

David & Isobel Gill's grave - St Machar's churchyard

Sir [David Gill](#)'s outstanding career in world astronomy began in the nearby [Cromwell tower](#) in 1863 and it is fitting that he and his wife as notable Aberdonians should be buried in St Machar's churchyard. Their memorial tablet, illuminated by the setting sun, is shown here. The Gills retired to London from South Africa in 1907. His colleagues' sentiments on his leaving were "*We shall miss him and his breezy pleasant presence; we shall miss his resonant voice; we shall miss his transparent sincerity – his honest hatred of cant and sham and humbug. We shall miss his great heart and his ever present sympathy. We shall miss him as a friend and as a citizen who has ever been prepared to take on his broad shoulders his full share of the duties of citizenship*".



Gill remained very active in London. He took on the Presidency of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1907. One influential Londoner commented "*It is always a great treat to his friends here when Gill looks us up; it is like a refreshing breeze that clears away dull cobwebs of the London gloom, and the frigid coils of red-tape routine seem to relax and shrivel up before his genial sincerity and good fellowship.*" The accompanying illustration of the Gills at home is from Forbes' biography. David Gill is captioned as having said to the astronomer G E Hale, Director of the Mount Wilson Solar Observatory, "*We are a very Darby and Joan old couple, who like to be together as much as possible*".



A Cape Town paper said upon their retirement that "*Lady Gill may well be regarded as one of the best and sincerest friends the Colony has ever possessed...*" going on to outline her work establishing nursing centres for the poor, creating a scholarship for girl students at the Cape University and other charitable causes. There is no need to rely on a brief quote to appreciate Isobel Gill – just read her book "*Six Months in Ascension: an unscientific account of a scientific expedition*" John Murray, London (1878).

The Gills' plaque is on a wall in the demolished transept space outside the East window of St Machar's Cathedral. Prof David Thomson, Gill's mentor in his early days at the Cromwell tower, also has his gravestone nearby in the churchyard.

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