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ISSUE 53

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

1998 FAS/Cambridge Convention

Saturday 3rd October 1998

9.00am - 6.00pm

Pippard Lecture Theatre

Cavendish Laboratories

Madingley Road

Cambridge

Tickets: (£4.00 prebooked) - (£5.00 on the day) Available end of July.

Prebooked: From FAS/Treasurer. Cheque (Made out to F.A.S.) S.A.E.

Details: FAS WebSite <http://www.fedastro.demon.co.uk>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT Pam Spence, FAS 1998.

This is my fourth year as President. Ideally, I believe people should stand for a maximum of three years but, because we had a large change amongst Council officers last year, I agreed to stand the extra year to help with the continuity.

I would like to thank all the new members of Council who have faced up to the reality of taking on their positions and done so well and all the long standing members of Council who have been a great source of support. Remember that Council officers are not paid, and everything they do is voluntary, fitted around other commitments like work and family. Sometimes it amazes me that things actually get done!

During my term as President, I have tried to raise the profile of the Federation. After all, we represent over 130 societies throughout the UK which is well over 7,000 amateur astronomers. We are a voice which should be heard. The Federation has been approached by other bodies to speak on behalf of the amateur community. In order to continue we need to hear what the societies want. Officers of the FAS are always available and I am hoping that the newsletter will become a forum for opinions, discussions and comments from member societies. Use your Federation! Contact us so we can air your views and speak with your voice.

I have been supported by many excellent officers. I don't like to pick out any one, as everyone has worked hard in their particular area, but I would like to thank Clive Down. The secretary of any organisation is very important and Clive does a wonderful job. In addition he has something very important: a good sense of humour.

I would also like to thank all the members of societies who have helped. There are a lot of lovely people out there, and I hope the Federation will continue to encourage the co-operation between societies and individual amateurs for the good of the community. I have really enjoyed being President of the Federation, a national organisation where its members and Council work for the good of the whole and not for themselves.

I would like to take this opportunity of publicly giving the proposed new President, Alan Dowdell, my whole hearted congratulations and support. I am confident I am leaving the Federation in good hands.

Dowdell, new president, FAS

The spring convention and AGM was hosted by Newbury Astronomical Society. The society is well known for its ability to be an excellent host to its guest speakers, and this time it excelled itself. I would like to thank them for making the day a success for all who attended.

The programme started with a talk in order to get members interested to stay for the second item on the programme, the AGM. I know that these three letters tend to put off members, but as usual Pam Spence dealt with this as quickly and painlessly as possible. We have to have these AGMs, as we are dealing with your interest and money.

The day's lecture programme supplied an interesting range of subjects and trade stands were present for those who wanted to spend their money. A good day out for all. Next year, the date will be the 8th May at Sidmouth. Put it in your diaries now and don't be put off by the AGM bit.

Second item. I would just like to say hello and to thank Pam Spence for all her work as President over the last few years. I am just realising that she and her committee spent a considerable amount of their time working for all our society interests. Thank you. I hope I can keep up the quality and quality in the future. If you wish to contact me, please write, phone or, preferably, e-mail me. Please use the Newsletter to promote your society activities, or use our web page.

FAS/Treasurer Report AGM - Newbury 1998

Interim Report for the financial year 1st September 1996 - 31st August 1997

Dave Sutton (Hon/Treasurer)

The (1996-1997) accounts were presented to the AGM. I advised the Members present that they were audited by (Bob Turner) Worthing Astronomical Society.

Income: slightly lower than the previous financial year. Expenditure: increased this year, (ie: printing, packaging, postage, stationary). Subscriptions: increased slightly over the 1996/1997, new societies joining FAS. Total to date is now 134 member societies.

Publications: sales of publications, astronomical slides have produced the bulk of our income this year. These now subsidise the membership subscriptions, newsletter, printing, postage, packaging, FAS/handbook and the committee expenses.

Committee Expenses: I am expecting a marginal rise for this year.

Public Liability Insurance: during the past year, a total of 14-member societies who for their own reasons paid the PLI subscription later than the requested renewal date. Cost to the FAS a further £39.75 in administration cost from the insurers. I urge societies to confirm their intention to continue with the PLI in good time and make renewal payments promptly, societies who do not wish to continue with the PLI advise the membership secretary promptly. It is my intention to surcharge societies the extra cost of administration incurred by our insurers. This will not affect any New Societies who join the FAS/PLI after the renewal date. This was carried and will commence at the next renewal date 1998.

SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS please take note.

Subscriptions: the annual subscriptions have remained unchanged for a few years and are subsidised by over 60% from the Publications Surplus Account. I will be discussing with the committee about the Subscriptions and the PLI at the next committee meeting, and I will be proposing a few minor changes. I advise members that I estimate a transfer from our reserve account to the main account before the end of this financial year of £500, this to prevent the main account from going into the red. Subscription & PLI I propose for the next year, 1998/1999 remain the same. But I will be looking for a review in the membership subscription from the year 1999/2000. I am suggesting a rise in the order of 50%.

Finally, at our last committee meeting I suggested the practice of a free year's subscription to societies who attend the FAS/AGM in large numbers was not in my opinion a fair choice to societies who for geographical reasons were only able to send one or two members, this will now cease with effect from this AGM.

I offer the accounts for approval by the membership with the following proposals

- The Accounts for 1996/1997 are agreed
 - Subscriptions/PLI - 1998/1999 remain the same
 - Surcharge Late Payers PLI - Additional Administration Cost
- Items (i)-(ii)-(iii) voted in favour.

I thank members present.

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EDITORIAL

This is the last newsletter that I shall be sending out. Rob Barter is taking over, so remember to send news to him (details on the back page). I'm sure he's going to put out an excellent newsletter.

There was far too much to put everything in this issue, especially with all the reports from Newbury. After reorganising everything for the umpteenth time I finally decided that I would have to cut the society details down to a contact number except where I had received a particular report. If the meeting times are not recorded assume that they are unchanged from last issue.

I should like to thank all of you who have sent news and friendly messages over the year, especially the committee members, and wish you every success in the future.

Pam Gill

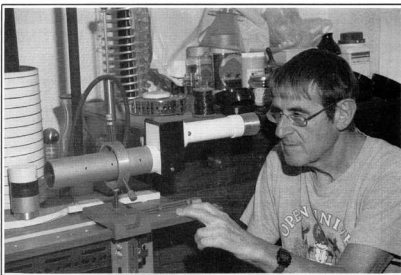


Photo: John Wall. (see Crayford Manor House AS)

SOCIETY NEWS ROUND UP

AYLESBURY Peter Biswell on 01296 85125

BEDFORD Peter Cox 01234 354552
<http://www.powernet.co.uk/bas/bashome.html>

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

BIRMINGHAM Dane Carty 0121 353 6577

BOSTON AS Congratulations to the Chairman and Secretary who got married on 14th March 1998. Well done to Paul and Lorraine. Details of the 98/99 lecture programme are available from Mrs Lorraine Money, 18 College Park, Horncastle, Lincolnshire. LN9 6RE. 01507-524037 (ansaphone), or e-mail Lorraine@astspace.demon.co.uk or Paul@astspace.demon.co.uk.

BRIDGEND Clive Down 01656 740754
E-mail clivedown@btinternet.com
<http://members.aol.com/BridgendAS/>

CAMBRIDGE AA and YOUNG ASTRONOMERS David Herbert, 67 Howard Close, Cambridge, CB5 8QU.
<http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/caa/caahome.html>

CASTLE POINT Andy Turner 01702 258640

CHESTERFIELD Robert McGregor, 34 Higher Albert Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S41 7QE

CORNWALL Sue Bristow 01726 813345
CRAWLEY AS Ron Garner, 1 Pevensey Close, Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 7BL. Tel: 01293 531096.

CRAYFORD MANOR HOUSE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
Telescope maker John Wall announced his

latest project to build a 30 inch refractor with a focal length of 366 inches. John expects this to be his last large telescope before retiring. The telescope is John's own design loosely based on the Dialyte/Shutmond principle. A folded telescope with 22.5 and 11.5 inch flats make the telescope more manageable. The optics have been completed and work on the structure should begin later this year. This is thought to be the largest refractor built by an amateur. The mount will be an equatorially driven alt/az, the telescope is mainly aimed at lunar and planetary work. (see photo above)

1998 has started well for Mark Armstrong with the discovery of three more supernova. The first 1998v was discovered on march 10th in NGC 6627 at mag 15.3 and confirmed by Tom Bowles. A spectrum was obtained by astronomers at the Harvard Smithsonian centre for astrophysics on march 19th which showed it to be a type Ia at maximum light. The next 1998aq discovered on april 13th in NGC 3982 at mag 14.1 again a type Ia but at one week before maximum light giving astronomers time to gain valuable data. The latest to date 1998bp discovered on april 28th in NGC 6495 at mag 12.1 again type Ia.
mark.armstrong@dial.pipex.com

EASTBORNE Peter Gill, on 01323 646853

LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE Geoff Falla the Hon. Secretary on Guernsey 724101

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

HAMPSHIRE Roy Dodd on 01705 646875

AS of HARINGEY Gary Marriott, 0181 803 5961 or expo@garym.demon.co.uk

<http://www.garym.demon.co.uk/index.htm>
HINKLEY & DISTRICT Shaun Albrighton, 4 Walnut Close, Hartshill, Nuneaton CV10 0HX (01203 397183).

HUDDERSFIELD & DISTRICT Philip Heppenstal on 01484 661497

ILKESTON & DISTRICT Mark Thomas on 0115 939 8133 or John Brown on 0177 376 8836.

IRISH AS Stephen Ryan at PO Box 2547, Dublin 11 or Tel: (from the UK) 00 3531 864 1382

ISLE OF MAN AS The Isle of Man Astronomical Society is going all out on a fund raising drive, raffles, a tombola etc., a "Night at the Races" recently made £1,117 profit. The latest is a constellation card similar to pub football cards. The names of 88 or 44 constellations are printed on a card, these are sold at £1 each, when full one of the names of a constellation is drawn. The winner received half of the takings £20 or £40 respectively, the balance going to club funds.

Requests for donations from members have been fruitful. We find the best policy is to keep donations confidential. The reason for all this gambling is that we have today submitted plans for approval for our observatory which we hope will be top class and an attraction to visiting astronomers. The Island has some of the best seeing in the UK. The site already purchased by the society is on a plateau in a dark country area of the Island at about 600ft above sea-level. The proposed dome will be 20ft diameter with attached club room and toilet facilities. A temporary telescope will be installed until details of the main telescope are finalised.

LEICESTER AS We are pleased to report a lot of new faces at recent

meetings! They are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm at Judgemeadow College, Evington, Leicester. Topics over the past few months have ranged from the very early universe to the Mir space station and coming up we have subjects as diverse as amateur telescopes, the 3D universe, light pollution and life on Mars.

The social side of the society is particularly strong - events in the near future include the annual skittles supper with Hinckley & District AS and trips to Warwick Castle and Stonehenge and Avebury.

The Leicester Young Astronomers Group (LYAG) has been busy recently making water-powered rockets and watching adults launching 'real' rockets. We have also made planispheres and sundials. LYAG meets on the last Saturday of the month at Judgemeadow College from 10.00am to 12 noon.

Further details: Ann Bonell, 53 Warden's Walk, Leicester Forest East, Leics. LE3 3G0 Tel. 01162394481

<http://www.thenet.co.uk/~obiwan/astro/index.html>

LEITCHWORTH Eric Hutton 01462 626032 .

<http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/bookman/ldas/>

LIVERPOOL AS The Liverpool Astronomical Society has had yet another busy but very successful year. Two weekend Public Star Parties at Croxeth Hall and Park were held during the Society's 1997-98 session, one in December 1997 and a second at the end of February 1998. Despite very poor weather over both weekends, a total of over 400 members of the public came along to the events and activities provided by the LAS membership.

During February's event limited views of the Moon and Saturn were seen using a wide variety of members instruments. Inside the hall, LAS members David Thompson and Geoff Regan had their homemade 30" inch Dobs telescope on public display for the first time. (see photo above by Gerard Gilligan) Members of the public also enjoyed a series of lectures from LAS members on subjects ranging from "The Story of the Solar System", "Astrophotography", "How to get started in Astronomy", and "Astronomy's problem with Light Pollution". The LAS also staged a major exhibition of its members observational drawings, and photographs. Membership information areas were also provided, together with a very welcome refreshments.

Other notable events during the year were the LAS group trips to view the Feb 26th Total Solar Eclipse, the 10th anniversary



David Thompson's and Geoff Regan's Telescope on Display. See Liverpool AS

of our Young Astronomers Days (YAD) was celebrated in April this year with the 17th such event being held at Liverpool Museum. The society monthly meetings at Liverpool Museum have also been held, and successful members & public open nights at the LAS Pex Hill Observatory

Extensive plans are now being made to observe the November 1998 Leonid meteor Max from North Wales, and the August 1999 Total Solar Eclipse, with several groups of LAS members planning to view one of nature's spectacular astro parties from Cornwall UK, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey and Iran. The next session of the Liverpool Astronomical Society, 1998-99 begins with the Presidential Address and annual Cheese and Wine reception to be held on 18th September, 1998 at the Lecture Theatre, Liverpool Museum (N.M.G.M.), William Brown Street, Liverpool. The first monthly meeting of the new session begins at 7pm. Ken Clarke, 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, Merseyside L45 0LJ (Please enclose a large sae) Tel: 0151-638 3270 or 0151-794 5356 (24hrs)

E-Mail: ggastr@liverpool.ac.uk <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~ggastr/home.html>

MANCHESTER AS Our forthcoming season of lectures will bring Professor A. Lawrence of the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh and Dr Jeremy Lloyd -Evans of Leeds University to the MAS.

c/o Godlee Observatory, UMIST, Sackville St, Manchester. M60 1QD (0161 2004977, 24hrs. Fax 0161 2287040). <http://www.u.net.com/ph/mas/>

MANSFIELD AND SUTTON Graham

Shepherd on 01623 552276

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

MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON Mark

Benton 01709 587887 or e mail Mark.benton@rotherham.gov.uk

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pgirard@compuserve.com

NORTH EAST LONDON Andrew Lawrence, 01376 510329.

NORWICH Malcolm Jones 01508 578392

NOTTINGHAM Carl Brennan on 0115 938 4521

ORWELL Peter Richards on 01473 659806 oasiengq@btbcs.bt.co.uk

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

PAPWORTH Keith Tritton on 01767 677219 (even) kpt2@tutor.open.ac.uk

PONLAF The Astronomy Forum at the University of North London.

Pat Prigmore, 0171 753 5126

SALFORD AS Tony O'Sullivan, reports on his observations of the two bright supernovae in Ursa Major...

His first observation of the SN in NGC3877 on 14-3-98 states it was 16" W and 46" S of the nucleus, estimated mag:11.9. On 20-4-98 est. mag: was 13.6 and by 02-5-98 it was lost below mag:14.0. Other members have taken CCD images. SN in NGC3982 (TA had asked for confirmation of SN discovered by Mark Armstrong). On 15-4-98 Tony estimated it to be mag:13.0: - 20-4-98 at mag:12.6: - 28-4-98 at mag:12.2 and on 2-5-98 at mag: 12.1. He reports it's easy to find and will continue observations. on 2-5-98 Tony also

observed Seyfert Galaxy Mark 421 in outburst, at approx: mag: 13.0.

Easter Saturday, April 11th, 11 members attended the Star Party at the Astronomy Centre, Todmorden and on April 18th, 4 attended the Webb AGM at the R.G.O. Cambridge. The society is now into the summer session. During this period members meet informally every Wednesday, at 8pm, with a public open night taking place on the first Wednesday of each month, from 7-30pm (as it does throughout the year) at the Observatory in Chaseley Field, Chaseley Road, Salford. Kath Redford on 0161 7943179.

SAWTRY & DISTRICT Sawtry beat two teams in an astronomical quiz, one from Bedford and one from Cambridge. Brooke Norton on 01487 831683.

SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS Ken Mackay at Hayford House, Cambusbarron, Stirling FK7 9PR . <http://star-www.st-and.ac.uk/~fv/sag/sag.html>

SHROPSHIRE David Woodward on 01743 872991 of the Programme Secretary John Chidlow on 01743 249823 for details

on forthcoming events

SOLENT AS Ken Medway on 01703 582204.

SOUTH EAST KENT John Kemp on 01227 766470 .

STRATFORD upon AVON Robin Swinbourne, 18 Old Milverton, Leamington Spa, CV32 6SA, Tel: 01926 882187

SUNDERLAND Don Simpson, 0191 5670151

SWANSEA Mrs Sandra Stewart
Email sandra@moonmoths.demon.co.uk.

<http://www.swan.ac.uk/astra/starpage.htm>

VECTIS AS John Smith on 01983 865451 or 27 Forest Road, Winford, Sandown, I.O.W. PO36 0JY.

WEST CORNWALL Robin Hughes, on 01209 890736

WEST OF LONDON Duncan Radbourne on 0181 952 2816

WEST YORKS Ken Willoughby, 11 Hardisty Drive, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF8 4BU on 01977 795535 Email Terry Cymbalisty on terry@ndl.co.uk
<http://staff.ndl.co.uk/terry/wyas>

WILLIAM HERSCHEL SOCIETY

Al Crotcher on 01225 311342 or 19 New Kings Street, Bath, BA1 2BL.

WOLVERHAMPTON Michael Bryce, at Iona, 16 Yellowhammer Court, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY10 4PP; Tel: 01562 863545;
e-mail Michael_Bryce@compuserve.com
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Michael_Bryce

WORCESTER Change of contact.

S.Bateman, 12 Bozward Street, Worcester. WR2 5DE

Telephone : (01905) 420531

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month 8 to 10 pm at Worcester College of Higher Education, Henwick Grove, Worcester Alternative Contact Mr C.Livingston, 14 Ellsdon Rise, Kempsey, WORCS. (01905) 821360

WORTHING AS . Nick Quinn at nick@nquinn.demon.co.uk

<http://www.nquinn.demon.co.uk/was>.

CENTRAL SIDEWALK

Stuart Williams 26 Matlock Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 3QD.

BULLETIN BOARD

4TH LOUGHTON AS EQUINOX SKYCAMP

Friday 18th - Sunday 27th September 1998Dower House Touring Park, East Harling, Thetford, Norfolk. NR16 2SE Tel: 01953 717314
A well proven dark site for astronomy.

Main Event Day: Saturday 19 September. Astro Boot Sale, Prize Raffle and Evening BBQ

Guest speakers to include Konrad Malin-Smith, George Sallit and Nik Syzmanek and Ian King.

Cost per pitch per night £7.00 (reduction available for prebooking)

For details send a large SAE, by 11th September, to: Mike Cook, 50 Linley Cres, Romford, Essex. RM7 8RD Tel: 0961 832 827

MANCHESTER AS ASTRODAY Oct 3rd 1998 Sachas Hotel, Manchester

Dr Allan Chapman, 'Animals in the Sky: The Astronomical Chart from Bayer to Bevis 1603-1750

Dr. David W. Hughes, 'Asteroids: Their Origin and History'

Chris Trayner, 'Tunguska: An Example of an Airburst'

See Manchester AS for contact details

Manchester AS/ The Atlas Celeste

It can now be revealed that this Society's archival researcher behind the scenes, A.W. Cross unearthed the discovery of the Society year, the "Atlas Celeste".

Our commercially astute and antiquarian enthusiast, Mike Oates, spent no small portion of his most valuable time in constructing from global antiquarian and academic sources the evolutionary history of this fine literary asset. Mike Oates adjudged it prudent, as well as a singular service for members and the dedicated enthusiast or scholar, for this volume to be definitively recorded. Already the special issue copyrighted CD ROM of our 'Atlas Celeste', in a professionally designed presentation case, has been released.

Contact our Mike Oates Email: mike@ph.u-net.com or see Manchester As details

Serious Astronomers, Blow your Mind!

An exciting opportunity for observing in Tenerife.

Rod Greening and Peter Schoder from Cambridge AA have set up telescopes at the Parador Hotel for amateur astronomer use. The Parador Observatory is at 28 deg North and sited at 7 200 feet.

The following equipment is available: 25" f/4.5 Dobsonian with large finder and 2"/1.25" eyepiece holder for visual work. 10" f/6 equatorially mounted and driven Newtonian, also for visual, but primarily for photographic work.

All you need are eyepieces, filters, cameras and film. Ring Rod Greening on 01763-838194

Don't Miss It! Solar Eclipse, August 11, 1999

Steuart Campbell from Edinburgh AS has asked for information about possible trips to the continent, especially France. Does anyone have information about local astronomy groups or others organizing these? Send information to Steuart at explicit@cix.compulink.co.uk

Keep your Bulletin Board updated with information. Here are a couple of items I found.

Cornwall accommodation is very booked up but a group from Harrogate AS have booked a farmers field for the week and plan to take a large van. (Remembering that the roads will probably be closed either side of the day) Extra camping areas are being set up all over Cornwall at the moment.

Bristol AS are planning a trip to Paris for the eclipse. It will cost £199/person, local pick up. Call Peter Williams 0117 949 9876

The Manchester Astronomical Society have discovered that a star atlas in their library is one of only sixteen copies known to exist. This very rare atlas was originally compiled by John Bevis, an eighteenth century physician - turned astronomer, whose other claim to fame is as the discoverer of the Crab Nebula.

Bevis intended publication of his Uranographia Britannica in about 1750. The atlas is based on Bevis's own observations in 1738 and the extensive star catalogues of the former Astronomers Royal; Sir John Flamsteed and Sir Edmond Halley (of comet fame).

Several pre-publication sets of Bevis's star charts were printed in 1749 but the project was never completed. Had Uranographia Britannica been published in 1750 it would have ranked as one of the great illustrated celestial atlases. The accompanying advertising broadsheet is extremely rare and there are only two complete original examples known to exist; one in a partial set of charts now in the British Library and one bound with the full set of fifty-two plates discovered by the Manchester Astronomical Society.

It is not known how many complete or partial sets of the 'Atlas Celeste' were offered for sale in 1786 but in 1981, only twelve copies were known. Manchester's Uranographia Britannica is unique in being the only copy in the possession of any amateur astronomical society. It is our intention to share our discovery with a leading Manchester library to house and make this rare celestial atlas available for research to the academic community in the Northwest.

Initial research by the MAS has shown that it depicts at least one pre-discovery observation of the planet Uranus. The Bevis atlas clearly shows that the planet was observed but unrecognised by John Flamsteed on 23rd December, 1690. It may yet show that Bevis himself also observed the planet over forty years before Herschel.

Further information may be obtained from: Anthony W Cross, (0161 2022940) or: Kevin J Kilburn. (01625 572453 even 0161 789 7832 day).E-mail: kkilburn@globalnet.com.uk

Illustrations of the atlas are available at <http://www.u.net.com/ph/mas/> and will be available for purchase on CD ROM (See Bulletin Board)

The article below has been written by a speaker who gives many talks to local astronomical societies. The article is based on facts and, although very amusing, it does hold a warning. Remember, treat your speakers well: many people give talks on top of a hard day's work and a long journey, all for expenses only. The writer of the article wishes to remain anonymous; he wishes to point out that many societies treat him in an excellent manner and does not wish to offend anyone. Pam Spence

After a morning spent chairing a Departmental meeting, sorting out the problems of post-graduate students, and answering a pile of letters and e-mails, Professor 'X' caught the 3.30pm train to deliver a lecture to the Anytown Astronomical Society, which is at the opposite end of England from where he lives and works. The Professor was met at the station, on his arrival at 6.15pm by a delegation from the Society and taken to dinner, where he was kept busy fielding questions about every aspect of astronomy until arriving at the lecture venue at 8.00pm. The fourteen people present in the lecture room were clearly appreciative, however, for they followed his talk with forty minutes of detailed questions. The organisers said they were sorry for the small turn-out, but "it's good on telly tonight".

At 9.50 as the meeting was breaking up, Professor 'X' was told by Jack, whose overnight guest he was going to be, that it was usual for the Society's regulars to adjourn to Ye Olde Rat and Ferret for a convivial session and a few jags before the land lord locked up at 11.30pm. As Professor 'X' did not drink alcohol, he found that his third orange juice was leaving a distinctly acrid taste in his mouth by the time that the publican finally cleared the public bar at 11.35. (Last orders had been at 11pm, but a hunger to know more about the multi-dimensional space-time continuum over the last 10^{16} million years failed to recognise the significance of such a hological trifle).

Anyway, milling outside the Rat and Ferret at 11.35, Professor 'X' was no doubt gratified to learn that, as no one had to be up for work in the morning, it was the custom for a group of "the lads" to finish off the evening by calling into The Star of Bombay to pick up a late night Indian take-away, which was taken back to Jack's house, where an in-depth cosmological discussion was to be carried on into the small hours. And so keen was everybody, that it was not

deemed necessary to ask Professor 'X' if he cared for a little time to himself before crashing-out after what had already been a fifteen-hour working day. But there again, how could he mind, for astronomy was everybody's hobby - wasn't it?

Professor 'X' finally got to his bed at 2.05am. Or more correctly, he was eventually left on his own in the same downstairs front room in which seven Indian meals had recently been washed down with lager, coke and coffee, to sleep on the same rather lumpy bed-settee.

Immediately before being left in peace by Jack, after the departure of "the lads" at 2.00am, Professor 'X' was told that the bathroom was downstairs through the kitchen, at the very back of the house. "And don't bother about Cannibal, who sleeps in his basket in the kitchen, for like all Alsations, he's really a great big softy at heart - aren't you boy? (Professor 'X' was a cat man who never felt safe in the company of big dogs and by 4am was regretting his Vindaloo and multiple orange drinks).

Although the members of the Anytown Astronomical Society enjoyed Professor 'X' 's lecture and visit so much that they kept asking him back, for some reason he was always double-booked on the dates on offer, even when they offered him the pick of the calendar, a year in advance. They could never understand why, for the Society was such a friendly and un-stuffy place.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Remember to send society contact changes to the Membership Secretary, Eric Hutton, 14 Folly Close, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9DG. Tel: 01462 626032 E-mail: bookman@rmplc.co.uk

STOP PRESS

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