

*EXTRACT FROM*

A Personal History of the  
Royal Greenwich Observatory  
at Herstmonceux Castle  
1948 – 1990

By George A. Wilkins

Sidford, Devon: 2009

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of the  
Royal Greenwich  
Observatory  
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Volume 2 – Appendices

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## PREFACE TO VOLUME 2

The appendices that comprise the second volume of this *Personal History of the Royal Greenwich Observatory at Herstmonceux Castle* are varied in character. They are intended to provide additional background information and further details of activities and persons that would be inappropriate in the Narrative in the first volume. Some of the sections are based on previously unpublished articles or quotations from published papers, but most contain information that has been collected from a wide variety of sources that are not readily available. In contrast to the style of the Narrative, attempts have been made to give references to these sources, but unfortunately this has not been done consistently. It is hoped, however, that the following paragraphs will serve to indicate principal sources that have been used and the abbreviations that identify them.

### **Sources of information**

The principal sources of information about the activities of the RGO that have been used during the drafting of this account are, firstly, duplicated information bulletins that were circulated to staff to keep them informed about past and future events and, secondly, the printed annual reports that were distributed externally to show how the Observatory had used the funds that had been allocated to it.

The information bulletins were started in February 1952 and subsequently appeared with changes of title, frequency, compiler, spread of topics, depth of content and style. I have a fairly complete set as, although I did not at first receive a personal copy of the RGO Information Bulletin, I subsequently inherited Dr Porter's copies for the period from 1951-1961 and thereafter I was able to save my personal copies. I have looked through these 'bulletins' quickly and prepared a 'diary' of events that appeared to be relevant to this highly selective account. I realize that many important events relating to research and telescopes etc are not included.

The early annual reports went under the title *Report of the Astronomer Royal to the Board of Visitors*. (The annual meetings of the Board of Visitors were normally held on a Saturday in June.) Copies were distributed to senior members of the staff and to Scientific Officers such as myself. I was later able to extend my set back to 1945. These reports ceased in 1964 and thereafter the only full reports of this kind were those published for 1974 to 1979/80, then for 1981 to 1985 and for 1985 to 1987.

I have also made some use of the RGO house journal, *Gemini*, but I have not yet looked systematically through my copies. Some of the material has been obtained during my visits to the RGO archives in the Cambridge University Library. In addition I have referred to my large number of other documents, such as McCrea's tercentenary booklet, about both activities and persons when trying to find or confirm details, but this is time consuming and often frustrating!

I gave many references to my sources in my 2004 draft, or on the print-out, but these have now been largely omitted from the narrative.

### References in the main text or in the appendices

A reference of the form [RAR yy, nn] usually indicates page nn of the annual Report of the Astronomer Royal for the report-year ending in 19yy. They applied to the year up to the end of March. I believe that they were printed in the published volumes of *Greenwich Observations*.

From 1965 to 1973 full annual reports were not published, but short reports, mainly about research activities, were published in the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society* from 1962 to 1982. References of the form [QJR yy, nn] refer to these shorter reports for the years ending in 19yy.

A reference of the form AR yy indicates for 1974 to 1980 the Annual Reports that were published first of all for the calendar year 19yy and then for the year ending in September 19yy.

A reference AR 85 indicates the composite report for October 1980 to September 1985 and AR 87 indicates that for October 1985 to September 1987. As far as I am aware, there are no published reports for the years 1987 onwards, although extensive reports were prepared for the Research Councils from 1965 onwards.

A reference of the form RGO X indicates class X of the RGO Archives in the Cambridge University Library. Each class is divided into numbered 'pieces'. Each of the sheets in some of the pieces (especially the early ones) have been given individual 'folio' numbers. A complete reference takes the form RGO X (pn, fn), but there may not be any of these.

References to RGO Information Bulletins or RGO Information Circulars (which replaced RGO Information Bulletins for a while) may use the abbreviations IB and IC, but the codes IB and IC may have been omitted and only the number [xxx] or date [yy/mm] is given in square brackets. This also applies to the Reporter that replaced the IBs in 1988 and for which the codes take the form [yy/xxx]. The abbreviation OC indicates an Official Circular.

References in the text to books and papers are given in only sufficient detail to identify them, but full publication details should be found in appendix G.

### Other abbreviations that may be used in references in the narrative or appendices

AGN = AT Division General Notice      TN = RGO Training Notice

NAR = NAO annual report – not published

CC = NAO Computer Circular      CN = NAO then RGO Computer Notice

Gem = *Gemini* (from 1982-1993): followed by number and the page number(s).

Spe = *spectrum* (from 1994 to 1998): followed by number and the page number(s), but my copies of *spectrum* (except the last) have been 'lost' at the University of Exeter.

SPH, nn refers to chapter nn of *A personal history of the NAO* by D. H. Sadler

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