

Professor P O A L Davies

Obituary

One of the founders of ISVR, Professor P O A L Davies MIOA, passed away on the morning of 14 February 2008. He was born in Sydney on 4 October 1922, and educated at Canberra Grammar School and Sydney University, from which he graduated with first class honours in Mechanical and Chemical Engineering in 1947. His time as a Radar Officer in the RAAF from 1941 to 1945 interrupted his education, to which he returned after his period of service. He was awarded a Charles Kolling travelling scholarship by Sydney University in 1948 for research on hydrodynamics at Cambridge University, who awarded him a PhD in 1951. Whilst at Cambridge, he was a member of the Cambridge University Air Squadron, undergoing flying training. It was here also that he met his first wife, Margaret (Meg) Pite, a fellow student who had coincidentally also served as a Radar Officer in Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1942 to 1945.

They returned to Adelaide where Peter was appointed lecturer, then senior lecturer in fluid mechanics at the University from 1950 to 1956. During their six years at Adelaide, Peter and Meg had three children (two girls and a boy).

Peter returned to the UK (where he and Meg were to have two more daughters) as senior research fellow in aeronautics at Southampton University in 1956. Then in 1963 he became one of the founding members of what shortly became, and is today, the world's leading research centre in all aspects of sound and vibration, namely the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research (ISVR), which became Peter's professional home for the remainder of his career, and beyond. Appointed to a readership in ISVR in 1962, Peter was awarded the personal chair of experimental fluid dynamics in 1972. He remained one of ISVR's most active members, and recognisable figures, and (although he retired in September 1988) he remained fully involved in ISVR and active in research until his death. From early research in experimental studies of turbulent shear flows and free turbulence (in particular, as

related to jet noise generation and control), his recent work included studies of sound propagation in discontinuous flow ducts, sound generation by coupled flow acoustic effects and source identification. At the end of 2007, when the UK undertook the largest nationwide assessment exercise in seven years of university research, several of Peter's recent learned papers were entered into the assessment exercise, and ISVR will no doubt receive credit and support for research in the years to come in part as a result of his involvement. Young staff in particular benefited from this outstanding contribution, made at the age of 85. Not only did he maintain an international reputation for cutting-edge research excellence, he made a considerable contribution to acoustics consultancy for industry and other clients through P & E Davies Enterprises Ltd, of which he was a director since its formation in May 1989. His international expertise in noise generation from flow has been applied to solve numerous technical problems, ranging from noise generation in aircraft engines to the design of automotive exhausts and the generation of speech through the human vocal tract.

In addition to his membership of the Institute of Acoustics, he was a member of EuroMech and of the International Institute of Acoustics and Vibration, and a Fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. In 2006 he was chosen as the member of ISVR senior staff to go to Buckingham Palace to receive the medal and award from HM Queen Elizabeth II when ISVR was recognised for sustained excellence and outstanding achievements in research with a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education. The citation made reference to the work in Peter's field.

Sadly, Meg died of cancer in December 1979, and their eldest daughter Marianne also died of cancer in December 1994, survived by Brian and three teenage children.

Peter is survived by his second wife, Shirley, whom



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he married in 1982. Shirley already had two daughters and six grandchildren, so family gatherings became sizeable affairs. Peter was an exceptionally proud father and grandfather. His son moved to France as an electronic engineer, his younger Australian daughter became a vet on the staff of Melbourne University and the other three are married (two to engineers, with eight grandchildren between them). In retirement he and Shirley remained active in their hobbies. Shirley achieved a diploma in fine arts (painting) with honours in 1994 and received commissions, whilst Peter was for years a prominent member of Hampshire's musical scene, a bassoonist in many local chamber groups and orchestras, including the University Orchestra and Marchwood Orchestra. He was particularly proud of his Heckel bassoon, and was playing it in orchestral concerts until a few weeks before his death. He was a very generous musician, both to his orchestral colleagues and to younger musicians: he was particularly proud of his contrabassoon, but when he no longer had the energy to play it, he gave this rare instrument on long-term loan to younger players for their use.

A thanksgiving service was held at Highfield Church on Wednesday 20 February 2008.

T G Leighton