



spectrum

staff news and events

April 2008

TAKING SCHOOL KIDS ON A JOURNEY THROUGH THE UNIVERSE

While astronomers easily understand each others' passion for our subject, it is a different matter to get someone else excited about what we do every day. Pretty pictures are certainly a draw, but to get school children to want to study science takes a lot of extra effort. One such endeavour is the Journey Through The Universe programme in the US which is supported by staff from the STFC's Joint Astronomy Center (JAC) in Hilo, Hawaii.

FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE

Journey through the Universe is a national educational initiative developed by the National Center for Space, Earth, and Flight Sciences Education (NC-SEFSE). This programme is funded by grants from NASA's Office of the Chief Education Officer and the Science Mission Directorate. The programme seeks to take entire communities, students, teachers, and families to the frontier of science, engaging them in topics in math, science, and technology, to foster general interest, and hopefully to encourage many students to pursue careers in our field.

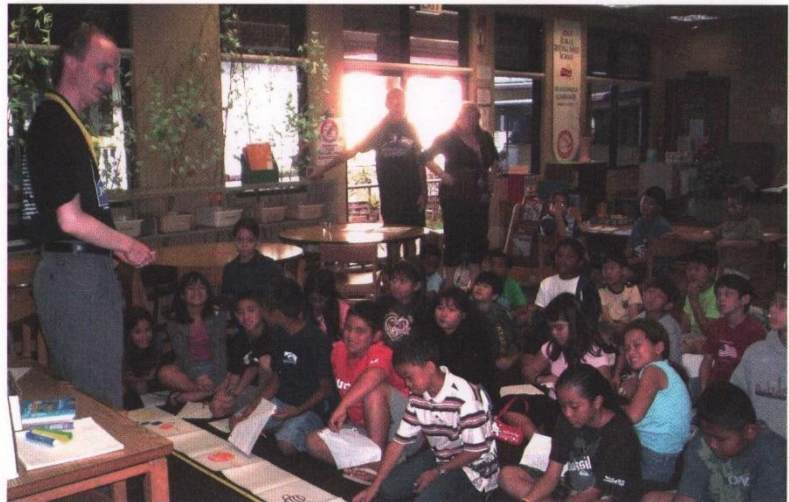
AT THE TOP

Hilo, Hawaii, is currently one of 10 communities around the US that are designated Journey through the Universe sites. The Hilo programme has been identified as the best and most effective of these, due to the enthusiasm of the large number of astronomers participating.

ASTRONOMY WEEK

During one week in February astronomers go into classrooms, sharing their expertise and excitement in astronomy with students and teachers.

Teachers take part in several teacher training courses aimed at increasing their



UKIRT's Andy Adamson scales our Solar System

astronomy knowledge as well as awareness of local resources. In addition to the week-long school visits, astronomers also participated in a family science night.

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

UKIRT astronomers Andy Adamson, Chris Davis, and Watson Varricatt, as well as JAC Outreach Specialist Inge Heyer, participated in the Journey to the Universe program. The children were in grade from kindergarten to high school, and the topics covered ranged from the Solar System, to the inner workings of a telescope. We could clearly sense the excitement in the class rooms, from both the students and the teachers. Judging by the number of follow-up school visit requests received, the teachers will continue to regard us as a resource for astronomy teaching throughout the rest of the year.

📍 Inge Heyer

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Tribute to departed friends



Louise Merrison

It is with great sadness that we report the sudden and unexpected death of our colleague and friend Louise Merrison on 8 January 2008.

Louise had worked at RAL for over 21 years, joining the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory on 6 October 1986 when it was part of SERC. After joining, Louise worked in many areas at RAL including payroll, travel, recruitment and in administration for employees and university visitors on Long Term Attachment overseas. Louise then became a very

valued member of the Technology HR team based at RAL which was formed as a result of FTF (Fit for the Future).

Friends and colleagues attended Louise's funeral on Friday 18 January in Didcot and a collection of £404 held in her memory was, at the family's request, donated to Cancer Research.

We will miss Louise very much and will especially remember both her smile and her laugh. It was a very rare day when we didn't see many examples of both.

Our sincere and deepest

condolences go to her husband and two children.

📍 **Miriam Waters**

With regret we also pay tribute to Tony Fordham Skelton who died in December. Tony, aged 43, was a band 4 Senior Research Associate at Daresbury Laboratory who joined the Lab in 1997 from Durham. He was a talented molecular biologist who will be sadly missed by his colleagues.

📍 **Tony Buckley**
Miroslav Papiz



IN THE NEWS! *Highlights from the Media Team*

INSIGHT TO THE WORLD OF WESTMINSTER

Two STFC scientists were in the media limelight when they took part in the Royal Society MP-Scientist pairing scheme. Kate Lancaster (CLF) was paired with Anne Snelgrove (Labour, South Swindon) and Jim Clarke (SRD) paired with Mike Hall (Labour, Weaver Vale).

Over the best part of a week both Kate and Jim were out and about absorbing the daily experiences of Westminster life. Both attended a Parliamentary and Scientific Committee meeting on

natural hazards; the Innovation, Universities and Skills Select Committee session on higher education issues and joined other scientists on the scheme to breakfast with Phil Willis MP (Chairman of the IUS Select Committee) and Ian Pearson MP (Science Minister). To top all that, they also got to experience Prime Minister's Questions live.

Highlights of Kate's time with Anne Snelgrove were attendance at a women's summit at Labour Party HQ and spending an afternoon



Anne Snelgrove, Labour MP for South Swindon (left) and Kate Lancaster (right) at the Royal Society

at the Department of Transport where they discussed questions for transport to be published for the following week's business. Kate got to see how science is so important to making policies, even those not directly associated with science and technology issues.

Jim attended the EFRA select committee enquiry into the summer floods; spent time with Mike on constituency issues chatting about daily life as an MP; and watched a House of Lords debate on the Climate Change Bill – he was very

impressed by the high scientific content (both informed and accurate).

On the final day of the Westminster week, Kate, Jim and their MPs attended a breakfast reception at the Royal Society.

The completion of this unique experience turned the tables on Anne Snelgrove and Mike Hall, when they joined Kate and Jim on home ground at the laboratories – in pursuit of science.

📍 **Jim Gallagher**



Jim Clarke (left) and Mike Hall, Labour MP for Weaver Vale (right)



STFC at the ASE Annual Meeting 2008

ASE SUPER STAND

STFC Swindon office were joined by colleagues from Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton immediately after the Christmas holidays for the Association of Science Education (ASE) Annual Meeting. And, for the first time, shared the stand with the rest of the Research Councils.

RESEARCH COUNCIL RESOURCE CENTRE

There were still the ever popular range of printed resources for schools, including new materials written as part of the awareness drive surrounding the Large Hadron Collider at CERN and other resources from the six councils.

SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the presence in the exhibitors tent STFC also had input into a programme of presentations. Tony Buckley (DL and RAL),

Francisco Diego and Maggie Aderin (Science in Society Fellows) and Gareth James (Swindon) offered presentations for STFC, whilst others were delivered for Research Councils UK and Researchers in Residence (a Research Councils funded project to encourage early career researchers to work alongside teachers in the classroom).

The stand received a large number of visitors, distributed a lot of materials and, as a consequence, many more teachers will have a better understanding of the work of the research councils and how it can be used to support their teaching. The Science in Society Team would like to thank all those who offered to help, who manned the stand and who presented. Their efforts all contributed to make the event successful.

📍 Gareth James

Assessing the value of the RAL and Daresbury libraries

Staff in the library services at RAL and Daresbury Laboratory are very familiar with receiving requests for information made by users, but how is all this information used? What value does it add?

A study has recently been carried out of the value of the library service to the organisation as a whole.

Something that is particularly striking is the range of ways that the library has added value for different people. It is not just about offering a collection of books and journals, but a much wider range of resources such as databases and online reference material. And there is also the personal and expert service: tracking down hard-to-find articles and giving advice on suitable

resources. Meanwhile, the ePubs repository of papers and reports exemplifies the scientific output of the organisation to the world and has a great impact: in one three-month period last year, over 250,000 copies of papers were downloaded from ePubs.

The case studies show in vivid terms the real benefits of the library services, enabling the development of innovative industrial methods or extensive publicity for scientific results. The full report on the value of the library service can be seen on the library web pages.

The library staff are very grateful to those who gave their time to talk about the use they make of the library services.

📍 Simon Lambert

Daresbury security awards

Pictured receiving their City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in Security Services are Security Officers Dave Woodall, George Mahon & Mike McCabe. Henry Gun-Why, Head of Estates and Operations at the Daresbury campus presented them with their awards. The NVQ's are issued to raise professionalism and promote consistency throughout the Security team.





STFC & Parliament

Select Committee CSR07 Inquiry

Keith Mason appeared before the Commons Innovation, Universities and Skills (IUS) Select Committee in early January to give evidence about the STFC science budget allocation. The oral evidence is available on the House

of Commons web site in the form of an uncorrected transcript at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/select.htm>. However, technical problems mean they could not broadcast a live web stream recording. An audio recording of the session is available at www.parliamentlive.tv.

implications of the funding shortfall that they hastily scheduled visits to three STFC sites: RAL on 31 January, the UK ATC on 5 February and to Daresbury on 18 February. The site visits were invaluable to the Select Committee in providing an opportunity to hear the personal views of people within the organisation.

of the Research Councils. The Select Committee plan to publish a report on their findings in the next few weeks, a copy will be available on the UK Parliamentary website.

A BIG THANK YOU
On behalf of the Chair of the Committee, Phil Willis MP, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who took part in any of the sessions. And I'd also like to say thanks to those people who did such a great job in helping to arrange each visit and by helping to ensure each day ran smoothly.

© Nigel Calvin



GROUND-LEVEL OPINION

The Select Committee have taken a great interest in how the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) settlement has affected STFC. Such was their concern at the

DEPARTMENTAL EVIDENCE

The Committee concluded their inquiry with one further session to take evidence from Ian Pearson, the Science Minister, and Sir Keith O'Nions – Director

The MICE Muon Beam takes shape:

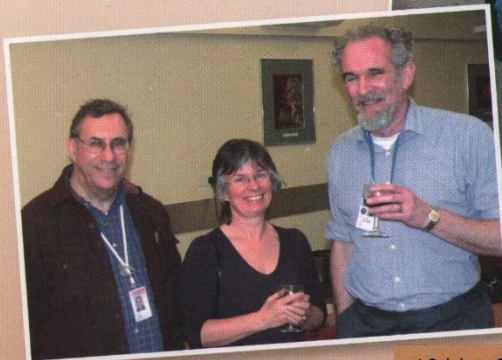
Over the Christmas shutdown the upstream portions of the MICE Muon Beam were installed. This major milestone was achieved after years of planning by the international Muon Ionisation Cooling Experiment (MICE) collaboration* of which the STFC laboratories and UK University groups are key members. Supported and encouraged by STFC management, the enthusiasm, dedication, and sheer hard work of the MICE team brought the shutdown work to a successful conclusion. After taking a well earned break at the end of the shutdown, the team has prepared the beam line

for commissioning which, it is hoped, will begin at the end of March. The experiment itself will now be built up over the next two years and will culminate in the demonstration of ionisation cooling; a technique that is essential for the Neutrino Factory.

© Ken Long



Celebrating MICE at RAL



* Belgium, China, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, and the US.

STOP PRESS

The MICE Muon Beam was operated successfully for the first time in the evening of Sunday 29 March 2008



ROE Jamboree

On 16 January staff at the UK ATC and the Institute for Astronomy, which share the ROE site, came together for their biannual Jamboree. At this event all members of staff are given one minute and one powerpoint slide to tell colleagues about their work, hobbies or a topic dear to their hearts.

As usual this was an entertaining and enlightening event with contributions from everyone from senior members of staff to first year PhD students who had arrived

in Edinburgh as recently as one week previously.

Highlights included a pre-recorded video message from a scientist observing in Hawaii, the Grid Technologist's Song to the tune of Gilbert and Sullivan's Modern Major General and the free admission that leading the project scientists group has much in common with herding cats.

The afternoon was rounded off with the opportunity to indulge in a chat and a beer courtesy of the IfA.

🗨️ **Eleanor Gilchrist**

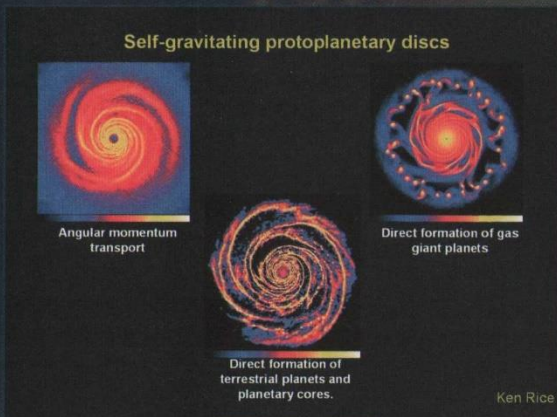
Hi, I'm Matt...

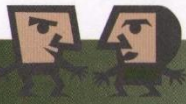


4th Year PhD student working on SCUBA-2 (supervised by Wayne Holland and Peter Brand)

Research interests: superconducting detectors and cryogenics

Also interested in archery, whisky and beer





RAL Fencing Club

A new club was formed at RAL with help from the Recreational Society – the RAL Fencing Club. In the five months since it was formed 10 experienced fencers have come forward from all over the site to dust off their masks and jackets to engage in duels on Tuesday lunchtimes in R58 sports hall.

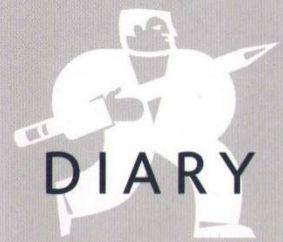
The aim of the club is to promote the sport of fencing amongst both experienced fencers and

complete beginners alike. To that end we have already completed two beginners' courses as run by our own qualified coach, Austen Rose, from Diamond. Beginners are allowed to use club kit for the duration of the six week course, which teaches all the basic principals of foil fencing and allow them to take on the more

experienced fencers and also progress on to use the Epee and Sabre.

The percentage of those who've subsequently decided the sport is for them and are continuing to fence beyond the initial course is extremely high. Mark Westall, founder of the club, reports that they are enjoying themselves and making good progress. The third group have just commenced their course and, despite a healthy waiting list of wannabe D'Artagnan's, there will be vacancies for the next course towards the end of May. If you are interested in trying out this unusual sport for the first time, or have past experience and wish to come back to it, then contact Mark Westall (m.e.westall@rl.ac.uk).

S Mark Westall



30 APRIL
**UNDERSTANDING PLANET
MIGRATION**
ROE Lecture, Lecture
Theatre, UK ATC, 16:00;

9 MAY
MAKING WAVES
Talking Science Lecture,
Pickavance Lecture
Theatre RAL, 10:00
& 19:00
David Robinson
Contact: Elizabeth Clarke;

16 MAY
**CHESTER ZOO
– PAST AND PRESENT**
Talking Science Lecture,
DL Merrison Lecture
Theatre, 19:00
John Makinson
Contact: Tony Buckley;

10 JUNE
**VISIT BY MEMBERS
OF THE INSTITUTE
OF MANAGEMENT**
Exhibition Area, RAL
Contact: Bekky Stredwick.

**Have you got an event
that you would like
included in the Diary?**

**Send your stories or
ideas to the Editor,
Jim Gallagher
(jim.gallagher@stfc.ac.uk)
or give him a call on
(01793) 442037.**

The deadline for the next
edition is 30 May.



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