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Miraculously, I have one phh to.

I took it around 1937!

PM

Patrick

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Dear Mr. Potter,

I have written this, but will not be at all offended if you don't want it. I am sorry it is not better typed (right hand problems, alas).

I do have photographs if wanted.

All good wishes

Sincerely

Patrick Moore

## BROCKHURST: A SMALL TWENTIETH-CENTURY OBSERVATORY

Patrick Moore

Brockhurst Observatory, at East Grinstead in Sussex, cannot claim to have been a major institution. Its largest telescope was a Bush 24-inch reflector, but most of the work was carried out with a 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch refractor, and by one man, William Sadler Franks (1851-1935). Yet some useful results came from it, and it deserves to be remembered. The location: 51° 7' 27" N, 2° 27' E.

It was set up in the first decade of the twentieth century by F.J. Hanbury, senior partner in the famous firm of Allan and Hanbury. Hanbury was very wealthy, and bought a lovely old house on the boundary between East Grinstead and the village of Ashurst Wood in West Sussex. He was a noted horticulturist, and specialized in orchids; his orchid-houses were world-famous, and were tended by a large staff. The Observatory was set up in the grounds, and was attractive; there was one main building, with a dome for the refractor as well as a transit instrument and an observing room. The Cooke telescope was optically excellent, with a conventional falling-weights drive; there was a very accurate clock, and a small library.

As observer, Hanbury engaged W.S. Franks, who had been born in Newark on 26 April 1851 and had become an enthusiastic astronomer, though he never attended University. He specialized in observations of star colours, and his first major contribution was "Catalogue of the Colours of 3890 Stars", communicated to the Royal Astronomical Society in 1878 by the Rev. W. Webb. Subsequently he became Director of the Star Colour Section of the Liverpool Astronomical Society (then a national rather than a local organization). The Liverpool society collapsed suddenly, and was to all intents and purposes succeeded by the British Astronomical Association, founded in 1890. Franks joined

the BAA in 1891, and directed its Star Colour Section for some years. In view of the small telescopes involved (many of them refractors) the estimates were surprisingly accurate, and several lists were issued, though with the rise of spectroscopy the Section faded away. Franks retained his interest in the subject, and in 1921 undertook a revision of the colours of 6000 stars<sup>1</sup>, at the request of the Vatican Observatory. Meanwhile he had spent some time as assistant to Isaac Roberts at a private observatory in Crowborough in Sussex (1892-1904). He assisted John Franklin-Adams in the preparation of the famous star charts, and in 1910 accepted Hanbury's invitation to take charge at Brockhurst Observatory.

Franks made his own programme of observation - mainly concerned with star colours; various papers were published, and in 1923 the RAS Council awarded him the Jackson-Gwilt Medal. Otherwise, Franks' duties were more or less limited to making the telescopes available to Hanbury's house guests, of which there were many. The 24 inch Bush reflector was housed in a separate observatory, but was always the secondary instrument, and was taken down in 1930.

The work at Brockhurst was not confined to star colours; Franks was concerned largely with micrometrical measurements of double stars, and indeed this was probably the most important contribution. Between 1914 and 1920, in particular, thousands of measurements were made. Neither was photography neglected, and in fact Franks' last paper, published in 1930, dealt with Barnard's dark nebulae.

Franks died on 19 June 1935, at the age of eighty-five. I had been observing with him, and very much to my surprise Hanbury invited me to take charge of the Observatory. Despite my tender years (I was aged fourteen) I hope that I carried out my duties efficiently; at any rate Hanbury seemed to think so, and I was able to use the Cooke refractor to make contributions to the lunar and planetary sections of the BAA.

Hanbury died in early 1939, and the Observatory was dismantled; the Cooke refractor was sold for £40 - a sum which was, to my great regret, out of my range. Franks's observing books were handed over to me; at the request of his relations, I correlated them and then handed them over to the BAA.

Trees now grow over the site of Brockhurst Observatory, but it played a role, albeit a minor one, and I at least will remember it with great affection.

#### References

1. FRANKS, W. S. and HAGER, J. Catalogue of Star Colours. Specola Vaticana, 1923.
2. MOORE, P. William Sadler Franks. Jnl. BAA, 112 No. 4, 2002.