

Aubrey's Life
of
Edmund Halley (1656-174 $\frac{1}{2}$)

Mr. Edmund Halley, astronomer, born October 29, 1656, London — this nativity I had from Mr. Halley himself.

Mr. Edmund Halley¹, Artium Magister, the eldest son of ⟨Edmund⟩ Halley, a soape-boyley, a wealthy citizen of the city of London; of the Halleys, of Derbyshire, a good family.

He was born in Shoreditch parish, at a place called Haggerston, the backside of Hogsdon.

At 9 yeares old, his father's apprentice taught him to write, and arithmetique. He wen to Paule's schoole to Dr. Gale: while he was there he was very perfect in the Caelestiall Globes insomuch that I heard Mr. Moxon (the globe-maker) say that if a star were misplaced in the globe, he would presently find it.

At . . . he studied Geometry, and at 16 could make a dyall, and then, he said, thought himselfe a brave fellow.

At ⟨16⟩ went to Queen's Colledge in Oxon, well versed in Latin, Greeke, and Hebrew: where, at the age of nineteen, he solved this useful probleme in astronomie, never donne before, viz 'from 3 distances given from the sun, and angles between, to find the orbe' (mentioned in the Philosophicall Transactions, Aug. or Sept. 1676, No. 115), for which his name will be ever famous.

Anno Domini . . . tooke his degree of Bacc. Art.; Anno Domini . . . tooke his degree of Master of Arts.²

Anno . . . left Oxon, and lived at London with his father till ⟨1676⟩; at which time he gott leave, and a viaticum of his father, to goe to the Island of Sancta Hellena, purely upon the account of advancement in Astronomy, to make the glove of the Southerne Hemisphere right, which before was very erroneous, as being donne only after the observations of ignorant seamen. There he stayed . . . moneths. There went over with him (amongst others) a woman . . . yeares old, and her husband . . . old, who had no child in . . . yeares; before he came from the island, she was brought to bed of a child. At his returne, he presented his

¹Aubrey gives in colours the coat: 'sable, a fret and a canton argent'; also Halley's horoscope.

²Halley did not graduate in the ordinary course, but was made M.A. by diploma in 1678.

Planisphere, with a short description, to his majesty who was very well pleased with it; but received nothg but prayse.

I have often heard him say that if his majestie would be but only at the chardge of sending out a ship, he would take the longitude and latitude, right ascensions and declinations of . . . southern fixed starres.

Anno 1678, he added a spectacle-glasse to the shadowe-vane of the lesser arch of the sea-quadrant (or back-staffe); which is of great use, for that that spott of light will be manifest when you cannot see any shadowe.

He went to Dantzick to visit Hevelius, Anno 167-

December 1st, 1680, went to Paris.

Edmund Haley:— cardinal d'Estrée caressed him and sent him to his brother the admirall with a lettre of recommendation. — He hath contracted an acquaintance and friendship with all the eminentst mathematicians of France and Italie, and holds a correspondence with them.

He returned into England, Januarii 24 °, 168 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Quaere Mr. Partridge of his Directio mortis, scilicet about 35 aetatis.

⟨Quaere⟩ Edmund Halley who cutts his schemes in wood? they are well.

⟨David⟩ Loggan informes me that one . . . Edwards, the manciple of . . . College Oxon, doth cut in wood very well.

Note.

In the earl of Macclesfield's library at Shirburne Castle, Oxon., are several MSS. by Halley; among them a common-place book.

From '*Brief Lives, chiefly of Contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between the Years 1669 & 1696.*' Edited by Andrew Clark. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1898.