

## Jeremiah Horrocks Public Lecture Series How far away is the Sun?

## Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June, 6:30pm (refreshments from 6pm) Harrington Lecture Theatre, Preston Campus

Everyone is taught as a child that the Sun is 150 million km away from the Earth. But how do we know that? Have a look at the Sun at sunset sometime. Is it obvious to you how far away it is? The Sun is  $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  in angular size, but then so is the Moon, which is only 384,000 km away. So, we cannot determine the distance to the Sun from just looking at it. Finding its distance was the major scientific challenge of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This lecture will tell a story of a cold castle tower, a dungeon, a Great Dane, a hypochondriac, Shakespeare, a child prodigy, a genius, sea battles and voyages of discovery, royal observatories, a clockmaker, a gentleman returned from the dead, and even Dixieland jazz - all leading to the greatest payoff of all time.

**Don Kurtz** was born in San Diego, California, to an American father and Canadian mother. He obtained his PhD in astronomy from the University of Texas at Austin in 1976, then spent 24 years in South Africa at the University of Cape Town, where he was Professor and Life Fellow. He then moved in 2000 to the University of Central Lancashire, where he was Professor of Astrophysics for 20 years. Don has dual British and American citizenship and is now Extra-ordinary Professor at North-West University in South Africa,



Professor Emeritus of Astrophysics at the University of Central Lancashire, and Visiting Professor at the University of Lincoln. He holds an A-1 research rating from the South African National Research

Foundation, its highest rating. He is a past councillor and Vice-President of the Roval Astronomical Society, and was awarded the Society's 2022 Service Award for a lifetime of service and outreach. He is frequently invited to speak internationally to both professional astronomers and to the public. Don has observed with some of the largest telescopes in the world, and now works primarily with data from the Space Missions Kepler and TESS. He has 540 professional publications and is the discoverer of a class of pulsating, magnetic stars that are the most peculiar stars known. He is co-author of the fundamental textbook "Asteroseismology", and author of a major review in 2022 Asteroseismology in the journal Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics. He is an outdoorsman and has travelled widely. Don enthusiastically gives many public lectures per vear to diverse audiences all over the world on a wide range of topics.



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