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 9281 Astronomy and planitary science. This is an exciting, broad ranging course, divided into four parts.
1. The stars and interstellar medium.
2. Planetary systems.
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 audicassette, and 8 broadcast TV programmes. A planetarium 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 enrolling 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

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 Marlinspike,
SHOREHAM-BY-SEA,
W.Sussex
BN43 5RD

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

June 1993
EDITORIAL

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 glimpse of starlight and out we go - a couple of 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 for 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 fairly 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 discreetly 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.

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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 workpack covers most of the programme for the National Curriculum and differences probably due to the syllabus having changed. It follows the same lines as the Primary School Workpack 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 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 Salmond on 021 565 4854 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 Glynn 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.

BRIDGENG 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 Relationship which left us all a little wiser. Irene Hatton 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 0222 521463 A delayed report (due to postal problems). The death of Tony Miller who had been Secretary for many years was a loss in the year. Speakers have included Allan Chapman, Gilbert Satterthwaite, Margaret Renston, Paul Roche, John Maxwell and 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 the Society, being included are a detailed report on the observatory. 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 Maund, The Open Weekend in February was a huge success. The Group's efforts with lighting problems still appears to be bearing fruit.

HEART OF ENGLAND AS Contact Jean Poyner on 0121 350 4312 for programme. HEOAS 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.

KETTERING & DISTRICT AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS SOCIETY Contact Stephen Williams on 0933 277972 for details of programme. The Society meets at the Quaker Meeting Hall on first Tuesday of month. Speakers have included Andrew Elliot (Video Astronomy), Jeremy Workman (Mars) and Ian Welland (William Herschel). The May Newsletter had a good picture of astronomically friendly lighting at Wellborough station car park. Well done BR!

LETC worthwhile meeting,596

LETTCHWORTH & 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 Voyages to the Planets 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 0JL 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 President 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 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 Drummodoch. Contact Jim Savage-Lowden, Cumnghurn, 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.
LIVERPOOL AS

As a result of negotiations with North-West Water LAS are to set up a new observatory at Pex Hill near Crompton. 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 Anery
- 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, L30 2PU

JUNIOR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The sudden closure of Holborn Library 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 14.30 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 venues will be confirmed later.

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

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

1994 June 4th Summer Convention & WYAS anniversary - Pontefract

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

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