



SHA e-NEWS

The SHA's new mode of Internet communication.

FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY IN ALEX



Rachel Weisz as Hypatia

Hypatia of Alexandria is the first known significant female mathematician and astronomer. She lived and worked in Alexandria around AD 400, where her father, Theon, was probably Chief Librarian. Few of her works are extant and she is mainly known through her correspondence and later compilations, which attest the importance of her work. She may, for example, have co-written a commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest*. She met an untimely death in March 415 when she was murdered by a mob of Christian fanatics.

Hypatia's quiet, scholarly life and brutal death seem unlikely material for a movie. Nonetheless, she is the subject of Alejandro Amenábar's *Agora* which was premiered at this year's Cannes Film Festival and stars Rachel Weisz as Hypatia. The film is intended as a debate on the nature of faith and the confrontation between faith and reason. It is sumptuously shot and the result is a slightly uneasy balance between swords-and-sandals epic and philosophical debate. It seems worth looking out for, though perhaps it is more likely to be screened in an art house cinema than your local multiplex.

Clive Davenport

SHA SECRETARY SPEAKS AT BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM

Kevin Kilburn has been invited to speak on 'The Bridestones Legacy' - Archaeoastronomy in the Staffordshire Moorlands, as part of the Solar Solstice Celebration which has been organised with the Black Country Living Museum by SHA member John Armitage.

The event takes place on Sunday 21 June at the Museum in Tipton Road, Dudley, DY1 4SQ and is on the same weekend as the Museum's Steam Weekend celebrating steam power with a range of different steam engines around the site, from large traction engines to models plus the narrowboat *President*. See details included with the email to which this issue of SHA e-News is attached. SW

Expenses, expenses...

In 1928, George Ellery Hale secured a grant of six million dollars from the International Education Board in the USA, endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation, for "the construction of an observatory, including a 200-inch reflecting telescope... and all other expenses incurred in making the observatory ready for use."

In 1934, at the age of 11, the young Patrick Moore purchased his first telescope, a 3-inch brass refractor on a wooden tripod. It cost the princely sum of £7 10s and is still occasionally used by Sir Patrick Moore, CBE, HonFRS, FRAS.

The 30 year Hubble Space Telescope project has a total budget of \$7 billion, making it the world's most expensive telescope, according to the Guinness Book of Records. Development began in 1980 and Hubble was launched on April 25, 1990. It has just been serviced for the last time and is scheduled to be in orbit until around 2014.

I wonder which of these three telescopes has had the greatest effect on the development of amateur astronomy in England?

Stuart Williams, Editor

SHA BULLETIN: PROGRESS REPORT



Clive Davenball

As we have advised in the previous issue of the *SHA e-News* the first issue of the *SHA Bulletin* (which will replace the *Newsletter*) is approaching completion. All the contents have been prepared and they are currently with the Layout Editor, Peter Grego.

Unfortunately, Peter has encountered some delays in completing the layout, partly because of work commitments and partly due to moving house (never an easy time).

Nonetheless the work is in hand and should be completed within a couple of weeks.

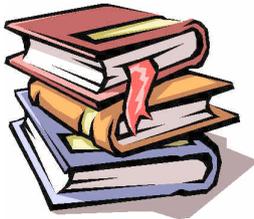
We anticipate the Bulletin being available for distribution by the second half of June.

This timescale increases the likelihood that the *Bulletin* will be distributed with *The Antiquarian-Astronomer*, which will save postage and reduce the burden on our long-suffering volunteer envelope-stuffer, Peter Hingley.

We apologise for the slight delay and thank you for your patience.

Clive Davenball, Editor, SHA Bulletin.

SHA LIBRARY BOOKS FOR SALE



The Sir Robert Ball Library of the SHA currently has a number of surplus items for disposal, either duplicates or unwanted, donated stock.

We are offering these to SHA members at £3 per volume plus postage. They may be collected from the BMI by arrangement or at the Autumn Conference on 31 October 2009.

A list of items for sale is appended to the email with which this edition of *SHA e-News* was distributed. If you are interested please contact me by email to: madeline.cox@googlemail.com

Madeline Cox, Head Librarian.

At the time of the Apollo missions NASA commissioned renowned filmmaker and sculptor Theo Kamecke to produce a documentary chronicling the landings. The result was *Moonwalk One* which, in addition to footage from the missions, explored the public's reactions to the events. It also featured some celebrated footage of Stonehenge. The film was released in the early 1970s, won an award at the Cannes Film Festival and was shown in a few US cinemas. Now it is to be released on DVD, the first time that it has been seen since the 1970s. *Moonwalk One* will be released on 16 June as a two disc DVD boxset, priced £19.99. See URL: http://www.msDVD.co.uk/moonwalk_one

CD

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST LUNAR LANDING

It will not have escaped your notice that this July is the fortieth anniversary of the first manned lunar landing. Numerous events are being planned to commemorate this event and we mention two here.

On 11 July BBC Radio 4 will broadcast a special edition of *Archive on 4* about the landing. It will feature Buzz Aldrin and include material from NASA's Oral History Archive. The producers are also interested in hearing people's recollections of what they were doing during the landing and encourage you to contact them if you have an interesting story. See: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/man-on-the-moon/contact/

RAS LIBRARY SATURDAY OPENINGS

SHA members will be interested to know of the special Saturday Openings of the Royal Astronomical Society Library, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BQ.

Remaining opening dates for this year are: 6 June, 4 July, 1 August, 5 September, 3 October, 7 November, 5 December. Opening times 10.00 - 12.30, 13.30 - 17.00. Anyone wishing to view the RAS Library on these dates should contact the Librarian, Peter Hingley, in advance to let him know of anything special they need, especially older journals and Reserve Collection books.

Contact Peter Hingley by email: pdh@ras.org.uk or by telephone during office hours: 020 7734 4582 extension 215. Website: www.ras.org.uk

PDH/SW

History of Astronomy Event Previews for 2009

SATURDAY 4 JULY, 1300:

SHA SUMMER PICNIC AT THE HANWELL
COMMUNITY OBSERVATORY



John Wall 30-inch Dialyte refractor at Hanwell Observatory

This year's SHA Summer Picnic will take place at the Hanwell Community Observatory, near Banbury, Oxon on Saturday 4 July. SHA members are asked to meet up at 1pm, but the grounds open at 12 noon and admission is free of charge.

The Observatory is sited in the grounds of Hanwell Castle, the remains of a fine early Tudor house just north-west of Banbury, 3 miles from junction 11 of the M40 and a similar distance from Banbury railway station. The extensive grounds, with their lake, medieval fishponds and leafy walks, provide many attractive spots for a picnic on a fine day and are of considerable interest in their own right.

The Observatory is the permanent home of the McIver Paton 12.5-inch reflector, the main mirror of which is a 1908 Calver, the 30-inch reflector due to be commissioned for public use this Summer, and the John Wall 30-inch dialyte, the largest refractor ever to have been mounted in the U.K., all of which will be on display on 4 July.

There is also likely to be a display of various astronomical items of antiquarian interest. On-site parking up to a maximum of 10 or 12 cars exists, so we ask members intending to drive to share vehicles as far as possible, with overspill parking just outside our gates in the village; a location map and further details will be put up on the HCO website - www.hanwellobservatory.org.uk - about one month before the event.

Christopher Taylor, Director, HCO

SATURDAY 18 JULY, 1015 - 1645:

JOINT MEETING & AGMS OF THE SIS AND
SHA AT THE NMM, GREENWICH



National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

For the first time ever, the SHA AGM & summer Conference is taking place as a Joint Meeting with the Scientific Instrument Society, on Saturday 18 July in the Leopold Muller Theatre of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, thanks to the NMM. SHA members will receive a booking flyer by post. Details are also included in the email accompanying this issue.

PROGRAMME

- 1015 Registration and Coffee
- 1045 Introduction
- 1100 Neil Handley, 'Some remarks on the role of opticians in supplying the 'business' of astronomy'. Followed by: Peter de Clercq, 'Thomas Bugge's travel journal of 1777'. Then: Marcus Cavalier, 'An Englishman's castle is his observatory'. The last presentation of the morning session is: Allan Mills, 'The discovery of helium in the Sun'.
- 1230 Lunch break [buffet lunch if booked]
- 1400 AGMs (to be run concurrently)
- 1500 Tea
- 1530 Allan Chapman, 'The history of the telescope from Harriot to Hubble'
- 1645 Close

Registration fees: £7.50 without lunch. £17.50 with lunch. Booking is essential and should be made asap. See email and flyer for details.

Gilbert Satterthwaite/SW, SHA

SHA MEETINGS IN 2009

Advance notice:

Sat. 4 July SHA Summer Picnic at Hanwell Community Observatory, Oxfordshire. Details on page 3. See: www.hanwellobservatory.org.uk.

Sat. 18 July SHAAGM and Summer Conference, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. A joint meeting with the Scientific Instrument Society (www.sis.org.uk). Details page 3. Contact Gilbert Satterthwaite: chair@shastro.org.uk.

Sat. 31 October SHA Autumn Conference, Dickens Room, Birmingham & Midland Institute (www.bmi.org.uk). Theme: 'Open' - programme now full. Contact Kevin Kilburn: kkilburn@globalnet.co.uk

SW

COUNCIL MEETINGS 2009

21 February: Burlington House, London. 13 June: BMI, Birmingham. 12 September: BMI, Birmingham. November: Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge, TBC.

SW/CD

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

www.shastro.org.uk

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OTHER EVENTS IN 2009

Fri. 19 June 8.00pm Failed to find Neptune

A lecture by Mark Hurn (IoA Librarian and SHA county co-ordinator for Cambridgeshire) gives the inside story of the British hunt for Neptune in 1846 and the life of the Revd. James Challis, Director of the Cambridge Observatory at the time. Presented by Cambridge Astronomical Association (CAA). Venue: Sackler Lecture Theatre, Institute of Astronomy, Madingley Road, Cambridge. Email: hurnm@ast.cam.ac.uk

MH/SW

European Events

During 2009 the Société Européenne pour l'Astronomie dans la Culture (SEAC) will be holding two events: its usual annual conference and a special meeting to celebrate the International Year of Astronomy (IYA). The meeting *Astronomy and Civilisation* will be held in Budapest during 10-13 August as a contribution to the IYA. It will be an exceptional, multi-disciplinary event addressing some of the most challenging questions of science, religion, and philosophy.

The seventeenth SEAC annual meeting, *From Alexandria to Al-Iskandariya*, Astronomy and Culture in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond, will be held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA), Alexandria on 25-31 October and is also an IYA event. In both cases see also: www.archeoastronomy.org

CD

SUBSCRIPTION LAPSED?

Please contact the
Acting Membership Secretary
PETER D. HINGLEY pdh@ras.org.uk

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.