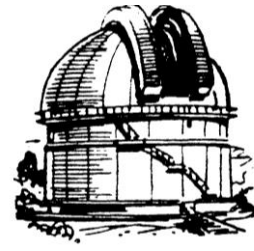

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society March 2003

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Thursday 6th March

Doors open 7.30pm

This evening we welcome

Les Jepson

of **Bassetlaw Astronomical Society**

who will be speaking on the subject of

EINSTEIN VERSUS STAR TREK

Nottingham Astronomical Society Annual Dinner

Our Society's annual dinner will be on **Wednesday 12th March 2003, at 7.00pm.**

The venue is the Newstead Restaurant at NCN – Clarendon College, Pelham Avenue, Nottingham, the same venue as last year.

This year the theme of the meal is "French Provincial – A taste of Provence". We will circulate a menu at the Society's 6th March meeting at Djanogly CTC.

The cost of the three course meal is £12.95 per person. Child portions of all dishes are available (for children up to age 12 years) at £8.95 per child.

Do come along and make it a great evening! All members, their spouses, partners, children, relatives and friends are very welcome. If you wish to attend the dinner, **please book with Peter Davison at the Society's meeting on 6th March.** Payment in advance will be welcome and preferable - please make cheques payable to 'Nottingham Astronomical Society'. Apologies for the short notice, but we need to let the restaurant know the number who will be attending.

Many meetings, many ideas

February was an exceptionally busy month for Nottingham Astronomical Society meetings. In addition to our regular one at Djanogly CTC, there was an informal meeting at Stuart Atkin's home, with a clear enough sky to permit some telescope observation of Jupiter and Saturn. Many thanks to Stuart for hosting this meeting, it was a most enjoyable evening.

There were also no less than *two* informal observatory meetings. The first was at the Sherwood Observatory and the second at our own Mount Pleasant Observatory.

Sherwood Observatory visit

As advertised in the February issue of the Journal, on Sunday 9th February a party of NAS members descended upon the Sherwood Observatory (owned by Mansfield & Sutton Astronomical Society) for a tour of their excellent facilities. We were made most welcome by Gordon Jones and his colleagues in the observatory's engineering team.

The main aim of our visit was to examine the mechanisms that rotate the dome and open the shutter, so that we could possibly apply similar solutions to our own observatory dome. We had a thorough demonstration of the mechanisms. Over coffee and biscuits, Gordon kindly agreed to make a visit to our observatory site near Cotgrave.

NAS Mount Pleasant Observatory site meeting

Two Sundays later, a group of NAS members met at the Mount Pleasant observatory site. Our guests were Gordon Jones and Brian Stirland from the Sherwood observatory and we spent a couple of hours inspecting our observatory's dome and discussing possible improvements. We were all grateful to Dorothy and Joe Sowerby for providing some excellent coffee and biscuits.

Many ideas were generated and the way forward became clearer. The initial steps are to

- accurately measure the base of the dome to check that it is circular
- remove some of the outward facing "guide" wheels, to leave a minimum of three, spaced at 120 degree intervals
- replace the existing nylon-tyred load bearing wheels with solid metal wheels or rollers.

This should help prevent the dome "sticking" when rotated, and remove the danger of the nylon tyres slipping off the wheels.

I have thanked Gordon and Brian for their visit and for giving us some practical ideas. I am pleased to report that they too enjoyed the meeting. Their view is that we have around 80% of the work already done on our observatory. But of course, that final 20% of work must be done *before* we can have our large telescope installed and operational. Once the telescope is installed, any corrections to the dome will be much more difficult!

The way forward

The NAS members present at the Mount Pleasant observatory agreed that we should meet there regularly. The committee has subsequently discussed the possibility of a special observatory group meeting and has approved a wider distribution of gate keys so that members can make more use of the site for observing with their own telescopes, from what is an excellent dark sky location.

The observatory project needs a "manager" to help organise the work. Are there any volunteers, please? Let me know if you are interested!

Paul Stocks
NAS President

NATIONAL ASTRONOMY WEEK

August 23rd to 30th 2003

2003 The Year of Mars

<http://www.astronomyweek.org.uk/>

Many societies around the country will be making a special effort to celebrate this event. Robin Scagell writes, "When NAW finally arrives, there will be no doubt about it! As well as the national press coverage, NAW will start off in a spectacular way with major TV coverage of Mars. A two-hour BBC programme will include live links to La Palma to view the planet as it nears its closest approach on 27 August."

There is so much going off during this astronomy week, with even the Society for Popular Astronomy celebrating its 50th Anniversary.

On September 4th our talk will be **MARS ODYSSEY**; Andy Lund, The Planetary Society, UK Regional Coordinator. Andy, and other "Mars" speakers are making a tour of the country and I'm afraid this was the nearest meeting date to NAW I could get.

With a little regret I have to say the NAS is doing little or nothing towards NAW. We have discussed it in committee, and I must agree that the workload involved in the observatory, the new telescope, and other business, committee felt that it would be impossible to take on any extra work. We hope to bring a major astronomical convention to Nottingham in 2004 and are targeting our efforts towards this (watch this space).

We hope you will support any activities other local astronomical societies plan for NAW.

Additional NAW information. 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> see also <http://basic1.easily.co.uk/057044/04D005/about.html>

**Space Night on Discovery Wings,
digital cable and satellite TV**

If you have digital cable or satellite television, the Discovery Wings channel now has a "Space Night" every Wednesday evening. Recent documentaries have covered the history of the Mir space station, robotic probes to Mars and the various attempts to try to win the "X Prize" for the first privately-funded human spaceflight. Will it happen?

On digital cable, you can find Discovery Wings on channel 805.
(Unfortunately, most TV listings magazines seem to omit listings for this channel!)

Sky Notes

2003 March

Compiled by Roy Gretton

All times quoted are U.T.



THE MOON

New Moon	3d 02h 35m
First Quarter	11d 07h 15m
Full Moon	18d 10h 35m
Last Quarter	25d 01h 52m

THE PLANETS

<i>Positions on March 12th</i>			
	R.A.	Dec.	Mag.
Mercury	<i>Not visible</i>		
Venus	20h 54m	-17°10'	-4.0
Mars	18h 20m	-23°34'	0.8
Jupiter	08h 46m	+18°53'	-2.4
Saturn	05h 27m	+22°11'	0.0
Uranus	<i>Not visible</i>		
Neptune	<i>Not visible</i>		

Mercury will be at superior conjunction (i.e. on the far side of the Sun) on March 21.

Venus, still nearly 40° from the Sun, continues to shine low in the south-east before dawn, but is far less prominent than it was around New Year.

Mars continues to draw away from the Sun in the morning sky, and will brighten very slowly. However, even at the end of the month it will still be too small in angular diameter to be worth studying unless you have a very large telescope.

Jupiter continues to be an excellent object for observation throughout the month. By the end of March it will be due south at about 20 hours, and will be very close to the Beehive cluster in Cancer....well worth observing through binoculars.

Saturn continues to be a most rewarding object for observation, although by the end of the month it will be setting about an hour after midnight. Early evening should be the ideal time for observation.

Uranus and **Neptune** have begun to move away from the Sun in the morning sky, but are still too close to it for practical observation.

The **MINOR PLANET Vesta** (magnitude 5.9) reaches opposition on March 31, when it will be close to the midpoint between *delta* and *epsilon* Virginis.

DIARY DATES, by Carl Brennan

MEETINGS OF THE NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

March 6th Djanogly CTC, Doors open 7.30pm
EINSTEIN VERSUS STAR TREK
Les Jepson, Bassetlaw Astronomical Society

March 24th Committee Meeting
Red Noses may still be worn

April 3rd Djanogly CTC, Doors open 7.30pm
**LARGE-SCALE STRUCTURE AND EVOLUTION OF
THE UNIVERS**
Dr. Steve Maddox, School of Physics and
Astronomy, University of Nottingham

OTHER EVENTS

6th March WHY DO YOUNG DRIVERS
CRASH? Find the answer to this and many other
questions with Geoffrey Underwood (School of
Psychology, Nottingham University) on Thursday
6 March, 7pm, Central Library, Angel Row,
Nottingham.

8th & 9th March Liverpool AS public Star party
will be held at Croxteth Park & Hall

14th March Red Nose Day

27th/28th March [UK Astrobiology Symposium](#),
Cambridge, United Kingdom

29th March to 1st April [10th ESF-Impact
Workshop: Biological Processes in Impact Craters](#),
Cambridge, United Kingdom

7th to 11th April [UK National Astronomy Meeting
& Solar Physics Meeting](#), Dublin, Ireland – even if
you cannot attend this event you would be advised
to keep up with the web site – visit
<http://star.arm.ac.uk/nam2003>

9th April (Wednesday) Sir Patrick Moore's 80th
Birthday Tour – Mars: The Next Front Ear
7.30pm Derby Assembly Rooms (£11, £9, (Cons
£7)). Patrick talks about his planned holiday to
Mars using his bus pass. 01332255800
www.assemblyrooms-derby.co.uk. If you want to
be entertained then this is a "must" night out.

25th to 27th April BAA Winchester Weekend.
<http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~baa/baa200203.htm>

9th/10th/11th 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.

10th 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, lstone@nmm.ac.uk or
visit www.nmm.ac.uk

6th 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, lstone@nmm.ac.uk or
visit www.nmm.ac.uk

1st to 4th August **Third Summer Star Festival**
(That's a Friday to Monday) 3 nights observing at
Adderstone, Dalby Forest, North York Moors
National Park. The site is ideal for caravans and
tents. £15 for the weekend. Details from Mrs. S
Anderson, 25 Highfield, Scarborough, N. Yorks,
YO12 4AW, 01723 500389, E-mail
gwnan2@ukf.net, visit [http://www.scarborough-
as.org.uk](http://www.scarborough-
as.org.uk)

DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE ENIGMA

With the Nottinghamshire Branch of the BA
as part of NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK.
On Saturday 8 March, 12.45 pm at The Broadway
Cinema, Broad Street,
Nottingham.

Come face-to-face with a genuine World War II
Enigma cipher machine. Discover how British
code-breakers used brainpower and brute force to
crack the Enigma code and defeat the Nazis.
With Claire Ellis of the Enigma Project. Followed
by a screening of the film
'ENIGMA' starring Kate Winslet and Dougray
Scott (Certificate 15). £4.60 full/£3.50 concessions
- including entry to the film. For more details,
contact The Broadway Box Office - 0115 952
6611.

For information about other events from the BA in
Nottinghamshire and events in National Science
Week check out our website:

www.the-ba.net.

Programme Ideas – Help

I still do not have speakers booked for
May 1st, June 5th, or July 3rd. I need
speakers for these dates, ideally from
within the NAS, or locally. Speaker's
expenses have increased a little more than
committee has budgeted for, and while

this is not a problem (yet) it is a cause for concern. Please help.

FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES NEWS

WINTER 2002 ISSUE 71 Newsletter is out now.

It carries a nice article on the front about the Chinese discovery of the American continent around 1419-22. The item is by Dr. Michael Martin-Smith; you may recall his talk to us last year?

There is a small news item about Newton Astronomical Society - based around Grantham. I think we've mentioned them in past issues of the Journal. They are planning a special exhibition and lecture(s) at Woolsthorpe Manor during National Astronomy Week (2003 August 23rd to 30th)

Ilkeston Astronomical Society look as if they have a couple talks coming up that you might like to attend. March 11 Bill Henshaw will be talking about **Observatory Construction**, and on April 8th Paul Money will be giving his **2MASS** talk, (which if you've not heard it is well worth making a special effort for. Ilkeston AS meets in an upstairs function room of the Erewash Museum at 7.30pm. A pint in The Observatory after, just around the corner on Ilkeston Market Place is worthwhile too.

FAS - NEWSLETTERS

Due to ever increasing costs of printing, packaging and postage of the FAS Newsletters, the FAS Council have proposed an option for Paid Up Societies with in the UK (That us), and Individual Members within Societies to receive an E-mail edition. The E-zine will be in PDF format.

(I have raised this at NAS committee and we have agreed to opt for this option with a reduction in the number of printed copies we will receive. If you are in one of the Journal E-mail groups and would like to receive a copy of the E-zine FAS Newsletter let me know. If your not familiar with PDF's (Portable Document Format or File) you will need an Acrobat reader. This comes free with most games/software, and can be obtained free as a download off a number of sites).

The Newsletter will in future only appear three times a year instead of four, (Spring, Autumn, and Winter). The next issue will be circulated in May 2003.

FAS E-GROUP

There is and FAS E-group at <http://www.yahoo.com/fedastro>

INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL YOUTH CAMP 2003 JULY 19TH TO AUGUST 8TH

The 2003 IAYC will be held at Klingenthal, in Germany. The camp language will be English, although a "fluent" knowledge of English is not necessary! Accommodation is at very pleasant "Jugendherberge Aschberg". For more information contact

Jörg Dietrich

Steiningweg 4, 85748 Garching b.

Muenchen, Germany,

Telephone +49 89 32386944, E-mail

info@iayc.org or www.iatc.org

Light Pollution and Astronomy

The **Science and Technology Committee of the House of Commons** is to conduct an inquiry into light pollution and astronomy.

The inquiry will have the following terms of reference:

To examine the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce the impact of light pollution on astronomy and to consider what further steps, if any, are required.

The Committee will consider the following specific questions:

1. What has been the impact of light pollution on UK astronomy?
2. Are current planning guidelines strong enough to protect against light pollution?
3. Are planning guidelines being applied and enforced effectively?
4. Is light measurable in such a way as to make legally enforceable regulatory controls feasible?
5. Are further controls on the design of lighting necessary?

The Committee would welcome written evidence from interested organisations and individuals addressing these points.

Evidence should be submitted by Wednesday 30 April 2003.

Oral evidence will be heard in May.

Evidence should be sent in hard copy to the Clerk of the Science and Technology Committee, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA.

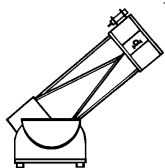
Please send an electronic version also, in Word format, via e-mail to scitechcom@parliament.uk or on disk. Guidance on the submission of evidence can be found at www.parliament.uk/commons/selec/witguide.htm

Further information on the work of the Committee can be obtained from Committee staff on 020 7219 2793/4.

Small Advertisements

David Lukehurst

Astronomical Telescope Maker



Large, Highly Portable Dobsonians

From 6¼ to 30-inches

12-inch f/6 truss-tube Dobsonian: £995

Also:

Large Finders, Low-profile Helical and Rack & Pinion Focussers, Eyepieces, Barlow Lenses, Ronchi Testers, etc.

For details & price list:

Tel: 0115 9602266

gildor@ntlworld.com

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**

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www.telescopes-direct.com

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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

The Journal

To register for your FREE Journal, just E-mail the secretary at carl.stella@virgin.net - You don't have to be a Society member to take advantage of this service.

Observatory Group

A web group page and message service has been set up at <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/nottinghamastronomicalsociety/>

It will be used for circulating information about the observatory construction and projects, large telescope up-dates, and use of the site by members of the Observatory Group. Please visit the web site and E-mail on line if you wish to join (NAS Members only)

Minute Reports

If you wish to receive E-copies of the draft minutes of the committee let the secretary know at carl.stella@virgin.net . This service is open only to Society members.

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, it's 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 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

PRESIDENT:

Paul Stocks

Tel: 0115 914 8185

e-mail: stocks_paul61@hotmail.com

VICE PRESIDENTS:

Peter Davison

e-mail: pebarwb@ntlworld.com

Dr Roy Gretton

e-mail: roy_gretton@peoples.ac.uk

Alan Heath (Ex. Dir. BAA Saturn Section)

HONORARY SECRETARY:

Carl Brennan

40 Swindon Close, The Vale
Giltbrook, Nottingham NG16 2WD

Tel: 0115 854 8687

e-mail: carl.stella@virgin.net

TREASURER:

Dr Mike Provost

e-mail: mike.provost@ntlworld.com

JOURNAL EDITOR:

Dr Roy Gretton

e-mail: roy_gretton@peoples.ac.uk

or: roy@gretton.surfonwater.com

CURATOR OF INSTRUMENTS

David Lukehurst

e-mail: gildor@ntlworld.com

CAMPAIGN FOR DARK SKIES:

Greg Eisenhauer

ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBER:

Richard Evans

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.

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.
