

Stephen Halliwell and Derek Ward-Thompson

Jeremiah Horrocks Institute for Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy  
University of Central Lancashire



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The University of Central Lancashire owes its foundation to a meeting of 24 townspeople of Preston on October 7<sup>th</sup> 1828, at which they agreed to create 'The Preston Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge'. This Institution eventually became the University of Central Lancashire.

One of the founders was listed as 'Moses Holden, Gentleman'. Moses was, amongst other things, a keen amateur astronomer, who regularly gave public lectures on astronomy. Therefore, we can be sure that Astronomy was included in the curriculum from the very beginning, under the guise of what was then known as Natural Philosophy.

## ASTRONOMER

Moses was born in 1777 in Bolton, the son of a hand loom weaver. He was always interested in Astronomy and collected a fine library of books on the subject. He was a great fan of Jeremiah Horrocks.

He built an orrery and a magic lantern, which he used to use when he gave public lectures in astronomy. An orrery illustrates the motions of the planets around the Sun, and the magic lantern was used to project the orrery in order to demonstrate it to large crowds. He toured all over the north of England giving lectures and demonstrating his orrery.

He was a member of the Mechanics' Institute and made telescopes and microscopes, even grinding his own lenses.

He also wrote a celestial handbook and almanac. He was highly respected as an authority on astronomy, even though he was entirely self-taught.



## References

'Moses Holden 1777-1864 The Preston Astronomer Who Was Never Eclipsed'  
Stephen R. Halliwell - See more at: <http://pegasuspublishers.com/shop&book=pb-moses-holden-1777-1864-the-preston-astronomer-who-was-never-eclipsed#sthash.EfoD8G5J.dpuf>  
'A small Celestial Atlas, or Maps of the Visible Heavens, in the Latitude of Britain,'  
1818, M. Holden

## MISSIONARY

Moses was a devout Methodist all of his life. He saw no contradiction between science and religion. In fact, he saw his astronomical discoveries as simply uncovering the works of God.

He often gave sermons in church, and was selected to lead an evangelical mission to the Fylde peninsula.

He carried out a series of fortnightly visits all over the Fylde peninsula, preaching sermons in numerous towns and villages as he went. The Fylde peninsula was much more sparsely populated in Moses' day than it is today.

He ran bible groups and Sunday schools, and was connected with Christ Church, Preston. He provided the correct time for the clock for Christ Church, which is now in County Hall.

He died in Preston on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1864, aged 86. His great-great-grandson, Patrick Holden, sent this portrait of Moses.