

Division of Finance and Administration

Douglas Watt

The Division is responsible for the provision of the 'non scientific' services to the Institute and encompasses the Units of Engineering and Maintenance, Estate, Glasshouse & Field Research, Finance and Human Resources, Information Technology and Scientific Liaison and Information Services, including Health & Safety, employing a total of 76 staff.

The Division provides a comprehensive service to the scientific community to ensure that they have the resources and ability to carry out the research commissioned by the various bodies, and that the infrastructure within which they work meets all the requirements in terms statutory legislation and health and safety requirements. The variety and sophistication of the work carried out at the Institute continues to increase and the staff within the various units have responded by working closely with the science staff, adapting working patterns, learning new skills and taking on additional responsibilities.

The Division is an integral part of the Institute and the staff interact very closely with the scientific staff, often providing a breadth and depth of practical experience that is not available elsewhere. The Estates and Glasshouse Unit provide a service ranging from the planting and monitoring of a wide range of agricultural and horticultural trials on the Institute's 400 acres of farmland to the provision of sophisticated facilities in both glasshouses and controlled environment facilities. In doing so they produce consistent, high quality results for scientists whose work requires increasingly detailed and accurate results, despite the vagaries of the Scottish climate.

Similarly the Engineering Unit has to maintain the basic infrastructure of the Institute whilst having to adapt it to meet the needs of increasingly sophisticated (and expensive) equipment required by the science programmes. The Institute was very successful in attracting £2.5 million of capital grant from the

Scottish Executive Department of Environment and Rural Affairs, which was extremely welcome but had to be managed by the Unit, within an already tight staffing and finance budget. Much of the new equipment also requires more sophisticated support and maintenance, and the staff have become extremely adaptable and knowledgeable in the provision these services, whilst continuing to maintain a wide breadth of facilities within a structure that, other than glasshouses, has not changed substantially in the last ten years.

The Institute is increasingly reliant on its computer systems for the management of internal communication, the manipulation of massive databases and scientific information, the

Internet and its administrative and financial systems. As such, the IT Unit and its development is central to the Institute's activities. New staff have been appointed and, building on the investment in the IT infrastructure in earlier years, the Institute plans to invest in an Institute wide information management system to allow it to manage the ever

increasing flow of information, provide an effective and efficient environment for staff to manage their work and enable staff to develop the Institute web site, to allow them to disseminate their work to an ever larger and information hungry 'customer' base.

In this, staff are also assisted by the Scientific Liaison and Information Services Unit who are tasked with promoting the science of the Institute to as wide an audience as possible, with particular emphasis on schools. This has been assisted by the appointment of a part time Education Officer, supported by the Mylnefield Trust. The quality of the displays, posters and presentation is remarkable given the size and resources of the Unit and they are expected to be able to answer questions and provide detailed information on all aspects of the Institute's work, usually at very short notice.



In anticipation of Dr Bill Macfarlane Smith's retirement in April 2002, Mr Ian Kelly was appointed as provisional Head of SLIS in January 2002, combining this position with the new role of Development Manager, which will encompass the management of the proposed development of a Science Park within the Institute grounds as part of the proposed 'Western Gateway' development for Dundee. This proposal is in line with the Institute's aim of developing relevant science and working with end users and is seen a critical part of the Institute's strategy to become one of Europe's leading plant research facilities.

The provision of a safe and healthy working environment has always been one of the priorities of the Institute and the Mike DeMaine, the Institute's Safety Coordinator works closely with the Engineering Unit and all other departments within the Institute to ensure all requirements are adhered to and that a culture of safe working is promoted throughout the Institute by the development of detailed safety assessments and the implementation of good working practices. This will be further developed

in the coming year with the increased implementation of procedures under the ISO 9001 standards.

Underpinning all of this is the Finance and Human Resources Unit, which works to ensure that all the administrative processes run as smoothly as possible and that the Institute operates within the available funds by providing relevant and timely financial and management information. Similarly, the HR staff support the Institute staff in all aspects of their work, training and personal development. An important part of this has been the accreditation under the Investors in People initiative, which was awarded in October 2001 and is a reflection of the commitment of the staff and the development of the Institute. Employment legislation and statutory requirements continue to increase and the HR Unit will require to develop its resources and abilities to keep pace with such developments.

The Division has to carry out its work within tight financial constraints but the staff approach their work with an enthusiasm and dedication which demonstrates their commitment to the work of the Institute.