

Alan Clark Heslop, 1937–2012

Alan Heslop, who was born in Sunderland on 1937 September 11, was a member of the Association for 58 years. Although he was not very well known in BAA circles he was nevertheless a knowledgeable amateur astronomer who had a passion for instrument-making and especially for optical design. He served an apprenticeship in mechanical engineering at Bristol Aircraft in Sunderland, and later, seeing an opportunity to pursue his astronomical interests, he moved to Grubb Parsons in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

I first met him at that time, and we worked together in the drawing office – Alan on the 98-inch [2.4m] Isaac Newton Telescope. After working for two years on the final stages of the INT's hydraulic systems and accessory equipment, Alan moved to optical design. In a small office, with Eric Braithwaite his boss and chief optical designer, and the latest computers of the 1960s, he flogged out and corrected the shapes and curves of many mirrors and lenses in the ancillary systems of large telescopes, which was work that he really enjoyed.

Some time afterwards Alan took up a job in the parent company, C. A. Parsons, and a few years later he left there and entered the teaching profession. During all these years he continued with his astronomy. He began making a 17-inch [432mm] f/4 reflector using the Rev T. H. E. C. Espin's no. 2 mirror (a Calver), and carried out numerous smaller projects, including a Schiefspiegler and a rich-field telescope. In all his projects Alan had the help, advice,



Alan Heslop with Len Clucas's 6-inch folded refractor on a Calver mount.

and guidance of his long-time friend Gordon Percival, a keen engineer and telescope-maker.

His wife of nearly 40 years, Moira, died in 2002, and shortly afterwards Alan was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Despite physical disabilities, he continued in his workshop until 2012 December 17, when he collapsed and died, pursuing his passion to the last. He left one son, Stephen.

Len Clucas