

Bulletin

A Monthly Newsletter for RAL Staff

December 1993

Director's Christmas message

I challenge anybody in the Laboratory to say that 1993 has been boring! Ever since the publication of the Government White Paper on Science and Technology 'Realising our Potential' in May, there has been a non-stop air of rumour and speculation at the Lab.

After a 28 year life that has been full of change in the world of science and engineering, SERC hangs up its pens and new Research Councils take over. I know that many of you have been concerned about the effect that all this will have on RAL; some of you may have thought from time to time that I was behaving in a far too relaxed manner considering the magnitude of the changes that we were facing. If I have been relaxed, it is because I have confidence in two things. Firstly, I believe that the reputation of RAL and the quality of the work we do will ensure that this national asset has a secure future. Secondly, and no less importantly, I know that you are well able to face and deal with any challenges and grasp any opportunities that are presented to us.

I have often said in previous Christmas messages that the very basis of the Festival focuses our attention on the future, on hopes and on opportunities. Our past gives us the confidence to face the future, some aspects of which we already know. We know, for instance, that from 1 April next year Daresbury and RAL will be brought together as a single entity and that I will be taking over as Director of the joint Laboratories. This is a major challenge for me but one which will, I believe, make the joint efforts of the two Labs even more effective than they have been singly. We also know that, in the relatively near term, it is planned that the joint Laboratories should become an independent entity, allowing them to underpin the work of all Research Councils on an equal basis. This will certainly open up many opportunities for us all. So the outline of the future for the Labs is already beginning to take shape and we have a clear future ahead of us.

1993 will finish for me on a very high note with the news that I have been awarded the Glazebrook Medal and Prize of the Institute of Physics. Although this is a personal award, I see it very much as an award to RAL in recognition of the important role that we have played in British science and engineering over the years. I could not have been nominated to receive this award without your solid support and I thank you for it.

This is the first Christmas message for some time in which I have not been able to announce the arrival of a new grandchild. Notwithstanding this, Marion and I are looking forward to having all our family with us on Christmas Day and I am already brushing up my Lego-building skills. I see Christmas very much as a family time and I wish you and your families a very happy Christmas full of good things and plenty of relaxation because 1994 is going to be quite a year!

Paul Williams

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All in the name of Pudsey!

It's amazing what people will do in the name of a good cause. The annual Children in Need appeal is the perfect excuse to dress up and do something daft, like Travel and Claims Section (pictured top right), who 'clowned around' and raised £440 through their prize raffle. Repayments Section (bottom right), donned an assortment of fancy dress and raised £219 from a cake sale and 'Guess the baby' competition.

Elsewhere on site, Sarah Corderoy, Isobel Climas, Susan Holton and Penny Whitehead, dressed as schoolgirls, raised £136.80 from a cake sale in R65 and R18. Penny went on to challenge Geoff Tappern to a 50 yard dash, which Geoff won but only because he cheated! They raised £20.

Individuals did their bit too. Graham Kerr raised £25 from a quiz and Val Salt raised £41 from a 'Guess the name of the bear' competition.

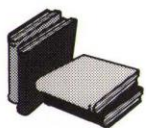
Organisers of the events would like to thank you all for your support. Whether you purchased a raffle ticket, donated a prize, baked a cake, entered a competition or simply turned up to eat, your contribution is valued. ■



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School report

GNVQs

Unless you take a particularly keen interest in education, it is likely that the GNVQ has so far passed you by. The General National Vocational Qualification introduced by the Government in an attempt to rationalise and improve vocational qualifications, is attracting a great deal of interest from schools all over the country. Piloted by around 90 centres last year, the courses are being offered by many schools and colleges this year.

What are they?

Otherwise known as Vocational A levels, GNVQs are aimed at full-time students aged between 16 and 19. They are designed to develop and assess skills, knowledge and understanding, underpinning a range of occupations within a vocational area. Regardless of the specific course followed, all GNVQ students develop a range of core skills in communication, numeracy and information technology, designed to stand them in good stead in any walk of life.

Assessment is made of a portfolio of evidence gathered by the student through assignments and project work and in addition, external tests must be passed for each vocational unit.

What levels and subjects do they cover?

With four levels planned, the qualifications are currently available at levels 2 and 3. Level 2 equates to five GCSEs at grade C or above and

level 3 equates to two A levels. Subject areas so far include Business, Manufacturing, Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism, and Art and Design. Courses currently being piloted include Science, Construction and Hotel and Catering.

How is RAL involved?

The Didcot Sixth Form (Didcot Girls' School and St Birinus) is offering the five subjects listed above at level 2 this year and the Lab is helping with the delivery of the Manufacturing course. Eddie Townsend from Technology Department presented a design brief to the students at the beginning of term and is now working with them at school where he monitors, guides and questions them on manufacturing processes related to their projects. In the New Year they will visit the Lab to make use of some of our facilities, such as CAD/CAM software.

In addition, individuals from industry are required to act as mentors in all subject areas. This involves a commitment of around three hours per term during which the mentor sees students individually for 20 to 30 minutes each to offer support and guidance. Both Eddie and I are currently acting as mentors.

It is hoped that RAL can become involved in the delivery of the GNVQ in Science locally when it is introduced next year.

Engineering Craft Apprentice Training Scheme

If you have a child who will be leaving school in 1994 and is interested in the Laboratory Engineering Craft Apprentice Training Scheme, you may like to know that the exercise to recruit next year's intake will get underway in January. Details of the Scheme and how to apply may be obtained from the Recruitment Office, Rm 2.16, R71, ext 5510/6604 or from Joe Hoskins, Rm 2.27, R71, ext 6724.

RAL floppy disk for schools

I have a few copies of a disk which was produced for schools some time ago and would like to offer them to anyone who may have a use for them. The 80 track DFS disk is for use on BBC-B or Master Series micro-computers and gives an introduction to the way computers are used at the Laboratory.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy can collect one from my office, Rm G.08, R71, during normal working hours.

Dawn Johnson ■

DLJ gets the 25 year itch!

After 25 years' service with an employer, you would be forgiven for thinking of someone 'they're here to stay.' Not so David Llewellyn-Jones of Space Science Department. The presentation earlier this year of a certificate marking a quarter of a century with the SERC prompted David to ask himself 'What have I done with my life?' We can guess at the answer because last month he left RAL to take up an appointment as Professor of Earth Observation Science at Leicester University - a case of gamekeeper turned poacher if ever there was!

In his presentation, John Harries, Head of SSD, expressed the hope that David will be a frequent and appreciative user of our facilities. David assured everyone that he would continue his association with RAL, not least because he would be looking to old friends and colleagues to help him build up the department which he is setting up from scratch. David will also retain the role of principal investigator for the ATSR instrument on ERS-1, the European Remote Sensing Satellite.

Among the many gifts which David received, were a pair of outsize underpants with the inscription 'Global warming' on the backside: a fitting reminder of his work on ATSR, the project with which he is most often associated, but they may take some explaining to the neighbours when they're hung out on the washing-line! ■



David and his wife Peggy (93RC4646)

DBS troubleshooter lays down his gun!



Denis with his wife, Sylvia, and Richard Lawrence-Wilson (93RC4715)

Denis Jacobs hung up his bleeper and handed over his book of DBS misdemeanours last month when he retired after 32 years' service.

In his time at the Laboratory, Denis has worked in every department in administration and has survived countless Reporting and Countersigning Officers, finally emerging from behind his desk to take on the unenviable task of DBS auditor. There was nowhere to hide when Denis was on the trail!

In reality, as the inscription on the 'Ray Roberts' card stated, Denis is 'a very nice admin man, completely red tape-free!' Denis' popularity was much in evidence from the many friends and colleagues, of all grades and ages from throughout the Laboratory, who gathered to bid him farewell on his last day and from the many gifts which he received. The Lab is a sadder place without him. ■

TCH Grotto is great and that's official!

In last month's Bulletin we reported on the repair to The Cosener's House Shell Grotto and the possibility of the project winning an award. We are delighted and proud to announce that the work has received a Commendation in the Vale of White Horse District Council Design Awards Scheme.

The panel of judges which assessed the work, judged it to have been done 'very well'.

The panel was particularly impressed that 'a work of conservation had been carried out for its own sake', and expressed the wish that the Grotto should 'be seen and appreciated by a wider public'.

Certificates will be awarded to the architect, Peter Bradley of Engineering and Building Works Division, the owner, RAL, and the builder, David E McDowell of East Hendred, at a ceremony on 11 January in the Guildhall, Abingdon. We hope to bring you a report of the event in the January issue of the Bulletin. ■

The 1994 UK IT Forum

'Wealth Creation from Information Technology' will be the theme of a major conference at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh on 22 and 23 March 1994. The conference will focus on the exploitation of information technology to benefit UK industry.

The 1994 UK IT Forum provides an opportunity for senior managers in companies in all commercial and industrial sectors to interact with academic and industrial researchers at the leading edge of technology development to exploit the latest technological advances for product development.

Leading figures from industry and the media will address the Forum. Speakers include Stewart Purvis, Editor in Chief of ITN News and Peter Cochrane, Head of Research at BT Laboratories.

The two-day programme includes sessions on future IT products of potential industrial relevance and visions of future information systems, as well as presentations on technology transfer to benefit small and medium-sized companies and exploitation from research and development. A substantial exhibition with demonstrations of emerging technology is also planned.

The IT Forum is jointly organised by the SERC and the DTI.

Further details about the conference can be obtained from Mrs Linda Prior, TPS Division, Department of Trade & Industry, 151 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SS, Tel: 071 215 1256. ■

Central exhibition

RAL's central exhibition in the foyer of R1 is now open to staff and visitors. The exhibition offers a fascinating insight into the Laboratory and its work.

Among its many exhibits and displays are a light-model of the ISIS instrument, scale models of a wind turbine, the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope and the JET-X instrument. There is also a Kodak photo CD on which a continuous sequence of images of RAL's work can be viewed.

The exhibition is a natural introduction to the Laboratory for all visitors, whatever their level of interest or knowledge. To ensure that it maintains its appeal and relevance, the exhibition will be constantly updated. We would welcome your comments on the exhibition and suggestions for future topics and displays. We are also looking for models and artefacts for temporary display. If you have any ideas for the exhibition or would like to volunteer items for display, contact Natalie Bealing on ext 5777 or by e-mail (OV/VM id NDB). ■

Senior appointments

The Office of Science and Technology last month announced the following senior appointments to the Research Councils (effective from 1 April 1994 unless otherwise stated):

Director General of Research Councils - Sir John Cadogan, Visiting Professor of Chemistry at Imperial College, Professorial Fellow at University College.

Part-time and non-executive Chairman of EPSRC - Dr Alan Rudge (from 1 August 1994), Managing Director, Development and Procurement, BT, also this year's president of IEE.

Part-time and non-executive Chairman of PPARC - Dr Peter Williams, chief executive and chairman of Oxford Instruments.

The Chief Executives of EPSRC and PPARC are still under competition.

Dr John Parnaby becomes the new Chairman of the LINK steering group. ■

Christmas

John Betjeman

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hooker's Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all.'

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad,
And Christmas-morning bells say 'Come!'
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissue fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare-
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

Neil takes the plunge!

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Neil Leach falling to earth after leaping from an aeroplane at 10,000 feet in a free-fall tandem parachute jump for charity.

Neil, a chargehand in Technology Department, raised a total of £346 for the Special Baby Care Unit at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford. His fall, over Windrush Camp near Burford, lasted five minutes, 35 seconds of which was spent free-falling. For the uninitiated, free-fall is the time spent hurtling towards the ground before the parachute opens! Would he do it again? "I'd have no hesitation. It was brilliant", said Neil. ■



Going down: Neil with an instructor, somewhere between 10,000 and 3,000 feet

Electronic emotion

In everyday conversation, as much as 80 per cent of meaning is conveyed, not by words, but by body language, facial expression or tone of voice, all of which is lost in communication via personal computer. In San Francisco, PC-users have developed a system of hieroglyphics, called 'emoticons', to punctuate their electronic mail and teleconference exchanges. To read the symbols, turn the page on to its side.

: -) Humour; happy

: - (Unhappy

: - < Forlorn

(: - (Very sad

: <) For those with hairy lips

: <) = For those with beards too

: /) Not funny

; -) Wink

: - o Oh, noooooo!

Congratulations ...

to the Director and to Professor Chris Damerell on their award of Institute of Physics medals and prizes.

Dr Williams will receive one of the IOP's two Premier Awards, the Glazebrook Medal, which is awarded for outstanding contributions in the organisation, utilisation or application of science, and Prize. The Duddell Medal and Prize will be awarded to Chris, of Particle Physics Department, for his outstanding contributions to the application of physics. The awards will be presented at the IOP's Awards Dinner on 27 January 1994. ■

UK particle theory community meeting at RAL

This year's meeting of the UK particle theory community will take place at RAL over three days from 15 December to 17 December. Contact David Morgan on ext 6139 for further details.

Noticeboard

Acknowledgement

Denis Jacobs would like to pass on his most grateful thanks to all who contributed to the many gifts which he received on his last day at the Lab including the individual gifts and cards, and the flowers presented to his wife, Sylvia. "Whether I am working around the home or enjoying the lesiure hours, I shall be using something which will remind me of all my colleagues at RAL."

Rec Soc News

Xmas buffet dance

Regrettably, the Rec Soc Xmas buffet dance planned for Saturday 11 December in R22, had to be cancelled. We are planning to run an event in the spring. Watch this space for further details!

ATSR 1994 calendar

The 1994 ATSR calendar is now on sale at the RAL shop, price £3. Like the 1993 calendar, it features spectacular colour images of Earth taken from the ERS-1 satellite. Deforestation in Brazil, an Antarctic ice shelf and highly intricate sea-surface temperature patterns are among the phenomena shown, each of which is accompanied by a full commentary. This unusual calendar would be an attractive and thought-provoking companion throughout 1994, especially for those with an interest in space or environmental issues - *Nick Moulton*.



Have you heard about BIDS?

Did you know that you can do literature searches for **FREE** from your own office? Using JANET you can link to a computer at Bath University and log onto the BIDS service where there are databases on science, social science, humanities and conference proceedings. If you type in a keyword or an author's name, BIDS will tell you how many journal articles in the database match your search. You can look at the details on the screen or e-mail the list to your id for further processing.

And there is more. You can place requests on BIDS for copies of the articles themselves. For a small charge, these can be sent to you within 24 hours by fax or within three days by post.

Accessing BIDS is easy, using either Telnet or PAD. For further details and a registration form please contact the Library Desk on ext 5384 (OV/VM id LIBRARY).

Lost

Digital voltmeter

Do you have in your possession or know the whereabouts of a Beckman pen-style digital voltmeter, type DM71 (inventory no R25936)? If you do, please contact Mike Towrie on ext 6141.

Diary

RAL Lectures

27 January 1994 3:00pm R22
Lecture Theatre
The origins of human speech
(provisional title)
Professor R Dunbar, UCL

HEP seminars

15 December 11:00am CR3, R61
Microstrip Gas Chambers - recent successes and breakthroughs
J C Thompson

Christian Fellowship

16 December 12:30pm CR6, R2
Thoughts on Christmas

21 December 12:30pm R22
Lecture Theatre, Carol service

23 December 12:30pm CR6, R2
Open meeting

Enquiries to John Hogston ext 5183

RAL Bulletin

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