

## THE SIXTH EARL OF ROSSE: 1907-1979

The sixth Earl of Rosse, who died on July 1 at the age of 72, was the great-grandson of the third Earl, who set up the 72-inch (1.8 m) "Leviathan of Parsonstown" in 1845 and used it to discover the spiral structure of the galaxies. The fourth Earl was also an astronomer, who was the first to make an accurate measurement of the heat of the Moon. Upon his death, the great reflector was dismantled.

The sixth Earl succeeded to the title in 1918. He was not himself an astronomer, though he had an excellent knowledge of the subject; he was however a scientist inasmuch as he was an acknowledged expert in connection with trees and shrubs, and he turned the gardens of Birr Castle into some of the greatest in Britain. He was also a leader of the National Trust, and supported many learned and charitable bodies. His interest in the history of science led him to do everything in his power to preserve the Birr astronomical records, and to make sure that the remains of the great telescope were kept in order; a museum has been erected on the site, and the tube itself has been renovated. But for his enthusiasm, the unique story of Birr astronomy might have been lost. In all his work he was actively supported by his wife (the Countess of Rosse, whom he married in 1935; she was formerly Mrs Anne Armstrong-Jones, and is mother of Lord Snowdon) and his son William, who succeeds to the title.

Lord Rosse was a man of utter integrity, great ability and exceptional charm. He will be sadly missed not only by his personal friends, but also by the scientific community all over the world.