

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Report on the papers of

SIR JOHN SEALY E. TOWNSEND, KBE, FRS

(1868-1957)

deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford

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THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS  
Quality House, Quality Court, Chancery Lane,  
London WC2A 1HP

1974

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No. 74/16

CSAC 8/2/74

THE ROYAL SOCIETY

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Committee on Scientific and Technological Records

CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC ARCHIVES CENTRE

Papers of

SIR JOHN SEALY E. TOWNSEND, K.B.E., F.R.S.

(1868 - 1957)

Listed by: Jeannine Alton  
Harriot Weiskittel

Deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford 1974

Description of the collection

The papers were received from the Bodleian Library where they were deposited in 1957. They cover the years 1914 - 1956.

The files of patents (from Britain, France, Italy and the U.S.) constitute the major portion of the collection and are arranged chronologically. Item 8 in 'Publications' includes an extensively corrected typescript of 'Theory of Waves in Gases', the book on sound which Professor Townsend was writing during his last years.

Summary of the career of Professor Townsend

1868 Born in Galway, Ireland  
 1885 Entered Trinity College Dublin  
 1890 - 95 Fellowship Prizeman  
 1895 Entered Trinity College Cambridge as an advanced student  
 1898 Clerk Maxwell Scholar  
 1899 Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge  
 1900 - 41 Wykeham Professor of Theoretical Physics, Oxford  
 1900 - 41 Fellow of New College Oxford  
 1903 Fellow of the Royal Society  
 1910 Opening of the Electrical Laboratory (now the Townsend Laboratory)  
 1911 Married Mary Georgiana Lambert  
 1914 - 18 Wireless research, Royal Naval Air Service  
 1941 K.B.E.  
 1941 Move to Winchester for several years followed by return to Oxford

Contents of the handlist

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I. Biographical

1. Memoir by A. von Engel (Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society, Vol. 3, November 1957, pp. 257 - 272)

II. Publications

2. Electricity and Radio Transmission, Winchester: Warren & Son: 1943  
9 Ms. pages of corrections, drawing for figure 22
3. 'Radiation and Energy', Chapter IX of Electricity and Radio Transmission: typescript with extensive Ms. corrections 1943

4. Electromagnetic Waves, London: Hutchinson's, 1951: Annotated copy with list of corrections, 2 pages of notes from 1946 ed. of Encyclopedia Britannica. 1951
5. Ms. notes taken on 'History of the Theories of Aether and Electricity' by E.T. Whittaker, Dublin University Press, 1910. n.d.
6. Ms draft of 'Transmission of Waves in Aether' n.d.
7. 'Transmission of Waves in Aether, Maxwell's Theory': typescript and copy (both with Ms. Corrections) n.d.
8. 'Theory of Waves in Gases': typescript with extensive Ms. corrections (includes abstract, preface and 'list of paragraphs'), 2 envelopes containing figures. First page inscribed 'Received 7 August 1956' 1956
9. Ms. notes on books read (Poincaré; 'Electric Waves' by Hertz) n.d.

### III. Correspondence

10. One letter from Professor W.O. Schumann dated April 4, 1954. 1953 - 54  
One letter from Professor G. Lamparillo dated June 15, 1953.

### IV. Patents and contracts

11. Diagrams for wavemeter IV (7 sheets) n.d.
12. No. 15788 'Improvements in and relating to electrical vacuum discharge devices' 1914 - 15
13. Envelope marked '3 English patents' containing: 1917 - 19  
No. 115876 'Improvements in variable electric inductances' May 18, 1917  
No. 130429 'Improved means for detecting small electric currents' February 23, 1918  
No. 129579 'Improvements in electric wave meters' February 4, 1919
14. Envelope marked '3 French patents' containing: 1918 - 23  
No. 499497 corresponding to British patent No. 115876, and letter authorising construction and sale by Établissements Gaumont of Paris (Ms. copy of letter), February 10, 1921 1918  
No. 21803 as addition to No. 499497, November 5, 1919  
No. 496870 corresponding to British patent No. 130429, October 2, 1918  
Copy of 'Notice sur le Contrôleur d'Ondes Gaumont', May, 24, 1923 1923
15. Envelope marked '3 Italian patents' containing: 1918  
No. 241, Vol. 501 December 31, 1918  
No. 242, Vol. 501 December 31, 1918  
No. 242, Vol. 501 (addition) December 31, 1918
16. Contract with the Admiralty to supply 18 wavemeters 1918
17. Envelope marked 'Agreement Johnson and Phillips' re patents in Item 13, 30 June 1920 1920  
Envelope marked 'Bristows, Cooke and Carpmael' containing 'expenses of Johnson and Phillips License and claims in respect of wavemeter v. government' 1920

18. No. 177938 (5248<sup>21</sup>) 'Improved method of and means for measuring the length of electric waves' with James Herbert Morrell, February 15, 1921 1921
19. Envelope marked '3 American patents' containing: 1921 - 23  
No. 1376592 'Variometers' May 3, 1921  
No. 1421041 'Variometers' June 27, 1922  
No. 1455458 corresponding to British patent No. 130429, 'Means for detecting small electric currents', May 15, 1923
20. Envelope marked 'Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Co. Ltd, Deed of Terms and License', October 18, 1924 1924
21. British patent No. 257334 'Improvements in adjustable inductances' 1925 and letter from chartered patent agents, May 27, 1925