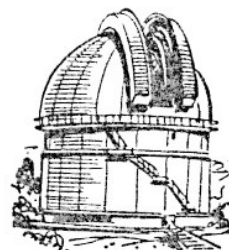


NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1946 for all interested in astronomy



NEWSLETTER 2

February 1996

50 YEARS OF AMATEUR ASTRONOMY IN NOTTINGHAM

In early 1946 a group of like minded amateurs got together, and proposed the formation of an astronomical society. They held their first meeting in May 1946, but did not hold the first Annual General Meeting until 1947. The first Society President was Mr. A. K. Bennett, with Mr. R. F. T. Granger F.R.A.S. and Lake W. Aske as Vice Presidents. The Offices of Treasurer and Secretary were combined and dealt with by Mr. A. J. Ashmore. Meetings were held at the original Mechanics Institution in Nottingham (the original building was knocked down in the 1960s re-development of Nottingham). There were three subscription rates, 15/-9d (about 80p) for man and wife, 10/-6d (55p) individual (with a note that voluntary extra gratefully received!), and 2/-6d (13p) for members under 18 yrs of age.

As far as I am aware the Society continued to meet at the Mechanics Institution until its demolition in the 1960s. Meetings must have been held elsewhere while Birkbeck House was being built. Meetings did resume at the New Mechanics shortly after it was opened. However, there must have been a sizable increase in the room hire charges, and the Society moved its meetings to the YMCA. This union did not last long, as the room above was used for Judo practice, the sudden cries and bangs put speakers off. The Society moved to the White Eagle Club in 1971 and our long friendship with them continued until 1992. Since then meetings have been held at the C.T.C.

I am only able to reflect on the recent history of the Society, but I would like to think that this has been our most important period. I well remember the Committee meetings at Gedling House when Alan Malloy "raised the question of building an observatory, and making a telescope" (January 12th 1978). I think the inspiration for this venture lay as much in trips to Mansfield and Sutton and Lincoln astronomical societies. We had seen what they were trying to do and felt that we wanted as much for our members. The project was not accepted with open arms and caused some very heated debates both in Committee and out. However, once the need to undertake this venture had been established things moved very fast. We acquired the Mt. Pleasant site on a 99year lease from Severn Trent, and work on the observatory began in 1981.

It is sad that the Minutes records of the Society have been lost between 1946 and 1969. This makes piecing the history of the Society together very hard. I do understand that the local studies library on Angel Row has some interesting records relating to the Society, but I am afraid I do not have the time to go and look. Perhaps some other members would like to take this on and write a fuller history of the Society?

Carl J. Brennan (Secretary)

NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

OBSERVATORY REPORT

Work on the Mount Pleasant Observatory continued throughout 1995, although the very hot Summer made life very difficult. Material for the shutter was obtained and construction started. The shutter is anticipated to be completed in 1996.

A great deal of repair and general maintenance was carried out during 1995. Wood for the annexe ceiling was fitted, and the problem with roof letting in water has been solved (as mentioned in Newsletter 1 Jan 95). All of the wheel axles on the dome were refurbished to remove rust. The wind turbine was given an overhaul when the existing bearings showed signs of wear.

The appeal for money for obtaining the optics for the 24inch was very successful. The 24inch primary mirror was re-figured and a 4.75inch Cassegrain mirror obtained to our specification. It is intended that the work will start on the telescope sometime during 1996.

Brian Griffin (Dir. of Obs.)

JACK NEWTON'S VISIT

The highlight of the 1995/96 session must have been on the evening of Sunday June 11th, when members from Nottingham met jointly with Mansfield and Sutton at their Sherwood Observatory to hear a talk from Jack Newton on the progress of amateur astrophotography from simple tripod mounts, through driven camera, cold camera work, and into state of the art colour CCD imaging. Many more people turned up than either Society had expected (two people coming all the way from Leeds), but M&SAS dealt with everything in a very calm professional way, and made the evening one that all will remember with pleasure for a very long time. There is a video tape of the evening available for members to borrow thanks to Graham Shepherd of M&SAS.

Jack and Alice began their visit to Nottingham by meeting us on site at Mt. Pleasant. Alice Newton was most impressed by our environmental approach to getting power with the wind turbine. They moved on with Dove Fletcher to do some brass rubbing at Clifton village church. The Saturday evening was spent relaxing and drinking red wine with the Fletcher family. On the Sunday Jack and Alice visited Haddon Hall in Derbyshire with the Fletchers before moving on to the evening talk. The Society would like to express it's thanks to Dove and his family for their hospitality.

Carl J. Brennan (Secretary)

OBSERVING SESSIONS AND INSTRUMENTS

These continued throughout 1995, although Winter and Spring were particularly cloudy and not much observing was carried out. Excessive rain during the Winter of 1994/95 made the ground water logged, and cars were unable to reach all the way to the observatory site.

NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Better observing conditions existed in the Autumn of 1995 and a number of successful observing sessions took place using the 215mm Newtonian reflector. Unfortunately the Perseid and Geminids meteor watches were clouded out. Also available to members were the 150mm Dobsonian, the 77mm refractor, and 25x104mm binoculars.

Brian Griffin (Dir. of Obs.)

PLANS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

We began 1996 with the now customary New Years Dinner at the Royal Hotel. This year was very successful, with many more members attending than in previous years. Another meal is being planned for later in the year.

It is hoped to start our 18th month 50th Anniversary by taking part in the Nottingham Show, staged in the grounds of Wollaton Hall. Help will be needed to man the stand during the show, and help interested members of the public. It is hoped that not only will we be able to increase our own membership, but also help to make the general public more aware of the Nottingham Astronomical Society, our aims and our activities.

At some time in early Spring there will be a trip to Upton Hall, (home of the British Horological Society), with a possible afternoon visit to Southwell and the Minster. Full details should be available at the April 4th C.T.C. Meeting.

Plans for the August 1st evening meeting are underway, and a number of options are being considered. Full details should be available by the July 4th C.T.C. Meeting at the latest.

Special plans are being made by the Committee to include National Astronomy Week (1996 September 21st to September 28th) in our 50th Anniversary celebrations.

Looking ahead to 1997 (May) Nottingham Astronomical Society will be playing host the Federation Of Astronomical Societies AGM and Convention, final dates and venue have yet to be confirmed.

Carl J. Brennan (Secretary)

PROGRAMME 1996

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|--------------|---|
| 1st February | <u>JUPITER FROM PIONEER TO GALILEO</u> Mr. Brian Griffin, Nottingham Astronomical Society |
| 7th March | <u>BLACK HOLES:- DO THEY EXIST?</u> Dr. C. Tadhunter, Department of Physics, University of Sheffield. |
| 4th April | <u>A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY</u> Mark Thomas. Ilkeston & District Astronomical Society. |
| 2nd May | <u>PLAYING BILLIARDS WITH GALAXIES</u> Prof. Peter Willmore, Department of Space Research, University of Birmingham. |

All the above meetings (except August 1st) will be held in Room 003 of the City Technology College, Nottingham Road. Room open 7.30pm to 10.00pm

NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Affiliated to the British Astronomical Association
Members of the Federation of Astronomical Societies

President:- Mr. A. Elliott
Vice President:- Mr. R. Haynes
Mr. A. Heath (former Dir. BAA Saturn
Section)

Honorary Secretary:-Mr. C. J. Brennan
40 Swindon Close, The Vale, Giltbrook,
NOTTINGHAM, NG16 2WD.
Telephone:- 0115 938 4521

Honorary Treasurer:-Mr. B. Griffin
24 Goldham Road, Strelley, NOTTINGHAM,
NG8 6NG
Telephone:- 0115 929 8364

Meetings:- Djanogly City Technology College, Sherwood
Rise/Nottingham Road (B682), Nottingham.
NG7 7AR
Doors Open:- 7.30pm
Meeting Starts:- 7.45pm
Meeting ends:- 10.00pm

These are a formal monthly meeting with speakers. They are held in Room 003 on the ground floor in the C.T.C.. A small charge of £1.50 Adults, £1.00 Juniors is made to non-members. Invited guests free.

Subscriptions:- £15.00 Full Adult
£ 7.50 Junior (16 or under, FTS, Senior Citizens, Unemployed persons (UB40 holders)). Subscriptions become due at the AGM. A half price subscription rate is charged for persons joining after April 1st each year.

NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

NAME:-
ADDRESS:-

Please tick as required;

I would like more information about the Society.....[]

I would like to make a donation to the Society.....[]

I enclose the standard year membership fee of £15.00.....[]

I enclose the reduced year membership fee of £ 7.50*.....[]

* The reduced membership fee is for younger members, 16 or under, full time students, Senior Citizens, and unemployed persons.

Please make all cheques/postal orders payable to;
NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY