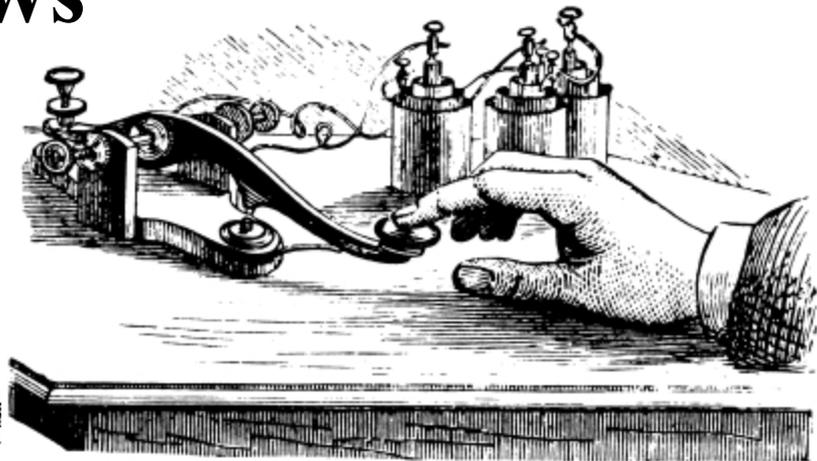


SHA eNews



Society for the History of Astronomy electronic news
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Editor: Clive Davenhall

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SHA news

Editorial: the SHA eNews

Welcome to the third issue of the *eNews* for 2010 and the second that I have edited. It is my intention that the scope of the *eNews* is strictly limited to conveying timely information about SHA events, publications and other activities, and any external events or activities pertaining to the history of astronomy that are likely to be of interest to members. In line with this approach, the *eNews* will only intermittently carry an editorial, typically when there is some news about the *eNews* itself to be announced. That is, the main purpose of this editorial is to announce that there will not usually be an editorial!

I hope that some of the details in the present issue are of interest and that you can attend some of the events mentioned. Snippets for inclusion in the *eNews* are always welcome; contact details are given at the end of the issue.

Clive Davenhall.

Subscription reminder

If you have not renewed your membership subscription then, under the terms of the Society's Constitution, your membership formally lapsed on 31 March 2010. If you intend to renew then please contact the Membership Secretary, Peter Hingley (details on the back page). An individual membership of the Society costs £25.00 *per annum*. Full membership details are available on the Society's Web site.

Summer events

Two events are planned for the summer, both of which will occur on Saturdays in July. The first is arranged for 3 July and is a return to Oxford for a visit to the Radcliffe Observatory and the Museum of the History of Science. The second will take place on 17 July 2010 and is the annual Summer Picnic, which this year will be held at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. Details for these events follow.

Both events are now imminent. If you plan to attend either, and have not already indicated your interest, you should contact Kevin Kilburn, the SHA Secretary, as a matter of urgency. His contact details are at the end of this *eNews*.

Visit to the Radcliffe Observatory

The Radcliffe Observatory, working in 1793 and completed by 1794 as Oxford's finest Georgian building, was one of the four leading observatories in Europe until about 1830. Its superb instruments were the final masterpieces of John Bird, and several of them are in Oxford's Museum of the History of Science (MHS). The Observatory is now part of Green

Templeton College (GTC). The SHA visit will be hosted by Professor Jeff Burley of GTC, who for years has played the leading role in restoring the Observatory tower and in planning the next stage of the restoration. He will explain the architecture of the remarkable and beautiful buildings. Our Honorary President Dr Allan Chapman will add his account of the Observatory's astronomical work; in the afternoon he will explain the instruments at the MHS. These two guides will provide a wonderful insight into the history and work of one of Britain's most historic and complete observatories.

The draft programme for the day is (we may need to be flexible however):

1045-1100: Meet in Porter's Lodge of GTC on the Woodstock Road, Oxford.

1100: Barclay room: welcome and brief introduction to the buildings by Prof. Jeff Burley.

1115-c1230: Guided tour of grounds and Observatory building; Prof. Burley on the remarkable architecture; Dr Chapman on the astronomy.

c1230: Lunch break (bring your own, or use a pub) depending on weather perhaps on the lawn of GTC, or the Lamb and Flag on nearby St Giles (half-way to the MHS).

1400: Meet at the entrance steps of MHS in Broad Street.

1400-1500: Dr Chapman's guided explanation of the Radcliffe instruments (on three floors).

1500: onward at leisure; view the rest of the MHS or go where you will.

Special Note: Jeff Burley has edited a splendid new book: *A History of the Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford: The Biography of a Building* (2005), published by Green College and profusely illustrated in colour and black and white. It includes a detailed account of the astronomical work of the Observatory. It is available for £14.50 from the Porters' Lodge and all proceeds go to the Restoration Fund. Your purchase and support would be much appreciated, but is not of course obligatory. The Society will make a donation.

Location: Green Templeton College, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6HG. For a map and directions see URL: <http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/contact-us/how-to-find-us.html>

Parking in Oxford is difficult and expensive. You are strongly urged to use the several park and ride schemes or the cheap and frequent Oxford Tube express omnibus from London (Grosvenor Gardens near Victoria or Marble Arch), or train. There is no parking at GTC.

Access: the beautiful interior of the Radcliffe Tower is accessed by a long staircase. The MHS visit also involves a good number of stairs. Coffee on arrival/sandwich purchase: these are available in Little Clarendon Street where St Giles becomes the Woodstock Road, 200 yards from GTC. Other attractions include: the MHS is open until 5 pm and has numerous astronomical and other exhibits of great interest. The Ashmolean (the University's archaeological and fine arts museum on the corner of Beaumont Street) reopened last November after a £60 million refurbishment and provision of seven new galleries. It is open until 6 pm and is wonderful!

Important note: there is no charge to SHA members for this event. However it is essential that you advise SHA Secretary Kevin Kilburn (contact details at the end of this *eNews*) ASAP if you plan to attend so that we have an accurate idea of numbers in advance.

Summer Picnic

The SHA Summer Picnic for 2010 will be held at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire on Saturday 17 July, starting at 1 pm. The College was founded in 1593 and has a long astronomical tradition. The noted Jesuit astronomer Fr Angelo Secchi did important work on the colour of stars here *circa* 1848-49 which ultimately lead to the modern understanding of spectral classification.

For nearly a century, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Stonyhurst was an important contributor to meteorological, geomagnetic and solar research in the UK. Its Directors lead British expeditions all over the world to view solar eclipses and the transit of Venus. For the modern solar observer, Stonyhurst is perhaps best known for the Stonyhurst discs used here between *circa* 1881 and *circa* 1938 to estimate the position of sunspots on the solar surface.

Our guide, Dr Fintan O'Reilly, lecturer and Director of Stonyhurst College Astronomical Society, will offer a valuable insight into various aspects of Stonyhurst's astronomical history and will describe the architecturally classical observatory, built in 1838, within the formal, landscaped gardens of the college. The picnic itself will take place beside the Observatory. The site of the long-disused underground magnetic observatory may also be visited. We will end the tour in the observatory housing the recently restored Grubb refractor of 1893 and from where the Stonyhurst solar observations were made.

Stonyhurst College is located in the picturesque countryside of the Ribble valley of central Lancashire, near Clitheroe. Access to the college is easiest from Junction 31 of the M6 and the A59 to Whalley, or via Ribchester and Longridge, thence to Hurst Green.

It is recommended that large scale maps are downloaded from <http://www.streetmap.co.uk/> using the Stonyhurst postcode (BB7 9PZ).

For those wishing to visit another astronomically historical site, Carr House, from where Jeremiah Horrocks first observed the transit of Venus in 1639, return to the M6 and then continue south westwards along the A59 about 10 miles to Much Hoole and Bretherton. Note, however, that Carr House is still a private dwelling.

There is no charge for SHA members but it is suggested that non-members make a voluntary donation to Fintan of £5 per person to cover his valuable time as our host. Please see Kevin Kilburn about this on the day. Pre-booking is not essential but is recommended; please contact Kevin Kilburn (details at the end of this *eNews*)

Location: Stonyhurst College, Hurst Green, Clitheroe. BB7 9PZ. For further details see the College Web site: <http://www.stonyhurst.ac.uk/> and also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonyhurst_College

Autumn Conference

The SHA *Autumn Conference and AGM* will be held on Saturday 30 October. As usual the venue will be the Birmingham & Midland Institute in central Birmingham. In a change to previous years the meeting will include the AGM. The provisional programme is as follows:

- 09:30 Registration
- 10:00 Welcome to the BMI, Gilbert Satterthwaite MSc FRAS, Chairman SHA
- 10:15 *Heavens Above Through Victorian Eyes*, Paul Haley MA FRAS
(based on the work of Revd T.W. Webb; TBC)
- 11:00 *John Phillips' Astronomy at Oxford 1862-7: a Pioneer of Comparative Planetology*, Dr Roger Hutchins FRAS
- 12:00 Lunch break
- 13:30 Welcome back, Gilbert Satterthwaite
- 13:30 Annual General Meeting
- 14:45 *Percival Lowell and the Canals of Mars*, John Dee
- 15:30 Afternoon refreshments
- 16:00 *H.P. Lovecraft: the Terror out of Space*, Stuart Williams FRAS
- 17:00 Concluding remarks and dispersal, Gilbert Satterthwaite

Afternoon refreshments will be provided, but morning refreshments (prior to registration) and lunch will not be. There are numerous catering establishments close to the BMI. There is no on-site parking but there are several city centre car parks and Birmingham New Street and Snow Hill Stations are within a ten-minute walk.

Tickets cost £10.00 per person and should be booked in advance from the Secretary, Kevin Kilburn (contact details at the end of this issue).

Recent meetings

A group of SHA members living in the Midlands met on the afternoon of 8 May 2010 at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, home of the Sir Robert Ball Library and the long-established venue for the Society's Autumn Conferences. The purpose of the meeting was to encourage use of the Library and, for the first time, to provide a local focus for the Society in central England.

The members attending discussed the work of the Society, future plans for the BAA Historical Section, their own projects and – of course – books, which they were able to both borrow and refer to at leisure. Though deliberately limited in size and scope, the meeting was

a great success and will act as a pilot for future quarterly meetings in the Midlands.
(Contributed by Stuart Williams.)

Forthcoming Council Meeting

The next meeting of the SHA Council will be held on Saturday 31 July 2010 at the Birmingham & Midland Institute. The principal purpose of the meeting is to expedite progress with *The Antiquarian Astronomer* (see below). Council meetings are not open due to lack of space, but any member may attend by prior arrangement with the Secretary, Kevin Kilburn. Similarly, if you have any issue that you would like to raise with Council then please contact the Secretary in advance (contact details at the end of this issue).

The Antiquarian Astronomer

We regret that there are continuing delays in the production of the next issue of the Society's Journal, *The Antiquarian Astronomer*. As previously mentioned, both the Editor, Reg Withey, and his father, are in very poor health and Dr Withey is currently unable to work on the journal. Council are investigating ways of expediting the production of the AA while he is incapacitated. The papers submitted for the next issue have been recovered and are being readied for publication. We hope to be able to announce further details shortly. In the meantime we wish Dr Withey and his family well, and thank you for your understanding and forbearance.

The SHA Bulletin

The Spring issue of the SHA *Bulletin* is now being laid out prior to printing. It should be distributed to members within a few weeks. If you reside in the UK and have not received your copy by 26 July then please contact Peter Hingley (details at the end of this issue), who handles distribution. Copies dispatched overseas will take a little longer to arrive, of course.

The Spring issue contains all the usual features: meeting reports, articles, letters, reviews and the various regular items. There is an obituary and appreciation of the Society's much missed founding Treasurer Ken Goward. The meeting reports include the Society's joint meeting with the Royal Meteorological Society, the RAS Discussion Meeting *Mars Before the Space Age* (both held last spring), and the Society's 2009 *Summer Conference and AGM* held at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. There are articles on the Isaac Newton Telescope at Herstmonceux and on artist's representations of Mars before the space age.

Contributions for future issues of the *Bulletin* are always welcome, indeed encouraged, and should be sent to me (contact details at the end of this issue).

Other news

BAA Historical Section Meeting

The BAA Historical Section has recently been relaunched with Mike Frost as Director and Lee Macdonald as Deputy Director (both of whom are SHA Members). The Section will hold its inaugural meeting in the late autumn, The details are as follows.

Date: Saturday 27 November 2010,

Time: 10:30 am to 6:00 pm,

Location: The Institute of Astronomy, Madingley Road, Cambridge,

Cost: there will be a nominal charge to cover a buffet lunch and speaker expenses.

The meeting will be on the theme of *Twentieth Century Astronomy*. Currently the following speakers are confirmed:

Simon Mitton, *Fred Hoyle*

Jacqueline Mitton, *Maria Mitchell and Vassar College*

Bob Marriott, *Mary Evershed* (first Director of the BAA Historical Section)

Jeremy Shears, *Felix de la Roy* (early Director of the Variable Star Section)

Lee Macdonald, *The Isaac Newton Telescope*

Further details will be announced on the Section's Web site closer to the time. See URL:

<http://www.britastro.org/history>

The organisers would be delighted to see SHA members at the meeting, which should be of considerable interest.

Gill-100

The Share Initiative (TSI) are now planning a new astronomical heritage project called 'GILL-100' which will celebrate the life of the Scottish astronomer Sir David Gill (1843-1914). The hundredth anniversary of his death will be on 24 January 2014 and the project will spend three years delivering a series of objectives to mark this very special occasion.

David Gill was born in Aberdeen and set up his own observatory using a 12-inch silvered-glass mirror made by Revd Henry Cooper Key. His photograph of the Moon taken in 1869 led to him working at Dun Echt Observatory for Lord Lindsay and the subsequent expedition to Mauritius in 1874 for the Venus Transit. Gill's measurement of the parallax shift of the minor planet Juno was highly praised. Three years later Gill with his wife Bella repeated the technique at Ascension Island during the close opposition of Mars in 1877.

Gill was appointed HM Royal Astronomer (Director) at the Cape of Good Hope (1879-1906) where his pioneering astrophotography work included collaboration with the Dutch astronomer J.C. Kapteyn to produce the *Cape Photographic Durchmusterung*. This led onto the *Carte du Ciel* project which he coordinated up to the time of his death. On returning to the UK Gill received many honours including becoming President of the Royal Astronomical Society.

GILL-100 will be the fourth astronomical heritage project led by TSI - following the success of Webb-Share, Aurora Polaris and Astro-Cymru - and funding applications are now being prepared for both the Heritage Lottery (Scotland) and also the EUCLID programme (European Union). To ensure a strong bid we are keen to work in partnership with both individuals and organisations - please contact SHA Member Paul Haley (e-mail: pahastro@aol.com) if you are interested in this project proposal. (Contributed by Paul Haley.)

RAS Library Saturday opening

By kind invitation SHA members may use the RAS Library in their premises in Burlington House. In addition to normal weekday opening the Library also opens on the first Saturday of each Month, Bank Holidays excepted. For the remainder of 2010 the Library will be open 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on the following Saturdays:

3 July, 7 August, 4 September, 2 October, 6 November and 4 December.

There will only be one member of staff on duty so it will be necessary to ring the bell and wait to be admitted; if the delay is excessive please telephone 020-7734 -4582, ext. 215. You are advised to confirm out-of-hours openings with the Librarian, Peter Hingley (details below) before undertaking a lengthy journey.

eNews admin

Next issue

The next issue will be circulated around 1 October 2010.

Contributions for inclusion in this issue should be sent to me by 20 September 2010.

Snippets for the *eNews*, typically notices of forthcoming events, are always welcome. Longer items suitable for the *SHA Bulletin* are also welcome and should be sent to the same address.

Contact details

All correspondence regarding the *eNews* should be sent to:

Clive Davenhall. 30, Millar Crescent, Morningside, Edinburgh, EH10 5HH, UK.
e-mail: newsletter@shasto.org.uk

Membership inquiries should be sent to the Membership Secretary:

Peter Hingley. The Librarian, Royal Astronomical Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BQ, UK. e-mail: pdh@ras.org.uk

General Communications to the Society should be sent to the Secretary:

Kevin Kilburn FRAS. 158, Low Leighton Road, New Mills, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK22 4JF, UK. e-mail: secretary@ras.org.uk

SHA Web site: <http://www.shastro.org.uk>