



Fred Hoyle's Universe

Jane Gregory

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Fred Hoyle was a Yorkshire truant who became the voice of British astronomy. For fifty years, he spoke out for astronomy in the newspapers, on government committees, at scientific meetings, in popular books and on the radio. He devised a never-ending history of the universe, and worked out how the elements were made. He founded a prestigious institute for theoretical astronomy and built a giant telescope, and if it rained on his summer holiday, he sat in his caravan and wrote science fiction novels for his legions of fans around the world.

Fred Hoyle also claimed that diseases fall from the sky, that the big bang never happened, and that the Astronomer Royal should be abolished. When the outspoken Fred Hoyle spoke out for astronomy, some astronomers really wished he had kept his mouth shut.

This book tells the behind-the-scenes story of Hoyle's widely acclaimed and deeply controversial role in the ideas, organization and public face of astronomy in post-war Britain. It chronicles the triumphs, acrimony, jealousies, rewards and bitter feuds of a field in turmoil, and meets the astronomers, contemplating cosmic questions, keeping secrets, losing their tempers, winking information out of distant stars and, over tea on the lawn, discussing the finer points of libel law.

Fred Hoyle's Universe draws on previously confidential government documents, recently released personal correspondence and interviews with Hoyle's friends, colleagues and critics, as well as with Hoyle himself, to bring you the man, the science, and the scandal behind the genial and genteel façade of the most exciting period in the history of astronomy.

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