EDITORIAL
I must apologise for the lateness of this newsletter - in preparing the material for the printers I had omitted to include the officers reports for the AGM. Since by including it we reduce the time needed for the formalities, thus giving us more discussion time, it is important hence the delay. Sorry!!
The AGM is almost upon us together with its associated afternoon of lectures. The programme is shown below and you can see that it is a good one. However the function of the AGM is to elect the FAS Council and I hope that there will be a good turn out of Societies to select the Council they want. I know that the Council makes suggestions for officers but they are only suggestions as a backup in the event of there being no nominations from the floor. Please feel free to nominate willing persons for any of the posts in the list.
The big news for societies who will hopefully be getting requests for public viewing sessions after Alex's TV series, is that the FAS have negotiated a Public Liability Insurance that Federated Societies can take up. It will cover members of the Public for public observing in public places and members gardens as well as Society premises and will cost Federated Societies not more than £20 and probably about £10 if there is a reasonable uptake. Your Secretary should have full details by now - make sure that you are covered!
Don't forget too the Solar eclipse in May. 50% and obviously something to show the public on their way home from work, but please stress that projection is the safest method. Hopefully there will be some spin-off too from the Shoemaker-Levy and Jupiter encounter. Just let's hope that it doesn't attract too many odd-ball characters.
Clear skies & good viewing
Ken Sheldon
FAS ASTROFEST SUCCESS!
The FAS does not gamble very often, but we felt it was a bit of a gamble to take a stand at this year's AstroFest in London. At £235, would we get a good return for the Federation's money? Indeed, how could we even quantify a "good return"? When we are not directly selling membership to the public, merely representing our 120+ members, would £235 for publicity be worthwhile?
Well, after two days at AstroFest I can unreservedly declare that the £235 spent was worthwhile. We gave out hundreds (no exaggeration) of secretary's addresses; people wanted the name of their nearest society, not just in London and the south east, but from Scotland to Dover, Cornwall to Norfolk. One person had even flown in from Northern Ireland.
The societies who had given us handouts and posters gained the most. It is much more immediate to hand over a piece of paper containing addresses, information, dates and venues of meetings rather than giving a hurriedly scribbled secretary's address. Next year - and I hope if we can get the manpower needed to organise and man this stand, there will be a next year - I recommend societies to send us some handouts. Your donations this year were well spent, I promise you.
Even financially the Federation did not lose out because thanks to the 15 societies who did give a donation, plus the sales of slides, astrocalendars, handbooks etc, I believe the Treasurer is "officially happy".
My thanks go to the people who gave their time to help run the stand: Alan Drummond, Clive Down, Peter Fisher, Chris and Ken Sheldon. I also thank Peter for making the Federation banner (you will see it at future events!)
Pam Spence Meetings Coordinator

AGM COUNCIL OFFICERS REPORTS

AGM to be held at the Herbert Lecture Theatre on Saturday May 7th. The doors open at 09.30 and there will be books and possibly other goodies.
The AGM will commence at 11.00 and finish by 12.30 to allow a reasonable break before the afternoon lectures.
The afternoon session will start at 14.00
The speakers are:

David Whitehouse BBC Science Correspondent with the The Ken Marcus Memorial Lecture on Rockets and Things
Alexandra Lovell BBC Astronomy researcher on Planetary Nebulce
Third speaker to be confirmed

The afternoon finishes at 18.00
There is adequate off street car parking around the Herbert Theatre.
Tickets £3.50 obtainable from Alan Drummond.
Don't forget that if 6 members of a Society attend the Society gets free membership of the FAS for 1994/95.
have a member attending our Council meetings. My AstroFest was organised with both hats on (Meetings/Liaison) and the event was brilliant. NOT only did we promote the FAS and its individual Societies but we gained by selling slides, astrolabets, handbooks, etc. A worthwhile event.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me in numerous ways, throughout this past year.

Pam Spence

EDUCATION SECRETARY

The duties of Education Secretary have been considerably eased over the last few years due to the increasing strength of the links between FAS and AAS. Education enquiries by individuals are still referred to the relevant Astro Society, if this is deemed to be the correct avenue of approach, but others, which might have a wider appeal, are often referred to the AAE. We know of course, that many queries of an educational nature are dealt with directly by the Societies and do not come to my attention. Such approaches are to be welcomed, but it would be useful if they were reported to the Education Secretary just for the record.

The links with the AAE are seen at Council meetings of both bodies - 2 AAE Council members attend FAS Council and 3 FAS Council members attend the AAE Council.

At the time of writing, we are uncertain of changes to be made to the National Curriculum (for Astronomy) but these may be known by the Coventry Meeting.

NAW 1996 will take place 1996 Sept 21-28. Societies should start planning now if they intend to participate. I represent the FAS on the NAW coordinating committee.

Eric Zucker

PUBLICITY OFFICER

My year started with inviting traders to take trade stands at Cambridge and dealing with advertisers for the Handbook. I also talked to Richard Milner who sent the Secretary details of a reduced price stand at Astrofest.

I can claim some small success with the north-west astronomical societies. After years of nagging them they have at last got together to form a regional group. Publicity for the FAS Handbook will be my next task. I did nothing for publicity outside the FAS for the Astrocalendar due to its late appearance. I hope for better things with the Handbook with potential outside purchasers. I continue to direct customers to the FAS slide collection when they ask for information.

As already indicated, I do not seek re-election in May. It seems time for a change. My place will make way for fresh talent and new ideas.

Rosemary Naylor

EDITOR

The year has been busy - I have produced the basic 4 newsletters (which involves trying to extract information from newsletters from some 30 contributing societies) and the Handbook. There have been some printing hold-ups. I have also circulated Societies, FAS and non-FAS, about matters such as DOE initiatives, current contact addresses and Public Liability Insurance for Observing Sessions plus fliers for the AGM, High Wycombe and Cambridge. I am prepared to continue in the post if the membership wishes it.

Ken Sheldon

AGM

The following nominations have been made by the Council.

President - Pam Spence

Vice President - Tony Balfour

Secretary - Christine Sheldon

Treasurer - Alan Drummond

Meetings Coordinator - Alex Lovell

Publicity Officer - Clive Down

Education Secretary - Eric Zucker

Asst Ed Secretary - Mike Inglis

Publications Officer - Malcolm Jones

Liaison Officer - Graham Bowden-Peters

Editor - Ken Sheldon

Nominations are needed for the post of Assistant Secretary with special responsibility as Membership/Minute Secretary. The officer elected should be available to attend 3 Council meetings and two or three Conventions a year. The duty of Membership Secretary is to maintain an up-to-date membership list in conjunction with the Treasurer. The Minutes Secretary takes and produces the Council Minutes.

Please remember that these nominations are only suggestions and that nominations for all the posts can be made before the AGM and also from the floor on the day. Nominations must be for persons willing to take the post and must be proposed and seconded by Federated Societies.

**AUTHORS and REPORTERS**

**PLEASE NOTE**

REVISED PUBLICATION DATES 1994

Proposed publication dates for Newsletter Summer End May deadline April 30th Autumn End August deadline July 31st Winter End November deadline October 31st

Please keep reports to about 120-150 words Handwritten or typed copy is OK.

1994

FAS Dates for your Diary

7th May AGM & Convention. Coventry

4th June Summer Convention & WYAS anniversary - Pontefract

24th Sept Autumn Convention

Cambridge

1995

Early May AGM
AYLESBURY AS Contact Nigel Sheridan on 0296 623255 for more details of programme.
Interesting for the last year or so to have been reading Ian Welland's "15 Brightest Stars from Britain" in the Aylesbury Bulletin and interesting too to see how many other Societies have been printing them recently. Well Ian has another series called Circumpolar Constellations - watch out for this on your newsletters. One sad event in the Aylesbury calendar was the passing away of veteran amateur Gerard Rawlings - I only met him once - on the night of the Voyager/Uranaus encounter, when he stayed with us. It was interesting to hear his comments on what we were seeing. AAS are busy being amateur astronomers and I had to chuckle at L Edwards description of the November lunar eclipse.

BEDFORD AS Contact Peter Cox on Bedford 3548452 for details of the programme. Since the AGM has come and gone and Peter is still Secretary I will continue to use him as the contact. Observing sessions and regular talks feature in the programme. Speakers include Paul Money and speakers to come include Bob Forest, University of Hertfordshire on 'CCDs for Amateur Astronomy' and Allan Chapman, Oxford University on 'Historical Figures in Astronomy'.

BIRMINGHAM AS Contact Peter Bolas on 0283 68512 for details of programme. John Spittle is expecting to move home soon and Peter has volunteered to cover the hiatus.

BRIDGEND AS Meet at Bridgegand Bowls Centre on alternate Fridays with observing sessions on the Fridays. Contact Keith Clark on 0656 664274 for more information. I was pleased to see Clive Down, BAS editor at AstroFest and must thank him for his efforts in manning the stand on the Friday. Clive's efforts at spreading Astronomical mugs now must be well-known and he has done good job in bringing Societies together. He has also had some success with light pollution!

BRIGHTON Astronomical & Scientific Society The Society in the year since Ken Marcus passed away has had a fairly hectic going including the decision to go ahead with building a BASS Observatory (Could you get any sponsorship from a well-known drinks manufacturer?) Chris Miller gathered the award as Young Astronomer of the Year with its associated trip to Chile - lucky Chris but then I couldn't have qualified!!

Looking at The New Sidereal Times I get the feeling that Society members have been flitting around the country on lots of occasions supporting amateur astronomy. The contact is Peter Fisher on 0273 555816

BRISTOL AS have a new Secretary so if you need to talk about the programme contact Geoff Cave, 0272 798375. They have had a good series of lectures this session and are very active as an observing group.

CAMBRIDGE Astronomical Association Contact Dr Frank Murphy on 0223 262421 for details. Because this newsletter is late - my fault entirely - I have not been able to give the Society's Planetarium Show much of a boost but there will still be time to contact CAA and talk about it. Your Secretary has a flyer with details.

CARDIFF AS Contact Dave Powell on 0222 551704 for details of programme which includes observing sessions.

CHESTERFIELD AS CAS is about 35 years old and numbers some 40 members of whom about 20 are active. Meetings take place every Friday in the Barnett Observatory, Newbold which boasts a small lecture room and an 18" Newtonian, all built by members, including the optics. There is a monthly lecture and so far this session we have enjoyed Dr Cedric Marty's talk on 'Shmid Camera', Paul Griffin on 'Astronomography' and Dr Greenwood on 'Eclipses'. Other Friday evenings are for observation (when clear) and a meeting of like minds. A number of members, having passed "the Test", may use the telescope whenever they wish. Contact John Brown on 0246 209364 for more details. (Ed-The Club Magazine looks quite good) From John Brown

CROYDON AS Talk to Konrad Malin-Smith on 081 777 1736 for future programme. Talks include Pam Spence's 'The Sun' which went down well at last years Winchester. Observing sessions occur regularly at the Kenley observatory with its 10" and 18" telescopes. The Winter issue of ALTAR (which I scoured from the FAS stand at AstroFest) had some very interesting articles including one on White Dwarfs by Roy Easto and one on the drive system at Kenley by John Mills.

COTSWOLD AS Contact John Daniel on 0453 757026 for details. Since the last newsletter Christmas has happened and the Society has had its usual Christmas Dinner in January. Speakers have included Chris Sheldon on 'History of Solar Observing' and me on 'The Radio Amateur and Astronomy'. Still to come are the AGM and Richard Fleet talking about 'Southern Skies'.

La Société GUERNESEIA Astronomique Section The contact is Geoff Falla on 724101. I have just received the 1994 programme of the Section and as usual am impressed by the topics to be covered by its speakers in the next ten months plus of course all the social events that are scheduled. Speakers include Antony Saunders on 'The Microwave Background Radiation', David Williams with 'Scintillate, Scintillate, Global Flavite', Lawrence Guilbert with 'The Sun', David Cave on 'The Hubble Space Telescope' and last but not least Stephen Jeffreys and 'Orion - the Hunter'. The latest Scintillation includes a 12 page supplement on Taurus plus good articles on the Sun, Sundials and Coloning Mars, together with lots of news and comment.

HAMPSTEAD Astronomy Group As usual HAG are active on all sort of fronts - Neil Bone praises them as one of the better Societies for submitting meteor reports, they are still pursuing light pollution and as usual they have had a good lecture season plus all the regular observing sessions from Clanchfield Observatory. The Group are looking for a Site Caretaker - salary 2 cups of coffee and as much fresh air as you can stand.

The big forthcoming event is the Clanchfield Observatory Open Weekend 15th to 17th April when the Observatory will be open 9pm until Midnight. Contact Red Dodd on Watlooveo 254032 for more details.

KETERING & DISTRICT AA Contact Stephen Williams at 120 Brickhill Rd, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 3JP for more details of the Society's meetings.

LEICESTER AS LAS has seen a significant upturn in membership over the past few months. Is this a national trend? Socially, the past few months have been very active. For the third time in four years, Leicester won the annual inter-society quiz at Hinckley in December. The annual dinner in January was well-attended. Ann Bonell won the prize for the best (and the cleanest!) timer entitled "There was a young astronomer from Leicester......" and Richard Caswell won the 'word' competition. A photograph marking the annual dinner appeared in the Leicester Mercury. At the February A.G.M., Martin Rose was awarded the D.Brown prize for his talk on 'Planet X'. Speakers lined up for the next few months include Shaun Albrighton, Peter Rea, John Lester, David Swaby, Paul Money and Alex Lovell. Meetings at Judgemental Community College, Evington, Leicester. Contact Ann Bonell, 53 Wardens Walk, Leicester Forest East, Leics., LE3 3GC. Tel: 0533 394481.

LEICESTER Leicestershire District of ASAS meet at Pilton Hall, Letchworth. Meetings have moved to the 1st Thursday of the month for more details consult Eric Hutton on 0462 431988 for more details of events.

Lots of activity including a Public Observing evening at the Standalome Farm Observatory. It was by all accounts a resounding success. Speakers to come include Arthur Davis of WOLAS on 'Deep Sky', Keith Fowler on 'The Local Group' and Jerry Workman of ASH talking about 'Jupiter'. The Newsletter is full of news and information plus an observing guide.

LOWESTOFT & GT YARMOUTH Regional Astronomers. Really out on a limb at the most easterly point in Britain the group are doing quite well. They meet at Kirkley High School on the 3rd Thursday. Speakers have include Bob Cheek and the Chairman Danny on the Winter Sky, John Nicholls on 'Useful Gadgets' while outside speakers have included Ken Sheldon on 'Simple Radio Astronomy', Neil Bone on 'Meteors' and Paul Money on 'Solar System III' A keen and friendly local group.

MANCHESTER AS The MAS will be holding a Major Convention on 2nd July 1994 at Parkers Hotel, Manchester from 11.00 am to 6.00 pm. The hotel is ideally situated 6 minutes walk from the main Victoria Rail Station and hotel services are available throughout the day at very reasonable prices. The main speakers will be the Astronomer Royal Professor Wolfendale and Dr David Whitehouse BBC Science correspondent. Supported by trade stands this promises to be a great day for all astronomers (remember our Centenary in 1992?). Demand for tickets is expected to be high, already enquiries are coming in from local societies so I advise all interested
SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS GROUP SAG Contact Brian Kelly, 449 Brook Street, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DDS 2DX for more details about the Society.

SOLON AS Details of meetings from Ken Medway on 0703 582204.

SOUTH AS Phone John Larird on 0821 299 1783 for details of the programme and meetings. If I had time (what a familiar cry! - how did I manage a job as well?) the South newsletter Monthly Notes would really stimulate me to get out and do something. Nice article by Bob Marriot on Sp"er, Solar Observer Extraordinary.

STRAFFORD UPON AVON AS SAS are now getting underway with a regular group of members plus visitors at the meeting place. Speakers have included Geoff Owen of Helius Designs, Ian Gray, Chris Sheldon and Pete Dun. An observing session was held in December with a good attendance with 4 telescopes in action. Contact Gordon Cutting on 0608 84414 for more details.

WEST OF LONDON AS Contact Robin Seagell on 0895 637463 for programme details. WOLAS have been active both in the lecture room and with observing sessions (the person to ring is Bob Garner on 081 578 9574 for these). Speakers to come include Gill Pearse on Supernovae and Alex Lowell on Active Galaxies (having heard this, I can recommend it). SETI features at the Nave. Visits and trips for the Spring and Summer include a weekend trip to Exmoor and one to the Old RGO (The REAL RGO!)

WEST YORKSHIRE AS Contact Pete Lunn, 21 Cranford Drive, WAKEFIELD, West Yorks for details of the Spring/Summer programme. There have been all the usual WYAS activities but a lot of thought and effort has been going into the preparation for the 21st Anniversary meeting in June (see your Secretary for full details of speakers). I am looking forward to getting back to Ponty and meeting the WYAS enthusiasts. Phobos has been running an excellent series on the American scientist Van Allen among all the other interesting articles that the Editors pull in.

WOLVERHAMPTON AS Malcolm Astley on 0902 783321 is the contact for more information. The Society continues to pursue its activities with many and varied speakers. The Preston Weekend unfortunately clashes with SETI but nevertheless the Society is taking part in a Science Week exhibition at the University. WAS are busy negotiating for a site for the 24" telescope and associated building.

WORCESTER AS WAS have had their usual mix of fun and serious astronomy in the session so far, including the AGM followed by the annual quiz. A couple of members sessions have included a talk by Dick Chambers on the Jack Ellis Automated Telescope. The annual dinner was once more held in The Spire Restaurant all attending enjoyed it. Recent outside speakers have been Chris Eyles of Birmingham Uni and Dave Powell from Cardiff AS. SETI sessions are planned and speakers to come include Chris Sheldon and the Astronomer Royal. Contact Ian Gray on 0386 47352 for more details.

WORTHING AS Ring Nick Quinn on 0903 814090 for details of the programme. WAS have been busy - with their new Observatory obviously it is rather easier to get observing sessions organised.

BOOK REVIEW

Professor Van Allen (after whom the radiation belts about the Earth are named) has written an unusual book aimed at supplying questions which can be used by teachers and others. Topics are divided between 7 chapters to cover various solar system bodies, together with the view of the sky seen from the Earth. These run to 924 questions in all. Then follows a similar number of pages giving the answers.

Some questions are suitable for use in astro socio quizzes, e.g. "Which of the following is not an asteroid? (a) Hildago; (b) Europa; (c) Geographies; (d) Icarus.

Many of the questions do not have such a simple unambiguous answer, however and require opinions, calculations and explanations; e.g. "Briefly what are your thoughts on the likelihood of the existence of living organisms on one of the other planets or its satellites?" and "Given a photograph of an unspecified region of the sky, how does one proceed to identify the stars therein?" and "Estimate the greatest possible height of a mountain on a solid-body planet. Compare your estimate with actual data on the Earth, Mars and Venus (and the Moon)."

These latter type of question show the book would be of most use to teachers of astronomy at GCSE level and beyond. As the author has called on his many years of experience teaching an introductory solar system course at university, this reviewer felt confident that it was not necessary to check out the answers for accuracy. So it is with confidence that I recommend the book to teachers and the self-taught, remembering that it covers in considerable depth, one particular aspect of astronomy.

Rosemary Naylor

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