

Speakers and Presentations for the 2026 Spring Conference

Friday, 24th April

Order of Speakers & Presentations may be Subject to Change.



Mary McIntyre

“Astronomical and Atmospheric Events Depicted in the ‘Augsburg Wunderzeichenbuch’ (The Book of Miracles)”

The Book of Miracles is a 16th Century illuminated manuscript produced in Germany which consists of 123 hand painted folios depicting various ‘miraculous events. Many of the folios depict perfectly ordinary astronomical events like eclipses, meteor showers, comets and atmospheric optics, painted in a dramatic yet charming style. This talk looks at some of the astronomy events depicted in the book.

Mary is an astronomy speaker, writer, astrophotographer and astronomy/space artist based in Oxfordshire, UK. She is a co-author of the Collins Stargazing Bible published in October 2024, has contributed chapters to several other books and regularly writes for Sky at Night magazine.



Martin Mobberley

“Eccentric BAA characters of the 20th Century”

The BAA had numerous eccentrics and even barking mad members during the 20th Century. Martin will give a summary of the most amusing characters.

Martin is a former BAA President and has been an amateur astronomer since the late 1960s. He has written numerous papers on the BAA's most fascinating characters.

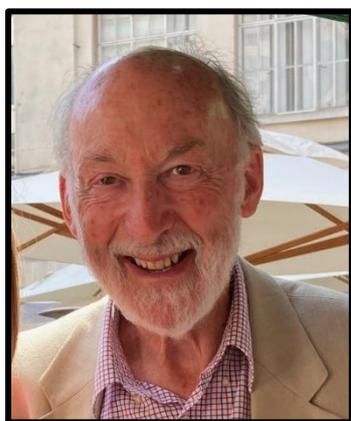


Wendy Bevan-Mogg

Nevil Maskelyne (no, not that one!) – Astronomer and Magician.

Nevil Maskelyne (1863 - 1924) was instrumental in capturing the first moving picture films ever made of a solar eclipse. As well as being a pioneering cinematographer, he was also an inventor, wireless telegraphy engineer, anti-spiritualist and a renowned stage magician. Wendy's talk is an introduction to this early member of the BAS and the extraordinary breadth of his work.

Wendy worked as a line producer in feature filmmaking before becoming a course leader in Film Production at Bournemouth University and the University of the West of England. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Biography and writing a book about the Maskelyne Family.



Roger Hutchins

“Dr Allan Chapman - An Appreciation of our honorary President approaching his 80th Birthday”

Every organization reflects the ideals of its leadership. The SHA has thrived by attracting dedicated volunteers to Council. Although several fine officers have been taken by the Reaper, or retired, Allan Chapman has remained a constant and inspiring presence as our President, because he is a man of very particular genius.

Roger Hutchins was benignly but insistently influenced by Allan 1990-97 at the History of Science Museum, Oxford, as Roger a Magdalen College student began research on Oxford astronomy, and Allan was researching there for his masterwork *The Victorian Amateur Astronomer* (1998).

The 2026 Michael Hoskin Lecture



Vladimir Brljak

'Oh, how strange! the heavens are black': From a Bright to a Dark Universe in the Western Cosmological Tradition.

Drawing on textual and visual evidence from antiquity to the present, the lecture traces a shift from a bright to a dark universe in the Western cosmological tradition and discusses its cultural impact. When did space turn dark, and what happened to us in the process? How has this momentous yet almost entirely overlooked development transformed our experience of the universe, as well as our planetary and environmental consciousness?

Vladimir Brljak works at the intersection of literary history, intellectual history, and the history of science. He is Associate Professor in the Department of English Studies at Durham University and a current (2025–26) British Academy Mid-Career Fellow. He has held the Thole Research Fellowship at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, as well as visiting fellowships at the Bodleian Libraries' Centre for the Study of the Book, the Huntington Library, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, and the Warburg Institute.
