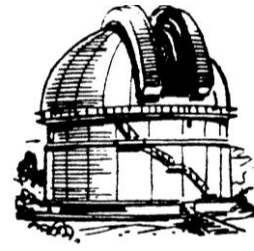


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# Journal

of the



## Nottingham Astronomical Society

December 2002

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### Inside this issue

- News Update
- Sky Notes for December
- Diary Dates
- Advertisements
- Membership application form
- Society Information

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December  
Doors open 7.30pm

### Sunspots

is the title of the evening's talk, and we are pleased to welcome our guest speaker

**Dr. Paul Matthews,**  
of the  
**University of Nottingham**

### News Update

As members at last month's meeting heard, the Society's large telescope has now been ordered and the Lottery grant has been used in payment of a substantial deposit. The telescope will shortly be under construction by Beacon Hill Telescopes, with installation in our observatory expected in mid-2003. That means that the observatory dome now has to be made ready for the telescope! As always, the committee welcomes the views and ideas of members, along with all offers of help at the observatory.

Did you see any Leonid meteors this year? The Moon was intrusive and the November weather was hardly co-operative, at least in the Nottingham area. However it seems that there was indeed a "storm" of meteors in the early hours of November 19, with 6 to 10 meteors visible every minute at around 4.00am. There are more details on the website of the Society for Popular Astronomy ( [www.popastro.com](http://www.popastro.com) ).

The Festive Season is almost upon us, so I would like to wish all NAS members, and all readers of this Journal, a very merry Christmas and best wishes for 2003.

Paul Stocks  
NAS President

# Sky Notes

## 2002 December

Compiled by Roy Gretton

*All times quoted are U.T.*



### THE MOON

New Moon	4d 07h 35m
First Quarter	11d 15m 48m
Full Moon	19d 19h 10m
Last Quarter	27d 00h 31m

### THE PLANETS

<i>Positions on December 12</i>			
	R.A.	Dec.	Mag.
Mercury	18h 21.2m	-25°38'	-0.6
Venus	14h 23.9m	-11°36'	-4.5
Mars	14h 18.5m	-12°58'	1.7
Jupiter	9h 22.7m	16°06'	-2.4
Saturn	5h 43.1m	22°04'	-0.4
Uranus	App. 21h 51m	app. -14°	5.8
Neptune	App. 20h 45m	app. -18°	7.8

**Mercury:** This planet reaches greatest elongation east on 26 December but is difficult to view from the UK because of its very low altitude above the western horizon at this time.

**Venus:** At the beginning of December Venus rises 3½ hours before the Sun, and will be a brilliant object above the south-eastern horizon, with maximum brightness occurring on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the morning of December 1<sup>st</sup> there is a lovely grouping of Venus, Mars, the crescent Moon and Spica (Alpha Virginis), Venus being the lowest of the four.

**Mars:** During the month Mars will move from Virgo into Libra. On 6<sup>th</sup> December Mars lies 1½° west of Venus, and on Christmas Day Mars passes just ½° east of Alpha Librae. Due to its great distance, Mars continues to be less than 5 arcseconds in apparent diameter.

**Jupiter:** This giant planet will begin to dominate the midnight sky during the month. By the end of December it will be rising around 20:15, enabling ground-based observers to view an entire rotation of the planet (just under 10 hours) in a single observing session.

**Saturn:** This planet is at opposition on 17<sup>th</sup> December, and is visible all night throughout the month. With a magnitude of  $-0.3$ , it forms the golden apex of a triangle formed by itself, Betelgeuse (red) and Aldebaran (also red). Saturn should be particularly bright because its rings are wide open this winter. On the night of opposition Saturn's satellites are beautifully placed: Titan at magnitude 8, followed by Rhea (9.4), Tethys (9.9), Iapetus (10.8), Enceladus (11.4), and Mimas (12.6).

**Uranus and Neptune** continue to be early evening objects during the month, and by the New Year will have set by 20.00 UT. A chance to locate Uranus occurs in the days leading up to Christmas, when it will be very close to the 5<sup>th</sup> magnitude star Mu Capricorni (only 2.5 arcminutes away on December 22<sup>nd</sup>). Neptune is fainter and much harder to identify than Uranus.

## **METEORS**

The **Geminids** reach their peak activity in the early hours of December 14<sup>th</sup>, but they may be observed on any night between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup>. They are regarded as the most reliable of our annual meteor showers, with a maximum rate of about 100 per hour. Many of the events are bright and easy to observe. This year moonlight should not be too obtrusive.

## DIARY DATES, by Carl Brennan

### FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

#### **December 5<sup>th</sup> Djanogly C.T.C.**

Doors open from 7.30pm

### **SUNSPOTS**

Dr. Paul Mathews, University of Nottingham

#### **December 19<sup>th</sup> Informal Meeting**

7.30pm to 9.30pm at the home of Marcus Stone  
12 Cavendish Avenue, Gedling, NOTTINGHAM,  
NG4 4FZ,  
Telephone 0115 987 8887

#### **January 2<sup>nd</sup> Djanogly C.T.C.**

Doors open from 7.30pm

### **MEMBERS NIGHT**

Bring along some examples of your work/projects

#### **January 16<sup>th</sup> Informal Meeting**

7.30pm to 9.00pm at the home of Stuart Atkins,  
356 Loughborough Road, West Bridgford,  
NOTTINGHAM, NG2 7FD,  
Telephone 0115 923 3558

### **OTHER EVENTS**

**5<sup>th</sup> December** BROWNIAN MOTION - with David Applebaum of Nottingham Trent University at 7 pm in the Coffee Bar, Central Library, Angel Row, Nottingham.

**6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> December** SPA Astronomy Weekend to be held at Preston Montford Field Centre, Shropshire. A great list of speakers including Dr Ian Morrison. A £15 deposit is needed by September 20<sup>th</sup>, full weekend cost £95 (full board). For more information contact Frank Tobin, 16 Penton Hook Road, Staines, Middx. TW18 2PF

**13<sup>th</sup> December** It is time to begin preparing your Imagine Mars Exploration Team for the hour-long interactive workshop, which will air LIVE here and on NASA TV. Join educators, students and special host, Emmy Award-winning Bill Nye, The Science Guy, as they explore what a community might be like on Mars during this entertaining and interactive Web cast.

[http://imaginemars.jpl.nasa.gov/webcast\\_20021122.html](http://imaginemars.jpl.nasa.gov/webcast_20021122.html)

**16<sup>th</sup> December** Arthur C. Clarke's 85th Birthday.

**9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> May** [Autographica 2003](#) 'The Worlds Largest Autograph Show'. At the Northampton Moat House Hotel. Tickets can now be booked on our **new telephone number 01227 762392** during

normal office hours only, or visit <http://www.autographica.co.uk/> for full details.

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2003 Eclipse** 10.30am to 4.15pm National Maritime Museum. A simple day course to look at this natural phenomenon and the science we can learn. Interesting collection of speakers. Cost £28.00 (£16 concessions). More information on 02083126747/6648, E-mail [openmuseum@nmm.ac.uk](mailto:openmuseum@nmm.ac.uk) , [lstone@nmm.ac.uk](mailto:lstone@nmm.ac.uk) or visit [ww.nmm.ac.uk](http://ww.nmm.ac.uk)

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2003 Extraterrestrial Life** 10.30am to 4.15pm National Maritime Museum. Cost £28.00 (£16 concessions). More information on 02083126747/6648, E-mail [openmuseum@nmm.ac.uk](mailto:openmuseum@nmm.ac.uk) , [lstone@nmm.ac.uk](mailto:lstone@nmm.ac.uk) or visit [ww.nmm.ac.uk](http://ww.nmm.ac.uk)

**The next National Astronomy Week.** On 27 August 2003 the planet Mars will come to a particularly good opposition. To celebrate this event, Britain's astronomers are planning another [National Astronomy Week](http://www.astronomyweek.org.uk) <http://www.astronomyweek.org.uk>.

If you are able to visit the Royal Observatory (Greenwich/London) there is a special exhibition running from December 2002 until August 2003 about the Beagle 2 mission to Mars.

#### **Nottingham Astronomical Society**

The Secretary compiles these Diary Dates. Contributions are always welcome (please include source acknowledgement). Nottingham Astronomical Society, and/or the Secretary accept no responsibility for any errors that may occur within this publication. Any views expressed in *Diary Dates* are those of the individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the Secretary, Nottingham Astronomical Society, its Committee or Members.

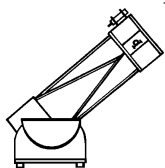
For more information about the Nottingham Astronomical Society please send a C5 SAE to the Secretary Carl Brennan at 40 Swindon Close, The Vale, Giltbrook, NOTTINGHAM, NG16 2WD. Telephone 0115 854 8687

E-mail [carl.stella@virgin.net](mailto:carl.stella@virgin.net)

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[gildor@ntlworld.com](mailto:gildor@ntlworld.com)

### For Sale

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**Nottingham Astronomical Society**

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**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

If you would like to join the Nottingham Astronomical Society, please complete and tear off this slip. Make your cheque/postal order payable to:

**THE NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

Then send the slip and payment to Carl Brennan, Hon. Secretary, **Nottingham Astronomical Society**, 40 Swindon Close, The Vale, Giltbrook, Nottingham NG16 2WD.

Alternatively you may hand the slip and payment to the Secretary or Treasurer at one of the Society's regular meetings.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Full address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to join the Nottingham Astronomical Society and enclose the membership fee for

*(please tick appropriate box)*

- Full Adult £22
- Junior (17 years or under) £11
- Concession (*full time student, UB40, Senior Citizen*) £11

# Nottingham Astronomical Society

Affiliated to the British Astronomical Association  
Member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies  
Member of the Society for Popular Astronomy  
Supporters of the Campaign for Dark Skies  
Registered Charity No: 1066645

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**Alan Heath** (Ex. Dir. BAA Saturn Section)

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## **CURATOR OF INSTRUMENTS**

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## **CAMPAIGN FOR DARK SKIES:**

**Greg Eisenhauer**

## **ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBER:**

**Richard Evans**

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## ***Meetings***

Formal monthly meetings, with speakers, are held on the first Thursday of each month (except August) at

### **Djanogly City Technology College**

Sherwood Rise, Nottingham NG7

Doors open	7.30pm
Meetings Start	7.45pm
Meetings end	10.00pm

**Non-members** are very welcome at our meetings and there is no charge for the first meeting. We make a small charge of £2.50 adults, £1.25 juniors to non-members after their first attendance. Invited guests are admitted free of charge.

## ***Annual Subscriptions, 2002-03***

Full Adult:	£22
Junior (17 years or under)	£11
Concessions	£11

(Full time student, UB40, Senior Citizens)

Subscriptions become due on 1 October. Half-price subscription is charged if joining after 1st April. Please make cheques payable to:  
**Nottingham Astronomical Society.**

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**If you would like further information about the Nottingham Astronomical Society, or would like to become a member, please**

- contact the Honorary Secretary, Carl Brennan, at the address given above or
- speak to any NAS committee member at one of the regular monthly meetings.

**A membership application form appears inside this issue of the Journal.**

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