

Heath, Thomas Little | Encyclopedia.com

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(*b.* Barnetby le Wold, Lincoln, England, 5 October 1861; *d.* Ashtead, Surrey, England, 16 March 1940)

mathematics, antiquity.

After attending the grammar school at Caistor, he went to Clifton and thence, with a foundation scholarship, to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became a fellow in 1885 and an honorary fellow in 1920. On leaving Trinity, he entered the [civil service](#) in the department of the treasury. He retired from that service in 1926, having been awarded the C.B. (1903); K.C.B. (1909); and K.C.V.O. (1916). His academic distinctions were numerous. The University of Oxford conferred an honorary degree on him; the [Royal Society](#) elected him a fellow (1912); and he served on the council of the society. He was a fellow of the British Academy and president of the Mathematical Association from 1922 to 1923.

Heath's main interest lay in the study of Greek mathematics, for which his training in classics and mathematics at Cambridge admirably fitted him; he soon became one of the leading authorities on mathematics in antiquity. The wide range of his interest is reflected in the titles of the works he published. His *History of Greek Mathematics* is usually regarded as his most famous contribution. In *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements* he made available those books of the *Elements* that had hitherto been considered unintelligible; in particular his treatment of book X is a masterpiece.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Original Works. Heath's works, including his translations, are [Diophantus of Alexandria: A Study in the History of Greek Algebra](#) (Cambridge, 1885; rev. ed., 1910); [Apollonius of Perga: A Treatise on the Conic Sections](#) (Cambridge, 1896; repr., 1961); *The Works of Archimedes* (Cambridge, 1897); *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements* (Cambridge, 1908; 2nd ed., 1925); [Aristarchus of Samos: The Ancient Copernicus](#) (Oxford, 1913); *A History of Greek Mathematics*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1921); *A Manual of Greek Mathematics* (Oxford, 1931); *Greek Astronomy* (London–Toronto–[New York](#), 1932); and *Mathematics in Aristotle* (Oxford, 1949), on which he was working at the time of his death.

Heath also made numerous contributions to the *Mathematical Gazette* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and assisted in the preparation of the 9th ed. of the Liddell-Scott Greek lexicon.

II. Secondary Literature. On his life and work, see the obituaries in the *London Times* (18 Mar. 1940); *Proceedings of the British Academy*, **26** (1940); and *Obituary Notices of the Fellows of the [Royal Society](#)*, no. 9 (January 1941).

J. F. Scott