

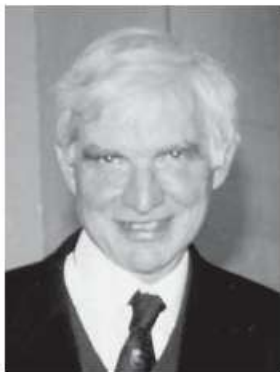
John Charles Clint Larard, 1937–2007

With the death of John Larard on 2007 May 25 at a nursing home in Camberwell, we have lost one of the great classical visual observers of our time.

John was born on 1937 April 17, his birth registered in Edmonton District with Clint adopted from his mother's maiden name. He attended Haileybury School. His interests were many, including a passion for classical music, but observational astronomy was his main hobby.

He was a long-time member of the Société Astronomique de France, which often appeared on his headed note-paper during correspondence, and also of the Astronomical Society of India. He was elected a member of the BAA on 1957 November 27 (appropriately

the year of the start of the Space Age) and as a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society on 1967 March 10. In volume 75 (pages 294–295) of the *BAA Journal* he wrote of his double star survey. The RAS library records also show a 'celestial survey' by John was lodged with them.



He became known to the author as the first secretary of *The Casual Astronomer*, which would later become known as *The Astronomer*. The records show he attended the inaugural meeting of this group at Caxton Hall on Thursday 1964 April 2, where he and the founding editor, Jim Muirden, discussed the production of a rapid publication magazine which would provide vital feedback to active

observers. Not only did John attend to all administrative matters but he was a very active observer himself and showed great encouragement to others.

His legendary contribution to *The Astronomer* was a series of articles entitled 'From the Night Sky', which grew out of a natural love of observing the deep sky and double stars. The Fry 0.20m refractor at the University of London Observatory, Mill Hill, was at his disposal from 1960 to 1983 following arrangements made by Dr Derek McNally, and these observations provided regular material for his articles. John recounted in a letter of 1998 July 16 (to which he added the time of writing, 18h 46m UT, in his typically precise way), that these observing sessions were amongst the happiest days of his life.

This collection still serves as a reminder to all observers that there is a great deal more which can be seen in such objects as star clusters than from a mere glance in the eyepiece. His advice to everyone, including myself, was to spend long periods studying detail at all available magnifications and to attempt to convey all this on to paper. His articles had a particular effect on the reader who could share the excitement of detecting a faint nebula or splitting a close double 'through John's eyes'.

His efforts to spread the word in visual observing were extended to the Southern Astronomical Society (named after Sir James South) which issued a quarterly bulletin in the 1980s. During occasional spells in hospital John's efforts would even extend to the preparation and editing of newsletters for the

staff and fellow patients! He was a great believer in the printed, or should I say typed and duplicated, word.

John Isles, well known to BAA members, recalls that John was his first mentor in astronomy and that he used to live in New Cross, South London, in the street behind his childhood home. John Isles had his first views of double stars and deep sky objects through John Larard's 3-inch refractor and made his first estimates of telescopic variable stars with it. John Larard's observing books were modelled on those of the legendary T. W. Webb, and many people adopted this format for their own observing logs.

An example of his meticulous and thoughtful provoking writing appeared in the *Notes of the Southern Astronomical Society's* Issue 56 in Nov-Dec 1985. John writes 'There comes a time when each person must rest and put down the tools. Stargazers, or Astronomers if you prefer, have urgent, nightly business. When they finish the night, down must be put the Star Atlas and its BD, the eyepieces ($\times 168$ among them?) and observing book. The clock is stopped on the telescope and the dome poises to be shut...'

Observational astronomy techniques have changed since those times but the records left by John and the enthusiastic help given to others live on. We extend our sympathy to Katherine on her sad loss.

Guy M. Hurst

(Photograph of John Larard by Melvyn Taylor)