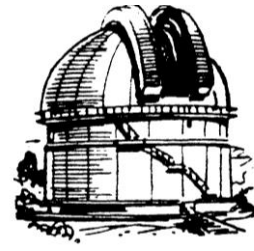

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society

May 2006

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- Sky Notes for May
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- Diary Dates
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Thursday May 4th

7.45 p.m.

at the Djanogly City Academy
(doors open at 7.30)

Tonight we welcome

Dr Susan Cartwright
of Sheffield University

who will be speaking on

**The Galactic Centre –
a Hidden Treasure**

EDITOR'S NOTE

This month's Journal has a file size approaching 600 kB. Our practice used to be to restrict the size to about 100 kB, as it was said that some servers had problems handling larger emails.

The file size has grown in recent months due to the inclusion of the new Widescreen Centre advertisement, and this month it is larger still because it contains an image (the map provided by Ilkeston AS).

Please let me know if the increased file size is a problem for you. If not, that's good news, as contributors will be able to include further images in future editions.

roygretton@speed-mail.co.uk

Sky Notes

2006 May

Compiled by Roy Gretton



From the third week of this month, astronomical twilight lasts all night, so the sky will never be completely dark (even if you could extinguish all the artificial lights).

PHASES OF THE MOON

First Quarter occurs in the early hours of May 5th

Full Moon occurs in the early hours of the 13th

Last Quarter occurs in mid-morning on the 20th

New Moon occurs in the early hours of the 27th

This month the Moon is closest to Earth on the 22nd, and furthest from Earth on the 7th.

THE PLANETS

Mercury reaches superior conjunction on May 18th, and will be very difficult to observe this month.

Venus, at magnitude -4, is low in the south-east before sunrise. It will be difficult to observe due to its southerly declination, and on May 16th the planet will be only 9 degrees above the horizon at sunrise. On the 24th the waning crescent Moon will be 3 degrees north of Venus.

Mars continues to move eastwards through the constellation of Gemini this month, and at the end of May passes into Cancer. The Martian disk is now less than 5 arcseconds across, so surface details are difficult to observe, even with large amateur telescopes.

Jupiter is in the constellation of Libra throughout the month. Opposition to the Sun occurs on May 4th, when the planet will be about 23 degrees above the southern horizon at midnight. At magnitude -2.6 it will appear as a bright off-white star.

Saturn, in the constellation of Cancer, will less-favourably placed for observation as the month progresses, and by the beginning of June will be fading into the evening twilight. However, at the beginning of May it will still be well worth observing through a telescope. It is now a short distance to the east of the Beehive Cluster.

Uranus, magnitude 5.9, becomes visible (but with difficulty) during this month as it moves out of the morning twilight. On May 4th it will be one arcminute away from the star 81 Aquarii (magnitude 6.2).

Neptune, magnitude 7.9, in the constellation of Capricornus, is visible in the morning sky through a telescope.

METEORS

There are no particularly notable meteor showers this month.

COMETS

Comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann 3

A Schwassmann and A A Wachmann of Hamburg Observatory discovered this comet (their third) on photographic plates taken on 1930 May 2. The initial orbit was uncertain and the comet was not found again until 1979. It has an orbital period of 5.4 years, but was missed at the next return. However it has been seen at the last three returns. This month it will make a close approach to Earth (0.082 AU or about 6 million miles). The Contour mission was scheduled to intercept it, but the spacecraft had to be destroyed following a motor failure.

In 1995, the comet's nucleus split into at least three fragments, designated as A, B and C. However, the number of fragments is constantly changing, and at least 19 fragments are currently being tracked.

The brightest fragment (the one considered to be the main comet) is component C, and this is expected to become visible to the naked eye (possibly as bright as magnitude 4) around the middle of May. It already has a significant tail. The next brightest fragment is component B, followed by G. These may also become naked eye objects, but together with a number of other components should at least be visible through binoculars. The situation is complex, as further fragmentation appears to be occurring all the time.

At closest approach, the fragments of the comet will pass through the constellations Cygnus and Pegasus on May 12, 13 and 14 (admittedly not well-timed, as Full Moon is on the 13th). As this Journal goes to press, there is at least one report that fragment C has been seen with the naked eye.

Observatory Opening and 60th Anniversary Lunch

Saturday, 13th May 2006

Timetable of events

- 10.30am** **Coffee** (free of charge) at **The Lime Kiln Inn, Colston Road, Cropwell Bishop.**
- 11.15am** **Opening Ceremony** at the **NAS Observatory, Cotgrave Reservoir.**
- 12.30pm** **Buffet Lunch** at **Cotgrave Place Golf & Country Club, Stragglethorpe, Near Cotgrave Village, Cotgrave.**

Our guests will be Professor Mike Merrifield and Mrs Merrifield.

All current and past NAS members and their spouses, partners, children, and any other guests they wish to bring are very welcome to attend any (or all) of these events!

If you wish to come to the lunch, the cost is £15.95 per head. Payment is due at the NAS meeting on **Thursday 4th May**. Please make cheques payable to 'Nottingham Astronomical Society'.

DIARY DATES 2006

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.

Thursday 4 May

Djanogly City Academy, Room 105
doors open 7.30pm

The Galactic Centre – a hidden treasure

Dr Susan Cartwright
Sheffield University

Saturday 13 May

from 10.30am

Coffee at The Lime Kiln Inn, Cropwell Bishop
then

NAS Observatory Opening Ceremony

at Cotgrave Reservoir

Observatory to be opened by

Professor Mike Merrifield, University of Nottingham

followed by

Buffet Lunch at Cotgrave Place Golf & Country Club
to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Society

Please see timetable of events in this issue of the Journal

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

Thursday 6 July

Djanogly City Academy, Room 105
doors open 7.30pm

Members' Evening

Bring along your solar eclipse pictures!

DIARY DATES: Other Events

Ilkeston & District Astronomical Society

Presents

A Silver Jubilee Astronomy Convention

on **Saturday May 20th 2006**

at

The Heanor Welfare Centre,

Wilmot Street, Heanor, Derbyshire

Doors open: **9am** Main event begins at **10am**

Four Guest Speakers:

Prof. Michael Merrifield (University of Nottingham): *Galaxies*

Prof. David Hughes (University of Sheffield): *Comets*

Prof. Ken Pounds (University of Leicester): *Space Science in the UK and Europe - 2006*

Prof. Nye Evans (Keele University): *The Dusty Universe*

Plus Trade Stands & Quality Raffle

Admission each: £7 in advance, £8 on the door

For tickets, send a SAE with a cheque made payable to the *Ilkeston and District Astronomical Society*, and post to Mr Harry Bingham, 38 Broadway, Heanor, Derbyshire, DE75 7GW
Tel: 01773 533761

Plenty of free parking

Light refreshments available

For further information, telephone Mary McNulty on 01298 78234, or Mark Thomas on 0115 8490724. Also visit our website at

<http://members.aol.com/idasastro/index.htm>

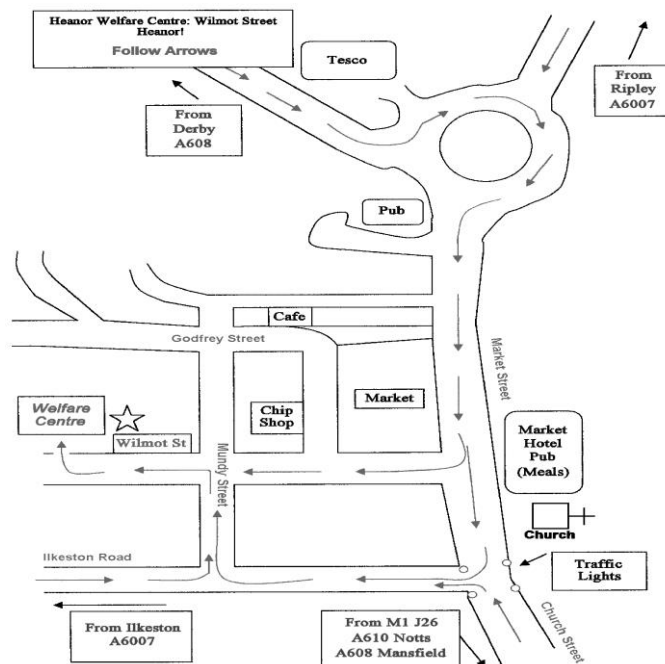
Directions:

The Heanor Welfare Centre is conveniently placed, situated about 15 minutes from Junction 26 of the M1.

Langley Mill railway station is just two miles away, and there are regular rail services from Sheffield and Nottingham. There are regular bus services to Heanor from Derby, Ripley, Alfreton and Nottingham. There's also plenty of free parking on site.

Finder map below – more can be found on our website, at

<http://members.aol.com/idasastro/index.htm>



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Nottingham, NG2 5BJ
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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
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Built by David Lukehurst.
65x and 250x eyepieces, finderscope.
4 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

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

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David Lukehurst

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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 (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.
