

Margaret Flamsteed: Wife, Hostess, and Astronomer

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Overview

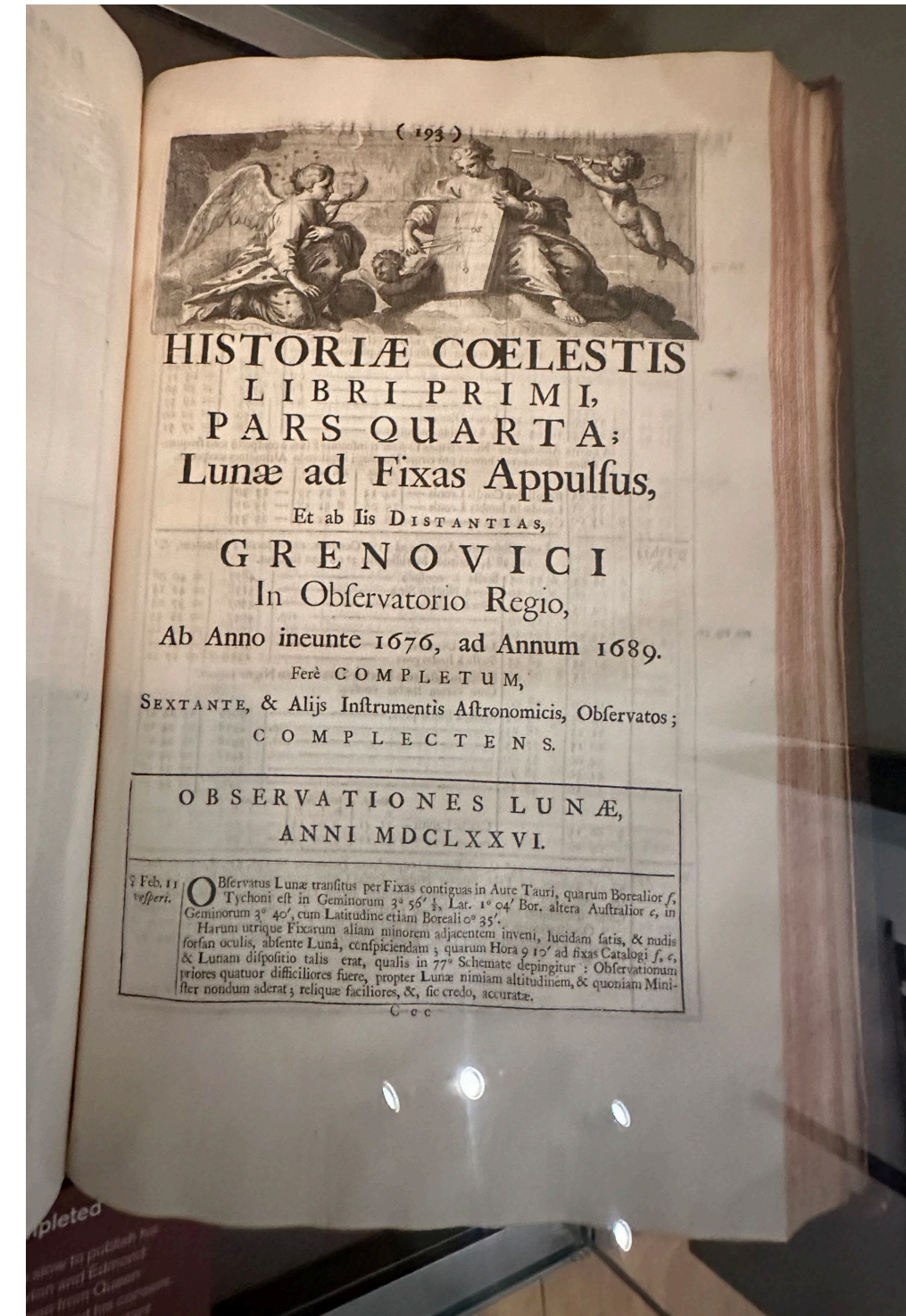
My research follows the life of Margaret Flamsteed (1670-1739), the wife of the first British Royal Astronomer, John Flamsteed (1646-1719). Flamsteed, while not cited in her husband's works, has been noted to have worked closely with her husband, wrote his notes as his health declined, and finished and produced his works, most importantly the *Historia Coelestis Britannica*, after his death. Flamsteed, while her husband was alive, instead was known for her wifely devotion and hostess abilities.



The Royal Observatory at Greenwich, or the Flamsteed House, built in 1676

Evaluation

Margaret Flamsteed was the first well documented British woman astronomer. While she was not credited with her work, she advocated for proper public education, assisted in her husband's work, and solidified John Flamsteed's legacy, as well as her own.



Historia Coelestis Britannica [British Account of the Heavens] second edition, volume 1

By John Flamsteed, Authorized by Margaret Flamsteed
London, 1725

Key points

Hosting Qualities

- Multiple letters commenting on Flamsteed's hospitality
- Flamsteed House built for entertaining
- Knew and used instruments in the house

Wifely Duties

- Continuing her husband's work
- Advocating for correct information being available
- Becoming an educator for mathematics for girls

References:

- 1 Brück, M. *Women in Early British and Irish Astronomy: Stars and Satellites*. Springer Netherlands, 2009.
- 2 Flamsteed, J. *Historia Coelestis Britannica*. Vol. 1, second edition. London, 1725.
- 3 Forbes, E. G. *The origins of the Greenwich Observatory*. *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, Vol. 85, p. 213-216, 1975.
- 4 Fisher, John, 'The King's Observator', *The Life and Work of James Bradley: The New Foundations of 18th Century Astronomy* (Oxford, 2023; online edn, Oxford Academic, 14 Dec. 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198884200.003.0002>
- 5 Flamsteed, M. *Letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, concerning Halley's spurious edition of the Historia Coelestis of 1712*. *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, Vol. 3, p. 10. Nov. 1833.

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