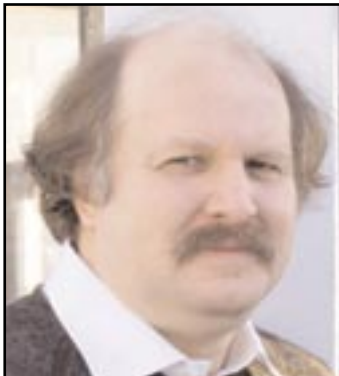


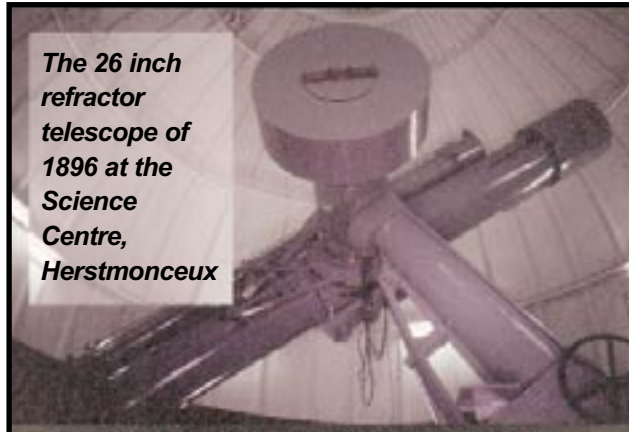
links

the bulletin of the newcomen society

First-ever history of science professor at RI



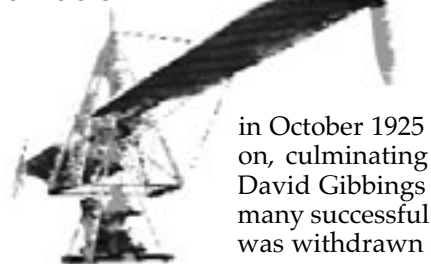
Newcomen Society president, Frank James, was appointed last December to be Professor of the History of Science at the Royal Institution, the first time that such an appointment has been made. He made specific mention of his presidency of the Society.



The 26 inch refractor telescope of 1896 at the Science Centre, Herstmonceux

THE SUMMER MEETING was based at the University of Sussex in Brighton. Members visited the Herstmonceux Science Centre, where they enjoyed a guided tour round the Equatorial Group of telescopes. The party also visited the Kent and East Sussex Railway and Volk's Electric Railway, and rode on both of them. Some recalled their childhood memories in the Toy and Model Museum while others looked at the two windmills called Jack and Jill. Other sights included the Brighton Engineerium with its beam engine and the original 1936 Beehive terminal at Gatwick.

The bird that never flew into mainstream aviation



Helicopters with tip-driven rotors were a good idea which never quite made it. Brennan's machine (artist's impression left) flew several flights of 20 - 30 yards at up to five feet on 2 June, 80 years ago this year. The rotor tip propellers were driven through shafts inside the aerofoils, and bevel gears. There were stability problems, the machine crashed in October 1925 and funding was withdrawn. But the idea lived on, culminating in the Fairey *Rotodyne*, whose story is told by David Gibbins in the March issue of *Links*. This machine made many successful flights but, due to lack of orders, the programme was withdrawn in February 1962.

Links publishes a regular 'Help needed' column in which authors tell readers of their research problems. This issue features Capt Durnall (1873-1947), pioneer of thermal-electric traction.

In the pioneering days of electricity generation, local power stations provided an essential service to their surrounding areas. March *Links* tells the story of the Isle of Sheppey station which supplied a light railway, a dockyard and a tramway.

western branch activities

Three addresses to Western Branch members were reported in the March issue. The first was a look at the life of Joshua Clowes (1736-1795) by Newcomen Society member G C Lewis. Clowes played a major role in the canal building mania of the time but he was overshadowed by James Brindley. However, much of his work can be seen today.

Anthony Burton, whose biography of Trevithick was published in 2000, talked about 'The Cornish Giant'. He was inventive, had a furious temper and put a huge amount of energy, time and his own money into his enterprises. He was buried in a pauper's grave at Dartford church.

Canon Brian Arman, editor of the Broad Gauge Society's magazine, continued the journey from Paddington to Penzance. He updated some of the pictures that had come to light since the first part of the talk in January 2004.

The Branch chairman, Dr Bryan Lawton, received a presentation of a newly minted insignia from David Worth, which had its first outing at the Yeovil helicopter weekend, arousing much comment.



THE AGM

The new president for the session beginning 1 October will be Miss Julia Elton, who was elected at the AGM on 12 January. Other officers will be Prof David Perrett as vice president, Mr Tim Crighton as hon treasurer and Dr Peter

Merriman as hon secretary. Three members of Council were elected: Mr Graham Matheson, Mr Robert Taylor and Mr David Worth.

The meeting also approved a rise in the annual subscription of £3 - 5 for individual members according to class of membership