

# HISTORY GROUP NEWSLETTER



News, views and a miscellany published by the Royal Meteorological Society's  
Special Interest Group for the History of Meteorology and Physical Oceanography

Issue No. 1, 2017

July 2017

## News

Julian Mayes, Secretary / Newsletter editor

### In this issue

Welcome to the first but not the last History Group newsletter of 2017. In here you will find the usual range of short articles including two contributions to our new series reviewing key historical publications. This issue contains the favourites of Howard Oliver and of Stephen Burt. There is also a letter from Maurice Crewe based upon the items included in the last newsletter. Most of the other contributions are from committee members. We do welcome contributions from the wider membership (and indeed beyond).

### Membership

So far this year we have had two new members join the History Group:

**Prof Zhenghong Chen**, Assoc. Prof. of Met. Science and Technology, China Met Administration, Beijing and Dep. Sec- Gen. of the Committee of History on Meteorological Science and Technology,

**Mr Scott Whitehead**, journalist and amateur meteorologist, Wanstead, London.

Sadly, the death has been announced of History Group member **Mr Peter Wickham**.

### Future meetings

A wide range of meeting topics is currently being investigated by the committee, with discussions ongoing with a variety of other organisations and possible hosts. It is hoped that plans will be sufficiently advanced to enable us to give specific

details in the next newsletter. A note on a proposed meeting on Dines at Benson appears on p. 12.

### Anniversaries

The 30th anniversary of the founding of the **Australian Meteorological Society** occurs this year. It had previously been a branch of the RMets for 15 years. The event is being marked by a 'Science for Life' conference in Melbourne on 22nd-23rd August. The title of the conference is 'Life-changing science in Weather, Oceans, Water and Climate'. The RMets President, Prof. Ellie Highwood, will be giving a joint Welcome Address.

The **Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society** celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding this year. It also had previously been a branch of the RMets. The RMets President, Prof Ellie Highwood, has produced a short video to be streamed at the CMOS Annual Meeting in Toronto.

Centenaries of the **American Meteorological Society** and the **American Geophysical Union** fall in 2019. The committee and the RMets are considering how these events will be marked.

### Occasional Papers

We welcome proposals for subjects to add to our Occasional Papers series. These could be topics that are too lengthy and detailed for submission to either this newsletter or to *Weather*, for example. Since the first one was published in 1998, we have published 18, mostly written by members of the History Group. All are available to read online at <https://www.rmets.org/publications/occasional-papers>. The series is edited by Dr Howard Oliver. Expressions of interest can be sent to Julian Mayes ([Julian.mayes@meteogroup.com](mailto:Julian.mayes@meteogroup.com)) and he will forward them to Howard.

## EXHIBITION REPORT

### □ Weather extremes exhibition at Nottingham Lakeside Arts

On 15th December 2016 an exhibition entitled 'Weather Extremes – Making and breaking records in Nottinghamshire' opened at the Weston Gallery at Nottingham Lakeside Arts. The collection of exhibits has been jointly curated by Professor Georgina Enfield and Dr Lucy Veale together with the Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham. The exhibition was opened by meteorologist and BBC weather presenter Helen Willetts.

Georgina will be well known to many RMetS and Climatological Observers Link (COL) members together with fellow researcher Carol Morris when they carried out interviews around the country prior to producing an excellent paper in *Weather*<sup>1</sup> as well as talks at local centres of RMetS. Georgina and Lucy co-authored an historical paper on observations and complexities over a 200-year period on the Helm Wind of Cross Fell<sup>2</sup> which included references to Gordon Manley making 100 visits to nearby Great Dun Fell and taking continuous temperature observations from 1937 to 1939.

Their expertise in putting together a fine collection of Nottinghamshire's weather history in this current exhibition is exemplified with a fine display of documentary records with sections devoted to, inter alia, floods, droughts, storms, extremes of temperature, and how these impacted different groups and affected daily life, and entered into the public memory. Items from the collection include letters, books, pamphlets, newspaper reports, illustrations and photographs. Also showcased are local meteorologists such as Henry Mellish, Edward Lowe and his weather notebook from the 1860's, together with Arnold Tinn, whose book entitled *This Weather of Ours* was first published in 1946 and is still a splendid read. Many of the early records are before the widespread systematic use of instrumentation,

but are no less meaningful when recollecting important historical events associated with extremes of weather. On the display featuring Weather Memories, the quote by Gordon Manley is particularly pertinent: "In a modern civilisation, the existence of a public memory of the weather is essential"<sup>3</sup>.

There are references to cold and snowy winters, e.g. 1838, 1895, 1947 and 1963; the 'big wind' of January 1839; the hot and dry summer of 1826; great floods including those of 1795 and 1947. One of the displays deals with an epidemic of infantile deaths from diarrhoea in the early part of the twentieth century in the city of Nottingham in any year with a prolonged hot summer, which formed part of a paper by History Group member John Wilson<sup>4</sup>.

A lunchtime talk on 12th January had the intriguing title of 'And what becomes of the turnips?' An audience of about 100 turned up to find out. As might be expected, agricultural records contain many references to weather events – turnips were part of fodder crops from about 1650, and in bad winters the turnip crop could offset failure of other crops. However, turnips could also be devastated by other forms of extreme weather, such as a severe hailstorm in October 1772, which triggered the formation of the Norwich Union insurance company. Many other historical references were detailed.

The exhibition curators are to be congratulated on researching vast swathes of documentary evidence from many sources, including county offices, university collections, local and national archives in order to produce the final displays that create a fascinating and entertaining showcase of historical weather.

**John Goulding**

1 Exploring contemporary amateur meteorology through an historical lens. G. Enfield and C. Morris *Weather* 67: 1 2012

2 The Helm Wind of Cross Fell. L. Veale and G. Enfield *Weather* 69:1 2014

3 The Great Winter of 1740. G. Manley *Weather* 13:1 1958

4 Weather in public health in Nottingham 1905-1926 *Weather* 67:5 2012

## The anonymous Metman of Benbecula and his Mark II hankie anemometer

I subscribe to the Royal Air Force Commands Forum<sup>1</sup>, an online meeting place for historians primarily concerned with all aspects of RAF history during WW2. As with many aviation forums specialising in this era requests for help sometimes have a meteorological context, but few are quite as unusual as one which was asked about Benbecula. The query came from Robert Stitt<sup>2</sup>, a Canadian aviation historian, who asked if it was possible to identify the kilted man in a photograph found in the album of Flight Lieutenant Lawrence Nelson.



*'Met Man' Benbecula'. © Simon Nelson via Robert M Stitt*

Nelson was a pilot with 206 Squadron, flying Boeing Fortresses on maritime reconnaissance from Benbecula. There were few clues; the photo was labelled simply as *'Met man, Benbecula'*, and the time frame was the late summer of 1942 to the spring of 1943 - the period Nelson was based at Benbecula.



*Flt Lt Lawrence Nelson in the pilot's seat of his Fortress. © Simon Nelson via Robert M Stitt*

With tongue firmly in cheek, Robert suggested the man seemed to be *'using a Mk II hankie to measure wind speed and direction'*, although some might argue he was performing a rain dance!

Met Office records proved no help in respect of his identity. Although observations started at Benbecula on 1 September 1942, the station's history file contains no documents prior to 1957. Nor were contemporary Benbecula daily registers<sup>3</sup> of any use either, as the names of observers had been omitted from the front covers.

Peter Rackliff<sup>4</sup>, a member of the History Group who had served as a Meteorological Air Observer with 518 Meteorological Reconnaissance Squadron at nearby Tiree during WW2, provided an introduction to Mike Hughes<sup>5</sup>, author of a wartime history of the Hebrides<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, despite having a number of contacts on Benbecula, Mike was unable to identify the mysterious Metman; although the name of a Derek Sadler was mentioned this proved a red herring.

Sadly, therefore, as of June 2017, Benbecula's anonymous Metman remains just that - anonymous.

I am grateful to Robert Stitt for asking the question, Simon Nelson for the use of his

father's photographs, and Peter Rackliff and Mike Hughes for their efforts in trying to trace the Metman's identity.

The photograph came to light purely by chance, and one cannot help but wonder how many others of meteorological interest remain hidden away in the photograph albums of WW2 aviators.

### Notes

1. The RAF Commands Forum is at <http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/>

2. Robert M Stitt is the author of *The Boeing B-17 Fortress in RAF Coastal Command Service*; published in 2010. He is currently researching the history of Fortress FK192 used by Alan Brewer for high altitude and contrail research at Boscombe Down during WW2 (*Meteorological Research Paper No 169*)

3. Daily registers for all Scottish meteorological offices are in the keeping of the National Records of Scotland (NRS) in Edinburgh. Unfortunately, not only the documents stored off-site, but the custodians are not meteorologists. Consequently, contrary for queries about meteorological offices in England and Wales, whose records are held by the Met Office Archives, answers to simple questions cannot be obtained quickly by email.

4. Peter is co-author, with John Kington, of *Even the birds were walking: The story of wartime meteorological reconnaissance*; published in 2000.

5. Mike Hughes is the author of *Hebrides at War*; published in 2009

**Brian Booth**

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## Reviews of key historical publications in Meteorology

### 1. *Travels in the Air*, James Glaisher, 1871.

The favourite of my collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century meteorological books contains exciting accounts of intrepid balloon ascents made in the 1860s.

This well-illustrated volume *Travels in the Air* was published in 1871 and was edited and part written by our Society's James Glaisher. There were two editions issued that year. The more desirable one is actually the second edition as it includes a supplement on the use of balloons by the French to get mail and carrier pigeons out from Paris while it was under siege by the Prussians. Original copies sell for around £150 to £250, but it is now possible to buy facsimiles of the 400 page book from about £10.

The introduction gives a useful account of mountain and balloon ascents and the meteorological information obtained from them from the 1780s to 1850s. The first chapter

details the first scientific British balloon ascents from 1838 onwards. The main accounts begin in second chapter with descriptions of Glaisher's own "travels in the air" beginning in 1862.

Although the ascents were for scientific purposes the accounts are written in a flowing general style with entertaining detailed descriptions of what happened, what was observed and how they felt. The planned meteorological measurements were very extensive as can be seen from the drawing of the equipment to be used. Details of the apparatus and the measurements requested by the British Association cover some seven pages. Not all were achieved and not surprisingly the instruments were often damaged or completely written off in a variety of heavy landings!

The descriptions of the ascents are interesting and sometimes exciting. The first two, made from Wolverhampton, reached heights of around 25,000 ft with temperatures falling to 16°F. It is however the third ascent on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1862 that was the most dramatic and very nearly cost Glaisher and his pilot, Coxwell, their lives. All went well until they passed the altitude of 26,000ft (5 miles) but both men then became increasingly incapacitated. Glaisher's last observations were made at 29,000ft before he passed out. It was only with a supreme effort that Coxwell succeeded in pulling the gas valve with his teeth, his hands already being useless, and initiating a descent from an estimated 37000ft. Figure 1 shows their amazing journey and the temperature observations obtained. The lowest temperature actually recorded was -5°F.

The lowest temperature actually recorded was -5°F. Further ascents were successfully made under a variety of weather conditions over the next few years. These included multi ascent-descents which provided totally new information on temperature profiles during the day and night and on the existence of contrasting air layers at different altitudes. The final part of Glaisher's section of the book discusses his scientific conclusions on the various types of measurement he obtained.

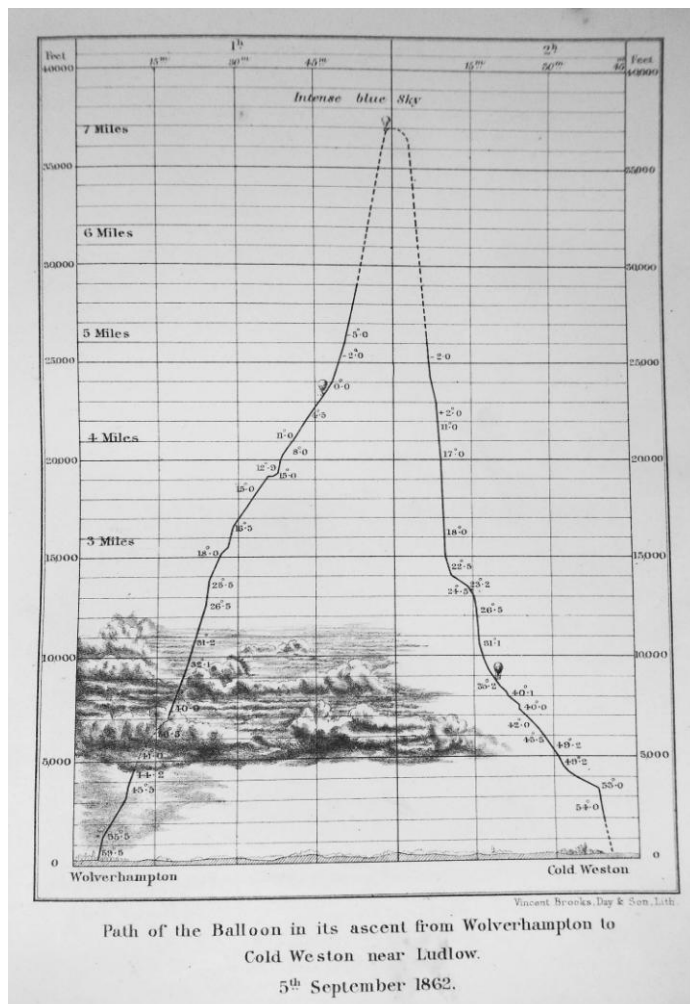


Fig. 1. Path of the balloon from Wolverhampton to Cold Weston near Ludlow. 5<sup>th</sup> September 1862.

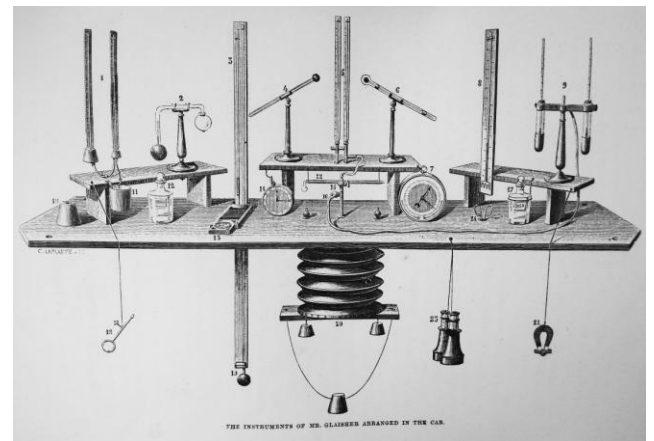


Fig. 2. The instruments of Mr Glaisher arranged in the air

The other two thirds of the book contains the accounts of many ascents, mostly made around the same period, by the famed French balloonist C. Flammarion, and by the intrepid pair de Fonvielle and Tissandier. They are again excitingly written and also include a reasonable amount of scientific information within them. (Flammarion's impressive book *The Atmosphere*, originally published in French in 1888, was later translated into English and edited by Glaisher).

Altogether it is a both enjoyable and instructive book which I can recommend to members as something to dip into whenever you feel the need for an escapist and entertaining read!

**Howard Oliver**

## 2. *The Eruption of Krakatoa and Subsequent Phenomena: the Report of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society.* Edited by George Symons, FRS, 1888.

We can regard the major eruption of Krakatoa in August 1883 as one of the first truly global news stories, for the relatively recent introduction of telegraph communications through much of the then-dominant British Empire meant that initial reports of the cataclysm were available in capital cities and major newspapers around the world within hours. This was, of course, very different from previous natural disasters; news of the massive 1815 eruption of Tambora had taken weeks to arrive by ship in European capitals, for example. The timeliness of the reports from the scene, increasing scientific awareness of its potential impacts upon the atmosphere and the prompt reporting of observations of 'peculiar hazes' and blue and green Suns (amongst many other related phenomena) within contemporary meteorological literature prompted the Royal Society to appoint the Krakatoa Committee on 17 January 1884. The remit of the Committee was to '... collect the various accounts of the volcanic eruption at Krakatoa, and attendant phenomena, in such form as shall best provide for their preservation, and promote their usefulness'.

This objective was admirably achieved in the *Report of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society*, published four years later, which is my nomination as a key historical publication in meteorology. The Chairman of the Krakatoa Committee was George Symons FRS, who we know well as the founder of the British Rainfall Organization in 1860 (Pedgley, 2010; Walker, 2010). Committee members included the great and the good from various scientific fields, including Robert Scott (then Director-General of the Meteorological Office), the Hon. Ralph Abercromby, Norman Lockyer, Professor George Stokes (then President of the Royal Society) and Professor John Wesley Judd (then President of the Geological Society). In all, ten Fellows of the

Royal Society are listed on the title page. Many other individuals and organisations contributed to sub-committees, and of course detailed evidence and accounts from all over the globe were examined and carefully collated in what remains to this day an outstanding piece of scientific investigation.

The report of the Krakatoa Committee was certainly comprehensive, amounting to 494 Quarto pages (slightly larger than modern A4) - the bound report weighs in at a hefty 2.5 kg. (The Report was published at 30 shillings or £1.50 in decimal currency; at today's prices, around £700 per copy.) Sections of the Report are divided into detailed geological and meteorological observations and impacts, seismic sea-waves, and terrestrial magnetism and electricity, and it is a credit to the organisation and hard work of the Committee that the material is so well structured and presented that the Report makes as interesting reading today as when it first came off the presses almost 130 years ago. Of course, in the 21st Century we know much more about the distribution and structure of upper tropospheric and lower stratospheric winds, the dynamics of tsunamis, the life-cycle of tectonic plate margin volcanoes and many other phenomena described in the Krakatoa Report, but the true worth of the Report is that it does not merely list or describe the phenomena, it begins to set out theories and explanations to account for the thousands of individual pieces of evidence in this vast environmental jigsaw. It was, and remains, one of the foundation stones upon which today's 'Earth Science' disciplines were built in the 20th Century, including modern meteorology.

I first came across the book in the library of my Grammar School aged about 11, and was immediately and completely captivated; I read

every word avidly, and remember copying out many of the descriptions and illustrations in my lunchtimes (the Librarian would, probably very wisely, not permit its removal from Library premises). I credit it as a major influence on my choosing a scientific career, and with sparking my long-lasting interest in meteorology and related topics. Unfortunately, I can't imagine many school libraries holding such a rare and valuable long out-of-print book these days, although of course there are many excellent modern books on Krakatoa which *are* more easily available — for example, Simkin and Fiske (1983) and Winchester (2004). Both draw heavily upon the Royal Society's 1888 Report, which also remains one of the most frequently cited works on Krakatoa in modern scientific journals.

Original volumes are very pricey and hard to come by these days, but do occasionally surface in second-hand bookshops and in online sites such as Abebooks.com. I managed to track down a good rebound ex-library copy several years ago for less than £500, and greatly enjoyed re-reading every word as I had done at school more than 40 years previously. Fortunately, as the volume has long been out of Copyright, online versions are available from, for example, Google Books (<https://books.google.co.uk/>) - both online-readable and as a downloadable PDF (27 MB). Some on-demand publishing companies also offer bound copies of scanned facsimiles at much more affordable prices than an original, although it is essential to check that original artwork is included, as many on-demand reprints of similar books reproduce text pages only.

The Royal Society Krakatoa Report is notable not only for the scientific understandings advanced within its pages, but also for the inclusion of many pages of noteworthy and often beautiful illustrations. Space permits the inclusion of only a small selection, including one of painter William Ascroft's famous pastel sketches of the volcanic twilight and afterglow

visible from Chelsea on 26 November 1883 (Figure 1) and the map showing the arrival times

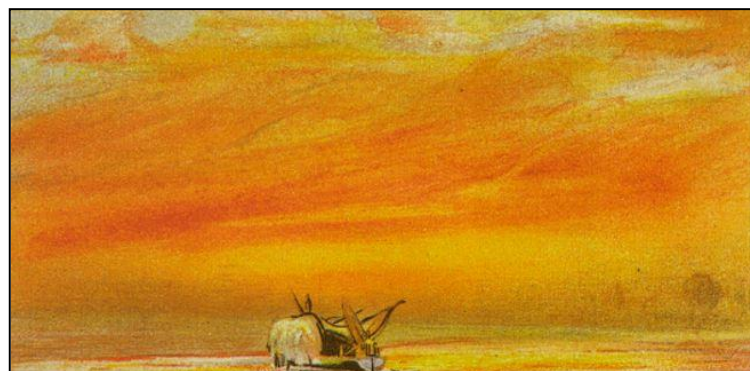
of the third and fourth atmospheric waves (of seven) propagating around the world from Krakatoa to the Antipodes between 40 and 72 hours after the cataclysmic blasts around 10 a.m. local time on 27 August 1883 (Figure 2).

**Stephen Burt**

*Department of Meteorology, University of Reading*

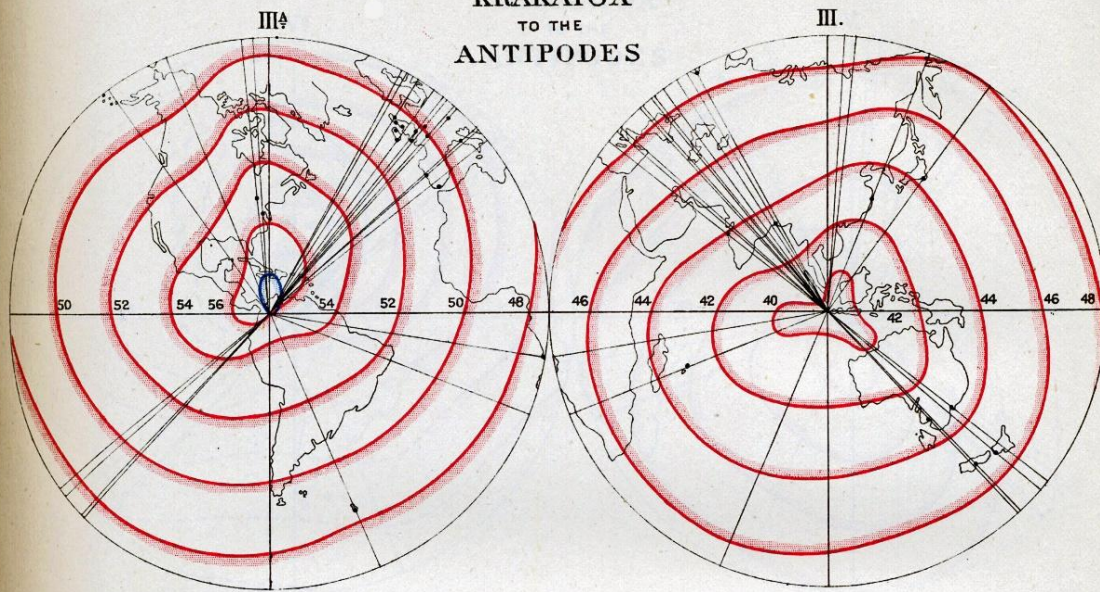
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- Simkin, T. and Fiske, R.S., 1983. *Krakatau 1883: The volcanic eruption and its effects*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC
- Walker, J. M., 2010. The man behind the British Rainfall Organization. *Weather*, 65: 117–120
- Winchester, S., 2004. *The day the world exploded: Krakatoa*. Penguin Books, London



*Fig. 1. William Ascroft's pastel sketch of the volcanic twilight and afterglow visible from Chelsea at 4.40 p.m. on 26 November 1883. From the Frontispiece of the Royal Society Krakatoa Report (see text).*

**WAVE N° III.**  
SECOND PASSAGE FROM  
**KRAKATOA**  
TO THE  
**ANTIPODES**



**WAVE N° IV.**  
SECOND PASSAGE FROM  
**ANTIPODES**  
BACK TO  
**KRAKATOA**

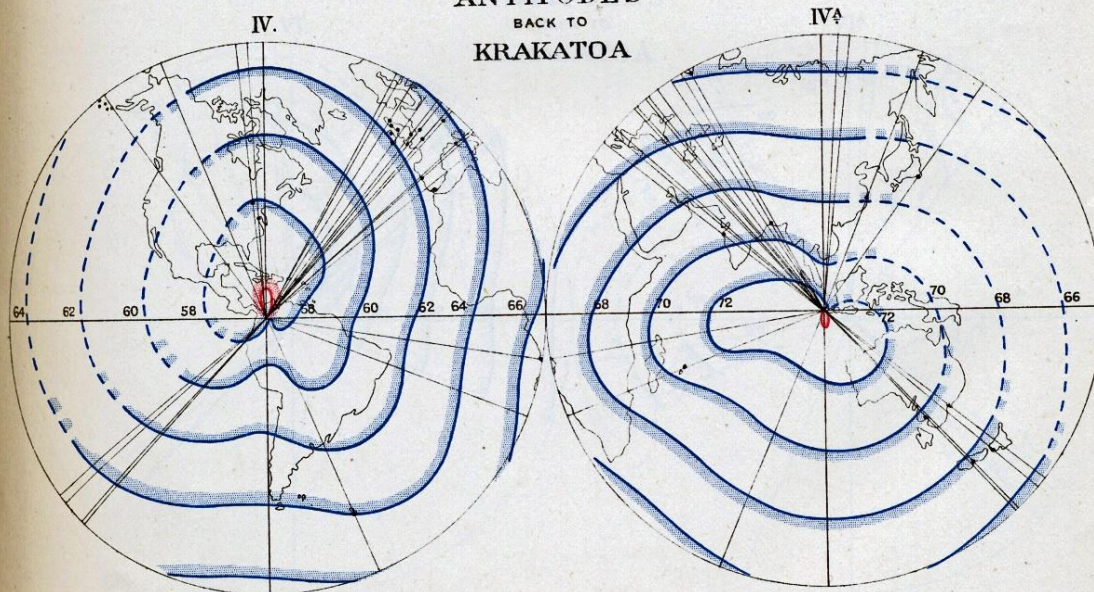


Fig. 2. Arrival times (in hours after the final cataclysmic blasts around 10 a.m. local time on 27 August 1883) of the third and fourth atmospheric waves propagating around the world from Krakatoa. Plate XI from the Royal Society Krakatoa Report (see text).



## Continuity - or change for the better?

I am writing this note during a heatwave in mid-June at home just south-west of London. Day after day, my local area has been reported as the hottest part of the country with several days exceeding 30 °C at places such as Heathrow and Hampton. On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June, BBC TV weather forecasters mentioned that the hottest location was Teddington. Teddington? I had never heard of an observing site there. The Met Office also tweeted that the highest maximum temperature of 30.2 °C had been observed at site they called Teddington (Bushy Park). Ah – that gave me a clue as to the location – the National Physical Laboratory would be an appropriate and secure location for a weather station. We were receiving observations at my place of work, so this was an official site.

Let's return to Hampton Water Works. It lies on the other side of Bushy Park, beside the Thames. As 'Hampton (Southwark Water Works)', it had the honour of being the first rain gauge site to be listed in the General Tables of *Symon's British Rainfall* until 1902, by which time the publication had just become retitled *British Rainfall*, of course. The readings look a little suspect in some entries but it would spoil the story to dwell on that!

The site developed into Hampton climatological station in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was first listed in the *Monthly Weather Report* in 1951. I remember seeing the manual instruments sitting in a grass courtyard close to the main buildings. A few years ago I was disturbed to see that they had disappeared and there seemed to be no open, grassed areas within the compound to accommodate a new site. I later learnt that the station had been automated in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as part of the Met Office programme of automation. It took me some time to find the AWS – let's just say the siting is rather unorthodox and does not comply

with what many of you will have become accustomed to from the *Observers Handbook*.

Back to today (June 19<sup>th</sup>, 32 °C at Hampton WW, another day when it was listed as the warmest place in the UK). A walk through Bushy Park revealed the Teddington met site – an excellent exposure in an open field in the grounds of the National Physical Laboratory.



*The Teddington met site (photograph courtesy of Michael de Podesta, Principal Research Scientist, NPL).*

We now have a fine addition to the UK observing network accommodated at the home of precise scientific measurement and analysis. It provides vital continuity to our climatological records, even if the sensors bear little resemblance to the traditional manual setup. Change can bring benefits – but who in past decades would have anticipated the value of continuity in climate monitoring as we try to come to terms with climate change. The simple 'weather station' is surely worthy of the scientific status of any of the research in other branches of science that is undertaken in the National Physical Laboratory itself.

*Further information on the history of the National Physical Laboratory can be found on their website <http://www.npl.co.uk/about/history/>.*

**Julian Mayes**

## An explosive mix

We are all familiar with the role played by Ocean Weather Ships in collecting systematic meteorological information from the open ocean west of the UK and the vital value of those observations to forecasters in the pre-satellite era. The ships also collected systematic oceanographic and wave data that continue to play a vital role in understanding climate related change in the oceans. What is less well known was the OWS's occasional use as scientific test beds.

An important example of this was aboard *OWS Weather Explorer* in 1949 at station Juliett (52° 30'N 20° 00'W). In the late 1930s scientists in the Department of Geodesy and Geophysics of Cambridge University (now incorporated in the Department of Earth Sciences) had started to experiment with marine seismic surveying using explosives as sound sources to reveal sub-sea geological structures – techniques that later underpinned the offshore oil industry.

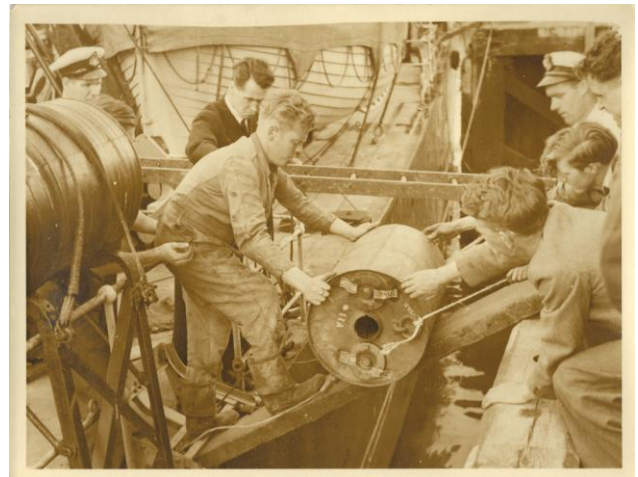


*OWS Weather Explorer*

The work on *Weather Explorer* was carried out by research students John Swallow and Maurice Hill and was the Cambridge group's first attempt to use the technique in deep water. Hydrophones were hung below buoys located by radar and of course a loud sound source was needed. So *Weather Explorer* sailed with its usual bottles of compressed hydrogen for the

met balloons but alongside were 300lb depth charges (as RN surplus they were presumably past their "sell by date").

John Swallow was an enthusiastic amateur photographer and I inherited from John a box of prints and negatives that included the work on *Weather Explorer* as well as photographs of the routine met observations and of the officers and crew. The work is described at <http://www.carrackconservation.co.uk/2016/01/14/seismic-refraction-at-sea-instrumentation-details/#more-171> the archive of the Cambridge Earth Sciences department where the negatives and prints of the geophysical work have now been deposited.



*Loading the depth charges*



*Inspecting a depth charge*

These photos are a graphic example of scientific work at sea in a pre-Health and Safety world.



*The balloon shelter*



*Preparing for a radiosonde ascent*

#### Post script.

In 1950-1 John Swallow (b.1924-d.1994) used the seismic techniques on the round the world voyage of the survey ship HMS Challenger (Ritchie ,1958). He later joined the National Institute of Oceanography where he developed the neutrally buoyant float to measure deep ocean circulation. Swallow's float was the forerunner of the modern-day Argo profiling float array (Gould, 2005). Maurice Hill (b.1919-d.1966) remained at Cambridge. Both were elected Fellows of the Royal Society; Hill (1962), Swallow (1968).

#### References

- Gould, W.J. 2005: From Swallow floats to Argo – the development of neutrally buoyant floats. *Progress in Oceanography*, 52(3/4), 529-543.
- Hill, M.N. and J.C. Swallow, 1950: Seismic experiments in the Atlantic. *Nature*, 165, 193-4.
- Ritchie, G.S. 1958: *Challenger: The life of a survey ship*. Hollis and Carter.

**John Gould**

## Letter

### Ah yes I remember it well

As I now spend more time involved with the local U3A than travelling to Society functions I feel I should offer my thanks to the members who are keeping the History Group going. As Met Office Librarian with custody of some of the Society's material I effectively had an ex-officio place on the History Group Committee. So I joined in 1984 and became friendly with Malcolm Walker, with whom I cooperated on various things over the years; always finding him knowledgeable, helpful and encouraging. I can only endorse Bob Gilbert's tribute to Malcolm in the last newsletter.

That issue really sparked my nostalgia. Chris Folland set me going with his review of the Bartholomew's Atlas of Meteorology; I was reminded that of one of the perks of being Librarian was access to a remarkable collection of literature and records, even if the time to browse was less than one would have wished.

I was then pleased to see the article by Sarah Pankiewicz and learn about the resources now available to make material in the Library and

Archive more accessible. It also sounds as though the status of the Archive has been restored to what it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when we were an official place of deposit under the Public Records Act and was inspected by senior staff from the Public Record Office as they used to call the National Meteorological Archives.

I recall problems developing during the 1990s when digitising became more common. As the officer responsible for the National Meteorological Library and Archives was deemed to be in charge of literature and records on paper some staff seemed to think the archive was just a dump for paper that may clutter their Branch. We couldn't possibly understand new-fangled gimmicks like the Internet or digitised records !

I managed to balance the accounts for buying books and journals but wasn't allowed extra funds so that expert staff could see advance copies of journals via the Internet. Some data that used to be archived as hard copy became available only on the big number cruncher, so out of the hands of the existing archive team. For a time it was unclear who was archiving what! The idea of digitising useful material for easier access was not even dreamt of.

**Maurice Crewe**

## Further news

### Interview programme for distinguished meteorologists

Many members will remember that distinguished meteorologists have been interviewed from time to time. The back-catalogue is here - <https://www.rmets.org/about-us/history-society/distinguished-voices-audio>

The committee is keen to continue these interviews and the aim is to complete at least one pair of interviews annually (where the interviewer of the first becomes the interviewee of the second).

### Pen Portraits of Presidents

It is hoped to publish a Pen Portrait of Sir John Mason early in 2018. Our thanks to committee member Prof Chris Folland for agreeing to compile this.

### Planned W H Dines Benson Observatory commemoration – 19 May 2018

Members of the History Group will be well aware of W H Dines' Observatory at Benson in Oxfordshire. Next May, an Oxfordshire Blue Plaque will be mounted at the entrance to Observatory Close, which is built on the land once occupied by his observatory. We are hoping to do some activity in the village to raise awareness of the man's significance, including an "Interactive Exhibition" on Weather and Water (linked to the National Curriculum) on 19 May 2018, which might also be the date for unveiling of the plaque. We would appreciate any suggestions for ideas, content, histories etc. related to these planned events from History Group members. We are also hoping for a 'household name' to give it some popular appeal, such as a TV weather presenter.

Responses please to David Cooper [cooperfamy@aol.com](mailto:cooperfamy@aol.com) or 1 Lower End, Benson Road, Ewelme, OX10 6HB

*Members may remember the article on the history of RAF Benson by J Galvin and J. McGhee (Weather, 60, p. 319 November 2005). An article on other meteorological blue plaques appeared in the History Group Newsletter, 2008 (2).*

## 2017 MEMBERS

Rob Allan (Exeter)  
Alberto Ansaloni (Milan, Italy)  
Catharine Bailey (Richmond, Surrey)  
Hannah Barrett (Sheffield)  
Graham Bartlett (Slough)  
Austen Birchall (Exeter)  
Rodney Blackall (Buckingham)  
Brian Booth (Devizes, Wiltshire)  
Ron Bristow (Maidstone, Kent)  
Tony Brown (Exeter)  
Stephen Burt (Stratfield Mortimer)  
Anna Carlsson-Hyslop (Manchester)  
Jacqueline Carpine-Lancre (Beausoleil, France)  
Mike Chapman (Nuthampstead)  
Prof Zhenghong Chen (Beijing, China)  
Andrew Cook (Newport on Tay, Fife)  
Stan Cornford (Hayling Island)  
Maurice Crewe (Watford)  
B D Dagnall (Lymington)  
Stephen Davenport (Indianapolis, USA)  
Peter Davies (Reading)  
Tony de Reuck (London)  
Federico de Strobel (La Spezia, Italy)  
Margaret Deacon (Callington)  
Storm Dunlop (Chichester)  
Philip Eden (Luton)  
Tom Fitzpatrick (Glasgow)  
Chris Folland (Exeter)  
Paul Fuller (Southampton)  
Robert Gilbert (Orange, Virginia, USA)  
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John Gould (Southampton)  
John Goulding (Middlesbrough)  
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Richard Griffith (Horsham)  
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Alan Heasman (Marlborough, Wiltshire)  
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Geoff Jenkins (Yateley)  
Arnold Johnson (Maidenhead)  
Keith Johnson (Twatt, Orkney)  
Simon Keeling (Wombourne, Staffs)  
Elizabeth Kent (Southampton)  
Joan Kenworthy (Satley, County Durham)  
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Richard Link (Croydon)  
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Scott Whitehead (Wanstead, London)  
Clive Wilkinson (Aslacton, Norfolk)  
John Wilson (Nottingham)  
Sir Arnold Wolfendale FRS (Durham)  
Mick Wood (Bracknell)

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We welcome all offerings, from letters, to brief articles – just drop me an e mail. Finally, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this issue. My contact details are as follows:

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*Julian Mayes, London, 8<sup>st</sup> July 2017*