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Issue 39

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

EDITORIAL

The skies are great, well, rainwashed anyway in Worcestershire and not too polluted with light - wouldn't it be nice to be able to say that without your tongue in your cheek! Anyway to get back to reality, Cambridge was good, wasn't it? Nice to see the crowds and the exhibits and I think that the speakers gave us excellent value with their wide range of talks. I don't think that we gave the impression the Rosemary Naylor had given up her Earth & Sky Books but it was strange not to see her manning the stand at Cambridge. Anyway we had a chat on the phone the other day and she said that she hopes to be in Britain for another five years. The Earth & Sky logo will be around for a while yet.

I have been worried by the activities on the magazine front, 'Astronomy Now' and 'Practical Astronomy' are targeting the same people and it is hard to see them both weathering the storm. Wouldn't it be good if they could get together and produce a joint effort which could be British but compete on equal terms with 'Astronomy' and 'Sky and Telescope'.

Please note that due to circumstances beyond our control (County Council decision) Tresham College, which was to be the venue for the AGM next May, is being refurbished and the meeting will now take place at the Montague School, Kettering. More later.

May I thank any members of FAS Societies who gave me their vote in the BAA Council elections. Thank you.

Included with the mailing of this Newsletter is an apology from the FAS council to Robert Lewis (one of the speakers in the FAS Handbook).

Incidentally, if I have any phone numbers wrong please excuse me, the process of putting a 1 in is far too complex for me.

Merry Christmas with Clear and Dark Skies.,

Ken Sheldon

FAS CAMBRIDGE CONVENTION

On September 24th several members of Aylesbury AS joined fellow astronomers at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge. With trade stands in abundance, a host of quality speakers delivered interesting lectures. Dr Paul Murdin made a welcome return to Cambridge with a lecture solely devoted to Supernovae. Describing in detail from the first sightings of a supernova, Dr Murdin informed the delegates of the composition and eventual fate of a typical supernova. Outlining the major work of several

global observations and mentioning the impressive advances since the LMC Supernova (1987a), Dr Murdin clearly defined the types of star involved and possible candidates for the future.

Dr John Zarnecki (University of Kent) delivered a lecture based on the forthcoming Cassini Mission to Saturn and its satellite, Titan. Proposed launch is October 1997 with the mission taking 7yrs to reach its target. Made up of two parts, Dr Zarnecki concentrated on the U.K. experiment on board the 'Titan' lander. The mission is truly international with many countries participating (France, USA, Italy and Germany).

Dr Christine Sutton (University of Oxford) gave the first lecture on 'Neutrinos'. The sub-atomic particles travel through everything including humans, however slowing their progress requires unusually filled tanks below the ground. Mentioning the genetic composition of Neutrinos, their origin (the Sun), and the work carried out by several astronomers, namely Wolfgang Pauli and Arthur Eddington, Dr Sutton informed delegates of the latest sites for Neutrino work. Gran Susso in Italy, Homestake Mine at Deadwood USA, and Kamiokande make up the initial venues. There are three types of Neutrino; 1-Electron, 2-Muon, 3-Tau. All are affected by strong magnetic fields and an abundance of Neutrinos can often be detected following solar flares or massive sunspot activity.

Dr Chris Kitchen (University of Hertfordshire) delivered the liveliest lecture of the day entitled 'The End of the Universe'. Stating that there is no beginning and no end, this progressed on to ascertaining the size of the known Universe, age, and life expectancy. The big bang, black holes and general stellar phenomena were discussed. Dr Carole Jordan (University of Oxford) gave the final talk of the day, describing the composition, behaviour and fate of the Sun. Bringing together the known information on solar flares, sunspots, faculae, the corona, and the impressive magnetic field, the Sun was a popular and worthy subject to end the perfect day.

From the Aylesbury AS Bulletin

ANOTHER VIEW OF CAMBRIDGE

Several members of the Society made the journey this year, and had the choice of five excellent guest speakers. In between the talks, we looked around the various trade and society stands. Cambridge Astronomical Association had a 25 inch Dobsonian on view! Mounted using the same principle as my small red 'Astroscan',

but the secondary mirror on this monster, is as large as the main mirror in my 'Astroscan'. Other stalls were taken by Bedford AS, the Webb Society, the BAA, the SPA and the Editor of Astronomy Now (very briefly). Then further stands with Earth & Sky (with two large tables of books for browsing through), AWR, Starwatch and David Hinds with a selection of eyepieces etc.

As for the guest speakers, I sat in on three of them. Rather than give a review of each of them, I thought to pick on just one aspect I liked of each talk.

The first talk, by Dr Paul Murdin was on 'Supernovae', who as part of his talk brought to life what a tribe of American Indian, who saw the Crab Supernova of 1054, did. They drew it, placing their hand prints onto the wall-painting, as their mark of that event long ago.

The second talk was Dr John Zarnecki, on the 'Cassini Mission to Saturn'. The probe, yet to be launched, will not arrive at Saturn until 2004.

If he is lucky the experiments he has been working on will last 20 minutes maximum, if unlucky all he will get back is a couple of seconds, as the probe lands/crashes(?) into Saturn's moon Titan.

The third talk I heard was Dr Chris Kitchen from our local University of Hertfordshire. He talked about 'The End of the Universe'. He felt he had to apologise about the lack of slides, as what he had to talk about had yet to happen. But he still managed to give us an idea of what will happen in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 million years time, or round about then!!!

Eric Hutton (from L&DAS Newsletter)

CALLING ASTROPHOTOGRAPHERS.

Have you any good slides which you would like to offer for the FAS slide list? If your slide is accepted it is copied, added to the list and sold to help FAS funds.

The FAS is often asked by authors, publishers and T.V. companies if we have slides on certain subjects for which they need illustrations.

When a slide is given to the FAS the copyright remains with the person who produced the slide. If a slide is used for a book or a T.V. programme, the FAS comes to an agreement on a royalty payment which is then passed on to the author of the slide with a small handling charge deducted. Malcolm would welcome any new slides - we have not received many recently.

Information given for each slide should include:-

name of photographer, subject, date when taken, film used, lens used, exposure time, direction of view.

WOULD YOU LIKE THE WORLD TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY?

The next IUAA meeting will be in Lucerne in 1996. Ken and I will go. I shall ask for a slot to talk about what is happening in amateur astronomy in Britain. Could you send me slides of your observatories or your meetings or notes about anything which your society has done so that I can build up a picture of what we are all up to? We know that Astronomy lives in Britain, but I need your help to put this across.

Chris Sheldon.

CfDS

Bob Mizon is interested in having a County Representative from all UK counties. He is short of the following counties. Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland, Lincoln, Oxon & Buckingham, Somerset, Cornwall N. Devon, Clwydd, Powis, Dyfed and all counties in Ulster with the exception of Co. Antrim.

If you live in one of these areas, are worried by Light Pollution and can give a little time please contact Bob on 01202 887084

Donations to CfDS are always welcome!

ATTENTION ALL SOCIETIES!!!

We need your help!!

The Education Secretariat of the FAS is compiling a database of all the places where astronomy courses are run or have been run. These can be of several weeks duration or just a one-day event. Also, they may have been organised, either by a society, the WEA or even a university department. With this information we can then answer the many queries we receive for such information, and more importantly, highlight those areas where there is a shortage of such courses. If you have ever attended such an event, or know of one that may have been run in the past, then please get in touch with either -

Eric Zucker 35 Gundreda Road, LEWES, E. Sussex, BN7 1PT or
Dr Mike Inglis, 32 Forrester Close, Leyland, PRESTON. PR5 1XT

ATTENTION ALL SOCIETIES!!!

The AGM of the Federation of Astronomical Societies is being held on the 6th of May 1995 in Kettering, hosted by the Kettering and District Amateur Astronomers. In addition to having guest speakers, we are asking societies if they would like to put up a display, highlighting the activities of the society. This can be sketches, observing reports, details of instrumentation and photographs etc. etc. So if you want to publicise your society at the AGM, please write to the Conventions Organiser;

Dr Mike Inglis, 32 Forrester Close, Leyland, PRESTON PR5 1XT

Incidentally a note from Neil Bone says that if you would like your info to appear in Astronomy Now send it to Society News at AN. But please don't expect immediate result the lead is 6 weeks. **AYLESBURY AS** Busy and active as usual AAS and its members are enjoying the start of the new season. Speakers appear at the AAS Observatory regularly and the Winter observing programme is in full swing. Contact Nigel Sheridan on 01296 623255 or write to him at 22 Moor Park, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 6AX

BEDFORD AS As might be expected BAS are busy, their display at Cambridge was great and attracted a lot of attention. They have also been given - yes given - a 10" telescope by the Cambridge AA. The presentation was to take place at the November Star Party. Speakers booked include Prof Jocelyn Bell Burnell and Dr Jim Bennett from the Whipple Museum of Science. P.S. I like the poetry. Contact Peter Cox on 01234 354552 for Society info and an up-to-date programme of events.

BIRMINGHAM AS Contact is Andy Salmon on 0121 565 4845 The Society recently had a "census" on its members and lots of interesting facts came out of it, not least the over 66% return rate! Out of 90 members 54 are observers, there are 69 telescopes and 32 computers among the members. The most popular options were more star parties and more visits (interesting the latter since the societies of which I am a member have problems prying their members away from home!). The most popular Society facility was the Library but mirror aluminising, testing and grinding were also very highly rated.

BRIDGEND AS The BAS are busy, at least their Secretary/Editor is, Clive is not just those things but BAA Area Rep and FAS Publicity Officer. Seriously though when his computer hard disk is behaving Clive's reports in the Bridgend Newsletter show us an active and enthusiastic society with lots going on. Contact Clive Down on 01656 740754 for details of meetings which take place on alternate Fridays.

BRISTOL AS The biennial Convention took place at the beginning of October. It attracted a large number of people and had many trade and society stands. The content followed the BAS pattern of a group of morning and afternoon lectures and talks by local societies followed by two Public Lectures - one by Robert Bauval on the "Orion Mystery" having many non-astronomers in the audience while Patrick Walter's "The Future of the Universe" in the evening was well attended by the astro community. Thanks to BAS for inviting the FAS along. Geoff Cane on 01272 798375 is the man to contact for info about BAS.

CAMBRIDGE AA and CAMBRIDGE YA. As usual the CAA are busy and still working hard on telescopes and places to house them. Nice too that they could help Bedford AS. Great to see them at Cambridge and fascinating to see the monster at the FAS Convention. The Association Newsletter *Capella* has some really excellent articles and I wonder if the Editor has considered producing a collection to market alongside the Cambridge Video. I am sure that it would sell. Contact Dr Frank Murphy at 98 High St, Harlow, Cambridge CB3 7ES or on 01223 262421 for membership and programme info.

CARDIFF AS Usual good programme including a Christmas Dinner on 16th December. Speakers to March include John Meacham, John Mason, Bob Owens, Ian Gray and Prof Mike Disney (President of Cardiff AS) Visits planned include Swansea AS's Observatory and (next Spring) the Norman Lockyer Observatory. Contact Dave Powell on 01222 551704 for more details.

COTSWOLD AS Speakers in the Autumn session have included Ann Bonell with "Ladies of the night" and Chris Baddiley "The Universe on your Computer". Contact Irene Hatton on 01242 673923 or John Daniel on 0453 757026 for more details of the programme.

CRAYFORD MANOR AS This year we have an excellent programme of lectures. Visitors are always welcome and should contact Roger Pickard on 01723 850663. John Wall's 32" telescope is undergoing trials and fine tuning. It is planned to use the telescope for spectroscopy. John was also in the news along with CMAS member John Boothroyde when they appeared in the BBC2 programme covering the Jupiter Collision. The Society's CCD camera has had plenty of use on our 24" telescope although we still have a lot to learn about image processing. Several members are going to South America in November for the total eclipse of the Sun.

A Cockburn

LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESAISE ASTRONOMY SECTION The Section have been active in all sorts of ways, WI visits and talks to the WI, browser visits and the acquisition of a CCD imager but certainly one of the most important events was the Liberation Monument. This is to be erected to celebrate the Liberation of Guernsey on the 9th May 1945 (yes, they were occupied until a week before the German surrender in Europe. Makes you think doesn't it!). The requirement is for the Monument's shadow to fall accurately on marks commemorating the events of 50 years ago. David Le Conte has been asked by the States Engineers Dept to help and he has asked the Section to get involved. It does sound exciting, if you want to know more contact Geoff Falla the Hon. Secretary on Guernsey 724101.

HAG The October *Observer* carries a picture the two young ladies Caroline Kirman and Natalie Wheellan who passed their GCSE in Astronomy this Summer under the tuition of Robin Gorman. The *Observer* also carries observing info and reports including the trip to Cambridge and to the Societe Astronomique du Havre. Speakers on the programme include Alan Dowdell with "History of Deep Sky Observing" and Dr John Parkinson "The Star of Bethlehem - Miracle, myth or reality". The person to contact for details is Roy Dodd on Waterloooville 254032.

AS of HARINGEY ASH meetings are held in the upper rooms of the Palm Court at Alexandra Palace. They occur on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7.30 with lectures starting at 8.00pm. Speakers until March are Allan Chapman, Mike Leggett, Stuart Clark and Chris Jones. The AGM in October was not quorate and although the committee was elected it will have to be ratified at an EGM in December. 2001 The Societies newsletter carries lots of useful and interesting material. Contact Jerry Workman on 0171 607 7751 for more details.

KIRISH AS Contact James Lynch on 820 2133 (dialling code is 010 353 1 I think) for information on meetings and publications.

LETCHWORTH & District AS As I said last time I envy LADAS, the 22 sides of the their Newsletter are full of information. The programme for the coming year looks very full with 3 or 4 meetings every month. I'm not counting committee meetings which also occur monthly. The Society seem to have been lucky with their two last Star Parties particularly the Public SP in October. The AGM is soon but I hope that the contact will still be Eric Hutton on 01462 431988.

LIVERPOOL AS Lots happening at LAS with their fully operational Observatory getting a great deal of use. You need to attend their meetings to really appreciate how much they are doing. Contact Ken Clark at 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, L45 0LJ with an SAE for more details.

LOWESTOFT & YARMOUTH REGIONAL ASTRONOMERS Plans are afoot for a Society Observatory at Lotheringland School. As Bob says all they need now is the dosh! Contact Bob Cheek on 0502 572697 for details of programme

LUTON AS Following the first successful public observatory open evening in July, a second 'Autumn Skies' evening was held on October 13th. The H.E. Dall Memorial Observatory in the grounds of Puttidge Bury, Faculty of Management, Univ of Luton was visited by over a hundred people on each occasion. The 15.5" Dall Kirkham telescope with a newly replaced drive system, the LAS 12" Dobsonian and member's 6", 8.5" and 12" reflectors were used to show people Saturn, the first quarter Moon and selected deep sky objects. LAS members to help and discuss astronomy with the visitors. LAS meetings are on the last Friday of the month (except for December) at Puttidge Bury starting at 7.30pm. Guest speakers, visits and social events. School and group visits have proved popular. New members of all ages always welcome.

Contact Geoff Mitchell, Secretary, LAS on 01582 502485. Report from Geoff Mitchell.

MANCHESTER AS Numerous visitors and enquiries have accompanied the summer months. Doubtless many were attracted by our monthly parallel study groups run by our Director Ray Groves, B.Sc, M.Sc. who led the studies of SL9/Jupiter but the finest sequence of drawings by Nigel Longshaw brought gasps of admiration from all who studied them. The Director and Head of the Solar, Lunar and Asteroid Section, Dr C. Steele, have revived dormant interest in their main fields through study groups while Dr Steele had a soundbite of opportunity on local radio to boost the Society.

Unusually the Society's season began early with a chance to hear David Malin with "A Universe of Colour" on September 8th. Prof Alex Boksenberg was the speaker in November with "All that you need to know about the Universe" and the December meeting is Tim Naylor of Keele with "Black Holes and the Amateur Astronomer". For more details of the regular Thursday meetings at UMIST contact J Davidson on 0161 2004977.

NORWICH AS Still involved with getting Seething Observatory fully operational and the Radio Telescopes running the Society manage to get some great speakers to relieve the hard worked members. They have included Mark

Hewitt, Dr Carolyn Crawford and Alan Dowell, and will include Dr Peter Andrews and Nick Hewitt. Open evenings are planned for each month with a particular object chosen for study. Contact Malcolm Jones on 01508 578392 for more details.

SAG Still active getting the Scottish and far north of England Societies to talk to one another. **SAGMAG** the newsletter of SAG carries some super information including this quarter an article on Mathematical Astronomy with particular reference to Spherical Geometry. I will have to talk nicely to Dave Gavine who wrote it. Another nice bit was on Megalithic Astronomy. Nice one John but it's not April!! Contact is Brian Kelly at Mills Observatory, Balgay Park, Dundee, DD2 2UB

SALFORD AS The Society is well into the autumn/winter session of lectures, the weekly Wednesday programme includes open nights and workshops at the observatory in Chaseley Field and lectures given by members and professional speakers at the new lecture venue, Hope High School, Salford. Dr Allan Chapman (a long-standing member of Salford AS) will be giving his annual Christmas lecture to the Society, "Lord Rosse and his Telescopes" on December 14th, other AS members are very welcome to attend this or any of the other lectures or events. Dr Chapman and his mother will be "guests of honour" at the Society's annual Christmas dinner and Social, this year taking place on 15th December at the prestigious Worsley Court House. The society holds a Messier meeting on Friday evenings throughout the year, mainly for deep sky observers, has a separate monthly computer section meeting (the computer has recently been upgraded to multimedia) and is hoping to set up a variable star section soon. Contact Kath Redford on 0161 794 3179 for Society news.

Kath Redford

SHROPSHIRE AS (Formerly the Shrewsbury & District AS) At the AGM last week the SADAS members decided unanimously to adopt Shropshire AS as its new name, since with the sad demise of the former Oswestry based SAS, SADAS had become the county society. Paid-up members of the old SAS became members of the new society. The society has lots of projects under way and is deeply into computer communications. The contact is still David Woodward on

SHEFFIELD AS The Yorkshire Astromind took place in October and the winners were Sheffield AS. Competing societies were Mexborough & Swinton, Huddersfield, Scarborough, West Yorks and one non-Yorkshire society. Cleveland & Darlington AS. All agreed that it was a good day out. Contact Mrs Bloodworth on 01742 652608 for more details of the Society's activities.

SOUTH EAST KENT AS Contact Andrew McCarthy on 01303 241933. The Society were active over the SL9 impact period, it included a slot on BBC Radio Kent which went down well. The peak night was on the 20th of July when a public meeting at Canterbury High School Observatory attracted 100 members of the public, 10 society telescopes plus an 8" SCT from the University. During the Folkestone Festival week SEKAS held solar observing sessions and had an Exhibition and mobile Planetarium at the Library. The Autumn session started with a Paul Money talk (I seem to have

mislaidd the latest programme so you will need to contact Andrew. K)

Andrew McCarthy

SUNDERLAND AS Contact Don Simpson on 0191 5670151 for details. The Society has an architect working on the observatory plans, and things seem to be going well. Cornings Consumer Ltd., have supplied the Society with some decent glass, at a reduced price (due to the plant being in Sunderland!). It will be put to good use towards mirror construction. I (Don Simpson) am still researching the work of T W Backhouse, I am now on the lookout for copies of his books. If anyone has any for sale would they please let me know, as it would greatly assist me in my research. Membership seems to be growing, although slowly, and we now have a permanent meeting place which will help with live presentations. Don Simpson

SWANSEA AS One of the problems that SAS anticipated when their new Observatory was opened on the foreshore last year was the Promenade lighting. After the Council were approached by the Society they promised to investigate the possibility of capping the lights. Well they have investigated it and now the globe lights in the vicinity of the Observatory are capped and it appears that the scheme might be extended further. The City Council are quite enlightened and have actually capped a light which was hindering a Society member. Well done Swansea. Contact Dave Tovey on 01792 873334 for details of Society meetings.

WEST OF LONDON AS Meetings continue at the Scout Activity Centre Wealdstone or at The Nave Uxbridge. Observing sessions are organised at Ruislip Common and at Piggotts. Speakers have included Dr David Whitehouse (remember the last AGM at Coventry) and Chris Packham from the University of Hertfordshire. Contact Maggie Daly on 01895 637400 for information on meetings and speakers.

WEST YORKS AS What a speaker list for the Winter/Spring session. It starts in January with Peter Rea, then continues with Dr Allan Chapman, Prof Chandra Wickramasingh, Prof Woolfson, Harry Everett, Sir Francis Graham-Smith and Dr Mike Leggett. That is just to the end of April. The October edition of **PHOBOS** gave me lots of food for thought with articles by Chris Lancaster on the use of the computer in astronomy especially about bulletin boards. There is a lot happening. Contact Pete Lunn on 01924 360064 for programme of meetings.

WORCESTER AS The Autumn/Winter programme is well under way and the AGM has gone (very quickly in a record 25 minutes) The annual quiz followed the AGM. Next years programme includes a Convention at the beginning of June at which Jack Newton is the chief speaker. Contact Ian Gray on 01386 47352 for more information.

WORTHING AS Lots of local activity with much use being made of the Observatory.. Equipment has been donated including an enlarger. The efforts against light pollution are paying off with modification to some lights having been carried out. Speakers have included Pam Spence "People and the story of the Universe" and Bob Turner with "Stonehenge". Both talks having a historical flavour. Ring Nick Quinn on 01903 814090 for full details of the programme.

Four Book Reviews with a variety of reading to start for a day by taking the Greenwich Meridian as mean noon, the day beginning at Greenwich midnight.

THE GREAT ASTRONOMICAL REVOLUTION 1534-1687 and the Space Age Epilogue, by Patrick Moore.

Published by Albin Publishing. Paperback £9.95 ISBN 1-898563-19-5

I enjoy reading Astronomical History and was delighted to get my hands on the latest of Patrick's books. The story of the early greats such as Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler and Galileo would grab anyone with the slightest interest in our great hobby. This book certainly gives you a real insight into the life and work of these geniuses, at least I think that they were geniuses. Life was hard and it is extremely difficult for people like us to realise how hard it was. Imagine a society where expressing your doubts about the Big Bang or the interpretation of the COBE results could result in your dismissal or at least expulsion from normal life. These four men all did this and Patrick has got over this feeling. It may be that I hear him saying the words but it does seem immediate.

The real twist in this book is the last chapter where the modern events associated with the topics the four were immersed in came to the fore again, I mean of course the Apollo missions.

One slight jarring note was opening the book and finding a list of errata which spoilt the way it was presented but didn't interfere with my real enjoyment.

I think that this is a book with two functions - you must read it from cover to cover initially and then you can dive into it for that bit of "gossip" which brightens society newsletters.

My recommendation is if you are fascinated by the early days of real astronomy "buy it!"

Ken Sheldon

VOYAGER IN TIME AND SPACE.

The life of John Couch Adams, Cambridge Astronomer. H.M.Harrison. Published by The Book Guild. at £15.00 ISBN 0 86332918 7

The book is based on knowledge of the family and on John Couch's diaries interspersed with straightforward accounts of events. The author, Hilda Mary Harrison is his Great Great Niece. After telling us about his early life in Cornwall, the second section of the book deals extensively with the papers and letters of Airy in correspondence with Challis, Adams, and Le Verrier as well as various other letters regarding the matter of finding the position of Uranus. This is ironic as JCA asked that publication of his biography should be delayed until the controversy had died down yet 150 yrs on the subject is still hotly debated!

There are many references to his brilliance as a mathematician, and mention of his work as editor of Newton's papers, his calculations on Satellites of Jupiter and Saturn, lunar inequalities, tables of the moon's parallax etc. are scattered through the text. There is a chapter on the Meridian Conference at which the Greenwich meridian was chosen as the prime meridian of the world and the matter of settling

It brings out the background of European history at the time and it seems remarkable to me that with Europe in turmoil Cambridge life was so tranquil.

The book is packed with facts and information and gives a good picture of the life of an academic in Cambridge at that time. He was not confined to Cambridge as the railway system was so good that he could move around the country almost as easily as we do now. The telegraph and postal service were fast and efficient. I found the diaries extremely interesting. Everything is mixed up - work, family, church, buying a hat, going on holiday - but this is bound to be the case when a person simply jots down the main events of the day. His life was very full but never extravagant. He started the day with prayers, and often went for a walk to Madingley or to the town. He spent the evening reading a great variety of subjects and he and his wife enjoyed novels. He belonged to a dining club called the Family which met at lunchtime. He enjoyed parties and the theatre. He was a modest, pleasant, 'ordinary' man yet one of the most extraordinary mathematicians of all time.

I would recommend this as a fascinating picture of life in Cambridge in the 1800s showing the amazing energy of John Couch Adams.

Christine Sheldon

THE DIARIES OF ROBERT HOOKE

The Leonardo of London 1635 - 1703 by Richard Nichols Published by The Book Guild Ltd ISBN 0 86332 930 6

'The object of this work is to remove from obscurity the details of the life of this remarkable man'. (Quote from p. 5.)

The book starts with an account of his early life. He was basically self-taught having spent much time alone at home, and then using a £100 bequest (given to him to train as a portrait painter) he obtained a place at Westminster School. Even there he spent his time in the library rather than attending classes! He was full of curiosity as to how things were made and how they worked. He was born at the right time to be ideally situated to become important in the formation of the Royal Society. The information has been extracted from the diaries and presented in sections dealing with different aspects of his life. Diary entries include what he ate each evening and how well he slept, a list of the tools he bought, his attempts at making a flying machine and meetings with other Royal Society members.

He was Professor of Geometry at Gresham College and Cutlerian Lecturer in the Mechanical Arts. He was Curator of the Royal Society for 40 years and President from 1684 - 86 Initially he was asked to provide 3 or 4 experiments to present to the Society every time it met. His ingenuity and inventiveness extended to all the sciences. He knew and worked with, and for, all the famous scientists of his time, proving their theories (and his own) by experiment. I was amazed at the extent of his work. He made advances in meteorology, astronomy, composition and properties of air, clockmaking, brickmaking, geology, map

making, biology, architecture and many other scientists are remembered for many of their discoveries which would have been incomplete without Robert Hooke's work. I think that the author of this book achieves his aim in showing Robert Hooke's contribution to all branches of science in his time. I recommend it as a thoroughly readable work for anyone interested in the history of any of the sciences.

Christine Sheldon

ATLAS OF THE UNIVERSE

Patrick Moore. Published by Philip's ISBN 0-540-06087-9

Another wonderful publication, this book now sits on our coffee table within easy reach. When our local radio station (or even a national station) rings as they do whenever something in the National News mentions astronomy then I have a really comprehensive set of answers at hand. It is much more than just a Star Atlas (not meant to be a put down since I also find Star Atlases fascinating!!!!) it is a compendium of knowledge covering, as the title says, The Universe. It begins with an overview of astronomy and methods, including a bit on the HST (repaired). Then we have the Solar system with some beautiful pictures of the planets and with lots of surface feature maps of planets and satellites. On out into the stars with supernovae then into the Milky Way and out into the deep of space. Then come the star maps and constellation maps with comprehensive lists of what lies in them (useful for sorting out what it is in what constellation). Last, but certainly not least, is a section on practical amateur astronomy. As you probably know I am a sucker where books are concerned but this is very near the top of the books in regular use. If you want something special that isn't on a disk or CD for Christmas this is it.

Ken Sheldon

FAS May 6 1995 AGM & Convention at Montague School, Kettering. Run by Kettering and District AS. More details later.
Worcester AS June 3 1995 Convention with Jack Newton.

FAS September 30 1995 Autumn Convention Cambridge

FAS May 1996 AGM & Convention Liverpool AS. Details later.

N.A.W. 1996

If you haven't started to think about this please start now.

The week begins on 21st September 1996

Publication dates.

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Please try to get material to me in good time.

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

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