



SHA e-News

Society for the History of Astronomy

Volume 17, no.2, May 2025

Editor: David Sellers

SHA AT HOME & ABROAD

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS IN PARIS AND BIRMINGHAM



Conference participants at the HQ of the Société Astronomique de France (photo: J-C Berçu)

PARIS (28-30 MAR 2025)

On Fri 28 Mar 2025, the SHA took part in the third joint conference with members of the History Commission of the Société Astronomique de France (SAF). The previous ones had been in 2017 (Paris) and 2019 (Oxford).

This year's conference took place at the headquarters of the SAF in Rue Beethoven, on the right bank of the Seine – opposite the Eiffel Tower. The presentations were in English and commenced with Danielle Briot speaking about the life and work of Gavriil Adrianovitch Tikhov (1875-1960), a Soviet astronomer who was a pioneer in astrobiology and astrobotany. Jean-Claude Berçu (President of the History Commission) talked about the solar eclipse of 27 May 1724 and particularly the observations from Versailles, where it was seen by King Louis XV. Then we were treated to an expert presentation by Guy Bertrand, describing in detail the calculations of Urbain Leverrier, leading to

the discovery of Neptune, and a comparison with those of John Couch Adams. The final morning lecture was by Gerard Gilligan, who spoke about the life and work of William Lassell, the brewer and astronomer.

After a fine lunch at a local brasserie, the afternoon sessions commenced with Kevin Johnson explaining the methodology of the SHA county survey. Louis-Aimé de Fouquières recounted the history of daylight-saving time in France – starting with what might have been intended as a humorous suggestion by Benjamin Franklin. Mike Leggett described research into the local history of astronomy – giving examples particularly from Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk. Roland Trotignon spoke about the Toulouse meridian telescope, which was built by the leading British instrument maker Jesse Ramsden. Finally, in preparation for a short visit to the Ferrié memorial at the foot of the Eiffel Tower (in pouring rain!), Jean-Claude Berçu introduced us to Gustave-Auguste Ferrié (1868–1932), who probably saved the Tower for posterity by setting up a system of long aerials there, making it indispensable for long-distance radio communication.



Flammarion's observatory at Juvisy



SHA visitors at the graves of Camille, Sylvie and Gabrielle Flammarion, at Juvisy (photo: J-C Berçu)

The following day, accompanied by beautiful blue skies, there was a memorable excursion to the famous observatory of Camille Flammarion at Juvisy, where participants were able to observe that day's partial solar eclipse, projected through the 240 mm Bardou refractor in the observatory. The gardens were open to members of the public, who had been invited to watch the eclipse with instruments provided by the local astronomical society. SHA members were invited to inspect the fabulous library and archive of Flammarion. That evening we joined SAF members for a meal in the prestigious setting of the *Lycée Louis le Grand* adjacent to the Sorbonne.

Finally, on Sunday there was an organised visit to the *Musée des Arts et Métiers*, followed by lunch and a guided walk around the historic Marais area of Paris.

BIRMINGHAM (26 APR 2025)

SHA members attending our Spring Conference at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on 26 Apr 2025 were treated to a reprise by Kevin Johnson of the talk about the SHA Survey, which he had delivered in Paris. This was followed by Mike Lancaster giving a presentation about the rarely studied early life and work of John Flamsteed, before becoming the first Astronomer Royal.

The pre-booked buffet lunch again worked well and allowed visitors to chat together, rather than dispersing to surrounding cafés and bars.

Three afternoon presentations were started by SHA Chair, Carolyn Kennett, who gave a fascinating lecture looking at the work of Norman and Mary Lockyer studying possible astronomical alignments of stone circles and lines in Cornwall (illustrated with many of Mary's original photos).

This was followed by David Strange giving a profusely illustrated account of the long history of Mars observations.

Finally, we had an enthralling presentation by Michal Paszkiewicz, who delivered this year's Michael Hoskin Lecture, on *Riccioli: The Sentinel of an Unshaken World*



SHA Spring Conference 2025, during the presentation by Michal Paszkiewicz (photo: G. Gilligan)

FUTURE SHA MEETINGS

2025 SUMMER PICNIC

Fri 27 Jun 2025 has been chosen for the SHA Summer Picnic at [Jodrell Bank](#), home to the world-famous Lovell radio telescope. The recently refurbished visitor centre at Jodrell Bank contains many exciting exhibits. We propose that you make your own way round the visitor centre and join us for lunch at 12:30 PM in the picnic area. We are not offering dedicated lectures for this event (we were unable to find anyone, sorry) but there should be enough to see to fill up your day.

Further details have been confirmed in a circular to members at the end of April.

For 2026 we are looking at holding the summer picnic at Birr Castle in Ireland, the home of Lord Rosse's great reflecting telescope – the '[Leviathan of Parsonstown](#)'. Please let us know what you think.

2025 AGM & AUTUMN CONFERENCE

This will be on **Sat 8 Nov 2025 at 10 am–4.30 pm** at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, Birmingham, B3 3BS

Speakers:

Sian Prosser – *Incunables*

Mike Leggett – *Astronomy and Discovery*

Louise Devoy - *Observatory Objects* (commemorating 350 years of the Greenwich Observatory)

One other speaker - TBC

ONLINE MEETINGS

Free online evening presentations for members:

Wed 8 Oct 2025

Title: **Astronomical history Research Techniques**

Wed 26 Nov 2025

Title: **Henry Enfield Roscoe, the spectroscopist**
(and friend of Joseph Baxendell)

Speaker: **Peter Morris**

Wed 14 Jan 2026

Title: **Marie Curie and her astronomical connections**

Speaker: **Dava Sobel**

Links will be sent to members nearer to the dates.

SHA COUNCIL

The current SHA Officers & Council are:

Honorary Council Members

Hon President Dr Allan Chapman

Hon Vice-Presidents Dr Emily Winterburn, Prof. Mike Edmunds

Council Members

Chair Carolyn Kennett

Vice-Chair (& e-News Editor) David Sellers

General Secretary Mike Leggett

Treasurer Geoff King

Asst. Treasurer Bill Barton

Membership Secretary Graham Jones

SHA Bulletin Editor Kevin Walsh

Publicity Officer Geoff King

Survey Coordinator Kevin Johnson

Online Editor John Chuter

Librarian James Dawson

Meetings/Events Secretary Mike Frost

Co-opted Officers

Editor, The Antiquarian Astronomer Peter Morris

Deputy Editor, The Antiquarian Astronomer Ian Ridpath

Archivist John Chuter

Assistant Librarian Carolyn Bedwell

SHA booklet distributor Gerard Gilligan

SHA COUNCIL MEETINGS

The next SHA Council meeting will be on:

Wed 24 Sep 2025, 6 p.m. (via 'Zoom')

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

RESEARCH WORKSHOP?

The SHA Council is looking at organising a one-day workshop on methods of conducting research in the history of astronomy. It would be useful to know what demand there would be for such an event. If you are interested, please contact the [Editor](#).

SHA PUBLICATIONS

SHA e-News

The next issue of the *e-News* is due in early-Aug 2025. 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).



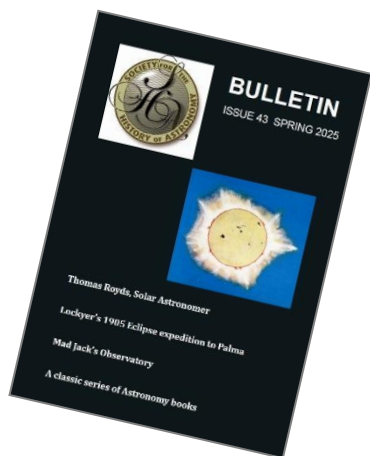
Back issues and guidelines for contributions are available from the [e-News web page](#).

SHA BULLETIN

Issue 43 of the *Bulletin* (Spring 2025) will shortly be distributed to SHA members. **Issue 44** (Winter 2025) is due around November/December this year.

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

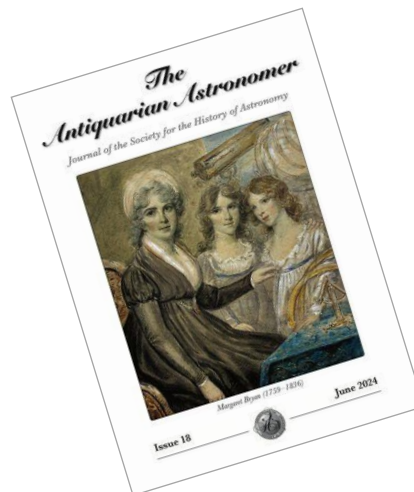
Back issues (except for the last 2 years) and guidelines for contributions are available from the [Bulletin web page](#).



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

THE ANTIQUARIAN ASTRONOMER

Issue 18 of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* was sent out to all members in early June 2024.



The cover subject is Margaret Bryan, the Georgian-era pioneer of women's education. Subjects of other papers include William Rowan Hamilton, second Royal Astronomer of Ireland; an unlikely link between Clapham Common and the speed of light; and the conclusion of Paul Haley's biography of Mary Watson Whitney.

Issue 19 should be published in June/July 2025. Members and others wishing to submit material for future issues of *The Antiquarian Astronomer* should contact the Editor (Peter Morris) at aaeditor@shastro.org.uk. Guidance for authors and some back issues can be found on [The Antiquarian Astronomer web page](#).

Please note that, from issue 19, Ian Ridpath and Peter Morris will be swapping roles as Editor and Deputy Editor respectively. Ian will have edited our much-respected journal for 10 years and the SHA is greatly indebted to him for his work.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

After canvassing members for their views, the SHA Council has now put in place a policy on 'Safeguarding'.

Our Society's activities include working with vulnerable people, face to face, and online. The purpose of [this safeguarding policy](#) is to protect children and vulnerable adults and to provide members, other stakeholders and the public with the overarching principles that guide our approach in doing so.

Please let [Carolyn Kennett](#) or [James Dawson](#) (our nominated *safeguarding officers*) know, if you have any concerns regarding this issue.

SHA LIBRARY NEWS

The SHA library now has about 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 focused 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 work of lesser known British astronomers and authors.

A list of the latest acquisitions is given below.

Armstrong, Sarita, *Astronomer Norman Pogson and his Amazing Family* (2025)

Beet, Ernest, *A text book of elementary astronomy* (1945)

Finocchiaro, Maurice A., *The Galileo Affair: a Documentary History (California Studies in the History of Science) (Volume 1)* (1989)

Jones, Brian, *Who's Who In The Moon: From Abbot to Zupus: A Guide To The Moon And The People On It* (2025)

Lovell, Bernard, *The Royal Institution Library of Science. Astronomy Volume 1* (1970)

Lunan, Duncan, *The stones and the stars: building Scotland's newest megalith* (2013)

McMahon, Matthew, *100 Years of Planetaria: 100 Stories of People, Places, and Devices* (2025)

Olson, Roberta, *Cosmos: The Art and Science of the Universe* (2019)



BMI (Birmingham): home of the SHA Library

Royal Astronomical Society, *Supplementary catalogue of the Library of the Royal Astronomical Society* (1926)

Ruggles, Clive, *Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy (IAU S278): Building Bridges between Cultures (Proceedings of the IAU Symposia and Colloquia)* (2011)

Below are the recent donations to the SHA Library:

Société Astronomique de France, *L'histoire de l'Observatoire de Juvisy* (2022), Chacksfield, Barrie

A 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 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



SHA RESEARCH GRANTS

SHA *Small Research Grants* are available for the period **1 Nov 2024 to 31 Oct 2025** 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. The research grants panel consists of: the Chair, vice-Chair, General Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary of the SHA (with powers to co-opt outside advice).

NEW MEMBERS

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

Mr Kenelm J England	READING
Prof D Graham J Shipley	LEICESTER
Ms Janet Dowling	SIDMOUTH
Miss Loretta Nikolic	HEREFORD
Ms Adrienne Skye	ISLE OF SKYE
Rev W John Young	WELLINGTON

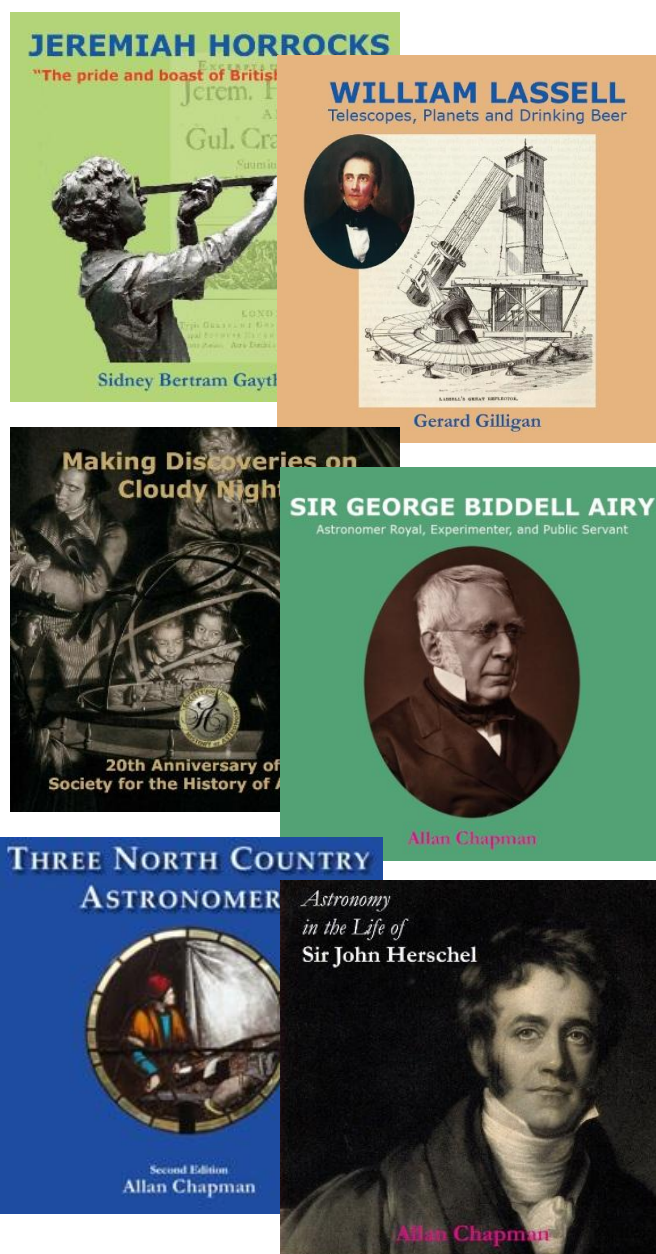
SHA REVISED CONSTITUTION

The seventh version of the SHA Constitution (adopted at the 2024 AGM) is [now available on our website](#).

VOLUNTEER A PRESENTATION?

Do you have a mini-presentation that you would like to make to an online SHA meeting? The SHA organises 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 our [Meetings Secretary](#) know.

SHA BOOKLET SERIES



Five titles in the SHA's occasional booklet series have been published so far: One on *Jeremiah Horrocks* (2020, £8), by Sidney B Gaythorpe; one on *William Lassell* (2021, £8), by Gerard Gilligan; one for the *SHA 20th Anniversary* (2022, £10) by various authors; one on *Sir George Biddell Airy* (2023, £12), by Allan Chapman; and most recently *Three North Country Astronomers* revised edition (2024, £8), by Allan Chapman. The prices relate to purchase at SHA events. For mail order costs, please contact bookshop@shastro.org.uk.

Soon to be published will be *Astronomy in the Life of Sir John Herschel*, by Allan Chapman. Following that will be *A History of Archaeo-astronomy*, by Carolyn Kennett. If you wish to suggest topics and/or authors for the future, please let the Editor know ([David Sellers](#)).

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR



It has been a busy and exciting few months, not least because of our recent trip to Paris. Nineteen SHA delegates took part in this very special joint event, and I want to extend heartfelt thanks to our French counterparts in the Historical Commission of the *Société Astronomique de France* (SAF). In particular, I'd like to thank Jean-Claude for his outstanding organisation—and his patience as we navigated the intricacies of the Paris Metro!

The visit received overwhelmingly positive feedback from those who attended, and we're already excitedly planning to invite our French colleagues back in 2028.

In addition, we held our Spring Conference at the BMI in Birmingham. It was a real pleasure to enjoy such an excellent variety of talks and to spend time in good company.

Looking ahead, we're eagerly anticipating the summer picnic at Jodrell Bank on 27th June. And for those of us in the South West, the BAA Historical Section is hosting a meeting at the Devon and Exeter Institute in Exeter on 31st May—home to a fascinating Moon model created by the stationmaster-astronomer Roger Langdon. Our Assistant Treasurer, Bill, will be reviving his talk on Roger's life, which some SHA members may remember from a previous event. It feels especially fitting, as this year marks 200 years since George Stephenson's train carried paying passengers for the first time—a moment of history well worth commemorating.

I hope you're all looking forward to the summer solstice in June. I plan to be in Cornwall, taking measurements at one of the stone circle sites on Bodmin Moor.

See you all soon—and have a wonderful summer!

Carolyn
SHA Chair

REV T.E. ESPIN'S TELESCOPE

The plinth that once bore the famous 24-inch reflector of [Rev. Thomas Espin](#), at the [Heddon Observatory of Newcastle University](#), has a plaque inscribed:

"This Calver Reflector was used by the Revd. T.H.E.C. Espin (1858-1934) at Tow Law, Co. Durham, from 1914 until his death and thereafter by Mr. William Milburn until 1939.

During his lifetime the Revd Espin discovered 2575 double stars, 4018 red stars and published data on 1424 stars with remarkable spectra.

After many years of disuse the instrument was renovated and presented by Mr. David Sinden to the University of Newcastle in 1971."

Sadly, it appears that the observatory and its impressive telescope have been allowed to decay.

A campaign to save the telescope has been set up a few months ago. An [online petition](#) can be signed.

In April, the Council of the SHA gave the following statement of support:

"The Espin telescope needs to be brought back into operation to provide the public with a window on the wonders of the night skies. The 20-inch reflecting telescope was originally used by the Rev. T.H.E.C. Espin to make thousands of observations of variable stars.

"An amateur and innovator of this area of astronomical research, he helped lay the groundwork of today's astrophysics. A founder member of the British Astronomical Association and a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, Espin developed links with Newcastle University, who later owned his telescope as a research and teaching instrument. The telescope is historic and its restoration would be a fitting monument to Espin's pioneering astronomical observations and associated work."

CAMILLE FLAMMARION 100

To commemorate the centenary of the death of the great populariser of astronomy, Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), the SAF has commissioned a bronze sculpture of him for the park of the observatory at Juvisy sur Orge. It has launched [a campaign](#) to raise 21,000€ for this. The SHA has made a donation of £100 towards it.



Nacera Kainou working on the clay version (credit: SAF)

SHA SURVEY NEWS

Although the winter quarter has been quieter than the autumn, there has been a range of contributions from members of the SHA. I have received contributions from regular contributor, Bill Barton, our West Midlands expert, Phil Barnard, and Mike Leggett for East Midlands. Phil has also agreed to examine an existing list of astronomers to see if it contains potential additions to the Survey.

Bill Barton has made several contributions, prominent being [Henry Ellis \[FRAS\] \(1858-1927\)](#), a successful marine underwriter with a keen interest in astronomy. He established a series of observatories at his Hertfordshire home near Potter's Bar that housed various telescopes, the largest being a 20-inch Grubb reflector. His observatory was later relocated to Lyme Regis in Dorset when he retired in 1909. Bill has also identified Bellerby (aka Harry) Lowerison (1863-1935), a teacher from the east end of London who established a [Ruskin School](#) near Hunstanton in Norfolk. With a keen interest in astronomy, he included the subject in his teaching curriculum, and erected with an observatory in the school grounds. His methods are laid out in his publication *Star Lore for Teachers* - details to be added shortly. Also, under the teaching heading, Phil Barnard has provided details for [David Harris \(1933-2017\)](#), a teacher at Binley and Highfields schools where he established school observatories – see previous report. Phil is also going through the [Macpherson's Directory](#) (typescript document) for potential additions to the Survey. It formed the basis for the *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, edited by Hockey. Lastly, Mike Leggett has contributed details for [John T.W. Claridge \[Rev: FRAS\] \(1854-1935\)](#), a cleric who popularised astronomy from his Garthorpe parish in Leicestershire.

My own researches have added a series of observatories relating to astronomers already on the Survey. These include the [observing establishment](#) of Nicholas Martindale on the outskirts of Liverpool, the [observatory](#) of James S Cooke, a mill owner in Gomersal, West Yorkshire, and George Dunn's private [observing facility](#) near Maidenhead in Berkshire. The last observatory housed a 15-inch Grubb refractor, now at the Alston Observatory in Lancashire (UCLAN).

Lastly, the Survey was brought to the notice of an international audience during the recent SHA/SAF meeting in Paris, where I gave a paper outlining its purpose, structure and its current status. The presentation was repeated last month at the SHA Spring Conference in Birmingham.

Kevin Johnson - Survey Coordinator
15 Apr 2025

SHA ON THE ROAD

Recent and future publicity events

The Society for the History of Astronomy continues to publicise its activities through events ranging from talks for local astronomical societies through to larger scale events such as astronomy shows. If you know of other forthcoming events at which the SHA might be able to have a publicity stand, or if you'd like materials to use at your local society meetings then please let the Publicity Officer, Geoff King, know via:

publicity@shastro.org.uk.

Forthcoming events

We'll be having book sales and recruitment stands at:-

The AGM of the FAS on **31 May 2025** at the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge

Then back to the IoA on **28 Jun 2025** for the Webb Society's AGM and meeting (NB: this one is on the 28th not as previously noted in error)

Later in the year we'll be at the International Astronomy Show on **Sat 1 Nov 2025**. This year it'll be at the Sports Connexion Leisure Club & Venue, which is based in Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Warwickshire.

SHA SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Amazingly, membership subscriptions for the SHA had only increased by £1 from its inception in 2002 until 2024.

Faced with rising costs (especially postage and printing costs), however, the SHA 2024 AGM approved the following changes to subscription rates:

Concessions will continue, but will only apply to:

- Under 18s or those in full-time education;
- Low-income persons in receipt of state benefits (other than state pension).

The annual subscription rates, from 2025, shall be:

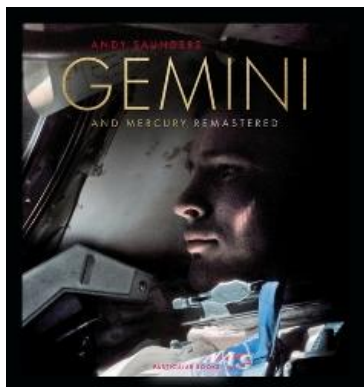
- Standard: £25
- Concession: £20
- Household: £30
- Institutional: £25

In addition the annual overseas postage supplement will be £15 for Europe and £30 for the rest of the World

The Council feels sure that members will be convinced that these rates are reasonable and represent excellent value for money.

FORTHCOMING BOOKS NOTICED

Gemini and Mercury Remastered, by Andy Saunders (Particular Books, Penguin), Aug 2025, pp. 320 (hardback, £50.00), ISBN 9780241638194

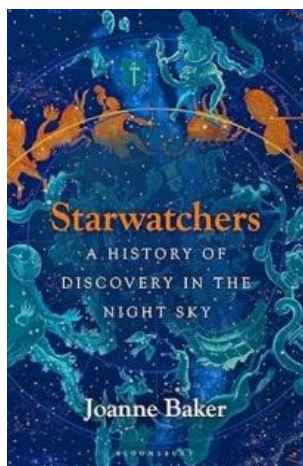


When we think of the history of space exploration, we can't help but think of the Apollo missions and Neil Armstrong's one giant leap. But what about the small steps that enabled NASA to reach for the Moon?

Astronauts working on the earliest space missions, from Project Mercury to the Gemini missions of the mid-1960s, answered fundamental questions about the possibilities of long-duration space travel, paving the way for the Apollo missions and, ultimately, the Moon landings. They also took the first, and still some of the finest, images of Earth ever captured on film.

Now, the bestselling author of *Apollo Remastered*, Andy Saunders, has restored images from these first missions to show them in unprecedented detail and tell their full story, filled with dramatic life or death moments, mischievous pranks and astonishing triumphs. This stunning visual odyssey brings to life the pivotal, intimate moments of early space travel, unveiling the raw beauty and profound challenges faced by the pioneering astronauts, pushing the boundaries of human achievement. *Gemini and Mercury Remastered* is a striking tribute to the visionaries who dared to dream beyond our world and a testament to the enduring power of exploration.

Starwatchers: A History of Discovery in the Night Sky, by Joanne Baker (Bloomsbury), Jun 2025, pp.224 (hardback, £22.00), ISBN 9781526608055

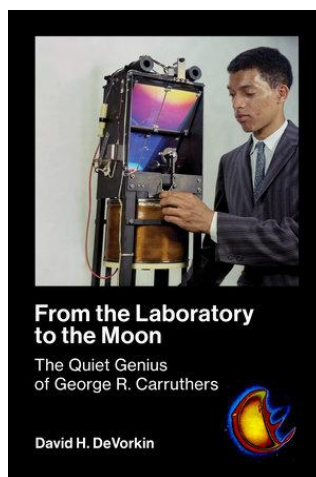


In this synthesis of science and culture, former astrophysicist and writer Joanne Baker charts the global history of humanity's relationship with the cosmos. Starting with the nearby Moon before venturing through the solar system to the stars and beyond, she unveils a rich mosaic of stories and research that illuminate the

significance of celestial bodies in our everyday lives.

It is a history that transcends borders and cultural traditions, taking us from Mesopotamian moon worship to the science fiction of H. G. Wells and the discovery of black holes. Driven by a personal quest to understand the universe as more than just an abstract mathematical realm, Baker also includes her own sparkling first-hand experiences—from watching a total solar eclipse in Idaho to visiting an ancient observatory in Samarkand.

From the Laboratory to the Moon: The Quiet Genius of George R. Carruthers, by David H. DeVorkin (MIT Press), May 2025, pp.456 (hardback, £57.00), ISBN 9780262551397

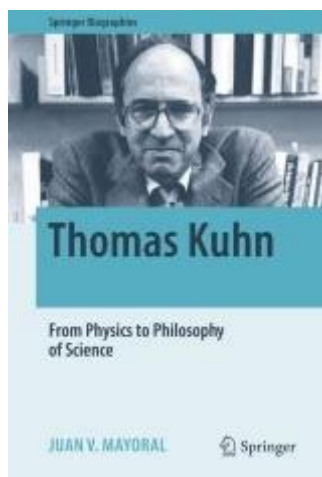


In April 1972, as George Carruthers closely monitored the operation from the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, astronauts conducting the Apollo 16 mission positioned a gold-plated far-ultraviolet electrographic camera on the moon. The camera, Carruthers's invention, was the first astronomical observatory on the lunar surface, where it

stands to this day. While Carruthers's achievements earned many accolades, including the President's *Medal for Technology and Invention*, surprisingly little is known about this remarkable man. David DeVorkin explores Carruthers's life and work, for the first time telling the full story of how a deeply reserved African American farm boy rose to become one of our most celebrated aerospace scientists.

DeVorkin follows Carruthers from his childhood in Ohio and then Chicago to his career at the US Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC. In the highly competitive world of space science in the 1960s and 1970s, Carruthers's genius for experimentation and exploration transcended the racial stereotyping and discrimination of his day, and he achieved world-class recognition for his studies of the Earth and deep space. A leading expert in the history of astronomy and space science, DeVorkin gives a deft account of these achievements and of how Carruthers used the fame they brought him, along with his notoriety as a Black man in science, to become a tireless advocate for underserved young people in science and engineering.

Thomas Kuhn: From Physics to Philosophy of Science, by Juan V. Mayoral (Springer), Jul 2025, pp.514 (hardback, £89.99), ISBN 9783031865114

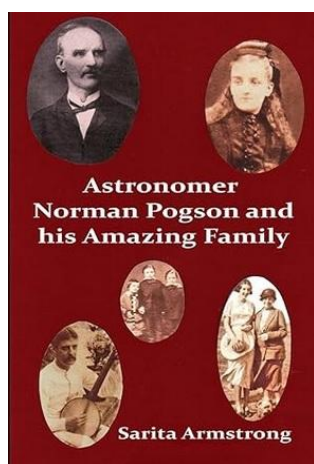


This new biography of Thomas S. Kuhn pays attention to the continuous development of his ideas. Mayoral provides a comprehensive overview of Kuhn's life and work. The book explores how Kuhn's theory develops from its beginnings at Harvard University in the early 1950s through the early 1990s at the MIT and also describes Kuhn's parallel lifetime. Between

those decades (1950s and 1990s), Kuhn went through different academic institutions, obtained a high status as a public intellectual, and shifted from the history of science to the philosophy of science (and back) as his main research target. All of this left a trace in his philosophical view of science, enriching and changing it since his early training as a theoretical physicist. In this book, Kuhn is considered as an intellectual in evolution, and his contributions are assessed against the backdrop of the different contexts that he traversed.

RECENT BOOKS MISSED

[Astronomer Norman Pogson and his Amazing Family](#), by Sarita Armstrong (Independently published), Jan 2025, pp.252 (paperback, £12.50), ISBN 9798308664284



This readable family story throws new light on the life of Norman Robert Pogson, a 19th century astronomer of many achievements, though much maligned in his day. Family papers saved over the years suggest a very different man from the one academic papers show. He mentored the first modern Indian astronomer. Variable stars were his passion and today

we still use the *Pogson Ratio* to measure stellar brightness.

Taking up the position of Government Astronomer in colonial India tore his family apart, but they reunited in that distant country. Personal letters and diaries bring to life a unique period of Indian history, with conversations and situations woven into the fabric of meticulously recorded events. The author is Norman Pogson's great-great granddaughter.

[The Meteorite Hunters: On the Trail of Extraterrestrial Treasures and the Secrets Inside Them](#) by Joshua Howgego (Oneworld Publications), Feb 2025, pp.272 (hardback, £18.99), ISBN 9780861549191



Meteors, with their ethereal, glowing trails slashing through the atmosphere, have entranced us for centuries. But these extraterrestrial visitors are also inestimably valuable. Not just for collectors, who can make their fortunes tracking them down, but for scientists too. Meteorites are the most ancient objects we know, unblemished time capsules from the birth of the solar

system.

Following in the footsteps of passionate hobbyists, ground-breaking scientists and intrepid adventurers, Joshua Howgego takes a ride through the world of meteorite hunting. Join the seasoned practitioners braving the elements as they scour the Sahara and ice sheets of Antarctica. Discover how, closer to home, one unlikely hero—a self-taught jazz guitarist—is uncovering the countless micrometeorites scattered across the rooftops of our cities. And meet the professor searching for the rarest of the rare: fossil meteorites, entombed in rock since the days of the dinosaurs.

Finding these stones from space is just the beginning. As scientists tease out their secrets, they piece together an unexpected new history of the solar system, with implications that extend to one of the most fundamental questions we can ask: how did life on earth begin?

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.*

NEW USES FOR OLD GREENWICH PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

The [April 2025 newsletter of LTE](#) (formerly IMCCE) reports the arrival of about 2500 photographic plates at the Meudon observatory in Paris, from the Greenwich Observatory. These are destined to be digitised by the NAROO (*New Astrometric Reduction of Old Observations*) facility with a state of the art scanner: one of the few in the world that is capable of digitising the plates with a precision less than one micron (a thousandth of a millimetre).

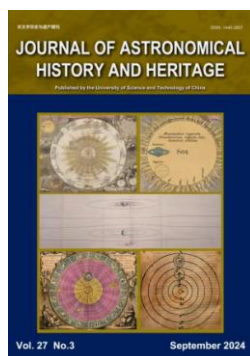
Although the NAROO machine has been operating since 2019, the arrival of the Greenwich plates marks an important step. Some of them include major discoveries, such as the first observation Pasiphae (a moon of Jupiter) in 1908. Furthermore, the dynamic models of natural satellite systems that have been developed at LTE are going to be able to benefit from the new data.

The availability of such historical and well-conserved photographic observations will permit the quality of the (post-2013) Gaia astrometric catalogue to be tested, with a view to highlighting any imperfections, which can then be taken into account in the preparation of future catalogues.

WEB-LINKS NOTICED

Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage

The latest issue of the [Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage \(Volume 28, Issue 1, 2025\)](#) is in preparation, but many papers are now available for free download.



The New Golden Age of Astronomy: Hubble's Universe Today

Barely a century ago, the Carnegie Science astronomer Edwin Hubble became the very first person to confirm the existence of galaxies beyond the Milky Way. Five years later, he went on to show that not only was the universe much more immense than previously thought, but that it was also expanding. Hubble's two extraordinary discoveries form the bedrock of modern astronomy.

In the first *Neighborhood Lecture* of 2025, Carnegie's recently appointed President, Dr. John Mulchaey, explored [how observations since the time of Hubble have helped redefine our entire understanding of the universe](#)—from the existence of dark matter and super-massive black holes to planets around other stars.

Walking with the Ancients in Cornwall

Presented by the Cornwall Heritage Trust, a video of the latest of their special on-site *Cornish Story Cafés*. The video follows Carolyn Kennett (SHA Chair)—a specialist in prehistoric astronomy and the historical cultural significance of the night sky—as she explains the [astronomical and archaeological secrets of the Hurler Stone Circles](#). This line of three early Bronze Age stone circles is one of the best examples of ceremonial standing stones in the south west and is one of the historic sites cared for by the charity.

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

BAA Historical Section Meeting

Sat 31 May 2025 – 10.00-17.00

[This conference](#) will be held at the Devon and Exeter Institution, 7 Cathedral Close, Exeter EX1 1EZ.

Speakers are:

Bill Barton – *Roger Langdon, the stationmaster astronomer*

A tour of the DEI's library, including the Moon globe which Langdon built.

Beatrice Steele – *Norman Lockyer & Archaeoastronomy*

Carolyn Kennett – *Mary Proctor*

Wayne Orchiston – *John Tebbutt*

In addition, **Mike Frost** will be speaking to the [Norman Lockyer Observatory AS](#) on **Fri 30 May** about *Norman Lockyer – his early life and times in the Midlands*. There will be a tour of the NLO in Sidmouth on **Sun 1 Jun 2025**.

INSAP 2025: 13th International Conference

9-13 Jun 2025. [This conference](#) will be held at Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, Northern Ireland (theme *Celestial Connections Across Time and Space*).

Sixteenth Biennial History of Astronomy Workshop (NDXVI)

11-14 June 2025. [This conference](#) will be held at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA (theme *Visual practices in the production and transmission of astronomical knowledge*).

SHA CALENDAR 2025

MONTH	SHA EVENT OR PUBLICATION	VENUE
2025		
JAN	SHA Online Lecture No.19, by Anna Marie Roos (22 Jan)	via 'Zoom'
FEB	SHA e-News (1-5 Feb)	
MAR	SHA Online Lecture No.20, by Bernie Taylor (12 Mar) SHA-SAF Conference, Paris (28-30 Mar)	Via 'Zoom'
APR	SHA Spring Conference (26 Apr)	Birmingham
MAY	SHA e-News (1-5 May) SHA Bulletin 43 (May)	
JUN	The Antiquarian Astronomer 19 SHA Summer Picnic (27 Jun)	Jodrell Bank
JUL		
AUG	SHA e-News (1-5 Aug)	
SEP		
OCT	SHA Online Lecture No. 21, on Research Techniques (8 Oct)	
NOV	SHA e-News (1-5 Nov) SHA AGM & Autumn Conference (8 Nov) SHA Online Lecture No. 22, by Peter Morris (26 Nov)	Birmingham
DEC	SHA Bulletin 44 (mid-Dec)	
2026		
JAN	SHA Online Lecture No. 23, by Dava Sobel (14 Jan)	