

Frank Dyson Room and Lunar Craters

I was at school in 1949 when we moved into the fine new building, currently celebrating its diamond jubilee. In my final year in the upper sixth, our form room was named after Frank Dyson. There we were taught much of our final year mathematics by two excellent teachers, Fred Garside and Walter Thornton, both of whom were Old Bradfordians.

After school and Sheffield University, I followed a scientific career, teaching and researching in Chemistry and Food Science. On retirement, I took up Astronomy as a hobby, and became a student again (part time), taking a number of university modules by distance learning. I have found out something about Frank Dyson; he was Astronomer Royal from 1910 to 1936. One of his achievements was as co-leader (with Arthur Eddington) of the expedition of 1919 to observe the total solar eclipse. This was to test Albert Einstein's prediction, that large objects like the Sun are able to bend light. These observations helped to win over support for Einstein's Theory of General Relativity, which transformed the theoretical basis of astronomy, and physics.

Dyson is known for a number of other major achievements, and has the distinction of having a moon crater named after him. Another much earlier OB, Abraham Sharp, who lived from 1653 to 1742 also had a lunar crater named after him. According to information gleaned from the internet, Sharp was born in Little Horton, and worked with the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed.

I find it fascinating to come across a connection between the school and the Moon, stretching over such a long period of time. The story does not end here. Wikipedia includes the Nobel prize winning physicist CTR (later Sir Charles) Wilson among its list of BGS Alumni. He also had a lunar crater named after him. After reading something of his background, I doubt if he was a pupil at the school. However, I do recall hearing many years ago, that he taught Physics at the school, during the Keeling period. It would be interesting if any of our school historians can throw any light on this. It raises the question as to how far back, records of pupils and teachers are maintained.

Roger Collinson
(1943 – 1951)