

WALTER BRISCOMBE was born at White Lea, in the parish of Batley, Yorkshire, on 1836 March 30. After a few years in business, at the age of twenty-four he entered the Wesleyan Ministry, his first appointment being to the Ebenezer Chapel, Sheffield. In 1863 he was transferred to Grimsby, and subsequently was appointed to numerous circuits in various parts of England, in all of which his work was highly esteemed. After thirty-eight years of active circuit life Mr. Briscoombe retired to Grimsby, but he still continued to preach and to carry on religious work. He took part in a missionary service the day before his death. He was keenly interested in astronomy, and obtained a practical acquaintance with the subject by the use of a 19-inch reflector and a 6-inch refractor which were placed at his disposal by a friend. He quietly disseminated a knowledge of astronomy in the various districts in which he was stationed.

Mr. Briscoombe was twice married, and leaves a widow, a daughter, and a son. He died at Grimsby on 1916 September 29.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society on 1906 April 11.

JOHN FRANCIS COLE was born at Wandsworth on 1824 July 5. At the age of fourteen, his mother being a Swiss, he was sent to Switzerland to continue his education.

Mr. Cole was with Messrs. Baring Bros., Bankers, as confidential clerk, for fifty years. When he retired, at the age of seventy-nine, his faithful services were recognised in a very practical form by the continuance of his salary in full. He was an accomplished linguist, and spoke French, German, and Norwegian fluently. For four years in succession, after his retirement, he visited his old college at Lausanne, and delivered an oration in French to the students who had taken their degrees. He had a genuine interest in astronomy, dating from the time when, as a young man, he made some astronomical observations in Norway. Only a few years ago, notwithstanding his great age, he gave a lecture on Kepler's Laws to the Literary Society at Sutton, Surrey, where he resided during half a century.

Mr. Cole died from acute pneumonia, after one day's illness, on 1916 January 16, being then in his ninety-second year. He was twice married, but had no children. His widow survives him.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society on 1859 February 11, and it may be of interest to note that there now remain only two Fellows of the Society who were elected prior to 1860.

GEORGE STICKLAND CRISWICK.—During the past year the Society has lost two of its older Fellows who were intimate friends and colleagues for many years on the staff of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. The younger of these, Mr. G. S. Criswick, died in the first month of the year, and forms the subject of this note. A similar note relating to the elder, Mr. William Ellis, is to be found next in this series.

George Stickland Criswick was a descendant of a Dorset family

who formerly owned Langford Court in the Parish of Burrington. His mother belonged to the Stickland family of Somerset. He was born on 1836 January 31, and was educated at King's School, Sherborne, with which ancient foundation he remained in touch until the end of his life. His father died when he was fifteen years old, and a financial disaster to his family prevented him going to a university as was intended, but his mother was able to procure for her elder son George a nomination as computer in the Royal Observatory, and she herself removed to Greenwich with her family.

George Criswick joined the staff at Greenwich on 1852 August 25, and early in 1854, on Airy's recommendation, he was transferred to the Cambridge University Observatory, taking up the position of Junior Assistant to Challis on May 1 of that year. In the following October the well-known pendulum experiment at Harton Colliery took place, and for this Airy borrowed observers from various British observatories, Criswick being lent from Cambridge. His subsequent stay at the University Observatory was short, for in 1855 February the departure of Charles Todd for Adelaide caused a vacancy, and Criswick was offered, and accepted, the position of Junior Assistant at Greenwich. He entered on his new duties on 1855 March 26, and almost at once took his place among the four regular observers—it was the custom at Greenwich, as it is now, that four of the established staff should take turns at observing with the Transit-Circle and other principal instruments day by day—and he continued to so observe until the end of the year 1881, this twenty-six years of continuous work with the Transit-Circle being the longest period yet accomplished by any observer with that instrument. In 1862 he was chosen to accompany Mr. Dunkin to Valentia Island in the south-west of Ireland to make observations for the telegraphic determination of the longitude of Knightstown.

As to his work in the Observatory, besides observing, for some years he was associated with Mr. Ellis in the conduct of the transit reductions, and in the Time-Signal and chronometer work of the Observatory. Later on, at successive re-organisations, he was entrusted first with the reduction of the zenith distances, then with the care of the library and manuscripts, and when, in 1874, Mr. Ellis was transferred to the Magnetic and Meteorological Department, Criswick was made Superintendent of the Time Department, and so remained until the end of 1881, when he left off observing and became Superintendent of Computers, taking general charge of the preparation of the Greenwich volume. In 1890 the Astrographic Equatorial was installed at Greenwich, and this was put into his charge, the photographic and mechanical manipulation being both very much to his taste. He remained Superintendent of the Astrographic Department until his sixtieth birthday in 1896, when he retired from the Observatory service at his own desire.

The above is a categorical recital of Mr. Criswick's work, and it certainly may be said that he did all conscientiously and to the best

of his ability. He was supple of hand and quick in perception, and took care to perfect himself in qualities and dexterities which go to make the skilled and useful observer, circumstances which may not have been sufficiently appreciated.

Apart from his official work, Mr. Criswick had several other interests. He supplied the astronomical information to *Whitaker's Almanack* from its first volume in 1869 until that for 1916. He was a great Freemason, and took a very active interest in the affairs of that brotherhood. He was of sociable and amiable disposition, and popular among a circle of many friends. He married in 1877 Miss Elise Tudor Hassall of Mount Sorrell, Leicestershire, who survives him. They had no children.* Mr. Criswick died on 1916 January 26 within a few days of his eightieth birthday.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society on 1868 February 14.

H. P. H.

WILLIAM ELLIS, who died on 1916 December 11, was the son of Thomas Ellis, an assistant to John Pond, Astronomer Royal in the early part of last century. Thomas Ellis was a native of York engaged in a commercial occupation, but evidently had a liking for and some knowledge of astronomy, for in 1825, at the instigation of William Richardson, who was also a north-country man, and already a member of the staff of the Royal Observatory, he came to Greenwich to take up a similar position. On 1828 February 20 his elder son William was born, and at the age of thirteen, after education at local schools, William Ellis was attached to the temporary computing staff then employed on the reduction of the observations of the Moon made at Greenwich between 1750 and 1830 which Airy had organised after the completion of the similar reduction of the ancient planetary observations. When these special computations came to an end in 1848, Ellis, with some of the others, one of whom was Charles Todd, was transferred to the Astronomical Department of the Observatory. In 1852 Richard Carrington, who had been until then the observer at the Durham University Observatory under the Rev. T. Chevallier, resigned that office, and on the recommendation of Airy the position was offered to William Ellis, who went to Durham in 1852 March.

The observer at Durham at that time seems to have been free to choose his own line of work to a great extent, and Ellis continued the series of observations of position of small planets begun by Carrington, and of comets. His observations of Westphal's Comet at its first apparition in 1852 will be found in vol. xxxvii. of the *Astronomische Nachrichten*, where also some of his planetary observations are published. Whilst Ellis was at Durham his father died (1852 May 29), the vacancy at Greenwich being filled by the promotion of J. C. Henderson, who did not hold his office for long, but resigned in 1854 April. Charles Todd, who had been

* Henry Criswick, who is mentioned in the Introduction to Carrington's Sun-Spot volume as having helped in that work, was the younger brother of G. S. Criswick, and was for a time a computer at Greenwich.