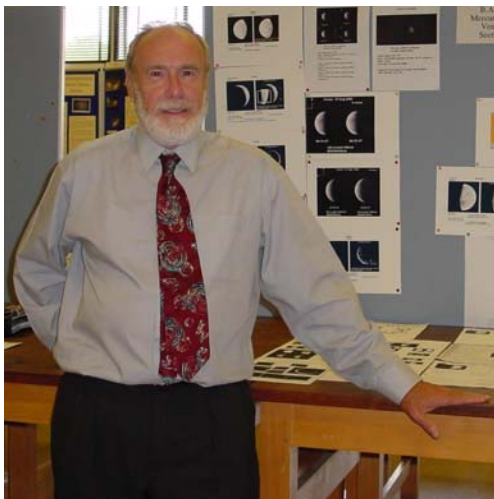


Obituary

Edward L. Ellis (1931–2006)



Edward Ellis at the BAA Exhibition meeting, 2003 May (Photo: Hazel McGee).

Throughout the last half-century, Edward Ellis made many useful planetary observations for the Association. One of his first contributions (after joining the BAA in 1952) was a record of the transit of Mercury in 1953 November. Later he began to send observations regularly, particularly of Venus, Mars and Saturn. These were mostly secured with an old 90mm brass refractor with which he observed from his home at Gerrards Cross, and later from St Albans. He also used a Celestron 8. With Venus he was concerned with the variable cusps and phase measurement, and published two interesting papers about the planet (the last in conjunction with Alan Heath) in this *Journal* in 1974 August and 2005 April. He was a careful and reliable observer and his drawings were always accurate. His observations of Mars spanned nearly fifty years. With Saturn he paid special attention to the magnitudes of the satellites, and at the time of his death had just had a paper accepted for publication on the subject of the variability of its satellite Iapetus (see page 76 of this *Journal*).

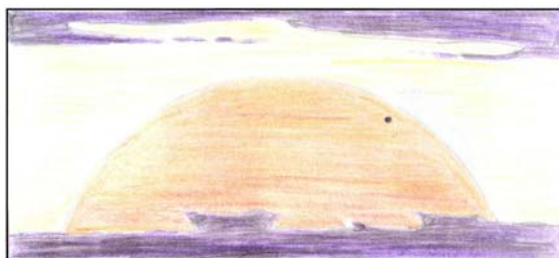
Born Edward Lovell Ellis on 1931 May 18, and known as Ted within his family, Edward attended school at Eton College (1944–'48) and after National Service took a degree in Electrical Engineering. He joined Mewburn Ellis & Co., a family firm, in 1955, qualified as a Patent Agent in 1964, and became a partner in 1965. He worked there until 1991, when he retired. He was very active in retirement, completing a Master's degree in Astronomy and Astronautics at the University of Hertfordshire upon the visibility of astronomical objects in daylight. His supervisor was the late J. C. D. ('Lou') Marsh. A spin-off paper from this activity entitled

'Naked Eye observations of Venus' was published in the *Journal* for 1995 December. Edward's non-astronomical hobbies included running (usually half marathons, his personal best time being 1hr 57min), gardening and music.

In 2003 Edward was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, which necessitated an operation and periods of radiotherapy and radioactive iodine treatment. Nonetheless, he returned to active observing and was enthusiastically following Venus once again in 2004 and 2005. He had willingly taken charge of the Mercury & Venus Section in 2003 following the sudden resignation of R. M. Steele as Director, and later served on its Committee and helped organise the Section display at Exhibition meetings. Sadly the period of relatively good health follow-

ing his hospitalisation was all too short, and he died on 2006 December 19 shortly after receiving the proofs of his final paper. Appropriately, 'Venus Bringer of Peace' and 'Mercury The Winged Messenger' from Holst's *The Planets* were played at his funeral. Edward is survived by his widow Clare, four children and seven grandchildren. We thank his daughter Lucy Thrussell for background family details which were used in the writing of this appreciation.

Richard McKim & Alan Heath



The transit of Mercury, 1953 November 14d 15h 46m, drawn by E. L. Ellis with 90mm OG, $\times 64$. 'Conditions 99% cloud.' (Mercury & Venus Section archives).

The 2006 Scottish Astronomy Weekend

The 18th Scottish Astronomy Weekend was held in the Cowane Centre, Stirling, on 2006 October 13–15 at the invitation of Stirling Astronomical Society. The main theme was Instrumentation, with excellent talks by the two main invited speakers, the BAA's Bob Marriott and Professor John Brown, Astronomer Royal for Scotland.

Other speakers were Roger Stapleton, Dr Alan Cayless, Bill Ward, Dr Bill Samson, Dr Alex Houston, Dr Dave Gavine and Tim Schroder, with short contributions from other delegates on a

variety of topics including Noctilucent Clouds and the stunning astrophotography of Douglas Cooper. Free time on Saturday afternoon enabled the visitors to explore the historic city and its Castle, or to visit the Society's Observatory with its 12-inch reflector on top of the Old High School, now a hotel. The Scottish Astronomers' Group are most grateful to Alex Houston, Hamish McPhee and their helpers for organising the Weekend.

Dave Gavine



Delegates to the Scottish Astronomy Weekend at the Cowane Centre, Stirling. Photo: Mike Fenwick.