

Ordinary Meeting, 2004 October 27

held at The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1

Tom Boles, President

Ron Johnson, Nick Hewitt and Nick James, Secretaries

The President opened the first Ordinary Meeting of the 115th Session, and invited Dr Nick Hewitt to read the minutes of the final meeting of the previous session. These met the approval of members, and were duly signed. Mr Boles wished to express his thanks to those members of the Association's Council who had retired at the end of the preceding session: Richard Flux, Geoffrey Johnstone, Chris Lintott and Richard Miles. He also welcomed those incoming members who replaced them: Roger Dymock, Maurice Gavin, John Mason and Martin Morgan Taylor, especially Mr Morgan Taylor, who joined Council for the first time. A vote of thanks was proposed to the scrutineers of the ballot: A. Davies, N. Grabaskey and G. Harding.

Mr Johnson reported that three presents had been received. A large number of issues of past memoirs, *The Indian Eclipse 1898*, edited by E.W. Maunder, and *A Hand Book of Solar Eclipses*, by I.M. Lewis had been received from Gordon Taylor. Mrs Hazel McGee had donated a number of books. A total of 17 videos, published as part of an Open University Course, had been received in an anonymous donation. Members showed their gratitude to the donors.

Mr Boles announced that 65 new members had been proposed for election. The 59 new members proposed at the previous meeting had been approved by Council, and, having been approved by the meeting, were announced elected. The President welcomed any newcomers to introduce themselves after the evening's proceedings. Mr James announced that five papers had been accepted for Journal publication:

The Daventry Double Star Survey, by ??? Nicholson

The Opposition of Mars, 1995, by Richard McKim

The Bury St Edmunds Athenaeum Observatory, by Martin Mobberley

A rapid roll-out Newtonian shelter for a dedicated planetary instrument, by Martin Mobberley

Astronomical references in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, by Darren Beard

The President announced that the next meeting would be held in association with the Royal Meteorological Society on November 27 at the present venue. Doors would open at 10.30am, with talks starting at 11am, however members were urged to fill out a registration form prior to the meeting to speed up the process on the day. It would be free to members, but a fee of ten pounds would be levied upon non-members.

The Meetings Secretary regretted to announce that the scheduled speaker, Dr John Mason, had not managed to make the meeting due to transport delays. Despite a series of text messages earlier in the evening which had implied his progress to have been hopeful, and his having crossed the Thames some minutes earlier, traffic congestion now appeared to have halted his progress. Dr Hewitt hoped that his talk, entitled *Kepler's Supernova of 1604*, in celebration of the four-centennial anniversary of this historical event, could be postponed until a future date. In the meantime, he was pleased to welcome two members from the audience to present short talks.

The first was delivered by Mr Bob Marriott, Director of the Instruments and Imaging Section, and Curator of Instruments. It was in the latter post, the speaker explained, that he had received a telephone call shortly after the Isle of Mann meeting, from an Association member resident in Worthing, who wished to return an Instrument which he had had on loan since 1952. Upon further investigation, the Association's records were found to report this instrument, a specular metal diffraction grating, as lost, and moreover, it turned out to be a particularly historic specimen, catalogue number one in the Association's collection of instruments. It had first been loaned to John Evershed, a founding member of the Association and prominent past member of the Historical Section, in 1890, and had gone on to pass through the hands of many familiar names, including Walter Maunder.

Mr Marriott went on to describe the circumstances of its original donation. Brasier [check spelling with Bob?], an American instrument maker, had toured Europe in 1888, and had been particularly impressed by the British amateurs who he had met. Upon his return to the continent in 1890, he made a visit to the Association in December, two months after its foundation, and donated the grating to the newly formed group. The speaker noted there was an inscription upon it, which stated that it had been prepared at the Astronomical Workshop of John Hopkins University on 1890 December 10. Members were invited to view the grating after the meeting.

Following applause for Mr Marriott's contribution, Dr Hewitt proceeded to welcome Mr Gordon Rogers to present the second short talk. Mr Rogers recounted a number of anecdotes about his good friend Mr Dick Underwood, who had worked in the photographic department of NASA during the *Gemini* and *Apollo* eras. His reminiscences ranged from work undertaken to correct the overexposure of photographs from the Apollo 8 mission, to the

extensive efforts made by the department to obtain good images of the stricken Apollo 13 Service Module after its jettison, in an attempt to pin down the cause of the blast.

Following further applause, the President thanked the two speakers for preparing their contributions at such short notice. He reminded members that the next meeting would be on November 27, and also remarked that it would fall within a day of the seventieth anniversary of Sir Patrick Moore's joining of the Association. He was believed to be the longest standing member, and it was hoped that if his health permitted, he would be able to attend the meeting to celebrate this significant anniversary. Mr Boles then adjourned the meeting until that occasion.

Dominic Ford