

Edmund Halley: A Stellar Astronomer



Background Information

- Edmund Halley was born in Haggerston, England, on November 8th, 1656 and died on January 14th, 1742 of natural causes
- He is best known for his discovery of Comet Halley
- As a young man, his interests and hobbies included studying archaeology and observing the patterns of the stars
- Edmund Halley successfully graduated from Oxford University, and at the age of twenty-two years old, became a member of the Royal Society
- After his schooling was finished, he pursued his passion of studying the stars and comets; which granted him his much deserved fame

Accomplishments

- Later in his life, Halley traveled to the island of Saint Helena. There, for two years (1676-1678) he catalogued the positions of more than 350 Southern Hemisphere stars
- While visiting Saint Helena, he also observed a transit of Mercury
- From these experiences, Halley developed the theory that the transits of Mercury and the future transits of Venus would be useful in determining the distance of the Sun

Halley's Prestigious Awards

- In 1704, Edmund Halley was appointed the position of Savilian professor of geometry at Oxford University, where he received his own education many years before
- In 1720, he succeeded fellow astronomer, John Flamsteed, as astronomer royal; which greatly boosted his fame and popularity amongst other physicists and astronomers
- In addition, his book, “*Tabulae Astronomicae*”, was written in 1749 and then successfully published in 1752

Edmund Halley's First Method

- . Shortly after his book was published, Halley began working at the Greenwich Observatory
 - . There, he used the first transit instrument, and created a method for determining the longitude at sea through means of lunar observation
 - . From these experiences, Edmund Halley was able to develop yet another theory, or method, surrounding the periodicities of comets in space
- . One comet in particular that he studied intensively, is the famous Comet Halley, which was named after Edmund, following his discoveries!

The Magnificent Comet Halley!

. His theories surrounding comets began in 1705, when he predicted that a certain comet (now known as Comet Halley) would make its return in 1758- which it did

. Unfortunately, because Edmund Halley died in 1742, he was never able to witness his prediction come true! However, he was recognized and respected worldwide for his discoveries and methodical theories that have impacted the science community so greatly



Pictures of Comet Halley!



Works Cited

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