



Society for the History of Astronomy

2026 Society AGM & Autumn Conference

Speakers and Presentation Summary.

Speakers and Presentation Details Subject to Alteration.



Image Credit: Gurbir Singh

Gurbir Singh hosts a not-for-profit astronomy, space and science podcast (www.astrotalkuk.org), established in 2008. In 2011, he published his first book, "Yuri Gagarin in London and Manchester". The book traces the visit of the world's first spaceman to England with first-hand accounts from the people who saw and met him. His most recent, co-written with Brian Harvey, is "The Atlas of Space Rocket Launch Sites", an overview of the key launch sites around the globe. More details can be found here: <https://gurbir.co.uk/books>

*"Allan Chapman, a friend, a mentor, and a paradox:
The man of faith who taught me science"*

Salford Astronomical Society, close to Swinton, where Allan was born, was the first astronomical society that Allan joined. As the Honorary President for many decades, his annual Christmas Lecture was the highlight of the Salford Astronomical Society's annual lecture program. Gurbir Singh, former chairman of SAS, will speak about Allan's influence on his writing career and on Allan's contribution to the early days of the Salford Astronomical Society.



Ross Code

After retiring from a thirty-year career in banking and finance, Ross has worked as a Visitor Assistant at the Royal Observatory Greenwich for almost three years. Over that time, he has had the opportunity to research and deliver several talks and tours on various aspects of life and work at the Observatory.

'Goings on at the Observatory'

Image Credit: Ross Code

The team of guides at the Royal Observatory try to make their tours different and engaging by including stories and anecdotes visitors won't get elsewhere. However, some of the most interesting, amusing, or shocking stories are ones that can't be included as tours must be suitable for visitors of all ages. This talk will share a few of these stories including murders and deaths, thefts, prostitutes, incest, affairs and relationships, what the teenage boy computers got up to, and more.



Bill Barton

Since taking early retirement from Network rail in 2014 Bill has devoted himself to historical astronomy. He has published the results of his research in the publications of the Society for the History of Astronomy and the British Astronomical Association as well as on his local astronomical society website.

Image credit: Roger Hutchins.

“The Astronomical Society of India”

The current Astronomical Society of India was founded in 1972 and is for professionals in astronomy and in related fields. This presentation, however, is about a previous amateur organisation of the same name that operated between July 1910 and circa 1922.

Conference Keynote Speaker. Dr George Seabroke



Dr. Seabroke is a Principal Research Fellow at the Mullard Space Science Laboratory, University College London. He primarily works on the European Space Agency mission, Gaia, and its Radial Velocity Spectrometer, and in his spare time researches the history of astronomy through the observations of his great-great-grandfather, George Mitchell Seabroke (1848-1918) and his two telescopes: an 1820s 3.5-inch Dollond and the 1859 8.25-inch Alvan Clark at the Temple Observatory, Rugby School. His interest in Francis Baily is three-fold: (1) Gaia is the modern successor to Baily’s star catalogues (he published another one in 1845); (2) they both grew up in Newbury, Berkshire, and he played football against Francis Baily Primary School; and (3) they lived about 100 metres from each in London.

(Image Credit: University College London)

“Celebrating the bicentenary of Francis Baily’s 1826-star catalogue with Gaia”

Early 19th century stellar positions were published in separate catalogues with limited availability and error-strewn corrections for aberration, precession and nutation. Francis Baily (1777-1844) improved this situation by collating these catalogues, recalculating the corrections and publishing a single catalogue for 2,881 stars in 1826, for which he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1827. I will celebrate the bicentenary of Baily’s 1826-star catalogue by visualising it for the first time with data from the European Space Agency mission, Gaia, which continues Baily’s star mapping by publishing its latest star catalogue in December 2026.

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