

Geoff Bird: Look carefully across the shades and shadows of the surface of the moon, with its thousands of craters and you might come across one named after the Cheadle woman who standardised their names. Mary Blagg was among the very first group of women admitted as fellows of the Royal Astronomical Society and even though she took up astronomy in her middle years, her grasp of advanced mathematics led to a revision of the law by which the distances of the planets is calculated. Mary worked with some of the leading astronomers of her time at a point where women gained little credit. Her obituary explained her success by saying she had the brain of a man. Her letters however, show her to be both a brilliant woman and a deeply modest one as well.

Greenhill, Cheadle, Staffordshire.

Dear Professor Turner,

Thank you very much for your letters and for the proposal which I feel to be a very great honour. I felt some hesitation about accepting it, partly because I know that my law may turn out to be only a remarkable coincidence or may at best require much modification in detail and if this should happen I should hate to feel that I had been admitted on fake pretences and that those who had done it might regret it. The news that another lady is being proposed lessens this dread, but still, if such a denouement as I have suggested would at least in a degree have an affect I have mentioned, please don't propose me. Otherwise, I accept with gratitude and a strong sense of unworthiness. The law was an accidental find and a collated list need only industry, care and patience and time.

Yours sincerely,

M. A. Blagg

1916, January 17th

Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your communication and to the Royal Astronomical Society for the honour they have done me. I enclose signed form of obligations and a cheque for three guineas.

Yours faithfully,

M. A. Blagg

Hannah Niblett: So my name's Hannah Niblett, I'm the heritage officer at Jodrell Bank. The work that Mary Adela Blagg did in standardising the names of the features on the surface of the moon, so the craters and the mountains prior to her work in the 18th and 19th centuries everybody came up with their own systems for naming craters and mountains and these different features. So what Mary Adela Blagg did was to look at all these different moon maps and all this different data and tabulate it all and come up with a standard naming system so that all the scientists, all the astronomers, are speaking the same language. I think particularly when scientists - including those at Jodrell Bank - started using radar to study the surface of the moon and then ultimately in the 1960s men visited the moon, none of this would have been possible without a standard naming system. There's just no way any of that could have happened without the work that Mary Adela Blagg did.

Jim Plant: I'm Jim Plant, local blacksmith and I was born on the same year as Mary died in 1944. My interest in astronomy started many years ago. Mary would have had very good skies, I would have thought, then because even in my young days, even in the high street, you could look up and see the stars. Very often when I am out with the telescope and very often these days I only use it when I've got a visitor, and of course if the terminator's in the right position that's where the division between the light side and the dark where you've got the shadows which bring out the detail on the moon, I normally do try and point out which is that little crater called Blagg.

Sally Roberts: I'm Sally Roberts, I'm a member of the Cheadle Discovery Group, very interested in Mary Blagg because I live in a house on the site of Greenhill House where Mary lived. I think to look up at the moon and to think gosh, that little dot in the middle there is named after a lady that lived in our small town is what makes Mary really important and inspirational to me.

Dear Mr. Westley,

When I wrote the other day I don't think I explained matters so well as I might have done and I kept perhaps too far within the line with regards to Franz's measured formations. I think really that quite 5 out of 6 of them were found eventually in one or other of the many photographs with which Professor Turner has supplied me. There is one particularly splendid one of the plato region on almost exactly the right scale and in favourable liberation. I began my work by plotting in all Mr Saunders' measured objects and added later all of Franz's - so far of course, as they came into the right regions, and then I fitted into this skeleton all such other details as I could find in the various photographs.

Mike Plant: My name is Mike Plant, I'm chairman of the Cheadle Historical Society and a trustee of the Cheadle Discovery Group. This isn't like someone who grew up with the hobby. She was a middle aged lady who had plenty of other things to be doing and such like. She was running a busy household for her father, she was helping out with the church and the Sunday school and things. This was almost like a sideline and yet she's become immortal really with the work she's done.

Sally Roberts: Growing up I didn't know about Mary Blagg even though I lived on the site of her house. It's important to bring her to the attention of Cheadle and people who live round here and I think we're pleased to be able to highlight her life and her work and bring her to people's attention that they otherwise just wouldn't know. I think it's important that we fly the flag for her.

Geoff Bird: You can read more from Mary's letters at Cheadle library and we hope you'll take the time to find out more about her life in the displays placed around the church. Using money raised by National Lottery players the Heritage Fund supports projects that connects people and communities with the UK's heritage. Cheadle Moon is made possible with the National Lottery Heritage Fund thanks to National Lottery players OUTSIDE has been able to produce this audio story for the Cheadle Moon Project. Thanks also go to Cheadle Discovery Group, Jodrell Bank and the Royal Astronomical Society.