

ALAN PATRICK MACKERRAS who died on 1973 August 20 joined the British Astronomical Association in 1920 and was thus the member of longest standing in the New South Wales Branch of the Association. He made a significant mark on the life of Sydney as an engineer, as a university teacher, as an astronomer and as a yachtsman.

The son of James Murray and Elizabeth Mary Mackerras, Alan Patrick was born at Elizabeth Bay, New South Wales, on 1899 August 28. He graduated from the University of Sydney in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering in 1923 and in the same year he married Catherine Brearcliffe MacLaurin. His family life was important to him and he and his wife had seven children who have remarkably individual and successful careers.

Mackerras' professional work was in electrical engineering. He occupied responsible posts in several electricity undertakings and during the time when he was Transmission Engineer with the Electricity Commission of New South Wales he made a major contribution to the planning of the New South Wales Transmission Grid including co-ordination of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority for the transmission of Snowy power to load centres in New South Wales. He was also keenly interested in economic problems associated with electricity supply and up until the time of his final illness was a member of the Retail Tariff Panel of the Electricity Authority of New South Wales. He wrote a number of papers on transmission problems in electricity and on economic problems associated with supply. In 1957 he joined the Electrical Engineering Department of the University of Sydney as Senior Lecturer and held this position until his retirement and still continued some lecturing work until his failing health compelled him to give it up. His wide experience and outstanding ability as a lecturer made him an extremely useful member of the Department.

As an astronomer Alan Mackerras was noted for his interest in spherical and dynamical astronomy. His clear grasp of these subjects and his readiness to discuss them at any time and at any level with members of the Association made him a great asset on many occasions. He contributed papers to the *Journal* of the Association on oppositions of Mars and on the form of mathematical tables. He was continuously active on the Committee of the New South Wales Branch and at various times occupied the positions of Treasurer and Secretary. He was President of the Branch during eight different sessions and was a founder member of the professional body, the Astronomical Society of Australia, when it was formed in 1966. From 1946 April Mackerras was a member of the Board of Visitors of Sydney Observatory, and was elected Chairman in 1953 April. He held this position until, early in 1973, he thought that he should resign. He was secretary of the Donovan Astronomical Trust from 1934 until 1971. This body was formed to encourage astronomy and

education in astronomy and in 1971 Mackerras decided that it would be better to pass the administration over to the Astronomical Society of Australia. For many years, from 1955 to 1972, he participated in series of lectures on Astronomy under the auspices of the Department of Tutorial Classes of the University of Sydney and the Workers Educational Association.

Alan Mackerras had a life-long interest in yachting and was well known as an excellent single-handed yachtsman. He said that he had always owned a boat from about the age of fourteen and his last yacht, a very successful one called *Antares*, he designed for himself.

No recital of the activities and achievements of Alan Mackerras can really give any idea of the high value that his friends placed on knowing him. As a lecturer he was always responsive to atmosphere and he made many friends amongst his audiences, both his undergraduate students and members of his adult education classes. He was always most approachable and gave his time most willingly to those who sought his advice. His clear-thinking wisdom will be much missed by his friends as well as by committees such as those of the New South Wales Branch of the Association and the Board of Visitors of Sydney Observatory.

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