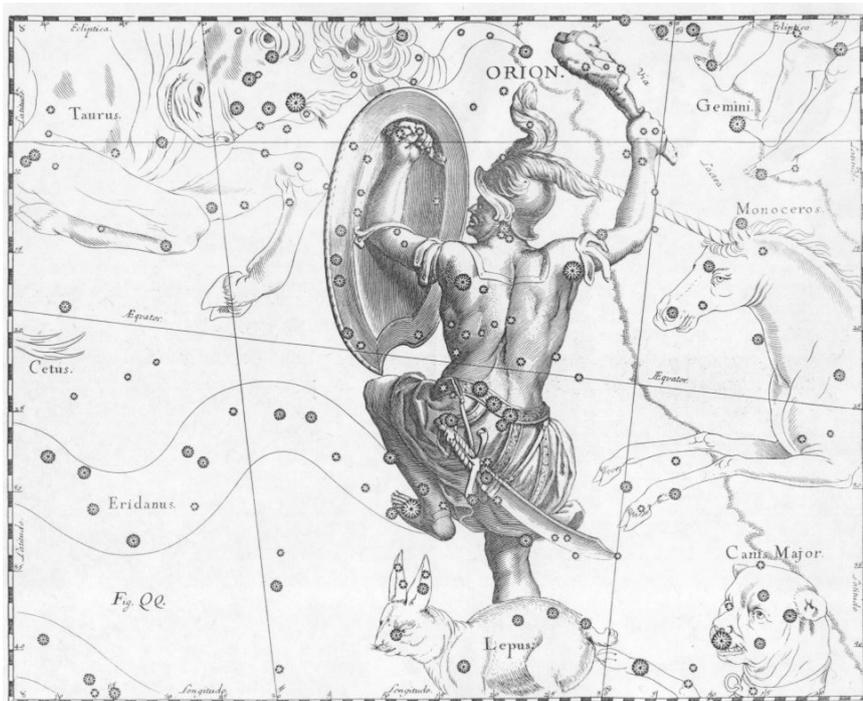




SHA e-NEWS

The SHA's mode of Internet communication.

WINTER: A TIME FOR REFLECTION



The Winter constellation of Orion by Johannes Hevelius from his Uranographia of 1690. The view is mirror-reflected to match the view through a telescope.

This time of year is traditionally one for reflection, of looking forward and of looking back to the previous year. Indeed, the month of January is named after the two-faced Roman god Janus (Ianuarius), the god of the doorway; the name has its beginnings in Roman mythology, coming from the Latin word for door (ianua) - so January is the door to the year.

Certainly, the Society for the History of Astronomy has much to look back on over 2009, which was a particularly difficult year for us with the passing of our Founding Treasurer Ken Goward, FRAS and the consequences of that sad event. Inevitably, we have all been running fast to catch up since then. Also, the health problems of our *Antiquarian Astronomer* editor Dr. Reg Withey have meant that we are still without 'The AA', though we remain hopeful of an issue later this year. So 2009 was hard for the SHA at times, but we nonetheless enjoyed some splendid meetings and new publications.

We now have a new year ahead of us. It will of necessity be a time of change. I hope that we will all do our best to make that change as positive as possible, and the year as enjoyable as possible. With your support, I believe we can.

Stuart Williams

Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes

You will have noticed that *SHA e-News* was not published in November and December of 2009. I have to apologise personally to all our members for this, and for not informing you about the situation before now. To be blunt, this was entirely my responsibility, due to my being over-committed in the latter part of the year.

Having taken on the SHA Treasurer's role primarily as a stop-gap measure until someone more able in this regard could be found, I confess I have found it difficult to keep up with that combined with the editorship of *SHA e-News*, my Sir Robert Ball Library work and my 'day job' plus ever-increasing local and family commitments.

As a result I simply found myself unable to deal with everything at once and 'ran out of steam'.

Having discussed the situation with our Chairman Gilbert Satterthwaite and Secretary Kevin Kilburn, it was decided that the most practical way to ease this problem was to change the frequency of publication of the *SHA e-News* to quarterly for 2010 and to review the situation at the end of the year. Publication will therefore now take place at the beginning of January, April, July and October. However, timely announcements will continue to be emailed as required.

Thank you for your patience.

Stuart Williams, Editor

A LOST TRIBE REDISCOVERED: WALSALL & DISTRICT ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

It often seems to be the case that locally significant items of astronomical history may be discovered quite by accident, even where it seems nothing astronomical ever happened in a particular place.

You would think though that something would survive of a local astronomical society, for example, while perhaps a lone amateur astronomer could easily evade the historical record if they had just enjoyed their solitary hobby quietly and made no noteworthy contribution to the science.

Yet if such a local society has been short-lived, or its publications (if it produced any) were not given to any library, if the local paper was not terribly good at reporting local clubs or if the society itself was not consistent in blowing its own trumpet, it might well turn out that, decades or even centuries later, no evidence of their existence or their work might survive. And yet...

Ten years ago while looking for something else I came across a snippet in a microfilm of a local newspaper - the Walsall Observer - for 1921. It was a report of a lecture on the Moon given to Walsall & District Astronomical Society. The discovery was a shock for me, as I had founded Walsall Astronomical Society in 1990, and having parted company with that society in 1997, had really thought little about it since. But I remember at the time checking the town archives to see if there was any previous local society and finding nothing.

Not being involved with the SHA or local astronomy at the time, I tucked this snippet away for future investigation and promptly forgot about it. Late last year, I dug it out again, and have since been ploughing a bleary-eyed furrow through the microfilms to discover more of this 'lost tribe' of astronomers for the SHA's Survey of Astronomical History, of which I am Staffordshire Co-ordinator.

Nearly three years worth of weekly newspapers later, I think I am beginning to get a better grip on the slippery story of the forgotten Walsall & District Astronomical Society, and 2010 will be the year they take their rightful place in the history of astronomy.

Of them, more anon - in the meantime I hope this little tale will encourage you to go and have a dig in your own local or county archives - you never know what you might find!

Stuart Williams

NEW COUNCIL MEMBER CO-OPTED

SHA Council is delighted to announce the co-optation of Dr. Roger Hutchins of Magdalen College, Oxford, as the latest member of Council.

An enthusiastic member and supporter of the SHA for several years, Dr. Hutchins has joined us with a view to standing for election as Treasurer in October.



Dr. Roger Hutchins, FRAS

SW

RAS LIBRARY SATURDAY OPENINGS

Special Saturday Openings of the Royal Astronomical Society Library for 2010 are on the following dates:

9 January, 6 February, 6 March, 10 April, 8 May, 5 June, 3 July, 7 August, 4 September, 2 October, 6 November, 4 December.

Opening times 10.00 - 12.30, 13.30 - 17.00.

It is hoped that SHA members and Fellows of the RAS who are within reach of London will try to make use of this facility whose continuance cannot be justified if it is not used.

These Saturdays are also an opportunity for kindred bodies to hold meetings at Burlington House and for Fellows, other individuals and societies to come to the RAS, perhaps with family and friends, for a look round the building and some of the RAS treasures.

Anyone wishing to view the RAS Library on these dates should contact the Librarian, Peter D. 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.

Royal Astronomical Society Library,
Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BQ.
Website: <http://www.ras.org.uk>

Peter D Hingley

*Past and Future Meetings***SHA 2009 AUTUMN CONFERENCE**

AT THE BMI, BIRMINGHAM

SATURDAY 31 OCTOBER 2009, 09.30-17.10



Gilbert Satterthwaite and Dr. Allan Chapman present Mrs. Lorraine Goward with a carriage clock in memory of her husband Ken.

As has been traditional, the 2009 SHA Autumn Conference took place at the Birmingham & Midland Institute in Margaret St, Birmingham.

The date was slightly later than in previous years, Saturday 31 October, and for reasons of economy, the meeting was held in the Dickens Room, which was the venue for the 2004 Autumn Conference. In fact, although we have in recent years used both a lecture theatre and a separate room for our Autumn Conferences here, the Dickens Room, although lacking raked seating, proved eminently suitable for our needs this time, especially since attendance was down on past events. The programme for the day was a full and fascinating one. There were also displays by the Pendrell Hall Observatories Group, Mr John Dee and SHA Library Book Sales. The day also honoured the late Ken Goward, FRAS by the presentation of a Memorial Clock to the Sir Robert Ball Library by Stuart Williams and a carriage clock to Mrs. Lorraine Goward by Gilbert Satterthwaite and Dr. Allan Chapman. Proceedings will be reported in detail in the *SHA Bulletin*.

THE FUTURE: at the 2009 AGM it was decided that the Annual General Meeting would in future form part of the Autumn Conference rather than the Spring or Summer Conference.

Therefore, the 2010 AGM & Autumn Conference will be at the BMI on Saturday 30 October 2010.

SW

SHA 2010 SPRING CONFERENCE

AT CHETHAM'S LIBRARY

SATURDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2010, 9:30 - 17:15

The first SHA meeting of 2010 will be a return visit to the historic Chetham's Library in central Manchester. Chetham's Library, was founded in 1653 and is the oldest public library in the English-speaking world.

The programme for the day is as follows:

9:30 Registration

10:00 *Welcome to Chetham's*, Dr Michael Powell (Librarian, Chetham's) plus *Welcome to Manchester*, Dr Barry Henshall (President, Manchester AS).

10:15 *Huntin', fishin' 'n' shootin' the Sun: the Ely solar observatory 1863-1874*, Mr Mark Hurn (Librarian, IoA Cambridge).

11:00 *From West Kirby to the Moon, The History of Liverpool AS*, Mr Gerard Gilligan (Liverpool AS).

12:00 Lunch break (lunch not provided).

13:20 *Welcome to the afternoon session*., Gilbert Satterthwaite (Chairman, SHA).

13:30 *The History of the English Mounting*, Mr Peter Hingley (Librarian, RAS).

14:15 *The Astronomy of Robert Burns*, Dr Catherine Smith.

15:00 Afternoon refreshments.

15:30 *A Noble British Tradition: Amateurs and the Origins of Astronomical Research in the Northwest*, Dr Allan Chapman (Wadham College, Oxford, Hon. President, SHA).

16:45 *Concluding remarks*, Gilbert Satterthwaite.

17:00 Close.

Tickets: cost £10.00 for both members and non-members. Lunch is not included. Numbers are limited and early booking is strongly recommended.

Venue details: Chetham's Library, Long Millgate, Manchester, M3 1SB. Chetham's Library is adjacent to Victoria Station and less than fifteen minutes walk from Piccadilly Station.

For further information see: <http://www.chethams.org.uk> An advance booking form has been posted to SHA members. If you have not received one, please contact Kevin Kilburn: kkilburn@globalnet.co.uk

CD/KK/SW

SHA MEETINGS IN 2010

**Saturday 20 February:
SHA Spring Conference**

Chetham's Library, Manchester. See page 3 for full details.

SHA Summer Picnic: We hope to hold the Summer Picnic at the historic Stonyhurst College in Lancashire (see Newsletter no. 17, October 2008, pp16-18). Date and details yet to be finalised.

SHA Summer Conference: The details of the summer conference are still being discussed, but the likely theme is the History of Astronomical Photography. More details in due course, date and venue TBA.

Sat. 30 October: SHA AGM & Autumn Conference, Dickens Room, Birmingham & Midland Institute. No theme - offers of papers welcomed. See p3 for last year's meeting. SW

COUNCIL MEETINGS 2010

Dates have not yet been finalised for these meetings and will be announced in due course. SW

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www.shastro.org.uk

CONTACTS

SHA e-News Editor
Stuart Williams:
research.librarian@shastro.org.uk

SHA Secretary
Kevin Kilburn:
secretary@shastro.org.uk

SHA Bulletin Editor
Clive Davenhall:
newsletter@shastro.org.uk

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OTHER EVENTS IN 2010

Exhibitions

Until Sun. 7 Mar. Points of View. Exhibition of nineteenth century photography, including some scientific photography. British Library, St Pancras. See: <http://www.bl.uk/pointsofview>

Sat. 16 Jan to Sun. 9 May. Solar Story: Understanding the Sun. An exhibition of striking solar images, including some historic ones for early observations. ROG Astronomy Centre, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. See: <http://bit.ly/8BeZDZ>

Thur. 21 Jan. to Sun. 25 Apr. 1001 Inventions. An exhibition about science in Medieval Islam. Science Museum, South Kensington. (Though astronomy was an important component of Islamic science, the astronomical content of the exhibition is unknown.) See <http://bit.ly/4DNakr>

Lectures

Some events at the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford may be of interest. For details see <http://bit.ly/44L6wW>

Sat. 6 Feb, 2:00pm. Masters of the Craft. Stephen Johnston introduces the world of early instrument makers via a tour of the galleries. Not specifically astronomical.

Sun. 14 March, 2:30pm. The Regiomontanus Sundial. Jim Bennett looks closely at a complex portable sundial from the sixteenth century and asks what it was really for.

Sun. 28 March, 2:30pm. Heaven and Earth Combined. Stephen Johnston investigates a geographical astrolabe (Table Talk).

Calendar in Brief 2010

Fri. 1 January

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

Sat. 16 Jan-Sun. 9 May

Solar Story: Exhibition of solar images at NMM, Greenwich.

Thur. 21 Jan-Sun. 25 Apr

1001 Inventions: Exhibition about science in Medieval Islam. Science Museum, South Kensington, London.

Sat. 20 February

SHA Spring Conference at Chetham's Library, Manchester.

Date TBA

SHA Summer Picnic, Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. TBC.

Date TBA

SHA Summer Conference. Likely theme 'History of Astronomical Photography'. TBC.

Sat. 30 October

SHA AGM & Autumn Conference, BMI.

Regular Contributors

STUART WILLIAMS



e-News Editor
Stuart Williams is also the SHA's Treasurer and Research Librarian.

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 events news.

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