



## Obituary

### Dr Ronald Charles Maddison (1935–2019)

With the death of Ron Maddison on 2019 Dec 29, at the age of 84, the Association has lost not only one of its most distinguished and longest-serving members, but also one of its most engaging personalities. Those who knew him will recall the warmth, friendliness and good humour that were essential parts of his character.

Born on 1935 Jan 1, Ron joined the BAA in 1965 and quickly rose to prominence as a member of the Lunar Section Committee during the directorship of Patrick Moore. He subsequently served the Association as a member of Council, Vice-President, and Director of the Lunar Section from 1968 to 1971.

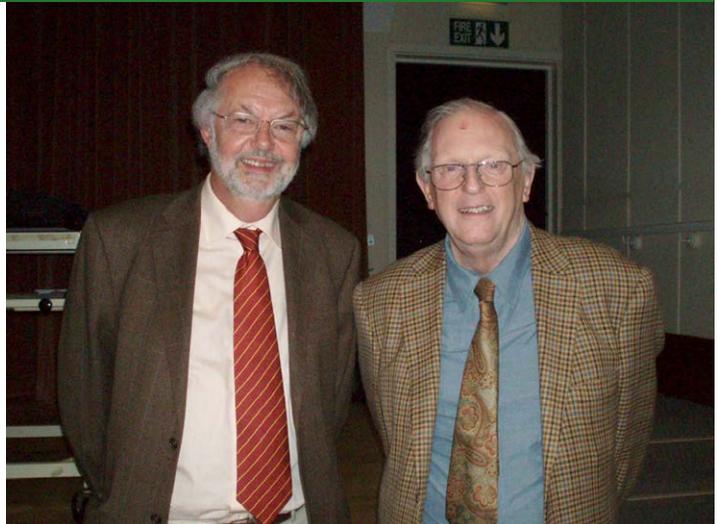
He assumed the directorship at a difficult time, taking over from Patrick Moore – perhaps the hardest of acts to follow – at a period when results from *Orbiter*, *Apollo* and other space probes were altering the nature of amateur lunar observation, with the old cartographical approach being supplanted by new methodologies. Ron recognised the shift that was taking place, and he undertook a major review of the Section observing programme in order to ensure that it remained relevant in the years that were to follow the *Apollo* manned Moon landings. He also had to deal with a general malaise among the established Section observers, some of whom saw the American space programme as effectively the end of useful amateur contributions. Ron’s infectious enthusiasm did much to help dispel this mood.

Apart from the BAA, Ron also made a lasting contribution to the development of astronomy at Keele University. One of that institution’s earliest

students, he eventually joined the academic staff and became a Senior Lecturer in Physics. In 1962 he was instrumental in founding Keele University Observatory, which still plays an important outreach role today by offering regular public observing sessions.

Ron sourced the original Grubb telescope from Oxford University, and through a close friendship with the Cheshire businessman Francis Harry Thornton he secured funding for the observatory’s development. Thornton had been a BAA member and keen lunar observer during the directorship of H. P. Wilkins, editing the Section bulletin *The Moon* for many years (a complete run of that publication is now available online to BAA members via the Lunar Section website). Ron also established a first-year subsidiary astronomy course at Keele, aimed at drawing non-specialists into science.

Through his close friendship with Patrick Moore, Ron made many television appearances, particularly on *The Sky at Night* where his skills at communicating science were amply displayed. The author of several books on astronomy, he was a popular guest speaker on cruise liners. He also enjoyed travelling to observe solar eclipses.



Ron Maddison (R) and Bill Leatherbarrow, Keele, 2012.

Ron left Keele in 1991, when he took up a position as Director of the Observatory at the Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory in Cocoa, Florida, where he continued to live until his death. He returned to Keele in 2012 in order to attend celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the observatory’s founding. During his years in Florida Ron cultivated an interest in steam trains and antique telescopes, serving as President of the Antique Telescope Society from 1994 to 1997. He also enjoyed visits from old friends, including Patrick Moore. Apparently, he taught Patrick to shoot a pistol – not a lesson to be undertaken lightly!

Ron Maddison passed away peacefully at the Advent Hospital in Orlando after a short illness. He will be sorely missed by his BAA friends and colleagues, and we extend our deepest condolences to his wife Margaret, son Christopher, daughter Julia and stepson Mark.

Bill Leatherbarrow, Director, Lunar Section



Ron Maddison and Patrick Moore, Keele, 1975.

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