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ISSUE 56

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES

THE NORMAN LOCKYER OBSERVATORY

Location of the Spring FAS Convention & AGM

The Federation of Astronomical Societies meet at Sidmouth in May of this year. On the hill above the town stands the Norman Lockyer Observatory. Allan Chapman will be telling delegates of the remarkable career of the observatory's founder. Suffice it to say that, at the age of 76, when most would be reaching for slippers and home comforts, Lockyer set about building an observatory. He was helped by rich and influential friends and so in 1912 the Hill Observatory came into being. At first it was equipped with two telescopes and a sidereostat to continue Lockyer's solar research. A third dome was to have been built to house Lockyer's 30-inch reflector. This telescope had been used to show the presence of hydrogen in the Orion Nebula.



Unfortunately, the First World War intervened and the dome was never built. Sir Norman died in 1920 to be succeeded as director by his son. James Lockyer continued work on the categorisation of the stars and in 1932 added a further dome to house a four tube astrographic camera. This enterprise was funded by Sir Robert Mond. The observatory suffered a reverse with James's sudden death in 1936, but his place was taken by Mr F. Edwards. By 1945 the Lockyer Corporation could no longer fund the observatory and the day to day running was taken over by the University College of the South-West of England, now Exeter University.

The College used the site to study the Earth's magnetism and the nature of the upper atmosphere, but with the retirement in 1962 of Donald Barber, the last Superintendent, the observatory fell into decline.

In 1975 the newly formed Sidmouth and District Astronomical Society renovated one of the telescopes and was allowed to meet in a disused building, as was the Sidmouth Amateur Radio Society. Life's breath was sustained in the observatory but came to an end in 1983 when the University decided to sell the observatory site for development. The proposal caused uproar in Sidmouth, whose citizens set up a landscape appeal to save the hilltops above the town from developers. Eventually the East Devon District Council purchased the 46-acre site and sold off 40 acres to the National Trust. The Trust paid for them with some of the £250,000 that the Sidmouth residents had collected. Lockyer's library was converted to a private dwelling and a new bungalow replaced an old dilapidated building.

The profit made from these deals could have been lost in the Council's coffers, instead the East Devon District Council chose to use the money for the refurbishment of the observatory. Their plans included a meeting room for the two societies and a 20-seat planetarium, which was installed in place of the astrograph that had been badly vandalised.

Dr. Patrick Moore reopened the observatory in October 1989 and the astronomical and radio societies were given the task of running it. They were expected to be open to the public on nine occasions during the year and were allowed to charge an admission fee to defray expenses. At that time the total membership stood at about 50, despite this in their first full year of operation 200 people visited the observatory.

By 1993 the membership of the society and visits by the public had outgrown the facilities of the site and plans were put before the Council for a major building programme. This came to fruition in 1995 and in September 1995 Patrick Moore returned to open the new 60-seat James Lockyer Planetarium.

Today the Norman Lockyer Observatory Society, formed from the two founding societies, boasts a membership of over 250 and welcomes some 51500 visitors to the observatory on the 120 occasions that the observatory is open to the public. Lockyer's telescopes are in regular use. Pride of place goes to the Cooke 6-inch telescope, whose mounting is dated 1871, but whose lens was the "secundus nulli" which Lockyer mounted in a Papier Mache tube to start his ground breaking studies of the Sun.

The Kensington telescope was originally commissioned for the Solar Physics Observatory built by Lockyer in South Kensington. It has a 10-inch main tube with a 9-inch spectroscopic camera added after it was installed at Sidmouth.

The RA drive has the original weight operated equipment that still works well. Its ease of operation makes this telescope one of the more popular instruments.

The McClean telescope was donated to the observatory by Sir Frank McClean. It had belonged to his father and was built by Sir Howard Grubb to the same pattern as telescopes made for the International Astronomical Convention. It has a 10-inch main viewing tube and a 12-inch photographic tube. The McClean telescope has undergone considerable modernisation. It is now operated by a crystal controlled electric motor providing a very accurate RA drive. It has become the observatory's main photographic telescope.

The Victoria dome and telescope have been added this year, thanks to local sponsorship. The telescope is a new f4, 12-inch Newtonian reflector. It is computer guided and there are great hopes that this instrument will enable members to widen their deep sky studies.

The members of the society are not only blessed with a range of first class instruments, they also enjoy a dark southern aspect, free from light pollution. We look forward to welcoming the delegates of this year's conference and hope for clear skies to enable us to demonstrate the instruments to our visitors.

Jack Wickings.

Chairman,

Norman Lockyer Observatory Society

FAS Spring Convention & AGM

Saturday 8th May

At the council chambers in Sidmouth, Devon

Agenda (preliminary)

- 09:00 Doors open to traders (Access from 08.30 by prior arrangement)
- 09:30 Doors open to public
- 10:00 - 11:00 **Konrad Malin-Smith**, Eclipses
- 11:00 - 13:00 AGM, coffee break, NLO Observatory visit
- 13:00 - 14:00 Lunch
- 14:00 - 15:00 **Dr Percy Seymour** (University of Plymouth), The Magnetism of the Universe
- 15:00 Tea break
- 15:30 - 16:30 **Dr Allan Chapman** (Oxford University), The Civil Servant and the Sunbeam: The life and times of Sir Joseph Norman Lockyer.
- 17:00 Meeting closes

Tickets:

Tickets cost £4.00 in advance, £5.00 on the door. Orders (please enclose SAE) from:

Mr Dave Sutton, (E-mail: dseg@tsdmc.demon.co.uk)

10 The Martlets,

Sompting,

West Sussex,

BN15 9SS.

Telephone: 0976 243151

Stand:

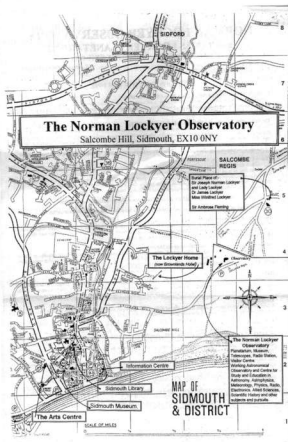
Anyone or society interested in taking a stand, contact Pam Spence (see contacts on back page).

Details of the observatory visit are:

At the Observatory the Lockyer Observatory Society are expected to do their normal planetarium lecture which will include something on the eclipse. There will be a conducted tour of the site. The observatory will be open to FAS members for a look through the telescopes on both Friday and Saturday evenings.

Information on the web site as available,

<http://www.fedastro.demon.co.uk>



We all know the benefits of affiliation to the FAS. The Public Liability Insurance, the Newsletter, the annual Handbook, the Astrocalendar, slides, inexpensive publications, conventions, free advice, the assurance that someone is looking after your interests with professional astronomers. The list is endless, but at the end of the day, the FAS is *your* organisation and *you* pay for it. The cost to each member society is negligible, but don't panic, we are not asking for more money!! It is working very efficiently for you, and after all, we are not a profit making organisation.

Who runs the FAS? Well, you do. The FAS Council is made up of elected members of affiliated societies, each Council member having a specific task to carry out. In a way, a bit like the way your own local society is run. What do we get out of it? Just the satisfaction that we are able to channel a little time and energy into helping others and (hopefully) for the good of amateur astronomers everywhere. We hope we are doing a good job and we hope that you will tell us if we are not.

But the point is, that we carry out our duties voluntarily, and enjoy doing so. It also means that nobody should feel that they should have to continue with a post on the FAS if they feel they would like to spend their free time doing other things.

Each year at our AGM, we ask for volunteers to take positions on the Council, and each year the cry comes back "vote them in again *en bloc*". Nobody comes forward to offer their services. It means that existing Council members have to carry on when they may have other commitments. It also means that the same person sometimes has to hold several posts. Only a handful of societies bother to volunteer one of their members for election and I find it hard to believe that other societies don't have someone who would be prepared to help guide us into the 21st century. Is that someone you?

So what does it involve? Each year we attend three Saturday afternoon meetings in a conference room above the London Planetarium, for which travelling expenses are paid. This is where any decisions are taken on your behalf. Also, we have to devote a little of our leisure time to looking after the post we have agreed to hold. Obviously, we can do this at our own convenience and we are given out of pocket expenses.

The bottom line is that a number of Council members feel that they would like to step down and have a well earned rest after having done their turn. They have looked after you, and now it is your turn to look after them by nominating a member of your society to carry on the good work.

PLEASE send in your nominations to my address on the front of this newsletter in plenty of time for the AGM in May.

**Clive Down
Secretary**



Edited by Ian Ridpath
Published by Longmans
ISBN 0 582 31283 3 CSD (Cloth)
or ISBN 0 582 35655 5 PPR (Paper)

As the millennium approaches - whenever that is - the idea of an update of one of the classic books on observing the sky is very sound sense. I love books and although I spend most of my free time sitting at a keyboard and am aware of and use lots of wonderful software to help me both with my astronomy and my other interests, when it comes down to it a book is much more comforting than a computer screen. It is something to pick up and caress, something to take to bed or read on the train, something to enjoy at leisure! So when a packet arrived and I opened it to find Norton 19TH Edition I felt really pleased. Norton to me, and I suspect lots of other amateurs is the real starting point of observing. Pick it up, open it to any page and there is something of interest - then move to the sky charts and they give you a chance to choose what you want to look at. Read about the interesting objects in that area of the sky (Double stars, Variable stars, Clusters, Nebulae and Galaxies) which are all there in comprehensive lists relating to the page of interest.

If it is cloudy and you can't observe (most of the time!) then open it at any point after the star maps and you will find something interesting and instructive. The Section headings are Position and Time, Practical Astronomy, The Solar System, Stars, Nebulae and Galaxies. If you look at any of them you get an excellent start to that topic. In fact it is more than a start, if you want an understanding of the topic great - but if it awakens a 'need to know' it gives an excellent basis to move on to higher powered texts.

Norton's to me epitomises an exceptional book as distinct from an ordinary one, I agree with Lief Robinson (Editor Sky and Telescope Magazine) that it is something special and that it is an important book that any serious amateur should own. However having said how much I admire and cherish my copy I have one minor grouse - it still has Chris's address (and by default mine) as the FAS contact (not that this will upset readers of this review, they know that it is Clive Down).

A book which would be a great stocking filler this year - I recommend that if you haven't got a copy you should have.

Ken Sheldon

ABINGDON A.S

Apr 12 - "A Voyage to the Edge of our Galaxy" - Inayat Kahn
 May 10- AGM
 May 24- Beginners evening
 Jun 11 - Members talk - "Solar Eclipse"
 Contact: Bob Dryden 01491 201620
 Or Sebastian Linfoot 01865 725094

Flat 10, Pembroke Court, Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BY

ASTRA: Association in Scotland to Research Astronautics

Contact Mr George McCue, 96, Bloomfield Road, Airdrie, Lanarkshire, ML6 9LX Tel: 01236 750903.

Meets Friday evenings at Airdrie Observ. & monthly in Glasgow.
<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~portwin/Pages/ASTRA/General/ASTRA.html>

E-mail: astra@easynet.co.uk

AYLESBURY

Contact: Peter Biswell on 01296 485125

BEDFORD

Secretary: Lisa Harrington, 24 Swallowfield, Wyboston, Beds. MK44 3AE Tel. 01480 406350

<http://www.btinternet.com/~cosmodave/bashome.html>

E Mail: (Dave Eagle): Observer@daveagle.freemove.co.uk

<http://www.powernet.co.uk/bas/bashome.html>

BIRMINGHAM

Dane Carty 0121 353 6577
BOSTON AS Details of the 1999 lecture programme are available from Mrs Lorraine Money, 18 College Park, Horncastle, Lincolnshire. LN9 6RE. 01507-524037 (ansaphone), or e-mail Lorraine@astspace.demon.co.uk or Paul@astspace.demon.co.uk

BRADFORD A.S

Contact: David Cooper, 36 Pollard Lane, Undercliffe, Bradford. BD2 4RN.

Bradford has now got it's own web site:-

<http://www.andybat.demon.co.uk/bas/index.htm>

E-mail: has@andybat.demon.co.uk

BRIDGEND

Meets on alternate Fridays between Sept & June.

Apr 2nd "Inside a Neutron Star" by Dr Simon Hands (Swansea University)

Apr 16th "Catching Gravitational Waves.." by Dr Sathyprakash (Cardiff University.)

Contact: Clive Down 01656 740754

E-mail clivedown@btinternet.com

<http://members.aol.com.BridgendAS/>

BRIGHTON ASTRONOMICAL & SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

Meetings are held at St John's Day Centre, Palmeira Square, Hove on the first Tuesday of each month, commencing at 7:30pm.

6th April - "Our Sun" by Peter Gill (Eastbourne A.S.)

4th May - Presidential Lecture by Robert Smith.

1st June - "Update on Leonids" by Neil Bone

6th July - "Solar Eclipses" by Pam Spence

Contact: Terri Fearn (01273) 581553.

BASS@starplace.demon.co.uk,

Web Site: www.fornax.demon.co.uk/BASS.html

BRISTOL

We meet at Bristol University Physics Building and we alternate Fridays there with Fridays at Westbury Park Methodist church rooms for club nights.

Details can be obtained from me on 01454 632692 or at this email address. E-Mail: John.Pickard@bristol.ac.uk

CAMBRIDGE AA and YOUNG ASTRONOMERS

Stanley Stafford (01223) 880624

<http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/caa/caahome.html>

CASTLE POINT

Andy Turner 01702 258640

The Castle Point Astronomy Club now has a website.

<http://www.djmurphy.demon.co.uk/cpac>

CHESTERFIELD- Robert McGregor, 34 Higher Albert Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S41 7QE

CORNWALL A.S.

Contact: Jill McGroarty 31, Godolphin Rd. Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8PX

Tel: (01326) 564996 E-mail: thomas.mcgroarty@virgin.net

CRAWLEY AS Ron Garner, 1 Pevensey Close, Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 7BL. Tel: 01293 531096.

CRAYFORD MANOR HOUSE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Recently Crayford hosted a meeting of the BAA Variable Star Section. The meeting was well attended with members from home and abroad. Starting at 11am through to 6pm the meeting consisted of a programme of lectures and an exhibition.

Organised by Roger Pickard and Dick Chambers, those attending agreed it was an excellent day.

We have a first class programme of lectures at Crayford anyone who would like more information can contact the secretary Roger Pickard on 01732 850663

Web Site: <http://www.astronomy.freemove.co.uk>

DONCASTER A.S

Contact: Colin Maskill, 58 Thorne Road, Doncaster

EASTBOURNE

Peter Gill, on 01323 646853

Apr 10 "The Development of Amateur Astronomy 1949-99" -

Kevin Johnson

LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE

Geoff Falla the Hon. Secretary on Guernsey 724101

<http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/estate/vs76/astrosec.htm>

GWYNEDD ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION

Contact: Davyth Fear Brwynog, Ffordd yr Orsaf, Llanrug, Gwynedd LL55 4AG Tel. (01286) 672882

e-mail fear@enterprise.net

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month at the Electrical Engineering Building, University of Bangor, at 7.30

HAMPSHIRE

Geoff Mann on 01705 596154

AS of HARINGEY

The society was formed in 1972 & under its new chairman, Jerry Workman, will be take the society into the New Millenium.

In 1999 bimonthly exhibitions are being arranged at Alexandra Palace with a big event planned for Oct. 2000. From Feb 2000 the society will meet twice monthly on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays.

Apr 21st "Medieval Astronomy" - Dr Mike Leggett

May 19th "The moon & Apollo, 30 years on" J. Workman

July 2st "Einstein's Tram - Thought s on Einstein's Relativity", Roger O' Brien.

Sept 15th "Simple Astro Photography" Bob Mizon.

Contact: Jerry Workman, 91 Greenslade Rd, Barking, Essex, IG11 9XF. Phone 0181 5077568

<http://www.garym.demon.co.uk/index.htm>

HASTINGS AND BATTLE AS

Paul Colegate, Flat 10, 78 Wickham Ave; Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex, TN39 5ER Tel: 01424 733041

HIGHLANDS AS

Richard Green, 11 Drumossie Avenue, Culcabock, Inverness IV2 3SJ Tel 01463 223826

FINCHLEY & DISTRICT Shaun Albrighton, 4 Walnut Close, Hartshill, Nuneaton CV10 0HX (01203 397183).

HEART OF ENGLAND ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY (HOEAS)

Contact: The Secretary, Keith Middleton, 33 Digby Drive, Marston Green, Solihull, B37 7DU.

Email: HOEAS@yahoo.com

Formal meetings held on the last Thursday of the month at Furnace End Village, Shustoke, Warwickshire.

25 March Society Quiz Night

29 April "The Moon: Galileo to Lunar Prospector" - Peter Grego

27 May "2001-The Reality: Spaceflight in the new millennium" - Keith Middleton

HUDDERSFIELD ASTRONOMICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY - contact Robert Williams 01484-537032

Except where indicated meetings are at 4A, Railway Street, Huddersfield.

ILKESTON & DISTRICT Mark Thomas on 0115 939 8133 or John Brown on 0177 376 8836.

IRISH AS Stephen Ryan at PO Box 2547, Dublin 11 or Tel: (from the UK) 00 3531 864 1382

LEEDS A.S.

Venue: Centenary House, North Street, Leeds from 7:00pm.

April 14th "Art & Science of CCD Astronomy" - David Ratledge & Gerald Bramall.

May 12th "Exploring the structure of the Universe" - Dr S Cole (Uni. Of Durham)

June 9th "Atmospheric Phenomena" - Mark Simpson, Leeds A.S.

LEICESTER AS

Meeting at Braunston Civic Centre, Leicester

Details: Ann Bonell, 53 Warden's Walk, Leicester Forest East, Leics. LE3 3GO Tel. 0116 2394481

<http://www.thenet.co.uk/~obiwan/astro/index.html>

LETCHEWORTH

Meet on the last Wed of each Month

Contact: Eric Hutton 01462 626032 . bookman@rmplc.co.uk

<http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/bookman/ldas/>

LIVERPOOL AS

Ken Clarke, 31 Sandymount Drive, Wallasey, Merseyside L45 0LJ (Please encl. large sae) Tel:0151-6383270 / 0151 7945356(24hrs)

E-Mail: ggastro@liverpool.ac.uk

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/~ggastro/home.html>

Mar 19 "Mars: The Next Generation" - Mr Paul Money

LOUGHTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The venue is Theydon Bois Scout Hall, Loughton Lane, Theydon Bois, Epping, Essex.

Meetings every Thursday at 8:00pm. Ones of particular interest are:

25th Mar Bob Mizon - Planetary show + Open evening.

15th Apr George Sallit - "Planet Sallit" + photo comp. results & prizes.

13th May Dr Allan Chapman - "Gresham College and astronomy in the 17th century."

24th June Martin Moberley - The 1999 total solar eclipse.

Contact: Charles Munton. 14a Manor Road, Wood Green, London N224YJ. 0181 8899253, charles@munton.u-net.com

MACCLESFIELD AS

Contact Cherry Moss 01625 611789

MANCHESTER AS

Contact: MAS. c/o Godlee Observatory, UMIST, Sackville St, Manchester. M60 1QD

(0161 2004977, 24hrs. Fax 0161 2287040).

<http://www.u-net.com/ph/mas/>

MANSFIELD AND SUTTON

Graham Shepherd on 01623 552276

<http://www.innotts.co.uk/~shepherd/index.html>

MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON Mark Benton 01709 587887

Email: Mark.benton@rotherham.gov.uk

MID-KENT A.S.

Mar 26th "Black Holes" by Emma Nicholson

Meetings held at The Visitor Centre, Riverside Country Park, Lower Rainham Road, Gillingham.

Contact: 01634 308035 or 01634 200718

MILTON KEYNES

Pierre Girard on 01234 391489 or pgirard@compuserve.com

NORTH EAST LONDON

Stephen Karpel, 99 Churchfield Road, ACTON, London. W3 6AH Tel: 0181 992 5751

NORWICH A.S.

Apr 23rd "Recipe For A Solar System" - Pam Spence

Apr 24th "The Planet Venus" - Frank Lawlor

All meetings at the Seething Observatory from 7:30pm to approx 10:30pm. Admission £2, under 16's £1, ample parking.

Situated off the B1332 Norwich - Bungay Road Signposted 8 miles south of Norwich.

B1332 Signpost 3 Seething Observatory, (Harvey Lane): 1 mile down Harvey Lane/Toad Lane

Frank Lawlor. 01508 493321

e-mail: FLawlor@compuserve.com

NOTTINGHAM Carl Brennan on 0115 938 4521.

ORWELL

Peter Richards on 01473 659806 oasiengq@btbc.bt.co.uk

<http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk:80/~ipswich/>

PAPWORTH

Meets on the 1st Wed of each month (except July) from 7:00pm to 9:00pm in the Bradbury Progression Centre, Papworth Everard, near Huntingdon.

Keith Tritton on 01767 677219 (even) kpt2@tutor.open.ac.uk

PLYMOUTH A.S.

Contact: Alan Penman, 12 St. Maurice View, Plympton, Plymouth. PL7 1FQ. Tel: 01752 338491.

See separate article else where in this publication for an Eclipse Exhibition.

PONLAF The Astronomy Forum at the Univ. of North London. Ponlaf hold monthly meetings (last Fri in month) in term-time, when an invited speaker talks on a subject of Astronomical interest. Pat Prigmore, 0171 753 5126

RENFREWSHIRE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Meetings are held every Friday evening at 7.30 pm at the COATS OBSERVATORY, PAISLEY.

Contact: Mark Pollock TelNo: 0141 561 3554

Or e-mail Ian Martin at Imartin@aol.com

SALFORD AS

Plans to join the great trek to Devon and Cornwall for the big event on August 11th 99 are well in hand.

Further Details: Phone or send a SAE to Kath Redford (see below) Kath Redford 2 Albemarle Road, Swinton, Manchester. M27 5ST Tel: 0161 7943179.

E-mail: salford@ast.man.ac.uk

<http://www.ast.man.ac.uk:8000/~salfordac/sasholme.htm>

SAWTRY & DISTRICT Brooke Norton on 01487 831683.

SCOTTISH ASTRONOMERS

Ken Mackay at Hayford House, Cambusbarron, Stirling FK7 9PR . <http://star-www.st-and.ac.uk/~fv/sag/sag.html>

SHEFFIELD ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

<http://www.saqqara.demon.co.uk/sas/sashome.htm>

SHROPSHIRE David Woodward on 01743 872991 or the Programme Secretary John Chidlow on 01743 249823 for details on forthcoming events.

SOLENT AS Ken Medway on 01703 582204.

SOUTH EAST KENT John Kemp on 01227 766470

SOUTH Lincs ASTRO. & GEOPHYSICAL SOC.

Contact Mark Underwood on Tel 01775 766084

E-Mail: solags@btinternet.com

Formal meetings are held monthly on the third wednesday at the Adult Education Centre in Pinchbeck, Nr Spalding. Observatory meetings are held on the second Friday and fourth Saturday of every month at the Peak Hill Observatory in Cowbit.

STAFFORD & DISTRICT A.S.

Meet on the 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month from September to August at 7:15pm at Weston Road School, Blackheath Lane, Stafford.

Contact Lydia Hodkinson at 6 Elm Walk, Penkridge, Staffs. ST19 5NL. Tel: 01785 712065

STRATFORD upon AVON Robin Swinbourne, 18 Old Milverton, Leamington Spa, CV32 6SA, Tel: 01926 882187

SUNDERLAND Don Simpson, 0191 5670151

SWANSEA A.S

Maurice Convey, 132 Eaton Crescent, Swansea. SA1 4QR
Tel: 01792 466814

<http://www.swan.ac.uk/austrastarpage.htm>

TORBAY A.S

Secretary Tim Moffat (01626) 361041

Meetings at Torquay Town Hall:-

Mar 18th X-Ray Binaries, Amateurs and Professionals" (Dr Paul Roche)

Contact: TAS@halien.net

Web: <http://www.halien.com/TAS/>

VECTIS AS John Smith on 01983 865451 or 27 Forest Road, Winford, Sandown, I.O.W. PO36 0JY.

MEETINGS 7.30pm, fourth Friday of each month except December, VENUE Lord Louis Library Meeting Room, Orchard Street, Newport.

Apr 23rd "The Andromeda Galaxy" by Alan Drummond

May 28th "Hubble from UK HST Support Group" by Robin Catchpole

June 25th "Precession of the Universe", Robin Gorman.

WALSALL

WALSALL AS goes from strength to strength, meetings every Thursday at the Free Trade Inn, Wood Lane, Pelsall.

For details of monthly lectures and astro diary phone Alan Ledbury on 01922 632 624

<http://wkweb5.cableinet.co.uk/G.Ledbury/WASINDEX.HTM>

WEST CORNWALL Mr. Robin Hughes

93 Atlantic Way, Porthowan, Cornwall TR4-8AH. 01209 890736

WEST OF LONDON Duncan Radbourne on 0181 952 2816

WEST YORKS Ken Willoughby, 11 Hardistry Drive, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF8 4BU on 01977 795535 Email Terry.Cymbalisty@ndl.co.uk

<http://staff.ndl.co.uk/terry/wyas>

WILLIAM HERSCHEL SOCIETY

Al Crotcher on 01225 311342 or 19 New Kings Street, Bath, BA1 2BL,

WILTSHIRE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Simon Barnes. 88 Oakfield Road, FROME, BA11 4JH

E-mail: simon@rohmman.freemove.co.uk

WOLVERHAMPTON

The Society meets on alternate Mondays at 7:30 p.m. at Beckminster Methodist Church Hall, Birches Barn Road, Wolverhampton.

For more information please contact the Secretary (note new address from FAS handbook)

Michael Bryce, at Iona, 16 Yellowhammer Court, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY10 4RR;

Tel: 01562 863545, Fax: 01562 639392

michael_bryce@hotmail.com

<http://www.spaceenthusiast.com/wemfas/was/was.htm>

22 Mar Andy Salmon (Midlands Spaceflight Society)

"The Soviet Space Programme"

12 Apr Malcolm Astley

"An Apple a Day Keeps the Alchemist Away"

17 May David Shayler (Astro Info Service) "Apollo 11"

14 June Michael Bryce and Simon Barnett

"A guide to the Total Solar Eclipse"

WORCESTER Change of contact.

S.Bateman, 12 Bozward Street, Worcester. WR2 5DE

Telephone : (01905) 420531

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month 8 to 10 pm at Worcester College of Higher Education, Henwick Grove, Worcester Alternative Contact Mr C.Livingston, 14 Ellsdon Rise, Kempsey, WORCS. (01905) 821360

WORTHING AS

Apr 14th Peter Gill (Eastbourne AS) "Introduction to the Sun"

May 12th Alan Dowdell (FAS President) "Visual Observing"

All monthly meetings are held at the Heene Church Rooms, Heene Rd, Worthing @ 7:30pm

Contact: Dave Storey at dave.storey@controls.eurotherm.co.uk
<http://www.nquinn.demon.co.uk/was>.

WYCOMBE A. S

Contact Paul Millington 125 Telford Way, Downley, High

Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 5SZ Tel 01494 637901

e-mail yix76@dia1.pipex.com

The Society meets 3rd Wednesday of the Month at Woodrow High House, Cherry Lane, Amersham Buckinghamshire at 19.45hrs

Web site <http://www.wolf359.demon.co.uk>

Society Diary

17th Mar Dr. Bob Lamborne from the O.U Structure and formation of clusters of galaxies and gravitational lenses.

21st Apr Kelvin Stephens from W.A.S. Astro photography

19th May Paul Scott from W.A.S. Chairman's lecture subject to be announced.

CENTRAL SIDEWALK

Stuart Williams 26 Matlock Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 3QD.

Larger articles from societies may be found elsewhere in this newsletter. If you have sent in an article but don't see it in this issue, don't despair. Due to space restrictions I may be holding it back for the next issue.

TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE 1999

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Eclipse talk & Exhibition 9th April 1999

The **Plymouth Astronomical Society** will be hosting special guest speaker *Dr Francisco Diego* of University College London. Dr Diego will be giving a special presentation on Eclipse '99. The venue will be Plymouth College, Ford Park Rd, Mutley, Plymouth. Commencing at 7:45pm on 9th April 1999, the talk will coincide with the opening of an exhibition in the City Museum. This Exhibition will run from April through October '99. Entitled "the Dark Side of the Sun", it is a joint collaboration between the City Museum, the Plymouth University, and Plymouth Astronomical Society.

In the run up to the eclipse, the PAS is also presenting a separate exhibition in Plymouth Civic Centre for the first two weeks in May '99. This exhibition called "Once in a Lifetime" is funded by a grant received from PPARC. The committee of the PAS wish to extend its thanks and gratitude to PPARC for its generosity, without which we would not have been able to present this exhibition, for the PAS is not supported by the Plymouth City Council.

Alan Penman

Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society

The new dome

As some of you will be aware the society is constructing a new steel 5 meter dome for our observatory. The Dome has been constructed in a room lent to us over the last year with members chalking up about 3000 hours. So far the first phase of the project has been a success as the dome spins round with very little effort required. Phase 2 is also complete, the dome has been dismantled and moved up to the observatory site.

We are ready to start reconstructing the dome (like an MFI kit) but are unsure whether to start this until after the winter. Plans for the dome will be available soon if you are interested.

We have enjoyed an excellent range of guest speakers over the last year and looking forward to next years selection. The Society has now got a web page which can be found at <http://www.msasuk.force9.co.uk>

Meeting are held every Thursday 1945 at Swinton Working Mens Club, Station Street, Swinton.

If you wish to contact the society then e-mail: Mark.benton@rotherham.gov.uk.

Or phone 01709 587887 after 18.00

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The next round of Handbook information gathering is currently gathering pace for the next edition. The purpose of this notice is to ask all member societies for their help in expanding the entries already included.

All of us have at one time or another managed to find a speaker that should be shared amongst many other societies, but isn't currently listed in the Handbook. If you have such a speaker please let us know about them. Just a letter from me could encourage that person willing to be included in the next edition.

That not only extends to speakers, but to places to visit and equipment suppliers or whatever. If you feel that they ought to be included, please let me know. There is a wide variety out there and the information we have is only as up to date as we can get it.

So if you have any info on any astronomical related service that you feel **SHOULD** be included, **LET ME KNOW**.

Thank you in anticipation for all your help.

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BULLETIN BOARD

A Date for your Diary 1999 FAS Autumn Convention

The 1999 Autumn Convention will take place on Saturday 2nd Octo-
ber, in the Pippard Lecture Theatre of the Cavendish Laboratory,
Cambridge.

Sponsored by Astronomy Now

Loughton Sky Camp

10-19th Sept 1999

As in previous years, Loughton will be organising a week long Sky
Camp near Thetford in Norfolk, to which everyone is invited. It will
be held from Friday 10th September to Sunday 19th September
1999, with lectures, barbeque (on Sat 11th) etc. Last year it was fea-
tured on BBC's 'CountryFile' programme.

Further information from the Loughton Chairman, Mike Cook (0961)
832827

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Contact the Editor for details.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Remember to send society contact
changes to the Membership Secretary,
Eric Hutton, 14 Folly Close, Hitchin,
Herts, SG4 9DG. Tel: 01462 626032
E-mail: bookman@rmplc.co.uk

**Deadline for submission for
next newsletter, 15th May
99.**

Please remember to send ALL articles
to the Editor, Rob Barter.