

A worthy endeavour

A history of *Endeavour* and its contributions to science and scholarship over 70 years

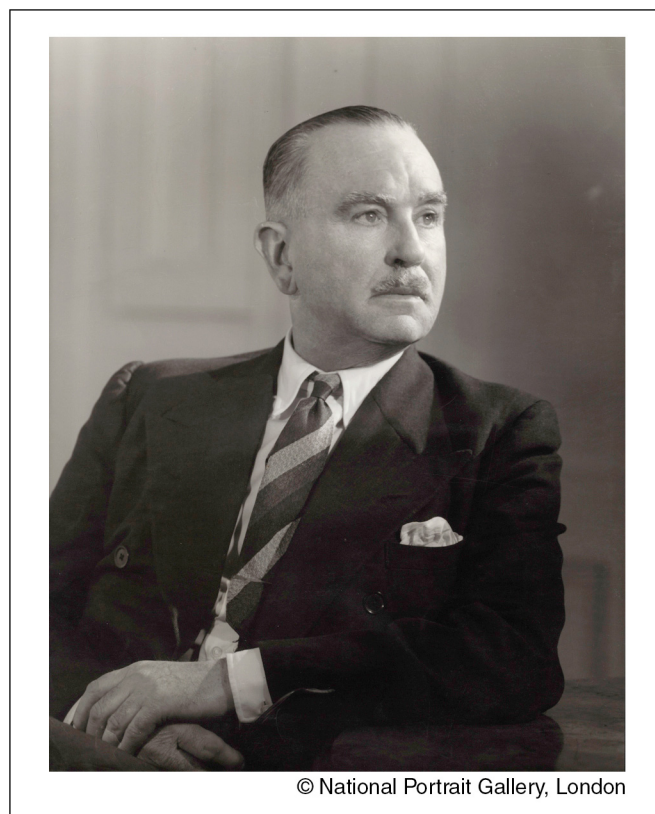
Christopher M. Tancock

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In 1954, the then-Editor, Trevor I. Williams wrote a piece to accompany the fiftieth issue of the journal *Endeavour*. 50 years on, the present Publisher looks back at the journal's rich and varied career spanning some seven decades. During these years *Endeavour* has faithfully chronicled innumerable discoveries, findings and experiments and has delivered thoughtful and highly articulate reviews of science, technology and medicine.^a

In this issue, *Endeavour* presents a variety of articles dealing with various aspects of World War I; a collection that resonates sympathetically with the centennial anniversary of the start of that long and terribly bloody conflict. The articles are timely reminders of the ingenuity, self-sacrifice and professionalism that accompanied the war's many horrors.

The theme of this special issue is also fitting in the far more modest sense that *Endeavour* was itself born in a period of world conflict. As Williams put it: 'these were sombre times, with all concerned grimly devoting themselves to survival'.¹ The journal was conceived as a beacon of light^b to carry the message of British scholarship abroad to act as a counter to Nazi 'scientific' propaganda which was gaining credibility as a result of the military victories of that unspeakable regime.



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Fig. 1. Sidney Rogerson by Howard Coster print, 1953.

It was in this context that the then Public Relations Manager at Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), Sidney Rogerson, envisioned a vehicle to describe and communicate 'Britain's contribution to the sciences'. As he later recalled:

*If the movement of British citizens and the export of British merchandise had been stopped, it was essential that the vacuum thereby created should be filled as far as possible with an increase in the export of British news and views.*²

Rogerson reasoned that, since ICI could not use its publicity budget for normal commercial purposes, the monies could instead be employed to found and support a periodical which would, as he explained: 'impress thinking people in all allied and neutral countries that British

Corresponding author: Tancock, C.M. (C.Tancock@elsevier.com).

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^b Indeed, an original proposal for the journal was that it should be named 'Pharos' – this being both easily pronounceable as well as resonating powerfully with the aims of the new work.

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scientific resource and British scientists were very much alive ...² Rogerson managed to sell the idea to an enthusiastic ICI, and an Editor was identified and appointed in quick succession.^c He was keen to see the journal attract and secure a leading authorship so rates for contributions were generous and the typography and illustrations were high quality.

Of course, marshalling popular and logistical support was only one of the trials facing Rogerson and his colleagues. One of the major hurdles to be overcome was that of seeking approval from the British government itself, especially in a period of severe austerity and during which the supply of paper was strictly rationed. Happily, the government consented to the launch and permitted an allowance of paper to support the journal.^d

With a supply of paper in hand, Rogerson assembled a team including E.J. Holmyard (the Editor), Ronald Slade (ICI's chief research scientist) and Michael Clapham (of the Kynoch Press in Birmingham) *inter alios*. In addition, a panel of experts was established to assist with the reviewing of articles, which included various distinguished scientific names of the time, among them members of the Royal Society^e and the British Council as well as representatives of leading universities. The name *Endeavour* was settled upon (after a suggestion from Lord Melchett who recalled that Captain James Cook had set sail in the barque *Endeavour*^f in 1768 to begin a series of explorations which would include an observation of the transit of Venus).

It was in January 1942 that the journal first appeared despite the exigencies of the ongoing war and the limitations of the technology of the time. This first issue, printed in no fewer than four editions (English, French, German and Spanish)^g numbered a staggering 22,000 copies – a tremendous figure albeit one reflecting an era long before the reach of online dissemination.^h Copies were despatched to the leading scientists of the day as well as, of course, to university libraries, governmental research groups, laboratories and learned societies. Again *Endeavour* benefitted from institutional support to distribute the copies – notably from the Ministry of Information, the British Council and the Foreign office, as well as via diplomatic and personal efforts.

The first issue carried inside it messages of support from many scientific notaries of the time – among them members of the Royal Society, including its then President, Sir Henry Dale. Sir Harold Spencer Jones, the Astronomer Royal, penned the first article, following a preface by

^c Serendipitously, the to-be Editor, E.J. Holmyard had just announced his retirement from Clifton College and had written to the Chief Research Scientist of ICI, Dr Roland Slade to enquire about possibilities for employment.

^d Rogerson records his understanding that *Endeavour* was the only new publication to be authorized by the British government at this time.

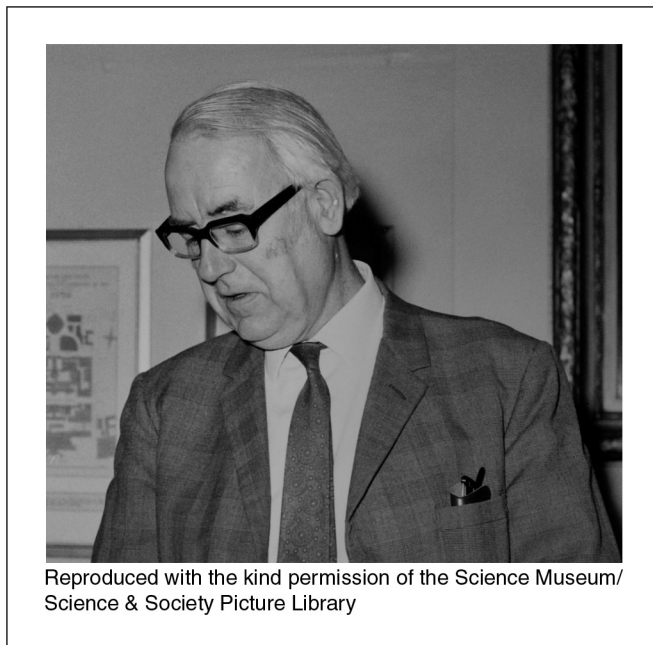
^e Thus continuing one of the Royal Society's oldest traditions – certifying the work published. 'Certification' was identified as one of the major functions of a publisher by Henry Oldenburg (1618–1677), first Editor of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, thereby establishing the notion of peer review.

^f Thus it is that a sketch of the ship has appeared on every copy of *Endeavour*. This was specially commissioned from the original plans of the ship held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and was drawn by Mr. J.E. Maunton of ICI.³

^g A Russian edition was also launched – in 1943 – but this was never distributed by the Russian authorities (despite their seeming alacrity to do so) and was swiftly abandoned.

^h It must be noted here that, despite the general tendency for journals to move over to the electronic medium as the primary one for dissemination; there are still many print subscribers to *Endeavour* presumably on account of its rich illustration and layout.

Sir William Bragg, Director of the Royal Institution and an opening statement by Lord McGowan in which he wrote of his hope that 'Endeavour will act as a vessel to carry overseas news of the continuing vitality and progress of the sciences, which know no frontiers but are directed to improving the common lot of all men'.⁴



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Fig. 2. Trevor Williams.

Since then, *Endeavour* has seen many changes. The journal continued to be published and supported through ICI's public relations department for many years. Another edition, this time in Italian, was launched in 1948. Contributions from outside the UK started to be seen with increasing regularity and, by the 1950s, circulation had risen to some 40,000 copies, of which half were in English. There were, of course, changes in the editorial team. Trevor I. Williams was appointed Editor in 1955, succeeding Holmyard, and he continued in the role for some 40 years, overseeing major changes and anniversaries along the way.ⁱ It would be difficult to think of anyone who has done more to propel *Endeavour* forward and the legacy of the 1500 or more articles that passed through his careful editorship attests to his tremendous and positive influence in this regard.

After almost four decades of publishing the journal, ICI at last decided that that *Endeavour* must sail under a different master. The company had disseminated the journal freely since its inception but with rising costs and a move towards dedicated science journals it became unsustainable in this form, especially in light of challenging economic times and the significant costs of production and distribution. Thus it was that the ICI sponsorship ceased and the journal was transferred to the Pergamon

ⁱ Including the 100th and 200th issues both coinciding serendipitously with significant anniversaries – the former in 1967 with the bicentenary of Cook's circumnavigation in *Endeavour* and the latter with the launch of the space shuttle *Endeavour* in 1992.

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