

## KENNET POLLOCK

Kennet Pollock, who was Treasurer of the Association for twenty-three years, died after a short illness on 1968 September 27 at the age of seventy. Although his professional work prevented him from attending many of our meetings, he will always be remembered by those who served with him on the Council for his very able control of the Association's financial affairs during its most difficult years.

As a boy he attended a small private school, but a serious illness prevented him from following a normal life for many years. During this period he received private tuition, and it is possible that his life-long interest in astronomy dated from this time. At seventeen he started work in the London office of a Calcutta firm in which his godfather was a partner, the intention being that he should later go out to Calcutta, where the firm owned jute mills. However, the 1914-18 war intervened, and afterwards, as a result of war wounds, Pollock was unable to pass the stiff medical test required for the Indian appointment. It became clear to him that his prospects were far from good, and on the death of his godfather he decided in 1926 to work for a University degree. His experience in buying and exporting large machinery had given him an interest in statistics and economics and in 1933 he passed the B.Sc. examination in Economics as an external student of London University. At the beginning of the second world war all exports to India ceased, and Pollock, who was on the Scientific Register, was sent to equip and manage a munitions factory in Dundee. Later he was appointed to the Statistics Branch of the Admiralty, then at Bath, and here he remained until his retirement a few years ago, by which time he held the rank of Chief Executive Officer.

Pollock had joined the Association in 1922 and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1924. In the early days he did some observing and had shown an interest in computing, but it was not until some years later that we find his name mentioned among the more experienced computers. Among other tasks he was engaged in the calculation of satellite phenomena, meteor paths, cometary perturbations, and the reduction of occultations, and was largely responsible for collating the results of this occultation work for several years. He was elected to the Council in 1939 and in the following year became the Association's Treasurer.

The war was just beginning (meetings had been suspended because of the air raids on London), and the outlook which Pollock faced was not very promising. Membership of the B.A.A., after years of economic depression, was little more than 800, and the subscription was one guinea. But Pollock's outstanding gift was his ability to look ahead—to use his business training to assess the future trends of expenditure and income. Each year he would

circulate to the Council a memorandum giving a reasoned appraisal of the prospects for the year ahead, and in one of the earliest of these he warned them of the depreciation in the value of the pound in the years to come, and of probable rocketing printing costs. As an expert on statistics, he gave them statistics, but it must be said that these figures had little effect at first. Perhaps the rising membership (it had doubled by 1947) gave the Council a false sense of security, but if so they were to receive a more urgent warning in 1948, when Pollock forecast a heavy loss on the year's working. The *Journals* and *Handbook*, which had cost a mere £50 apiece in 1941, were by then averaging three times as much, while *Memoirs* were still being distributed to all members, regardless of their value, content or cost. In a long memorandum in 1948 February Pollock suggested, among other things, severe restrictions in printing, using the *Journal* as the main source of information and reports, and at the same time an increase in the subscription rate. Only the last of these recommendations was adopted, the subscription being raised to 1½ guineas in 1949, but this was not enough for Pollock. The Council were faced with the prospect of his resignation, and were forced to take action. A small Memoir Committee was formed and their recommendations (which unanimously supported Pollock's views) were adopted and are still in force.

The financial state of the Association showed some improvement for a few years but this did not last, and there were four successive years (1952-55) of losses, although the membership had by then risen to 2 600. The subscription was again raised in 1956, this time to 45s. Perhaps it is not out of place to remark that, although our membership today is in the region of 3 600, the subscription still stands at 45s., but the cost of each issue of the *Journal* or *Handbook* has now risen to about £700, as compared with the £50 in 1941. Members do not always appreciate the difficulties which face the Treasurer of an Association whose main interests are served by its publications; and the fact that we are still in a stable financial position is in large measure due to Pollock's foresight and constant insistence on the need to face up to the changing times with new ideas and new methods. The Association owes much to this modest and sincere man, who was always appreciative of the other man's point of view and especially of the needs of our members. With an enquiring mind, he had many other interests; he was a voracious reader and possessed a very large collection of books on a wide variety of subjects, but astronomy remained his greatest pleasure, right up to the last few days before his death. His widow survived him for barely three months; they leave two sons.

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