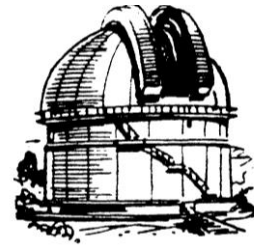


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# Journal

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## Nottingham Astronomical Society

February 2005

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### Inside this issue

- Sky Notes for February
- Diary Dates
- Our “Beehive” website
- Telescope and observatory update
- An eclipse expedition
- Advertisements
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### Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February

at the Djanogly City Technology College

*Doors open from 7.30pm*

Tonight we welcome

**Andrew Johnson**

who will be introducing

### “The Disclosure Project”

UFOs and extra-terrestrial intelligence

A video, question & answer session

### TRACKING COMET MACHHOLZ

Comet 2004 Q2 (Machholz) continues to be an easy binocular object, having now become circumpolar from our latitude. As February begins it can be found just to the east of the ‘W’ of Cassiopeia, from which it will continue to move northwards, reaching Cepheus later in the month. The Moon is new on the 8<sup>th</sup>, so the early part of the month will be a good time for observation, weather permitting.

The comet was discovered in August 2004 by Don Machholz, using a six-inch reflecting telescope.

# Sky Notes

## 2005 February

Compiled by Roy Gretton

*All times quoted are U.T.*



### PHASES OF THE MOON

Last Quarter	2d 07h 27m
New Moon	8d 22h 28m
First Quarter	16d 00h 16m
Full Moon	24d 04h 54m

### THE PLANETS

**Mercury** passes through superior conjunction on February 14<sup>th</sup>, and so observation is virtually impossible this month.

**Venus** is also approaching superior conjunction, which will occur in March. It is now very difficult to observe, as it is only a few degrees above the horizon at sunrise.

**Mars** is only a little better placed for observation from our latitude, as it continues to move further south of the equator. It continues to rise at about 5 hours, but with sunrise now getting earlier, there is less darkness in which to make observations of the planet.

**Jupiter** now rises before midnight and at magnitude -2.3 is the brightest object in the night sky, apart from the Moon. Being six degrees south of the equator, Jupiter does not appear at its very best from the UK, as our atmosphere degrades the view compared with when it is further north.

**Saturn** continues to adorn the sky just to the south of Castor and Pollux. Having recently passed through opposition it can be viewed at any time of the night, given a clear sky. Last month the Huygens probe delighted us by making a perfect descent and landing on Titan, Saturn's largest moon, and sending us the first detailed images of the surface. Titan can be seen with a small telescope as a point of light moving around the planet, which it orbits about twice every month. If your telescope gives an inverted view, Titan will appear directly above Saturn on February 8<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, and directly below it on the 16<sup>th</sup> -- so why not give it a look, and reflect on the frozen visitor from Earth that now sits on its surface!

**Uranus** and **Neptune** both pass through conjunction with the Sun this month and consequently are unobservable from Earth.

### METEORS

February has no significant meteor showers.

## DIARY DATES

### Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society

*Doors open from 7.30pm*

#### **Thursday 3 February**

Djanogly CTC

#### **“The Disclosure Project”**

UFOs and extra-terrestrial intelligence

Video, question & answer session

Andrew Johnson

[www.disclosureproject.org](http://www.disclosureproject.org)

#### **Thursday 3 March**

Djanogly CTC

#### **“Astronomy with the International Space Station”**

Dr Nigel Bannister

Space Research Centre, Department of Physics & Astronomy

University of Leicester

[www.src.le.ac.uk/lobster](http://www.src.le.ac.uk/lobster)

#### **Thursday 7 April**

Djanogly CTC

#### **“Nottinghamshire, a Heavenly County”**

Madeline Cox

Bassetlaw Astronomical Society

#### **Thursday 5 May**

Djanogly CTC

*[Speaker and topic to be arranged]*

#### **Thursday 7 July**

Djanogly CTC

#### **“Extra-Solar Planets”**

Dr Roger New

Sheffield Hallam University

#### **Thursday 6 October**

At NAS Observatory site

#### **Members' Evening at the Observatory**

An opportunity for members & guests to use the society's 24 inch telescope, weather permitting

#### **Thursday 1 December**

Djanogly CTC

#### **“Cosmic Collisions”**

Dennis Ashton

Director, Sheffield Hallam University Star Centre

**DIARY DATES continued**

**Other events**

Friday 4 February  
& Saturday 5 February  
Kensington & Chelsea Town Hall  
Hornton Street, London  
(Nearest Tube station is High Street Kensington on the Circle and District lines)

**European Astrofest 2005**

**“The Universe comes to London”**

*Conference programme details:*

[www.astronomynow.com/astrofest/](http://www.astronomynow.com/astrofest/)

**Ticket Hotline 01732 367542**

Saturday 26 February

**British Astronomical Association Workshop No. 6 "Image Processing"**

The Berrill Lecture Theatre

The Open University

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes

Speakers include Nik Szymanek and Gordon Rogers

*Organiser: Nick Hewitt, BAA*

<http://www.britastro.org/main/meetings.html>

**NEW!**

**Take a look at**

**The Nottingham Astronomical Society's 'Beehive' website**

The NAS now has a 'Beehive' website, which you can find at:

<http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro>

'The Beehive' is a free service for the local area's not-for-profit community groups provided by the Nottingham Evening Post as part of the community section of their website. It's a useful way for the Society to publicise our meetings and observatory facility. I will keep the site up to date with NAS event details and will add more pictures.

The website is easy to use, so please do take a look! If you have any ideas for the content of the site, please let me know at: [nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk)

**Future developments**

In addition to the Beehive site, the NAS committee intends to set up a separate full-scale website for the Society. I'll keep you informed of developments in the Journal.

*Paul Stocks*

*Secretary, Nottingham Astronomical Society*

## Telescope and Observatory Update

### Forthcoming weekend work on the telescope

There will be a work session at the observatory site on **Sunday morning, 30 January**, from **10.00am**. If you see this item in time, volunteers to help with the work are welcome - **please bear in mind that there will be some lifting involved**. Wear a hard hat for safety and warm clothes - the site is very cold at this time of year! If you are reasonably fit, can come along to help and perhaps bring some tools, please contact David Lukehurst: [gildor@ntlworld.com](mailto:gildor@ntlworld.com) 0115 960 2266.

The aim of the day's work will be to remove the truss tubes from the telescope so that the upper tubes can be returned to Beacon Hill Telescopes for re-engineering to shorten them.

As you will no doubt know, there is currently a problem with the "fit" of the large telescope in the observatory dome. The top of the telescope tube makes contact with the upper part of the dome. Fitting shortened upper truss tubes (and new, longer lower ones) will permanently solve this problem by making the telescope sit lower in its mounting.

### Raised floor for the observatory

The NAS committee is also planning a raised wooden floor for the observatory. This will bring the floor level up to the top of the concrete plinth, making access to the telescope eyepiece a bit less of a mountaineering task.

The materials for making the floor are currently being costed. The society will need volunteers to help with fitting the floor - we currently expect this to take place over a weekend during the Spring. More details nearer the time...

Once the new floor is installed in the dome, the society will purchase a suitable observing platform so that users can reach the telescope eyepiece safely.

And then, we should have a functioning observatory that we can all enjoy.

## March 2006 Total Solar Eclipse

On Wednesday, **29 March 2006**, a total eclipse of the Sun will be visible from a narrow corridor on the Earth's surface, stretching from Brazil all the way to western Mongolia.

With a maximum duration of over 4 minutes, this eclipse promises to be the best one in our lifetimes.

The track of totality passes across Turkey and special tours there are now being organised to view the eclipse. NAS member **Fred Hopper** is planning to go to Turkey to view the eclipse. So if you are interested in joining him, Fred would like to hear from you.

E-mail: [F.Hopper@itss.nerc.ac.uk](mailto:F.Hopper@itss.nerc.ac.uk) or speak to Fred at a meeting. Places are being booked-up now, so don't leave it too late!

## Small Advertisements

### For Sale

**Maksutov 6-inch by Drew.** 2x2-inch finderscopes, equatorial tripod mount with circles, eyepiece tray, carry box. Selection of eyepieces, Barlow lens, star diagonals.

Buyer collects. **£495** for prompt sale.

**Telephone Peter Davison  
on 0115 923 0040**

### For Sale

#### **8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch Newtonian telescope on Dobsonian mount**

Built by David Lukehurst.  
65x and 250x eyepieces, finderscope.  
3 years old.  
Hardly used, very good condition.

**£375** or near offer

**Telephone Terry Naylor  
on 0115 9815968**

## The Widescreen Centre

18, **LADY BAY ROAD**, Nottingham, NG2 5BJ  
0115 945 5459 FAX: 0115 945 5362

WebShop: [www.widescreen-centre.co.uk](http://www.widescreen-centre.co.uk)  
[www.telescopes-direct.com](http://www.telescopes-direct.com)

eMail: [call@widescreen-centre.co.uk](mailto:call@widescreen-centre.co.uk)

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You are always made welcome at our shop or a telephone call to Lynda will bring you our latest catalogue

# The Nottingham Astronomical Society: E - SERVICES

## **'Beehive' Website**

Whether or not you are a NAS member, you can now keep up to date with details of the Society's meetings and other events by visiting the NAS 'Beehive' website:

<http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro>

## **NAS Journal e-mailing list**

To register for your monthly e-mailed copy of the NAS Journal, just e-mail

Carl Brennan at: [carl.stella@virgin.net](mailto:carl.stella@virgin.net)

You don't have to be a Society member to take advantage of this service.

## **NAS Observatory Group**

A web group page and message service (for NAS members only) is available at

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/nottinghamastronomicalsociety/>

It is used for circulating information to members about work at the observatory and use of the large telescope. If you are a member of the Society, you can join this online group by visiting the website and clicking on "Join this Group".

### **Nottingham Astronomical Society**

*The Nottingham Astronomical Society, and/or the Editor accept no responsibility for any errors that may occur within this publication. Any views expressed in the NAS Journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the Nottingham Astronomical Society, its Committee or Members.*

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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 Paul Stocks, Hon. Secretary, **Nottingham Astronomical Society**, 22 Killerton Park Drive, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7SB

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 £24
- Junior (17 years or under) £12
- Concession (*full time student, UB40, etc*) £12

# 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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## **PRESIDENT:**

**Greg Eisenhauer**

Tel: 01949 875857

e-mail: [greg.eisenhauer@ntlworld.com](mailto:greg.eisenhauer@ntlworld.com)

## **HONORARY VICE PRESIDENT**

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

## **VICE PRESIDENTS:**

**David Lukehurst**

e-mail: [gildor@ntlworld.com](mailto:gildor@ntlworld.com)

website: [www.dobsonians.co.uk](http://www.dobsonians.co.uk)

**Dr Roy Gretton**

e-mail: [roy@gretton.surfonwater.com](mailto:roy@gretton.surfonwater.com)

## **HONORARY SECRETARY:**

**Paul Stocks**

Tel: 0115 914 8185

e-mail: [nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk)

## **TREASURER:**

**Dr Mike Provost**

e-mail: [mike.provost@ntlworld.com](mailto:mike.provost@ntlworld.com)

## **JOURNAL EDITOR:**

**Dr Roy Gretton**

e-mail: [roy@gretton.surfonwater.com](mailto:roy@gretton.surfonwater.com)

## **CURATOR OF INSTRUMENTS**

**David Lukehurst**

e-mail: [gildor@ntlworld.com](mailto:gildor@ntlworld.com)

## **CAMPAIGN FOR DARK SKIES:**

**Greg Eisenhauer**

## **ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

**Joe Sowerby**

**Dorothy Sowerby**

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## **Meetings**

Formal monthly meetings, with speakers, are held on the first Thursday of each month (except August, and occasionally other months as announced) 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.

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## **Annual Subscriptions, 2004-05**

Full Adult:	£24
Junior ( <i>17 years or under</i> )	£12
Concessions	£12

(*Full time student, UB40, etc*)

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, Paul Stocks, 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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