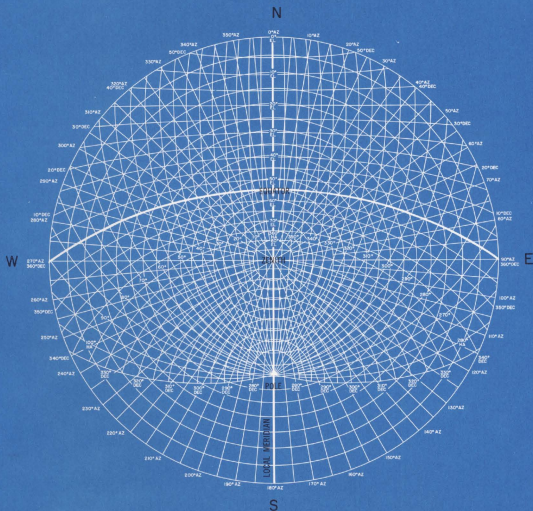




# DSIF: TIDBINBILLA



FRONT COVER: A stereographic projection of the local coordinates used at the Tidbinbilla Station to define antenna-pointing angles for locating the spacecraft.

The place-name Tidbinbilla derives from the aboriginal name Jedbinbilla, one of only a few hundred words that have been preserved from the Ngunawal language of the aborigines in the Canberra district. Anthropologists translate the meaning as "place of initiation."

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

JPL TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM No. 33-207

***DSIF: TIDBINBILLA***

JET PROPULSION LABORATORY / CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## Foreword

An essential part of every National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space flight project is the communications system which returns data from the spacecraft to its home base and transmits instructions from Earth to the spacecraft. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) pioneered the development of many of the critical elements of communications systems designed to function over the vast distance involved in cislunar and interplanetary missions. In 1958 the Laboratory first established a three-station network of receiving stations to gather the data from the first U.S. Earth-orbiter *Explorer 1*. Since that time, the network has developed into the Deep Space Network (DSN) specifically designed to communicate with space probes traveling to the Moon and beyond.

The DSN has many outstanding accomplishments to its credit. Included among these are radar observations of several planets, tracking the *Mariner* mission to Venus, and receiving the television photographs from *Ranger*. The capabilities of the Network are continuously being improved in order to keep up with the demands of the more complex deep space missions undertaken by NASA.

With the establishment of the tracking station at Tidbinbilla, near Canberra, Australia, the DSN has achieved increased capability to support the ever-expanding exploration of space. The initial mission for this station is to participate in tracking the *Mariner IV* spacecraft flight to Mars. We gratefully acknowledge the participation of the Australian Department of Supply in this joint scientific project.

This Technical Memorandum is one of a series which describes the facilities and functions of the various major elements of the Deep Space Network.



W. H. PICKERING  
Director, Jet Propulsion Laboratory



*DSIF stations circle the globe at intervals of 120 degrees in longitude to maintain continuous coverage of the spacecraft.*

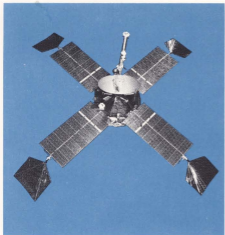
## **The Deep Space Network**

The Deep Space Network is a facility of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Office of Tracking and Data Acquisition, under the system management and technical direction of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. The main elements of the DSN are the Deep Space Instrumentation Facility (DSIF), with space communication and tracking stations based around the world; the Space Flight Operations Facility (SFOF) at JPL in Pasadena, California, U.S.A., the command and control center; and the Ground Communication System, which connects all parts of the DSN by telephone and radio-teletype.

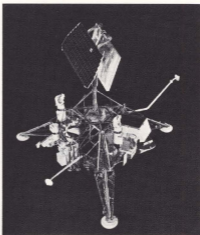
The Deep Space Network is to be distinguished from other NASA networks such as the Scientific Satellite Network, which tracks Earth-orbiting scientific and communication satellites, and the Manned Space Flight Network, which tracks the manned spacecraft of the *Gemini* and *Apollo* programs. The DSN is the NASA facility for two-way communications with unmanned space vehicles traveling 10,000 miles from Earth, and beyond, into the great distances for interplanetary travel.

The DSIF stations are situated approximately 120 degrees apart in longitude so that the spacecraft is always within the field of view of at least one of the ground antennas. The DSIF locations are at Tidbinbilla and Woomera, Australia; Goldstone, California, U.S.A.; Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa; Madrid, Spain; and Ascension Island, South Atlantic Ocean. Support facilities include a spacecraft monitoring station at Cape Kennedy, Florida, U.S.A. JPL operates the U.S. stations and the Ascension Island station; the overseas stations are staffed and operated by government agencies of their respective countries, with the assistance of U.S. support personnel.

The impact of space explorations is felt throughout the world, but most profoundly by those nations who actively participate in DSIF operations. They share in the trials and triumphs, as well as in the burden of spacecraft tracking, communication, and command that falls on the ground stations.



**MARINER IV:** Launch weight, 570 pounds • Instrument weight, 40 pounds • 8 experiments • TV camera • 4 solar panels • Mission, Mars flyby



**SURVEYOR:** Launch weight, 2100 pounds • Instrument weight, 100 pounds • 8 experiments • TV camera • One solar panel • Mission, lunar soft-landing

## DSN Mission Support

In preparation for increasingly accelerated activities in space, the Deep Space Network has developed the capability of controlling operations of as many as four spacecraft in flight at the same time, and advanced communication techniques that make the prospect of probes to planets as far out as Jupiter within the realm of possibility.

The DSN supports the following space exploration projects for which JPL is responsible:

**Ranger.** A series of TV-picture-taking missions to different areas of the Moon to collect preliminary information for scientific studies of possible landing sites for the NASA manned lunar program.

**Surveyor.** A soft-landing of instrumented craft on the Moon capable of performing operations to contribute new scientific knowledge about the lunar surface and to make final tests in support of the *Apollo* program.

**Mariner.** A flyby mission to Mars during the 1964-1965 Mars opportunity to take TV pictures of the planet's sur-

face, make radiation and magnetic fields and particles experiments, and provide basic knowledge of spacecraft performance in long-duration flights to interplanetary distances.

**Voyager.** An unmanned spacecraft weighing approximately 10,000 pounds which will conduct scientific exploration of the planets, beginning with Mars in 1971.

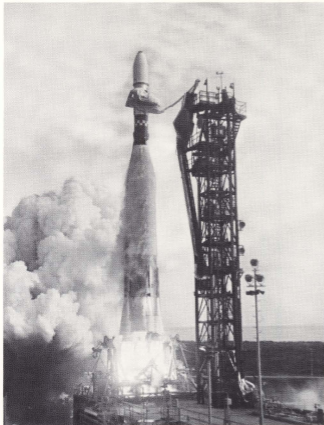
The DSN also supports the following missions for which the NASA agency identified with each is responsible:

**Lunar Orbiter** (Langley Research Center). A photographic mission to take TV pictures of the lunar surface from a satellite spacecraft.

**Pioneer** (Ames Research Center). A series of probes designed to penetrate deep into our solar system to learn more about the nature of solar flares and other deep space phenomena.

**Apollo** (Manned Spacecraft Center). The manned spacecraft mission that will put men on the Moon.

*Mariner IV, atop an Atlas-Agena rocket, is launched from Cape Kennedy on its TV-picture-taking mission to Mars.*



*Control room at Tidbinbilla awaits telemetry signals from Mariner IV.*



*Photograph of Mars as seen by a telescope on Earth.*





*FACING: Nestled in natural bowl-shaped terrain in the Tidbinbilla Valley, the Tidbinbilla Space Communications Station is shielded from man-made noise that would interfere with the sensitive antennas.*

*RIGHT: Tidbinbilla operations and engineering building.*



## ***Tidbinbilla Space Communications Station***

The Australian and United States Governments have entered into a cooperative agreement to establish and operate stations of the Deep Space Instrumentation Facility (DSIF) in Australia. The Australian Department of Supply through its Weapons Research Establishment is responsible for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the DSIF stations at Woomera and Tidbinbilla.

Each DSIF station is equipped with a polar-mounted 85-ft-diameter parabolic antenna and associated equipment for communicating with spacecraft millions of miles from Earth. The tracking stations must be located away from man-made electrical and commercial radio and television interference, and it is desirable that they be in natural bowl-shaped terrain to provide further shielding from interference.

Such a site was found in the sheep and cattle grazing land of the Tidbinbilla valley, about 25 miles from the Australian capital city of Canberra. The station is situated on 150 acres of land leased from the Australian Capital Territory and is in an area which could be expanded to accommodate other tracking stations without mutual interference.

Canberra is in the center of the 900-square-mile Australian Capital Territory, an area which was transferred from the state of New South Wales to the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1911, as the site for a capital city. In April, 1911, the Commonwealth Government launched a world-wide competition to secure the best possible design for the new city. The winning entry

was submitted by Chicago landscape architect Walter Burley Griffin, who proposed to integrate the natural beauties of the area with functional planning in order to achieve one of the world's best-planned and most beautiful cities.

The construction of the city's buildings, parks, and the magnificent Lake Burley Griffin have progressed from that time to this except for some interruption during the two World Wars. Canberra has been the home of Parliament since 1927 and has gradually taken over most of the other functions of Commonwealth Government from Melbourne. Its present population of 80,000 is expected to increase to 100,000 by 1967.

Canberra provides the DSIF station at Tidbinbilla with nearby communications and transportation facilities which connect with all parts of the world. Canberra is also a source of operating supplies and skilled construction and maintenance personnel. The Australian National University located in Canberra provides station personnel with a nearby location for pursuing advanced study.

Tidbinbilla's first tracking assignment is to participate in communicating with the *Mariner IV* spacecraft which was launched in November 1964 on a course to bring it in close proximity with the planet Mars in July 1965. Tidbinbilla will also participate in the *Surveyor* program aimed at gaining further knowledge of the lunar surface and lunar environment. *Surveyor* spacecraft equipped with instrumentation packages will make soft landings on the Moon's surface and telemeter scientific data back

to Earth where it will be received and recorded at the DSIF stations.

Construction of the Tidbinbilla station was commenced in mid-1963. The design and construction of the buildings was accomplished by the Canberra Department of Works on behalf of the Department of Supply. Basic requirements and design criteria for the station were developed in conjunction with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Tidbinbilla is a self-sufficient station, with its own access roads, and its own maintenance and repair facilities. It has its own power-generating equipment and a telephone system provided by the Australian Postmaster-General's Department.

The station is operated up to seven days a week, when required, by a staff of 75 people. A private industrial firm supplies most of the technical staff and maintenance personnel who operate the station under the management of the Department of Supply Station Director. A DSN Resident Engineer from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory acts as a technical consultant to the Station Director.

The Station Director and other key operating personnel performed acceptance tests on much of the electronic equipment when it was checked out at the Goldstone, California, station before shipment to Tidbinbilla.

The major facilities at the station are:

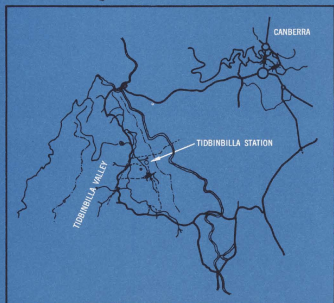
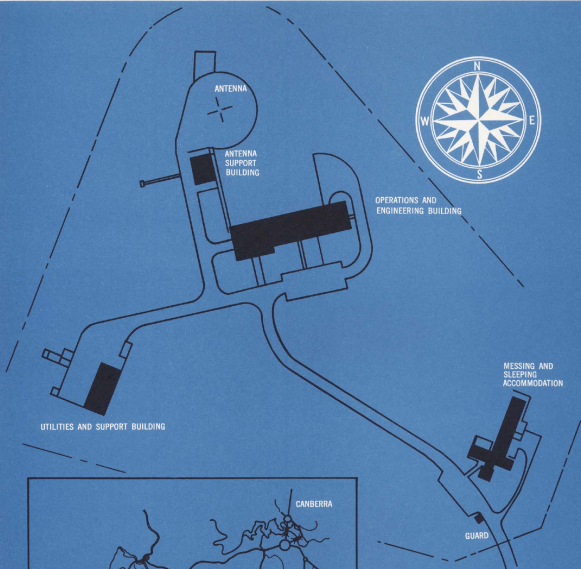
- a. An operations and engineering building which houses the majority of the tracking, telemetry, and communications equipment as well as laboratories and offices.
- b. A utilities and support building which houses the power-generating and switching equipment and workshop facilities.
- c. The 85-ft-diameter antenna and an antenna support building which contains the hydro-mechanical

equipment for the antenna and the radio transmitter.

- d. A personnel building which provides dining facilities for the staff of the station, and limited emergency sleeping accommodations.
- e. A collimation tower and a small building to house the collimation equipment located about two miles from the main antenna. A source of radio energy which simulates spacecraft signals is mounted in the collimation tower. This equipment is used to calibrate and check the performance of the main antenna and associated electronic systems.

In DSIF operations, Tidbinbilla performs the functions of *tracking*—locating the spacecraft, measuring its distance, velocity, and position, and following its course; *data acquisition*—gathering information from the spacecraft; and *command*—sending instructions from the ground that guide the spacecraft in its flight to the target, tell the spacecraft when to perform required operations and when to turn on the instruments for performing the scientific experiments of the mission. The station operates in the radio-frequency channel allocated to the DSIF. These frequencies are in the S-band, and range from 2110 to 2120 Mc (million cycles per second) for transmission of commands from Earth to the spacecraft, and from 2290 to 2300 Mc for receiving signals from the spacecraft.

Each space flight project requires equipment and accommodations unique to that project, dependent upon the type of command system to be used and the type of telemetry system the spacecraft will carry. Sometimes this may just mean a rearrangement of station equipment. When tailor-made equipment is required by a project, it is supplied to the station by the responsible project organization, and arrangements are made in advance for the equipment to be integrated with the normal complement of station equipment.





*FACING: With the aid of antennas designed to detect the faintest of radio signals, man can listen to messages relayed from space.*

## **Reaching Into Deep Space**

The only truly practical means known today of communicating with spacecraft at deep space distances is the same basic technology that brings radio and television into our homes—radiation of electromagnetic waves through space. The difference lies in the magnitude of the problem of how to overcome the great loss of energy of a signal that occurs because of the tremendous distances it must travel.

In the brief span of DSIF history, spectacular progress has been made in the evolution of antenna, receiver, and transmitter capabilities, which is fast approaching the technical and theoretical limits for communication within our solar system. Present technology is capable of meeting requirements for tracking, command, and data acquisition at distances ranging up to hundreds of millions of miles from Earth. Sophisticated communications techniques have developed so rapidly that by 1966 the DSIF capability, measured in quantity of information transmitted per unit of time, will have increased more than a thousand times over that of the pre-1960 capability.

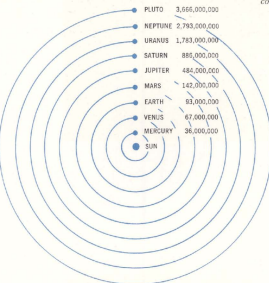
To overcome space losses, the DSIF uses antennas designed for high gain, or very high concentration of received signal power, and powerful transmitters that

send out a very strong signal. Standard DSIF ground transmitters operate at power levels of 10 kilowatts (10,000 watts). A spacecraft transmitter, on the other hand, is very limited in power because of size and weight restrictions. Very early spacecraft (*Pioneer III*) used power outputs as small as 0.2 watt; the *Ranger VII* spacecraft used two 60-watt transmitters to send back to Earth the images recorded by the six television cameras. Continuing development will increase transmitter outputs for probes contemplated for exploratory missions to the edge of the solar system.

The well-known doppler principle has long been used in determining the relative speed with which a celestial body or star and the Earth are approaching or receding from each other (the radial velocity). The doppler shift is the apparent change in frequency of a signal reflected from or emitted by a moving object as the object moves toward or away from the observer—much as a train whistle is high in pitch as the train approaches, then lower in pitch as it passes.

The doppler principle has been adapted for use in determining spacecraft velocity. Early spacecraft used one-way doppler—that is, measuring the difference be-

FACING: Photographs show evolution of JPL-designed antennas—from the early systems with a tracking range of 3000 miles from Earth to the present-day giant antenna that is capable of communicating with spacecraft traveling to the edge of our solar system.



COMMUNICATION WITHIN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM INVOLVES TREMENDOUS DISTANCES. SHOWN ABOVE ARE DISTANCES OF THE PLANETS FROM THE SUN IN MILES.

tween the frequency of a signal transmitted from the spacecraft and the frequency as it is received on the ground, which is proportional to the radial velocity between the Earth and the spacecraft.

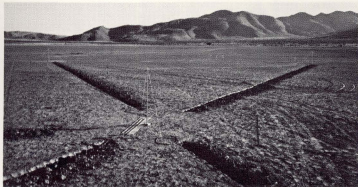
Because of inexact knowledge of the transmitted frequency, the accuracy of the measurement of spacecraft velocity using one-way doppler is limited to about 90 feet per second. Two-way doppler developed for the DSIF has increased this accuracy to better than one inch per second. In two-way doppler, a signal is transmitted from the ground to a turn-around transponder (receiver-transmitter) on the spacecraft, where it is converted to a new frequency in an exact ratio with the ground frequency, and then retransmitted to the ground. Since the frequency of the signal sent from the ground can be determined with great precision, the resulting doppler information and velocity calculations are very accurate. By two-way doppler calculations alone the position of a spacecraft at a distance of several million miles can be determined within 20 to 50 miles. A JPL-developed electronic ranging system uses an automatic coded signal in conjunction with doppler information to provide range measurements with an accuracy better than 45 feet at lunar and planetary ranges.

Because of the doppler shift and other effects, the frequency of the signal received on the ground from the spacecraft varies widely, which means that receiver tuning must be continually changed. Both spacecraft and DSIF ground receivers use a phase-lock method of signal detection, which maintains an automatic frequency con-

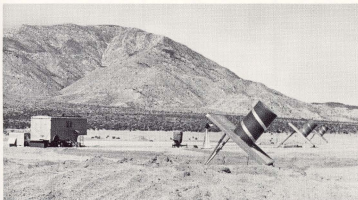
trol and keeps the receiver locked in tune with the received frequency.

Receiver performance is measured by the ability to pick up the weak signal from the spacecraft transmitter and separate it from surrounding noises (static) originating not only in the Earth's atmosphere, but from lunar, solar and galactic sources. DSIF receivers have a very low threshold—the point at which the receiver can no longer detect the signal, just as in human hearing, the lower limit at which the ear no longer responds to a sound is the threshold of hearing. And just as internal body sounds (such as that of blood coursing through the head) interfere with the lowest external sound discernible to the human ear, radio receiver sensitivity is affected by internal electronic noise in the system itself. To help overcome this problem, advanced methods of ultra-low-noise signal amplification have been developed. DSIF S-band receiving systems use a traveling-wave maser amplifier. The maser is basically a synthetic ruby crystal immersed in liquid helium to keep it at a very low temperature and operates with a "pumped-in" source of microwave energy to augment the strength of the incoming signal without generating much internal system noise.

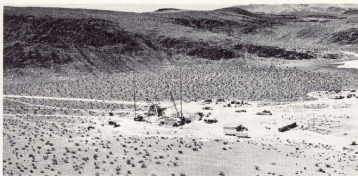
The basic components of the antenna systems in the DSIF are essentially the same, although auxiliary equipment may vary depending upon the special requirements for scheduled missions. The following pages describe the antenna system installed at Tidbinbilla. The complete system comprises thousands of different elements which must work perfectly under precision requirements.



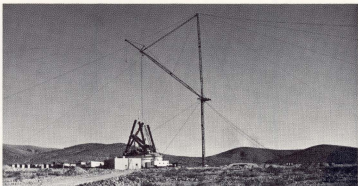
1956: Microlock interferometer



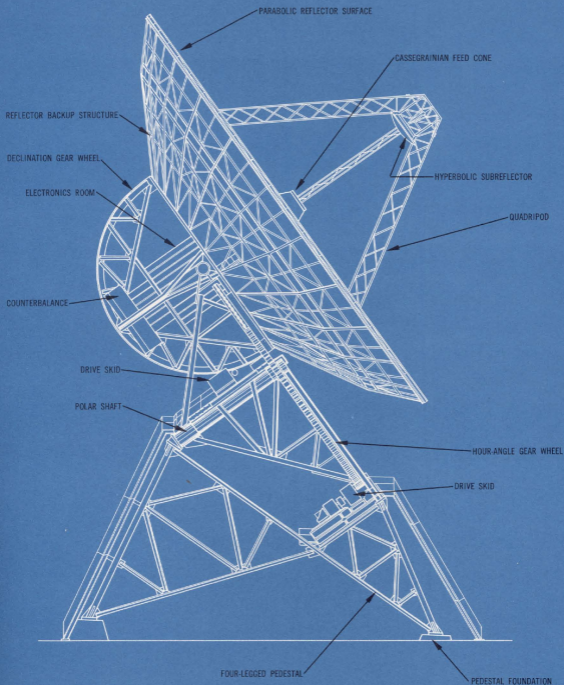
1957: Array of fixed helical antennas



1958: The first 85-foot-diameter antenna under construction at Goldstone Pioneer Station.



1964: The advanced 210-foot-diameter antenna under construction at Goldstone Mars Station.



*FACING: Skeletal drawing of the standard DSIF antenna with an 85-foot-diameter dish-shaped reflector displays the intricate balance of its structural steel ribs and girders. Tall as a 10-story building, antenna and supporting structure weigh about 600,000 pounds.*

## **The Antenna**

The standard DSIF antenna uses a parabolic reflector, 85 feet in diameter. The reflector is a perforated metal mirror that looks like an inverted umbrella and is often called the "dish." The antenna and its supporting structure stand 10 stories high and together weigh around 600,000 pounds.

About 8,000 pounds of electronic and operating equipment are an integral part of the antenna structure. This equipment is mounted on the antenna itself and in rooms reached by ladder on the supporting structure. The supporting base is a reinforced concrete pad sunk deep into the ground. Whenever new equipment is added, counterbalancing weights must also be added to distribute stress evenly over the structure.

### **Driving the Antenna**

The 85-foot-diameter antenna is steerable; that is, its "beam" or major radiation pattern can be readily shifted in any direction to follow the spacecraft. When a deep space probe gets out and away from the Earth, it travels in an orbit or path similar to other celestial bodies, and "rises" and "sets" on the horizon like the Sun. The predicted or actual course of a spacecraft is determined by the same methods astronomers use in locating heavenly bodies. That is, the angular position of the spacecraft relative to the star background is defined by a set of imaginary circles (coordinates) corresponding somewhat to Earth longitude and latitude. Each antenna in the DSIF is oriented to a set of local coordinates that are

used to measure the antenna-pointing angles by which the spacecraft is located. The DSIF tracking antennas use a system of polar coordinates which measure the hour angle (representing angular direction referenced to a station's local meridian circle) and the declination angle (representing angular direction referenced to the celestial equatorial circle).

The gear system that moves the antenna is polar-mounted. The axis of the polar, or hour-angle gear wheel, is parallel to the polar axis of the Earth, and points precisely to the North Star. This gear sweeps the antenna in an hour-angle path from one horizon to the other. The declination gear wheel, the smaller of the two gears, is mounted on an axis parallel to the Earth's equator (perpendicular to the polar axis) which enables the antenna dish to pivot up and down. These wheels can be moved either separately or together. The arrangement of the gears allows the beam of the giant reflector to be pointed in almost any direction in the sky.

The motion of the antenna is controlled by the servo system, which consists of hydraulic pumps and motors, gear reducers, and pinions that engage the antenna gear system. A separate servo system drives the polar wheel and the declination wheel. Electric-motor-driven pumps in the hydromechanical building send high-pressure hydraulic fluid through stainless steel pipes up to the driving motors on the antenna that actuate the gears. The electronic control and readout equipment for the servo system is in a separate control room. Like the driver

FACING, TOP: Close-up view of the polar-mount gear system of the 85-foot antenna shows the large polar wheel and smaller declination wheel which are rotated to steer the antenna in the direction of the spacecraft as it moves across the sky.

FACING, BOTTOM: The polar-mount antenna is so-named because the axis of the main gear wheel, or polar wheel, is mounted parallel to the Earth's polar axis. Axis of the declination wheel is parallel to the Earth's equator.

of an automobile, the operators of the servo system control and operate the equivalent elements—steering wheel, brakes, clutches, etc.—and in the same sense “drive” the antenna. They are responsible for the safety and efficiency of its operation, and the safety of personnel who might be working on the antenna.

### ***Pointing the Antenna***

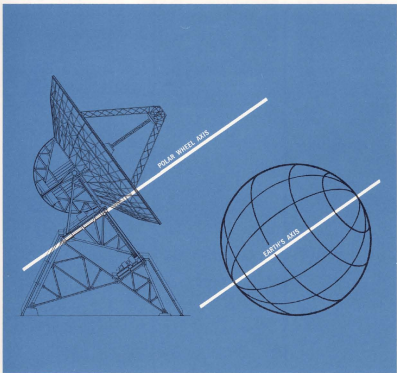
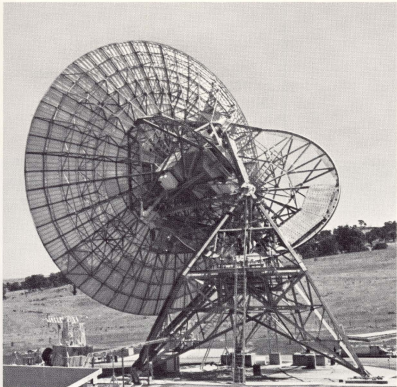
The antenna, like an ear trumpet, receives most strongly the signals coming from a point directly in front of it. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the antenna pointed in the direction of the space vehicle to receive its signals. To accomplish this, the servo system of the Tidbinbilla tracking station normally operates in what is called a slave mode: angle information for pointing the antenna at specific times is supplied to the station by computer printout from the JPL Space Flight Operations Facility (SFOF) control center in Pasadena, and the computer and the antenna servo system operate together in an automatic loop to keep the antenna trained on the spacecraft as it moves across the sky.

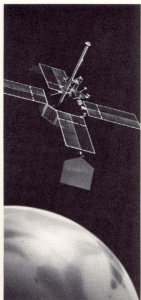
Pointing-angle information based on computer-calculated predicted trajectory data may be supplied to the station in advance of the actual launch of the spacecraft, and is then verified by actual trajectory data from early passes over the DSIF sites, particularly first-acquisition data from Johannesburg or Ascension Island. Computer angle information may also be verified at Tidbinbilla by nulling error signals from the receiver angle-tracking channels. (Error signals are voltages that

tell the angle between the spacecraft and the exact center of the beam of the antenna.) With accurate information on the time and position at which the spacecraft will appear in the antenna field of view, no time is lost in locating the spacecraft. The station is also equipped with a broad-beam acquisition antenna and receiver which may be used in the early phases of a spacecraft flight to direct the narrow-beam antenna onto the spacecraft.

### ***Aligning the Antenna***

The gears and all parts of the antenna structure are so precisely balanced and aligned that, heavy as it is, the antenna can be rotated at rates up to 1 degree per second. The Tidbinbilla station has a collimation tower—located about two miles from the antenna—which is used in testing and adjusting antenna alignment and operation. A test antenna, a transmitter-receiver unit, and optical targets are mounted on the collimation tower. The tower simulates spacecraft signals for testing antenna and station operation. Visual checking of antenna boresighting (adjusting the line of sight, similar to aligning gun sights) is done in conjunction with an optical tracking package, mounted on the 85-foot antenna, which consists of a television camera, a 35-mm film boresight camera, and an optical telescope. This equipment may also be used for optical tracking of luminous celestial objects such as the Moon, planets, and stars. Radio stars of known position are also tracked by the antenna to verify pointing accuracy and other performance factors.





*Engineering measurements or scientific data generated by instruments aboard the spacecraft are radioed to Earth by the spacecraft transmitter.*



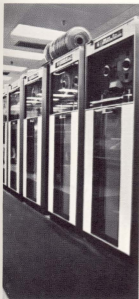
*The radio signal, greatly reduced in strength because of the distance it travels, is captured by the Earth antenna.*



*Signal is amplified and processed through the receiving system, and information from the signal is translated and recorded on magnetic and punched paper tape.*



*Data gathered at Tidbinbilla are transmitted to the SFOF at JPL by teletype and high-speed digital data circuits.*



At the SFOF control center, information is processed by computers into usable form for analysis by scientists and engineers.



Processed data present video, tracking, engineering, and scientific telemetry in the form of time-labelled numerical printouts or graphs. All processed data are stored on magnetic tape.

## ***Tracing a Signal Received From the Spacecraft***

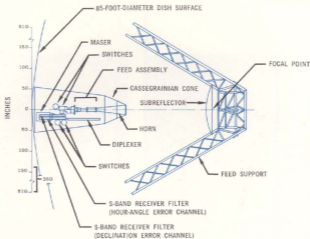
The reflecting surface, or dish, of the 85-foot antenna collects the radio energy which is fed into the sensitive DSIF receivers. The antenna, with an area of almost 6000 square feet, can detect signals so faint that the radio-frequency energy is calculated to be about equivalent to that radiated by a 1-watt light bulb at a distance of approximately 75 to 80 million miles.

In general, shorter radio-frequency connections between the antenna signal feed system and the receiver mean greater antenna efficiency. DSIF antennas for S-band operation have a Cassegrainian cone feed system mounted at the center, or focal point, of the reflector, which allows very short connections. This system is similar in design to that of a Cassegrainian telescope used in optical astronomy. Radio waves collected by the main dish bounce up and hit a subreflector mounted on a truss-type support that extends about 36 feet from the center of the dish. The subreflector focuses the waves into a feed horn in the Cassegrainian cone. The signal is then fed directly from the feed horn to the low-noise maser amplifier, so that maximum amplification of the weak signal occurs before it is contaminated by the electronic noise of the rest of the receiver system.

The S-band phase-lock receiver has four separate receiving channels: two reference channels (called sum channels) for doppler information, spacecraft telemetry, and TV signals; and two channels that carry angle-tracking signals for antenna pointing. The information in each of the sum channels is dispersed by distribution amplifiers in the receiver system to proper destinations in the telemetry instrumentation and data-handling systems in the control room.

FACING, TOP: The Cassegrainian feed cone mounted in the center of the antenna reflector is the focal point of the received signal. Radio waves bounce from the main dish to a subreflector (see sketch below) which focuses the waves into a feed horn in the cone.

FACING, BOTTOM: 10-kilowatt transmitter gives the antenna an effective radiating power of 2.5 billion watts for sending signals into deep space.



GEOMETRY OF THE CASSEGRAINIAN FEED SYSTEM.

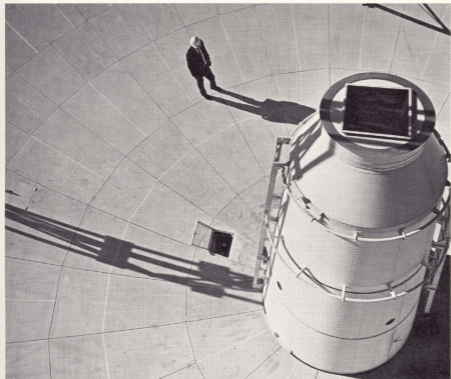
## ***Sending a Command to the Spacecraft***

The accuracy of the trajectory of a deep space probe is controlled by transmitting command signals that initiate roll, pitch, and yaw maneuvers, as well as propulsion, ignition, and timing sequences, which are determined by computations made from tracking data. Signals are also sent to the spacecraft to change data rates, change the type of telemetry information being transmitted, turn the transmitter on or off or change its power, reorient the spacecraft or its antennas, or even to switch antennas, receivers, and transmitters.

Sending a command to the spacecraft is somewhat the reverse process of receiving a signal. The transmitting station is equipped with a 10-kilowatt transmitter. The exciter and controls of the transmitter are in the control room; the radio-frequency power amplifier and associated equipment are mounted up on the antenna. The power level of the signal put out by the exciter is very low—on the order of a few watts. This is amplified in the power amplifier so that the signal radiated from the antenna is very strong—at least 10,000 watts. The transmitter is normally used with a diplexer, which is a device designed to allow simultaneous operation of both a transmitter and a receiver at different frequencies on a single antenna.

The commands to be sent to the spacecraft originate in the JPL SFOF control center in Pasadena. The command information is sent over the teletype link from Pasadena to the station at Tidbinbilla.

Because an incorrect command could result in possible damage to the spacecraft, extreme precautions are taken to ensure accuracy. Command information from the SFOF is usually sent three separate times over the teletype links to the command station, and is also verified by voice over the telephone. Ground command and control equipment at the station includes read-write-verify equipment that carefully checks a command before it is sent and as it is being sent to the spacecraft. This special equipment reads and verifies the teletype message, transforms the command into a signal for radio transmission, and monitors the transmitted radio-frequency signal bit-by-bit. If any bit proves incorrect, transmission is automatically stopped to make correction. Very often, especially if the command is to be stored in the spacecraft memory equipment for later execution, the command as received by the spacecraft is telemetered back to the ground and checked again with the transmitted command. A special-purpose computer is used just to execute these check routines.



## ***Translating the Information From the Spacecraft***

Signals processed by the receiver are sent to ground instrumentation and data-handling equipment in the control room. This includes paper-tape and magnetic-tape recorders, and ultraviolet oscillographs.

Tracking-data-handling equipment records angle measurements of antenna position, doppler frequency measurements, range measurements, and time. These data are recorded on paper tape for immediate teletype transmission to the SFOF in Pasadena for use in spacecraft orbit determination, calculation of maneuver parameters, command decisions, and prediction of arrival time at the target.

Telemetry signals from the spacecraft that come in on the receiver sum channel are either time- or frequency-multiplexed or both; that is, the signals from the various measuring instruments on the spacecraft are carried on one composite radio-frequency signal, either sequentially (time-multiplexed) or simultaneously on several subcarrier frequencies (frequency-multiplexed). This composite signal is "unscrambled" by decommutators and/or discriminators in the ground telemetry system so that each signal is identified by a channel number. Analog or digital (or both) methods of signal modulation are used for transmission of data from the spacecraft to Earth.

Analog modulation transmits engineering measurements in continuously varying electrical signals that represent measurements of voltages, temperatures, pressures, radiation intensity, etc. With coded digital modu-

lation techniques, it is possible to increase the efficiency of data transmission from the spacecraft. Digital transmission also simplifies data handling at the ground station because digital signals can be formatted for direct inputs to computers and for teletype transmission.

The detected unscrambled signals are recorded on magnetic tape so that complete permanent recordings of all telemetry data from the spacecraft will be available for later data processing either at the SFOF or by the NASA Center responsible for the project. Certain selected spacecraft telemetry signals are displayed at the station as they are received for the use of operating personnel in maintaining contact with the spacecraft. Digital data are exhibited on special displays; analog data are recorded on oscillograph recorders, which produce a visible pattern of electrical signals.

Because the quantities of data produced during a mission are enormous and constantly growing as space projects become more sophisticated, increasing use is being made of on-site data processing in the DSIF to relieve the burden both on communication lines to the Pasadena SFOF control center and on the SFOF data-processing system. In the on-site data-processing system at Tidbinbilla, which is controlled by general-purpose digital computers, some of the unscrambled spacecraft data are converted and reduced to digital format for transmission by high-speed data lines direct to the computers at the SFOF.



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