



Dr Matthew Forman (1971–2024)

Widely esteemed for his life-saving research, Matthew was a well-loved, familiar face in the BAA.

On 2024 November 28, the Association lost a great character and friend in Dr Matthew Forman, who passed away after a short illness. Matthew was my partner for 25 years and many of you will have seen him at meetings and events, such as the annual Winchester Weekend, which he especially loved to attend.

Matthew was born on 1971 November 4 in Cuckfield, Sussex. His family moved to Cheltenham, and he attended the King's School in Gloucester. It was here that Matthew showed an early aptitude for science, engineering, and in particular, computing and electronics. He founded the school's astronomical society and produced the newsletters on the school's newly acquired PC, likely being one of the few people who could use and programme the machine.

After completing his A-levels, Matthew attended Leicester Polytechnic (now De Montfort University), whereby he obtained a first-class degree in electronic engineering. He completed his PhD in 3-D computer imaging – a fairly new area at the time, which he helped to establish.

Once he had completed his PhD, Matthew joined the faculty staff to become a lecturer in electronic engineering. Although he greatly enjoyed teaching, his desire to pursue engineering in a medical setting ultimately led him to apply 3-D techniques to medical imaging and then to his large success – Non-Invasive Parental Testing (NIPT).

In 2013, Matthew joined the newly formed company Premaitha Health Care (now Yourgene Health). It was here he helped develop computer software which would allow the accurate testing of fetuses for severe genetic abnormalities from a blood test. This novel technique would remove the need for amniocentesis – a

procedure which poses significant risk to the unborn child as well as the mother (which was one of the reasons for the development of NIPT). The software and products were a great success and are now available in many hospitals around the world.

At Yourgene Health, Matthew became Head of the Bioinformatics Division – an important group tasked with developing new software for products to extend NIPT beyond parental testing, with the hope of looking for early detection of cancer and other dangerous diseases. Matthew grew a team of dedicated computer scientists, treating his younger colleagues more as if he was a PhD supervisor than a formal line manager, and he was much admired as a programmer, scientist, and a manager. At the time of his passing, Matthew had over 100 patent inventions in his name. Yourgene Health have named their Research and Development room the Matthew Forman Room in his honour.

Outside of work, Matthew held many interests, including travelling, boating, astronomy, wildlife, gardening, and radio acting. In particular, he lent his unique voice to 'the Book' in the SciFiGroup's production of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. He used his considerable engineering skills to set up an observatory for me and an all-sky camera to capture meteors.

Matthew and I travelled extensively – in the last decade, on eclipse expeditions taken with Pete Lawrence and Jon Culshaw. Our last eclipse trip was to Texas in 2024. Before this, Matthew devised a portable thermometer in a



At the helm of one of the boats we used to hire on the Norfolk broads. (Photos courtesy of the author)

Stevenson screen, which would electronically record the temperature at regular intervals during the eclipse. As can be seen in Abel, Forman & Lawrence (2024),¹ we found that the coldest point of the eclipse occurred some time after totality.

In May of 2024, Matthew was diagnosed with the extremely rare condition of an aggressive pituitary tumour and despite surgery and treatment, he passed away after a short illness in November. His endocrinologist, Prof. Miles Levy, has helped set up an award for 'Teaching and research into aggressive pituitary tumours' at the Society for Endocrinology. This award will be given once a year to medical researchers who make a significant contribution to either research and treatment or indeed teaching and spreading the word about these incredibly dangerous tumours. Matthew's father Chris Forman and I set up a JustGiving page, and the funds from this will be used to finance the award, which will run once a year in perpetuity.

Matthew was a great character who believed in living life to the full and using science and technology to improve people's lives. He will be much missed by friends and family, and I myself have found him irreplaceable. I am profoundly grateful for our 25 years together. 🌿

Paul G. Abel

Director, Mercury & Venus Section



Left: Collimating the mirrors in Sir Patrick Moore's 12.5-inch Newtonian Reflector.

Right: Collecting the data from our last total eclipse expedition in Texas, 2024 April.

¹ Abel *et al.*, 'Total eclipse expedition to Waxahachie, Texas, USA', *J. Br. Astron. Assoc.*, 134(5), 242–346 (2024)