Em Mercus,
ent forz.

Ation of Astronomical Societies

Copyright © Federation

Dave Powell, 1 Tal-y-bont Road, Ely, Cardiff, CF5 5EU.

# December 1986

issue number 11

lished by the Federation of Astronomical Societies. tor: Rosemary Naylor, 256 Bacup Road, TODMORDEN, Lancs, OL14 7HJ.

ern vandalism takes on various forms and is a puzzle to know how to prevent it, or one should react after it has taken

will read in the Round-Up of an attack Solent Amateur Astronomers' Toothill ervatory. Elsewhere I hear that Mid-Kent ronomical Society's Club House was entered mindless intruders who did an enormous unt of damage to telescopes and computers. this instance, the Society's equipment covered by insurance, but individual bers' own equipment, also damaged, was

se attacks, harrowing to the societies cerned, pale into insignificance beside acks by governmental and local authh has been said about the unjustifiable

ervatory from its present headquarters Herstmonceux Castle. Of course this is the original home of this establishment. there is no reason why it should remain ever in its present location. However, ping, or rather the Earth's rotation in One of the facilities made availe for group visits during our day at stmonceux on October 4 was the Laser ging Equipment. From its housing in of the domes, the Satellite Laser Ranger the returning beam is timed to give a stance measurement from which the satell-'s height is calculated. Orbits of cellites are governed by the gravitational Sects of the Earth's interior, and by the

w that this country has equipment functionwhich is determining very accurately Earth's internal structure, what logic there in destroying its scientific uselness by demanding that it be relocated? ving this equipment in mid-experiment is other form of vandalism. The FAS has made s opinion known, as reported elsewhere in is newsletter.

and Moon.

fourth instance of vandalism has been curring slowly over decades, by the agency curring saudily over decades, by the agency sheer neglect, in Sidmouth, Devon. happily, I have to report that here, where dmouth is synonymous with the Norman Lock-r Observatory for many of us, the present ners are about to put the boot in for the nal time.

e Norman Lockyer Corporation has sold the servatory site, consisting of land, domes, long house, bungalow, pumphouses and sheds East Devon District Council. Most of the nd has gone to the National Trust, but it the domes which are now to be rendered nally unusable. The other buildings on te are very close to the domes and it ems that these are to be converted to mestic dwellings, subject to the granting planning permission. If this happens, e domes will be in "the backyard" of the w occupants of the site. Or put the other y round, the ancillary buildings to the mes will no longer be available to support rking astronomers on site.

Converight (c) Federation of Astronomical Societies 1986.



There is evidence that the East Devon District Council has been offered a large sum of money by a professional astronomer (see BAA Journal for 1986 August, p 303) who wishes to restore this observatory to its natural function. For some reason best known to themselves, the local authority prefers to ignore this offer.

I would suggest that all those astronomers who deplore the demise of the Norman Lockyer Observatory should write to the authorities asking exactly what their plans are. If these same authorities can be persuaded that enough people care about this historic establishment, then it might be that they will reconsider. At least they will know that the spotlight is upon them.

I cannot, from where I sit, detail exactly what is happening in Sidmouth. I do intend to write to enquire what plans are afoot. If you regard this case of local authority vandalism of sufficient concern to warrant action, then write, either as individuals, or as society committees, to express you concern and to ask for information.

The Chief Executive, East Devon District The Knowle.

Amazingly, the money is available to restore the observatory to full operational use, but the Council do not want it restored. What an odd world we live, in, or are our national observatories really not worth fighting

Another line of publicity would be through the local newspaper, the Sidmouth Herald, Sidmouth, Devon. A letter to the editor could record your views.

Act now, and who knows, with enough people making enough noise, we may yet enable one of our colleagues to bring the Norman Lockyer Observatory into its working mode. ..........

### FUTURE DATES

1987 May 9 AGM and Convention in Coventry Herstmonceux 1987 October 3

### FEDERATION NEWS

Subscriptions which were due on September 1 should be paid to Ken Marcus at the rates:-£7.50 full rate £4.00 for societies of 24 or fewer members. Please note that the figure quoted in the last newsletter was incorrect.

:::::: ASTROCALENDARS ::::::: 1987 The new astrocalendars run from

October 1986 to December 1987 and give sky notes month by month. The price remains at 60 month. The price remains at 6 each, to include postage, and they can be obtained from Ken Marcus. Cheques payable to Federation of Astronomical Societies please.

Extensive coverage was given in the Apri and August Newsletters to the astronomic competition which the FAS have tried to organise on behalf of SPACEPRINTS of generously offered £150 in prize monies.

Although entries were invited in three Although entries were invited in three separate sections, chosen to cover a rar of experience and expertise, entries hav This leaves the FAS Council wondering if

the goals to be achieved were too diffi-cult, or if the time available was less than necessary to produce a worthwhile

Whatever the reason for our failure, it has been decided to withdraw the offer of prizes. If those interested in winning £50 in exchange for some reasonable effo can suggest a different schedule for the competition, then the Secretary would li some response from you.

Please discuss this at your society meetings and come up with a solution. lack of response has left the Council

## Society News Round-Up





AYLESBURY AS: During May the Society had a number of talks. Don Wallis talked about the constellation Canes Venatici. Although fairly blank, he told of many interesting clusters and galaxies which could be seen. The main talk was given by John Smith of the Wycombe Astronomical Society with excellent slides giving a survey of the solar system, and of some nebulae and galaxies. The last talk of the evening was by Peter Edwards, who demonstrated a camera tracking device he has made. The night was then finished off with observing with the Society 8 inch telescope. A meeting in July received a very interesting and picturesque talk about a trip to Australia by Tim Haynes to see Halley's Comet.

BIRMINGHAM AS: The Society is discussing ways of spending some of its money, on one shaped of the service of the leave of the service of the leave of the service of the leave of the service of the serv

SESTIM AS: A correction should be made to a past Road-Up. Yaul Knowy (first Observed salley's Comet on the morning of 15 Septemsialley's Comet on the morning of 15 Septemsialley's Comet on the morning of 15 Septemfor a community of the community of the First person to do so from Lincolnstime. The lifety has being the easily found for Person to do so from Lincolnstime. Person to do so from Lincolnstime. Person to do so from Lincolnstime to was Person to the community of the community of the Person to the community of the community of the Person to the community of the comm

BRAINTERS, MAISTRA AND DISTRICT AS: James Abbott howcomed sities of Halley's Comtel, interesting because they aboved varition of the state of the state of the state of the bookerwations. Kornow Mailn-switt gave as talk about Pulsars. During a trip to Southmed Flanstrain mesters were about as-Southmed Flanstrain mesters were about asboth May. Gly Paraley gave a talk at the Ally meeting entitled "May is the Night companies for the observatory fund, to BRITISH AEROSPACE AS (BOLTOW): The Society at present has a 6 inch meflector constructed by Remberrs, but is expanding that structed by Remberrs, but is expanding that 6 inch telescopes are being made for members' personal use. They hope to produce a 12 inch. Also in the future they hope to build a purpose built observatory. Iam companying the Moon. Members attended the FAS Convention at the AAC.

Robert McKenzie, New Minor Planets, etc. betails were given about Astronomy and Meteorology evening classes at the University of London. CRROFF AS: The trip to La Palma in April of this year was a great success and enjoyed by all participants. Cameras, lenses, bincoulars, tripods and an 8 inch Mead accompanied the party which nearly took over the

BRITISH METEOR SOCIETY: The Journal was packed with very useful information: Spi

craft at P/Halley; the Official Results by

by all participants. Cameras, lenses, binpanied the party which nearly took over the small plane on the inter-island flight. Three small hire-cars took the party up 8.000 feet (on an island where 4th gear is unnecessary) to an area near the telescopes for the first night. Other observing nights were spent near the sea. The only problems encountered were one member having his tripod and clockwork motor taken away from him on the flight home. Another member upset the airport X-ray machines by the coating on his eyepieces reflecting the X-rays. One official wanted to take the evenieces apart but this was fortunately avoided. Norman was the only member of the party to lose his passport, hotel room key and car hire keys all on the same day!

COTSWOLD AS: The newsletter is called Mercury after the first planet the Society observed. They are very keen on Astrophotography. Three new observatories have appeared in the gardens of members, for a 14 inch, a 10 inch, and a 4 inch rich field Newtonian. They are now lucky in that they no longer carry several hundredweight of equipment in and out of the garden. Ron Arbour performed the official opening of the Riverside Observatory (formerly Mount Tuffley Observatory) which houses Bernard Abrams' 10 inch reflector. Dick Warden is to have a regular computing spot in the newsletter. Details were given of the new Comet Wilson and Bernard has photographed

it. Members are very active observers and

23 members have made 966 observations. Vic

Sage gave the members a tour of the Southern

DEMENTINE AS: The observatory site at knakerley has been abundoned due to legal fees, but another atts will be found. A display was present at the Derwentside Pestival and seemed to generate a great deal of interest, a good day with sales of badges etc. Plans are set for an Astronomy Road Show to schools. A visit was arranged to see the Royal Observatory at Edinburgh.

FITZHARRY'S AS: A small but active society at Abingdon, attracting members from a large area: South Kofredhire, Oxford, Didoc, kellingford and Mantage. A talk was given working at Mutherford Appleton Laboratory. He talked about the many spacecraft observing comet Halley.

GULLPORD AS: Plans are set for a trip to coesnich to observe through the 28 inch. Repairs are being carried out on the Alderabot Observatory, and the telescope is being control to the comparison of the comparison of the comparison of the comparison of the control to the contr

HAMPSHIRE AS: The Society meets once a week with more than 70 members, and has various types of meetings including one for beginners, observing seasions, etc. An exhibition was held at Queen Elizabeth Country Park on a weekend and was a great success; displays included members' observations, telescopes, and Telesy Computer Programs have been programs of the Society include Skittle Evenings!

HUDDESSFIELD AS AND FHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY. The Society has been given a 5 cnnt teletransport of the society and society and society across a contract of the society and society across a contract of the society across a society and society and part of 250 from the Liesure Services, although there are strings attached. The groups the cheerwatery and standing meetings away, AGC, etc. A photometer is being bounded to the society and the society

LEEDS AS: A member is involved in running a course at Leeds University Adult Education Centre, titled astroncey and Cosmology. In conjunction with the York AS, it is proposed to visit various places of astronomical interest in the City of York. The Society hosted the BAA Meteor Section meeting during the Course of the City of York. The Society December Stance about the Green Flash article titled "If You Can See It You Can Photograph It". Members visited the Camoridge Radio and Optical Observatories. A small party went to visit the Astronomy and Space Science Convention at Mid-Kent College. Brian Mitchell has described "Things to do on the Moon". The Society has a project for a 30 inch mirror. A trip is organised to visit the Old Greenwich Observatory. DRWELL AS: The Society had open evenings at the Orwell Park Observatory during September to show the public the Moon, planets, etc. and a slide show. This was a fund-raising event. Roy Cheesman and Alan Smith gave a report on their trip to Australia to observe Helley's Comet, they brought back nearly 1,000 slides. During May a search was made to observe the planet Pluto. Members went on a field trip to observe the Perseid Meteor Shower and were successful. SAGAS: Societies have been active this year. Croydon celebrated its 30th anniver-sary. Members attended the Astro Camp. SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS GROUP: This Society includes members from the Outer Hebrides includes manuers from the other hebrides to Carlisle! An Astronomy Day is to be held at Inverness in October. Inverness has no Astro Society. Dundee AS celebrates its

guest speaker at the April meeting where he talked about the Astro Camp, giving details

of its history and how it has expanded. It

as always been a success and is now expand-

ing at an astronomical rate. Leslie Needle-

Sernard Beeston gave a talk on the topic of

filters were shown and the effect they have

WORWICH AS: Brian Mitchell has written an

Photography Films and Filters. Didynium

man gave a talk on Astro Navigation.

on cutting out sodium street lights.

30th birthday this Autumn. Talks have been given by Dave Gavine, Peter Waddell and Robert Law. Dundee skies were cloudy for the meteor watch in August, but they hope

for better weather this winter. SOUTH EAST KENT AS: National Astronomy Week vielded more new members. Members are to visit the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory at Cambridge. Steven Clover went to South Africa in April to see the Comet. Many observing sessions are to be held this SOLENT AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS: An active Socety, making observations and reports which are sent to the BAA. Clubhouse and observ-Reservoir. Members are currently restoring he Toothill Observatory which was struck by

andals. The Society are looking for any oits that could be useful for a 10 inch or 12 inch telescope (tube etc). If you have comething please let the Society know. Several members went to Australia and South

SOUTH WEST HERTS AS: Forty-five members and quests attended the Society's Barbeque. Maurice Newman gave an illustrated talk on Jranus. The new arrangement of regular appears to be successful. WELLINGBOROUGH AND DISTRICT AS: Noel White gave a lecture on Halley's Comet, which contained several models. During June an Astro-Quiz was held. A number of trips to London and the Cambridge area are to be neld. Radio Northampton are giving out monthly Astro Info on the first Thursday of

each month, at around 2.30pm on 1107 Khz MW.

WEST OF LONDON AS: Members attended the FAS

Robin Scagell talked about sundials at the

July meeting. During August there was no

official meeting but members were active

Convention at Coventry. Vice President

Autumn and Winter.

Africa to see the Comet.

figure should emerge. Despite his parents emphasis on a strict religious upbringing, his instinctive interest in science soon became apparent. When he was eleven he was already experimenting with gunpowder, and as

friend the village chemist he actually took photos with it. This was a sign of greater things to come.

In his teens he enrolled as an engineering

he came across the work of the German opt-

specialised in optics. While studying there

ician Stehl, and, after completing his stud-ies, Schmidt left for Germany to seek him

Stehl had worked at Mittweida but

when Schmidt arrived Stehl had gone elsewhere. Schmidt, however, liked the place

student in Gothenburg, Sweden, where he

a result he almost lost his life. In one experiment while packing powder into a metal tube it exploded and he lost his right hand and forearm. Yet despite this devastating accident he maintained and developed his interest in maths and physics. In the years that followed he became interested in optics and working from drawings of a camera in a book he ground a lens from the bottom of a bottle, mounted it in a cigar box, and with some of the photographic plates from his

Part 1: Bernhard Schmidt and his Work Bernhard Schmidt was born on 30th March 1879 on the small island of Nargen off the coast of Estonia. Only 5 miles long by 2 miles wide and 12 miles from the mainland, life on Nargen was dominated by the church and farming. It is remarkable that from such an isolated environment such an influential

be a full demonstration of processing and

interested in astrophotography.

printing black and white film to aid those

WEST MIDLANDS AS: Has anyone heard anything

in the press about a Meteor Storm/Fireball

that occurred on February 23-24? If so, a

member of the Society would be interested.

about "The Road to Professional Astronomy or How to be a Professional Astronomer in One Easy Lesson!". W Atkins is to talk

about "The Amateur Astronomer and his

Australia".

made welcome.

15 December please.

Martin and Pam Chick

Mid-Glamorgan CF38 2LL

MR SCHMIDT AND HIS CAMERA

by Mike Harlow, Orwell AS

25 Calderton Road

John Randall gave details in the newsletter

Telescope"; J Randall, "The Perseid Meteor Shower": and A Lound, "Halley's Comet from

WORCESTER AS: The Society was formed in

exnedition to the Royal Observatory at

Wood. One of the Society members has an 8 inch telescope which he loans to other

Greenwich, AAC, and meetings at Chelmsley

December 1984 and now has 35 members. Meet-

ings take place each month at the College of

Higher Education. Members attended many Astro events away from Worcester, such as an

members. Three members went to La Palma and

one to South Africa and the Namib Desert to

view Halley's Comet. The Society is young but very active and new members are always

We must thank the many societies for sending

their newsletters, more than the last Round-

Up. Please keep them coming. Newsletters

for inclusion in the next Round-Up by

Gwaun Miskin (Nr Pontypridd)

shop. instrument.

R Schorr, eventually persuaded Schmidt to join the staff, albeit as a "voluntary colleague" as Schorr described him. Schmidt maintained his irregular, independent style of work, often roaming off into the nearby woods instead of being in the optical workfirst camera built had a 14 inch glass

rors and selling them to local amateur

astronomers. In the beginning he made them

only for the amateurs but soon orders came

in from the professionals as well, when the

realised how good they were. Beginning in

900, Schmidt made mirrors up to about 8 inches in diameter. In 1905 he made a 16 inch mirror which far surpassed anything

then available, and as his skill developed

he worked on figuring 12, 20 and 24 inch objectives for Leipzig. Potsdam and Hamburg

observatories. It is remarkable that all his work was carried out with his left hand

observatories. It is remarkable that all

his only hand, and that he never used

His reputation spread rapidly and he was

offered several jobs by the great German

these offers, however, Schmidt wished to maintain his independence. A man who dis-

liked regimentation, he worked only as the

for Hamburg observatory at Bergedorf and in

By 1920 Schmidt had made several mirrors

1926 the Director of the observatory.

optical companies of the day. Despite

machines.

mood took him.

From the beginning at Bergedorf, Schmidt was set on overcoming the limitations of conventional telescopes. The details of his design will be explained in Part 2. In 1929 he went on an eclipse expedition to the Phillipines with the great astronomer Walter Baade, and during this trip Schmidt told Baade that he had at last solved the problem, in principle, of producing a reflecting telescope that not only had a large aperture realising the importance of this new design, urged Schmidt to build one as soon as possible, as did Schorr on hearing the details. Despite this, however, Schmidt continued his apparently aimless walks in the woods, insisting that he had to solve the problem of how to grind the complex curves involved in his design. His ability to work was phenomenal once he started. On one occasion, Baade visited his to find him sleeping after 36 hours' continuous work. The camera was completed in early 1930 and soon produced fine photographs. Schmidt's design, described in detail next month, has a large mirror at the bottom of the tube, a thin glass plate at the top end, and the film on a curved surface facing the mirror in the middle. The

plate, a 17 inch mirror, and with a focal length of 25 inches had a photographic speed of f/1.7 - incredibly fast for such a large Photos from the camera initially failed to impress the European astronomers, but as

soon as Edwin Hubble of Mount Wilson saw them he immediately asked what was the largest Schmidt camera that could be built. The answer turned out to be 48 inches diameter for the glass plate with a 72 inch

mirror, and for this reason the two large cameras of Mount Palomar and Siding Springs are of this size. Anything bigger would ru into technical problems. Schmidt continued work until his death on 1st December 1935. The 48 inch Schmidt of Mount Palomar was completed in the late 1940s, and continues to be of immense value to astronomers; a great tribute to one man' insight and optical genius.

...........

NEWS DROW DAS SECRETARY

Resolution on the Closure of the RGO The following resolution was agreed by Council and sent to the local MPs: The Federation of Astronomical Societies. representing the views and interests of thousands of astronomers throughout the

country, both amateur and professional, deplores the decision to close the Royal Greenwich Observatory at Herstmonceux. The Royal Greenwich Observatory at Herstmonceux has been of the greatest help and encouragement to amateur astronomers of this country. upon whom the professional must depend for recruitment into astronomy and many other branches of science. This decision to sacrifice one of Britain's senior and most respected scientific instit-

utions apparently upon the altar of political expediency should be reconsidered before untold harm is done to British astronomy, which is, and must continue to be, reknowned throughout the world.

### Light Pollution

My thanks to the Leeds AS for sending in a very interesting letter concerning light pollution. Now what about other societies? You must all have a view and it is most important that Council know what is happening in the field, so do write and let me lonous.

DAVE POWELL

ing street lights, thus allowing more light to shine on the road and not into the sky. He also underlined the fact that the present design of street lamps is inadequate. As a large percentage of the light shines into the sky, this is a waste of electricity and ratepayers' money.

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE: Tony Higgins of the

asking if there was any chance of shield-

Leeds AS wrote to Leeds City Council

Perhans Tony will let us know what reply. if any, he received from Leeds City ......

### MY INTERNATIONAL ASTRO-PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAMME

Graham Young, Dundee AS

My International Astrophotography Programme (IAPP) is a beautiful fusion of four great personal interests; the science of astronomy, the written discipline of keeping a record book, (which I have done for every day since 1972), the technical art of photography and darkroom manage-

ment stemming from art student

days and my love of travelling at The programme began in the mid-seventies as part of an '0' level project, with shots of starfields lunar phases, eclipses and and lunar phases, eclipses shu sunspots. In a few yesrs I had used many different types of cam-eras and films. Now I have a small library of photographs recording the position of planets, including Uranus, Neptune and asteroids, and other phenomena taken over the years. Many photos are purely artistic, as the full Moon rising over the Firth of Tay reflecting off McGonagalla 'Silvery Tay' at

Widsummer.

Using the 10 inch refractor at the Mills Observatory, Dundee, I have

worked on the Dundee lunar Atlas, before leaving Scotland to settle in leeds. Visits to Liverpool, Cambridge, Greenwich and Keele followed. In 1980, the Clympic Games was an excuse to go to the Soviet Union, where I toured this wast continent.

Thus starfields over lake Baikal joined these taken over loch Ness. he midnight sun was a new experience. 1982 found me touring Europe, Scandinavia and North Africa. From the Marakech Hostel 1 saw my first ever black starry sky at the mid-

summer solstice; and the sting of Australia-85 was an opportunity for a complete photographic

coverage of the Southern newisphere during a three-month autumn/winter programme. Australia has many advantages. 1 paid particular attention to the centre of our galaxy and to the very old and very young moons

visible in the rapidly changing

dawn and dusk skies. It was a new

experience to have the sun moving

from right to left across the sky. My comet count includes lras-Araki-Alcock and Sugano-Saigus-Fujikawa. 'alcock' I snot near the head of Hydra; not possible from Britain since it was asylight there. The Jupiter-Uranus conjunction was

photographed between the pain trees of Walkiki Beach, Hawaii. But then it was cloudy in an Francisco and

Los angeles. Canada offered an aurors display to best anything in Dundee.

My interest in international photography has taken me to observatories all over the world, including in 1984 those in the hetherlands, luxemburg and the Vatican. I still have to reach Fauna Kea and hope to follow in the footsteps of Captain James Cook Caniti to observe a who visited transit of Venus. Also I have still to see a total solar eclipse.

me relinquish it.

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY Geoffrey Johnstone, Tudor Cottage,

Stoneleigh Road, Blackdown. Leamington Spa, CV32 6QR. I was delighted recently to receive letter from Dr Vincent of the Dunde

astronomy. Nothing will ever

Astronomical Society including a pr Halley's Comet taken from Australia nhotograph was taken with a Practic f/1.8 using a Scotch Mount. The ex was three minutes and showed an ama amount of detail. Not only the Com auri, together with part of the sou Milky Way. Not having fast slide ! available at the time, and with the to produce slides to show at meeting slide film, apparently very success Slides can be produced directly fro colour negatives by a specialist la alternatively they can be copied at using special Kodak film, although ing the correct colour balance is for the inexperienced. I would now like to turn to planet photography as I have recently had

success in recording Jupiter shows

With Jupiter well placed now for m the winter months, it may be worth a go. The main difficulty with pl photography is the very small imag is produced at the prime focus of tonian telescope. The size of the will depend on the angular diameter planet and the effective focal leng the instrument, and will normally nome form of amplification by a Ba lens, eyepiece, or both. My best were obtained with a Barlow and 12 piece. This combination produced of about 3mm in diameter. This ms small, but by using Kodak 2415 fil the image ten times without the ap of unpleasant grain. Furthermore, copying the negative to produce a the projected image was very pleas found that with my telescope, a 25 Newtonian, that an exposure of abo 6 seconds produced good results. with an exposure as long as this : mounting and steady seeing are re-\*

# FILMS FOR HIRE

Societies with facilities for show films might like to know that the films of the Voyager encounters wi Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus are now able in this country. These can b from the British Interplanetary So (telephone 01 735 3160) and from t Central Film Library (telephone 01 2345). Beautiful photography and graphics make these historic explo unforgettable.

## \* RATES FOR DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS

265 Full page Half page Quarter page

Smaller ads are £1 per single co a minimum charge of £4.

Copy for Newsletter No 12 should Editor by end of December