



DIARIES OF MARCUS LAUGHTON

Historical notes attached to the diaries by an archivist of the Royal Society in the 1860s identifies Marcus Laughton (1734-1806) as a physicist who had joined the Society in 1762. He began writing his diaries in 1758 and seems to have kept them with fair regularity until near the end of his life (the last entries are listed in 1804). At his bequest, the Mercy Hill Asylum saw the diaries donated to the Royal Society for historic preservation.

Selected entries of interest from 1788:

April. Sunday 15.

Woke this morning eager to begin preparations on my presentation to the Royal Society concerning the comet which had been reported to me by Nathaniel's letter, the fall of which into the largely uninhabited area north of Berkeley presents such an exciting opportunity for the study of celestial objects. However, I found myself unable to locate Nathaniel's letter, much to my frustration. Marie, of course, denied disturbing anything upon my desk. At last, I was forced to consult the record I had made here in my diary concerning the letter to refresh my mind of the details, but I cannot find the entry I am certain to have written yestereve.

May. Friday 1.

Today's meeting of the Royal Society has left me in a great state of confusion. At first I was filled with that sense of dread which accompanies the belief that one has forgotten to make the proper preparations for some great affair or commitment. But I had no business nor assistances to render before the Society. Midway through the affair, however, I was suddenly afflicted with a curious doubling of vision. During Edwards' presentation on optical effects I felt a strange compulsion to leap to my feet and take the podium, as if my name had been called. I suppressed this bizarre impulse and remained thoughtfully in my seat, albeit in an increase state of unease. Afterwards, at tea, I found myself relating several points of interest regarding the presentation I had given regarding the Berkeley Comet. Except, of course, I had given no such presentation.

June. Friday 18.

My brief and thoughtless writing in this journal over the past week have simply belied the great sense of confusion which has overwhelmed my life. For these several days I have awoken each morning convinced that I would find myself in residence at the Severnford Inn. On Tuesday I nearly screamed in Marie's face when she opened the door to deliver my breakfast, so certain that she was some phantasmal manifestation. I have to give cease to my perambulations through the estate's grounds, for I find myself inexplicably becoming lost and confused among the trees.

June. Saturday 19.

I see now that I had no choice. My sense of self is out of balance and, if I desire to restore it, then I should seek to bring myself to that place where my thoughts already dwell. This morning I arranged for a stagecoach to carry me to Berkeley, with the intention of passing on to Severnford after local arrangements could be made. The coaching company, however, asked me if I would instead prefer passage to Brichester, since that would be nearer to my final destination. I nearly struck the man for babbling such nonsense. I hope that the recent Stage Coach act will bring a modicum of much needed professionalism to this industry. I wonder how many fools have been tricked into booking passage to fictional cities on the presumption of their ignorance.

June. Monday 21.

My senses are shattered. Upon arriving in Berkeley on Saturday evening, I found a community both smaller and remarkably different in character than the city I remembered from my last journey here. Furthermore, I could find no trace nor memory of my friend Nathaniel. And then there were the damnable references to "Brichester". I thought it odd that some new community of such importance had sprung up just to the north of Berkeley in the five years since I've last visited, but when I finally relented and came north I discovered an entire city. An impossible city.

June. Tuesday 22.

This city is a lie. I have spent the day walking its cobblestones. Unraveling its streets one at a time. Now, in the sunset's glimmer, I sit at a café and with one eye I write this journal in the midst of a bustling multitude and with the other I gaze out at wilderness and farmland. I fear my sanity perches on a bubble as insubstantial as this entire wasteland of lost souls.

June. Wednesday 23.

I journeyed today towards the Golgotha which beckons me. And then I fled from it. My mind knows that I should be standing upon that crater's edge where the great meteor fell, but I could remain there no longer. I found no raw impact there, but rather a placid lake well worn by centuries or millennia of our churning, spinning Earth. The doubling there was too strong and my ears were filled with a horrible vibration: a screeching symphony of cricket-song.

July. Saturday 19.

I feared madness. But now I see that it is not I who is mad, but rather the world which has been unmade.

After the entry on July 19th, there is a sizable gap in Laughton's entries. When they continue (in a separate volume), it appears that he has been incarcerated at Mercy Hill Asylum.