

Lieutenant-Commander H Derek Howse 1919-1998

By the death of Derek Howse we have lost one of the world's leading authorities on maritime navigation and the history of astronomy. He made major contributions to science, and also had a very distinguished record as a wartime Naval officer.

Humphrey Derek Howse was born on 1919 October 10. He was the son of a Naval captain, and in 1933 went to Dartmouth as a cadet, joining *HMS Rodney* as a midshipman in 1937. Throughout the War he served in small ships. In 1943 he was First Lieutenant on the destroyer *Inconstant*, and was mentioned in dispatches for his role in a successful attack on an enemy submarine. He was again mentioned in dispatches in 1944, and in December 1945 was awarded the DSC. After the War he continued his Naval career as a radar specialist, and in 1953 was appointed MBE.

In 1958, following further service in the cruiser *Newcastle* during the Korean War, he retired from the Navy, and was appointed Assistant Keeper in the Department of Navigation and Astronomy at the National Maritime Museum. He subsequently became Head of the Department, and remained in that role until his retirement in 1982. He was Caird Research Fellow at the Museum until 1986, and Clark Library Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, during 1983 and 1984.

Howse was a prolific author. His books included *Greenwich Time* and the *Discovery of Longitude* (1980, revised 1997) and the official biography of Nevil Maskelyne (1989), and he wrote many technical and popular articles. His skills were recognized again in 1993 when his book *Radar at Sea* was commissioned and published by the Naval Radar Trust. This is now recognized as the standard work on the subject.

He was active in many societies; he served for two years as President of the British Astronomical Association (1980-1982) and was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. In 1998 the Royal Institute of Navigation awarded him its Gold Medal, and he was active in the Antiquarian Horological Society. He was a brilliant speaker, and played a major role in many scientific conferences.

Derek Howse had many friends all over the world, and it is difficult to believe that he could ever have had an enemy; he was popular with everyone, and was unflinchingly helpful and courteous. He will be badly missed, and his death leaves a gap which will be hard to fill. Our sympathy is extended to his family; in 1946 he married Elizabeth Waller, and they had three sons and a daughter, all of whom survive him.

Patrick Moore