

## OBITUARY

## Arthur Philip Norton, 1876-1955

On 13th October 1955 there passed away, at the age of 79, one whom probably few of our members knew other than by name: Arthur Philip Norton, compiler of the *Star Atlas and Reference Handbook* that bears his name.

Son of the Rev. Philip Norton, he was born at Cardiff, and educated at the Cathedral School, Worcester, and later, Barbourne College in the same city. From school he went to Dublin University, where he took his B.A. degree, thereafter making teaching his career, holding successive posts in Caldley Grange Grammar School, Lancs, Southport, and Worcester, before going to the Judd School, Tonbridge, where he was Geography master for twenty-two years, retiring in 1936.

Norton lived a full and active life, being no mean sportsman in his younger days and winning several athletic trophies. Tennis, walking, and cycling were his chief interests, and latterly he took up bowling.

His interest in astronomy began when a small boy, an ancient, but nevertheless efficient, telescope belonging to his great-grandfather laying the foundation of his future love, to which he brought a practical, mechanical mind to bear, enhanced with artistic ability, which were to be shown in the star charts which were the foundation of his *Atlas*, and telescope and equatorial head, which he himself designed and made, as well as a grandfather clock, which, to his pride, kept perfect time with only a few seconds' error over a long period.

Norton's *magnum opus*, however, was his *Star Atlas and Reference Handbook*, the Atlas containing some 7000 stars and nebulae accurately plotted first for Epoch 1920, and forty years later, when he was nearly seventy years of age, completely replotted for Epoch 1950—a testimony to the energy of the man. Not content with this, he subsequently offered to draw the basic charts for Gall & Inglis' *Popular Star Atlas*, which that firm were planning to supersede a very old and imperfect atlas.

*Norton's Star Atlas* soon became a standard reference work in observatories and colleges all over the world, and a review in the 1930s described it as 'almost a classic'.

Latterly, Norton's eyes gave way under the strain of life-long close and meticulous work, and it was a sad day for him when he could no longer use his beloved telescope, and disposed of it to a friend.

A bachelor, but lovingly cared for by his devoted housekeeper, Norton spent his last years as actively as failing health, sight, and a series of painful illnesses, quietly and patiently borne, permitted, but he maintained an intelligent interest in life to the last. A remark he made to the writer only a month before his death is characteristic of the faith by which Arthur Norton lived and died: 'I have so much for which to thank God.'

Our sympathy is extended to his sisters and kin, who mourn his loss.

ROBT. GALL INGLIS