

Meetings

Exhibition Meeting and Ordinary Meeting, 2010 June 26

held at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London SE10



The 2010 Exhibition Meeting was again organised by Ms Lorraine Crook in the impressive surroundings of the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich. Displays were mounted by the BAA Sections, the Campaign for Dark Skies, local astronomical societies and trade stands. The Exhibition was opened on the lawns of the College by The Worshipful the Mayor of Greenwich, Cllr Barbara Barwick, who then spent much of the morning touring the exhibits with the President.

At 12:00 noon and 2:30 p.m., Dr Richard Miles, Director of the Asteroids and Remote Planets Section, and Peter Meadows, Robotic Telescope Coordinator, presented

versity College London gave a talk entitled 'Aliens! Could Darwin work on the worlds of Galileo?' There may be billions of extrasolar planets in the Milky Way galaxy. Will we ever know if any of them, like the Earth, are teeming with thriving, evolving lifeforms?

A superbly illustrated web page about the Exhibition Meeting, presented by Bob Marriott, can be found at <http://www.britastro.org/exhibition/>.

Hazel McGee



Public solar observing on the lawns, courtesy of North Essex Astronomical Society.



The exhibition was opened on the lawns of the Naval College by the Mayor of Greenwich, Cllr Barbara Barwick.

live remote sessions on the Faulkes Telescopes in Hawaii and Australia. The first was successful, but the second unfortunately failed due to cloudy weather down under.

The North Essex Astronomical Society set up telescopes, solar filters and equipment on the lawns, and observations of the Sun in white light and H-alpha were conducted throughout the day, attracting much interest from the general public, who were also invited to tour the indoor exhibits.

A short Ordinary Meeting was held at 2:00 p.m. at which the Association's Medals and Awards for 2010 were presented (see below). Finally at 5:00 p.m. after the Exhibition closed, Dr Francisco Diego from Uni-



Bob Mizon of the CfDS was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.



Dr David Boyd shows Cllr Barwick the display by the Variable Star Section



John Cook (left), Section Director Bill Leatherbarrow and Paul Abel of the Lunar Section.

(Exhibition Meeting photos by Hazel McGee.)



Ordinary Meeting, 2010 June 26

At 2:00 p.m. during the Exhibition Meeting, the President, Dr David Boyd, opened the sixth Ordinary Meeting of the 120th session. He reminded members that copies of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 2010 May 26 were available for inspection. These were approved.

The President said that the names of 9 candidates for election had been posted at Burlington House and that Council had recently elected 8 new members, subject to confirmation by today's meeting. Their election was confirmed by the members present.

Nick James, Papers Secretary, said that at the Council meeting on June 23 two papers had been accepted for publication:

HS2325+8205 – a frequently outbursting dwarf nova, by Jeremy Shears *et al.*;

The aurora in the United Kingdom 1962–2009, by Ron Livesey

The President said that the next meeting of the Association would be the weekend meeting at the Norman Lockyer Observatory in Sidmouth, Devon, on 2010 September 3–5. The AGM and next Ordinary Meeting would be on Wednesday 2010 October 27 at 17:30 in the RAS Lecture Room at Burlington House.

Dr Boyd announced that Council was this year awarding the Walter Goodacre Medal and Gift to Eric Strach, and the Steavenson Award to Monty Leventhal. Neither Eric (in his 96th year) or Monty (in Australia) were able to attend the meeting to receive

their awards, so these would be forwarded to them. Award citations are given below.

Dr Boyd congratulated Bob Mizon of the Campaign for Dark Skies on being awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Dr Boyd then gave the floor to vice-President Roger Pickard, who presented Gordon Taylor, retiring Director of the Computing Section, with an engraved plaque of Uranus occulting a star, in recognition of his long service to the BAA as Section Director.

Dr Boyd then introduced Mike Frost, the new Director of the Historical Section, and Lee Macdonald, Assistant Director, who described their plans for the Historical Section and details of the first Section meeting on 2010 November 27 at the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge.

The President then adjourned the meeting until Wednesday 2010 October 27 at 17:30 at Burlington House.



Roger Pickard (left) presented an engraved plaque to former Computing Section Director, Gordon Taylor.

Hazel Collett

The BAA Awards and Medals, 2010

The Walter Goodacre Medal & Gift – Eric Strach

Eric Strach celebrated his 95th birthday on 2009 October 21 having joined the BAA on 1965 November 24, therefore having been a member for over 44 years. Eric has been a leading amateur solar observer for nearly 60 years, submitting regular monthly reports



and images to the Solar Section right up until 2009 May. Sadly his declining health obliged him to retire from active observing, although he is still keeping up-to-date on solar matters and the Section's work. Eric's love of astronomy has been long lived and consistent, achieving many highlights along the way.

Eric's observation days started in the 1950s. During the 1960s he became friends with Harold Hill and so Eric progressed to sketching and recording his observations with his 8" reflector under Harold's guidance. During this decade Eric joined the BAA and the Liverpool Astronomical Society, eventually becoming president of LAS during their centenary year in 1981.

On one visit to Harold Hill's observatory Eric spotted Harold's solar observing equipment, a 3" refractor and home-made solar projection box. Eric decided to give

solar observing a try and soon he was submitting his solar observations to the then BAA Solar Section Director, Bill Baxter.

The 1970s brought further developments such as the building of an observatory, the purchase of a DayStar 0.65Å hydrogen-alpha filter and a trip to Zanzibar in 1976 to study shadow bands during the total eclipse of the Sun. Further eclipse chasing followed when Eric travelled to Java in 1983, Sumatra in 1988, Finland in 1990, Baja Peninsula in 1991 and Curaçao in 1998 at the age of 83! Altogether, he observed 13 total eclipse events.

His first paper for the *BAA Journal* was published in 1982 June, entitled 'Astronomy & Medicine' reflecting his background as an orthopaedic surgeon. Further articles were published: 'A solar observatory' in 1996; 'Shadow bands recorded at

The BAA Awards & Medals, 2010 ~ continued

the February 26 eclipse', 1998 June; 'Filaments & fibrils on the Sun', 2002 August; 'Solar chromospheric darkenings around active areas', 2006 February.

Not content just to draw observations in white light and H-alpha, Eric started recording his observations using emulsion film,

but as soon as the digital era dawned, Eric was amongst the first to commence CCD imaging. In recognition of his solar work and contributions to the BAA solar observing programme, Eric was awarded the Merlin Medal in 1999. He has imaged prominences, filaments, flares and active areas,

processing images and converting files to the appropriate format before forwarding to the Solar Section for archiving. His work has always been of the highest quality and his observations consistently accurate. When Eric recently advised the Solar Section Director that he may not be able to submit any more monthly solar returns, he added that he had an idea for another paper for the *Journal!* Such is the man, an inspiration to all of us.

The Steavenson Award – Monty Leventhal

For the past 16 years on every clear morning Monty Leventhal has been conscientiously observing and making detailed drawings of the Sun from his home in Australia. These record the exact positions of the various events that occur on the Sun, such as sunspot groups, flares, filaments, surges and prominences, using full aperture white light and hydrogen-alpha filters. He has also taken valuable images of phenomena visible through the H-alpha filter.

Monty writes up all the data that he collects from his observations and distributes monthly reports to a wide range of relevant groups, the foremost of which is the Solar Section of the BAA. Others include CV-Helios Network in Switzerland, the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO), the Intersol Program in Germany, the Solar Observers' Society in Poland, the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand, the Association of Lunar and

Planetary Observers (ALPO) in the USA and the Astronomical Association of Queensland in Australia. He has received certificate awards from the AAVSO, ALPO, CV-Helios and the Solar Observers' Society. Moreover, recognising his expertise, the ALPO commissioned him to write a manual on observation of the Sun in H-alpha and on solar photography, which was completed and published in 2005.

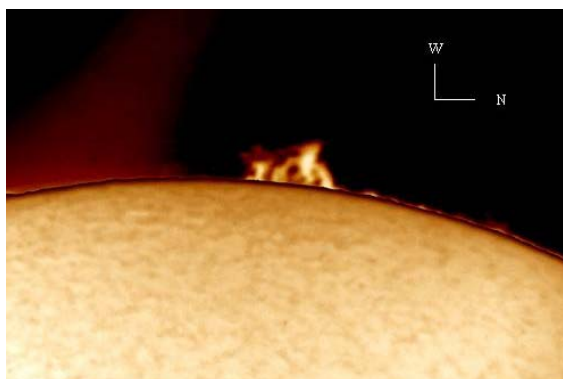
These data are exceptionally valuable as they come from a longitude from which the Sun is less commonly observed than, say, from the UK. Also because Monty has now been making observations for a considerable length of time, they form a highly consistent and reliable dataset.

Monty uses his solar observations for promoting astronomy. He has had articles published in *Sky & Space*, an Australian popular astronomy magazine, and his images of solar activity such as prominences and flares have appeared on a number of websites including the Sydney Observatory blog. He is a popular speaker on the Sun and solar photography to astronomy groups in Sydney, and for the Sydney City Skywatchers he presents a report on the previous month's solar activity at each meeting. Monty is also

a volunteer guide at Sydney Observatory, where twice a month he provides an opportunity for visitors to look at the Sun through white light and H-alpha filters.

Monty's achievements in becoming an expert solar observer are all the more remarkable as he came into astronomy relatively recently without a previous scientific background. After taking a basic course in astronomy he joined the New South Wales branch of the BAA and quickly adopted solar astronomy as his field. He obtained the necessary observing equipment and taught himself about the Sun and solar phenomena.

Monty Leventhal is making an outstanding contribution to observational astronomy of the Sun, and is a worthy recipient of the Steavenson Award.

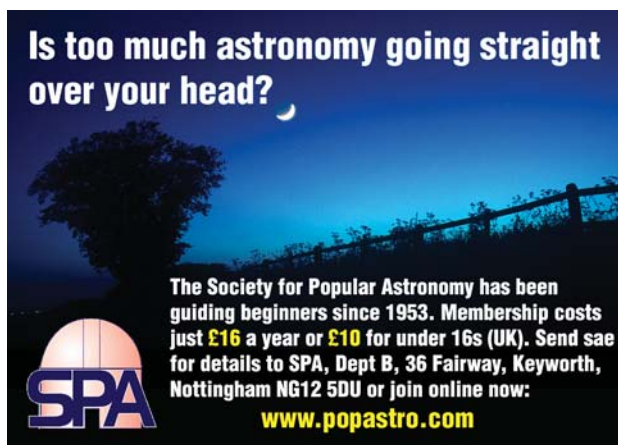


Prominence imaged by Monty Leventhal at 21:45 UT on 2011 Feb.24 using a Canon 300D digital SLR camera and 250mm SCT.

Erratum: DQ Her

On page 47 of the February *Journal*, the classical nova DQ Herculis was wrongly identified as Nova Herculis 1991, a George Alcock discovery. The designation DQ Her was in fact given to Nova Herculis 1934, found by John Manning Prentice, as coincidentally mentioned on the previous page. Apologies, and thanks to Roger Griffin for pointing out the error.

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