

WELCOMING ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE

I am honoured and certainly delighted to have been appointed the privilege of welcoming you all on behalf of the local organising committee to the Fifteenth International Radiocarbon Conference. Why, I asked, had I been elected to follow on Baillie Adam's formal opening words on behalf of Glasgow's city fathers? Was it polite respect for my relatively venerable age, or perhaps even a certain power of intimidation that comes with an increasingly impressive waistline? My co-organisers assure me that their reasoning was much less flattering; it was down to the fact that since I had fronted the bid in Tucson then I had better see the business through. No matter the reason, it gives me great pleasure to echo the Baillie's welcome to Glasgow and to Scotland.

For the past three years the local organising committee has had a single focus. Our target is to provide you, the international radiocarbon community, with the opportunity to build on past achievements in Tucson. We aim to provide a forum for progressive scientific discussion and allied with a memorable social programme. We leave it to individuals, however, to arrange their own priorities *vis à vis* science and socialising.

Who, then, are these local organisers? First, we can be most readily identified by our pink labels (name tags). Second, is to say that among our various duties we have an absolute responsibility to ensure traditional Scottish hospitality and to assist with any individual problems (or problem individuals) that may arise; may both categories be few. As with all introductions it must be ladies first and that means our Marian (Dr. E.M. Scott). Without doubt it is Marian who has been the prime driving force to this week's endeavour. A word of warning, during the past week she has slipped into a very direct overdrive. Next is Gordon (Dr. G.T. Cook), who is also running in top gear after having the lead role in a very successful LSC 94 Conference which we co-hosted last week. Last, but certainly not least is Brian (Mr. B.F. Miller). Brian is one to see if you need something done quickly and effectively; he also has an increasingly demanding task keeping yours truly (Dr. Doug. Harkness) on the straight and narrow. While we four are listed formally in the handouts and programmes we are of course only as good as our back-up team *viz.*, i) the girls with the real organising ability—Myra, Maureen, Margaret, Irene and Elaine and ii) the post docs and research assistants who shoulder so much of the day-to-day donkey work—Phil, Roland, Fiona, Jackie and Niall.

The Scottish radiocarbon people congregate from three centres, two in East Kilbride and one in Glasgow. As in all good soap operas the set-up is complex and positively incestuous. In Glasgow at the University there is the Department of Statistics—that is Marian and Myra, the two M's. Then there is East Kilbride and that is where the fun as to who is who really begins. In East Kilbride we have two independent radiocarbon laboratories. The NERC Radiocarbon Lab (that's mine) coded in the *RADIOCARBON* listing as SRR- which of course derives from Scottish Research and Reactor Centre. Then there is the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre Radiocarbon Lab—headed by Gordon Cook—and coded in *RADIOCARBON* as GU- which of course indicates Glasgow University. So, to someone depending on the *RADIOCARBON* listings, the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre lab is in fact the NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) lab and the Glasgow University lab is the real SURRC outfit!

Of course the entire business is historical. The tale begins in the mid 1960s with the appointment of an itinerant geochemist called Alan Walton to a senior lectureship in the Chemistry Department at Glasgow University. Alan arrived in Scotland via the US of A where he had been consorting with people like Wally Broecker and Bill Schell. He had a look at Glasgow's market of available intellect and decided to appoint a young Turk (Mehmet Ergin) as his research assistant. Then, because some

additional lab space became available in a basement dungeon, Murdoch Baxter and I were given the chance to complete the research team. We set up the University of Glasgow Radiocarbon Laboratory in 1966.

I well remember our indoctrination from Alan Walton. He was full of enthusiasm about the applied radiocarbon research being carried out around the world; by the several groups of fabulous Yanks, the Dutch school in Groningen, the Norwegians in Trondheim and Athole Rafter and his New Zealand pioneers. Then there was of course the inevitable English. In Cambridge Harry Godwin, Eric Willis and a boy called Roy Switzer. At the British Museum there was Harold Barker who, because he was not afraid to handle acetylene, eventually reverted to producing benzene to feed something called a liquid scintillation counter. Nearer home, in Belfast, there were two young hopefuls (Alan Smith and Gordon Pearson) digging up bits of bog oak.

During the intervening 28 years or so the application of low level C-14 measurement has prospered in Scotland and to the extent that it is a proud occasion for us to have the international recognition of your presence here today. On a personal note I have one regret *viz.*, that for various reasons Alan Walton, Mehmet Ergin and Murdoch Baxter cannot be with us during the Conference. Each, however, sends his best wishes for a successful meeting.

With regard to opportunities for the development and practice of applied C-14 measurement we in Scotland have been favourably endowed. In a geographical sense our country is placed ideally at the northwest corner of continental Europe where the climate is largely determined by the ameliorating effects of oceanic circulation in the North Atlantic. I am sure that we will be learning a deal more on that theme during the coming week. We also inherit a coastal regime and highland topography that each retain a wealth of natural records of those marked swings in palaeoclimate that have occurred during the extent of the radiocarbon timescale. This is of course a topic that now has front stage in both academic interest and public concern. In that context it seems appropriate to highlight the fact that Glasgow University was early, if not indeed premature, in its contribution to the general theme of climatic change and in particular the role of orbital forcing. Last century we had a research assistant James Croll, who in 1867, published two papers in *Phil. Mag.* 33. entitled, i) "On the eccentricity of the Earth's orbit, and its physical relations to the glacial epoch" and ii) "On the change of the obliquity of the ecliptic, its influence on the climate of the polar regions and on the level of the sea." Somewhere along the line I suspect that the family changed its name to Milankovitch!

What then of the scientific menu for the next five days? If the past two days of pre-Conference Workshops are a worthwhile barometer, then we can look to a veritable feast of scientific versatility and intellectual challenge.

We also have a social programme. The flavour is unashamedly Scottish; please enjoy it. However, if you do not, then there is no refund.

Before we embark on our serious business it remains for me, on behalf of the local organisers, to thank our many sponsors (as listed in the Conference programmes and abstracts), our very good friends in the scientific advisory committee but first and foremost to thank all of you, the participants in the Fifteenth International Radiocarbon Conference, for coming to Glasgow.

Doug Harkness