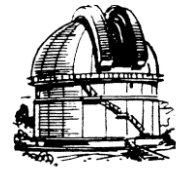

Journal

of the
Nottingham Astronomical Society



May 2002

Inside this issue

- Sky Notes for May
- Lincolnshire's
Astronomical Societies
- 6th June Meeting Notice
- Observatory Supervisor
- Best of the Web
- Diary Dates
- Society for the History of
Astronomy
- Pro-Am observing of the
planet Mercury
- Small advertisements

Thursday 2nd May 2002

at Djanogly CTC

Doors open 7.30pm

A Ramble Around The Summer Skies

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

Paul Money

PLEASE NOTE:

The June meeting will be at our Observatory Site

A chance to do some observing on a summer evening! And if you haven't visited the Society's Observatory Site before, an opportunity to come along and see the site for yourself. **The meeting date is Thursday 6th June - please see the Notice giving details in this issue of the Journal.** Beginners at observing will be particularly welcome.

Lets hope for clear skies on the night, and don't forget to bring warm clothing.

Sky Notes

May 2002

by Paul Stocks
Journal Editor



THE MOON

Last quarter 4d 07h
New Moon 12d 11h
First quarter 18d 20h
Full Moon 26d 12h

Just for the record, there is a penumbral eclipse of the Moon on the 26th. The eclipse is not visible from anywhere in the UK. Not that we are going to miss much, as the Moon will pass only through the outer shadow of the Earth and any dimming of the Moon will be minimal.

THE PLANETS

The grouping of five planets in the western evening sky continues into May. A rare alignment that has had some attention from the newspapers. But Venus and Jupiter are by far the brightest, with Mercury and Mars much fainter. By the end of the month, Mercury and Saturn will no longer be visible and Mars will be a difficult object in bright twilight.

Mercury

Visible early in the month, low in the NW sky soon after sunset. The planet will reach greatest elongation on 4 May, when its magnitude will be 0.0. It will be “downhill all the way” after that as Mercury drops out of view by the middle of the month. Inferior conjunction is on 27 May.

Venus

A spectacular object in the NW evening sky, at a brilliant magnitude of -3.9 .

Mars

Now very distant from Earth, the tiny (3.9 arc second) disc of Mars glows at magnitude 1.7 low in the west after sunset. Best summarised by saying “badly placed for observation”.

Jupiter

Magnitude is -1.9 , so still a great sight in small telescopes in the evening sky. But the planet is setting progressively earlier as the light evenings of summer approach. It won't be as conveniently placed again until late in the year.

Saturn

Low in the western sky in the evenings and not well placed this month. Magnitude is 0.1.

Uranus

I'll confess that I only observed Uranus for the first time two years ago. This month, it is a magnitude 5.7 object in Aquarius, low in the south eastern sky in the early hours of the morning.

Neptune

The planet is a magnitude 7.8 object in Capricornus, also low in the south eastern early morning sky.

Comet 2002 C1 (Ikeya-Zhang)

This comet has been a good one, clearly visible through binoculars, or (as we heard at last month's meeting) a naked eye object from a dark-sky site. May will see it start to fade as it moves through Draco and on into Hercules and then Corona Borealis.

Meteors

The eta (η) Aquarids, reach maximum on 4 May. But from UK latitudes the radiant is low (in the early morning sky) and very few meteors are likely to be seen.

Lincolnshire's Astronomical Societies

From Paul Money's website

Perhaps because of its rural & generally good night time landscape Lincolnshire now has 6 Astronomical societies that between them cater for most of the county. Lincoln A.S. is the oldest followed by Cleethorpes and District A.S. whilst Boston and SoLAGS formed within a year of each other. A fifth society is in the process of being set up in Grantham calling themselves Newton Astronomers and a sixth group has been formed in North Lincolnshire and it is hoped that they are both successful. All are either well established or becoming so and always welcome new members and occasionally get together for special joint meetings. All of them have at one time or another got together to observe special sky events such as grazing occultations of stars by the Moon etc., and have undertaken joint trips to places of astronomical interest.

So if you are in Lincolnshire as a resident or just passing through then take a look at the links on this website to find out more about each of the groups.
<http://www.astspace.demon.co.uk/Home.htm>

JUNE 6th Ordinary Meeting NOTICE

The June 6th meeting will be held at the Mt. Pleasant Observatory site. Please bring warm clothing, as there is **ALWAYS** a cold breeze at the site. Please do bring along a small telescope or binoculars. If you are able to make your own way to the site then it will be open from 20.00hrs. Do **NOT** drive on the access road beyond the gates – this is private land and we have no right to be there. Please open the reservoir gates and drive up to the observatory (park on the tarmac if it has been raining). Locator maps will be available from the secretary and/or at the May meeting.

If you do not know how to get to the site, or need transport then talk to a committee member at the May CTC meeting, or turn up at the CTC on June 6th **no later than 7.30pm.**

There will not be a speaker for the meeting, but the general idea is try and get some basic observing done, and help the members to more aware of the excellent site we own. If you bring a torch along, please try and make sure it has a red filter over the light/lens and keep it pointed downwards so as not to disturb observer's night vision.

APPENDIX 1

PROCEDURES AND NOTES FOR THE USE OF THE MOUNT PLEASANT OBSERVING SITE

1. GENERAL

1.1 Members arriving before a key or code holder should wait at the reservoir gates and are reminded not to block the farm road leading up from the main road. The Society has right of access to the reservoir site along the farm road up to the reservoir gates, but not beyond. The reservoir gates will only open outwards.

1.2 Members should not walk around the outside of the reservoir perimeter fence, particularly on the three sides adjoining the farmer's fields.

1.3 On opening the gates the key or code holder should fasten the chain by locking the opened padlock in such a manner as to form a closed chain around one of the gates. Code holders **must** ensure that the combination code has not been left on the lock. These are preventative measures to:

- a). Ensure the chain, padlock and combination padlock cannot be removed by accident or as a malicious act.
- b). Prevent the chain and locks inadvertently falling into the field or onto the road when the site is open.
- c). Compromise the combination number.

1.4 The last person in the arriving group should close the gates behind them. This is a preventative measure to protect the site from unwelcome guests if they see the gates open (particularly at night).

1.5 Members arriving after the gates have been opened should also close the gates behind them.

1.6 All vehicles should proceed slowly along the tarmac road within the reservoir complex to its end, and then onto the grass leading to the observatory site. Some of the route will be on uneven ground. Parking should be in a sensible manner.

Notes

Members/guests will be advised if:

- a). An alternative route to the observatory is required because of site works undertaken by Severn-Trent.
- b). The usual grass route/alternative grass route becomes waterlogged. Parking in this instance will be on the tarmac road inside the reservoir perimeter fence alongside the steps leading up to the reservoir pump house.

1.7 Vehicles leaving the site should do so by the same route as they entered it.

1.8 The last person out in a leaving group should close the reservoir gates behind them.

1.9 The last person to leave the site (which must always be a key or code holder) must ensure that the chain and padlock have been firmly fastened to prevent the gates being opened again. If the combination padlock was used the code holder **must** ensure that the combination is not on display.

Members are requested to take away all belongings (including litter), and must not interfere with the workings of the adjoining reservoir.

Observatory Supervisor

This notice first appeared in the April issue of the NAS Journal

With the Large Telescope project approaching completion during the next year, there is an urgent need for someone to oversee the work which needs to be completed in order for the Society Observatory building to be in a fit state to receive the Large Telescope.

At this time, it is hope that all members with appropriate skills and a little spare time will contribute to completing the outstanding work, but someone is needed to organise and oversee this work. Anyone interested in this task is invited to step forward at the earliest opportunity!

David Lukehurst
NAS President

Best of the Web

Astronomical weather

Check the forecast for observing conditions on the BBC website:

www.bbc.co.uk/weather/astronomy/

You can choose your location from a list of regions (Nottinghamshire is included) and check to see if it is worth getting the telescope out. I only discovered this website at the end of April, so haven't had a chance to test how accurate the forecasts are. But it is nice to see that the needs of amateur astronomers are being catered for by the BBC weather service!

Paul Stocks

DIARY DATES by Carl Brennan

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY 2002

May 2nd Djanogly C.T.C.

Doors open from 7.30pm

A RAMBLE AROUND THE SUMMER SKIES

Welcome back Paul Money

June 6th

Meet at Djanogly CTC for transport
or make your way to the
OBSERVATORY SITE.

July 4th Djanogly C.T.C.

Doors open from 7.30pm

SETI AND OUR PART IN PROJECT PHOENIX

Dr Ian Morrison, Jodrell Bank

September 5th Djanogly C.T.C.

Doors open from 7.30pm

THE HUMANIZATION OF SPACE

Talk by Dr. Michael Martin-Smith, author and member
of Hull Astronomical Society

OTHER EVENTS

11th May Ilkeston & District Astronomical Society

Celebrates its' 10th Anniversary with a one day convention. To be held at Heanor Welfare Centre, Wilmot Street, Heanor. Advance tickets are £5.00. Make cheques out to "Ilkeston and District Astronomical Society", and send them to Harry Bingham, 38 Broadway, Heanor, Derbyshire, DE75 7GW.

14th May I&DAS meeting at the function room, Erewash Museum (7.30pm). Dennis Aston will talk about METEORS.

18th May Saturday 10:30am Webb Society Annual General Meeting at Rutherford-Appleton Laboratory, Nr. Oxford.

25th May Stratford upon Avon hold an Astronomy Convention, at the Home Guard Club, Tiddington, near Stratford upon Avon. Doors open 9.30am and the bash begins at 10.00am through to 17.15pm. Full programme of good speakers – tickets £50 from 20 Colleen Avenue, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 3NN (make cheques payable to Stratford upon Avon Astronomical Society)

11th June I&DAS meeting at the function room, Erewash Museum (7.30pm). Brian Griffin will be giving a talk – topic unknown at this time.

9th to 12th August Scarborough & District

Astronomical Society Summer Star Festival

Details from Carl Brennan, or Mrs. S. Aderson, 25 Highfield, Scarborough, N. Yorks, YO12 4AW, Telephone 01723 500389, E-mail

gwernan2@ukf.net www.baryte.demon.co.uk/astro/

Future Events

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>.

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.

NEWS RELEASE

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

A new national Society for the History of Astronomy is being formed, with the support of noted astronomy historian Dr. Allan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford. The Society will welcome equally amateur and professional historians and astronomers, and enthusiasts with a general interest in the subject. The objectives of the Society will include encouraging new research into the history of astronomy, especially amateur research at the local level, and facilitating its collation, publication and dissemination both by conventional means and through the internet.

It is planned to develop a close working relationship with the Royal Astronomical Society and the British Astronomical Association Historical Section, with the aim of contributing research material and publications to both of their Libraries as well as maintaining a central Archive and promoting the preservation of such research in local, county and national record offices.

Stuart Williams of the SHA said "Astronomers know well the major contribution that amateurs can and do make to the study of the great science, both making new discoveries and supporting the major research programmes of the professionals. Amateur and local historians can make an equally important contribution to the history of astronomy, especially its local history or in those aspects of history which are not always covered by professionals, such as that of the scientists assisting the 'big names', the local and university observatories, the amateur astronomers and societies, the telescope makers and publishers, etc. The SHA will have as one of its primary aims the encouragement and support of amateur research in these areas especially, but will also encourage professional research and the widest possible general interest in the subject."

The Society for the History of Astronomy will be founded at a special meeting organised for the purpose at Wadham College, Oxford, on Saturday 29th June 2002 at 1pm. A light lunch will be available at modest cost before the meeting, at 12 noon. Anyone interested in joining the new Society and contributing to its work is very welcome to attend that meeting, and for further details and a formal Invitation should indicate their interest by sending an A4 first class stamped s.a.e. to:

***Stuart Williams FRAS LRPS, Society for the History of Astronomy,
Flamsteed Villa, 26 Matlock Road, Bloxwich, West Midlands, WS3 3QD.***

Stuart Williams can be contacted by email on flamsteed@v21mail.co.uk

An opportunity for amateurs to contribute to the first ever pro-am collaboration project on Mercury

Professional astronomers Ann Sprague and Josh Emery will be observing Mercury from the Infrared Telescope Facility at Mauna Kea, Hawaii between May 2-5 and June 22-24, 2002 and Johan Warell has been granted observing time for Mercury as well on the Nordic Optical Telescope for the period June 28-July 2.

The main emphasis will be on visual and near infrared work to obtain information on the surface composition. **They propose amateurs also join in making as many observations of Mercury as possible from around the world on these dates.** Of particular interest are observations and images that have already been acquired which show surface features on Mercury that will be visible during these periods. Intending contributors can log on to a web page detailing the "Mercury Watch Support Observations Program" at:

<http://www.astro.uu.se/planet/planet/MERCWWW/supportobs.html>

This page gives information on CCD and visual techniques, filters, and how to submit results to the professionals. On the linked pages is additional information on planned Mercury research observations and links to related sites.

(From a note circulated to BAA members by Bob Steele, Director, Mercury and Venus Section, British Astronomical Association)

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 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

Small Advertisements

David Lukehurst **Astronomical Telescope Maker**

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For details & price list:
Tel: 0115 9602266
e-mail: gildor@ntlworld.com

“Small Ads” in the NAS Journal

The Journal can accept small advertisements, as long as they relate in some way to astronomy or space science.

NAS Members' advertisements of up to 50 words are accepted free of charge.

Advertisements of a commercial nature are accepted at a cost of £1 per issue or £10 for the year (11 issues).

All advertisements are accepted at the discretion of the Journal Editor.

Please send your advertisement to the Journal Editor.

Cheques in payment for commercial advertisements should be made payable to “Nottingham Astronomical Society” and sent to the Treasurer.

The Widescreen Centre

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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, 2001-02

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

(Full time student, UB40, Senior Citizens)

Subscriptions become due at the October AGM. 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.
