



# SHA e-News

Society for the History of Astronomy

Volume 13, no.2, May 2021

Editor: David Sellers

## ‘THE DIG’

### Excavating astronomical history



The new Netflix movie, ‘*The Dig*’, streaming from Feb 2021 and already the recipient of nominations for the British Academy Film Awards, is based on the novel of the same title by John Preston. Although it ‘re-imagines’ the story of the famous Sutton Hoo excavation in 1939, the events depicted are [essentially true](#). Suffolk landowner, Edith Pretty (played by Carey Mulligan) engaged self-taught archaeologist Basil Brown (played by Ralph Fiennes) to excavate a large burial mound in her land. Within the mound, Brown discovered an anglo-saxon ship, accompanied by priceless artefacts. Unfortunately, after the archaeological ‘establishment’ moved in, Basil was for a long time deprived of the recognition that he deserved.

A sub-plot within the movie shows Brown as an amateur astronomer, introducing Pretty’s young son to the wonders of the night sky.

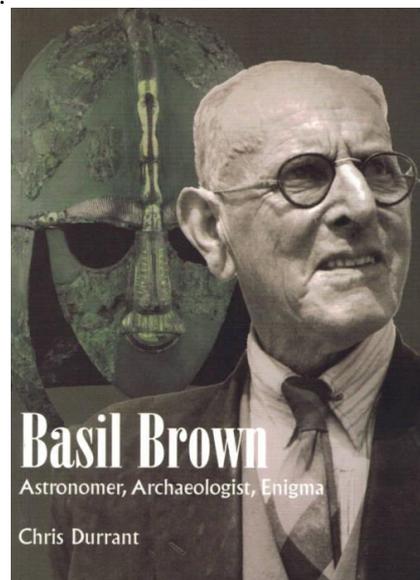
Prior to ‘*The Dig*’, Basil Brown’s name was probably not widely known – even in the astronomical community – but he was an active member of the Brit-

ish Astronomical Association in the 1930s and was the author of a widely respected book: *Astronomical Atlases, Maps and Charts: An Historical and General Guide*.

Basil Brown was a remarkable character and his achievements were all the more impressive, given that he left formal education after the age of 12. Not only did he [teach himself astronomy](#): He also apparently managed to acquire a facility in several languages, including Latin.

It is clear that Basil’s story has intrigued and inspired many viewers. Bill Barton, who created the [Orwell AS webpage on Brown](#), noted that the [Wikipedia entry](#) on him, which normally receives far fewer than 100 hits per day, suddenly started getting more than 44,000 per day after the appearance of the film.

Some years ago, the Sutton Hoo Society published a booklet [Basil Brown: Astronomer, Archaeologist, Enigma](#), written by Chris Durrant, and has recently re-advertised it (price £12, including postage to UK destinations).

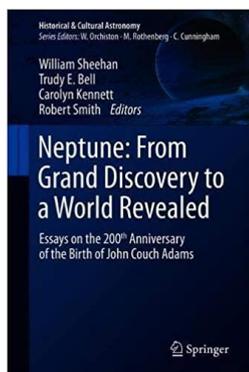


## FUTURE SHA MEETINGS

### EVENING ONLINE MEETING

On **Wed 19 May 2021** at 7 pm the SHA will be hosting a **free online evening presentations** for members (using 'Zoom'):

**Title: Neptune: From Grand Discovery to a World Revealed**



**Speakers: Carolyn Kennett, Prof. Robert W Smith and Brian Sheen** (*please note the changed line-up*)

The talk will be limited to 100 attendees. Places will be offered on a first come first served basis. More details, along with joining instructions, will be sent to all members by email nearer to the date.

To register, please contact our Meetings Secretary, Mike White, at: [Meetings@shastro.org.uk](mailto:Meetings@shastro.org.uk)

### 2021 SUMMER PICNIC

Although a brighter future is now imminent, as the Covid-19 vaccines are rolled out, it is still probably premature for the SHA to hold physical events. Therefore the proposed Summer Picnic, which was to have been at [Laycock Abbey and the Fox Talbot Museum](#), has been cancelled. There is every chance that this could be re-organised in the future.

### 2021 AUTUMN CONFERENCE & AGM

This event is expected (with any luck!) to be at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on **Sat 23 Oct 2021**. Further details and confirmation of a date will be circulated in due course.

## SHA COUNCIL

The current SHA Officers & Council are:

### Honorary Council Members

**Hon President** Dr Allan Chapman  
**Hon Vice-President** Dr Michael Hoskin

### Council Members

**Chairman** Gerard Gilligan  
**Vice-Chair (& e-News Editor)** David Sellers  
**General Secretary** Mike Leggett  
**Treasurer** Geoff King  
**Membership Secretary** Graham Jones  
**Editor, SHA Bulletin** Kevin Walsh  
**Publicity Officer** Mike Leggett  
**Survey Coordinator** Kevin Johnson  
**Online Editor** John Chuter  
**Librarian** James Dawson  
**Meetings Secretary** Michael White

### Co-opted Officers (non-Council)

**Editor, The Antiquarian Astronomer** Ian Ridpath  
**Asst. Editor, The Antiquarian Astronomer** Peter Morris  
**Archivist** John Chuter  
**Assistant Librarian** Carolyn Bedwell

### SHA COUNCIL MEETINGS

The following SHA Council meetings are scheduled for 2021:

**Sat 3 Jul 2021 11 am**, remotely via 'Zoom'

When physical meetings are able to resume, 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.

## RECENT ONLINE MEETINGS

**Sat 24 Oct 2020** Steve Barrett (Liverpool University): **The Hale Telescope on Mount Palomar.**

**Wed 18 Dec 2020** Seb Falk (Cambridge University): **Monks, astrolabes and equatoria: practical astronomy in the later Middle Ages.**

**Tue 12 Jan 2021** Ian Glass (South African Astronomical Observatory): **200 years of the Cape Observatory.**

**Thu 11 Mar 2021** Jacqueline Mitton: **Vera Rubin: A Life.**

## SHA PUBLICATIONS

### SHA e-News

The next issue of the *e-News* is due in early August 2021. 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](#) (David Sellers).



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

### SHA BULLETIN

Issue 35 of the *Bulletin* (Spring 2021) was distributed to SHA members during April.



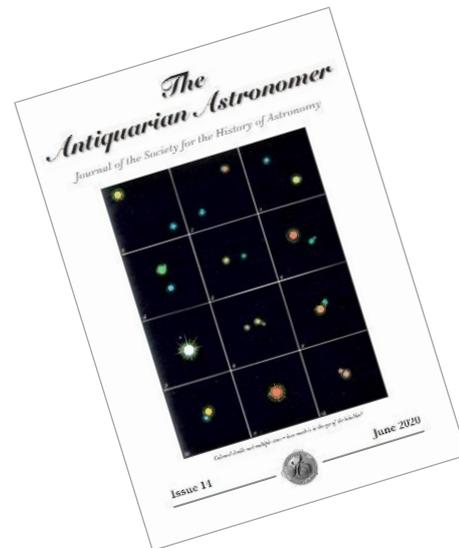
Contributions to the *Bulletin* are most welcome, including letters which can be on any aspect of the Society or the history of astronomy.

Back issues (except for the last 2 years) and guidelines for contributions are available from the [Bulletin web page](#).

It is usually prudent to check with the [Editor](#) (Kevin Walsh) before preparing items where duplication is a possibility (e.g. book reviews).

## THE ANTIQUARIAN ASTRONOMER

Issue 14 of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* was published close to timetable in mid-July 2020, which is quite an achievement, given the prevailing unusual circumstances. All members should have received a copy.



This is a ‘bumper’ issue, running to 108 pages. The contents include: an assessment by Simon Mitton of Georges Lemaître’s role in what is now known as the Hubble–Lemaître law; Paul Haley on the life and work of Henry Cooper Key, a pioneer of silvered-glass mirrors; the story of W. H. Smyth’s telescopes told by Rob Peeling; a study of colour perception among past and present observers of coloured double stars by Peter Morris and Bill Sheehan; and the final part of Richard Schmidt and Paul Dearden’s in-depth history of the Liverpool Observatory, from the time when it became the Greenwich of the north to its eventual removal to Bidston.

Issue 15 should be published in June/July 2021. Members and others wishing to submit material for future issues of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* should contact Ian Ridpath (Editor) at [aaeditor@shastro.org.uk](mailto:aaeditor@shastro.org.uk). Guidance for authors and some back issues can be found on [The Antiquarian Astronomer web page](#).

## SHA ON THE ROAD

For obvious reasons, the SHA has not been able to have any publicity stalls recently.

If you are aware of future events, which would be suitable for a SHA stall, please let us know.

## SHA LIBRARY NEWS

The SHA library now has over 2700 books dedicated to the history of astronomy and related subjects, numerous journals, as well as miscellaneous items including letters, meeting programmes, conference proceedings and the like.

Outside the legal deposit libraries, the SHA Library has one of the most extensive history of astronomy collections in any library in the British Isles. It is *unique* in having a collecting policy, totally focussed on history of astronomy, that includes not only the latest popular and scholarly works, but also the active acquisition of second-hand books, astronomical ephemera, and the preservation of the works of lesser known British astronomers and authors.

As lockdown eases, we are making plans to re-open the SHA Library in the next few months, likely after the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 when all limits on social contact are lifted.

We continue to look for and obtain new items for the Library; I have a pile of items at home which I am waiting to take to the Library to put on the shelves. All new items are in the current version of the SHA Library Catalogue which can be viewed [here](#).

**Some of the Library’s new additions** (including one donation):

Bloomsbury Auctions (Firm), [Astronomy and space exploration, 15th-20th century. Catalogue of sale held on Wednesday 12th December 2012](#) (2012)

Buick, Tony, [Orreries, Clocks, and London Society : the evolution of astronomical instruments and their makers](#) (2020)

Frank, Charles, [Binoculars, astronomical and terrestrial telescopes](#) (Kindly donated by Jim Mehta) (197?)

Grassi, Giovanna, [Union catalogue of printed books of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries in European astronomical observatories](#) (1989)

Haddad, Tomas AS, [Maps of the Moon : lunar cartography from the Seventeenth Century to the Space Age](#) (2019)

Herschel, John FW, [The Telescope](#) (1861)

Lockyer, William J S; McClean, W N, [Handbook to the Norman Lockyer Observatory](#) (1921)

Smyth, William Henry, [Addenda to the Aedes Hartwellianae](#) (1864)

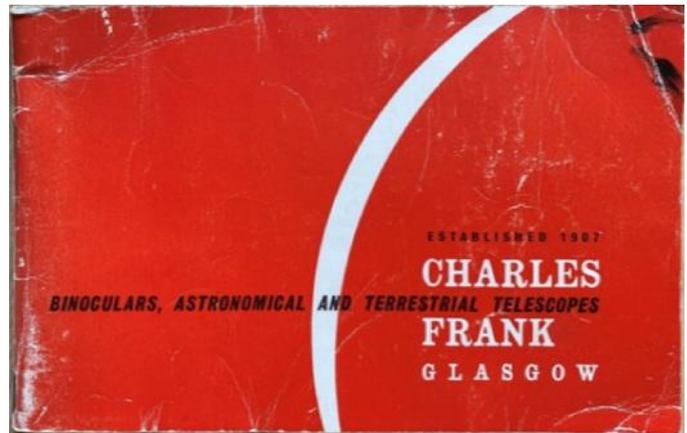
Wakefield, Julie, [Halley's Quest : a selfless genius and his troubled Paramore](#) (2005)

A new addition to the SHA Library is this 50 page catalogue from the 1970s (post-decimalisation) for the



**BMI (Birmingham): home of the SHA Library**

instrument maker and retailer Charles Frank Ltd, based in Glasgow, Scotland. This catalogue was kindly donated to the SHA by Jim Mehta. I doubt many copies of this still exist and if anyone has instrument catalogues from the past, or information relating to manufacturers or retailers the SHA Library would be very interested in these.



The revised catalogue of books in the library is available and a link to this can be found on the library page of the SHA's [website](#) as a downloadable Excel spreadsheet – if you have trouble viewing the cata-

logue let us know and we can arrange to send it to you in an alternative format.

If you want to know more about the library or its stock, or if you'd like help with your research or finding a book or article, or other library-related matter, please do contact [James](#) and [Carolyn](#) who would love to hear from you.

*James Dawson, SHA Librarian  
[library@shastro.org.uk](mailto:library@shastro.org.uk)*

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

I do hope this message finds you well, inoculated, and looking forward to some kind of normality in the next few weeks and months, now that it appears the pandemic restrictions are beginning to be relaxed.



Since my last chat, I have retired from my forty three year working life as a Laboratory Technician. It may have come at a bad time under present circumstances, but I now have lots of time to combine two of my long standing interests of history and astronomy. I was

pleased to learn that libraries were able to open again recently, but with restrictions. Nonetheless I have recently begun to visit my local history library and archives again after over a year of lockdown.

I combined this new milestone with the use for the first time of my pensioner's bus pass for the first time. Due to the current covid-19 restrictions, the journey on public transport was not that easy, buses having their capacities reduced. Once at the library building, I had to wait for someone to leave before I could enter, and the search room had its opening times reduced, so my visit lasted only just over 60 minutes.

My perseverance and purpose for the visit was to view letters stored and preserved in the Archives Department from brewer, telescope maker, and observer William Lassell. He is one of my long time research interests. The letters are between Lassell and members of the wealthy Holt and Durning families of Liverpool. At the moment there is no direct astronomical connection contained within the letters. However, they do give a clear idea of the many local business connections and commercial circles that he communicated with: thereby providing some insights into Lassell's commercial and social activities, which supported his

astronomical endeavours and discoveries. There are many more library visits planned, and more letters to examine.

I do hope you too are beginning to get out and about, meeting family members and friends, and perhaps visiting libraries, museums, and places of astronomical interest. However, there have been many families all over the UK who have been bereaved and are mourning the loss of a loved one, due to Covid or for other reasons. No matter how well-known the family, we send our condolences for their loss.

I wish you continued good health. Stay safe. I hope to meet you once again face-to-face when time, restrictions and circumstances allow.

*Gerard Gilligan,  
SHA Chairman*

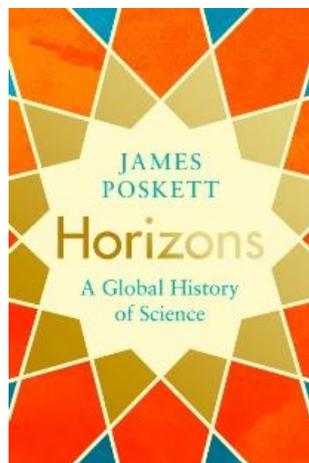
## NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to give a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined or re-joined since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021:

<b>Mr Robert Dipple</b>	<b>BROMSGROVE</b>
<b>Mrs Susan Dipple</b>	<b>BROMSGROVE</b>
<b>Mrs Sue Parr</b>	<b>GRIMSBY</b>
<b>Mrs Madeline Dunn</b>	<b>ABINGDON</b>
<b>Dr Benjamin Lewis</b>	<b>CWMBRAN</b>
<b>Mr Les Dickens</b>	<b>CHELTENHAM</b>
<b>Mr Giuseppe Nicolosi</b>	<b>LONDON</b>
<b>Dr Roger Kinns</b>	<b>HELENSBURGH</b>
<b>Dr Jacqueline Mitton</b>	<b>CAMBRIDGE</b>
<b>Miss Lois Roddy</b>	<b>ROCHDALE</b>
<b>Mr Brian Whittaker</b>	<b>COVENTRY</b>
<b>Prof Virginia Trimble</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Ms Catherine Johns</b>	<b>Kielder Observ/ry AS</b>
<b>Mr George Latura</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Prof Jean-René Roy</b>	<b>CANADA</b>
<b>Dr David Brand</b>	<b>HOVE</b>
<b>Mr Wayne Lowe</b>	<b>GLASGOW</b>
<b>Mr David Kolb</b>	<b>USA</b>
<b>Mr John Rosenfield</b>	<b>AVIEMORE</b>

## FORTHCOMING BOOKS NOTICED

[Horizons: A Global History of Science](#), by James Poskett (Viking), Oct 2021, pp.368 (hardback, £25.00), ISBN 9780241394090

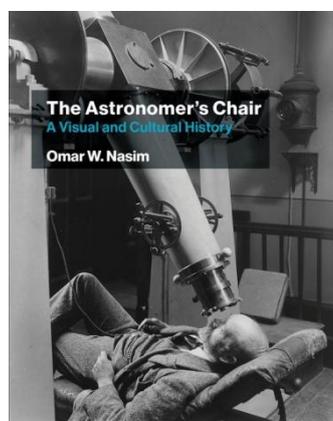


A radical retelling of the history of science that challenges the Eurocentric narrative. The history of science is not, and has never been, a uniquely European endeavour.

Copernicus relied on mathematical techniques borrowed from Arabic and Persian texts. When Newton set out the laws of motion, he relied on astronomical observations

made in Asia and Africa. When Darwin was writing *On the Origin of Species*, he consulted a sixteenth-century Chinese encyclopaedia. And when Einstein was studying quantum mechanics, he was inspired by the Bengali physicist, Satyendra Nath Bose. *Horizons* pushes beyond Europe, exploring the ways in which scientists from Africa, America, Asia and the Pacific fit into the history of science, and arguing that it is best understood as a story of global cultural exchange.

[The Astronomer's Chair: A Visual and Cultural History](#), by Omar W. Nasim (MIT Press), Sep 2021, pp.304 (paperback, £43.84), ISBN 9780262045537

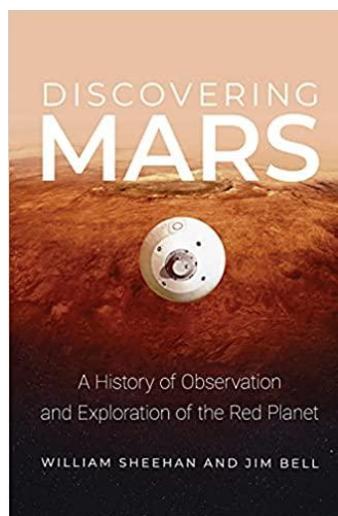


The astronomer's chair is a leitmotif in the history of astronomy, appearing in hundreds of drawings, prints, and photographs from a variety of sources. Nineteenth-century stargazers in particular seemed eager to display their observing chairs--task-specific, often mechanically adjustable observatory furniture designed for use in conjunction with telescopes.

But what message did they mean to send with these images? In *The Astronomer's Chair*, Omar W. Nasim considers these specialized chairs as both image and object, offering an original framework for linking visual and material cultures. Observing chairs, Nasim ingeniously argues, showcased and embodied forms of scientific labor, personae, and bodily practice that appealed to bourgeois sensibilities.

Viewing image and object as connected parts of moral, epistemic, and visual economies of empire, Nasim shows that nineteenth-century science was represented in terms of comfort and energy, and that "manly" postures of Western astronomers at work in specialized chairs were contrasted pointedly with images of "effete" and cross-legged "Oriental" astronomers. Extending his historical analysis into the twentieth century, Nasim reexamines what he argues to be a famous descendant of the astronomer's chair: Freud's psychoanalytic couch, which directed observations not outward toward the stars but inward toward the stratified universe of the psyche. But whether in conjunction with the mind or the heavens, the observing chair was a point of entry designed for specialists that also portrayed widely held assumptions about who merited epistemic access to these realms in the first place.

[Discovering Mars: A History of Observation and Exploration of the Red Planet](#), by William Sheehan and Jim Bell (University of Arizona Press), Oct 2021, pp.712 (hardback, £21.89), ISBN 9780816532100



For millennia humans have considered Mars the most fascinating planet in our solar system. We've watched this Earth-like world first with the naked eye, then using telescopes, and, most recently, through robotic orbiters and landers and rovers on the surface.

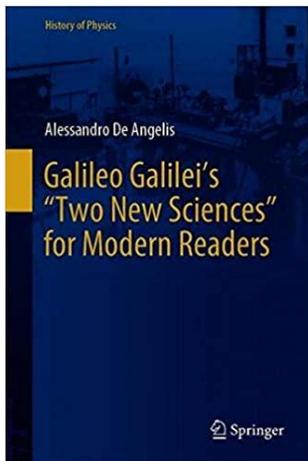
Historian William Sheehan and

astronomer and planetary scientist Jim Bell combine their talents to tell a unique story of what we've learned by studying Mars through evolving technologies. What the eye sees as a mysterious red dot wandering through the sky becomes a blurry mirage of apparent seas, continents, and canals as viewed through Earth-based telescopes. Beginning with the Mariner and Viking missions of the 1960s and 1970s, space-based instruments and monitoring systems have flooded scientists with data on Mars's meteorology and geology, and have even sought evidence of possible existence of life-forms on or beneath the surface. This knowledge has transformed our perception of the Red Planet and has provided clues for better understanding our own blue world.

*Discovering Mars* vividly conveys the way our understanding of this other planet has grown from earliest times to the present. The story is epic in scope--an *Iliad* or *Odyssey* for our time, at least so far largely

without the folly, greed, lust, and tragedy of those ancient stories. Instead, the narrative of our quest for the Red Planet has showcased some of our species' most hopeful attributes: curiosity, cooperation, exploration, and the restless drive to understand our place in the larger universe. Sheehan and Bell have written an ambitious first draft of that narrative even as the latest chapters continue to be added both by researchers on Earth and our robotic emissaries on and around Mars, including the latest: the Perseverance rover and its Ingenuity helicopter drone, which set down in Mars's Jezero Crater in February 2021.

[Galileo Galilei's "Two New Sciences" for Modern Readers](#), by Alessandro De Angelis (Springer), Jun 2021, pp.156 (hardback, £54.99), ISBN 9783030719517

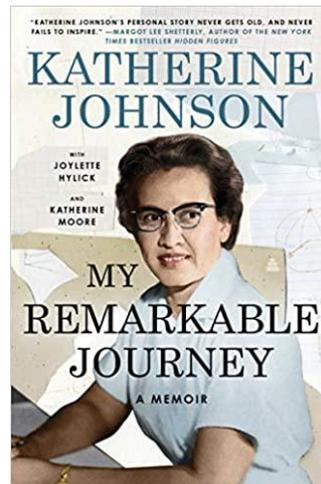


This book aims to make Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) accessible to the modern reader by refashioning the great scientist's masterpiece *Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences* in today's language.

Galileo Galilei stands as one of the most important figures in history, not

simply for his achievements in astronomy, physics, and engineering and for revolutionizing science and the scientific method in general, but also for the role that he played in the (still ongoing) drama concerning entrenched power and its desire to stifle any knowledge that may threaten it. Therefore, it is important that today's readers come to understand and appreciate what Galilei accomplished and wrote. But the mindset that shapes how we see the world today is quite different from the mindset -- and language -- of Galilei and his contemporaries. Another obstacle to a full understanding of Galilei's writings is posed by the countless historical, philosophical, geometrical, and linguistic references he made, along with his often florid prose, with its blend of Italian and Latin. De Angelis' new rendition of the work includes translations of the original geometrical figures into algebraic formulae in modern notation and allows the non-specialist reader to follow the thread of Galilei's thought and in a way that was barely possible until now.

[My Remarkable Journey: A Memoir](#), by Katherine Johnson (Amistad), Jun 2021, pp.256 (hardback, £20.00), ISBN 9780062897664



The remarkable woman at heart of the Oscar-winning film *Hidden Figures* tells the full story of her life, including what it took to work at NASA, help land the first man on the moon, and live through a century of turmoil and change.

In 2015, at the age of 97, Katherine Johnson became a global celebrity.

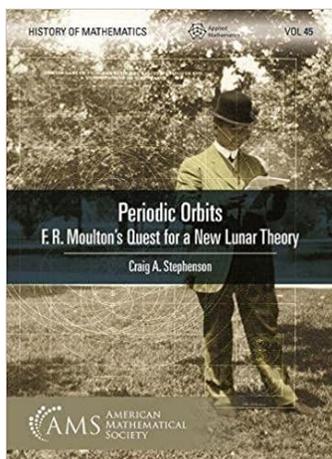
President Barack Obama awarded her the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom—the nation's highest civilian honor—for her pioneering work as a mathematician on NASA's first flights into space. Her contributions to America's space program were celebrated in a blockbuster and Academy-award nominated movie.

In this memoir, Katherine shares her personal journey from child prodigy in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia to NASA human computer. This multi-dimensional portrait is also the record of a century of racial history that reveals the influential role educators at segregated schools and historically Black Colleges and Universities played in nurturing the dreams of trailblazers like Katherine. The author pays homage to her mentor—the African American professor who inspired her to become a research mathematician despite having his own dream crushed by racism.

Infused with the uplifting wisdom of a woman who handled great fame with genuine humility and great tragedy with enduring hope, *My Remarkable Journey* ultimately brings into focus a determined woman who navigated tough racial terrain with soft-spoken grace—and the unrelenting grit required to make history and inspire future generations.

[Periodic Orbits: F. R. Moulton's Quest for a New Lunar Theory](#), by Craig A. Stephenson (American Mathematical Society), Jun 2021, pp.255 (paperback, £111.00), ISBN 9781470456719

Owing to its simple formulation and intractable nature, along with its application to the lunar theory, the three-body problem has since it was first studied by Newton in the *Principia* attracted the attention of many of the world's most gifted mathematicians and astronomers. Two of these, Euler and Lagrange, discovered the problem's first periodic solutions. However, it was not until Hill's discovery in the late 1870s of the variational orbit that the importance of the periodic solutions was fully recognized, most notably by Poincaré, but also by others such as Sir George Darwin.

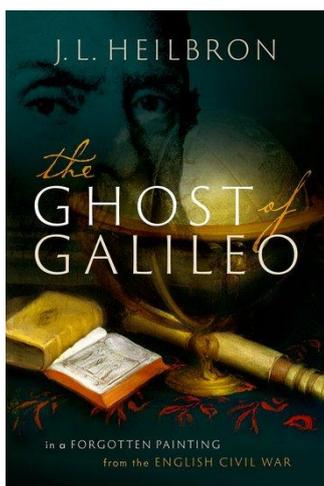


The book begins with a detailed description of the early history of the three-body problem and its periodic solutions, with chapters dedicated to the pioneering work of Hill, Poincaré, and Darwin. This is followed by the first in-depth account of the contribution to the subject by the mathematical astronomer Forest Ray Moulton and his

research students at the University of Chicago. The author reveals how Moulton's *Periodic Orbits*, published in 1920 and running to some 500 pages, arose from Moulton's ambitious goal of creating an entirely new lunar theory. The methods Moulton developed in the pursuit of this goal are described and an examination is made of both the reception of his work and his legacy for future generations of researchers.

## RECENT BOOKS MISSED

[The Ghost of Galileo - in a forgotten painting from the English Civil War](#), by John L Heilbron (OUP), Jan 2021, pp.5284 (hardback, £25.00), ISBN 9780198861300

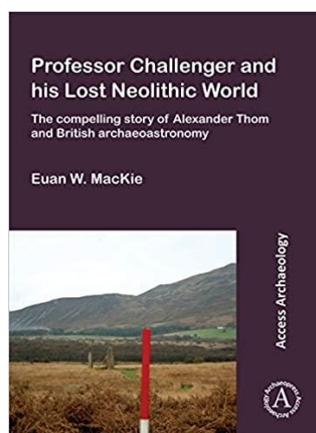


In 1643/4 the once-famous Francis Cleyn painted the unhappy young heir of Corfe Castle, John Bankes, and his tutor, Dr Maurice Williams. The painter is now almost forgotten, the painting much neglected, and the sitters themselves have left little to mark their lives, but on the table of the painting lies a book, open to an immediately identifiable

and very significant page. The representation omits the author's name and the book's title; it sits there as a code, as only viewers who had encountered the original and the characteristic figures on its frontispiece would have known its significance. The book is Galileo's *Dialogue on the two chief world systems* (1632), the defence of Copernican cosmology that incited the infamous clash between its author and the Church, and its presence in this painting is no accident, but instead a statement of learning, attitudes, and cosmopolitan engagement in European discourse by the painting's English subjects.

Grasping hold of the clue, John Heilbron deciphers the significance of this contentious book's appearance in a painting from Stuart England to unravel the interlocking threads of art history, political and religious history, and the history of science. Drawing on unexploited archival material and a wide range of printed works, he weaves together English court culture and Italian connections, as well as the astronomical and astrological knowledge propagated in contemporary almanacs and deployed in art, architecture, plays, masques, and political discourse. Heilbron also explores the biographies of Sir John Bankes (father of the sitter), Sir Maurice, and the painter, Francis Cleyn, setting them into the narrative of their rich and cultured history.

[Professor Challenger and his Lost Neolithic World: The Compelling Story of Alexander Thom and British Archaeoastronomy](#), by Euan W. MacKie (Archaeopress), Feb 2021, pp.158 (paperback, £30.00), ISBN 9781784918330 (also [Open Access – free PDF](#))



*Professor Challenger and his Lost Neolithic World* combines the two great passions of the author's life: reconstructing the Neolithic mind and constructively challenging consensus in his professional domain. The book is semi-autobiographical, charting the author's investigation of Alexander Thom's theories, in particular regarding the alignment of prehistoric monuments in the landscape, across a number of key Neolithic sites from Kintraw to Stonehenge and finally Orkney. It maps his own perspective of the changing reception to Thom's ideas by the archaeological profession from initial curiosity and acceptance to increasing scepticism. The text presents historical summaries of the various strands of evidence from key Neolithic sites across the UK and Ireland with the compelling evidence from the Ness of Brodgar, added as an appendix in final justification of his approach to the subject.

**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.*

## OTHER MEETINGS, COURSES & EXHIBITIONS NOTICED (non-SHA)

Given the uncertain situation with the pandemic, anyone interested in the following events is advised to check regularly whether they are still going ahead.

### National Astronomy Meeting 2021: Preserving Astronomical Heritage

Mon 19 Jul 2021 online

In the wake of the bicentenary of the Royal Astronomical Society, [this session](#) of the RAS annual meeting focuses on positive actions that can be taken by members of the astronomical community towards safeguarding astronomical heritage for the future, for example, by preserving historical observations and maintaining research data. Session organisers: Sian Prosser and Joshua Nall.

### BAA Historical Section

Late 2021

The Section is hoping to hold a real-world meeting in late 2021. For updates, consult the [Section webpage](#).

### History of Astronomy Workshop (NDXV)

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, [the Fifteenth Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop \(NDXV\)](#), originally scheduled for July 2021, has been postponed until the following year on June 8–12, 2022.

## SHA RESEARCH GRANTS

SHA *Small Research Grants* are available for the period **1 Nov 2020 to 31 Oct 2021** and applications are solicited. The total amount allocated by the Council for the current round is £1500. These grants are made available to provide limited financial support for members' research.

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.

## KEPLER ANNIVERSARY



Our colleagues at the [Obserwatorium Astronomiczne Królowej Jadwigi w Rzeplienniku Biskupim](#) (Queen Jadwiga Observatory of Rzepliennik Biskupi Poland) are planning a commemorative volume to honour the 450th birthday of Kepler (born 27 December 1571) and would like to receive short articles/papers to include, about Kepler, his life and/or work, his relevant for us today, and so forth.

It is expected that the contributions will be in English, though ones in Polish will not be rejected (and some of their previous volumes have included German). If this is something you might like to do, please contact the editor, Bogdan Wszolek at [bogdan.wszolek@gmail.com](mailto:bogdan.wszolek@gmail.com). The deadline for submissions will be close to the start of fall/autumn.

*Virginia Trimble (honorary member of the Kepler Commemorative SOC)*

## SHA SURVEY

Additional entries for astronomers continue to be added to the [SHA Survey website](#). Amongst the latest entries are: [Rev. WJB Richards](#), [Henry Adames](#) and [Elijah Howarth](#).

Members are encouraged to submit new entries – however brief – where they spot gaps in the record

## WEB-LINKS NOTICED

### Travels through time: The Ghost of Galileo (1643)

When historian of science, John Heilbron, visited the National Trust property of [Kingston Lacy](#) in Dorset, he was surprised to see a mid-seventeenth century [oil painting depicting a young man with his tutor](#), surrounded by several artefacts, together with a book that Heilbron immediately recognised as Galileo's *Dialogue on the two chief world systems* - the work that brought him to trial before the Inquisition.

What was that book doing in the painting? This was the question that set Heilbron, a well-known Galileo scholar, off on a fascinating journey of discovery.

The tangled web of connections and controversies he discovered are revealed in his fascinating new book, *The Ghost of Galileo* (see the book notice in this e-News). [Listen to John Heilbron's account in a 43 minute podcast](#) on the *Travels Through Time* website.

### Prof. Herbert Hall Turner recording

Not a new posting on the web, but nevertheless one that might be of interest to SHA members. [A rare audio recording](#), dating from c.1928, on 'The Stars', given by HH Turner, the Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford University. This shellac 78 rpm record was distributed by the International Educational Society in London.

### The Antikythera Cosmos

Work to fully decipher the enigmatic Antikythera Mechanism is still progressing. In [this new video](#), the UCL Antikythera Research Team struggle to solve the front of the Mechanism—a fragmentary ancient Greek astronomical calculator—revealing a dazzling display of the ancient Greek Cosmos.

### The Moon for a twopence

Recently uploaded onto the Sorbonne's *Archives-Ouvertes* website, this interesting paper by David Aubin recounts the use of [street telescopes in nineteenth-century Paris and the epistemology of popular stargazing](#). The paper was originally published in *Early Popular Visual Culture* (Taylor & Francis, 2017).

### BAA Historical Section Newsletter

The latest issue of the *BAA Historical Section Newsletter* (no.23, Spring 2021) is [now available online](#) for download (BAA member's login required).

### Journal of Skyscape Archaeology

The latest issue of the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* ([vol. 6, no.2 2020](#), published in March 2021) is now available for download. Some parts have to be paid for, but amongst the freely downloadable articles is the useful reference: [The Simulated Sky: Stellarium for Cultural Astronomy Research by Georg Zotti, et al.](#)

### Mount Wilson Observatory and the Birth of Modern Astronomy

In Feb 2021, retired JPL astrophysicist, Tim Thompson, presented one of a series of online presentations from Palomar Observatory. His talk highlighted many of the [innovations and discoveries in astronomy made at Mount Wilson Observatory](#). In the 1 hour 47 minute lecture with slides, he goes into some depth, explaining the astrophysics behind some of the more important work done on the mountain, past and present. While many are familiar with Hubble and Shapley's contributions to modern cosmology, there were many other less well known discoveries made there that changed the course of astronomy.

### Astronomical Dating of Ancient Battles

From vol. 7.2 (2021) of the open-access Journal "Scientific Culture" (Journal of Applied Science & Technology to Cultural Heritage Issues), SHA members might be interested in the article by Gongaki, et al. on [Astronomical Calculation of the Dating of the Historical Battles of Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis, based on Herodotus' Description](#).

### VOLUNTEER A PRESENTATION?

Do you have a mini-presentation that you would like to make to an online SHA meeting? The SHA Council would like to organise occasional online meetings featuring several short talks, where members can present topics that they have been researching. If you have something up your sleeve and would like to give it a go, please let Mike White, our Meetings Secretary, know:

[Meetings@shastro.org.uk](mailto:Meetings@shastro.org.uk)

## SHA CALENDAR 2021

MONTH	SHA EVENT OR PUBLICATION	VENUE
<b>2021</b>		
JAN	SHA Online lecture No. 2, by Ian Glass (12 Jan)	via 'Zoom'
FEB	SHA e-News (1-5 Feb)	
MAR	SHA Online lecture No. 3, by Jacqueline Mitton (11 Mar)	via 'Zoom'
APR	SHA Bulletin 35 (1 Apr) SHA Spring Conference (Apr) <b>CANCELLED</b>	
MAY	SHA e-News (1-5 May) SHA Online lecture No.4, by Carolyn Kennett, Robert Smith and Brian Sheen (19 May)	Via 'Zoom'
JUN	The Antiquarian Astronomer 15 (Jun)	
JUL	SHA Summer Picnic (20 Jun) <b>CANCELLED</b>	Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire
AUG	SHA e-News (1-5 Aug)	
SEP		
OCT	SHA Autumn Conference & AGM (23 Oct) <b>TBC</b>	
NOV	SHA e-News (1-5 Nov)	
DEC	SHA Bulletin 34 (mid-Dec)	

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