

December 2, 1976

Dr. A.E. Covington
Astronomy Section
National Research Council
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0R6

Dear Dr. Covington:

Thanks very much for the copies of your recent correspondence with Edge. I was especially interested in your remark, in a letter to William Morley, that your retired mechanical engineer, H.E. Parsons, is cousin to S.J. Parsons of Hey's original post-war group. Since I have not yet been able to locate either him or J.W. Phillips, could you please send me the address of H.E. Parsons so that I may inquire of him if he knows his cousin's present whereabouts? Or, if you are able, perhaps you could simply obtain H.E. Parson's address for me and communicate it to me directly. Either way, I thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Woodruff T. Sullivan, III

P.S. I have now begun transcribing my interviews and you should be receiving a transcript of yours to check within a few months.

HTS (10/104



National Research Council
Canada

Conseil national de recherches
Canada

Herzberg Institute
of Astrophysics

Institut Herzberg
d'astrophysique

File Référence

Dec 8th 1976

A. E. Parsons
RR 3 Metcalfe Ont

Dear Hal,

In one of my letters to Bill Morley at Queen's University, I recalled your account of visiting your Cousin in England who was associated with the early development of radio astronomy in England. — The enclosed copy of a letter from Sullivan who is writing a history of radio astronomy will explain my writing to you. I hope you will be able to write to him directly. If any other recollections come to mind, I am sure he would appreciate them. I, too, would like a copy.

With best regards.

Arthur E Covington

Canadian Radio Technical Planning Board

880 Lady Ellen Place, Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 5L9 Phone: 728-8692

December 21, 1976.

Dr. Woodruff T. Sullivan III,
Dept. of Astronomy,
University of Washington,
Seattle, Washington, 98195,
U. S. A.

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

I understand from Dr. Covington of N.R.C. that you are interested in getting the address of S.J. Parsons who was with Hey's original post war group of radio astronomers.

As Dr. Covington mentioned in his letter to William Morley, S.J. Parsons is a cousin of mine so I am able to pass along the required address:-

S.J. Parsons,
Arbury House,
Lapworth,
Warwickshire,
England.

I do not know if he is still in touch with any of the radio astronomy people as he is currently the managing director of a transformer manufacturing firm in Birmingham.

During the war he was in the British Army and concerned with their Radar Equipment, while I headed up a group at N.R.C. concerned with the mechanical design of all the Canadian Radar. I do remember him mentioning to me during a visit to the UK in 1946 that he had "scrounged" some bit of Radar Equipment to set up Sir Bernard Lovell in the Radio Astronomy business.

I will drop a line to John to expect a query from you in regard to Hey's post war group.

Yours very truly,



H.E. Parsons.

Harold

RR 3

Metcalfe, Ontario

tel: 613-821-2702 (but no listing under this name 10/55)

4/19/78 - after 2 yr effort, finally interviewed over the phone
Cambridge → Warwickshire

December 31, 1976

Sydney John
Mr. S. J. Parsons
Arbury House
Lapworth, Warwickshire
England

Dear Mr. Parsons:

I am a radio astronomer and historian of science currently conducting a long-term project on the worldwide growth and development of radio astronomy (see the enclosed summary). Through Dr. A.H. Covington and your cousin H.E. Parsons, I have finally been able to track you down.

I am of course extremely interested in the work which you did in J.S. Hey's group in the years after WW II. In the period 1946-48 you published five papers in radio astronomy, all co-authored with H.W. Phillips and J.S. Hey, as well as several papers in meteor radar astronomy. Since Hey has not been willing to talk to me, saying that "his story" is sufficiently set forth in his 1973 book The Evolution of Radio Astronomy, I am particularly anxious to acquire some independent information about the work of the AORG group. I enclose copies of the relevant pages from his book, which we can perhaps take as a point of departure. I would be very pleased if you are willing and could find the time to answer the following questions in depth. If you would find it easier and have access to a standard cassette recorder, then feel free to tape record your answers and send me the cassette. I will then have the tape transcribed and have you verify the transcript. In any case before I will use any direct quotes from you, I will definitely ask your permission. My main interest is in information not available in publications, as well as in anecdotes and insights into motivations and personalities.

The questions:

- *Jordan S.* (1) Do you know the present whereabouts of either J.W. Phillips or G.S. Stewart? Were there any other significant members of that group that I should try to contact?
- (2) Do you have any memorabilia, photographs, or archives from that group? If so, I would very much like to be sent either copies or the originals (in which case I would make copies and return the originals to you).

Mr. S. J. Parsons
December 31, 1976

-3-

(14) Overall, what would you say were the AORG group's main contributions to the development of radio astronomy?

Thank you very much for your time in helping to set the record straight and convey some of the flavor of that era. If you could reply before the end of January, I would be appreciative.

Sincerely yours,

Woodruff T. Sullivan, III
Assistant Professor of Astronomy

enc.

Mr. S. J. Parsons
December 31, 1976

-2-

- (3) Can you describe the ambience of the group? How was it decided as to what the next research step should be? How much were you influenced by the results of other groups?
- (4) Please tell me briefly about your educational and professional background before you joined the group. What sort of work did you do during the War? How was it that you joined Hey's group and became involved in radio astronomy? As you carried out this research, which type of scientist or engineer did you consider yourself? To whom were you primarily trying to communicate your research results?
- (5) Are there any aspects of Hey's account which you feel are either inaccurate, misleading, or incomplete? Are there any important incidents or factors not mentioned?
- (6) When and how did you first learn of Hey's 1942 discovery of solar radio bursts? Over the years 1945-48 what were the primary scientific questions you were trying to answer through solar observations?
- (7) Do you agree with Hey's description of the group in ^{ERA}~~ERA~~, p. 21?
- (8) Were you involved at all in the experiments on short scatter echoes (pp. 21-23)?
- (9) Tell me about data acquisition and reduction for the 64 Mc/s survey of the sky (pp. 43-45). How much modification of the military equipment was required? What were the primary questions to be answered by studying the galactic radiation? What do you remember of the discovery of the fluctuating source in Cygnus? At that time and over succeeding years, what was your opinion as to the origin of the fluctuations?
- (10) Do you recall the visits of Ratcliffe and Lovell to AORG immediately after the War (p. 30).
- * (11) Tell me in detail about the visit by you and Hey to Lovell at the University of Manchester (pp. 30-31). Hey's description leaves the reader with the idea that your visit and discussions were vital to the success of Lovell's operation. Do you agree?
- (12) What are your recollections concerning the great Giacobinid meteor shower in October, 1946 (pp. 32-34)? Which were the most important questions at that time about meteors and their interaction with the ionosphere?
- (13) How was it that the radio astronomy effort ended at AORG (pp. 48-49)? What sort of work did the group members go into? Why did you not stay in radio astronomy?

Lapworth 2393

ARBURY HOUSE,
LAPWORTH,
WARWICKS.

7th February, 1977

Dear Professor Sullivan,

Your letter of 31st December last is of great interest and I have given your project some thought.

It is many years since I was involved in radio astronomy and although I retained copies of all my published papers, most of the working papers were scrapped a long time ago. However, it is possible that I may be able usefully to supplement your present knowledge of the AORG work, given a little more time to set out my thoughts and make a few enquiries, e.g. relating to the present whereabouts of Phillips and Stewart. Incidentally, I have a clear recollection of some of the personal matters, such as meetings with Appleton and Lovell, but I retained none of the correspondence with them - Hey possibly has copies, although in spite of the surprisingly personal style of parts of "The Evolution of Radio Astronomy", I doubt whether he would wish to publish them.

Please accept my apologies for the delay in getting to grips with your questions, but I will follow-up this brief note as soon as practicable.

Yours sincerely,

S. J. Parsons,

PP JHP

Professor W.T. Sullivan,
University of Washington,
Seattle, U.S.A.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98195

December 13, 1977

Department of Astronomy

3 S.S. Parsons' in Birmingham area!
↓
7660885
21 - 3281311
3225563
Massachusetts
263 N. Shreve Way, S. Hall
50 Hollywell Rd, Birm 26 → 7438081
re factory during war (Sydney J.)

8/78 - could
find re
tel # from
info

Mr. S. J. Parsons
Arbury House
Lapworth, Warwickshire
England

Dear Mr. Parsons:

I was encouraged by your reply of 7 February in response to my letter of 31 December 1976 asking for information on your participation in Hey's group and especially its radio astronomical investigations. I still am very much interested in your detailed replies to my questions as they will be invaluable to my study.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Woodruff T. Sullivan, III
Assistant Professor, Astronomy

WTS:1a



RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT TE GRONINGEN

STERREKUNDIG LABORATORIUM "KAPTEYN"

POSTBUS 800 - GRONINGEN - NEDERLAND

TEL. 050 - 116695

9/15 - he finally calls + we agree afft for 2100, Tue 19 Sep
- I call Lepworth (05643) 2393

011-44

Ons no./ Our ref.:

GRONINGEN,
Nettelbosje 2 (Paddepoel)

31 Aug 1978

Onderwerp/Re:

Dear Mr. Parsons,

I am visiting the above laboratory until 18 September
and it occurred to me that, if you are willing, I could telephone you and
obtain answers to ^{in my letter} the questions of 31 Dec 1976. Could you please send me
your telephone number - or call me if you wish at 050-116656 or 116695 and I
will call. If you would rather answer the questions by mail, that is fine, too. I will be
back at my usual address in Seattle after 25 Sept.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

W.T. Sullivan, III

Dept of Astronomy F11-20

Parsons

269 Pleasant Park Rd
Ottawa Ont R1H 5M7
Ont

* actually a
re-connection.

Record of telephone conversation with Harrold E Parsons on Sept 9th 1982 to inform him that I would like to record his relationship to S John Parsons of the J S Hey group in England in a forthcoming paper. He did not mind, and went on to say that the family connection* occurred through Bill Happe coming across a Captain Parsons at the time when he was in England with the Canadian GL IIIC radar set. Bill Happe said that they (NRC, Canada) had a Parsons with them, who was working in the mines of Britannia Mines outside of Vancouver. On Hal's first trip over during the war, the Parson cousins met and have subsequently maintained a connection. Captain Parsons obtained the early wartime radar sets used by Lovell and was co-author with J S Hey on some of the early radio astronomy papers. He did not continue in radio astronomy, but managed an electrical wire factory. Telephone 821-2702 in Metcalfe, Canada.

613 F.E. Parsons 821-3285

Sept 9th / 82.

Dear Dr Sullivan,

In cleaning up my desk, I came across a letter to you which I forgot to enclose with my preliminary draft to you. - it is now forwarded as well as this note of a recent telephone conversation with H.E. Parsons. - - - - in view of this I would like to remove the brackets from page 2 and make the sentence part of the text or a footnote.

Yours sincerely

Arthur E Cowington

7/30 - sent bug

10/27/85 called (at 206-445-5643-2343) + he said he hadn't replied

because he wasn't sure about the wisdom of trying to answer my probing questions

-but he has no objections to my chapters

-he will shortly send permission, etc.

~~He will shortly send permission, etc.~~

Department of Astronomy FM-20
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195
U.S.A.

11 February 1985

Mr. S.J. Parsons (went very close by item 10/20/85)
Arbury House
Lapworth (near N of Stratford-upon-Avon, on A34)
Warwickshire B94 5LX
England

Dear Mr. Parsons,

It has now been over six years since I interviewed you over the telephone for my project on the history of radio astronomy, but I have not forgotten your helpfulness then. Under separate cover I am sending you the transcript of that interview for your review and for signing a release form.

I have now completed drafts for two of the chapters in my book A History of Radio Astronomy (Vol. I). Under separate cover I am sending the portions (a) based on information which you have given me, (b) relevant to your participation in the development of radio astronomy, or (c) relevant to your interest in the history of the subject. I am extremely interested in your comments on this draft, in particular with regard to the following points:

- (1) historical accuracy
- (2) fair emphasis of the events and issues
- (3) any omissions of important ideas or developments
- (4) the "flavor" of the times -- has it been captured?
- (5) style of writing and presentation

Besides the above general areas, there are the following points:

- (1) I now formally ask for your permission to use the quotation from your interview cited in footnote 3 in my book and in any other articles on this subject which I may write. Please send me your written permission.
- (2) The enclosed sheet of questions covers many points on which I need your help. Please answer those which you can.
- (3) What exactly was your role in the February 1942 incident which led to the discovery of the solar radio bursts? Were you Hey's chief assistant in the "troubleshooting"? After looking again at pp. 3-5 of your transcript, I am thinking that I should perhaps mention your role in 1942 - would you agree? Were there any others who should be mentioned?

If you wish, return the draft copies to me with your comments; otherwise, a separate sheet (referring to page numbers in the draft) will be fine. If at all possible, I urge you to cite publications or to send me photocopies of supporting documentation (reports, memos, letters, notebook entries, etc.) to buttress any arguments which you may wish to make. All comments will be seriously weighed; based on these I will then develop the final version of the chapter.

Finally, if you have any photographs (of which I may not be aware) relevant to the material in this chapter, please send me prints (with full captions) and indicate whether I may keep them or should make copies and return the originals to you.

It will greatly aid the schedule for the book if your comments could reach me by 15 March, but if this is not possible I will still profit from comments received on a later date. I thank you in advance for your time in reviewing this draft and I trust that you will find the end product worth your effort.

Sincerely yours,

Woodruff T. Sullivan, III
Associate Professor of Astronomy

ARBURY HOUSE
LAPWORTH
WARWICKSHIRE
Telephone: Lapworth 2393

(already had)

Dear Professor Sullivan,

As regards a copy of a
letter which was never published
which may be of interest.

I have looked thro' all
my old papers & nothing
significant has come to light.

I have not yet looked at
my photographic files, but I doubt
whether there is anything interesting
there. If I do find anything I
will send it on.

Sincerely
John Thomas

10/14/87 - called from F&A - he's put it off largely because of Phillips' objections
- but he'll cooperate; I told him I'd call him back after I'd talked to Phillips
+ let him know the current situation

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98195

10/14 - told him Phillips was now happy, so he'll send all stuff in 2-3 weeks

- he thinks he has a copy of the 1942 Hey C report; - I told him to send me
a copy if he can find it

Department of Astronomy, FM-20

- I send him piece of ch. D (p. 105 I think) + my copy of 1942 report

1/88 - sent digging for

26 January 1986

Dear Mr. Parsons,

From our telephone conversation of 27 October,
I thought that I would be soon receiving your response to all of
the materials I sent you last February.

I am still extremely interested in your checking of
the transcript of your interview and returning permissions (another of
which I include for your signature!) and any comments you have. From our
conversation, I gathered that you are reluctant to answer my specific questions
about Hey's group, etc. This is fine (to ignore these), but please return
the other material so that I can maintain my schedule.

Thank you very much for your time and effort, which
materially aid my history research.

Sincerely yours,

W. T. Sullivan, III

W. T. Sullivan, III

28 - West Hill, Warwick, p.c.

ARBURY HOUSE
LAPWORTH
WARWICKSHIRE
Telephone: Lapworth 2393

©

21 November 1987

Dear Professor Sullivan,

This is just a brief note
to tell you there is no news to
report from the Operational Research
seminar - indeed a fact from George
indsey from Canada there were
Operational research men (or
women) ^{at} ~~in~~ ^{these} ~~business~~ who had had
direct experience of radio astronomical
work.

I have not yet had the
opportunity to read and
comment on your draft papers, but
as soon as other pressing business
matters are less dominant I
will attempt to deal with them.

P.T.O.

© (left and right)

In the meantime, you might be interested in the ^(attached) copy of a paper by Eastwood which I came across some years ago.

I knew Eastwood during the war, especially for his observations of birds on various types of radar, & if I remember rightly for some tropospheric propagation problems on radar accuracy. But I think he was slightly envious that he had not made any significant progress in extra terrestrial phenomena.

Sincerely,
John Parsons

Parsons

absolutely the best!

Department of Astronomy FM-20
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195
U. S. A.

12 February 1989

Mr. S.J. Parsons
Arbury House
Lapworth
Warwickshire
England

Dear Mr. Parsons,

This is just a reminder that I am still very much interested in materials from you, originally requested some time ago. If you want to minimize your effort, I would suggest that you simply sign the permission forms and return the transcript of the interview. But I do hope that, if you are able, you could comment on the drafts that I sent you - yours is the only "voice" missing in the feedback that I have received. Everyone else, including Phillips, has sent me very useful material.

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

Sincerely yours,



Woodruff T. Sullivan, III
Professor of Astronomy

WTS3/vax