Editorial

Chairman’s Chat
We should have more faith in the England football team; had we known they were going to get as far as the quarter finals and that their 2-0 quarter final victory over Sweden would occur sometime late afternoon on Saturday 7th July, then we may not have organized our AGM for that precise moment! In addition to that a loud and vibrant ‘Gay Pride’ march had been scheduled (they clearly had no faith either!) which made my motorbike journey to the venue at the Boot & Flogger somewhat interesting. Having stopped to view the scientific offerings at Christie’s (where the security guards were so wrapped up in watching iPads of the game, you could help yourself if you wished), I then diverted around the march and, following my nose, found myself passing through joyous singing throngs the further south I went - at one point a fan even hitched a lift! Fortunately it was all in high spirits and I arrived intact – thank goodness we didn’t lose! It transpired that Davies, who runs the place, don’t play football, so we found we were in the quietest inn in London – a genuine oasis of calm. As members arrived and drinks were bought, we relocated to an airy courtyard to meet and catch up properly. As 6pm approached we relocated to an air conditioned room and transacted the AGM efficiently and then went for another sharpener before being shown to a large dining room and enjoying a convivial meal – it was lovely to see some new faces and we were only sorry the footie had prevented others from making it.

After quick run home, it was up early to Glaziers Hall where some old regulars were already loitering to gain access. The Fair ran smoothly and we had a steady footfall throughout the whole 10 am-3 pm opening time. The venue was lauded and the hosting Livery were delighted with how it all ran; my only regret is we had spare capacity and everyone would have liked a stronger turnout. It’s likely we’ll run this event with the AGM at a similar time next year as it works well with our calendar, but with more notification and better advertising, we hope for a stronger take up. Before you ask why it’s not on a Saturday, the reason is that Borough Market is and so the access would be nigh on impossible for stand holders. In the afternoon we went upstairs to hear three excellent talks which had a very good participation and show that this event really could evolve into something special; there’ll be more on the talks and the AGM Weekend in general on pp. 4-5 of this issue.

Looking ahead, we have our annual ‘Medal Lecture’ to look forward to on Friday, November 9th (see ‘Current and Future Events’ on p. 14 and the flyer in this issue). Simon Schaffer (professor of the history and philosophy of science at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge) will be our speaker and I have no doubt will be excellent. We also plan a modest adjustment to the format of the evening – historically we have organized a buffet supper afterwards yet, however it was organized, always drew complaints for either quantity or quality, so this year we will adjourn for a glass of sherry and some simple nibbles (for free) and then use a local restaurant for as many as would like to come for a modest charge. Please return the enclosed form ASAP so we can gauge the size of room needed. I look forward to seeing many of you at Burlington House on the 9th November for what promises to be a very special evening.

Charles Miller

Cover: The Cole Theodolite Recreated
It was the remarkable restoration by an army of craft-specialist restorers of the external and interior fabric of Windsor Castle after the disastrous fire of 20 November 1992, that made me aware that the old craft techniques are still very much with us. There are master carpenters who can still construct a hammer-beam ceiling or cabinet makers who can recreate Augustus Pugin’s 19-foot long oak and rosewood ornate gilded sideboard, and there are the myriad of other crafts which were needed to restore Windsor Castle to its former glory: craftsmen working in stained glass, parquetting, leadwork, brass and copper, gilding, and weaving silk and other fabrics, to name but a few. The Windsor restoration project formally ended with a reception by the Queen on 17 November 1997. I have profound respect for those who are keeping alive the skill of the early instrument makers. One of these is Jeffrey Lock who I am pleased has agreed to write up another of his remarkable creations for us. We first met him in the December 2017 issue (No. 135, pp. 9-12) where he describes his restoration of a 17th-century altazimuth theodolite. This time he describes his recreation of the Humphrey Cole theodolite, inspired by the instrument he examined at the Museums of the History of Science in Oxford (shown here). The Oxford instrument is signed ‘Humfrey Cole’ and dated 1586. The spelling of his name is not fixed as he also used: ‘Humfray, Humphry and Humphrey’. It is the earliest complete theodolite known, and was designed to be easily taken apart so that the horizontal circle could be used independently, while the vertical semi-circle could have been attached to a plane table alidade. For further details see the Museum’s website. Inv. no. 55130. © Museum of the History of Science.

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