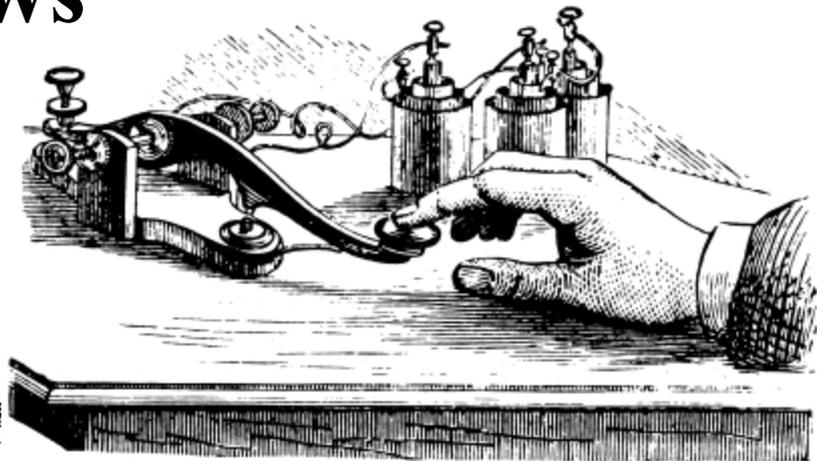


SHA eNews



Society for the History of Astronomy electronic news
Volume 4, no. 4, October 2012.

Editor: Clive Davenhall

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Dates for the Diary

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Imminent: Sat. 27 Oct. *SHA Autumn Conference and AGM*, at the BMI in central Birmingham. Further details are given later in this *eNews*. A flyer is enclosed with this *Bulletin* and is also available from the Society's Web site.

Imminent: Mon. 5 Nov. *SHA Library Open Day*. The SHA Library at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in central Birmingham will be open from 11:00am to 3:30pm. Further details are given later in this *eNews*.

Imminent: Fri. 9 Nov. 4:00 pm *Unravelling Starlight: William Huggins and the Rise of the New Astronomy*. Talk by Dr Barbara J. Becker at the RAS Ordinary Meeting, Burlington House, London. Further details are given later in this *eNews* (non-SHA event).

Imminent: Sat. 10 Nov. 7:30 pm *Unravelling Starlight*, as above. Talk by Dr Barbara J. Becker to the Eastbourne Astronomical Society. Further details are given later in this *eNews* (non-SHA event).

2013

Sat. 6 Apr. *BAA Historical Section Meeting*, on the theme *History of Observational Astronomy and Telescope Making* (part of the BAA's Winchester Weekend residential course). Further details are given later in this *eNews* (non-SHA event).

Sat. 20 Apr. *SHA Spring Conference*, at the Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York. Further details are given later in this *eNews*. A flyer is enclosed with this *Bulletin* and is also available from the Society's Web site.

Sat. 22 - Sun. 23 Jun. *Eleventh Annual Sophia Centre Conference*, on the theme *Celestial Magic* and to be held at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Bath. Further details are given later in this *eNews* (non-SHA event).

Sat. 29 Jun. *SHA Summer Picnic*, London Observatory in Mill Hill, north London. The visit will include an opportunity to inspect the Observatory's instruments and equipment, both historic and modern. Further details are given later in this *eNews*.

Mon. 22 - Sun 28 Jul. *Twenty Fourth International Congress of History of Science, Technology and Medicine*, on the theme 'knowledge at work' and to be held at the University of Manchester. See <http://www.ichstm2013.com/> (non-SHA event).

Sat. 26 Oct. *SHA Autumn Conference and AGM*, at the BMI in central Birmingham. Further details to be advised.

Announcements

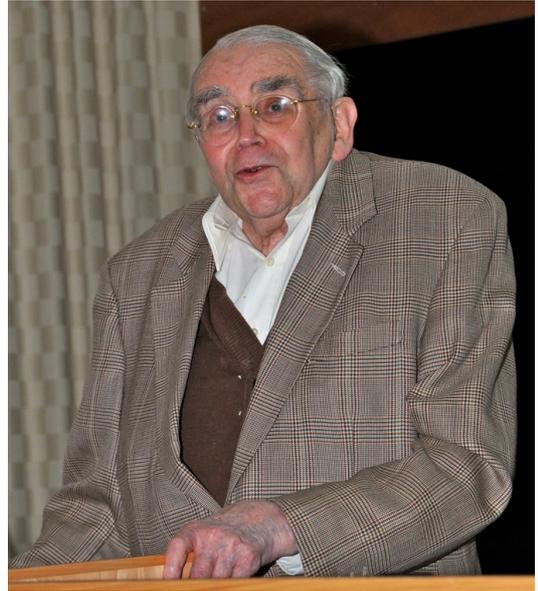
David William Dewhirst

It is with the greatest regret and sadness that I have to report the death of Dr David Dewhirst, on 23 September 2012, aged 86.

David was a Founder Member, a keen supporter and benefactor of the SHA. He spent most of his professional career as a Cambridge astronomer, and many of you will remember the conference *Books and the Sky* which we held in David's honour in 2009 (see *Bulletin 19*, Autumn 2009, pp8-18). In July this year he was made an Honorary Member of the Society (see p4).

A full obituary will appear in issue **23** of the *Bulletin*.

Madeline Cox



SHA news

Honorary Memberships

I am delighted to report that in this, our tenth anniversary year, Council has decided to confer Honorary Membership on two Founder Members, Dr David Dewhirst and Mr Richard Baum, in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the history of astronomy. Full details will appear in issue 23 of the *Bulletin*.

Madeline Cox

Important: General Secretary

The Society's General Secretary, Stuart Williams, intends to step down at the AGM for personal reasons, including increasing family responsibilities and work commitments. Mr Williams was the Society's first Secretary, serving until 2008 and in his current stint has been General Secretary since 2011. During these periods he has rendered an immense service to the Society and is owed an enormous debt of gratitude.

A volunteer for the post of General Secretary is urgently sought. The duties include drafting, in consultation with Council, the agenda for Council meetings and the AGM, and minuting those meetings. The General Secretary is also the first point of contact for external correspondents with the Society, and will often attend to any miscellaneous matters that may arise that are not in the purview of other Officers. If you are interested in this post then in the first instance please contact Stuart Williams (secretary@shastro.org.uk) or Madeline Cox (madeline.cox@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss what is involved.

Membership Secretary

Amongst his many other services to the Society, Peter Hingley was its Membership Secretary until he fell ill earlier this year, when Roger Hutchins kindly took over as temporary Acting Membership Secretary until the 2012 AGM in October. Following a call for volunteers we are pleased to report that Mr Bob Bower has agreed to stand for election as Membership Secretary at the AGM. He will be 'shadowing' Roger Hutchins in that position until then. Until the AGM all membership correspondence should continue to be sent to Roger Hutchins at 5, Sandringham Close, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NU (note that he has recently moved and this is his new address), e-mail: roger.hutchins@btinternet.com.

Mr Bower is eminently qualified for the post of Membership Secretary. He is an ex-RAF Officer, now retired after a technical career. He lives near Stranraer in Galloway, and served as President of Ayrshire Astronomical Society for five years. He is a keen amateur astronomer, with a 12-inch Dobsonian, and is building a 16-inch binocular telescope using two portholes from the German battle-cruiser *Derfflinger*. He has lectured on the history of astronomy and is also a radio ham.

Imminent: 2012 Autumn Conference and AGM

The 2012 SHA Autumn Conference and AGM will be held on Saturday 27 October at the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI) in central Birmingham and is now imminent. Anyone planning to attend is strongly urged to pre-book using the details below in order that we can supply accurate numbers for the catering.

In a departure from previous practice the papers for the 2012 AGM have been circulated to Members by electronic mail rather than postally. If you have not received a copy, and believe that you should have done, then please contact The Chairman, Madeline Cox in the first instance (contact details at the end of this *eNews*). Members are invited to raise any issues that they may have concerning the Society either in person at the AGM or, if they cannot attend, via the Chairman.

The programme for the *Autumn Conference* is as follows:

- 09:30 Registration
- 10:00 Madeline Cox, *Welcome and Introduction*
- 10:05 Kevin Kilburn and Michael Gilligan, *Jeremiah Horrocks's non-observation of the Venus Transit in 1639 from Carr House*
- 10:40 Stuart Williams, *Some Walsall Astronomers in History*
- 11:30 Gerard Gilligan, *The Bidston Observatory on Merseyside – A History*
- 12:30 Lunch (not provided)
- 13:30 Madeline Cox, *Welcome to the afternoon session*
- 13:30 Madeline Cox, *2012 Annual General Meeting*
- 14:45 Joseph Jaworski, *Building the Past: Constructing Two Romney Observatories to House Two Restored Calver Reflectors*
- 15:20 Afternoon refreshments
- 15:40 Dr Allan Chapman, *Hevelius: Grand Amateur and Master Brewer*
- 16:40 Madeline Cox, *Concluding remarks*
- 16:45 Close

Tickets are £10 per person and should be booked in advance if at all possible. Guests or non-members are most welcome. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Society for the History of Astronomy' and sent to The Treasurer, Roger Hutchins, 5, Sandringham Close, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NU (note that he has recently moved and this is his new address) or pre-register by e-mail (roger.hutchins@btinternet.com) and pay on the day.

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>

Imminent: Library Open Day

The Society will hold a Library Open Day on Monday 5 November from 11:00am to 3.30pm. Note that unlike most of the Society's meetings this event is not on a Saturday. Please come along to browse, read, copy and borrow items as you wish. A complete list of the titles and series held is included in the *Library Manual and Catalogue*, which is available as a document in PDF format and can be downloaded from the Library page of the Society's Web site:

<http://www.freewebs.com/sochistastro/library.htm>

The Society's Library is kindly hosted by the BMI, which is conveniently located in central Birmingham. See the previous item for the address and other details.

Meetings During 2013

The Society will hold the following meetings during 2013:

- Sat. 20 Apr. *Spring Conference*,
- Sat. 29 Jun. *Summer Picnic*,
- Sat. 26 Oct. *Autumn Conference and AGM*.

Details of the *Spring Conference* and *Summer Picnic* are given below. Further details of the *Autumn Conference and AGM* will be circulated in due course.

2013 Spring Conference

The SHA aims to hold meetings in venues throughout the UK and we are pleased to announce that the 2013 *Spring Conference* will be held in the historic city of York. The meeting will be held on Saturday 20 April in the Quaker Meeting House in the Friargate. The programme is as follows:

- 09:30 Registration
- 10:00 Madeline Cox, *Welcome and Introduction*
- 10:15 Mike Leggett, *Bryan Donkin FRS, Engineer, Industrialist, Astronomer*
- 11:15 Richard Sargent, *Russell Porter – Arctic Explorer, Artist and Telescope Maker*
- 12:15 Lunch (not provided)
- 13:15 Madeline Cox, *Welcome to the afternoon session*
- 13:15 Dr David Gavine, *Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Astronomy in the Scottish Universities*
- 14:15 Dr Ken Elliot, *Telescopes and Technology in the Twentieth Century – A Review of how Technology has Changed the Way We Do Astronomy*
- 15:15 Afternoon refreshments
- 15:45 Prof. Sir Arnold Wolfendale, *The History of Cosmic Ray Astronomy*
- 17:00 Madeline Cox, *Concluding remarks*

Tickets are £10 per person and should be booked in advance if at all possible. Guests or non-members are most welcome. Cheques should be made payable to ‘The Society for the History of Astronomy’ and sent to The Treasurer, Roger Hutchins, 5, Sandringham Close, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NU (note that he has recently moved and this is his new address) or pre-register by e-mail (roger.hutchins@btinternet.com) and pay on the day.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided during morning registration and the afternoon break. However, you should make your own arrangements for lunch. The Friargate Meeting House is centrally located and close to transport links and medium and long stay car parking. The address is: Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York, YO1 9RL See:

<http://yorkquakers.org.uk/friargate-meeting>

2013 Summer Picnic

The 2013 SHA Summer Picnic will be held on Saturday 29 June 2013 at the University of London Observatory in Mill Hill, north London. The visit will include an opportunity to inspect the Observatory’s instruments and equipment, both historic and modern, while the picnic itself will be held in the adjacent park. Further details will be circulated closer to the event. In the meantime information on the Observatory, including its history, can be found at URL:

<http://www.ulo.ucl.ac.uk/>

See also Roger Hutchins’ *British University Observatories 1772-1939* (2008, Ashgate), pp413-17.

Council Meetings in 2012

The following Council meetings have been held during 2012:

- Sat. 25 February, at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham,
- Sat. 23 June, at the Science Museum, South Kensington, London,
- Sat. 8 September, at the Science Museum, South Kensington, London.

The meetings on Sat. 23 June and Sat 8 September were due to be held at the premises of the RAS in Burlington House and hosted by Peter Hingley. However, the venue had to be changed and thanks are due to Kevin Johnson for organising a room in the Science Museum at short notice. The following meeting is scheduled for the remainder of the year:

- Sat. 10 November, at the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge.

Provisionally these meetings will start at 1:00 pm. Council meetings are not open due to lack of space, but any member may attend by prior arrangement with the General Secretary. Similarly, if you have any issue that you would like to raise with Council then please contact the General Secretary in advance (contact details at the end of this *eNews*).

Publications

The next issues of the *Bulletin* and *The Antiquarian Astronomer* are in preparation. *Bulletin* 22 should be out either shortly before or shortly after the *Autumn Conference* and volume 7 of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* around the start of 2013.

Papers for consideration for publication in *The Antiquarian Astronomer* are always welcome. Papers should present original research in the history of astronomy and are externally refereed prior to publication. If you are interested in submitting one then please contact the Editor, Kevin Johnson, who will be pleased to advise.

Contributions for inclusion in the *Bulletin* are also always welcome and might include meeting reports, articles, letters and book reviews. Letters and short articles could include photographs that you have discovered, informal descriptions of an observatory or astronomer or other interesting snippets from your local knowledge, research or reading. All such items can also contribute to the Society's Survey.

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 *eNews*).

Web site

The URL of the Society's Web site is:

<http://www.freewebs.com/sochistaastro/>

The previous URL (<http://www.shastro.org.uk>) no longer functions correctly. (Strictly speaking the freewebs URL has been current for some time and the previous URL redirected to it. However, the redirection no longer works properly, so the freewebs URL should be used directly.)

Membership Correspondence

All membership correspondence should be sent to:

Dr Roger Hutchins, 5, Sandringham Close, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NU, UK.
e-mail: roger.hutchins@btinternet.com.

Please note that Dr Hutchins has recently moved and also changed e-mail address; *the above details supersede any other addresses previously advised.*

Other news

Imminent: Talk: Unravelling Starlight

Dr Barbara J. Becker (now retired and formerly at the Department of History, University of California, Irvine) will be giving a talk on *Unravelling Starlight: William Huggins and the Rise of the New Astronomy* at the Ordinary Meeting of the RAS to be held on **Friday 9 November 2012** at 4:00 pm in the lecture theatre of the Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG. She will then present the same talk to the Eastbourne Astronomical Society on the following day, **Saturday 10 November 2012**, at 7:30 pm in the Willingdon Memorial Hall, Church Street, Willingdon, East Sussex BN20 9HT.

Dr Becker has provided the following summary of her talk: one hundred fifty years ago, on 14 November 1862, William Huggins (1824-1910) presented his first paper on celestial spectroscopy to the Royal Astronomical Society. The event marked a watershed moment in the history of science. Astronomers would never look at – or understand – the denizens of the celestial realm in the same way again. Who was William Huggins? What moved him to adapt the spectroscope, then a staple of chemical and physical laboratories, to new astronomical purposes? What prompted others to follow his lead? To celebrate Huggins's contributions to the development of astrophysics, this talk will present evidence on his life and early career gleaned from his unpublished notebooks and correspondence, documents that place his pioneering efforts more realistically within the context of the theoretical and methodological flux in Britain's astronomical community during the last half of the nineteenth century.

Dr Becker is the author of *Unravelling Starlight: William and Margaret Huggins and the Rise of the New Astronomy* which was published by Cambridge University Press in 2011. She was awarded a PhD in the history of science from The Johns Hopkins University for a thesis on the Hugginses. Until her recent retirement, she taught history of science at the University of California, Irvine.

RAS meetings are open to non-members with free admission and Eastbourne Astronomical Society has kindly invited SHA members to attend their meeting. For further information please contact Peter Gill (Hon. Membership Secretary of the Eastbourne Astronomical Society and member of the SHA), telephone 01323-646853, e-mail: pbj.gill@btinternet.com.

Further details:

RAS Meetings: <http://www.ras.org.uk/events-and-meetings/ras-meetings>

Eastbourne Astronomical Society: <http://www.eastbourneas.org.uk/>

Imminent: Call for Papers: Literature and the Stars

The editors of the journal *Culture and Cosmos* invite submissions of papers for consideration for publication in an issue of the journal on the theme 'Literature and the Stars.' This issue will be published as **17** no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2013). Papers may focus on any time period or culture, and should deal either with representations of astronomy or astrology in fiction, or studies of astronomical or astrological texts as literature. Contributions may focus on western or non-western culture, and on the ancient, medieval or modern worlds.

Papers should be submitted by **15 November 2012**. They should typically not exceed 8000 words length and should be submitted by e-mail to editors@cultureandcosmos.org. Shorter submissions and research notes are also welcome. Further information can be found on the journal's Web site:

<http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/>

See in particular:

<http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/callForPapers17.html>

Call for Papers: Eleventh Sophia Centre Conference, Celestial Magic

The *Eleventh Annual Sophia Centre Conference* will be held on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 June 2013 at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Bath, UK. The theme of the conference will be 'Celestial Magic.' The conference will be chaired by Dr Nicholas Campion (n.campion@tsd.ac.uk), University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Dr Liz Greene (l.greene@tsd.ac.uk), University of Wales Trinity Saint David and the University of Bristol.

Keynote speakers include Prof. Peter Forshaw, Universitair Docent (Senior Lecturer/ Assistant Professor) for the History of Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period at the Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, University of Amsterdam and Prof. Elliot R. Wolfson, Abraham Lieberman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University.

Magic, loosely defined, is the attempt to engage with the world through the imagination or psyche, in order to obtain some form of knowledge, benefit or advantage. Celestial magic engages with the cosmos through stellar, planetary or celestial symbolism, influences or intelligences. This academic conference will explore the history, philosophy and practice of celestial magic in past or present societies.

The conference organisers invite proposals for papers of thirty minutes which may deal with text, imagery, practice or theory. We welcome proposals on any time period or culture. The deadline for submissions is **31 December 2012**. Please include an abstract of approximately

150 words and a biography of approximately 100 words, in the same document. Abstracts and biographies should be submitted by e-mail to Dr Liz Greene (l.greene@tsd.ac.uk). The conference is held in collaboration with the Sophia Centre Press, which will publish selected proceedings.

BAA Historical Section Meeting

The next BAA Historical Section meeting will be held on Saturday 6 April 2013 on the theme of the *History of Observational Astronomy and Telescope Making*. This meeting will be part of the BAA's 'Winchester Weekend' residential course. Most attendees will register for the entire weekend, but a small number of places will be available for single days. BAA membership is not required in order to attend, but because the Winchester Weekend is a flagship BAA event, booking will be through the forms in the *BAA Journal* and on the BAA Web site. Anyone who is not a member and who is interested in attending should contact the BAA Historical Section Director, Mike Frost (frostma@aol.com), in the first instance.

Further information:

BAA Historical Section Web site: <http://britastro.org/history/>

BAA Web site: <http://britastro.org/baa/>

UNESCO Astronomy Heritage Web Portal

UNESCO has launched a Web portal for its Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative. The site was inaugurated on 24 August 2012 during the 28th IAU General Assembly, held in Beijing. The initiative is sponsored by the IAU and RAS. The URL for the site is:

<http://www2.astronomicalheritage.net/>

International Astronomy Show

The following item is not specifically relevant to the history of astronomy, but might be of interest to some members. The first *International Astronomy Show* (IAS) will be held on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 May 2013 at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre just outside Leamington Spa and Coventry. The show is organised by UK Astronomers Ltd in association with *Sky at Night* Magazine. It aims to be the biggest astronomy show organised outside London and will have over forty astronomy dealers and specialists under one roof in some 2000 square meters of exhibition space. There will also be a series of talks by well-known speakers and some live demonstrations. Further details are available from the show's Web site:

<http://www.international-astronomy-show.com/>

eNews admin

Next Issue

The next issue will be circulated around 1 January 2013.

Contributions for inclusion in this issue should reach me by 14 December 2012.

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

Inquiries regarding membership or meetings other than matters for the AGM should be sent to the Acting Membership Secretary: Dr Roger Hutchins, 5, Sandringham Close, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1NU, UK. e-mail: roger.hutchins@magd.oxon.org (note that he has recently moved and this is his new address). Matters concerning the AGM should be directed to Madeline Cox, 4, Rutland Close, Warsop, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG20 0DY, UK. e-mail: madeline.cox@googlemail.com

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

Stuart Williams. 26, Matlock Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, WS3 3QD, UK. e-mail:

secretary@shastro.org.uk

SHA Web site: <http://www.freewebs.com/sochistastro/>