

## Obituary

### Kenneth J. Goward (1952–2009)

With the death of Ken Goward on 26 February the world of UK amateur astronomy has lost one of its most popular historians, at a tragically young age. Ken was born on 1952 April 14 and had a lifelong interest in astronomy and its history. He spent most of his life in East Anglia and until heart problems forced his early retirement in the 1990s he served as a policeman in London and Essex. As a young 'bobby on the beat' with the 1970s Metropolitan force he gained early notoriety as a man with no fear when he was called to an incident at a London tube station. On arrival at the ticket area he found a very large criminal violently assaulting a Pakistani ticket inspector. Truncheon in hand, the young PC Goward quickly apprehended the assailant and marched him in handcuffs to the local police station, unaware that he had arrested one of the biggest villains in the London area:



none other than the brother of the infamous armed bank robber and 'Public Enemy No. 1' John McVicar.

Sadly, Ken's first marriage did not survive his twenty-two years of service with the police force and when the first signs of cardiac problems surfaced he opted for early retirement to allow him more time to enjoy reasonable health and indulge in his hobby of astronomy.

The 1990s saw Ken's life totally transformed as he met and married a kindred spirit, his young wife Lorraine, and settled blissfully into what he described as his new 'house husband' role. Now retired, Ken at last had more time to observe the night sky and use his 25cm Newtonian, although he often preferred to observe with binoculars.

However, Ken's real passion was astronomical history and the study of the Victo-

rian era astronomers as well as those of the early 1900s. Having settled at Tuddenham St Martin, near Ipswich, Ken became fascinated with the history of Orwell Park Observatory, its 10-inch refractor and the former Astronomer Royal George Biddell Airy, who had also lived in Suffolk. Ken joined the local Orwell Astronomical Society which had access to the huge 10-inch telescope, and quickly became an enthusiastic and highly popular member, being elected as the Orwell Treasurer after only two years of membership. Already a father to his daughter Maggie, Ken became a father again in 1998 when Lorraine gave birth to twin sons, Matthew and Daniel. Determined to attend the BAA eclipse meeting at Truro School in August 1999, Ken had already booked up well in advance for a family room stating 'sex unknown' for his unborn twins on the accommodation form, which caused much amusement in the BAA office at the time.

In June 2002 Ken, Stuart Williams and Allan Chapman founded the Society for the History of Astronomy (SHA) at an inaugural meeting at Wadham College, Oxford, and the society has since gone from strength to



Ken Goward with the SHA stand at the BAA Exhibition meeting at Cambridge in June 2005. (Photos by Martin Moberley)

strength. Ken became the SHA's first treasurer and surely his greatest legacy will be as a co-founder of that society. At almost every big astronomy meeting in the years after the SHA was formed Ken could be found proudly assembling the ornate, almost ecclesiastical, exhibition display for the SHA stand. Ken had also become a highly trusted member of the Orwell Society by this time and in January 2003 he was promoted from Treasurer to Chairman; a prestigious role as Orwell is one of the country's largest local astronomical societies. Ken was universally popular with both SHA and Orwell mem-

bers and despite continuing health issues he always seemed to have energy and enthusiasm for new projects. Ken had started building up a database on Suffolk amateur astronomers and observatories which, sadly, he would never complete.

From a personal perspective, although I had met Ken in the 1990s I first contacted him with a serious plea for information in 2003, when I started to investigate a childhood haunt, the Bury St Edmunds Athenaeum Observatory (*J. Brit. Astron.*

*Assoc.* 115(5), p251–260, 2005). Ken freely supplied all the information he had without any conditions; in fact he posted all his research to me the same day that I enquired! I got to know Ken pretty well over the coming years and he was always the same with everyone he met: modest, patient, very kind and generous, never sarcastic and with a permanent sense of humour. Surely Ken Goward was a man with no enemies. On our second major project, the astronomical life of Will Hay (*J. Brit. Astron. Assoc.* 119(2), 2009), Ken was, once more, a joy to work with.

Much to his frustration, Ken's heart problems became more serious in March 2006 and after major open heart surgery he was forced to take things easy. Although 2007 was a much better year and he oversaw the local arrangements for the BAA Back to Basics Workshop meeting at Ipswich on January 20 of that year, 2008 saw his cardiac problems return; reluctantly he had to accept that he could no longer continue either as Orwell Chairman or SHA Treasurer. But despite his poor health Ken's enthusiasm for anything to do with his young family and the history of astronomy was undaunted and his sense of humour remained as strong as ever. When he was rushed to hospital for an emergency pacemaker operation in January 2009 he still found time while in intensive care to get a message to me regarding Will Hay! It was the last message I would receive from Ken as he died a few weeks later.

The loss of Ken Goward, at the age of 56, is a very painful one, not just for his immediate family but for all his friends in the Orwell Astronomical Society, the SHA, the RAS and the BAA. He was also a highly popular member of the East Anglian Traction Engine Society. He will be sorely missed for his enthusiasm and his passion for astronomical history but, most of all, for his easy going nature and generosity towards all who knew him.

**Martin Moberley**