List of Staff:

Professor
A.T.A. Learmonth, M.A. (Edin.), Ph.D. (Edin.)

Reader
A.J. Rose, M.A. (N.Z.)

Senior Lecturer
E.C.F. Bird, M.Sc. (Lond.), Ph.D. (A.N.U.)

Lecturers
N.S. McDonald, M.Sc. (New England)
P. Laut, B.A. (New England)

Lecturer (part-time)
W.P. Packard, M.A. (N.Z.)

Demonstrator
G.T. Walker, B.A. (adel.)

Introduction

The Department is concerned to build its teaching to sufficient scope and strength to offer a reasonably wide range of courses to undergraduates, with the double aim of providing professional training for future geographers by way of the Honours degree, and a broader general education of substance for those who choose or are able to take only the Pass degree. The first three years of existence of the Department have seen steady progress towards this goal. During the year we were in a position to re-formulate our courses, and from 1966 the Department will be offering five full units, plus supplementary Distinction course work, which may be taken by students during the first three years of their degree.

Although the Department now has five full-time members on its lecturing staff, the development of additional course work in Geography IV from 1967, and the continuing steady increment of M.A. thesis supervision and special course work, means that the academic staff will continue to be under considerable pressure for some time to come.

Developments during the year

The course structure was unchanged but we experimented with offering options in part of the Geography II work as a transition towards the marked changes in course structure in 1966.

Miss S.E. Lee became our first M.A. in Geography, Second Class Honours.

Additional space in the department's temporary quarters in Childers Street was made available and very adequately converted, where necessary, as map laboratories. The department was housed together for the first time and gained a great deal in unity and cohesion.

Mr. Peter Laut joined the staff and with his arrival the field work on the human side of the subject was greatly strengthened to equal that on physical geography.

In December Dr. Bird tendered his resignation, to become effective on January 31, 1966, to take up a new position as Reader at the University of Melbourne.

Teaching programme and curriculum

In general, we are satisfied with the return for fairly intensive effort applied to the Geography I students in the way of close supervision and terminal test. Some students appear to find the course arduous, with its demands in library and field work beyond the lecture and tutorial structure normal in Arts units. This appears to result in some moderate lapse in numbers during the year; on the other hand, the failure rate among those completing all the requirements of the year's work and attempting the final examination is unusually low. Geography II and III teaching is
transitional to the new course structure already referred to. Undergraduates surviving Geography I show considerable keenness to continue studying Geography and express interest in the new course.

The very low failure rate in Geography I (only 12 percent of the examination candidates) has already been partially explained above, but deserves closer attention. We are satisfied that the results and actual mark levels of Geography I students are fully consistent with the performance of these students in their other subjects. We must therefore accept that by some means Geography fails to attract any significant proportion of failure-prone students in the way that such students seem attracted by the "mass" first-year units such as those offered by the History, English and Political Science departments. That is, although Geography may not be attracting any undue proportion of the better students, it is also very fortunate in that the less satisfactory "tail" of the student body is also keeping away. In large measure this situation must be attributed to the just reputation for demanding consistent work throughout the year that the subject has gained.

The department has its first honours graduate in Owen Dent with a good performance (an upper second). It is extremely disappointing that 1966 will be without honours candidates in Geography IV, it seems clear that several promising students are finishing at the pass degree because of the stipulations of bonding to the N.S.W. Education Department. Candidates for the degree of M.A. in Sociology attended some of the lectures in the distinction course on Urban Geography.

We have continued to enjoy our remaining contacts with students from the Faculty of Economics or majoring in Economics within an Arts degree; a small group did additional distinction work which proved rewarding to staff and students.

Several classes enjoyed the stimulus offered by the assistance generously granted by the Department of Geography in the Research School of Pacific Studies: Mr. Jennings, Mr. Ho and Dr. Linge took classes and also a number of scholars: Messrs. I. Douglas, H.J. Webber, M.E. Robinson, J.S. Whitelaw and A.D. Couper. M.A. scholars in this department also acted as tutors in their special fields: D.A. Shortle and Miss E. Lee. We were fortunate to have part-time assistance from the following: Mrs. Bird, Mrs. Morley, Mrs. Douglas, Mrs. Major, Mrs. Wilkinson, Mr. Goede and Mrs. LeRoux.

The undergraduates have not so far formed a Geographical Society but under the stimulus of Mr. Dent they held a very successful series of lunch time seminars. Staff and students enjoyed several of the seminars in the sister department and welcomed members of the Institute of Advanced Studies to some meetings in Childers Street.

Staff members engaged in teaching in Adult Education courses, in the University of the Air and other Television series, in presenting the case for Conservation to the public in several media, and in visiting schools.

Visitors to the Department

These include Professor H.J. Wiens of Yale University; Professor R.W. Steel of the University of Liverpool; Professor E.A. Boateng of the University of Ghana and Dr. N. Stephens, Queens University of Belfast.

Enrollments and Examinations

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Research and Publication

Professor Learmonth's contributions to the revision of O.H.K.Spate's India and Pakistan are in the press and he inaugurated a departmental series of occasional papers with contributions to knowledge with studies on India and Australia; Mr. A.J. Rose's book on the Political Geography of the Southwest Pacific "Dilemmas Down Under" is in the press, and a paper on Central Place Theory is also in the press. Dr. E.C.F. Bird continued to advance his work on coastal geomorphology: work with students on the south coast of N.S.W. gave some fresh findings particularly about the nature of deposits at estuary mouths, and he extended his interests to New Guinea. He continued his work on Conservation and Conservation Education; Mr. N.S. McDonald continued methodological studies in Climatology; Mr. P. Laut greatly advanced his sample based studies of dairying in the Macleay basin with great assistance from the University's computer unit and also carried out reconnaissance work in New Guinea and also in the library particularly with reference to the Australian Agricultural Company; Mr. G.T. Walker is completing his study of the coastal geomorphology of the Jervis Bay area.

Other research in the department includes M.A. scholars work on the social geography of Taiping, Malaya; population geography of the southern tablelands; historical geography of settlement in S.E. Australia; Aboriginal culture. B.A. dissertations on Shore Platforms of the south coast of N.S.W. and an M.A. Qualifying thesis on "Namoli - a Fijian Village" reached an acceptable level.

A.N.Z.A.A.S.

The department's contributions to ANZAAS conference in Hobart included convening a symposium on Conservation, another on medical geography, and papers in coastal geomorphology and location theory.

List of Publications

Learmonth, A.T.A.


Bird, E.C.F.

Coastal Landforms: An Introduction to Coastal Geomorphology with Australian examples. The Australian National University, 1964 (reprinted 1965)


"Training and Education in Conservation", School of General Studies Department of Geography Occasional Paper No. 4, 1965


A.T.A. Learmonth.