

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Born December 16, 1917, Minehead, Somerset, UK; science fiction writer who “invented” HAL in the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey. Originator of the concept of communications satellites.¹



Education: Huish's Grammar School, Taunton, 1927-1936; BSc, first class honors, physics and mathematics, King's College, London, 1946-1948.

Professional Experience: Auditor, H.M. Exchequer and Audit Department, 1936-1941; Royal Air Force: Instructor, No. 9 Radio School, then Flight Lieutenant, Ground Controlled Approach Radar² 4 1941-1946; assistant editor, *Physics Abstracts*, IEE, 1949-1950; self-employed author, 1950-present; chancellor, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, 1979-present.

Honors and Awards: honorary fellow, British Interplanetary Society; honorary fellow, American Astronomical Association; academician, World Academy of Art and Science; honorary fellow, International Academy of Astronautics, 1960; Stuart Ballantine Medal, Franklin Institute, 1963; fellow, Franklin Institute, 1971; DSc (Hon.), Beaver College, Pennsylvania, 1971; Aerospace Communications Award, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 1974; honorary fellow, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 1976; Bradford Washburn Award, Boston Museum of Science, 1977; fellow, King's College, 1977; DSc (Hon.), University of Moratuwa, 1979; Engineering Award, Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 1981; fellow, Institute of Robotics, Carnegie Mellon University, 1981; Marconi International Fellowship, 1982; honorary fellow, Institute of Engineers, Sri Lanka, 1983; Centennial Medal, IEEE, 1984; foreign associate, National Academy of Engineering, 1986; Charles A. Lindbergh Award, 1987; associate fellow, Third World Academy of Sciences, 1987; Hall of Fame, Society of Satellite Professionals, 1987; DLitt, University of Bath, 1988; fellow, International Aerospace Hall of Fame, San Diego, 1989; fellow, International Space Hall of Fame, Alamogordo, N.M., 1989; R. A. Heinlein Memorial Award, National Space Society, 1990; honorary life president, UN Association of Sri Lanka, 1990; honorary fellow, Ceylon College of Physicians, 1991; International Science Policy Foundation Medal, 1992; freeman, Town of Minehead, 1992.

Arthur C. Clarke was born in the small Somerset town of Minehead, not far from Exmoor, the site of the story of *Lorna Doone*, in 1917. He was educated at Huish's Grammar School, Taunton. Clarke entered H.M. Exchequer & Audit Department in 1936, and served in the Royal Air Force during World War II. While operating the prototype Ground Control Approach radar system, he conceived the basic theory of communication satellites, and published the concept in 1945.

After demobilization, he took a first class honors degree in physics and mathematics at King's College, London, which later elected him as a fellow. From 1948 to 1950 he was assistant editor of *Physics Abstracts*, a publication of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. Twice he was chairman of the British Interplanetary Society-1946-1947, and 1950-1953.

¹ See *Wireless World*, October 1945.

² Developed by MIT Radiation Laboratory.

Since 1954 his interest in underwater exploration has taken him to the Great Barrier Reef of Australia and the Indian Ocean; he is now a director of the Colombo-based “Underwater Safaris.”

He has published more than 70 books and made many appearances on radio and television, most notably with Walter Cronkite on CBS during the NASA Apollo missions. His 13-part “Mysterious World” and “Strange Powers” television programs have been seen worldwide, and reappear frequently on PBS in the US.

He is a council member of the Society of Authors, a vice president of the H.G. Wells Society, and a member of many other scientific and literary organizations. He was nominated for an “Oscar” for the screenplay of 2001: *A Space Odyssey*.

Clarke has lived in Sri Lanka for the past 30 years, and in 1979 was appointed Chancellor of the University of Moratuwa by President Jayewardene. The university, near Colombo, is the location of the government-established Arthur C. Clarke Centre for Modern Technologies, specializing in communications and computers. He is also chancellor of the International Space University.

In 1989 H.M. Queen Elizabeth awarded him a CBE for “services to British cultural interests in Sri Lanka.” On returning to the UK in 1992 for his 75th birthday celebrations, he was made the first Freeman of his hometown, Minehead, Somerset.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical

Clarke, Arthur C., *Astounding Days-A Science Fictional Autobiography*, Bantam Books, New York, 1989.

McAlear, Neil, *Odyssey: The Authorized Biography*, Contemporary Books, Chicago, 1992.

Significant Publications

Clarke, Arthur C., “The Obsolescence of Man,” in *Profiles of the Future*, Harper Press, London, 1958.

Clarke, Arthur C., “The Steam Powered Word Processor: A Forgotten Epic of Victorian Engineering,” *Analog*, Vol. 106, No. 9, Sept. 1986, pp. 175-179.

UPDATES

Arthur C. Clark died 19 March 2008. Portrait inserted, MRW, 2012.