

This machine, which is the first of its kind in Europe, is capable of measuring positions (to 1μ) and densities (to .02 D) of astronomical plates up to 14" x 14". It will first be used for positional calibration of the Sky Survey plates which are taken with the ESO and SRC Schmidt telescopes, and also for quality control by means of image evaluation. However, it is expected that the machine will attract users of Schmidt plates within ESO as well as astronomers from institutes in ESO countries who want to evaluate plate material they have received from ESO.

The manufacturer is the Optronics Co. of Chelmsford, near Boston, USA. R. West

New Electric Power Plant at La Silla

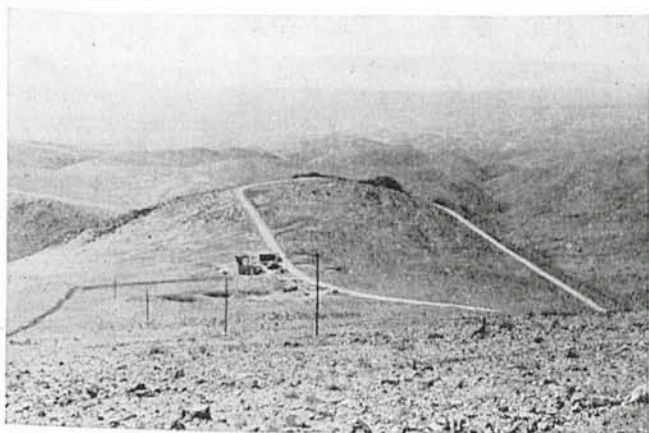
On March 7, news was received that all three diesel motor generator sets had just become operational. Within the following days they were taken fully into service for the supply of power to the Observatory.

Begun in June, 1973, the new electric power plant is part of the general plan for developing the installations at La Silla to meet the energy requirements of the 3.6 m telescope. It was assembled by Motoren-Werke of Mannheim, Germany. The location is at Km 17.5 on the road from Pelicano to La Silla and about two kilometres from the hotel.

The plant consists of a main engine-room measuring 22 x 8.5 m — i.e. 187 m² — and 5.8 m high inside; moreover, a small room containing the 6,000 volt starting cells, the four cells for the transformers that raise the generator tension from 380 V to 6,000 V, and, finally, a small combined workshop-store. The plant will have three groups of diesel generators of 480 kVA each, for a start, with space reserved for a fourth group later on.

Three external mazout tanks with a capacity of 150 m³ each will permit independent functioning for more than two months, with one group operating continuously at full strength.

The operation will be entirely automatic and the characteristics of the generator groups have been determined with a view to permitting the Observatory site to be supplied normally by a single group, the second being



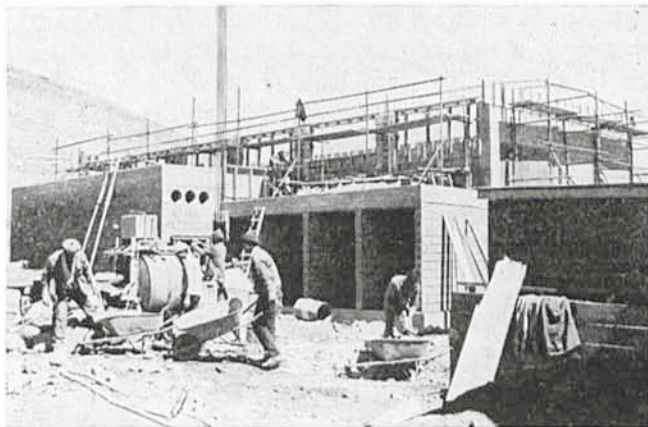
Site of the new electric power plant on the road from El Pelicano to La Silla. On the left is the outline of the 6,000 V cable connecting the plant with La Silla.

held as a reserve or a complement, if need be, and the third for maintenance.

The new power plant will eventually supply the whole La Silla site by means of an underground 6,000 V cable about two kilometres long. It will also supply the installations at Pelicano and the pumping stations along the road through the present 6,000 V aerial electric cable connecting Pelicano with La Silla.

It will replace the plant operating at El Pelicano since 1967. This has been supplying the whole ESO area through the aerial cable, but, with its three old groups of 115 kVA diesel generators, it can no longer ensure an adequate supply for the Observatory.

J. Rouel



Construction in progress, October, 1973. View from the road, with the transformer cells in the foreground on the right and the edge of the high-tension cells (6,000 V) with the three orifices for a future cable extension on the left. In the background is the superstructure of the engine-room housing the diesel-generator groups.

Filming the 3.6 m Telescope

The Rodgers-Pillet film unit at Geneva is keeping well up with construction work on the 3.6 m telescope. Footage recently taken at the REOSC plant at Ballainvillers and Creusot-Loire at Saint-Chamond, also in France, has included some larger sections of the telescope, such as the horseshoe and the fork. The film, 16 mm soundtrack and in colour, follows the progress of the telescope, its aim being to provide a visual documentary record of the whole project.

The producer is N. Rodgers and cameraman-for-Europe B. Pillet. They will bring together the material from the various construction locations and edit it at the ESO TP Division in Geneva. The finished product will be distributed outside ESO also—e.g. to observatories and teaching institutions—but not commercially.

N. Rodgers

Letters Department

Letters on subjects of ESO interest are invited. They should be relatively brief and addressed formally to The Editor, ESO MESSENGER, Hamburg.