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Issue 32

Federation of Astronomical Societies

F.A.S. A.G.M. Herbert Lecture Theatre Coventry Saturday 1st May 1993

Doors Open 9.30 AGM Begins 11.00

Lectures in afternoon.

See your Society Secretary for details of speakers.

Please come - 6 members from a Society means a free sub for 1993/94.

Come along with some ideas for the future.

There is adequate car parking within 400 metres of the Hall.

Tea & Coffee available.

Admission £3.50 for the day.

Book through your Society Secretary.

OFFICERS REPORTS 1992/1993

The President

The Federation has had a good year with three splendid conventions, for which praise and thanks are due to all concerned; we intend to have three more good ones this year to keep up the standard! The Year Book becomes better value with each passing year, and a lot of time has been spent in helping Astronomical Societies and individuals, whether members or not, particularly by the Secretaries. I should like to give my thanks, and I hope I may say yours too, to them and to all the Council members for their hard work and for all they have achieved.

Astronomy is now included in the National Curriculum, which gives us a great opportunity to join the Association for Astronomy Education in helping schools and teachers. We have attended each other's Council meetings to discuss the best way forward, and there will be a speaker from the AAE at Coventry to explain things more fully. The approaches will probably have to come from teachers in the first instance but I hope all Societies will give whatever help they can, depending upon their circumstances and facilities. It is a great chance to share astronomy with others, and it may also lead to many keen new members!

The use of video recorders at

conventions has been discussed by Council as tapes of lectures are of great value to those who were unable to get to the meeting, and also to those like me who are sometimes a little slow in absorbing information. But the agreement of the speaker must be obtained beforehand, and the tapes only shown within affiliated societies so that there are no questions of commercial use or copyright difficulties. Anyone who wants to make a video tape must ask the Chairman of the meeting before the lecture, so that he can get the speakers consent.

We hope that our members are not dissatisfied with our efforts, but we always need new people on Council if we are not to stagnate. If you think that you could do a job better - which is something everybody should quite properly feel from time to time - then come and join us and show us how, by writing to the Secretary beforehand or standing forward at the AGM. Thank you all for your help and support; now tell us how we can do a better job for you, or better still come and do it!

The Secretary

The FAS has once again kept me busy throughout the year. There have been 3 Council meetings and an extraordinary council meeting regarding change of Building Society. There have been 7 Council newsletters.

General correspondence has been

answered as follows:-

42 written replies to enquiries for nearest societies, plus some telephone enquiries,

19 replies to letters asking about FAS publications, FAS information and application for membership, including one from Nigeria.

58 giving help with school/college projector or helping teachers - including advising them to buy the AAE workbooks.

1 to a college in Cuba giving help with obtaining information for astronomy teaching from a college in Cuba.

There have been various other enquiries and letters and telephone calls connected with organising conventions, and telephone calls between Council members when necessary.

The Secretary and Editor have attended all FAS conventions and represented the FAS at the NASS at Sutton Coldfield in December. We have continued to work with the JAS and the BAA where applicable. Pam Spence was invited to attend Council meetings and has been co-opted onto the Council initially to act as liaison officer with other Astronomical organisations.

Education Secretary

Links between the FAS and AAE have existed for several years. Thus there has been cross-representation on each other's

Councils. Both share an interest in astronomy education. These links have been strengthened, following a meeting between the Presidents of each organisation in September, by increasing the representations on the relevant Councils: Pam Spence a co-opted member of the FAS Council, now attends AAE Councils and Alexandra Lovell, an AAE Councillor, attends FAS Councils. The FAS Education Secretary is also a member of the AAE Council.

An article by Pam Spence in this issue of the FAS newsletter spells out in more detail some of these points. In particular, there has been a questionnaire on astronomy education, organised jointly by the FAS and the AAE. All FAS affiliated Societies should have copies of this questionnaire. It appears, so far, that 50 completed questionnaires have been received out of about 120 sent out. A further 80 were sent to non-affiliated societies but few of these have replied.

It has been my practice to refer to the AAE queries sent to me, particularly if the query was concerned with the wider educational scene from which everyone would benefit. Occasionally we get questions which are more "local", and often these are referred to a local society.

Of interest to FAS societies is another questionnaire emanating from the AAE addressed to A-level examination boards, asking for information on astronomy in their syllabuses. It is hoped to report on this at the AGM. (Note: this is not the GCSE, in which astronomy is a compulsory part of the national curriculum)

Editor

The production of the Handbook, four newsletters, several flyers including the letter from the DOE - I hope that you wrote to them asking them to install "good" lighting - and several different forms have meant plenty of work for the Editor. He hopes that the newsletter covers as much Society news as possible and thanks all Societies who send him information for publishing.

Liaison Officer

The FAS wishes to work closely with other national astronomy organisations, particularly in the areas where a common voice is needed most, for example in astronomy education. To this end, closer links have been formed with the Association for Astronomy Education. The FAS now sends a representative to AAE Council meetings and an AAE Council member has been asked to join us to keep us informed of educational issues. Their representative, Alexandra Lovell, has written a short explanatory note about the AAE. This appears below.

So many people are battling in isolation to educate teachers and school children now astronomy is part of the National Curriculum. Hopefully communication between us will help us sort out the fragmented mine field of astronomy education.

KEN MARCUS: A biography

It is with sadness that I have to announce the death of our colleague and friend Ken Marcus, until recently treasurer of the FAS. Ken died in hospital, peacefully, on January 13th, 1993 after a period of illness.

Those of you at the AGM in 1991 will remember his happy smiling face when he was presented with a silver salver by Council on his retirement after ten years as Federation treasurer. He knew then of his illness and wanted to make a smooth transition from himself to his successor.

Ken took over the office of treasurer in 1981 after the sudden death of Peter Laycock, then treasurer, who developed an illness at the total eclipse in Siberia that year. The Brighton AS had a record of service to the FAS and Ken was well placed to pick up the reins. In fact Ken was in harness not only as treasurer but over the years became the mainstay of the FAS Council.

He helped with the organisation of Herstoncoex in 1982 and 1983. Then from 1984 onwards was organiser-in-chief of this memorable annual event. It was the hard work which he and others put in at the Herstoncoex Conventions which turned around the FAS finances from being in a very rocky state when he took over, to its present reasonably stable state. Member societies will be aware that year after year FAS subscriptions remained unaltered, when other societies were raising theirs in line with inflation.

During the ten years in office, Ken took on more and more responsibilities, beyond the normal duties of a treasurer. He held and distributed the various FAS publications, another source of income. Yet he never lost sight of the aims of the Federation, that activities should be for the benefits of members. Thus prices charged for publications and slides, which he also distributed, were usually little more than at cost.

His influence with the rest of the Council was enormous. While other officers changed around him, he became the fixed centre around whom we all revolved. He became the one person to whom one referred when no one else was the obvious authority. It exasperated him at times that he had to carry so much on his shoulders but he remained patient with us.

At FAS conventions he missed most of the fun as he did more than his share of "behind the counter" duties. Yet he took this on willingly, saying that he had heard all the best speakers already at his own society.

On retirement from the Treasurer's role, Ken still attended FAS Council meetings as the SAGAS regional representative until his last meeting in October 1992, when his comments were still listened to with respect. If all of this makes him sound hard working and dedicated, yes he was. But we also remember him for his sense of fun. His humour was legendary, or perhaps I should say notorious, for we were none of us safe from his pithy comments. His dry humour is what many of us will remember best.

Who else could have us smiling at some detail of a balance sheet?

We loved you Ken and appreciate all that you did for the Federation of Astronomical Societies through good years and bad. Long may you remain in our thoughts.

Rosemary Naylor; FAS Council 1980-1993

ASTRONOMY EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires are notorious for eliciting little or no response, so it was with the expectation of having only a few percent filled in and returned, that the joint FAS/AAE questionnaire on societies' involvement with astronomy education was sent out with the last FAS Newsletter. It was sent to about 200 local amateur astronomical societies, 120 of whom are affiliated with the FAS. It is therefore very pleasing that a preliminary report can be issued, based on 40 replies, after only six weeks since sending out the questionnaire.

Of course, care must be taken in interpreting results based on only 20% of returns, mainly because interested societies are more likely to have responded than those not interested in becoming involved with astronomy education.

Out of the 40 replies, 85% of the societies have had contact in some way with their local schools over the past 12 months; 73% have given talks to school children, 20% have talked to teacher groups and 68% have provided information on astronomy to schools.

Looking at the 34 societies that have had some involvement with local schools, it is interesting to see that initial contact is fairly evenly divided between the schools and the societies: 41% of initial contact came from the schools, 33% from societies and 26% replying that it came from both sides.

Only 2 out of the 34 societies that have been involved with local schools replied that they did not wish to become further involved; these two societies are already doing a great deal.

Out of the 6 societies who have not had any involvement with schools at all, only one showed total disinterest in doing so. The other 5 indicate that the main reason they have not yet become involved is that they have never been approached.

The societies were asked what materials they would find most useful to be supplied to them: an overview of astronomy in the National Curriculum, ideas for talks/demonstrations or accounts/examples of what other societies are doing in this field. The overwhelming response was, yes please: all three! Additional resources asked for were suitable visual aids (eg slides, models etc). It appears that many societies throughout the country are helping to inform both teachers and children about astronomy. It is also apparent that many societies feel they are working in a vacuum and would welcome more help and information. Hopefully, as a result of this questionnaire,

the FAS, AAE and other bodies concerned with astronomy education will be able to supply the information required.

Finally, out of the 40 replies, 100% had heard of the FAS and only 25% had not heard of the AAE.

A fuller report will be issued when more completed forms have been received. Pam Spence

The Association for Astronomy Education.

The AAE was founded in May 1981. It exists as a non-profit organisation for the sharing and promoting of astronomy ideas and information that can be used in the classroom and other educational establishments.

The AAE's role has become all the more important with the introduction of the National Curriculum which contains an astronomy component. Since then, much of the AAE's efforts have been directed to providing a much needed helping hand for teachers who have found themselves having to teach a subject they have not been taught themselves.

The main communication between members is the quarterly newsletter *Gnomon*. This contains much useful information on resources, ideas and current news. A special feature *Curriculum Corner* is designed for sharing ideas for use in the classroom.

The AAE has published (with the Association for Science Education) both Primary and Secondary workbooks. The former has sold in excess of 10,000 copies. The AAE also produces a poster pack, resource pack and distributes FAS publications.

A network of resource centres throughout the country provide regional support for members: advising on speakers and organising or participating in workshops for teachers.

The AAE aims to forge closer links with other organisations. Links are maintained with bodies such as the RAS, BAA, JAS, UKSEDS and FAS. It is through such links that initiatives such as the FAS/AAE questionnaire are formed. We hope, through this association with the FAS, to provide information and backup services for the mutual benefit of local schools and societies.

If you have not already done so, please fill in and return your questionnaire, to help us to help you. (Remember that every interested school child or teacher is a potential member for your society!)

All publications are available from Nik Steggall, AAE, 38 Victoria Crescent, Birkdale Road, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, WF13 4HJ.

For further information about the AAE, contact Bob Kibble, 34 Acland Crescent, Denmark Hill, London, SE5 8EQ. Alexandra Lovell

Rather limited space this issue for Society News due to business but I won't write an editorial and that will save space. Ken Sheldon

AYLESBURY AS Contact Ian Welland on 0494 438090 for more details. AAS are heavily involved in all sorts of activities not the least of which are the July Convention and Ian's campaign over the closure of the Astronomy Gallery in the Science Museum. You can follow this in the pages of 'Astronomy Now'. Keep it up Ian! Work has slowed on the Observatory but is about to restart. The forthcoming programme includes the AGM and a visit by Geoff Elston.

BEDFORD AS Contact Peter Cox on Bedford 354552 for details of the programme. BAS have an active lecture programme based on Bedford School. One speaker for this month is Dr Storrie-Lombardi talking about teaching computers to see Hubble's Nebulae. Sounds very fascinating. Observing when clear!

BRIDGEND AS For details of programme contact Keith Clark on 0656 664274. BAS have a 'new' newsletter - Clive Down their enthusiastic editor has upgraded and the result is a new look. Clive has also instituted a newsletter swap scheme with several other Societies as a means of circulating information. Seems like a good idea but needs watching 100 newsletters by post is £18 just for postage.

CAMBRIDGE Astronomical Association Contact Dr Frank Murphy on 0223 262421 for details. Busy as always things are happening at the CAA observatory. The usual good speakers have figured and observing sessions have been scheduled - the only problem is the weather! CAA were also involved in the Joint BAA/JAS Solar Section meeting on March 6th organised by Pam Spence.

CAMBRIDGE Young Astronomers an offshoot of Cambridge AA

COTSWOLD AS Contact Trevor Talbot on 0386 881595 for details. The meetings this quarter seem to have included all sorts of topics but much of the activity has surrounded electronics and computing. John Fletcher had the loan of a CCD imager but the weather beat him. John Rock has also got a very successful imager programme in hand but the weather always seems to win.

FITZHARRYS AS (Oxford & District AS) FAS is active both with lectures and 'doing things'. Speakers this session have included Dr Allan Chapman, Jeremy Cook and Mike Tabb. The newsletter *CROSSWIRES* is both fun and instructive. I'm not sure about the contact but try Dave Simmons on 0235 814814.

La Societe GUERNESIAISE Astronomy Section The contact is David Le Conte on 64847. Congratulations are in order to David Le Conte who has been appointed to a senior position in the Guernsey Government. I hope

that this does not mean his departure from Astronomy. A new Society magazine has appeared to replace the newssheet. A visit by Patrick Moore who opened the new Observatory has been one of the highlights of a busy Winter session which still has one or two interesting goodies to come.

HAMPSHIRE Astronomy Group Contact Rod Dodd on Waterloo 254032 for more details. The Support building for the Clanfield Observatory was officially opened in November by BAA President John Mason. Looking at the *HAMPSHIRE OBSERVER* makes one realise how busy some groups are and what good public relations work they are doing.

AS of HARINGEY Contact Wally Baker on 081 888 6528 for more details. The Society have had a busy season of speakers which has included Dr Allan Chapman, Kevin Johnson, Piers Corbyn and Steve Cook. Speakers still to appear are Doug Daniels on "Astrophotography", Dr Stuart Kingsley "S.E.T.I." and Peter King on "Cosmology"

HEART OF ENGLAND AS Contact Jean Poyner on 021 350 4312 for programme. The Society continues to flourish. One little sadness is that Gary Poyner is now so busy - TA Variable Star Section and his involvement with a pro-am programme on the Hubble Space Telescope that he has given up editorship of *MIRA*.

IRISH AS By the time most of you read this the IAS Astrofest '93 at Tullamore will be finished but it looks like the culmination of a great winter programme. To find out more about the activities contact James Lynch on Dublin 820 2135.

ISLE OF MAN AS Meetings are on first Thursday of each month. Contact James Martin on 0624 842954. The Society has been visited by Patrick Moore who returned to the island for the first time since his RAF days during the war. He gave a public lecture at the Manx Museum on the "Missions to the Planets" which was attended by 200 people. Another visitor was Alan Wells. Star parties including a Swift-Tuttle Evening and a Lunar Eclipse Watch have been successful. An excellent talk was given by local amateur Dr Henri Soper on meteor observations.

KETTERING & DISTRICT AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS SOCIETY Going from strength to strength the KADAAS held a convention at the end of February which was a great success - according to Allan Chapman who was one of the speakers. It is nice to see one of the smaller societies doing something in the public field. Nice to see the Newsletter too.

LETCHWORTH & DISTRICT AS One major speaker to the Society has been Terry Platt talking on CCDs. If you have had chance to look at this years FAS Handbook you will know that Terry is well into CCD Imaging and I gather that the people present were enthralled by his talk and demo. Work

has been going ahead at the Observatory and it seems that the project is well on its way to completion. One sad bit of news is the resignation of the Secretary for personal/family reasons. Meetings to come include a Paul Money Special in April. Contact Eric Hutton on 0462 431988 for more details of events.

LIVERPOOL AS LAS continue to provide a series of good lectures and open meetings. The Newsletter contains much observational information. To get more info contact Ken Clark, 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, L45 0LJ

NORTHEAST LONDON AS Contact Bernard Beeston on 081 363 5696 for details of programme and venue. A busy winter season has included talks by Mike Maunder on 'Observatories', Prof Malcolm McCullum on 'Gravity' and Geoff Elston on 'The Sun'.

PLYMOUTH AS Contact Sheila Evans on 0752 706908 for more details of programme. PAS are active both in the Lecture room and observing. In the last *Orion* descriptions of experiments on Solar Observing sound the warning about observing only with due precautions. The Society has a corresponding member in Guatemala - Senor Edgar Castro can see 80 of the 88 named constellations. The programme includes "Moon Rock samples from SERC" and a putative visit by Patrick Moore. Speakers have included visitors from Tiverton AS (Douglas Rice with "Simple Astronomical Models") and SW Cornwall Society (Tony James on "SETI").

P.O.N.L.A.F. Contact either Tony Corbett on 071 263 2789 or Matthew Hepburn on 071 607 2789 ext 2100 or 071 753 5165
 Next meeting 26th March Roger O'Brien "Polar Orbiter - Equipment & results"
 28th May Jerry Workman "Saturn"
SALFORD AS Contact Kath Redford on 061 794 3179 for more details about the future programme. SAS have been busy again. They are particularly proud of the Society's youngest member Richard Recarey. Richard at the age of 11 has been awarded the Astronomy badge at his Scout Troop. Possibly the only one in the area. Some members saw the lunar eclipse in December. Speakers to the Society have included Dr Allan Chapman on "Isaac Newton". The Society has continued with its trips to other venues, NASS, The Digital Star Party at UC London, Liverpool AS (Andrew Elliott talking on "Video Astronomy"), Jodrell Bank to hear Patrick and AstroFest. Observing has included cloud activity on Mars, Comet Schaumasse and Tony O'Sullivan has made a visual observation of the Horsehead.
SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS GROUP
 SAG is made up from 20 Scottish and North Eastern Societies. As a consequence it has a huge programme of speakers. The Winter Magazine *SAGMAG* lists 26 events and that is from only six of the member groups. The Scottish Weekend is to hold on Sept 17th-19th and I will give more info when I see more. *SAGMAG* has some nice stuff in it including a radio telescope system. It also has a nice touch of history. Included in this is Cliff Meredith's Schiehallion jaunt

in April to celebrate the JAS's 40th anniversary. Contact Cliff for more details. His address is 25 Highfield Road, Prestwich, Manchester. M25 7AQ
SOUTH AS Phone John Larard on 081 299 1783 for details of the programme and meetings.
SOUTH WEST HERTS AS A talk by Stuart Malin on The Anthropic Cosmological Principle seems to have caused a degree of controversy. Sounds fun. Other talks have included mirror making by people who have made mirrors.

WEST OF LONDON AS Contact Robin Scagell on 0895 637463 for programme details especially if you have an OHP computer display. Like most other societies WOLAS are involved with computing as an aid to astronomy the interface between the speaker and the audience needs such a device. On exciting event in April will be the Society Weekend when a trip has been arranged to David Strange's Observing site at Worth Matravers in Dorset. The usual list of good speakers figures in the past and future programme.

WEST YORKSHIRE AS Whenever I receive *PHOBOS* I know that I am in for a treat and quite often around Christmas with several hours of entertainment and sometimes frustration trying to solve the puzzles. The twice monthly lecture meetings sound great fun and the opportunity on a regular basis to use the Rosse Telescope makes WYAS sound like a great society to join.

WOLVERHAMPTON AS WAS are busy with the Wolverhampton Weekend Course and with this summer's IAAU meeting to be held in Wolverhampton in August. Malcolm Astley on 0902 783212 is the man to approach for details of the Society's programme.

WORCESTER AS Ring Ian Gray on 0386 47352 for more details of programme. The usual busy Winter session is rounded off by a Convention in May. The Society has had its share of competent and exciting speakers and is involved on a regular basis with other West Midland Societies in the Lickey Hills nights.

WORTHING AS Ring Nick Quinn on 0903 814090 for details of the programme. A full programme of meetings has kept WAS members 'entertained' during the long dull winter nights.

Publication dates for Newsletter

March 14th	deadline February 23rd
June 14th	deadline May 25th
September 14th	deadline August 25th
December 10th	Deadline November 21st
1994 June/July Summer Convention & WYAS anniversary - Pontefract	

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Orwell AS Open Weekend April 2nd, 3rd & 4th

Contact Ron Gooding on 0473 462977 for more details.

Worcester AS Convention May 8th from 10.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

At the Worcester College of Higher Education, Henwick Grove, St Johns, Worcester. Contact Ian Gray on 0386 47352 for more details

Speakers include:

Neil Bone	Meteors
Dr Allan Chapman	Transits of Venus
Dr Nigel Metcalfe	CCD Galaxy Observations
Ken Phillips RAL	The Sun

Admission £3

Adequate on-site car parking

BAA European Colloquium on Light Pollution. Saturday July 3rd

Palmer Lecture Theatre, Reading University. 10.30 to 5.30

Seven top speakers including John Mason and Gerry Davis. Contact

BAA at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 9AG for more details

IMO International Meteor Conference September 23-26

Puimichel, France Information from Paul Roggemans, Pijnboomstraat

25, B-2800 Mechelen, Belgium or phone 010 32 15 41 12 25

FAS Meetings for 1993

1st May AGM and Convention at the Herbert Lecture Theatre Coventry. Details with this newsletter.

July 10th Summer Convention Hosted by the Chiltern and Thames Valley Group.

See poster with your Secretary. Several Exciting speakers including Drs Allan Chapman, Mike Maunder and Gillian Pearce.

September 25th Autumn Convention at The Cavendish Laboratory Cambridge