

**OBITUARY**

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**WILLIAM MAXIMILIAN LINDLEY, 1891–1972**

On Saturday 1972 September 2 the Association lost through the passing of William Maximilian Lindley, M.C., M.A., A.M.I.C.E., one of its few old outstanding members and a former Director of the Variable Star Section.

Born at Frankfurt-am-Main on Monday 1891 July 27 he came of a line of engineers, both his father, the late Sir William Lindley, and his grandfather, following that profession with considerable distinction both at home and abroad. Thus it became a foregone conclusion that Max Lindley should follow in what had become almost traditionally the family profession. His great-grandfather, Joseph Lindley, however, was an Assistant at Greenwich Observatory, so the love of astronomy reappeared after two generations. But though engineering was his profession his chief interest and love throughout life, apart from astronomy, was in the arts, and music in particular, and he was an accomplished violinist.

Until he was fifteen years old he lived at Frankfurt but then came to England and finished his education first at Sherborne School in Dorset and then, from 1910 to 1913, at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read the Engineering Tripos and graduated B.A. The next year, with the lamps “going out all over Europe”, he volunteered immediately in August for service with the Royal Engineers, and after brief training at Biggleswade, he took a section of Royal Engineers (later the Royal Corps of Signals) to the Western Front in November 1914. There he served throughout all the years of war, on the canal bank at Ypres and on the Somme, and elsewhere, too. But on Wednesday, October 28, just before being posted abroad, he realized his ambition and married Miss Florence Spencer whom he had known since school teenage days. In 1917 he was awarded the Military Cross and in the following year he was mentioned in one of Sir Douglas Haig’s despatches. There is an interesting sidelight here, for during this war, he met and came to know two members of Scott’s last Antarctic Expedition: Wright (later Sir Charles Wright) who discovered the tent during the search, and R. E. Priestly who faced the tribulations of the Northern Party. “C. S. Wright I knew quite well. He often came to see me when I was a Brigade Signals Officer—I still have a memento of him in the form of a scrap of paper which he left behind one day—Christmas Day—when he came to my dugout on the Ypres canal. That was 1915, Ypres”, he wrote in one of several letters the writer cherishes. Priestly was his Colonel when he was demobilized in 1919 with the rank of Captain. Incidentally he also met Professor Frank Debenham, O.B.E., “in Stratton’s rooms at Cambridge”.

The war over, he took a job with the British Thomson Houston Co. in their electrical department at Rugby, which he was obliged to relinquish in 1923 for

health reasons that made it necessary for him to live in Switzerland for some time. When he returned to England in 1924 he moved to Trevone, Cornwall, the place which was to be his home for life, where his principal instrument was a fine 140 mm Cooke equatorial.

Meanwhile, while still at Rugby, he had joined the Association on 1920 January 28, and the Royal Astronomical Society two years later, and had already contributed observations to the Section of which he was later to become the fourth Director, his first being of T Cas on 1921 January 10, the year of the Section's coming of age. For although it was originated soon after the Association was founded, it was not until the turn of the century that it was consolidated into an organized body by Colonel Marwick, who thus founded the oldest organization for co-operative variable star observing, the B.A.A. Variable Star Section. A year after Lindley's first observation, the Section came under the direction of Dr de Roy, and the next seventeen years were perhaps the most productive. In November 1934, following the sudden death of A. N. Brown, the Section Secretary, Lindley was naturally chosen to succeed him, for he not only had the necessary experience and time but had given yeoman service ever since he joined. Perhaps a personal recollection may be allowed here, for this was the year of the writer's first steps in observing, and the newly appointed Section Secretary, then always approachable, patient and sympathetic, somehow found time for reams of encouragement and guidance, never forgotten, and the following year when the Chart Committee was formed the brunt of the work fell on Lindley as the Director was abroad. It is good to recall those days, to summon up remembrance of things past: of last-minute telegrams, "Lunch today"; of the "Catsmeat Club", the uneuphonious name for supper, where tables would later be littered with papers and charts, and where five whole minutes in private conclave with the harassed Secretary was a wonderful concession!; of reply postcards (penny postage then!) scribbled on the way home of something forgotten or of further advice needed. He was a truly wonderful correspondent then.

In 1939 de Roy was obliged to resign through ill-health and Lindley was the natural choice for his successor. The time was particularly inopportune as the Second World War had just started, many Section documents were abroad, and Max Lindley, himself on the Reserve of Officers, was whisked away in November, a few days after his Silver Wedding Anniversary. Stationed at Catterick, he was training recruits, but later, and after a long spell in hospital at Catterick, he was invalided out of the army with the rank of Major and returned to his loved Trevone and later to V.S.S. work rather disenchanted. "These are not days for people a large proportion of whose lives was spent pre-1914", he wrote.

His last major work was the preparation for the 1930–34 V.S.S. *Memoir* eventually completed in 1957. The following year he resigned the Directorship, invited his successor for a week's initiation at Trevone, and generously presented his entire library including B.D. Catalogue and charts, atlases and Harvard volumes to the Association.

He was later invited to accept the Presidency, but by now he found the distance too great for frequent attendance, and felt he might not do justice to the honour. Wednesday 1964 October 28 saw his Golden Wedding Anniversary; indeed, the Diamond Anniversary was missed by only two years.

Older members kept in touch at Christmas and for birthdays, and it is good to record that his eighty-first and last birthday brought a Greetings Telegram from the present V.S.S. Director whom he had never met, and which moved him greatly. There were but five weeks left from months of illness before he stole away peacefully, "awakened from the dream of life".

To the vast majority of members today he can be only a name; but for those lucky enough to work along with him in happy days thirty-five and more years ago something is gone irretrievably, and these will extend their deep sympathy to Mrs Lindley.

G.E.P.