

Draw my life script

My name is Patrick Blackett or else I'm also known « the right honourable Lord Patrick Maynard Stewart Blackett » OM CH PRS WTF. OK, that last one was made up. I'm going to draw my life : I was born in London on the eighteenth of November 1897. When I was young, I loved playing with technology and would build my own radio sets and model aeroplanes. These interests helped me secure a place at a school that prepared its students for the Navy. Attend Trump and you think your teachers are strict. I hadn't even finished my studies when World War One broke out. Soon I was fighting at the Battle of the Falkland Islands at the age of just 17. When the war was finally over, the Admiralty sent me to Cambridge University to finish my studies, which is rather nice of them. While there I became so fascinated with physics I immediately quit the Navy and enrolled as a Cambridge undergraduate. At Cambridge, I met a girl called Constanza Bay and fell madly in love with her. We would eventually marry and have a son and daughter. Anyway, enough of that, back to my first love : « science ». I'd studied under Ernest Rutherford, a physicist who just discovered the proton. Let's just say it was a pretty big deal. He asked me to conduct experiments using a new device called a cloud chamber which looked at how particles travelled. After some tinkering, I demonstrated it was possible to make one element turn into another as if by magic although there's no such thing as magic. I also helped confirm the existence of the positron, the discovery that would earn me the Nobel Prize for Physics. But yet again my work was to be interrupted by war. However, this time I fought not with guns but with mathematics, improving military operations with scientific research. This led to the creation of operational research, a discipline I defined and helped to popularize. During the war, German submarines found a way of eavesdropping on our radar diving before we could bomb them. I used science to come up with a solution. Instead of hiding our radar, I calculated a system that would overload their detectors around the clock making them dive for so long they'd run out of air and power and be forced to surface. We would then pounce and destroy them. It was a radical way of thinking. So radical that Marshall Bomber Harris was having none of it. Speaking to Winston Churchill, he asked : are we fighting this war with weapons or with the slide rule ? Churchill took one puff on his cigar and said : « that's a good idea, let's try the slide rule ». The submarine sinkings went from 2% to 45% so I guess the slide rule 1 chairs operational research. After the war, I have spread operational research into government, business, health care, sport, manufacturing and beyond, but it's still used today improving performance and helping people make evidence-based decisions. I also made many other discoveries like helping prove continental drift, the geological process that describes continents moving and I led the team that discovered two more subatomic particles. Check me out, nailed it. I was made president of the Royal Society in 1965 and I was made a baron in 1969. I even had a crater on the moon named after me not a bad way to celebrate our life's work although I wouldn't find a glass of bubbly if you want to know more about how maths can help the world work better. Visit the Orsociety.com

tinkering : the act of making some small changes to something, in an attempt to improve it or repair it

eavesdropping : secretly listening to a conversation/ spying on people

overload : an excessive amount of something/ load with too great a burden or cargo

to pounce : to swoop down suddenly and grasp (fondre sur une proie) as a bird does seizing its prey

the slide rule : a device for performing mathematical calculations, consisting essentially of a ruler having a sliding piece moving along it, both marked with graduated, usually logarithmic, scales: now largely replaced by the electronic calculator. (règle à calcul).

to take one puff on a cigar : prendre une bouffée de son cigare

to chair operational research : présider à la recherche opérationnelle

geological drift : dérive géologique

check me out, nailed it : regardez-moi, je l'ai cerné/ je l'ai eu ! J'y suis arrivé ! (American idiomatic phrase). (meaning : j'suis trop fort!)