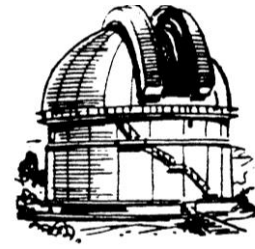

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society

June 2006

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Thursday June 1st

7.45 p.m.

at the British Geological Survey

Nicker Hill, Keyworth

(doors open at 7.30)

Tonight we welcome

David Boyce

of the University of Leicester

who will be speaking on

The Magnetism of Sunspots

THE TENTH PLANET

Xena, the largest Kuiper Belt object so far discovered, has been studied through the Hubble Space Telescope, and a new estimate of its size has been produced. Previous ground-based observations suggested that Xena was about 30 percent greater in diameter than Pluto, but HST measurements, thought to be more reliable, make Xena only slightly larger than Pluto.

The Hubble measurements of diameter are

Xena 1490 ± 60 miles

Pluto 1422 miles

Measuring Xena presents the greater challenge, as its distance is about ten thousand million miles. Since Xena is smaller than earlier thought, but comparatively bright, it may be one of the most reflective objects in the Solar System.

Sky Notes

2006 June

Compiled by Roy Gretton



The Summer Solstice occurs at about midday on June 21st. At that time the Sun will be 23.44 degrees north of the equator, which for observers in Nottingham means that it will be at an altitude of **60½** degrees above the southern horizon (as compared to its maximum altitude of **13½** degrees in mid-winter – which is reason enough to expect June to be warmer than December).

PHASES OF THE MOON

First Quarter occurs shortly before midnight on June 3rd

Full Moon occurs in the early evening of the 11th

Last Quarter occurs in the afternoon of the 18th

New Moon occurs in the afternoon of the 25th

This month the Moon is closest to Earth on the 16th, and furthest from Earth on the 4th.

THE PLANETS

June is a reasonably favourable month for observing **Mercury** this year, as it reaches Greatest Eastern Elongation (25 degrees) on the 20th. At sunset the planet will be 12 degrees above the western horizon, and will shine at magnitude 0.5.

Venus continues to be a morning object this month, visible low in the east before sunrise. It begins June 38 degrees from the Sun, but the elongation decreases to 31 degrees by the end of the month.

Mars spends June in the constellation of Cancer, and on the 15th and 16th passes in front of the Beehive Cluster (M44). You may recall that Saturn has been lurking near the Beehive for several months, and on June 18th, Mars will overtake the gas giant. On that date the two planets will be one Moon-width apart. The best time to observe this conjunction will be between 10 pm and 11pm BST. Mars will be the more northern of the two. By the end of the month Mars will be virtually lost in the evening twilight.

Jupiter remains in the constellation of Libra throughout the month. It is a bright off-white star low in the south in the evening at the beginning of June, but by the end of the month will be only 15 degrees above the western horizon by the time the sky has darkened, and observation will be getting difficult.

Saturn will skirting the Beehive Cluster in the constellation of Cancer early in June, but will be getting harder to observe as the month progresses. Apart from interest in the conjunction with Mars (see above) there will be little point in attempting to observe Saturn in the latter part of June.

Uranus, magnitude 5.8, will be 30 degrees above the eastern horizon at sunrise by the end of June, and keen observers might like to try to locate it in the constellation of Aquarius.

Neptune, magnitude 7.9, is in the neighbouring constellation of Capricornus.

NAS Observatory Opening Ceremony & 60th Anniversary Lunch

A great day!

Saturday 13th May 2006 was a landmark date for the Nottingham Astronomical Society. At a ceremony attended by present and past members of the Society and their guests and representatives of Severn Trent Water, our observatory with its 24 inch aperture telescope was formally opened. Later, members and guests enjoyed lunch at Cotgrave Place Golf & Country Club to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the Nottingham Astronomical Society.

The event went very smoothly and the weather stayed dry – at least until we had left the site!

Our guests of honour were Professor Michael Merrifield of the University of Nottingham and Mrs Merrifield. When declaring the observatory open, Professor Merrifield delighted us by reading out the following messages he had received:

From Professor Michael Rowan-Robinson, President of the Royal Astronomical Society:

"It is a pleasure that almost my first act as President of the RAS (which happened on Friday afternoon) is to send my warmest greetings to the Nottingham Astronomical Society on the occasion of the opening of your new observatory."

From Lord Rees, Astronomer Royal and President of the Royal Society:

"I'm really sorry not to be with you to celebrate the opening of the new Nottingham observatory. It's involved a great deal of campaigning and a great deal of work. It's wonderful that, after 60 successful years, the Society is being enhanced in this way. And there's no better time to expand interest in astronomy: technology now allows as much to be done with modest-sized telescopes as could be done with far larger 'professional' telescopes in earlier days. Cosmic horizons have never been wider - and have never attracted as much interest, from young and old, as today."

The Society is grateful to Professor Merrifield for opening the observatory and for his interest in our activities.

Pictures of the ceremony and the 60th Anniversary lunch are on the NAS "Beehive" website:

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

NAS meeting Thursday 1st June
at
The British Geological Survey
Nicker Hill, Keyworth

As you may already know, the society's meeting on 1st June will be at the new venue of The British Geological Survey.

Here are directions by car:

Heading out from the south of Nottingham, take the **A606 Melton Road**.

Stay on the A606 beyond Tollerton and Plumtree, and look for a **right turn**, signposted "**Keyworth ¾, British Geological Survey**". This is Platt Lane.

Drive along Platt Lane, enter Keyworth and go past the goods entrance to the BGS. You will reach a "T" junction. Turn left into Nicker Hill, then first left again into the main gate of the British Geological Survey.

After going through security at the gate, please use the car park to your left. We will arrange for someone to be there to guide you to the meeting in **Meeting Room 1**.

Moving the society's meetings to Keyworth?
Notice of a vote at September's meeting

The 1st June meeting at Keyworth is an opportunity to see what NAS members think of the new venue.

The **7th September** meeting will be at **Djanogly City Academy, Sherwood Rise**, as usual. At the September meeting, we shall hold a vote of members to see whether the Society wishes to make a permanent move of our meetings to the British Geological Survey in Keyworth. The location is conveniently close to our observatory, should members wish to take advantage of a clear night after a meeting for some observing with the large telescope!

The NAS committee welcomes the views of members – whether "for" or "against" a move.

DIARY DATES 2006

<p>Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society Our programme is below. Don't forget to check our website: http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro for the latest information about the Society's activities.</p>
<p><u>Thursday 1 June</u> This meeting will be held at The British Geological Survey (Meeting room 1) Nicker Hill Keyworth Doors open 7.30pm The Magnetism of Sunspots David Boyce University of Leicester</p>
<p><u>Thursday 6 July</u> Venue to be confirmed in the July issue of the Journal doors open 7.30pm Rambling through the Summer & Autumn Skies Paul Money</p>
<p><u>August</u> <i>Summer break, no meeting this month.</i></p>
<p><u>Thursday 7 September</u> Djanogly City Academy, Room 105 doors open 7.30pm Members' Evening Bring along your solar eclipse pictures!</p>
<p><u>Thursday 5 October</u> NAS Observatory, near Cotgrave from 7.30pm Observatory Evening Members are welcome to bring guests to the observatory. If you need directions to the site, please e-mail nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk</p>

Other Events

<p>Science Meets Art ... Leonardo Sunday 4 June 2006 National Space Centre Exploration Drive, Leicester Details and admission prices: www.spacecentre.co.uk Enjoy a completely new learning experience, as CTC Theatre Company tells the story of Leonardo Da Vinci. Leonardo da Vinci painted wonderful pictures and made marvelous machines. But then he was a genius! This play revolves around the building of a working machine which has audiences both enthralled and inspired. This is the story of Leonardo's life, but most importantly this is the practical story of his inventions that changed the world. Time: 11am Price: £3.50 (Does not include entry to the National Space Centre)</p>

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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

nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk

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.

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 £25
- Junior (17 years or under) £12.50
- Concession (*full time student, UB40, etc*) £12.50

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

PRESIDENT:

Fred Hopper

e-mail: fwmh@nerc.ac.uk

HONORARY VICE PRESIDENT

Alan Heath (Ex. Dir. BAA Saturn Section)

VICE PRESIDENTS:

David Lukehurst

e-mail: gildor@ntlworld.com

website: www.dobsonians.co.uk

Dr Roy Gretton

e-mail: roygretton@speed-mail.co.uk

HONORARY SECRETARY:

Paul Stocks

Tel: 0115 914 8185

e-mail: nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk

TREASURER:

Dr Mike Provost

e-mail: mike.provost@ntlworld.com

JOURNAL EDITOR:

Dr Roy Gretton

e-mail: roygretton@speed-mail.co.uk

CURATOR OF INSTRUMENTS

David Lukehurst

e-mail: gildor@ntlworld.com

DIRECTOR OF OBSERVING

John Hurst

Observatory line: 07726 940700

CAMPAIGN FOR DARK SKIES:

Duncan Collins

e-mail: duncan.collins@talk21.com

ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Joe Sowerby

Dorothy Sowerby

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 Academy, Room 105

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, 2005-06

Full Adult:	£25
Junior (<i>17 years or under</i>)	£12.50
Concessions	£12.50

(*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.

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.
