

# Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

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Jackson, John

Born Paisley, Scotland, 11 February 1887

Died Ewell, Surrey, England, 9 December 1958

John Jackson was His Majesty's Astronomer at the Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope.

Jackson was the fifth of eight children born to Matthew and Jeannie (*née* Millar) Jackson. He entered Glasgow University at the age of 16 and graduated with an M.A. in mathematics (1907), followed by a B.Sc. (1908) with special distinction in mathematics, natural philosophy, astronomy, and chemistry. Jackson then went to Cambridge University, where he obtained a first-class degree in the mathematical tripos. His first research concerned the motion of Jupiter's eighth satellite, which had been discovered by Phillibert Melotte at Greenwich in 1908

In 1914, Jackson was appointed chief assistant at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. He did much routine observing during World War I, especially with the Airy Transit Circle. In 1917, Jackson was commissioned in the Royal Engineers. He was sent to France as a trigonometric survey officer. After his return to Greenwich, his Assignments included the preparation for publication of Greenwich observations of double stars made between 1893 and 1919, a study of the observatory pendulum clocks, the reduction of Thomas Hornsby's observations made from 1774 to 1798, and examination of the motion of the perihelion of Mercury's orbit.

In 1933, Jackson was appointed His Majesty's Astronomer at the Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope. He supervised and participated in several large, routine programs, including determinations of the proper motions of some 41,000 southern stars in the Cape Astrographic Zones. He did much of the observing and measuring for determining the parallaxes of about 1,600 stars, selected mainly because they had appreciable proper motions. Jackson also supervised a large program of photographic astrometry. Afterward, many stellar magnitudes were determined, and this program greatly improved photometry in the Southern Hemisphere.

Jackson retired in 1950 and returned to England. His honors included the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society, whose presidency he assumed from 1953 to 1955. In 1920, Jackson married Mary Beatrice Marshall. They had one son who died in infancy

*Roy H. Garstang*

## Selected References

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