

Britain's second atomic pile, the new large Harwell Pile, began operating at low power on Saturday, July 3 1948.

With a rated output of 6000 kw, the Harwell Pile has been designed primarily as an experimental tool, to provide as many facilities as possible without unduly complicating the engineering of the structure. When operating at rated output the Pile should be able to produce, by transmutation of inactive elements, all the artificial radioactive isotopes required in this country by medical and other research workers.

Like Gleep, the Harwell Pile is a graphite moderated air cooled pile, consisting of several hundred tons of graphite blocks in which a large number of cylindrical rods of uranium are arranged in a regular lattice.

14. First British Plutonium Produced (Ministry of Supply Press Notice, March 6, 1949)

For the first time Britain has produced plutonium-- the fissile element which can be used for the creating of atomic power.

This is one of the most important steps forward in the country's atomic energy programme. The plutonium was made at the Ministry of Supply Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell.

The plutonium produced at Harwell was extracted from a uranium slug which had been irradiated for several months in Gleep, the low power atomic pile.

Because of the Low Power at which Gleep Operates, the Amount of Plutonium is Small, But it is Sufficient for Investigating the Chemical and Chemical Engineering Problems Which Will Be Met in the Large Scale Handling of Plutonium.

Plutonium, which can only be produced in quantity in an atomic pile, does not exist naturally on the earth. It was first produced in quantity in 1942 in America and being fissile can be made to break up and give out great energy.

When the slug was unloaded from Gleep it was stored for some time to ensure that the intense radioactivity decayed so that the experimental work could safely begin.

15. Ministry of Supply Offers to Buy Atomic Energy Raw Materials Produced in Colonies (Ministry of Supply Press Notice, March 21, 1949)

An effort to stimulate interest among Colonial mining houses and prospectors, in locating substantial deposits of uranium and thorium, is being made by the Ministry of Supply.

An announcement is being published in all Colonial territories where there is considered to be a possibility of locating the radioactive materials.

Part of the announcement issued in the Colonies runs as follows:-