

John Hedley Robinson (1905-1991)

By the death of J. Hedley Robinson, on 16 October 1991, the Association has lost one of its best-loved members. Though he had not been able to attend many meetings in recent years, his name was known to all observers, and all older members will remember him personally.

Hedley Robinson (to the best of my knowledge, he never used his first name) was born in Bristol, and educated privately at Redland Hill House School. On leaving school he joined the Midland Bank, and spent his entire career with them, finally retiring in 1965-by which time he had become Second Officer at the Bank's branch at Dawlish. He had moved house to Teignmouth, where he set up a private observatory equipped with an excellent 10-inch reflector, and soon became known not only as a skilled observer but also as a first-class popularizer of astronomy.

His initial interest was in variable stars, and he made many thousands of estimates for the Variable Star Section, but later it is fair to say that he concentrated more on the Moon and planets. As an energetic member of the Lunar Section he was concerned particularly with TLP (Transient Lunar Phenomena) and was unquestionably one of the Section's most reliable workers; he also pioneered the use of niters in lunar and planetary observations. In 1965 he was appointed Director of the Mercury and Venus Section of the BAA, and continued in this post until retiring in 1980; it was appropriate that at this time he was awarded the Walter Goodacre Medal. He was an



J. Hedley Robinson (1905-1991). (Photo: Avery's, Brighton).

ideal Director, who 'led from the front' and was a constant source of help and encouragement to others. It is sad that he did not live to see the restoration of the Mercury and Venus Section as a separate entity!

He was an extra-mural lecturer in astronomy for Bristol University before moving to Teignmouth, after which he became a lecturer to the WEA and gave courses at various places in Devon. He was a founder member of the highly successful Torbay Astronomical Society; he served a term as Chairman, after

which he was elected a Life Member in 1973 and became Patron in 1989. He was also the founder-President of the Devonshire Astronomical Association.

Over the years he published many scientific papers as well as popular articles, and was the author of three books: *Astronomy Data Book* (1972), *Using the Telescope* (1978) and *God and the Universe* (1988). The last of these underlines the great part that religion played in his life. He became an accredited Methodist lay preacher in 1937, and conducted services in many local circuits for almost fifty years.

In 1932 he married. It was a very happy union, but, sadly, marred by the fact that his wife Mildred suffered ill-health for many years. Hedley gave up most of his outside activities to take care of her, which was absolutely typical of him - though until recently he was still able to spend a little time in his observatory, and also some hours with his model railway, built in the attic mainly by himself. He died after a brief final illness, aged 86.

Hedley was one of the few people about whom it would be impossible to say anything evil; he was absolutely incapable of any malicious or dishonorable act. He had many friends, and no enemies. He will be badly missed, and our sympathy goes out to his wife and family. (His son, Donald, is himself an active amateur astronomer). I am proud to have counted him as a friend for over half a century.

Patrick Moore