

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Report on the correspondence and papers of

ALBERT PERCIVAL ROWE (1898-1976)

telecommunications engineer

1945-76

deposited at the
Imperial War Museum

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THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS
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CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC ARCHIVES CENTRE

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Report on the papers of
Albert Percival Rowe, C. B.E.
(1898-1976)

Compiled by: Jeannine Alton
Harriot Weiskittel

Deposited in the Imperial War Museum, London, 1977

Description of the collection

The papers were received from Mrs. Mary Rowe (widow).

There is very little material relating to Rowe's service as Superintendent of TRE (Telecommunications Research Establishment) 1938-45, though there are frequent references to this important period in the letters, and some of the talks, in the collection. Item A.3 gives some of the lighter side of life at Malvern during the Second World War, and A.4 contains a note by Rowe c.1968 on the background to the Committee for the Scientific Study of Air Defence ('the Tizard Committee'), corroborating the account given in his book One Story of Radar, 1948. Item A.5 is Rowe's comments on a history of the development of radar as put forward by the Operations and Technical Radar Committee in 1945.

The talks and addresses in Section B give a picture of the strong principles which Rowe brought to academic life as Vice-Chancellor of Adelaide University, and his continuous endeavours to instil respect for rigorous moral and intellectual standards.

The manuscript material was (in part) conveyed in the original brief-case which Rowe used throughout the War for his documents and carried with him to all conferences and meetings. The brief-case is also held in the Imperial War Museum. The Museum already holds the originals of 14 letters of congratulation, 1941-49, on TRE work, which Rowe himself donated in 1970.

Some correspondence exchanged with Lord Blackett in 1960, when Blackett was preparing his Tizard Lecture given at the Institute of Strategic Studies in February 1960, is in the collection of the Blackett papers to be deposited at the Royal Society, London.

Titles and descriptions in inverted commas are those which appear on the documents.

Not all of the material is yet available to scholars.

Summary of career of A. P. Rowe

- b.1898 Launceston, Cornwall
Educated Dockyard School, Portsmouth
- 1921 Royal College of Science (Imperial College of Science and
Technology), London
- 1922 Member of Scientific Staff, Air Ministry
- 1925 Assistant to Harry Egerton Wimperis, first Director of Scientific
Research, Air Ministry
- 1927-37 Part-time lecturer, Imperial College
- 1932 Married Mary Gordon Mathews
- 1935 Secretary, Committee for the Scientific Study of Air Defence
- 1938 Superintendent, Bawdsey Research Station
- 1939 Superintendent, Air Ministry Research Establishment, Dundee
- 1940 Superintendent, Telecommunications Research Establishment, Swanage
- 1942-45 Chief Superintendent, Telecommunications Research Establishment, Malvern
- 1942 C. B. E.
- 1945 Deputy Controller, Research and Development, Admiralty
- 1946 Medal for Merit, U.S.A.
- 1947 Adviser, Australian Defence Department and Chairman, Defence
Scientific Advisory Committee
- 1948-58 Vice-Chancellor, University of Adelaide (first salaried V-C of the
University)
- 1957 Honorary Fellow, Imperial College
- 1958-66 Taught mathematics and astronomy at Malvern College

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- A. Biographical and personal (A.1-A.12)
- A.1 3p. biographical sketch of Rowe's life and work by Denys Freeman.
Obituary by Sir Bernard Lovell, The Times.
Copy of citation to accompany the award of the Medal for Merit by the U.S.A.; typescript of press announcement of award. 1946
Letter from the Ministry of Supply on Rowe's retirement from Civil Service on appointment to Australia. 1947
- A.2 Letter from 10 Downing Street announcing award of C.B.E. 1941
Letters and telegrams of congratulation. 1942
- A.3 Misc. souvenirs of TRE, Malvern:
Chart of command structure dated 12-X-43.
Various verses and songs to be sung at TRE social functions.
Letter from American British Laboratory at Malvern challenging TRE to baseball game, 1944.
- A.4 Radar
- 'Note by Dr. A.P. Rowe on the Guardian article by John O'Callaghan "Radar - how it all began"', 1 p. n.d.
- This 'Note' gives Rowe's account of early work on sound location, his survey in 1934 of the air defences of Britain, the setting-up of the Tizard Committee, and the first test of sound echoes in Feb. 1935 which Rowe attended as representative of the Committee.
- There is also a short note by Mrs. Rowe (July 1976) in which she says 'I have a clear memory of his [Rowe's] return after the test on 26th Feb. 1935 when the result was obtained'.
- Copy of Foreword by Marshal of the RAF, Lord Tedder, to Rowe's book, One Story of Radar (pub. 1948) with accompanying letter from Lord Tedder (25.5.48.). 1948
- Photocopy of letter of thanks from Buckingham Palace (signed by Sir Alan Frederick Lascelles) for copy of One Story of Radar. 1949
- 'Radar has an anniversary', article by Rowe published in the Advertiser, 26 February 1955. 1955
- Misc. press-cuttings on radar and the Tizard Committee.
- Obituary notice by Rowe of H.E. Wimperis, Nature, November. 1960

- A.5 'The Story of Radar', document prepared by the Operations and Technical Radio Committee for the disclosure of radar information to the public. Extensive comments and discussion by Rowe who disagreed with both the facts and the presentation of the report. Also correspondence and comments by W.B. Lewis, and various drafts in manuscript and typescript form of Rowe's and Lewis's comments. 1945
- A.6 Biographical material re service as Vice-Chancellor at University of Adelaide, and retirement: includes press-cuttings, photographs, published text of Commemoration Address given at Adelaide University by the Chancellor, Sir Mellis Napier, with reference to Rowe and his work as Vice-Chancellor (see also C.3-C.7). 1947-58
1957
- A.7 Misc. photographs of Rowe and colleagues.
- A.8 Misc. biographical material - programme of Imperial College Commemoration Day (1958) at which Rowe was made an Honorary Fellow of the College; press-cuttings, memorabilia, and letter written by Rowe to his wife (n.d. but probably 1957) describing his visits to Sir Henry Tizard and other friends. 1950-65
- A.9 Letters of condolence to Mrs. Rowe, with tributes and recollections of Rowe. 1976
- A.10 Programme of Royal Society Discussion on 'The Effects of Two World Wars on the Organization and Development of Science in the United Kingdom', 28 March 1974, organized by R.V. Jones. Note to Rowe written by Jones and signed by participants in the discussion. Letter from J.A. Ratcliffe written before the dinner. 1974
- A.11 One folder of humorous writings and verse: 'Animals I Remember', 'Steve of the Jolly Sailor' (published in East Anglia Magazine (1964). Typescript and printed version of 'The Debunking of Good King Wenceslas', published in the Malvern Mercury with letter in reply.
- A.12 'The Microwaves of Malvern', article on the work of TRE published in Warwickshire and Worcestershire Life, August 1970. 1970
'T,R.E.' article published in Discovery, July 1948. 1948
Both of these articles contain numerous references to Rowe's work.
- A.13 Transcript of talk given by Rowe at the Royal Radar Establishment, 1961, containing historical recollections of TRE.

B. Talks, addresses and writings (B.1-B.62)

- B.1-B.48 The following were given by Rowe as Vice-Chancellor of Adelaide University, and are presented in chronological order as far as ascertainable; some are accompanied by correspondence. Unless otherwise indicated they are in typescript with ms. revisions and underscorings.
- B.1 Note of introduction (perhaps press release) on 'New Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor for the University', with, on verso, notes in red pencil by Rowe on his views of the university (perhaps for speech). 1947
- B.2 'Commemoration Evening Talk', 7 pp. heavily revised and underscored, with letter to editor of On Dit (Adelaide University newspaper). June 1948
- B.3 'The Choice' (English Speaking Union), and ensuing correspondence, 6 pp. Oct. 1948
- B.4 Copies of misc. news items based on Rowe's speeches and broadcast on ABC news service. 1948
- B.5 'Address to Teachers Conference', 8 pp. heavily revised. Jan. 1949
- B.6 'Talk to Graduates', 5 pp. March 1949
- B.7 'Foreword' for Science Journal, 1 p. May 1949
- B.8 'On Stopping progress', 4 pp., for Science Journal. May 1949
- B.9 Address on 'Change', given at meeting of Victoria League, printed copy, 6 pp. August 1949
- B.10 Address at Trafalgar Day Commemoration Service, 3 pp. Oct. 1949
- B.11 Prize Day speech, Prince Alfred College, 5 pp. Dec. 1949
- B.12 Legacy Club talk, 6 pp. Dec. 1949
- B.13 Script for broadcast on ABC, on pictures in the Australian National Gallery, 2 pp. Oct. 1951
- B.14 Speech at opening of Exhibition of Australian Contemporary Art, 3 pp.; newsletter of Contemporary Art Society with thanks to Rowe for his support. n.d.
1958
- B.15 'Your university - and others', 4 pp. n.d.
- B.16 'J.C.C.', 6 pp. n.d.
- B.17 'Summer School Opening', ms. and typescript, 8 pp. Jan. 1952

- | | | |
|------|---|-------------------|
| B.18 | 'Woodside', ms. and typescript, 10 pp. | March 1952 |
| B.19 | 'Television', 11 pp. | April 1952 |
| B.20 | 'Half-price universities', 2 pp. | May 1952 |
| B.21 | 'Australia', speech to Commercial Travellers Association, 4 pp. (3 copies). | August 1952 |
| B.22 | 'Scots Church', 5 pp. | March 1953 |
| B.23 | Notes and letter on 'University Finances', in <u>Adelaide Advertiser</u> . | March 1953 |
| B.24 | 'Any News?' - a talk on universities, 5 pp. | April 1953 |
| B.25 | Dinner speech, 2 pp. | Sept. 1953 |
| B.26 | Incomplete text (pps.6, 7, 8) probably of broadcast on religion in the university, July 1954, with letter of appreciation from a listener. | ? July 1954 |
| B.27 | 'Before the cock crows', address in Town Hall, Adelaide, 5 pp. | Feb. 1955 |
| B.28 | Speech at opening of extension of Adelaide University, 2 pp. | March 1955 |
| B.29 | Article in <u>Sunday Advertiser</u> on American and Australian Universities, 3 pp., written following Rowe's visit to the U.S.A. on a Carnegie grant. | March 1955 |
| B.30 | Speech, probably for Toc.H. (p.5 only). | April 1955 |
| B.31 | Address to Brighton High School, 7 pp. | Dec. 1955 |
| B.32 | 'Seven Sins?', address to the Rotary Club of Adelaide, 2 copies of published speech, 7 pp. | Dec. 1955 |
| B.33 | Address at the opening of the Summer School, 6 pp. | Jan. 1956 |
| B.34 | Speech at opening of Summer School of Business Administration, 6 pp. | Feb. 1956 |
| B.35 | 'Anzac', commemoration speech, Xerox of published text. | April 1956 |
| B.36 | 'Talk to dentists', notes for talk to university students in School of Dentistry, 2 pp. | May 1956 |
| B.37 | 'Pulteney Grammar School Speech', 4 pp.
Typescript of talk to girls' school. | Dec. 1956
n.d. |
| B.38 | 'Views on Australian University Grants Committee', 4 pp. | Jan. 1957 |

- B.39-B.46 Rowe's annual 'Talks to Freshers' at Adelaide University 1948-56 (1951 missing):
- | | | |
|------------------|---|--------|
| B.39 | 8 pp. | 1948 |
| B.40 | 6 pp. | 1949 |
| B.41 | 7 pp. | 1950 |
| B.42 | 10 pp. | 1952 |
| B.43 | 2 pp. notes. | 1953 |
| B.44 | 6 pp.
with 1 further page of welcome to freshmen for publication in <u>Cn Dit</u> , and two letters of appreciation of the address. | 1954 |
| B.45 | 2 pp. | 1955 |
| B.46 | 3 pp. | 1956 |
| B.47 | 'Report on the Financial Position of the University together with Proposals for a Short-Term Plan', October 1948, with 8 pp. introductory note and summary by Rowe as Vice-Chancellor containing his recommendations and criticisms. | 1948 |
| B.48 | 'Religion and the Community', duplicated typescript, 10 pp., of talk delivered in November 1952. | 1952 |
| <u>B.49-B.58</u> | Writings on university reform: | |
| B.49 | <u>If the Gown Fits</u> , Melbourne University Press: reviews, including one by Sir Mark Oliphant in <u>The Sydney Morning Herald</u> , 13 April 1960 (typescript and printed version with covering letter from Oliphant). See also C.1, for correspondence from readers. | 1960 |
| B.50 | 'Red Brick and Whitewash' (reprint). | c.1960 |
| B.51 | 'Dry Rot and Redbrick' as printed in <u>The Listener</u> (24 November 1960) following Rowe's broadcast on <u>BBC Third Programme</u> . See also C.1 for correspondence from the general public following the broadcast. | 1960 |
| B.52 | 'A Case for University Reform', London School of Economics Oration, December 1960 (reprint). | 1960 |

- B.53 'The Problem of Freedom and Efficiency in Universities', reprint of Rowe's remarks at discussion sponsored by the Committee on Science and Freedom, with leader in The Times Educational Supplement commenting on his speech, 1 p note 'Mr. Rowe and University Efficiency' by Prof. Bruce Williams, and Rowe's reply to Prof. Williams as published in 'Science and Freedom', December 1960.
- B.54 'A Beeching for the Dons?': typescript and printed article (differing versions). n.d.
- B.55 Remarks at Conference of the British Association for Commercial and Industrial Education, Nottingham, October: typescript notes and report in The Guardian. 1962
- B.56 'From scientific idea to practical use' (reprint). 1964
- B.57 Report in The Daily Telegraph, 11 November 1964, on Rowe's evidence to the Franks Commission. 1964
- B.58 'Training for research' editorial in The New Scientist: typescript and correspondence in the letters section. 1965
- B.59 Various sets of typescript notes on university reform. n.d.
- B.60 Astronomy and Cosmology, Thames and Hudson, 1968: correspondence with editor and publishers, reviews. 1967-71
- B.61 One folder of notes and drafts on astronomy and cosmology prepared by Rowe for General Studies Association project 'Man's Place in the Universe' (see C.14 for correspondence re the project). Lecture notes, ms. and typescript drafts, including the titles: 'Quasars and Pulsars', 'Measurement of Distances', 'The Expansion of the Universe', 'Spectroscopy', 'The Solar System', 'The Ages of Constituent Members of the Universe'. Rowe's material was edited and printed as a 13 p. booklet 'Cosmology'. The file also includes another booklet 'Cosmology for Non-Specialists'. Notes on the Teaching of Astronomy and Cosmology to Non-Scientists at Malvern College' by Rowe describing methods of teaching and material covered in the course.
- B.62 Book Reviews by Rowe:
1. The Question of Astrology, Derek Parker and The Case for Astrology, J.A. West and J.G. Toonder (ms. and typescript).
 2. Astrology and Science, Michel Gauquelin (typescript).
 3. The Prof in Two Worlds, Earl of Birkenhead (Typescript). 1961
 4. Tizard, Ronald Clark (typescript and printed version). 1965

5. Science and Government, C.P. Snow (typescript).
6. Einstein, His Life and Times, Ronald Clark (typescript and printed version; see also correspondence with Clark in C.12).

C. Correspondence (C.1- C.16)

- C.1 Correspondence from readers and listeners re If the Gown Fits and 'Dry Rot and Redbrick'. 1960-62
Selectively indexed. Includes one letter from Kenneth Mellanby (December 1960) in his capacity as Chairman of the Consultants to advise the Western Nigerian Government asking if Rowe would consider becoming Vice-Chancellor of a Nigerian university. (See also B.49 and C.51.)
- C.2 Correspondence on general matters of educational and university policy, including letters from Sir James Mountford, Lord Beveridge, Lord Snow, Lord Wolfenden, among others. 1960-65
- C.3 Correspondence re Australian university affairs during Rowe's service as Vice-Chancellor of University of Adelaide. 1955-58
File includes some letters written on the occasion of his retirement.
- C.4 Correspondence re portrait of Rowe commissioned by the University with text of speech by Frank Borland at the presentation of the portrait to the Union. Invitation to Rowe to attend University's Centenary celebrations (1974). Correspondence re naming of committee room after Rowe. File includes photographs of room and of portrait. 1966-75
- C.5 Correspondence with officials of Adelaide University following Rowe's retirement. 1972-74
- C.6 Correspondence with Sir Mark Oliphant re Australian university affairs. 1955-74
- C.7 Correspondence from Australian colleagues or re Australia (see also C.15). 1959-72
- C.8 Correspondence re Malvern College and with colleagues and pupils there.
- C.9-C.11 Personal and scientific correspondence from UK scientists and colleagues (in alphabetical order):
- C.9 Bowden, Bertram Vivian (2 letters, 1 card) 1972-74
 Brundreth, F. 1946
 Cockburn, Robert 1974
 Cripps, Isobel 1944
 Hill, Archibald Vivian 1971
 Hodgkin, Alan 1970
 Jones, Reginald Victor 1974

C.10	<p>Liddell H. ... een Lovell, Ben ... letters)</p> <p>Macfarlane ... ge (2 letters) Millar, George ... letters) Nabarro, G. Palmer, H.</p>	<p>1970 1965, 1970, 1971 1971, 1975 1973-74 1970 1967</p>
C.11	<p>Ratcliffe, J. ... worth Roskill, Stephen ... entworth (3 letters) Ryle, Martin Snow, Charles ... cy Taylor, Albert ... Percivale Tedder, Arthur ... William Wallis, Ben Wimperis, H. ... gerton</p>	<p>?1945 1968, 1973 1965 1972 1968 1958 1971 1945, 1959</p>
C.12	<p>Correspondence from Donald Clark re his book <u>Einstein, His Life and Times</u> (see B.62 for Rowe's review of this work).</p>	<p>1972-74</p>
C.13	<p>Correspondence from Guy Hartcup re his book <u>The Challenge of War</u>, photocopies of reviews, typescript of Foreword by Lord Bowden.</p>	<p>1969, 1971</p>
C.14	<p>Correspondence from John Baker and Anthony Wilson re project 'Man's Place in the Universe' sponsored by the General Studies Commission (see B.61 for Rowe's notes and drafts).</p>	<p>1969-73</p>
C.15	<p>Correspondence from Sir William Mitchell (Chancellor, University of Adelaide) re Rowe's broadcasts and publications. Most of the letters are not dated; one is 1960.</p>	<p>c.1955-60</p>
C.16	<p>Misc. personal correspondence; several of the letters are re broadcasts.</p>	<p>1966-75</p>

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Bayley, J. G.	C.1
Beveridge, William Henry (Baron Beveridge of Tuggal)	C.2
Biaggini, E. G.	C.1
Borland, Frank	C.4
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Brabazon of Tara, John Theodore Cuthbert Moore-Brabazon (Baron Brabazon of Tara)	A.2
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