



Preface

Once again, I took paper to pen for this second edition, and began a journey to explain the mysterious, beautiful, and sometimes astounding complexities of stars, galaxies, the material that lies between, and the universe itself. It was a journey that took many roads with numerous side turnings as I often spent many long, lonely hours worrying whether I was being too obtuse, or at times patronizing, as it is a fact that many amateur astronomers are very knowledgeable of the subject that they pursue with a passion. However, the book eventually came into sight, and this, for me a mammoth task, was completed.

Writing a second edition afforded me the satisfaction of not only correcting the errors and typos that had crept into the text but also updating several chapters with new and exciting information. Additionally, it allowed me to add completely new chapters, covering the dynamic of the Solar System, the discovery of exoplanetary systems, and perhaps the biggest subject of all—cosmology!

Throughout the entire process of writing the second edition, I was fortunate enough to have the support of the senior astronomy editor at Springer Publishing, Maury Solomon, who knows only too well that astronomy authors are a breed apart and need to be pampered and dealt with using extreme patience. Thank you, Maury, dinner is on me! I must also thank my great friend John Watson, also associated with Springer, who gave the initial thumbs up when I first outlined expanding the original book with a second edition. John is an amateur astronomer himself, so he knows exactly what should go into a book, and perhaps even more importantly, what should be left out! John, I owe you a pint.

I was fortunate to have been taught astronomy by some of the world's leading experts, and it was, and still is, a privilege to have known them. In my humble opinion, not only are they superb astronomers, whether theoretical or observational,

but also wonderful educators. They are Chris Kitchin, Alan McCall, Iain Nicolson, Robert Forrest, and the late Lou Marsh. They were the best teachers I ever had.

It is important to acknowledge the pioneering work that is being done in amateur astronomical spectroscopy, and to that end I would like to thank the following spectroscopists for allowing me to use their work in the book. They are Tom Field, for designing a simple and affordable but superb piece of spectroscopic equipment, and for spearheading the revolution, along with Hansen Torsen, Ken Wright, William Wiethoff, and David Strange.

During the time spent writing both the first and second editions, usually alone, usually at night, usually tired, I had the company of some wonderful musicians whose music is truly sublime. They are Steve Roach, David Sylvian, John Martyn, and the Blue Nile.

Many friends have helped raise my spirits during those times when not all was going right, according to the Inglis Master Plan. They listened to me complain, laughed at my jokes, and helped me remain sane—for the most part. So I want to say thank you to my great friends—Professor Peter Harris and Dr. William Worthington. It is nice to know that beer is the universal lubricant of friendship, whether it is McMullen's or Harvey's.

Astronomy is a very important part of my life, but not as important as my family; my brother Bob is a great friend and a strong source of support, especially during the formative years as a young astronomer. My mother Myra is amazing, still full of energy, spirit, and laughter, and has been supportive of my dream to be an astronomer since I was knee-high to a tripod. She is truly an example to us all. And of course Karen, I am not exaggerating when I say this book would not have originally seen the light of day without her help. "*Diolch Cariad.*"

For making my life worthwhile and fun, cheers!

Long Island, NY, USA & St. Albans, UK

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