and seven serious ones (though the distinction is probably debatable for most, depending on whether you hear Mozart's last piano concerto as triumphant or mournful): (*i*) a five-metre-tall snowman on the campus of Williams College, posing with (sadly now deceased) author Jay Pasachoff and his wife Naomi, connoisseurs of solar eclipses; (*ii*) a Chuppah illustrating a transit of Venus, quilted by author Sarah Schechner for her 2013 marriage to the mechanic who had helped her dismantle a historic telescope, so that it could be reassembled and used for viewing the 2004 Venus transit; (*iii*) a calendar on which February has 30 days, while Sweden was switching from Julian to Gregorian calendar as described by author Lars Gislen; (*iv*) William Herschel claiming "the great probability, not to say almost absolute certainty of the Moon being inhabited" in the chapter by W. T. (Woody) Sullivan (more often associated with the history of radio astronomy); (*v*) a shepherd herding Inca constellations of the Serpent, the Toad, the Tinamou, the Mother Llama, the Baby Llama and the Fox, followed immediately by the Roasted Guinea Pig for dinner during author Steve Gullberg's trip to Peru; (*vi*) Joseph Weber with his childhood Jew-fro hairstyle only partly tamed by the US Naval Academy, shown to authors Trimble and Robertson; (*vii*) Joe Shklovsky wearing a 10-gallon Texas hat at the Fourth Texas Symposium in Dallas (1968 December) as immortalized by the camera of author Ken Kellerman.

And the Seven sours: (*i*) "the sad reality that this traditional [Australian Aboriginal] knowledge has been severely damned from the effects of invasion, colonialism, and community displacement" as discussed by authors Trevor Seaman and Duane Hamach; (*ii*) "the vexed and tendentious history of lunar nomenclature" that seems to have deprived some astronauts of "their" lunar craters, as pointed out by author William Sheehan (but, back at "frivolous" you should see Mount Marilyn!); (*iii*) the crew abandoning the incandescent USS Lexington in the Battle of the Coral Sea, shortly before John Bolton joined the British aircraft carrier HMS *Unicorn* which just barely fit under Sydney Harbour Bridge according to Trimble & Robertson; (*iv*) the rise and fall of time determination and dissemination as a justifying purpose for astronomical observatories, appearing in the chapters by Steven J. Dick and Roger Kinns; (*v*) what is apparently a genuine 1917 photograph of Sydney Observatory followed by dismissals from the government astronomer William Cooke in both 1925 and 1926 noted by author Nick Lomb; (*vi*) the sad-looking images of the sites of what were once the pioneering field stations of Australian radio astronomy, many photographed by author Harry Wendt; (*vii*) the narrow bounds of what astronomy should mean, as set by Bessel writing to Humboldt to encompass "precise measurement of the positions and orbits of celestial bodies…their appearance and the constitutions of their surfaces is not unworthy of attention, but is not the proper concern of astronomy," as quoted by [the late*] Alan. H. Batten. Luckily he was outvoted by astronomers adopting photography and spectroscopy. And every one of the chapters from which no quote is given above has something in it to cheer, puzzle, or inspire astronomers who are interested in our own history! — Virginia Trimble.

Atlas of the Messier Objects. Highlights of the Deep Sky, 2nd Edition, by Ronald Stoyan (Cambridge University Press), 2024. Pp. 372, 31·5 × 27 cm. Price £59·99 /$79·99 (hardbound; ISBN 978 1 00 936406 5).

The first edition of Ronald Stoyan's *Atlas of the Messier Objects* was an

* See obituary on p. 268

instant success and although now out of print commands a significant price on the second-hand market. Thus, the appearance of a second edition is to be welcomed. First of all it must be said this is not a guide that you would take into the field but a reference book for the home. The second edition has been considerably updated with new images for many of the objects and the astrophysical data updated to include distances from *Gaia* DR3 along with other information that has come to light since the publication of the first edition. Although the book has more pages than the first it is also thinner indicating a different type of paper. It is, however, still very heavy.

The book contains much useful information on Messier himself and the telescopes he used, as well as an English translation of his catalogue. The book also contains some information on the forerunners to his catalogue and the work that contemporaries were doing in cataloguing nebulae. There is also a brief section on the astrophysics of the types of objects found in the Messier catalogue. The main part of the book is ordered by the Messier catalogue number and the section on each object contains information on its history, what is known about it, and observations of it. Note that there are no charts to show where they are, hence it not being a field guide. The book could be combined with Stephen O'Meara's Messier book from the CUP *Deep Sky Field Guides* series to get more information, although much of the information in that book is now out of date. The reproduction of the drawings and images in the *Atlas* is first class which adds to the lustre of the book.

I found very few issues with the book and only a couple of nit-picking errors where the discoverer of M 1 was called Charles Bevis rather than John Bevis in one part, although correctly attributed later, and Admiral Smyth was referred to as Admiral Smith. I also found the text in the reference section was so small that one would need a magnifying glass to read it. These, however, in no way detract from an excellent publication that should be on the bookshelves of any deep-sky observer. I would suggest that this is now the definitive guide to the Messier objects. — Owen Brazell.

From The Library

Three Views of the Cosmos

The Great Ideas Today: Ptolemy, Copernicus, and Kepler, by Owen Gingerich, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1993. Pp. 137–180.

Cosmology, by E. Finlay-Freudlich, in *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (University of Chicago Press), 1951. Vol. 1, No 8, 1951. Pp. 1–59.

The Recent Renaissance of Observational Cosmology, by D.W. Sciama, in *Atti della Reunion di Studio su Problemi di astrofisica* (Torino), 1969. Pp. 21-47.

These three came to me as part of the RAS Library deaccession project, with some of their pages still uncut. A nail file completed that task, revealing three very different opinions on what has been known about the Universe at various times and who is likely, or should be likely, to care about it all anyway

Each of the three has something you may never have thought of and could