Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

Whitrow, Gerald James

Born Kimmeridge, Dorset, England, 9 June 1912

Died London, England, 2 June 2000

Gerald Whitrow published over 100 papers and many books, mostly on the subject of time

Whitrow entered Christ Church, Oxford, graduating with a double first-class degree in 1933. He remained to carry out research with Edward Milne on kinematical relativity and received his D.Phil. in 1939. Whitrow was a mathematics lecturer at Christ Church from 1936 until 1940, when he had to join the Ministry of Supply as a scientific officer conducting war research. In 1945, he went to Imperial College, University of London, where he was successively an assistant lecturer and a lecturer in mathematics. Whitrow was promoted to reader in Applied Mathematics in 1951. In 1972, he received a personal chair in the History and Applications of Mathematics

Perhaps the most important of Whitrow's books was *The Natural Philosophy of Time* (1960). He showed that time could be studied independently of its magnitude. Other books included *The Structure of the Universe* (1949) and (with H. Bondi, W. B. Bonnor, and Raymond Lyttleton) *Rival Theories of Cosmology* (1960). The latter was written at the time of the debate between the Big Bang and steady-state theories of the Universe. Whitrow's historical work included a paper on Robert Hooke.

Whitrow played an important part in many societies, libraries, and archives. He was president of both the British Society for the History of Science and the British Society for the Philosophy of Science, and was a founding member and first president of the British Society for the History of Mathematics.

Roy H. Garstang

Selected Reference

James, Frank A. J. L. (2001). "Gerald James Whitrow, 1912–2000." *Astronomy and Geophysics* 42, no. 2: 35–36.