CENTENARIES

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Regaud, Stephen Peter (1774–1839)

STEPHEN PETER RIGAUD, a British astronomer, was born at Richmond in Surrey, August 12, 1774. His father was observer to the King at Kew, which is believed to have influenced the tastes and predilections of his son. He was educated at Richmond and Oxford and became M.A. in 1799. He was appointed reader in experimental philosophy and Savilian professor of geometry in 1810. He succeeded his father in 1814 as observer to the King at Kew and became Radcliffe observer in 1827. These posts he held till his death.

Rigaud made nineteen valuable contributions to the *Transactions* of the Royal Astronomical Society and to other periodicals. He was responsible for the addition of a new transit circle to the Radcliffe Observatory. He succeeded in persuading William IV to erect a monument to Bradley at Kew.

Rigaud is perhaps best remembered for his contributions to the history of mathematics and astronomy. In 1831 he published the *Miscellaneous works and correspondence of Dr. Bradley*. To this he added a supplement in 1833 which incorporated the astronomical papers of Harriott. He also published in 1838 a *Historical essay on the first publication of Newton's Principia*, in which he explained how Newton might have been led to give an erroneous value to the radius of earth. He also made extensive preparation for a life of Halley and a new edition of the works of Pappus. The first volume of his *Correspondence of scientific men of the seventeenth century* was printed just before his death, while the second volume came out posthumously in 1841.

He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society May 30, 1805 and was its Vice-President in 1837–38. Rigaud died in London March 16, 1839.

Colburn, Zerah (1804–1839)

ZERAH COLBURN, an American mathematical prodigy, was born in Cobot September 1, 1804. His father was a poor man with a large family of nine children. Zerah showed remarkable powers of calculation before he was six and his poor father tried to liquidate his poverty by exhibiting his son.

Having met with success in America he set out in 1812 to England where his prodigious son was admired by royalty and nobility. But Paris gave him a cold reception and the father lost heavily by his travel through France.

During 1816–19, Zerah was sent to the Westminster School under the patronage of the Earl of Bristol. But on the suspicion that the Earl was diverting some funds due to him, the father quarrelled with him and, plagued by poverty, induced his son to redeem their fortunes by a career on the stage. Failing there, he became a school master and ultimately returned to America in 1824, after his father's death. Even there he had only a chequered career, first being a minister till 1835 and then a teacher for the remaining four years of his life.

In 1833 Zerah published his autobiography entitled *A memoir of Zerah Colburn written by himself*. His arithmetical ability is said to have remained with him throughout his life. Leaving his widow and six children behind, he died of tuberculosis March 2, 1839.

Binnie, Alexander Richardson (1893–1917)

ALEXANDER RICHARDSON BINNIE, a British engineer of the Indian Engineering Service, was born in London March 26, 1839. Having received his general education privately and his engineering education from Bateman, he took up an appointment in 1862 in connection with the construction of new railways in Mid-Wales.

In 1867 he came to Nagpur as executive engineer. During his period of service he carried cut the works for the supply of that city with water from Ambajheria, about four miles distant. He also made discoveries of coal in the Chanda District. This led to the construction of a railway and the opening up of the coalfields.

Having served as the Chief Engineer for water works to the City of Bradford from 1875 to 1890, Binnie became Chief Engineer to the London County Council. This position he occupied for nearly twelve years when he constructed the Blackwell and Greenwich tunnels under the river Thames, constructed the Barking Road Bridge and commenced the Vauxhall Bridge. He also reported on the reconstruction of the London drainage and widened the Strand, Aldwych and Kingsway.

After retirement from the London County Council, Binnie commenced private practice with his son as a partner. The works that engaged his attention during this period were the Arterial Drainage of Ireland, the water-supply of Malta, the water-supply and drainage of Petrograd and the water-supply of Ottawa.

His paper on the *Nagpur water works* is of interest even now. His paper *On mean and average rainfall and the fluctuations to which it is subject* won for him a Telford and a George Stephenson Medal.

On the completion of the Blackwell Tunnel he was Knighted and in 1905 he was elected President of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Binnie died at Beer May 18, 1917.

Tata, Jamsetji Naserwanji (1839–1904)

JAMSETJI NASERWANJI TATA, an Indian pioneer and patron of scientific research, was born at Naosari in Gujerat March 3, 1839. After studying in the Elphinstone College, Bombay, for three years, Tata entered his father's business and set sail to China in 1859 to further their export business.

Turning his attention to the cotton industry in Bombay, Tata first studied the conditions of