

John Tilley



John's earliest astronomical memories are of the launch of Sputnik and watching the partial phases of the 1961 solar eclipse from the UK.

After graduating from Cambridge with a degree in Mechanical Sciences, he spent the next 15 months working in Japan, studying the oriental board game "Go" and then helped invent the "gap year", travelling in the far east and Himalaya, before joining IBM UK, where he spent some 34 years, in a variety of software technical positions. Prior to taking early retirement in 2005 he was EMEA Technical Sales Manager for IBM's Data Management products.

His interest in solar eclipses was rekindled by the 1999 total eclipse, so he bought two of Jean Meeus's books and given his interest in maps, recreational mathematics and technical challenges in general, he started to write a program to look at both eclipse maps and Mathematical Astronomical Morsels.

John presented at SEC2004, with Luca Quaglia, showing an early version of "Solar Eclipse Explorer" and an extended saros-inex panorama for a period of 26000 years. In 2005 John produced the first kml files for a solar eclipse < the 2005 October annular > for use with the very first version of Google Earth. He had a paper accepted for SEC2007 on "Eclipse Mapping, On and Off the Web", which became a joint presentation with Xavier Jubier, but unfortunately he was unable to travel due to family illness. When preparing a slide for SEC2007, showing the track of the 2008 total eclipse, using four different sets of data and different ephemeris, he noticed that the centre line track using the NASA data was some 200 metres away from the other three. John worked with Luca Quaglia and helped resolve this problem.

John has always suffered from having too many hobbies and interests, as a result his eclipse programs all seem to be permanently stuck at "90% complete"; however the long lead time into SEC2014 has focused him on getting something that does much of what he wants and allows him to present some more solar eclipse "Mathematical Morsels".

John's favourite astronomical memories include watching the 2004 Transit of Venus on the beaches of D-Day with his father, the shadow bands at Jalu in Libya and the spectacular storm that followed the 2009 eclipse in China, the clouds having co-operated for exactly the right six minutes.