



# SHA e-News

*Society for the History of Astronomy*

Volume 14, no.1, February 2022

Editor: David Sellers

## JOHN GOODRICKE REASSIGNED IN YORK



**The new plaque honouring John Goodricke**

At 1pm on Friday 19th September 2021 a York Civic Trust [revised blue plaque](#) was unveiled to renowned 18th century astronomer John Goodricke (1764-1786). It was a warm sunny day in a beautiful location behind York Minster and the organisers were delighted with the turn out, and especially by the many attending from York's deaf community.

The unveiling was a celebration of Goodricke's 'game-changing' achievements in the field of astronomy. Winning the Copley Medal for his observations of the variable star Algol, the highest scientific honour of the Royal Society of London, he was invited to become a Fellow at just 21. However, that year, before he was able to receive Fellowship, he tragically passed away.

The new plaque replaces the original installed in 1952, which campaigners said included 'outdated terminology'. As such, the unveiling was also a **celebration of the plaque's rewording**, which now features up-to-date and accurate reference to the deaf community.



**The original plaque, erected in 1952, describing Goodricke as a 'deaf and dumb' astronomer**

In touching York Civic Trust TV videos, [Marije Davidson](#) and [Dai O'Brien](#) tell us what the new plaque to John Goodricke means to deaf people and why the wording of the plaque is important.

### DR MICHAEL HOSKIN (1930-2021)

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Michael Hoskin on 5 Dec 2021. For almost 20 years Michael was an Honorary Vice-President of the SHA.

He founded and edited for 44 years the *Journal for the History of Astronomy*. He also served as the General Editor of several volumes of the *General History of Astronomy*.

An appreciation is included later in this issue.

## FUTURE SHA MEETINGS

### 2022 SPRING CONFERENCE

**Sat 12 Mar 2022 at 10 am – 5 pm** the SHA will, hopefully, be holding its first physical meeting since the Covid lockdown. This will be in the large Lyttleton Theatre at the [Birmingham & Midland Institute](#), 9 Margaret St, Birmingham, B3 3BS.

Speakers include:

Emily Winterburn, **Tracking down the lost & forgotten astronomical women of Empire**

Daniel Belteki, **James Glaisher and the Editorship of Illustrated London Almanack**

Lee Macdonald, **Proposals to move Greenwich Observatory**

Hilary Forbes, **Aristarchus**

Allan Chapman, **TBC**

### 2022 SUMMER PICNIC

Summer 2022 will be the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of William Herschel. We hope to hold the SHA's summer picnic in Bath (**25 Jun or 2 Jul**) to take part in commemorations of this.

### 2022 AUTUMN CONFERENCE & AGM

This will be on **Sat 22 Oct 2022** at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, Birmingham, B3 3BS.

Full details will be given in due course.

### ONLINE MEETINGS

Free online evening presentations for members (using 'Zoom'):

**Sat 26 Feb at 12 noon** (UK time)

Title: **Exploring the exciting astronomical history of Southeast Asia**

Speaker: **Professor Wayne Orchiston & Darunee Lingling Orchiston**

From the first introduction of the telescope into Southeast Asia in the seventeenth century, and the historically significant telescopes at Manila and elsewhere, to Hindu and Buddhist temples and the special role of the Hindu Sun temples. Along the way, examining the total solar eclipses of 1868, 1871, 1875 and 1929 and the key roles they played in the development of solar physics.

## SHA COUNCIL

The current SHA Officers & Council are:

### Honorary Council Members

**Hon President** Dr Allan Chapman

**Hon Vice-President** Dr Emily Winterburn

### 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** Gerard Gilligan (acting)

### 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 meeting is the first scheduled for 2022:

**Sat 2 April 2022 11 am**

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.

**Mon 9 May 2022** (7pm BST)

Title: **Why does the Pope have an Observatory?**

Speaker: **Brother Guy Consolmagno, S.J.** (Director of the [Vatican Observatory](#))

On 18 September 2015, Br. Guy was appointed by Pope Francis as the new director of the Vatican Observatory. His research explores the connections between meteorites and asteroids, and the origin and evolution of small bodies in the solar system.

## SHA PUBLICATIONS

### SHA e-News

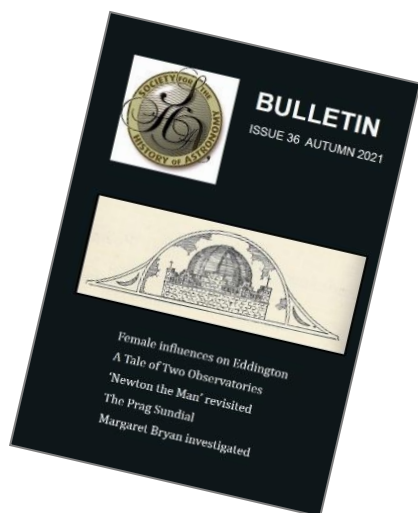
The next issue of the *e-News* is due in early May 2022. If you know of any meetings, publications, exhibitions or events pertaining to the history of astronomy that might interest other members, please email brief details to the [Editor](#) (David Sellers).



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

### SHA BULLETIN

**Issue 36** of the *Bulletin* (Autumn 2021) was distributed to SHA members during late November. **Issue 37** is due in April/May 2022.



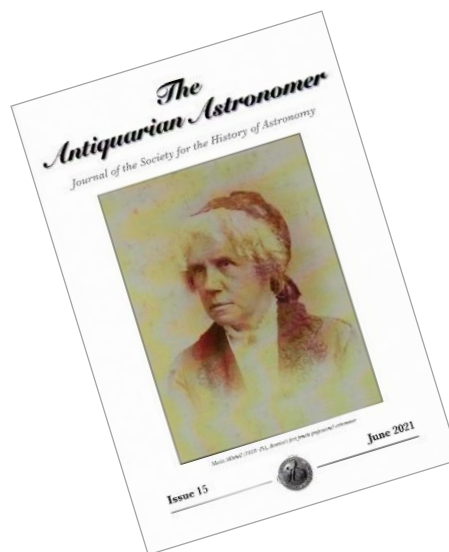
Contributions to the *Bulletin* are most welcome, including letters which can be on any aspect of the Society or the history of astronomy.

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 15** of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* was published at the beginning of June 2021. All members should have received a copy.



This issue has 70 pages. The contents include: an account by Timothy Baker of Stanley Hey's radio observatory in Richmond Park; the story of popular practical astronomy in late Georgian and early Victorian Birmingham, by David Bryden; a look at astronomers and observatories in late Georgian England (1800-1830s), by Kevin Johnson; and, a chronicle of Maria Mitchell's career, from Nantucket to Vassar, by Paul Haley.

Issue 16 should be published in June/July 2022. Members and others wishing to submit material for future issues of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* should contact the Editor (Ian Ridpath) 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](#).

## 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 LIBRARY NEWS

The SHA library now has almost 3000 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.

Due to the internal reorganisation within the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI), the home of the SHA's Library, we've had to relocate the SHA Library out of the Benson Room where it has resided since 2004. Our library has a temporary residence in a purpose built enclosure in the John Lee Lecture Theatre which is not going to be used as a lecture theatre for the time being. The future location of the Library is still under discussion.

We continue to look for and obtain new items for the Library and a list of the latest acquisitions is given below. If you have anything you'd like to donate to the Library please let us know.

Armitage, Geoff, [The shadow of the moon : British solar eclipse mapping in the eighteenth century](#), 1977

Baillie, GH, [Planetarium of Giovanni De Dondi, Citizen of Padua](#), 1974

Barentine, John C , [Mystery of the Ashen Light on Venus : investigating a 400-year-old phenomenon](#), 2021

Bernardi, Gabriella, [The Unforgotten Sisters: Female Astronomers and Scientists before Caroline Herschel \(Springer Praxis Books\)](#), 2016

Dick, Steven J, [Discovery and Classification in Astronomy: Controversy and Consensus](#), 2013

Dolan, Marion, [Decoding Astronomy in Art and Architecture](#), 2021

Finnegan, Ruth, [Studying family and community history : 19th and 20th centuries. Volume 1. From family tree to family history](#), 1994

Goddard, DE, [Parkes : thirty years of radio astronomy](#), 1994



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

Golby, J M, [Studying family and community history : 19th and 20th centuries. Volume 3. Communities and families](#), 1997

Gossin, Pamela, [Thomas Hardy's Novel Universe: Astronomy, Cosmology, and Gender in the Post-Darwinian World](#), 2007

Howard-Duff, Ian, [Astronomical Observatories and Observers : a collection of short papers on some astronomical observatories and the people who used them](#), 2006

Jacobsen, Theodor S, [Planetary Systems From the Ancient Greeks to Kepler](#), 1999

Jones, Brian, [Yearbook of Astronomy 2022](#), 2021

Levy, David H, [The starlight night 2016: the sky in the writings of Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Hopkins](#), 2016

Musser, Clair M, [The Helios Planetarium](#), 1971

Newton, Robert Russell, [Ancient astronomical observations and the accelerations of the earth and moon](#), 1970

Holden, Edward Singleton, [Essays in Astronomy](#), 1900

Pryce, WTR, [Studying family and community history : 19th and 20th centuries. Volume 2. From family history to community history](#), 2001

Saunders, Len, [Stonehenge Solved: Its Three Observatories, Who Built Them, How and Why](#), 2009

Schmidt, Johann Friedrich Julius, [The Moon \(a translation of Der Mond\)](#), 2020

Seidelmann, P Kenneth, [The History of Celestial Navigation: Rise of the Royal Observatory and Nautical Almanacs \(Historical & Cultural Astronomy\)](#), 2020

Sheehan, William, [Discovering Mars: A History of Observation and Exploration of the Red Planet](#), 2021

Soderlund, Inga Elmqvist, [Taking possession of astronomy : frontispieces and illustrated title pages in 17th-century books on astronomy](#), 2010

Steinicke, Wolfgang, [William Herschel: Discoverer of the Deep Sky](#), 2021

Stewart, Larry, [The rise of public science : rhetoric, technology, and natural philosophy in Newtonian Britain, 1660-1750](#), 1992

The following items have been given to the Library; the name of the donor is on the right:

*From Michael Hoskin:*

Bennett, James A , [The mathematical science of Christopher Wren](#), 1982,

Galilei, Galileo, [Sidereus nuncius : a reproduction of the copy in the British Library](#), 1987

Hoskin, Michael, [The mind of the scientist](#), 1971

Hunt, Garry, [Uranus and the outer planets](#), 1982

Jaki, Stanley L, [The paradox of Olbers' paradox : a case history of scientific thought](#), 1969

Jaki, Stanley L, [The Milky Way: An Elusive Road For Science](#), 1972

Kant, Immanuel, [Universal natural history and theory of the heavens](#), 1981

Schweber, SS, [Aspects of the life and thought of Sir John Frederick Herschel Volume 1](#), 1981

Westman, Robert S, [The copernican question : prog-nostication, skepticism, and celestial order](#), 2012

*From Kevin Kilburn:*

Crampton, Josiah, [The Lunar World: its scenery, motions, etc.](#), 1853

Denning, W F , [Telescopic Work for Starlight Evenings](#), 1891

Dick, Thomas, [The sidereal heavens and other subjects connected with astronomy: as illustrative of the character of the diety and of an infinity of worlds](#), 1866

Johnston, Alex Keith, [School atlas of astronomy, comprising a complete series of illustrations of the heavenly bodies](#), 1877

King, Edward Skinner, [A manual of celestial photography : principles and practice for those interested in photograph](#), 1931

Nasmyth, James, [The Moon: Considered As A Planet, A World, and a Satellite](#), 1874

Proctor, Richard A, [Mysteries of time and space](#), 1892

Proctor, Mary, [The book of the heavens](#), 1926

Proctor, Richard A, [Other worlds than ours : the plurality of worlds studied under the light of recent scientific researches](#), 1870

Serviss, Garrett P, [The Moon : a popular treatise](#), 1908

Sheehan, William, et al, [Neptune: from grand discovery to a world revealed. Essays on the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Couch Adams](#), 2021

Todd, David P, [A New Astronomy](#), 1897

Turner, HH, [Observations of variable stars: made at the Rousdon Observatory, Lyme Regis under the direction of the late Sir C E Peek](#) , 1904

The 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 catalogue 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)

## SHA MEETINGS SECRETARY

Our excellent Meetings Secretary, Michael White, has unfortunately had to relinquish his role, due to personal circumstances. We are now looking for a replacement.

The main duty of the post would be to invite speakers to future meetings of the Society. If you would possibly be interested in this post, please contact our Chair, [Gerard Gilligan](#), to discuss what is involved.

## NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to give a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined or re-joined since the previous issue of *SHA e-News*:

<b>Mrs Katherine Short</b>	<b>CHELMSFORD</b>
<b>Mr Robert Bell</b>	<b>OXFORD</b>
<b>Mr Brian Humphries</b>	<b>OLDBURY</b>

## A WORD FROM THE CHAIR



Hello again. I hope it's not too late to wish you a *Happy New Year*, and to wish you all good health and the very best for the remainder of 2022. Yet again, unfortunately, I have to begin this message on a note of sadness: At the begin-

ning of December we learned of the passing the SHA Vice-President Michael A. Hoskin (1930-2021). To my regret I did not know Michael as well as many of you. He was a highly regarded antiquarian, archaeologist and historian, particularly with his many published books on the Herschel Family and his involvement in major European archaeoastronomy fieldwork. This high regard was worldwide: His influence was felt in many organisations, including Commission 41 of the International Astronomical Union and beyond.

Even with his many Cambridge academic responsibilities, Michael was still very generous with his time and support for this society from the very moment of the SHA being established in 2002. Despite his many later years of ill health he would send supportive emails. These would express a warm encouraging message to me and the members of the SHA Council for the time and effort we were giving for the Society, plus the promotion of the history of astronomy and associated sciences. Perhaps one of Michael's many great legacies was the founding of the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* in 1969, which he edited for 45 years. Michael will be missed in the world of astronomical history and philosophy of science research, and within the SHA. I did send a message of condolences to his family on behalf of the SHA, but would like to send my appreciation to SHA member Clive Ruggles, who represented the society at the funeral service for Michael in December and was able to pass on a personal message to the family from me.

I wish to end on a happier note, with a hope that again, despite the continued uncertainty with the Covid-19 pandemic, we can meet up for a face-to-face conference at the BMI in Birmingham on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March. Details of this will be sent out to SHA members very soon. At this stage, I can only reassure you that the meeting will be conducted with speakers', society members', visitors', plus the venue staffs' health and wellbeing foremost in our minds. We will consult with the venue staff, and review public transport provision up to the last minute if required. But obviously the

final decision to attend will be yours, and that of your family members. Full covid-19 anti-infection measures will be in place at the venue, based on UK government advice, and NHS guidelines in-use at the time.

Meanwhile please beware that the very successful SHA webinars will continue during the year. Special events and publications to make the society's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary are also planned, so even in these months of uncertainty, please join me and continue with your society membership for this celebration year...and make discoveries on cloudy nights! Take care and stay safe.

[Gerard Gilligan](#),

*SHA Chairman*

## SHA SURVEY

New contributions from SHA members include William Frend (1757-1841). New stubs, for which content is now sought, include Rev. John Craig of Leamington Spa.

During this period, a number of prominent manufacturers associated with astronomy have been added to the Survey. These include Dollond & Co. (c.1750s-1925), Troughton & Simms (1826-1922), John Browning & Co. (1860-1925) and (Adam) Hilger (1874-1948). W.H. With (1860-87) and G. Calver (1871-1904) are amongst other telescope makers that have been added.

Entries for a further four school observatories have been made: St Edward's College Observatory (1888-c.1930), Liverpool; St Joseph's College Observatory (c.1932-1996), Upholland; Langton Boys' School Observatory, Canterbury (c.2011- ); and St. Albans High School for Girl Observatory (1936-?).

*Kevin Johnson*  
*Survey Coordinator*

## SHA RESEARCH GRANTS

SHA *Small Research Grants* are available for the period **1 Nov 2021 to 31 Oct 2022** 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.

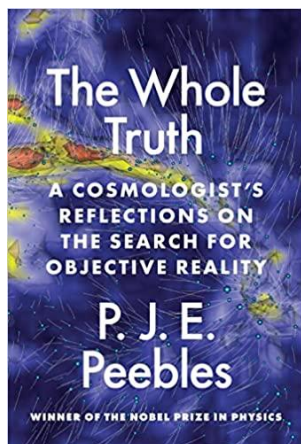
Links to the [application form and regulations](#) for applicants are available on the Society's web site. Applications must be made using the application form. Appended to the regulations are some guidelines for completing the case for support that forms part of every application.



## FORTHCOMING BOOKS

## NOTICED

[\*\*The Whole Truth: A Cosmologist's Reflections on the Search for Objective Reality\*\*](#), by P.J.E. Peebles (Princeton University Press), Jun 2022, pp.240 (hardback, £22.00), ISBN 9780691231358



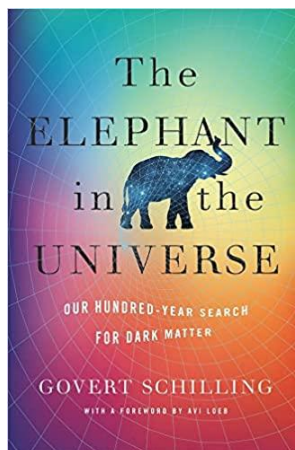
A century ago, thoughtful people questioned how reality could agree with physical theories that keep changing, from a mechanical model of the ether to electric and magnetic fields, and from homogeneous matter to electrons and atoms. Today, concepts like dark matter and dark energy further complicate and enrich the

search for objective reality. *The Whole Truth* is a personal reflection on this ongoing quest by one of the world's most esteemed cosmologists.

What lies at the heart of physical science? What are the foundational ideas that inform and guide the enterprise? Is the concept of objective reality meaningful? If so, do our established physical theories usefully approximate it? P. J. E. Peebles takes on these and other big questions about the nature of science, drawing on a lifetime of experience as a leading physicist and using cosmology as an example. He traces the history of thought about the nature of physical science since Einstein, and succinctly lays out the fundamental working assumptions. Through a careful examination of the general theory of relativity, Einstein's cosmological principle, and the theory of an expanding universe, Peebles shows the evidence that we are discovering the nature of reality in successive approximations through increasingly demanding scrutiny.

[\*\*The Elephant in the Universe: Our Hundred-Year Search for Dark Matter\*\*](#), by Govert Schilling (Harvard University Press), May 2022, pp.376 (hardback, £23.95), ISBN 9780674248991

Govert Schilling explores the fascinating history of the search for dark matter. Evidence for its existence comes from a wealth of astronomical observations. Theories and computer simulations of the evolution of the universe are also suggestive: they can be reconciled with astronomical measurements only if dark matter is a dominant component of nature. Physicists have devised huge, sensitive instruments to search for dark matter, which may be unlike anything else in the cos-



mos—some unknown elementary particle. Yet so far dark matter has escaped every experiment. Indeed, dark matter is so elusive that some scientists are beginning to suspect there might be something wrong with our theories about gravity or with the current paradigms of cosmology. Schilling interviews both believers and heretics and paints a colourful picture of

the history and current status of dark matter research, with astronomers and physicists alike trying to make sense of theory and observation.

Taking a holistic view of dark matter as a problem, an opportunity, and an example of science in action, *The Elephant in the Universe* is a vivid tale of scientists puzzling their way toward the true nature of the universe.

[\*\*Investigating Art, History, and Literature with Astronomy: Determining Time, Place, and Other Hidden Details Linked to the Stars\*\*](#), by Donald W. Olson (Springer Praxis), Apr 2022, pp.186 (paperback, £27.99), ISBN 9783030955533

How can shadows determine the date and time of a painting by Johannes Vermeer? How did the Moon and tides cause the loss of King John's crown jewels?

In his newest book, Professor Olson, author of *Celestial Sleuth* and *Further Adventures of the Celestial Sleuth*, explores how astronomical clues can uncover fascinating new details about art, history, and literature. He begins with an accessible introduction to amateur "celestial sleuthing", showing how to use your astronomical knowledge, software, archives, vintage maps, historical letters and diaries, military records, and other resources to investigate the past.

Follow along as Professor Olson then explores twenty real-world cases where astronomy has helped answer unresolved questions or correct longstanding interpretations about an event. Examples involve artists such as Vermeer, Monet, and O'Keeffe; the historical exploits of Alexander the Great, the desert travels of the Death Valley '49ers, and a meeting between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in Marrakech; and literary works by Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Longfellow.

Packed with dozens of full-colour illustrations, this book will enrich your knowledge of the past and equip you with all the tools you'll need to become a celestial sleuth yourself.

**Alfonsine Astronomy: The Written Record**, by Richard Kremer, Mathieu Husson, Jose Chabás (eds.) (Brepols), Feb 2022, pp.435 (hardback, £82.57), ISBN 9782503595207

Compiled between 1262 and 1272 in Toledo under the patronage of Alfonso X, the Castilian *Alfonsine Tables* were recast in Paris in the 1320s, resulting in what we now call the Parisian *Alfonsine Tables*. These materials circulated widely and fostered astronomical activities throughout Europe. This resulted in a significant number of new works, of which there are a few hundred, extant in more than 600 manuscript codices and dozens of printed editions. These manuscripts and imprints, broadly contemporary to the works they witness, comprise the written record of Alfonsine astronomy and provide the focus of this volume. A first series of essays examines individual manuscripts containing Alfonsine works. The authors seek to reconstruct, from the manuscript evidence, the cultural, astronomical and mathematical worlds in which the manuscripts were initially copied, compiled, used and collected. A second series of essays turns from the particular codex to the individual work or author. These contributions ask how particular works have been transmitted in surviving manuscript witnesses and how broader manuscript cultures shaped the diffusion, over two centuries, of Alfonsine astronomy across Europe. A final essay reflects on the challenges and opportunities offered by digital humanities approaches in such collective studies of a large manuscript corpus.

## RECENT BOOKS MISSED

**Une Histoire des cadrans solaires en Occident: La Gnomonique du Moyen Âge au XXe siècle**, by Denis Savoie (Les Belles Lettres), Dec 2021, pp.312 (paperback, £25.70), ISBN 9782251452319



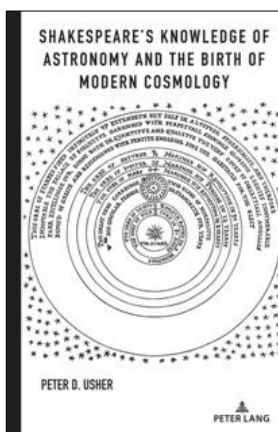
(In French) 800 sundials from Antiquity are known and preserved in museums. There are tens of thousands of them in Europe built between the Middle Ages and today. France alone has more than 32,000. The vast majority of them are still in operation on churches, in gardens, on public buildings or on private houses.

In this book, Denis Savoie reminds us of the heritage of Greco-Roman gnomonics and then examines the medieval achievements that reflect the clear decline of astronomy in the West. A profound change began in the measurement of time at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the

Renaissance, with the appearance of clocks and the abandonment of ancient timekeeping. The development of mathematics, the diffusion of the first printed works in the 16th century, the increase in the precision of the dials by which clocks are now set, all these factors contribute to massively spread these instruments which will remain for a long time the only way to know the time in the cities and the countryside.

Sundials became an inexhaustible field of research and many types were built, from the luxurious pocket portables to the meridian in the cathedrals while passing by the simple dials which decorate the facades. Even if the 19th century relegates them to the background, sundials have never ceased to be at the same time objects of art often decorated with mottos and scientific and educational instruments essential to the understanding of the movements of the Sun. This richly illustrated History of sundials allows us to discover all the facets of an instrument that goes back to the beginnings of astronomy. [Denis Savoie](#), historian of science, is a scientific advisor at Universcience (Palais de la Decouverte & Cite des Sciences et de l'Industrie) and an associate researcher at the Observatoire de Paris (Syrte).

**Shakespeare's Knowledge of Astronomy and the Birth of Modern Cosmology**, by Peter D. Usher (Peter Lang), Nov 2021, pp.186 (hardback, £60.00), ISBN 9781433191701



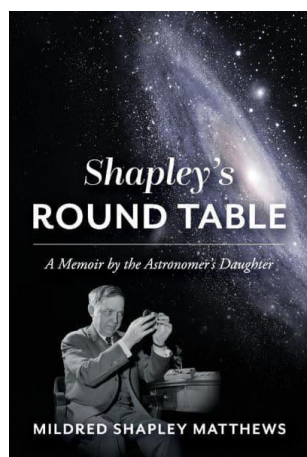
This book addresses an observation first made many decades ago, that Shakespeare appears to neglect the intellectual upheavals that astronomy brought about in his lifetime. The author examines temporal, situational, and verbal anomalies in Hamlet and other plays, and finds a consistent pattern of interpretation that is compatible with the history of astronomy and with the development of modern cosmology. He also demonstrates how Shakespeare takes into account beliefs about the nature of the heavens from the time of Pythagoras up to and including discoveries and theories in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The book makes the case that, as in many other fields, Shakespeare's celestial knowledge is far beyond what was commonly known at the time.

Students and teachers interested in Shakespeare's alleged indifference towards, or ignorance of, the celestial sciences will find this book illuminating, as will historians of science and scholars whose work focuses on epistemology and its relationship to the canon, and



on how Shakespeare acquired the data that his plays deliver.

**Shapley's Round Table: A Memoir by the Astronomer's Daughter**, by Mildred Shapley Matthews (Bookbay, self-published), Dec 2021, pp.312 (paperback, £18.99), ISBN 9781098383565



A lively memoir about growing up with the charismatic American astronomer and science impresario, Harlow Shapley, by his daughter, the late Mildred Shapley Matthews. Shapley remains widely regarded as one of the most unusual, interesting, and noteworthy American astronomers, internationalists, and humanitarians of the 20th century. The “round table” in the title refers to a large rotating wooden desk mounted on central spindle, which graced the Director’s Office at the Harvard College Observatory from 1906 through the mid-1950s. Mildred Shapley Matthews (1915-2016) wrote this reminiscence of life with her father, Harlow Shapley (1885-1972), during the early 1960s. It is based on her personal recollections plus extensive correspondence and conversations with her father and her mother, Martha Betz Shapley (1890-1981).

Written in a colloquial narrative style, it exhibits for the first time a delightfully human side of Harlow Shapley. Harlow Shapley was also an outspoken political progressive, socialist, pacifist, and internationalist who openly espoused his political and social causes. He was one of the “suspected communists” named by Senator Joseph McCarthy, and in 1946 was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Shapley retired as director of the Harvard Observatory in 1952. Over the next 20 years he wrote several books and lectured extensively on college campuses across the country, sharing his enthusiasm with generations of future thinkers about the wonders of science, and his witty disdain for humankind’s hubris.

**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.

### ‘Cosmic Harmonies’: A Symposium Celebrating the Life, Science, Music, and Legacy of William Herschel (1738–1822)

2022 sees the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of William Herschel, a profoundly significant figure in the field of astronomy, but one who made his early living as a musician — as an oboist, violinist, harpsichordist, organist, composer, and impresario.

[This symposium](#) takes the bicentenary of his death as a cue to explore new aspects of Herschel’s work as composer, instrumentalist, impresario, and astronomer in the intellectual, creative, and cultural contexts of his time. The symposium will take a wide perspective on astronomy, music, and natural philosophy, including the Herschels’ legacy in connections between science and art today.

The symposium will take place on **19 June 2022**, and will conclude with a public keynote lecture by Professor Tom McLeish FRS (University of York), a panel discussion on Herschel’s legacies, and a concert of Herschel’s music given as part of the *York Festival of Ideas*, 11–24 June 2022.

### Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop (NDXV)

The [Fifteenth Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop](#) (NDXV) will be held **8-12 Jun 2022**, in-person at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, with a planned one-day trip to the Adler Planetarium in Chicago.

The theme will be: *Communicating Astronomy* - How is astronomical knowledge and expertise communicated, both within and beyond the astronomical community?

## WEB-LINKS NOTICED

### HAD News

The latest issue of *HAD News* (no. 98, Nov 2021), newsletter of the Historical Division of the American Astronomical Society is [available for download](#).

## STONEHENGE

The High Court ruled in July 2021 (see Aug 2021 *SHA e-News*) that the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, had failed to properly consider alternative schemes before approving the proposed 3.2 km tunnel beneath the **Stonehenge World Heritage Site**.

Transport Secretary, Shapps, is currently in the process of “re-determining” his decision on the National Highways’ planning application for the tunnel. A large part of this exercise will be spent looking at the environmental and carbon impact of the proposed scheme in relation to government commitments and legislation. National Highways submitted its revised case on 11 Jan 2022.

Shapps will also have to prove that he has considered an alternative scheme for a longer tunnel and is therefore asking interested parties to submit material setting out the relative merits of an alternative scheme.

## ... & STONEHEDGE



This tribute in hornbeam, at [Breezy Knees Gardens](#), North Yorkshire, is claimed to have all dimensions 40% of the original. A notice declares that the only other difference is that “the one in Wiltshire doesn’t need trimming twice a year”.

## SHA PUBLICITY STALLS

The SHA held publicity stalls at the following venues/events:

**Fri 12 Nov 2021:** [Stargazing Event](#): World Museum, Liverpool

**Sat 13 Nov 2021:** [Federation of Astronomical Societies Convention](#), National Space Centre, Leicester

Forthcoming events with SHA stalls will include:

**Sat 19 Mar 2022:** [Practical Astronomy Show](#), Kettering

## MICHAEL HOSKIN 1930-2021

Our Honorary Vice-President, Dr Michael Hoskin, who died on 5 Dec 2021, was one of the most notable historians of astronomy in the UK and was held in the highest esteem amongst historians of science internationally. He founded and edited for 44 years the *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, which has been an invaluable vehicle for the dissemination of research in this subject.

He was instrumental in producing some of the key general reference works in the history of astronomy, including serving as the General Editor of several volumes of the *General History of Astronomy*. He also made significant contributions as a historian of stellar astronomy and in particular published extensively on the work and lives of William and Caroline Herschel.

Michael Hoskin’s work in the field of archaeoastronomy (or astronomy in prehistory) has gained international recognition. It earned him a gold medal by Royal Decree in Spain and in 2017 a bronze bust of him was erected in Antequera, Spain.

In 2004 the American Astronomical Society awarded him the *Leroy E. Doggett Prize* in history of astronomy. More recently, he was worthy recipient of the *Agnes Mary Clerke Medal* of the RAS, in recognition of his services to the history of astronomy.

Michael’s own notes for any would-be obituarist – sometimes tongue-in-cheek – [can be read here](#).



Michael (right) with Roger Jones and Dr David Dewhirst at a SHA Conference in 2004



## INFORMATION WANTED

### 17<sup>th</sup> Century Manuscript

The SHA was recently approached for help in identifying an astronomical manuscript that has recently come to light in an old private library in South Wales. The manuscript consists of 122 pages. The Latin handwriting appears to be in a late-seventeenth century style. Does anyone out there recognise it?

The title is: *Institutiones Astronomicae* [Principles of Astronomy].

The date on page 71 of the manuscript, 1687, is perhaps consistent with the fact that a diagram of the solar system in Chapter 1 shows the four Galilean satellites of Jupiter (discovered, 1610) and 3 satellites of Saturn (discovered, 1655-72), but not the two further satellites

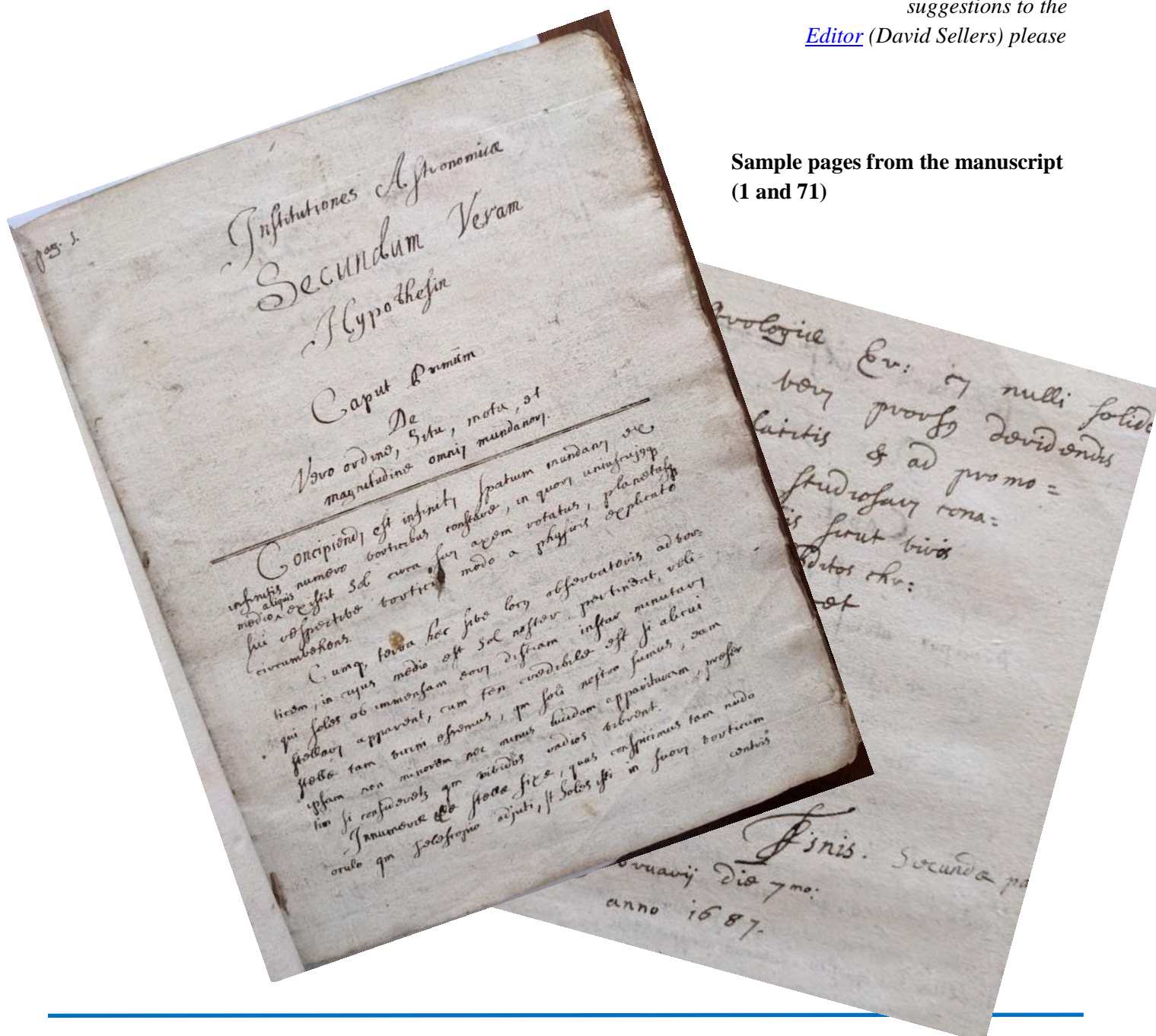
of Saturn (discovered, 1684).

At least 31 pages (possibly more) correspond, more or less verbatim, to passages from the book *Institutionum astronomicarum* by Nicholas Mercator (1620-87), which was first published in 1676. The handwriting, however, does not match known samples from Mercator. Maybe the manuscript is that of a student, diligently transcribing from borrowed books?

Interestingly, although Mercator's worked examples of astronomical calculations are repeated, where Mercator gave the polar distance of the Zenith for London ( $38^{\circ} 47'$ ), the author of the manuscript has substituted the value for Edinburgh ( $34^{\circ} 5'$ ) and refers to 'our' Edinburgh location.

The initials "M.C." are embossed on the leather binding.

suggestions to the  
[Editor](#) (David Sellers) please



Sample pages from the manuscript  
(1 and 71)



**SHA CALENDAR 2022**

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>SHA EVENT OR PUBLICATION</b>	<b>VENUE</b>
<b>2022</b>		
JAN	SHA Online Lecture No.7, by Dr Philipp Nothaft (26 Jan)	Via 'Zoom'
FEB	SHA e-News (1-5 Feb) SHA Online Lecture No.8, by Prof. Wayne Orchiston & Darunee Lingling Orchiston (26 Feb)	Via 'Zoom'
MAR	SHA Spring Conference (12 Mar)	Birmingham
APR	SHA Bulletin 37 (1 Apr)	
MAY	SHA e-News (1-5 May) SHA Online Lecture No.9, by Brother Guy Consolmagno (9 May)	Via 'Zoom'
JUN	The Antiquarian Astronomer 16	
JUL	SHA Summer Picnic (date TBC)	Bath
AUG	SHA e-News (1-5 Aug)	
SEP		
OCT	SHA AGM & Autumn Conference (22 Oct)	Birmingham
NOV	SHA e-News (1-5 Nov)	
DEC	SHA Bulletin 38 (mid-Dec)	