titled *Star-Names and their Meanings* (G. E. Stechert, New York, 1899).

[2] Ridpath, Ian, *Star Tales* (Lutterworth, 1988).

[3] Ridpath, Ian, *Star Tales*, 2nd edition (Lutterworth, 2018). The online version is available at http://www.ianridpath.com/startales/contents.htm

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Horologium_(constellation)&oldid=1519625

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Horologium_(constellation)&diff=2213483

[6] Lacaille, N. L. de, 'Table des ascensions droites et des déclinaisons apparentes des Etoiles australes… ', *Mémoires* de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, Paris, 1752 (but published 1756), p. 588.

[7] I thank Françoise Launay for linguistic advice.

[8] The dial was illuminated by a faint lamp so Lacaille could read the time and jot down his observations. He described the procedure as follows: "As soon as a star entered or left the plates of the reticle, the observer, closing his right eye, which was only used to look in the telescope, and keeping his left eye open, turned a little to present a little paper to the light of the dark lantern at the clock. He recorded his observation on it and quickly returned to the telescope." Evans, David S., *Lacaille: Astronomer, Traveler* (Pachart Publishing, Tucson, 1992), p.122.

[9] Lacaille's clock was made by the leading Parisian craftsman Julien Le Roy (1686–1759), but this does not seem to have survived.

[10] Lacaille, N. L. de, *Coelum australe stelliferum*, (Guerin & Delatour, Paris, 1763).

[11] Allen's entry for Horologium can be read online at https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Topics/astronomy/_Texts/secondary/ALLSTA/Horologium*.html

[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Horologium_(constellation)&diff=710816283

David Osmond Le Conte, FRAS

1940 - 2020

by Jason Hill and Jean Dean

David Le Conte was born in Guernsey on the Spring equinox of 1940 and shortly afterwards was evacuated for the duration of the war as German forces occupied Guernsey. Upon returning, David attended Elizabeth College and then went on to Edinburgh University, from where he graduated with a degree in physics. His scientific career began at the Edinburgh Royal Observatory before moving to Aberystwyth University where he worked on developing astronomical optics. In 1964 his work in Aberystwyth led to his being recruited by the Smithsonian Institution and moving to America where he worked for NASA's space programme tracking satellites with advanced optics and lasers.

The mid-1960s saw activity in space science at fever pitch with the Americans working towards their "end of the decade" task of "putting a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth". David's contribution to this significant period of human endeavour saw him working as the manager of the Smithsonian Institution's Astrophysical Observing Station in Maui, Hawaii. It was whilst working in Hawaii that David was able to take the only photographs of the moment on 21 September 1968 when Apollo 8 fired its rocket motors for trans-lunar injection and the astronauts became the first humans to leave the Earth's orbit and head for the Moon.[1] In 1969 his space monitoring work for the Smithsonian Institution took him to Arizona where he was involved in photographing the progress of the Apollo 11 mission that first took men to the Moon. With characteristic modesty David later observed that, "I'm amazed that a little lad from Guernsey could make

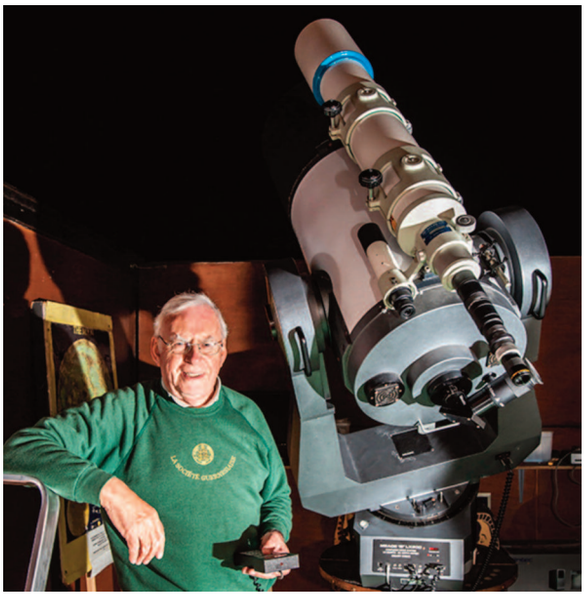

Fig. 1: David Le Conte at La Société Guernesiaise Astronomical Observatory

Fig. 2: Apollo 8 translunar injection (TLI) rocket burn which sent the first humans toward the moon, taken by David Le Conte from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observing Station in Maui, Hawaii, 21 December 1968

his way to the heart of the space programme in the USA."

After the excitement of Project Apollo, David became Executive Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Research Foundation in Washington and then a department manager at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona. In 1978, he returned to Guernsey where he held several senior posts within the Civil Service and in 2005 was awarded the greatest honour of being elected a Jurat of the Royal Court, a role that required him to be involved with the administration and dispensing of justice in serious criminal and civil cases as well as civic spectacle and tradition.

David's interest in astronomy continued with his research into local historical astronomy and subsequent publications on Guernsey-born astronomer Warren de la Rue who pioneered early astrophotography techniques, and artist Paul Jacob Naftel who contributed to astronomy through his paintings of the total solar eclipse of 1870. David also researched the construction and orientation of megalithic tombs in the Channel Islands and their possible correlation with sunrise. This led David and his wife to develop an interest in sundials and they documented over 25 sundials within Guernsey, dating from as early as 1312 to the most recent Liberation Monument which was designed by local artist Eric Snell to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Guernsey's liberation from occupying German Forces and which was unveiled on 9 May 1995 by HRH The Prince of Wales.

The Liberation Monument hewn out of Guernsey granite, is a sundial with a 5m obelisk gnomon that casts a shadow along a curved 40 metre seat. David used his mathematical and astronomical skills to determine the exact orientation of the monument and inscriptions along the seat so the shadow of the sun on May 9th falls on precisely determined spots marking the surrender of the German Forces at 7.15am, the landing of the British Liberation Forces at 8.00am and the unfurling of the Union Flag at 10.00am. David's love of historical astronomy led him to become a founding member of the Society for the History of Astronomy in 2002.

One of David's most enduring contributions to astronomy upon returning to Guernsey was joining the fledgeling Astronomy Section of La Société Guernesiaise in 1978. He quickly immersed himself within the club's activities, organising a permanent home and the construction of an observatory building equipped with a 16" research grade Meade Schmidt Cassegrain telescope and a 5" Takahashi refracting telescope which was opened by Sir Patrick Moore in 1993 and is still in use today. That same year David was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society having being proposed by Patrick.

Under David's unwavering and infectious enthusiasm for astronomy, the club grew in membership and now has a comprehensive educational and public outreach program which David actively participated in until his passing. One of David's greatest legacies has been encouraging and helping to shape the career of future astronomers. For over four decades he has been a mentor to many youngsters on Guernsey who have gone on to pursue Physics and Astronomy as a career. The most recent was accepted as a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in October 2020, having being nominated by David, and is shortly to embark on a year studying Astrophysics at Harvard University.

For those of us who were privileged to know David, we will always remember his genial manner and enthusiasm for Science and Astronomy - and have cause to be thankful we were able to move in his orbit. *(Photos: David Le Conte)*

[1] Le Conte, D., *Apollo Memories*, SHA Bulletin, no.32 (Autumn 2019)