

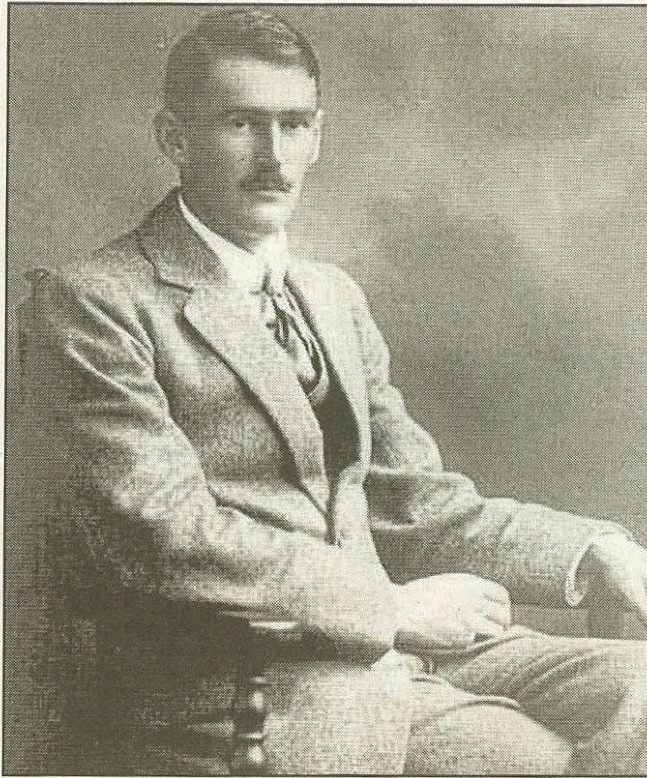
Thought for the week

Matthew Fell
Canterbury Christ Church University Christian Union

“MIGHT I'd do something for my girls” he said, whilst feet two baby daughters were precious to their new HD-TV. A week before my friend hadn't enough money to feed his family had taken him to the local bank. At the time I was working as a support officer and just managed to untangle funds were owed the family. The man was proudly showing how he spent most of the money. “The money deserved it.”

One thing that stands out as I reflect on that memory is how very much I like that father I can be. I can explain away my selfishness: “I decided to let off steam”, “I thought you were better off not knowing”... What is sad is that I believe the lie I'm telling. It's later – when the bank account is empty, our spouse hurts, the thrill is – that we realise.

When I was a student, someone told me this from the Bible: I have the desire to do what is right, but I lack the ability to carry it out. I do not get the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this...? (Romans 7) I hadn't expected Romans, let alone the Bible, to be so honest! The passage goes on to give answers: Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord! Sometimes it can be hard to do that something is amiss with our art. Other times it's undeniable. I didn't think I'd find a sinner in church. But I did. Do you?



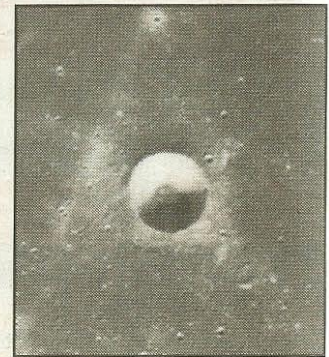
YOUNG VISIONARY: Bertrand Peek at the age of 26



LOOKING SKYWARDS: Bertrand's house in Herne Bay



SCHOOLMASTER: Bertrand Peek in later life



IMMORTALISED: Peek Crater on the moon

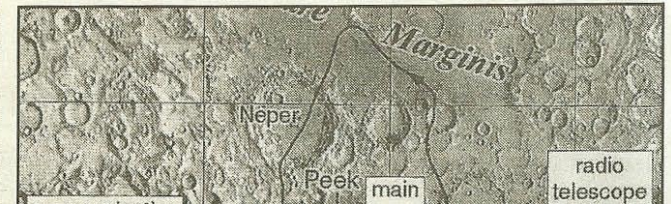
Remembering a teacher who looked to the stars

For breaking news, the day's

Get involved by

Way we were

David Lewis
Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society

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Way we were



David Lewis
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DID this man teach you maths at Simon Langton Boys' School between 1946 and 1955?

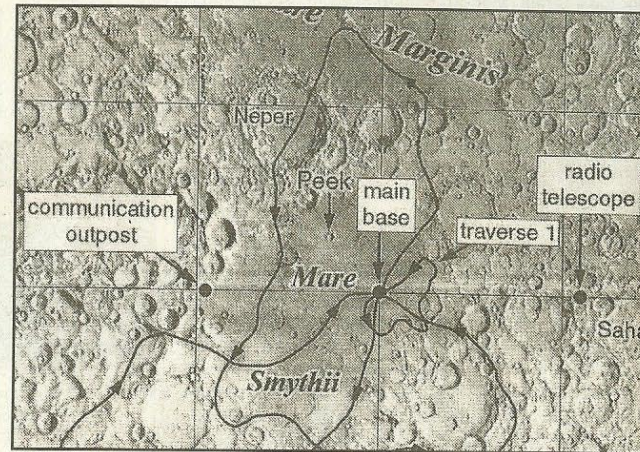
One day I suppose we'll have regular journeys to the moon and colonies of Earth folk living up there. When that day comes, it is wholly plausible that the shuttle station will be named after a Canterbury schoolmaster, and that the first view of lunar arrivals will be of a crater that bears his name.

Unless you attended Simon Langton Boys' School in the post Second World War years, I very much doubt whether you've heard of him – I'm referring to the maths master Bertrand Peek (1891-1965).

Bertrand was born near Bournemouth in 1891, son of a London corn merchant. His academic gifts soon became obvious – after public school at Malvern College he studied at Magdalen College, Cambridge, and three times won the university's coveted mathematics prize.

But Bertrand shone at much more than maths. By the outbreak of the First World War he played chess at international level, had become a competent yachtsman, composed classical music, and had developed expertise in the early science of radio. What went on to dominate his life, however, was none of these, but his abiding love of astronomy.

By 1918 Bertrand had reached the rank of major, serving in India with the Hampshire Regiment. Back in England, he obtained a teaching diploma and went on to teach maths at Gorse Cliff School in Boscombe, then at Solihull School, before joining the staff at Simon Langton Boys' School in 1946.



THE FUTURE? Bertrand Peek's plans for a lunar colony

Bertrand lived in a large Edwardian house in Herne Bay. He retired with health problems in 1955 and died ten years later whilst visiting his son (another astronomer) in Australia.

Throughout his life, Bertrand studied the night sky. Whilst teaching at Solihull he had access to the Solihull Observatory, where he kept detailed notes of his regular astronomical observations.

He wrote astronomical articles for the Daily Telegraph and became active in the Royal Astronomical Society and the British Astronomical Association. He held the post of president of the latter for two years, and also served as director of their Jupiter and Mars sections.

When in 1944 the British press announced a German "sensational discovery" of changes in Jupiter's red spot, Bertrand wrote to The Times to explain that these changes were already well known to British astronomers. In 1958 he published "The Planet Jupiter", which became the standard text on the planet.

In addition, during his time at Simon Langton, Bertrand formed and ran the school astronomical society, and submitted frequent

papers on his observations to learned societies. In recognition of his contribution to astronomy, a moon crater was named after him. Nasa plans for a lunar base include a location very close to Peek Crater.

Shortly before Bertrand died, a meeting of the Melbourne Astronomical Society was held around his hospital bed – confirmation of his lifelong love of astronomy and his passion for sharing his knowledge with others.

He clearly deserves more local recognition than he has so far received. As a start, on Tuesday, July 15 a plaque to him will be unveiled at Simon Langton Boys' School to mark his achievements.

If you would like to attend, please get in touch with Pauline Walter on 01227 766331 for more information. See the CHAS website at www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk for more on this remarkable man.



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