

Dr. Chris Moss



Chris was a remarkable person. Some people have two careers or even more, but most undertake them sequentially. Chris had parallel careers in Theology and Astrophysics, of which I am much more familiar with the second. I knew him first in the early 1970s, when he was a research student working with Bob Dickens at the University of Sussex and the Royal Greenwich Observatory, and I was at Cambridge. Chris worked on clusters of galaxies, obtaining redshifts of cluster galaxies from the Isaac Newton Telescope before its move from Herstmonceux Castle to La Palma. His great interest was, and remained, star forming galaxies in clusters, and the mechanisms by which star formation is triggered. After his PhD he spent periods at Steward Observatory and at the Vatican Observatory, among his close collaborators were Mark Whittle and Gerard de Vaucouleurs. Chris returned to the UK, where a position as Dean of St. Edmunds Hall, Cambridge, allowed him to continue his research career alongside his considerable administrative duties. He continued to research star formation in cluster galaxies, where in a series of papers with Mark Whittle and others he advocated that gravitational tidal interactions, in particular during mergers in subclusters, were a major factor in driving star formation, more important than the rival mechanism of ram pressure effects.

Around 2002 Chris began yet another career, as salesman and contract negotiator for Telescope Technologies Limited, manufacturer of research class telescopes on Merseyside. He was a principal negotiator for the sale by TTL of a 2.4 metre telescope to the Yunnan National Observatory in China. As recently as April he was able to use newly installed, and now very successful, Yunnan telescope at its site near Lijiang, to obtain some observations in support of his theory that gravitational effects, rather than ram-pressure stripping, triggered star formation, in this case in some galaxies in the Abell 1367 and Coma clusters.

Following the sale of TTL to a US company, Chris moved full time into the ARI, where he acted as Liverpool Telescope support astronomer, organizing the time allocation process, making sure that telescope users had the correct information to carry out their observations effectively, and acting as advocate for the users to the LT operations and technical groups. He continued his research career, taking part in the supervision of two research students, and forming new collaborations through his knowledge of the Liverpool telescope. In addition he was an effective and popular teacher of undergraduates.

Chris had a great affinity with eastern cultures, and a network of friends in the far east. He was key to developing our partnerships with astronomers in China and Thailand. He was a very private person, yet a friend to everyone he met. We will all miss him.

Dave Carter