

# Concours des grands scientifiques

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He was an English amateur astronomer who, at the age of 18, established from his own naked-eye observations that the star Algol varied regularly in brightness, every 2 days 21 hours. He proposed the correct explanation for these changes, namely that they were caused by an orbiting body eclipsing it periodically. He went on to discover the variability of Beta Lyrae and Delta Cephei, the latter being the prototype Cepheid variable. Unfortunately, he was deaf and dumb from birth, and died at the age of 21, apparently from pneumonia contracted while following the changes of Delta Cephei.



This stamp is part of a sheet of 12 commemorating astronomers which also includes Isaac Newton, Edmond Halley, William Herschel, George Airy and James Bradley. The head of our unknown astronomer is a mirror image of the only known portrait of him, held by the Royal Astronomical Society in London.