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Bellhouse, David R.

Abraham de Moivre: Setting the stage for classical probability and its applications.

Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press (ISBN 978-1-56881-349-3/hbk). 266 p. (2011).

This is essentially the first biography of De Moivre (1667-1754) since the article by Matthew Maty in 1755 and is the outcome of an extensive study of surviving sources scattered in a number of countries. It includes an account of his family move to England from France as Huguenot refugees and provides what evidence there is to explain his quick move into the upper levels of scientific society of London, including an important relationship with Edmond Halley and Isaac Newton. For a time, Johann and Nicolaus Bernoulli were important correspondents of De Moivre, though they were puzzled why he would publish *Doctrine of Chances* (1718, second edition 1738) in English rather than the international language of Latin as he had most of his earlier work. Though the author summarizes some detailed analyses of mathematical arguments which have been treated in other historical writings, ample detail is provided, especially of De Moivre's work in probability by which he established the field's modern foundation. Especially important, the social background is given from which challenging problems arose, such as annuities and games of chance, and the role of London coffeehouses. Heated precedence controversies were no small part of the competitive life of mathematicians of the time. Apart from becoming involved in the most famous one between Newton and Leibniz and their respective followers, De Moivre had his own encounters, most prominently with George Cheyne, P. R. Montmort, and Thomas Simpson. Thomas Bayes, it is argued, was probably not directly influenced by De Moivre with respect to the study of probability, but rather by Philip Stanhope, one of De Moivre's pupils. A chapter is devoted to De Moivre's work as a private tutor. A surprising amount of fruitful detail has been gleaned on all of these topics. *Albert C. Lewis (Austin)*

Classification: A30

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