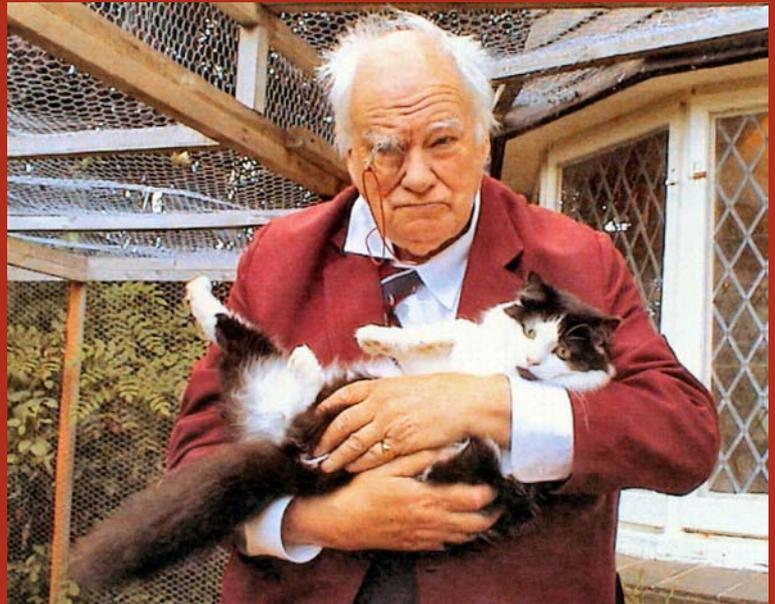


Sir Patrick Moore, CBE, FRS, FRAS (1923–2012)

Over the years since its formation in 1890, the British Astronomical Association has been proud to claim among its members a large number of distinguished astronomers, outstanding observers, influential authors, tireless advocates of astronomy, towering (and at times eccentric) personalities, charismatic and inspirational figures, patient and generous mentors and guides, and globally acknowledged symbols of what amateur astronomy is all about.

But only once have all these qualities come together in a single individual.



Patrick Alfred Caldwell–Moore was unique, and his impact on astronomy and the BAA remarkable to the extent that it is perfectly reasonable to talk of a ‘Patrick era’ in the affairs of our Association. Now that he has left us we embark upon the unknown, for he has been a constant presence for most British astronomers, amateur and professional, alive today.

Those who knew Patrick only in his final years, when he was physically diminished (and deeply frustrated) by infirmity, will not appreciate the extent to which in his pomp he truly was a force of nature – irrepressible, impulsive, controversial, generous, larger-than-life and, yes, at times cussed. He got things done, and he liked to cut through what he saw as unnecessary formality. Once, in the late 1980s, he was present at a meeting of the BAA Council when the discussion of who should write an obituary for a recently deceased member took a particularly circuitous course. By the time the President called the discussion to a close, Patrick had already written the entire obituary himself and handed over his draft.

But he was also sensitive to the requirements of a situation and able to think on his feet to produce an appropriate response. I recall being at a meeting of the Lunar Section in 1967 January when news of the *Apollo 1* tragedy was breaking in the UK. As Section Director Patrick chaired the meeting and, although clearly deeply affected by the event, steered a perfectly judged course between respect for those who had lost their lives and the need to continue with business as usual.



Above: At the telescope as a young man.
Top of page: With his cat Jeannie, 2002.
(Photo courtesy Dr Brian May.)

He gave so much of himself to astronomy and to the BAA, sometimes at the expense of his own interests and wellbeing. The stories are many of his travelling to distant meetings, even when

his health was poor, in order not to disappoint an audience and to sign books for his admirers. Even in recent times he has defied the odds to turn up at events such as Astrofest. His hospitality was also legendary, and he would preside over large parties at his home in Selsey with enthusiasm and at the drop of a hat. The doors of ‘Farthings’ were always open, not only to his friends and colleagues, but also to countless budding astronomers who wrote to him and were invited to visit.

Born in Pinner, Middlesex on 23 March 1923, Patrick was educated at home due to ill health. During World War II he joined the RAF while under age and served as a navigator in Bomber Command. After the War he had a period in teaching before embarking upon his long career as a freelance author and broadcaster. In 1965 he took on the directorship of Armagh Planetarium, but never felt settled in Northern Ireland and returned to Sussex in 1968. The experience proved valuable, however, as he was later able to help with the successful establishment of the South Downs Planetarium.



Mars drawn by Patrick Moore on 1971 Aug 15, 23:50 UT, 317mm refl. x360.

As his reputation grew, he was the recipient of many awards and honours, including honorary degrees from several British universities and medals from astronomical societies both here and abroad. He was awarded the Association’s Walter Goodacre Medal and Gift in 1968. He received a CBE for services to astronomy in 1988 (OBE 1968) and was knighted in 2001, in which year he also became an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society.

Patrick joined the BAA on 1934 November 28 and soon began contributing to the work of its observing Sections. As a teenager, his observing skills were honed by William Sadler Franks, who had been Director of the BAA’s Star Colour Section from 1890 to 1894. Franks took Patrick under his wing and taught him how to use the 6.1-inch (155mm) refractor at the nearby private Brockhurst observatory, where Franks worked as an observer. After Franks’ death in 1935, Patrick was asked to take on his rôle at the observatory, and he continued to use the telescope there until 1939.

Although Patrick came to specialise in lunar and planetary observation, he also submitted a substantial amount of work to other BAA Sections over many decades, and his observing logbooks show him as a prolific and skilled observer. He monitored the great Martian dust storms of 1971 and 1973, and observed the planet with some of the world's largest refractors. He was a tireless observer of Jupiter's atmospheric features, making large numbers of transit timings in a single session and occasionally monitoring entire rotations of the planet when circumstances permitted.

With Saturn he was particularly interested in the ring-plane crossings, on one such occasion recording a possible observation of the then-unknown satellite Janus. He contributed observations of both binocular and telescopic variables to the Variable Star Section, being particularly proud of his long run of observations of the 'slow' nova HR Delphini. In addition to such nocturnal work, Patrick also made daily full-disk drawings of the Sun for many years.

He became a prominent member of the Lunar Section during the directorship of H. P. Wilkins, when he served as Section secretary. During those years he proved an able right-hand man to Wilkins, accompanying him on observational visits to the observatory at Meudon and co-authoring with him the classic work *The Moon* (1955), which featured Wilkins' 300-inch map together with a complete description of the Moon's visible surface.

However, the bulk of Patrick's observational work was done from his home, initially in East Grinstead and then in Selsey, using first a 3-inch (76mm) refractor and then reflectors of 8.5-inch (216mm) and 12.5-inch (317mm) aperture. In the 1960s he acquired a 5-inch (127mm) Cooke refractor, as well as the 15-inch (381mm) reflector that became his main instrument for the rest of his observing career.

Patrick stepped down from his rôle as Lunar Section secretary in 1955, when he was invited to assume the Directorship of the Mercury and Venus Section. This could have been a very difficult task, for he was following Henry McEwen who had been Director for sixty years; but Patrick successfully negotiated the transition and served as an effective Director until 1963. He left a legacy of well-written reports, as well as encouraging members to pursue their own projects. In particular, he was the first to produce reports on each elongation of Venus in order to cover a complete 8-year cycle.



A young Patrick Moore at the Brockhurst Observatory at East Grinstead, about 1935.



Drawings by Patrick Moore of the partial solar eclipse of 1936 June 19.

The following year he was appointed Director of the Lunar Section, and this too could have proved a poisoned chalice, for the Section had been directed since 1956 by a succession of professional astronomers, each of whom had served for a relatively brief time. Patrick was the perfect choice to steer the Lunar Section through the turbulent years of the 1960s, a period when the whole nature of lunar science changed under the impact of the *Orbiter* and *Apollo* programmes.

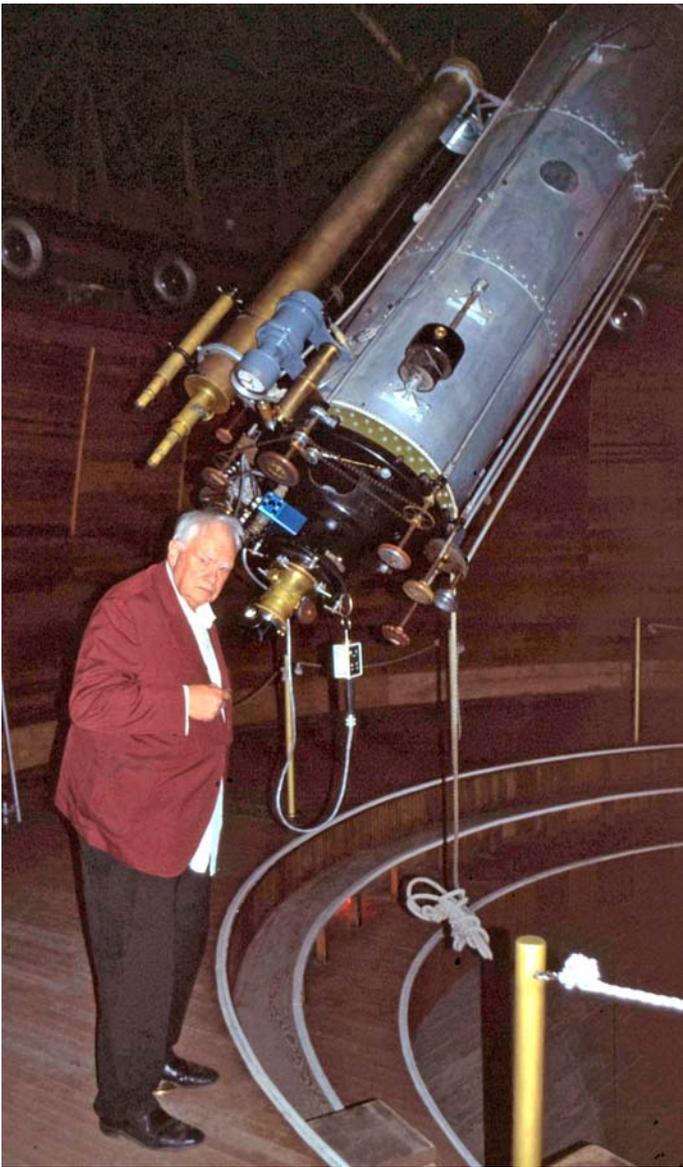
His main task was to keep up momentum in the face of increasing professional encroachment on what had previously been the amateur's territory. This he achieved through the force of his own enthusiasm and his skilful tailoring of the Section's observing programme. With the help of Phil Ringsdore, he started the monthly Section *Circulars* that are still produced today, and he also introduced regular Section meetings at venues throughout the country, which in those pre-internet days served to bring people together and create a sense of shared endeavour.

Those who belonged to the Section during Patrick's two periods as Director (1964-'68 and 1971-'76) will remember being caught up in the excitement of those days, as he encouraged group observing projects (such as that which led to David Allen's paper on the then little-observed limb crater Einstein, known at that time as Caramuel). Patrick also increased the Section's emphasis on the observation of transient lunar phenomena (TLPs), working in conjunction with professionals from America. The result was that the Lunar Section attracted several hundred members, many of whom were active observers.

Patrick's own lunar studies were essentially cartographic in nature. Apart from his work with Wilkins, he was also invited to participate in the US Air Force mapping project carried out at Flagstaff in the run-up to the *Apollo* programme. He did, however, also venture into more theoretical territory, co-authoring with Peter Cattermole *The Craters of the Moon* (1967), one of the last works to advance a coherent volcanic theory of crater formation.

As well as his work in directing two of the Association's observing Sections, Patrick also served as BAA President from 1982 to 1984, a rôle that almost coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of his joining. Apart from the leadership he offered and the example he set during his term of office, he also demonstrated the breadth of his expertise in two fine Presidential Addresses to the Association, one on the mapping of Mars, the other on the mapping of Venus. He also introduced the current 'Notes and News' into the *Journal*, beginning the process of publishing observations quickly, a department that has much expanded over the years.

The 75th anniversary of his membership of the BAA, in 2009 November, was marked by a special meeting in his honour held in the Faraday Lecture Theatre at the Royal



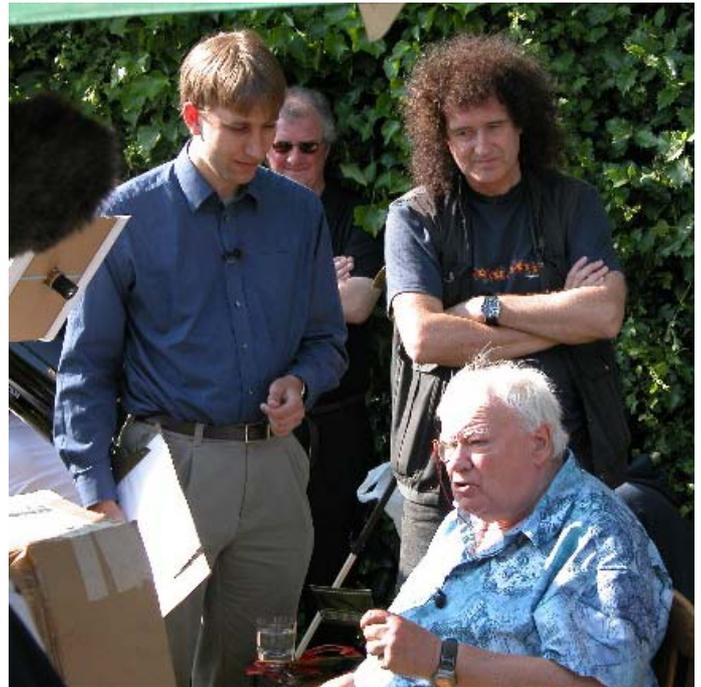
At the Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Arizona in 1996. Photo by Chris Doherty.

Institution in London, an event jointly sponsored with the Royal Astronomical Society. The theme of the day was 'Developments in amateur astronomy: Past, present and future', and Patrick himself gave a presentation, together with Peter Cattermole, suitably entitled 'The Craters of the Moon'.

Those who were there that day, or who have seen the DVD of the occasion, will long remember a moving and effective tribute to a remarkable man. The last word, fittingly, belonged to Patrick: with typical modesty he deflected attention away from himself and towards the BAA which, he said, had done an 'immense amount of good'.

Much has been written elsewhere, and quite rightly, about the public Patrick Moore: the tireless and much-loved presenter of the BBC's *The Sky at Night* since 1957; the author of hundreds of books that have served to inspire generations of astronomers, amateur and professional, since the appearance of *Guide to the Moon* in 1953; the celebrity television performer and lecturer; the musician and composer; the unlikely cricketer and purveyor of leg-spin; the BAFTA Award winner; and the great communicator and fearless advocate of often controversial causes and opinions. These are all part of the phenomenon that was Patrick Moore.

But here in the BAA, we were privileged to see a Patrick that few others knew, as he served for over seventy-five years the Associa-



Observing the transit of Venus with Dr Chris Lintott (left) and Dr Brian May in his garden at Selsey, 2004 June 8. Photo by Martin Mobberley.

tion he loved. This he did as a gifted astronomical observer, loyal supporter and advocate, informal meetings recorder, public relations officer, Council member, Section Director, President, Honorary Life Vice-President (a unique appointment within the Association) and, not least, as a memorable presence at meetings and a frequent and authoritative contributor to our publications.

We truly have lost someone very special.

Bill Leatherbarrow, BAA President, 2011–2013

A special day at the Royal Institution in honour of Sir Patrick Moore

This four disk DVD set is a complete record of this outstanding meeting, held in 2009 to mark Patrick's 75th year of continuous membership of the Association.

The disks include professionally filmed and edited coverage of all of the presentations made on the day along with extensive additional material including an exclusive interview with Patrick at his home in Selsey.



The post-free price of this set is £18 (£14 for BAA members) and it can be ordered from the web address below

www.britastro.org/pm_at_ri_2009

