Fine.		
13.	W.	27	18	325	50	42	46.0	?		
14.	W.	28	29.75	015	49	42	45.5	?		
15.	S. W.	29.74	67	29.705	50	33	41.5	Fine.	.5	
16.	W.	85	74	795	40	34	37.0	Fine?		
17.	W.	30.00	85	925	42	35	38.5	?		
18.	W.	00	88	940	50	37	43.5	?		
19.	S. W.	29.88	28.98	430	52	47	49.5	Cloudy.	.8	
20.	S. W.	30	29.05	175	47	42	44.5	Fine.	.18	
21.	S.	05	28.68	015	48	33	40.5	Fine		
22.	N.	66	55	105	47	30	38.5	Fine	2.05	
23.	N. W.	70	29.21	155	46	29	37.5	?		
24.	N. W.	57	19	380	47	36	41.5	?	.25	
25.	S. W.	48	00	240	55	34	44.5	Cloudy.		
26.	Var.	80	48	640	40	32	36.0	Showers	.13	
27.	S. W.	57	42	495	51	40	45.5	Rain.	.58	
28.	W.	95	57	760	45	29	37.0	Fine?		
29.	S. W.	30.05	87	960	40	33	36.5	?	.5	
30.	W.	07	78	925	48	36	42.0	?		
31.	S. W.	10	75	925	53	42	47.5	Cloudy		
		30.28	28.55	29.770	55	23	38.706		4.17	

THE RECLAIM PROJECT

The RECLAIM Project (RECOVERY of Logbooks and International Marine data) is “a cooperative international project to image historical ship logbooks and related marine data and metadata, and digitize the meteorological and oceanographic observations for merger into the International Comprehensive Ocean-Atmosphere Data Set (ICOADS) and for utilization for climate research.” RECLAIM builds on the results and knowledge gained during the European Union-funded Climatological Database for the World’s Oceans (CLIWOC) 1750-1854 project (completed in 2003). CLIWOC focused on ship logbooks containing “semi-instrumental” (e.g., wind force and wind direction) observations from Dutch, Spanish, French and UK archives. Vast numbers of undigitized historical ship logbooks exist in UK archives (estimated at over 250,000 items), and smaller, but still significant, amounts exist in Dutch, French, German, and other European, US, and international archives.

The RECLAIM project began in 2005 and by the following year, one significant accomplishment was the imaging by KNMI of Dutch logbooks from the 19th century, which are planned for future digitization by NOAA’s Climate Database Modernization Program (CDMP). The main focus however is on UK holdings of logbooks and another major accomplishment in 2006 was a jointly funded UK and CDMP effort to image and digitize selected UK Royal Navy Ship’s Logs around the data sparse World War II period (1938-47). The completed WWII project preserved 268K images from 302 vessels and produced 1.5M digitized observations. The data are now available as an Auxiliary data set of ICOADS in IMMA format. Another RECLAIM task presently in hand (January 2008) is the imaging and digitization of approximately 900-1K English East India Company logbooks recording instrumental data in the period 1790-1834. A further task being prepared for 2008, is the imaging and digitization of UK Royal Navy logbooks around the WWI period (1914-23).

The RECLAIM website (<http://icoads.noaa.gov/reclaim/>) will undergo restructuring with much new material in the spring of 2008. It presently provides researchers with data on selected Royal Navy shipping movements between 1800 and 1947, the movements of East India Company vessels from 1790 to 1834, and the activities of Arctic exploration vessels, whalers and Hudson’s Bay Company vessels through a set of logbook and ship movement directories. The associated archive references are also provided. There is also information on UK archives, the

format and content of logbooks, and information on digitized logbooks. Several original UK and US documents are reproduced. They include UK Marine Data Bank series manuals and digital images of a manuscript list of Royal Navy WWII Meteorological Logs held by the UK Met Office. US documents include marine card deck reference manuals and instructions for US Marine Meteorological Journals (1878-94). The data and information available is regularly updated and amended. Future developments will include updated and amended logbook and movement directories, revised and updated archive reports, metadata on vessels and meteorological instruments, additional sets of manuals and instructions, and relevant literature from 19th century scientific journals.

The RECLAIM Project has concentrated for the most part on the logbook holdings at the National Archive, Kew, the India Office collections at the British Library and the holdings of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Smaller collections such as the whaling logbooks from Hull, the significant material held by the Scott Polar Institute, and the substantial holdings of meteorological logbooks kept by the Met Office in Exeter have already been documented by RECLAIM or are due for future attention. However the whereabouts of the many thousands of merchant shipping deck logbooks from the 19th and 20th centuries remains a mystery and only a handful have been located in museums in Bristol, Liverpool and at Greenwich. The dozens of county archives have yet to be explored. Shipping company and family archives may yet yield significant material, as may the archives of ocean-going yachting associations. RECLAIM hopes to document as much of this material as possible. If readers can assist or know of any small collections of deck or meteorological logbooks, they can contact Clive Wilkinson at c.w.wilkinson@uea.ac.uk.

Clive Wilkinson

ROYAL PATRONAGE

The Royal Meteorological Society has enjoyed Royal Patronage since 1904, when HRH The Prince of Wales, later King George V, agreed to become the Society’s Patron. The letter from Marlborough House, Pall Mall, dated 24 June 1904, was addressed to Captain D. Wilson-Barker, the Society’s President, and received two days later. The letter reads as follows:

Sir

In reply to the letter of the 23rd instant from yourself and other Authorities connected with the Royal Meteorological Society, asking the Prince of Wales to become its Patron, I am directed to inform you that His Royal Highness has much pleasure in acquiescing to this request. I am, Sir, Your most obedient Servant, Arthur Bigge.

Arthur Bigge was Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales

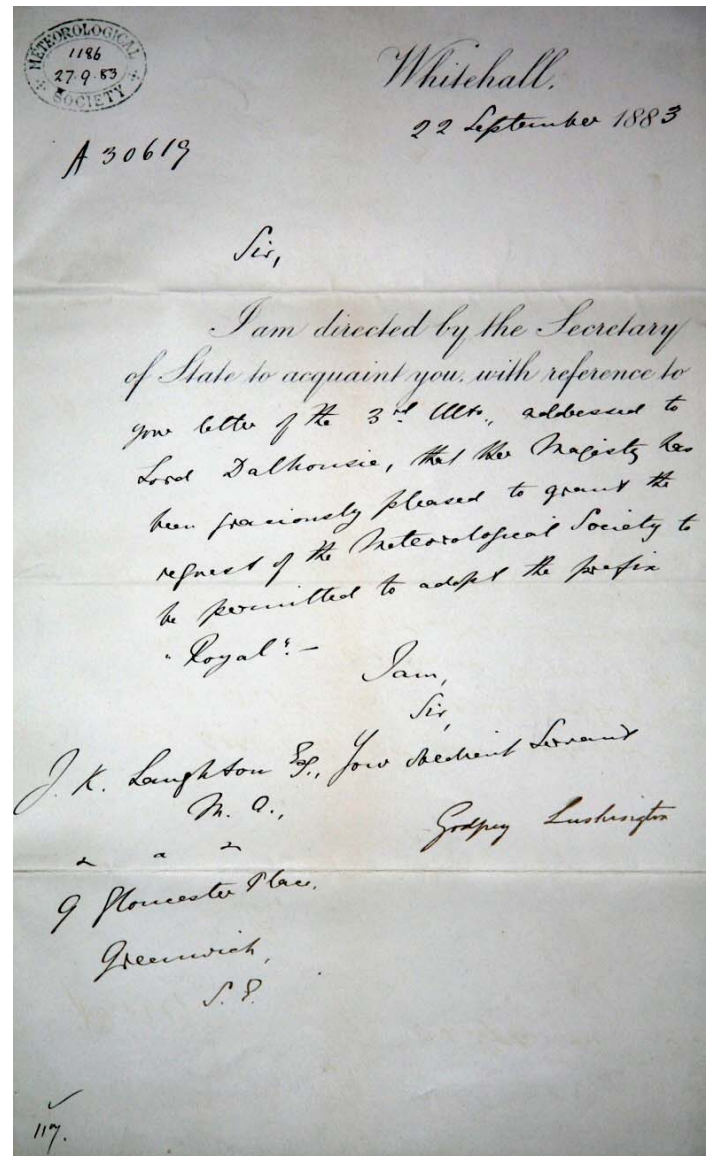
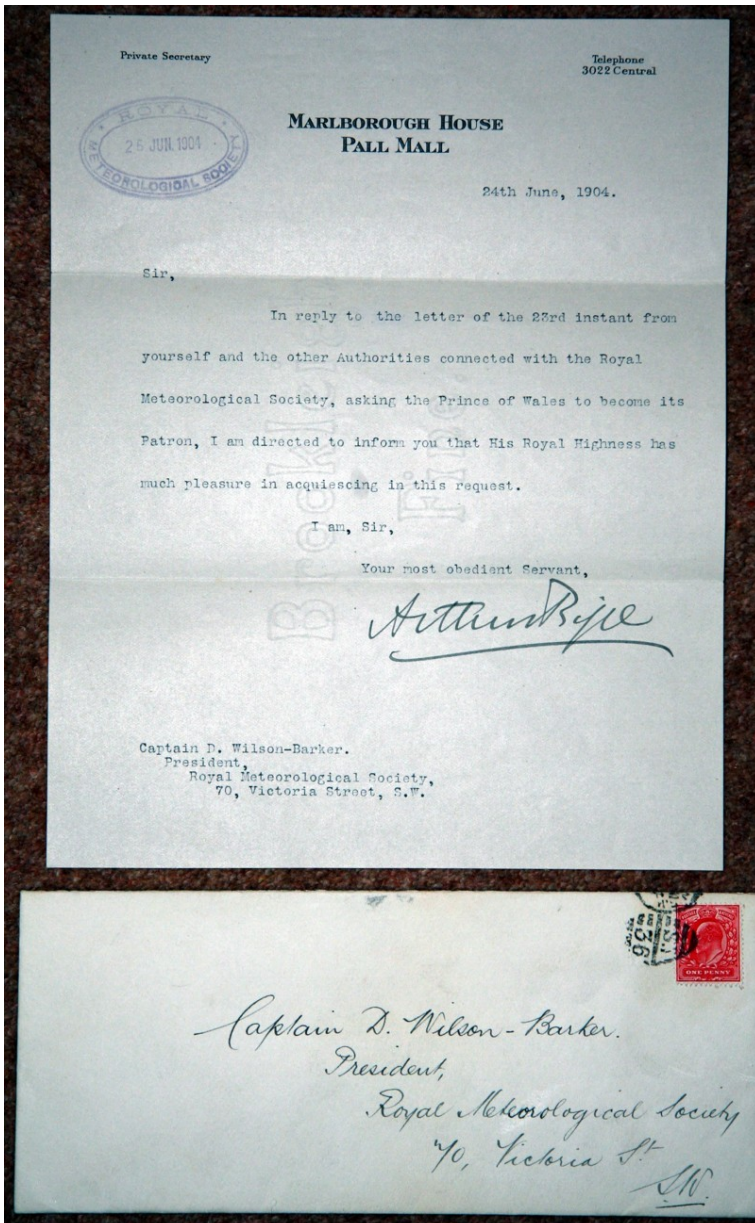
The notification letter was dated 22 September 1883 and received by the Society five days later. Addressed to the Society's President, J.K.Laughton, of 9 Gloucester Place, Greenwich, S.E., it read as follows:

Sir

I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you with reference to your letter of the 3rd ult., addressed to Lord Dalhousie, that Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant the request of the Meteorological Society to be permitted to adopt the prefix 'Royal'.

I am, Sir, Your Obedient Servant, Godfrey Lushington

Godfrey (later Sir Godfrey) Lushington (1832-1907) was Permanent Under-Secretary in the Home Office.



Malcolm Walker

THE PREFIX 'ROYAL'

Her Majesty Queen Victoria allowed the Meteorological Society to adopt the prefix 'Royal' 125 years ago.

The letter is in the National Meteorological Archive, Exeter.

Malcolm Walker

OPEN THE DOOR TO A BIT OF OUR HISTORY....

Because we live nearby, my wife and I are regular visitors to Hungerford in West Berkshire and during their recent Victorian Christmas Evening (a splendid annual event) we wandered into one of the many antique shops which line the High Street. The fact that it was dispensing free mulled wine was a coincidence. There, amongst the vast array of things shiny and fascinating, my wife noticed a spectacular brass door bell pull heavily inscribed 'Royal Meteorological Society'. A subsequent discussion with the store confirmed it to be an 'original' excepting that the centre 'pull' had been replaced at some time. The mechanism had been overhauled by the shop and so it is in 'full working order'. Apparently it is unusual in that each letter has been individually cast and then riveted to the back plate. This added to its antique quality and, no doubt, to the asking price of £400. I immediately alerted Paul Hardaker, CE, RMetS who, just prior to Christmas, was seeking further information from the shop owner. It would no doubt make a splendid presentational item for the Society especially if suitably mounted. It would almost be too good to adorn the door of the current HQ in Oxford Road. Current received wisdom from Malcolm Walker is that it was probably used at the

HQ when it owned and occupied 49 Cromwell Road, West Kensington, London from 1921 to 1971. Several relics went astray when the Society moved to Bracknell in 1971. At the time of writing (2 January) the bell pull is still on display in the shop and is shown on the antique shop's website <http://www.belowstairs.co.uk>; search their online catalogue for item bell pull BP73 for a photo and full description. It would be appropriate if the bell pull could be retained either corporately or individually within the realm of the Society or the History Group.

Alan Heasman

Update from the Society:

We have purchased the bell pull and it has been decided not to mount it on the front door as the centre part can (and surely would!) be unscrewed and the whole thing removed. The plan is to mount it on a plaque and display it in the Society's meeting room. The owner of the shop could give no information about its background – he had purchased it from a salvage merchant in Surrey.

Margaret McGraw

2008 Members

Rob Allan (Exeter)
Alberto Ansaloni (Milano Italy)
Oliver Ashford (Didcot)
Rodney Blackall (Buckingham)
Stephen Burt (Stratfield Mortimer)
Jim Burton (Ilkley)
J Carpine-Lancre (Beausoleil, France)
Mike Collins (Frinton on Sea)
Phil Collins (Okehampton)
Andrew Cook (London)
Stan Cornford (Bracknell)
Maurice Crewe (Watford)
B D Dagnall (Lymington)
Peter Davies (Reading)
Tony de Reuck (London)
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Margaret Deacon (Callington)
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Tom Fitzpatrick (Glasgow)
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Malcolm Walker (Tiverton)

Alan Wall (Southampton)
Dennis Wheeler (Sunderland)
G D White (Truro)
Peter Wickham (Wokingham)
Clive Wilkinson (Diss)
Christopher Wilson (Cullompton)
Mick Wood (Bracknell)

This is your newsletter – please send any comments or contributions to Sara Osman
Hon Secretary, History Group
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MetSocHistoryGroup@gmail.com

The annual subscription for membership of the History Group is £5 (payable to Royal Meteorological Society History Group). Members will be sent a reminder when their sub is due.