

## CAVENDISH'S CROCODILE AND DARK HORSE: THE DYNAMIC DUO OF RUTHERFORD AND ASTON

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Ernest Rutherford is one of New Zealand's favourite sons. Born August 30, 1871 close to nearby Nelson and a graduate of Canterbury College, Rutherford went on to become one of the most influential scientists of his time. From 1919 he assumed the role of Director of the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge (from J.J. Thomson) and worked in close contact with mass spectrometrists Francis Aston. Rutherford and Aston formed a close collegial relationship and friendship despite their very different characters. Aston was a retiring figure who preferred his own company and worked mostly alone. Rutherford by contrast could command a room - his voice and footsteps were said to precede him - who enjoyed being the centre of attention. Although both were physicists, the impact of their work on our understanding of atomic theory, led to the pair each receiving a Nobel Prize in Chemistry. This amused Rutherford whose bias toward physics appears in his quote "*All science is either physics or stamp collecting*". Even Aston had remarked offhandedly that chemistry had become a branch of technology dependent on physics for her theoretical basis. Aston used the proceeds of his award to fund his research and travels; Rutherford used it to buy a car. This presentation will describe the interactions between Rutherford and Aston from within the confines of the Cavendish through to their sea travels abroad and will feature quotes and anecdotes.



Photographs of Rutherford and Aston together at the Volta Congress meeting in Como, Italy (left) and in South Africa (right)