

Skinner, Frederick (1860 - Feb 1927), born Falmouth, Cornwall. Skinner was an astronomer employed by the Mersey Dock & Harbour Board at the Bidston Observatory at Birkenhead on the Wirral, Cheshire. Prior to moving to Bidston he had worked at the Falmouth Observatory in Cornwall, aged 25 he remained here for the next 42 years. The observatory's role at this time was to check chronometer running rates, while his main observing tasks involved observing faint planets during the daytime as they crossed the meridian. Skinner used a 4-inch Troughton and Simms transit instrument and a 8 1/2-inch equatorial refracting telescope with a Merz lens, fitted with 4-foot circles by Simms. He worked briefly under the well-respected director, John Hartnup and then his son John Hartnup Jnr. He was present when the younger director met a terrible death, falling from the roof of the observatory. At this point he became acting director of Bidston Observatory. There is no record of him applying for the senior role and by mid-1892, the next director, Mr William E. Plummer, had been appointed. Along with his regular observing tasks, which included sleeping at the observatory at weekends and during the director's vacations, he was in charge of meteorological forecasts for mariners at nearby Liverpool and was even involved in administration, such as payment of staff wages. He worked the rest of his life at the observatory and was found unconscious one morning outside the observatory having collapsed after night work aged 67 - he died later that day in hospital (see Scoffield, Joyce, *Bidston Observatory the place and the people* (Birkenhead, 2006) for sources and further details; obituary published in the Western Morning News published 23rd Feb 1927).