



SHA e-News

Society for the History of Astronomy

Volume 8, no.1, January 2016.

Editor: David Sellers



Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution
(photo: © Ad Meskens/ Wikimedia Commons)

SPRINGTIME IN BATH

The Spring 2016 Conference of the Society for the History of Astronomy is less than three months away. It will be held jointly with the William Herschel Society at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution and promises to be a memorable occasion. After a day packed with lectures on subjects from Kepler to Cosmic Rays, attendees will be treated to a reception in the house once occupied by Sir William Herschel. Register now to ensure your place (see p.2).

OBSERVATORY RESTORATION BID

A [campaign has been launched](#) to restore an historic 19th century observatory and telescope in Bury St Edmunds, with the aim of bringing it back into public use. The observatory is housed in a dome on the roof of the Athenaeum - a Grade I listed building at Angel Hill. Most townsfolk may be unaware of its existence, but the observatory has a fascinating story. Its construction was apparently inspired by the appearance of Donati's spectacular comet of 1858 and by a local lecture given by George Airy, the Astronomer Royal. Historian Allan Chapman has described it as 'an almost unique Victorian astronomy time capsule'.

The Athenaeum Club, which owns the observatory, wants to bring it back into the public domain, with visits and also a camera feed so that the stars and planets can be viewed in a room below.

The project is seeking to raise about £6,000.

Campaigners intend to found a Bury astronomy club, which it is hoped will help galvanise support and funding for the work.

A fascinating 10-page article about the history of the Bury St Edmunds Athenaeum Observatory was published in the [BAA Journal in 2005](#) by Martin Moberley and the late Treasurer of the SHA, Ken Goward.

SHA LIBRARY GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH



Part of the SHA Library, in the throes of re-cataloguing - see page 4 for full story (photo: James Dawson)

FUTURE SHA MEETINGS

2016 SPRING CONFERENCE

The 2016 SHA Spring Conference will be held on **Sat. 2 April 2016**, jointly with the William Herschel Society, at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16 Queen Sq., BA1 2HN. Speakers include:

Roger Moses on *100 years of Cosmic Rays*

David Love on *Johannes Kepler*

Francis Ring on *Sir William Herschel and the Bath Philosophical Society*

John Chuter on *Somerset Astronomers*

Richard Mansfield on *Bristol Astronomical Society: past, present and future*

The Conference will include a reception at the Herschel Museum (and maybe a tour of the museum).

SHA members who wish to register for the Spring Conference should contact [Mike Leggett](#). Advance payment is preferred and will secure a place in case the event is over-subscribed. The usual payment rate will apply, £5 SHA (and WHS) members and £10 non-members.

2016 SUMMER PICNIC

The 2016 summer picnic will be at [Hanwell Community Observatory](#), near Banbury in North Oxfordshire on **Sat 2 July 2016**. Members and guests all welcome.

2016 AGM / AUTUMN CONFERENCE

The Annual General Meeting & Autumn Conference for 2016 will be held at the Birmingham & Midlands Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS on **Sat. 29 October 2016**, 9.30 - 17.00. Speakers include:

Allan Chapman (*subject TBA*)

Bill Barton on *The Chaldean Astronomical Society*

Lee Macdonald on *George Airy and the Origins of the Magnetic and Meteorological Department at Greenwich*

Mike Leggett on *The Hartwell Synod: Dr John Lee, Admiral Smyth and their associates*

Enquiries to Gerard Gilligan (ggastro@liverpool.ac.uk)

Price and booking details will be available in a future issue of e-News.

SHA COUNCIL

The current SHA Officers & Council are:

Honorary Council Members

Hon President Dr Allan Chapman

Hon Vice-Pres. Dr Michael Hoskin

Hon Vice-Pres. Prof. Sir Arnold Wolfendale, FRS

Council Members

Chairman Bob Bower

Vice-Chairman Vacant

General Secretary Laura Carroll

Treasurer Geoff King

Membership Secretary Mike Shaw

Editor, SHA Bulletin Clive Davenhall

Editor, SHA e-News David Sellers

Publicity Officer Mike Leggett

Survey Co-ordinator Kevin Johnson

Online Editor John Chuter

Librarian James Dawson

Member without portfolio Gerard Gilligan

Co-opted Officers (non-Council)

Editor, The Antiquarian Astronomer Ian Ridpath

Archivist Mark Hurn

Assistant Librarian Carolyn Bedwell

Historical Records Officer Anthony Kinder

SHA COUNCIL MEETINGS

The following SHA Council are scheduled for 2016:

2016 Feb 13 Birmingham (BMI)

2016 Jun 04 Birmingham (BMI)

2016 Sep 03 Birmingham (BMI)

2016 Nov 19 Birmingham (BMI)

SHA members are very welcome to attend Council meetings as observers. Please let the General Secretary know in advance, if you wish to do so.

2017 AGM / AUTUMN CONFERENCE

The AGM/Conference for 2017 will be on Sat 28 October 2017 at the BMI.

PRESENTATIONS & POSTERS?

If you would like to give presentations, or exhibit posters relating to your research, at future SHA events please contact the [General Secretary](#) in the first instance.

SHA PUBLICATIONS

SHA e-News

The next issue of the *e-News* is due in early April 2016. 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* should have been received by all members. It is hoped that future issues will now appear on a more regular basis - normally two per year. Issue no.25 should be published in early Spring 2016. 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 web page](#).

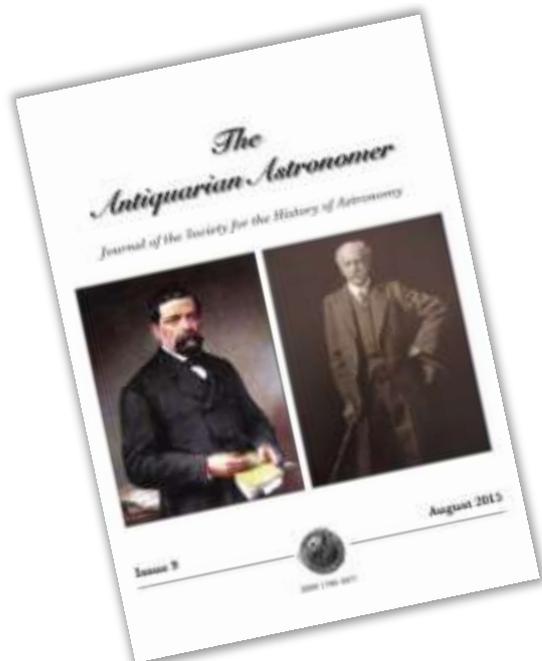
It is usually prudent to check with the Editor before preparing items where duplication is a possibility (e.g. book reviews). Back Issues of the *Bulletin* (and its predecessor: *SHA Newsletter*) are now indexed on the Abstract service of SAO/ NASA. Enter "SHAN" as the 'Journal Code' at

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

The *Antiquarian Astronomer* issue no.9 was published in early September 2015. The next issue is due in the Summer of 2016.



Issue 9 included: *An astronomer's summer outing to the Lizard, Cornwall, 1769*, by Carolyn Kennett (about an expedition to measure the longitude of the Lizard Point, made by John Bradley, nephew of the Astronomer Royal James Bradley); *Mars: The history of a master illusionist*, by William Sheehan (a psychologically based history of Mars observation); *Edwin Alfred Holmes: His life and writings*, by Anthony Kinder (an account of the discoverer of the periodic Comet Holmes).

Note: the first six issues of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* have been online at NASA's ADS service since the start of 2015. Type "antas" into the box at the top marked Journal Name/Code on this page

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

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.

SHA TRIP TO PARIS?

At the recent SHA annual general meeting there was a general welcome for the idea of organising an SHA trip to the historic Paris Observatory some time during 2016. If this can be arranged, would you be interested? If so, please let the General Secretary, Laura Carroll, know by email: lauracarroll55@hotmail.com

RESEARCH & WRITING WORKSHOP FOR MEMBERS

As mentioned in the previous *SHA e-News*, the Council is aware that a number of members are researching, but are less confident about writing up, and some have an astronomical interest that they would like to research, but are not sure how to start.

Simultaneously, the editors of *e-News*, the *Bulletin* and *The Antiquarian Astronomer* all need new material for the SHA publications.

Hence we have organised a one-day workshop at the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI, Ryland Room) on **Saturday 30 January 2016** (13.30-17.00). Participants will meet at noon for lunch and a chat hosted by the SHA in the nearby *All Bar One* (43 Newhall St, Birmingham, B3 3NY), then transfer to the BMI. The workshop will be led by Lee Macdonald (SHA Member, and Deputy Director of the BAA Historical Section), who completed his PhD thesis on *Kew Observatory* in September. He will be assisted by David Sellers. Places are almost all taken, but there could be room for two more members.

The programme will be tailored to the interests and concerns of participants. If you are interested in taking advantage of this new initiative, please email David Sellers at enews@shastro.org.uk stating one or two research or writing issues that would particularly interest you and confirming that you can attend on this date.

SHA LIBRARY 'UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT'



The SHA Library at the BMI (December 2015)

At the 2015 Autumn Conference / AGM, James Dawson was elected as Librarian (and Councillor) of the SHA and Carolyn Bedwell as Assistant Librarian. They have taken up the reins from Stuart Williams to continue sorting through the hundreds of books left to the Society by the late Gilbert Satterthwaite and Madeline Cox. By re-arranging existing items in the library the new team has managed to clear the decks, hoping this will encourage visitors to the library in the New Year.

James is planning to compile a list of books which are not needed for the library collection and which will be sold on, preferentially to SHA members. James hopes to be able to circulate this list by email early in the New Year.

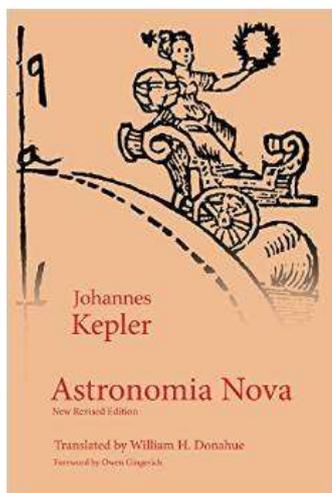
There is still much work to be done in the library, cataloguing the new books and other materials, and eventually integrating these into the existing collection. A more detailed account of this project will appear in the *SHA Bulletin* in due course. For any questions about the SHA's Library, please do contact James: library@shastro.org.uk

The SHA's Library will be open on the following dates, between the times stipulated. If there are other dates you are interested in visiting the library, or alternative times on the dates below please contact James Dawson the Librarian. If you are planning a visit to the library please also contact James in case there is severe weather and either the BMI is closed or the library staff are unable to travel to the library.

Mon 11 Jan, Thu 4 Feb, Sat 13 Feb, Thu 3 Mar 2016
(10 am - 3 pm)

FORTHCOMING BOOKS NOTICED

[**Astronomia Nova**](#), by Johannes Kepler, trans. William Donahue (Green Lion Press), Dec. 2015, pp.574 (paperback, £33.05), ISBN 9781888009477 (also available in hardback, £46.14)

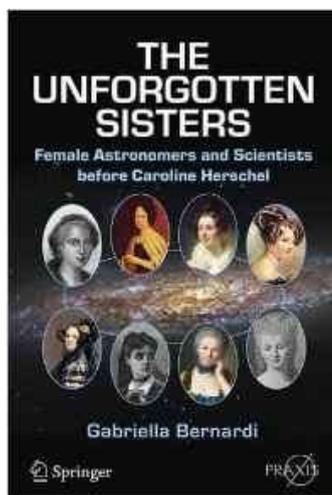


Second edition, completely revised, of the only English translation of Kepler's 1609 masterpiece. A work of astonishing originality, *Astronomia Nova* stands, with Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* and Newton's *Principia*, as one of the founding texts of the scientific revolution. Kepler revolutionized

astronomy by insisting that it be based upon physics rather than ideal geometrical models.

The first edition of this translation was published by Cambridge University Press in 1992, but has long been out of print. After Green Lion Press acquired the rights, Donahue completely revised the translation with the assistance of classicist Bruce M. Perry, and added much material, including a listing of Tycho Brahe's Mars observations and accounts of Kepler's use of them, as well as a comprehensive index, which was lacking in the Cambridge edition. The book is newly laid out in a handsome 8-inch by 12-inch format [*Excellent!* Ed.]

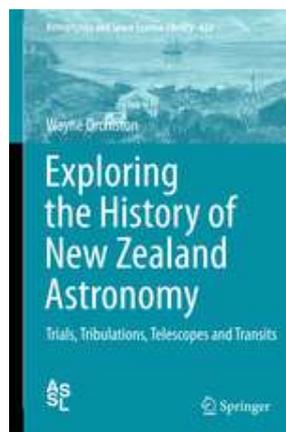
[**The Unforgotten Sisters: Female Astronomers and Scientists before Caroline Herschel**](#), Gabriella Bernardi (Springer-Praxis), Feb.2016, pp.105 (paperback, £59.99), ISBN 9783319261256



Taking inspiration from Siv Cedering's poem in the form of a fictional letter from Caroline Herschel that refers to "my long, lost sisters, forgotten in the books that record our science", this book tells the lives of twenty-five female scientists, with specific attention to astronomers and mathematicians.

Each of the presented biographies is organized as a kind of "personal file" which sets the biographee's life in its historical context, documents her main works, highlights some curious facts, and records citations about her. The selected figures are among the most representative of this neglected world, including such luminaries as Hypatia of Alexandria, Hildegard of Bingen, Elisabetha Hevelius, and Maria Gaetana Agnesi. They span a period of about 4000 years, from En HeduAnna, the Akkadian princess, who was one of the first recognized female astronomers, to the dawn of the era of modern astronomy with Caroline Herschel and Mary Somerville. The book will be of interest to all who wish to learn more about the women from antiquity to the nineteenth century who played such key roles in the history of astronomy and science despite living and working in largely male-dominated worlds.

[**Exploring the History of New Zealand Astronomy: Trials, Tribulations, Telescopes and Transits**](#), by Wayne Orchiston (Springer), Dec.2015, pp.688 (hardback, £117.00), ISBN 9783319225654

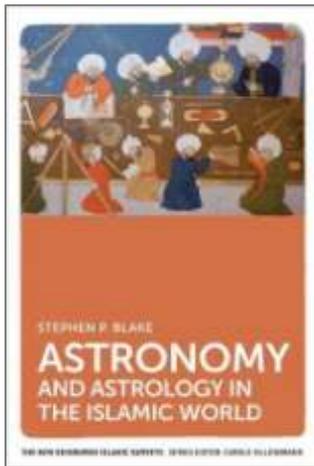


Dr Orchiston is a foremost authority on the subject of New Zealand astronomy, and here are the collected papers of his fruitful studies in this area, including both those published many years ago and new material. The papers herein review traditional Maori astronomy, examine the appearance of nautical astronomy practiced by Cook and his astronomers

on their various stopovers in New Zealand during their three voyages to the South Seas, and also explore notable nineteenth century New Zealand observatories historically, from significant telescopes now located in New Zealand to local and international observations made during the 1874 and 1882 transits of Venus and the nineteenth and twentieth century preoccupation of New Zealand amateur astronomers with comets and meteors.

New Zealand astronomy has a truly rich history, extending from the Maori civilization in pre-European times through to the years when explorers and navigators discovered the region, up to pioneering research on the newly emerging field of radio astronomy during WWII and in the immediate post-war years. A complete survey of a neglected but rich national astronomical history, this does the subject full and comprehensive justice.

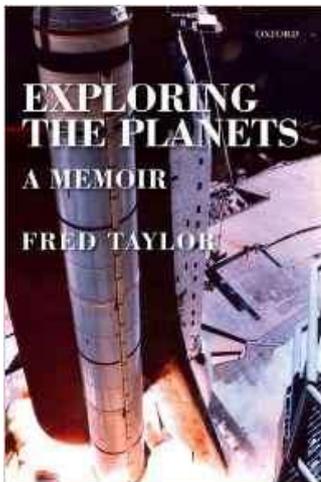
[**Astronomy and Astrology in the Islamic World**](#), by Stephen Blake (Edinburgh University Press), Apr.2016, pp.224 (paperback, £24.99), ISBN 9780748649099



It was the astronomers and mathematicians of the Islamic world who provided many of the theories and concepts that paved the way from the geocentric theories of Claudius Ptolemy in the second century AD to the heliocentric breakthroughs of Nicholas Copernicus and Johannes Kepler in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Algebra, the Arabic numeral system, and much trigonometry: all these and more originated in the Muslim East and undergirded an increasingly accurate and sophisticated understanding of the movements of the Sun, Moon, and planets. This nontechnical overview of the Islamic advances in the heavenly sciences allows the general reader to appreciate (for the first time) the absolutely crucial role that Muslim scientists played in the overall development of astronomy and astrology in the Eurasian world.

[**Exploring the Planets: a Memoir**](#), by Fred Taylor (Oxford University Press), Feb.2016, pp.784 (hardback, £25.00), ISBN 9780199671595



This book provides a first-hand account of the how the space programme evolved over the last 50 years and offers insights into exploration of the solar system, the world's space agencies, research labs, and conferences.

Fred Taylor is Halley Professor of Physics Emeritus at Oxford University and a member of the Oxford Physics

Department where he was head of Atmospheric, Oceanic & Planetary Physics for 21 years. After graduating he spent ten years in the USA, in the Space Science Division of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology. He was Principle Investigator on the Pioneer Venus Orbiter in 1979, making the first systematic study of meteorology of the atmosphere of Venus. He is currently participating in a number of planetary and Earth Observation space experiments, as well as contributing to theoretical work and modelling on problems in atmospheric and oceanic

physics, such as ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect and climate change.

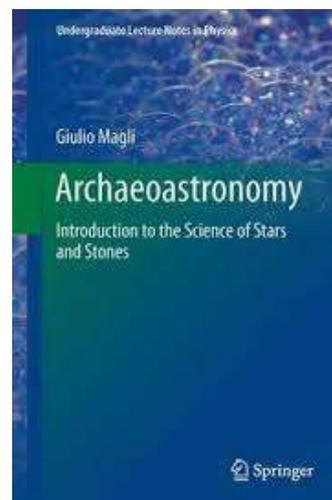
[**Literature in the Age of Celestial Discovery: From Copernicus to Flamsteed**](#), ed. Judy A Hayden (Palgrave Macmillan), Jan 2016, pp.240 (hardback, £58.00), ISBN 9781137583451



The reconfiguration and relinquishing of one's conviction in a world system long held to be finite required for many in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a compromise in one's beliefs and the biblical authority on which he or she had relied - and this did not come without serious and complex challenges. Advances in astronomy, such as the theories of

Copernicus, the development of the telescope, and Galileo's discoveries and descriptions of the moon sparked intense debate in Early Modern literary discourse. The essays in this collection demonstrate that this discourse not only stimulated international discussion about lunar voyages and otherworldly habitation, but it also developed a political context in which these new discoveries and theories could correspond metaphorically to New World exploration and colonization, to socio-political unrest, and even to kingship and regicide.

[**Archaeoastronomy: Introduction to the Science of Stars and Stones**](#), by Giulio Magli (Oxford University Press), Dec.2015, pp.260 (paperback, £33.99), ISBN 9783319228815

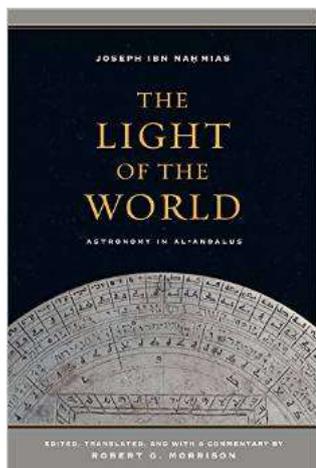


This book provides a complete, easy to read, up-to-date account of the fascinating discipline of archaeoastronomy, in which the relationship between ancient constructions and the sky is studied in order to gain a better understanding of the ideas of the architects of the past and of their religious and symbolic worlds. The book is

divided into three sections, the first of which explores the past relations between astronomy and people, power, the afterworld, architecture, and landscape. The fundamentals of archaeoastronomy are then addressed

in detail, with coverage of: the celestial coordinates; the apparent motion of the Sun, Moon, stars, and planets; observation of celestial bodies at the horizon; the use of astronomical software in archaeoastronomy; and current methods for making and analyzing measurements. The final section reviews what archaeoastronomy can now tell us about the nature and purpose of such sites and structures as Stonehenge, the Pyramids of Giza, Chichen Itza, the Campus Martius, and the Valley of the Temples of Agrigento. In addition, a set of exercises is provided that can be performed using non-commercial free software, e.g., Google Earth or Stellarium, and will equip readers to conduct their own research. Readers will find the book an ideal introduction to what has become a wide-ranging multidisciplinary science.

[The Light of the World: Astronomy in Al-Andalus](#), by Joseph ibn Nahmias (Author), Robert G. Morrison (Translator) (University of California Press), Jan.2016, pp.410 (hardback, £65.00), ISBN 9780520287990



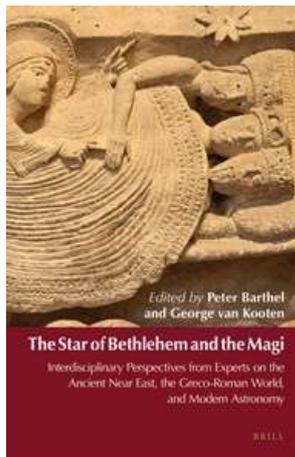
This book contains an edition—with an extensive introduction, translation and commentary—of *The Light of the World*, a text on theoretical astronomy by Joseph ibn Nahmias, composed in Judeo-Arabic around 1400 C.E. in the Iberian Peninsula. As the only text on theoretical astronomy written by a Jew in any variety of Arabic, this work is evidence for a

continuing relationship between Jewish and Islamic thought in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The text's most lasting effect may have been exerted via its transmission to Renaissance Italy, where it influenced scholars at the University of Padua in the early sixteenth century. With its crucial role in the development of European astronomy, as well as the physical sciences under Islam and in Jewish culture, *The Light of the World* covers an important episode in Islamic intellectual history, Jewish civilization, and the history of astronomy.

RECENT BOOKS MISSED

[The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi](#), eds. Peter Barthel & George van Kooten (Brill), Nov.2015, pp.695 (paperback, £43.00), ISBN 9789004308480

This book is the fruit of the first ever interdisciplinary international scientific conference on Matthew's story of the Star of Bethlehem and the Magi, held in 2014 at the University of Groningen, and attended by world-



leading specialists in all relevant fields: modern astronomy, the ancient near-eastern and Greco-Roman worlds, the history of science, and religion. The scholarly discussions and the exchange of the interdisciplinary views proved to be immensely fruitful and resulted in the present book. Its twenty chapters describe the various aspects of the Star:

the history of its interpretation, ancient near-eastern astronomy and astrology and the Magi, astrology in the Greco-Roman and the Jewish worlds, and the early Christian world – at a generally accessible level. An epilogue summarizes the fact-fiction balance of ‘the most famous star which has ever shone’.

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.*

ROGER JONES

1 Dec 1942 – 25 Sep 2015



As most SHA members will know, Roger Jones, who established the Society's Survey of Astronomical History, died at the end of September. Roger managed the Survey from the time of its inception in 2003 until he had to step down in 2014, as a result of the tragic onset of Motor Neurone Disease.

Roger's humanist funeral took place at Streetly Crematorium on 16th October 2015. The SHA was represented by Kevin Kilburn, who delivered a eulogy.

SHA RESEARCH GRANTS

SHA Small Research Grants are available for the period **1 September 2015 to 31 December 2016** and applications are solicited. These grants are made available to provide limited financial support for members' research.

For 2015/16 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.

WEB-LINKS NOTICED

HAD News

The October 2015 issue (no.86) of *HAD News*, the Newsletter of the Historical Astronomy Division of the American Astronomical Society, is [now available for download](#).

It includes, *inter alia*, a tribute to Albert van Helden, a description of the HAD Astronomy Genealogy Project, and an item about the AAS Oral History Project.

Historical Reflections on the Work of IAU Commission 4 (Ephemerides)

As part of a reorganization of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), Commission 4 (Ephemerides) went out of existence after the IAU General Assembly in August 2015. [A paper is now available](#) on ArXiv which presents brief discussions of some of the developments in fundamental astronomy that have influenced and been influenced by the work of Commission 4 over its 96-year history. The 22-page paper also presents notes about some of the publications of the national institutions that have played an essential role in the Commission's mission. The contents of this paper were submitted for Commission 4's final report, to appear in IAU Transactions Vol. XXIX-A.

Science Museum Library Re-opens

The Science Museum's [Dana Research Centre and Library](#), which is the home to its library and archive services in London, has been open to the public from 9 November 2015. There are over 500,000 items in its collections, including archives and original works that have shaped our understanding of the world, from Newton to Babbage to Einstein.

The Library is open from 10.00 to 17.00 hours five days a week. The entrance is at 165 Queens Gate. The Library [catalogue](#) can be consulted online

WANTED

I am trying to get hold of a copy of the *1941* edition of *Signpost To The Stars* by Frank Edwin Butler. It's the small, 32-page paperback item that many of us have on our bookshelves from our early days of stargazing!

However, I am finding it difficult to track down - several sellers on Amazon and so on have listed it but either cannot locate the book when they look for it, or have the year wrongly described!

I wondered if I could make a request to the readers of the *SHA e-News* to see if they have a copy that they are either willing to part with (at an agreed price, of course) or to send me a scan/copy of the Introduction.

Brian Jones (Bradford, West Riding of Yorkshire)

Please reply to Brian at: stars@starlight-nights.co.uk

MEET OUR MEMBERS

SHA members introduce themselves and their interests

In this issue: *Norma Foster (Gloucestershire)*



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

I first heard of the society from Mark Hurn, Librarian of the *Institute of Astronomy*, when I contacted him on the possible publication of a biography of John Couch Adams, the famous astronomer. This communication happily resulted in the publication of my article: ‘Some matters relating to the documentary evidence of the discovery of Neptune. Disputes and controversies’ in the society’s journal *The Antiquarian Astronomer*, issue 8, April 2014.

Do you have a special area of interest in the history of Astronomy?

Yes. The part played by John Couch Adams in the discovery of the planet Neptune and the historical context in which the discovery was made.

What got you hooked on that?

A visit to a lecture given by the late Sir Patrick Moore at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon, in February 1988, where I took a group of pupils while I was a teacher of physics and mathematics. I ventured to say to him that there was a link in my family with Adams, and he encouraged me to research the topic. This was when *Voyager 2* was *en route* to the outer regions of space.

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

I found a letter in the Cornwall County archives that established our family link. Our ancestor on my mother’s side was a cousin of J. C. Adams. On further

researching the life and work of Adams, I found that the literature on Neptune showed discrepancies in the official reports that needed to be rectified. The available documentary evidence supplied the means.

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

Both. It is amazing the amount of documentary evidence that is available online. However, it is extremely gratifying to visit the archives and see at first hand the original papers and manuscripts and to place these papers in context. I was particularly pleased to meet the former archivist of the Cambridge Observatory, Dr David Dewhirst, who showed me the Northumberland Telescope used by Professor Challis in the search for the planet Neptune. Equally satisfying, was my visit to the Cambridge University Library to see the missing RGO Neptune files belonging to the Astronomer Royal, Airy.

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

To begin with I would have said *The Astronomy Encyclopedia* by Patrick Moore, (1988) as this is a signed copy. But now I would choose Robert Grant’s *History of Physical Astronomy from the Earliest Ages to the Middle of the 19th Century* (1852). Although I only have a Classic Reprint, it is fascinating to me that it has the inscription inside ‘Gift of Lady Huggins’ to an Astronomical Library. So I wonder - would this be an inspiration to another area of research, of a lesser known astronomer in keeping with the aims of the society?

Why?

The continued access to the historical literature enables one to proceed with confidence. This, together with the additional material provided by lectures given by the Society, that cover a broad spectrum of interest, is a bonus to the researcher. Every time I have attended the meetings, I have learned more of the varied interests of fellow members and have been drawn to new areas of study.

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

Maybe, an introduction to the Council and Officers of the Society in a way that puts names to faces, in the *e-News*, or in the journal, so that new members can determine this most easily.

SHA SURVEY OF ASTRONOMICAL HISTORY

Carolyn Kennett has kindly taken on the role of Survey co-ordinator for Cornwall and Dorset, James Dawson, has done the same for Nottinghamshire, and Geoff King has volunteered to do Bedfordshire. 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.

Even if you do not have the time or information to prepare a full entry for the Survey, please consider submitting a 'stub' to the relevant County Coordinator (or, if none, to the Survey Coordinator, [Kevin Johnson](#)) - in other words, an entry which has minimal text, but highlights a topic that eventually deserves fuller coverage.

If you are in an astronomical society you could start by checking whether your society is already in the Survey, and if not (most aren't), why not draft a brief history (even just the foundation date or a simple timeline). What about checking that your 'favourite' astronomer is given the mention that he or she deserves in the Survey?

SHA PUBLICITY STALLS

We already have volunteers to run SHA stalls at the following events:

The Institute of Astronomy Open Afternoon on 19 Mar 2016 in Cambridge (Norma Foster, Eric Hutton, Mike & Pat Leggett, Terry Stancliffe and Paul Whiting);

The South-West Astrofair on 13 Aug 2016 at the Norman Lockyer Observatory, Sidmouth, Devon (Carolyn Kennett, John Chuter and Paul Whiting).



SHA publicity stall at the IoA
(photo: Mike Leggett)

Other events at which we might be represented next autumn include the **FAS Convention and AGM**, **Starfest** and **Leeds Astromeet** (November), depending on dates and availability of personnel. If you will be at these events or live in the area and could spare an hour or two to help on a stall, it would be much appreciated. For further information or offers of help, contact the Publicity Officer, Mike Leggett:

leggett189@btinternet.com

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a happy new year. The Society is starting 2016 in excellent health. We have an influx of new, enthusiastic talent onto Council, a full programme of events for the year and beyond, and significant changes afoot in some of our member services. All of these are described in greater detail in this issue.



Bob Bower, SHA Chairman

I would like to seek your assistance in a couple of ways. The possibility of the first SHA event outside the UK is being considered – a trip to the Paris Observatory. It is, however, early days on this as yet. There is a not inconsiderable hurdle to be overcome at the outset. If you check their website you will see that visits by the public are currently suspended, perhaps not surprisingly in view of recent events. However, I do hope that a specifically organised visit by a special interest group like ourselves might still be possible. It seems to me the way forward on this is to establish a personal link with a member of the Observatory staff. We do have the name of one such, courtesy of member Barrie Chacksfield. However, that individual will be away from Paris until the Autumn. One option would

be to wait until then before any planning starts. However, it may be that you can help move things along before then. Do you have any contacts there? I'd be happy to hear from you.

The second way that I'd like to elicit your assistance is in regard to membership numbers. The Society has been more or less static in size for the past few years, at 150 or so members. It would be great to see us grow. One way to achieve this is by talks to local Ast Socs. Publicity Officer Mike Leggett has been tireless in this respect in the Midlands. I like to think that there is potential in not only the rest of the country, but outside the UK as well! I've started my own campaign in Scotland, and I'm sure that some of you are doing likewise in your own areas. I would encourage as many of you as possible to join in. I've found that such talks can be quite general in historical content. We would be happy to supply quantities of the Society publicity leaflet.

If there is any other aspect of Society activity in which you think you could assist, we'd be happy to hear from you.

Finally, I'd like to welcome two new members who have joined since the last e-News – John Cariss and Ian Galletly.

Bob Bower (chairman@shastro.org.uk)

OTHER MEETINGS & EXHIBITIONS NOTICED (non-SHA)

BAA Historical Section Conference May 2016

Saturday 21 May 2016, at the Quaker meeting house, School St, Liverpool L1 3BT.

From 10:00 - 17:00, doors open 09:30

A loose theme of "*Visual Astronomy*" is emerging. Speakers confirmed to date include:

Gerard Gilligan - *The History of Liverpool Astronomical Society*

Chris Taylor - *William Herschel and the Expansion of the Universe*

Bill Leatherbarrow - *Patrick Moore and our Volcanic Moon*

In 2017 the Historical Section is hoping to meet at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh, Blackford Hill, Edinburgh.

For further information, keep an eye on the [Section's website](#)

From Sea to Sky: the Evolution of Air Navigation from the Ocean and Beyond

Thu 9 - Fri 10 Jun 2016, at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

Following a series of successful conferences, Royal Museums Greenwich and the Royal Institute of Navigation are planning another event to bring together current research in the history of navigation.

Coinciding with *Above and Beyond*, an interactive exhibition on air and space technologies to be held at the National Maritime Museum (opening 27 May 2016), [this conference](#) will explore the evolution of aeronautical navigation and its relationships to practices at sea.

Medieval Physics in Oxford - One day conference

This event will be a one-day conference on the 27th February 2016 at St Cross College, Oxford on medieval physics in Oxford. The conference is intended to challenge the commonly held view of the prolonged gap in the progress of Western civilisation's understanding of the natural world between the theories of the Ancient Greeks, led in particular by Aristotle and Plato, and the formation of the modern world view leading to the heliocentric theory of the Solar System and the theories of mechanics and gravity. These modern theories were in fact the result of centuries of empirical and theoretical work, which was conducted mainly in the universities of Europe and in particular at Oxford and which replaced in turn the Aristotelian world view of antiquity and then the literally biblical view of the Church. The conference will review the contributions of these medieval scholars working in Oxford and is intended to demonstrate the evolution of this activity from its theoretical, theological origins into the activity using mathematics and experimental observations which forms the basis of modern physics.

Registration and attendance at the conference are free.

Confirmed speakers include:

Dr James Hannam (author of "God's Philosophers") - *Medieval Physics at Oxford: Who, What and Why?*

Dr Jack Cunningham (Bishop Grosseteste University) - *Robert Grosseteste: The Oxford Years*

Brian Clegg (author of "The First Scientist: A Life of Roger Bacon") - *Doctor Mirabilis: Roger Bacon's Legend and Legacy*

Dr Allan Chapman (University of Oxford) - *Friars, Physicists and Natural Philosophers in Medieval Oxford*

Professor Nicolas Weill-Parot (Université Paris-Est Créteil) - *The Historical Meaning of Late Medieval Physics in Oxford*

Details of the conference and how to register are at

<http://www.stx.ox.ac.uk/happ/events/medieval-physics-oxford-one-day-conference>

24th SEAC Conference

Monday 12 - Friday 16 September 2016, in Bath.

This conference is organised by the European Society for Astronomy in Culture (SEAC), whose objectives are to

- promote the interdisciplinary study of astronomical practise in its cultural context as a topic of considerable importance within the general study of human societies and their relationship to their environment.

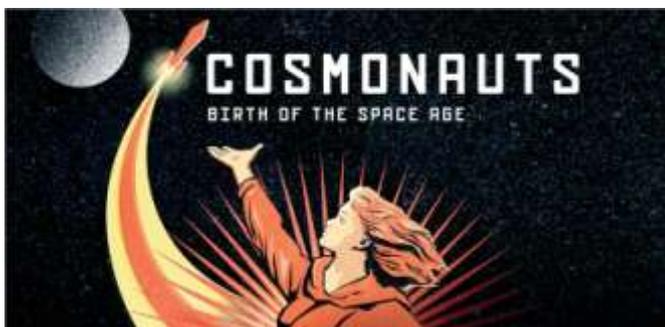
- promote research seeking to develop our understanding of the cultural significance of astronomical knowledge through the integration of techniques and methods within the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and other disciplines.

For further details, see the [SEAC website](#) and the [conference website](#).

Cosmonauts: Birth of the Space Age

Until 13 Mar 2016 at the Science Museum in London. Discover the story of Russian space travel in this once-in-a-lifetime exhibition

Price: £14 - concessions available



Cosmonauts: Birth of the Space Age will reveal the most significant collection of Russian spacecraft and artefacts ever to be shown in the UK, including:

Vostok 6: the capsule flown by Valentina Tereshkova, the first ever woman in space

Voskhod 1: the capsule used on the first mission to carry more than one crew member

LK-3 Lunar Lander: a single cosmonaut craft built to compete with Apollo

a collection of gadgets that cosmonauts – and pioneering space dogs – need to live in space, including a shower, toilet, medical instruments and survival kits for crash landings.

Explore the historical, cultural and spiritual context of Russian space travel, shaped especially by the turbulent early decades of the twentieth century. See poignant testimonies and memorabilia belonging to some of the biggest names in spaceflight and discover the deeply personal stories of the pioneers who kick-started the space age.

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** (Laura Carroll): lauracarroll55@hotmail.com

SUMMARY DATES FOR THE DIARY

2016 MEETINGS

27 Feb *Medieval Physics in Oxford* at St Cross College, Oxford. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*

2 Apr *SHA-Herschel Society Spring Conference* at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*

21 May *BAA Historical Section* meeting at the Quaker meeting house, School St, Liverpool L1 3BT. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*

9-10 Jun *From Sea to Sky: the Evolution of Air Navigation from the Ocean and Beyond* at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*

2 Jul SHA Summer Picnic at Hanwell Community Observatory, near Banbury in North Oxfordshire. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*

12-16 Sep *24th SEAC Conference* in Bath. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*

29 Oct SHA Autumn Conference & AGM, at the BMI in central Birmingham. *Details given elsewhere in this issue.*
