

## MEMOIR

FREDERICK AUGUST ANDREW MENZLER

ON Monday, 2 June 1924, Mr F. A. A. Menzler, a Fellow of five years seniority, rose in Staple Inn Hall 'to avail himself of the constitutional opportunity afforded by the Annual General Meeting to raise certain questions which he believed to be of importance to the welfare of the Institute'. The word 'questions' was, characteristically, something of a euphemism for what turned out to be criticisms: he thought that there was a lack of interest in the proceedings of the Institute, and that the method of electing the Council was unsatisfactory; that there were a number of defects in the examination system; and above all that urgent consideration should be given to the extension of the scope of the profession in and into many fields—including statistics, business control and administration, and what is now called operational research. These were not entirely new thoughts, as he was to record in his Presidential Address twenty-six years later, but they represented causes in the furtherance of which (together with some others that became added to them) he was to remain on his feet, as it were, protesting, suggesting, urging, to the end of his long life two weeks after his eightieth birthday.

'History' wrote Carlyle 'is the biography of great men', and no doubt this is as true of actuarial history as of any other. How then ought the biography of a man of note to be sketched? For many, it is possible to mix commentary with record, but where the latter is overwhelming this will not serve; the memory of Fred Menzler (as we all knew him) deserves something more vivid, if in some ways more difficult. His *Curriculum Vitae* is therefore appended, separately, to this brief summing up.

The beginnings, set in the late Victorian and Edwardian worlds, were seemingly quiet and ordinary enough; a diligent apprentice sought advancement through self-education. To a Fabian a public service career might well seem attractive. To a member of a small Department with poor promotion prospects a professional qualification and the hope of a transfer would seem sensible. Wars, which destroy worlds and end or change lives, generally forge any metal of quality that falls into their fires, and it may well have been the application of his actuarial training (as yet uncompleted) to novel scientific purposes that first lifted the eyes of the young Menzler to the spreading horizons from which they were never afterwards lowered. Of this experience Sir Lawrence Bragg writes: 'Menzler was one of the veteran sound rangers of World War I . . . sound ranging established itself as a practical means of finding the positions of enemy batteries . . . Menzler took an active part . . . and suggested improvements in technique.' He was awarded the *Croix de Guerre Belge* in 1917.

No actuary who has used his trained mind in unaccustomed tasks is ever quite the same man again. In Menzler's case the addition of five post-war years of service, under the exacting Sir Alfred Watson, in the wide activities of the Government Actuary's Department, and two years of pioneer endeavour in the Official Statistics Committee, as well as the thoughts about demography that led up to his first Institute paper 'The Census of 1921: some remarks on tabulation', were enough to bring him to his feet at the 1924 Annual General Meeting in what was plainly meant to be a basic challenge to the Establishment, or Hierarchy (as he alternatively, but in generally good-natured disrespect, used to call the Council and Officers). But the Establishment was sometimes wiser than he gave it credit for, and he was promptly invited to put his ideas into writing. The result was a paper 'The Future of the Actuarial Profession, together with some remarks on possibilities of extending its scope', discussed at a Special General Meeting

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on 26 October 1925. The Council, thus encouraged, set up a Committee, which reported in February 1926 (*J.I.A.* 57, 122), and out of all this activity there emerged arrangements for courses of lectures, suggestions for enlarging the syllabus, for fostering research, for seconding Fellows to non-life departments of insurance companies, and for increased publicity for the profession, the appointment of a permanent committee to maintain liaison with other bodies and to watch legislation and political activities generally, the Appointments Board, the Sessional Dinner, and the *Year Book*. In the meantime (such was the fibre of this still young man) he met the impact of the General Strike of 1926 upon the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, of which he was then Honorary Secretary, and (in the words of Mr Douglas Houghton) 'was the man who saved the National Staff Side from complete disruption and the whole Whitley system from breaking up'.

So far as the Institute was concerned, at any rate, his objectives had been widely accepted, but new means could always be devised, and he hardly felt the battle to be over. Moreover, other fields came into view, in the course of time, in which actuaries and actuarial training could be of importance, and which had to be urged upon a sometimes cautious profession. If the voice of Menzler on these matters was not recorded in the *Journal* again for another twenty-five years it never fell silent, and it was heard, for he was a member of Council for virtually the whole of that long period.

He was in fact also busy with other activities—and not only with building the successful career in London Transport detailed in the *Curriculum*. The Institute might slowly—too slowly, in Menzler's view—develop its ways of establishing liaison with other organizations and finding out more about the outside world; he preferred and pursued his own. Books, magazines, journals, proceedings, scientific papers, flowed incessantly across his desk, and his sharp eye missed little that affected, or ought to affect, the actuarial profession. The circle of acquaintance that he gradually formed was remarkable; and in learning, and seeking to learn, about men and women of importance in many spheres, national and international, he himself became widely known and esteemed. His mind ranged over statistics, administration, finance, demography, investment analysis, operational research—all the topics which have now been added to the 19th-century actuarial repertoire, in a material degree by his efforts. For to be well-informed, to comprehend and to envisage were not enough; whenever he came across events or developments in which he thought that actuaries ought to be concerned someone had to be buttonholed, or telephoned, or written to instantly—and, if necessary, repeatedly. This tireless enthusiasm continued, from the moment of that first intervention in 1924, until long after he had officially retired, and it is hardly surprising that, as the sturdy, eager figure of this man of knowledge and imagination was to be seen pursuing its determined way about the actuarial world it should have been found a disturbing (to put it no higher) phenomenon to nearly everyone at some time or other. It was not only that Menzler was not prepared to suffer fools gladly—he was not prepared to overlook any kind of folly at all. He understood the implications very well, and was genuinely surprised (and moved) when he was invited, in 1950, to accept the Presidency of the Institute. The truth is that his qualities were better appreciated than he realized, and that he was always held in greater affection than he thought possible. Then, at last, the voice found its way into the *Journal* again, in his Presidential Address on (inevitably!) 'The Actuary in the National Economy'.

Although he never much liked public speaking (at any rate extemporary speaking), he was an impressive, forthright and often fluent draftsman—which was just as well, for he wrote copiously. Many of the writings and speeches of Ashfield and Pick (his two

hard taskmasters at London Transport) came in fact from his pen. It is a correcting experience, to anyone who has heard Fred's sometimes pungent condemnations of others' insufficiencies, to contemplate the sympathetic understanding of human qualities, and of the abilities of these two men, that illuminates his study 'Lord Ashfield and the Public Corporation'. Perhaps it was also in some degree characteristic that, as his most fruitful source of explanation of the qualities of an outstanding administrator, he should have quoted extensively, in this study, from 'What life has taught me' (in which work Lord Ashfield 'distilled for our guidance the essence of his wide experience')—without revealing that every word of this essay on higher administration had been written for Ashfield by Menzler himself.

Understanding as he did the importance of effective teamwork, Menzler set about recruiting, training and controlling many able young men in the London Transport organization—a course which he pursued with equal vigour during the ten years that he spent as adviser to a well-known firm of stockbrokers after retiring from London Transport in 1954. These years in a new world—of City finance—not only led to new thoughts and new writings, but also left him a little more time for other aspects of Institute affairs; in 1956 he (with Messrs B. Benjamin and P. R. Cox) submitted an Institute paper 'Modern Population Trends and Problems'; in 1964 he and Mr J. M. Ross presented a paper to the Seventeenth International Congress, 'The Development of the Actuarial Profession in Great Britain'; and he wrote (with some creative turmoil—from which his helpers were not entirely spared) *The Institute of Actuaries Students' Society: The First Fifty Years 1910–1960*, a model history of its kind. Only general reference can here be made to other writings—for the Royal Statistical Society, the Institute of Transport, the Institute of Public Administration, the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, and many others. His last contribution to the *Journal*, written only a few months ago, was his Memoir of another pioneer, his old friend Bill Phillips.

From his creation of the *Year Book* in 1928, to the introduction of the Certificate in Finance and Investment in 1962, and the gift of £1,000 in 1966 to found the John Finlaison Memorial Fund, the imagination, the vigour and the innovations never flagged. To Marguerite, always his staunch encourager, he owed much—as did she to him in her own very distinguished career. But the debt of the actuarial profession to Fred Menzler, who played so prominent a part in urging it out of its long-standing preoccupations into the wider fields in which it now flourishes, can perhaps not yet be measured. The *Journal* pages record no developments of basic actuarial science directly attributable to his work—indeed, although he was a most successful director of research his temperament was not really that of the personal, theoretical researcher—and in this, conventional, sense he cannot be said to have contributed significantly to the advancement of actuarial knowledge. But in the practical sense there have surely been few actuaries who have done so much to widen and deepen the scope of our activities. It is largely owing to his persuasion that many Fellows have also become members of statistical and other societies; and it is worth recording that whilst, when he wrote his 1925 paper, two 'Home' Fellows were working outside the traditional fields, there are now nearly one hundred.

I find that, as I suspected, these few pages are not large enough for a portrait, but only for a miniature. This was a man in whom a natural breadth of view and practical common sense came into contact with an unusual range of experience, and wrought great change within and beyond him. It would be idle to pretend that he did not savour his own great achievements; it might be equally idle to suppose that even he saw, or that we have yet seen, the full consequences of them. I can only remind present and future

generations of actuaries of the words (so especially applicable to Fred Menzler) with which St Paul's pays due tribute to Wren: *Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*

J. H. GUNLAKE

*Curriculum Vitae (18 October 1888–1 November 1968)*

*Education*

St. Marylebone Grammar School and Strand School, King's College. B.Sc. London (private study).

*First World War*

Royal Garrison Artillery, and in command of a Sound Ranging Section, Royal Engineers. *Croix de Guerre Belge* 1917.

*Occupations*

Ecclesiastical Commission 1907–19.

Government Actuary's Department 1919–29.

London Transport:

Underground group of Companies, London Passenger Transport Board and London Transport Executive, 1929–54. Capacities:

Actuary 1930–39, Chief Financial Officer 1939–45,

Chief Development & Research Officer 1945–54.

Chairman, Special Advisory Committee to the Standing Joint Committee of the Main Line Railways and the London Passenger Transport Board.

Chairman, London Joint Advisory Committee.

Chairman, London Plan Working Party on Railway Development in the London Transport Area (which recommended the Victoria Line).

Chairman, London Transport's Research & Development Committee.

Directed the first London Travel Survey.

Responsible for general oversight of the London Transport Executive's Scientific Services, including development of Operational Research methods for London Transport.

Member, London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee.

Member, Special Committee on the Sickness Experience of London Transport Workers.

Member, Conference on the Health of London's Busmen.

Member, Committee on the Technical and Economic Aspects of Railway Electrification.

Phillips & Drew: Consultant 1954–63.

Throgmorton Management Ltd: Chairman 1957–63.

Actuarial consulting work over a long period.

*Public Committees and Commissions*

Secretary, Permanent Consultative Committee on Official Statistics (from which arose the 'Guide to Current Official Statistics').

Member, Staff Side National Whitley Council for the Civil Service.

Member, Statistical Committee of the Medical Research Council.

Member, Phillips Committee on the Economic and Financial Problems of Provision for Old Age.

Member, Royal Commission on the Civil Service.

Member, Statistical Committee to advise the Royal Commission on Population.

L.C.C. representative on the governing body of University College, London.

*Institution of Professional Civil Servants*

Member of Council. Honorary Secretary 1925–28. Chairman 1928–29.

*Institute of Statisticians*

Member of Council.

*Royal Statistical Society*

Member of Council. Vice-President 1957–58.

Guy Medallist in Silver 1951.

*Institute of Actuaries*

Fellow 1919.

Member, Board of Examiners 1926–38. Chairman 1931–38.

Editor of Year Book 1928–50.

Member of Council for 27 years between 1926 and 1956, serving on 41 Committees (in many cases as Chairman).

Honorary Secretary 1937–39.

Vice-President 1939–42.

Treasurer 1948–50.

President 1950–52.

*Some Publications and Papers*

*Institute of Actuaries Students' Society: The First Fifty Years 1910–1960.*

*The London Stock Exchange* (a *Sunday Times* 'Career Book').

*London and its Passenger Transport System* (published in *J.R.S.S.*).

*Lord Ashfield and the Public Corporation* (published in the 1951 issue of *Public Administration*).

*Statistical Methods and Operational Research in Transport* (published in *J.Inst. T.*).

Many contributions to discussions, etc., (including reports of several meetings of the British Association) recorded in *J.I.A.* and *J.S.S.*

Numerous book reviews and other contributions to various publications.

*Degrees and Diplomas*

B.Sc., F.I.A., A.S.A., F.S.S., F.I.S., M.Inst.T.

*Honour*

Created C.B.E. 1949.