

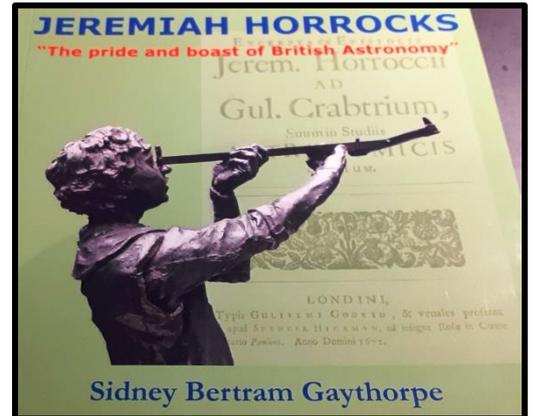


JEREMIAH HORROCKS

“The pride and boast of British Astronomy”

By Sidney Bertram Gaythorpe

First published 2020



The Liverpool astronomer, Jeremiah Horrocks (c1618-1641), was described by Sir John Herschel as “the pride and boast of British Astronomy”. Tragically, Horrocks died in his early twenties. Without a doubt, had he lived longer, he would have achieved great things. Even as a teenager he was a pioneer of new thinking in astronomy that ranked him with the leading astronomers of Europe. For almost 400 years his work has continued to elicit the admiration of succeeding generations.

On the basis of his own calculations, Horrocks predicted that on 24th November 1639 (old-style calendar) the planet Venus would pass in front of the Sun’s disc – a rare event, which had never been seen before. He and his greatest friend, William Crabtree, of Salford, gained everlasting fame by observing this ‘transit of Venus’.

In this previously unpublished work, Sidney Gaythorpe (1880 – 1964), recounts Horrocks’s life and achievements, as seen through the prism of his correspondence with Crabtree. In 2020, several surviving manuscripts of Sidney Gaythorpe about the life and work of Horrocks, which had been carefully preserved by Professor Wilbur Applebaum, were generously given to the library of the Society for the History of Astronomy (SHA) by Wilbur’s son, Alan Applebaum. The current publication is based on one of these, which was probably compiled during the first decade of the twentieth century.

We hope that readers agree that the useful analysis of Horrocks’s letters (to his friend William Crabtree) that this work contains, makes it an important addition to the published literature about the life and work of that fascinating young astronomer.

David Sellers (Editor)

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