

Andrew John Hollis, 1947–2005

Andrew Hollis, known as 'Andy' to his many friends and colleagues, was the founding Director of the Asteroids and Remote Planets Section of the BAA, serving in that role from 1984 to 2005.

Andy was born on 1947 February 3 at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, and was brought up in Cambridge and Hatfield, Hertfordshire, his father being an area manager for the Ind Coope brewery. His affection for Norfolk, where he spent time holidaying in his early years with grandparents, stayed with him throughout his life. He knew much of the history of Great Yarmouth where his grandfather had been manager of the flour mill, and in later life continued his links with the county by regular visits to Gorleston-on-Sea to visit his elderly father. His interest in astronomy was kindled through the influence of his uncle Donald Roy Worton. He was elected a member of the Association on 1961 April 26, when he was living in Hatfield as a young teenager. In addition to astronomy, his abiding passion from an early age involved railways and canal boats, both probably stemming from holidays on the Norfolk Broads and further afield.

Andy and his brother Richard, five years his senior, travelled to St. Albans School for their secondary education, Andy attending the school from 1958–1965 and leaving with 3 'A' levels and 1 'S' level qualification. He studied Civil Engineering at Imperial College, London, from which he graduated in 1969 as a Bachelor of Science (BSc, Eng Hons) and as an Associate of The City and Guilds of London Institute (ACGI). He joined the British Transport Docks Board in 1969, initially receiving training at Hull Docks, and then began his working career as a structural engineer. He was involved in many design projects, including developments in Redditch New Town, Manchester, Warrington and Runcorn New Towns and at Risley Moss nature reserve, where he designed the observation tower later visited by his children on school trips. He worked his way up to department head, and then regional project manager. When the economy was poor and structural engineering work dried up in 1992, Andy showed his resourcefulness and determination by turning his hand to insurance assessment, and requalified as a loss adjustor specialising in building subsidence. He was always proud of the fact that he was never unemployed, not even for a day.

He first met his wife-to-be, Ruth Muriel Hirst, in 1971. Ruth was also working for the British Transport Docks Board in Hull: they were married the following year. In 1973 they moved to Redditch where they started

a family, Angela being born in December of that year. Julia was born in 1976 and Christopher in 1978, the year the family moved to Cheshire. Andy was always a practical man and undertook many DIY projects, including the construction of a house extension with the assistance of two others, and the building and running of model railways. He had a broad musical taste, was interested in computing and computer construction, and purported to be a lifelong supporter of Norwich City Football Club. In his younger days he played rugby, cricket, ten-pin bowling and green bowling.

During the 1960s and '70s Andy was an active variable star and planetary observer and contributed many observations to the Sections (4240 variable star magnitude estimates of 138 objects, the first in 1963 September). On cold clear nights he would don his thickest clothes and a balaclava, and retire to his observatory, with an elderly electric heater to keep his feet warm. The observatory in Cuddington, Cheshire, was self-built and its design improved over the years, from the early wooden model which blew down in a gale, to a very respectable brick construction at Marton Green, discreetly hidden from the house by two small pine trees. He built three of his own telescopes, grinding mirrors over many months. His verve and enthusiasm were infectious as witnessed by anyone who attended the many talks he gave to local societies throughout the country.

In 1980, at the invitation of Richard Baum, the then Director of the Terrestrial Planets Section, he established the Minor Planet Group and in 1984 became the founding director of the Minor Planets Section, later to become the Asteroids and Remote Planets Section. In 1992 he was awarded the Merlin Medal and Gift (along with the writer) in recognition of our observations and analysis of the occultation by Titan of the bright star 28 Sagittarii in July 1989. Later, in 1996, after almost 12 years of study, he became one of the very first students of the Open University to receive a Doctorate of Philosophy, his thesis being on the subject of shape studies of asteroids and their orbital evolution.



Andy Hollis (left) with Dr Alan Harris of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California.

A skilful visual observer, he was one of the pioneering few during the 1980s in applying photoelectric photometry to the study of stars, asteroids and planetary satellites. Technology was moving apace during this period and Andy was keen to take advantage of the very latest developments in electronic circuitry, in producing a high-performance photometer based on a 1P21 photomultiplier tube working at high voltage. He obtained several lightcurves of some of the brighter asteroids and the analysis of this data was included as part of his doctoral dissertation.

Unfortunately Andy's health became problematic and in 1989, he was diagnosed as having a mild form of multiple sclerosis. Though merely a nuisance initially, the condition became more debilitating, eventually forcing him to take six months off work. Andy's reaction to this was very much in character in that he redoubled his efforts to attend more meetings and publish more papers in the *BAA Journal*, both of which I am pleased to say he achieved. In addition to his graduate qualifications referred to earlier, he also gained his CEng, MStructE, MICE, MIHEEM, ACILA and FFB. However, the accolade which gave him the greatest satisfaction was to have the minor planet 1985 GM named after him at the recommendation of its discoverer, Ted Bowell. This object, estimated to be 29km across, is rather unusual. It is a member of the Koronis family and occupies a rare near-circular orbit in the Main Belt, having an orbital eccentricity of only 0.010. It now has the appellation (4084) Hollis.

The photograph of Andy standing next to his long-time mentor, Dr Alan W. Harris, then of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, was taken on the occasion of Dr Harris' visit to Manchester for the IAU General Assembly in 2000 August.

Tragically, Andy was diagnosed with cancer in 2004 September, and it was to this illness

that he finally succumbed. He died on 2005 November 21 and was cremated at Bradwell Crematorium, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Andy was very proud of his three children, and latterly equally proud of his grandchildren, Emily, Edward and Tobias. He was very popular and a good friend to many in the Association, not least myself. It goes

without saying that he will be greatly missed.

I am most grateful to Ruth, his children Christopher and Angela, to Andy's cousin, Ann Share, and to Roger Pickard for their kind assistance in the preparation of this account.

Richard Miles