

13th March, 1954.

Ordinary Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Group, Northern Branch, held at Leeds University at 2.30 p.m., Mr. Peter Alexander in the Chair.

Nine applications for Membership of the Group were received.

The following Paper was read and discussed :

“ Action at a Distance ”, by Dr. Mary Hesse.

(Abstract on page 257 ; this Paper is being published in *Annals of Science*)

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## Notice

*Proposed Visit by Members of the British Society for the History of Science to Longleat, Seat of the Marquess of Bath, on Saturday, 19th June, 1954.*

A cordial invitation has been received from the Marquess of Bath to visit Longleat and to see the special rooms not generally shown to the Public, together with the Eighteenth Century Scientific Instruments recently discovered here. Dr. H. Heywood, who gave a description of the Instruments at the Society's Meeting on 23rd February, 1953, has kindly offered to lead the Visit, the time-table of which is as follows :

- 9.35 a.m. Leave Paddington.
- 11.25 a.m. Arrive Westbury (Wilts.) Proceed by coach to Warminster.  
lunch.
- 2.00 p.m. Arrive Longleat and visit those sections of the house open to the  
approx. Public.
- 3.00 p.m. Visit to Bishop Ken Library where the Collection of Scientific  
approx. Instruments is exhibited.
- 4.15 p.m. Coach to Horningsham for tea.
- 5.32 p.m. Train from Frome.
- 7.35 p.m. Arrive Paddington.

For a party of *EIGHT* Members, the overall cost of the excursion to and from *Paddington* (comprising third class rail fare, coach fare, lunch, tea and entrance to Longleat) will be £2 10s. 11d. per head ; for a party of *SIXTEEN* Members, the inclusive cost will be £2 0s. 11d. per head.

Will Members who wish to join this excursion please send their names to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible and in any case *NOT LATER THAN* Tuesday, 1st June.

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## Obituary

### ROBERT STEWART WHIPPLE

By the death of Mr. R. S. Whipple on 13th December, 1953, the Society lost a member, at the time one of its Vice-Presidents, who had done much to assist the development of the study of the History of Science in Britain. For most of his life he had been concerned with the manufacture of scientific instruments for research and industrial use, and he had a unique knowledge of the history and methods of construction of apparatus used for a wide variety of purposes. He was an assiduous collector of old instruments and scientific books ; at the same time he had very considerable administrative and business ability.

Born in 1871, he was the son of Mr. G. M. Whipple, who was Superintendent of the Kew Observatory. After education at King's College School, London, he worked at the Observatory for about eight years. His association with the manufacture of scientific instruments began when he joined the firm of L. P. Casella as assistant manager. Two years later he removed to Cambridge, and joined the Staff of the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company, where he was especially concerned with the development and construction of instruments for measuring and recording temperature. There he came under the influence of Sir Horace Darwin, one of the founders of the concern, a man of remarkable personal charm with great ability and originality as a designer of instruments. In 1909 Whipple became, with Mr. C. C. Mason, a joint managing director of the firm,

and from 1939 to 1949 he was Chairman of its Board of Directors. Through this work he acquired an exceptional knowledge of the design and construction of instruments used in modern scientific work, both physical and biological. He loved fine craftsmanship and maintained very friendly relationships with his workmen, in whose welfare and education he was deeply interested.

About 1920 he began to collect interesting and beautiful old instruments and early scientific books. This collection gradually grew, especially after he had left Cambridge and had returned to live in London. It included a fine collection of microscopes; astrolabes, dials and other astronomical instruments; some very beautiful telescopes; old mathematical instruments; scales and weights. His books, numbering over fifteen hundred volumes, covered a wide range of subjects. They included early astronomical works, some of great typographical beauty; a copy of the first edition of Galileo's *Dialogues*; and many early works on dials. He had a fine collection of the seventeenth century books on physics, and of books dealing with the early history of microscopes. He had succeeded in finding many of the books and pamphlets produced by Benjamin Martin and by George Adams, well known makers of scientific instruments in the eighteenth century, but his collection was by no means confined to English authors.

In 1944 he generously presented the greater part of his instruments and books to the University of Cambridge to form the nucleus of a History of Science museum and library. His gifts were accompanied by a fine reflecting telescope, made by Sir William Herschel about 1800, which Whipple had obtained for Cambridge from the late Mr. Howard Marryat. The instruments and some of the books were exhibited for a week in the Old Schools, and aroused much interest. The donor himself spent much time in arranging and labelling the exhibits. The opening ceremony was performed by the President of the Royal Society, Sir Henry Dale, who spoke of the need for the study of the history of science and expressed the hope that the University would establish a lectureship or readership in the subject. Whipple's generous gift, which was accompanied by a large sum of money for the purchase of books and apparatus, led soon afterwards to the fulfilment of Sir Henry Dale's hope. The efforts, begun in 1935, to obtain regular teaching were rewarded by the appointment of a University Lecturer, and later the History and Philosophy of Science became a subject in the Natural Sciences Tripos. After a considerable delay a small temporary building was found to accommodate the collection of instruments, and the Whipple Museum was declared open by the Vice-Chancellor in 1951. This marks the beginning of a department which should have a profound influence on the study of the History of Science in the future.

Whipple's services to a number of scientific societies have been mentioned elsewhere. His sound judgment and his tact made him a good officer or member of council. On the formation of our Society Whipple became a foundation member and took a keen interest in its activities. He often attended meetings, and though he suffered considerably from ill health in recent years, the affairs of the Society were constantly present in his thoughts. He was anxious to see its legal status properly established by incorporation, and he took the first step to bring this about. He offered to defray the costs of the legal and public charges that would be incurred, and he took an active part in the discussion of the proposed articles of association. He considered that the Society would be strengthened if it were associated with the publication of a journal, and he tried to bring this about. He had actively supported the *Annals of Science* as a director of Messrs. Taylor and Francis, and he believed that some form of union between this publication and the *Bulletin of the Society* would be to the advantage of all concerned. Unfortunately he did not live to see either of his projects completed.

Whipple's fine character, his gentle and unassuming manners, combined with sound common-sense, made him a man who was loved and admired by all who knew him well. His advice and encouragement will be missed by many. The sympathy of the Society will go out to his widow, whom he married more than fifty years ago, and to his son and daughter.

H. HAMSHAW THOMAS.