

Published by the Federation of Astronomical Societies.
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issue number 15



EDITORIAL

In a communication from Dick Chambers, secretary of Crayford Manor House AS, I learn of the negative response that society experienced when they planned a specialist meeting at their observatory. This event, reported elsewhere in this Newsletter, was intended to bring people together who might be interested in photoelectric photometry.

Their first approach was to those societies within 60 miles of themselves, in Kent, who seemed, from reports in the FAS Round-Up, to be active in practical astronomy. NOT ONE SOCIETY BOTHERED TO REPLY!

Castig their net further, they found a response from Southampton AS who sent three delegates. Except for Crayford's own delegates at the meeting, most of those attending were individual astronomers who had given up the notion of belonging to a local society as they could make more progress on their own. The verdict was that astronomical societies are social organisations not primarily interested in practical astronomy.

Mr Chambers goes on to describe the situation as perplexing and worrying, and describes that tract of country between Crayford and Southampton as "an awfully big astronomical desert".

Shortage of space in this issue dictates that I do not elaborate my own views on his comment but I can sense shouts of "Hear! Hear!" from all directions. To be positive about this sad truth, let me say that the FAS exists as a channel of communication between societies.

Organisers should give the Editor advance news of their Conventions. Specialist meetings, whatever, for publication in this Newsletter. Please allow six months notice wherever possible even if at that stage only the date and a general statement of likely contents of the meeting are available.

Having said this I am ashamed to say that one of the societies present at the Jodrell Bank meeting tried to give me a meeting notice at a moment when I was feeling particularly harassed, as one does on these occasions, and having no pocket or bag on me I asked him to choose a better time to approach me. All I can say is sorry, I really should have been more composed.

For those who did not get to Jodrell Bank, we had seating for about 150 people and an attendance of 300.

VERY URGENT NOTICE

THE DATE OF THE 1988 FAS MEETING AT HERSTMONCEUX IS NOT THAT WHICH WAS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED.
Please correct the date in your diaries, in the last FAS Newsletter and on the ASTRONOMY NOW Year Planner.
Our final meeting at Herstmonceux takes place on Saturday October 8. Always previously we met at the home of the RGO on the first Saturday in October. By some awful chance, someone else has booked the Castle for that date and we have had to change our date. There isn't much we can do about it. Lettings are a commercial necessity to the administrative staff these days

FAS CONVENTION SATURDAY MAY 7

This follows the AGM in Coventry, after the lunch break. The detailed programme will be available on the day but speakers have been booked as follows:-

Dr Allan Chapman of the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Oxford who will celebrate the 400th anniversary of Tycho's famous set of observations of comets with a talk entitled: TYCHO BRAHE, THE FIRST 'MODERN' OBSERVATIONAL ASTRONOMER.

Those who have heard this speaker will agree we are in for a treat.
Dr Peter Meikle of Imperial College,

London has agreed to keep us up to date with a talk on THAT SUPERNOVA. Dr Meikle is conducting work on Supernova 1987A so we hope to be well informed.

In the "We did it ourselves" slot, Mike Tabb of Bath AS will give us an account of the work required to restore the House in Bath from which Herschel made his momentous discovery of Uranus. We shall have the latest on the management of the Herschel House Museum and what we may hope to see when we organise our various society visits to 19 New King Street, Bath.

This is the first and final notification of this meeting date so please book tickets, by society, through Ken Marcus, as usual. Entry will cost £2.50 per person, to include coffee and biscuits but not lunch. This can be bought easily in Coventry during the lengthy break. If it is your first visit to our Coventry meeting, mention this when booking so that instructions for finding the Herbert Lecture Theatre at the city's Museum and Art Gallery can be given. In fact it is a stone's throw from the Cathedral.

Proceedings: 11.00am to 6.00pm approx.

A.G.M. continued ... page 6

PHOTOGRAPHY

by GEOFFREY JOHNSTONE, Tudor Cottage, Stoneleigh Road, Blackdown, Leamington Spa, CV32 6QR.

I show this time my photograph of the Pinwheel Galaxy, M33, in Triangulum. This particular exposure was very successful, showing the classic shape of this galaxy together with its hydrogen clouds in the spiral arms. As I made the print I was particularly struck how critical the processing was. I used Ilford Multigrade II paper in conjunction with a number 5 filter to make the paper as contrasty as possible. The developer used was Lifospeed Multigrade which is very docile in the sense that development is complete in one minute, and increasing the time makes very little difference. What does make the difference is the exposure time using the enlarger, particularly with a subject such as this. Too little and there is insufficient contrast in the print and too much produces a loss in detail and structure of the gas clouds. It is in fact very critical, with a difference of two or three seconds in a half minute exposure being very noticeable. It is worth aiming at an exposure of around thirty seconds in order to provide the necessary control.

I have received no photograph recently from any FAS members and disappointingly none of M13. Since Orion is going to be available for a few months yet I would be very pleased to receive a photograph of M42. Excellent results can be obtained with surprisingly short exposures using either T-MAX 400, TRI X or one of the fast colour films.

Lastly, as I write this, Venus is rapidly increasing in elongation and brightness and its phase is becoming a crescent. This makes it quite a useful object for the planetary photographer. I suggest a slow fine-grained film for this so that the image can be subsequently enlarged without showing too much grain.





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BRIGHTON BN1 6YD

GREENWICH LUNY DAY 1987 NOV 28

PERSONAL VIEW BY MILLIE NAYLOR,
SHEFFIELD ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

It was advertised as "Luny Day" so we went to Greenwich Park and saw just a few of the activities on offer.

The Planetarium show was both entertaining and informative. Many children enjoyed dropping little balls into a tray of flour, especially as they acquired the knack of producing quite realistic "lunar craters". Slimming parents were not always so keen to see what they would weigh on the moon!

At dusk a queue of Mums, Dads, children, locals and visitors waited to look at the moon. In small groups we were taken into the dark dome, and as our eyes became dark-adjusted, saw the huge 28-inch telescope. In turn, we saw a lovely view of the moon - through the finder! Then came my turn to look through the telescope. A few moments to adjust to the almost blinding light, then I saw a small part of the moon, and it seemed as though it were very close to us. That was well worth waiting for.

We went home with that view still in our minds, and with memories of a very happy day for the many families who came.

Our thanks go to the staff, not only astronomers, who stayed after closing time so we could all get a look at that magnificent moon.

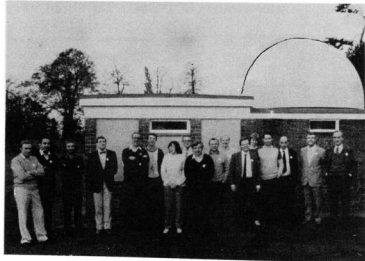
SCOTTISH ASTRONOMY WEEKEND -
23rd to 25th SEPTEMBER 1988

This event, formerly known as the Dundee Astronomy Weekend Course and held very successfully in Dundee for the past two years, has been renamed the SCOTTISH ASTRONOMY WEEKEND. This year it will be held in Edinburgh, hosted by the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh. The dates will be as already announced, namely Friday 23rd September to Sunday 25th September. The format will follow the general pattern of previous years with a mixture of illustrated talks, visits to places of astronomical interest, telescopic viewing (ideally timed for Mars at its best since 1971), displays of photographs, equipment, etc.

The principal speaker is expected to be Dr Iain Nicolson and it is hoped that the event will be inaugurated by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

Enquiries for more details should be addressed to:

Iain Neil, 82 St Alban's Road,
Edinburgh, EH9 2PG.-



"TEACH-IN" ON PHOTOELECTRIC PHOTOMETRY
AT CRAYFORD

by R H CHAMBER, CRAYFORD MANOR HOUSE AS

Photoelectric photometry (PEP) is a technique which is attracting the attention of advanced amateurs who wish to undertake observations of professional quality. The method involves the use of a light sensitive device which converts the light collected by the telescope into a current which is subsequently amplified and recorded. Thus, measurements of the light changes of variable stars and other objects may be made with a precision far exceeding that obtainable hitherto.

Two basic types of photometer are available: the photodiode, which is cheap and robust and requires only low voltages for its operation but suffers from the disadvantage of insensitivity, and the photomultiplier tube which, while more expensive and fragile and requiring complex circuitry, has high sensitivity and is favoured by most photometrists.

To promote the use of PEP the Crayford Manor House AS held a "Teach-in" at its headquarters on 1987 October 24 when a dozen potential photometrists gathered for an all-day meeting to hear a variety of talks by Crayford members and to be given demonstrations on the practical aspects of the subject.

Jack Ellis initiated the meeting by speaking on observing techniques and on the methods available for reducing the results. This talk was based on the extensive experience Jack has obtained in observing short period eclipsing binaries using his BBC computer controlled system.

Roger Pickard then spoke on equipment, concentrating on the design of the photometer head and the necessity for a well driven telescope. During this session David Lewis demonstrated his new light-weight photometer head which uses a fluid light guide and is suitable for his Celestron C8 telescope.

In the afternoon Dick Young gave a comprehensive review of the range of photomultiplier tubes which are available to the amateur and described the associated electronics and the use of computers to control the system. John Watson then described his new advanced design for a photon counting system.

The formal proceedings were completed with a discussion by Dick Chambers on observing programmes which would be suitable for the amateur with PEP capability.

One feature of the meeting was the excellent catering arrangements undertaken by Crayford member Jean Felles, ably assisted by her husband Brian.

*Participants of the "Teach-in"
at Crayford Manor House A.S.*

After the meeting the delegates were shown the Society's 24-inch telescope and then drove to Jack Ellis's home where they saw his unique rotating observatory and the newly completed automatic telescope.

Following tradition, the meeting was then adjourned to the local pub where discussion continued for several more hours.

KEEPING THE MEMORY OF WILLIAM HERSCHEL
ALIVE

John Waterfield supplied information about the memorial fund he administers, some detail of which was incorrectly translated by the Editor in the article which appeared in Issue 14 under this title. The offending paragraph is reprinted below, with a correction to the family relationships.

"To date there are 49 contributors, some acting for societies, so the number of people associated with the enterprise is larger. 26 donors are direct descendants, and one, my mother, widow of a great grandson, and one my cousin (though not a descendant) named after my grandmother."

Apologies to Mr Waterfield for annoyance caused by this error.

FOR SALE

14 inch F/4.5 Dobsonian reflector. New primary mirror and flat recently supplied by manufacturers. 7x50 finder and 5 new eyepieces, giving range of magnifications from very wide angle 45x to 180x.

Secondhand, but in good condition and hardly used since overhauled. Excellent for deep sky work. House purchase reluctantly forces sale. Buyer collects. Will negotiate in the region of £550.

Contact: Andrew White, 'Polprier' Tregoney Hill, Nevegassey, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6RE
Tel: 0726 842693

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Madam

We are hearing a lot in the media now about keeping British Summer Time throughout the year. Alongside the argument of economic advantages, it also helps minimise accidents on the roads, considering more accidents occur during the evening rush-hour than in the morning. It has further been suggested that Britain adopts Double Summer Time in the summer and BST the rest of the year. However, in Scotland and the west of Britain, this would mean longer dark mornings in winter, (as Glasgow and Belfast endured during the experiment nearly twenty years ago) and daylight summer evenings lasting well up to midnight causing social problems such as children's bedtime as well as problems for astronomers such as having to stay up longer to do noctilucent cloud observations, for example.

The variations in times of sunrise and sunset is quite substantial across the British Isles throughout the year both in latitude and in longitude. A few years ago I travelled frequently between Dundee and Leeds where I noticed a difference of up to half-an-hour between midwinter sunrises and the same between midsummer sunsets.

May I suggest a solution in dividing the British Isles into two time zones. Double Summer Time would suit England, Wales and the Channel Islands whereas Scotland, Isle of Man and Northern Ireland (and the Irish Republic if they wish) would be added to the present system of GMT in winter and BST in summer. The time change at the border should not pose problems; if the USSR can handle eleven time zones and continental railways cater for cross-border time changes in their timetables, then surely we can handle the all year one hour time difference between the north and south of the country. Scotland would remain as it is and England would be in line with the continent all year.

I would be particularly interested to hear of comments or suggestions from other members around the country, and any useful criticisms they may provide.

Yours faithfully

Graham Young
Secretary; Scottish Astronomers Group

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Rosemary
Re FAS Issue No 14: Daylight Stars - My Finnish friend Kari Kaila has seen both Vega and Arcturus in daylight, naked eye, in summer in Finland. Also (from memory) members of Ursa Astronomical Association, Helsinki, have seen many sixth magnitude stars with 13.5cm Mezz refractor in daytime, but I am not sure of the details. I think there is a limit of faintness of stars that can be seen at mid-day whatever size telescope and Sirius B may be too faint, due to sky background, but I am not sure. Mid-day is different from sunrise/sunset.

Also it depends how far the star is from the sun in the sky. Probably easiest are north facing high elevation stars very well shielded from the sun. Also it depends if the sun is high, (summer) or low (winter). With the sun behind thick clouds but the northern sky being clear might help. It is a complicated subject. Jupiter and satellites or Saturn and Titan should be a good test. Following Saturn into daylight with Titan at elongation could be tried. The position of the faint star must be known exactly in relation to something brighter nearby.

Sincerely
DAVID FRYDMAN: W OF LONDON AS

EDITOR'S CORRECTION TO THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE:-

I mis-interpreted Ernest Appleton's notes to me when I stated that he had found Alcor by first locating Mizar. In fact it was the close companion of Mizar which could be seen in the telescope at mid-day. I am sure Mr Frydman would regard this as corroboration of his final statement.

IN THE SKY

GRAZE OCCULTATION OF THE STAR 572 TAURI
ON 1987 SEPTEMBER 14
By members of Fitzharrys Astronomical Association

Four members of Fitzharrys Astronomical Association, namely Diana Parsons, John Napper, John Fathers and myself positioned ourselves on a quiet road in Blewbury, Oxfordshire (GR-SU 536 855), ready for the grazing occultation of 572 Tauri. We had three telescopes set up; my own 60mm refractor, which subsequently proved no use for the observation as the target stars were on the limit of the scopes resolving power and was lost in the glare of the moon; John Napper's 60mm refractor and John Fathers' 200mm Celestron. The main observation was made by John Fathers through the 200mm scope. The pre-dawn sky was clear and steady.

The target star was actually a binary, listed in Norton's Star Atlas as being 4.1" of arc separation with magnitudes of 6.5 and 6.5 and a PA of 198°. It was observed to be closing to the southern limb of the 587 moon, and at approximately 04.09hr UT one of the pair was observed to disappear. It then flashed twice as it reappeared from behind lunar mountains before being totally occulted. This flashing lasted for approximately 2 seconds before the star became totally obscured. Interestingly, throughout the occultation, one of the pair was always visible beyond the limb of the moon. The 'grazed' star reappeared after approximately 4min45sec. It is worth noting that no flashing was seen as it reappeared at the end of the event.

We were all pleased to have seen the event, but we realised that our timings etc were not as accurate as they might have been, and indeed should have been, and it was a pity that we were not able to make some visual record.

Brian James

EDITOR'S COMMENTS: I think Mr James intends the time of the disappearance to be read as 9 minutes after 4am UT ie 04hr 09min. Would readers like to comment on how times, angles etc should

be recorded in this publication. I know some people have strong feelings about these things and it is important to avoid ambiguity even if we are never likely to achieve uniformity.

Thanks anyway to Fitzharrys for this report.

EDITOR'S REPORT

Three issues of the FAS Newsletter have been produced in the course of the year since the last AGM. This is one issue fewer than intended, and the Editor can only plead a heavy work load. Material comes in at a reasonable rate but more articles would be welcome. Thanks are due to Pam and Martin Chick who continue to supply copy for the Round-Up on demand.

Although strictly not part of the Editorial duties, the Editor distributes all FAS publications, including the Handbook, astrocalendar and Beginner's Handbook, together with meetings notices.

The Jodrell Bank meeting in March was a major undertaking and is largely responsible for the lateness of this current copy of the Newsletter.

The Editor would be particularly grateful for a new recruit to the Council to take over the organisation of meetings.

If re-elected to the position of Editor, I shall do my best to continue with the battle to beat my old computer/word processor into submission and publish newsletters at such intervals as time permits. Thank you for your patience.

Rosemary Naylor

ADVERTISING RATES IN THIS PUBLICATION

Full page display £65
Half page £35
Quarter page £19

Circulation: 2,200 copies
Inserts by arrangement with the Editor

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"EXPLORING THE SOUTHERN SKY" must be the book of the year. Written by observers at the European Southern Observatory and printed in Germany on high quality paper, this book has received good reviews everywhere.

Copies at £36 will be available at the Coventry meeting of the FAS on the stand of EARTH AND SKY.

Unhappily, the publishers are increasing the price to £43 so if you plan to buy, now is the time while current stocks remain.

by Martin and Pam Chick

YLESBURY AS: As usual the society newsletters have been packed with members' observations, which are well illustrated with drawings. Over the past months the society has had various talks such as "The relation between astronomy and amateur radio" by Paul Eguilert, and a review of the recent apparition of Halley's Comet by Don Wallis. The society has had a new and experimental form of meeting. Instead of talks and slides they have had two debates, the benches in the meeting hut were arranged facing each other, House of Commons style. The first debate was "Space exploration is not worth the astronomical cost", the second was "Life in the universe and whether or not it could be considered to be a common occurrence". On Tuesday 13th October a group of members went to the observatory to hold a host meeting of the Association for Science Education. The visitors were impressed with what they had seen, and were delighted that they had been able to do some observing.

BEDFORD AS: The society is almost one year old, and during the past months has achieved much more than most members could have possibly imagined. The society is hoping to have a permanent meeting place, and possibly an observatory. The appearance of Comet Bradfield was used to hold a public "Comet Watch Evening", which was to attract new members. Astrophotography seems to be the favourite pastime of the active members, and the meetings filled with slides of their achievements.

BOLTON AS: January 5th 1988 sees a new era for Bolton Astronomical Society. After ten years of meetings in the basement of Bolton Library, the society and its 20 members are moving to a new meeting place in the Community Centre in Barlow Park. The society has regular guest speakers and observing nights, and has trips planned to Condor Brow Observatory, The PAS Festival at Jodrell Bank, and Moor Park Observatory, Preston. Meetings are held twice a month, first and third Tuesday; new members always made welcome.

BRIGHTON AS: During October a major International Space Conference and Exhibition took place in Brighton. Several of the society members managed to see the exhibition and were generally very impressed. The exhibits from the European Space Agency were particularly spectacular and many glossy handouts were available describing the plans for the European manned spacecraft before the end of the century. However, things change rapidly and the British Government has almost abandoned its participation in these ambitious plans. The society has talks given by various speakers such as Philip Taylor, Alan Drummond, Ron Weston, and Dr Paul Murdin who is from the RGO. The society has given details in one of the newsletters of the telescopes available to members, for example 4-inch refractor, two 6-inch reflectors, and other good size telescopes. Members of the society are entering the quiz run by the "Astronomy Now" magazine.

BRITISH AEROSPACE AS: The society has an annual event called Astromind, in the form of the well-known television programmes Mastermind and The Krypton Factor, with shields awarded to winners. The society has an observatory which is under construction and the dome is almost complete. The overall diameter will be around nine feet. The newsletters contain many interesting articles, and two News Release sheets, one describing the "Dual Head

Space Satellites", the other "Successful In Orbit Delivery of British Aerospace Built Satellite".

BRITISH METEOR SOCIETY: This society, which is The International Meteor Society, has just passed through its eighteenth birthday and is now in its nineteenth year. The society exists solely to further research in meteor astronomy and to provide a service (where required) to those wishing to join in achieving these aims. This year they will commence an exciting new publishing venture: Systems Meteorium. This concept is already proving very popular. It will be the first complete encyclopaedia of meteor astronomy, and the first continually updated astronomical publication.

COTSWOLD AS: The society has been very active over the past months, the newsletters are full of observational reports and members' activities. Members visited Jodrell Bank during September. John Fletcher spent a week in Scotland with a fellow member Andy, who is studying astronomy at the University. This gave a chance for them to use the 37-inch Cass/Schmidt and 8 channel photometer. Bernard Abrams has sent letters to "the powers that be" on the problem of light pollution. After six weeks only one reply has been received out of the four letters sent. Members will be entering the Astronomy Now Quiz. Tony Ireland has written an interesting article about his Tour of Canada, giving details of his visit to an observatory housing a 72-inch reflector. The rest of the members have been active with the Constellation Project, Novae Patrol, Messier League, Supernovae Patrol, etc (They must get better weather in the Cotswold area!)

COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE AS: Observing sessions have been held using the 6-inch Cooke telescope. Monthly meetings have been held, and the newsletters contain observations and notes on what to observe along with the usual articles by members.

EAST DEVON AS: East Devon Astronomers is a new society founded in 1987. Due to the locality in a small village in the heart of the countryside, membership is slow, but increasing. Meetings are held at the Chairman's house every Friday. If conditions are favourable members observe, if conditions are unsuitable members look at computer programmes, video tapes, or talks illustrated with slides. On the 16th January Bill O'Shaughnessy sighted a meteor 5 degrees to the west of Venus and just brighter. A report has been sent to Dr J. Mason. Did anyone else witness this unique sight?

GIBRALTA AS: This society, formed last year, is growing quickly and has joined the FAS. Astroweek will be May 23 to 27 when visitors from the UK will include Heather Cooper and Guy Fennimore of the Junior Astronomical Society. Astroweek will be an opportunity for the society to display their telescopes to the public. There will also be an exhibition of posters, videos, astronomical computer programmes and other exhibits to promote astronomy and the society. Gibraltar Television is producing a programme about the society and local schools are to be involved too in the promotion.

Best wishes to this society. We look forward to a report after the event.

GUILDFORD AS: The society had its Annual Dinner last November, with guests Nigel Henbest and Heather Cooper. The formal twilight of the society with the Houston Astronomical Society in Texas has been signed, and projects are now under way. A letter from the Houston society describes how excited they are about the twinning of

the two groups. One of the projects was the eclipsing binary observing project. It is hoped that a Society and family trip to the Canary Islands will be arranged in the near future, and that members of the Houston society could also meet up there.

HUDDERSFIELD APS: The society has a new look Omega newsletter, now produced on a word processor, as a result of this more information is carried owing to the number of margins being reduced. The telescope observatory at Crosland Hill has had an annual clean, this included the removal of the 15-inch mirror, rendering and painting of the observatory. Richard Cooper is to revive the observing sections. Society publicity has recently been on high, an article has been sent to Astronomy Now magazine; Mark Sykes has secured a monthly astronomy column in the Huddersfield Examiner. A group of members travelled to the observatory during August to observe the Perseid meteor shower, and members have also attended the August star party at the Amateur Astronomy Centre.

LEEDS AS: Talks have been given to the society by Dr Bill Griffiths of Leeds University on the subject of "Gazing at Globulars", Paul Money of the Boston AS talked on Planetary Satellites, there has also been a members evening which was to give society members an opportunity to present results of their astronomical work. A visit to Greenwich, London, is planned for March 12th. Articles in the Newsletter include "Visibility of Celestial Objects" by Dr A. Walker and "Supernova 1987A" by Paul Marchant.

MID-SUSSEX AS: During January Dr John Landon who has worked at Jodrell Bank, spoke to the society on the topic "An introduction to radio astronomy", talks were also given by Ray Hatt, Len Brundie, John Ellis and Mark Blundell. The society is now having regular meetings devoted to practical observing, the preliminary indoor meeting being brief, followed by an observing session. There is a theme for each meeting, if it is cloudy then short talks are given and a discussion takes place. Members enjoyed the FAS event at Herstonconex.

NORTH EAST LONDON AS: Does Anyone Want A Tenth Foot Astro Dome? This offer was made by the society to its members. It was originally made for Morley College, but was rescused from demolition. It was light in weight and complete with circular track. Available just for the cost of transport, what an offer! (It has probably gone now.) Talks to the society have ranged from Atmospheric Phenomena to the Hubble Space Telescope.

NORWICH AS: During the past year the society has enjoyed some excellent clear intervals using their telescope. A problem has now occurred at the Observatory due to the proposed change of venue for the new hospital to Colney Lane. This will have some quite catastrophic effects on the observatory as it is almost certain that the car park will be lit throughout the night, and this combined with the hospital lights will rather swamp the night sky. A barbeque was held at the Observatory on 7th November. With 1988 being the year of Mars an article is to be published in their newsletter about this planet.

ORWELL AS: Time was booked to use the 28-inch refractor at Greenwich during November. This year is the 21st anniversary of the society and an open day is under preparation for Saturday 9th July. On the 25th September the society had its annual open weekend and the public were invited to use the 10-inch telescope. On January

News Round-up continued over ...

27th the society planned to observe the Pleiades Occultation. The Observatory is now to be renovated, and members have made some suggestions as to how this should be done.

RAYLEIGH CENTRE AAOG: The society has recently joined the FAS and is a fairly new group who started up about a year and a half ago, in response to the need for a centre to which beginners could come together. They have been very successful, virtually all the original members still attend and they are still gaining members. They are lucky enough to have a very pleasant meeting place in a school. Meetings are held weekly, which include short talks on specific subjects etc. Members are of all ages, starting at school age to well past retiring. Observing is carried out on most weekends. To further the promotion of astronomy they have a space in a local newspaper distributed to about 100,000 homes. Also they have persuaded BBC Essex that Astronomy is a good thing and have a monthly slot on various aspects of astronomy.

SAGAS: Details were given in the round-up newsletter about the various societies involved with the group. Working parties were set up because of damage caused at the Astro-Camp site at Hindleap Warren, due to the hurricane which swept through the region on October 16th. Norman Fisher asked for volunteers to help with clearing up the site. The first party met on Saturday October 24th and managed to remove practically all of the fallen trees on the main site. Since then several other parties on Saturdays have been helping the wardens with repairs.

SOLENT AA: A full programme of talks has been arranged. Trips to see grazing occultations are planned, along with monthly star parties at Toothill Observatory. They hope to locate four major objects during each star party. Members have their own key to the observatory, which is now in full use. A new finder has been fitted to help newer members find objects. The society has been asked to oversee the restoration of the Iichen College Observatory which has a 16-inch equatorial telescope. A major public viewing event is planned for August 1988, at the Toothill Observatory grounds. The society is taking a stand at the Portsmouth Evening News. **HELP NEEDED FROM OTHER SOCIETIES.** Members are planning to install a 12v electricity system and would like details from other clubs about wind generators to trickle charge a 12v car battery. Please write to Rob Smith at 16 Lincoln Close, Romsey, Hants.

SOUTH WEST HERTS AS: Many talks have been given to the society, such as "Transient Lunar Phenomena", "History of the Measurement of Light", "Introduction to Spectroscopy", etc. Members were invited to hear John Mason talk to the British Computer Society on "The Uses of Computers in Astronomy". This took place during January. Observing sessions have been held at High Top.

STEVENAGE & DISTRICT AS: The Society have progressed to the second round of the "Astronomy Now" quiz, having beaten Cranfield AS.

Two members paid a visit to Bayfordbury Observatory, the observatory of Hatfield Polytechnic on the occasion of that establishment's Open Night. They were amazed at the numbers of members of the public who turned up to queue at each of the five instruments focussed on the sky. One senses they would have enjoyed spending less time waiting in queues and more time looking through the excellent telescopes at M31, M42 etc. However, it did set the two members, Robert Townsend

and John Rayner, wondering if eventually they will have an astronomical centre at Stevenage to which the public will come in equally large numbers.

WELLINGBOROUGH & DISTRICT AS: Neil Bone from Cambridge gave a talk on "Atmospheric Astronomy", covering the areas of meteor, aurora and noctilucent cloud. **WNAS** members have been providing short talks at meetings including society member Godfrey Stewart who is a keen astrophotographer. Details of meetings are now being broadcast on local radio. Being a Chiltern Group member the society now exchange newsletters with several other member societies. This year's annual outing will be to the London Planetarium, and Science Museum. Ian Ridpath recently accepted an invitation by the society to become society president.

WEST OF LONDON AS: The society has had many talks including one with the longest title they have ever had: "Josef Fraunhofer and his amazing technicolor discovery" by Konrad Malin-Smith, a historical subject - the development of spectroscopy. The society is coming of age, and will celebrate its 21st during 1988, a grand day of celebrations is planned at the Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip, on 17th September.

WEST MIDLANDS AA: This society is very keen on observing and the news letter "Nova" reflects this with the quantity of members' observing reports. One of the main interests appears to be observing meteor showers. During 1987 they had a project to observe the Orionid Meteor shower, full details were given in their newsletter along with a very clear Meteor Report form for members to use. Beginners are kept well informed with information sheets on various types of observing, and instruments to use. The current "Nova" newsletter is very well produced although there are comments of some difficulty in producing it in the future. Let's hope that the difficulties are overcome: keep up the good work West Midlands!

WEST YORKSHIRE AS: During the past year the society membership has been very healthy and numbers maintained. The society has been very active and has had many talks. Members made the journey down to the FAS meeting at Herstmonceux, and they had a pleasant and congenial weekend. Members had a rewarding night during October when they observed the Orionids. At the Observatory visitors continue to roll in, in addition to visits by various schools. Each year at the AGM the society has an Astro-photography Award, this is made for the best astro photo taken by a member during the session. The society has entered a team for the Astronomy Now quiz. (NOTE: I may visit your society during May, as I will be on a course at Wakefield - Martin.)

WOLVERHAMPTON AS: Each year there are three or four comets and a couple of novae brighter than about magnitude 11 discovered. The society is to have an early warning system for members who would like news of such events as soon as the information becomes available. A deposit of £2 is required and calls will be deducted at the provisional rate of 25p pending an average working costing. Members interested in receiving these calls are invited to fill in a form which is provided in their society newsletter. Other events have taken place in the society such as an astronomical "Call My Bluff" last October.

WORCESTER AS: The society is to have a new system by which members may use the large telescopes which other members own. The

society has had a number of talks, Dr B Owens from Cardiff talked about the structure of the Earth, the Moon and the inner Planets, Dave Powell from Cardiff talked about Observing Planetary Nebulae, and Chris Sheldon talked about the Electromagnetic Spectrum. Members of the society had a trip to Cambridge University Observatory, and were shown various telescopes and photographic plates made at the AAT. On examination of the plates members found that with a magnifier some of the little dots were really galaxies.

PLEASE SEND YOUR NEWS, MAGAZINES, NEWSLETTERS ETC TO FAN AND MARTIN CHICK FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEXT FAS ROUND UP. The address is 25 Calderton Road, Osawa Miskin, Nr Pontypridd, South Wales CF38 2LL.

NEWS ITEM:

The magazine APEX is now edited by Alan Drummond a past President of the FAS. Apex was until recently edited by Maurice Gavin. The magazine is issued 3 times a year and is of interest to astronomers who enjoy using their calculators and computers for astronomical purposes. The membership secretary, will provide more information. He is Mr R W Johnson, 19 Elm Way, Ewell, Surrey KT19 0HB.

NEWS ITEM:

Cleveland Astronomical Society are holding a Convention "COSMOS NORTH-EAST" at the Teesside Polytechnic, Middlesbrough, Cleveland on Saturday October 15, 1988

Speakers will include Heather Couper - "How big is space"; Nigel Henbest - "Supernova, death of a star"; Peter Rea - "The Golden Age of Planetary Exploration"; David Gavine - "Aurorae"; Neil Bone - "Astrobiology, Origin of Life"; and Paul Money - "Mars, after Viking"

The organiser is Neil Hagath, 5 Fountains Crescent, Eton, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS6 9DF.

NEWS ITEM:

ORWELL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY are to hold their 21st Anniversary Convention at the Orwell Park Observatory, Nacton near Ipswich on Saturday July 9, 1988.

More information can be obtained from the organiser; Mr R Gooding, 168 Ashcroft Road, Ipswich IP1 6AE.

Amateur astronomers and space enthusiasts who possess a computer and modem can subscribe to the bulletin board service "BBS ALTAIR" for the latest information on astronomical discoveries and space launches. This will be updated daily to give a service comparable with the professional services of Prestel but for a more modest subscription.

For more information write to:

Michael Webber
BBS ALTAIR
168 Caunce Street
Blackpool FY1 3NJ

FAS AGM SATURDAY MAY 7

This, together with the Convention will take place at the Herbert Lecture Theatre, Coventry, as in previous years.

AGENDA

- 1 To approve the minutes of the 1987 AGM
- 2 Matters arising
- 3 To hear the Treasurer's report
- 4 To fix the subscription rate for 1988/89
- 5 To hear reports by and to put questions to other officers
- 6 To elect officers for 1988/89
- 7 To consider the relaunch of a competition sponsored by Spaceprints
- 8 Any Other Business.

ELECTION OF A COUNCIL FOR 1988/89 *****

Societies are invited to put names forward of any of their members who might be suitable to fill positions on the Council, particularly for the two positions for which the present Council has been unable to make nominations themselves.

Council have nominated the following people to stand for election:

PRESIDENT: Bob Owens
VICE PRESIDENT: Tony Balfour
SECRETARY: Chris Sheldon
TREASURER: Ken Marcus
EDITOR: Rosemary Naylor
EDITOR: COUNCIL NEWSLETTER: Bill O'Shaughnessy
EDITOR: HANDBOOK: Brian Jones
EDUCATION SECRETARY: Eric Zucker
SOCIETY NEWS EDITOR: Martin Chick
ASSISTANT " " : Pam Chick

There is one new name listed above, that of Mrs Chris Sheldon of Worcester AS. She has agreed to stand to allow Dave Powell to retire gracefully.

Nominations are required for the following:
MEETINGS ORGANISER
PUBLICITY OFFICER
Possible assistant to the secretary.

Regional Representatives:

Groups of societies within any specific region are reminded that, if they have not already done so, they may choose their own representative to join the FAS Council. This representative becomes a full member of Council with voting rights. Such a representative can be selected at any time and the position is not up for election at the AGM. The duties of such a representative are ill-defined but it is hoped that he/she will keep a watching brief on changes which take place in the region in order to keep the Handbook up to date. In addition, having seen at first hand the workings of the Council, the representative may take on a more demanding position, in time.

The Chilterns Group have just informed Council that their rep is John Smith, 26 Mahoney Court, Oakridge Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2NH

The Yorkshire Group rep is currently producing a Handbook, (the third) giving data about each society in the group, irrespective of whether the society is a Federation member. A useful information source for Yorkshire astronomers.

The regular work of the FAS continues. The Secretary has handled a large volume of mail from outside bodies and individuals. In particular letters asking for the address of their local Society. It would appear that interest in Astronomy remains high and I do hope this is reflected in an increase in membership of your Society.

The Handbook continues to be widely distributed, and we have gone to great lengths to update the information contained in its pages. We do however still rely on local knowledge, so if you know something is incorrect do let us know as well. The Calendar is another very popular publication and this work has now been joined by a new publication, a "Beginners' Guide", this also has rapidly become established as a worthwhile, well written work. These together with an excellent Newsletter should prove that the FAS offers unparalleled support to all Societies. The message here, we are in touch with the grass roots but if we are to continue to be at the forefront of amateur astronomy it is vital you out there continue to keep in touch with us. More Societies are joining us and overall numbers are increasing and yet this is sometimes spoilt when perhaps through oversight some fall by the wayside. With this in mind our future crucial role for the FAS is to find out why this happens and what can be done to overcome it. Remember the bigger the membership the more strength we have and this we will need if we are to tackle major issues, such as astronomy in education, and light pollution.

We know that geographically most societies lie in the South East but we have not forgotten the rest of the country and will continue to hold, besides Herstonconex and Coventry, a Northern Convention. Here again the message must be wherever you live the Federation is not far away.

Regular Council meetings are held in London and these are very well attended considering the distances members have to travel.

On the negative side looking back to my last report, some things have fallen by the way-side. Public Liability Insurance did not have the support we required. We have not yet produced a FAS bookmark but perhaps most important we have not come up with any new ideas for our Competition sponsored by Spaceprints, but Rome was not built in a day and I feel sure our achievements outweigh the negative side of things.

The FAS Council is always open to requests from member Societies to participate in joint ventures etc.

Please attend the AGM and Convention this year with your ideas for the future of the Federation, and how it should best promote the activities of Local Societies. Remember unity is our strength.

Still after beating the drum it is time for me to stand down from Council. I regret very much having to do this and the only reason for going is due to change in circumstances. I am unable to travel on the week-end to Council meetings and as Secretary one of the jobs includes taking the minutes, and so I will hand over to someone else.

I joined the Council in 1984, became Secretary in 1985 and have enjoyed my time and involvement immensely. I may be accused of bias but I consider the Federation to be the true friend of amateurs and societies in this country. I shall miss the involvement and friendships made very much indeed. I should like to thank all my colleagues for their help, advice and above all friendship that I will always value.

Whoever succeeds me I wish the very best of luck, you could not join a better organization.

Dave Powell
Hon Secretary

I think that all will agree that the Federation has had another successful year, with an increase in the number of member societies over last year. This is an encouraging trend, which I hope will continue. In addition to the FAS ASTROCALENDAR, which has now become an established publication alongside the HANDBOOK, we now have the BEGINNER'S GUIDE, written by Stephen Lubbock of T. Bridgend AS, which seems to be well received. Council's thanks are due to Brian Jones, who has arranged the printing of all three, as well as the NEWSLETTER. In attempting to give the Federation a higher profile in the North a Convention was organised at Jodrell Bank on March 5th, to follow on from that at the AAC a couple of years previously. Speaking of Conventions, Council are in desperate need of a Meetings Organisation; this post has remained vacant since Mr Pace retired a few years ago, and the task has fallen onto the shoulders of other Council members, who already have their own jobs to carry out. It is on fair that the burden is spread, and I invite member societies to submit the names of any enthusiastic member who think might be able to help. Perhaps could have one from the North and one from the South. Maybe some of the local groups, eg SAGAS and Yorkshire can fill someone?

Lastly it is my pleasant task to thank all members of Council for their effort over the last year. I'm sure that none will have any objection to my singling out Rosemary Naylor for all her hard work on the NEWSLETTER and in arranging Jodrell Bank and this year's Coventry meeting, and Ken Marcus who, as in previous years, organised Herstonconex as a highlight of the FAS year, and to mention his keeping our finances on the straight and narrow. Dave Powell, secretary since 1985, retires at the end of the year and we are grateful to him for the hard work put in over the past three years.

BOB OWENS 1988 February 24

REPORT OF THE EDUCATION SECRETARY *****

A steady trickle of enquiries of an educational nature continues to arrive throughout the year, and these are answered directly. Sometimes the enquiry relates directly to school courses or curricula, and in this case they are of interest to the Association for Astronomy Education. In view of the "accord" between the FAS and AAE (together with the RAS, BAA and JAS) these enquiries are also brought to attention of the AAE; replies to the enquiries are answered directly by the FAS Education Secretary after consultation with the AAE.

As a matter of interest, the first meeting of the AAE Council on which representatives of other astronomical organisations were present took place 20 February 1988. At this meeting it was decided that these representatives be full members of the AAE Council, full voting rights, and not merely representatives of their parent body. In this way the function of the AAE body linking other astronomical organisations on educational matter been established.

ERIC ZUCKER 25 February 1988

Editors Report on page