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Issue 33

Federation of Astronomical Societies

CAMBRIDGE MEETING

**Saturday 25 September at the Pippard Lecture Theatre,
Cavendish Laboratory, Madingley Road, Cambridge.**

**The day starts at 9.30 a.m., there will be trade stands and
displays. Lectures will start at 10.00.**

Ploughmans Lunch will be available - bookable in advance.

**Speakers include Dr Bob Lambourne of the Open University
and hopefully some of the RGO locals. Visits to IoA and
MRAO. (First come first served basis)**

**Book through your Secretary £3-50 in advance £4-50 on the
door. Bookings to Alan Drummond.**

Can You Help Dr Patrick Moore

Dear Chris,

May I ask for help?

A friend of mine is compiling an index of
refracting telescopes. His thesis is to be
published by Cambridge. I wonder,
therefore, if you have a refractor of 6"
aperture or over, you would be kind
enough to send me details of it?
Obviously a photograph would be
welcome, but is by no means essential.
If you would help in this project, I will be
grateful if you will let me know.

Patrick Moore.

Farthings,
West Street,
Selsey,
Sussex

A NEW OPEN UNIVERSITY ASTRONOMY COURSE

From 1994 the Open University will be presenting *S281 Astronomy and planetary science*. This
is an exciting, broad ranging course, divided into four parts.

1. The stars and interstellar medium.
2. Planetary systems.
3. Galaxies.
4. Cosmology.

The course materials include a main text for each part, and a book of about 200 colour images.
There is also a two hour videocassette, an audiocassette, and 8 broadcast TV programmes. A
planisphere is supplied as an aid to some basic project work that can be done by the unaided eye,
though binoculars are an advantage.

It is recommended that anyone embarking on this course should have a GCSE in mathematics or
physics at grade C or above, or an equivalent qualification, such as a pass at O level.

The course starts in early February each year, and ends early in October, followed by a 3 hour
written exam in October/November. There are optional tutorials and visits to planetaria etc.
Enrolment for the course in 1994 starts in April 1993. It is possible to tackle the course on its
own, or as part of a degree. For further particulars please contact :

Central Enquiry Service,
P.O. Box 200,
The Open University,
Milton Keynes

THE KEN MARCUS FUND

The Council of the FAS felt that if any
Society or individual wanted to honour Ken
Marcus's memory they might care to make
a small donation to
THE LEUKAEMIA RESEARCH FUND,
48 Hangleton Valley Drive,
Hove, BN3 8AP

ASTROFEST 94

Do you think that the FAS should have a
stand at AstroFest 94? If you do and feel
that your Society can contribute either
towards the cost, manning and display
materials please write to

Pam Spence,
FAS Meetings Coordinator,
5, The Martinspike,
SHOREHAM-BY-SEA,
W.Sussex
BN43 5RD

I seem to have got out of the habit of writing an editorial, usually because of space problems, but I thought that I needed to ask you to read and hopefully react to the story on this page, to Patrick's request and the suggestion made by Jack Newton that he would like to come to the UK next year or the year after. For a nights board & lodge he would be prepared to talk to Societies. There is also the Open University course in Astronomy to consider.

Astronomy for Chris and I seems to be on an upward curve - the only snag is shortage of hard disk space on the PC. I certainly think that CCD imaging is great for our skies, a glimmer of starlight and out we go - a couple of 40 second exposures of something like 1993J or M13 and there we are for the next three or four weeks of image processing. Great fun though! Please help Patrick if you can. If your Society can find a fiver how about donating it to the Cancer Fund in memory of Ken Marcus. Don't forget Reading, High Wycombe or Cambridge. Clear Skies. Ken Sheldon

It was on a Monday Morning

Nearly lunchtime, time for the team to get together in my office for the weekly progress meeting. A fairly hard week for the team in store as the main ESA/NASA programme we are concerned with is reaching a critical stage. So far the morning has been pretty frantic dealing with schedule changes by telephone and E mail.

The telephone rings, "It's A here, from X Astronomical Society."

(To avoid embarrassment and perhaps legal action when I exaggerate, there are no names in this article [and I have asked the editor not to put my name at the bottom]).

"We've been let down by our speaker for Friday night, can you come?"

As it happened not only did I have a free evening, but also my family were planning to spend the weekend near X. However, I did not know our travel plans.

"I don't know, it's possible, but could you 'phone me at home this evening when I will have had time to check with my wife?"...

...That evening I agreed with A. to talk at X on the following Friday. He would post a map of X showing the location the next day.

Tuesday to Thursday were spent at various ESA meetings in Europe...

...Thursday evening another 'phone call from A, "You still alright for tomorrow?"

"Yes, but I have not had a map."

"Well we meet at...at 7 p.m." A says.

As I know X a little I agree that I will be able to find the meeting venue, and plan to arrive a little after 6.30.

As X is about 100 miles away and Friday traffic is notorious I leave work at about 3.30 having spent the previous hour or so checking over slides and the outline

lecture notes. Fortunately, it is a talk I gave recently and so I don't have to review it much. I wonder if my jokes will work this time.

Not much traffic and so I get to X and find the venue by about 6.15. At about 6.45 the caretaker lets me in and I start to check over screen projector, video etc.

At about 7 p.m. the first members arrive, who say that the meetings start at 7.30.

By about 7.15 several committee members have arrived and set up society stalls and generally helped. A very friendly society and by about 7.30 the room seemed full with about 50 members of all ages. At about 7.25 A arrived and seemed pleased to find that everything was set up. The society chairman, secretary and half the committee seem to have said hello and asked what the talk was going to be. I wish I were better at remembering people's names.

A little after 7.30 the meeting starts with the usual minutes of the last meeting, report on a society weekend, monthly observing notes and description of the society's latest fund-raising activity. Then my turn with the suggestion that I should stop halfway for a tea break.

By half-time I was glad of that cup of tea. (Remember I left work mid-afternoon so unlike the majority of members I have not had an evening meal).

I finished on time and the talk seemed to generate a lot of questions. The members did laugh at the jokes and the vote of thanks was fulsome. Of course, the buzz of adrenaline may make it hard to be objective, but the talk seemed to have gone well.

The projectionist returns my slides (saves me driving off without them which happened once) but no-one says good-bye or escorts me to my car. No mention of travel expenses and no letter of thanks a few days later.

My car broke down on the way home. The map never arrived.

X is a good society and certainly not the least pleasant I have visited. I never accept travelling expenses from amateur societies (editor please do not publish my name!), but it would have been nice to be asked rather than assumed.

Society meeting secretaries have a hard time but they should realise that they are not the booking agent of a Northern club offering precious contracts to budding entertainers.

Why do we give our time for free (when my commercial rates for a one hour lecture is in three figures)?

■ because we are, ourselves, amateurs as well as professionals

■ because as young scientists it will give us experience and a line or two on our C.V. (alas no longer true for me!)

■ because we know the taxpayer provides for our work

■ because we want to make young people enthusiastic about science in general and astronomy in particular

The FAS did (does?) have a list of

suggestions for societies when dealing with the external speakers. Can I suggest the following:-

■ Be precise with the invitation, send a written confirmation with a good map. (I once had a map sent which was known by the society to be wrong due to a new bypass - but the meeting secretary did not drive!)

■ Have a named host who will be there to meet the speaker and check on everything during the evening, finally escorting the speaker to his transport at the end.

■ Provide a drink on arrival (even a can of cola or small carton of fruit juice), check carefully if the speaker would appreciate a meal, etc.

■ Ask discretely and carefully about travel expenses, not 'do you need travel expenses' but rather 'how much do we owe you for travel?' Not prefaced by statements on hardship of the society please!

■ Keep society notices to the minimum. Every speaker I know has a horror story about only being left a few minutes for a one hour talk before the caretaker started to shake his keys.

■ Offer your speaker one of the society mugs, ballpoint pens or monthly newsletters. He/she will often decline!

■ Look after your speakers - remember we talk to each other and an unfriendly society will soon find it hard to get speakers.

BOOK REVIEW

EARTH AND SPACE. Teaching materials in support of Science in the National Curriculum - suitable for Secondary Schools. *Produced by the Association for Astronomy Education and the Association for Science Education and endorsed by the Royal Society.* £9.20 plus £1.20 p&p.

This workbook covers most of the programme of study for the National Curriculum any differences probably due to the syllabus having changed. It follows the same lines as the Primary School Workbook reviewed in the FAS Handbook 1991. The authors obviously understand youngsters, particularly in a classroom situation. They also understand the need for teachers to have simple material on subjects with which they may not be familiar. It is not intended that the book should be given to the pupils but the fact that worksheets and diagrams can be freely photocopied for them is invaluable.

Sets of questions for the class are given, and teachers are supplied with notes which are relevant to the answers.

Practical work is all simple and clearly illustrates the points which are being investigated. Gravity, modern ideas and communications are all very well explained.

The Milky Way needed more explanation and I did not find anything about geological activity on planets.

A useful book for teachers and members of societies who are helping in schools and also for those amateur astronomers new to the subject.

by Christine Sheldon

SOCIETY NEWS ROUND-UP

If you are on holiday in another area why not contact the local group?

AYLESBURY AS Contact Nigel Sheridan, 22, Moor Park, WENDOVER HP22 6AX for details of programme. Ian Welland gave up the Secretary job due to pressure of work, however he is to continue as Chilterns Rep on the FAS Council and hopefully will continue to lead the campaign for the Astronomy Gallery at the Science Museum. AAS have been very busy with the Summer meeting at High Wycombe.

BIRMINGHAM AS BAS were the saviours of the FAS at the Coventry AGM when they manned the tea urn at short notice. Thanks a lot Contact Andy Salmon on 021 565 4845 for details of programme.

BLACKPOOL & DISTRICT AS Contact Terry Devon on 0253 25975 A 'new' newsletter has highlighted the activities of the BADAS one noteworthy feature being the imaging of Jupiter using eyepiece projection and a handheld video camera (Terry is the expert) Another news item was the opening of Glynne Gray's observatory complete with its 19" telescope.

BEDFORD AS Contact Peter Cox on Bedford 354552 for details of the programme. The Society has had its usual busy season and took part in a quiz with Cambridge. Who won? Wait for the next issue.

BRIDGEND AS For details of programme contact Keith Clark on 0656 664274. BAS is flourishing and the newsletter is a good example of its type. Speakers have included Dave Powell, Patrick Walters and Bob Owen. Topics ranged from Variable stars, Olbers Paradox and Mapping the Sky. It was nice to meet so many of the group at the Worcester Convention.

CAMBRIDGE Astronomical Association Contact Dr Frank Murphy on 0223 262421 for details. The Planetarium show was a success. The 1986 five year plan has basically been achieved. Another one is

under way. Looking at the newsletter Capella lots of things are happening both for The Cambridge Young Astronomers and the main body, not least of which was the completion of the dome. Lots of good interesting talks and articles.

COTSWOLD AS Contact John Daniel on 0453 757026 for details. The society had a visit from Konrad Malin-Smith talking on Relativity which left us all a little wiser. Irene Hutton the new Events organiser and John the new Coordinator have some interesting speakers lined-up, including Allan Chapman in October.

CRAYFORD MANOR HOUSE AS Contact Roger Pickard on 0322 521463

A delayed report (due to postal problems). The death of Tony Miller who had been Secretary for many years was a low light in the year. Speakers have included Allan Chapman, Gilbert Satterthwaite, Margaret Renston, Paul Roche, John Maxwell with still to come John Mason, Glen White, Mike Dworetzky and David Dewhurst. The John Wall 32" is finished. A CCD camera is undergoing trials and the Jack Ellis PEP telescope is giving good results.

Report by A. Cockburn

CROYDON AS Contact Graham Howell on 0737 555197 for programme & details. This year the CAS has complemented its 18" telescope with a CCD camera system from Terry Platt. The system has lower noise, more pixels, more accessibility and a lower price than the ST-6 and this year seemed the right year to buy. The Society opened its observatory on May 22nd for celebrations. Many observing programmes have been planned and initial results are wonderful. (written by Roy Easto)

La Societe GUERNESIAISE Astronomy Section The contact is David Le Conte on 64847. The Section were pleased to welcome Patrick Moore who opened the Sections Observatory and then gave a Public Lecture which was a sell-out. Patrick joined the

Section as Member. The Observatory houses a 14" SCT and an 11" and a Schmidt camera are available. Member John Hodder opened his garden to help raise funds. Several speakers have given members great pleasure and the latest was Neil Turner talking about Amateur Radio satellites.

HAMPSHIRE Astronomy Group Contact Rod Dodd on Waterlooville 254032 for more details. The latest newsletter carried news of intruders in the Observatory compound. Fortunately they were scared away by the presence of members actually observing. As you will see Salford AS were not so lucky. Speakers have included Mike Maunders. The Open Weekend in February was a huge success. The Group's efforts with lighting problems still appear to be bearing fruit. **HEART OF ENGLAND** AS Contact Jean Poyner on 021 350 4312 for programme. HOEAS must be the most travelled Society - in the Midlands at least, they were seen at Winchester, Coventry, Worcester all in a period of a few weeks.

IRISH AS The IAS were involved in the Irish Astro Weekend at the end of March which I believe was a great success. Orbit the society news magazine is beautifully produced and carries much original material. The spring session is now finished but to find out more about the activities contact James Lynch on Dublin 820 2135.

KETERING & DISTRICT AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS SOCIETY Contact Stephen Williams on 0933 279792 for details of programme. The Society meets at the Quaker Meeting Hall on first Tuesday of month. Speakers have included Andrew Elliott (Video Astronomy), Jeremy Workman (Mars) and Ian Welland (William Herschel). The May Newsletter had a good picture of astronomically friendly lighting at Wellingborough station car park. Well done BR!

LETCHWORTH & DISTRICT AS Contact Eric Hutton on 0462 431988 for more details of events. Recent speakers have included Paul Money talking on 'The Messier Marathon' successfully completed at the COAA in March. Other speakers included Jeremy Workman on 'Voyager to Uranus' and Stuart Clarke with 'Star Formation'. Star parties and Observatory training sessions feature too.

LIVERPOOL AS To get more info contact Ken Clark, 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, L45 0LJ The News Circular as usual carries lots of Observing information and some fascinating articles by Ray Roberts on Rotation in Astronomy. The Society's next formal meeting is the Presidential Address on September 17th but regular Observatory meetings continue on Wednesdays during the summer.

MORAY AS Contact Richard Pearce on 0343 835011 for more. MAS recently hosted a SAG meeting with speakers including Brian Kelly, Jim Savage-Lowden, Colin Steele, Sandy MacKenzie and Richard Pearce. Topics ranged from Observing Highlights through Astrofest93 to Education. The raffle was won by Catherine Traynor of

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

BAA European Colloquium on Light Pollution. Saturday July 3rd

Palmer Lecture Theatre, Reading University. 10.30 to 5.30

IMO International Meteor Conference September 23-26

Puimichel, France Information from Paul Roggemans, Pijnboomstraat 25, B-2800 Mechelen, Belgium or phone 010 32 15 41 12 25

Scottish AG Astronomy Weekend September 17-19 at Drumnadrochit. Contact Jim Savage-Lowden, Carn Bheag, Glickabea, Kiltarlity, by Beaulie, Inverness-shire, IV7 4HR

BAA Horncastle Weekend September 10-12 Contact Paul Money

FAS Meetings for 1993

July 10th Summer Convention Hosted by the Chiltern and Thames Valley Group. See poster with your Secretary.

September 25th Autumn Convention at The Cavendish Laboratory Cambridge. Speakers to include Bob Lambourne of the O.U. See flyer and booking form with your secretary

Stirling AS (A mystery cardboard box!)
The MAS and Inverness AS have decided to form a new grouping called the Highlands AS but no venue has been fixed as yet.

ORWELL AS The Open Weekend was a reasonable success, Saturday being spoilt by cloud but Sunday being very busy with over 100 visitors. Observations have been made of 1993J. Suggestions for future Society events include a holiday in La Palma - I wonder what the attraction is? Contact Peter Richards on 0473 659806 for more details.

PLYMOUTH AS Contact Sheila Evans on 0752 706908 for more details of programme. The Society has just completed its 'formal' season with the AGM. The season went well with good speakers from both Plymouth and neighbouring Societies. The Lunar Rocks in experience was much enjoyed by all these brought in several new members. The outgoing chairman, Alan Penman, has had some success over the lighting at SAFEWAY stores in both Plymouth and Tavistock. A trip is planned to Herschel House soon and to Goonhilly later. (Report by Sheila Evans)

P.O.N.L.A.F. Contact either Tony Corbett on 071 263 2789 or Matthew Hepburn on 071 607 2789 ext 2100 or 071 753 5165

Speakers in the last session included Roger O'Brien talking about Ulysses and Jerry Workman on Saturn.

SALFORD AS Contact Kath Redford on 061 794 3179 for more details about the future programme. The Observatory was burgled in early April and the computer & video were stolen. The supernova 1993J has attracted observers and John Toone has also observed Nova Aquila. SAS has also been working with local scout groups for the Astronomy Badge. Visits have included Jodrell Bank, the AC Easter Star Party, Chester AS and the Newchapel Sciences Centre at Kildgrove. A plaque to the founders of the Society was unveiled earlier. A fuller report in our next newsletter (from Kath Redford)

SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS GROUP
SAG contact is Brian Kelly, 449 Brook Street, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD5 2DX. The group continue to champion the cause of astronomy across Scotland with about a dozen societies pulling together. The Group organise a Scottish Astronomy Weekend which this year will be at Drumnadrochit (see events panel on page 3). The good newsletter has been running a series on Radio Astronomy and this should hopefully get something going to combat the cloud.

SHROPSHIRE AS Contact Kevin Wildgoose on 0691 88408 for more. An active Society with lots of members telescopes available and a CCD camera. Also involved in Starbase 4 run by Pete Williamson - we hope to get an FAS area on the board in the foreseeable future. A regular programme of formal events takes place.

SOUTH AS Phone John Larard on 081-299 1783 for details of the programme and meetings. The Society Chairman Geoff Elston has taken on Assistant Director of the

BAA Solar Section (which he shares with Worthing's Pam Spence) Since Geoff is also JAS Solar Section Director he is going to be Submerged with data. Several members of SAS went to Pui Michel (triggered by a Year in Provence) the intrepid quartet, Geoff, John Smith, Trevor Hebditch and Kelvin Stevens enjoyed some Solar Observing and also 1993J. The newsletter is full of useful observing information.

WEST OF LONDON AS Contact Robin Scagell on 0895 637463 for programme details. Speakers have included Stuart Malin and Andy Lawrence. One highlight has been the visit to David Strange's site in Dorset where the wonders of CCD imaging and image processing produced some great images of 1993J and Jupiter.

WEST YORKSHIRE AS The society have been very active and at the moment are setting next year's summer meeting on 4th June. The man responsible is Paul Dobson. At the AGM the President Les Woollicroft had to give up the post which he had much enjoyed because of health problems and also because of the pressure of work. Phobos continues to flourish.

WOLVERHAMPTON AS Malcolm Astley on 0902 783212 is the man to approach for details of the Society's programme. Infact the Society has with the Preston Montfort Weekend in March and the IAAU meeting in August been extremely busy. The normal society meetings have taken place and the newsletter Lyra has been improved as Editor Mike Bryce masters the DTP program.

WORCESTER AS Ring Ian Gray on 0386 47352 for more details of programme. The May Convention was very successful with great speakers including Allan Chapman, Nigel Metcalfe of Durham University, Neil Bone and Ken Phillips of RAL. Chris Baddley showed some monitor screen shots of processed CCD images, very impressive. The normal spring meetings have included 'A Trip to Baikonur' by Nigel Evans of Birmingham AS, 'Video Astronomy' by Andrew Elliot of Reading AS. Future talks include Geoff Owen of Helios Scopes and in July Merlin Ellis talking about 'Pluto & Charon'. Steve Foulkes is mastering the interface between Starlite Xpress images and the JPL Image processing program. His results are really excellent.

WORTHING AS Ring Nick Quinn on 0903 814090 for details of the programme. The usual busy programme has continued with a series of interesting lectures as well as the observing sessions. The society were pleased to hear the Pam Spence is now joint Assistant Director of the BAA Solar Section. The 101 observatory is almost complete and will have a Public Opening shortly.

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When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like second. When you sit on red-hot cinder a second seems like an hour. *That's relativity!*
Albert Einstein, 1879-1955

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LIVERPOOL AS

As a result of negotiations with North-West Water LAS are to set up a new observatory at Pex Hill near Cronton. This will involve a huge outlay for the society and fundraising efforts which had already raised a considerable amount (but not enough) need to be stepped up. LAS has for many years produced Astro Events for the Liverpool Area and the LAS Sky Diary. At the centenary meeting it was decided that some practical Handbooks should be produced and sold. With the advent of DTP systems this has now happened.

Under the heading "GETTING STARTED IN ASTRONOMY" the following booklets are now available.

Buying A Telescope.	Tony Williams
Drawing the Moon & Planets.	Steve Taylor
Observing the Sun.	Eric Strach
Astrophotography.	Rob Johnson
Variable Stars.	Rob Corrigan
Observing Saturn.	Alan Heath

In preparation:

Observing the Moon	George Amery
Building an Observatory	Reg Spry
Messiers Nebulae & Cluster	Dave Owen

Booklets cost £1 each and can be obtained from:
Tony Williams, 14 Whitelodge Ave,
Huyton, Merseyside, L36 2PU

JUNIOR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The sudden closure of Holborn Library Hall has forced the JAS to move to a new venue after many years. The 1993 July 31 and October 30 meetings have been arranged to take place in Lecture Theatre 1, University of Westminster, Marylebone Road, London NW1 at 1430 hours. Being directly opposite the Planetarium and Baker St Tube Station the location should be easy to find. It is hoped that the lecture theatre will be suitable as a permanent meeting place for the JAS, but next years venues will be confirmed later.

For information about JAS membership send an SAE to Guy Fennimore, 36 Fairway, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5DU

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FAS

Publication dates for Newsletter

September 14th	deadline August 25th
December 10th	Deadline November 21st
March 14th	deadline February 23rd
June 14th	deadline May 25th

Please note

1994 June 4th Summer Convention & WYAS anniversary - Pontefract

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Council of the FAS.

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Published by CAKE, Whitehaven, Maytree Road, Lower Moor, PERSHORE. Printed by John Knight & Sons, Printers, 33 Littleworth Street, Evesham