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ISSUE 50

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

THE FAS AUTUMN CONVENTION

OCTOBER 4th

CAVENDISH LABORATORIES, CAMBRIDGE

Tickets from Dave Sutton (01903) 754063
£4-50 pre book, £5-50 on the day.

9.00 Doors open

10.00 Welcome address by Pam Spence President FAS

10.15 Dr Steve Miller, University College London
"Astronomy & the Media"

11.15 - 11.45 Coffee break

11.45 Dr Roger Griffin, University of Cambridge
"Stellar Radial-Velocity Measurements"

12.45 - 14.15 LUNCH

14.15 Dr Cathy Clarke, University of Leicester
"Formation of Stars & Planets"

15.15 - 15.45 Tea Break

15.45 Dr Peter Williams, Queen Mary & Westfield
College
"Neutrino Astronomy"

16.45 Professor Colin Pillinger FRS, Open
University
"Mars"

17.45 Closing Address Pam Spence

There are two trips arranged for the lunchtime: the RGO and the Institute of Astronomy, numbers limited to 20 per visit, tickets available at entrance. At 13.00 the Cambridge Astronomical Society will present an informal talk on their project "Cyclops".

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sept 12 - 14th **SCOTTISH ASTRONOMY WEEKEND** based on the University of Dundee. Can include one of two trips. For more information and a booking form contact Dr David Gavine, 29 Coilldene Crescent, Edinburgh, EH15 2JJ or ring him on 0131 657 2338.

Oct 4th **FAS AUTUMN CONVENTION** at the Cavendish Laboratories in Cambridge.

Oct 11th **SOUTH WALES SOCIETIES CONVENTION** This will take place at the Techniquet Science Centre, Cardiff Bay and the

speakers are Prof. Sir Martin Rees, Dr Mike Edmunds, Dr Patrick Walters, Dr David Dunbar. Admission is FREE but by ticket only. For more information contact Theresa Cooper on 01466 700722 or visit the Web Site at <http://users.acl.com/astroswales/>

Nov 1st **SE KENT AS CONVENTION** to be held at Canterbury with Guest Speakers. Starring John Zamecki and Patrick Moore. Contact Andrew McCarthy on 01303 241933.

The main item of this issue is details of the FAS Autumn Convention, which will be taking place on October 4th at the Cavendish Laboratories, Cambridge.

Most societies have had a break over the Summer but I am looking forward to receiving articles from you for the next issue.

The newsletter is under review at the moment to look at potential changes. Don't forget to let me have any suggestions for content or format as soon as possible.

Pam Gill

—See FAS Handbook for contact details of FAS affiliated Astronomical Societies—

HAVERING ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

We celebrated our third anniversary in April, when Konrad Malin-Smith showed slides and a video of his trip to India for the total solar eclipse. The speakers at our monthly meetings have been very informative, interesting, and enjoyable; our membership is growing, the youngest being 11 years and our oldest over 80. We have observing evenings and our photography group has produced good results. We have visited the Old Greenwich Observatory and Herschel's House in Bath, and are making plans for Cornwall 99. Meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month - contact Frances Ridgley on 01708 227397.

MANCHESTER AS The Society's year ended with an avalanche of members' detailed and eye-riveting astrocaptures, which have comprised a satisfying review of the Hale -Bopp sequences.

Our colonising cyberspace consultant and the MAS Website comptroller, Mike Oates, F.R.A.S., has reported a monthly 'hit' average for the MAS Website of some eight hundred, though during the month of March there was a peak of two thousand and eighty-one.

The April AGM saw the inauguration of the new President, Ray Brierley, B. Sc. while the indefatigable A. W. Cross was transformed into Past President which post now carries a surfeit of onerous responsibilities unimagined by previous occupants. Kevin J. Kilburn has been entrusted with the Directorate of the Godlee Observatory. Our new President has continued his strategies of utilising data downloaded from cyberspace to supplement members' observational programmes and interests. The huge demand on such resources by members also seeking to upgrade their computer literacy inspired Council to create its first appointment of computer resource facilitator, a post conferred on the energetic and youthful Stephen O'Brien, already admired for his carefully chosen astrocaptures.

Thursday evenings have been given many an inspiring input by Colin Henshaw, B.Sc., F.R.A.S., who has generously shared with his fellow members his unique slides depicting the wide ranging fields of study undertaken not only from Saudi Arabia, his former base, but also from diverse sites within Britain during the interval between his overseas contracts. He reverted to being our representative abroad on his return to Saudi after mid-August.

Our new season opens on September the eighteenth with a paper entitled, 'Telescopes for All Wavelengths', Professor Sir Francis Graham Smith. Our October lecture on 'the Great Comets', will see that other internationally known astronomer, Dr. David W. Hughes from Sheffield University. Full details of our year's programme can be downloaded from <http://www.ernet.com/pb/mas/>

SALFORD AS The society's winter session of lectures and events for 97/98 is, as usual, an ambitious one. Commencing on September 24th until March 25th, with the AGM on April 22nd, the Wednesday programme consists of 8 guest speakers (two less than last session), 4 member speakers, 1 questions and answer evening, plus 1 cheese and wine event, all at Hope High School, Eccles Old Road, Salford, from 7.00 to 9.00 p.m. Part of the programme, 6 open nights and 6 workshops take place at the Observatory in Chaseley Field, Chaseley Road, Salford, from 7.30 and 8.00 p.m. respectively.

Dr Allen Chapman will be giving his annual Christmas lecture to the society, "The Prism and the Plate; a History of Astronomical Photography and Spectroscopy" (again a new one) on December 17th. Visitors welcome at any of our meetings.

September 6th this year sees the 30th anniversary of the inauguration of the society. It has come a long way since the founders meeting in the potting shed of Bule Hill Park!

During the summer recess, work started on the modernisation of the 0.45m Newtonian telescope's drive system. More details next newsletter.

Further enquiries contact Kath Redford on 0161 794 3179.

STRATFORD upon AVON AS The new contact for the society is Robin Swinbourne, 18 Old Milverton, Leamington Spa, CV32 6SA, Tel: 01926 882187 for more information.

SWANSEA AS is a joint organiser of the South Wales Astronomical Societies Convention of Oct 11 1997. During July and August the Swansea Marina Towers Observatory was open to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 4pm and on Sundays from 11am to 4pm. From September 11th 1997 until May

28th 1998, the Society will meet at 7pm on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month in Maths/Physics Lecture theatre C, University of Wales Swansea. The Junior section meets at Olchfa Comprehensive School, Killay, Swansea on the first Thursday of the month at 7pm.

Considerable use is made of both of the Society observatories, the popular Marina-Towers observatory in the Swansea maritime quarter, and the Dark-sky Fairwood Common observatory. Term-time school visits to the Marina Towers observatory take place

on Wednesdays. Enquiries for school visits should be made to Marilyn Walker 01792 897878. The Swansea Astronomical Society Internet Web-Site is at:

<http://www.swan.ac.uk/astro/strpage.htm>

The Chairman Phil Brady and the Hon. Secretary Dave Tovey will both be retiring this year and I shall inform the FAS Newsletter of their successors for the next edition. Meanwhile, the Hon Sec. Dave Tovey can be contacted on 01792 873334.

WEST CORNWALL AS On Wednesday 3rd September Steve Parkinson (Bristol AS) is giving a talk "Chaos in the Solar System" and on Wednesday 1st October Mr D Copp of the University of London Observatory is giving a talk entitled "Bubble, Bubble, Toil and Trouble - Volcanism in the Solar System". This is a joint meeting with the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall. Contact Robin Hughes on 01209 890736 for more details.

WILLIAM HERSCHEL SOCIETY Contact the secretary - Al Crotcher on 01225 311342 or write to him at William Herschel Society, 19 New Kings Street, Bath, BA1 2BL, for more information.

WORTHING AS Mr Graham Bouts recently visited the Centre of Observational Astronomy of the Algarve (COAA) in Portugal. The address for the COAA is Casa Adelina, Poio, Mexilhoeira Grande, 8500 Portimão. Visit their Website on <http://www.algarve.net/pt.coaa>. The centre contains 4 domes and a range of telescopes, from a 0.5m f4.5 Newtonian, through 3 0.3m Newtonians (2 x f5's and 1 f6), to a 0.15m f6 Newtonian. Graham thoroughly enjoyed his time there and wholeheartedly recommends others paying a visit.

Contact Nick Quinn at nick@quinn.demon.co.uk for full details of the programme.

NEW FAS SOCIETY

CHESTERFIELD AS Contact the Secretary - Robert McGregor, 34 Higher Albert Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S41 7QE for more information.