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Issue 36

Federation of Astronomical Societies

EDITORIAL

I must apologise for the lateness of this newsletter - in preparing the material for the printers I had omitted to include the officers reports for the AGM. Since by including it we reduce the time needed for the formalities, thus giving us more discussion time, it is important hence the delay. Sorry!!

The AGM is almost upon us together with its associated afternoon of lectures. The programme is shown below and you can see that it is a good one. However the function of the AGM is to elect the FAS Council and I hope that there will be a good turn out of Societies to select the Council they want. I know that the Council make suggestions for officers but they are only suggestions as a backup in the event of there being no nominations from the floor. Please feel free to nominate willing persons for any of the posts in the list.

The big news for societies who will hopefully be getting requests for public viewing sessions after Alex's TV series, is that the FAS have negotiated a Public Liability Insurance that Federated Societies can take up. It will cover members of the Public for public observing in public places and members gardens as well as Society premises and will cost Federated Societies not more than £20 and probably about £10 if there is a reasonable uptake. Your Secretary should have full details by now - make sure that you are covered!

Don't forget too the Solar eclipse in May. 50%

and obviously something to show the public on their way home from work, but please stress that projection is the safest method. Hopefully there will be some spin-off too from the Shoemaker-Levy and Jupiter encounter. Just let's hope that it doesn't attract too many odd-ball characters.

Clear skies & good viewing

Ken Sheldon

FAS ASTROFEST SUCCESS!

The FAS does not gamble very often, but we felt it was a bit of a gamble to take a stand at this year's AstroFest in London. At £235, would we get a good return for the Federation's money? Indeed, how could we even quantify a "good return"? When we are not directly selling membership to the public, merely representing our 120+ members, would £235 for publicity be worthwhile?

Well, after two days at AstroFest I can unreservedly declare that the £235 spent was worthwhile. We gave out hundreds (no exaggeration) of secretary's addresses; people wanted the name of their nearest society, not just in London and the south east, but from Scotland to Dover, Cornwall to Norfolk. One person had even flown in from Northern Ireland.

The societies who had given us handouts and posters gained the most. It is much more immediate to hand over a piece of paper containing addresses, information, dates and venues of meetings rather than giving a hurriedly scribbled secretary's address. Next year - and I hope if we can get the manpower needed to

organise and man this stand, there will be a next year - I recommend societies to send us some handouts. Your donations this year were well spent, I promise you.

Even financially the Federation did not lose out because thanks to the 15 societies who did give a donation, plus the sales of slides, astrocalendars, handbooks etc, I believe the Treasurer is "officially happy".

My thanks go to the people who gave their time to help run the stand: Alan Drummond, Clive Down, Peter Fisher, Chris and Ken Sheldon. I also thank Peter for making the Federation banner (you will see it at future events!)

Pam Spence Meetings Coordinator

AGM

COUNCIL OFFICERS REPORTS

PRESIDENT We have had another good year, with three first-class Conventions thanks to excellent speakers; thanks also to all the organisers and helpers who worked so hard to bring us and the speakers together. We look forward to three more good Conventions this year; Coventry in May and Cambridge in the autumn, and Pontefract in the summer as a special jamboree with West Yorkshire AS to celebrate their jubilee!

Members have asked the FAS to organise a block insurance scheme to cover public liability at an affordable premium. We have now found a policy to "cover members of the society for their

FAS AGM 1994

AGM to be held at the Herbert Lecture Theatre on Saturday May 7th. The doors open at 09.30 and there will be books and possibly other goodies.

The AGM will commence at 11.00 and finish by 12.30 to allow a reasonable break before the afternoon lectures.

The afternoon session will start at 14.00

The speakers are:

David Whitehouse BBC Science Correspondent with the The Ken Marcus Memorial Lecture on Rockets and Things,

Alexandra Lovell BBC Astronomy researcher on Planetary Nebulae

Third speaker to be confirmed

The afternoon finishes at 18.00

There is adequate off street car parking around the Herbert Theatre.

Tickets £3.50 obtainable from Alan Drummond.

Don't forget that if 6 members of a Society attend the Society gets free membership of the FAS for 1994/95.

legal liability for damage or loss of third party property and bodily injury to third party persons" for £10 (TEN POUNDS A YEAR!!!). There is an excess of £250 on property, but bodily injury includes death and the limit of indemnity is £1,000,000. This policy is very good value indeed; we would like to take the offer up at once, but cannot go ahead until 25 of our members have joined. If you have queries please ring me now, as we hope not to have to wait until the AGM to get things going; and IF YOU WANT TO JOIN, LET THE TREASURER KNOW AT ONCE. This policy also covers legal liability for claims by the members of an astronomical society; the brokers would gladly quote for insuring observatories, telescopes etc but this might take a few weeks because the insurance company would probably want to inspect the observatory.

Good relations with the AAE continue to mutual benefit. Thanks are due to all our Council members, who have worked hard overcoming various problems throughout the year, especially the Secretary who has been kept very busy. We hope that as many members as possible will come to the AGM to make their voices heard and to give our year the best possible start.

Tony Balfour
SECRETARY During the year I have directed over 40 people to their local society, and have helped four societies to get started. I have helped 24 students of all ages with projects as well as advising on buying telescopes. Through the Newsletter, amateur astronomers were told about the new O.U. Astronomy Course and the O.U. asked about buying our Astrocalendars. A variety of 40-odd letters on other matters have been dealt with. The problem of Insurance was brought to the notice of the Council as a result of a letter from the Herschel Society. In July I gave a presentation on the work of the FAS to the IUAU and as a result was elected to represent Britain on the European section of the IUAU.

Christine Sheldon
MEETINGS ORGANISER/LIAISON OFFICER

At the last AGM at Coventry we had three very interesting lectures, Neil Bone talking on Aurorae, Professor Peter Wilmore on Dark and Related Matters and Bob Kibble on Astronomy in Education. The latter talk was scheduled as a result of the questionnaires sent out to local astronomical societies asking how they were involved in astronomy education. This survey, done jointly with the AAE showed how active many societies were in this field, and information was subsequently sent out to the societies. Hopefully this was helpful and hopefully more can be done by the FAS in this area in the future. I was not involved with organising the FAS Summer Convention at High Wycombe but I understand it was enjoyed by all who went. The Convention in Cambridge was well attended. The standard of speakers was high and I hope everyone enjoyed themselves. They seemed to, anyway!

As Liaison Officer, I have been trying to promote cooperation between the national astronomy organisations. Success has been achieved with the AAE and the SPA; both these organisations now

have a member attending our Council meetings. My AstroFest was organised with both hats on (Meetings/Liaison) and the event was brilliant. NOT only did we promote the FAS and its individual Societies but we gained by selling slides, astrocalendars, handbooks, etc. A worthwhile event.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me in numerous ways, throughout this past year.

Pam Spence

EDUCATION SECRETARY

The duties of Education Secretary have been considerably eased over the last few years due to the increasing strength of the links between FAS and AAE. Education enquiries by individuals are still referred to the relevant Astro Society, if this is deemed to be the correct avenue of approach, but others, which might have a wider appeal, are often referred to the AAE. We know of course, that many queries of an educational nature are dealt with directly by the Societies and do not come to my attention. Such approaches are to be welcomed, but it would be useful if they were reported to the Education Secretary just for the record.

The links with the AAE are seen at Council meetings of both bodies - 2 AAE Council members attend FAS Council and 3 FAS Council members attend the AAE Council.

At the time of writing, we are uncertain of changes to be made to the National Curriculum (for Astronomy) but these may be known by the Coventry Meeting.

NAW 1996 will take place 1996 Sept 21-28. Societies should start planning now if they intend to participate. I represent the FAS on the NAW coordinating committee.

Eric Zucker
PUBLICITY OFFICER

My year started with inviting traders to take trade stands at Cambridge and dealing with advertisers for the Handbook. I also talked to Richard Milner who sent the Secretary details of a reduced price stand at Astrofest.

I can claim some small success with the north west astronomical societies. After years of badgering them they have at last got together to form a regional group. Publicity for the FAS Handbook will be my next task. I did nothing for publicity outside the FAS for the Astrocalendar due to its late appearance. I hope for better things with the Handbook with potential outside purchasers. I continue to direct customers to the FAS slide collection when they ask for constellation slides.

As already indicated, I do not seek re-election in May. It seems time for a change. My place will make way for fresh talent and fresh ideas.

Rosemary Naylor

EDITOR The year has been busy - I have produced the basic 4 newsletters (which involves trying to extract information from newsletters from some 30+ contributing societies) and the Handbook. There have been some printing hold-ups. I have also circularised Societies, FAS and non-FAS, about matters such as DOE initiatives, current contact addresses and Public Liability Insurance for Observing Sessions plus fliers for the AGM, High Wycombe and Cambridge. I am prepared to continue in the post if the

membership wishes it.
Ken Sheldon

AGM

The following nominations have been made by the Council.

President	Pam Spence	
Vice President		Tony Balfour
Secretary		Christine Sheldon
Treasurer		Alan Drummond
Meetings Coordinator		Alex Lovell
Publicity Officer		Clive Down
Education Secretary		Eric Zucker
Asst Educ Secretary		Mike Inglis
Publications Officer		Malcolm Jones
Liaison Officer		Graham Bowden-Peters
Editor		Ken Sheldon

Nominations are needed for the post of Assistant Secretary with special responsibility as Membership/Minute Secretary. The officer elected should be available to attend 3 Council meetings and two or three Conventions a year. The duty of Membership Secretary is to maintain an up-to-date membership list in conjunction with the Treasurer. The Minutes Secretary takes and produces the Council Minutes.

Please remember that these nominations are only suggestions and that nominations for all the posts can be made before the AGM and also from the floor on the day. Nominations must be for persons willing to take the post and must be proposed and seconded by Federated Societies.

****AUTHORS and REPORTERS****
****PLEASE NOTE****

REVISED PUBLICATION DATES 1994
 Proposed publication dates for Newsletter
 Summer End May deadline April 30th
 Autumn End August deadline July 31st
 Winter End November deadline October 31st

Please keep reports to about 120-150 words. Handwritten or typed copy is OK.

1994

FAS Dates for your Diary

7th May AGM & Convention. Coventry
4th June Summer Convention & WYAS anniversary - Pontefract
24th Sept Autumn Convention. Cambridge
1995
Early May AGM

SOCIETY NEWS ROUND-UP

AYLESBURY AS Contact Nigel Sheridan on 0296 623255 for more details of programme. Interesting for the last year or so to have been reading Ian Welland's "15 Brightest Stars from Britain" in the Aylesbury Bulletin and interesting too to see how many other Societies have been printing them recently. Well Ian has another series called Circumpolar Constellations - watch out for this ion your newsletters. One sad event in the Aylesbury calendar was the passing away of veteran amateur Gerard Rawlings - I only met him once - on the night of the Voyager/Uranus encounter, when he stayed with us. It was interesting to hear his comments on what we were seeing. AAS are busy being amateur astronomers and I had to chuckle at L Edwards description of the November lunar eclipse.

BEDFORD AS Contact Peter Cox on Bedford 354552 for details of the programme. Since the AGM has come and gone and Peter is still Secretary I will continue to use him as the contact. Observing sessions and regular talks feature in the programme. Speakers have include Paul Money and speakers to come include Bob Forest, University of Hertfordshire on 'CDs for Amateur Astronomy' and Allan Chapman, Oxford University on 'Historical Figures in Astronomy'. **BIRMINGHAM AS** Contact Peter Bolas on 0283 68512 for details of programme. John Spittle is expecting to move home soon and Peter has volunteered to cover the hiatus.

BRIDGEND AS Meet at Bridgend Bowls Centre in alternate Fridays with observing sessions on the Fridays. Contact Keith Clark on 0656 664274 for more information. I was pleased to see Clive Down, BAS editor at AstroFest and must thank him for his efforts in manning the stand on the Friday. Clive's efforts at spreading Astronomical mags must now be well-known and he has done good job in bringing Societies together. He has also had some 'success' with light pollution!

BRIGHTON Astronomical & Scientific Society The Society in the year since Ken Marcus passed away has had a fairly hectic time including the decision to go ahead with building a BASS Observatory (Could you get any sponsorship from a well-known drinks manufacturer?) Chris Miller gathered the award as Young Astronomer of the Year with its associated trip to Chile - lucky Chris but then I couldn't have qualified!!

Looking at *The New Sideral Times* I get the feeling that Society members have been flashing around the country on lots of occasions supporting amateur astronomy. The contact is Peter Fisher on 0273 555816

BRISTOL AS have a new Secretary so if you need to talk about the programme contact Geoff Cane, 0272 798375. They have had a good series of lectures this session and are very active as an observing group.

CAMBRIDGE Astronomical Association Contact Dr Frank Murphy on 0223 262421 for details. Because this newsletter is late - my fault entirely - I have not been able to give the Society Planetary Show much of a boost but there will

still be time to contact CAA and talk about it.

Your Secretary has a flyer with details.

CARDIFF AS Contact Dave Powell on 0222 551704 for details of programme which includes observing sessions.

CHESTERFIELD AS CAS is about 35 years old and numbers some 40 members of whom about 20 are active. Meetings take place every Friday in the Barnett Observatory, Newbold which boasts a small lecture room and an 18" Newtonian, all built by members, including the optics. There is a monthly lecture and so far this session we have enjoyed Dr Cedric Martys talking on 'Schmidt Cameras', Paul Griffin on 'Astrophotography' and Dr Greenwood on 'Eclipses'. Other Friday evenings are for observation (when clear) and a meeting of like minds. A number of members, having passed "the Test", may use the telescope whenever they wish. Contact John Brown on 0246 209364 for more details. (*Ed-The Club Magazine looks quite good!*) From John Brown

CROYDON AS Talk to Konrad Malin-Smith on 081 777 1736 for future programme. Talks include Pam Spence's 'The Sun' which went down well at last years Winchester. Observing sessions occur regularly at the Kenley observatory with its 10" and 18" telescopes. The Winter issue of *ALTAIR* (which I scrounged from the FAS stand at AstroFest) had some very interesting articles including one on White Dwarfs by Roy Easto and one on the drive system at Kenley by John Mills.

COTSWOLD AS Contact John Daniel on 0453 757026 for details. Since the last newsletter Christmas has happened and the Society had its usual Christmas Dinner in January. Speakers have included Chris Sheldon on 'History of Solar Observing' and me on 'The Radio Amateur and Astronomy'. Still to come are the AGM and Richard Fleet talking about 'Southern Skies'.

La Société GUERNESIAISE Astronomy Section The contact is Geoff Falla on 724101. I have just received the 1994 programme of the Section and as usual am impressed by the topics to be covered by its speakers in the next ten months plus of course all the social events that are scheduled. Speakers include Antony Saunders on 'The Microwave Background Radiation', David Williams with 'Scintillate, Scintillate, Global Flaviate', Lawrence Guilbert with 'The Sun', David Cave on 'The Hubble Space Telescope' and last but not least Stephen Jeffreys and 'Orion - the Hunter'. The latest *Sagittarius* includes a 12 page supplement on Taurus plus good articles on the Sun, Sundials and Colonising Mars, together with lots of news and comment.

HAMPSHIRE Astronomy Group As usual HAG are active on all sort of fronts - Neil Bone praises them as one of the better Societies for submitting meteor reports, they are still pursuing light pollution and as usual they have had a good lecture season plus all the regular observing sessions from Clanfield Observatory. The Group are looking for a Site Caretaker - salary 2 cups of

coffee and as much fresh air as you can stand - any takers. The big forthcoming event is the Clanfield Observatory Open Weekend 15th to 17th April when the Observatory will be open 9pm until Midnight. Contact Rod Dodd on Waterlooville 254032 for more details.

KETTERING & DISTRICT AA Contact Stephen Williams at 120 Brickhill Rd, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 3JP for more details of the Society's meetings.

LEICESTER AS LAS has seen a significant upturn in membership over the past few months. Is this a national trend? Socially, the past few months have been very active. For the third time in four years, Leicester won the annual inter-society quiz at Hinckley in December. The annual dinner in January was well-attended. Ann Bonell won the prize for the best (and the cleanest!) limerick entitled "*There was a young astronomer from Leicester.....*" and Richard Caswell won the 'word' competition. A photograph marking the annual dinner appeared in the 'Leicester Mercury'. At the February A.G.M., Martin Rose was awarded the D.Brown prize for his talk on 'Planet X'. Speakers lined up for the next few months include Shaun Albrighton, Peter Rea, John Lester, David Swaby, Paul Money and Alex Lovell. Meetings at Judgemeadow Community College, Evington, Leicester. Contact Ann Bonell, 53 Wardens Walk, Leicester Forest East, Leics., LE3 3GG. Tel: 0533 394481.

LETCWORTH & DISTRICT AS L&DAS meet at Plinston Hall, Letcworth. Meetings have moved to the 1st Thursday of the month but for more details consult Eric Hutton on 0462 431988 for more details of events.

Lots of activity including a Public Observing evening at the Standalone Farm Observatory. It was by all accounts a resounding success. Speakers to come include Arthur Davis of WOLAS on 'Deep Sky', Keith Fowler on 'The Local Group' and Jerry Workman of ASH talking about 'Jupiter'. The Newsletter is full of news and information plus an observing guide.

LOWESTOFT & GT YARMOUTH Regional Astronomers. Really out on a limb at the most easterly point in Britain the group are doing quite well. They meet at Kirkley High School on the 3rd Thursday. Speakers have include Bob Cheek and the Chairman Danny on 'The Winter Sky' John Nicholls on 'Useful Gadgets' while outside speakers have included Ken Sheldon on 'Simple Radio Astronomy', Neil Bone on 'Meteors' and Paul Money on 'Solar System III' A keen and friendly local group.

MANCHESTER AS The MAS will be holding a Major Convention on 2nd July 1994 at Parkers Hotel, Manchester from 11.00 am to 6.00pm. The hotel is ideally situated 6 minutes walk from the main Victoria Rail Station and hotel services are available throughout the day at very reasonable prices. The main speakers will be the Astronomer Royal Professor Wolfendale and Dr David Whitehouse BBC Science correspondent. Supported by trade stands this promises to be a great day for all astronomers (remember our Centenary in 1992?). Demand for tickets is expected to be high, already enquiries are coming in from local societies so I advise all interested

tries to get in touch with me at the Godlee Observatory address or by phoning me at home on 061 202 2940. The Godlee Observatory is open every Thursday evening from 7.30 and visitors are most welcome. The Observatory telephone number is 061 700 4977 (24 hours). The address is Godlee Observatory, UMIST, Sackville Street, Manchester 1, M60 1QD
from Tony Cross.

NEWBURY AS Contact Nichola Evans on 0734 835595.

NORTHEAST LONDON AS Contact Bernard Beeton on 081 363 5696 for details of programme and venue.

NORWICH AS Contact Malcolm Jones for more details of the programme. The Seething site is well underway towards its completion and opening which is planned for July 2nd/3rd. Patrick Moore will perform the ceremony. Speakers include Gerry Gilmore, Allan Chapman, Paul Money and Peter Rea. Should be good!! Having looked at photographs of the site I am extremely impressed by the set-up. One has to wish them well. One development triggered by the new site is the development called STEP (Science and Technology Education Programme) which will involve the Seething Astronomical Observatory, Education and Industry. More to come on that.

ORWELL AS Contact Peter Richards on 0473 659806 for more information. Plenty happening with a film evening and a talk on Radio Astronomy as the next couple of events. The newsletter contained an interesting analysis of the occultation by the Moon of Zea Tauri. The results obtained locally by Mike Harlow and David Payne showed a six second error in the prediction. Peter said that the Canaries trip didn't take place.

PONLAF Contact Betty Turner 071 404 1111. The Society have some good speakers lined-up for the rest of the season with Jaqueline Mitton and still to come.

SALFORD AS On Monday November 29th the total lunar eclipse was watched by many members. Due to thin cloud and mist, at totality it was seen as a very dark eclipse, no colouring at all and with refraction from the Earth lighting up the southern portion, a bright sliver of the Moon remained throughout totality. Ken Irving captured the event on video and he reports that the camera still recorded the eclipse until the end of totality, even though the Moon was too low to be seen with the naked eye. Speaking for myself only, I was able to observe until 6:25 am when the Moon disappeared into thicker cloud and 'murk', not to be seen again, even with binoculars. For SAS members the Geminids were better than the Perseids. The evening of December 13th started cloudy, so again, members observed from their own gardens. However before maximum skies cleared and a good number of meteors were seen. Most of us reported some very bright ones with long trails.

On Dec 9th members attended Manchester AS lecture given by Professor F D Khan on 'Molecular Clouds and Star Formation' The lecture was a tribute to SAS's former Patron Prof Zdenek Kopal who died in 1993. Prof Khan has accepted the role of Patron. On 15th Dec the

Society hosted Dr Chapman who spoke to a full house on 'James Bradley - Astronomer in Eclipse'. Dr Chapman and his mother also attended the Christmas Dinner. Nova Cas1993 was observed as was Comet Encke. Cliff Meredith and Tony O'Sullivan being the lucky men. SAS have been involved in the setting up of the NWSG a grouping of Societies in the North West. An inaugural meeting was held in November and another meeting is due to be held in March. The group differs from SAGAS and most of the others in charging a fee (£10) to member Societies. *Edited Report from Kath Redford* Contact Kath Redford on 061 794 3179 for more details about the future programme.

SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS GROUP SAG Contact Brian Kelly, 449 Brook Street, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD5 2DX for more details of the Societies.

SOLENT AAS Details of meetings from Ken Medway on 0703 582204.

SOUTH AS Phone John Larard on 081 299 1783 for details of the programme and meetings. If I had time (what a familiar cry!) - how did I manage a job as well? the South newsletter *Monthly Notes* would really stimulate me to get out and do something. Nice article by Rob Marriot on Spörer, Solar Observer Extraordinary.

STRATFORD UPON AVON AS SAS are now getting underway with a regular group of members plus visitors at the meeting place. Speakers have included Geoff Owen of Helius Designs, Ian Gray, Chris Sheldon and Pete Dunn. An observing session was held in December with a good attendance with 4 telescopes in action. Contact Gordon Cutting on 0608 84414 for more details.

WEST OF LONDON AS Contact Robin Scagell on 0895 637463 for programme details. WOLAS have been active both in the lecture room and with observing sessions (the person to ring is Bob Garner on 081 578 9574 for these). Speakers to come include Gill Pearce on Supernovae and Alex Lovell on Active Galaxies (having heard this, I can recommend it). SET⁷ features at the Nave. Visits and trips for the Spring and Summer include a weekend trip to Exmoor and one to the Old RGO (The REAL RGO!)

WEST YORKSHIRE AS Contact Pete Lunn, 21 Cranford Drive, WAKEFIELD, West Yorks for details of the Spring/Summer programme. There have been all the usual WYAS activities but a lot of thought and effort has been going into the preparation for the 21st Anniversary meeting in June (see your Secretary for full details of speakers) I am looking forward to getting back to Ponty and meeting the WYAS enthusiasts. *Phobos* has been running an excellent series on the American scientist Van Allen among all the other interesting articles that the Editors put in.

WOLVERHAMPTON AS Malcolm Astley on 0902 783212 is the contact for more information.

The Society continues to pursue its activities with many and varied speakers. The Preston Weekend unfortunately clashes with SET⁷ but nevertheless the Society is taking part in a Science Week exhibition at the University. WAS are busy negotiating for a site for the 24" telescope and associated building.

WORCESTER AS WAS have had their usual

mixture of fun and serious astronomy in the session so far, including the AGM followed by the annual quiz. A couple of members sessions have included a talk by Dick Chambers on the Jack Ellis Automated Telescope. The annual dinner was once more held in The Spires Restaurant all attending enjoyed it. Recent outside speakers have been Chris Eyles of Birmingham Uni and Dave Powell from Cardiff AS. SET⁷ sessions are planned and speakers to come include Chris Sheldon and the Astronomer Royal. Contact Ian Gray on 0386 47352 for more details.

WORTHING AS Ring Nick Quinn on 0903 814090 for details of the programme. WAS have been busy - with their new Observatory obviously it is rather easier to get observing sessions organised.

BOOK REVIEW

'Elementary Problems and Answers in Solar System Astronomy' by James A Van Allen. 252 Pages Duckworth at £12.99 paperback

Professor Van Allen (after whom the radiation belts about the Earth are named) has written an unusual book aimed at supplying questions which can be used by teachers and others. Topics are divided between 7 chapters to cover various solar system bodies, together with the view of the sky seen from the Earth. These run to 924 questions in all. Then follows a similar number of pages giving the answers.

Some questions are suitable for use in astro soc quizzes; eg. "Which of the following is **not** an asteroid?" (a) Hildago; (b) Europa; (c) Geographos; (d) Icarus".

Many of the questions do not have such a simple unambiguous answer however and require opinions, calculations and explanations; eg.

"Briefly, what are your thoughts on the likelihood of the existence of living organisms on one of the other planets or its satellites?" and "Given a photograph of an unspecified region of the sky, how does one proceed to identify the stars therein?" and "Estimate the greatest possible height of a mountain on a solid-body planet. Compare your estimate with actual data on the Earth, Mars and Venus (and the Moon)."

These latter type of question show the book would be of most use to teachers of astronomy at GCSE level and beyond. As the author has called on his many years of experience teaching an introductory solar system course at university, this reviewer felt confident that it was not necessary to check out the answers for accuracy. So it is with confidence that I recommend the book to teachers and the self-taught, remembering that it covers in considerable depth, one particular aspect of astronomy.

Rosemary Naylor

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Published by CAKE, Whitehaven, Maytree Road, Lower Moor, PERSHORE. Printed by John Knight & Sons, Printers, Littleworth Street, Evesham