



SHA e-NEWS

The SHA's new mode of Internet communication.

SHA WEBSITE REGENERATED AND RELAUNCHED



The SHA has had a website since the Society's founding in 2002. Set up originally by Callum Potter, his successor as webmaster Greg Smye-Rumsby later gave it a more elegant design and created the SHA's crest and logo.

Two years ago David Henderson took over as webmaster and the site was moved to freewebs (now webs.com), based on a standard template.

Now, redesigned and rebuilt following Christmas 2008, the SHA has a new website, partly evolutionary, partly revolutionary, with the aim of providing a better facility for the members, and a more welcoming point of contact for prospective members and like-minded people in the UK and around the globe. The URL remains the same: www.shastro.org.uk.

The current site is the product of a team comprising David Henderson (Webmaster) who has overall responsibility for day to day management of the site, Stuart Williams (News Editor) who created the overall look and feel of this latest incarnation by customising a webs.com template and reworking a number of the pages, and Roger Jones (Survey Editor) who has special responsibility for the Survey of Astronomical History pages as the Co-ordinator of that Survey.

The SHA website is as much of a publication as the *SHA Bulletin*., the *SHA e-News* or *The Antiquarian Astronomer*, forming as it does an essential part of the Society's publications strategy, and in many cases it is the first publication that someone new to the SHA will read. While there is always room for further improvement, we believe it is now fit for that purpose. Please check it out!

IYA 2009: The year of Thomas Harriot

This year, the world celebrates the International Year of Astronomy, marking the 400th anniversary of the first drawings of celestial objects through a telescope.

Galileo usually gets the credit for this, but UK historians and astronomers are raising the profile of Englishman and polymath Thomas Harriot (1560 to 1621), who in fact made the first telescopic drawing of the Moon earlier than the great Italian, in July 1609.

SHA Hon. President Dr Allan Chapman believes that it is about time Harriot received the credit he deserves. He says "Thomas Harriot is an unsung hero of science. His drawings mark the beginning of the era of modern astronomy we now live in, where telescopes large and small give us extraordinary information about the Universe we inhabit."

I could not agree more with Dr. Chapman's comments. Galileo was a great man, but it is time to shine a brighter light than moonlight on the Englishman who got there first, and who deserves to be better known: Thomas Harriot.

Stuart Williams, Editor

research.librarian@shastro.org.uk

VISIT TELESCOPE 400 - CELEBRATE THOMAS HARRIOT!

Members of the public are being invited to attend *Telescope400*, a major event at Syon Park in west London on Sunday 26th July 2009. *Telescope400* will draw attention to the importance of the telescope today and in the past, and highlight the unique contribution to UK astronomy made by Thomas Harriot (see right). A programme of lectures and other activities will mark the 400th anniversary of Harriot's first astronomical observation through a telescope. Details can be found online at: www.telescope400.org.uk

SURVEY OF ASTRONOMICAL HISTORY



Roger Jones at the 2008 AGM & Spring Conference

Members who regularly visit the Society's website will notice several changes to the layout and content of the Survey pages, following the recent updates.

The number of adopted counties is growing slowly, but we have yet to publish the results from some of our newer coordinators. To date, the counties which have been most thoroughly researched

and surveyed are: Buckingham, Cambridge, Devon, Essex, Lincoln, Northampton, Nottingham, Rutland, Suffolk and Yorkshire.

Counties where research is under way but results are yet to be published are: Derbyshire, Hereford, Lancashire, Middlesex, Oxford, Staffordshire, Isle of Man, Channel Islands.

The Survey pages now include a resources section with links to online databases and repositories which should prove useful to new researchers.

We still need more volunteer researchers and members are urged to visit the website to see what has already been achieved and how they might contribute. You can sign up online and work at your own pace. We encourage you to do so; let's make IYA 2009 the year when we really give the Survey a boost.

Roger Jones

SHA LIBRARY NEWS



Research Librarian Stuart Williams at the SRBL

NEW CATALOGUE, NEW WEB PAGE

Members who would like to discover more about the SHA's Library Service can read all about its history and the services available to members on the new SHA website at www.shastro.org.uk - just click on the Library link. We also have a new 56 page Sir Robert Ball Library Catalogue and Library manual, which may now be downloaded in pdf format from that page.

LIBRARY OPENING AT THE BMI

May we remind members that the Library is open by appointment, subject to staff availability.

Contact Madeline Cox - by email to library@shastro.org.uk, tel: 01623 844121, or Stuart Williams - email research.librarian@shastro.org.uk, tel: 07906 103735.

Madeline Cox & Stuart Williams

NEW BOOK: LUNATICK ASTRONOMY



Matthew Boulton, 1792

The Lunar Society was one of the most influential gatherings of intellectuals in the eighteenth century. The group of friends met informally every month on a Monday evening closest to the full Moon. Matthew Boulton was the prime mover behind the moonlit gathering and most people today know him as the great manufacturer of Birmingham and the partner of James Watt. His friend and fellow 'Lunatick' James Keir once observed that electricity and astronomy were at one time among Matthew Boulton's favourite amusements. But just how much of an interest in astronomy did Boulton and the other Lunar Society members have?

A new book by SHA Member Andrew Lound, FBIS, *Lunatick Astronomy*, is an account of his research into Matthew Boulton's and his friends' interests in astronomy, discovering Boulton's design for an astronomical observatory as well as snippets of information on one of his favourite amusements.

For further information about the book, and to purchase a copy, please contact Mr. Lound by email to: odyssey@dial.pipex.com SW

History of Astronomy Event Previews for 2009

TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY:

'FRIENDS OF THE RAS' EVENT

The first 'Friends of the RAS' event of 2009 will take place at 1800-1930 on Tuesday 24 February in the Royal Astronomical Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. This will take the form of a talk by the author of a new book, *The Georgian Star*, about the first President of the RAS, Sir William Herschel, and his remarkable sister Caroline. The author, Michael Lemonick, is a former senior science writer at *Time* who teaches at Princeton, Columbia, and Johns Hopkins Universities, USA. Following the talk there will be a wine reception. In view of the nature of this talk members of the SHA would also be very welcome. Please indicate asap if you would like to attend this event (for which there is no charge, though there will be an opportunity to make a voluntary contribution of £3 towards the costs of the wine) by replying to: jh@ras.org.uk.

David Elliott, Executive Secretary, RAS

SATURDAY 14 MARCH:

VICTORIAN ASTRONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY

Organised by Pendrell Hall Observatories at the Black Country Living Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 4SQ. Commences 10am and includes displays, demonstrations, tours and (from about 11.30am) guest speakers: Sir Arnold Wolfendale, FRS "Victorian Astronomers Royal"; Dr. Allan Chapman "James Glaisher"; Rt. Rvd. M.G. Bourke "Victorian Clerical Astronomers"; John Armitage (Pendrell Hall Observatories) "Lord John Wrottesley", and Bob Marriott (BAA) on "T. W. Webb, with comments also on With and Calver". Contact John Armitage, tel: 01543 579805. See: <http://www.bclm.co.uk/>

JA/SW

SATURDAY 28 MARCH:

JOINT MEETING OF THE SHA WITH THE ROYAL METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY

Joint meeting of the SHA with the Royal Meteorological Society's Special Interest Group for the History of Meteorology and Physical Oceanography from 10.30am-4.45 pm at the Royal Astronomical Society, Burlington House,

Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BQ. Entitled *Meteorologists and Astronomers*, the meeting will explore links between meteorologists and astronomers and will include the R Met S History Group's Annual General Meeting. Registration costs £10 - please see the programme and application form for the event distributed with this issue of *SHA e-News* as a separate pdf flyer.

This event is organised by the Royal Meteorological Society; contact Malcolm Walker: MetSocHistoryGroup@googlemail.com. See: <http://www.rmets.org/events/detail.php?ID=427>. The SHA contact is co-organiser Peter Hingley: pdh@ras.org.uk *RMetS/SW*

SATURDAY 18 APRIL:

'BOOKS AND THE SKY - A MEETING TO HONOUR DAVID W. DEWHIRST'

Dr. David Dewhirst was Librarian and Astronomer at the Institute of Astronomy, University of Cambridge, England, from 1950-93.

Speakers at this Society for the History of Astronomy one day conference are to include Sir Francis Graham Smith, Michael Hoskin, Jim Bennett, Roger Hutchins and Peter Hingley. The theme is broadly history of astronomy. Starts 10.30am at the IoA. Booking is required, if you are interested in attending please contact SHA Archivist and IoA Librarian Mark Hurn by email: hurnm@ast.cam.ac.uk

Further information will be circulated as soon as it is received. For more details of the IoA, see: http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/about_ioa/

Mark Hurn

FRIDAY 8 MAY:

RAS SPECIALIST DISCUSSION MEETING - MARS BEFORE THE SPACE AGE

Royal Astronomical Society Lecture Theatre, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BQ (www.ras.org.uk). Organisers: Barrie Jones, OU.b.w.jones@open.ac.uk, Peter Hingley, pdh@ras.org.uk. Admission: RAS members free, £15 non-members, £5 students.

The programme for this event may be downloaded in pdf format from the RAS website here: http://www.ras.org.uk/images/stories/ras_pdfs/meetings/Mars-before_pbprog.pdf

RAS/SW

CALL FOR PAPERS: SHA
AUTUMN CONFERENCE
SATURDAY 31 OCT 2009

This year's SHA Autumn Conference has the theme of 'Astronomers Abroad' to celebrate the International Year of Astronomy. We are looking for five or six SHA members to speak on the topic, which is intended to focus on non-UK astronomers working within the UK, or non-UK astronomers working abroad. The meeting, which will be held in the Dickens Room at the Birmingham & Midland Institute in Birmingham, England (see: www.bmi.org.uk) will start with Reception at 9.30am and the first lecture will commence at 10.00am following an Introduction and Welcome by SHA Chairman Gilbert Satterthwaite. It is hoped to have a flexible morning session with perhaps two or three speakers giving 30-40 minute talks between 10am - 1pm. The afternoon session (from 2pm) will include two 1 hour lectures (all slot times include time for questions)

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www.shastro.org.uk

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followed by closing comments by the Chairman. The BMI closes at 5pm therefore the Conference will close no later than 4.30pm.

Any SHA member interested in presenting a paper should contact the Secretary, Kevin Kilburn, asap by email to: secretary@shastro.org.uk or post: 158 Low Leighton Road, Low Leighton, New Mills, High Peak, Derbyshire SK22 4JF. KK/SW

SHA MEETINGS IN 2009

Meetings not on page 3:

Sat. 4 July SHA Summer Picnic at Hanwell Community Observatory, Oxfordshire. Details TBC. See: myweb.tiscali.co.uk/hanwellobservatory/index.htm

Sat. 18 July SHA AGM and Summer Conference, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. A joint meeting with the Scientific Instrument Society (www.sis.org.uk). Details TBC. Contact Gilbert Satterthwaite: chair@shastro.org.uk.

Sat. 31 October SHA Autumn Conference, Dickens Room, Birmingham & Midland Institute (www.bmi.org.uk). Theme: 'Astronomers Abroad' - see call for papers (left). Contact Kevin Kilburn: secretary@shastro.org.uk

Fuller details will be sent later.

COUNCIL MEETINGS 2009

21 February: Burlington House, London. May: Yorkshire Museum, TBC. 12 September: BMI, Birmingham, TBC. November - Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge, TBC.

SW/CD

**SHA SUBSCRIPTION
RENEWALS ARE DUE**

Calendar in Brief 2009

Thurs. 1 January

SHA Subscription Renewals due. Contact Peter Hingley pdh@ras.org.uk

Sat. 28 March

SHA Joint Meeting with RMetS, RAS, Burlington House, London.

Sat. 18 April

SHA David Dewhirst Meeting, IOA, Cambridge.

Mon. 20 - Thur. 23 April

European Week of Astronomy and Space Science, including RAS NAM etc: www.jenam2009.eu

Fri. 8 May

Mars Before the Space Age, RAS, Burlington House, London.

Sat. 4 July

SHA Summer Picnic, Hanwell Community Observatory, Oxfordshire.

Sat. 18 July

SHA AGM & Summer Conference, NMM, Greenwich.

Sat. 31 October

SHA Autumn Conference, BMI.

Regular Contributors

STUART WILLIAMS



e-News Editor
Stuart Williams is also Research Librarian at the SHA's Sir Robert Ball Library in Birmingham.

KEVIN KILBURN



Kevin Kilburn is the Secretary of the SHA and contributes society news.

CLIVE DAVENHALL



Clive Davenhall is Editor of the SHA *Bulletin*, and contributes timely news.