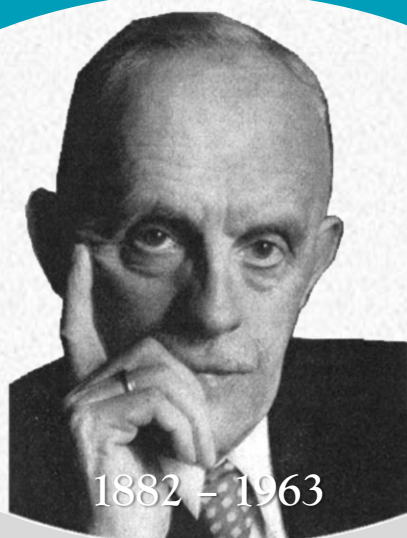


ERNST TAMS



1882 – 1963

Head of the main station for
earthquake research in Hamburg

Ernst Tams was born in Hamburg on January 24, 1882. Due to his great interest in natural sciences, he began studying mathematics, physics and geophysics in 1900 at the University of Göttingen under Emil Wiechert and at the University of Strasbourg under Georg Gerland. He completed his studies in 1907 with a prize-winning dissertation at the University of Strasbourg. During his time in Strasbourg, Tams came into contact with earthquake geography at the office of the International Seismological Association, which was to have a major influence on his later research activities.

In 1908 Ernst Tams returned to Hamburg and became an assistant at the State Physical Laboratory (*Physikalisches Staatslaboratorium*), the later Geophysical Institute of the University of Hamburg. His main duties included the management of the earthquake observatory station located in the street "Jungiusstraße", founded by Richard Schütt. In 1919 followed his habilitation and in 1932 he became professor for seismology at the University of Hamburg.

In the course of time, Ernst Tams dealt with various seismological topics on which he published numerous papers, among others in the journal "Zeitschrift für Geophysik" published by the DGG. These topics included, for example, the relationship between isostasy and earthquakes, earthquake periodicity, seismicity of the Atlantic and Arctic, seismic ambient noise in Hamburg, and in particular the investigation of surface wave velocities. In 1921, for example, Tams published a paper in which he established, independently of Gustav Angenheister, that surface waves moved faster along oceanic "paths" than along continental "paths". He linked this finding to Alfred Wegener's theory that there were two different types of crust. Wegener then used the results of Tams and Angenheister to confirm his 'Theory of continental drift'. Furthermore, Ernst Tams was also the author of numerous books, e.g., in 1922 he published the textbook "Einführung in die Geophysik" together with Carl Mainka and Adalbert Prey.

Tams also showed great commitment to the German Geophysical Society (DGG). Thus, he was not only one of the founders of the DGG itself, but also one of the founders of the macroseismic commission. Even after his retirement in 1946, he continued to be involved with the DGG and was vice-president of the society from 1950 to 1951. For his tireless work he received the honorary membership of the DGG in 1953.

Ernst Tams died on November 16, 1963 in Hamburg-Blankenese at the age of 81.

DGG PRO – Public Relations & Outreach, Hannover

Modified after Tams E. (1921): Über die Fortpflanzungsgeschwindigkeit der seismischen Oberflächenwellen längs kontinentaler und ozeanischer Wege. Centralblatt für Mineralogie, Geologie und Paläontologie, 44-52 + 75-83; Jacobs F. & Börngen M. (2019): Wiechert, Mintrop & Co. – Die 24 Gründungsväter der Deutschen Geophysikalischen Gesellschaft. Publisher EAGLE.