

Record

Charles Henry Cotter

The sudden death, on 5 November 1981, of Charles Cotter, at the early age of 62, has shocked and saddened his many friends; and it has deprived the whole field of navigation of the apparently inexhaustible stream of masterly articles that have contributed so much to the appreciation of, and interest in, its fascinating history. His most recent articles, in four distinct journals, illustrate admirably not only the breadth of his interests but also the care with which he wrote for the particular readership. The comprehensive 'biography' of Captain Edmond Halley RN, FRS (*Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, vol. 36, no. 1, August 1981); the story of 'Ancient Methods of Measuring Altitudes' (*The Nautical Magazine*, vol. 226, p. 200, October 1981); 'The Instruments of Navigation' and 'Edmund Gunter 1581–1626' (this *Journal*, vol. 34, pp. 280 and 363, 1981); and the fascinating account of 'John Churchman and the Longitude Problem' (*Navigation*, vol. 27, p. 217, 1980): these all illustrate his flair for combining a high level of interest and readability with authoritative scholarship.

Appreciating the enormous effort and time needed to visit libraries, look up references (and, far more difficult, to search for new source material – at which he was most successful), and select and copy extracts, I once asked him how he could possibly cover the whole field of his wide interest in such detail. Modestly, he replied that fortunately he had much of the source-material in his own library; his collection, made during many years of frequenting book-shops and sale rooms while teaching in London, is both eclectic and comprehensive, and contains many items of rare interest. At a large desk, piled high with open books and papers, in a huge room with every square foot of wall space covered by books, he was in the habit of writing, or typing, for most of every day. He knew every book intimately, and how he had acquired it. His enthusiasm matched his astonishing capacity and energy; it was quite impossible to be with him without becoming involved in discussion of some point of interest.

This is not the place to attempt to chronicle his published contributions to navigation – a mere list of titles of books and articles would fill many pages. He was a founder Member of the Institute, and was awarded the Gold Medal in 1977; the brief citation (in the Annual Report of the Council for 1976–7) gives a summary of his achievements and of a dozen of his major books – all written, at their various levels, with characteristic fluency, accuracy and presentational skill. As a practical seaman he qualified as Master and Extra Master, and had adequate sea experience;

while teaching navigation, after retiring from service afloat, he acquired a B.Sc degree in geography and the inspiration for research from his professor, E. G. R. Taylor. He was thus admirably equipped, technically as well as by inclination and training, for the historical research in almost all aspects of navigation with which he has enriched navigational literature. And it was, in due course, acknowledged by the award by UWIST, of an M.Sc and a Ph.D. Even though his main technical work was in the field of magnetism, he shared my own interests in all aspects of astronomical navigation; his doctorate was for his outstanding thesis 'A History of Nautical Astronomical Tables' for which I have a specially high regard. He frequently called my attention to long forgotten suggestions and comments that he came across during his researches.

Personally, he was a truly delightful man. Physically rather short, he was always impeccably neat; my wife also says that he was our tidiest house-guest. His extensive knowledge was freely at the disposal of numerous correspondents from many countries, and he must have written, in long hand, hundreds of helpful letters; he, and his writings, were thus appreciated abroad as much as in this country. There have already been expressions of astonished dismay at his sudden death from his friends and colleagues abroad – particularly from the USA, which he visited for several weeks in September and October. They share their grief with those who saw Charles Cotter in such ebullient mood at the Institute's reception on 15 October.

He was born on 21 January 1919 in the small town of Hirwaun near Aberdare, and spent much of his life in Wales, finally retiring to Aberaeron in a house overlooking the sea. He leaves a widow, Lilian, and four sons.

D. H. S.

Richard Brakell Richardson

R. B. RICHARDSON, known perhaps inevitably as Dickie to his wide circle of friends, a Fellow and past Treasurer of the Institute, died suddenly but peacefully in Zimbabwe on 30 October 1981. He came from a long line of seafarers and his son Simon is currently serving as a Master at sea; both these facts gave him great pride. After Pangbourne, Dickie spent 22 years at sea as an executive officer in the Royal Navy, qualifying as a specialist in communications in 1942. After the war he became first of all Assistant Harbourmaster and then Harbourmaster of the Port of London and he was largely responsible for the introduction of the Thames Navigation Service. Latterly he held a number of navigational consultancies and worked part time at the Institute helping the Director. He was a familiar figure at IMCO where he so often represented the International Association of Institutes of Navigation, and at navigational conferences both here and abroad where he frequently represented the Institute.

Dickie Richardson totally identified with the objects of the Institute and he saw navigation in terms of philosophy rather than as a purely technological