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THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY – FROM IMAGINATION TO REALITY – 80 YEARS
ALISTAIR SCOTT, PRESIDENT, THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY**Abstract**

The BIS, the world's oldest organisation dedicated to promoting the use and exploration of Space, is celebrating its 80th year. It was founded in Liverpool on 13 October 1933 and published its first Journal in January 1934. Its Technical Committee began detailed studies of Moonships and Moon Landers in 1936/37 and the Society continues to provide visionary leadership in Space flight today, nearly 80 years later. Linking a worldwide network of academics, industry professionals and space and science fiction enthusiasts, the BIS is pleased that some of its more eminent members including Sir Arthur C. Clarke and Sir Patrick Moore have influenced the way we use and view space. Early rocket, steam-powered geostationary orbiting terminal and minimum orbit satellite designs in the 1940s and 50s have ultimately lead to the heavy lift launch vehicles, the TV broadcast and weather satellites, space stations and navigation systems that are now part of everyday life. What now? Imagination has certainly turned to Reality, the reality of the 21st Century where, in recession, all Societies, Institutes and learned bodies struggle to stay alive. The BIS recognises the importance of retaining its capital assets and cutting costs, but, looking to the future, it has to recruit more members and find other ways of raising funds. To recruit new members and retain its older members, it must have something to offer. So the BIS is returning to its origins, to being 'the think-tank' for space to attract both the technically minded and the visionary science fiction enthusiasts to join its project teams. It has also reformed its education and outreach team to promote astronautics and careers in space to school, college and university students and is forming regional branches both in the UK and internationally to spread the word and provide programmes of lectures and events for those members who cannot get to events in London.