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Issue 42

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

FAS AUTUMN CONVENTION

Saturday September 30th

Pippard Lecture Theatre

Cavendish Laboratory

Madingley Road

Cambridge

09.00 Doors Open

10.00 Welcome from the President

10.15 Dr Richard McMahon (IOA Cambridge)

Hunting for the most distant Quasars

BREAK

11.45 Dr Jasper Wall (RGO Cambridge)

A walk around Active Galactic Nuclei

LUNCH

14.30 Dr Dave Rothery (Open University)

The Icy Outer Solar System - Planetary Satellites and the Kuiper Belt

15.30 Dr Patrick Walters (University of Swansea)

Micro Cosmos

BREAK

17.00 Dr Iain Nicholson (University of Hertfordshire)

The Origin of the Search for Planetary Systems

18.00 Concluding remarks from the President

Admission if booked in advance £4 - £5 on the door. Under 16 half price

Coffee available on arrival

Lots of Trade Stands

Buffet Lunch £4.50. This must be booked in advance (includes morning and afternoon drinks)

Tickets from Ken Sheldon, Whitehaven, Maytree Road, Lower Moor, Pershore, WR10 2NY

Cheques should be made payable to Federation of Astronomical Societies

Sponsored by Astronomy Now

It seems very strange in the middle of the hottest and driest summer since 1727 - that was the era of Halley as Astronomer Royal - to be writing a newsletter with the Autumn byline. However the great thing about that is the enhanced number of hours possible for observing!

At least that is the theory. Actually I have been pleasantly surprised on the nights when I have been out to be able to see so much. For the last few years I have usually equated our hot days with milky skies but it doesn't seem like that this time. Seeing has of course been degraded by heat instability.

As you may have noticed, Tony Balfour is acting as Treasurer. Graham needed to go to Australia and decided that it was better if someone else held the fort. I would like a Treasurer, I seem to be collecting cheques at a great rate and would be happy for them to go to some-one else.

I am also publishing the first bit of Society news that has arrived by e-mail, Plymouth are the Society which made "history" for the FAS Newsletter. Seems like a good idea to me, since it can come straight in to the Newsletter. But please remember that 150 words is good, 450 words is bad (and likely to get heavily edited). I will look forward to seeing more.

I hope that the Cambridge programme on the front will encourage some of you to come along. I must admit that Mike seems to have got another good programme together - I wonder if Patrick Walters' talk is about computer planetaria?

Clive seems to have got a large number of readers to come this year - please find time to have a look at them. I certainly do drool over lots of the bits and pieces. What I need is a paid job.

Look forward to meeting some of you at Cambridge.
Clear and dark Skies.
Ken Sheldon

FAS HOME PAGE ON WWW

Thanks to Nick Stevens of Starbase 1 the Federation have a Home Page on the World Wide Web. The URL on Internet is:
<http://www.emoticon.com/emoticon/astro/fasmmain.htm>

Incidentally Nick's base page contains home pages for all the national societies. The URL is <http://www.emoticon.com/emoticon/astro>
If you or your Society have material to go on the FAS Home Page please contact Nick Quinn (S.A.G.A.S. rep. on FAS Council) at:
15 Newham Lane, STEYNING, West Sussex, BN44 3LR or on Tel: 01903 814090, or on Nick@quinn.demon.co.uk
Incidentally other FAS E-mail addresses are:

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pam@astronow.demon.co.uk
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cake@kcsdemon.demon.co.uk
Clive Down at
CLIVEDOWN@delphi.com

SOCIETY NEWS ROUNDUP

IUAA CONFERENCE IN LUCERNE 1996

Don't forget that Chris Sheldon will be reporting on Amateur Astronomy in the UK at this Conference and would appreciate slides and/or information about your Society's activities and particularly about your observatories. Delegates from all of the participating countries in Europe and some from Asia and Americas will be there so please help her make it memorable

Don't forget that although Neil Bone would like your Society News for AN I would like it as well!

AYLESBURY AS The contact is Peter Biswell on 01296 85125 for programme.

BEDFORD AS BAS had their usual Barbecue in August to which Cambridge AA representatives were invited - the occasion saw the inauguration of the telescope that CAA donated to BAS a year ago. Dave Eagle has managed to obtain another scope for the Society so suddenly there is a possibility of borrowing one. Library purchases are imminent and a raffle has been held to help fund them. I like raffles they are nearly as exciting as the Lottery and a lot more attainable. Forthcoming speakers are Barry Parkinson "Astronomers - spinners of dreams", Dr Derek Jones "Exploding Stars", Liba Traub "Ptolemy" and Barry Moulang "observing in Portugal". Contact Peter Cox on 01234 354552 for Society info and an up-to-date programme of events.

BIRMINGHAM AS Contact Peter Bolas, 107 Ashby Road, Burton-on-Trent, staffs, DE15 0NX or phone 01283 568512.

BRADFORD AS The Society meets at Eccleshill Library Bradford on alternate Monday evenings from 7.30 pm onwards. Our guest speakers for the next few months include Paul Money, Prof. M Woolfson, Dr David Hughes and Prof. John Dyson. In June we had our Annual quiz with West Yorkshire AS which is always a close run contest over two legs. We won this year by 99 points to 77.

After a quiet period we have now become active on the observing front, acquiring a permanent site at Thackley Football Club, Bradford. We have recently installed a 10" equatorially mounted Newtonian Telescope to compliment our C8 and 5" Deep Sky Binoculars. Having visited other Society's Star Parties we are now planning an Autumn "Evening of Astronomy" to include an informal talk followed by a chance to observe using the above equipment - weather permitting of course. We look forward to seeing you! Should you require further information contact David on 01274 638038 or John Bardsley on 01274 617702.
Report from John Bardsley

BRIDGEND AS The season never really finishes for BAS but looking at the programme for the next few months with Dr Mike Inglis, Dr Simon Hands, Dr Graham Shore and Professor Chandra Wickramasingh I think that the brain cells will certainly be stimulated this Winter. Interesting to read about the BAS and CIDS success over lighting at the new high security prison planned for Bridgend - not for the members! - I will confirm that lighting from such places can be seen from a long way away.

We have Long Latten about 10 miles East of us!!!

Observing sessions are held at St Brides or alternate Fridays if the weather is suitable
Contact Clive Down on 01656 740754 for details of meetings which take place on alternate Fridays.

CAMBRIDGE AA and CAMBRIDGE YOUNG ASTRONOMERS. Reading Capella one has to wonder at the enthusiasm that the CAA manage to arouse in its members. I was also tickled by the bit in the July/August edition on this CCD thing! and what is PUST? It is difficult getting some of these ideas over to people who just want to do Astronomy or even just listen to talks about it. CAA seems to have had its share of good speakers, Dr Jasper Wall (who is talking at the FAS meeting) "The Universe in a glass of Water" and Paul Money "Chasing Cygnus" The CYA programme has also included some fascinating stuff "Collisions in Space", "Death of the Dinosaurs" for 7-11 year olds and "Orbits of the Planets" and "Telescopes" for 11 and over. Oh to be 10 and to live in Cambridge. Contact David Herbert at 67 Howard Close, Cambridge, CB5 8QU for membership and programme info.
CARDIFF AS CAS celebrate their 20th anniversary this summer with a weekend of special events. This will begin on the 7th of September with a talk by Dr Allan Chapman and on September 8th by Dr Hughes of Sheffield will give a talk on the "Origin of the Solar System". On Saturday the 9th September, the Society for Popular Astronomy will hold its Out-of-London meeting in Cardiff.

1994/95 has been a busy year with a full calendar of events including lectures every fortnight, participation in the SET95 activities at Techniquet and a visit from Sir Isaac Newton (or a very good lookalike, well done Dr Mike Edmunds, our Vice-president!).

The Bill Sutherland Award was presented to founder member Dr Bob Owens for his observational work. Next year promises to be full of varied activities with something for everyone. Further information from another founder member Dave Powell, 1 Tal-y-Bont Road, Ely, Cardiff CF5 5EU Tel: 01222 551704

Theresa Cooper Publicity Officer The editor apologises for this possibly being a little late to many societies.

COCKERMOUTH AS

Contact Stuart Atkinson on 01900 826139 for details on programme.

COTSWOLD AS Contact Irene Hatton on 01242 673923 for more details of the programme.

LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE ASTRONOMY SECTION The July/August edition of Sagittarius the Societe's super newsletter has two stories about Liberation Day and the Liberation Monument. Reading them makes me realise that some of us were very lucky during the War. A couple of other things caught my eye, two bits on the Anthropic Principle and the Anthropic Universe. I don't know what I think about that - it is very much "I think therefore I am" or is it? What really made me look were the

near pictures by Roger Chandler - they really are good and their printer is very much better than mine. Contact Geoff Falla the Hon. Secretary on Guernsey 724101 for details of the Spring and Summer programme..

HAMPSHIRE AG As usual there seems to have been a lot going on in HAG. These include a trip to Le Havre to enjoy a barbecue (liked the story about the fresh seafood!) One of the main stories is the ordering of the 24" blank now the 20" drive is installed. Security seems to be a problem here too, the 16" dome having been broken into although nothing was taken. The Autumn programme includes Dr Paul Roche talking about "Impacts from Space" and David Leadbetter "UK and ESA Space programmes - an overview" together with the usual set of fine members talks and demonstrations. The person to contact for details of the programme is Roy Dodd on 01705 646875

AS of HARINGEY Contact Jerry Workman on 0171 607 7751 for more details.

HAVERING AS Formed in 1994 we meet at the Cranham Community Centre, Upminster on the third Wednesday of every month (except for the July and August summer break). The HAS is an informal with varying levels of experience, some with telescopes but mainly beginners, and our membership is around 25. We shall always be grateful to Konrad Malin-Smith of Croydon AS for his encouragement to "get started", and for his continuing interest in our Society. We have joined with Croydon AS for visits to Jodrell Bank and the RGO Cambridge. We have held one observing session on farmland locally, with the prospects of another in October. We have welcomed many interesting speakers and now members of the group are beginning to share their knowledge. We are looking forward to building closer contacts with other local Astronomical Societies. Contact Frances Ridgley on 01708 227397 from programme of events.

Frances Ridgley
IRISH AS The Irish AS are just beginning their winter session with its twice monthly meetings September has Prof Wayman talking about "The Mechanical Balancing of the Rosse 6-ft Telescope" and John Flannery "Space & Cyberspace - Astronomy and Computers" In October they have Girvan McKay of Tullamore AS and the AGM.

Contact James Lynch on 820 2135 (dialling code is 010 353 1 I think) for information on meetings and publications.

ISLE OF MAN AS Looking into the idea of a Society Observatory on one of the mountain tops - I wonder what it would be like in the winter! Contact J.W.Martin Tel: 01624 842954 for programme information.

KETTERING & DISTRICT AAS KADAS Alice Newton is being selected by Jack and Alice Newton as one of the Societies where he would talk - I have no doubt that many of you did hear the talk at one of the places that he visited. He did Kettering proud and those who attended really enjoyed it. The Society is organising a trip to Greenwich and the London Planetarium Contact Stephen Williams on 01933 277972 for more.

LEITCHWORTH & District AS Looking at the provisional programme for the coming weeks

makes one realise that if all the Societies are working as hard as LADAS the public really should be becoming aware of what is in the sky! I wonder if LADAS or any other Society that holds Star Parties/Public Observing sessions could confirm how many members of the Public come and how many have been more than once! The programme includes Dr Chris Kitchen on "Supernova" and Paul Money. Contact Eric Hutton on 01462 431988 for further details of meetings.

LEICESTER AS If you want the LAS programme talk to Ann Bonell on 0116 239 4481 for details.

LIVERPOOL AS Contact Ken Clark at 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, L45 0LJ with an SAE for more details of the LAS programme

MANCHESTER AS Under the vigorous management of the President A W Cross, the July Astroday and Convention was an unqualified success by any criteria. Delegates not only had high quality points of sale to attract their interest and finances but were also enabled to hear internationally known speakers P. Doherty, Dr E H Strach and Dr A Chapman expound on "Art & Astronomy-My View", "The Sun in Hydrogen Alpha" and "The Astronomical Works of Robert Hooke 1637-1703" respectively. Since the latter title involved a knowledge of the immense and influential input accorded by the Towneley family, we were most honoured to have its senior lineal descendant, Sir Simon Towneley, K.C.V.O., K.S.I.J., K.C.S.G., M.A., D.Phil., D.Mus., Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotularum of the County of Lancashire in attendance. The special Astroday Prize for the finest astroslide went to Ian Gray of GrayStel and Worcester AS for his colourful and detailed auroral display study. The season now opening has the following speakers: Prof J Geake (University of Arizona and UMIST) on October 19th with "The UMIST Refractometer to land on Titan" and Prof Sir Hermann Bondi KCB, FRS on Nov 16th "Why is it dark at Night?"
MAS have a Home Page on WWW. The URL is <http://www.u-net.com/ph/mas>.

For details of the regular Thursday meetings at UMIST contact J Davidson on 0161 2004977.

John Davidson
MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON AS Contact Gareth Coulson for subscriptions to their "ibellous" Newsletter but see me at Cambridge mid. Ken

FIRSTLAND SPACEFLIGHT SOCIETY For the programme contact Andy Salmon, "Olympus Mons", 13 Jacmar Crescent, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B67 7LF

NORWICH AS Seething is starting to seethe with action. Contact Malcolm Jones on 01508 578392 for more details.

NOTTINGHAM AS Contact Carl Brennan on: 0115 938 4521 for details of programme. (Editor's note - I got this wrong) Nottingham AS had offered to host the AGM in 1997 (their 50th anniversary not their centenary). Carl Brennan the Nottingham Secretary thinks that it may seem like a hundred by the time it is finished.

ORWELL AS Now have a couple of e-mail addresses: osiang@btbc.bt.co.uk and a WWW

[url http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/80/~ipswich/](http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/80/~ipswich/)
The Plans for the autumn look to include all the every night sessions. Contact Peter Richards on 01473 644828

PLYMOUTH AS The PAS has had a vigorous year during 1994/95. We celebrated our 30th anniversary in February by organising two city displays - one in the Civic Centre and one in Central Library. Each attracted a large number of people and all pamphlets disappeared without trace! Meetings were heavily attended during many months, reducing a little as summer approached. There has been only one major problem for us - our large 24 inch telescope. This consists essentially of a mirror and some basic optics. The hardware has been in need of a complete overhaul for a long time, in order to make it safe for reliable viewing by members and the public. Earlier in the season we were belatedly informed that the telescope had been moved to a local College, without the knowledge of the committee. On checking the situation we discovered that there was no insurance cover at the new site, nor did they propose to take out any. This would have left the committee potentially liable for the safety of the instrument. The College recognised the problem and took the expedient route of simply telling us to remove the telescope. Fortunately two members agreed to look after the bulk of the instrument while we once more try to resolve its future.

We have managed to continue to publish our quarterly journal ORION, and using the Internet as a valuable source for astronomical information has proved very helpful.

One of the society's greatest assets has been its secretary Sheila Evans. Unfortunately, due to the increasing pressure of her professional commitments, she decided to leave the post which she has held for many years. We hope that she will eventually find time to rejoin in an active capacity. Our new committee includes secretary Alan Penman, who is the local representative of the Campaign for Dark skies. One of his many talents has been negotiating the gradual replacement of many of the city lamps by the new, efficient luminaries which throw light where it is wanted - and not up at our sky! This year's chairman is me (Lawrence Harris) and I have the pleasure of contributing a fortnightly astronomy column to the Evening Herald, and a monthly slot broadcasting on astronomy on Radio Devon. The society can be contacted via telephone or by e-mail to me at lawrence@peverell.zynet.co.uk.

To summarise the Society's greatest problem - finding a site where all of our assets can be stored and made available.

Contact Lawrence Harris (01752)-775148 or Alan Penman (01752)- 338491

Report from Lawrence Harris (chairman)
SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS GROUP (SAG) Contact Ken Mackay at Hayford House, Cambusbarron, Stirling FK7 9PR for more details of programme.

SALFORD AS Contact Kath Redford on 0161 794 3179 for Society news. The Spring excursion on Saturday 13th May to Newton's birthplace at Woolthorpe Manor, Lincs, followed by a visit to Lincoln AS's Observatory

and afterwards finishing in Lincoln to some of the City's many attractions was enjoyed by 28 members and friends plus 9 from Liverpool AS who joined us for the day. On Tuesday 6th June 25 members attended Macclesfield AS's meeting at Jodrell Bank for Jack Newton's excellent slide/lecture presentation on "Astrophotography". June 10th saw the second break-in in two years at the Society's observatory, (involving two totally different methods of entry). After the first one, security, which up to then had appeared to be quite adequate, was increased and included the fitting of an alarm system. During the recent burglary, the thieves were evidently deterred by the alarm going off and consequently only managed to steal the computer keyboard. Security has again been stepped up but with the ever present threat of burglary, we wonder - WHAT NEXT!!!

Kath Redford

SAWTRY & DISTRICT AS Involved with the Library/Education display in Peterborough the Society are fully occupied. An Open Evening is planned for November (see forthcoming events) For more details contact Brooke Norton on 01487 831683

SHROPSHIRE AS The contact is David Woodward on 01743 872991

SOLAGS or South Lincolnshire Astronomical & Geophysical Society, good name isn't it? The Society was formed in 1976 and operates from Spalding with an input from the area around Grantham, Peterborough and Sleaford. They meet for formal lectures on the third Wednesday of the month at the Adult Education Study Centre in Pinchbeck, Knight Street, Spalding. Star parties (StarWatches) are held up to three times a month at Peak Hill near Cowbit. Work is going ahead on the housing in a permanent observatory of the Frank Birmingham 12" reflector. The Winter talks programme includes talks by John Mackay on "CCD Imaging", Dr Michael Leggett "Astronautics and the Environment", Paul Money "Where no probe has gone before", Dr Nick Hewitt "Deep Sky Projects for the UK Amateur", Dr Bob Warwick "X-Ray Astronomy - Past, Present and Future" and Philip Norton "Our Variable Sun". Contact Ian Farley on 01778 425946 for more details.

SOLENT AAS SAAS meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the Oaklands Centre Southampton. The 1995/96 programme has just been done which includes a talk by Dr Allan Chapman on "The Victorian Amateur Astronomer". Regular Public Viewing sessions are held at out two observatories at Toothill (12" refl) and Ithen (16" refl), both regularly draw large crowds. One feature has been Ken Medway's video presentation of observations of solar prominences and disk using his video camera with a Daystar Halphal 0.6Angstrom filter. He has also been successful in capturing Halphal images with an ordinary camcorder. Future results are eagerly awaited. In addition we also hold an annual barbecue at Toothill (near Rowhams), sponsored walks and a couple of our members give talks to local schools. SAS has a telescope hire scheme with a C8 and 11x80 bins available. Contact Ken Medway on 01703 582204 or Derek Haselen 01703 491421 for details of programme.

Submitted by Ken Medway

SOUTH WEST WESTHERTS AS Contact Mr Tom Walsh, The Hermitage, London Road, Bourne End, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, Herts HP1 2RJ

SOUTH EAST KENT AS Contact Andrew McCarthy at 25 St Pauls Way, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3NT or on 01303 241933.

STRATFORD-U-AVON AS Now that the Autumn is upon us the Informal Wednesday meetings are to be used for "beginners Nights" assuming the sky is not clear. The programme of formal speakers is already in place to December 1996. A lovely little story - about an 8 year old boy (called Storey) who attended his first Society meeting on the night that Professor Peter Willmore was talking on "Exotic Galaxies" Afterwards Prof Willmore approached the boy and said "How was it?" to which the lad replied "Fine I understood most of it!". That put me (the Editor) firmly in my place since Prof Willmore had said to me "Are you sure you want to listen to this since you've heard it before?" My reply had been "I didn't absorb it all so I will understand more about it the second time". Talk about out of the mouths of babes and sucklings! Oh by the way I did take more in the second time! Contact John Harrison on 01789 268775 for more information on the society.

SUNDERLAND AS Contact Don Simpson on 0191 5670151 for details.

VECTIS AS The Society have had a visit from South Downs AS which seemed to go well. Plans are underway for a joint visit with Southampton AS to Jodrell Bank in the Autumn. There are disadvantages to living on the IOW (long way from anywhere on the Mainland) as well as advantages (good skies). The Observing programme for Variable stars and John Smith's Deep Sky work seem to be going well. Allan Chapman is speaking after the AGM. Contact John W Smith on 01983 865451 for more details of the Society programme.

Sadly we have to announce the death of Jim Cahill Chairman of the Vectis Astronomical Society

WEST CORNWALL AS Contact Robin Wadding on 0136 366981 for details of the coming programme of events.

WEST OF LONDON AS The new Secretary is Duncan Radbourne on 0181 952 2816. Speakers planned for the near future include Ian Welland of Aylesbury AS talking on "The secret life of William Herschel" To reinforce that the Society are visiting the Herschel Museum in Bath. Contact Margarite Daly on 01895 637400 for details of programme

WEST YORKS AS Contact Pete Lunn on 01924 360064 for programme of meetings.

WORCESTER AS Usual busy programme for the Autumn but a lucky dozen of the members had the chance of a visit to the Met Office Bracknell where they had an interesting tour and a lecture on Weather Forecasting with the emphasis on Astronomical Observing. Afterwards some of the group visited Tim Haymes (Maidenhead AS) to look at his observatory. Contact Ian Gray on 01386 47352 for details of programme.

WOLVERHAMPTON AS Meetings are

fortnightly on Mondays beginning on September 18 when the Presidential Lecture will be "Astronomy and the Internet" Meetings are at Beckminster Methodist Church Hall. Call Malcolm Astley on 01902 783212, for details of the programme.

WORTHING AS Contact Nick Quinn on 01903 814090 for full details of the programme.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September 7th - 9th **CARDIFF AS 20TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING** combined with **SPA OUT-OF-TOWN DAY**.

Contact Dave Powell on 01222 551704 for details

BAA Out of London Weekend Sheffield Contact Pat Barber on 0171 734 4145 for details.

BAA Horncastle Weekend Contact Paul Money on 01507 588296 for details

September 30th FAS AUTUMN CONVENTION Cambridge

October 7th AstroMart & AstroMeet Leeds

October 13/15 SCOTTISH ASTRONOMY WEEKEND Stirling.

Contact Fiona Vincent at 23 Strathkinness High Road, St Andrews, Fife. KY16 9AU for booking form and more details.

October 20/22 SPA Weekend Course Preston Montford Milky Way

November 4/5 Practical Astronomy Show Royal Horticultural Halls, Westminster

November 24 Sawtry AS Open Evening at Greefields Cricket Ground 10 telescopes on view and hopefully in use. Contact Mike Glazier on 01487 832470

1996

February 2/3 AstroFest Kensington Town Hall

March SET7 Look out for details if you haven't already had them.

FAS May 1996 AGM & Convention at Liverpool AS. Details later.

N.A.W. 1996

If you haven't started to think about this please start now.

The week begins on 21st September 1996. A copy of The NAW Newsletter was sent to your Secretary with this Newsletter

Publication dates. 1995

Winter late November Deadline 31st October 1996

Spring late February Deadline 31st January Please try to get material to me in good time.

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. Typeset by Townsend Typesetters, Northwick, Worcester. Printed by John Knight & Sons, Printers, 33 Littleworth Street, Evesham