

COMMENT.

With the open air meeting which took place this month, these pleasant gatherings cease for the duration of the summer months. It is the astronomer's lot that his principal work is done during the wintertime, and often he has to put up with really rigorous conditions - still he, or it should really be they, for we must not forget the strong feminine following, must be amply repaid for the cold extremities acquired during these nocturnal watches, by the very splendour of the Heavens, which is so much more beautiful to a trained observer; for the person who knows the night sky must have a far deeper and richer appreciation of these beauties than the casual observer.

Still, let us hope that the amenities of summer will compensate us for the very short periods of darkness ahead, and it would be very pleasant if we could enjoy a few outings together in this 'the close season' for star gazing.

After all, the charm of a summer day in the English countryside, enjoyed by a group of people with a common interest, has a lot to recommend it. Last year under the able and energetic leadership of Mr. Ashmore, the Society had two outings - the first to Rugby School and the second to Cambridge University. Admittedly both trips had a definite astronomical slant, as on both occasions observatories were visited and inspected. As far as we can determine this exhausts the potential observatories within reasonable travelling distance of Nottingham, but it has been suggested that we could visit the birth place of Sir Isaac Newton, not far from Grantham - this would certainly be sufficient scientific excuse for an outing. Conversely we could make it purely an outing to enjoy the delights of the country - what could be more delightful than a summer day in that loveliest of counties, Derbyshire?

We should like to hear members' views on this idea of an outing - suggestions as to where we should go - when, and how often will all be welcome, so let your Committee know what your ideas are - perhaps the social side of our society has been rather neglected for the scientific.

THE SKY FOR MAY, 1948.

The Julian date for May 0 is 243 2672. For other dates add the date.

THE SUN. Solar rotation No. 1266 began on 29th April, and rotation No. 1267 begins on 26th May. Naked eye groups of spots are still appearing and the summer evenings give opportunity for continuous series of observations.

The sky becomes dark enough for most observational work at 9h. 05m. G.M.A.T. at the beginning of the month, and 10h. 15m. at the end.

THE MOON. Full moon on the 23rd is low in the sky. At new moon on the 9th there is an annular eclipse of the sun, visible only in the far east. There are no occultations of stars brighter than sixth magnitude.

THE PLANETS. Mercury may be seen between the 25th and 30th in the evening twilight, about 10° lower and to the right of Venus, but it sets about two hours after the sun. It is approximately equal to Capella (alpha Aurigae) in brightness.

Venus, now in crescent phase, is near to us and is about to sweep past the sun on the side of it. It will be hard to see by the end of the month, and will disappear entirely from the evening sky by the first week in June.

Mars and Saturn are moving forward again towards the Leo Sickle, Mars much the faster. By the end of May Mars will have passed Regulus, but Saturn will be far short of it. Mars passes only 1° North of Regulus on the 15th.

Jupiter is up most of the short night, but very low in the sky.

OPEN AIR MEETING. The final open air meeting this season was held in perfect weather on 15th April. In the strong twilight only lunar and planetary observation was attempted, and Venus, Saturn and the Moon provided plenty of material for both telescopes and the binoculars. As darkness improved, two of Saturn's satellites were seen, and the shadow of the ball on the rings. The ring system is closing, and we shall see a very big difference next season. Our first season of outdoor meetings has been fortunate in the weather and many members have seen their first telescopic views of many objects. May we repeat, these meetings are to show the sky to the ordinary member; if we are able to attempt ordinary observation work it will be arranged on a different occasion.

NOTES, NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

ORDINARY MEETING. The next ordinary meeting takes place at the Mechanics' Institution, Trinity Square, Nottingham, on Thursday 6th May, 1948, at 7.30 p.m.

SALE OF TELESCOPE A 10" reflecting telescope, together with observatory is offered for sale by the executors of the late R.F.T. Granger, and the price asked is £150. For further particulars would any prospective purchaser consult Mr. W. Lane Hall, 19, Hartington Road, Sherwood, telephone number 66587.

NEW MEMBERSHIP EFFORT. It has been decided to have a drive for new members. As those of you who were present at the last ordinary meeting will recall, Mr. A.K. Bennett appealed for each member to make an effort to bring in at least one new member to the Society, either from your family, your circle of friends or business people with whom you come in contact. We have certainly grown since our inaugural season nearly two years ago. Remember that as far as senior membership fees are concerned, from April, the subscription is half the annual fee, i.e. 10/6 - for junior members of course, it remains throughout the term at 2/6.

Do try - once they have seen the splendour of the Heavens through the Society's telescopes - have heard the fascinating talks given by Mr. Lane Hall each month - they would thank you for the introduction, and you are helping the Society.

ADDRESS. Mr. G.H. Butler will be giving an address at the May meeting following Mr. Lane Hall's usual talk in the Night Sky series. The subject of his talk will be "the Moon and its Phases".

Addresses.

Director, Observing Section:

Mr. A.W. Lane Hall,
19, Hartington Road,
Sherwood,
Nottingham.

'Phone 66587

Hon. Secretary:

Mr. C. Halley,
18, Clarendon Street,
Nottingham.

'Phone 2738

Nottingham.
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