

Herbert J. T. Carpenter (1931-1998)

H. J. T. (Bert) Carpenter died on 1998 January 21 at the age of 66 following many years of ill-health.

Bert studied mathematics and physics at London University, and after a brief flirtation as a professional photographer, turned to engineering and became a chartered engineer. He eventually joined a local engineering firm, and rose to the position of Chief Design Engineer, where for many

years he worked on the automatic postal system.

As a young man Bert had shown great athletic prowess and hurdled for Cambridge Harriers. He was also a skilled carpenter and, aside from carrying out many home improvements, made a number of toys for his children, which are still being enjoyed by his grandchildren. Typically, when his children developed an interest in playing music,

Bert supported their school band. He then helped in the formation of a new band, initially formed from the pupils leaving the school and eventually became their Vice President. Despite his health problems, Bert remained remarkably cheerful, even when he was forced to give up many of the activities which had given him so much pleasure throughout his life.

Following a long interest in astronomy, Bert attended evening classes in Catford in the 1970s and joined Crayford Manor House Astronomical Society in 1980 and the BAA the following year. He was also a member of the Society for Popular Astronomy. Bert's main astronomical interests were the Moon and occultations, particularly grazing occultations. This interest was further fostered when he took over the responsibility of Occultation Co-ordinator at Crayford, work for which he will be long remembered.

Grazing occultations had been popular at Crayford during the late 1960s and early 1970s under the guidance of Gordon Taylor, but when Gordon left interest dwindled for a while. However, Bert soon changed this, and organised expeditions all over the South East of England with meticulous detail. This involved producing a letter which was delivered to each household (very often a remote farmhouse) on which simple details of the event were described. It also advised that a party of amateur astronomers would be descending on their area (quite possibly at some very unsocial hour) to observe it. In addition, Bert always notified the local constabulary and advised the local residents of this fact as well. All this came about because on more than one occasion observers, who had thought themselves safe when setting up in a field, were visited by the local farmer who thought they were cattle rustlers!

Amongst his many other activities, Bert also became the International Occultation Timing Association (IOTA)'s UK Graze Coordinator and took on the task of computing and supplying grazing occultation predictions to UK observers about four years ago. He was working on this year's predictions when he died. In recent years he attended the annual European Symposia on Occultation Projects and last year he was the hard-working co-organiser of ESOP XVI.

It was Bert's wish, that if his body was of any use, it should be offered to medical science and this has been the case. Bert's main forte was in helping others and in this he will be sadly missed.

He is survived by his wife Sheila, his son Tom and daughter Therese.

Roger Pickard & Andrew Elliott

Civic reception held to honour George Alcock



On 1998 March 24 a reception was held at the Mayor's Parlour in the Town Hall, Peterborough, for G. E. D. Alcock MBE 'in honour of his achievements and recognition of his services to Astronomy'. George Alcock has been a member of the BAA since 1935. He has discovered 5 novae and 5 comets, and also discovered the outburst of the recurrent nova RS Ophiuchi in 1985. Remarkably, all the discoveries were made with binoculars - in order to recognise his novae, George has memorised some 30,000 stars in the Milky Way. The photograph shows the presentation to George made by the Mayor, Cllr Mrs Yvonne Lowndes, at the reception, which was attended by Guy Hurst on behalf of the BAA and *The Astronomer*.