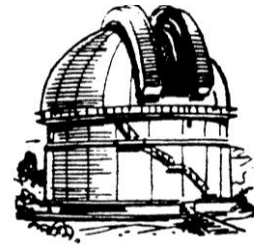

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society

May 2003

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- Sky Notes for May
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Thursday May 1st

Doors open 7.30pm

This evening is a

MEMBERS' EVENING

**AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO
LEARN MORE AND DISCUSS THE PROGRESS
OF THE OBSERVATORY PROJECT**

THIS WILL INCLUDE A SHORT TALK BY

David Lukehurst,

Curator of Instruments and Everest climber

THIS EXCEPTIONAL YEAR CONTINUES...

March 2003

The whole UK experienced mean temperatures well above average, with day times *exceptionally* above average. Most places were also very dry and exceptionally sunny.

Many stations throughout the UK, broke their existing March sunshine records. The temperature at Altanharra rose from -9°C to 18°C on the 17th, the greatest diurnal rise in temperature for Scotland in March.

Source: www.bbc.co.uk/weather/features/review/index.shtml

Sky Notes

2003 May

Compiled by Roy Gretton

All times quoted are U.T.



THE MOON

New Moon	1d 12h 15m
First Quarter	9d 11h 53m
Full Moon	16d 03h 36m
Last Quarter	23d 00h 31m
New Moon	31d 04h 20m

THE PLANETS

<i>Positions on May 11th</i>			
	R.A.	Dec.	Mag.
Mercury	<i>Not visible</i>		
Venus	1h 29m	+7° 32'	-3.8
Mars	20h 57m	-19° 12'	-0.2
Jupiter	08h 51m	+18° 31'	-2.0
Saturn	05h 48m	+22° 32'	0.1
Uranus	22h 20m	-11° 15'	5.9
Neptune	21h 03m	-16° 50'	7.9

Mercury is at inferior conjunction on the 7th. This will be a special event as Mercury will transit the Sun (see later for details). Mercury will emerge into the morning sky late in the month, with greatest western elongation on June 3rd, and although at this elongation Mercury will be 24° from the Sun, it will barely rise above the pre-dawn horizon at the latitude of Britain.

Venus remains a morning object throughout the month, becoming increasingly difficult to observe due to its low altitude in the brightening pre-dawn sky.

Mars continues to draw away from the Sun in the morning sky and on May 7th will achieve an apparent diameter of 10 arcseconds. On this date Mars will rise at around 02:00 and shine at magnitude -0.13. It is about now that amateur observers with good-sized telescopes will be able to discern several dusky desert markings and the bright south polar cap.

Jupiter is in the constellation of Cancer and remains a brilliant object in the evening sky as we draw towards the end of a very good observing season. By the middle of the month the planet sets at 01:15.

Saturn is now fading into the evening twilight and will be almost unobservable after the middle of the month.

Uranus and **Neptune** continue to be very difficult to observe in the morning sky throughout May.

TRANSIT OF MERCURY—2003 May 7

On the morning of 7th May, Mercury will pass directly between the Earth and the Sun. Sunrise will occur at about 04:25 (5.25 a.m. BST). The transit will begin at 05:11 (eleven minutes past six BST) when the Sun will be only 5° above the ENE horizon, and will end at 10:32 (just after half past eleven BST) when the Sun will have climbed to 50° above the southeastern horizon. In transit, the planet will appear as a black dot, 12 arcseconds across. Mercury enters the solar disc at a position angle of 15.3° (the upper left edge of the Sun) and leaves at a position angle of 290.8° (the upper right edge of the Sun).

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE SUN. Even with eclipse glasses Mercury will be too small for you to see with the naked eye. The best way to observe the transit is to project the Sun's disk on to white card using a small telescope (e.g. 50 mm aperture) or binoculars. The maximum distance of Mercury from the Sun's limb will be a little more than 4 arcminutes at 07:52.

The next transit of Mercury (not visible from Britain) will occur on 2006 November 8.

TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE MOON—2003 May 16

Despite its low altitude in this country, observers will be able to view most of the total lunar eclipse on the morning of 16th May. The Moon, in Libra, will be 17° above the southern horizon when it first enters the faint penumbra at 01:05 (shortly after 2 a.m. BST), but the Moon gets even lower in the southwestern sky as the eclipse progresses. It begins to enter the darker umbral shadow at 02:03 and is completely immersed at 03:14 (about quarter past four BST). Mid-eclipse is at 03:40, when the Moon will be only 5° above the horizon in a brightening sky. The next total eclipse on the Moon will occur on 8-9th November this year, and will be much more favourably placed for observers in Britain.

ANNULAR ECLIPSE OF THE SUN—2003 May 31

An annular eclipse of the Sun will be seen at sunrise on the morning of Saturday 31st May from the north of the Scottish mainland, the Shetland Isles, the Orkney Isles and the Isle of Lewis. However, sunrise on that day will be spectacular across most of Britain, with the Moon obscuring a substantial portion of the Sun. Annular eclipses occur when the Moon moves across the face of the Sun but does not completely hide it because the Moon is too far from the Earth. A ring of the Sun's disk can be seen around the Moon at the time of maximum eclipse. The further west you go the longer will be the duration, although the lower the altitude. The further north you go the higher the eclipse will be above the horizon. **It is however a sunrise eclipse, so what is important is a low, cloudless northeast-facing skyline.**

From Nottingham a striking partial eclipse will be visible (given clear sky). At sunrise (about a quarter to five BST) almost three-quarters of the Sun's disk will be obscured by the Moon. The eclipse will end soon after 5.30 a.m. BST. Time to get out your eclipse glasses if you still have them from 1999!

TELESCOPES AND TAXES

Having just filled in a form to claim over £300 from the taxman for the Society's coffers, I thought it might be useful to remind you all how you can help the Society financially, particularly with the Large Telescope Project and the Observatory...

1) Fill in a Gift Aid form. If you pay UK tax, filling in a really simple (honest!) Gift Aid form will enable me to claim back the tax you paid on any money (such as subscriptions and donations) that you give to the Society. If you are a higher rate taxpayer, doing so will even reduce your personal tax bill! Note that, even if you are a pensioner, you may still be paying tax, so you can still help the Society in this way. It is very important, though, to tell me if you cease to pay UK tax, so I can stop reclaiming the tax that you have stopped paying.

2) Make a regular donation. Several people donate money regularly, via standing order, directly from their bank accounts to the Society, which is a good way of ensuring the Society has some steady income. If you are one of these, then thank you! Please, however, make sure you let me know when regular payments start or stop, so I can keep the books straight (the building society can't tell me who paid what and when, so I have to keep track manually). If your payments are about to finish because there was a time limit on the original form you filled in, I can give you a new form to restart them if you wish to do so.

3) Make one-off donations. These are always welcome, and I can claim the tax back on them (in the same way as for subscriptions and regular donations) if you have filled in a Gift Aid form.

4) Pay your subscriptions on time. Most people do, but I had to say it anyway.

I have all the necessary forms in the Treasurer's bag, so see me at a meeting or contact me by phone or email if you need one.

Thanks

Mike Provost

Treasurer, Nottingham Astronomical Society

Email: mike.provost@ntlworld.com

Tel: (0115) 919 9984

DIARY DATES, by Carl Brennan

**MEETINGS OF THE
NOTTINGHAM
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

May 1st Djanogly CTC, Doors open
7.30pm

**MEMBERS' NIGHT WITH
SHORT TALK BY**

Dave Lukehurst, Curator of
Instruments and Everest climber

May 12th Committee Meeting
7.30pm
22 Killerton Park Drive, West
Bridgford

Committee and invited guests only
please.

OTHER EVENTS

9th/10th/11th May [Autographica](http://www.autographica.co.uk)
[2003](http://www.autographica.co.uk) '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

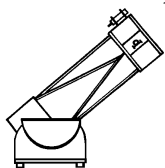
6th June 2003 Extraterrestrial Life
10.30am to 4.15pm National
Maritime Museum. Cost £28.00
(£16 concessions). More
information on 02083126747/6648,
E-mail openmuseum@nmm.ac.uk,
lstone@nmm.ac.uk or visit
www.nmm.ac.uk

**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
gwernan2@ukf.net, visit
<http://www.scarborough-as.org.uk>

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**

The Widescreen Centre

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www.telescopes-direct.com

eMail: 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

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

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e-mail: stocks_paul61@hotmail.com

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e-mail: pebarwb@ntlworld.com

Dr Roy Gretton

e-mail: roy_gretton@peoples.ac.uk

Alan Heath (Ex. Dir. BAA Saturn Section)

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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.
