Gamma Virginis 2005

Observers, whether devotees of telescopic doubles or not, should be aware that they may be in danger of missing by far the most spectacular binary star event of the century: the now-imminent periastron passage of G Virginis.

For over 160 of its 169-year period this pair of identical 3rd magnitude stars is very easily resolved at moderate power in a small telescope but, thanks to its extreme orbital eccentricity (about 0.9), Gamma closes for 2 or 3 months around minimum to no more than 1/3rd arcsecond, a dramatic climax last seen in the winter of 1835-6 by John Herschel, W.R. Dawes and Admiral Smyth. This is not something only detectable by micro-meter measurement but a progressive change in the visual appearance of the pair plainly obvious at the eyepiece over an astonishingly short time — we are about to witness the only instance in the entire sky visible from northern latitudes of a bright pair visibly and obviously moving, as seen in a 6-inch telescope, within a 2-year period. In fact, on the way in this time, Gamma Vir. has changed its gross appearance completely even in a 4-inch O.G. in each of the twelve months to Spring 2001 ( "disks tangent" — they were well separated a year earlier), 2002 ( "disks heavily overlapping"), 2003 (a single elongated disk, "olive") and 2004 ( "round"), each of these changes being instantly obvious ' by eye '.

The purpose of this piece is, therefore, to alert observers to the imminence of this unique event which, in default, they may miss. The morning pace has really been hotting up over the last year or so. The morning of Gamma with the 12½ inch on 27th December last showed the pair at about 0.4 arcsec. in p.a. 177°(approx.), a closing up of some 40%, and a revolution of no less than 42°, since the corresponding dawn observation of just 12 months earlier.

Evidently, to follow the events of the next few months will be a real challenge, good optics and high magnifications (at least 60 inch of aperture) being absolute essentials. While the star will certainly appear absolutely single in a 6-inch telescope at minimum, it will be completely resolved again in that aperture within 2 years, and an acute observer will begin to see the two components clearly opening out and rapidly revolving well before that. In 1836 Smyth with 5.9 inch O.O. and Dawes, with only 3.8 inch, managed this convincingly only 2 months after closest approach! Here, then, is a challenge to present observers to match the Smyth-Dawes record. A further incentive to observe this remarkable event is that, despite all the many efforts of the orbit computers, we still have very little idea what to expect at apparent periastron. Persistent astronomical folklore to the contrary notwithstanding, the least separation of Gamma was not determined, or even estimated, in 1836; all we can say on the basis of those observations (Smyth, Dawes and subsequent data) is based on Strand’s orbit of 1937.

The Importance of the FAS Regions

An important issue was raised at the AGM last October. There was a comment from the floor about how did societies find out what was going on at FAS Council meetings. The answer which I gave is that is where the FAS Regions and the Regional Representatives come in. The FAS has a number of recognised regions and each region is entitled to nominate a person to attend FAS Council meetings to represent their region. The idea is that the Representative can both bring information into the Council and provide feedback to the societies in their region.

To become a recognised FAS region, a group of FAS member societies needs to come together and write into the FAS Secretary. The Council will then decide if the group warrants a new region, or should be part of an existing region. Once formally recognised, the Region should nominate someone to attend FAS Council meetings as their official Representative.

There are however, a number of problems with the way this system is currently working. At present, the travelling costs of the Regional Representatives is carried by the FAS, and at nearly £1,000 pa, it represents a full half of all of the total expenses of running the FAS Council.

Secondly, there are no laid down guidelines for how regions should operate. Some regions are extremely ad-hoc. Others, for example, the North West Group, have a structure, meet regularly as a committee and produce minutes. The North West Group operates as ‘mim’ regional branch of the FAS, producing its own list of those members prepared to be speakers, co-ordinates and publishes each others events, plus it has its own web site giving contact details for all the member societies and other useful information.

Most of the regions do not appear to have any sort of structure, rarely meet, do not appear to have a mechanism to provide feedback to/from the FAS Council. It is possible that on Council we do not see what is going on in the regions. However, from the feedback that we have received, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion. I am happy for us to be proved wrong. To be brutally honest, most regional reports received at FAS Council are embarrassing through their lack of content.

Going forward, we need a workable mechanism that ensures that member societies are effectively in communication with the FAS Council. It is very difficult to justify the current operating costs of £1,000 p.a. for the Regional Representatives since it does not seem to deliver value to either the FAS Council nor to the member societies.

We need to see the Regions become better defined and put onto the Spring 2005 issue of the Federation of Astronomical Societies.
WHERE WERE YOU?

As those who attended will know, the FAS had a table stand, in the Societies Room, at Astrofest again this year—there is a report on the 05 ’Fest elsewhere in this Issue. However, the FAS Council members who manned the stand felt quite lonely. The reason—there were so few member Societies represented. We know that it can be difficult to find the bodies or even the interest to take part, but Societies must remember that the FAS persuaded the organisers to provide the room free of charge. With the very poor support shown this year by Societies, then this privilege is in jeopardy. In modern rugby parlance, it is a case of ‘USE IT OR LOSE IT’. Come on all you members of Societies local to London or even farther afield—get yourselves organised and let’s have a good turnout in 2006.

As part of the drive to streamline the administration of the FAS and to reduce costs, the Handbook is being redesigned. As most societies will be aware much of the content of the Handbook stays pretty much the same from year to year. It has been decided that the A5 stapled version will be discontinued. In its place will come an A4 ring binder, (see picture), with all the items in separate sections. It is intended that the binder will be perpetual and societies will be provided with revised sections as required from time to time. As there will be a significant set-up cost, whilst the initial binder will be supplied as part of the membership fee, replacements will unfortunately have to be charged for.

With finding speakers a continuing headache for Societies, the FAS is keen to update the speaker list for the Handbook and so is appealing for those interested to put their names forward. Details of subjects, distances will travel, etc. should be provided.

Preparations for the Annual Convention are well advanced—keep watch on the website for details as they are finalised. The speakers will include Prof David Southwood talking about the Cassini mission with all the latest from Jupiter and Titan and Neil Bone on Aurorae of recent years. We also have Dr Alan Longstaff with a talk ‘ Mars Revisited’ which will reveal the most recent discoveries from Opportunity and Spirit and from Mars Express. One other feature that is sure to be of great interest is the Foulkes Telescope. Sam George, the FAS PR man, has arranged that the Foulkes will be live during the midday break in proceedings. There will also be a tour of the Cambridge historic observatories. Make sure you book up early.

Happy observing, imaging - or whatever takes your fancy: Ed

BOOK REVIEWS

Mary Somerville and The World of Science

For those with an interest in the participation of women in scientific history, the story of Mary Somerville will prove to be both surprising and inspiring.

Faced with opposition to her studies -based on her gender - Mary faced many obstacles that most women at that time failed to overcome. Confronted by her parents’ beliefs that studying would be detrimental to their daughter’s health, and prejudice from those within the church, Mary persevered in her studies and gained sufficient knowledge to publish highly acclaimed papers on all manner of scientific areas. From her studies of the electromagnetic spectrum to her interest in geology, Mary diligently researched and presented papers which matched, if not rivalled, her (mostly male) peers. For these achievements she received the great honour of having her name bestowed upon an Oxbridge University College.

With her initial interest in mathematics being sparked by an article in a women’s magazine, and armed with her widely acknowledged perseverance and interest in her subject, this mild-mannered but no means passive woman befriended such figures as Jean Baptiste Biot and Sir William Herschel, and was presented to no fewer than two Popes.

With the companionship and unending devotion of her second husband, William Somerville, she travelled Europe, finally settling in Italy, where she lived out her final days.

With her daughter, critics, and admirers of her work - Chapman also touches on deviations into the 19th Century ‘Grand Amateur’ society. This is a well-researched and inspiring read, which explores Mary’s personal and academic experiences in an insightful and light-hearted way. It is a must for those with an interest in the history of Astronomy, and women’s role in shaping its progression.

Abigail Wilson - Bath University / Brannel Astronomy

F. A. S. Newsletter 78 2 Spring 2005

Care of Astronomical Telescopes and Accessories

By M. Barlow Pepin

For a book entitled ‘Care of . . .’ It was surprising that the topic of care in its various forms did not come until page 99. However this is not a criticism, but rather a comment on how much there more there is in this publication than straight care and maintenance.

The first section, five chapters in all, covers detailed descriptions of the many types of telescopes, eyepieces, etc., as well as buying second-hand equipment, with a description of the many of the faults to be found. There is a lot of detail here that would be of use to both beginner and experienced astronomer alike. Particularly liked the diagrams, which are useful for the beginners and for those of us whose memories are not so good anymore.

Published by Canopus Publishing
176 pages, Hard Covers ISBN 0 9537868 4 6 £12.95

Published by Springer
Patrick Moore’s Practical Astronomy Series

Eyepiece construction, eye relief and filters are also covered. All this is almost a book in itself. The ‘care’ sections go way beyond the use of isopropl alcohol to clean the light transmitting/reflecting surfaces; it covers mounts, including equatorial, do bsonians and tripods, collimation and adjustment, and long term storage.

For those who are more adventurous, there is a section on dismantling and correcting eyepiece optics, with the Chapter entitled ‘Separating a Small Cemented Achromat’ being specially fascinating – but, however, does not tempt me to try it.

Finally it covers the tools you are likely to need to undertake all aspects of care and ends with a chapter on practical information, such as Seeing scales, etc.

All in all, this is a book, which would prove useful to all observing and imaging astronomers who wish to fully understand their equipment and who want to keep it in first class condition.

Frank Johns
FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS HAS INDICATED A WISH TO KNOW A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE MEMBERS OF THE FAS COUNCIL, SO FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, HERE'S SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT ME. I AM 45, I ORIGINATE FROM LIVERPOOL, BUT I NOW LIVE IN SHROPSHIRE. I WORK IN IT AS A TECHNICAL DESIGNER IN DATA WAREHOUSING. I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF LIVERPOOL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY FOR OVER 30 YEARS, I HELD NUMEROUS COMMITTEE POSTS WITH THE LAS FROM 1976 UNTIL 1998, INCLUDING SECRETARY DURING THEIR CENTENARY YEAR (1981-2), AND PRESIDENT FOR MY LAST 3 YEARS ON COUNCIL.

MY MAIN INTEREST IS NOT ASTRONOMY BUT MUSICAL PERFORMANCE. I HAVE BEEN SERIOUS ABOUT CLASSICAL MUSIC SINCE I WAS 10, ALTHOUGH I DID NOTHING ABOUT BEING A MUSICIAN UNTIL MY MID 30S. I TOOK SINGING LESSONS AND SOON JOINED VARIOUS CHOIRS. I HAVE SUNG EVERYTHING FROM MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE MUSIC TO CONTEMPORARY WORKS (ONES WHERE THE COMPOSERS AREN'T YET DEAD!). I CURRENTLY SING WITH A CHAMBER CHOIR (THE BORDER SINGERS SEE WWW.BORDERSINGERS.ORG.UK), WHICH DOES A LOT OF A CAPPELLA (UNACCOMPANIED) MUSIC. MY LAST CONCERT WITH THEM WAS A CHARITY CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT EATON HALL, THE HOME OF THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER NEAR CHESTER. I AM CHAIRMAN OF NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY (WWW.NANTWICHCHORAL.ORG.UK), WHICH IS A LARGER GROUP WHICH HAS A PROFESSIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR. I ALSO SING WITH THE CHESTER FESTIVAL CHORUS WHICH ONLY SINGS IN THE SUMMER SPECIFICALLY TO PERFORM AT THE CHESTER ARTS FESTIVAL. THIS GIVES ME A CHANCE TO SING WITH A BIG CHOIR WITH MAINSTREAM ORCHESTRAS SUCH AS THE BBC PHILHARMONIC AND THE ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA. THESE CONCERTS ARE SOMETIMES BROADCAST ON RADIO 3. AS I WRITE THIS, WE ARE WAITING FOR CONFIRMATION IF WE WILL BE INVITED TO SING AT THE 2005 PROMS AT THE ALBERT HALL - THAT WOULD BE REALLY EXCITING IF IT COMES OFF.

WITH MY INTEREST IN EARLY MUSIC, I AM A MEMBER OF AN EARLY MUSIC GROUP (SEE WWW.NWEMF.ORG.UK) AND I ATTEND A LOT OF EARLY MUSIC WORKSHOPS AROUND THE COUNTRY. BECAUSE OF THIS, I HAVE TAKEN UP PLAYING THE BASS VIOL (ALSO KNOWN AS THE VIOLA DA GAMBA). THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS ME WITH THE INSTRUMENT IN MY STUDY. IN RECENT YEARS I HAVE ATTENDED EARLY MUSIC SUMMER SCHOOLS AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY (SEE WWW.NORVIS.ORG.UK) AND ALSO HARROGATE CHORAL WEEK (WWW.HARROGATECHORALWEEK.ORG.UK). SO AS YOU CAN SEE, MUSICAL INTERESTS KEEP ME BUSY.

SINCE I'M OBVIOUSLY NOT BUSY ENOUGH, I AM STUDYING TO GET A MUSIC BASED DEGREE WITH THE OU AND I SHOULD GET MY DIPLOMA IN MUSIC THIS YEAR. OH - I'VE ALSO BEEN DOING LATIN AT EVENING CLASSES IN SUPPORT OF MY LONG TERM AMBITION TO DO A RESEARCH DEGREE IN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE ENGLISH MUSIC. SO, IF YOU SEE ME AROUND THIS YEAR AT YOUR SOCIETY, OR THE FAS CONVENTION, YOU COULD ALWAYS TALK TO ME ABOUT MUSIC!

KNOW THE COUNCIL MEMBER

RON KELLEY—President FAS

THIS IS OUR SECOND VISIT TO ASTROFEST. LAST YEAR WE WERE LOOKING FOR EQUIPMENT SO THE EXHIBITION AREA WAS OF MAIN INTEREST. THIS YEAR APART FROM A FEW MINOR ITEMS THAT WERE REQUIRED WE WENT FOR THE INFORMATION ASPECT.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT BEEN TO ASTROFEST IT IS HELD IN KENSINGTON TOWN HALL, LONDON. THE EVENT IS OVER THREE FLOORS WITH LECTURES IN A LARGE AUDITORIUM. THE MAIN EXHIBITION AREA IS OUTSIDE THE LECTURE THEATRE華 WERE THE MAIN EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS EXHIBIT. THERE ARE MANY " DEALS " ON OFFER AND ALSO END OF LINES. BESIDE THE EQUIPMENT THERE ARE PUBLICATIONS AND COMPUTER SOFTWARE SUPPLIERS. UPSTAIRS ARE THE SOCIETY EXHIBITIONS INCLUDING THE FSA, BOOK SUPPLIERS AND EDUCATIONAL COURSE FROM SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES. ON THE LOWER GROUND FLOOR ARE MORE PUBLICATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIERS AND THE VARIOUS DISPLAYS.

SO WHAT DID WE THINK OF THE FESTIVAL?

WE SPENT THE FRIDAY MORNING LISTENING TO FOUR LECTURES RANGING FROM ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY TO HUNTING SUPERNOVAE.

THE FIRST LECTURE BY NEIL ENGLISH WAS ENTITLED "PUTTING ART INTO YOUR ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY". NEIL EXPLAINED SEVERAL WAYS IN WHICH USING A RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE KIT ONE CAN CREATE VISUALLY IMPOSING IMAGES OF THE HEAVENS. THIS WAS HIGHLY ENTERTAINING AND HAS GIVEN US SOME IDEAS.

THE NEXT LECTURE WAS ENTITLED "NEW LIGHT ON THE DISCOVERY OF NEPTUNE" BY NICK KOLLERSTROM. THIS WAS AN HISTORICAL LOOK AT SOME NEW DATA THAT NICK AND OTHERS HAVE DISCOVERED REGARDING THE DISPUTE OVER WHETHER JOHN COUCH ADAMS REALLY MERVYS THE TITLE OF CO-PREDICTOR OF NEPTUNE. WE MUST ADMIT TO FINDING THIS TALK A LITTLE BORING BUT WE THINK THAT NICK DECIDED THAT IT WAS A GOOD TRY BY THE BRITS TO CLAIM THAT WE CO-PREDICTED NEPTUNE ORBIT.

AFTER A BREAK THE NEXT LECTURE WE FOUND HIGHLY ENTERTAINING AND INFORMATIVE. IT WAS ENTITLED "SPACE BIRDS – OBSERVING EARTH SATELLITES" AND WAS GIVEN BY ALAN PICKUP. ALAN HAS BEEN IN THE SATTELITE-OBSERVING FIELD SINCE SPUTNIK DAYS AND HE EXPLAINED THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SATELLITE AND WHY THEY FLASH IN DIFFERENT WAYS. HE INCLUDED DETAILS OF HOW AND WHERE TO GET THE NECESSARY INFORMATION ON THEIR ORBITS. AN INTERESTING SIDE TO HERE WAS THAT THE AMERICANS ARE GOING TO CLOSE DOWN ALL RECOGNISED WEBSITES DISTRIBUTING SATELLITE DATA BUT THE ONLY SITES LEFT WILL BE THE ONES THAT HAVE DISCOVERED THE DETAILS OF SPY SATELLITE INFO AND PUBLISH THE DATA.

THE FINAL LECTURE OF THE MORNING, GIVEN BY STEPHEN SMARTT, WAS ENTITLED "SUPERNOVAE – HUNTING EXPLODING STARS." STEPHEN EXPLAINED THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPERNOVAE OF WHICH OVER 2000 HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED BUT UNTIL RECENTLY ONLY TWO PROGENITOR STARS HAD EVER BEEN DETECTED. THESE TWO STARS WERE NOTHING LIKE THE TYPE OF STARS PREDICTED TO EXPLODE. HE ILLUSTRATED HIS TALK WITH SOME OF THE LATEST IMAGES FROM HUBBLE AND EXPLAINED THE TECHNIQUES BEING USED TO DETECT SUPERNOVAE EXPLOSIONS.

AFTER A BRIEF LUNCH WE WENT WALKABOUT LOOKING AT THE VARIOUS STALLS AND PICKING UP APPROPRIATE LEAFLETS AND FREEBIES.

ALL IN ALL A GOOD DAY AND AN INTERESTING ONE BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WE SHALL BE AttENDING FOR A FEW YEARS UNLESS WE HAVE NEED OF SOME PARTICULAR ITEMS OR SEE THAT A INTERESTING TOPIC IS BEING DISCUSSED.

MARK AND BRIAN TIMBRELL – BRANNEL ASTRONOMY CLUB
**Hermes Celebrate 10 Years**

For the first time in our short history, members gathered on 20th January at the Cornhouse Restaurant in Shrewsbury to celebrate the success of the Society in the last ten years that have whizzed past since it was re-constituted in December 1994.

However, there was nothing reconstituted about the meals, which were all excellent and enjoyed in a convivial candle-lit atmosphere. Actually it was more of a smoky atmosphere after Simon managed to set light to the tablecloth. Of course it had to be Lembit Opik’s place setting, so it’s just as well he was two hours late!

He had been delayed in Commons Committee meeting about tuition fees to be introduced for students in Northern Ireland, a government measure which was defeated by 11 votes to 10 after Lembit had telephoned a fellow Lib-Dem MP for the Orkney constituency, to come and vote PDQ. Naturally our honoured guest was feeling upbeat and treated us to forty minutes of anecdotes, jokes and making us feel important about our apparently monumental role in tackling the threat of planetary mayhem from unthinking asteroids. I hope the gods don’t get angry and send us one next week.

Notwithstanding the calamities, we all had a good time. Lembit somehow managed to get his side of Shropshire lamb down by the time the rest of us were starting our desserts the tablecloth having been replaced without fuss or face. The staff were brilliant and quickly readjusted to the non-appearance of members who were unable to come through illness or for other reasons.

I have a feeling we may be doing this again when a reasonable excuse comes up…..

David Woodward

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Annual Convention: a Plea for Restraint

I always look forward to the annual convention, to which we never fail to attract some excellent speakers. There is seldom cause to interrupt the flow of their talks, since there is invariably time for questions to be raised afterwards. However, since our guest speakers are often working at the forefront of their branch of research, they may use specialist terms or introduce concepts, which are not immediately understood by all of the audience. Should this happen, the interjection of a judicious inquiry during the talk may sometimes compensate for the break in flow it causes by enabling the speakers to clarify the point for the benefit of all.

I have noticed though, that occasionally questions are put during the talks, which could better be asked afterwards, and when this happens usually they are of no interest to any but the questioner. Worse, one question frequently gives rise to another, most commonly from the same person who prattles on in an uncontrolled way without regard to whether their doubts, uncertainties or prejudices are shared by anyone else. Meanwhile, the rest of us, who have collectively travelled the length and breadth of the country to hear the speaker, impatiently twiddle our thumbs and hope that the intended lecture can eventually proceed.

So if you wish to ask something, please consider whether the point you want to raise is of immediate, general interest or whether you merely want to satisfy your own short term curiosity. And remember, it is probable that no one else wants to waste time and suffer the irritation of a string of naive questions or uninformedit assertions during the talk. Neither has the lecturer turned up merely to give you a personal tutorial; he really wants to convey his message to the whole audience. Therefore, so that we may all enjoy a smooth, explicit delivery, please don’t just blurt your questions out: save them until the end of the lecture. And should there be some who are too self-indulgent to heed this request, then a second plea to whoever chairs the meeting: in the interests of the rest of the audience, please try to restrain those who can’t restrain themselves.

Yours respectfully but caustically,

Arthur Boardman (Wolas member)
SOCIETY ROUND UP

ABINGDON AS
Abingdon AS at the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Abingdon, at 8.00pm. For more details telephone Bob Dryden 01491 201620 or visit our website www.abingdonastro.org.uk
May 9 AGM
May 16 Beginners meeting
Jun 6 Beginners meeting
Jun 13 TBA–Ms Deborah Hamblt (Abingdon AS)

AS OF HARINGEY
Meetings generally 3rd Thursday at Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14, at 7.30 pm www.ashastaro.org.uk.
Apr 28 Cloulds of Magellan Konrad Malin-Smith
May 19 Origins of the Solar System Roger O'Brien
June 16 Double Talk
July 21 Astronomers and Oddities Peter Hingley
Sep 22 Double Talk

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 Piazza Smyth Community Observatory, Bedford School, Pemberley Avenue.
Contact: Paul Barton, 01234 302429 www.bedastro.org.uk
27 April Cassini-Huygens Mission

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
Apr 26 Rainbows Mike Frost, Coventry & Warwickshire AS
May 24 Brought forward due to Spring bank holiday - TBA
May 31 TBA
Jun 28 End of the Milky Way Samuel George

BOLTON AS
Ladybridge Community Centre, Beaumont Drive Ladybridge Estate, from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday.
May 3 "Is Colour Film Dead?" Joe Grant and Keith Malleliue.
May 17 Solar/Lunar Supper Night.

BRADFORD AS
Meetings usually held on a Monday in the upstairs room at Eccleshill Library, Bolton Road, Bradford, BD2 4SR at 7.30pm until 9.45pm.
For any further information please see our website at www.bradford-astro.freeserve.co.uk or ring Hilary on 01274 6725711.

BRANFORD AS
Meetings take place in the upstairs room at Ecclesehll Library, Bolton Road, Bradford, BD2 4SR at 7.30 pm until 9.45 pm.
For any further information please see our website at www.bradford-astro.freeserve.co.uk or ring Hilary on 01274 6725711.

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BRECKLAND AS
Open Meetings are followed by a tour and observing (weather permitting) at Recreation Centre near Attleborough, Norfolk at 7.30 PM.
Open meetings are on the second Friday of each month at Great Ellingham.

BRESTLAK AS
Meetings held on Friday evenings at 7.15 pm at Bristol Grammar School.
Contact John Pickard (Vice Chairman), tel. 01454 632692 or Tricia Brown (Secretary), tel. 0117 968 5023 www.bristolastrosoc.freeserve.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@fiddlat.demon.co.uk
www.cardiff-astronomical-society.org

CLEETHORPES AS
Meetings held at the Beacon Hill Observatory, Cleethorpes, at 7.30 pm.
May 4 The Tunguska Event John Brown

COTSWOLD AS
Meets second Saturday of every month at Shurdington Church Hall, Shurdington, Cheltenham. 7.45 pm. Contact Duncan Willoughby (01452 416405) www. cotswood.org.uk

CRAWLEY AS
Meets third Friday of every month (exc July & Aug) at Ifield Community Centre. 7.30 pm. (December dates can be variable)
Contact: Jim Swift 01293 882560 or 07973-142779 (mobile)
Email: cryton@btinternet.com

CREWKERNE & DISTRICT AS (CADAS)
Have outline planning permission to build an observatory, meeting room and work room in a dark sky site close to Crewkerne.
Anne Dodgson Crewsta@acol.com

EASTBOURNE AS
Meetings held on Saturday in month at the Willingdon Memorial Hall, Church Street, Willingdon starting at 7.30 p.m. Contact Peter Gill, tel. 01323 646853, email pbj.gill@btinternet.com. www.eastbourneas.org.uk

EWELL AS
Meets 2nd Friday each month at St Mary's Church Hall, Ewell.
Secretary, Richard Gledhill, tel. 0208-393-1058
May 13 Clouds of Magellan
Conrad Malin-Smith
July 8 Ellipes & Transits
Michael Maunder
Sept 9 Astrobiology
Geoff Keir
Nov 11 Mars Rover
Jerry Workman

FLAMSTEAD AS
Meets 1st Monday each month at Royal Observatory & National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Contact: Friends Office. tel. 010 8312 6678

HARROGATE AS
Meetings last Friday of the month. Harlow Community Centre, Harlow Ave.
Contact: Lyn Smith 01937 531171 lynsmithbridgehouse@hotmail.com
29 April Lucky Breaks in Astronomy
20 May Beginners Night
10 June TBA
24 June Observing Caldwell Objects
29 July Venus, Paradise Lost

HAVERING AS
Meetings 3rd Wednesday of the month. Cranham Community Centre, Marlborough Gardens, Upminster. Contact: Frances Ridgely 01708 227397 www.ccdland.com (follow link for Havering AS)

HIGHLANDS AS
Meetings 1st Tuesday of the month at The Green House, Beechwood Business Park North, Inverness. Contact: Pat Williams, Inverness Tel: 01463 793464 pat.williams@ndirect.co.uk.
May 3 Getting the measure of the Universe Dr Martin Hendry
June 7 The Stars Above, the World Below Howie Firth
July 5 Equipment Night
Aug 2 Open Night

HULL & EAST RIDING AS
Meet 2nd Monday of the month, 7.30-9.30 pm. from September to May University of Hull, Wilberforce Building, Room SR 110
May 9 Annual General Meeting
Contact: N Swetez, 58 Exeter Street, Cottingham, HU16 4LU Anne Dodgson Crewsta@acol.com www.eastbourneas.org.uk

HULL & EAST RIDING AS
Meetings held on Friday evenings at 7.15 pm at Bristol Grammar School.
Contact: John Pickard (Vice Chairman), tel. 01454 632692 or Tricia Brown (Secretary), tel. 0117 968 5023 www.bristolastrosoc.freeserve.co.uk.

ILKESTON & DISTRICT AS
Meetings at the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Ilkeston, Derbyshire and start at 7.45 p.m. Contact Mary McMulty, tel. 01298 78234
May 7 Astronomy Day 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Shipley Country Park, Heanor.
May 10 An Introduction To CCD Imaging Russell King
July 2 Annual Nightwatch 9 p.m. to midnight at Shipley Country Park, Heanor. Booking essential, through Shipley Park.
Aug 20 Astronomy Day 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Ilkeston Museum
PORT TALBOT AS
Meetings are held on the first Tuesday each month at 7.15pm, at Mozart Drive Community Centre, Sandfields, Port Talbot.
Contact: Andrew Short (secretary) - phone 01639 765146.

SALFORD AS
Meetings are held on the first Tuesday each month at 7.15pm, at Mozart Drive Community Centre, Sandfields, Port Talbot.
Contact: Andrew Short (secretary) - phone 01639 765146.

SCARBOROUGH & RYDALE AS (Note the change of name)
Meetings held on the first and third Wednesday of the month at Salford Observatory, Chaseley Field, Chasely Road, Salford.
Contact 0161 794 3179 email: mail@howarddatelay.com,demon.co.uk www.salfordastro.org.uk

SEKAS (SOUTH EAST KENT)
We are an active one, have excellent speakers, and are very sociable too !!! Instruments include a 20" Dobsonian, and ccd work is pursued by a good number, as well as h-alpha solar observation, traditional observations, public observation nights, etc. Contact: Tony Bennet 01843 831079 Secretary@sekas.co.uk www.sekas.co.uk

SHROPSHIRE AS
Speaker meetings are generally held on the first Friday of the month in Shrewsbury with a monthly observing meeting at Rudington Village Hall
Phone 01952 820882 for details. www.shropshire-astro.com
June 24 Planetary Nebulae-The Fate of the Sun Dr Rhys Morris
Sept 23 Exploring the Universe from Jodrell Bank Tim O’Brien

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY
Contact Stuart Williams, secretary@shastro.org.uk www.shastro.org.uk

SOUTHAMPTON AS
All meetings are held at Southampton University, Physics Building in the Physics & Astronomy Seminar Room at 7.30pm.
Phone 01703 592375
Jan Gore - Secretary 01703 592375 Ian.Gore@hstl.org
Lawrence Harris - Publicity 023 8090 8408

STAFFORD & DISTRICT AS
Meetings held at Weston Road High School, Stafford. 19.15
Contact L Hodkinson, 01785 712065

STOUR AS
Meetings monthly in the Jubilee Room of Cavendish Memorial Hall, Cavendish, Suffolk on the first Tuesday of every month at 7.30 pm.
Contact: K. Marshall, 01282 249534

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

SUNDERLAND AS
Meetings held on alternate Fridays, starting at 8.00 pm.
Contact: 01634 308035 email m.morrison-smith@lineone.net

SUNDERLAND & DISTRICT AS
Meetings held on the first Tuesday each month at 7.15pm, at Mozart Drive Community Centre, Sandfields, Port Talbot.
Contact: Andrew Short (secretary) - phone 01639 765146.

SOUTHAMPTON AS
Meetings held at the Home Guard Club, Tiddington, Nr Stratford upon Avon.
Contact: Mike Whitecross 01789 731784 www.astro.org.uk

TIVERTON AS
Meetings held on the first Tuesday each month at 7.30pm at St Aubyn's School, Blundells Road, Tiverton.
Contact: 01884 254869

TULLAMORE AS
Meetings are held at 7.30pm in lecture theatre C of the Science Block at the University of Wales Campus, Swansea
May 12 To See The Beginning Of Time Mr. Andy Lound

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.bham.ac.uk www.astrosoc.org.uk

VECTIS AS (Isle of Wight)
Meetings held in Parish Hall, Town Lane, Newport. rosemarypearse@aol.com website: www.wightskies.fsm.net.co.uk

WADHWURST AS
Contact: C I Reeves, 01892 784255

WEALDEN AS
Meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month (exc Aug) at 7.30pm at Upland Community College. Contact: Keith Woodward. Email: wealdenax@hotmail.com www.ravels.org.uk

WOLAS (West of London AS)
Secretary: Duncan J Radbourne, 9 Wellington Road ,Hitch End,Pinner, Middlesex HA5 4NF. Email: duncan.radbourne@gmail.com

WOLVERHAMPTON AS
Meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month, starting at 7.30 for 8pm. Members £1.00 Non-members £2.
Children under 16 are free. Contact Hazel on 07944 751277
Once again October saw the Radio Leeds Yorkshire Astromind, and it broke new ground by being hosted in partnership between the Hull & East Riding AS and Blackburn Leisure AS, at BLAS meeting venue, the Blackburn Leisure Social Club, Brough. The event was a new venture for HERAS although in times past it had been seen at BLAS before.

Six societies met to try and win the coveted Radio Leeds Cup (which would just about hold a double measure of spirits, with not much to spare), with Hull & East Riding AS, Blackburn Leisure AS, Cleveland & Darlington AS, Sheffield AS, Huddersfield AS and Mexborough & Swinton AS sending contenders to face the horrors of questionmaster Neil Haggath's fiendish questions.

After 5 rounds of mindbenders, the ultimate winner was Joe Jones of Mexborough & Swinton, beating last years winner, Marcus Armytage from Huddersfield, into 3rd. Presentation by the questionmaster, Neil Haggath, of Cleveland & Darlington AS.

Next year's contest will return to Mexborough for the next installment of the Ultimate Astronomical Quiz.

### 2004 Yorkshire Astromind

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<th>LIST OF OFFICERS 2004/2005</th>
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<tr>
<td>President: Ron Kelley</td>
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<td>See front cover for details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President: Callum Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cottage, Bredon’s Hardwick, Tewkesbury, Glos, GL20 7EE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 01684 773256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:vicepresident@fedastro.org.uk">vicepresident@fedastro.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary: Clive Down</td>
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<td>See front cover for details</td>
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<td>Treasurer: Peter Cooke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution Sec: Eric Hutton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29, Paternoster Close, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3JU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 01992 610243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:bookmark@rmplc.co.uk">bookmark@rmplc.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Sec: Shaun O’Dell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147 Queen Street, Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorkshire, S64 8NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile: 07714 093723 E-mail: <a href="mailto:shaun@msas.org.uk">shaun@msas.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Newsletter Editor: Frank Johns</td>
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<td>Handbook Editor: VACANT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publications Sec: VACANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings Organiser: Stan Waterman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amadeus House, Temple End, Charlton, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 7TE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 01462 433912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:stanwaterman@aol.com">stanwaterman@aol.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity Officer: Samuel George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55, North Road, Solly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6AN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 0121 249 1584 E-mail: <a href="mailto:samuel@krioma.net">samuel@krioma.net</a></td>
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Joe Jones of Mexborough & Swinton, beating last years winner, Marcus Armytage from Huddersfield, into 3rd. Presentation by the questionmaster, Neil Haggath, of Cleveland & Darlington AS.

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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.

### FAS Publications

Discounts for quantity purchases, pricing details are available at: [http://www.fedastro.org.uk](http://www.fedastro.org.uk)

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

### Deadlines for submission for newsletter in 2005:

**Summer 2005 - 12th August 2005**

**Winter 2005/6 - 9th December 2005**

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