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## More than a decade in the making

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The viewing was better from the visitor's stands. The gathering was among the most attended events in Furman history.



DAVID SIGLIN | JEREMY FLEMING

## More than a decade in the making

*Astronomer and author returns to campus to reunite with friends and family*

BY JOHN ROBERTS

Perhaps no one looked forward to the solar eclipse with greater anticipation than Guy Ottewell.

And few travelled farther to see it. A freelance writer and world-famous astronomer, Ottewell traveled from Greenwich, England, to see the event. As a Furman guest of honor, he had one of the best seats in the house—the Bell Tower peninsula.

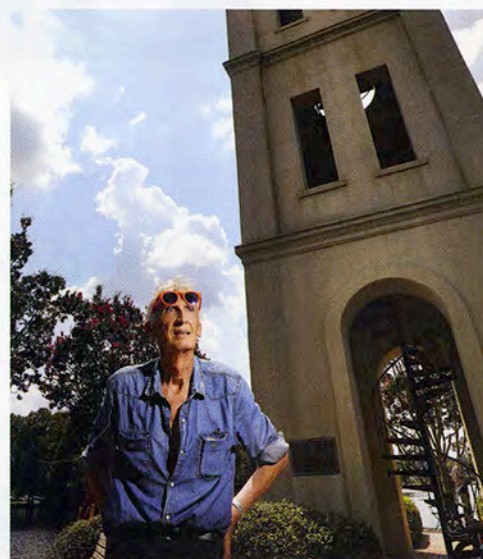
The trip was a homecoming, and Ottewell has had the date circled for 16 years. From 1973 to 2001, he kept an office in Plyler Hall and was a bit of a campus oddity as he was not a faculty member or university employee.

He used the space to produce the *Astronomical Calendar*, an annual publication that was crammed with charts, sketches and essays on celestial events. The work, published 1974–2016, brought Ottewell international acclaim among the astronomy community. Oftentimes, visitors from disparate parts of the world would stop by Furman to meet him.

After 43 editions, Ottewell, now 81 and living in a house on the shore of the Thames River, retired the calendar last year. Its circulation was about 24,000.

A Renaissance man, Ottewell's interests extend beyond the stars. He is an artist (see pg. 65), poet, a student of languages (among them Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian and Hebrew), and was educated in the classics at King's College School in Wimbledon, studied Middle Eastern languages and history, then archaeology and anthropology, at Pembroke College in Cambridge, taught in a school in Arab Jerusalem, and catalogued books in Middle Eastern languages for the libraries of Manchester University and UCLA.

Even more remarkable, his knowledge of the stars is entirely self-taught. It was sparked in the late 1960s while he was work-



ing at a school on a Navajo Reservation. The Arizona sky was ideal for star-gazing, and Ottewell began researching Navajo star-lore.

A world traveler, Ottewell has observed 15 solar eclipses. He has traveled to Canada, Mongolia, Indonesia, India, the Caribbean Islands and Kenya to witness and marvel.

An avid cyclist and quiet conversation-  
alist with a crisp English accent and wispy gray hair, Ottewell strikes a distinctive figure. He made many close faculty friends during his time on campus. Some of them, including Bill Brantley, Gil Allen, Maurice Cherry and Sofia Kearns were there to see him Aug. 21.

But the event was special in another way, too.

Ottewell's son, **Roland '88**, was there with his wife, Karen, and they brought their daughter.

"This is my granddaughter Madeline," said Guy Ottewell beaming and nodding to the blonde-haired little girl. "And I have just met her. And today is her one-year birthday!" ●