

DR. LESLIE BERNARD HUNT

1906 – 1987

A TRIBUTE TO HIS MEMORY

Leslie Hunt will be remembered not only with deep respect but also with great affection throughout the platinum-using industries of the world, to which he devoted the later part of his life. His single-minded commitment to the greater effective use of the platinum group metals has, perhaps, overshadowed his earlier contribution to the more general application of science to the needs of industry.

Born in Leicestershire, he graduated in chemistry from Imperial College, London, in 1927. In 1931 he was awarded the degree of M.Sc., and in 1934 he gained his doctorate for a thesis on "A Study of the Structure of Electrodeposited Metals". While working for Vauxhall Motors Limited, Luton, Leslie Hunt gained wide metallurgical experience and published a number of scientific and technical papers.

He was editor of "The Metal Industry" for some years before joining Mallory Metallurgical Products in November 1937, where he was Technical Manager at the time that Johnson Matthey took a majority holding in that company. Relocated in Hatton Garden in 1939 his technical and commercial expertise were soon put to good use. After the war he was appointed manager of the newly created Industrial Division; with additional responsibility for sales and technical publicity. In 1946 "Electrical Contacts", his reference book for the electrical engineer was published.

During the mid-50s, in line with Johnson Matthey's increasing desire to identify and exploit new opportunities for the use of platinum metals, Leslie Hunt proposed the publication of a specialist journal. Directed towards raising the level of awareness of the remarkable properties of the platinum metals, and demonstrating the industrial advantages of platinum technology, the quarterly "Platinum Metals Review" was launched in January 1957, and Leslie Hunt continued as its editor until his tragic death earlier this year.

When he was appointed an Executive Director of Johnson Matthey in 1962, Leslie Hunt was given responsibility for all aspects of the Company's research and development activities, a duty which he carried out with distinction until his retirement from the Executive Board in 1969.

His knowledge of the noble metals was put to further use when he was asked by the Chamber of Mines of South Africa to found a journal similar to "Platinum Metals Review" to promote the industrial uses of gold. When "Gold Bulletin" was firmly established he was able to give more time to the history of science, an interest which had been growing for many years. Just one result of this was his complete revision of Donald McDonald's "A History of Platinum and Its Allied Metals", which is regarded as a model of scholarship in the history of science and technology.

The great importance of the platinum metals to industry and to the well-being of the peoples of the world is now an established fact. Leslie Hunt's contribution to this achievement is immeasurable. He was a man of high intellect combined with great personal charm. Without him the world is a poorer place.