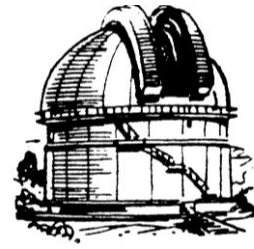

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society

March 2006

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Thursday March 2nd
7.45 p.m.

at the Djanogly City Academy
(doors open at 7.30)

Tonight we welcome

Dennis Ashton

Director of the Sheffield Hallam
University Star Centre

who will be speaking on

COSMIC COLLISIONS

COMING SOON

A Notable Event in the History of the Society

This year the Nottingham Astronomical Society will be sixty years old. To celebrate this event we are holding an Anniversary Lunch on May 13th. This will coincide with the official opening of the Society's observatory.

Please would members and friends take note of the important announcement later in this Journal.

Sky Notes

2006 March

Compiled by Roy Gretton

All times quoted are U.T.



PHASES OF THE MOON

First Quarter occurs in the evening of March 6th
Full Moon occurs shortly before midnight on the 14th
Last Quarter occurs on the evening of the 22nd
New Moon occurs late in the morning of the 29th

This month the Moon is closest to Earth on the 28th, and furthest from Earth on the 13th. All lunar occultations this month involve stars dimmer than magnitude 5.

THE PLANETS

Mercury is not well placed for observation this month. It passes through inferior conjunction on March 12th, to re-appear as a very challenging early morning object at the end of the month.

Venus is a brilliant object low in the south-east before sunrise. You can hardly miss it if you are up shortly before dawn and the sky is clear, provided your view is not obstructed by buildings or trees. Greatest western elongation (47 degrees) occurs on March 25th but the planet will be only 11 degrees above the horizon at dawn.

Mars is a first magnitude evening object moving steadily eastward in the constellation of Taurus. Detailed telescopic observation is now becoming very difficult, as the planet's disc is less than 6 arcseconds across.

Jupiter is still a morning object, but by the end of the month it will be rising as early as 22hr, and will be prominent in the constellation of Libra, magnitude -2.3, and 40 arcseconds across. A very good subject for viewing through a telescope, along with its four brightest moons. Jupiter begins its retrograde motion on March 4th (due to the Earth overtaking it in the 'fast lane'—something that happens every year).

Saturn continues to be a prominent object in the constellation of Cancer near to M44, the Beehive cluster, and visible throughout the evening. It is well-placed for telescopic observation. The shadow of the rings on the planet is visible, as is the shadow of the planet on the ring system.

Uranus and **Neptune** are practically unobservable this month.

METEORS

There are no prominent meteor showers in March.

ALGOL

There is one favourable opportunity for observing a minimum of the eclipsing binary star Algol this month. The minimum will occur at 21hr 25min on March 18th, with marked changes in brightness for two or three hours either side of this time. See last month's Journal for further advice on how to observe this variable star.

MEGREZ (Delta Ursae Majoris)

Megrez is the **central** star (and the faintest) of the seven that make up the Plough, so it is very easy to identify. It is suspected of being a long period irregular variable star, because in ancient times it was regarded as being similar in brightness to the other six. Recent estimations of the brightness of Megrez suggest that it may have varied from magnitude 3.3 at its brightest to 4.0. Members might like to look at Megrez from time to time and see if they notice any change.

TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN visible as a partial eclipse from Britain

A total solar eclipse occurs on Wednesday, March 29th. The track of totality passes through Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Libya, NW Egypt, Turkey, Georgia, southern Russia and Kazakhstan. The greatest duration of totality is 4 minutes and 7 seconds. From the UK a partial eclipse will be visible (weather permitting!) with 14% of the Sun's disc being obscured in the Outer Hebrides, and 30% on the Kent coast. We can expect about a quarter of the Sun to disappear in Nottingham, with maximum eclipse occurring at about 10.30 in the morning.

Good luck to any members who will be travelling to Africa or southeastern Europe for the eclipse. Remember to bring back some pictures!

Anyone attempting to observe the eclipse should take appropriate precautions to avoid damaging their eyes.

Nottingham Astronomical Society
60th Anniversary Buffet Lunch
Saturday, 13 May 2006
at 12.30pm

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Society's first meeting and to celebrate the opening of our observatory, we will be having a buffet lunch at **Cotgrave Place Golf Club** from 12.30pm on Saturday 13 May. The Observatory Opening Ceremony will take place shortly before the lunch and after morning coffee at The Lime Kiln Inn.

Our guests will be Professor Mike Merrifield and Mrs Merrifield.

All NAS members, their spouses, partners, children, relatives and friends are very welcome to attend. The cost of the lunch is **£15.95** per head, with a deposit of £5 each.

A copy of the menu will be available at the March meeting.

So that we can confirm the booking with the restaurant, it is important that we collect the £5 deposit at the March meeting. Please come prepared to book your place(s)! Cheques should be made payable to 'Nottingham Astronomical Society'.

A June meeting in Keyworth

As you will see from the **Diary Dates**, the Society's **1st June** meeting will be held at the **British Geological Survey in Keyworth**.

The BGS has a suitably sized meeting room on a site with security and ample parking space. The June meeting will give us an opportunity to try the venue, before considering whether we should move our meetings there on a permanent basis.

The **July** and **September** meetings will be held as usual at Djanogly City Academy. At the September meeting, we'll take a vote of members on whether to hold our future meetings at BGS Keyworth, or to stay at Djanogly.

Paul Stocks
NAS Secretary

DIARY DATES 2006

Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society

Our programme of monthly meetings is below. Don't forget to check our website:
<http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro>
for the latest information about the Society's activities.

Thursday 2 March

Djanogly City Academy, doors open 7.30pm

Cosmic Collisions

Dennis Ashton

Dennis Ashton

Director, Sheffield Hallam University Star Centre

Thursday 6 April

NAS observatory site, from 7.30pm

Observatory Evening

Do please come along and help prepare the observatory for the official opening

E-mail for directions: nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk

(No meeting at Djanogly in April)

Thursday 4 May

Djanogly City Academy, doors open 7.30pm

The Galactic Centre – a hidden treasure

Dr Susan Cartwright

Sheffield University

Saturday 13 May

Observatory site, near Cotgrave

NAS Observatory Opening Ceremony

followed by a **Buffet Lunch at Cotgrave Place**

Observatory to be opened by Professor Michael Merrifield

(Further details to be announced at NAS meetings)

Thursday 1 June

This meeting will be held at

The British Geological Survey, Keyworth

Doors open 7.30pm

The Magnetism of Sunspots

David Boyce

University of Leicester

DIARY DATES: Other Events

Received from The White Peak Astronomical Observing Group:

Peak District Star Party 29th March to 1st April 2006

The **White Peak Astronomical Observing Group** and the UK Astroimaging forum are organising a star party in the Peak District from 29th March to 1st April. If any NAS members are interested you would be more than welcome to attend. Details can be found at www.peakstarparty.co.uk
If you are interested you will need to book direct with the site, but if you could also let The White Peak Astronomical Observing Group know that you will be coming, it will help with the planning.

Ian Porter Membership secretary WPAOG www.wpaog.co.uk www.peakstarparty.co.uk

National Space Centre Exploration Drive, Leicester 8 - 23 April 2006 **MARS 3D**

A unique chance to view high resolution images from recent missions to Mars. See the amazing landscapes of our closest neighbour and discover how our understanding of the red planet has been transformed since the days when man first started to look at Mars through Earth-bound telescopes. These stunning images, from over 35 million miles away, were collected by the NASA Mars rovers, Spirit and Opportunity and Mars Express.

Times: Throughout the day. Free to ticket holders.
(National Space Centre tickets: Adult £9.95, Child/ Student /Senior Citizen £7.95)
Details & opening times: www.spacecentre.co.uk Phone 0116 261 0261

Received from Sunderland Astronomical Society:

4th KIELDER FOREST AUTUMN STAR CAMP Northumberland 18 - 22 October 2006

"I'm pleased to give you first details of the 2006 Kielder Forest Autumn Star Camp. It will be staged over five nights from 18 to 22 October 2006 in the spectacular Border countryside - the darkest area of England according to a CPRE study.

Once again, the Forestry Commission and Sunderland Astronomical Society have joined forces to organise the event, which is based at Kielder Campsite. The main day will be **Saturday 21 October** at nearby 18th century Kielder Castle. We will have top speakers and a full line-up of the nation's leading astronomy vendors, together with events for novices.

During the winter, the Forestry Commission plan to undertake improvements to the drainage and hard standings on the electric hook-up side of the campsite. Hopefully, it will make the site somewhat more water-resistant. Pitch fees have been kept at £12 per night for an electric hook-up and £10 without (per pitch, not per person). There's also a minimum two night stay. Activities on the main day will be free of charge to those registered and we will also provide a warm room. Other free talks and workshops will be arranged before the main day, after the success of those staged at the 2005 event.

We also have something new to tell you - a Spring Star Camp, set to be staged over three nights from **21 to 23 April 2006**. This is being organised by Sunderland Astronomical Society, who have block-booked Kielder Campsite. It's not meant to compete with our Autumn event, but rather offer a friendly observing weekend before summer arrives. Pitch fees are from £8 and **booking should be made directly with Sunderland Astronomical Society**.

You can find more details on both star camps and how to book at www.richarddarn.demon.co.uk/starcamp. If you require any further information, please contact me at starcamp2006@richarddarn.demon.co.uk, or call **01226 246351**. We hope to see you again under Kielder's dark sky!"

Richard Darn, Sunderland Astronomical Society

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MEADE

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

**8³/₄-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 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

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Fred Hopper

email: 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: roy@gretton.surfonwater.com

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: roy@gretton.surfonwater.com

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

email: 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 (17 years or under)	£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.
