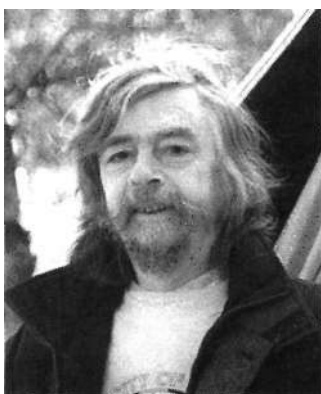


Obituaries

Norman Edward Fisher (1936-1994)

Norman Fisher was born in Croydon, but soon after the beginning of the war the family moved to the tiny village of Tilshead on Salisbury Plain. It was his long walks on the Plain that gave him his love of nature, and the beauty of the dark wartime skies from his remote village bestowed a love of Astronomy he would have for all his life. Young Norman soon took after his father who was very practical. Times were difficult; if something was wanted it had to be designed and built using whatever was available. In addition to his practical skills he was very interested in Science from an early age. He had the idea that light and messages could be sent by what is now known as fibre optics, and approached his science teacher out of class. He was rebuked by the teacher who called it nonsense and said it would never work!



eyepieces, mirror making kits, accessories, repairs or just friendly advice. He had perfected his 'Star-beam' telescope, a 6" or 8" reflector which was very strong and sturdy and incorporated many new design ideas. His home was open house for any amateur and regular weekly telescope making groups were held.

He created another important event in 1981 - 'Astro Camp'. This was originally intended for Croydon members, but soon extended to the Southern Group of Astronomical Societies and the BAA. The idea was an Astronomy holiday under canvas held in Ashdown Forest, Sussex. It is still a very popular event and Norman made it very relaxed and flexible.

For those who worked with Norman on committee he was known to be firm, but fair. He was a very caring person, always willing to put himself out for others. For a man with no formal qualifications his achievements and skills were immense, and his contribution to amateur astronomy cannot be measured. Any design or constructional project was a personal challenge that had to be overcome.

It was at the 1992 'Astro Camp' that he was taken ill and cancer was later diagnosed. He still remained cheerful and keen to help others although he must have been suffering a great deal of pain. He was still designing and enthusiastic right up to the last.

After his funeral on May 31, many returned to his home and solar observing was carried out in his front garden. He would have been pleased with that.

Keith Brackenborough

In March 1963 he joined the Croydon Astronomical Society and by 1967 had become Chairman of the Society, a position he was to hold three times in the coming years. He was also one of the founder trustees of the Society observatory.

He became a lecturer in three dimensional design and display at the London College of Printing and Distributive Trades, and kept this job for the rest of his life. He was a brilliant teacher, highly respected by his colleagues and very popular with the students. He was now involved with all aspects of the construction of the Croydon observatory and the dome was made in sections in his back garden.

He then turned his attention to telescope construction and aimed to produce a high quality telescope at an affordable price. He would help anyone with a problem with telescopes, be it alteration, repair or renovation. In addition to a workshop, his garage and one large room of his house was devoted to this work.

In 1973 he designed and constructed a solar telescope which would keep the image steady on a rolling ship. He was one of the five members of the Croydon society who went to Mauritania on the 'Monte Umbe' BAA Eclipse cruise. His invention worked perfectly and many fine photographs were obtained. He saw his second total eclipse in Zanzibar in 1976.

In 1976 he started, with his wife Margaret, a small trading company, which offered amateur astronomers telescopes,

David Anthony Allen (1946-1994)

By the death of David Allen, after a long and brave battle against cancer, astronomy has lost one of its most brilliant researchers.

He was a graduate of Cambridge University, and even in his student days was producing work of importance. He went to Australia in 1975 as one of the first SRC Fellows, becoming AAO Research Astronomer in 1977 and the first and only permanent member of the Observatory's scientific staff in 1983. He was quick to make his mark; he became a pioneer in infrared techniques, and was the key figure in designing and building new and sophisticated equipment for use with the AAT and other telescopes. His own contributions were very considerable in many fields of research, and he was also an excellent organiser; in 1991-93 he was President of the Astronomical Society of Australia.

David Allen was exceptional among professional astronomers in hav-

ing a great feel for amateur work. He joined the BAA at the age of seventeen, and published many papers, largely in connection with the Moon; though he was not a member in recent years, he always kept in close touch. And quite apart from his technical contributions, he was almost certainly the best of all 'popular' writers.

I last saw him earlier this year, when I was in Australia and he joined me for a *Sky at Night* television programme. He realised then that he had not long to live -

but seeing him 'on camera' one would never have known. His courage was immense, and an inspiration to all those around him.

Astronomy has lost a researcher who had so much to offer; we have all lost a very dear and loyal friend. He will never be forgotten, but his death leaves a gap which cannot be filled.

Patrick Moore

