

# The BAA Weekend Sunday visit to Mills Observatory Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016



Mills Observatory on Balgay Hill in Dundee was financed as a public observatory by linen and twine manufactured John Mills. On his death in 1889, money to build an observatory was passed to his trustees, but a series of delays meant that it was not built until 46 years later. It was opened by the then Astronomer Royal for Scotland on the 28th October 1935. The observatory houses a number of telescopes, the most impressive being the 10 inch Cooke refractor, built in 1871 and installed in Mills in 1950.



Mills Observatory was designed by the City Architect Mr McLellan Brown in collaboration with Professor Ralph Sampson the Astronomer Royal for Scotland. Built of sandstone, it has a distinctive 7-metre dome. It is the only British observatory to have been built with the sole aim of encouraging public understanding of science.

The main telescope is a 400mm (16 inch) Dobsonian reflector. It provides spectacular views of the Moon and planets and breath taking views of deep space objects. The main telescope used to be a 250mm (10 inch) refractor built by Thomas Cooke of York in 1871. Due to its age and size this telescope will only be used on special occasions.

When the Mills Observatory opened on 28 October 1935, it originally housed a 450mm (18 inch) reflecting telescope, constructed by the Newcastle-based company of Grubb Parsons.

The Observatory now also has a 12 inch Meade Schmidt Cassegrain reflector which is fully computerised and can find 30,000 objects in the sky and a solar telescope which allows viewers to observe the sun safely during the summer months. There is also a variety of smaller telescopes and binoculars that visitors can use from the Mills Observatory's viewing balcony or the car park.



The Observatory is used for public visits and observations from October until the end of March on a daily basis and during the summer months special events are arranged for children and adults.



Members of Dundee Astronomical Society attend many of these events during winter and summer months and use the telescopes housed in the observatory, supplemented by their own equipment on the balcony.