

INTRODUCTION

When the Executive Committee of the International Astronomical Union asked me, in 1968, to organize a Symposium on White Dwarfs it became evident that members of at least four Commissions of the IAU should participate, and that the most opportune place, and time to hold such a Symposium would be somewhere in the British Isles and just preceding the Fourteenth General Assembly at Brighton in August, 1970.

After a preliminary correspondence with Dr. D. W. N. Stibbs it was decided to accept his invitation to hold the Symposium at St. Andrews University, Scotland, while the dates 11–13 August 1970 were selected. I am sure I speak for all the participants of the Symposium when I express our deep gratitude to Dr. Stibbs for the admirable way in which he planned and organized this meeting down to the smallest details – the success of the conference is due in no small measure to his continuous and painstaking efforts.

An organizing committee was formed, consisting of O. J. Eggen (Photometry), J. L. Greenstein (Spectroscopy), A. G. Masevitch (Stellar Interiors), V. Weidemann (Stellar Atmospheres), D. W. N. Stibbs (local chairman), with myself (Proper Motions and Parallaxes) as overall chairman.

Since the main purpose of such a Symposium is to have a full and extensive discussion of the subject, it was decided to limit the number of participants to 24–30, to have three morning sessions, each featuring two longer (30–40 minutes) summarizing papers, followed by discussion, and devote the afternoons to having a number of shorter, contributed papers, generally five to six, each also followed by discussion.

This was probably the first time that observational and theoretical astronomers in this field were brought together and were forced to try and understand each other's language. Whether we succeeded only time will tell.

We are greatly indebted to the International Astronomical Union for a grant which helped to defray the expenses of the Symposium.

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