

Previous Winners

- 2006 Dr Tom Richards
For his broad ranging CCD photometry lightcurve observations particularly of minor planets, variable stars and exoplanet searches.
- 2004 Mr Colin Bembrick
For photometric lightcurve observations of minor planets and derivation of their rotation periods.
- 2002 The Reynolds Amateur Photometry Team
For their substantial contribution to photometric observations of variable stars.
- 2000 Mr Andrew Robert Pearce
For significant and extensive visual observations of comets, variable stars and novae.
- 1998 Mr Gordon Garradd
For significant contributions in the observation of asteroids, comets, novae and supernovae.
- 1996 Mr Peter Williams
For his extensive on-going visual observations of variable stars, especially the R Coronae Borealis variables.
- 1994 Mr Paul Camilleri
For discoveries of novae and Mira variables and the development of simple photographic techniques for nova searches.
- 1992 Dr Mal Wilkinson
For the design and construction of a radio-telescope and subsequent observations of the Io-Jupiter system and for his development of a model for the emissions.
- 1990 Mr Barry Adcock
For telescope design work and planetary observations.
- 1988 Mr Robert McNaught
For photographic nova and supernova observations and discoveries.
- 1986 The Reverend Robert Evans
For visual discoveries of supernovae.
- 1983 Mr Byron Soulsby
For work on the oblateness of the umbral shadow.
- 1981 Mr Bill Bradfield
For the discovery, up to that time, of 11 comets.
- 1978 no award
- 1975 Mr David Herald
For observations of Baily's Beads in the solar eclipse of 20 June 1974.
- 1973 Mr S.J. Elwin
For photometric observations of the occultation of Beta Scorpii by Jupiter.



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Incorporated in the ACT
ABN 37 660 297 848

The 2008 Berenice Page Medal

Presented at the NACAA
Penrith, 22 March 2008

The Berenice Page Medal is awarded every two years by the Astronomical Society of Australia (ASA). It came into being as the result of a bequest to the Society from the estate of the late Mrs Berenice Page of Brisbane. Berenice and her husband, Arthur, were foundation members of the ASA when it was formed in 1966. Although most ASA members are professional astronomers, the Pages were readily accepted as members because of the indispensable part they both played in collaborating with Bruce Slee and others from the CSIRO Division of Radiophysics in the *IAU Flare Star Programme* in the 1960's.

Berenice Rose was trained as a pharmaceutical chemist, graduating in 1951. She moved up through the profession and was managing her own pharmacy in Brisbane in the late 1960's. Throughout this time she had a deep interest in astronomy, building her own 22.5cm Newtonian telescope in the 1950's. In 1963 she became involved in the *Flare Star Visual Programme*, working with Arthur Page. In a match made in the heavens, she married Arthur in 1964. Together they established the Page Observatory near Brisbane and Berenice undertook the construction of a 31cm Schmidt for photographic observations, mainly for flare stars. Later, the Observatory was moved further out of Brisbane.

Berenice and Arthur contributed a great deal to the *Flare Star Programme*, and to astronomy in general, throughout the 1960's. Then, at the height of her career, Berenice was struck down by a cerebral haemorrhage and died in July 1970 at just over 40 years of age. Amateur and professional astronomy alike suffered a severe blow, and astronomers felt a deep sense of loss. Members of the ASA therefore learned with gratitude of the wish of Berenice to leave a portion of her estate to the ASA for the advancement of astronomy in Australia.

After much deliberation, and frequent consultation with Arthur Page, the Society used this bequest to establish the Berenice Page Medal for excellence in amateur astronomy in Australia and its territories, judged on the basis of scientific contributions which have served to advance astronomy.

The previous winners of the award comprise an impressive list of outstanding Australian amateur astronomers. The first award was made over 30 years ago, in May 1973, to Mr S.J. Elwin, for his photometric observations of the occultation of Beta Scorpii by Jupiter. It is also interesting to note that age is no barrier when contributing to astronomy with award winners ranging from their early 20's up to quite mature years.

The penultimate award was made to Colin Bembrick in 2004, for photometric observations of minor planets and the derivation of rotation periods. Colin played a leading role in setting up an international team to determine the lightcurves of minor planets.

The most recent award in 2006, was made to Tom Richards from the Astronomical Society of Victoria. Tom is a pioneer of CCD photometry amongst amateur astronomers in Australia. His observations include compact binaries, variable stars, exoplanets and minor planets, and he has collaborated with professional astronomers, both within Australia and internationally.

Astronomy is perhaps unique among the modern sciences in the extent to which amateurs and professionals can co-operate to advance human knowledge, and the distinction between professional and amateur astronomers is often blurred. Amateur astronomers are an indispensable part of the team needed to advance astronomy. There are such a large number of phenomena in the sky to observe and a much smaller number of instruments to make the observations. Amateur astronomers can help fill this void and their work is greatly valued by professional astronomers and the ASA.

In recognition of the high standard of astronomy achieved by the winners of the Berenice Page Medal, they are invited to become full members of the ASA.

Astronomy also advances by keeping the public informed of astronomical events. Great contributions are made by amateurs in this area through their tireless efforts in educating members of the public about the wonders of the heavens, admittedly a labour of love.

The role of amateurs, and especially amateur societies, in raising public awareness of astronomy is perhaps most obvious during 'special events' such as the passage of a bright comet or a total solar eclipse. Members of amateur societies make a vital contribution by informing the public, answering questions and offering opportunities to see the objects at first hand.

Professional astronomers are very much aware of the importance of an informed and interested public, because, with professional astronomy now much more costly than ever before (especially for large telescopes and spacecraft), we depend very heavily on public support, through the Australian Government. Australian astronomy has been generously supported in the past, and this is likely to continue if the public remain interested in, and excited by, the work we are all doing.

And so we come to the sixteenth award of the Berenice Page Medal...