

SHORTER CONTRIBUTIONS

WATERSPOUT SIGHTED AT GARBUTT

by H. McCann

Meteorological Office, Aerodrome, Townsville

(Manuscript received April, 1958)

At approximately 0154 GMT on 10 March, 1958, the duty observer at Garbutt was able to satisfy what he later described as a long cherished ambition by reporting in his present weather "waterspout in the distance".

The phenomenon created a considerable amount of interest in this sleepy North Queensland town; caused the meteorological office to be inundated with requests for information about its cause and movement; received a very good press; and, in all gave the local inhabitants their juiciest conversational morsel for some time.

At the time of occurrence of the spout large cumiliform clouds were in the area and a heavy shower was visible to the east-northeast. It was in the forward portion of this cloud that the waterspout formed. An Ansett-ANA captain flying in the area reported that the cloud base was about 1200 ft which would be approximately also the length of the spout. He described the surface of the water as being very disturbed with foam and spray shooting upwards. There was then clear air before the spout proper commenced swirling upwards to the base of the cloud. The R.A.A.F. Marine Section situated on the foreshore had apparently a clear view of proceedings and advised that the spout moved from a position about four miles seaward, towards the Townsville Harbour breakwater. As it neared the breakwater it appeared to break at the base leaving the top portion behind. It then reformed temporarily, but disappeared after covering a distance of approximately 100 yards.

The phenomenon was not without its humourous side. The duty weather officer, engaged in telephone conversation with an interested caller from South Townsville, asked the caller if he could discern any movement in the phenomenon. When the reply was in the negative, the duty weather officer unthinkingly said "perhaps it's heading straight for you". This remark was received in dead silence. Then came an unprintable ejaculation and the slam of a telephone receiver. We had visions of a South Townsville resident leaping for his life to escape a deluge of water.

The waterspout was estimated to move from north to south at about 15/20 kt and was visible for 8 minutes.

VICE-REGAL VISIT

by B.W. Newman

Divisional Office, Bureau of Meteorology, Brisbane

On 1 April, 1958, the Brisbane Weather Bureau had the honour of a visit by the newly appointed Governor of Queensland, Colonel Sir Henry Abel Smith KCVO DSO. Notice was given by the A.D.C. about 12.30 p.m. to the effect that His Excellency wished to visit the office at 4 p.m. to learn of the possibilities of rain development in the drought area of Southwest Queensland.

Sir Henry duly arrived informally with his A.D.C., Lt. Michael Sellars, and during a stay of half an hour showed a lively interest in synoptic charts, teleprinter networks, printing processes and the clients to whom forecasts and bulletins are issued. One might say that His Excellency has an easy approach and the staff carried on its duties unflurried during the visit.