



SHA e-News

Society for the History of Astronomy

Volume 7, no. 1, January 2015.

Editor: David Sellers

FEAST OF ASTRO-HISTORY AT GREENWICH



Stellar line-up for joint SHA–BAA Spring Conference 28 March

The 2015 Spring Conference of the Society for the History of Astronomy will take the form of a joint event with the History Section of the British Astronomical Association. It will be on Saturday 28th March 2015 at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and promises to be a memorable event.

Giving the *Alan Cox/David Dewhirst Memorial Lecture* will be **William Sheehan**, renowned US author of many books on the history of astronomy—including the recently published *Galactic Encounters*—who will speak on the history of Mars exploration. Sheehan has also edited and brought to press Patrick Moore's translation of Camille Flammarion's 1892 classic, *The Planet Mars* and is currently working on an update of his own authoritative 1996 work on Mars.



William Sheehan
(photo: D.Sellers)

Stuart Clark, widely read astronomy journalist and author of the highly successful *Sky's Dark Labyrinth Trilogy*, will be talking about the subject of his acclaimed biography *The Sun Kings*—Richard Carrington and the 1859 Solar Flare.



Stuart Clark
(image-courtesy
Simon Wallace*)

The US astrophysicist and historian of astronomy, **Prof. Jay Pasachoff**, fresh back from observing the March 2015 solar eclipse, will take us back to sixteenth century astronomy as he



Prof. Jay Pasachoff
(image: Williams College)

speaks about the seminal discoveries of Galileo Galilei and Simon Marius, in relation to the Moon and Jupiter's satellites.

Jay is the Field Memorial Professor of Astronomy at Williams College, Massachusetts, and is responsible for a number of general astronomy textbooks,

which have become popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

Anthony Kinder, former Directory of the BAA History Section, will outline the major study that he has been undertaking into the historical membership of the BAA and the SHA.

Bob Marriott, Director of the BAA Instrument & Imaging Section, will tell the fascinating story of the father-and-son astronomers, William Dawes and the Rev. William Rutter Dawes.

Roger Jones, until recently a Councillor of the SHA, will describe the unique record of British and Irish astronomy across the centuries that is contained in the rapidly expanding SHA on-line survey of astronomical history.

* www.meltingpotpictures.co.uk

FUTURE SHA MEETINGS

2015 Joint SHA-BAA HISTORICAL SECTION CONFERENCE

This event will be on Saturday **28 March 2015** at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and will feature presentations by the following speakers (see previous page):

William Sheehan on *Mars: from the canals to Curiosity*

Stuart Clark on *Richard Carrington (and the Solar Flare of 1859)*

Jay Pasachoff on *Galileo Galilei and Simon Marius: Their 1609 and 1610 Discoveries about our Moon and Jupiter's Moons*

Anthony Kinder on *the BAA/SHA historical membership project*

Bob Marriott on *William Dawes and William Rutter Dawes*

Roger Jones on *The SHA Survey*

Registration begins at 9.30 for a start at 10.00. The Conference finishes at 17.00. Book in advance if possible: £5 for members, £10 for non-members.

Friends and family members welcome (members of the SHA should book or pre-register via roger.hutchins@btinternet.com).

2015 SUMMER PICNIC

The summer picnic will be on Saturday **4th July 2015** at [Woolsthorpe Manor](#) (Newton's house) near Grantham and will include a tour of the house and a visit to [Colsterworth Church](#). Full details will be included in the next e-News.

2015 AGM / AUTUMN CONFERENCE

The Annual General Meeting & Autumn Conference for this year will be held at the Birmingham & Midlands Institute on **31 October 2015**. Confirmed speakers include Allan Chapman and Madeline Cox. Topics already being considered include: *Derbyshire Astronomers; 20th Century Cosmology; Development of the Calendar*.

Members are encouraged to give presentations, or exhibit posters relating to their research, at this and

future SHA events and anyone wishing to do so should should contact Kevin Kilburn (kevinkilburn@sky.com) in the first instance.

2016 SPRING CONFERENCE

The 2016 SHA Spring Conference will held in Bath, jointly with the William Herschel Society in early April. Date and venue to be confirmed soon.

SHA COUNCIL

The current SHA Officers & Council are:

Honorary Council Members

Hon President Dr Allan Chapman
Hon Vice-President Dr Michael Hoskin
Hon Vice-President Prof. Sir Arnold Wolfendale,FRS

Council Members

Chairman (& Librarian) Madeline Cox
Vice-Chairman (& Events Coordinator) Kevin Kilburn
General & Membership Secretary Bob Bower
Treasurer Roger Hutchins
Editor, SHA Bulletin Clive Davenhall
Editor, SHA e-News David Sellers
Editor, Antiquarian Astronomer Ian Ridpath
Deputy Editor, Antiquarian Astronomer Kevin Johnson
Publicity Officer Mike Leggett

Appointed Officers

Archivist Mark Hurn
Online Editor Stuart Williams
Survey Co-ordinator Roger Jones

SHA COUNCIL MEETINGS

Future meetings of the SHA Council are scheduled as follows:

2015 Feb 7 Birmingham (BMI)
 2015 Jun 6 Manchester (Godlee Observatory)
 2015 Sep 12 Birmingham (BMI)
 2015 Nov 21 London (Science Museum, TBC)

SHA PUBLICATIONS

SHA e-NEWS

The next issue of the *e-NEWS* is due in early April 2015. If you know of any meetings, publications, exhibitions or events pertaining to the history of

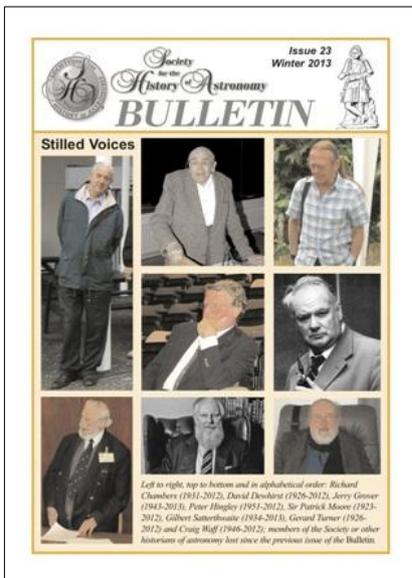


astronomy that might interest other members, please email brief details to the editor.

Back issues and guidelines for contributions are available from the [e-News web page](#).

SHA BULLETIN

Issue 24 of the *SHA Bulletin* is overdue, but should be ready for distribution shortly. It will contain two



obituaries that had to be held over from issue 23 and all the usual material: news, meeting reports, articles, book reviews etc. Look out also for the winning essay in the 'Bookshop Competition' that was announced in the last e-News! Contributions to the *Bulletin* are most

welcome, including letters which can be on any aspect of the Society or the history of astronomy.

Back issues and guidelines for contributions are available from the [Bulletin's web page](#).

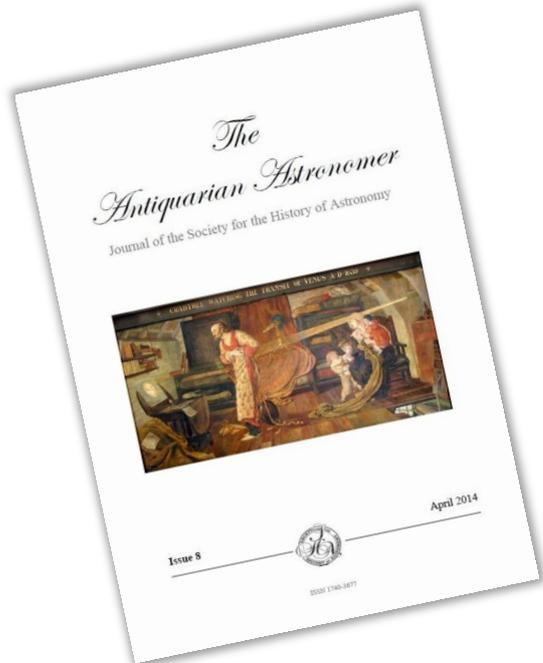
It is usually prudent to check with the Editor before preparing items where duplication is a possibility (e.g. book reviews). Back Issues of the *Bulletin* (and its predecessor: *SHA Newsletter*) are now indexed on the Abstract service of SAO/ NASA. Enter SHAN as the "Journal Code" at

http://adsabs.harvard.edu/bib_abs.html

It is hoped that in the near future, scanned copies of the original articles will be accessible in the same way.

THE ANTIQUARIAN ASTRONOMER

Issue 9 of *The Antiquarian Astronomer*, the Society's refereed journal, is due to be published in mid-2015.



Members and others wishing to submit material for future issues of the *Antiquarian Astronomer* should contact the Editor, Ian Ridpath at ian@ianridpath.com. [Guidance for authors](#) can be found on our website.

In future, as a result of a Council decision on 13 Sep 2014, any member having a paper published in the *Antiquarian Astronomer* will receive **free membership of the SHA for one year**. Non-members having a paper published will be offered a year's complimentary membership of the SHA.

LIBRARY ACCESSIONS

Recent additions to the SHA Library include:

Purchases

Chapman, Allan. *Stargazers: Galileo, Copernicus, the Telescope and the Church* (2014)

Lane, K M D. *The Geographies of Mars* (2011)

Sheehan, W & Conselice, C J. *Galactic Encounters: Our Majestic and Evolving Star System* (2014)

Donations

Cottam, Stella & Orchiston Wayne. *Eclipses, Transits, and Comets of the Nineteenth Century: How America's Perception of the Skies Changed* (2014). Donated by Mark Hurn

Bevis, John *Atlas Celeste* CD ROM. Revised edition (2014). Donated by Kevin Kilburn

A collection of pamphlets. Donated by David Gavine

A 74-page updated [catalogue](#) (Oct 2014) of the thousands of items held by the SHA Library is available on the Society website.



Birmingham and Midland Institute, home of the SHA Library

The [Sir Robert Ball Library](#) of the SHA is located at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BS—just 10 mins walk from New St and Snow Hill stations.

If you are a member of the SHA and you wish to consult or borrow any items, please arrange a visit in advance with the Librarian: library@shastro.org.uk

JOURNAL FOR THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

Members who subscribe to the Journal for the History of Astronomy (JHA) will know that Sage Publications have taken over the publication of this journal from Science History Publications. You may not know that Sage are honouring their reduction in



prices for SHA members, £32 instead of £50 per annum. You can contact them on 020 7324 8701 or email subscriptions@sagepub.co.uk. The SHA membership database allocates a unique ID number to each member. Those who wish to avail themselves of the JHA discount may wish to contact the Secretary for theirs as proof of membership, if necessary.

For further information about JHA see the Sage website at: <http://jha.sagepub.com/>.

SHA SURVEY OF ASTRONOMICAL HISTORY

The Survey

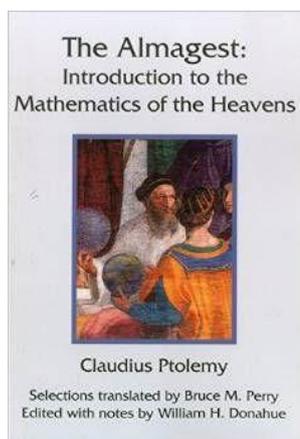
The survey website now includes entries for 750+ astronomers. The Survey aims to reveal the depth of local history of astronomy across the UK and is available both [online](#) and at the SHA's library in Birmingham.

Survey Expansion

It is our ambition to expand the survey to include oral history and the history of local astronomical societies. If you have information about the history of your own local society, please feed it to the Survey Coordinator. Pertinent questions could include: When and why was the society formed? Did it have any notable past members? Does it hold any instruments of historical interest?

FORTHCOMING BOOKS NOTICED

[The Almagest: Introduction to the Mathematics of the Heavens](#), Claudius Ptolemy, translation by Bruce M. Perry. Edited by William H. Donahue (Green Lion Press), Dec.2014, pp.264 (paperback, £18.57), ISBN 9781888009439

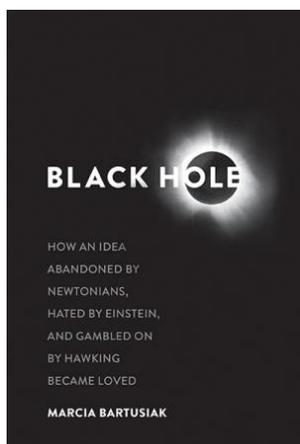


A new translation of selections of Ptolemy's Almagest for a Ptolemy reader. The book includes notes to assist a non-specialist readership.

Designed as a text for use in courses, it contains extensive introductions to the celestial phenomena and to Ptolemy's world

system, as well as preliminaries to the individual books of the Almagest. The selection includes Ptolemy's presentation of the form of the universe, the mathematical tools necessary to construct planetary theories, and the theories of the sun, Venus, Mars, together with an account of retrograde motion and the procedure for computing planetary positions for any date. This selection constitutes a lucid introduction to Ptolemy's extraordinarily powerful constructions and his amazingly sophisticated mathematical methods.

[Black Hole: How an Idea Abandoned by Newtonians, Hated by Einstein, and Gambled on by Hawking Became Loved](#), by Marcia Bartusiak (Yale University Press), Apr.2015, pp.240 (hardback, £14.99), ISBN 9780300210859



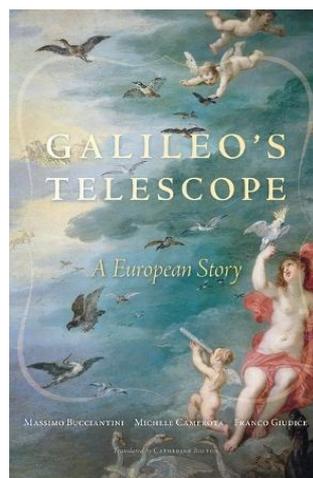
For more than half a century, physicists and astronomers engaged in heated dispute over the possibility of black holes in the universe. The weirdly alien notion of a space-time abyss from which nothing escapes—not even light—seemed to confound all logic. This engrossing book tells the story of the fierce

black hole debates and the contributions of Einstein

and Hawking and other leading thinkers who completely altered our view of the universe.

Marcia Bartusiak shows how the black hole helped revive Einstein's greatest achievement, the general theory of relativity, after decades during which it had been pushed into the shadows. Not until astronomers discovered such surprising new phenomena as neutron stars and black holes did the once-sedate universe transform into an Einsteinian cosmos, filled with sources of titanic energy that can be understood only in the light of relativity. This book celebrates the hundredth anniversary of general relativity, uncovers how the black hole really got its name, and recounts the scientists' frustrating, exhilarating, and at times humorous battles over the acceptance of one of history's most dazzling ideas.

[Galileo's Telescope: A European Story](#), Massimo Bucciantini et al (Harvard University Press), Apr.2015, pp.320 (hardback, £24.95), ISBN 9780674736917

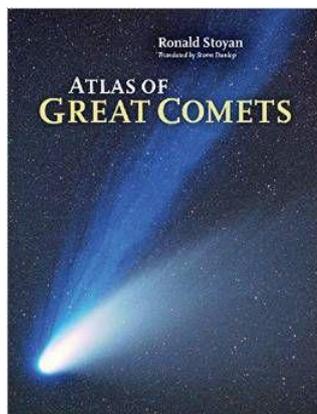


The story of how an ingenious optical device evolved from a toy-like curiosity into a precision scientific instrument, all in a few years. Galileo plays a leading but by no means solo part in this riveting tale. He shares the stage with mathematicians, astronomers, and theologians from Paolo

Sarpi to Johannes Kepler and Cardinal Bellarmine, sovereigns such as Rudolph II and James I, as well as craftsmen, courtiers, poets, and painters.

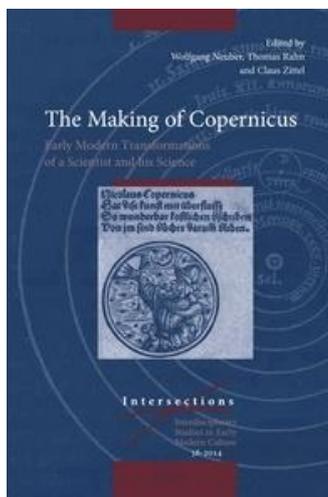
[Atlas of Great Comets](#), Ronald Stoyan (Author), Storm Dunlop (Translator) (Cambridge University Press), Jan.2015, pp.224 (hardback, £35.00), ISBN 9781107093492

A generously illustrated reference on thirty of the greatest comets that have been witnessed and documented since the Middle Ages. Special attention is given to the cultural and scientific impact of each appearance, supported by a wealth of images, from woodcuts, engravings, historical paintings and artifacts, to a showcase of the best astronomical photos and images. Following the introduction, giving the



broad historical context and a modern scientific interpretation, the 'Great Comets' feature in chronological order. For each, there is a contemporary description of its appearance along with its scientific, cultural and historical significance.

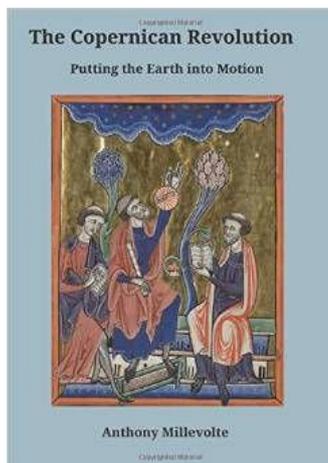
The Making of Copernicus (Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture), Wolfgang Neuber, Claus Zittel & Thomas Rahn (Brill), Oct.2014, pp.348 (hardback, £90.00), ISBN 9789004281103



This volume studies, using examples, how some of the Copernicus myths came about and whether they have held their validity or vanished. It investigates methodological, institutional, textual and visual transformations of the Copernican doctrine and the topical, rhetorical and literary

transformations of the historical person of Copernicus respectively

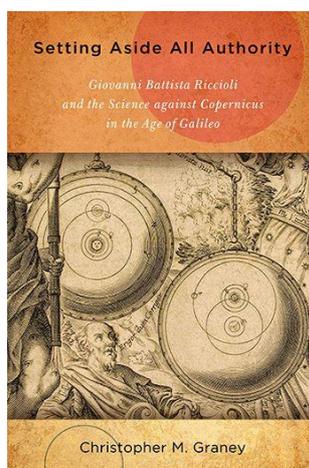
The Copernican Revolution: Putting the Earth into Motion, Anthony Millevolte (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform), Oct.2014, pp.342 (paperback, £11.68), ISBN 9781500433765



This text provides an accessible historical account of how people came to realize that we are on a big spinning ball orbiting the sun. While most of the text naturally focuses on the works of Copernicus and Galileo, several early chapters are devoted to developing a full appreciation of the

earth-centered cosmos. The book begins with Babylonian and Egyptian contributions to early science and ends with a brief account of Newtonian physics and the later proofs for the Copernican System. It incorporates the latest scholarship on the episode and includes an extensive bibliography and endnotes for interested readers.

Setting Aside All Authority: Giovanni Battista Riccioli and the Science against Copernicus in the Age of Galileo, Christopher M. Graney (University of Notre Dame Press), Apr.2015, pp.280 (paperback, £18.62), ISBN 9780268029883



An account and analysis of seventeenth-century scientific arguments against the Copernican system. Christopher M. Graney challenges the long-standing ideas that opponents of the heliocentric ideas of Copernicus and Galileo were primarily motivated by religion or devotion to an outdated intellectual tradition, and that they were in continual retreat in the face of telescopic discoveries.

Graney calls on newly translated works by anti-Copernican writers of the time to demonstrate that science, not religion, played an important, and arguably predominant, role in the opposition to the Copernican system. Anti-Copernicans, building on the work of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, were in fact able to build an increasingly strong scientific case against the heliocentric system at least through the middle of the seventeenth century, several decades after the advent of the telescope. The scientific case reached its apogee, Graney argues, in the 1651 *New Almagest* of the Italian Jesuit astronomer Giovanni Battista Riccioli, who used detailed telescopic observations of stars to construct a powerful scientific argument against Copernicus.

Note: *The descriptions of the books above are largely taken from the publishers. They are not reviews and do not imply endorsement by the SHA.*

SHA RESEARCH GRANTS

SHA Small Research Grants are still available for the period **1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015** and applications are solicited. These grants are made available to provide limited financial support for members' research.

For 2014/15 a total sum of £1000 has been set aside to provide research grants and members may submit applications for up to this amount. Grants may be used to support research in any aspect of the history of astronomy, broadly understood, and may be used to fund any expenses incurred while pursuing such a research project. The grants are available only to SHA members in good standing.

Links to the [application form and regulations](#) for applicants are available on the Society's Web site. Applications must be made using the application form. Appended to the regulations are some guidelines for completing the case for support that forms part of every application.

Applications will be judged by the SHA Awards Committee whose decision is final.

Successful applicants should note that items claimed for reimbursement must be accompanied by receipts to the full value of the item.

Completed applications should be sent to the SHA Chairman, Madeline Cox (chair@shaastro.org.uk)

TREASURER'S NOTE ON SHA FINANCES

The 14-month detailed accounts for 2012–13 have been scrutinized by an independent chartered accountant, and approved.

The SHA started the year on 1st January 2014 with a bank balance of £14,921.90 (and £50,000 on deposit until December 2015—the Cox and the Dewhirst bequests). On 31st December 2014 we finished the year with a balance of £11,050.70.

In mid-October, in advance of the AGM, the Secretary emailed or posted to all Members a Treasurer's Report for nine months, which itemized the Income under donations, subscriptions, conference fee income, and miscellaneous; the Expenditure was itemized under thirteen headings.

The total income for the year 2014 has been £3,599.79, the Expenditure £7,534.07 so that the excess of expenditure over income is £3,934.28. This is in line with prediction, and reflects Council's decision in 2013 to use the asset of the bequests both of which were made "for furthering the History of

Astronomy and for for Society's general purposes" to benefit Members. This is effected by keeping subscriptions low while accepting the deficits on each publication and conference event, as well as offering research grants, and, when possible, essay or book prizes for school students.

Hence while the Society's financial situation is sound and on track, Council trusts that members will feel that across the year they receive good value.

Roger Hutchins, Treasurer, 31 Dec 2014

NEW SHA MEMBERS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2014

I am delighted to welcome these new members to the Society. I hope they enjoy our mixture of events and publications, and I look forward to meeting at least some of them during the year. Please do get involved!

Individual Members

Stewart Bradshaw	<i>Market Harborough</i>
Roger Brown	<i>Manchester</i>
Michael Double	<i>Birmingham</i>
Norma Foster	<i>Cirencester</i>
Carole Grover	<i>Cheadle Hulme</i>
Carolyn Kennett	<i>Helston</i>
Bill Leatherbarrow	<i>Sheffield</i>
Eric Northey	<i>Stockport</i>
Dennis Osborne	<i>Leicester</i>
Neil Short	<i>Chelmsford</i>
Warren Smith	<i>Bothwell Northants</i>
Jonathan Swan	<i>Bristol</i>
Brian Thompson	<i>Haverhill</i>
John Timmins	<i>Buxton</i>
Stephen Wainwright	<i>Swansea</i>
Karen Wilson	<i>Kettering</i>
Geoff King	<i>Turvey, Beds</i>

Institutional Members

Paris Observatory
Scarborough AS

Madeline Cox, Chairman

MEET OUR MEMBERS

SHA members introduce themselves and their interests

In this issue: *Gerard Gilligan (Liverpool)*



Gerard Gilligan

How did you find the SHA, and does it meet your needs?

Well the true story is that the SHA found me, I jumped at the chance to be a member from the day the SHA was formed. I attended the very first meeting. Yes, it has helped with many of own particular lines of enquiry, with valuable resources.

Do you have a special area of interest in history of astronomy?

The local Victorian astronomer and brewer William Lassell, the history of astronomy in Merseyside, and the long history of my own local astronomical society—Liverpool.

What got you hooked on that?

The well-known astronomical historian Dr Allan Chapman gave the first William Lassell Lecture to members of Liverpool Astronomical Society in October 1989, and seeing a small display on Lassell in the lecture venue asked for help in finding more information on Lassell's background for a paper Allan was writing for the journal *Vistas in Astronomy*. I dropped my own Family History research, and concentrated on Lassell's family history. It resulted in a booklet published in 1994 for Liverpool AS's *North West Astronomers* series on the life and work of Lassell. The rest is history!

What did you discover in that area that enthuses you most?

I was able to make contact with living decendants of Lassell.

Do you actively research, or prefer being an armchair scholar?

It is a question of having the time, but I have periods of active researching, as many documents and resources are within easy reach due to the expansion of the internet.

If you're thrown out of the library balloon, what one book would you grab to save?

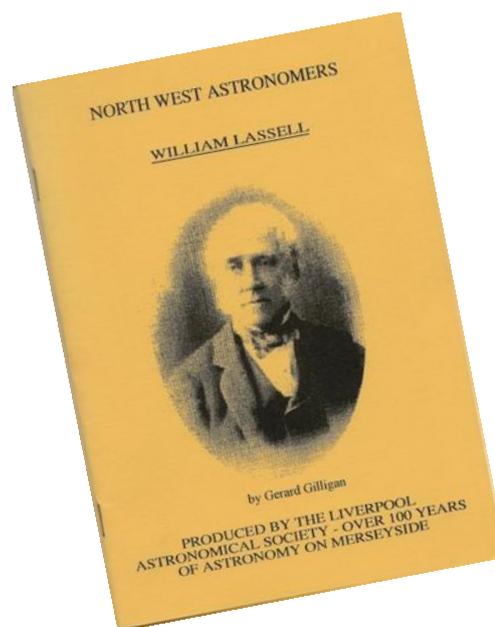
The Victorian Amateur Astronomer by Dr Allan Chapman.

Why?

It is super research tool for anyone starting out and a fine example of the rich rewards of many years of research. There is always more information to discover.

What one thing would you most like the SHA to do better or differently?

Nothing, I just hope its success carries on for many more years.



North West Astronomers: William Lassell
by Gerard Gilligan (1994)

OTHER MEETINGS NOTICED (non-SHA)

The Marginalisation of Astrology (Netherlands)

The Descartes Centrum for history of science of the University of Utrecht, in collaboration with the Department of Philosophy of the Radboud University at Nijmegen, will host an [international conference in Utrecht](#) on the subject of the marginalization of astrology in the early modern period (19–20 Mar 2015).

12th Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop - NDXII (USA)

The [Twelfth Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop](#) is scheduled for **24–28 Jun 2015** at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and will include a one-day trip to the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum in Chicago. Papers are invited on the theme of astronomy and authority. Who controls the production and dissemination of astronomical information? What are the purposes for which that information is used? What sorts of evidence and influence are exercised in establishing astronomical theory and practice? What roles do instruments and wealth play in matters of astronomical authority? What are the ways in which astronomical investigation reflects philosophical, cultural, or political differences between competing traditions? How is astronomical authority undermined?

The 9th Conference on the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena (INSAP IX)

This year's [INSAP conference](#) is on August 23–28 2015, at Gresham College, London.

Proposals are invited for 25 minute talks on the inspiration of astronomy, the stars, planets and sky in the arts, literature, film, religion, philosophy, politics, or any aspect of human culture, ancient or modern. Proposals are welcomed from academics in the sciences and humanities, independent scholars, and artists who work with astronomy or the sky and wish to speak about their work.

The Conference, to be held at Gresham College, Holborn, London, will feature a number of former Gresham Professors of Astronomy, including Lord Rees of Ludlow, Astronomer Royal and President of the Royal Society 2005–10, who will be giving a public lecture as part of the conference programme.

SHA PUBLICITY STALLS

Events during autumn 2014 at which the SHA was represented with a publicity stall included:

The **FAS Convention and AGM** on 11 October 2014 (at the University of Birmingham)

The **Leeds Astromeet** on 8 November 2014 (at the Clothworkers Hall, University of Leeds)

Both events were very successful and the FAS Convention was a particularly timely opportunity to promote the SHA Autumn Conference, also in Birmingham.

We had originally intended to cover **Starfest IV** in Colchester on 1 November 2014, but the event was cancelled.

Forthcoming astro-events at which we hope to be present include: the **Institute of Astronomy open-day** (Cambridge) on 21st March 2015 (an excellent family day out, by the way!); and, the **Webb Society Convention** (IoA, Cambridge) on 20th June 2015.

If you will be at these events or live in the area and could spare an hour or two to help on the stall, it would be much appreciated. For further information or offers of help, contact the Publicity Officer, Mike Leggett (leggett189@btinternet.com).

A new tri-part full-colour SHA publicity leaflet is currently in production.



SHA mobile publicity stand

e-News CONTACT DETAILS

Communications relating to SHA e-News should be sent to the **Editor**: enews@shastro.org.uk

General communications to the Society should be sent to the **General Secretary** (Bob Bower): membership@shastro.org.uk

SUMMARY DATES FOR THE DIARY

2015 MEETINGS

Thu 19–Fri 20 Mar. The Marginalisation of Astrology (Utrecht, Netherlands)

Sat. 28 Mar. SHA/BAA Historical Section Joint Meeting, at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Further details are given elsewhere in this *e-News*.

24–28 Jun. 12th Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop—NDXII (Indiana, USA)

Sat. 4 Jul. SHA Summer Picnic at Woolsthorpe Manor. Further details are given elsewhere in this *e-News*.

23–28 Aug. 9th Conference on the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena, Gresham College, London. Further details are given elsewhere in this *e-News*.

Sat 31 Oct. SHA Autumn Conference and AGM, at the BMI in central Birmingham
