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Thesis submitted by Ronald Thomas STEWART BSc (Hons) Qld, M Teach UT December 2009

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences James Cook University.

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I certify that this thesis is entirely my own work apart from assistance offered by Harry Wendt in obtaining archival material from the National Archives of Australia, discussions with John Murray and Jim Roberts about the early days at Penrith and Dapto Field Stations, and email correspondence with Kevin Sheridan and Donald Mclean. I also made use of the library services provided by the Australian Telescope National Facility (ATNF), the Anglo Australian Telescope (AAT), the University of Sydney and Macquarie University.

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I would also like to thank Dr. Harry Wendt for assistance in digging into the National Archives of Australia for relevant letters and minutes of meetings before my arrival at the CSIRO Division of Radiophysics, as well as help on other IT matters.

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Finally I would like to thank my family for their encouragement and wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of three giants in the history of Australian solar radio astronomy, Paul Wild, Steve Smerd and Kevin Sheridan who were my mentors and a continuing source of inspiration throughout my career.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a detailed study of the research activities of the CSIRO Division of Radiophysics Penrith and Dapto Solar Group, who, it will be demonstrated, achieved an international reputation in solar radiophysics during the period 1949 to 1964, by innovative design of observing equipment and by ground breaking investigations into the nature of metre wavelength solar radio bursts and the disturbances which give rise to them.

An account of the planning, development and implementation of the world's first radiospectrograph at the Penrith field station in 1949 and its extensions to increasingly lower frequencies at the Dapto field station from 1952 to 1963, as well as the first swept-frequency interferometer, is presented using archival material, personal reminiscences and published literature.

The Penrith observations led to the first classification of Spectral Type I, II and III bursts. The observed frequencies of the leading edges of the slowly drifting Type II bursts and the rapidly drifting Type III bursts were converted to radial heights by using a standard coronal density model and by assuming that the radio emission occurs at the fundamental plasma frequency. This was referred as the *plasma hypothesis*.

The resulting height-time plots suggested that the disturbances exciting the radio emissions moved outwards through the corona with velocities of the order of 1000 km/sec for Type II bursts and 100,000 km/sec for Type III bursts. This was the first evidence for the ejection of corpuscular material to such great heights in the corona and it was suggested that the Type II disturbance upon reaching the Earth might be responsible for initiating geomagnetic storms which disrupt radio communication. Likewise the fast moving Type III disturbance was considered to be a possible candidate for solar cosmic rays, although the exact nature of the particles involved in the emission of Type II and III bursts was not known at that time.

The development of an improved radiospectrograph at Dapto led to the discovery in 1954 of fundamental and second harmonic components in both Type II and III bursts. This discovery gave support to the plasma hypothesis and allowed the height-time plots to be extended to greater heights in the corona. Further low frequency extensions to the spectrograph from 1956 to 1961

pushed the investigations to even greater coronal heights until it was established that the fast moving electron streams responsible for the Type III burst moved virtually unimpeded out to heights of at least 3 solar radii above the photosphere. This height was the limit that could be observed by ground based radio observations because of absorption effects in the Earth's ionosphere at frequencies below 7 MHz. Also, the Type II disturbance was traced to similar heights indicating that the shock wave responsible also escaped into interplanetary space.

Final confirmation of the *plasma hypothesis* was obtained with the development of the swept-frequency interferometer at Dapto in 1957. The radial heights found subsequently for Type II and III sources were in good agreement with coronal density models assuming, as before, that the emission occurs at the fundamental and second harmonic plasma level. An earlier experimental model of the interferometer, the first of its kind, had been installed at Dapto in 1954 for the study of radio scintillations from the source Cygnus A.

Later, spacecraft observations confirmed that the Type III bursts were associated with electron streams travelling outwards towards the earth along Archimedes spiral paths, at speeds of the order of c/3 in agreement with the earlier Dapto results. Similarly, the Type II burst was found sometimes to be associated with interplanetary shock waves and ejected plasma clouds known as coronal mass ejections (CME's). The latter are considered now to be the initiating cause of the Geomagnetic disturbance. The close association of Type II-IV bursts with CME's is why ground based radiospectrographs are still used today to monitor space weather.

The Dapto observations also led to the classification of a new type of burst called the Type V which sometimes followed Type III bursts. A model was proposed for this event in which some of the Type III electrons became trapped in coronal magnetic fields to produce the longer duration and broader bandwidth Type V burst. Other phenomena discovered at Dapto included the reverse drift pairs (RDPs) which were closely associated with Type I storms and the splitband and *herring-bone* structure in Type II bursts. The RDPs were thought to be evidence for radio echoes in the corona while several magnetic theories were proposed for the split-band structure in Type II bursts. The *herringbone* features were found to be highly polarized suggesting that the Type II shock wave excited streams of fast electrons as it moved across magnetic field lines in the corona.

The only metre wavelength burst not discovered by the Australian group was the Type IV, first classified by the French in 1957, who attributed the emission to synchrotron radiation from electrons spiralling along magnetic field lines in the corona. Dapto interferometer observations revealed that the Type IV had two components, an early moving source, called the *moving Type IV burst*, followed by a stationary source called the *stationary Type IV burst*. A model was proposed to account for the observed characteristics of the moving Type IV burst, which involved an ejected plasmoid, containing relativistic electrons generating synchrotron radiation, behind a Type II shock wave. The second stationary component lasted several hours before degenerating into a Type I storm. It was assumed that the fast electrons generating plasma emission in these stationary sources were trapped in magnetic fields above the flare region. Spectral observations of slowly drifting chains of Type I bursts were taken as evidence that the emitting electrons were excited by Alfven waves in the corona.

Although the Solar Group concentrated mainly on the collection and interpretation of the observed properties of solar radio bursts at metre wavelengths, several important contributions of a theoretical nature also were produced and theories reviewed. These concerned the propagation of electron streams and shock waves in the corona, as well as the conditions required for coherent plasma wave emission which occurs in Type II and Type III bursts. Also a two phase acceleration process for flare particles was propose based mainly on metre wavelength observations of solar bursts.

By the early 1960s the Division of Radiophysics had been granted funding to build a radioheliograph at Culgoora, NSW. As a result the Dapto Field Station was closed down in 1964. Solar radio observations continued at Culgoora from 1967 until 1984.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		page
1.	INTRODUCTION	20
1.1	Thesis Topic	20
1.2	Explanation of Terms	20
1.3	Methodology	26
1.4	Justification of Chosen Topic	27
1.5	Penrith and Dapto Team Members	30
1.6	Outline of Thesis	36
1.7	Publications arising from The Thesis	38
2.	INSTRUMENTAL DEVELOPMENTS 1947-1963	
2.1	Planning the World's first Radiospectrograph 1945-48	
2.2	The Penrith Radiospectrograph 1949	46
2.3	First Spectral Classification of Solar Bursts	54
2.4	The Dapto Radiospectrograph 1952	57
2.5	Radio Scintillations Studies of Cygnus A	66
2.6	Polarization Studies of Solar Bursts	70
2.7	The Dapto Swept-frequency Interferometer	73
2.8	Extensions to the Dapto Radiospectrograph 1958-1963	
2.9	Acknowledgements by above Authors	94
2.10	Closure of the Dapto Field Station in 1964	95
3	RADIOSPECTROGRAPH RESULTS 1949- 1966	96
3.1	Analysis of 'Outbursts' Recorded by the Penrith Radiospectrograph 1950	97
3.2	Analysis of 'Isolated' Bursts 1950	101
3.3	Analysis of 'Enhanced Radiation' 1950	106
3.4	Summary of Observations and Analysis of Penrith Data	110
3.5	Analysis of Fundamental and Second Harmonic Type II and Type III Bursts 1954	110
3.6	Interpretation of Harmonic Structure 1954	116
3.7	Evidence for the Ejection of Very Fast Particles and Shock Waves from the Sun 1955	121
3.8	Radio Scintillations Studies at Dapto During 1952-54	123
3.9	Review Paper on the Association of Radio 'Outbursts' with Solar Flares 1955	132
3.10	Proposed Future Research Activities	136
3.11	Review Paper on Spectrograph Results 1957	136
3.12	Swept-frequency Polarization Studies of Solar Bursts 1958	139
3.13	Correlation of Type III bursts with Solar Flares 1957	145
3.14	Discovery of Reverse Drift Pairs 1958	149
3.15	Association of Type II Bursts with Solar Flares 1958	154
3.16	Statistical Study of the Properties of Type II Bursts 1959	156
3.17	A Proposed Model for the Origin of Type IV bursts 1959	166

3.18	Association between Type III-V bursts and Centimetre Bursts 1959174
3.19	Type I Solar Radio Noise Storms and the Coronal Magnetic Field 1964178
3.20	The Speed and Acceleration of Type III and V Sources over Large Distances
	in the Corona 1964
3.21	Conclusion to Chapter 3190
4	INTERPRETATION OF INTERFEROMETER OBSERVATIONS 1957-64
4.1	Preliminary Results 1957191
4.2	The Transverse Motions of the Sources of Type II, III and IV Solar Bursts 1958193
4.3	Investigation of the Speed of the Disturbances responsible for Type III Radio Bursts 1958199
4.4	Relative Positions of Fundamental and Second Harmonic Type II and III Bursts 1961208
4.5	The Positions and Movements of Sources of Type II Bursts 1963
4.6	Statistical Study of Type IV Bursts 1963
4.7	Statistical Study of the Properties of Type V Bursts 1965235
4.8	A Proposed Model for the Type V Burst 1965245
4.9	Polarization of 'herring-bone' Type II Bursts 1966250
4.10	The Nature and Velocity of the Sources of Type II Bursts 1965
4.11	Unpublished Study of Type I Bursts
4.12	Conclusion to Chapter 4 260

5 SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO METRE WAVELENGTH SOLAR ASTRONOMY

	1942 – 63	
5.1	Introduction	261
5.2	Importance of Spectral Records	261
5.3	Importance of Interferometer Observations	
5.4	A Model of the Complete Flare Event	
5.5	Theoretical Contributions	
5.6	Concluding Remarks	272
6		274
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY	278
8		291
8.1	Archival Letters regarding Radiospectrograph Development	291
8.2	Reminiscences of Jim Roberts	

LIST OF TABLES

page

Table 1	List of locations for each spectral type and instrumental development	36
Table 2	Comparison of early spectral and single frequency records	53
Table 3	Sense of rotation of polarization ellipse	139
Table 4	Summary of activity of 9 June, 1955	143
Table 5	Observed and derived characteristics of chains of Type I bursts	180
Table 6	Constants used in the derivation of radial velocity	
Table 7	Degree and phase of polarization of 20 Type II bursts	252
Table 8	Significant contributions to metre wavelength solar radio astronomy	
	during 1942-64	

LIST OF FIGURES

page

1	A typical interferometer pattern where "d" is the spacing between the two aerials	22
2	Illustration of (a) linearly polarized (b) circularly polarized (c) elliptically polarized wave	24
3	The Radiophysics cricket team in the late 1950s	33
4	Photograph of members of the solar group circa 1965	35
5	An outburst recorded simultaneously at three frequencies	40
6	Most likely site of the Penrith radiospectrograph	46
7	Aerial photograph of the Penrith site taken in 2006	47
8	Penrith rhombic aerial design	48
9	Polar mount and declination axis for the Penrith rhombic aerial	48
10	Raising the Penrith rhombic aerial	49
11	Photograph of the aerial and pulley system	50
12	Examples of the display A scans	52
13	Time-frequency diagrams or 'dynamic spectra' of spectral Type I, II and III bursts	55
14	Colour photograph of the site of the Dapto spectrograph	59
15	Block diagram of the Dapto radiospectrograph	60
16	Colour photograph of the three crossed rhombic aerials at Dapto	61
17	Photograph showing one set of the three tuning condensers	62
18	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63
18 19	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and	63
18 19	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts	63 65
18 19 20	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations	63 65 68
18 19 20 21	 Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations 	63 65 68 69
18 19 20 21 22	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter	63 65 68 69 72
18 19 20 21 22 23	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter Schematic representation of a record of polarized radiation	63 65 68 69 72 72
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter Schematic representation of a record of polarized radiation Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency interferometer	63 65 68 72 72 72
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter Schematic representation of a record of polarized radiation Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency interferometer Characteristic patterns of an adding and a multiplying interferometer	63 65 68 72 72 73 75
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter Schematic representation of a record of polarized radiation Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency interferometer Characteristic patterns of an adding and a multiplying interferometer Block diagram of the adding interferometer	63 65 68 72 72 72 73 75 76
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter Schematic representation of a record of polarized radiation Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency interferometer Characteristic patterns of an adding and a multiplying interferometer Block diagram of the adding interferometer Block diagram of the multiplying interferometer	63 65 68 72 72 73 75 76 78
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display Spectral record of the fundamental and second harmonic (a) Type II and (b) Type III bursts Principles of the three instruments used for observing radio-star scintillations Complete record of ridge-type scintillations Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency polarimeter Schematic representation of a record of polarized radiation Block diagram of the Dapto swept-frequency interferometer Characteristic patterns of an adding and a multiplying interferometer Block diagram of the adding interferometer Patterns obtained with multiplying interferometer	63 65 68 72 72 73 75 76 78 79
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63 65 68 72 72 73 75 76 78 79 80.
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63 65 68 72 72 73 75 76 78 79 80.
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63 65 68 72 72 73 75 76 78 79 81 81
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63 65 68 72 72 73 76 76 79 80 81 81 81
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63 65 68 72 72 73 75 76 78 79 81 81 81 82 84
 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 	Photograph of Paul Wild and John Murray at the display	63 65 68 72 72 73 76 76 79 80 81 81 81 81 82 84 87

36	Dynamic spectra of solar bursts recorded in the frequency range 10-210 MHz	90
37	Groups of Type III bursts recorded in the range 5-210 MHz	90
38	Comparison of lowest observed frequencies with predicted critical frequencies	91
39	Comparison of lowest observed and measured critical frequencies	91
40	Simplified bloc diagram of the 200-2000 MHz receiver	92
41	Dapto 200-2000 MHz reflector and broad-band feed	93
42	A major outburst recorded over the entire 5-2000 MHz range	94
43	Dynamic spectrum of (a) Type II burst of 8 June 8 1949 and (b) 14 February 1949	97
44	The variation with frequency of the low frequency cut-off of the four Type II bursts	99
45	The motion of a Type II disturbance moving outwards through the solar corona	100
46	Examples of the dynamic spectrum of isolated bursts	102
47	Examples of Type III bursts	103
48	Plot of the average normalized decay constant versus frequency for 12 Type III bursts	104
49	Diagram for studying the frequency drift of Type III bursts	105
50	A-scans of three noise storm bursts - each section of 3 seconds duration	106
51	Histograms showing the distribution of recorded storm bursts with bandwidth	107
52	Histograms showing the distribution of recorded storm bursts with lifetime	108
53	LH plot shows the distribution of Type I storm bursts and the RH plot shows the	
	continuum spectrum and the 'burst index'	109
54	Outburst of 21 November 1952 (a) The dynamic spectrum (b) Profiles at 1-min intervals	112
55	Outburst of 5 May 1953 (a) The dynamic spectrum, (b) profiles at 15-sec intervals	113
56	Dynamic spectra of harmonic Type III bursts extended to greater heights by using	
	half the frequency of the second harmonic	114
57	Comparison of the fundamental and second harmonic bands of Type III bursts	115
58	(a) Assumed natural spectrum for a point source at the 50 MHz plasma level in a	
	Baumbach-Allen corona, (b) propagation characteristic for various angles to the radial and	
	(c) the received spectrum	117
59	The limiting rays of outward emission at various frequencies from a point source	
	at the 50 MHz plasma level in a Baumbach-Allen	118
60	Position determinations for the Type II burst of Figure 55 (a) The variation with time of	
	(1) the peak frequency of the fundamental (triangles) and (2) half the peak frequency	
	of the second harmonic (dots) (b) The derived height and source angle	
	(c) Successive positions of the source at $\frac{1}{2}$ min intervals	119
61	Derived height-time plot for the Type II burst of Figure 54	120
62	Derived height-time plots for harmonic Type III bursts assuming a Baumbach-Allen	
	corona	121
63	Plot of the derived motions in the solar atmosphere for a compound burst of	
	1 September1952	122
64	Complete record of ridge-type scintillations recorded on 29 April 1954	
	(a) The dynamic spectrum (b) The swept-frequency interferometer pattern	
	(c) 45 MHz records with the spaced-aerial system showing systematic time delays	125
65	Dynamic spectra of ridge-type scintillations (a) and (b) many of the ridges are seen	

	to show an internal fine structure	126
66	Idealized sketches of dynamic spectra	127
67	Ellipses showing the size and shape of the pattern on the ground for ridge-type	
	scintillations	129
68	The annual variation of the velocity of ridge-type patterns across the ground	129
69	Solar time variation of the fluctuation index	130
70	Two large outbursts recorded at 7 frequencies on 17 and 21-22 February 1950	133
71	Observations of source position, polarization and intensity during the outburst of	
	17 February 1950	135
72	Histograms of velocities of solar corpuscular particles ejected from solar flares	137
73	Spot groups arranged in order of increasing intensity, shaded according to limb	
	characteristics	138
74	Single records of strongly polarized Type I radiation	140
75	(a) Record of an unpolarized Type III burst (b) Polarized Type III bursts	
	(c) Cluster of polarized Type III bursts	141
76	Frequency distributions of phase angles of 40 Type III bursts	142
77	Heights of the levels of zero refractive index in the corona above an extremely large	
	unipolar sunspot group	144
78	(a) Spectral record and (b) interferometer record of Type III bursts	
	Interference fringes are evident in (b)	146
79	Comparison of positions on the solar disk of Type III bursts and chromospheric flares	147
80	Histogram showing the dependence of association on apparent flare area	147
81	Dependence of disk longitude on the association of Type III bursts and solar flares	148
82	Examples of reverse drift pairs (a) showing sudden changes in the rates	
	of frequency drift; (b) occurring within bursts of spectral Type III	149
83	(a) Each reverse drift pair is represented by a pair of contiguous lines which show	
	the frequency extent of the two elements of the burst. (b) Histogram showing the	
	prevalence of bursts at different frequencies	150
84	(a) The 'frequency-separation model'. (b) The 'time-delay model' of reverse drift pairs	151
85	Histograms showing the differences in (a) the starting frequency, and (b) the finishing	
	frequency of the two elements of the observed reverse drift pairs	151
86	Diagram showing the paths of direct and reflected rays in the corona for a source located	
	at the 30 MHz plasma level and radiating at 60 MHz	153
87	Centre to limb variation for a source at the 30 MHz plasma level radiating at a frequency	
	of 60 MHz (a) time delay of the reflected ray after the direct ray (b) Integrated	
	absorption in the direct (curve I) and reflected (curve II) ray	153
88	Distribution of Type II bursts with radial distance determined from the flare position	155
89	Histogram showing the frequency of occurrence of Type II bursts	157
90	Frequency dependence of the drift rate in the fundamental of 24 harmonic Type II bursts	158
91	Histogram of the mean radial speeds of 24 Type II bursts	158
92	(a) Distribution of Type II bursts associated with a solar flare Unshaded regions	
	refer to bursts showing both fundamental and harmonic bands. Shaded regions	

	refer to bursts where a harmonic was not observed. (b) Disk distribution of	
	observed harmonic ratios (dots) compared with the predicted curve from Wild, Murray	
	and Rowe (1954)	159
93	Examples of Type II bursts showing split-band structure	160
94	Points show the frequency separation in split-bands, referred to the fundamental band .	
	The dashed curve shows the variation of the gyro-frequency (ordinate) with the	
	coronal plasma frequency	161
95	Examples of herringbone structure in Type II bursts	162
96	Derived height time plots for five harmonic Type II bursts	163
97	Temporal relationships between flares and Type II bursts	164
98	(a) Superposed epoch diagram showing the mean value of the geomagnetic index	
	A_p on days before and after 60 Type II bursts .(b) The predicted time delays inferred	
	from the frequency drift of 24 of the Type II bursts	165
99	Idealized sketch of spectral record showing the metre wavelength components of a complete maior radio event	167
100	Spectral appearance of Type IV storms. The first three examples are reproductions of	-
	spectral records in which the time scale has been considerably compressed. The fourth	
	shows the start of the third event on a normal time scale	167
101	(a) Schematic diagram showing durations of eleven of the twelve Type IV storms and their	
-	relations in time to the Type II and big flare event (b) Similar to Fig. 100 (a) but showing	
	all the Type I storms observed	168
102	Mean K _n index for each 3-hourly period before and after (a) 10 Type IV storms	
	(b) 10 Type I storms and (c) 10 importance '3' flares (d) 36 Type II bursts	170
103	Proposed model of a Type IV storm: see text for details	173
104	Three examples of Type III bursts followed by broadband Type V bursts	175
105	Examples of groups of sharply defined Type III bursts not accompanied by Type V bursts	176
106	Data showing the association of Type V bursts, centimetre bursts and flare puffs	177
107	Tracings of dynamic spectra (a) an individual burst chain (b) several chains occurring in	470
100	Succession	179
100	single and a double shain	170
100	Single and a double chain	195
109	Plots of radial valacity for 20 individual Type III burste. Cross batching refers to burste	105
110	followed by Type V continuum	100
111	Plote of redial velocity against frequency for four Type III burste for which reliable	100
	more measurements, were peoplied over at least five of the civit frequency ranges	100
110	(a) Type Laterm equipe position measurements everaged ever time (full lines)	169
112	(a) Type I storm source position measurements averaged over time (full lines)	
		400
440	(c) variation of mean source size with frequency	192
113	(a) An instantaneous position measurement averaged over frequency	
	(b) histogram showing the 55 MHz source sizes for the 26 bursts (c) the average	4.00
	spectrum of source size during the burst referred to in (b)	193

114	Showing centroids of the sources of two groups of Type III bursts were located at different	
	frequencies by the swept-frequency interferometer on 5 June 1958	194
115	The variation with frequency of the positions of sources of Type III bursts or groups	
	recorded on different days between 4 June and 7 July 1958	194
116	The polarization, spectrum and position data recorded during an outburst at the time of a solar flare of importance 2	197
117	Polarization, spectrum and position data recorded during an outburst. The earlier	
	section of the outburst is a Type II burst, the later a Type IV	197
118	Observations of source position, polarization and intensity during the outburst of	
	17 February 1950	198
119	Source positions of eight Type III bursts (short arcs) associated with limb flares	
	(open circles). The lines on which the radio sources are located are only showed in	
	part closest to the radial through the flare position	199
120	Distribution with 60 MHz position on the disk of the amount of spread in Type III bursts	
	(as measured by the difference between 45 and 60 MHz positions)	200
121	Idealized diagram showing the radio emission from a radially ejected Type III disturbance	201
122	Distribution across the disk of the 60 MHz sources of Type III bursts	202
123	Variation with 60 MHz position of the transverse component of apparent outward velocity	
	of Type III disturbances	202
124	Distribution with 60 MHz position on the disk of the percentage of Type III bursts which	
	show recognizable harmonics	204
125	Electron densities in the corona as a function of radial distance	205
126	Distribution with 60 MHz position on the disk of the time interval between times of	
	maximum intensity at 60 and 45 MHz for observed Type III bursts. Open circles refer to	
	bursts followed by Type V emission	205
127	Time delay of radio signals near the plasma level	206
128	Distribution of radial velocities of Type III bursts	206
129	Dynamic spectrum and East-West positions of the 28 April 1960 Type II burst	208
130	Mean positions of the fundamental and harmonic bands of the four Type II bursts	209
131	Plot showing the relative displacements between fundamental and harmonic Type II	
	and Type III bursts	210
132	Showing direct and reflected rays escaping from above the plasma level	211
133	Dispersion relation for longitudinal plasma waves and electrodynamic waves in	
	a thermal plasma in the absence of a magnetic field	212
134	(a) Calculated angular power spectrum for radiation at the second harmonic of the	
	plasma frequency (b) The backward/forward ratio of intensities	213
135	Event of 14 July 1959 showing positions of two widely separated Type II sources	215
136	(a) Multiple Type II event of 15 June 1960 showing two sources in different positions	
	and with different drift rates	216
137	Multiple Type II event of 28 April 1960 showing three separated sources associated	
	with different spectral features in the Type II burst	217
138	Disk distribution of (a) associated flares and (b) Type II bursts	217

139(a)	Observed 50 MHz position coordinates of the Type II bursts plotted against flare position	218
139(b)	Observed position coordinates of the sources of Type III bursts at 50 MHz plotted against	
	the position of the associated solar flares	219
140	Diagrams showing the dependence of variation of position with frequency for (a) Type II	
	bursts and (b) Type III bursts	220
141	Model adopted in treating non-radial motion of the exciting disturbances of Type II bursts	221
142	$ P_{45} - P_f $ for non-central Type II bursts with $ P_{45} > 15$ min. of arc	223
143	Average electron densities in the corona as a function of height. Squares refer to	
	Type II bursts and circles to Type III bursts	224
144	Temporal relations between the start and time of maximum intensity of Type IV bursts	
	and the start of the associated Type II burst	.226
145	Position data showing movements and stable positions of Type IV sources	.227
146	Variation of position as a function of stable position for Type IV bursts	.228
147	Type IV bursts which show initial rapid movement	.229
148	Examples of stationary Type IV bursts	.230
149	Relative positions of Type IV and Type II bursts	.231
150	Sense of circular polarization of Type IV bursts plotted against disk coordinates of flare	231
151	Properties of the sources of Type IV emission of 15 November 1960	.233
152	Examples of Type V bursts	236
153	Observed initial bandwidths of 59 Type V bursts	.237
154	The average durations of 59 Type V bursts recorded at Dapto (+) compared with	
	Thompson and Maxwell's (1962) results (o)	.238
155	(a) Comparison of observed initial (+) and final (positions of 17 Type V bursts averaged	
	over the frequency range 45-60 MHz with the averaged positions of the associated	
	Type III bursts. Detached Type V bursts are denoted by D.	
	(b) Distribution of the differences $P_v - P_{III}$ between 23 initial Type V positions and the	
	associated Type III positions	239
156	Example of a detached Type V burst, in which the frequency cut-off of the continuum drifts to	
	higher frequencies and, in which there is a large discontinuity in position between the Type III	
	and Type V bursts	240
157	(a) Model to interpret the displacements between Type III and Type V sources	
	(b) Histogram of the possible radial displacements and (c) Histogram of possible horizontal	
	displacements	241.
158	Plot of the 50 MHz position coordinates of 10 Type V bursts against the flare position	.242
159	(a) Comparison of the observed dispersion of position coordinates with frequency for 13	
	Type V and associated Type III bursts (b) Relation between dispersion and 52.5 MHz	
	position coordinates for 18 Type V bursts	.243
160	Observed disk distribution for (a) Type V bursts and (b) Type III bursts	.244
161	Comparison of the long (LB) and short baseline (SB) visibilities of Type V and associated	
	Type III bursts	.245
162	Proposed model for the physical state of the corona at the time of a Type V burst	.248
163	An example of the spectrum and degree of polarization at 40 and 60 MHz of a Type II	

	burst containing herring-bone structure25	3
164	Scatter diagram of the frequency drift rates of 21 Type II bursts compared with the	
	averaged result of Maxwell and Thompson (1962) for fundamental (full lines) and	
	second harmonic (dashed lines) bursts25	5
165	Averaged derived velocities for Type II bursts derived from 2 x Newkirk and	
	10 x Baumbach-Allen density models25	6
166	Source velocities predicted fro the shock energy equations on the assumption that	
	the energy and shock strength remain constant as the shock spreads spherically25	57
167	Coronal magnetic field strengths derived on the assumption that the Type II disturbance	
	is a perpendicular shock. The heavy full line is the value obtained by averaging over	
	all the 21 Type II bursts. The dashed full line is the minimum value, for which	
	gas pressure = magnetic pressure28	58
168	Coronal magnetic field strengths derived from band-splitting for 4 Type II bursts using	
	(a) δ f _S (b) δ f _{MI} (c) δ f _h . Shaded portion shows values derived from magnetic	
	shock theory25	59
169	The main components of a solar outburst26	36
170	Diagram showing the origin of radio emission, x rays and corpuscular effects of solar flares26	39
171	Conditions required for incoherent and coherent emission	'2