



Sir Martin Ryle: Nobel Prize in Physics 1974



Sir Martin Ryle



Sir Martin Ryle was born in Brighton, Sussex, England, on September 27, 1918. He was educated at Bradfield College and the [University of Oxford](#), where he graduated in 1939. During the war periods, he worked on the development of radar and other radio systems for the Royal Air Force.

In 1945 J.A. Ratcliffe invited Ryle to work at the [Cavendish Laboratory](#), Cambridge, starting an investigation of the radio emission from the Sun, which had recently been discovered accidentally with radar equipment. In 1948 Ryle was appointed to a Lectureship in Physics and in 1949 elected to a Fellowship at [Trinity College](#), Cambridge. In 1959 he was appointed as a new Professor of Radio Astronomy, and in 1972 was appointed Astronomer Royal.

Ryle enjoyed working at the Cavendish, where both Ratcliffe and [Sir Lawrence Bragg](#) gave him enormous support and encouragement. Through many years of hard work and testing, Ryle developed revolutionary radio telescope systems, including the aperture synthesis technique, using them for accurate location of weak radio sources. With this novel equipment, he observed the most distant known galaxies of the universe. His contributions led to the discovery of numerous radio galaxies and quasars (quasi-stellar radio sources). Ryle and [Antony Hewish](#) shared the Nobel Prize for Physics 1974, the first Nobel prize awarded in recognition of astronomical research, “for their pioneering research in radio astrophysics: Ryle for his observations and inventions, in particular of the aperture synthesis technique, and Hewish for his decisive role in the discovery of pulsars”.

In 1947 he married Rowena Palmer, and they had two daughters and a son. Ryle received many medals, including the Gold Medal, Royal Astronomical Society, London, in 1964, and the Royal Medal, Royal Society of London in 1973. He was knighted in 1966. Ryle had honorary doctorate degrees from University of Strathclyde, University of Oxford and Nicholas University of Torun, Poland. His favourite hobbies were sailing and building small boats. He died in 1984.