

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ambition to write a decent history of the Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge first struck me in the fall of 1985, my first semester at Harvard graduate school. As a foreign student from a non-Western developing country, South Korea, I was frightened and somewhat doubtful that I could survive in Harvard's competitive environment. Although the history of physics had long been my favorite subject for study, my experience and knowledge were naturally quite limited. For a course taught by Erwin N. Hiebert on the history of physical sciences during the twentieth century, I read an article by George P. Thomson about his father's discovery of the electron. This article, "J.J. Thomson and the Discovery of the Electron (*Physics Today* 9 (1956): 19-23)," focused on Joseph John Thomson's greatness as a physicist and his charisma as a teacher. Fascinated by this account of J.J. Thomson's charming character, I devoted my term paper to an examination of his role as director of the Cavendish Laboratory. When Professor Hiebert encouraged me to delve further into the history of J.J. Thomson's achievements, I quickly discovered that the available histories of the Cavendish Laboratory depended heavily on the reminiscences and memoirs of former directors and researchers of the Cavendish and that these histories lacked systematic analysis. I was especially bothered by the apparent consensus that an 1895 regulation change at Cambridge permitting non-Cambridge graduates to enter the University for post-graduate research was the chief cause of the Cavendish's sudden success at the turn of the twentieth century. I simply could not accept this idea. Thus began a long research project. The subject for a term paper developed into a doctoral dissertation (in 1991) and finally matured into this book, which represents a thorough condensation and revision of my dissertation along with the addition of two new chapters.

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Dong-Won Kim
Korea Advanced Institute of
Science and Technology
Korea