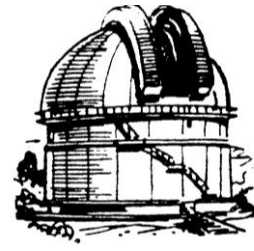

Journal

of the



Nottingham Astronomical Society

December 2003

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Thursday December 4th

at the

Djanogly City Technology College

Doors open at 7.30 pm

Tonight we welcome

M J Branney BSc, PhD

Department of Geology, University of
Leicester

who will be speaking on

***Understanding the largest
explosive volcanic eruptions on
Earth***

GREETINGS FROM THE NEW COMMITTEE

A new committee was elected at the A.G.M. in November. The members are listed on the last page of this Journal.

The coming year should be an eventful one in the progress of the Society, with the installation of the large telescope expected soon.

The committee would like to wish all members a happy Christmas and a very prosperous 2004.

Annual Subscriptions are now due. The Treasurer will be delighted to see you if you have not already paid.

Sky Notes

2003 December

Compiled by Roy Gretton

All times quoted are U.T.



THE MOON

Full Moon	8d 20h 37m
Last Quarter	16d 17h 43m
New Moon	23d 09h 43m
First Quarter	30d 10h 03m

THE PLANETS

Mercury is at greatest eastern elongation (21°) on the 9th, and so may be glimpsed low in the evening sky after sunset during the first couple of weeks of the month. However, this apparition is more favourable to southern hemisphere observers as the planet is 25° south of the celestial equator.

Venus is also an evening object, and although much easier to observe than Mercury, will nevertheless be very low in the sky, being only 10° above the horizon at sunset at the end of the month. (Greatest eastern elongation does not occur until late March).

Mars continues to fade, reaching magnitude zero this month, but also climbs higher in the sky as it moves from Aquarius into Pisces. The planet will continue to be visible throughout most of the evening, and although its angular diameter will have fallen to 9 arcseconds by Christmas, it will be the focus of renewed interest with the arrival of Mars Express at that time.

Jupiter is a brilliant object in the morning sky, reaching magnitude -2.2 before the end of the month. It will be 3° south of the Moon on the 16th.

Saturn is a prominent object (magnitude -0.4) in the constellation of Gemini. It reaches opposition on New Year's Eve. Saturn will be 5° south of the Moon on the 10th.

Uranus (magnitude 5.8) is an evening object, a few degrees north of iota Aquarii, and visible through binoculars all month.

Neptune (magnitude 7.9) in Capricornus, is very difficult to observe this month.

METEORS

This is the month of the **Geminids**, probably the most consistent of the annual showers. The meteors are slow and bright, and therefore excellent objects for photography. The maximum (possibly 100 per hour) occurs on December 14th, but the meteors may be observed from the 7th to the 16th. Late evening should be the best time to make observations.

Diary Dates

December 2003

Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society

Thursday 4th December 2003

Djanogly CTC

Doors open from 7.30pm

Understanding the largest explosive volcanic eruptions on Earth

M J Branney BSc, PhD

Department of Geology, University of Leicester

Thursday 1st January 2004

Please note - **no meeting!**

Monday 12th January 2004

Committee meeting

Committee members only please

Thursday 5th February 2004

Djanogly CTC

Doors open from 7.30pm

Members' Night

Update on progress with the Society's
large telescope and observatory.

Please come along and join the discussion

Other Events

25th December 2003

A Christmas Day landing on Mars for Beagle 2

If all goes as planned, the timetable for the Beagle 2 landing is as follows:

25th December:

- 02:54 GMT: Beagle 2 lands on Mars
- 03:00 GMT: Mars Express orbital insertion
- 05:15 GMT: Mars Odyssey orbiter flies over Beagle 2 - first possible signal retrieval from the lander
- 07:00 GMT: First evaluation of Mars Express orbital insertion
- 22:45 GMT: Possible direct capture of Beagle 2 signals at Jodrell Bank Observatory

Details from www.beagle2.com

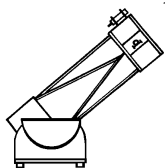
B.A.A. HANDBOOKS

The Society is affiliated to the British Astronomical Association, and the Handbook for 2004, packed with data for the serious observer, may be ordered from our Treasurer at a charge of £9. See Mike Provost at the December meeting if you wish to order a copy.

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**

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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 Carl Brennan 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 Carl Brennan 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 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 £23
- Junior (17 years or under) £11.50
- Concession (*full time student, UB40, Senior Citizen*) £11.50

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:

Greg Eisenhauer

Tel: 01949 875857

e-mail: greg.eisenhauer@ntlworld.com

HONORARY VICE PRESIDENT

Alan Heath (Ex. Dir. BAA Saturn Section)

VICE PRESIDENTS:

David Lukehurst

e-mail: gildor@ntlworld.com

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CURATOR OF INSTRUMENTS

David Lukehurst

e-mail: gildor@ntlworld.com

CAMPAIGN FOR DARK SKIES:

Greg Eisenhauer

ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBER:

Carl Brennan

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 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, 2003-04

Full Adult:	£23
Junior (17 years or under)	£11.50
Concessions	£11.50
<i>(Full time student, UB40, Senior Citizens)</i>	

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.
