

SIDNEY BERTRAM GAYTHORPE

S. B. Gaythorpe, who died at his home on 1964 November 25 at the age of eighty-four, had been a member of the Association since 1902.

Born in Barrow-in-Furness in 1880 February 5, Sidney Gaythorpe was educated at the Higher Grade School (now Barrow Grammar School). Here he began to take an interest in classics, stimulated perhaps by his father, who was himself interested in antiquities and was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Among Gaythorpe's contemporaries at the school was R. O. Gross—the New Zealand sculptor—and Norman Birkett, the Lord Chief Justice. But classics were not Gaythorpe's only concern, although they resulted in papers by him to well-known antiquarian and historical societies; he also became interested in mathematics and this, not unnaturally, led him to take up astronomy.

Gaythorpe's contributions to astronomy were historical and his published papers in the Association's *Journal* and the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* range from a method of working out the focal length and magnification of early telescopes from the descriptions of celestial objects by the observers that used them, to subjects like the astronomy in Virgil's poetry. All of these papers were interesting and many of considerable value, but without doubt Gaythorpe's main work was connected with Jeremiah Horrox, the brilliant young astronomer who lived from 1619–1641, and of whom Newton thought so highly. Indeed, he intended to write a book about Horrox and his work, but unfortunately his house was blitzed in 1941 and parts of his considerable library destroyed, and he found it necessary to move to a smaller home. This dislocation delayed his work and later, ill-health forced him to abandon the project and to satisfy himself by publishing a series of articles, although unhappily these were never completed.

Gaythorpe was a man of considerable knowledge and if it had not been necessary for him to go into the family business when he left school, there is little doubt but that he would have gone up to the university and might indeed have pursued an academic life. Yet be this as it may, his work was throughout characterized by a meticulous attention to detail and a lack of bias that made his papers so valuable. He served as a stretcher-bearer in the First World War, but otherwise spent his life at Barrow-in-Furness. A competent photographer, with a great interest in English literature and in music, his main efforts were nevertheless astronomical, and he kept up a correspondence with many astronomers both amateur and professional, including past Astronomers Royal. With his passing the Association has lost an amiable personality and a great scholar.

In preparing this brief note, I must express my thanks to Mr F. Barnes, the Librarian and Curator of the Public Library at Barrow-in-Furness, for supplying me with much personal material.

Colin A. Ronan
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