



## Obituary

### Jeremy David Cook (1933–2003)

Jeremy Cook, also known as 'Jes' or 'Jerry' to his friends and colleagues, was the BAA's Lunar Section Director (1992–1995) and the chairman of the Reading Astronomical Society (1981–1987). Jeremy was born on 1933 August 16 at Streatham, South London. His parents were both teachers and he had an elder brother John, now living in Athens. The young brothers grew up during the Second World War and for most of its duration the family were evacuees in Reading, although the children and parents were billeted in separate dwellings. By 1943 the bombing had quietened down enough for the Cook family to return to their house in Cophthorne Avenue, South London and Jeremy attended Emanuel School at Wandsworth.

However the danger of living in London during wartime had not entirely finished. One Sunday in 1944 the sirens sounded and the family heard a characteristic sound of a V1 doodlebug (a flying bomb) approaching, so the children were 'shooshed' immediately into the cupboard under the stairs – one of the more structurally sound places in a house. There was a loud bang and everyone assumed the V1 had been shot down and trooped out to the front door, as did most others in the avenue. However looking up they saw the V1 framed between telephone wires now silently gliding down towards them and everybody dived back under the stairs again. After a swoosh and a bigger bang, it was clear that the V1 had missed by curving off to one side in the last few seconds. It had landed in Hazelbourne Road, Clapham, opposite a house where Marie (his future wife) was living, though he did not know her at that time. She and her family survived the blast by sheltering under the dining table.

Jeremy became interested in radio at the early age of eleven and built various electrical devices. Recollections from relatives suggest that it was quite common to find his floor littered with electrical components, making his bedroom a hazardous environment for cleaning, and perhaps this was a very good indication that later he would become an electronics engineer. Jeremy went on to take Engineering at the Department of Electrical Engineering, Battersea Polytechnic, being awarded a University of London BSc in 1955.

After graduation, he worked for two large companies as a development engineer in their instrumentation laboratories. His first job, with Philips at Balham in the Radiation Laboratory, involved working on the development of nuclear radiation monitors. After the Laboratory was transferred to Mullard Equipment Ltd he was offered a job at Glass De-

velopments Ltd, Brixton. Amongst the projects he worked on there were an Ultrasonic Flaw Detector, designing electronics for a Beryllium Dust Monitor and an Ammonia Maser Frequency Standard electronics package.

In 1954 Jeremy married Marie Christine Harding whom he had met at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Clapham, and was now persuaded to keep the floor tidy! Interestingly enough the person who organized social musical evenings and lectures at the church was the astronomical historian and author, Colin Ronan (BAA President 1989–1991). In 1962 Jeremy and Marie had a son, Tony, and lived in a house in Crawley in the aptly named Cook Road. From 1962–1965 Jeremy was on loan to the Ministry of Defence at Boscombe Down, Wiltshire, as a Principal Development Engineer where he ran an experimental laboratory in the Instrumentation Research and Development Laboratory. He was given a notional rank of squadron leader, as signified by three rings on the name plate of his office. There he was responsible for digital instrumentation for a number of aircraft trials. Among the projects he worked on were a portable magnetic tape recorder to monitor temperatures, based on one used on the Black Knight rocket project. He was at Boscombe Down during the TSR2 supersonic aircraft trials, but following its cancellation and other cutbacks, decided to return to industry. The family relocated to Frimley, Surrey, and remained there for 38 years.

Now back in industry, Jeremy headed a team developing AC measuring instrumentation for a company later to be known as Dynamco. A new company, Calibration Systems Limited (CSL), was formed in 1970 to carry out the business of repair and calibration of electrical and electronic test equipment, and Jeremy was asked to become its Technical Manager. Here he organised the Standards Laboratory, taking on the additional responsibility of head of laboratory. Eventually the CSL Standards Laboratory became one of the largest electrical laboratories in the UK with accreditation received from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). He served on the technical committees of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE), the British Measurement and Test Association, and the British Calibration Service, now UKAS. He presented technical papers for these and for the National Physical Laboratory and was also involved with two IEE committees, being chairman of the S4 Measurements committee and a member of the Microwave Measurements Course Committee.

Jeremy's astronomical interest began in the early 1970s when his son wanted a telescope. Eventually the whole family joined in as a team, primarily on lunar studies, but also on any topical astronomical event. Particularly memorable observing events to the family were *Skylab* overflights of southern England in 1973/74, the Torricelli B TLP (1983), Comets Kohoutek, IRAS–Araki–Alcock, Halley, Hyakutake, and Hale–Bopp, the occultation of a 28 Sgr by Titan in 1989, the Shoemaker–Levy 9 cometary impacts on Jupiter (1994) and many meteor showers. Jeremy contributed to the practical side of the hobby, building a fully rotating observatory in the back garden, and also the circuitry to drive a photodiode array, CCD chips, and image intensifiers. He was the one who developed the astronomical films and printed photographs for the family. Following increased management experience at CSL he undertook more administrative duties, becoming Director of the BAA Lunar Section, though he had to give the latter up due to increased pressure at work. He did though manage to find time to edit the 2nd edition of the *Hatfield Lunar Atlas* and was working on another lunar atlas just before his death. He gave numerous talks to local astronomical societies and to the BAA covering subjects as diverse as sundials, lunar observing, and CCDs.

Jeremy's other interests included gardening, DIY and genealogy of the Cook family. In every aspect he was the most practical member of the family. During the early 1970s he built an emergency lighting system for their house that switched on automatically during power cuts. One Christmas he constructed an illuminated map display for his



Jeremy Cook in his observatory at Frimley, in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

son's model railway where you could use a metal stylus to click, or switch, points on the track – slightly akin to point and click aspects of the World Wide Web about 20 years later.

On 2003 November 19 Marie and Jeremy moved to Norfolk to retire, to continue their Cook genealogy and to enjoy the scenery of the north Norfolk coast. This was sadly ended by Jeremy's death at the age of 70, on 2003 December 21, at Norfolk and Norwich hospital. He had been diagnosed with bad pneumonia four days earlier and although apparently stable, he unfortunately suffered a sudden heart attack.

Jeremy was a kind, gentle person, who made the people he met feel important because he took such an interest in them and their hobbies. He was held in high regard by his colleagues, both at work and in the societies that he joined. One work colleague described him as 'a brilliant scientist, a lateral thinker, full of ideas and capable of the most

amazing inventions'. He was a very capable mathematician and genuinely loved to solve problems using pages of equations. At work he would often be under great pressure but would always remain calm, diligent, have time to listen to a problem and lend a hand. His favourite expression to work colleagues was 'leave it with me'. The Jerry Cook name was synonymous at CSL with high quality and technical excellence and they still work to his technical procedures using systems that he devised.

So for many reasons this very practical, quiet, unassuming man will be sadly missed. Jeremy lived a full and productive life as a successful professional electrical engineer and enjoyed his years as BAA Lunar Section Director, and all astronomically held positions; but above all he was a good husband, excellent father, and caring grandfather to Tony and Sashas' twins Alex and Jane.

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**Anthony C. Cook**