



Aries

The Journal of the Derby and District
Astronomical Society

50th Anniversary Issue



The Society's Flamsteed Observatory pictured on a frosty November morning in 2023.

Image Credit: Tony Wright

December 2024



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Editorial

Welcome to this special edition of Aries. This year, 2024, sees a rather special milestone in the history of the Derby and District Astronomical Society, this year is the 50th Anniversary year of the founding of the DDAS. The Society was founded in 1974 by Mrs Jane Kirk and had its first AGM in May of that year. Almost from the start, Aries was there, the establishment of a Society publication happened relatively quickly. Aries began as a newsletter and, since then, it has grown and matured into the journal it is now. Aries has become the 'chronicler' of the Society, in addition to member contributed articles and items of news, Aries has covered all the activities and events that the Society has been involved with over the years. Aries has been the 'eyewitness' to the history of the DDAS and this issue will celebrate that legacy.

A 50th anniversary for any group or organisation is a remarkable achievement, regardless of how long you have been a member of the Society, from new members, to those members who have been in the DDAS for a number of years (in some cases, decades), all DDAS members should be proud. It has been a long and eventful road to get to the 50 year mark. The DDAS today is in good shape, it has a large membership, 55 members at the last count, we have a very capable Observatory set-up at our Flamsteed Observatory, which was opened originally in 1992 by Astronomer and TV Presenter Heather Couper. In 1996, we had a second opening to mark the installation of an upgraded Newtonian reflector telescope system, that opening was conducted by Alan Heath, former Director of the British Astronomical Association's (BAA) Saturn Section and amateur astronomer based in Long Eaton. Since then the Flamsteed Observatory has had a further upgrade to a 10-inch Schmitt-Cassegrain GOTO enabled telescope, so now the Flamsteed Observatory has entered the digital age.

We have a robust programme of meetings featuring speakers presenting talks on a variety of astronomical/space topics from a number of organisations and institutions, these speakers include DDAS members as well. We also enjoy secondary meetings, our 'introductory meetings,' which are a little less formal than the main speaker-based meetings. These feature talks by DDAS members that are more focused on general astronomical/space topics such as 'What's in the Night Sky (for that month),' 'buying your first telescope and how to use it, 'astrophotography,' the solar system' and so on. These meetings are well attended and well received by their audiences, these meetings are also a way for newcomers to see for themselves what the DDAS is all about and, hopefully, they will decide to join our ranks based on that experience.

We engage with the wider community in the form of regular public events, either organised by ourselves or in conjunction with other organisations. We have a robust relationship with the local media and the Society maintains its own website, which has over time, proved its weight in gold in promoting the DDAS and attracting new members. We also engage in educational activities involving local schools and scout and cub groups in order to bring astronomy to the younger generation.

So thank you to all those DDAS Committee Members both past and present for all your hard work in making the Society into what it is today, but, more importantly, thanks must also go to you, the membership of the DDAS. Thank you for your steadfast support throughout the years. Without you there would be no Derby and District Astronomical Society. You are the beating heart of the DDAS, you should all be proud.

On a personal note I feel extremely humbled to be back as Aries Editor, I felt that it was important that Aries was around to be part of the DDAS 50th Anniversary celebrations. Aries is an important part of the life of the Society, Aries is its heart, its voice, its soul. So in conclusion, well done to you all and happy 50th Anniversary Derby and District Astronomical Society and here's to the next 50 years!

Onwards!

Anthony Southwell - Aries Editor

Articles

About the Society

By Jane Kirk

Editor's Note:

Whilst going through some old copies of Aries recently, that were handed over to me as well as a large amount of early DDAS documentation by Jane Kirk, during the Society's 40th Anniversary Open Day in 2014, I came across the article that appears below. It was written by Jane to mark National Astronomy Week in April 1981 that was arranged to mark the 200th Anniversary of the discovery of Uranus by William Herschel on 13th March 1781.

Jane wrote this article as a kind of 'look back' at the then 6-year history of the Society. I had not come across this article before, as these copies of Aries have been safely filed away and have been gathering dust for the last ten years. I thought it would be a good idea to include this article in this issue of Aries as it is a piece of DDAS history written by our Founder member and it is also interesting to find out what the Society was doing and saying about itself back in those early times.

On the 14th April, 1974, I placed an advertisement in the Personal Column of the Derby Evening Telegraph, asking for anyone interested in forming an astronomical society to contact me. One result of that advertisement was that Radio Derby contacted me for an interview and that was broadcast one morning shortly after. Several people contacted me and a meeting was arranged at which 15 people were present.

At this meeting the society was formed and given the title of "Derby and District Astronomical Society." That was six years ago and we are now involved in our first exhibition, specifically, for National Astronomy Week.

At that meeting a small committee of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer was formed. I was the Chairman and the Treasurer was Peter Homonko who has since left Derby for a career in Astronomy. Our first Secretary was a special person, Farren Shaw, volunteered his services as Secretary at that first meeting and I would like to thank him through this article, for the excellent work he did for us in getting the Society off the ground and, laying the foundations for its successful running. This is more difficult in Farren's case than for most of us, since he has Muscular Dystrophy.

The Society began regular meetings, once a month to start with, and then at the request of the members, a second meeting in the month was arranged specifically for observational work. The meetings on the first Friday of the month have not changed in form. They are the organised events; with guest speakers, member's talks, slide evenings, film shows, visits, etc. Our first guest speaker was a local radio astronomer, Mr Ken Stevens, who proved to be an entertaining and knowledgeable speaker.

Personally remembered visits were those to Jodrell Bank and to the Royal Greenwich Observatory at its new home of Herstmonceaux. In July 1974, it was decided to issue a newsletter. These proved to be so successful that we had to call it a magazine and so 'Aries' was born. The name was fairly obvious for several reasons. Since the society is Derby based 'Aries' is a fitting name, since it is the proper name for the constellation popularly known as 'The Ram,' and since Derby's emblem is also 'The Ram' the connection is apparent.

In September of that year the Society also began its regular monthly article to the Derby Evening Telegraph, 'The Sky at Night.' It has been so useful to us in two ways; one, of course being a regular

income to the society; the other is the fact that has prompted some of its readers to join our Society. Both the Derby Evening Telegraph and Radio Derby have been very good to us over the years, and we would like to thank them for their support. It is important to us and not all societies are so lucky.

DDAS Memories - Paul Hailes

Editor's Note:

This DDAS memories piece was emailed to our Secretary by Mr Hailes, after contacting Brian concerning the DDAS 50th Anniversary and Brian, in response, asked Mr Hailes for his memories of the Society.

My memories of DDAS? Well, as I mentioned, back in those days (I joined around 1975 I think and probably continued my membership up until 79 or 80, when I moved to London) we all met at Farren Shaw's property in Breadsall. There was a summer house behind the main house a long, narrow building that easily accommodated the membership, which I would estimate like number around 15-20 at most meetings.

The society was vibrant and hosted lectures, trips to astronomy-related sites, quiz nights, Christmas parties, etc etc. I remember a lecture from the leader of the Saturn section of the BAA at the time; his first name was Alan and he lived in Long Eaton I believe. He was very encouraging to me, telling me that my little 4 inch Newtonian could still do valuable work.

The members whom I can recall were Jane Kirk (as mentioned earlier), Dr Ed Spooner, Neil Redshaw, John Baguley and a very tall fellow called Malcolm whose last name escapes me. I think he was a friend and/ or colleague of Ed's.

The society was always very welcoming and the membership very friendly and encouraging of younger members such as myself.

John Baguley was astonishing. He lived in Mickleover and built his own telescopes. He had built a 6-inch Newtonian reflector with a clock drive and, during my time there he built a 12-inch Cassegrain. I remember we were all shocked that he dropped the mirror just after he had completed grinding it and he heard a tinkling sound as it hit the floor! Thankfully although a chip had broken off it had broken off along the depth of the glass and not off of the surface of the to-be-silvered surface! When we learned of his mishap I think most of us found our toes curling!

The society organized a few trips and I attended some of these: one was to Jodrell Bank (we drove there in members private vehicles) and one to the Royal Observatory in Herstmonceux when a coach was hired.

My memories of the trip to Jodrell Bank is particularly strong as I joined Neil and a few other younger members piled into someone's mini-van. The trip up was very eventful and included a stop upon seeing the main dish from the roadside. One of the members stopped the car and 2 of our group duly crossed the road to climb an embankment to gain a better view. Unfortunately they were so keen to clamber up the embankment that they failed to spot a muddy ditch they would have to negotiate first. The result was they both got stuck in the mud and one of them had to be pulled out, losing a shoe in the process.

The society also held a Christmas party and one year it was hosted by Dr Spooner and his wife. Ed had been building a dome for his observatory. That night was an extremely windy one and his dome, sitting on the ground waiting to be positioned atop the main building, fell victim to the winds. It was far from a sturdy structure (I think made of papier mache!). Ed built a second dome made of much sturdier material and, at one meeting, asked for volunteers to drive up to Heage the next day (a Saturday), to assist him with placing it on the observatory. That was a memorable hot sunny afternoon and Ed paid us for our efforts in beer, the international token of thanks!

My final memory is of John Baguley. In addition to building his own equipment John was a great astro-photographer and I recall him showing us slides of all kinds of deep sky objects, photographs made even more remarkable when you learned his view of the sky was limited by a very intensive sodium street lamp nearby!

I hope these notes are useful - I have very happy memories of the society and am pleased to learn it is still going strong. I've just bought my Seestar S50 and am waiting to try it out when I get an opportunity. It is just the UK that gets days of clouds! Here in Louisiana we have had 9 straight days of cloud!

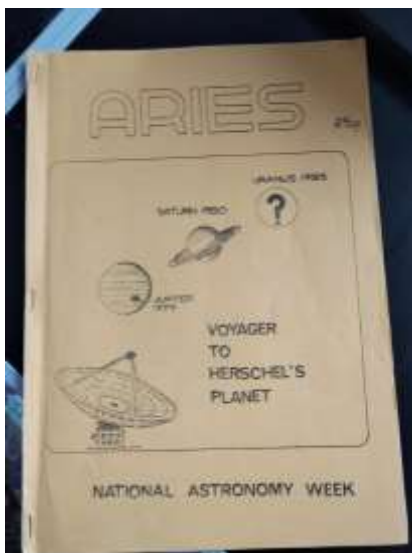
Aries – Beginnings

By Arthur Tristram

From the start of the Society in 1974 by our Founder Member, Jane Kirk, it was the goal to have a journal for the members.

These articles being solely written by the members. It was envisaged that at least two copies a year should be produced. I understand from conversations with the earliest members over the years, that Jane was the first Editor of Aries. I think the first one was like a pamphlet, I didn't join the Society until 1979. Members at the beginning like Malcolm Neal, Ed Spooner, Ken Redshaw, Christine Williams and John Baguley, would have contributed to the first issues.

At the AGM in 1980, Steve Parkin and I were voted on to the Committee as Editors of Aries. Our first task came when it was announced that the first National Astronomy Week (NAW) was to be held on the week starting 20th April 1981. The occasion

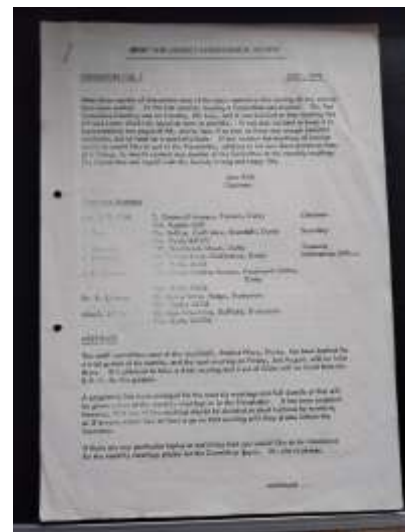


Derby and District Astronomical Society Journal Aries – National Astronomy Week – April 1981

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

was to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the discovery of Uranus by William Herschel (from his backyard in Bath with his 6” reflector). Steve Parkin and I did a 20 page issue for the event. We typed out a triplicate page sheet to enable us to duplicate an inked page on Ed Spooner’s Gestner printer. Each page was cranked by hand to produce 200 issues of Aries. The process took at least two trips to Ed’s house in Heage, when finished we celebrated with a few beers, so not all bad then. On the meeting of the 3rd April at St Helen’s House, Christine Williams got the members to collate the 200 copies that Steve and I had printed for the event. Afterwards we all went downstairs for another beer.

The next NAW was in 1985 for the return of Halley’s Comet. This was a more professionally printed Aries. I went to Derby Printing on London Road, Wilmorton to pick up 80 copies just one week before the event on 8th - 15th November 1985. Dr Keith Hindley gave a talk on Halley’s Comet at Kedleston Road Tec (as it was then known, it went on to become the University of Derby – Editor). The Society held observing nights on Markeaton Park.



Derby and District Astronomical Society Newsletter No.1 – July 1974

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

On the 5th September 1986 the Society hosted the “Out of Town” meeting of the British Astronomical Association (BBA). The Society held this event at Lonsdale College Mickleover. Heather Couper was President of the BBA at that time and gave a talk on “Did you see Halley?” Aries covered all the events of that great meeting over the weekend. Neil Breakwell took over as Editor of Aries at the time of the 3rd NAW. This was for the centenary of the formation of the BAA. The event was held in November 1990. The Society did a month long exhibition in Derby’s Silk Mill. At the 16th AGM our Founder Jane Kirk stepped down as Secretary having been in the post since the start of the Society. Neil Breakwell organised a lot of the exhibits at the Silk Mill. A new role for the Society was introduced in that year, that of Public Relations Officer (PRO) and it went to the capable stewardship of Anthony Southwell. This was the Society reaching out to the wider community and has paid dividends for us over the years.

Aries covered the NAW 1996 which was to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the discovery of Neptune by John Couch-Adams and Urbain Leverrier. The other significant event in 1996 was “Flamsteed Festival” at the University of Derby. This started on 23rd September and our very own Anthony Southwell gave a talk to a packed house on his favourite subject the Apollo Programme. On the 24th we had the world renowned authority on Flamsteed, Dr Alan Chapman, speaking to another packed house. The 25th saw Sir Arnold Wolfendale (who was the Astronomer Royal at the time), spoke about his fellow Astronomer Royal. The 26th saw Maxwell Craven a Derby historian take us through 250 years of scientific endeavours in Derbyshire. The 27th September, Alan Heath (amateur astronomer and former Director of the Saturn Section of the British Astronomical Association (BBA) – Editor) finished the week off with, “The Voyager Mission to Neptune.” This week was a great time for the Society and gave a much welcome boost to our profile in Derbyshire.

So all these activities of the Society have been documented through Aries. The rest of the issues since have been down to one Editor and that is Anthony Southwell. He brought the journal into the computer age for the Society and deserves our gratitude for doing so. I will leave this article with a quote I have come across recently and that is:

“History needs to be put down in any form that can be recorded. The atmosphere we breathe will never record the conversations and events of our lives.”

DDAS Memories - Phil Jaworek

Firstly, congratulations DDAS on 50 years, well done. Dave Selfe found out I was an early member of the DDAS back in the 70s and asked if I could put a few memories together, so here goes.

Back in the 70s myself and astro mate Kev Wildgoose built an observatory in his Mum’s back garden and our telescopes sat side by side in there and many a night we talked about the lack of local astronomical groups or societies which we could attend.

Then one day in 1974 Kev found small ad in the Derby Evening Telegraph enquiring if anyone would be interested in forming a local society and if so a meeting was set up at the Broadway Pub. Founder member Jane Kirk had placed the advert and arranged the initial meet up.

Myself and Kev attended along with Jane and several other like-minded folk and from that meeting the DDAS came into being.

The monthly meetings were held at a couple of venues back then, firstly someone’s summerhouse/annexe in Breadsall, a pub in Brailsford, (Rose and Crown I think), and then at St Helen’s House in Derby.

The Society was very active with speakers (in house and external) giving talks from telescope building to short wave radio. There were also meteor shower watches where a group of us would park up on Ashbourne Airfield, (pre housing and industrial estates), and spot meteors.

Excursions were organised, one particularly memorable one was in 1977 to The Royal Observatory Hestmonceaux with a chance to view the magnificent scopes there plus the Isaac Newton Reflector prior to its relocation.

For awhile I used to compile the monthly Sky at Night article for Derby Evening Telegraph. Once a month I would send the draft off to Jane Kirk who would adjust and type it up into a presentable form and submit it to the paper. There was also one memorable day when I drew the short straw and popped into Radio Derby for a short interview on the Society and amateur astronomy in the district.

The barbeques were always fun and I remember one was held at Ed Spooner's house where we assisted raising his observatory roof.

Fond memories and it's nice to see the Society is still going strong after all these years.

Naming an Asteroid – A DDAS 50th Anniversary Odyssey

By Anthony Southwell

This is the story of how the Derby and District Astronomical Society managed to get a small Solar System body (commonly known as an Asteroid) named after it to celebrate its 50th anniversary year.

The saga begins back in 2023 and a Committee Meeting. That particular Committee Meeting had gotten to the item in the agenda that was looking forward to what we could do to celebrate our 50th Anniversary in 2024. We discussed events, such as talks, displays, public observing sessions and even, a DDAS 50th Anniversary Party for the membership. Most of the ideas that were put forward have come to pass (see this issue for the articles that cover these events – Editor), a small number have yet to be realised. We were looking to set up a display called “Eyes on the Universe” and perhaps present one or two lectures as well. At the moment those ideas are somewhat up in the air, as the QUAD is facing financial difficulties at the present time. We are in a bit of a ‘holding pattern’ until we know more. It is beginning to look like that the display is looking doubtful, but the series of talks look like they may go ahead (Editor's Note: Unfortunately, due to the QUADs financial situation and reduced opening hours and our anniversary year rapidly drawing to a close, it was decided not to carry on with any further DDAS anniversary plans with the QUAD).

Anyway, back to that Committee Meeting, as we were discussing these 50th Anniversary ideas, one committee member, Mike Dumelow suggested that we could try to get an asteroid named for the Society. The Birmingham Astronomical Society had gone through that process and got an asteroid named for them to celebrate an anniversary. Mike wasn't too sure who to contact concerning getting an asteroid named. It was at this point that another committee member added to the conversation and that committee member was yours truly. I pointed out that the naming of astronomical bodies comes under the jurisdiction of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), the very same organisation that defined what a planet was in 2006 and that decision got Pluto demoted from Planet to Dwarf Planet status, and, quite right too, I will leave it there, as I have not got the room to get involved in that on-going argument in this article.

I, like Mike, was not sure how to approach the IAU in order to ask how you would go about the small Solar System body naming process. Unknown to me at the time, there was a ‘department’ within the

IAU that dealt with such matters, it was the “Working Group Small Bodies Nomenclature (WGGBN). They dealt with all naming requests and they developed the naming protocols and maintained the records of all the names, they also produced a bulletin document, every four weeks that lists the names and the citations for recently named small solar system bodies.

As I mentioned earlier, I was not aware of this group at the time, so with my usual enthusiasm and naivety, I said that I would look into it and report back, also I was sort of ‘volunteered’ by my fellow DDAS Committee Members, so, with their blessing, I embarked upon my quest.

Not knowing where to start I found myself investigating the website of the “Minor Planet Center,” which is operated under the auspices of the IAU and is hosted by the Center for Astrophysics, Harvard & Smithsonian. It is also funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The Minor Planet Center is the ‘clearing house’ for all the small solar system bodies that are discovered, be they main belt asteroids or, even, Earth crossing objects, these are objects that cross the orbit of the Earth, this also includes the class of objects known as Near Earth Objects (NEOs), these are objects that can make close passes of the Earth.

When a small solar system body is found the discoverer(s) contact the Minor Planet Center to ‘register’ the discovery by sharing all the discovery information for that object. The Minor Planet Center then verifies the discovery, assigns a discovery identifier and archives the discovery in its database. The identifier assigned is a basic alphanumeric string, such as ‘P21WU8g,’ the lower case letter usually denotes its position in the discovery period, in this case ‘g’ stands for the seventh object found during that year. Once that has been completed the Minor Planet Center then announces the discovery to the World via electronic circulars and its website.

Now, not having discovered a small solar system body myself, I was unsure as to how to access the Minor Planet Center website properly. I could not find any reference regarding how to name a small Solar System body, and, then, I happened to discover the website FAQ section and I saw the following entry:

“I have a question related to naming/citations.”

I clicked on the option and found the ‘department’ I needed to contact and that was the Working Group on Small Body Nomenclature (WGGBN). The FAQ entry included an email address for the WGGBN and a link to their website, bingo!

This is where the ‘fun’ began. I sent an email to the address quoted and I explained who I was and whom I represented and asked if it were possible to have an asteroid named to celebrate the Society’s 50th Anniversary. I had a reply to my request almost within hours, a very helpful (and very patient) gentleman from the WGGBN, Mr Gareth Williams who is the WGGBN’s Secretary, supplied me with all the information that I needed and answered all of my ‘daft’ questions, as this was something that I had no experience of. Mr Williams also sent me the WGGBN guidelines document, ‘Names and Citations,’ that included guidance on what the criteria was in order to get a small solar system body named.

The naming process was free and we would not receive an official document of any kind to confirm our name (and I did ask). The only way we would know if we had an object named for the Society was when the name and its citation appeared in the WGGBN Bulletin, this was published by the IAU every four weeks, it was issued as a pdf file and was available from the IAU.org publications website. In order to have our name assigned to a small solar system body, we would need to supply a suitable name, no numbers, email address or abbreviations were allowed for the submitted name, so using DDAS was out. Also we had to supply a 360 character, not word, citation to accompany the name.

The criteria was quite strict and I consulted with the Committee and we came up with a name or two and a citation, and submitted them to Mr Williams. One of the names we submitted, in error (on my

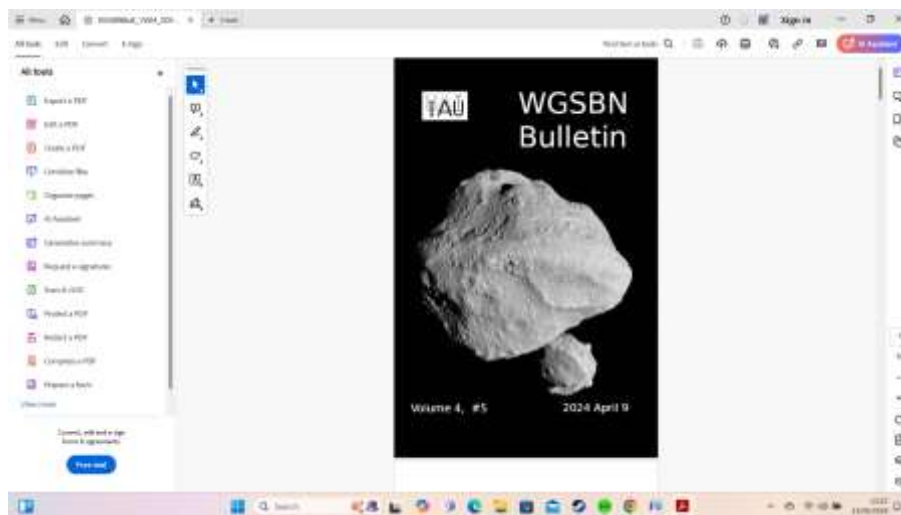
part, as I was not clear enough regarding the naming criteria to the Committee) was “Derbyastro50” or, even, “DDAS50.” We even submitted “Derby and District Astronomical Society,” which was really far too long for the naming process. These were not suitable and Mr Williams suggested “Derbyastro” or “Derbyastsoc.” He also suggested “Derbydisastro,” but he thought that would not work as it sounded like the word “disaster.” Our original citation, even though it met the length criteria was not accepted, so we had to revise it. Then by February/March of this year (2024) we were at the point where we could try again to submit our name and citation, and after much discussion at a Committee meeting at around that time, our name and citation was agreed upon (based on Mr Williams’ guidance) our submission was:

Name: Derbyastro

Citation: The Derby and District Astronomical Society is based in Derby, England and was founded in 1974 by Jane Kirk. The society holds monthly meetings and engages in public and educational activities. It also operates the Flamsteed Observatory and runs monthly public viewing nights.

There was no turning back now! This was it! So with trembling, but excited fingers, I typed out our submission to Mr Williams and sent the email. All we could do now was to wait. I kept a wary eye on the IAU Publications website and the WGSBN Bulletin releases.

One lunchtime in April, I was sitting at my desk at work when I thought that, having the time to do this, I could check the WGSBN Bulletin website to see if a new issue has been published. I went online and conducted my search and found that there was indeed a new bulletin was published and the issue for 9th April 2024 was available. So I downloaded it and opened up the PDF file. I went straight to the contents page and started to look for our entry “Derbyastro.” It was there! We were in! Our name was the 11th item on the contents page and I went to the page number noted in the contents, to have a look at our entry. It was on Page 6 under the heading (69273) Derbyastro = 1989 TN₁. Underneath that was our citation! We did it! The sense of achievement and pride that I felt was overwhelming, I was really affected by it. The title “(69273) Derbyastro = 1989 TN₁” basically breaks down into “(69273)” is a catalogue number, “Derbyastro,” the chosen name, and the 1989 TN₁ is the object’s original discovery identifier, including its year of discovery, which in this case was 1989.



Screenshot of the front cover of the 9th April 2024 issue of the IAU WGSBN Bulletin.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

I was intrigued to know more about the small solar system body that had been named for us. I remember Mr Williams informing me that not only would the name appear in the WGSBN Bulletin, but, I could access the Jet Propulsion Laboratory’s (JPL) Small Body Database website and enter the catalogue number or the discovery identity number into the system and an information page would be displayed concerning ‘our’ asteroid.

So, with the remaining minutes of my lunch break, I accessed this website and entered the catalogue number and was presented with a page full of information. Derbyastro is a main belt asteroid discovered by English astronomer Brian G. W. Manning at Stakenbridge Observatory near Kidderminster in October 1989. It measures 4.6 km (2.8 miles) in diameter, has an absolute magnitude of 14.6, and takes 4.6 years to orbit the Sun, with an orbit lying between Mars and Jupiter that is inclined 11 degrees to the plane of the ecliptic. Not only is that information available, but there is a drop down item labelled 'Orbit Viewer' with the option 'show' which you can click on, once you do you are presented with a graphic showing the current position of Derbyastro within the Solar System.



Screenshot of the contents page of the 9th April 2024 IAU WSGBN Bulletin with our entry highlighted in red.

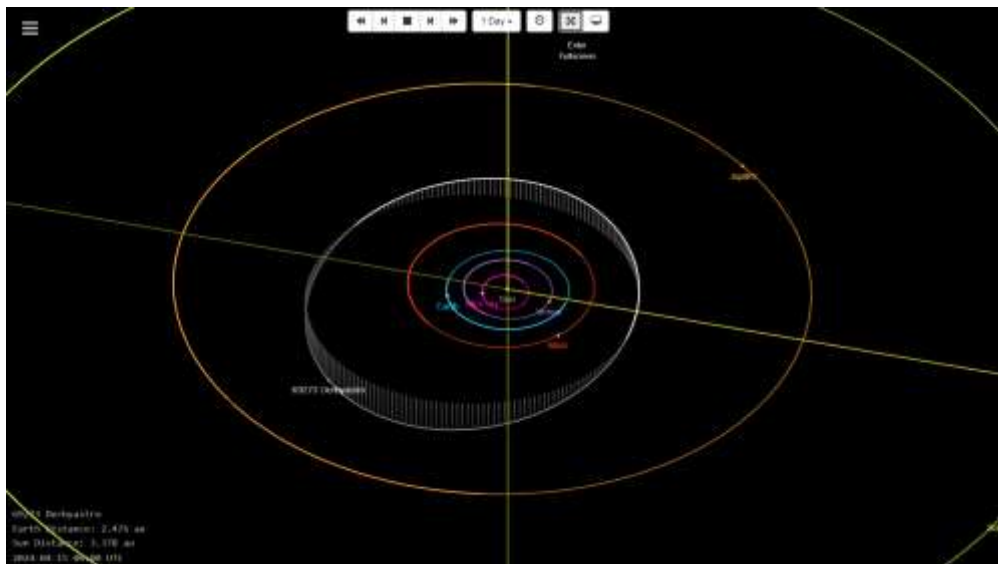
Image Credit: Anthony Southwell



Screenshot of our citation submission in the 9th April 2024 IAU WSGBN Bulletin with our entry highlighted in red.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

I was absolutely delighted and so proud. We have an asteroid named for us! What an achievement! I announced the naming of Derbyastro to the Society at large at the 19th April second meeting to much applause and congratulations, but, I did single out Mike Dumelow for recognition, as he was the one who started the whole process off with his original suggestion made at DDAS Committee Meeting.



Graphic showing the location of 69273 Derbyastro as of 15th April 2024.

Image Credit: Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Small-Body Database website.

Also to mark this 'moment' in the history of the Society, we engaged in the process of getting a plaque engraved that will list the name, the citation and will include the orbital graphic for Derbyastro. This plaque will be unveiled at the Flamsteed Observatory and it will remain there.

So that's it. That is the story of how the DDAS got an asteroid named after it to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. It is very satisfying to know that out there between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter lurks an object that is named for us. Also it is not every day that you become intimately involved in such a naming process and I will always be proud of my involvement.

But, that's is not quite the end of the story Dear Reader, as this issue of Aries was being put to bed, our Secretary, Brian, sent a WhatsApp message to the DDAS group on the evening of Tuesday 10th September, stating that he had received an item, the item in question was the aforementioned plaque. He included a picture of it and it looked absolutely stunning! That picture appears below.



The Plaque produced by Bob Richardson's son Tom for our named Asteroid 69273 Derbyastro – (1989 TN₁). The Plaque is still in its protective plastic covering.

Image Credit: Brian Dodson

The plaque was produced by DDAS member Bob Richardson's son, who manufactures signs, Brian asked Bob if he could make a sign up for us and I sent Brian a mock-up of the plaque as a Microsoft Word document with the imagery that was to used incorporated into the mock-up.

Book Review

Beyond by Stephen Walker

Malcolm Neal

ISBN 978-0-00-837250-7

Publisher: William Collins

£20

As stated on the front cover "The astonishing story of the first human to leave our planet..." This is essentially the story of the first human in space Yuri Gagarin but includes details of the other Russian cosmonauts especially the Vanguard 6 and the other 14 chosen Soviets as well as the Mercury 7 the USA astronauts.

It is a book about the personnel on both sides of the race to space with a lot of personal detail. It also includes quite a lot of detail again from both sides about the gruelling regime they were put through to be selected to be able to go into space. There is slightly more about the USA personnel than the Soviet side but even here there is a huge amount of detail. The author seems to have interviewed practically everyone still alive who was part of the program or a relation of those who took part, or at the very least interviewed someone on the Soviet side who interviewed one of those involved.

The book is some 400 pages long about that story with a further 100 pages of notes, references, bibliography and index. This is a thoroughly researched book and as someone who lived through the space race in the 1950's, 60's and 70's fills in many of the gaps that the news at the time did not give. It compares the relative openness of the American side with the almost pathological secrecy of the Soviet side. A telling quote is "If an American astronaut gets blown up 80 million will see it live, if a Soviet cosmonaut suffers the same no one will ever know".

The Soviets were ahead in the race to put a man in space simply because their technology was relatively poor. All the space rockets were originally converted ICBM's but as the soviet technology was crude their H bombs were massive and so needed large rockets to launch them where as the USA bombs were smaller and needed smaller rockets which were not so easily adapted to launching men into space.

Typical is the Mercury Redstone launch disaster where the rocket rose 3.8 inches before the engine failed and then the escape capsule fired and almost hit people in the crowd watching the launch. The Soviets used dogs and a variety of other animals whereas the Americans used chimpanzees and other monkeys to test whether it was possible to exist in space before putting a man beyond the earth's atmosphere. This is also part of the detail of the book which estimates up to 41 dogs were used of which 22 died in various accidents none of which were mentioned at the time. Even "Ham" the chimp which had a successful Mercury flight was very close to disaster which was not mentioned in public at the time, but there was less outright secrecy.



The front cover of Beyond by Stephen Walker

Image Credit: Internet Source

There is a lot of detail re the Soviet 6 with even more about Korolev the rocket designer as well as information about the families of Gagarin and Titov the first two Soviets in space. The Americans and some of their families are also quite well represented as is van Braun. There is also a fair deal of comparisons between Korolev and von Braun with latter clearly coming off the worse especially in the moral aspects of their lives.

The detail regarding the tests the people had to undergo is quite graphic for both sides and surprising is the fact the Soviets all had to learn to parachute as they were ejected from the Vostok vehicle and then had to parachute down. Gagarin's flight mentioned all the things which went wrong with the flight again which were not made public at the time or even for many years. This negated the claim they made at the time for the height record from the Federation Aeronautique Internationale - a Swiss based group. However their rules stated the person claiming the record should stay in the vehicle when it lands, which clearly Gagarin did not. However, they did lie and various people signed documents saying he was in Vostok when it landed. Because of the secrecy on the Soviet side even failures could be hailed as a success notably the failed Venera launch which became an earth orbiter by design and no one could say anything else as the World did not know.

With its huge amount of research and a very easy to read format this is quite the best book I have read on the subject for a very long time and having lived through the time period makes it doubly interesting.

DDAS Public Event at the Museum of Making 17th April 2024

by Anthony Southwell

This event came out of the discussions that myself and Mike Lancaster had at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery with Mr Dan Webber, Events Programmer. We discussed various ideas including talks, displays, public observing sessions and so on. It became obvious very quickly during the discussion that the Museum were very keen on the idea of public observing and a public talk, this public talk idea would evolve to become the public lecture presented by Dr Allan Chapman in May.

The public observing could only be staged at the Museum of Making, as it had a large space, Cathedral Green, in front of it, where telescopes could be set up. The tower at the Museum of Making was offered as an observing site, but, after an inspection by Mike Lancaster, it was deemed to be unsuitable, due to the height, that meant that all of the street and other lights in the immediate space of the Museum of Making, had an unobstructed path into the tower. Even though we would be observing bright objects, such as the Moon and the Planets, there would be enough additional light nuisance to hamper observing these objects, also there was a protective mesh over the openings in the tower that would have also interfered with the observing session and would have degraded any view of the objects we were observing, also, it was a small area, so that restricted the number telescopes and people can be in that space. So the tower idea was rejected, then Cathedral Green came into play, it was offered to us for the public observing session, but Dan Webber said that he would check if it was available for such an event.

As part of the discussions concerning this event at the Museum of Making, myself and Mike suggested to Dan Webber, that it would be a to have an indoor display as well, just in case the weather decided not to play ball and it was cloudy and/or raining. If that happened then the display would serve to keep visitors engaged. The Museum wondered if we could, as part of the, display, if we could set up something for younger visitors? So, to this end, myself and Mike reported back to the Committee, which was scheduled to meet a few days after our meeting with the Museum. So at that Committee meeting, the Museum's idea was communicated to the meeting and our Secretary, Brian Dodson and our Outreach Officer, Donald Anderson, said that they could put something together,

specifically a presentation concerning the solar system, which would involve a 'mini' solar system model that would involve younger visitors, this was set up to assist a local beaver group with their astronomy badge.

It was decided to pass on Brian's contact details on to Dane Webber at the Museum so arrangements could be made for this aspect of the event. It was decided that the displays would feature the Society's moon globe, the Society meteorite collection, a telescope display, models and astrophotography display arranged by Peter Branson, including an example of astrophotography kit, and, also, something Brian asked if I could arrange for the display, this would fit in with the solar system presentation, Brian wondered if I had any examples in my 'pet rock' collection of any geological examples that can be displayed to 'represent' the surface materials of solar system bodies such as the Moon, Venus and Mars, of course I said yes! I also have two small vials of Moon and Mars 'simulant,' these are terrestrial materials that are chemically similar to lunar and martian surface materials and have been processed to have the same grain size as lunar and martian surface dust. NASA uses such material to conduct engineering tests on the surface rovers and their equipment prior to launching the spacecraft to their destinations.



DDAS Members Brian Dodson and Donald Anderson presenting a brief presentation on the Solar system to a Beaver group.

Image Credit: Colin Blockwell



DDAS Chairman Gary Lambert with his 8-inch Dobsonian telescope.

Image Credit: Colin Blockwell

So I began to pull together a little display of such geological samples and generated an explanatory sheet to go with the rock samples. As for telescopes, a number of DDAS members brought telescopes to the event, including the Society's Jane Kirk-40 (JK-40) Dobsonian telescope, built by Mike Dumelow. Mike built this telescope from the mirror set that was gifted to the Society by our Founder Member, Jane Kirk, after she spoke at our 40th Anniversary celebration in 2014. Thanks must go to Mike Dumelow, Gary Lambert, Colin Blockwell and Russ Pollard for bringing their telescopes along and stationed them on Cathedral Green for public observing. Donald Anderson brought his refractor set-up to the event and that was a static indoor display. The models that were on display were my 3D-printed models of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), the New Horizons spacecraft, which conducted the first flyby of the Dwarf Planet Pluto, and finally, a model of the

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS). Another model of mine, which was on display with the Society moon globe, was a 3D-printed model of the Apollo AL-7 Spacesuit. Also on display with the moon display were my Apollo mission patch medallions, also my 9 gram sample of lunar meteorite NWA 11444, also my two 'laser-etched' 3D sculptures of our galaxy and the Hubble Space Telescope (HST).



DDAS Member Mike Dumelow with an 'improvised' screen to project the Sun's image onto to show the sunspots that were visible on the solar disk at the time.

Image Credit: Tony Razzell

So with everything arranged and also knowing which room we were to put our displays in, we waited for the fateful day to arrive. The event was to start at 6pm and would close at 10pm. We arrived at 5pm to start setting things up. As we began to set things up, the weather decided to change and it started to rain a little before the event start time. Typical! But it did not last very long and the sky cleared and the telescopes were moved out on to Cathedral Green. The indoor displays were set up and people started to arrive. The publicity for the event was arranged by the Museum and the event was "advertised" on the DDAS website, so we were confident that we would be quite busy, and, we were not to

be disappointed, as by the end of the evening it was calculated that there had been 160 people who attended the event.

The first part of the evening was the solar system presentation for the beaver group, given, after a shaky start, due to audio/visual issues. This was presented by Brian Dodson and assisted by Donald Anderson. Once that was completed, then the indoor display moved to talking to the visitors and showing the people outside in Cathedral Green, the wonders of the night sky. But before the Sun went down, we conducted a bit of impromptu solar observing. The Sun is currently approaching solar maximum, so as a consequence of that, the solar disk is showing increased sunspot activity on the Sun's disk. So to that end, Mike Dumelow went on the hunt to find a



DDAS Member's telescopes were doing brisk business out in Cathedral Green.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

piece of white card, or a white surface that he could use to project the Sun's image on to, in order to safely observe the sunspots present on the solar disk. Mike disappeared for a while and back with a piece of material that he salvaged from a builder's skip, it was a small white panel and it made a perfect 'screen' for solar projection, so people could view the Sunspots on the solar disk. The telescope's outside were doing brisk business and it was no less busy indoors. I spoke to dozens

during the event, as did we all, Peter Branson spoke to a lot of people who came to have a look at his astrophotography display and gave a lot of information and advice concerning astrophotography. It is at this point, I must say thank you to Jim Sarsgard, who 'manned the fort' whilst any of us took a break. In fact, Jim never stopped chatting with the event's visitors all evening.



Setting up the indoor display, DDAS Members Mike Dumelow, Peter Branson and Donald Anderson.

Image Credit:Anthony Southwell

Jim came over to me to tell me that a group was taking a look at my geological samples and were asking questions about and Jim was not too sure how to answer their queries, so he sought me out. So I went over to the group and I spoke to a lady, who seemed to be 'leading' the group, and, as it turned out, this lady was a tutor at the University of Derby who had brought some of her students with



The Society's 'Jane Kirk -40 (JK-40)' Dobsonian telescope built by DDAS member Mike Dumelow from a 8.25 inch primary mirror and flat set donated by our founder member Jane Kirk for the DDAS's 40th Anniversary (left) and another member's Dobsonian telescope.

Image Credit:Anthony Southwell

her. The students were studying biology, ecology, geology, geography and environmental studies. I thought "wow, small world." I said to this Derby University tutor that I studied at Derby from 1996 to 2000 and I studied Applied Environmental Earth Science, so I could relate to what her students are studying. The tutor was somewhat surprised to be talking with a University of Derby Alumni, small world indeed! I chatted with the tutor, catching up on what has happened at my old Alma Mater since I graduated and we chattered about my

time at the University of Derby and the lecturers who were there. I chatted to her students and asked them what they were studying and answered all of their questions concerning my geological samples and planetary science in general. I almost ended up conducting a tutorial with them! I spoke with the tutor and the students for about 40 minutes.

The moon globe and the society meteorite collection proved to be very popular as always. I never fail to be amazed and pleased at the amount of people who come up to us and chat to us and ask questions. There is a real hunger out there in the general population to know more about the Cosmos. I love to see the looks on people's faces once you have answered their questions or have absorbed fact that you have imparted to them. There is a glint in the eye,



The Society's Moon Globe and a display of Apollo-related items.

Image Credit:Anthony Southwell

a look of surprise, a grin, a non-verbal "wow" being given. I am constantly delighted by the reaction of young and old alike, when I place my NWA 11444 lunar meteorite sample in their hand and tell them that they have in their hands a piece of the Moon. The adults are as excited as the children, their eyes go wide and a look of joy mixed with reverence crosses their faces. It is such a privilege to witness

that, to witness someone coming into contact with the Moon for the first time. The whole event was huge success, I didn't get much chance to go outside. Those manning the telescopes outside no doubt experienced the same kind of energy from their visitors. In fact, the event was so successful that we are going to have a repeat performance in October!



A number of 3-D printed models of the New Horizons spacecraft (front), Transiting Exo-Planet Survey Satellite (TESS) spacecraft (back left) and the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) (back right).

Image Credit:Anthony Southwell

Before I finish this article I want to say thank you to my fellow DDAS members who were at the event and manned the displays and the telescopes outside, they are:

Mike Dumelow
Dave Selfe
Brian Dodson
Gary Lambert
Tony Razzell
Peter Branson
Jim Sarsgard
Russ Pollard
Colin Blockwell
Donald Anderson

Well done to you all. This event was the 'curtain raiser' to the DDAS' 50th Anniversary celebration programme and it couldn't have gotten off to a better start!

Finding Flamsteed Observatory

by Arthur Tristram

Most astronomical societies in Great Britain endeavour to build an Observatory. Apart from the obvious use for observing the Universe, it gives a focal point for members to gather and socialise. Our society has over the years used the site to hold barbeques, and shown interested parties round mainly in Autumn and Winter. Astronomical events such as comets etc are observed with the public.

Our quest to build an Observatory developed over the first few years, since its inauguration in 1974. At the A.G.M. on Friday 4th May 1979 the Society held a debate on "Should the society build an Observatory", the result was 8 for and 8 against with the casting vote of the chairman in favour of building an Observatory. Looking back this interest to build an Observatory was always there. To want one is one thing but build one is another thing as we have found out over many years.

Over time various members searched for a suitable site. Jane Kirk put an ad in newspapers for a parcel of land that would be right for an Observatory. Steve Parkin and I visited a few sites on the edge of Derby. One was a tall building in the middle of a field in Morley, it seemed a candidate until we found out it was used by the locals for shooting pigeons. Another one was a building at Staunton Harold Reservoir, but this was thought to be too far away. On the 4th July 1983 Jane Kirk rang me to say there was a plot of land near Duffield. The committee went to have a look at it. Seven Trent owned the building that had been disused for a number of years. The site was up a narrow lane between Duffield and Milford. John Hickling went to Amber Valley Council to see if we could alter the access. The Highways Dept objected to the proposal and on 20th July the County Surveyor blocked the application.

12th Feb 1984 Ed Spooner, John Stone, and myself went to visit the site on North Lane, Brailsford to look at a site for the Observatory this was just down from our present site. The seeing was very good and on 14th Feb 1984 we sent plans drawn up by John Hickling to Jane Kirk to send to Ashbourne Council. On 21st Feb we had a committee meeting at Jane Kirk's house in Findern to talk about the site. Then on 28th Feb John Hickling, Jane Kirk & I went to view the site at Brailsford at night, a very dark site. We decided that we were going to put a request into Derbyshire Dales Council for planning permission for the site. 18th June saw a DDAS committee meeting at Hugh Dell's house in Littleover, it was decided that we should send 4 copies of application form to W.D.D.C. Ashbourne. This application was objected to by the local kennels nearby.

Two brothers, Joe and Harold Ridgard, contacted Jane to say they had a field we could build an Observatory on. This was just up the road from the last one we had tried to get also on North Lane

Brailsford. On the 22nd September 1984 I got the Committee together for a site visit. Joe Ridgard took us round the field which turned out even better than the one down the lane, more space and better viewing. On 1st October Mr Ridgard said he didn't want to sell the land and wanted £6 pounds a week rent. The Committee talked it over and I rang Joe the next day to make an offer of £3 a week for the first 2 yrs, then £6 a week for the next 30 yrs. At the 5th October meeting at Friends.Meeting House, I informed the Society about the new Observatory site. On the 7th October Mr Ridgard rang me to say he had drawn up an agreement for the site. The Committee then went to Mr Ridgard's house on 15th October to sort out details of the agreement.

On the 15th November 1984 John Hickling rang me to say, Brailsford Council had objected to our site. On 11th December 1984 Mr Ridgard rang to say the planning application would go through from the Derbyshire.Dales District Council in Ashbourne, that was great news!!!.



On 14th January 1985 we went to Mr Ridgard's house to sign the agreement for renting the land at Brailsford, A. Tristram, S. Parkin and J. Hickling signed for the Society and Jane Kirk signed the papers at my house before we went up to Brailsford. At our 1st March 1985 meeting at the Friends Meeting House. I announced that the Observatory would be named in honour of our very own son of Derbyshire John Flamsteed, I also sent a letter to Patrick Moore telling him our effort to build an observatory.

A sign at the Observatory site stating that the land had been acquired by the DDAS for the establishment of the Flamsteed Observatory.

Image Credit: Dr Mike Lancaster

On Sunday 17th March we held the first work party at the new Observatory site. One of my last duties as Chairman was to cut the first sod to start the building of the new Observatory, we started on the car park at the bottom of the field.

Well this was the start of a long journey to enable Society members and the general public alike to observe the Universe and not to travel too far to do it. The Society has built a fantastic place and long may it be used for future generations to come.

Well done Derby District Astronomical Society.



Work begins on the car park area at the Flamsteed Observatory site.

Image Credit: Mike Lancaster

DDAS Memories – Anthony Southwell

I have had an interest in astronomy and space from an early age, those who know me are aware of the event that sent me onto my own personal journey through the Cosmos. By the age of 20, I decided that it was high time that I took my passion for the Universe to the next level and join a local astronomy society and so the search began to find a suitable group. I bought a copy of the 1987 Yearbook of Astronomy, edited by the late Sir Partrick Moore, I still have the yearbook to this day.

At the back of this goldmine of a book is a listing comprising of the details of all the astronomical societies in the UK and, much to my delight, I found the entry for an outfit called 'Derby and District Astronomical Society' (DDAS). The entry featured the contact number for the Secretary at that time, Mrs Jane Kirk, our Founder Member. I contacted Jane and she invited me to attend the next meeting, which was the February 1987 meeting at the Friends Meeting House, at that time, we only held the one monthly meeting. I learned from Jane that the DDAS was in the process of building their own Observatory near to the village of Brailsford and it was going to be named after the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed. I was sold! I accepted Jane's invitation to attend the February 1987 DDAS Meeting.

My first DDAS meeting featured a lecture by two members of the British Interplanetary Society (BIS) who spoke on the BIS paper study concept for the unmanned interstellar probe ship 'Daedalus,' the concept would have the spacecraft conduct a fly-by investigation of Barnard's Star, 6 light years away. I was absolutely blown away by the lecture, which is no real surprise because astronautics and spaceflight are also passions of mine. By the end of the evening I decided to join the DDAS, not just because the topic of the evening, but the DDAS members who were there, were very friendly and helpful, a lot of them have become life-long friends.

I formerly joined the DDAS at that year's AGM (1987), but, I consider my personal DDAS anniversary to be my first meeting in February 1987. I have been a member of the DDAS for 37 years. I was elected to the DDAS Committee for the first time in 1988 as an ordinary committee member, since then I have held the positions of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary (twice), Public Relations Officer (PRO), a position that I originated and have been the only holder of. I also held the position of Editor, this is the DDAS Committee position I currently hold, in fact, this is my third time sitting in the Aries Editor's chair. The only committee positions I have not held are Treasurer and Site Curator.

I remember a time, I think it was 1990 or 1991, when the Society came close to wrapping up. We were having a tough time, we had a membership of around 15, a large proportion of that group were Committee Members. There was not much money in the Society coffers at the time, so we could not afford many outside speakers, so the membership stepped up to the plate and we enjoyed a number of very impressive member lectures, at that time, we still only had one meeting a month, but with the Flamsteed Observatory nearing completion, we began to meet there more regularly outside of working parties.

It was during this time that I suggested that we should establish a new Committee officer position, that of, Public Relations Officer (PRO) as a means to reach out to the wider community and to better publicise the DDAS and what it does. So the PRO position was ratified at the following AGM and I was elected to the position, so the work began. Over time, we gradually began to grow and get more members, it was a long process, but it paid off. Without sounding pompous, in my opinion, without those 15 members and the Committee Members at that time, there probably wouldn't be a DDAS today. Those 15 members fought tooth and nail to keep the DDAS going, I really do think that that the current membership owes a debt of gratitude to those DDAS members.

In my time as a member of the DDAS I have been engaged in the planning and execution of many of the DDAS' events. So I have a large and varied collection of memories, too many to list here, be they special events, lectures, trips and so on.

One of my standout memories is of arranging for Dame Jocelyn Bell-Burnell to come to speak to us in 1996, if memory serves, on the subject of radio astronomy (I was DDAS Secretary at the time), and, then to introduce her again (I was the DDAS Chairman at that time) when she came to speak to us in December 2009 to present her 'In Pursuit of Pulsars' lecture. I have never been so nervous when introducing a speaker! It was such a privilege to introduce Dame Bell-Burnell's lecture.

Another memory is of the establishment of the Flamsteed lectures at the University of Derby. I started my science degree course at the University of Derby in 1996. That year saw the 350th anniversary of the birth of John Flamsteed, the first Astronomer Royal, born in Denby, Derbyshire and lived (Queen Street) and was educated in Derby. We decided to mark this anniversary by having a re-opening ceremony at our Flamsteed Observatory, as we just swapped out the previous telescope, (a 12-inch Newtonian reflecting telescope) for a 10-inch Newtonian, but with this one had a different mounting system. The re-opening ceremony was conducted by Mr Alan Heath, an astronomer from Long Eaton and former director of the British Astronomical Association's (BAA) Saturn section (the Flamsteed Observatory was originally opened in October 1992 by astronomer and TV presenter Heather Couper).

I had the idea, that being I was a student at the University of Derby at the time, to find out if the University would like to get involved in marking this anniversary and, much to my delight, they expressed an interest.

The then Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Jonathan Powers, was very interested and I found myself involved in the planning for the 'Flamsteed Festival.' This was to be a week-long series of talks during a week in July 1996. I gave the first talk of the Festival, I spoke about the subject closest to my heart, the Apollo lunar landing programme. One of the speakers was Sir Arnold Wofendale, he was the fourteenth Astronomer Royal. Another speaker was Dr Alan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford, who spoke about Flamsteed. This 'Flamsteed Festival' went on to become the annual 'Flamsteed Lectures' at the University of Derby, the lectures ran from 1996 until 2012.

The memory I am most proud of is the DDAS 40th Anniversary celebrations and Open Day on 21st June 2014 at the Friends Meeting House on St. Helen's Street in Derby. I was the DDAS Secretary (my second stint in the job). I suggested that we hold such an event to mark our 40th Anniversary. I liaised with the Friends Meeting House, as we intended to book the whole meeting place for the day, as we did for our 50th Anniversary Open Day on 10th August this year. We had a number of displays in Room 1, Room 3 was turned into a café/chill out room and Room 2 was where the guest speakers would present their talks throughout the day. We had four speakers on that day, our very own Dr Mike Lancaster presented the first talk of the day, with his 'In the Footsteps of Flamsteed' presentation, The second speaker in the morning session was Martin Griffiths who presented a talk titled 'Observing Star Clusters.' The afternoon session started with popular lecturer and friend of the DDAS, Paul Money, who presented a talk titled, 'Images of Space: Art or Science?' The last speaker of the day was Dr Colin Steele another frequent visitor to the DDAS and his presentation was titled 'Professional and Amateur Astronomy.'

We also had a bonus 'speaker,' our Founder Member Mrs Jane Kirk who gave us a short talk on how the DDAS began and at the end of her talk, she presented to the Society a 8.25 inch Grade A David Hinds Primary mirror and flat. Our Site Curator, Mike Dumelow, took this mirror set and made a Dobsonian Telescope, that was soon to be christened the 'JK-40' or 'Jane Kirk – 40.' This telescope has been present at nearly all DDAS public events since its construction.

Outside in the garden area at the rear of the Friends Meeting house, there were a number of telescopes observing the Sun (yes, for once the weather was kind to us) both by projection method and by the use of solar filters.

I could go on, I have so many memories, suffice it to say that in my 37 years as a member of the Derby and District Astronomical Society, have been good years. I have helped shape the DDAS' direction and I have given numerous lectures to the Society and that has led me to go on to present public lectures that have been well received. Most importantly, I have made life-long friends within the DDAS.

As for the future,. hhhmmmm, interesting, I think that the DDAS has a strong position within the community and has a robust future to look forward to. As a group we spread our passion for the Universe as widely as possible to both old and young alike. We need to expand our outreach programme to not just schools and youth groups, but to adult organisations too.

I am constantly impressed by the curiosity of our older 'audience' at our public events. There seems to be a real 'hunger' within that demographic to know more about their Cosmic environs. I have spoken to people from late teens to retirement age and they all share the same sense of wonder and enthusiasm to know more. We need to capitalise on this. This demonstrates to me the value of 'lifelong learning.' Just because you have left school, that doesn't mean that you have finished 'learning,' far from it, school has only just begun! Also we must ensure that the DDAS membership is well catered for, because they are **the** most important group that we should be looking after. You look after the membership and they will look after you. So, here's to the next 50 years of the Derby and District Astronomical Society!

DDAS 50th Anniversary Party 10th May 2024

by Anthony Southwell

As part of our programme to celebrate our 50th Anniversary we decided it would be a good idea to have a 50th Anniversary Party for the membership. The party would serve two functions, to mark our anniversary but, also, to say "thank you" to the membership and for their support over the years.

So the DDAS Committee swung into action, a venue was soon arranged, as was the buffet and the music for the evening. At this point thanks must go to our Secretary, Brian Dodson for booking the Littleover Social Club and also to our Chairman, Gary Lambert and his partner Caroline for organising and making the party buffet and for arranging the sound system with the appropriate music. Drinks were available at the function room's bar and were paid for individually.



A view of the DDAS 50th Anniversary Party in full swing.

Image Credit:Anthony Southwell

Drinks were available at the function room's bar and were paid for individually.



DDAS party-goers: foreground Mike Dumelow, Graham Ensor (head turned away from camera), Elliott Fountain. Standing: Tony Razzell (towards the left of the picture) and Neil Breakwell (in the grey top).

Image Credit:Anthony Southwell

The event itself was very enjoyable with all attendees chatting, enjoying a few drinks and munching on the buffet provided. The musical selection chosen by our Chairman did have a 'space' theme, there was the odd piece of rock/pop music included, but, in the main, the music stayed within its prescribed theme. There were two pieces of music that, in my humble opinion, must be played whenever a group of astronomers meet and when these two pieces of music were played, I turned to Gary and gave him the thumbs up. One piece was "At the Castle Gate" by Jean Sibelius (8th December 1865 – 20th September 1957), when I heard the first few notes of that piece I just smiled. That

piece of music, the first part of it, is used as the opening music to "The Sky at Night." We all smiled when we heard that and there were a number of spontaneous Patrick Moore impressions that broke out, I'm sure that Patrick would have approved.

Later on in the evening the second 'astronomer's theme' was heard and, again, I had to smile, this piece of music was by the Greek composer Evangelos Odysseas Papathanassiou (29th March 1943 – 17th May 2022), better known to us as 'Vangelis.' The piece in question is from his 'Heaven and Hell' album, Heaven and Hell Part 1 to be precise. Towards the end of this piece you hear a particular section, this fantastic piece of music was used as the theme for Carl Sagan's "Cosmos" TV series, one of the best known, beloved, and influential, science programmes ever produced. This is my own 'personal' theme and I think that many in the Society would say the same.

So the evening continued, I got up and grabbed my trusty Canon camera and took a few pictures for posterity and for this very article of course. Eventually the party began to die down and people began to leave as it was getting late. A few of us were still happily chatting away and the music was still going and then a piece of music began, which was one of the last pieces of music for the evening, when I heard it, I laughed loudly, it was the end credits theme to the BBC comedy series 'Red Dwarf,' well, that just opened the flood gates, those who were left in the function room immediately started quoting dialogue from it, myself included, I know, I know, I'm a Geek!

So after all the music, chatting, food and the odd beer, it was time to leave. So we left the function room, after making sure that it was tidied up beforehand, and we headed for the car park. As I was approaching my Car, our Treasurer and Webmaster, Mike Lancaster shouted "Anthony! Aurora!" At first I thought Mike was pulling my leg, as I have a tendency to miss these events, I went to Iceland in January 2018 and was there for three nights and never saw the Aurora whilst I was there!



An image of part of the auroral display taken by DDAS member Anthony Southwell in the Car Park of the Littlelover Social Club. Image taken with an Honor Magic 4 Lite mobile phone.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

So I was a little, shall we say, cautious, concerning Mike's report. I knew that there had been a large solar flare that had erupted from the Sun, there was a huge sunspot group (AR 3664, which was 17 times the diameter of the Earth) on the solar disk at the time and this sunspot group was the source of a number of X-class Coronal Mass Ejections (CME), including a large X5.8 CME, which occurred on the 8th May.

Two days later, on 10th May, that dense 'cloud' of charged particles slammed into the Earth's magnetic field and resulted in a G5 Geomagnetic storm which

would produce high auroral activity, this would go on to interfere with HF/VHF/UHF communications, GPS, earth orbiting satellites, power grids and so on. The Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES), GOES-16, which is used for weather monitoring for the Americas, stopped transmitting data for two hours, then came back online, from 03:19 UTC to 03:30 UTC, then went silent again, before recovering. The European Space Agency's (ESA) Gaia Astrometry spacecraft was also affected and it suffered electrical problems during this event. The energy of this cloud of charged particles basically overwhelmed the Earth's magnetic field, resulting in an Aurora that was seen from Hawaii and, even, northern Australia.

Meanwhile, back in the car park of the Littlelover Social Club, I had just been alerted by Mike Lancaster that there was an aurora in progress, I looked towards where Mike was pointing and I could not believe my eyes, there was the Aurora, a large, diffuse curtain of red light was before me, I just looked on dumbfounded! Wow, it's the Aurora, something I don't see very often! Flippin' Eck!



A view of the auroral display with the constellation of Ursa Major (Great Bear) towards the upper right of the image. This image was taken by DDAS member Mike Lancaster using a Google Pixel 8 Pro mobile phone.

Image Credit: Mike Lancaster

But that was not all, the aurora was to get better and better during the 90 minutes we were standing in that car park. Just to give you some idea of the vividness of this display, there were street lights shining away and the car park security lights were also on, but you could see the aurora with little interference from all the light pollution around us!

Once I have gotten over my surprise, I reached for my mobile and accessed WhatsApp and sent a message to the DDAS WhatsApp system, basically saying, "Oi! Get outside Ladies and Gents, there is an Aurora happening right now!" Then all hell broke loose, with messages from other DDAS members flooding in, as well as their pictures of the display. The aurora itself was breathtaking, the colours were vibrant reds, greens, blues and purples, there were curtains, streaks and arcs of light. I had never seen anything like this. I remember the March 1989 aurora event, that was an impressive display, but it could not compete with what we were seeing in that car park! There was complex structure within the aurora and it seemed to change quite rapidly, you almost got the sense that it was shimmering and moving in real time. We all just stood there mouths open and also we were snapping away with our mobile phone cameras, excitedly chatting away, with the occasional "oohhhh" and "aahhhhhh" thrown in for good measure when the display changed in structure and intensity. I was in such a rush to capture this event that I initially forgot to adjust my mobile camera settings properly. When I finally managed to set up my mobile properly, I got back to snapping pictures. I got some really good ones, but the ones taken by members such as Mike Lancaster were just superb! You can see examples of member's images of this aurora on our Society website in our Gallery section in the "Our Atmosphere" collection of images. Also you can see all the pictures that were taken by DDAS Members of the 10th May aurora in the "Past Activities" page of the DDAS website in the entry concerning the "DDAS 50th Anniversary Party."



DDAS member Dave Selfe captured this image of the 10th May aurora. Dave was using his mobile phone camera.

Image Credit: Dave Selfe

Whilst we were snapping away with our mobile phone cameras and witnessing the raw power of our home star, some 93 million miles and eight light minutes away, one of our intrepid group went back inside the Social Club to inform staff and patrons alike regarding this cosmic spectacle. The car park then began to fill up with a whole new audience of Aurora watchers, mobile phones were deployed almost immediately and many, many photos were taken. For many of the people now present this was the first time they had seen an Aurora and, as you would expect, they were full of questions about it, so they were lucky to have a bunch of amateur astronomers on hand to answer them. They were spellbound by what they were seeing, the excitement, wonder and, even, shock on their faces was a sight to behold. Their excitement was infectious and their interest and hunger to find out what the heck was going on made a huge impression on me, myself and my fellow DDAS members went into 'lecture mode' and answered all the questions that came our way.



DDAS Chairman Gary Lambert captured this image of the 10th May aurora from the Allestree area of Derby. Gary was using his mobile phone camera.

Image Credit: Gary Lambert

really special, that just blew me away. It was almost as if the Cosmos was taking note of this anniversary and was saying “Happy 50th Birthday Derby and District Astronomical Society!”

I will never forget that night, celebrating the DDAS’ 50th Anniversary with all my fellow DDAS members, to honour such a landmark achievement of an organisation of which I have been a member of for 37 years was a great pleasure and privilege. Then to cap it all off, to witness the most widely witnessed Aurora of recent times, well, that was something really,



DDAS member Libby Ray captured this image of the 10th May aurora from Wirksworth, Derbyshire. Libby was using her mobile phone camera.

Image Credit: Libby Ray



DDAS member Jim Sarsgard captured this image of the 10th May aurora from the Littleover area of Derby.

Image Credit: Jim Sarsgard



DDAS member Paul Railton captured this image of the 10th May aurora from the Peak District, Derbyshire.

Image Credit: Paul Railton



DDAS member Tony Wright captured this image of the 10th May aurora from the Mickleover area of Derby.

Image Credit: Tony Wright

DDAS Memories – Dr Michael Lancaster

Back in 1982 I was a student at Derby College of Further Education at Wilmorton, doing my A levels. I was asked by a friend and fellow student of mine, Mike O'Key, if I would like to go to a meeting of the Derby & District Astronomical Society, that he had recently joined. I duly did, and we were joined by another mutual friend and student Edward Tarte. Back in those days the club ran a tote at meetings to raise money. This was run by DDAS member John Stone. On one occasion Mike hadn't got the right change to pay for a ticket, which prompted John to say to him "You live in Allestree and cannot afford 50p?"

Also in the 1980s I got the chance to meet one of the early but former DDAS members, John Baguley, who had built his own Observatory in the garden of his home in Mickleover, a few houses down from where I lived on North Avenue at the time. He wasn't using the Observatory anymore but told me that DDAS members used to meet up for observing sessions there. One of the members at these sessions, who shall go unnamed, had, let us say, an argument with gravity, and went through the floor of John's Observatory!

For a while we used to meet at St Helen's House, instead of The Friends Meeting House, and I remember attending a meeting with Mike and Edward where a gentleman was talking about clocks. He was using an ancient epidiascope projector to show the illustrations in some books he had brought along, which didn't always fit. Various photos and diagrams appeared and disappeared on screen during the talk, often at crazy angles. Myself, Mike and Ed could not help ourselves from sniggering away on the back row like naughty schoolboys.

When the Society's Flamsteed Observatory was under construction during the late 1980s, we were working one day on filling the central pillar for the telescope with hand mixed concrete. We had run

out of sand, but I noticed that the soil at the site was very sandy. I was studying for a degree in geology at the time and rather rashly said "I am a geologist, why don't we use some of the sand from the ground?" It went in the mixer. Perhaps not the most informed decision as I was not a builder or civil engineer! Nevertheless the pillar has stood the test of time. I also recall we threw a Mars bar wrapper into the pillar, which remains buried inside it to this day!

Also in the late 1980s, along with DDAS members Anthony Southwell and Neil Breakwell, I observed the Perseid meteor shower from the first floor of the Society's Flamsteed Observatory. Back then the dome still hadn't been added so we had an open and unobstructed view of the sky. Neil had brought along his tape recorder. Later, when we listened to the tape, it was replete with the whoops and wows of meteor sightings, plus the sound of a rolling bottle...and the sound of the wind...and I don't mean meteorological!

By the 1990s I had been to University and was doing a PhD in Astronomy at University College London, working in the planetary surfaces group at Mill Hill Observatory. I was lucky enough to work on data from the NASA Magellan mission to Venus. I gave the DDAS a talk on this mission. At the start of the meeting, DDAS member Anthony Southwell gave various notices, including spaceflight news. He began to talk about Magellan. Five minutes later I was wondering who would be delivering my talk!

In the 2000s, we had a couple of visitors attending one of our observing sessions. We were showing them the moon. I was with Mike Dumelow among other members. We tried to explain to one of the visitors what they were seeing, but she said "I thought the sun was the moon".

Book Review

Black Holes by Brian Cox and Jeff Forshaw

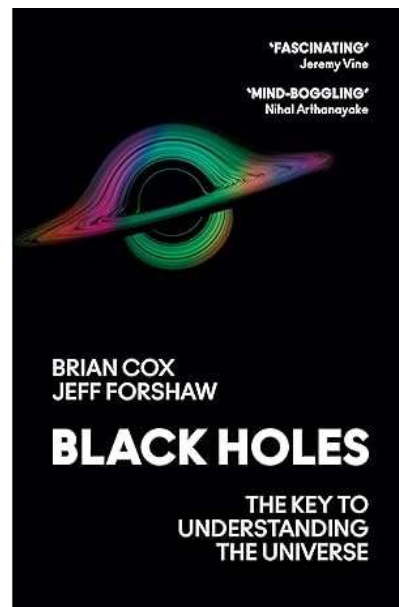
Malcolm Neal

Published by William Collins in 2022

Cost £25

This will be a shorter review than many I have written for the DDAS Aries magazine, not because it is a short book, or a boring book, but because it is a mind boggling book. We are all used to seeing Brian Cox talking on the TV on a variety of astronomical subjects using easy to understand language and showing us a range of very interesting ideas. Jeff Forshaw may not be quite as well known as Brian but he advised on some of those aforementioned programmes and many others. Both are professors of Particle Physics at Manchester University so have good credentials to explain the subject matter of this book.

I found this book harder to understand ?? and follow than the previous books by them simply because the subject is a) difficult and b) very counter intuitive. To put your mind at rest there is very little mathematics in the book which for me is



The front cover of Black Holes: The Key to Understanding the Universe by Brian Cox and Jeff Forshaw

Image Credit: Internet Source

especially good as is not my strong subject. The book takes us through the history of the story of Black Holes from Einstein up to the present day. The book mentions all the usual characters in the field / world of Black holes from Hawking to Penrose, Schwarzschild, Chandrasekhar and Wheeler and many others and shows how they all contributed to the understanding of Black Holes and then through them to a greater understanding of the Universe. It is a relatively short book at just over 250 pages and is liberally illustrated which does make some of the ideas being talked about a little easier to understand.

The book covers all the expected ideas about light, gravity and the known ideas about Black Holes but also goes well beyond this delving into quantum theory which, for me at least, gets truly strange - no pun intended. Black Holes on their own are strange enough but some of the ideas described in this book really boggle the mind including the idea that the world / universe is like, or perhaps is, a hologram. I have certainly lost the plot with this part of the book but even more weird is the idea that gravity is itself not a force but is really the result of quantum entanglement.

What has been mentioned above is just a taster of the book and to try to describe it in any detail would spoil it for a future reader, but difficult as the subject matter of the book is, it is still well worth a read. I had my copy from our local library in Mickleover so it is available for anyone with a Derby City Library card and even if the local library here has the only copy, which I doubt, you can request it from any other library in Derby.

I really hope you feel encouraged to read the book despite it not being an easy read.

DDAS Public Lecture Dr Allan Chapman – “John Flamsteed: Derby’s Gift to
Astronomy” 18th May 2024

by Anthony Southwell

This lecture was part of our 50th Anniversary celebration programme and had its genesis, as did most of the 50th Anniversary programme, from a number of discussions across a number of Committee Meetings in the run up to our anniversary year. As these discussions progressed it was suggested that we approach other organisations and invite them to join with us to celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

So we decided to approach the Derby Museum and Art Gallery (with whom we have collaborated on a number of events) and the QUAD with whom we marked the 40th anniversary of Apollo 11, the first manned lunar landing, I was the DDAS Chairman at the time. We also have a very good relationship with the QUAD as I have been giving public lectures there since 2013.

We received positive responses to our request/invitation and meetings were arranged, these meetings were initially attended by myself and our Treasurer/Webmaster Mike Lancaster and for the Derby Museum, Mr Dan Webber, their Events Programmer, and Miss Jodi Kwok, the Assistant Curator at the QUAD. The ideas for events that we put forward to both organisations was a display to stay up for a few weeks, a series of public talks and public observing sessions. In regards to public talks these could be given by DDAS members and outside speakers. To cut a long story short, we arranged with the Museum and Art Gallery, through Mr Dan Webber, to have a public display and observing session at the Museum of Making (see the article in this issue – Editor), as for having talks at the Museum, the discussion we had with the Museum moved away from a number of talks to a single talk, mainly due to scheduling a series of talks around the Museum’s existing schedule. So one talk it was, but who to get to present it and what would the subject be?

A number of topics and names were offered until, Mike suggested that the talk should be about John Flamsteed, a local lad (lived in Queen Street) and who became first Astronomer Royal at the Royal

Greenwich Observatory in London. Mike suggested that Dr Allan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford who is a world renowned authority on Flamsteed. Dr Chapman is a well known scholar, lecturer and historian of science and astronomy and has written many books and was the presenter of the "Gods in the Sky" TV programme and the "Great Scientists" TV series.

Mike is the DDAS' very own 'Flamsteed Scholar,' as it were, as he has presented his "In the Footsteps of Flamsteed" lecture to the DDAS, but also at the Royal Greenwich Observatory whilst the DDAS was on a visit there in February 2015, being shown around by the Flamsteed Society, who gave their own lecture regarding Flamsteed and the Royal Greenwich Observatory. Mike has also presented this talk as part of the University of Derby's "Flamsteed Lectures" in 2012, in fact that was last Flamsteed Lecture and it was a joint lecture with the Derby Museum and Art Gallery to mark the purchase of a copy of Flamsteed's "Atlas Ceolestis." Mike is currently involved in a project with the Derby Civic Society, Professor Powers and others to produce a submission to get the Queen Street site listed as an historic site for a Grade II listing.



A view of the audience for Dr Chapman's lecture.

Image Credit: Brian Dodson

Mike felt that Dr Chapman was the best person to present this talk. So the Museum offered to host the lecture, they suggested that it be held in the old Central Library (which could accommodate up to 100 people) building on the Strand. They also suggested a date. We would get in touch with Dr Chapman and arrange for him to present the lecture if he was available for the suggested date and the Museum would cover all the expenses. So the plan was set in motion and Mike Got in touch with

Dr Chapman. The response from Dr Chapman was very positive, he would be delighted to present a lecture on Flamsteed and he was available for the suggested date (Saturday 18th May), he would also give Mike the title for the lecture (John Flamsteed – Derby's Gift to Astronomy).



DDAS Treasurer and Webmaster Dr. Mike Lancaster (standing next to the screen) about to introduce Dr. Allan Chapman. Dr. Chapman (seated) and Derby Museum and Art Gallery Events Programmer Mr Dan Webber (far right of image)

So everything was set, all that had to be done now was to get the word out and get tickets sold, that task was undertaken by the Museum. Mike would travel to Oxford the day before the lecture and pick Dr Chapman up on the 18th May and take him to the lecture venue then transport him back to Oxford. Dan Webber

Image Credit: Brian Dodson



DDAS Members chatting with Dr Chapman. Dr. Chapman (seated) Nick Cowling, Dr. Mike Lancaster and DDAS Secretary Brian Dodson.

Image Credit: Brian Dodson

commented via email that the tickets were selling very well.

Saturday 18th May arrived and it was a nice spring day the lecture was scheduled to start at 2pm, so at about 1:30pm I left my flat and had a leisurely stroll to the old Central Library building. I got there with ten minutes to spare and waited for the doors to be opened, whilst I was waiting two DDAS members arrived, Peter Branson and Bob Richardson and we had a brief chat whilst we waited. The doors opened and we went in, there was a steady stream of people arriving and by my count, there were about seventy people present.

In front of the audience was a slight raised platform with a projector screen that was displaying a portrait of Flamsteed, other images relevant to the lecture would appear here as well. Then, off to

one side of the 'stage' was a chair and a microphone, this was for Dr Chapman. Dr. Chapman is 78 years old now and a little unsteady on his feet, so hence the chair also he has suffered a few medical issues, so he is not in the best of health and his voice is not as commanding as it once was so hence the microphone. This was the second occasion I have seen Dr. Chapman present a public lecture, the first time was at the Practical Astronomy Show at the Stoneleigh Show Ground, Warwickshire, I can't remember what year it was, I think it was pre-COVID, so, probably 2019. He presented a lecture concerning the astronomer Sir John Herschel (son of Sir William Herschel, discover of the planet Uranus in 1781) and his observations of the Southern Sky. The lecture was very good, but it was obvious that Dr. Chapman was struggling a bit

So on to this lecture, Mike Lancaster introduced the lecture and why the lecture was being presented and went on to introduce Dr. Chapman. Dr. Chapman's lecture was thoroughly



Dr Allan Chapman and DDAS Member Nick Cowling in front of a portrait of John Flamsteed, painted by Nick.

Image Credit: Dr. Mike Lancaster



DDAS Members with Dr Chapman after his lecture left to right: Bob Richardson, Paul Hill, Elliot Fountain. Donald Anderson, Mike Dumelow, Madhunika Srivatsan, Dr.Allan Chapman (seated), Nick Cowling, Dr. Mike Lancaster and Brian Dodson.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

entertaining and enlightening. It covered not only John Flamsteed and his life and works, but the times he lived in and controversy concerning his treatment by Issac Newton and Edmund Halley concerning the publication of his major life's work the "*Historia Coelestis Britannica*." Dr Chapman was on form, his presentation was information-packed, authoritative and, in parts, light-hearted. Dr. Chapman remarked that John Flamsteed does not get the recognition he so rightly deserves, indeed, he went on to say that it is a real shame that his home town has not got a statue erected in his honour and I completely agree with that statement. At the end of the lecture there was time for a

question and answer session and there were a lot of questions put to Dr. Chapman.

One of our members, Nick Cowling, who is an amateur artist, painted a portrait of Flamsteed for the lecture based on a portrait that the artist Thomas Gibson painted in 1712. This was shown to Dr. Chapman who was very impressed by it and both Nick and Dr. Chapman had their photograph taken with the portrait (see the images included in this article – Editor).

This was a very good lecture, an afternoon well spent. As I mentioned earlier, this was my second time attending a lecture by Dr. Chapman and I was not disappointed. He is a remarkable speaker, even at the age of 78, Dr. Chapman can keep an audience enthralled, that is the mark of a great orator.

Just to go off topic for I have met Dr. Chapman previously, in January 2013 as part of the live broadcast of the BBC's Stargazing Live, which the DDAS became involved in. The University of Derby had built a 'copy' of Sir William Herschel's 20-foot telescope and Dr Chapman was there to talk about Herschel and the 20-foot telescope. I was the DDAS Vice-Chair at the time and I got to briefly talk to Dr Chapman during the event prior to us going live on air.

I hope I get to see Dr. Chapman present another lecture in the future.

DDAS Memories – Professor Nial Tanvir – University of Leicester

I joined the DDAS in 1977 having been put in touch via a relative of a family friend (no googling in those days!). At the tender age of 12, it felt like I was joining an ancient and venerable society, even though it was really only recently founded. No doubt, the membership did include a few ancient and venerable examples, but actually there was a sufficient age spread that I didn't feel out of place, and it was great to be rub shoulders with people who shared the same nerdy enthusiasms I had.

The first meetings I attended took place in the annex of the house of a member, but soon moved into town, usually at either St Helen's House or the Friends Meeting House (I think Hugh Dell facilitated that connection), which ultimately became a long-term home.

Some meetings have stuck in my memory. One talk was on cosmology and the Big Bang by a visiting speaker (from Sheffield University, if I remember correctly). It generated much discussion, and it was striking to me that even the senior "old hands" seemed to struggle with the unfamiliar concepts nearly as much as I did. Another speaker brought a laser to play with. We reflected the light back and forth from mirrors to see how many reflections it took before it would no longer be a tight beam. In those days, if a speaker brought any interesting kit, or indeed colour slides of astronomical objects, it was regarded as a rare treat and would elicit many an ooh-and-aah. I also remember movie nights (old documentaries, I suppose), quiz nights, and even the occasional party – in that era, likely lubricated by home-made wine for the adults!

Observing was more challenging in those days, before the advent of sensitive electronic detectors. I do remember several meteor watches, lying on sun-loungers in sleeping bags in Ed Spooner's garden in Heage, thermos flask and sky charts to hand. Particularly exciting was our trip to observe a grazing occultation of Venus (October 1980). Christine Williams kindly put up several youngsters in her home and drove us to the observing site, somewhere in rural south Derbyshire, at about 3am. As I recall, precise timing was achieved by means of a cassette tape, first recording the speaking clock at a nearby public telephone, then keeping it recording throughout the observations so that people could call out as they saw the planet appear and disappear. Perhaps someone then recorded the speaking clock a second time, to make sure the calibration was good.

In 1980/81 I decided to have a go at the O-level in Astronomy. I was very lucky that a physics teacher at my school (and subsequently at a nearby school), Peter Branson, agreed to give me tuition. It was a very valuable experience, particularly in doing several substantial observational projects, and in getting well practiced in problems in celestial mechanics and optics.

All in all, the DDAS played a big part in nurturing my early interest in all things astronomical, and I look back with a lot of fondness to those days. I think I still attended occasional DDAS meetings when I was back in Derby from University, probably up to about 1987. I went on to study physics at Durham University (where I also was president of the student AstroSoc). And as if that wasn't enough, I went back to Durham to do a PhD, and have continued researching and teaching in astronomy ever since



Professor Nial Tanvir

Image Credit: Royal Astronomical Society (RAS)

DDAS 50th Anniversary Open Day at the Friend's Meeting House, Derby, 10th August 2024

By Anthony Southwell

DERBY AND DISTRICT ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
OPEN DAY!
AUGUST 10TH 2024
10:00am - 4:00pm
Friends Meeting House,
68 St Helen's St, Derby, DE1 3EY

JOIN US
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF DDAS

- ★ Astronomical displays
- ★ Telescopes on show
- ★ Meteorites on display
- ★ Guest speakers:

10:00am Professor Jonathan Powers: Evidence of Local Astronomy Before the Stone Circles
11:30am Introduction to the solar system by Tony Razzell, DDAS member
1:00 pm The universe we see at night by Mike Lancaster, DDAS member
2:30 pm Our Current Search for Life Elsewhere by Dr Martin Griffiths

Room 1
Various Displays and exhibits including:
DDAS Moon Globe, Signed by some of the astronauts that have walked on the moon
DDAS and Members Members the collection
Astrophotography display by members
History of the Hantsford observatory display
History of spaceflight, The Solar System, Telescopes, Books for sale, Advice and a lot more.

Room 2
Tea/Coffee and snacks available throughout the day
In the back garden - The society's solar scope along with other members telescopes set up for observing the sun safely. (Weather permitting)

KIDZ KIDZ
Fun activities for kids and adults with a bit of fun.
Plus a one-off invitation to join the society at half price. Must be over 12B.00

Children only - £3.00
(This price applies to anyone over to the society joining between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 10th August)

Please note that some things may vary from those advertised

For further information contact: secretary@derbyastro.org
www.derbyastro.org

The Promotional Notice for the DDAS Open Day which featured on the homepage of the DDAS website and was distributed at various location to help publicise the event,

Image Credit: Gary Lambert/DDAS

This event was called to celebrate the Society's 50th Anniversary and invited the public and DDAS members alike to take part. We held a similar event for our 40th Anniversary in 2014, held at the same venue (Friends Meeting House). Like the 2014 event, we decided to book the entire Friends Meeting House for a whole day, so we could use the rooms for displays, lectures etc.

The lectures were to continue through the day and would feature four lectures, two in the morning session and two in the afternoon. The lectures presented at the DDAS 50th Anniversary Open Day were:

Morning Session:

“Evidence of Local Astronomy Before Stone Circles” by Professor Emeritus Jonathan Powers.

“Introduction to the Solar System” by DDAS Member Tony Razzell

Afternoon Session:

“The Universe We See at Night” by DDAS Member Dr Mike Lancaster

“Our Current /search for Life Elsewhere” by Martin Griffiths.

I did not get much opportunity to attend any of these talks, as I was engaged with the display in Room 2, I spent all of my time in Room 2 talking to all those who came to look at the displays. The displays in Room 2 comprised of the Society's 3-foot diameter Moon globe, which is signed by such astronomy and space luminaries as Sir Patrick Moore, Professor Colin Pillinger (chief scientific investigator and 'Father' of the UK's 'Beagle 2' Mars landing probe), NASA astronaut Dr Jeffery Hoffman (who took part in the space shuttle mission to correct the defective vision of the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) in December 1993), and, also, a number of Apollo astronauts, including several 'moon walkers,' such as Buzz Aldrin, Alan Bean and Charles Duke. In keeping with the Apollo motif, the Moon globe is also signed by Gerald D. Griffin, who was one of the Flight Directors in Mission Control for the Apollo programme, the Moon globe never fails to attract people.



A view of the DDAS display room, the DDAS Library books that were for sale appear in the foreground, Dr Mike Lancaster's 'Rolling DDAS Display' in running on the flat screen monitor at the middle right of the image, the models of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, (not seen here) and spacecraft models can be seen in the background.

Image Credit: Malcolm Neal

In addition to the Moon Globe and, standing next to it, was my 1/96th scale model of the Apollo/Saturn V launch vehicle that launched the Apollo astronauts into history. On the table below was my copy of "A Man on the Moon: The Voyages of the Apollo Astronauts" by Andrew Chaikin, one of the best books on the Apollo programme you can read. Next to that was my collection of Apollo mission patch medallions. Situated next to the Apollo/Saturn V was my 3D-printed model of the Apollo AL-7 Spacesuit standing on a small plinth with a 'lunar surface' and a couple of rocks at its feet as a kind of diorama.



A view of the Society Moon Globe, the 1/96th scale Saturn V model, the Jane Kirk 40 (JK-40) Dobsonian telescope and Mike Dumelow's DDAS display with DDAS members Anthony Southwell and Dave Selfe (back towards the camera).

Image Credit: Malcolm Neal

To the left of the 'Apollo display' was a small display put on by Mike Dumelow of Society pictures from past events and various pieces of DDAS memorabilia, including the JK-40 (Jane Kirk – 40) Dobsonian Telescope, which Mike constructed from a 8.25" mirror and flat set that was donated to the Society by Jane at our 40th Anniversary event in 2014, since then, it has been present at each DDAS public event. To the left of Mike's display was a selection of telescopes, tripods, eyepieces and accessories, these items were for sale to visitors.

Also on sale were a number of books from the DDAS Library, they were on a table in the middle of the display area. Also on sale were number books by Professor Emeritus Jonathon Powers. There was a 'rolling' presentation, running off a laptop, by Mike Lancaster that showcased some examples of DDAS member's astrophotography, Society events and so on. Next to that presentation was Tony Razzell's display which featured various pieces of Radio Astronomy equipment, that included an apparatus that was active for the whole day and was displaying solar activity readings.



Selection of telescopes, tripods, mounts, eyepieces and accessories that were for sale in the DDAS display room.

Image Credit: Malcolm Neal

Moving on from Tony's display was a display containing items from local astronomer, the late Mr. Ken Stevens, who had not only an Observatory at his house, but a Radio Astronomy Observatory in his back garden. Mr Stevens was a pioneer in the field of radio astronomy, who, from his house in Littleover, was the first person to map the Milky Way in radio wavelengths. Next door to that a display was a number of models of the planets Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, built by Brian Dodson, as well as book focusing on the Voyager spacecraft, provided by myself. There were also three spacecraft models, they were of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), the New Horizons spacecraft that flew by the dwarf planet Pluto in July 2015 and, finally, the Transiting Exo-planet Survey Satellite (TESS) spacecraft. All were 3D printed models and were constructed by myself.

Peter Branson provided an impressive display of his a selection of his astro-images which featured, as its centre piece, an example an astrophotography set up, including, tripod, mount, refracting telescope with dedicated CCD camera attached to it, with a guide scope included, also mounted on the set-up was a Canon DSLR camera. On the table next to the astrophotography display were a number of star atlases were on display, such as "The Cambridge Star Atlas" and "Turn Left at Orion."

To round off the displays were two meteorite displays, one from the Society's own collection and the second were a selection of meteorites from my own personal collection. Unfortunately, I did not get much an opportunity to image these displays, so no images appear in this article. Again, like the Moon Globe, both displays drew a lot of attention.

Room 3 was a Tea/Coffee area, but it also featured two computers running the “Kerbal Space Programme,” a spaceflight simulator and a SpaceX docking simulator in which you attempt to dock a SpaceX Dragon capsule to a docking port on the International Space Station (ISS).



A view of Room 3 at the Friend’s Meeting House with two computers set up with spaceflight simulators running, with someone attempting to dock SpaceX’s Dragon capsule with the International Space Station (ISS).

Image Credit: Malcolm Neal

There was a single telescope positioned outside in the garden area of the Friends Meeting House which was going to be used for Solar observing with the use of the proper solar filters to allow for safe solar observing. This telescope was not used as the weather did not play ball on the day and it remained mainly cloudy, with the odd spot of rain. Later on, irony of ironies, it cleared up, but that was near to the end of the day’s events and we were preparing to pack things away and leave.

As for the day itself, it was a fantastic event, one of the best events of our 50th Anniversary celebration programme in my humble opinion. It was a

thoroughly enjoyable, but, busy day, there was a steady stream of people attending during the day. I never stopped talking to visitors all day. One of these visitors was Professor Nial Tanvir, who was a member of the DDAS in the 1970s, before leaving for a career in Astrophysics. He is currently employed in the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Leicester. Professor Tanvir has given a number of talks to us over the years, he was very impressed with the displays and stayed to chat a number of members and reminisced about his time in the DDAS (Professor Tanvir’s DDAS Memories piece appears in this very issue - Editor).

The telescopes, tripods, binoculars and accessories that were for sale sold very well as did a large number of books from the DDAS Library to both DDAS members and the public alike. I bought 4 books myself. I also bought two books from the selection that Professor Jonathon Powers had brought along to sell. One was titled “Mapping the Heavens” and it concerned itself with the work of John



DDAS member Dr Mike Lancaster and Professor Emeritus Jonathon Powers at the beginning of his talk “Evidence of Local Astronomy Before Stone Circles”

Image Credit: Mike Dumelow

Flamsteed. The second book was titled "The Man Who Weighed the Earth" and looked at the 18th century English scientist Henry Cavendish, who is buried in the Devonshire family Crypt in Derby Cathedral.



DDAS member Tony Razzell pictured prior to giving his talk
"Introduction to the Solar System"

Image Credit: Mike Dumelow

Looking Back on 50 Years of the DDAS: A Lecture by DDAS Members Arthur Tristram and Dave Maynard

By Anthony Southwell

Friday September 6th saw the first main meeting of the autumn/winter session of the DDAS and what better way to start the season off but a trip down memory lane, courtesy of long-standing DDAS members Arthur Tristram and Dave Maynard.

They presented a talk titled: "Looking Back on 50 Years of the Derby and District Astronomical Society." I was really looking forward to this talk because;

1. It is always good to stroll down memory lane, and;
2. I had not spoken to Arthur face to face for quite some time. Arthur had moved to Cornwall in 2015 and, recently, he has moved up north to the Lake District, so it would be nice to have a 'catch up' face to face. We have kept in touch in the intervening time via letter, email and WhatsApp messages.

So when I arrived at the Friend's Meeting House, I found that I was the first one to arrive, so I waited outside, as I do not have a key for the Meeting House's door. Before long, quite a group of DDAS members had turned up and were waiting outside.

Once inside the building entered Room 1 where the presentation was going to be held, and I helped with the setting out of the chairs and the placing of a large table in the room, as Arthur was bringing a large number of pieces of DDAS memorabilia with him, items such as old copies of Aries, meeting



DDAS Members Arthur Tristram and Dave Maynard at the end of their lecture.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

notices, DDAS event promotional material and photos taken at various Society events and trips. There was even a selection of photos showing the phases of the construction of the DDAS' Flamsteed Observatory.

I then went to the back of the room and took my seat with my camera at the ready to take some pictures for Aries. After the usual Society notices and a brief introduction to the meeting conducted by Brian, Dave and Arthur began their talk. The talk itself was based around a PowerPoint presentation that drew from diary entries that Arthur had made over the years.

The DDAS was formed in 1974 by our Founder Member Jane Kirk and the first 'meeting' of the nascent DDAS was held in May of that year, Arthur joined the Society in 1979, so he has been a member of the Society since its earliest days. I joined in 1987 so it was interesting to see what went on in the DDAS before my arrival within its ranks.

It was interesting to learn of all the meetings, trips and events that happened during this period. The British Astronomical Association (BAA) 'Out of Town' meeting in 1984 that we took part in as a hosting society, there were special events and displays and lectures during this event. During the talk Dave Maynard recounted an incident during that 'Out of Town' event, it is presented here in Dave's own words in response to my email request concerning his memories of the DDAS:

"Perhaps the most significant memory I can think of is when the society hosted the BAA Out of Town meeting in 1984. On the final Saturday evening, Heather Couper & Nigel Henbest were being interviewed by Radio Derby just before they were to be whisked off to BBC TV in Nottingham.

Literally, within 6ft of Heather & Nigel, and whilst the interview was taking place, were two blokes rolling about on the floor having a fight. Most bizarre, but unbelievably funny. If only it had been captured on TV. What it was about, no-one ever found out,



DDAS Members Arthur Tristram and Dave Maynard during the Question and Answer session following their lecture.

Image Credit: Anthony Southwell

and fortunately there were no injuries. The best thing though, was that nobody tried to stop them. I don't think anyone paid any attention to what Heather & Nigel said during the interview.”

During the lecture Arthur showed a picture of himself and Founder Member Jane Kirk raising a glass with none other than Sir Patrick Moore, I think that was taken during the same ‘Out of Town’ meeting period. Arthur showed a picture of the original telescope that was installed in the Flamsteed Observatory, known as the ‘Ed Spooner Telescope,’ after DDAS member Ed Spooner who designed the Flamsteed Observatory and the Telescope. The Ed Spooner Telescope was a 12-inch Newtonian Reflector of open-frame design and was seated in a fork-mount. That system remained in place at the Observatory until 1996, when it was swapped out for a 10-inch Newtonian with a more ‘stable’ mounting system than the original fork mount design. The picture that Arthur showed is of the Ed Spooner Telescope on display at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery in April 1984 as part of the BAA ‘Out of Town’ Meeting events. As the talk continued, I was astonished to see how many sponsored bike rides that had been organised and run over the years to raise funds for the Society, mainly for the construction of the Flamsteed Observatory. When the Observatory was completed we still held sponsored events to help keep the Society coffers going.

The pictures that Arthur and Dave showed of DDAS trips really stirred the memory pot for me. Places like Jodrell Bank, Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory, Cambridge and University College London’s Mill Hill Observatory of which we were given a tour by a very young looking Mike Lancaster, that was the trip that, at the end of it, Mike gave the DDAS members present a set of NASA prints with Magellan Venus Radar Mapper spacecraft images of the surface of Venus. I still have that image set in a box somewhere. I looked at these pictures and smiled, but, at the same time, I was shocked by the passage of time, we all looked so young in those pictures. To me, at least, these images showed how these events and trips are still so vivid in my mind, like they happened yesterday. The sobering reality is that some of these trips were not just a few years old, some were a decade old or more!

Arthur and Dave’s talk was a thoroughly enjoyable trip down DDAS memory lane and a very comprehensive history of the Society too. It showed the Society to be an active, forward-looking organisation with a passion to share the Universe with the wider public, but above all, it was a story about the DDAS membership past and present and how they have shaped the Society into the organisation it is today. We may not be the biggest, the richest or have fancy equipment or an expensive Observatory, but we are still going strong after 50 years and that is down to the DDAS membership. DDAS members like Arthur and Dave laid the foundations for what the DDAS has now become, what the next 50 years will bring, who knows? Let’s hope there will be two DDAS members giving a talk about their time in the Society in 2074 at the DDAS’ 100th Anniversary.

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Editor: Mr Anthony Southwell

Please submit articles and their associated images to the Aries Editor at the following email address:

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Articles must be in the following format:

Font Size, Style and Alignment: Arial 10 point and justified alignment.

If a submitted article is too large to be included in one issue of Aries, the Editor reserves the right to split such an article into two parts.

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Thank You.