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Editor: George Bolland, 25 Deneside, East Dean, Eastbourne BN20 9HY.
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or the Editor.

A NIGHT AT THE TEMPLE OBSERVATORY
By Bob Mooney
(Coventry and Warwickshire A.S.)

It is one of those British rarities -
a starlit night that's going to stay
clear. A couple of phone calls and
its all fixed. Tonight I shall be observing
with one of the finest refractors
ever made.

I throw my observing gear into the back
of the car and set off, hell-bent towards Rugby. It is an October midnight and
already frosty. As I head East from Coventry the last quarter Moon hangs
over the road ahead, sliding steadily
higher in the sky.

During my short drive I ponder on the
past of the Temple Observatory and its
founder Charles Clarke. More than
a progressive phase in the late 1860s
Rugby School acquired both, due largely
to the benefaction of bishop Temple, then
to the present day. As a refractor the glass
is an early masterpiece by Alvan Clark Snr.,
figured in Massachusetts on the eve of
the American Civil War. Put simply
it was made to be the finest lenses of its day,
in fact, of any day! Perhaps only the
Great Franshocher can be said to vie
with him. From its making the glass
remains unchanged to this day, and is in
the possession of the Rev. William (Eagle-
Eye) Dawes, one of the greatest observers
of the nineteenth century and especially
for his work on the theoretical
resolution power of telescopes. The
"Dawes Limit" is still an everynight
expression in astronomy.

In its heyday the Temple refractor
was used by the eminent amateurs Seabroke
and Wilson to compile a catalogue of over
3000 double stars. Using a Dollond
reflecting telescope within a few
nights, which are unhappily of very rare
occurrence, it divides down to half a
second or thereabouts.

But last double stars that I will be
observing tonight. I glance up at the
Moon. Is it getting hazy? No, just a
smear on the windscreen... Usually
there are certainly changed in Rugby since
Seabroke's day. I see the sickly yellow
light of the sodium vapour Disneyland
reaching up to envelope the Moon - but
the effect of the city is within a few
minutes, I pull up at the gates of the observatory.
its green conical dome looms in the
moonlight behind the gatehouse.

Mr. McMeneney, who looks after the
starlplitter, is expecting me. He
unlocks the door and flings it wide open
allowing the chill air to pour into the
building and stir the necessary processes
of temperature equilisation. We walk
into the stone floored library and
equipment store, past the disused
transit room, and up the three steps into the
telescope chamber. The high shutters
are opened with long poles to reveal a
slit of eastern sky. We both stand and
look for a moment above the Moon the
Cassiopeia, Castor and Pollux sparkle.
After handing me a set of modern
orthoscopic eyepieces my companion leaves
telling me he will look in again after
two hours.

I uncnap the telescope and peer at
Mr. Clarke's handwork. The lens shines
softly in the reflected moonlight. But
I lose no more time. After fitting a low
power ocular I swing the towering tube
onto the Moon.

I focus in carefully... and there it is.
I have never seen the Moon like this
before. Even at x175 Plate reaches out to
shake hands. There is much to see.
Mount Piton stands on the terminator,
dazzling white, but resolved into three
main masses - a serpentine ridge stretching
to the horizon. On the central peak of Tycho
we can plainly see as triple - the third peak clasped by
Wilkins and Moore as "difficult".

And these views are obtained with terrible
seeing! As I had feared by the look
of the sky, the air is very unsteady.
I settle down to wait. As a more critical
test - I am trying to resolve the telescope
on the famous binary star, Castor. Its
separation at the moment is around
2.5 arc seconds, the binocular vision
so it is an easy job for an 8" Clark!
Yet the split is not "clean". The two
images shimmer and blur into a single
light, and I am denied the sight of the
perfect diffraction rings.

Well - you can't have everything! I
then turn back to the Moon and commence
my programme of work. The particular
object of interest to me is lying
in the Mare Nubium - the crater Kies A.
It is a small feature that I have always
looked across - but it is a rare type of
banded crater. It has a single F-W band.
On the west wall the band actually seems
to break the surface, and the crater
causes interesting shadow effects
under a rising sun. Under a setting sun
very little is known about the East wall.
Orbiting shots are inconclusive.
This isn't my first view under local sunset
conditions, but it is the first where
I have a chance of coming up with anything
new.

The seeing refuses to improve. I have
to carry on regardless, my full concentration
given to the concrete display of the
air calms down. After a while I move from
Kies A to Aristarchus, then to Plato, then
to Castor and Tycho - back to Kies A. An hour
goes by, five minutes, I begin to fill
with notes and sketches. As the
drive isn't operating I must give the tube
the merest touch to watch the lunar
landscape cruise through the field of
view again. Even with the lowest
power only about a third of the half moon
will fit into the field. When I adjust
the Declination axis the telescope tracks
eastwards, and four hours later the
terminator success each other in increasing
splendour. Plato gives way to Archimedes.

Archimedes to Maginus, and Maginus to
the tremendous Clavius. All these vast
enclosures are in high relief, about to be
swallowed by the long lunar night.

But my night is almost over. It is 2.30 -
and as the Moon rises further the
terrestrial terrace falls, and I have
gradually got into one of those "in-between
positions" - which are a real pain in the
neck! It's a good time to break off. Out
comes the flask and sandwiches. As I
drop my concentration I suddenly feel how
cold it is. Mr. McMeneney returns,
happy in his uniqueness, and we close up the
observatory.

I start up my car for the return journey
- praying that the heater will work.
It does!

ASTROCALENDAR 1985 hopefully will be
available in time for Herstmonceux 84.
We aim to keep prices stable, so at
50p it is excellent value. It gives
the monthly star/planet charts for
1985 and comes in the form of a booklet.

Letter

Dear Sir,

I fear I cannot allow comments attributed
to me in the April 1984 Journal to go
unchallenged. In the Society Round-up
section by Mr. N. A. S. H. (p. 4) I am
referred to as being "not altogether
convinced of the accuracy of the
conclusion of" an Astronomer using my
horoscope as an example to explain his ideas.
This comment is the complete reverse of
the truth. I stated unequivocally at
the meeting concerned that I was very
impressed by the accuracy of the
dictator's account of my character, as far as I
could tell myself.

While there is severe doubt as to the "Scientific
reliability" of astrology in statistical
terms, as one of the human disciplines
with a far longer historical pedigree than
any notion of "exact science", it deserves
better respect than the howling abuse of
bittered astronomers.

Before condemning metaphysical systems we
had better realise that there is little
comfort to be had from the impenetrable
mathematics of the universe without some
system of belief.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Green

This publication is intended to bring the
F.A.S. to the attention of
ordinary members of local
societies. Future issues depend
on your reaction. If you have
enjoyed reading the articles or if
you have any comments, for or
against, please write to the Editor
with your views.
A visit is to be organised to the University optical and Mullard Radio Observatories in May.

SHEFFIELD AS: Dominating the activities of the society were the 50th Anniversary celebrations. They commenced with a Civic Reception on April 6th in the Town Hall, Sheffield. The Lord Mayor was present and the guests included the Mayor of Sheffield, Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Hollingshead. The reception was attended by over 300 people. The Lord Mayor presented a certificate to the society and expressed his appreciation of the work done by the society.

The society also held a Symposium on "The Development of the Astronomical Telescopes". The event was well attended, with many members participating. The talks were well received and provided a good opportunity for members to exchange ideas and thoughts on the development of astronomical telescopes. The event was well attended, with many members participating. The talks were well received and provided a good opportunity for members to exchange ideas and thoughts on the development of astronomical telescopes.

The next day was the Annual Dinner at the Hotel Royal, Sheffield. The dinner was attended by over 200 members and guests. The evening featured a variety of talks on various astronomical topics, including the latest developments in astronomy and the use of astronomical telescopes.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the annual awards. The awards were presented to members who had made outstanding contributions to the society and the field of astronomy. The awards were well received, and the recipients were congratulated by the society for their hard work and dedication.

The society also held a special event for members who had recently joined the society. The event was well attended, with many members expressing their appreciation for the society's support and guidance.

The society is now well established and is working hard to continue its growth and development. The society is always looking for new members and ideas, and is open to anyone interested in astronomy.

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WEST MIDLANDS AA: Advertisement in the March issue of 'Nova' - 'Following the sad death of his Sinclair ZX81, John Kendall offers for sale its MEMCPACK 32K although the computer has died its memory lives on...'. Phone 021 472 4617. Offers around £30.

A link has been established with a Spanish astronomical group. It would seem they do most of the things WMAA do except writing their magazine in English. Translators get in touch!

Chairman, Alan Wells, reports on the continued decline in the membership which he attributes to the current economic disaster that we all live in! That is his own personal view.

His fellow member and Editor of 'Nova', Steven LaPee seems to think otherwise in his Editorial of the March issue, "Astronomy is THE cheapest hobby: there is no admission fee to look at the night sky, and the most valuable piece of equipment imaginable is also free - your eyes."

STUART LONSDALE

Material for the next "Round-up" should be sent to 16 Joan Lane, Hooton Levitt, Nr Rotherham, S. Yorkshire S66 8PH.

FEDERATION NOTICES

SUBSCRIPTIONS remain at £1.50 per society, but the subscription year which would have ended 30th April 1984 has been extended to 31st August 1984. The next subscription will therefore be £1.50 due on 1st September. Those societies with fewer than 25 members will pay £1.00. Of course subs can be paid now.

Items 13, 15, 17, and 18 of the constitution were amended at the AGM on May 6th to allow this change. The Federation's accounting year remains the same.

OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 1984/85 were:

President: Alan Drummond
Vice-President: Tony Nalpar
Secretary: Rosemary Naylock
Treasurer: Ken Marcus
Editor: George Bolland
Publications Secretary: Brian Jones
Meetings Organiser: Michael Pace
Publicity Officer: Ros Owen
Education Officer: Dave Powell
Society New Editor: Stuart Lonsdale

These make up the Council together with the regional representatives, these being:

SAGA Representative Mike Hargood
Yorkshire: Philip Heppenstall
Chilterns: David White
Addresses for Council members can be found in the end cover of the April 1984 FAS magazine, except for the newcomers.

Bob Owen, 3 Dunford Close, Llandaff, Cardiff CF5 1PL
David White, 54 Burr Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 3AG

COMPETITION WINNERS at the Convention of 12th May were:

Cotswold AS for the photographic competition, judged by Alan Dowell. Kim Lindley for the astrophotography competition.

HANDBOOK 1984/85 will be available in the Autumn. The change of publication date parallels with the extension of the subscription year.

FAS TENTH ANNIVERSARY:

I am ashamed to say that I was well aware that the FAS is now ten years old, but kept quiet about the fact because I was too taken up with removing myself from such and such a telescope to Tomsonder. However, the anniversary was remembered at the AGM, and it was suggested that we put on a display of early FAS material at the AGM on Saturday 6th October.

If you have any early photographs or other memorabilia of those early days (when we all looked younger), please do send them to the secretary. They will be returned after Hermonaceous.

SECRETARY'S NEWS:

I am no longer able to produce free circulars, having left my previous office job. My lack of access to duplicating machines means I shall be dependent on others to produce society news - letters. Happily, George Bolland is a regular visitor with ideas and the desire to communicate, so I look for an improved news service to members via FAS publications.

My change of circumstances has been brought about by my move to Calderdale, West Yorkshire, where I have taken up residence in order to be close to the Amateur Astronomy Centre. My house is one mile from the AAC site, so I shall expect to see some of you there. My new address is:

Rosemary Naylock, 256 Bacup Road, Todmorden, Lancashire OL15 7YU.
(The postal address is in Lancashire, though the county boundary puts me in Yorkshire.)

One member society has recently resigned from the FAS on the grounds that as they cannot attend either of the two Federation meetings, there is nothing in it for them. Meanwhile, having tied the hand of holding more meetings for FAS members in a variety of locations, I am now coming to the realisation that more and more local societies are themselves organising meetings which could almost be described as national meetings. The S B Essex AS and the Derby & District AS to my knowledge, have recently held meetings which have been supported in larger numbers than the Federation's own meetings. Perhaps, and I am thinking aloud here, this is a positive development which would relieve the need of the FAS to cater for all parts of the country. What do members think? Certainly it is difficult finding a Saturday free of astronomical meetings and frequently they clash. Have we reached saturation point?

Rosemary Naylock Secretary FAS.

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COMPETITIONS

The competitions will be open to all members regardless of whether or not they attend, but those not attending should please send the material in to George Bolland, 25 Denbigh, East Dean, Eastbourne BN20 CHY, ensuring that they include sufficient stamps for return postage. Items will be accepted on the day or by prior posting to the above address. All material submitted must be the work of the person or society in whose name it is entered and competitions are only open to members of the FAS so please make sure that your society has paid the appropriate subscription.

Prizes will be awarded at the sole discretion of the FAS Council and judges’ decisions will be final.

Could you please ensure that each item entered for any of the competitions is clearly marked with the name, address and the Society of the person entering and also, in the case of photographic and art competitions, a title or description of the item and the photographer’s name.

1. MAGAZINES Entries must consist of two different issues only, each to have been published in the year ending October 1964. Each copy should be marked with the Society’s name, Editor’s name and date of issue, and it would considerably help if these could be posted to the organisers before the event at the above address.

2. ASTRO ART Paintings, sculpture, pottery, pencil or ink drawings, in fact, any art form limited to six items per person.

3. TELESCOPES All instruments must be amateur constructed (apart from the optics). There is no limit on the number of instrument per person.

4. BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS Any size, mounted on card ready for display with title, photographer’s address and Society. Maximum six prints per person.

5. COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS Arrangements as for black and white prints.

6. COLOUR TRANSPARENCIES Maximum six slides per person. Please mark each slide with name and title and include a list giving details of the objects shown in the slides.

G. BOLLAND

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