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Issue 29

Federation of Astronomical Societies

AUTUMN CONVENTION

September 26th 1992
The Pippard Lecture Theatre
Cavendish Laboratory
Madingley Road
Cambridge.
(Opposite RGO & IOA)

Speakers to include:

Dr PAUL MURDIN on SUPERNOVAE
Dr RODNEY BUCKLAND on
THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE YEAR AND
THE AMATEUR ASTRONOMER
Other speakers to be arranged.

Visits to RGO, IOA and MRAO.
(Limited numbers on visits. Tickets on day)

Doors open 9.00 a.m.
Lectures start 10.00 a.m.

Ploughman's Lunch available £3.00
(please book in advance)

Tickets

Members of FAS £3.50 Non-members £4.50

Please book tickets and lunch in
advance from Alan Drummond,
27 York Road, CRAWLEY,
W. Sussex, RH10 5JS
Adequate Car Parking on site.

As part of their Society display at the Autumn Convention, Cambridge Astronomical Association will have an exhibition of the Moon Rocks (by courtesy of the British National Space Council). If you haven't seen them come along. Otherwise you will have missed the chance to see geological specimens that cost more than the Crown Jewels!

HOW ABOUT A HOLIDAY AT THE ASTROCAMPS?

August 15th - 5th September.
Contact Norman Fisher, 5 Dagmar Rd, London SE25 5HZ
S.A.E. appreciated.

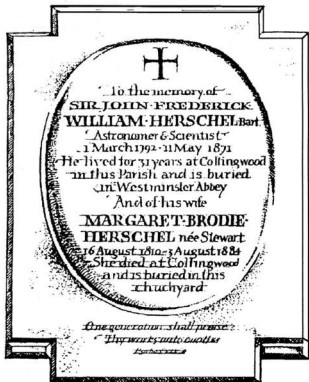
ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT LIGHT POLLUTION?

At the AGM in Coventry the question was raised as to whether the FAS was doing anything about light pollution - of course yes! Some individuals are and certainly some SAGAS societies are active.

Dr Chris Baddiley, who is on the committee of the Campaign for Dark Skies, the BS Lighting Committee and represents CPRE spoke from the floor, he pointed out the fact that the CFDS produces a News Fact sheet and these are available from the BAA. He suggested that rather than splitting the voice of the amateur community we should pull together. If you want advice write to the BAA. Write constructive letters to authorities quoting waste of electricity, damaging the interest of science etc. High pressure sodium lights having a smaller light source can be used effectively in full cut-off fittings. The Lighting Officer for Portsmouth is installing full cut-off fittings where possible. Full cut-off lights are being installed on most motorways as they are upgraded.

More to follow as it is revealed.

I had a letter from Dr Allan Chapman about this Memorial - to be unveiled at St. Laurence Church, Hawkhurst, Kent by Patrick Moore on 6th August. The Memorial has been partly paid for by the Royal Society, The Herschel Society of Japan and others. If you wish to donate something please contact Mary Ellingworth, 10 Marine Parade, Budleigh Salterton, Devon, EX9 6NS



The memorial to be erected in memory of Sir John Herschel.

Yes, I know, I made a real real time in the last newsletter by not including the date of the Leicester Convention - I was so relieved at having received the finalised programme that something as obvious as the date missed me. I am sorry - but it had appeared in the two previous newsletters!

Another observing season rushes towards us - by the time you get the next newsletter at the end of September we will be looking forward to the long dark clear nights of winter. I certainly hope that we do get some. But the chances are that even if the skies are cloud-free, Pinatubo and other volcanoes will have put so much rubbish into the stratosphere that observing will be difficult and the odd good night should not be wasted.

Living where we do, the good nights are really still very good, but supermarket lights and by-pass roundabout lights are creeping up on us and on mediocre nights we now have an orange fog up to 45° nearly all round. If you have the same problem (or maybe a worse one) write to your County Planning Department. Follow Chris Baddiley's ideas of being constructive - it does work, we have had a meeting with our County Lighting Engineer, who wasn't pro-astronomy but at least listened and presented his point of view. He has issued the BSI recommendation on Light Spillage to all developers in the County. Something good might just come out of it! Try it, if everyone did maybe they wouldn't just say 'Tough, but you are a minority!'. Clear and clean skies. Ken Sheldon.

AGM & CONVENTION

May 2nd at Coventry

The AGM was attended by members from 20 odd societies. Discussions about Light Pollution and Regional Groups took place. Tony Balfour was elected President and Rosemary Naylor was elected to the post of Publicity Officer. Subscriptions were raised for the first time in 10 years. It was decided to have four newsletters a year. In the afternoon the speakers were Prof. Peter Wilmore talking "Hot Gas", Dr Bryn Cooke on "Gamma Ray Bursters" and Paul Money with a report of his failure in 1992 to beat his 1991 Messier Marathon record. A very instructive and entertaining afternoon. Subscriptions. £9.00 for Societies with more than 25 members. £5.00 for Societies with fewer than 25 members. £5.00 for individuals.

Publication dates for Newsletter.

March 14th	deadline February 23rd
June 14th	deadline May 26th
September 14th	deadline August 26th
December 10th	deadline November 21st

If you have material for a newsletter please get it to me (the Editor) by the deadline, as it does take a little time to get the newsletters printed, counted out and mailed.

A.S. OF HARINGEY Meet on the third Wednesday of the month at the Palm Court Area of Alexandra Palace starting at 8.00 p.m. Contact Wally Baker on 081 888 6528 for more details. Meetings recently have covered topics like "Turing Machines" by Steve Cook, telescope making, "Binary Stars" with Konrad Malin-Smith and "Inflation" by Iain Nicholson. 2002 the ASH newsletter has carried some fascinating articles on Solar Observing by Paul Clements including a description of wire-brushing off the aluminizing of his telescope optics. Lots of other good stuff.

AYLESBURY A.S. Meet at the Observatory on the first Monday of the month. Contact Ian Welland on 0494 438090 for more details. It seems as though the 24" telescope will be fully operational for the coming winter as a result of members hard work. Speakers have included Dr Allan Chapman on "William Lassell", John Smith on "Leo" and Paul Atkins on "Computers for Amateur Astronomers". A solar telescope using unsilvered optics was shown by Di Parsons and John Yewen. At the AGM Ian Welland took over as Secretary. Tony Balfour became President of the FAS. Several members attended Coventry.

B.A.S.S. Meet fortnightly at either St. John's Centre, Palmeira Square, Hove or 27 Palmeira Avenue, Hove. Contact Terri Fearn on Brighton 581553 for more details. Speakers have included Dr. Robert Smith on "Large Telescopes", Dr Peter Thomas with "The Big Bang", Dr Stuart Malin "Inside the Earth". Internal speakers have included Eric Gibson and Ken Marcus.

BEDFORD A.S. The Society meet at Bedford School at 7.30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of the month. Contact Dave Eagle on 02302 5256 for details of the programme. Speakers in the recent past have included Paul Money talking about "Rings and Things". The Annual Quiz with Cambridge took place. The Newsletter is usually full of interest with observing notes, maps for observing, a Charlie Brown cartoon, articles and letters not to forget a good front cover picture.

BIRMINGHAM A.S. Meet regularly at the University of Aston. Contact Andy Salmon on 021 565 4845 for more details. Speakers in the past few months have included Chris Sheldon on "Solar Observing" and Dennis Buczynski talking about Condor Brow (the repository of the Birmingham mirror). A Beer and Skittles evening was arranged for the early summer.

BRIDGEND A.S. Contact Keith Clark for details about meetings on 0656 664 274. The Newsletter with a new Editor has observing notes plus many good articles.

CAMBRIDGE A.A. The Association is well placed for speakers - these have included Prof. Sir Hermann Bondi on "Why is the Sky dark at night?" and Brian Mack fresh from La Palma talking on "Large Telescope Design". Added to their good speakers Cambridge have at last obtained a good site for their Observatory out to the West of the city. The Society are blessed with several good telescopes so the Observatory will be well used. The Junior Group seems to be

flourishing with talks on the Death of the Dinosaurs and The Summer Sky and outer planets. A 'professionally produced' video of Cambridge Astronomy looks interesting. Lunar rocks will feature in September.

CARDIFF A.S. Meet in the University of Cardiff, Park Place, Cardiff, on alternate Thursdays. Contact Dave Powell on 0222 551704 for more information. C.A.S. managed to stage a talk by David Malin - remember last September - weren't they fortunate? The Society have a varied programme of speakers, observing evenings at Duffryn Gardens. The person to talk to about these is Hugh Lang on 0222 754211. A new newsletter Editor in Martin Chick means changes but it looks good.

CHESTER A.S. Meet at the South View Community Centre, Chester on the last Monday of the month, except in August and December. It is the aim of the Society to arrange a varied range of lectures throughout the year along with a meeting given over to members activities. Lecturers this year so far have been Dr Ralph Spencer, Dr M. Bailey, Prof. Ian Robson, Prof. Peter Wilmore. Still to come are R. Baum, Dr Allan Chapman and Prof. Andrew Lyne. Over the last few years we have organised several very interesting trips to observatories and places of astronomical interest.

For further information contact Stella Brookes, on 051 339 8647.

COTSWOLD A.S. have their usual busy season with most meetings being presentations by members. A group went to BAA Winchester weekend and other members have trekked around the country to events such as the Astrophotography meeting at Cambridge. For details of the programme which includes Star Parties contact the Coordinator Trevor Talbot on 0386 881595

CRAWLEY A.S. (Editor's note: I know that I said that comparisons are invidious and that I should stop making them when looking at newsletters but I did say "WOW!" when I looked at the May Newsletter with a full-colour A4 picture of M13 on the cover - my colour was GREEN! - congratulations to Colin Russell). The committee are contacting schools about Astronomy in the National Curriculum. They are also looking for an observing site and encouraging beginners. Visits to other Societies are to be continued. A grazing occultation was attempted on 11th March but was clouded out. Pity since 5 telescopes were available. The lecture programme included Andrew Dale on "Indian Observatories", Peter Gill with "Solar Astronomy" and a visitor on "Computational Astronomy". The newsletter contains comprehensive observing notes with good maps in the May issue of the Polar Comets. Meetings are at Ifield Community Centre on first and third Thursdays of the month. Contact Andrew Dale on 0403 56932 for more info.

HAMPSHIRE ASTRONOMICAL GROUP
The Group meet regularly on Fridays at the

Is Your Society Interested in RADIO-ASTRONOMY?

If it is, contact Malcolm Jones of Norwich A.S. or the Editor with information about your activities. The FAS would like to bring like-minded Societies together.

second Friday of the month usually at Clonfield Memorial Hall. Recent speakers have included Dr John Mason on "The Hubble Space Telescope" and Storm Dunlop on "Variable Stars". Contact Roy Dodds on 0705 254032 for more details. The Group have had some success over Light Pollution problems but they do have help from Gerry Davis!

HARROGATE A.S. Meet at Harlow Hill Methodist Church Hall, Otley Road, Harrogate on the last Friday of the month - contact Paul Barton, 31 Gordon Avenue, Harrogate, N.Yorks HG1 3DH for more details. Lectures have included "Yorkshire Astronomy" by Martin Dawson and "SETI - are we alone?" by Neil Haggath. Observatory meetings are a regular feature and the bimonthly newsletter carries observing data.

HEART OF ENGLAND A.S. Talk to Gary Poyner via TA for details of Society meetings. Gary is now very active in publicising TA and its advantages. The Society has a well planned observing programme and produces some good astrophotography in spite of the location - between Birmingham and Coventry. The new format newsletter is well produced and very interesting.

LA SOCIETE GUERNESIAISE A.S. The Society have just celebrated their 20th Anniversary with three Star Nights at the Observatory and with an Astronomical Treasure Hunt and Supper. They are an active Society with lectures and a working Observatory. If you are having a holiday on Guernsey why not give David Le Conte a ring on 64847 and find out about the meetings in the summer.

LETCHWORTH A.S. Meet at Plinston Hall, Letchworth on the last Thursday of the month. Ring Eric Hutton on 0462 431 988 for more details. The Society is questioning the use of expert speakers. This is interesting since I put myself out to go to hear a professional but might just find I have something more important on if the speaker is internal!!! The Society continues to run Star Parties and is also active in the fight against Light Pollution. The well produced Newsletter is excellent value and has a wide range of astronomical articles plus lots of Starbase One and NASA Bulletin Board material together with observing notes.

LIVERPOOL A.S. Meet on the 3rd Friday of the month beginning at 7.00 p.m. at The City Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool. Contact Dave Whittle, 17 Sandy Lane, Tuebrook, Liverpool, L13 0BT. The Convention in March was successful and well attended. The Society has had several outside speakers including Chris Baddley on Astronomical Computing. Activities in the North have meant that many Liverpool members have been travelling. (Manchester Centenary, AAC and Cosmos). Newsletter normally has comprehensive observing notes and Space news.

LUTON A.S. A communication reads "After several years of fund raising the Luton A.S. has finally completed the restoration of the 15" Dall-Kirkham Cassegrain, donated to the Society by the late Helena Dall. The telescope has been re-housed in a new all-aluminium observatory made by Astro-Promotions and is sited within the grounds of Putteridge Bury College near Luton.

invitation to any person who knew Horace Dall to the opening ceremony, which will take place on SATURDAY OCTOBER 10th.

The programme is being finalised, but the opening will be performed by Dr. P. Moore. Any person wishing to attend should write to the Secretary, Mr D. White, "Kingsfold", 14a Back Street, Clophill, Beds., NK45 4BY including a S.A.S.E. for further details.

MANCHESTER A.S. Celebrated 100 years of astronomy with a Cheese and Wine Party on 30th April. Guests included Professor Sir Francis Graham Smith, Professor Kahn, Lord Mayor of Manchester and the great-nephew of the founder of the Observatory. The Society have also published a History of M.A.S. obtainable from the Society.

NORTH EAST LONDON A.S. Meet on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 3 p.m. in the Park Room, Wanstead House, 21 The Green, Wanstead, E11. Contact Bernard Beeston on 081 363 5696 for more details. Speakers have included Tony Sizer on "Legends of the Skies", John Fisher on "Astrology - science or superstition" (which looked to be a very well reasoned and lucid talk). Alan Drummond gave a talk on "Eclipses". Speakers for the forthcoming Autumn include Konrad Malin-Smith. Newsletter has useful observing notes.

SALFORD A.S. Contact Kath Redford on 061 794 3179 for Society details. The society has had a fairly busy time travelling around to events. Visits to Manchester AS's Observatory (18 members), Jodrell Bank (20 members) to hear Patrick Moore, the Liverpool Convention (24 members and Ken Irving was a contributing speaker), Easter Star Party at Todmorden and The Webb Society AGM at Cambridge (4 members) show the interest in the Society for visits. It hasn't all been travelling though. Members have been observing Nova Cygni (with observations to TA), Markarian 421 and Comet Tanaka Machholz. Shoemaker Levy has also been seen. The Society has loaned Observatory 'Props' for a drama film being produced by the Manchester Advanced Film Project. This will be on T.V. in September with Salford AS's name amongst the credits. Congratulations to two members of the Society Chris Jordan and Sarah Brough who were married at Eccles Parish Church on June 20th. There was a good Society representation.

PLEASE DON'T FORGET SALFORD'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY ON SEPTEMBER 6TH

SOLENT A.A The Toothill (Bertha C. Weston) Observatory should now be completed if the timetable in the Newsletter has been adhered to. Similarly the Ithen (Erni Mason) Observatory is nearly complete. Apart from the labouring the Society have been to The Norman Lockyer Observatory now run by Sidmouth AS for an observing session. Observing notes feature in the Newsletter. Contact Ken Medway on 0703 582204 for more information.

SOUTH EAST KENT A.S. Meet formally at the Dover Community Centre. Informal meetings at members homes. Contact George Goodfellow on 0304 375640 for more details. The programme has included a talk by Dr Ken Smith on "New Light on Comets", solar observing (practical) and a quiz. For the future R. Pickard will talk on "Photoelectric Photometry & Variable Stars", a

& Wine party. The nicely produced Newsletter has reports of meetings, observing notes, some computing and general articles.

SOUTH WEST HERTS A.S. The Society were saddened by the death of the long-time Treasurer Maurice Newman. Talks have included one on "The North Galactic Pole and its surrounding Constellations" by Richard Westwood. A few days later Richard was seriously injured in an accident on his bicycle. We all hope that he has recovered. Tony Fanning also spoke on "Sir John Herschel". Observing sessions are held at High Top Observatory. Contact Brian Bloomfield at 58 Whitelands Avenue, Chorleywood, Herts for details of next year's programme.

WEST OF LONDON A.S. The Society meet on the 2nd Monday of the month at The Nave, Windsor Street, in the centre of Uxbridge. Talk to Arthur Davis on 081 866 3858 to confirm programme and to check on venue. Speakers have included Piers Corbin on "Formation of Galaxies" and Dr John Mason on "Comets, past, present and future". Observing sessions are held in the High Wycombe area.

WEST YORKS A.S. The Society meet weekly at The Rosse Observatory, Carleton Centre, Carleton Grange, Carleton. Contact Robin Taylor on Wakefield 823507 for details of meetings. Because they meet so frequently WYAS have a long list of speakers - they might be a good society to contact if you are looking for a speaker. Ken White, Pete Lunn, George Senior, Trevor Sutton seem to be names that crop up regularly. Guest speakers have included Neville Kidger, something of an expert in Soviet Rocketry and Neil Haggath on "Islands in Space" I must not go on about "Phobos" but it is still a super production.

WOLVERHAMPTON A.S. Contact Malcolm Astley on 0902 782212 for details of the WAS meetings on alternate Mondays at Beckminster Methodist Church Hall. The Magazine "Lyr" is full of astronomical information, some of it news but a lot of it is very useful and instructive which with the Observing Notes make it very well worth looking at.

WORCESTER A.S. Meet on 2nd Thursday of the month at Worcester College of H.E. Contact Ian Gray on 0386 47352 for details. Speakers have included Ian Gray on "Exobiology", Dick Chambers on "Megalithic Astronomy" and Dr Bob Warwick on "ROSAT". Open evenings have contained much of interest including shots of Jupiter, stars and the Sun (in H α) taken with a small video camera. The Newsletter Skywatch uses the full power of Archimedes technology with grabbed video images, sky charts and photographs.

WORTHING A.S. The Society has maintained its usual hectic pace of meetings. Six or seven a month seems normal, many of these are practical sessions, viewing or photography at the Society's observatory or at a member's home. Lectures have included "Clouds" by Dr B. Hopkins and a talk on "Giotto Encounter with Grig-Skjellerup" by Dr J. Zarnecki plus talks by local members. The newsletter has the usual observing notes plus some unusual ones (H α and occultations) and an ongoing series on Celestial Phasor Diagrams. Absolutely fascinating.

Some of you might have seen the name before if you subscribe to TA. John is a member of Salford A.S. and lives at Boothstown, Worsley 8 miles west of Manchester and has made 50000 recorded observations of variable stars. John who is 31 made his first measurement on 1975 January 4 and his 50000 was made 1992 February 8 at 18.36 U.T.

The majority of these observations have been made from his back garden against the increasing light pollution from the City. He uses 12x50 binoculars for most of his observations of bright stars, a 20cm Schmidt Cassegrain and a 41cm Newtonian for the fainter objects. His observations go to TA, H.A.A. and to the B.A.A. where John is Chart Secretary of the Variable Star Section.

It now seems however that John will be very much restricted in his activities. His work is now affected by direct light trespass from high mast, high pressure sodium street lamps, which have been installed to within a short distance of his observing area by the local Council. The reaction of the Salford City Council spokesman was to be expected. "While we have tried to help Mr Toone as much as we can, including painting out part of the lanterns, lighting of the highway has got to be the main priority for safety reasons. It is ironic that most people like lighting to fall in their gardens because it does give added security". (Ed - I put the last sentence in italics to highlight it. That was the same comment made by the Hereford & Worcester Lighting Engineer when we met him a few days ago. It must be a very much an urban desire, since in the village in which we live it certainly does not appear to be true.)

John is faced with the need to move to a darker site or to modify his astronomy. It does seem to be a sad state of affairs that this should be so. I wonder if the fact that he is regularly mentioned in IAU telegrams makes him a registered Observatory with a special dispensation in terms of local lighting? If he is, the restrictions on lighting are quite stringent and unlike most lighting laws they are enforceable.

STIRLING ASTRONOMY WEEKEND

4-6 September

Places are still available through Roger Lynn, 25 Pullar Avenue, Bridge of Allen, Stirling FK9 4TB or on 0786 832689. The Astronomer Royal has unfortunately had to withdraw, but he is being replaced by Dr. Patrick Moore, who will give a Public Lecture on the Saturday night. Although part of the Weekend tickets will be available separately.

Dates for 1993

May 1st A G M &
Convention
July 11th Summer Convention
with Chilterns Group.
September 25th Autumn
Convention

Hardback (0 521 38199 1) £35.00
Paperback (0 521 79693 X) £13.95
Cambridge University Press 1992

ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE AMATEUR

by Michael Covington.

Hardback (0 521 41305 2) £25.00
Paperback (0 521 40984 5) £13.95
Cambridge University Press 1992

Dr. Scott Birney describes his book as providing a ready reference of a practical nature, catering for the needs of advanced undergraduates who lack sources of information on everyday astronomy. The book is, in fact, based on a course on astronomical techniques given at Wellesley College.

Where necessary theory is required, the author explains this in detail - the reader is not fobbed off with statements such as: It can be proved that.... Thus, to take an example, it is really basic to the practical astronomer to have a knowledge of the celestial sphere and coordinate systems. Even at the level of the advanced undergraduate one comes across students who do not *really* understand terms such as Right Ascension, sidereal time and hour angle. Dr. Birney allocates 27 pages to this basic information. There are about 15 pages devoted to the mathematics of the spherical triangle.

Even though professional astronomers nowadays rarely make visual observations at the telescope, these largely having been replaced by CCDs, the section on the human eye is welcome; amateur astronomers who do not have access to such sophisticated techniques will find this useful.

The chapter on observing the Sun progresses from using small telescopes, to solar photography, the spectrohelioscope and the coronagraph. There is a comprehensive chapter dealing with radio astronomy.

At the end of each chapter a number of questions are posed for the reader, which serve as a check on progress made. There is also a comprehensive bibliography. There are 5 appendices, one of which deals with some mathematical aspects of the subject and another on the CCD.

References to photography are scattered throughout the book, but the main description of this technique appears as another appendix. Perhaps it is because this is a subject which requires special treatment that not more space is devoted to it. Astronomy (certainly as practised by the amateur) without photography would be reduced to almost nothing! This makes it even more important for the student to read the appendix.

However the reader will find the other book reviewed here, "Astrophotography for the Amateur", virtually takes over where "Observational Astronomy" leaves off. The 1992 revised edition shows the great advances made in this field since the first edition six years earlier. This book is aimed at the amateur, contains virtually no mathematics, and requires no previous knowledge by the reader as long as he is prepared to read it through carefully from cover to cover. It could be used as a work of reference, but it is far more satisfying to read the whole book first - it is reader-friendly and very

answering.

The book is divided into three parts: "Getting started" for the beginner, followed by "Advanced Techniques" and then a survey of cameras, films and processing techniques. As one would expect, there are photographs of one kind or another on almost every page. The author suggests the use of colour slide film because one is then least likely to experience things going wrong in the hands of the processors. The only thing likely to cause problems is incorrect cutting, as the black background makes it difficult to find the gaps between exposures: the processor can be instructed, however, to leave the film uncut.

The beginners section explains how to photograph the Moon, eclipses, comets and meteors without optical aid; the advanced section brings in the telescope and explains how to indulge in deep-sky photography. The last section deals with choice of camera, film and developing. A book of this sort would be incomplete without specialised appendices, and included here are tables giving exposure times for various celestial objects. There is also an appendix on computer programs.

Both books are similar in format and style. Whereas "Observational Astronomy" is couched in language familiar to the undergraduate student (but still understandable by others), "Astrophotography for the Amateur" is written in a more chatty style (but still useful to the undergraduate).

I would recommend, without reservation, both books as a complementary pair to FAS members and other amateur astronomers. Eric Zucker June 1992

FAS HANDBOOK 1993

This will be published in December - But I need Articles for the book itself and more speakers. Articles should be on topics likely to interest Societies or groups in a Society (for instance Weather Satellites or Radio Astronomy) or alternatively on the legalities or needs of running a Society. On a PC or BBC disk would be fine. I undertake to return disks. If you or your Society have a member or members who can talk to other Societies on our usual terms - expenses only - please let me know in the format followed in the Handbook - name, contact address, telephone and topics.

SECRETARIES!

If your Society news does not appear it might be that you haven't sent your news to me - Ken Sheldon. We can't expect Pam & Martin Chick to keep forwarding material indefinitely. Equally if facts about your Society are incorrect maybe you should tell me or Chris about it!

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Council of the FAS.

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