

JOHANNESBURG CENTRE.

ANNUAL REPORT, 1928-29.

The Committee record their regret at the passing away of a valued colleague, Dr. James Moir, and their great indebtedness to him as a real friend and indefatigable scientist, who was always ready to assist and enlighten from his wide and comprehensive knowledge any student who sought his counsel. The Mars Section, in particular, has lost in him an efficient and enthusiastic director.



The late James Moir, M.A., D.Sc.

Obituary.

**DR. JAMES MOIR,
1874-1929.**

In the death of Dr. James Moir, which occurred on 30th March, 1929, the Astronomical Society of South Africa has lost one of its most valuable members. Dr. Moir was associated with the Society from its foundation and was a very thorough and energetic Director of the Mars Observing Section, as will be seen from the reports which he contributed frequently to the Journal. He was also an enthusiastic observer of occultations of stars by the Moon and his observations were made with such painstaking care that they have been found, on investigation, to be of equal value with those made at fixed observatories.

James Moir was born at Banff, in Scotland, in 1874, and was educated at the Aberdeen Grammar School, proceeding from there to the Aberdeen University, where

he graduated with triple 1st Class Honours in Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics. Receiving an 1851 Exhibition Scholarship, he went to London to undertake chemical research under Professor Henry Armstrong at the Central Technical College, South Kensington. As a result of his work there he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science by Aberdeen University at the unusually early age of 27.

For health reasons he came to South Africa in 1902, and his first post was as Science Master in the Jeppe High School, Johannesburg. Later he joined the staff of Messrs. H. Eckstein & Co. as a chemist and was in charge of mine air experiments in connection with the first Miners' Phthisis Commission. In 1904 he was appointed chemist to the Transvaal Mines Department, a position which, with slight changes of title due to reorganisations of the Department, he held until his death.

He was a very active member of the Chemical, Metallurgical and Mining Society of South Africa, of the South African Chemical Institute, of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, and of the Royal Society of South Africa. For his researches on chemical subjects he was awarded the South African Medal in 1919 by the South African Association for the Advancement of Science and in 1921 he received the Research Medal for Chemistry from the Chemical, Metallurgical and Mining Society. His chief work was an investigation into the chemical cause of colour and many papers dealing with this subject were contributed by him to the Royal Society of South Africa and to the London Chemical Society.

His love for Astronomy was very sincere. Approaching his house at Auckland Park, it was very evident that an enthusiastic astronomer lived there, for the two most prominent objects in his garden were an equatorially mounted 5¼-inch refractor and a large equatorial type of sundial with an interesting device of his own design, by means of which the shadow was still cast on the south face when the Sun had moved north of the equator. He missed no opportunity of making an astronomical observation and was only prevented by weak health from playing a much greater part in the astronomical world. In 1927 he visited England mainly for the purpose of viewing the total solar eclipse at Southport on 29th June, and on his return he gave the Johannesburg Centre of the Society a very vivid account of seeing a total eclipse of the Sun. He was due to retire from his official position at the end of this year and was looking forward to the greater opportunities of increased leisure to carry out more astronomical work.

There are still not a large number of amateurs of astronomy in South Africa; and enthusiasts of the type of Dr. James Moir and William Reid, who were not only active workers themselves, but who also possessed the rare gift of inspiring enthusiasm in others, are greatly missed.

H.E.W.