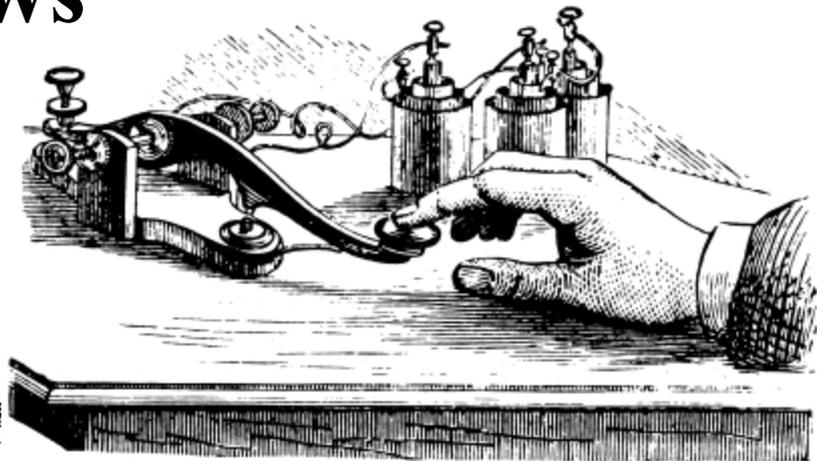


SHA eNews



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

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Thr. 15 to Sun. 18 Sep. Hevelius 2011, Gdańsk, Poland. A meeting to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Johannes Hevelius, organised by the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences. For further details see: <http://ihnpan.waw.pl/2011/01/hevelius-2011-15%E2%80%9318-september-2011-gdansk-poland-call-for-papers/?lang=en> (non-SHA event).

Mon. 19 to Sat. 24 Sep. SEAC 2011: Stars and Stones: Voyages in Archaeoastronomy and Cultural Astronomy. Annual meeting of the Société Européenne pour L'Astronomie dans la Culture (SEAC). To be held at the University of Évora, Portugal. See: <http://www.ciuhct.com/seac2011/> or the flyer for the second announcement (about 0.1 Mbyte; PDF format) at: http://www.ciuhct.com/seac2011/docs/2ndAannouncement_SEAC2011.pdf (non-SHA event).

Fri. 14 to Sun. 16 Oct. Heavenly Discourses: Myth, Astronomy and Culture, at the University of Bristol. For further details see: <http://heavenlydiscourses.org/> (non-SHA event).

Sat. 29 Oct. SHA Autumn Conference and AGM, at the BMI in central Birmingham. 10:00am to 5:00pm. SHA Members and non-members £10. Prior booking necessary. Full details are given later in this *eNews*.

Finally, the exhibition *Out of this World: Science Fiction but not as you know it* which runs at the British Library, St Pancras until 25 September may be of interest to some members. For further details see: <http://www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/outof/outofthisworld.html>

SHA news

Important: Volunteers Sought for Council Posts

*Several of the Society's Officers have either had to stand down or are planning to stand down in the Autumn and we need to recruit replacements. Mike Leggett has kindly volunteered for the new role of Publicity Secretary and Stuart Williams has replaced David Henderson as Webmaster but several posts are still vacant. The positions that remain vacant are **Chairman**, **General Secretary** (which could be split in separate posts of **Events Secretary** and **Business Secretary**). Subject to approval at the autumn AGM additional officerships may be created and willing candidates would be welcome.*

After seven years of remarkable and effective leadership, our Chairman Gilbert Satterthwaite wishes to stand down at the October AGM. Gilbert is only the Society's second Chairman in its nine years. He is in negotiation with a potential candidate for the post, and has agreed to stand as Vice Chairman for a year to provide continuity and ease the transition. Brief details of the other posts follow.

General Secretary: *for personal reasons our popular General Secretary Kevin Kilburn must also stand down by October and nominations for a replacement are sought. The primary responsibilities of the General Secretary are twofold, and could readily be divided between: (a) an **Events Secretary** to plan (with input from Council members) and organise two speaker meetings and a summer picnic each year; to prepare flyers or e-mail notices for them and to collect bookings; and (b) a **Business Secretary** to draft, in consultation with Council, the agenda for each of the two annual Council meetings and the AGM, and to minute those meetings. For both those roles keenness and being well organised and friendly is more important than previous experience.*

It is possible, indeed encouraged, for anyone interested to 'test the water' before making a formal commitment: the SHA is run by a friendly Council and Officers. They liaise by any member asking a question or raising an issue for frank discussion within a Council e-mail group and by occasional meetings (attendance at which is not mandatory). If you are interested in any of the vacant posts (or in contributing in other ways, such as assisting with the publications), it would be possible to co-opt you to join the e-mail group so that you can read the traffic, see how things work, contribute your opinion, and also, when ready, shadow a role so that you can discuss queries in more detail with the incumbent.

If further information from an informal chat would help you to decide to give it a try, please contact any Council member (the full Council is listed in the Bulletin, The Antiquarian Astronomer and is also available on the Society's Web site).

If you are interested in getting involved then please do get in contact. Elections for the Council posts will be held at the AGM in October and members will be circulated with details of all the candidates in advance.

Volunteers to Help with Journal Searches

Most members will be aware of the SHA's Survey of the Astronomical Geography of the British Isles. This project is one of the most important activities of the Society, with much potential value to future studies. It seeks to collate information on all recorded astronomers and observatories, on a county-by-county basis, for the whole of the British Isles. Some counties have been superbly done but others have hardly been touched and taking on the astronomical history of a whole county can seem quite a daunting task.

One possible way this project could be made to seem less daunting would be if various 'national' sources could be searched 'once and for all', recording topographical locations of astronomical activity. These data would then be available to anyone adopting counties for the Survey. Sources would include well-known journals such as the *Journal* of the British Astronomical Association and the *Monthly Notices* of the RAS, lesser known publications such as the short-lived *Selenographical Journal* and the like, and possibly at a later stage sources such as RAS election certificates.

Most of this work would be done at the RAS Library at Burlington House on Saturdays or Sundays (most likely the latter), but if a reasonable number of Midland-based volunteers were available it is possible that some sessions could be held at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

No prior specialist knowledge or experience is required, but members taking part would have to be prepared to work carefully and meticulously and to follow the methodology set out so that the records are consistent. If you feel you could contribute the occasional day to this worthwhile effort please e-mail either myself, the RAS Librarian (pdh@ras.org.uk) or the Survey co-ordinator, Mr Roger Jones (ziksby@gmail.com) and we can discuss when possible dates might be arranged.

I do hope you will be able to help!

Peter Hingley.

***Imminent:* Summer Picnic**

The 2011 SHA Summer Picnic will be held Saturday 16 July at the Orwell Park Observatory, which is in Orwell Park School, in the village of Nacton, near Ipswich, Suffolk. This splendid Observatory is run by the The Orwell Astronomical Society (Ipswich). Tickets cost £10.00 for both members and non-members. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Society for the History of Astronomy' and sent to the General Secretary, Kevin Kilburn (contact details at the end of this *eNews*).

The picnic itself will be held in South Field, which has excellent views to the River Orwell. The School have kindly offered the use of their Orangery and Alstom rooms (the former backs onto the South Field) and these will provide a suitable retreat in the unlikely event of inclement weather. Tea urns will be available.

The planned attractions include guided tours of the observatory at various times during the afternoon and a book sale of surplus stock from the OAS Library. The OASI is kindly making these items available to SHA members at very reasonable prices. Weather permitting, the Tomline 10-inch refractor (by Troughton and Sims) will be set up for solar observing. Several smaller telescopes, including a PST (Personal Solar Telescope), will similarly be set up in the School grounds.

Access to the School is via the main entrance and there is ample parking around the front or North side of the school. We hope that some signage will be erected outside and around the school. It should be possible to arrange special or disabled parking, given advance warning. Similarly it should be possible to collect (and duly return!) anyone travelling by public transport from either Ipswich rail or bus station. In all cases contact the General Secretary, Kevin Kilburn in advance to make the necessary arrangements (contact details at the end of this *eNews*).

The OASI has further information about the Observatory on its Web site:

<http://www.oasi.org.uk/>

The address of the Orwell Park School is: Nacton, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP10 0ER. The School's Web site has an interactive road map showing its location:

<http://www.orwellpark.co.uk/>

Autumn Conference and AGM

The 2011 SHA Autumn Conference and AGM will be held on Saturday 29 October at the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI) in central Birmingham. The programme is as follows:

9:30: Registration

10:00: Gilbert Satterthwaite, *Welcome and Introduction*

10:15 Clive Davenhall, *Lost World: Images of Mars Before the Space Age*

11:00 Brian Sheen, *The life and times of John Couch Adams from 1819 to 1847*

12:00 Lunch (not provided)

13:30 Gilbert Satterthwaite, *Welcome to the afternoon session*

13:30 Gilbert Satterthwaite, *2011 Annual General Meeting*

15:00 Afternoon refreshments

15:30 Dr Allan Chapman, *TBC**

16:45 Gilbert Satterthwaite, *Concluding remarks*

17:00 Close

* Dr Chapman will speak on either Sir George Airy or the history of the Royal Society. The final details will be advised closer to the event.

Tickets are £10.00 each for both members and non-members and can be obtained from the General Secretary, Kevin Kilburn (contact details at the end of this *eNews*). Cheques should be made payable to 'The Society for the History of Astronomy.' Booking in advance is greatly appreciated.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided during the afternoon break. However, you should make your own arrangements for refreshments prior to the meeting and for lunch. The BMI has a cafe and there are numerous cafes and restaurants close by.

The BMI is conveniently located in central Birmingham, within ten minutes walk of New Street station. Its address is 9, Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS. See:

<http://www.bmi.org.uk>

SHA Stand at the FAS Convention

For outreach and recruiting purposes the SHA will have a table at the Federation of Astronomical Societies Convention to be held at the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge on Saturday 15 October. Details of this event are available on the FAS Web site:

<http://www.fedastro.org.uk/fas/>

Recent Events

The first SHA event of 2011 was the Spring Conference held at the Institute of Astronomy Cambridge on Saturday 9 April. The meeting started at 10:00 am and included informative and enjoyable talks by Dr Anita McConnell, Peter Hingley and Dr Michael Hoskins. Unfortunately Prof. Colin Pillinger was not able to speak due to ill health and SHA General Secretary Kevin Kilburn stood in at short notice with an alternative talk. Our best wishes go to Prof. Pillinger. A full report of the meeting will appear in a future issue of the *Bulletin*.

Future Meetings

Outline Programme for 2012

The current outline programme for 2012 is as follows.

Sat. 28 Apr. *Spring Conference*, at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Sat. 9 Jun (TBC). *Summer Picnic*. The venue is not decided, but a possibility under consideration is Carr House, Much Hoole, Lancashire, from where in 1639 Jeremiah Horrocks made the first observation of a transit of Venus.

Sat. 27 Oct. *Autumn Conference and AGM*, at the BMI in central Birmingham.

Suggestions for the 2013 Programme

The options for meetings in 2013 are being considered. Possibilities for the Spring Conference include the historic Chetham's Library in Manchester, where two successful meetings have already been held, or a venue in Durham.

Several members have suggested holding the Summer Picnic in Sidmouth in order to visit the Norman Lockyer Observatory. On the one hand there are concerns that this location may be too remote to attract enough members to make the event viable; on the other members may choose to make the picnic a part of a longer break in an attractive part of the country. Council have been taking advice from members on this issue and will seek a further show of hands at

the BMI in October, and be guided accordingly. Your preferences, comments and suggestions for alternative venues are most welcome. Please do make your views known either in person at one of the meetings or by e-mail to the General Secretary, Kevin Kilburn (contact details at the end of this *eNews*).

Changes to the Council and Officers

There have been a number of changes to the Society's Council and Officers since the last *Bulletin* and more are in the offing. Some senior officers are planning to stand down at the AGM in the autumn and volunteers are sought for several posts; see *Important: Volunteers Sought for Council Posts* on p3.

Amongst the changes already in place we are pleased to report that Dr Roger Hutchins was duly appointed as Treasurer at the 2010 AGM and has subsequently proved a thoughtful and energetic addition to the team. He will already be known to many members, but briefly, he was originally a ship broker on London's Baltic Exchange and was drawn into astronomy by the astonishing Apollo Moon landings. He acquired a refractor, served a period as Secretary to an astronomical society, visited major observatories and attended JPL for the Voyager fly-bys of Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

In 1989 he went up to Oxford to read Modern History (BA, 1992). He was subsequently a Research Associate, a copy-editor with and contributor (astronomers) to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and gained a D.Phil. in 1999. His thesis was subsequently published as the well-received *British University Observatories 1772-1939* (2008). He organised the Development Office of Magdalen College until his retirement in December 2006. He is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Dr Mike Leggett has recently been recruited to the new post of Publicity Secretary and will be working to increase the visibility of the Society's activities. Mike is a Founder Member of the Society and is the Survey coordinator for Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland. He is currently Publicity Officer for the Milton Keynes Astronomical Society (and has also served as Chairman and Secretary of that Society), so he brings a wealth of experience to the post. In addition he is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and of the British Interplanetary Society and a member of the British Astronomical Association and the Planetary Society. He was a founder member of the South Lincolnshire Astronomical and Geophysical Society in 1976.

He is a graduate in Chemistry and Pharmacology from the University of Nottingham and also holds a PhD in Chemistry. He is a Chartered Chemist and a Member of the Royal Society of Chemistry, a member of the Astrophysical Chemistry Group and the Historical Group. He holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Technical Authorship and Communication and is a Member of the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators. In addition, he is a member of

several historical and heritage organisations, including the National Trust, English Heritage and the Society of Genealogists.

David Henderson, the Society's long-standing Webmaster stood down during February because of accumulating work and family commitments. David has done sterling work on the Society's Web site and we thank him most warmly for his contribution. SHA stalwart Stuart Williams stepped in as the new Webmaster. However, in June Stuart unexpectedly resigned from the Council for personal reasons, though he is currently retaining the posts of Research Librarian and Webmaster. Stuart has made an enormous contribution to the Society and, indeed, was instrumental in its founding, and he is owed a huge debt of gratitude. We look forward to working with him in his remaining roles.

Council Meetings in 2011

Council held a productive meeting at the premises of the RAS, Burlington House, London on Sat. 12 March. The following meeting is scheduled for the remainder of the year:

Sat. 10 September, at the BMI in central Birmingham.

Council meetings are not open due to lack of space, but any member may attend by prior arrangement with the General 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 *eNews*).

Publications

All the material for the Summer 2011 issue of the SHA *Bulletin* (no. 21 in the series) will shortly be sent for layout prior to printing. We hope that it will be ready for distribution in late July. The mix of items in no. 21 will be much as in previous issues: news, meeting reports, articles, letters, book reviews and various Society business.

Contributions for inclusion in the *Bulletin* are always welcome and might include meeting reports, articles, letters and book reviews. It is usually prudent to check with the Editor before preparing items, particularly for meeting reports and book reviews, where duplication is a possibility. All correspondence should be sent to Clive Davenhall (contact details at the end of this issue).

We plan to publish volume **6** of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* around the end of 2011. Several papers have been received and are either being refereed or readied for publication. Papers for consideration for publication in *The Antiquarian Astronomer* are always welcome. If you are interested in submitting one then please contact the Executive Editor, Kevin Johnson (contact details at the end of this *eNews*), who will be pleased to advise.

Membership Subscription for 2011

Formally membership renewals for 2011 were due by 31 March and if you did not renew by this date your membership has lapsed. In practice we will still accept renewals and, in any event, new or rejoining members are always welcome.

As for last year, a discount of £5 is available on all subscriptions for renewing members. This discount is to compensate for the non-appearance of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* during 2010. Consequently it is only available to existing members renewing their subscriptions and is not applicable to new members joining for the first time in 2011. The table below gives the full details.

Cheques should be made payable to ‘The Society for the History of Astronomy’ and sent to the Membership Secretary, Peter Hingley (contact details at the end of this *eNews*).

Membership Subscription rates for 2011

<u>Membership category</u>	<u>Full 2011 subscription</u>	<u>Amount due after applying discount</u>
Ordinary Membership	£25.00	£20.00
Family Membership	£30.00	£25.00
Concessionary Membership	£20.00	£15.00
Institutional Membership	£20.00	£15.00
Overseas Supplement	£10.00	£10.00

Other news

Henge Tours by Omnibus

A new 'Henge Tours' bus service has recently started which may be of interest to some members. The service will run from the Wiltshire Heritage Museum in Devizes. The route passes through the picturesque Wiltshire countryside and takes in a number of henge sites, including the 'superhenge' complexes of Avebury, Marden and Durrington Wells and also Stonehenge and Woodhenge.

The service is flexible so passengers can disembark to explore individual sites and then be collected later. Tickets last for two days, so it is possible to take a leisurely tour. Alternatively, Pewsey Station can be included in the itinerary. It is less than an hour from Paddington, so Metropolitan visitors could complete the tour in a day. While a ticket is valid it also includes temporary membership of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, which gives free entry to the Devizes Museum, discounts at Stonehenge *etc.* Tickets cost £10.00. Initially the service will only run at weekends and on bank holidays, though it may be extended later. For further information see: <http://www.stonehenge-avebury-bus.org.uk/> and also the letter by Steve Marshall in *Fortean Times*, no. 277, July 2011, p67.

2012 Transit of Venus

5 June 2012 will see a transit of Venus across the disk of the Sun. Such transits come in pairs; the previous one in the current pair was on 8 June 2004 (see *Newsletter* no. 5, November 2004, pp14-15). The 2012 transit will be best observed from eastern Asia, Australasia, the Pacific and parts of north western America. It will be partly visible from the British Isles, weather permitting. At dawn on 5 June Venus will already be in progress across the solar disk. The time of egress depends on location: from London interior egress will be at 5:37 am (BST) and the transit will end with exterior egress at 5:55 am (BST).

Numerous events are planned to mark the event and these are being coordinated by the Transit of Venus Project: <http://www.transitofvenus.nl>. The Project's Web site has a wealth of resources, many of them historical. One notable example is Rob van Gent's excellent and extensive bibliography of publications relating to past transits. There are also numerous activities planned which individuals can contribute to, such as attempts to duplicate the 'black drop' effect and to repeat historical techniques that use the transit to measure the distance of the Sun. The Project is still under development and announcements will be made as plans evolve. In the meantime there is already much to become involved in. The Transit of Venus Project is run under the aegis of Astronomers Without Borders: <http://www.astronomerswithoutborders.org/>. The egress timings given in the first paragraph are by kind courtesy of HM Nautical Almanac Office, which also has much useful information about the transit at: http://astro.ukho.gov.uk/nao/transit/V_2012/

APOD, 25 June

Perhaps more 'history and astronomy' than 'history of astronomy', but the APOD (Astronomy Picture of the Day) for 25 June 2011 may be of interest to some members. It is a spectacular sequence of photographs by Elias Politis showing the lunar eclipse of 15 June unfolding above the Acropolis in Greece. See: <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap110625.html>

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 2011 the Library will be open 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on the following Saturdays:

6 Aug, 3 Sept, 1 Oct, 5 Nov, 3 Dec.

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 2011.

Contributions for inclusion in this issue should reach me by 17 September 2011.

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* or *Bulletin* should be sent to:

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

All correspondence regarding *The Antiquarian Astronomer* should be sent to:

Kevin L. Johnson. 38, Tuns Hill Cottages, Reading, RG6 1NB, UK.
e-mail: theaa@shastro.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 General Secretary:

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

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