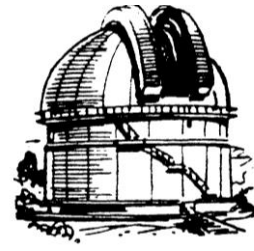


---

# Journal

of the



---

## Nottingham Astronomical Society

May 2008

---

Inside this issue

- Sky Notes for May
- Sky at Night magazines offer
- Diary Dates
- Advertisements
- E-Services
- Membership application form
- Society Information

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May**

at the

**British Geological Survey**

Nicker Hill, Keyworth

**8 pm** (doors open at 7.30pm)

Tonight we welcome

**Madeline Cox**

Librarian, Society for the History of Astronomy,

who will be speaking on

**Caroline Herschel**

### TWO "NEW" STARS IN CYGNUS

Two novae have been discovered in as many months in the constellation of Cygnus. The first was discovered on March 7<sup>th</sup> by a Japanese amateur astronomer, Hiroshi Kaneda, using a digital camera with a 105mm f/2.5 lens, and was independently detected the same night by Martin Nicholson of Daventry. This "new" star was previously a very faint object before it flared up to magnitude 8. It is situated about 6 degrees ENE of the colourful double star Albireo. The second nova, at magnitude 7.6, was discovered on April 10<sup>th</sup>, roughly midway between Albireo and Eta Cygni, by two other Japanese astronomers.

Both objects are thought to be classical novae, which occur where a white dwarf is in a close binary system with a main sequence star. The main sequence star gradually loses material, resulting in the formation of a disc of gas around the white dwarf. Over long periods enough material has spiralled down on to the dwarf to trigger a thermonuclear explosion, resulting in the object brightening by up to 16 magnitudes.

# Sky Notes

## 2008 May

Compiled by Roy Gretton



### PHASES OF THE MOON

New Moon occurs shortly after midday on May 5<sup>th</sup>  
First Quarter occurs in the early morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>  
Full Moon occurs in the early morning of the 20<sup>th</sup>  
Last Quarter occurs in the early morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>

This month the Moon is closest to Earth on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and furthest from Earth on the 20<sup>th</sup> (which coincides with Full Moon – so this month’s Full Moon will be a “small” one!). May is a good month for observing the first quarter Moon, as it is high in the southern sky after sunset.

### THE PLANETS

This month provides the best opportunity of the year for observing **Mercury** in the evening, as greatest eastern elongation occurs on May 14<sup>th</sup>. On that date the planet will be 22 degrees from the Sun, and around this time it can be seen shining at first magnitude, 10 degrees above the northwestern horizon about three-quarters of an hour after sunset. Thereafter it moves quickly back toward the Sun, and becomes unobservable by the end of the third week of May.

**Venus** is too close to the Sun to be observed this month.

**Mars** moves eastward from Gemini into Cancer, and continues to fade in the evening sky. It now presents a tiny disc less than six arcseconds across, so little or no useful telescopic observation can be carried out.

**Jupiter**, in the constellation of Sagittarius, rises soon after midnight, and will be best seen in the pre-dawn sky about 3 a.m., when it will have climbed to about 15 degrees above the southern horizon. However, telescopic viewing will be hampered by the thick atmosphere at our latitude.

**Saturn**, still close to Regulus in the constellation of Leo, continues to be well-placed for observation in the evening, and by the end of the month will be setting about 1 a.m.

**Uranus** and **Neptune** have returned to visibility. **Uranus** (magnitude 5.9) is in the constellation of Aquarius, and **Neptune** (magnitude 7.8) is in the constellation of Capricornus.

## METEORS

The **Eta Aquarids** are the main meteor shower in May, but are poorly placed for observation from the British Isles. The anticipated maximum rate (if you are observing from the equator) is 40 events per hour. They reach their maximum activity on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

## VARIABLE STAR: Algol

There is only one minimum of this **eclipsing binary** visible from the UK this month. It occurs at 3.05 a.m. BST on May 1st. The star dims from its normal brightness (magnitude 2.1) to magnitude 3.4 over a period of 4.8 hours.

-----

## **The *Sky at Night* Magazine: An Announcement by Mike Provost**

I've got a full set of the first three years of the BBC *Sky at Night* magazine (36 issues) in good condition, bound in three volumes with all the CDs in three slip cases, to give to anyone prepared to make a reasonable donation to the NAS Telescope Fund. To give an idea of 'reasonable', I think I spend about £140 on the mags, binders and CD cases, and the mags are £4.25 each in the shops, but the Treasurer will have the final say! Alternatively, the NAS (or BGS?) might want to give them a good home.

'Donator' collects, either from my house or, by prior arrangement, from a general meeting.

Thanks

Mike Provost  
0115 919 9984  
07811 944990

## DIARY DATES 2008

### Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society

Our programme for the coming months is below. Don't forget to check our website:  
<http://beehive.thisisnottingham.co.uk/nottinghamastro>  
for the latest information about the Society's meetings and observing sessions.

#### Thursday 1 May 2008

British Geological Survey, Keyworth  
8.00pm (Doors open 7.30pm)

#### 'Caroline Hershel'

**Madeline Cox**

Librarian, Society for the History of Astronomy

#### Thursday 5 June 2008

British Geological Survey, Keyworth  
8.00pm (Doors open 7.30pm)

#### 'The Discovery of New Worlds'

**Andrew Lound**

A dramatic talk, with music and props!

#### Thursday 3 July 2008

British Geological Survey, Keyworth  
8.00pm (Doors open 7.30pm)

#### 'Mars – The Next Generation'

**Paul Money**

#### August

*Summer break*

*No meeting at BGS this month*

## OTHER EVENTS

### **University of Leicester Alumni Association and Haldane Society Annual Public Lecture 2008**

The NAS has received the invitation (*see below*) to attend a lecture on **Wednesday 7 May** at **6.00pm**.

**If you wish to attend, please e-mail Karl Brown at the University to let him know that you will be there. [kb118@le.ac.uk](mailto:kb118@le.ac.uk)**

**Website information <http://www.le.ac.uk/alumni/annual.html>**

“I am writing to invite the members of the Nottingham Astronomical Society to attend the University of Leicester Alumni Association and Haldane Society Annual Public Lecture 2008, to be given by Emeritus Professor Ken Pounds CBE FRS, entitled “**50 Years as a Space Scientist - Studying the Hot and Violent Universe**”

The Lecture will take place in the **Ratray lecture Theatre on the University's main campus on University Road , Leicester on 7<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm**, followed by a drinks reception at 7pm in the Park-Side Lounge on the fifth floor of the Charles Wilson Building , also on main campus.

Professor Pounds became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1981 and received a CBE in 1984, has been a Professor of Space Physics since 1973 and became Head of Department of Physics in 1986, before taking the decision to merge it with the Astronomy Department to create the present Department of Physics and Astronomy.

He was a member of the Science and Engineering Research Council from 1980 to 1984, President of the Royal Astronomical Society between 1990 and 1992, and Chief Executive of the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council from 1994 for 1998. After the end of his term with the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, Ken returned to Leicester as Head of Department until his retirement in 2002. He remains active in the department as a Research Fellow.

In addition to the rare distinction of an honorary degree from his own institution, Professor Pounds holds four other honorary degrees.

The launch of Sputnik in 1957 accelerated the use of rockets and satellites for scientific research that were already being planned around the world. British universities were active from the start, working with NASA and leading the developments in Europe . Studies of Solar X-radiation led the author to a career at Leicester in the new science of X-ray astronomy and the exploration of a universe inhabited by exploding stars, super-hot gas and hungry black holes. Science highlights will be described over four decades when missions evolved from small national projects to present-day global observatories.

I appreciate that you may be based some way from the campus, but I would be more than happy to welcome you if you were to choose to attend.”

Kind regards,  
Karl Brown  
Alumni Relations Officer  
Development & Alumni Relations Office Division of Marketing & Communications  
University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH  
phone: +44 (0)116 252 2153 fax: +44 (0)116 252 3445 email: [kb118@le.ac.uk](mailto:kb118@le.ac.uk) web:  
[www.le.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.le.ac.uk/alumni)

# Small Advertisements

## Various items of equipment for sale

Celestron Nexstar 5 telescope and tripod etc. (including nylon cover and power supply)	£395
Pop-up observatory tent	£95
Carl Zeiss 10x50 binoculars with leather case	£25
Meade 9.7 Super Plossl eyepiece	£25
Celestron 3.6 Plossl eyepiece	£10
Celestron 90-degree erecting diagonal	£10
sodium light pollution filter	£10

**Please contact Sam Boote  
s.boote@bcs.org  
0115 937 4644**

This advertising space is available  
free of charge to society members

### For Sale

10 inch reflector telescope, focal length 63 inches  
with RA Drive  
two eyepieces  
and storage shed

Any reasonable offer accepted

Phone **Mr Chambers**  
0115 914 1454

## 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](mailto:nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk)

You don't have to be a Society member to take advantage of this service.

#### 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, 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:

- Full Adult £25
- Junior (17 years or under) £12.50
- Concession (*full time student, UB40, etc*) £12.50

Please tick and enter your e-mail address if you wish to receive:

- the monthly **NAS Journal** (in 'Word' format) by e-mail
- e-mail notifications of dates & times of observing sessions using the large telescope at our observatory.

Your e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

# 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**

*email:* [fwmh@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:fwmh@nerc.ac.uk)

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

**Dr Roy Gretton**

*e-mail:* [roygretton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:roygretton@hotmail.co.uk)

**SECRETARY:**

**Paul Stocks**

Tel: 0115 914 8185

*e-mail:* [nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nottinghamastro@yahoo.co.uk)

**TREASURER:**

**Sam Boote**

*e-mail:* [s.boote@bcs.org](mailto:s.boote@bcs.org)

**JOURNAL EDITOR:**

**Dr Roy Gretton**

*e-mail:* [roygretton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:roygretton@hotmail.co.uk)

**DIRECTOR OF OBSERVING and  
CURATOR OF INSTRUMENTS**

**John Hurst**

*email:* [jmhurst@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jmhurst@hotmail.co.uk)

**Observatory line: 07726 940700** (line open during observing sessions)

**ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

**Joe Sowerby**

**Dorothy Sowerby**

**Kevin Greally**

**Robert Bush**

---

## Meetings

Our meetings, often with an illustrated talk by a guest speaker, are held on the first Thursday of each month (except in August & October) at:

**The British Geological Survey**

**Nicker Hill**

**Keyworth**

**Nottingham NG12 5GG**

Doors open 7.30pm

**Meetings start 8.00pm**

Meetings end 10.00pm

Meetings are open to the public and visitors are always welcome to attend.

## Annual subscriptions 2007-08

Adult £25

Junior (under 18 years) £12.50

Concessions\* £12.50

(\*Full-time student, jobseeker's allowance, basic state pension)

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 more information about the **Nottingham Astronomical Society**, or would like to become a member, please contact the Secretary, Paul Stocks, 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.

---