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A General Survey of the Astronomical Geography of the UK

One of the aims of the Society for the History of Astronomy as laid down in its Constitution is *"To encourage new research into the history of astronomy, especially amateur research at the local level"*.

A great deal has been written about local astronomy in recent years, from Dr Allan Chapman's book "The Victorian Amateur Astronomer" to the many fine papers in the astronomical journals. Local societies have contributed a great deal too, with members' articles in their own magazines. However, much of what went on locally in the past still awaits discovery by local historians and amateur astronomers.

The main vehicle for this research is the "Survey of the Astronomical Geography of the UK" which was launched at the Society's AGM in February. To the best of my knowledge, a survey of this kind, on this scale, has never before been attempted.

The County format

As a new society starting with a blank sheet, we wanted to find an easy to follow format. Where to look for inspiration? I immediately thought of my own research into family history, and remembered the many useful genealogy sites I had found on the internet, and still use frequently. In the UK scores of these are County based, and contain numerous links to archive repositories, libraries and record offices.

It seemed sensible to follow the County route in setting up the SHA survey, and because it's concerned mainly with the history of astronomy, it was decided to disregard the new administrative areas, and instead base the survey on the county structure prior to 1974; one which had existed for many centuries. The survey therefore covers the 120 ancient counties of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Web Pages

A county template was drafted with a number of specific headings. The information on these pages gives the researcher links to repositories in each county where research can be carried out; these links include local history centres and county record offices, local astronomical and historical societies, universities and observatories. On the pages under the various headings, details of local astronomers and places of interest can be added. These county templates are now viewable on the Society's website at www.shastro.org.uk. New researchers can go to a county web page, click on a name or a place and discover what, if any, research has been carried out in the locality. It must be stated that many counties at the moment carry only minimal information.

How can you participate?

The SHA has over 115 members the UK and Ireland, and a growing number of these are getting involved with our Survey. Counties are available for adoption, and members adopting counties become co-ordinators, with responsibility for collecting and collating data with respect to their location and liaising with the SHA council regarding the archiving and publishing of material on the society's website. Initially of course, co-ordinators may be working alone, doing the ground-breaking research themselves.

Members not wishing to adopt a full county can of course still contribute. They may have interests in just one or two local astronomers or observatories, or a local town or village. This research can be entered on the County pages so that others with a similar interest can refer to it. Members who have the necessary "parenting" skills and inclination can apply for their chosen county at any time. Adoption forms are available online, by post, or from the SHA stand at events around the country. Visitors to the website

(Continued on page 2)

will see the message "This county available for adoption" when clicking on any unadopted counties.

Readers of this article who are not SHA members can also contribute to the survey, and we welcome their contributions, though they can only become co-ordinators by joining the Society.

What does the Survey include?

Anything and everything astronomical. We want to know where astronomers, both amateur and professional, lived in the past, what they did and whether or not they had their own observatories. Are there any remains of these buildings today, and can they be found on old maps? Do the census records tell us anything? A search through the 1881 census of Great Britain produces many results from the queries "astronomer" and "observatory".

Where, for instance was Howard Grubb on census night? Not in Dublin ... but in London at the Tavistock Hotel, an establishment as I understand it, suitable for bachelors, room rate 1/6d per night.

Astronomical societies have come and gone in many areas. These too need researching. The SHA would be more than happy to receive copies of the histories of local astronomical societies for inclusion in our archives.

Where does one start?

If you have internet access, just type your county name in the search engine along with any of these words "astronomy, astronomer, observatory, telescope" and hit the search button. You will get hundreds of links. Or try the county name with "local history". No need to leave home until you've done a bit of homework.

Once you have made it to the local history centre or library, look up back copies of local and national newspapers, particularly around the dates of known events such as eclipses, meteor showers and comets. These reports often mention local astronomers. Most large towns and cities had venues where lectures were held. These lectures were well publicised and the adverts and reviews include the names of many famous astronomers on the lecture circuit, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. My own research has concentrated on the lecture tours of Sir Robert Ball. I live in Walsall, where Ball lectured on 9 occasions. I have traced the reviews of all his lectures there and it is worth mentioning that Ball's first lecture in the town did not go smoothly. Whilst Ball was describing "The Glories of the Midnight Sky", the lanternist must have had serious trouble with his equipment. The local paper reported

"The enjoyment of the Literary Institute lecture by Sir Robert Ball on Wednesday last was much interfered with by the incompetent mis-management of the gas. The members of the Institute must look to Mr Alfred Stanley as responsible for this. Never did an audience, however, behave better under prevailing circumstances. May Walsall audiences ever conduct themselves without any approach to panic, under whatever circumstances may arise".

The major astronomical societies and associations are an excellent source of information. Back copies of the membership lists of the RAS include members' addresses. Once the names of local astronomers have been found, the real investigations can start. I won't go into detail now about how to carry out such research. We will be putting some guidelines on the website, but we also intend to hold a short session for researchers, probably at one or more of our 2004 meetings

Publication of findings.

Once research has been completed on a particular topic, a copy can be deposited in the SHA archives. A suitable link can be entered on the county web page with a short summary.

Even when research is ongoing, reference can be made to it on the website, allowing others to see that work is in progress. In this way members will be able to collaborate and compare notes on a particular subject, at the same time avoiding duplicate work. The Newsletter editor will always be pleased to receive updates from

members on how their research is progressing.

Other Resources

The internet, already mentioned, is of course the fastest growing source of information and can supply the researcher with numerous leads. The Nasa ADS site is an invaluable tool in that it contains scans of millions of astronomical documents including the past minutes and notices of the RAS. Typing "obituary + fellow" in its search engine will bring up more than 800 obituaries published by the RAS. A2A or Access to Archives is another online catalogue with great search facilities. Type in Observatories and as an example you may come across this. John Smeaton, the 18th century engineer famous for the 3rd Eddystone lighthouse and the Forth canal also designed Observatories. For those members in the London area A1M25 gives very detailed descriptions of archives in and around the capital. In addition there are the many and varied genealogy and local history sites, with their search engines, discussion groups and message boards. We will endeavour to link the best of these sites to our reference pages.

SO to recap We have well over 100 members in the UK and more who currently reside overseas. We launched our survey in February with a dozen interested members. Our County web pages are now live and seeking adoption.

Fascinating stories of Dead Astronomers lie in wait for you.

Have I whetted your appetite? Your County needs YOU

If you would like to help ... in any way ... please let me know.

Email: roger.jones@shastro.org.uk or write enclosing sae to:

Roger Jones, 12 Stencills Drive, Walsall, WS4 2HP

The day I took David Levy to the Herschel Museum

When David Levy came to the UK I had the pleasant task of escorting him for the first leg of his trip. While crawling along the M25 between Gatwick and the M4 David Levy enthused about Slough. Why Slough? Because of the Herschel connection. Would he like to visit his house in Bath? Would he just!

Now the chances of a small museum being open on a Monday morning are slim, but we decided to try. Thoroughly soaked by the first rain for weeks, two drowned rats arrived outside a locked door. Now that would have been that, but I had David Levy with me. Three bells; I ring the one for the museum. A museum employee answers the door. I introduce my companion. "And who are you?" "Tricia Brown, Bristol Astronomical Society". Now that seemed to cut more ice! We're invited in.

I attempted, but failed, to convey the fact that I was with a VIP. We were given the standard introduction to William and Caroline Herschel. Did we know that Caroline did something that William never managed; she discovered eight comets! I decided that, as David hasn't discovered one since 1994, his efforts weren't worth mentioning.

We watched the introductory video and inspected the workshop where William ground his mirrors. A young lady opened the door so that we could go out into the garden and stand at the spot from where William had first seen Uranus. Now this is what David had come for. Five minutes later our guide reappeared. Isn't the Internet wonderful? It was obvious that he now knew who his visitor was. Could we sign the visitors' book? I'd already made sure that this had been done. I begged herbs from Caroline Herschel's garden for my astronomical supper party. It's great travelling with royalty!

Yes, we had an amusing visit to the Herschel house. David Levy may be the best-known astronomer in the US but let's face it, he's not Sir Patrick. But, despite not realising the identity of the visitor, a young museum employee welcomed us into the museum outside normal opening hours. That's the way to run our museums! I know that David Levy will long cherish the hour he spent with the ghosts of the Herschels.

Tricia Brown, Secretary, Bristol Astronomical Society

RUSSIAN SPACESUITS By Isaak Abramov and A. Ingemar Skoog

A Book Review by Andy Salmon

This is a fascinating book. Not for the spaceflight novice but more for those who have followed the Soviet/Russian programs over the years. Written by engineers from the Russian company Zvezda, who manufactured all the Soviet/Russian spacesuits, along with a European engineer who has been actively involved with Zvezda for many years. The book draws extensively upon Zvezda archives for photos and facts. The only thing missing is a translation for most of the spacesuit names. For example "Orlan", the main spacesuit for many years, means "Bald eagle" and hence sounds more American than Russian! A very instructive aside is that insider details of many Soviet space programs, like the Almaz military space station, Buran space shuttle and the abortive L3 Moonlanding project, is provided. A useful appendix, for those that gather data on such things, is a detailed listing of all Soviet/Russian spacewalks. Another absorbing chapter details the UPMK rocket backpacks of the 1960s and 1980s. You even get to learn about the plans for a European-Soviet joint spacesuit design (EVA-2000) for the Hermes spaceplane and the Mir-2 space station that were cancelled and never built respectively. Definitely a book that you could not imagine being written back in the days before the collapse of the USSR. It is both a valuable book in its own right and a tribute to the ingenious workers at Zvezda.

Published by Springer. ISBN 1-85233-732-X. 366 pp (softback). £24.50

CONCISE CATALOG OF DEEP SKY OBJECTS By W. H. Finlay

A Book Review by Bob Dryden

This is a straightforward list of deep sky objects, and the spelling in the title makes it obvious it is aimed at an American audience. The author states in the introduction, 'this book is not intended to be read cover to cover,...', and this would indeed be hard going. Instead, it is more of a reference book.

There are 520 deep sky objects listed, including all of the Messier list, the Herschel 400 list, and the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Finest 110 NGC objects.

The book is divided into four chapters and an index. The first chapter is a very short, 6 page introduction, explaining what all the symbols and abbreviations mean. The second chapter is the 110 object Messier list. Chapter three is by far the largest at 187 pages and this is a list of selected NGC objects, including word for word repeat entries of all the Messier objects, only this time under their NGC numbers. A one page chapter four covers two IC objects which is followed by a short index.

Each listed deep sky object has a standard table detailing what you would expect: constellation, object type, RA and Dec, apparent magnitude, distance and age (if known), apparent size, which Sky Atlas chart to use, and a bit strangely (for us British anyway), which Herald-Bobroff chart to use. Just in case you didn't know, the Herald-Bobroff atlas is written by two Australians and is quite favoured by Americans, although it is rarely used in the UK.

There follows a paragraph of text giving various astrophysical details such as what is known about the objects physics, what is happening to it, what will happen to it, its mass, actual size, etc. One important point to realise is that there is no indication of what the object actually looks like in the telescope, or how easy it is to find, or even how to actually find it.

There are a handful of black and white pictures, all taken from the Digitised Sky Survey (Space Telescope Science Institute) which

are mainly extreme close ups of various open clusters and a couple of emission nebulae. They are not finder charts for the object as a whole, rather finder charts for stars within an object.

Does the book work? Well as a list it just about fits the title description of 'concise'. The dictionary describing the word concise as 'a brief but comprehensive explanation'. As an observational guide it is lacking somewhat as it fails to address the telescopic descriptions and how to find things, but as a list you could use as a basis for putting together an observing programme it is OK as a start. It has obviously got all the brighter, showcase objects which is where most people want to look first anyway.

One very annoying niggle though is the page numbering. They are all in the right sequence of course, but the actual page numbers are almost unreadable being black type in a little dark blue spot half way up the side of the page. Very irritating. Not a bad book, but not one of the best either.

Published by Springer. ISBN 1-85233-691-9, price: £24.50p

Hastings and Battle Astronomical Society Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

The Society was formed in 1993 to promote astronomy to as many people as possible and, bring people with a common interest together. We hope that over the last ten years we have done just that.

The Society has been very fortunate in enjoying working with the Observatory Science Centre, Herstmonceux for the last nine years. At their viewing evenings there have been as many as sixty to one hundred members of the public at a time.

For example the Society was involved in the National Astronomy Week that culminated in a barbeque that also included two speakers, one of which was Anton Vamplew, the resident astronomer for Blue Peter, who gave a very interesting talk to the Society and guests and has been very active in helping on various aspects of Mars. This was a great success to the public.

The Observatory Science Centre, Herstmonceux has had an on-going restoration project for its telescopes and our Society has been very active in assisting the Centre to get all its telescopes up and running.

The Society has been involved in many observations, as you would expect from a dynamic and enthusiastic club. In August 1999 there was a total solar eclipse and the Society had the privilege of projecting the solar eclipse onto a large screen for around 750 people at the Observatory Science Centre, Herstmonceux.

Most Friday nights the Society has regular night-time viewing for the members. However, on many occasions the general public have joined in, including the local constabulary! We usually observe from North Seat or the helicopter-pad, Fairlight, or from a member's garden.

The Society makes all its own telescopes at the moment including grinding, polishing the mirrors and lenses. The members of the Society have made a 7" refractor mounted on an alt-azimuth tripod, an 8" reflector mounted on a driven equatorial mount that is a beautiful blue telescope donated to the Society that although needed some cleaning up/refurbishment has turned into a very good scope.

There is a 10" Dobsonian (HABAS 1) telescope that is now a veteran of the Society's displays and well known by those that come to any night viewing. This was built in 1994 and is the first telescope made by the members of the Society.

There is a brand new 16.5" Dobsonian telescope that shows a promising future. It has already exceeded all expectations. It was unleashed on the members of HABAS at their annual BBQ where



the members were impressed at its optical performance and the public, at a later event, where people were astounded with its ability to show astronomical objects at a very good deep sky level and also with its ease of use for its size.

Now the Society is in the process of completing a ten foot dome which will house both a 10" reflector telescope with its 6" guide reflector all mounted on a German equatorially driven pedestal mount.

Monthly meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month at the Observatory Science Centre where the Society invite guest speakers, hold slide shows and quiz evenings.

The Society publishes a bi-monthly magazine called Reflections that has all the dates of the events that the Society is involved in and other articles ranging from the planets to a sky diary, a novice quiz to one a little more advanced and many other items of interest.

The Society has a membership of 56 people from all walks of life whose age ranges, at present from ages 8 to 90 and with many with years of experience. We are very fortunate that we all work well as a team.

HABAS has links with several other astronomical organisations and is always willing to be involved in helping other clubs or societies. For example, we often work with the Hastings and District Geological Society when our interests overlap, the local Rangers and the Scouts.

The Society are looking forward to the next ten years and making more contacts and friends.

Simon Thorne & Gordon Elder

NORTH ESSEX AS - Essex Astronomers Receive Lottery Boost

Members of the North Essex Astronomical Society (NEAS) were celebrating in November after being awarded the sum of £5000 from the National Lottery funded 'Awards for All' grant scheme, which is aimed at small local projects. The award will be used on the society's Munday-Sayer Observatory, by expanding the observatory building and improving its facilities. A new, modern telescope will also be purchased. This will allow Society members to greatly expand their observing activities.

The Society has been in existence for over 20 years & has now grown into a healthy group of astronomy amateurs & enthusiasts. NEAS holds public meetings on the third Thursday of every month (excluding August & December) at the BT Exchange Social Hall in Collingwood Road, Witham. For more information goto <http://www.neas.org.uk> or call (01376) 521897.

FAS Slide Library Update

After several years of use, the FAS slide library has finally had several new slides added. A few old ones have been deleted but the original library largely remains and the list of available slides has already increased by over 50% and more will be soon added.

New slides now available include various planetary groupings, several of the recent bright comets, meteor trails, various nebula and Milky Ways views, several Messier objects and many more. The new slides give the library a fresh look, and bring it more up to date with more topical subjects and better quality emulsions. So, if you are in need of illustrations for a future talk, take a look at the library and you could well find just what you need. The updated list is available online at the FAS website or contact the slide librarian for details.

We are always interested in adding slides to the library so please contact the slide librarian if you have some interesting slides you think would be of interest to others.

Bob Dryden, Slide Librarian

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- All recently discovered moons of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.
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FAS NEWS

AGM 2003 UPDATE

Having stepped down as President I must take this opportunity to thank all the Council for their hard work and support over the past years. The President's job is basically to steer and supervise the work done by the Council, stepping in only to sort out problems or to make certain that things are done correctly and on time. This in most cases has been easy as only gentle reminders have been necessary.

Those who have been to the recent AGM/Autumn Conventions will have realised that the Federation has been fighting the ever increasing running costs. Over the last 4 - 5 years the subscriptions have been subsidised to a great extent by the sales of Publications. We unfortunately reached the point where this was no longer a viable option and we had to raise the subscription rate to enable the FAS to continue.

The Council recommended the following Rates at the AGM, which will come into effect for the year 2004/5. The Society subscriptions have been split into 3 to make it more equitable.

Small Societies	up to 20 members	£20	10 Newsletters
Medium Societies	21-45 members	£35	20 Newsletters
Large Societies	46+ members	£45	30 Newsletters

This increase was passed.

More Newsletters can be purchased or you can receive an e-mail version - some colour content - and print as many as you like for your Society use.

These may seem large amounts, but the cost of the Newsletters and the Handbook alone equate to more than the Subscription cost at the moment.

The FAS Constitution was also brought up to date.

The Council is very sad to lose Pam Spence, who has been a valued member of the Council for many years. Her astronomical knowledge together with her professional contacts were of great assistance. Always one to give a helping hand if required, she will be missed at FAS Meetings. We wish her well in her new career.

I look forward to working as Vice President with Ron and I will have to get used to voting again. I never did get to use my casting vote.

Malcolm Jones, Vice President 2003

Treasurers Report

This is my second year as Treasurer.

I appear to have taken over at a time of upheaval in the world of finance. PLI is to go up again this year Postage has risen by 25% printing by 15% along with everything else. We have had Two financially taxing years with poor returns at the last Two Conventions lets hope that we have turned the corner by coming back to Cambridge. The running costs over the past year have only just been kept within the Budget this year we will no doubt dip into the reserves and with the increase next year will bring us into a healthy balance for renewing the portfolio of literature we produce. Hopefully we will produce an e-mail only newsletter at some time in the near future thus saving a considerable amounts on costs. I have decided to return the financial year to April both for tax purposes and also for AGM purposes. I intend to send by e-mail a copy of the accounts to every secretary prior to the next agm for distribution to members.

Peter Cooke, Treasurer.

(note, a copy of the accounts is circulated to societies)

FAS Council 2003/4



Left to Right - Stan Waterman, Ian Coulson, Shaun O'Dell, Peter Cooke, Clive Down, John Parrat, Samuel George, Bob Dryden (back), Ron Kelly, Gary Gawthrop, Eric Hutton, Paul Harper (back), Malcolm Jones, Callum Potter.

A Few Words from the President

By the time you read this, 2004 will be well underway, even though it's only just starting as I write this. It is already a few months since the last AGM, and planning is well underway for the next AGM. The Council of the FAS only meets 3 times a year, so forward planning is essential. A constant theme which recurs on Council is the need for new people to come forward and take the reins over.

To many of you, I am a new name, to some of you a well known one! My background is with local astronomy in local societies. 2004 is my 30th year of membership of Liverpool AS, and I served on its Council from 1976 to 1998, when I stepped down having served my last 3 years as its President. I helped to organise Liverpool's centenary celebrations back in 1981/82, and in the early 1990s I helped to set-up the North West Group of Astronomical Societies. This was soon an accredited FAS regional group and I became its representative on the FAS Council. The rest, as they say, is history!

The whole ethos of the FAS Council is to not burden individuals with too heavy a workload, but to distribute the load more evenly. This is one of the reasons why the Council is quite large. The advantage is that people are unlikely to burn out through overwork, the disadvantage is the constant need for new blood!

This is where you come in. The last AGM left us with several vacancies, some of them quite important. For example, we still need a new Publications Officer. This key role is important for the financial well-being of the FAS since publications generate a lot of income.

If you are interested in a particular role, or would like to know more, then please do get in touch with either the Secretary (Clive Down) or with me and we'll try to answer your questions.

Clear Skies, Ron Kelley, FAS President

2003 Convention At Cambridge

A bright sunny day welcomed the delegates to the FAS Convention and AGM last September at the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge. A excellent series of talks by the guest speakers was complemented by society displays and trade stands, with a few of the telescopes set up outside for trials. Tours of the telescopes at the Institute were enjoyed. Bob Mizon was presented the Eric Zuker Award in recognition of his tireless work promoting the Campaign for Dark Skies.



SOCIETY ROUND UP

ABINGDON AS

Meetings at 8.00 pm in the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Abingdon. Details from Bob Dryden, 01491 201620, or Sebastian Linfoot, 01865 725094. www.abingdonastro.org.uk

- 09-Feb Asteroids the Vermin of the Sky Sebastian Linfoot
- 08-Mar The Aurora - from Sun to our Planet & Beyond Dr. Chris Davies
- 05-Apr Cosmic Recycling - An Amateur Perspective Dr. Nick Hewitt
- 10-May AGM

AS OF HARINGEY

Meetings in 2003 at Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14, at 7.30 pm www.ashastro.org.uk.

- 26-Feb Mars Odyssey Mission Jerry Workman
- 18-Mar More CCD Images Nic Szymanek
- 29-Apr Transits of Venus Peter Hingley
- 20-May Landing on a Comet Dr. Andrew Ball

ASTRONOMY SECTION OF LA SOCIETE GUERNESE

Meetings at the Observatory, Rue du Lorier, St. Peters, Guernsey. Every Tuesday evening and Friday if clear for observing.

www.astronomy.org.gg

AYLESBURY AS

Meetings take place at the Scout Hut, Oakfield Road, Aylesbury.

Contact Simon Foster on 01844 216108

www.aylesbury-astronomy.org.uk

BEDFORD AS

Meets last Wednesday of every month at the Piazzini Smyth Community Observatory, Bedford School, Pembley Avenue

Contact: Paul Barton, 01234 309249

www.bedsastro.org.uk

BIRMINGHAM AS

Wednesday Evenings at Aston Uni. Club Night; Library, telescope construction, & if it is clear observing at the Priory Observatory.

www.birmingham-astronomy.co.uk

BRADFORD AS

Meetings held at Eccleshill Library, Bolton Road, Bradford at 7.30 pm

Contact Hilary on 01274 672570 or Mike on 01274 637374

www.bradford-astro.freereserve.co.uk

- 02-Feb Galaxies Dr. Philip James

- 16-Feb A Brief History of the Moon Ray Emery

- 01-Mar Richard Feynman's Lost Lecture David Lord

- 15-Mar Astronomy Update on UK Space Missions Prof. Ken Pounds

- 05-Apr TBA Paul Money

- 19-Apr Women Astronomers Martin Lunn MBE

- 10-May The Transit of Venus David Sellers

- 24-May A Star is Born Dr. M. Hoare

BRISTOL AS

Meetings held on Friday evenings at 7.15pm at Bristol Grammar School, Contact John Pickard (Vice Chairman), tel. 01454 632692 or Tricia Brown (Secretary), tel. 0117 968 5023

www.bristolastrosoc.freereserve.co.uk

CARDIFF AS

Meetings alternate Thursdays, September to July, 7.30 pm. at Dept of Physics and Astronomy, Univ. of Wales, 5 The Parade, Newport Road, Cardiff.

David Powell (secretary), 029 2055 1704. Email CAS@ilddat.demon.co.uk

www.cardiff-astronomical-society.org

- 05-Feb The Solution to a 40 Year Old Astronomical Puzzle Dr. D. Ward Thompson

- 19-Feb The Annular Eclipse of the Sun 2003, Iceland Jerry Workman

- 04-Mar The Sun, Space Weather, Aurora and the Antarctic Dr. Alan Rodgers

- 18-Mar The Origins of Astronomy Prof. Mike Edmunds

- 01-Apr Cassini-Huygens to Saturn and Titan Dr. Andrew Coates

- 15-Apr AGM

- 29-Apr Its Been a Wonderfully Clear Day ... Bob Irwin-Edmunds

- 13-May Astronomy in Wales Peter Grossi

- 27-May Cold Dark Matter in Galaxies Dr. Erwin de Blok

CLEETHORPES AS

Meetings are held at the Beacon Hill Observatory, Cleethorpes and start at 7.30pm. Contact Paul Thompson 01472 233552 or e-mail

paul@cleethorpesastronomy.co.uk.

www.cleethorpesastronomy.co.uk

- 04-Feb The Invisible Universe T Storey

- 17-Feb My Visits to CERN Rob Wressell

- 03-Mar The New Lancaster Telescope Dennis Buczynski

- 16-Mar The Search for Intelligent Life David Whitehouse

- 25-Mar Observatory Open Night

- 20-Apr CCD Photography Members

- 05-May Unveiling the Goddess of Love Paul Money

CLEVELAND & DARLINGTON AS

Most monthly meetings held at Grindon Parish Hall.

Contact: Neil M. Haggath, Tel. 01332 740977, E-mail: neil.haggath@ntlworld.com

[haggath@ntlworld.com](http://www.haggath@ntlworld.com)

- 3-Feb Sundials - Not Just a Pretty Face David Cook

- 14-Mar Title TBA David Robertson

- 16-Apr Presidential Address Jack Youdale FRAS

- 14-May Weighing the Universe Mark Swinbank

COTSWOLD AS

Meets second Saturday of every month at Shurdington Church Hall, Shurdington, Cheltenham. 7.45 pm. Contact Duncan Willoughby (01452-416405)

www.cotswoldas.org.uk

- 14-Feb Beagle 2 Barrie Kirk, Astrium

- 13-Mar Comets - Ancient and Modern Guy Hurst, BAA and TA

- 10-Apr AGM & Social Evening

- 08-May "The Transit of Venus" John Harris & Callum Potter

EASTBOURNE AS

Meet on the first Saturday of the month from October to July, in the Willingdon Memorial Hall, Church Street, Willingdon. Meetings start at 7.30pm.

Contact Peter Gill, tel. 01323 646853, email pbj.gill@btinternet.com

- 07-Feb Exploring the Radio Universe Ian Morison

- 06-Mar Minor Planet Measures - Have Telescope Will Travel Gordon E. Taylor

- 03-Apr Transits of Venus Peter Hingley

- 08-May Radioisotopes in the Solar System Dr. Eta Mullane

EWELL AS

Meets 2nd Friday each month at St Mary's Church Hall, Ewell.

Secretary: Richard Gledhill, tel. 0208-393-1068

- 13-Feb Key Astronomical Events of the 21st Century John Murrell

- 12-Mar Communicating with ESA's Deep Space Explorers Nick James

- 16-Apr Transits of Venus Robin Gorman

- 14-May Landing on a Comet Dr. Andrew Ball

Huddersfield Astro. & Phil. Society

Meetings at Observatory and Town Hall

www.huddersfieldastronomy.co.uk

- 06-Feb Fly Me To The Moon Andrew Green

- 08-Mar Asteroids Andy Hollis

- 02-Apr Surveying the Milky Way Dr. Melvin Hoare

LEEDS AS

Centenary House, North Street, Leeds between 7.00 pm and 9.30 pm

leedsastronomy.org.uk

- 11-Feb Volcanoes on Mars Kevin Read

- 10-Mar A Giant Reborn - The Birr Telescope John Singleton

- 14-Apr The Sun - Our Nearest Variable Star Dr Barbara Bromage

- 12-May New Observations Of The Engraved Hourglass PNe Dr Myfanwy Bryce

LIVERPOOL AS

Venue for monthly meetings is the Roman Catholic Cathedral's Crypt Concert Room, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. Meetings commence at 7pm until 9pm.

Secretary: Tel 0151-638 3270 or email: clarklunar@aol.com

- 20-Feb Dr Plod & the Amazing Double Sunset Kevin Kilburn

- 19-Mar Earth-Type Planets around Stars Dr David Underwood

- 16-Apr History of Sundials Mr Robert Sylvester

- 21-May LAS AGM & Members Talks

LOUGHTON AS

Meeting every Thursday at 8.00 pm. in the Scout Hall, Loughton Lane, Theydon Bois, Essex. Contact Andrew Robertson (01373-874175) or Charles Munton (020-8889-9253)

las-astro.org.uk

MARR AS - NEW MEMBER SOCIETY

Meets: Last Tuesday of the month at 1930, Learney Arms Hotel, Torphins.

Observational meetings as weather permits

Contact David Pattullo, wolfscot@dialstart.net

www.freewebs.com/marraastro

NORTH EAST LONDON AS

Meets normally on the third Sunday of each month (excluding August) between 3pm and 6pm, in the Park Room, Wanstead House, 21, The Green, Wanstead,

Contact Bernard Beeston, tel. 020 8363 5696

NORTH ESSEX AS

Public meeting at 7.30pm on the third Thursday of every month (excluding August & December) at the BT Exchange Social Hall in Collingwood

Road, Witham.

For more information contact (01376) 521897.

<http://www.neas.org.uk>

ORWELL AS

email ipswich@ast.cam.ac.uk

www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~ipswich

PAPWORTH ASTRONOMY CLUB

Meets on the first Wednesday of every month. Contact Keith Tritton (tel. 01767 677219)

04-Feb The Moon A Biography David Whitehouse

03-Mar News from Mars Dr. Monica Grady

07-Apr Astronomical imaging from Hawaii Nik Szymanek

05-May An Astronomer in Antarctica Jonathan Shanklin

SCARBOROUGH & DISTRICT AS

Public observing nights at The Astronomy Centre, Dalby Forest, Thornton Dale, near PICKERING, North Yorkshire, on the first Friday of the month. Contact 01723 500389

www.scarborough-as.org.uk

20-Feb Riding on Light Neil Haggath

19-Mar Astrophotography Anne Hopkinson and Colin Richardson

16-Apr The Celestial Un-dead (Pulsars) Ray Emery

21-May Cassini's Planet David Graham

SHROPSHIRE AS

Speaker meetings are generally held on the first Friday of the month in Shrewsbury with a monthly observing meeting at Rodington Village Hall Phone 01952 820082 for details.

www.shropshire-astro.com

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

Contact Stuart Williams, secretary@shastro.org.uk

www.shastro.org.uk

21/22-Feb AGM & Conference Institute of Astronomy Cambridge

STAFFORD & DISTRICT AS

Meetings held at Weston Road High School, Stafford. 19.15

Contact L. Hodkinson, 01785 712065

26-Feb Observing Evening Cannock Chase

18-Mar TBA

22-Apr TBA

20-May AGM

STOUR AS

Meets monthly in the Jubilee Room of Cavendish Memorial Hall, Cavendish, Suffolk on the first Tuesday of every month at 7.30 p.m.

Contact K. Marshall, 01787-249534

03-Feb Time and the Calendar Dr. Keith Tritton

02-Mar Galaxy Formation and Structure Dr. Kevin Marshall

STRATFORD UPON AVON AS

Meetings 7.30pm at the Home Guard Club, Tiddington, Nr Stratford upon Avon. Contact: Mike Whitecross 01789 731784

www.astro.org.uk

11-Feb Amazing Astronomical Facts

24-Feb Astronomy Lecture

10-Mar Using the Society Spectroscope

23-Mar Compact Binary Stars Dr. Ulrich Kolb

TIVERTON AS

Meetings are held Fridays at 7.30 p.m. at St Aubyn's School, Blundells Road, Tiverton.

06-Feb Meteorites and Radio Rev. Steve Smith

05-Mar Faulkes Telescopes and Binary Stars Dr. Paul Roche

07-May Greek Astronomy Dr. Allan Chapman

TULLAMORE AS - NEW MEMBER SOCIETY

<http://www.iol.ie/~seanmck/tas.htm>

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM AS

We are a University society with the majority of our members being Undergraduate students, but we always welcome people along.

Contact Scott Porter, email: scp@star.sr.bham.ac.uk

www.astrosoc.org.uk

WOLVERHAMPTON AS

Meets alternate Mondays, at 7.30pm, between September and April, with additional meetings in May and June, at Beckminster Methodist Church Hall, Birches

Contact Mr Sydney Crump (tel 01299 871606), email secretary@wolvast.org.uk

www.wolvast.org.uk

23-Feb Astronomy in the Ancient World Dr. Mike Leggett

08-Mar Mars Odyssey, A History of Mars Observations Andy Lound

22-Mar Campaign for Dark Skies Martyn Filsak

10-May Recent Results in X-Ray Astronomy Dr. Katherine Gunn

YORK AS

Meetings are held in the Denham Room, The Priory Street Centre, York, Meetings start at 7.30 for 8pm. Members £1.00 Non-members £2. Children under 16 are free

Contact Hazel on 07944 751277

06-Feb Naked Eye & Binocular observing Paul Money

20-Feb British Meteors Monica Grady

06-Mar China in Space Dr. M Martin-Smith

19-Mar A Brief History of our Moon Ray Emery

02-Apr Informal Evening

16-Apr Astro-Photography Paul Money

07-May Variable Stars and how to Report Them Karen Holland

Details of meetings mentioned in the Society Roundup should be confirmed before travelling. All programmes may be subject to change with no notice. The FAS can accept no responsibility for any inaccuracies.

Busy time at Wolverhampton AS

After six years in the job Michael Bryce has decided to step down from the Secretary's post, and as a member of the Society Council. The new Secretary is Mr Sydney Crump (tel 01299 871606). The email address remains as secretary@wolvast.org.uk. Please update your contact lists. Along with Sydney Crump the new Council consists of Mr Ted Thurgur (President) Mr John Smith (Vice President and Treasurer), Mr Philip Barnard (Assistant Secretary), Simon Barnett (Projects Officer) completing the Council are Ralph Pinder, Jeremy Edwards and Robert Cole. Michael Bryce will continue to publish the Society web site, however, and Mrs Barbara Russell will produce the Lyra newsletter until a new Editor is found.

The Society has enjoyed an exceptional lecture programme since the group returned to its usual meetings in September. Dr Mark Sims from Leicester opened the season with a talk about Beagle 2; Syd Crump gave his presentation about gravity, and we also had the Heather Couper presentation about Mars at our Society for Popular Astronomy (SPA) Golden Jubilee meeting. This meeting also included a talk by our own member Mr Paul Pope about optics. Other meetings included Spaceguard by Jay Tate and Malcolm Astley stepped in with a talk about the Galilean Satellites of Jupiter, when our intended speaker Dr Phil Diamond of Jodrell Bank was called away to an important conference in Munich.

We have some interesting subjects for future meetings including The Kuiper Belt, Frontiers of Modern Astronomy, Astronomy in the Ancient World, Mars, Campaign for Dark Skies, Transit of Venus and X-Ray Astronomy. We hope that Dr Diamond will give his talk "21st Century Radio Astronomy", some time in 2004.

On the night of 8 – 9 November our new Secretary hosted a star party to observe the total eclipse of the Moon. Those who attended were greeted with very welcome hot soup and hot dogs from Diane Crump's kitchen, plus a recently produced video copy of the "Society Film", which was made on 16mm film stock in the 1970's, was shown. And, guess what, cloud cover! We managed to see some of the penumbral eclipse through a break in high cloud and then the sky cleared for a while when the umbral phase was observed. Cloud cover then returned before totality. Lets hope for better skies at future observing sessions.

Wolverhampton AS meets on Monday evenings at 7:30 pm at Beckminster Church Hall, Birches Barn Road, Wolverhampton. For details of meetings please visit our web site at www.wolvast.org.uk. Contact Sydney Crump on 01299 871606.

Michel Bryce

LIST OF OFFICERS 2003/2004

President: **Ron Kelly**
See front cover for details

Vice President: **Malcolm Jones**
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E-mail: 100257.1434@compuserve.com

Secretary: **Clive Down,**
See front cover for details

Treasurer: **Peter Cooke,**
See front cover for details

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Education Secretary: **VACANT**

Publications Secretary: **VACANT**
Contact Malcolm Jones (see Vice President above) in the meantime for information about publications.

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Devon Group : **John Parratt**
See Handbook Editor above

East Anglia Group : **VACANT**

SAGAS Rep: **VACANT**

FAS Publications

The FAS 'Astrocalendar 2003-2004' is now available.

Discounts for quantity purchases, pricing details are available at:
http://www.fedastro.freeserve.co.uk/publications/members_prices.html

Members Prices:

Astrocalendar 2003/4	£1.60 + A5 SAE with 34p stamps
Observational Astronomy	£2.00 + A5 SAE with 34p stamps
Using a Telescope	£1.80 + A5 SAE with 34p stamps
Step by Step	£1.30 + A5 SAE with 28p stamps
Astrophotography	
Choosing a Telescope or Binoculars	£0.60 + A5 SAE with 28p stamps
FAS Handbook 2001 (published 2001)	£1.00 + A5 SAE with 44p stamps
FAS Handbook 2002/3 (published Dec. 2002 - Every paid-up FAS Member Society gets a copy free)	£3.50 + A5 SAE with 69p stamps

Queries are usually easier via e-mail to the Publications Secretary:
publications@fedastro.org.uk

THE 2004 FAS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONVENTION

**Will Be Held On
2nd October 2004**

**At The Institute of Astronomy,
Madingley Road, Cambridge**

More details in the next Newsletter

EUROPEAN ASTROFEST 2004 6/7 February

The FAS will have a stand at this years Astrofest - why not stop by and say 'Hello' if you are attending.

Deadline for submission for next newsletter (Spring 2004) is 18th April 2004

Please remember to send ALL items to the Editor,
Callum Potter.
Regrettably material can only be returned if supplied with a SAE.

**THE FAS WEBSITE HAS BEEN REVISED - CHECK OUT
www.fedastro.org.uk**