

letters

Dear Sirs,

Re your news note on Arthur C. Clarke in the June 2008 issue, you refer to him as one of the “Big Three” of science fiction along with Heinlen and Isaac Azimov. Well, maybe I always enjoyed his stories, but thought that his non-fiction works, such as *How the World was One* were far more important while being most readable and entertaining. He was much more than a science fiction writer!

To my mind, the above comments apply even more to Azimov, whose fiction I rarely enjoyed, but who’s many books of essays on such a wide variety of subjects are all completely fascinating. What a remarkable gift he had in lecturing to the layman, what a prolific output, and what a vast range of knowledge.

In *How the World was One*, Clarke includes a brief biography of Oliver Heaviside and admits the fact that he evolved a rigorous proof of the famous relationship, $E=mc^2$, in 1890, thus anticipating Einstein by some fifteen years. As it is generally accepted that this equation of mass and energy was only brought to light by Einstein’s genius, I think that the Heaviside story should be publicised. Perhaps you will publish my letter and so start to spread this knowledge, even if only in a small way.

Yours faithfully,
Joe Bradford, Sandton

Readers interested in the history of the $E=mc^2$ relation are recommended to look at the Wikipedia article on this subject.

Ed ☆

erratum

It had been brought to our attention that the statement in the Peter Smits obituary on p.165 of the October 2008 issue about Sir Richard Woolley banning amateurs from the Observatory site and forcing Council,

Society and Centre meetings to be held elsewhere is incorrect. As far as could be ascertained, ASSA meetings continued to be held on the SAAO, Cape Town site after Woolley took over as director. ☆