

Division of Finance & 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, employing a total of 76 staff.



The work of the Division is geared towards providing a service to the scientific community to ensure that they have the resources and ability to carry out the research commissioned by the various bodies. The variety and sophistication of the work carried out at the Institute has increased significantly in recent years and the staff have responded by 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. This is particularly true of the Estate, Glasshouse & Field Research Unit who actually have to get their hands dirty and battle with the vagaries of the Scottish weather to produce consistent, high quality results for scientists, whose work is increasingly geared towards the labora-

tory. The Engineering Unit has to work with a large variety of buildings and equipment and it is to their credit that the Institute is able to provide such a breadth of facilities within a structure that, other than glasshouses, has not changed substantially in the last ten years.

The function of the IT Unit has become central to an Institute that now has more computers than people, and is increasingly reliant on the Internet and massive databases for much of its information. This is an area in which the Institute will require to allocate more resource to ensure that the staff are able to keep pace with the volume of information and the need to disseminate their work to an ever larger and information hungry 'customer' base.

This is similar to the problems faced by the Scientific Liaison and Information Services Unit who are tasked with promoting science, and more particularly the science of the Institute, to as wide an audience as possible. 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.

Underpinning all of this is the Finance and Human Resources Unit, which tries to ensure that all the administrative processes run as smoothly as possible and that the scientists do not exhaust the resources of the Institute. Similarly, the HR staff support the Institute staff, without whom the Institute would not exist, and significant progress has been made in pushing forward the Investor in People initiative, developing the training programme and setting up a sophisticated, computerised HR system.

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