

Gordon Esmond Patston (1902–1989)

Gordon Patston joined the Association in May 1931 and soon became an enthusiastic and reliable observer for the Variable Star Section. He set up an observatory with a sliding roof in the garden of his home in Streatham (*Journal*, 50, 216 (1940)). This observatory housed a 12-inch reflector on an English equatorial mounting whilst, for use on parts of the sky inaccessible to this instrument, he used a portable 3-inch refractor. With these telescopes he observed 40 long period and eruptive variables and also contributed to establishing suitable sequences of fainter comparison stars for many of these variables. His favourite star was the long period variable U Boo. From 1944 to 1948 Patston was Curator of Lantern Slides, a post which has now been combined with that of Librarian.

When he retired he moved to East

bourne. The garden of his house not being a suitable site for his observatory, this was erected in the grounds of the nearby hospital. After his observatory and telescope were badly vandalised he never rebuilt them nor resumed observing. Such behaviour saddened him greatly.

In 1966 Patston became Secretary of the Variable Star Section and proved himself to be hardworking. He was prompt to answer letters, careful in supervising the checking of deduced magnitudes of the variables and did much of the work himself. Each year he produced the tabular summary of the Section's observations. In 1973 he found it necessary to give up this post because of poor health.

Patston never married and, while at Eastbourne, cared faithfully for his aged mother. In his latter years he became

increasingly deaf but never allowed this handicap to make him irritable or abandoned his courteous approach to all. He was ever ready to help and advise those who approached him but never sought to impose his views.

A well-read man, Patston had a considerable library and his letters frequently contained apt quotations from varied sources. With very little garden at Eastbourne he nevertheless took great pride in producing excellent grapes from his vine, which occupied the whole of his conservatory.

In 1985 Patston resigned from the Association. He died on December 13 1989 aged 87 years and his ashes were scattered over Beachy Head. He will be remembered with affection by his many friends.

Colin Munford