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ISSUE 49

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

THE 1997 FAS AGM - A SUMMARY

The 1997 FAS AGM held at Bestwood Lodge Hotel 1997 19th April

It promised another pleasant driving day as we (Ray Ravenscroft, Chris and I) set out across country towards Nottingham. There was a certain air of gloom in the car - all three of us were giving up our jobs on the Council for one reason or another and we couldn't help thinking about things.

The journey was easy and we were at the meeting place in plenty of time to help with the setting up and for Ray to take his (by now accustomed place) at the cash desk.

In the next hour or so lots of familiar faces came in and said "Hello!".

More or less on time the President, Pam Spence, called the assembled throng to order and started the day by introducing Roger O'Brien who was to talk about 'Astronomy on a Cloudy Night'. It wasn't quite what I had anticipated (darkroom work - planning observing sessions etc) but an amusing and well presented reminder, based on the alphabet, that you can learn about Astronomy by attending classes at almost any level from WEA type meetings through to University courses. The university side included the Open University and I must say I echo his thoughts about this approach since I did just that, getting a degree with all the Astrophysics and Geology available

at the time I did it. In fact my mind went back to the good times I had with the OU and I might have missed some of Roger's finer points. Never the less I think that it was fun and very thought provoking.

A coffee break was followed by the AGM. It followed the usual format, apologies, minutes, officers reports and the standing down of all Council members. Chris, Ray and I left the stage and the nomination and election of replacements took place. A block vote elected all the nominees without dissent. A very nice touch at this point was the presentation to Chris and me of the original Comet painting that had graced Astronomy Now's front cover earlier in the year. Lunch was then taken.

After lunch the "entertainment" continued. Three top class speakers kept the largish audience happy. Prof Andy Fabian took us near to Black Holes - not actually but he made us aware of their fascination, of the fact that they think that some positive identifications have been made and explained some of the possible outcomes of encounters with Black Holes. Alan Heath then got us down to Earth - at least his talk dealt with the things that an amateur audience could emulate. Fascinating and instructive although I am still not sure why the

'net' works!

Finally we had The Ken Marcus Memorial Lecture given by Dr David Hughes who started by telling us a couple of anecdotes about Ken. After a few chuckles he grabbed us by giving us the low-down on killer asteroids. This is a topic which seems to worry the minds of non-astronomers. The shows put on by Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp has made the general public (and the media) very aware of objects in space. David would not have put everyone's mind at rest but I think that we all enjoyed his talk.

Pam closed the meeting, wishing all safe journeys and looking forward to seeing us at Cambridge. We said "Farewell" to our friends and went home feeling a little sad but looking forward to some astronomy and a few more FAS Conventions (and AGMs).

Oh yes, the painting! Well it now graces our house and reminds us both of great meetings and lots of friends. Thank You All. Clear and Dark skies.

Ken Sheldon

Deadline for submission for next newsletter - 15th August 1997.

(This means that it will be out in plenty of time for the FAS Autumn Convention on 4th Oct). Send to Pam Gill, Editor (address at top of page).

Since becoming the new editor of this newsletter I've been impressed by the friendliness and cooperation of everyone involved. This is a really dynamic society! A special thanks to Ken and Chris who are always ready to answer questions and promptly forwarded all your newsletters to me.

It is obvious that we are cramped for space in the newsletters. The committee is looking into ways to expand it.

So lets have your views!

Do you want a bigger newsletter?

What do you want in the newsletter?

Please write or e-mail me any suggestions so that I can take them to the committee.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Pam Gill

If you have any specific news for your society section please be sure to send me a short write-up for inclusion.

SMOOTH RUNNING OF SOCIETIES (Part 1)

Clive Down (Bridgend AS) has started the ball rolling with his tip on how a society can be run smoothly.

At Bridgend, we always make coffee BEFORE the meeting and this gets people chatting to each other and makes for a good ambience. Many people have to (or want to) rush off after the meeting and wouldn't bother with coffee then. Most visitors from other societies are surprised at our topsy-turvy idea, but all see it as a wonderful idea. We are lucky that we have a bar to go to afterwards and it is interesting to note that more and more people are taking advantage of this. Even if they only have a glass of Coke. Everyone thinks we are the friendliest society they have been to and I am convinced that the "coffee first" is one of the prime factors.

Any other suggestions to be included next time should be sent to the editor.

AYLESBURY AS The AAS Bulletin is a very interesting and informative read. I especially like the Question & Answer and the 'Which Star am I?' sections. It was also nice to see that the society have encouraged and educated the local Brownies groups (May issue). For more information on AAS's activities contact Peter Biswell on 01296 85125 for the programme.

BEDFORD AS Contact Peter Cox on 01234 354552 for Society info and an up-to-date programme of events, or look on their Web page at

<http://www.powernet.co.uk/bas/bashome.html>

&

<http://www.powernet.co.uk/bas/basevent.html>

BOSTON AS Details are available from the Secretary Lorraine Kendall at 18 College Park, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 6RE Tel: 01507 524037

BRIDGEND AS The future programme of the BAS looks to be really excellent and the 'Keeping Abreast' article was a fascinating and informative read. The BAS are involved in the South Wales Societies Convention (See 'Dates for your Diary' section in this publication). The BAS meet on alternate Fridays in the Bridgend Bowls Centre. Contact Clive Down on 01656 740754 for details of meetings.

CAMBRIDGE AA and CAMBRIDGE YOUNG ASTRONOMERS

The CAA's newsletter *Capella* is a very interesting read. I would like to extend my congratulations to the members for their heroic crimestopping in March. CAA can be found at

<http://www.mrc-dunn.cam.ac.uk/caa/caa-home.html>

For membership details, contact the Membership Secretary, David Herbert, 67 Howard Close, Cambridge, CB5 8QU.

CASTLE POINT AC Meetings are at St. Michael's Hall, Dawes Heath every Wednesday. Contact the Secretary Andy Turner on 01702 258640

CARDIFF AS are one of the organisers of the South Wales Societies Convention to be held on Oct. 11th (See 'Dates for your Diary' section).

CORNWALL AS Contact Mick

Harvey on 01326 377294 for more details.

LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESAISE ASTRONOMY SECTION Some really lovely images appear in the May/June issue of *Sagittarius*; it also has some interesting articles. A comprehensive observing programme is in existence. If you are heading towards Guernsey for your holidays contact Geoff Falla the Hon. Secretary on Guernsey 724101 for more details of the programme. Alternatively look at

<http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/estate/vs76/astrosec.htm>

HAMPSHIRE AG Contact Roy Dodd on 01705 646875 for details of the programme.

AS of HARINGEY Astro Expo - the 25th Anniversary Convention of ASH will be held at Alexandra Palace at the end of August (See 'Dates for your Diary' section) Contact Gary Marriott on 0181 803 5961 or e-mail -

expo@garym.demon.co.uk for more details of the programme or look on the Web at

<http://www.garym.demon.co.uk/index.htm>

HUDDERSFIELD & DISTRICT P&AS The society meets at 4A Railway Street on Friday nights 7.30 p.m. - 9.30 p.m. Talk to Philip Heppenstal on 01484 661497

ILKESTON & DISTRICT AS The society meets at the Erewash Museum, Ilkeston. For details of the programme contact Mark Thomas on 0115 939 8133 or John Brown on 0177 376 8836.

IRISH AS Contact Stephen Ryan at PO Box 2547, Dublin 11 or Tel: (from the UK) 00 3531 864 1382 for information on meetings and publications.

LETCHWORTH & District AS Some interesting articles appear in the LDAS newsletter and they have a full list of star parties over the coming months. Contact Eric Hutton on 01462 626032 for further details of meetings.

LIVERPOOL AS Contact Ken Clark at 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, L45 0LJ with a SAE or on 0151 638 3270 for more details of the LAS programme. Alterna-

tively, try the Web on:

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/~ggastro/home.html>

MANSFIELD AND SUTTON AS

Contact Graham Shepherd on 01623 552276 for more details of their programme or log on to

<http://www.innotts.co.uk/~shepherd/index.html>

NORTH EAST LONDON AS

Meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month (except August) at Wanstead House. The Programme Secretary, Andrew Lawrence, can be contacted on 01376 510329.

NORWICH AS Contact Malcolm Jones on 01508 578392 for more details.

NOTTINGHAM AS Contact Carl Brennan on 0115 938 4521 for details of their programme.

ORWELL AS Contact Peter Richards on 01473 659806 for details of society activities. The Web page is:

<http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk:80/~ipswich/>

PAPWORTH AC meets on the first Wednesday of each month (except July) from 7.00 - 9.00 p.m. in the Bradbury Progression Centre, Papworth Everard, near Huntingdon. Further details can be obtained from Keith Tritton on 01767 677219 (evenings).

STRATFORD upon AVON AS Contact Ron Davey on 01386 830675 for more information.

SALFORD AS *A summing-up on the truly wonderful Comet Hale-Bopp...*

Members have been "Hale-Bopping" at every conceivable opportunity and are currently collating drawings, slides and CCD images for display purposes.

When writing a piece for the society newsletter, one member started listing superlatives but stopped upon reaching 30 and finally settled for "Absolutely Fabulous". The comet was last seen by the majority of members on May 6th, the final observation being made at 21:25UT on May 9th, with CCD. By then we were all feeling thoroughly "Hale-Bopped", at the same time very much appreciating the fact that this comet (while not forgetting Hyakutake 96) has graced our skies in our lifetime.

30 passengers enjoyed the annual

outing on May 17th. The visit to the University of Durham for talks and demo: on "Adaptive Optics" was extremely interesting as was the visit to the Newcastle University Observatories and exhibition in the lovely setting of a country estate. The trip culminated with 3 hours in Newcastle upon Tyne for sight-seeing etc. Here, the fine but misty weather of the day turned to rain.

Further enquiries contact Kath Redford on 0161 794 3179.

SAWTRY & DISTRICT AS For meetings contact Brooke Norton on 01487 831683.

SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS

GROUP Contact Ken Mackay at Hayford House, Cambusbarron, Stirling FK7 9PR for details of the programme.

SHROPSHIRE AS Contact the Chairman David Woodward on 01743 872991 of the Programme Secretary John Chidlow on 01743 249823 for details on forthcoming events.

SOLENT AS For information on the programme contact Ken Medway on 01703 582204.

VECTIS AS For news of events contact John Smith on 01983 865451 or write to him at 27 Forest Road, Winford, Sandown, I.O.W. PO36 0JY.

WEST CORNWALL AS WCAS have updated their newsletter now called *Triton*. There have been a number of excellent lectures this year including Pam Spence, Heather Couper and Bill Barnes (Exeter University).

The Cornwall Planetarium is in the final DAR phase of Millennium funding.

A Web site will soon be posted on the internet with information about their proposed Millennium project - the Cornwall Planetarium. The site can already be found at

<http://www.cornwall-planetarium.org/> although at present it is still under construction. Contact The Secretary, Robin Hughes, on 01209 890736 for more information of forthcoming events.

WEST OF LONDON AS Contact Duncan Radbourne on 0181 952 2816 for information on events.

WEST YORKS AS Contact Pete

Lunn on 01924 360064 for a programme of meetings or look on the internet at

<http://staff.ndl.co.uk/terry/wyas>

WORCESTER AS Contact Ian Gray on 01386 47352 for details of the programme.

WORTHING AS Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of each month in the Heene Church Rooms, Heene Road, Worthing, commencing at 7.30 p.m. Contact Nick Quinn at nick@quinn.demon.co.uk for full details of the programme.

NEW FAS OFFICERS

PRESIDENT:

Pam Spence

(Worthing AS)

VICE PRESIDENT:

Malcolm Jones

(Norwich AS)

SECRETARY:

Clive Down

(Bridgend AS)

TREASURER:

Dave Sutton

CONVENTION

CO-ORDINATOR:

Mike Inglis

(South Bayfordsbury AS)

EDUCATION SECRETARY:

Roger O'Brien

(ELAS)

EDITOR:

Pam Gill (assisted by Robin Waddingling)

(WCAS)

PUBLICATIONS

SECRETARY:

Malcolm Jones

(Norwich AS)

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:

Eric Hutton

(Letchworth & District AS)

PUBLICITY OFFICER:

Theresa Cooper

(Cardiff AS)

MINUTES SECRETARY:

Mike Hurrell

(South Bayfordsbury AS)

COUNCIL NEWSLETTER:

Alan Dowdell

(Andover AS)

SLIDE LIBRARIAN:

Alan Dowdell

(Andover AS)

HAVE LECTURE WILL TRAVEL!

Stuart Clark of the Astronomy Department of the University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB is prepared to give a talk anywhere in the country entitled "Redshift". His phone number is 01707 324702 and he will agree expenses in advance.

FAS VACANCY

There is a vacancy on FAS Council for representatives from East Anglia and the West Midlands Group of Astronomical Societies.

NAW - LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

At the FAS AGM in Nottingham, several points were raised about last year's National Astronomy Week. In order for the FAS to fulfil the wishes of the member societies, perhaps you could let me have your thoughts on NAW. How successful was it for your society? What would you like changed, if anything, in future NAWs?

Please let me have your comments either by letter or e-mail. Many thanks,

Pam Spence, President FAS

BAA EXHIBITION

The FAS is having a small stand at the BAA exhibition meeting on the 28th June. The venue is London Guildhall University, Calcutta House, Old Castle Street, Whitechapel, London (not the same building as last year). If you plan to attend or know anyone who may be going please let me know. I want to know who can help to man the stand on the day.

Alan Dowdell

(ARCEAD@hantsnet.hants.gov.uk)

DIARY OF ASTRONOMICAL MEETINGS

At the AGM, the Council was asked if the FAS could keep some sort of diary of astronomical meetings and events, to try and prevent things being arranged for the same date. To that end, it has been decided to set up a trial system on the FAS World Wide Web pages.

If you are organising an event that involves members of other societies (not your usual Society meetings), please check your proposed date against the Web page, and then tell us about it.

From our homepage

<http://www.ukindex.co.uk/ukastro/fasmain.html> follow the links to 'News and Events' where you should find another link to the 'diary'.

As always, we are happy to publish convention details with links to your own Web pages.

Please E-mail information to me: nick@nquinn.demon.co.uk, or post to 15 Newham Lane, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3LR.

Nick Quinn.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE YOUNG MEMBERS GONE?

At the FAS AGM, more than one speaker enquired about Junior members. Most seemed to feel there were fewer than, say, ten years ago. As a guest speaker at various societies, I agree.

Successful Junior Policies tended to use additional, usually, Saturday, Meetings tailored to the market. The cynical comment that they might be providing cheap weekend childcare was accepted philosophically.

Do members feel Junior recruitment is a problem?

Is there a need for a general policy of outreach to the young?

Would those who feel their methods are good, please share with the rest of us?

Are there any untried suggestions for making astronomical societies more attractive to prospective juniors?

How do we deal with the parental reservations about letting their children out in the evening AND the reluctance to accompany them?

ROGER O'BRIEN

EDUCATION SECRETARY

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

August 30 - 31st - ASH ASTRO Expo - the 25th ANNIVERSARY convention at Alexandra Palace. Contact Gary Marriott for info on 0171 803 5961 or e-mail him on expo@garym.demon.co.uk

Sept 12 - 14th SCOTTISH ASTRONOMY WEEKEND based on the University of Dundee. Can include one of two trips. For more information and a booking form contact Dr David Gavine, 29 Coillesdene Crescent, Edinburgh, EH15 2JJ or ring him on 0131 657 2338.

Oct 4th FAS AUTUMN CONVENTION at the Cavendish Laboratories in Cambridge.

Oct 11th SOUTH WALES SOCIETIES CONVENTION This will take place at the Techniquet Science Centre, Cardiff Bay and the speakers are Prof. Sir Martin Rees, Dr Mike Edmunds, Dr Patrick Walters, Dr David Dunbar. Admission is FREE but by ticket only. For more information contact Theresa Cooper on 01466 700722 or visit the Web Site at

<http://users.aol.com/astrowales/>

Nov 1st SE KENT AS CONVENTION to be held at Canterbury with Guest Speakers. Starring John Zarnecki and Patrick Moore. Contact Andrew McCarthy on 01303 241933.

OCT 4th - FAS AUTUMN CONVENTION

Cavendish Laboratories, Cambridge

Tickets from Dave Sutton (01903) 754063

£4-50 pre book, £5-50 on the day.