



# THE ASTRONOMER ROYAL

*Not the "Royal Astronomer"*

- Position created by King Charles II in 1675; the Royal Observatory at Greenwich established at the same time
- Per royal proclamation, tasked with “rectifying the tables of the motions of the heavens, and the places of the fixed stars, so as to find out the so-much desired longitude of places, for the perfecting the art of navigation.”
- Also served as director of the Greenwich Observatory until 1972; since that time, ‘Astronomer Royal’ is an honorary title
- Paid a stipend of £100 annually (about \$120 US)
- A senior post in the Royal Households of the United Kingdom; now serving King Charles III



# JOHN FLAMSTEED

*FIRST ASTRONOMER ROYAL*

- One of the first to record a sighting of Uranus, which (like others of the time) he mistook for a star
- Accurately estimated the distance from Earth to Mars
- Through observations, created a catalog listing the locations of thousands of stars
- Theorized that comets moved in large elliptical orbits around the Sun
- Succeeded as Astronomer Royal by Edmond Halley in 1720
- Has both a crater on the Moon and an asteroid named for him

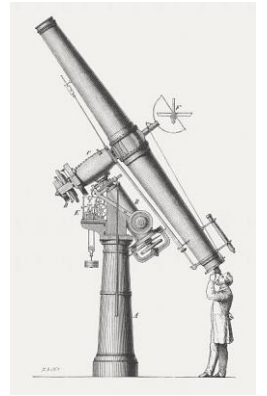


NUMBER OF  
BRITISH MONARCHS  
SINCE 1675:

16

NUMBER OF  
ASTRONOMERS ROYAL  
SINCE 1675:

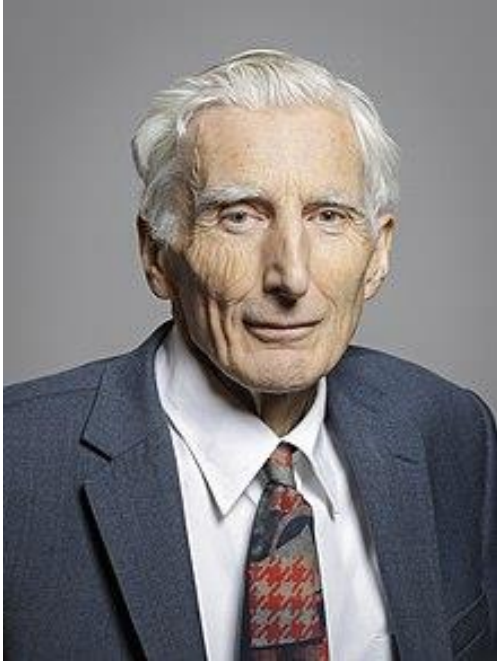
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## NEVIL MASKELYNE

*Longest serving Astronomer Royal (1765-1811)*

- Work on determining longitude led to Greenwich's designation as the Prime Meridian (zero degrees longitude)
- Came up with a measurement of the Earth's density and hence its mass



CURRENT ASTRONOMER ROYAL  
**MARTIN REES**

*AKA 'Baron Reese of Ludlow'*

“Crossbench” member of the House of Lords  
(generally supports Labour positions)

- Has served in the post since 1995 (currently 80 years old)
- Author of more than 500 research papers and author / co-author of 10 books popularizing astronomy
- Research has led to greater understanding of background cosmic radiation and galaxy formation and clustering
- Won the prestigious Templeton Prize in 2011