

BOOK REVIEW

R. W. Home, with the assistance of Paula J. Needham, *Physics in Australia to 1945: Bibliography and Biographical Register*. Melbourne, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Melbourne, and National Centre for Research and Development in Australian Studies, Monash University, 1990, xx-222 pp., hardback \$55.00 (available from D. W. Thorpe, P.O. Box 345, North Ryde, N.S.W., 2113).

Someone linked to both the bodies responsible for publishing the present volume has to declare his interest. At the same time it may not be apparent why such a book should be noticed in *Explorations* at all. However, since our brief is to study all aspects of French-Australian relations, science certainly cannot be neglected. Indeed it could be argued that the scientific connection—for example, through the La Pérouse, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin expeditions—was the earliest and has remained one of the most important points of contact between the two countries.

Physical research enters into this picture, but Professor Home's rules for inclusion leave out "those who came as visitors and collected data and ideas, which they subsequently wrote up after returning home". Thus, in the period before 1945, we are looking essentially at individuals who spent more or less time researching and publishing inside Australia or from an Australian base.

The "Introduction" (pp. iv-xii) sets out very clearly the scope and the significance of this bio-bibliography, which fits into the remarkable effort of the last decade to document, chronicle and analyse Australian scientific history. Each entry includes a brief biographical notice—at most a few lines—and a list of relevant publications. The trouble taken to compile each article at first hand is emphasized, but, regardless of the variety of sources used and of the need to verify and sometimes correct details in them, it is a pity that the most accessible ones, notably the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, are not indicated in specific cases.

It is hardly astonishing that immigrants, temporary residents and eventual expatriates figure largely in the record up to the end of the Second World War. Nonetheless there are cases, for example those of T. H. Laby and J. H. Michell, that follow the pattern of first degree in Australia, postgraduate work at Cambridge and return to

teaching in this part of the world. What is also unsurprising is the extent to which participants, native-born or recruited overseas, fall outside Anglo-Celtic society. The German-speaking world predominates, but the Romance countries are not absent from the background of some members of the physics community. Louis Charles Bernacchi was a special case, as the *ADB* articles on him and his father Angelo indicate. The Sydney-born Pierre Gerard Mathieu Gilet (1913–1958) and the somewhat elusive Gaston Fleuri "Ed. France (Licencié ès—sciences math., Licencié ès—sciences phys.)" (p. 65), with two papers published locally in 1893 and 1894, must attract our attention at the very least on onomastic grounds. Maurice Belz's record as a Francophile earns him an honourable place in our culling of the French content of a list that suggests all sorts of fascinating paths to explore.

More centrally, through the articles on Henry Herman Leopold Adolf Brose, Edmund Harold Molesworth and others, one can approach the "richly endowed but ultimately ill-fated Cancer Research Committee at the University of Sydney" (p. v). Those who are puzzled by the silence of the recent official history of the University of Sydney on this subject can go to Herbert Moran's *Viewless Winds* (London, Peter Davies, 1939) for a partisan account written with brio and bite. Moran, Brennan's friend and purchaser of some of his most significant Mallarméana, belongs assuredly to our story even if his own research on X-ray therapy was not that of a physicist.

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