

# Federation of Astronomical Societies

Editor: Michael Bryce



[fedastro.org.uk](http://fedastro.org.uk)

# Newsletter

No 149: April 2026

*The Newsletter for Members of FAS Affiliated Astronomical Societies*

*Cover Image: The Flaming Star Nebula (IC410) and The Tadpole Nebula (IC405) located in Aurigac. RGB plus hubble palette.*

*Credit: Nick Hart, Barry Astronomical Society  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/barryastronomicalsociety/>*

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*Note: The FAS Council Reserves the Right to publish articles, events and reports submitted to the FAS Newsletter. Any content published in the FAS Newsletter from a Member of an FAS Society does not necessarily reflect the opinions or values of the said Society or that of the FAS.*

# Obituary: Dr Allan Chapman

(30 May 1946 – 21 January 2026)

Dr Paul A Daniels, 10-Mar-2026

**I've known Allan on and off for over fifty years – this is my personal recollection of him.**

I first met Allan shortly after going up to Wadham College, Oxford in 1974 as an undergraduate. Allan was then a DPhil student studying the history of science and cut a curious figure around college in his Edwardian style clothing: tail-coat, bow-tie, waistcoat (complete with pocket watch and chain) and robust shoes – ever the picture of an eccentric Oxford academic. Back then Allan spoke with a distinct Lancashire accent though that faded (but never quite disappeared) during his long career.

Allan also had a genuine love of the politeness and graceful character of that past era and this stayed with him all of his life. On more than one occasion when introduced to a lady, I saw him, with a twinkle in his blue eyes, bow slightly as he delicately and respectfully kissed her hand.

Allan made an immediate impression as an erudite raconteur and showman with an impressive memory for facts, figures and dates. The first time I heard him speak was in 1975 when he gave a detailed and witty monologue on *The Life and Times of Dr Hieronymus Bosch* in Wadham chapel. He'd set up a trestle table with an assortment of props including a wig and cloak and he proceeded to absolutely enthral his audience.

At the time I was the local secretary for Oxford Mensa and I happened to mention to Allan that one of our members, a disabled lady who lived in Abingdon (10 miles south of Oxford), would love to hear his monologue but she found it difficult to travel into Oxford. Allan's immediate response was "We'll go to her!". So, one day soon after, we bundled into a friend's car along with table and props and Allan gave her a special performance in the sunny back garden of her terraced house. As he finished he got a round of applause – including from about a dozen neighbours hanging out of their upstairs windows.

It's not widely known that Allan was also an accomplished craftsman. He used his skills to construct early scientific instruments using materials (wood and brass) and techniques that would have been used by the ancients. He then studied the practical use and accuracy of those instruments.

One day he invited my Wadham roommate and I to afternoon tea and biscuits and a chance to look at the instruments he'd made – all very impressive! Whilst chatting, and as an indicator of his great sense of fun, Allan suddenly produced an old metal teapot and trumpet mouthpiece which he proceeded to jam into the spout. He played the teapot enthusiastically, somehow simultaneously managing to adjust both pitch and volume by



**Image Above:** Dr Allan Chapman

**Credit:** David Stumpp

wiggling the lid! He said the title of the piece was 'Felix Obit' which in my ignorance, for many years, I thought referred to the sound of a dying cat but which actually translates as 'Happy Death'.

Allan and his wife, Rachel, were regular attendees at Wadham College's annual Benefactor's Garden Party. My wife, Trish, and I often used to take guests to the garden party and afterwards Allan would delight in giving them a guided historical tour of the college. This would include the impressive Jacobean dining hall (including portraits from Sir Christopher Wren to Rosamund Pike), the room upstairs where the pre-cursor to the Royal Society met and the gallery overlooking the dining hall.

My other times with Allan, of course, were at the monthly meetings of the Royal Astronomical Society. The specialist meetings during the day generally don't include historical subjects but he was a regular attendee at the afternoon's

Ordinary Meetings (now called the A&G Highlights Meeting). On occasions, especially around the time of the RAS' 200th anniversary, Allan was a speaker at that meeting. Afterwards, he could be found at the RAS drinks reception and then dinner at the more than 200 year-old RAS Dining Club where, on 12th January 1820, John Herschel, Charles Babbage and others founded the Astronomical Society of London that later became the RAS.

Besides astronomy, Allan was also a historian of medical science and medical instruments. Once, lying on an operation table, under just a local anaesthetic, for a minor operation on his arm, he asked for a mirror to see what they were doing. As the surgeons worked he gave them a running commentary on the history of the medical instruments they were using and, once recovered, was asked back to give them a lecture (but this time whilst standing up)!

Some of you may know that Allan was a man of strong Christian faith, very involved with the church and, in particular, the Wadham College chapel and the Christ Church Cathedral. In defence of his faith, Allan was fiercely opposed to the ideas of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and the like and published a refutation in his book *Slaying the Dragons: Destroying Myths in the History of Science and Faith*.

As well as being a prolific writer and broadcaster, Allan was probably most widely known as an excellent speaker on the history of astronomy. He regularly gave talks to local societies, speaking without notes and, maybe, a few slides at the end of a talk so that they didn't distract from what he was saying. He

often spoke for longer than his intended speaking slot but his engrossed audiences didn't care and hung on every word!

Allan didn't drive a car and usually used public transport though, in later years when his mobility declined, talk hosts would need to arrange private transport. I recall driving to collect him from his home in Oxford for a talk to Guildford Astronomical Society and returning him home afterwards. He usually declined payment for his talks to societies and asked, instead, that a donation be made to one of the Oxford charities for the homeless.

Allan was a founding member of the Society for the History of Astronomy at Wadham College in 2002 and remained Honorary President of the SHA until his death. He was also an Honorary President of many local astronomical societies including: Mexborough & Swinton, Orwell, Preston and District, Reading and Salford Astronomical Societies and a Vice-President of Newbury Astronomical Society.

There's no doubt that Allan has enlivened, inspired and touched the lives of many people. He was a gentleman through and through and will be very much missed. I feel privileged to have counted him as a friend. Our condolences go to Rachel and his family.

**Dr Paul A Daniels**  
**Former President of the Federation of Astronomical Societies**  
**Honourary Member of Guildford Astronomical Society**



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# President's Spot:

## Clare Lauwerys



How many times does something have to happen before you can call it a pattern? Clearly if something happens once then it's not a pattern, but does twice count?

Hello to both regular and new readers, and welcome to the magical mystery tour that is my President's Spot.

The reason for my musing on what constitutes a pattern is that I am thinking about the FAS Convention. Last year when we were in Cambridge, one of our speakers was Lord Martin Rees, in one of his final talks as the Astronomer Royal. Technically he had already stepped down but as the new one hadn't been appointed, I think we can all agree that he could still use the title. This year we're heading to Cardiff, where one of our speakers will be Prof. Mike Lockwood FRS - currently the President of the Royal Astronomical Society. By the time the convention happens his term of office will have concluded, which leads me wondering: has the FAS Convention turned into a sort of farewell tour stop for leading lights in the astronomy world?

Now there's the old adage of "once is an accident, twice is a coincidence, and three times is a pattern." So, we're not quite the pattern stage yet. And according to "How many times until a coincidence becomes a pattern?" <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03610926.2023.2232908?needAccess=true> then when it comes to "yield curve inversions preceding recessions" the number then is seven. Which is nothing to do with astronomy, but I did feel it was time including a link to something mathematical!

But back to astronomy and the Convention. At the risk of sounding like a market stallholder: Roll up, roll up — get your tickets here!

Our theme for this year is "Ancient Tech, Modern Challenges, and the Future of STEM" and there's definitely something for everyone in this year's line-up of speakers.

- **Prof Mike Lockwood - Space Junk - The danger of orbital collisions**
- **Prof. Paul Roche - Using astronomy to engage students in STEM**
- **Prof. Mike Edmunds - The Antikythera Mechanism Revisited**
- **Dr Jane Clark - Measuring Solar System Orbits for Yourself**
- **Dr Jenifer Millard - A Waste of Space**

Now as I type almost half the tickets have already been bought. In a few weeks we will open up tickets to the general public so if you want to get one, please don't leave it too late.

There is a discounted price for members of FAS affiliated societies. Just enter Cardiff2026 (all one word) where it says "Enter code"



*Image Above: FAS President Clare Lauwerys Addresses the Audience at the FAS 2025 Convention at the University of Cambridge.*

*Credit: Jerry Stone*

and click on apply to reveal the special price tickets. Just £10 per person, £5 for under-16's, £20 for families (plus booking fee). Tickets can be purchased by going to <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ancient-tech-modern-challenges-and-the-future-of-stem-tickets-1982501668859>

The convention is on 27 June but ticket sales end on 20 June, assuming of course there are any left by then. Last year we sold out and while there were a few cancellations, not everyone on the waiting list was fortunate enough to get a ticket. I think nearly 30 people on the waiting list missed out!

As well as the fantastic speakers, there will be various stall holders. Once again First Light Optics are our Gold Sponsor. For information about other sponsors etc, please visit our Eventbrite page. I understand there is still space for a couple more stallholders. Contact Jerry for more details [meetings@fedastro.org.uk](mailto:meetings@fedastro.org.uk).

Clare



**The Federation of Astronomical Societies  
will be holding its**

# **2026 Convention**

**Saturday 27 June at Cardiff University**

**Our Gold level Sponsor is First Light Optics. Silver level sponsors are the British Astronomical Association and nPAE Precision Astro Engineering. All are repeats from last year, showing their belief in being involved.**



**FIRST LIGHT OPTICS**



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***Our five speakers are:***

### **Paul Roche FRAS**

Chair of Astronomy Education at Cardiff University

An astronomer who specialises in outreach and education, working with schools to develop astronomy and space-themed STEM education resources and programmes.

### **Jane Clark**

Observatory Manger, Cardiff Astronomical Society.

Jane has written books on mapping the solar system, imaging the solar system, photographing galaxies from light-polluted skies, and is now engaged in a quest with David Bennett to measure distances to nearby stars.

### **Mike Lockwood FRS**

Professor of Space Environment Physics at the University of Reading and current President of the Royal Astronomical Society. An award-winning physicist who specialises in the cutting-edge study of space weather, the Northern Lights and solar radiation.

### **Jen Millard**

Lecturer at Cardiff University, An expert science communicator on national and international radio and TV, TedX Cardiff and in BBC clips on YouTube. Watch her podcasts "Awesome Astronomy" and "Growing Worlds".

### **Mike Edmunds MA PhD FRAS**

Emeritus Professor of Astrophysics. Former Head of the School of Physics & Astronomy. Chair of the Antikythera Mechanism Research Project - an international collaboration that investigates the extraordinary Greek calculator which, although well over 2,000 years old, can predict astronomical positions and events.

**There is a discounted price for members of FAS affiliated societies. A promo code has been sent to all societies to buy tickets for the low price of just £10 per person, £5 for under-16's, £20 for families (plus bookings fee). Public tickets will be made available later if space permits.**

**Tickets are already selling fast! For more information, visit [www.fedastro.org.uk](http://www.fedastro.org.uk)**

**To book displays and adverts contact Jerry Stone at [meetings@fedastro.org.uk](mailto:meetings@fedastro.org.uk)**

# Obituary: Owen Brazell

(October 1957 - 16 March 2026)

Christ Holt

Abingdon Astronomical Society

Owen Brazell, who died in a road traffic accident on Monday 16 March, was a major figure in British amateur astronomy, well known worldwide for deep sky visual astronomy.

Owen was president of the Webb Society and, for many years, editor of its Deep Sky Observer journal. He had held various roles in the British Astronomical Association, including as an Acting Editor of the BAA Newsletter, Meetings Secretary, Assistant Director of the Deep Sky Section and member of the BAA Council. He had also been active in the Federation of Astronomical Societies, as an editor of the FAS Newsletter and a Council member. He was also known to readers of astronomy magazines, as the writer of columns in Astronomy Now. He regularly represented the Webb Society at astronomy conventions and gave talks to astronomical societies throughout Britain. He also wrote the two-volume set 'Galaxy of the Month', published by the Webb Deep Sky Society. He frequently attended star parties at Kelling Heath and Kielder and also took his telescopes to other dark sky locations. Indeed, he was en route to Kelling Heath when he had his fatal accident.

Owen spent his early years in Toronto, Canada, before moving to the UK and completing his school education at Southwell Minster Grammar School in Nottinghamshire. In 1976, he took up a place at St Andrew's University, Scotland to study for a degree in astronomy. He started postgraduate studies for an MSc but left these to work in the oil industry, initially in research and development and later in computer systems design. In the 1980s his work took him to Calgary in Canada where, outside of work, he worked with the Calgary Centennial Planetarium and was a council member of the RASC Calgary Centre and editor of its Starseeker journal. By the 1990s he had returned to the UK, living first in Surrey and, later, in Aston Tirrold in Oxfordshire. When in Oxfordshire, he first started attending the recently formed Abingdon Astronomical Society, which is when I first met him. In the early 2000s his work took him to the London area for a few years. When his employer opened new premises in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Owen moved to nearby Faringdon and rejoined Abingdon AS. He joined the committee in 2005 and had been our chairman since 2018. Owen did much for the Society, introducing visiting speakers, providing short talks and beginners' meeting talks and editing our newsletter. He organised and led Zoom meetings for our 2020-2021 season during the Covid-19 pandemic. His Covid infection in October 2021 was serious enough to involve a short stay in hospital. He participated in outreach events, bringing well-chosen telescopes, and, as chairman, he chaired our committee meetings. Most of all, he was a deep reservoir of knowledge about the deep sky, general astronomy and telescopes and eyepieces. Owen was always happy to advise fellow amateurs and newcomers to astronomy. He encouraged members



*Image Above: Owen Brazell. Taken about 3 years ago.*

*Ccredit: Mel Gigg. Abingdon Astronomical Society*

to join him for continued discussions after meetings in a nearby pub, where he would drink exclusively Diet Coke. He possessed a wide range of telescopes and high end eyepieces. Owen was a visual astronomer rather than an astrophotographer. However, a year or two ago, he bought a ZWO Seestar S50 and was soon using it to take fine images, particularly of comets.

Beyond astronomy, Owen had a range of other interests. He was very knowledgeable about stone circles, burial chambers and other ancient monuments. He had played table tennis at a county level until relatively recently. He had also volunteered with the British Red Cross, at one time using his all-wheel drive vehicle to ferry medical staff to work at a hospital up a snow-covered hill. For the past three years, he had been a volunteer at Kelmscott Manor, the 17th century manor house that now houses artwork by its most famous resident, William Morris.

Owen's sudden death is a major loss to Abingdon AS, to astronomy and, above all, to his family. We shall miss him greatly.

**Chris Holt**  
Secretary, Abingdon AS  
<http://abingdonastro.org.uk/>



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# Liverpool Astronomical Society

## Jeremiah Horrocks Memorial Lecture

### Guest Speaker Russell Parry: "Astronaut Stuart Roosa (1933 – 1994) and The Moon Trees"

Friday 20 February 2026

The society continues to celebrate its 145th year since formation with a busy February of membership meetings and public outreach events.

On February 20th the Liverpool Astronomical held its lecture meeting in memory of 17th Century Lancashire astronomer Jeremiah Horrocks (c1618 – 1641). The guest speaker was Russell Parry, who told the spellbinding story of the Apollo 14 Command Module pilot Stuart "Stu" Roosa, his life, and military service and career with NASA.



Image Above: The title slide for Russell Parry's lecture.

Credit: Wendy Taylor

On Apollo 14, he spent 33 hours in solo orbit around the Moon, conducting an extensive series of experiments. As part of a joint U.S. Forest Service/NASA project, he carried seeds from loblolly pine, sycamore, sweet gum, redwood, and Douglas fir trees. The seeds were germinated on his return and planted throughout the United States, becoming known as the "Moon Trees".

Some of these seedling trees were sent around the world and some to the UK, but the location of any British planted "Moon Trees" is a mystery, and if any have survived. However, a second-generation tree has been located by the Royal Astronomical Society.

Russell concluded his lecture with a special personal video message to the members of the society from Stuart Roosa son Joe. During the Q&A, the possible location of "Moon Trees" in the UK was discussed, and the possible application for Seeds taken around the moon by the Uncrewed Artemis I mission in 2022.



Image Above: Russell Parry is welcomed by LAS members on February 20th.

Credit: Wendy Taylor

The Society meetings Monthly every third Friday at the Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane Liverpool, L1 3BT commencing at 7pm. The Remaining meetings for the session 2025-26 are detailed below: -

## 17 April

### "Art in Astronomy"

Guest speaker: Mr Steve Warbis – Macclesfield Astronomical Society

## 15 May

### LAS Annual General Meeting

Followed by Members short talks

Text with thanks to Russell Parry, Phil Williams and Wendy Taylor

# Liverpool Astronomical Society

Astronomy Public Outreach - Wirral Country Park.

Thurstaston Visitor Centre,

Saturday 21 February 2026



*Image Above: Wirral Star Party - Lectures on What's up in the Night Sky this Spring.*

*Credit: Liverpool AS*

Despite the forecast of poor weather, the Liverpool Astronomical Society held another successful public outreach event at the local Wirral Country park. Society members had various telescopes available for short views of the Crescent Moon, and the planet Jupiter within in the stars of the constellation Gemini. However, the society provided displays and demonstrations of telescope, and how images are recorded of distant galaxies, plus deep sky objects which are millions of light



*Image Above: Wirral Star Party - Public using telescopes to view the Moon.*

*Credit: Liverpool AS*

The society is planning similar public outreach events later in the year but in the meantime the Society's Leighton Observatory, at Pex Hill, Cronton WA8 5QW is open for visitors' every Wednesday from 7pm during spring and summer months. Please contact: [dobs@liverpoolas.org](mailto:dobs@liverpoolas.org)

For More information, and membership details please visit the Society web site at: [liverpoolas.org](http://liverpoolas.org)

**Images: Steve Stix and David Galvin**



*Image Above: Wirral Star Party - Public viewing Live images.*

*Credit: Liverpool AS*

years away. The estimated fifty members of the public, young and old, enjoyed a series of lectures on astronomy subjects, including what can be seen in the night sky for the coming Spring months. The visitor centre very kindly opened its "Whistle Stop Café" for the evening to serve hot drinks and some light refreshments.



# Hertford Astronomy Group

## Forthcoming Meetings

### Wednesday 8 April

Sheridan Williams – Fascinating Astronomical Facts

### Wednesday 13 May

Lewis Dartnell – How the Earth Shaped Human History

### Wednesday 10 June

Louise Devoy – Royal Observatory Greenwich – A History Through Objects

Meetings are held at: University of Hertfordshire, Lindop Building, College Lane, AL10 9AB and are also broadcast via Zoom. Meetings start at 8:00pm.

Members are also welcome to join our Astrophotography meetings held on the 4th Wednesday of the month at the same location, and our Observing group sessions.

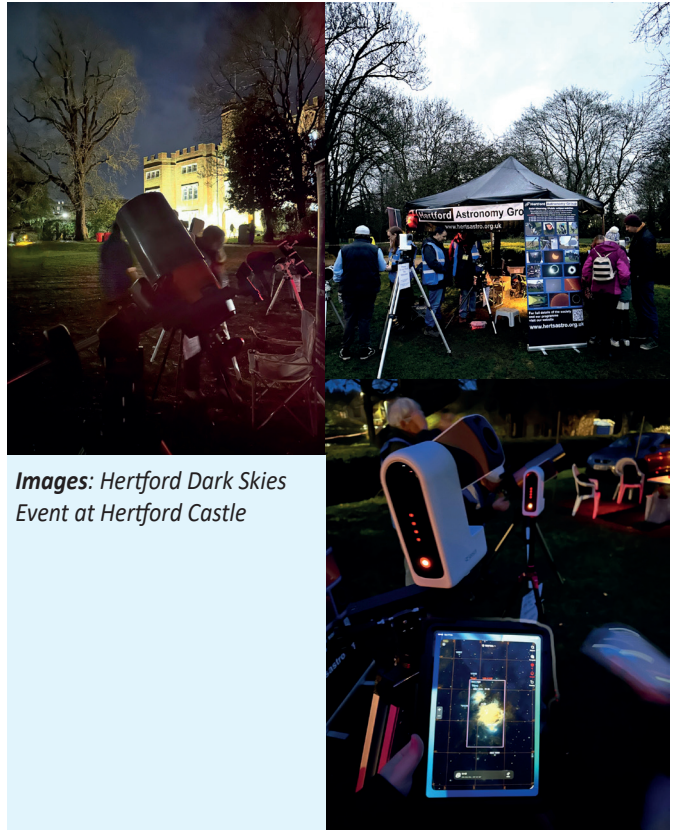
For more details, please visit our website:

[www.hertsastro.org.uk](http://www.hertsastro.org.uk)

or follow us on Facebook or Instagram

[@hertfordastronomygroup](https://www.facebook.com/hertfordastronomygroup)

Past recordings of meetings can also be found on our YouTube Channel "[Hertford Astronomy Group](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)".



Images: Hertford Dark Skies Event at Hertford Castle

A regular fixture is also our assistance at the University of Hertfordshire's Bayfordbury Observatory Open Evenings. We have been inundated with new members from these events, as they are very popular with the local community, and it gives us an opportunity to show what can be visible with a telescope in your own back garden, alongside showcasing our new smart telescope, the Seestar S30, which has proved very popular at every event it's attended!



During February, the team attended Hertford Dark Skies, a community event hosted by Hertford Castle, which offers stargazing under reduced lighting, expert-led talks, hands-on activities, and a mobile planetarium from the team at Bayfordbury Observatory.

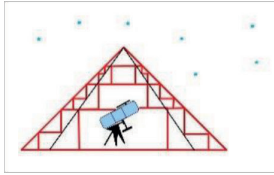
Despite an early downpour, we were able to show Jupiter, Andromeda, and the Pleiades with our various scopes that committee members brought along, and enjoyed a fantastic tour of the night sky, put on by the Bayfordbury team.



Alana Smith  
Club Secretary & Publicity Officer

# Milton Keynes Astronomical Society

Registered Charity No: 1084943



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## Programme 2026

Date	Meeting	Programme Event
16 January 30 January	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b>	By members <b>Dr. Mike Leggett</b> <b>Astronomy &amp; Exploration</b>
13 February 27 February	Astrodome Astro Quiz	By members Mark Hurn
13 March 27 March	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b>	By members <b>Sheridan Williams Eclipses</b>
10 April 24 April	Astrodome Oscars	By members By members
8 May 22 May	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b>	By members <b>Mark Hurn via Zoom</b> <b>History of the Sun</b>
5 June 19 June	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b>	By members <b>Mary McIntyre</b> <b>General Astrophotography of</b> <b>Meteors</b>
3 July 17 July	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b>	By members <b>Paul Fellows</b> <b>Northern Lights &amp; Space Weather</b>
31 July	Astrodome	By members
14 August 28 August	Short Talks Astronomers Question time	By members By members
11 September 25 September	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b>	By members <b>Dr. Matt Bothwell</b> <b>Update on James Webb Telescope</b>
9 October 23 October	Astrodome <b>Guest Speaker</b> <b>Richard Lambert</b> <b>Memorial Lecture</b>	By members <b>RLML</b> <b>Mike Frost</b> <b>Who's who in the Moon?</b>
6 November 20 November	Astrodome <b>AGM</b>	<b>Annual General Meeting +</b> <b>Election of New Committee</b>
4 December 18 December	Astrodome Christmas Social Members & invited Guests Event	

# Society for the History of Astronomy



**SHA 2026 Spring Conference**  
**Friday 24th April Doors open 09:30**  
 The Lyttelton Lecture Theatre, Birmingham & Midland Institute,  
 Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS

Time	Speaker	Subject	Note
09:30 to 10:00		REGISTRATION & Second-hand book sales open. Freebee desk available. SHA Library open for Members.	Tea & coffee and biscuits will be provided in the John Peek Room
10:00	Ms Carolyn Kennett FRAS: Chair, SHA	Welcome to the BMI & SHA Conference. Housekeeping etc.	<b>Venue Health &amp; Safety Notice.</b>
10:10 to 11:05	Mary McIntyre	<i>The Augsburg Book of Miracles</i>	
11:05 to 11:55	Martin Mobberley	<i>Eccentric BAA characters of the 20th Century</i>	
11:55 to 13:15		LUNCH BREAK Delegates Pre-booked Buffer Lunch. In John Peek Room	The BMI has also excellent café which has been opened for to-day's meeting.
13:15	Ms Carolyn Kennett FRAS: Chair SHA	Welcome back	
13:20 to 14:15	Wendy Bevan-Mogg	<i>Nevil Maskelyne (no, not that one!) - Astronomer and Magician.</i>	
14:15 to 15.10	Roger Hutchins	<i>An appreciation of our honorary President Dr Allan Chapman</i>	
15:10 to 15:30		AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS In John Peek Room	
15:30 to 16:25	Vladimir Brljak	<b>The Michael Hoskin Lecture</b> <i>From a Bright to a Dark Universe</i>	
16:30 Approx	Ms Carolyn Kennett FRAS: Chair, SHA	CONCLUSIONS & DISPERSAL	Safe Journey home

**All times and speakers are subject to Change.**

Please Book in advance, at £20 per person for members, £25 per person for non-members,  
Pre-Booked Buffet Lunch £6.50 per person.

Refreshments and Buffet Lunch in John Peek Room.

To pre-register use booking form attached or contact [meetings@shastro.org.uk](mailto:meetings@shastro.org.uk)

# Society for the History of Astronomy

## Society Spring Conference 2026



**Doors Open from 9:30am on  
Friday 24th April**

**In The Lyttelton Lecture Theatre  
Birmingham & Midland Institute  
Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS**

**The 2026 Michael Hoskin Lecture:  
“From a Bright to a Dark Universe”**

**Keynote Speaker: Vladimir Brljak**

**Other confirmed Speakers;**

**Mary McIntyre, Martin Mobberley**

**Wendy Bevan-Mogg, Roger Hutchins.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Booking in Advance at £20 per person for SHA members.**

**£25 per person for non-members.**

**Per-Booked Lunch Buffet £6.50 per person.**

**More details and pre-booking only. Please Contact  
SHA Meeting Secretary – [meetings@shastro.org.uk](mailto:meetings@shastro.org.uk)**

Images: © BMI web site & Wikipedia Images  
Society for the History of Astronomy.



The Society for the History of Astronomy



# Somerset Levels Stargazers Outreach Event Highlights Dark Skies

Paul Adamson

Images Courtesy Somerset Levels Stargazers



On 18 February, Somerset Levels Stargazers held a successful public outreach event in partnership with CPRE Somerset, focusing on astronomy and the growing problem of light pollution.

The evening featured a series of short talks from Somerset Levels Stargazers, CPRE, Space Detectives, astrophotographer Josh Dury, and the Somerset Space Walk, each highlighting different ways people can engage with astronomy and the importance of protecting dark skies across the Somerset Levels.

Alongside the talks, visitors enjoyed displays of telescopes, meteorites, astrophotography, and hands-on family activities provided by Space Detectives. Although the event had hoped to include outdoor observing, the weather unfortunately did not cooperate.

Despite the cloudy skies, the event attracted a great turnout and successfully raised awareness of the beauty of the night sky and the importance of reducing light pollution so future generations can continue to enjoy it.



**Paul Adamson**  
Chairman Somerset Levels Stargazers  
<https://www.facebook.com/SomersetLevelsStargazers>

# Allan Chapman Whizzing Around the Solar System

By Gerard Gilligan

Even after his sad passing at the end of January, the renowned historian of science and in particular astronomy, Dr Allan Chapman (1946 – 2026), has a part of the solar system named after him. So he is indirectly whizzing around the solar system.

Following a nomination and proposal from Neil Haggath and others, who were close Oxford colleagues of Allan, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) Working Group Small Body Nomenclature committee have renamed minor planet or asteroid “1984 BZ6” after Dr Chapman. The full official citation published in the WGSBN bulletin, dated 23rd February 2026, NO 6 #3 reads as follows:-

(13490) Allanchapman = 1984 BZ6  
Discovery: 1984-01-26 / E. Bowell / Palomar Mountain / 675

Allan Chapman (1946–2026) was an eminent British historian, and world-renowned

authority on the history of science. He was a prolific author and astronomy populariser, and a popular speaker to UK amateur-astronomy societies and conventions. He was Honorary President of the Society for the History of Astronomy and of several astronomical societies.

On hearing the news, Allan’s wife Rachel commented: -  
“Thank you for your email about Allan’s asteroid – I had already heard about this from Neil Haggath, who was one of the proposers, I believe.

It is extraordinary tribute, and I think Allan would have been amazed! He probably wouldn’t have thought he deserved it. But when he got used to the idea, I expect he would have been amused and “Chuffed”, as they say. I certainly am!”

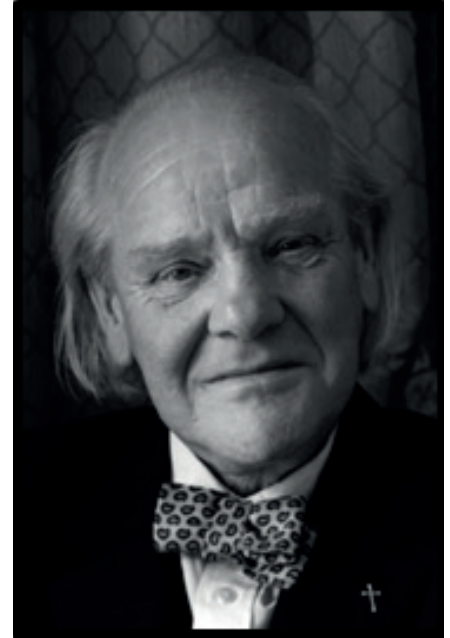


Image Above: Dr Allan Chapman

Credit: ©2018 Helen Fairweather

## Orbital elements for 13490 Allanchapman

**Orbit type: Main Belt. Absolute Magnitude 14.76 Estimated to be 6.3**

epoch	2025-11-21.0	reference	MPO 964505
epoch JD	2461000.5	observations used	1434
perihelion date	2020-11-21.68604	oppositions	24
perihelion JD	2459175.18604	arc length (days)	15291
argument of perihelion (°)	264.52459	first opposition used	1984
ascending node (°)	134.68760	last opposition used	2025
inclination (°)	1.51406	residual rms (arc-secs)	0.74
eccentricity	0.2220274	perturbers coarse indicator	M-v
perihelion distance (AU)	2.3975041	perturbers precise indicator	003EK
Tisserand w.r.t. Jupiter	3.2	first observation date used	1984-01-25.0
$\Delta V$ w.r.t. Earth (km/sec)	9.8	last observation date used	2025-12-06.0
semimajor axis (AU)	3.0817335	computer name	MPCORBFIT
mean anomaly (°)	332.54376		
mean daily motion (°/day)	0.18218440		
aphelion distance (AU)	3.766		
period (years)	5.41		
P-vector [x]	0.77456293		
P-vector [y]	0.59026480		
P-vector [z]	0.22724379		
Q-vector [x]	-0.63221784		
Q-vector [y]	0.71185566		
Q-vector [z]	0.30587927		
absolute magnitude	14.76		
phase slope	0.15		
uncertainty	0		

### References used -

Edward Bowell (1943 – 2023) : <https://dps.aas.org/news/ted-bowell-19>

Email from Mrs Rachel Chapman dated 10th March 2026.

WGSBN -IAU Bulletin Feb 2026 NO 6 #3 : <http://www.wgsbn-iau.org/files/Bulletins/latest.pdf>

Gerard Gilligan  
Publicity Officer

The Society for the History of Astronomy  
<https://societyforthehistoryofastronomy.com>

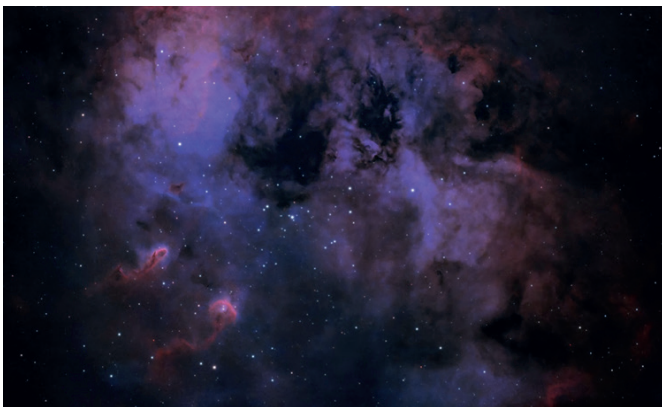
# My Astrophotography Journey

Karen Smith

I started my astrophotography journey in 2020, using my husband's old Nikon DSLR camera and an old zoom lens. I soon became hooked on the hobby and gradually purchased what was to become my first astrophotography rig with a dedicated colour astronomical camera. I have rarely missed a clear night since, although living in the Midlands, clear nights are unfortunately very few and far between!

I started imaging the Tadpole nebula, IC 410, from my back garden in the early hours of 9th September 2025. I had previously been imaging the Crescent nebula and I had woken up noticing that the target had dipped too low on my horizon. Not to waste any more of the clear night, I quickly slewed my telescope to the Tadpole nebula. I only captured 20 x 4 minute exposures before dawn, but it was a start. I revisited the Tadpole nebula on 26th December, this time I was able to capture 44 x 4 minute exposures. I was hoping to add additional time to this project, but unfortunately, the clouds seem to have taken a particularly strong liking to my back garden this year so far! I therefore decided to process what I had, image below.

The Tadpole nebula is a bright emission nebula in the constellation Auriga. It contains two adorable tadpole shaped dust clouds, which have been formed by the stellar winds emanating from the open star cluster NGC 1893.



Over the past year, I have been tempted to try monochrome imaging, and when I heard about the monochrome QHY Minicam 8 camera, which comes with its own built in filter wheel, I took the plunge and built a second astrophotography rig. The Flaming Star Nebula above, was one of the first images taken with my new monochrome setup. The nebula is also known as IC 405, SH2-229 or Caldwell 31, and is an emission and reflection nebula in the constellation Auriga. I captured this image on 5th January 2026, taking 300 second exposures in HA, SII and OIII from 6pm until 1.30am the following day.

Despite watching several YouTube videos on how to process monochrome images, I was still struggling so I turned to our society members for advice. Mark Tweedie, an excellent astrophotographer and printmaker, kindly wrote down his workflow for SHO images in PixInsight for me. I am not quite sure what I did wrong, as the colours came out a little bizarre; maybe I have the filters mixed up? Whatever the issue was, I loved this shot! Photographing deep sky objects is magical, and you never really know what you might end up with until you process them!

**Karen Smith**  
**Coventry And Warwickshire Astronomical Society**  
<https://covastro.org.uk/>

## **Image Left: Tadpole Nebula IC 410**

*Optolong L-eXtreme filter – 59 x 240 second exposures.*

*ZWO ASI2600MC Pro.*

*Meade LX90*

*ZWO AM5n mount*

*ZWO Off-axis guider with ZWO ASI 220MM Mini guide camera*

*ZWO ASIAIR Plus*

*Processed in PixInsight and also using RC Astro's Xterminator tools*



## **Image Left: Flaming star nebula IC 405**

*HA – 30 x 300 seconds, OIII – 20 x 300 seconds, SII – 30 x 300 seconds*

*QHY Minicam 8 mono with 7nm HA, SII and OIII filters.*

*William Optics Zenithstar 61 with field flattener 61a*

*ZWO AM3n mount*

*QHY Off-axis guider with ZWO ASI 120 mm Mini guide camera*

*SVBony sv241 pro Astro Power controller*

*MeLE Quieter 4C Mini PC running N.I.N.A.*

*Processed in PixInsight and also using RC Astro's Xterminator tools*

# Meet Nova: The New Brightest Star at the York Astronomical Society

Since 1972, the York Astronomical Society (YAS) has been dedicated to one clear mission: helping people explore the wonders of the universe. Whether we are setting up telescopes on a freezing winter night or hosting lectures on the history of cosmology, our goal is to make astronomy accessible to everyone.

Today, we are thrilled to announce a new way to access that knowledge—right from the comfort of your home. We are proud to introduce the newest member of our team: **Nova**.

## Who—or What—is Nova?

Nova is our brand-new AI-powered member, designed specifically for the York Astronomical Society. While our committee members and volunteers work tirelessly to keep the society running, they can't be awake 24 hours a day (even if astronomers are known for being night owls!).

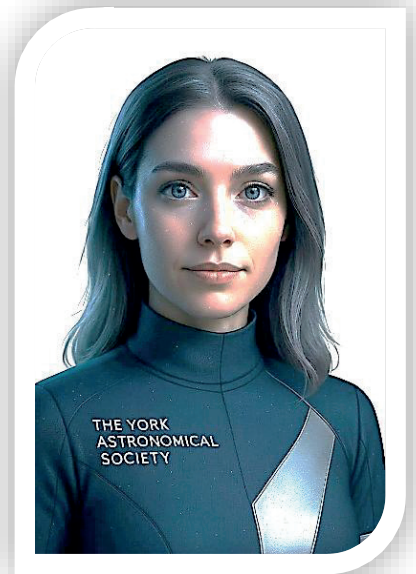
Nova is different. She is available 24/7, 365 days a year, ready to guide both long-standing members and curious first-time visitors through the vast amount of information available on our website – <https://yorkastro.org.uk>

## How Nova Can Help You

We know that navigating a website to find specific details can sometimes be as tricky as star-hopping through a faint constellation. Nova acts as your personal guide. Instead of clicking through multiple menus, you can simply ask a question in plain English on our website and Nova will fetch the answers for you.

Here are just a few things Nova is ready to help you with:

- **Meeting Information:** Not sure when the next lecture is or who the guest speaker will be? Just ask, "*When is the next meeting?*" or "*What's the next meeting about?*"
- **Visitor Details:** For those looking to join us for the first time, Nova can provide directions to our meeting spots or observing sites as well as information on facilities we have available – from parking to a hot cuppa and a slice of cake.
- **Membership Queries:** Interested in joining the society? Nova can guide you through the subscription costs and the signup process.
- **Astronomy Basics:** Nova isn't just an admin assistant; she knows a bit about space, too. You can ask basic questions about what might be visible in the night sky tonight in York or general facts about the society's history.



# **Mid-Kent** *Astronomical Society*



**Our meetings are held at Bredhurst Village Hall.  
Unless otherwise stated, meetings normally open at 7:40pm for an 8pm  
start, finishing around 10pm. We look forward to seeing you there.**

## **10 April**

### **Arthur Fentaman - Astrophotography using Smartphones**

Arthur will give an overview of how to take images of the night sky using mobile phones,  
followed by an extended Q&A session.

All welcome

## **24 April**

### **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM is open to all MKAS Members and Visitors, however only Members are  
entitled to vote.

## **8 May**

### **Laura Mullin - Opportunities for Radio Astronomy from Home**

## **29 May**

### **Jeni Millard - Investigating Gravitational Waves and Black Holes**

## **12 June**

### **Jonathan Clough - Kristian Birkeland; The father of Northern Lights knowledge**

Birkeland worked out what causes the Northern Lights from his observatory near Alta, Norway, and  
was nominated for a Nobel prize 7 times. He was Norway's most celebrated scientist and father of  
Northern lights understanding.

## **26 June**

### **David Southwood - A Decade as an ESA Director**

Prof Southwood was Director of Science and Robotic Engineering of the European Space Agency  
from 2001-2011 and in his talk will share his memories of the projects that he supported (and  
cancelled!) during that time.

**See [EVENTS](#) page of our website for details of our events  
[www.midkentastro.org.uk/events](http://www.midkentastro.org.uk/events)**



# Loughton Astronomical Society

Discover the wonders of the universe with the LAS - West Essex's community for astronomy enthusiasts and sky watchers of all levels. Our society is dedicated to exploring the night sky, sharing knowledge, and igniting a passion for the cosmos. We offer a welcoming space for both novice stargazers and experienced astronomers to connect and grow.

LAS Meetings are held on Thursday evenings in Scout Hall, Theydon Bois. CM16 7JY.

## 2 April

Speaker: Professor Ian Crawford

"The Fermi Paradox - Where are the Aliens?"

Speaker website:

<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/our-staff/8004655/ian-crawford>

## 7 May

Speaker: Dr Matthew Bothwell

"How Fast is the Universe Expanding?"

Speaker website:

<https://people.ast.cam.ac.uk/~bothwell/>

## 9 April

Speaker: Dr Simon Ebo

Speaker website:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Simon-Ebo>

## Friday 8 May

AstroKyds Junior Section

AstroKyds is the Junior section of the LAS. 6:30pm at St Mary's Church Hall

<https://las-astro.org.uk/astrokyds.html>

## 16 April

Miscellany evening with LAS Members

Members short talks. Projects, processes, images , etc.

## 14 May

Speaker: Dr Steve Barrett

"Gaia"

Speaker website: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/~sdb/>

## 23 April

Speaker: Prof. Martin Hendry

"Listening to Einstein's Universe: the Exciting Dawn of Gravitational Wave Astronomy."

Speaker website:

<https://www.astro.gla.ac.uk/users/martin/>

## 21 May

Speaker: William Joyce

"Astrobiology: The Search for Advanced Life in the Galaxy"

## 30 April

Speaker: Dr Alfredo Carpineti

"The Unexpected Cosmos: Unplanned Discoveries That Changed Astronomy"

Speaker website: <https://www.theastroholic.co.uk/>

## 28 May

Speaker: Gary Auker

"Humanity's return to the Moon - this time to stay"

**Society Website:**

<https://las-astro.org.uk/>



# Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society

The Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society meets every first and third Tuesday at 8pm (doors open at 7.30pm) at Alderminster Village Hall, New Road, Alderminster. CV37 8PE. Everyone is welcome, especially beginners and those wanting to learn more.

**7 April**  
Club Night

**21 April 2026**

Mike Frost from the British Astronomical Association, with a talk called "Who's Who in the Moon". Please note that the speakers usually start quite promptly at 8pm.

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## Venus and the Spring Stars

### Adrian Wakeham

This month the 'star' of the show is Venus. It's easy to find, it's the really bright star in the west, the second brightest object in the night sky, only behind the moon. That's why it is called (among other things) the 'Evening Star' (well at this point in its orbit), as it can be seen before full darkness, before any other star at dusk.

On the 18th and 19th April, it lies close to a very new (thin crescent) moon. Close by is the star cluster, the Pleiades (also known as the Seven Sisters).

Venus is the planet that gets closest to Earth (a mere 40 million km or 25 million miles) and was also known as 'Earth's Twin'. Come the age of space exploration, Venus changed from a warmer version of earth to a hell-like place. It has a carbon dioxide atmosphere with sulphuric acid rain and a volcanic surface! An atmosphere which is 90 times denser than Earth's and the hottest planet in the Solar System at 460 degrees Celsius. It's day (at 243 Earth Days) is longer than its year (at 225 Earth days), and it rotates in the opposite direction (clockwise) to most

bodies in the Solar System. It is not a nice place for humans to visit!!

Back to the spring stars, Jupiter is still obviously visible, but starting to fade, in Gemini, below Castor and Pollux. The Moon passes close by the planet on the 22nd. The Moon is at First Quarter on 24th, a great time to get binoculars or a small telescope to look at it. The line where the light and shade meet is known as the Terminator, and that line of light helps to make the craters and mountains look much more prominent.

On the 24th the Moon then passes in front of another of my favourites, Praesepe (the Beehive Cluster) M44. It's well worth a look at with binoculars or telescope! Next it moves on to a close encounter with Regulus, in the constellation of Leo, on the 25th.

Leo is easily identifiable, as it looks like a lion (or a mouse or even a flat iron) and it is a sure sign that the warmer days, of summer are just around the corner.

Club Nights offer more information on what to look out for each month. If it is clear we do some observing just outside the Village Hall, so please join us. There is no charge initially to come along and find out more, but if you do want to become a member then the fee is just £15 a year and it's free if you are in full-time education. For more details go to the website <http://www.astro.org.uk> or contact the Chair, John Waller [john.waller@astro.org.uk](mailto:john.waller@astro.org.uk) or on 07703 192188.

**Happy Observing!**  
Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society  
<http://astro.org.uk/main/index.php>

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## Young Astronomers UK

### A Request for Volunteers

The *Young Astronomers UK* organisation came about from a need to encourage children to take a more active role in astronomy, with the ultimate aim of attracting them into local astronomical societies. Many current societies have ageing memberships and, without an influx of younger members, a long term sustainability which is under threat; the ultimate survival rate – if not challenged and addressed – may eventually result in a large number of astronomical societies simply ceasing to exist.

The concept of *Young Astronomers* involves the formation of local societies comprising the younger generation (typically aged between 7 and 16), with each of these groups going under specific titles such as ‘York Young Astronomers’, ‘Bradford Young Astronomers’ and so on. This is intended to give them their own ‘identity’ rather than being ‘part of something else’, such as a ‘junior section’ or similar of a adult-based society. Each of the ‘local’ Young Astronomers groups would organise their own meetings, visits and other activities and would be run completely independently of their local astronomical society.

Although the individual Young Astronomers groups will be scattered across the UK, this will be under the guidance and support (as and when needed) of a central resources unit known as *Young Astronomers UK*. This central unit will provide individual children’s groups with an integrated information matrix to which all UK-based Young Astronomers will have free access. In other words, *Young Astronomers UK* will be the pre-eminent national astronomy organisation whose remit is solely to promote local groups of Young Astronomers and in doing so hopefully, maintain, cherish, and preserve the existence of local astronomical societies, the very cornerstone of amateur astronomy.

The popularity of *Young Astronomers UK* is steadily increasing, although in order to achieve our goals we are in urgent need of volunteers to help run the *Young Astronomers UK* central unit and to bring the whole concept to fruition. The roles we urgently need to fill are those of Treasurer; Media Secretary; Advertising Sales Coordinator; Fundraiser; and Zoom Meeting Host.

We require that all applicants reside within the UK. However, as most (if not all) of the duties entailed by any of the above-listed roles can be carried out online, your precise geographical location would probably not be important. If you are interested in taking on any of the above-listed positions, or would like further details of what each/any of the roles entail, please contact Brian at [stars@starlight-nights.co.uk](mailto:stars@starlight-nights.co.uk)

Also, if you would like a copy of the Young Astronomers UK ‘Aims and Objectives’ leaflet please contact Brian at the above email address.