while the index is being built up, for names which I know became well known or distinguished later. As it is, I am up to the 1870s now, and I reckon I have made at least a quarter of a million entries already.

THE
‘LONDON GAZETTE’
INDEX

GRACE HOLMES *

The London Gazette is a government publication in which various official or individual acts are set out in print and thus acquire legal status. The phrase 'gazetted', used of honours and military appointments, can also be employed for any other announcement made.

The Gazette appears twice weekly throughout the year, on Tuesday and Friday, including public holidays. A quarterly Index is compiled, and two years ago the contract for this work was put out to tender. I understand that, immediately before this step was taken, the Index was compiled by full-time staff at H.M.S.O. However, when I visited H.M.S.O. after obtaining the contract, there were intriguing references to an elderly lady who had earlier carried out the task for many years, apparently working single-handed and in solitude in a small office. I now feel a bond with this unknown person.

The contractor's price for the Index has to include all expenses, notably paper and postage. A further requirement is that one should be accessible both personally and by phone when needed, and hence must live within reasonable distance of London. The final important condition of the contract is the strict timetable laid down for both indexer and printers. The average number of entries per quarter is 35,000, and these must be stuck up and delivered within 21 working days from the end of the quarter. It follows that one must work intensively in January, April, July and September, and arrange one's personal affairs accordingly. At the Stationery Office everyone who discussed the work with me was very affable, but no one admitted to any knowledge of the methods so far used in compiling the Index. An old copy and two specimen texts were provided, and the rest was up to me. The composing-room overseer at St. Stephen’s Parliamentary Press was very helpful over layout, and made it seem less complex than had at first appeared.

The first step after undertaking this work was to find suitable and inexpensive material for the typing and sticking up. A large newsagent-stationer's firm with many branches sell rolls of gummed perforated address labels at 21/6 each, and these can be fed into the typewriter and used until exhausted. Subsequently the long strips are cut up, sorted, and pasted on to newspaper strips which are numbered consecutively. I hoped to get a discount from the stationers on my enormous purchases of label rolls, but was unsuccessful. My local branch now keeps a permanent stock, and the shop assistant once asked if I was running an agency.

To avoid confusion, which could easily arise, each of the seven sections of the Index has its own alphabetical symbol which always appears on every slip. Occasionally we have sorted into the wrong box, which could be disastrous if not noticed quickly. However, the distinguish-

* The substance of a paper read at a Discussion Meeting on February 27, 1964.
ing symbols enable these mistakes to be corrected. After sticking up, the symbols are crossed off in red ink, together with any other superfluous indications which need not be printed. While crossing off one can make a final check for errors.

As the assignment is so large, my next step was to break the work down into skilled and unskilled sections. The typing of the simpler entries (lists of names) was offered to a disabled ex-serviceman who has been very reliable and accurate, and being house-bound is delighted to find a remunerative occupation. His work is checked by me, and then cut up by my husband, who can be relied upon not to snip off a vital page number. This has happened once or twice, and necessitated a search through the whole quarter's issues. We try to avoid it. Discarded boxes from the gummed rolls are stapled together in rows, lettered and placed in shallow cardboard dress boxes. The cut slips are sorted into these. If possible, the cut and sorted slips ought not to be left in a warm room, as they tend to curl up and are then difficult to handle.

I now come to the various sections of the Gazette. The first is State Intelligence. This includes, and largely consists of, Ministerial announcements. If these are made by virtue of a specific Act of Parliament, they are entered under that Act, with reference from the Ministry, otherwise under the Ministry concerned.

Example:
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Ministry of:
Diseases:
Returns of outbreaks:
Diseases of Animals Act, 1950
see heading

Institutions such as Church Commissioners, Bank of England, Electricity and Gas Boards and Land Registry form main headings under which announcements are listed. The use of classifying symbols saves time and ensures accuracy.

Example:
Church Commissioners:
Church Patronage Act:
Symbols s (State Intelligence)
CC/CPA
followed by the name of the parish concerned.

Many of these institutional entries have corresponding personal name entries, especially where appointments are involved.

Example:
Gas Boards:
North-West:
Part-time Members 3456
Jones, E., part-time Member,
North-West Gas Board 3456

Announcements under the Factories Acts are also frequent and in the case of Factory Doctor appointments require personal entry as well as place entry under the heading of the Act. Other announcements concern the Privy Council, appointments to the Queen's Household, diplomatic appointments and the various orders of chivalry.

In the last case, the names of the persons appointed are listed in Section II of the Index, namely Honours, Decorations and Medals. All typing, cutting and sorting of State Intelligence slips is done by me, so that I can observe the vital classifying symbols.

Section II, Honours, Decorations and Medals, is typed by my war pensioner. Lists of persons to whom the Imperial Service Medal has been awarded are frequently published. There are also military honours and Baronetcies and Knighthoods. The latter appear in State Intelligence, but the names of the recipients are listed in the Honours section.
Example:

s Knights 4567, 5678
(See also Honours, Decorations and Medals)

H Smith, J. H. 4567

No details of the honour are given, but if a titled person is given an additional award, he is listed by title.

Example:

Brentford, Earl of 5678

You will notice that it is the practice to index under the title, and not under the family name: indeed, no reference is made from this name. In this I am following precedent, as set out in the terms of the contract to the effect that my Index must be consistent with earlier ones.

Twice a year the publication of the Honours List swells the number of entries considerably. If two persons have the same name and initials they must be distinguished by their town or government department. Periodically a long list of appointments to the Order of St. John appears in State Intelligence and the names are indexed under Honours.

Section III, Naval, Military and Air Force Appointments, is the largest. It too is typed for me, but checking, cutting, sorting and sticking are a considerable task. Identical names are distinguished by service numbers. Quixotically, Admiralty appointments appear in State Intelligence, and, having no service numbers, can only be distinguished by the letters R.N. Appointments of Aides de Camp to the Queen appear in State Intelligence with other Royal Household appointments. As with Honours, names only are listed in this section, without details of announcements.

Section IV, Advertisements, is complex in the same way as State Intelligence, but differs from it in that the announcements are made by Local Authorities, non-Government institutions such as the Royal College of Surgeons, and by individuals.

Announcements under Water, Clean Air, Road Traffic and Town and Country Planning Acts form the bulk of this section. They are listed by the name of the authority. A considerable number of changes of name appear regularly, and both the abandoned and the assumed name must be indexed. Another large item is the registration of places for the solemnisation of marriage, and cancellation of registry.

Example.

Marriage:

Cancellation of Places for the Solemnisation of:

Acton, Gospel Hall,
High Street 1234

For this, the classifying symbols are a/mc while an entry in the registration section is a/mr. The Industrial and Provident Societies Act and the Friendly Societies Act also head cancelling and dissolution notices. Page references only are needed for these, and the society concerned is listed alphabetically in the main body of the Advertisements index.

Example:

Friendly Societies Acts:

Cancelling of registry 5678
Dissolution notices 5679
(Symbol: a/FS/c
a/FS/d)

Todmorden Sick Benefit Society,
cancelling notice 5678

Notices under the Companies Act form Section V. There are few complications here, but the successive notices concerning the same company, appearing at infrequent intervals, have to be collected together after sorting.

Trustee Act notices are also straightforward and are put out for typing. Here again, identical names must be distinguished by adding the town of residence.
Example:

Jones, Mary Eliz. (Cardiff)
— — — (Swansea)

Bankruptcy notices form the final section of the Index. Here, as with companies, references occur at intervals and have to be assembled. Aliases and alternative names must be entered, and also the names of any firm with which the bankrupt has been associated.

Example:

Brown, Henry (also known as John Smith) trading under the style of Handy Stores

The copy is posted to St. Stephen’s Press in batches as ready, and galley proofs come back in instalments for checking. The final stage is the counting of entries for the submission of the quarterly account. When all this has been completed, a month’s Gazettes of the current quarter have accumulated and the whole process begins again.

The discussion following this talk was mainly concerned with the following points:

1. Abbreviations. These are sparingly used in the Index, according to established precedent. Some members thought that lists of quarterly returns, a recurring feature, might well have the names of months shortened in the recognised manner. Others pointed out that while this particular point might be valid, it was inadvisable to use many abbreviations in an Index which might be widely used abroad.

2. Various suggestions for tax claims based on expenses were made, bearing in mind that the Contractor (Indexer) must meet all costs from the price agreed with H.M.S.O. The initial problem here is to establish precedents with the Inland Revenue over expenses incurred while working at home.

3. It was generally agreed that once the system of headings and entries, already established in the past, had been mastered, the major task and satisfaction of this work was found in organising the enormous volume of entries so that all participants were kept employed without bottlenecks, and the work delivered in accordance with the time table.

NO INDEX

‘It seems almost incredible that such a useful work should have been published without an index.’—Chronicle of the West India Committee for December 1963, reviewing In search of mermaids: the Mantees of Guiana by Dr. Colin Bertram (Peter Davies, 1963).

‘It should, by the way, have had an index, because a great many persons are mentioned to whom one might want to refer again for Mr. Callaghan’s opinion’—Anthony Powell, reviewing That summer in Paris by Morley Callaghan (Macgibbon & Kee) in The Daily Telegraph, November 22, 1963.

The index of another work comes in for comment in this newspaper. This is Cuba: an American tragedy, by Robert Scheer and Maurice Zeitlin (Penguin), of which Ronald Darling writes: ‘This book may be useful for academic reference, but the incorrect indexing in this edition (which has been brought up to date) of the important Appendix II, “A Calendar of Cuba-United States Relations since the Revolution”, is most confusing.’

Quite an English tragedy!