

Donald Fletcher Hedley Robinson, 1935–2007

Don Robinson grew up under the guidance of his father, J. Hedley Robinson, who many BAA members will know of, in a house whose main functions were focused on services to both religion and astronomy.

As with many youngsters, and despite his father's best efforts, catching enthusiasm from a parent was a slow process that runs only to its own schedule, and it wasn't until returning from National Service with the RAF in 1956 that Don found himself hooked with the 'Astronomy Bug', as he called it.

That winter, just over 50 years ago, John Hedley was one student short of the minimum number required for an astronomy course for the Workers Education Association taking place at Widdecombe, Dartmoor, and he persuaded his son to come along to make up the numbers. One can imagine the appeal of a chilly hall in the middle of Dartmoor on a cold winter's evening, but within weeks Don was gripped by the subject and had unwittingly embarked on what would become a very prominent part of his life – spreading the astronomical word. He was always keen to help and encourage others, often embellishing his lectures with his great sense of humour, which, I remember, occasionally involved witty drawings of aliens, cartoon rabbits, and of course, green cheese.

In 1957 he joined the Torbay Astronomical Society, and whilst living in Exeter in the early 1960s he formed the Exeter Astronomical Society, serving as its Chairman for several years. Upon moving back to Teignmouth in 1968 he returned to the TAS, where he held several positions on the Committee including Observations Secretary and Chairman, eventually being honoured as Life Member and Patron of the Society in the 1990s. During these years Don gave lectures and courses for the WEA as well as the TAS in Devon and beyond, covering subjects ranging across the whole spectrum of amateur astronomy. Also he be-



*Donald Hedley Robison
in 1990*

came an accredited Methodist Lay Preacher in 1987. In between all this, he spent most of his working career in the grocery trade.

When Hedley became ill in 1991, Don moved back to his parents' house to help care for his mother Mildred, who had been disabled by a stroke some years ear-

lier. After his father's death, and being unable to actively observe in the night air due to his respiratory condition, he donated his 10-inch refractor to Teignmouth Grammar School, which he had attended from 1946 to 1951, and where it is still in use today.

Since those difficult years his own health steadily worsened and reduced his ability to travel, but he still kept in regular contact with many people, and socialised as best he could. Indeed he was always open to a conversation of any depth and on any subject, and was a great source of answers to me and many others. There was always a *BAA Handbook* or *Journal* on his coffee table, ever since he joined in 1965.

I will always remember those tricky theological discussions, as Dad and Hedley tried to bridge the subjects of Science and Religion, but at least their open-mindedness rubbed off on me a little, I hope. No doubt they now both have a greater understanding of the mysteries of the universe.

Don leaves behind a son and a daughter, Andrew and Linda, and five grandchildren, Katie, Hannah, Joshua, Nicky and James, and is sadly missed. His family have been very touched by the many kind condolences received, and they wish to express their thanks to all.

Andrew H. Robinson