



PRESIDENT Ron Kelley, 11 Meadowcroft, Plovers Rise, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 1BD
Tel: 01948 662201 E-mail: president@fedastro.org.uk

TREASURER Peter Cooke, Haven Cottage, Frithville, Boston, Lincs, PE22 7DS
Tel: 01205 750868 E-mail: treasurer@fedastro.org.uk

SECRETARY Clive Down, 10, Glan-y-Llyn, NORTH CORNELLY, Bridgend County Borough, CF33 4EF
Tel: 01656 740754 E-mail secretary@fedastro.org.uk

EDITOR Frank Johns, 38 Chester Road, Newquay, Cornwall. TR7 2RH
Tel: 01637 878020 E-mail newsletter@fedastro.org.uk Fax: 08700 558463

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

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

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 γ 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-metric 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observers to the imminence of this unique event which, in default, they may miss entirely if relying on older and now superceded orbital predictions. In particular, the commonly-quoted periastron date of 2007-8 (still being given in many current books, sky-mapping programmes and even on some active websites!) is based on Strand's orbit of 1937

which in reality has been defunct now for a decade or more: by Spring 2001 its errors were so gross as to be obvious at a glance in a 4-inch telescope, Strand predicting a distance which would have made the two stars easily separated in that aperture, contra the "disks tangent" actually seen. Anyone still relying on that erroneous ephemeris will therefore miss the action entirely, as by late 2007 Gamma will have opened out again to nearly 1 arcsec. and have slowed once more to a mere 20° per year in revolution. Meanwhile, in fact, the pace has really been hotting up over the last year or so. The morning measure 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 per 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.G. and Dawes, with only 3.8 inch, managed this convincingly only 2 months after closest approach! Here, then, is a challenge to present observers - can you 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 subse-

(Continued on page 5)

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 p.a, 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 exam-

ple the North West Group, have a structure, meet regularly as a committee and produce minutes. The North West Group operates as a 'mini' 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

(Continued on page 5)

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 Ox-



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

ford University College.

With her initial interest in mathematics being sparked by an article in a womens' magazine, and armed with her widely acknowledged perseverance and interest in her subject, this mild-mannered but by 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.

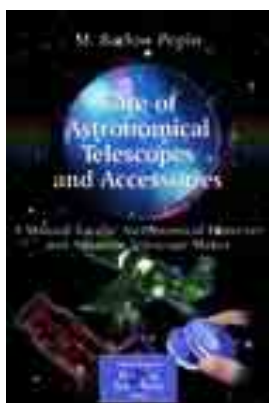
Using sources and accounts from those closest to her - including her daughter, critics, and admirers of her work - Chapman also touches on deviations into the 19th Century 'Grand Amateur' society. This is a well-researched and inspiring read, which explores Mary's personal and academic experiences in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

Abigail Wilson - Bath University /Brannel Astronomy

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, just 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. I particularly liked the diagrams, which are useful for the beginners and for those of us whose memories are not so good anymore.



Published by Springer
Patrick Moore's Practical Astronomy Series
253 pages, Soft Covers ISBN 1 85233 715 X £26.50

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 isopropyl alcohol to clean the light transmitting/reflecting surfaces; it covers mounts, including equatorial, dobsonians 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

KNOW THE COUNCIL MEMBER

RON KELLEY—President FAS

Feedback from members has indicated a wish to know a bit 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 music. 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 capella (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, music keeps 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'm also 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!

Astrofest 2005

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 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.

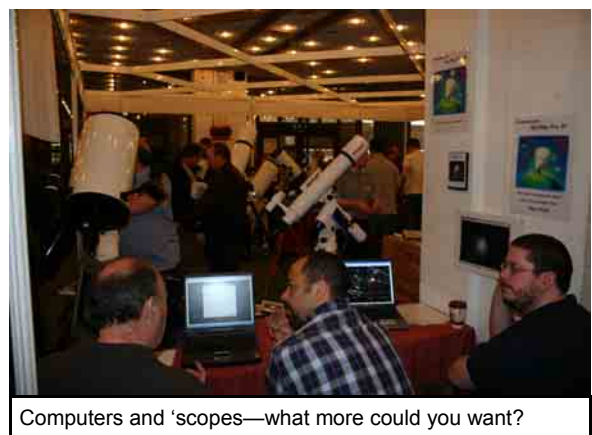
So what did we think of the festival?

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 explored several ways in which using 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 merits 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 satellite-observing field since Sputnik days and he explained the different



Computers and 'scopes—what more could you want?

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 aside 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

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



A general view at Astrofest 2005
- Lots of expensive goodies to drool over



Above: Members of Hermes—presumably after the fire!!
Left: The honoured guest - Lembit Opik being welcomed to the fray



SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS—ALL WORKING MODELS

True working reproductions with historical and operating notes.

FOLDING DIALS - ASTROLABES - ASTRONOMICAL RINGS
SOLAR COMPASSES - EQUATORIAL QUADRANTS - OCTANTS
and many more for your cabinet including KEY RINGS and MINIATURES

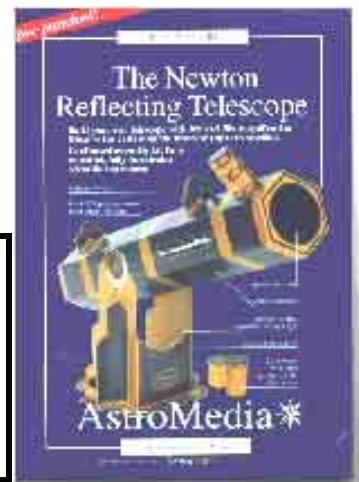
TELESCOPE KITS

Replicas from Pre-printed, pre-cut cards with full instructions to build early telescopes (High quality German optical acrylic lenses) and other WORKING optical instruments.

Some models :
THE DIGITAL SUNDIAL
THE MAGNETIC COMPASS
THE NEWTON REFLECTING TELESCOPE
SOLAR FILTER FOR THE NEWTON
THE NELSON TELESCOPE
THE STAR DIAL



For full catalogue :
L HONEY
22 HEATHVIEW
LONDON N2 0QA
TEL\FAX: 0208 883 8696
e-mail: l.honey@virgin.net



LETTERS

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 uninformed 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)

(Continued from page 1)

a more organised footing. The structure used by the North West Group seems to be a sound basis for starting from. It works as follows: all member societies are entitled to have two representatives on the Group (usually, but not restricted to, the chairman/president and secretary). The group should formally meet on a regular basis. Regular in this case being a minimum of once a year (NWGAS meets 3 or 4 times a year). The Group should nominate one of its members to be the Region's FAS Representative. The format and nature of the meetings should be determined by the Group, but it must include reports to/from FAS Council. Preferably, minutes should be kept of the meetings (these only need to be summary, not verbatim minutes) which should be copied to the FAS Secretary.

The above is only a suggestion, but it is a method that seems to work well for the dozen or so societies that make up the North West Group. There IS NO Reason why a similar process could not work elsewhere.

The FAS Council is currently reviewing the entire way in which the FAS works. The Council is not presently in a position to enforce such changes onto the existing Regions. Requests for new Regions will in future require a detailed proposal for how the Region will operate. However, it would seem to be a matter of good governance that Regions should operate in a way which is accountable and delivers value to both their own member societies and to the FAS as a whole.

We would like to hear from the Regions what they think about the above, how they currently operate, whether they think that they should or could change the way that they currently operate. Do they believe that the FAS should bear the full cost of running the Regional Representatives?

If you have any comments on the above, then use the FAS Council feedback e-mail address "consultation". The link to this can be found on the web site (www.fedastro.org.uk) on the home page under "Consultation".

The FAS is your Federation, help to improve it by getting involved.

Ron Kelley - FAS President

WIDNES ASTRONOMY EVENING

Pickerings Pasture Visitors Centre - Friday 4 March 2005

I arrived at this event at about 19:20, with Geoff Regan and Jim Lawler. Graham Roberts had arrived at about 18:00 to meet the Halton Ranger and set up some direction signs for visitors. Dave Thomson and Steve King were already there, minus the 30 inch TROK Dobsonian, which is currently undergoing some refinements that could not be completed in time for this event.

Dave Thomson and a few others helped me set up my 16 inch Dobsonian and we got some good views of Saturn, M42, M43, and NGC 2392, before cloud blotted out the last hour. Meanwhile, Geoff Regan entertained a few dozen visitors with a 45 minute slide show.

Jim Stacey set up his 5 inch Maksutov; John Naylor, his 8 inch reflector; Tom green his 6 inch f8 refractor; Dave Bentley his short focus refractor and John Simcock his ETX 90.

Before we packed up for the night we tried out our 16 inch wheelbarrow. Two wooden poles, with wheels on, bolted to the 16 inch Dobsonian. The photos below, tell their own storey. This was the first time we were able to give our new "movement strategy" a full road test. The turning circle was smaller than for my car!

Thanks to Jim Stacey for taking the photo below. Our next Sidewalk adventure is at Stadt Moers Park on Fri 14 Oct 2005.



16 INCH WHEELBARROW
PICKERINGS PASTURE SIDEWALK EVENT FRI 4 MAR 2005

Awards for All Grant to SOLAGS

South Lincs Astronomical & Geophysical Society (SOLAGS) have been awarded £4152 by the 'Awards for All' Lottery programme. This money will be invested in new equipment - a Solar telescope, an additional large portable scope as well as eyepieces, filters, CCD camera, laptop & Digital projector. The future looks bright for all those interested in astronomy in Spalding and the surrounding areas. See web site at www.solags.co.uk

(Continued from page 1)

quently Struve, who missed the appulse itself) is that minimum distance was almost certainly less than 0.3 arcsec. and probably less than 0.25. This, again, is independently verified by applying Kepler's law of areas to the apparent motion, using the maximum angular velocity quoted earlier, which implies an upper limit of 0.29 arcsec. at closest approach. The computed orbits, on the other hand, right down to the most recent (Soderhjelm 1999) at 0.35 arcsec., have consistently overestimated this parameter².

Gamma has yet another unresolved conundrum for us, however, in that its motion in 1836 actually violated Kepler's law. The observations are unanimous in showing that the rate of revolution peaked some months after closest approach, a violation of Kepler II perhaps most easily explained by the presence of an unseen 3rd body. If this should, indeed, prove to be the case, any predictions based on simple period-icity of the motion- including that made here, and all 2-body orbit computations- may turn out to be inaccurate: 2005 may not be an exact re-run of 1836³. So even here, in one of the most famous of all binaries, the unknown confronts us and surprises may lie in wait. All of this surely makes for a fascinating observing challenge; to all telescope users the call should go out "be there, or be square!"

Christopher Taylor Hanwell Community Observatory
(Unfortunately I had to edit this article down. Further information can be seen at the Hanwell website www.hanwellobservatory.org.uk - Ed)

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 Hamby (Abingdon AS)

AS OF HARINGEY

Meetings generally 3rd Thursday at Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14, at 7.30 pm www.ashaastro.org.uk.

Apr 28 Clouds 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.aylesburyastronomy.org.uk

BEDFORD AS

Meets last Wednesday of every month at the Piazza Smyth Community Observatory, Bedford School, Pemberly Avenue

Contact: Paul Barton, 01234 309249 www.bedastro.org.uk

www.bedsastro.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 9pm. Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday.

<http://boltonastro.fateback.com/index.html>. Secretary: Peter Miskiw.

May 3 "Is Colour Film Dead?" Joe Grant and Keith Malleliu.

May 17 Solar/Lunar Super 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.freereserve.co.uk or ring Hilary on 01274 6725711.

For information about weekly night-time observing ring Andy on 01274

413464 or John on 01274 419142; or for weekend solar observing ring Colin on 01274 586584.

May 9 Mapping the Big Bang Iain Morison

May 23 Genesis - the Birth of Stars Paul Money, FRAS, FBIS

BRANNEL ASTRONOMY

Meetings on third Friday, and from April - the first Saturday, of each month at Brannel School, St Stephens, Cornwall.

www.brannelastronomy.com

Contact: Paul Hughes, 0796 6961802 or Frank Johns, 01637-878020

May 18 How Far is Far? - Brian Sheen

June 17 Life but not as we know it. Brian Parsons

July 15 So who reckons it's a sheep Andy Read

Aug 19 Galaxies & the largest structures in the Universe Samuel George

BRECKLAND AA

Open Meetings are on the second Friday of each month at Great Ellingham Recreation Centre near Attleborough, Norfolk at 7.30 PM.

Open meetings are followed by a tour and observing (weather permitting) at our adjacent observatory, which houses a computer controlled 20 inch reflector. We also have a 9 1/4 inch celestron Scmitt-Cassegraine, an 8 inch reflector and an 8 1/2 inch reflector.

Further details and a full contact list are available on our website at

www.breckastro.supanet.com telephone 01953 602045

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

CLEETHORPES AS

Meetings held at the Beacon Hill Observatory, Cleethorpes, start at 7.30pm.

May 4 The Tunguska Event John Brown

May 10 Patrick Moore

June 1 Milestones in Astronomy

Contact Paul Thompson 01472 233552 or e-mail paul@cleethorpesastronomy.co.uk. www.cleethorpesastronomy.co.uk

CLEVELAND & DARLINGTON AS

Most monthly meetings held at Grindon Parish Hall.

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

COTSWOLD AS

Meets second Saturday of every month at Shurdington Church Hall, Shurdington, Cheltenham. 7.45 pm. Contact Duncan Willoughby (01452416405)

www.cotswoldas.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)

E-mail: cytron@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 Crewastra@aol.com

EASTBOURNE AS

Meeting first 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. 0208-393-1068

May 13 Clouds of Magellan Conrad Malin-Smith

July 8 Eclipses & 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

As well as a full programme of lectures and visits members assist astronomers at the Royal Observatory with many and various projects, such as assistance with the 28", the seventh largest refracting telescope in the world and regular public solar viewing sessions using the Society's own Coronado telescope.

GUERNSEY AS

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

Contact: Jessica Harris. 01481 247193 www.astronomy.org.gg

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 Rod Hine

20 May Beginners Night

10 June TBA Allan Chapman

24 June Observing Caldwell Objects David Ratledge

29 July Venus, Paradise Lost Andy Lound

HAVERING AS

Meetings 3rd Wednesday of the month. Cranham Community Centre, Marlborough Gardens, Upminster. Contact: Frances Ridgley 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: Dr 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

Meets 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

Sharon Long, Secretary. E-mail: charon@charon.karoo.co.uk

HUDDERSFIELD ASTRO. & PHIL. SOCIETY

Meetings at Observatory and Town Hall. www.huddersfieldastronomy.co.uk

ILKESTON & DISTRICT AS

All meetings unless otherwise stated take place at Erewash Museum, Ilkeston, Derbyshire and start at 7.45p.m. Contact Mary McMulty, tel. 01298 78234

May 7 Astronomy Day 10a.m. to 4p.m. at Shipley Country Park, Heanor.

May 10 An Introduction To CCD Imaging. Russell King

July 2 Annual Nightwatch 9p.m. to midnight at Shipley Country Park, Heanor. Booking essential, through Shipley Park.

Aug 20 Astronomy Day 10a.m. to 3:30p.m. at Ilkeston Museum

JERSEY AC

Meets 2nd Monday of the month, 8.00pm at Sir Patrick Moore Astronomy Centre, Les Creux Country park, St Brelade.

Contact: Eileen Besnard. 01534-860802 e-mail: hakmat@jerseymail.co.uk

LEEDS AS

Centenary House, North Street, Leeds between 7.00 pm and 9.30 pm
leedsastronomy.org.uk

May 11 Title to be arranged Dr Malcolm Grey
June 8 Liverpool AS Sidewalk Astronomers David Owen

LETCHEWORTH & DISTRICT AS

Meets last Wednesday of the month at Plinston Hall, Letchworth: 7:45pm

Contact: Nick Ellis e-mail: ellis.nick@virgin.net

LIVERPOOL AS

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

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

LOUGHTON AS

Meeting every Thursday at 8.00 pm. in the Scout Hall, Loughton Lane, Theydon Bois, Essex. Contact Jerry Workman (0208-507-7568)
las-astro.org.uk

May 12 Astronomy in Education Richard Williams

May 19 Making Stars & Planets Dr Helen Walker

May 26 Landing on a Comet Dr Andrew Ball

LOWESTOFT & GT YARMOUTH RA (LYRA)

Tues 18th Feb AGM

Meetings normally take place on the 2ND Thur at the Sunrise Inn in Corton Road. All meetings begin at 8pm.

Richard Chilvers: 28 Blyford road, Lowestoft 01502 57401

email: good.goat@tiscali.co.uk www.lyra.gb.net

MARR AS

Meets: Last Tuesday of the month at 1930, Learney Arms Hotel, Torphins. Observational meetings as weather permits

Contact David Pattullo, wolfscoot@dialstart.net

www.freewebs.com/marraastro

MID KENT AS

Meetings of the society are held twice a month at The Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road, off The Street, Bredhurst, Kent

Contact: 01634 308035 email m.morrison-smith@lineone.net

http://www.mkas-site.co.uk/

May 13 James Fradgley :- Inside Stars. Cooking pots for the elements

May 27 Peter Parish :- Constellation of the month

June 10 Dr Alan Longstaff :- Impacts and Extinctions

June 24 Peter Parish :- Constellation of the month

July 8 Patrick Sebell :- Super String theory

July 29 Peter Bassett :- Artificial Satellite spotting

Sept 9 Nik Szymanek :- Astronomical Imaging from Hawaii

Sept 30 Peter Parish :- Constellation of the month

MILTON KEYNES AS

Meetings are held at Rectory Cottages, Church Green Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes on alternate Fridays, starting at 8.00 pm.

May 13 The Evolution of the Milky Way Pierre Girard

May 27 Galaxies and AGNs Dr Chris Baddiley

June 10 Astronomy from Hawaii Nik Szymanek

Jul 8 Virtual Tour of World Observatories John Bell

Aug 5 Johannes Kepler David Mainwaring

Sep 2 Aurora Vish Deepan and Suzanne Miles

Oct 28 Black Holes are real Dr Paul Murdin

Astromeets on 29 Apr, 24 June, 22 July, 14 Oct, 11 Nov.

MORAY AC

Meetings 1st Friday of every month starting at 7.30PM at Elgin High School, New Elgin, Elgin, Morayshire. Observing Evenings every Friday from mid September at The Bothy, Easterton Airfield. For details contact Ian Brantingham on 01466 771371 or ian@branters

freeseve.co.uk Web site: http://www.sigma-astro.co.uk

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

Apr 22 TBA Dr Allan Chapman

May 4 Workshops:

PAPWORTH ASTRONOMY CLUB

Meets on the first Wednesday of every month.

May 4 Secrets of the Saturn V Alan Lawrie

No meetings in June or July

Contact Keith Tritton - phone 01767 677219, email kpt2@tutor.open.ac.uk

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 Ob-

servatory, Chaseley Field, Chaseley Road, Salford. Contact 0161 794 3179

email: mail@howarddazely.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" DarkStar 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 Rodington Village Hall

Phone 01952 820082 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. Monthly Meetings

Ian Gore - Secretary 01329 310876 Ian.Gore@fshfc.org

Lawrence Harris - Publicity 023 8090 8488

STAFFORD & DISTRICT AS

Meetings held at Weston Road High School, Stafford. 19.15

Contact L Hodkinson, 01785 712065

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

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

www.sunderlandastro.com

SWANSEA AS

Meetings 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

May 26 Annual General Meeting With Members' Talks

TIVERTON AS

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

TULLAMORE AS

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

VECTIS AS (Isle of Wight)

Meetings held in Parish Hall, Town Lane, Newport.

rosemarypears@aol.com website: www.wightskies.fsnet.co.uk

WADHURST AS

Contact: C I Reeves, 01892-784255

WEALDEN AS

Meets third Wednesday of month (exc Aug) at 7.30pm at Upland Community College. Contact: Keith Woodcock. Email: wealdenas@hotmail.co.uk

WOLAS (West of London AS)

Secretary: Duncan J Radbourne. 9 Wellington Road, Hatch End, Pinner,

Middlesex HA5 4NF. Email: duncan.radbourne@gmail.com

Website: www.wolas.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: Sydney Crump (tel 01299 871606),

email secretary@wolvas.org.uk www.wolvas.org.uk

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

LIST OF OFFICERS 2004/2005

President: See front cover for details	Ron Kelley	Slide Librarian: 21 Cross Road, Cholsey, Oxon, OX10 9PE Tel. 01491 201620	Bob Dryden E-Mail: bobdryden@ntlworld.com
Vice President: The Cottage, Bredon's Hardwick, Tewkesbury, Glos., GL20 7EE E-mail	Callum Potter Tel: 01684 773256 vicepresident@fedastro.org.uk	Website Coordinator: 19 Campion Drive Swinton, South Yorkshire, S64 8QZ E-Mail:	Gary Gawthrop Tel: 01709 584116 gary@theob.f9.co.uk
Secretary: See front cover for details	Clive Down	Chilterns Group : 19 Furnace Cottages, Furnace Lane, Finedon, Northants, NN9 5NZ E-mail:	Ian Coulson Tel: 01536 725563, albedo@freewire.co.uk
Treasurer: See front cover for details	Peter Cooke	Devon Group : 73 Woolbarn Lawn, Whiddon Valley, Barnstaple, North Devon, EX32 8PQ. E-mail:	John Parratt Tel: 01271 372331 john@parratt8017.freeseerve.co.uk
PLI & Publications		East Anglia Group :	VACANT
Distribution Sec: 29, Paternoster Close, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3JU. E-mail:	Eric Hutton Tel: 01992 610243 bookman@rmplc.co.uk	North West Group :	Richard Sargent 4 Bache Drive, Upton, Chester. CH2 2JB Tel: 01244 378349
Membership Sec: 147 Queen Street, Swinton, Mexborough, South Yorkshire, S64 8NG Mobile: 07714 093723	Shaun O'Dell Tel: Evening: 01709 586695 E-Mail: shaun@msas.org.uk	SAGAS Rep:	Andy Harris 32 Silvan Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex. TN38 9RD Tel: 01424 851794
Newsletter Editor: See front cover for details	Frank Johns	West Midlands :	Andy Salmon Olympus Mons, 13, Jacmar Crescent, Smethwick, WARLEY, West Midlands. B67 7LF Tel: 0121 5654845
Handbook Editor:	VACANT	Yorkshire Group :	Paul Harper 45, Lydgate, Lepton, HUDDERSFIELD, West Yorkshire, HD8 OLT
Publications Sec:	VACANT		
Meetings Organiser: Amadeus House, Temple End, Charlton, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 7TE. E-mail:	Stan Waterman Tel: 01462 433912 stanwaterman@aol.com		
Publicity Officer: 55, North Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6AN Tel: 0121 249 1584	Samuel George E-mail: samuel@krioma.net		

2004 Yorkshire Astromind

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.

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



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.

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>

Members Prices:	
Astrocalendar 2005	£2.00 + C5 SAE (34p stamps)
Observational Astronomy	£2.20 + C5 SAE (34p stamps)
Using a Telescope	£2.30 + C5 SAE (34p stamps)
Step by Step	£1.60 + C5 SAE (28p stamps)
Astrophotography	
FAS Handbook 2001 (published 2001)	£1.00 + C5 SAE (44p stamps)
FAS Handbook 2004/5 (published Dec. 2004 - Every paid-up FAS Member Society gets a copy free)	£3.50 + C5 SAE (69p stamps)

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.