

IoA Library Bulletin

No. 51 May 2013



Richard McKim (right) hands the book to IoA Librarian Mark Hurn. Photo by Amanda Smith

The IoA Library was pleased to accept from Richard McKim of the British Astronomical Association (BAA) a copy of a very rare book, which describes aurorae seen over Cambridge in 1846 and 1847.

One of the books authors, John Holdsworth Morgan (1825-1908) was a Junior Assistant at the Cambridge Observatory over the period 1844-47 where he mainly worked on transit observations. With John T. Barber, a student of Trinity College, he published "An account of the aurora borealis, seen near Cambridge, October the 24th, 1847. Together with those of September 21, 1846 and March 19, 1847, seen at the Cambridge Observatory", the book was published in Cambridge, probably in 1847. Copies were distributed to a small number of subscribers.

There are copies in the University Library, Trinity College, Newnham College, Bodleian, British Library and Yale, but it is still a very rare book. Researches by former Institute librarian David Dewhirst found that our library had never owned a copy, despite the obvious connection to the Cambridge Observatory.

Morgan went on to a career in the church but obviously retained some astronomical interests as he belonged to the RAS from 1879 to 1906. Sadly he died in 1908 in London's infamous mental hospital 'Bedlam' (Bethlem Hospital).

The short book contains 12 colour plates depicting the aurora as seen from Cambridge and particularly the Cambridge Observatory, along with meteorological observations and accounts by other observers. It is interesting to note that 'Cambridge mean time' is used, based on the Observatory clock.

We are really pleased to have (at last) a copy of this rare book in the IoA Library. We hope to scan the plates to make them available on DSpace, the book will also be used for library displays and shown to visitors.



Plate 12. Aurora borealis seen at Cambridge Observatory on March 19, 1847

Social Media

On 5th April our number of followers on the IoA's Twitter account (used mainly for public outreach and astronomy news) hit the 1000 mark. We still have a long way to reach Brian Cox and his 1,086,845 followers! But you can help, if you have an event at the IoA, a news story, or are giving a talk somewhere, please let us know, and we can give it some publicity, the IoA is also on Facebook.

Please fill out a loan card when removing anything from the Library – Thank You

IoA Open Afternoon (23 March)

This year we had to contend with snow, which reduced the number of visitors, however, we still had over one hundred visitors to our library display on the life of Sir Robert Ball. The purpose of the display was to commemorate 100 years since the death of this former Director of the Cambridge Observatory 1913-2013. Included in the display was the stereographoscope, which was quite a hit with the visitors.

NEW BOOKS: MAY 2013

New books on display in the Hoyle building library area through the month of May.

The birth of string theory / edited by Andrea Cappelletti Cambridge University Press, 2012 ISBN 9780521197908 (140/CAP)

International workshop: binaries inside and outside the local interstellar bubble: Santiago de Compostela, Spain 10-11 February 2011 / J.A. Docobo et al. [editors] New York: American Institute of Physics, 2012 AIP Conference Proceedings 1452 ISBN 9780735410527 (118/DOC)

Advancing the physics of cosmic distances: IAU Symposium 289, Beijing, August 2012 / Edited by Richard de Grijs Cambridge University Press, 2013 ISBN 9781107033788 (B.6.1)

From ultra rays to astroparticles: a historical introduction to astroparticle physics / Brigitte Falkenburg & Wolfgang Rhode Dordrecht: Springer, 2012 ISBN 9789400754218 (67/FAL)

Planets, stars and stellar systems: Volumes 1-6 including Volume 5 Galactic structure and stellar populations / Gerard Gilmore (volume editor) Dordrecht: Springer, 2013 ISBN 9789400756113 (R/G/OSW (Hoyle library area))

Origin of matter and evolution of galaxies 2011: Wako, Japan November 2011 / Shigeru Kubono et al. (editors) New York: American Institute of Physics, 2012 AIP Conference Proceedings 1484 ISBN 9780735410961 (52/KUB)

Newton's gravity: an introductory guide to the mechanics of the universe / Douglas W. MacDougal New York: Springer, 2012 Undergraduate Lecture Notes in Physics ISBN 9781461454434 (45/MAC)

Astrophysics of the interstellar medium / Walter J. Maciel New York: Springer, 2013 ISBN 9781461437666 (54/MAC)

Are we being watched? The search for life in the cosmos / Paul Murdin London: Thames & Hudson, 2013 ISBN 9780500516713 (7/MUR)

Dark matter, neutrinos, and our solar system / Nirmala Prakash Singapore: World Scientific, 2013 ISBN 9789814304542 (138/PRA)

The Milky Way: An insider's guide / William H. Waller Princeton University Press, 2013 ISBN 9780691122243 (126/WAL)

Time, space, stars & man: The story of the Big Bang / Michael M. Woolfson 2nd. ed. London: Imperial College Press, 2013 ISBN 9781848169333 (11/WOO)

Suzaku studies of white dwarf stars and the galactic x-ray background emission / Takayuki Yuasa Tokyo: Springer, 2013 Springer Theses ISBN 9784431542186 (65/YUA)

Diary Date

15 June (Sat) Webb AGM at IoA.

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