In the 1960s a number of new societies were formed in the South of England. There was no co-operation between them and some found it difficult to go it alone. What was the best way to arrange a meeting? How can we get speakers? What are our legal responsibilities?

All these and many more were frequently asked questions. There was a need for societies to share common problems, help each other, share ideas. There was no Federation at this time. It was considered that if the officials could meet it could benefit the development of individual societies.

The first meeting of what became the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS) actually took place on 15th September 1973, and was chaired by the Brighton Society. The concept was almost an instant success. By 1976 there were 16 societies in SAGAS. That being said there was no formal ‘membership’ as such – no subscriptions, no constitution.

Officers and members of individual societies could attend any meetings they wished. Also, in 1976 a central distribution of information was established – societies decided at a meeting on 10th July 1976 to form a central clearing house for information. A monthly newsletter was also established and each society sent copies of their magazines to the others. An inter-society quiz was started and social events between societies and after the SAGAS meetings were popular.

This was, perhaps, the time that the original SAGAS was most active. An open meeting, at which members from all societies are invited and chaired by one of the societies took place every year with a number of speakers. This has now been going for over 30 years!

For much of the time communication to SAGAS societies has been by the publication ‘Nightlife’. This was produced by Peter Seiden who was Chairman of the now defunct Portsmouth Society. Pete had been very energetic in supporting SAGAS in the past and for this his efforts were much appreciated. Indeed, without Pete’s involvement over many years it is difficult to know if SAGAS would have survived.

Finally, in 2005, Peter decided to give ‘Nightlife’ a break - on the 9th July 2005 a ‘Nightlife event’ occurred – a major astronomical convention took place in Portsmouth. It was a great success and many SAGAS societies attended but no further ‘Nightlife’ were produced - the lifeline of communication that had been SAGAS was broken.

The number of societies attending SAGAS events dropped. After the meeting of 18th February 2006 the open meeting took place in June 2006 and was hosted by Croydon to

Members of the SAGAS group relaxing after a strenuous meeting!!
FAS Convention 2007
Saturday 13 October 2007 at Birmingham & Midland Institute

8.30 Doors open for traders
9.00 Doors open to public
9.50 Introductory remarks from FAS Pres, Callum Potter
10.00 Professor Mike Cruise, University of Birmingham—title tba
11.00 Samuel George: The International Year of Astronomy—What’s Happening?
11.20 Jerry Stone: How to book and run a public star party
11.40 Discussion: Sources of funds for astro socs
12.00 Lunch

* FAS Imaging Competition Display in the lecture theatre
* Robert Ball Library Tours

1:45pm FAS AGM
2:30pm Professor Phil Diamond: ‘Jodrell Bank: at the heart of the past and the future of radio astronomy’.
3:00pm Tea and coffee Break
4.00 Imaging Competition Result, Raffle, Eric Zucker Award
4:15 Professor Colin Pillinger—title tba
5:15 FAS Pres: closing remarks

Exhibitors (at the time of going to press)
SHA, Birmingham AS, Birmingham University AS
Open University, SCS Astro, Altair Astro, Aurora Books
Sky’s the Limit, SPA, Practical Astronomer
Martin Peston—‘A User’s Guide to the Midland LXD 55 and 75 telescopes’
Amateur Astronomical Spectroscopy by Jack Martin
Faulkes Telescope, Chilterns Group

Imaging Competition—to be held at FAS Convention

RULES

1. You must be the copyright owner of any image submitted.
2. Only one image per person can be accepted.
3. Images must be submitted in JPEG format with no information on the image (e.g. image details, copyright statement, object names)—if any details are given then the image cannot be entered. You may supply a title that we will add alongside the image number.
4. All entries must have an accompanying text file stating the details of how the image was made (e.g. exposure length, imaging device, telescope, filters)
5. Images can be submitted electronically, up to 4 days before the event, to fasimaging@googlemail.com
6. Entries after 4 days before the event must be submitted on the day, at registration.
7. Entries on the day must be submitted via either a CD or a USB memory stick to the registration coordinators.
8. All entries must be saved as the authors name.
9. Upon registration all delegates will receive a voting slip (one vote per delegate). You may supply a title that we will add alongside the image.
10. The winner(s) permits the FAS to use their image on the FAS website and in the FAS newsletter with appropriate credit given, of course all copyright with the individual submitting their image.
11. Only delegates in attendance are able to submit images, if you submit electronically and then do not sign in on the day then you entry will be void.

LIST OF OFFICERS 2005/2006

President, Secretary, Treasurer & Newsletter Editor—See cover
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(Continued from page 1)

celebrate their 50th anniversary. The next normal meeting was planned for October—but there was confusion with the date and communication and who should be invited—no one appeared to have an up-to-date list!

Finally a meeting took place on 18th November 2006—only nine societies attended. As usual, at these meetings, each society gave a short report on their activities since the last meeting but the main item on the agenda was SAGAS—organisation and future.

It was agreed that SAGAS should continue and a questionnaire should be sent out to all societies in the area inviting them to formally join.

It was also agreed that there should be four meetings a year—not three and a new SAGAS web site should be introduced, the old SAGAS web site was part of the ‘Nightlife’ site and had not been available for some time.

At the next meeting on 17th February 2007 at which 12 societies attended, discussion took place on the past unstructured approach. It was agreed that a more structured approach was required for the future. The establishment of a Co-ordinating Committee was agreed.

The present membership of which are-
Keith Brackenborough (Eastbourne) Co-ordinating Officer (Chairman of the committee):
John Axell (Guildford) Secretary: David Woods (Hampshire): Communications/Newsletter:
John Murrell (Croydon) webmaster: John Stapleton (Basingstoke)

19 Societies have now formally joined: Basingstoke, Beckington, Brighton & Hove, Crawley, Croydon, Eastbourne, Ewell, Farnham, Guildford, Hampshire Astronomical Group, Horsham, Lewes, Newbury, Solent, South East Kent, Vectis (Isle of Wight), Wadhurst, Weyden and Worthing.

It is expected that South Downs and Southampton—both original SAGAS societies will join shortly.

Since then a new logo has been introduced and a new web site www.sagas.org.uk has just been established.

Work is well underway for the first Newsletter which will appear quarterly.

There was much discussion on what societies would want from such an organization and many suggestions were forthcoming.

So SAGAS has been reborn, stronger, more organized and larger than the original. There is much work still to be done and our aim is simply to unite astronomical societies in the Southern Area so we can help each other, share ideas and observations, advise on telescopes and give our members a better service.

Keith Brackenborough: Tel: 01323 641980
The loss of a planet - and the chaos it has caused.

By Samuel George

It has been about a year now since tiny Pluto had its classification as a planet revoked but the arguments over its nature still continue. I do wonder why people are so bothered by this. Okay, yes, we all grew up (well most of us anyway!) with their being 9 planets and I am sure we are all fond of little Pluto, but in what sense does it really matter?

The International Astronomical Union’s (IAU) definition is sensible, it may seem a bit vague at first and have a few holes in it (mostly around the clearing the neighbourhood bit) but it is an improvement on no real definition. The IAU came up with three main conditions for an object to be considered a planet:

- The object must be in orbit around the Sun.
- The object must be massive enough to be a sphere by its own gravitational force. More specifically, its own gravity should pull it into a shape of hydrostatic equilibrium.
- It must have cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.

Pluto fails to meet the third condition. In fact on this point Alan Stern, leader of NASA’s New Horizons mission to Pluto has been pretty vocal pointing out that Mars, Jupiter and Neptune have so-called “Trojan” asteroids sharing their orbits. Others, including the discoverer of Eris (Mike Brown) have supported this definition. Some have called this the “Great Pluto War”, a funny though but I guess this is not just about physics. In the wider community a great number of petitions have been produced by the uninformed. I see this as a great and interesting challenge to astronomers. Inform and explain the reason behind this decision - don’t just blame those professionals. Even if you don’t agree with the decision this is a great chance to teach the sons behind this decision – don’t just blame those professionals. Even if you don’t agree with the decision this is a great chance to teach the sons.

You have to remember that the IAU has never before been called to name a planet never mind declassify one - this decision was not one taken lightly. Though this whole discussion probably would ring bells for historians. I hate to say that. If we did include Pluto then there is no physical basis to exclude dozens of other candidates and then the term planet would lose any impact or real meaning.

Expect more dwarf planets. When the IAU were originally considering the options of classification no more than 12 other objects including Pallas, Vesta, Hygeia, Senda and Q on were to be considered as planetary candidates. I originally took the view of “I do wonder why people are so bothered by this” and I still am. We have lost Pluto as a planet but we have gained a whole new classification. Oh, and remember that there are 8 planets in our solar system but, as I write this, there are 241 extrasolar planets known!

We define m to be the aggregate mass of all bodies that share its orbital zone. If and orbiting around a primary star or substar then the body is considered a planet. If we use this and the accepted values for Pluto, Ceres and Eris then they are not planets. Of course, there are problems with this idea – especially about determining the value of m. I still think it makes a nice and succinct definition and actually works nicely alongside the IAU definition. I actually think this would nicely replace the vagueness that is suggested by the third condition set down by the IAU.

Pluto being a planet has lost any scientific rationale; it is now one for historians. I hate to say that. If we did include Pluto then there is no physical basis to exclude dozens of other candidates and then the term planet would lose any impact or real meaning.

Now to determine if a body of mass say M is the end product of disk accretion we use:

$$\mu = \frac{M}{m}$$

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References:
http://www.exoplanet.eu

Letters

Hello

I am Researching an Astronomer called Charles Frederick Butterworth (he was born in 1870 -1946) for a talk to Isle Of Man Astronomical Society in September. Whilst I have found out quite a lot about him, two things I could do with includes a picture of the observatory that he had in Poynton from 1897-1927, the house was called Waterlo.

The other thing is a picture of him. I have tried the B.A.A / R.A.S / M.A.S who have all been very good and many other places as well, can any readers help?

Best Wishes

From Gary Kewin email: gary@iomastonomy.org
Eleven by Graham Smith

"The ground shakes and there is an ear-shattering roar like thunder as Apollo 11 leaves the launch pad at Cape Kennedy at 13:32:00 UT on July 16, 1969. The three astronauts inside, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins are on their way to the moon."

Eleven by Graham Smith is a series of melodic electronic instrumental tracks that attempts to capture the essence of man going to the Moon. It is a musical tribute to Apollo 11. The album is set chronologically as the spacecraft leaves the Earth on its trip to land on the Moon. This style of music is not normally my taste. I'm more of a metal/ punk fan but I have to say this album hit it off with me immediately. The mixed in sounds of communications between the spacecraft and the control centre really give you a feel of the mission occurring – and of course “the eagle has landed” reminds you that they have indeed landed on the Moon. This album is one I could easily just relax to, it's not one to get you jumping around the place but then again I don’t this the composer really wanted to go for this. It is an ambitious album, by an independent musician, but I have to say it was surprisingly pleasing to listen to. Though it is not the Planet's suite by Holst, it is still one of the more enjoyable space themed musical compositions I have heard.

Samples of this album can be heard on the composer’s site: www.gsmithmusic.co.uk and the album can be purchased on the site for £7.99 (+ postage and packing).

Samuel George

String by Diana Syder

Publisher: Smith/Doorstep Books ISBN-10: 1902382870

It may seem a strange concept to most people, the idea of combining science and poetry and I must admit that at first I was equally dubious. But as Syder points out in 'The poetry Machine' they can compliment each other beautifully. 'A poem is like a star formation, primordial words scattered across the vacuum of the page’ is a good example of this. The inquiring style of Sydes poems use simple metaphors and similes to illustrate some of the more complex areas of physics in a new and sometimes intriguing ways, in some places comparing the inner workings of a computer with the city of Manchester.

It does however, seem that in some cases Syders explanations and comparisons go a little beyond what is needed for the reader to understand what she is trying to say. In others it takes a while for the message of the poem to come through. Overall the book is a good insight into the world of physics for both scientists and the public, the final section with the same title as the book being the highlight.

The book costs £7.95 and can be found at all good book shops.

Elizabeth Birmingham, University of Birmingham AS
Lobbying Can Work Sometimes
A letter in response to Samuel George

Dear Samuel
Southampton Laser Gateway Proposal

Thank you for your correspondence expressing your views on the above proposal. You may have seen recent publicity regarding the decision taken by the Southampton Partnership and Southampton City Council not to proceed with the trials for the proposed Laser Gateway project.

This project was conceived as an innovative way of promoting the city and its heritage, however we have listened to what people have said and want our efforts to improve the image and perception of the city to have widespread support. This project did not have that support and therefore will not go ahead. Factors included in this decision were:

- Continuing public concerns regarding light pollution and disturbance to the night sky of neighbouring authorities,
- The increasing costs of holding the trials and conducting a full appropriate assessment of the effect on the environment
- The likelihood that the trials would not have had a conclusive result and that further tests would have to be undertaken over a longer period of time than originally anticipated.

The Southampton Partnership is an overarching strategic partnership that brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector (including the City Council, Police, National Health Service, Job Centre Plus, Business Link and Learning and Skills Council) as well as private business, community and voluntary sectors (including the Chamber of Commerce and the city's two universities) so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together.

The Partnership is working with the City Council and others to explore other ways to raise the profile of Southampton and celebrate its many assets which include maritime heritage, extensive parks and open spaces, varied cultural and artistic events, a fine record on innovation and on responding to climate change.

We have some exciting ideas under consideration and are consulting with other stakeholders on options to take forward.

Yours sincerely
Ros Casey - Chair of Southampton Partnership
Southampton Partnership, c/o Chief Executives Office
Southampton City Council
DONCASTER AS
Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday (speaker on 4th Thurs) at Church House—behind St George’s Minster, Doncaster. Observing at Observatory in Austerfield Field Study Centre at dusk in winter on last Fridays.
Contact: Mrs Lesley Hardware on 01362 743352 www.donastro.org.uk

DUMFRIES AS
Monthly meetings at the St. George's Churchhall, George Street, Dumfries
7 to 9.30 pm. September to May. For dates/details contact the Secretary Klaus Schiller at lesley.burrell@btinternet.com or 01387 297672
Society website www.astronomers.ukscientist.com

EASTBOURNE AS
Meetings on Saturdays at the Willington Memorial Hall, Church Street, Willingdon starting at 7.30 p.m. Contact Peter Gill, tel. 01323 648653, email plgi@btinternet.com. www.EastbourneAS.org.uk

EAST RIDING ASTRONOMERS
Meet every 3rd Monday in the month all year round (except August) from 7:30pm, at the Friends Meeting House, Quaker Lane, Beverley.
Contact: Tony Scala, email astrastronomy@karo.co.uk
www.astronomy@karo.co.uk (index.html)

FALKIRK ASTRONOMERS (ASSOCIATION OF) AFA
Meet second Weds of month (exc June/July) at Old Peoples Welfare Hall, Laurieston, Falkirk, at 7.00pm.
Contact: D. McSweeney 01324 877479 email: AFA@astronomyfalkirk.co.uk www.astronomyfalkirk.co.uk

FARNHAM AS
Meet 2nd Thursday at The United Reform Church, South Street, Farnham
Secretary: Barry Bellinger, tel. 07748766610 barry.bellinger@nokia.com www.farnham-as.co.uk

FLAMSTEED AS
Meets 1st Monday each month at Royal Observatory & National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Contact: Friends Office. tel. 020 8312 6678 - sibell@jinterra.co.uk
As well as a full programme of lectures and visits members assist astronomers at the Royal Observatory with many and various projects.

GUERNSEY AS
Meetings at the Observatory, Rue Lorier, St. Peters, Guernsey. Every Tuesday evening and Friday for clear observing.
Contact: Debby Quertier. 01481 725760 quertiers@oweg.net
Lamorna, Route Charles, St Peter Port, Guernsey. GY1 1QS

GUILDFORD AS
Meet at the Guildford Institute, Ward Street, Guildford on the 1st Thursday of every month (bar August). www.guildfordas.org
Contact: John Axtell. 01932 341036 johnaxtell42@aol.com

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB AS
Meets at 7.30 pm Room 3 (the Griel Room) Free Church Hall, Northway, London NW11. Entrance via the door on the left side of the building.
Contact: Peter Babin 020 4848 4308 hgap@ffish.demon.co.uk

HARROGATE AS
Meetings last Friday of the month. Harlow Community Centre, Harlow Ave.
Contact: Patricia A Hunt 01423 866067

HASTINGS & BATTLE AS
Meets second Saturday at the Battle Abbey, St Leonards on Sea.
Contact: Keith Harbert Kh@biomedical.co.uk

HAVERING AS
Meetings 3rd Wednesday of the month. Cranham Community Centre, Marlborough Gardens, Upton, Romford, Essex.
Contact: Frances Ridgley 01708 227397 www.coldland.org.uk (follow link for Havering AS)

HEBDEN BRIDGE AS
Meetings at Hope Baptist Church Rooms approx 4 week intervals.
Contact: Len Entwhistle 01422 378368 or visit FAS Diary on FAS webpage.

HERSCHEL AS
Secretary: Peter Snell, 128 Langley Road, Slough. SL3 7TF (01573 675634)
Email: haasadmin@gmail.com

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@dir.eck.co.uk

HORSHAM AS
Meetings 1st Wednesday of the month (exc Aug) at Chist's Hospital.
Contact: Corinne Loudon. Email hoas.secretary@hotmail.co.uk

HULL & EAST RIDING AS
Meets 2nd Monday of month from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. 9 Oct Variable Stars in Light Polluted Skies Gary Poyner
Nov 5 Observing Variable Stars in Light Polluted Skies Gary Poyner

HULL & EAST RIDING AS
Meetings 1st Wednesday of the month at Fishley Park Visitor Centre, Hounor, Derbyshire at 7.45 pm
11 Sep The Discovery of Pluto Martin Lunn
9 Oct Astrophotography Brian Griffin
13 Nov John Dooland - Achromatic Aberration Madeline Cox

IRISH AA
Meets alternate Wednesdays at 7.30pm at the Teachers Training College, Stranmillis, Belfast.
Contact: John Hall email: jimmyxquarius@btinternet.com

ISLE OF MAN AS
Meets first Thursday at 7.45pm at the IOM Observatory, Foydale.
Contact: James Martin email: ballatoron@manx.net www.iomastronomy.org

JERSEY AC
Meets 2nd Monday of the month, 8.00pm at Sir Patrick Moore Astronomy Centre, Les Caeus Country park, St Brelade.
Contact: Eileen Bennard. 01534 866082 email: hakmat@jersyami.co.uk

KOWLE AS
Meets 1st Mondays (4/-1 week for BH - no meet Aug) at St George & St Therese's Parish Centre, Donrigg, Solihull, B93 8T2
Contact: Nigel Fosher. Tel: 01675 833941 email: kfrost00@hotmail.com www.kowleastro.co.uk

LEIGHTOWORTH & DISTRICT AS
Meets last Wednesday of the month at Plinston Hall, Leighton: 7:45pm
Contact: Nick Ellis email: ellisnick@virgin.net

LEICESTER AS
Meetings at the Observatory, Dancing Knaves, Leicestershire. Meetings commence at 7pm to 9pm.
Contact: Tel 0151638 2770 or email: clarklunar@aol.com

LUTON AS
Meet at the Guildford Observatory, Gardens Road. Meets second Tuesday of the month at Llanfair Community Centre, Colwyn Bay
Contact: Jean Smith, 16 Byron St, Trelawnyd, Flintshire. LL18 6DP email: jmsmith2859@aol.com

LONDON HEATHROW TELESCOPE CLUB
Secretary: Duncan Fishman, 8 Chewton Farm, Molesfield Road, Heathrow Village, LU3 3LE
Contact: Johns Hall email: jimmyaquarius@btinternet.com

MID KENT AS
Meet at Hope Baptist Church Rooms approx 4 week intervals.
Contact: Andrew Atterbury - andy@att143.freeserve.co.uk- 01664 812673

MELTON & DISTRICT AS
Meet: Last Tuesday of the month at 19.30, Learney Arms Hotel, Torphins. Observational meetings as weather permits
Contact David Pattullo, wolfscot@dialystart.net

MARCHES ASS
Meetings normally take place on the 1ST Tues at the Waveney Gymnastics Centre, Lowestoft.
Contact: Richard Chilvers: 28 Blyford road, Lowestoft 01502 57401

MARR AS
Meets: Last Wednesday of the month at Plinston Hall, Letchworth: 7:45pm
Contact: Nick Ellis email: ellisnick@virgin.net.

LOWESTOFT & GT YARMOUTH RA (LYRA)
Meetings 1st Weds of the month.
Contact: Tel 01502 57401 email: ryde@lyra.co.uk

LOWESTOWE & GT YARMOUTH RA (LYRA)
Meetings 1st Weds of the month.
Contact: Tel 01502 57401 email: ryde@lyra.co.uk

LIVERPOOL AS
Meet every Thursday at 8.00 pm. in the Scout Hall, Loughton Lane, Thelmad Bois, Epsom. Contact Jerry Workman (0208-507-7568) las-astro.org.uk

LONDON HEATHROW TELESCOPE CLUB
Secretary: Duncan Fishman, 8 Chewton Farm, Molesfield Road, Heathrow Village, LU3 3LE
Contact: Johns Hall email: jimmyaquarius@btinternet.com

LOWESTOFT & GT YARMOUTH RA (LYRA)
Meetings regularly take place on the 1st Tues at the Waveney Gymnastics Centre (access Notley Rd). All meetings begin at 7pm.

MARR AS
Meets last Thursday of the month at University of Luton. LU2 8LE
Contact: David Early daval@kbnet.co.uk www.lutonastro.co.uk

MID KENT AS
Meetings of the society are held first and last Fridays of the month at The Brethurst

MID KENT AS
Meetings of the society are held first and last Fridays of the month at The Brethurst

(Continued on page 8)