

COMMENT.

It is with very great regret that we have to inform you that the outing into Derbyshire will not take place. This is most unfortunate as it is the first social event entirely divorced from astronomy which we have tried to organise and we can only hope that we shall be able to carry it out before the summer ends.

THE NIGHT SKY FOR AUGUST 1948.

The Julian date for August 0 is 243 2764. For other dates add the date.

THE SUN. There has been a marked falling off of activity but there is still plenty to see, and two inch disks or spot details would be very welcome. A good series of spot counts based on a record of the number of separate groups visible each clear day, and a simultaneous count of the total number of spots has been returned by one member for May. This is a useful field of work for small telescopes or for those who lack the time or ability for measuring or draughtsmanship.

Solar rotation No. 1269 began on July 19 and Rotation No. 1270 begins on August 16.

THE MOON. The moon is full on the 19th so that moonlight interference will be in mid-month.

There are no occultations of stars brighter than mag. 6½.

THE PLANETS. The planets as a group are very badly placed.

Venus is prominent in the morning sky, just as it has recently been in the evening sky, and remains a crescent throughout the month. It is very near "first quarter" at the end of the month.

Mercury, Mars, Saturn and Neptune are all very nearly in line with the sun.

Jupiter is very prominent low in the south or south-west and may easily be identified by anyone as it is by far the brightest on that, or any other part of the sky.

Uranus rises soon after midnight, and is fairly high in the pre-dawn sky.

COMETS. 1948g (Honda-Bernasconi) was bright at discovery and may remain a binocular object during July. It is well placed in the northern part of Cygnus, and a separate note is given of it elsewhere in the Bulletin.

METEORS. The great Perseid shower should be looked for, even by the most casual watcher, in the early part of the month. Maximum is on the 11th, 12th and 13th. The point from which they radiate is in Perseus, rather low in the north-east before midnight. It must be remembered that although their paths, if traced back all pass through this "radiant", the whole visible path is usually well removed from the actual Perseus area. A yard of string held at arms length over the visible path will soon convince a beginner of the smallness of the patch just north of gamma Persei through which their paths can be made to pass. Not all meteors on one evening will be Perseids, but the majority will, and the strangers can be noted as coming from quite different directions, and the quick observer will notice physical differences in their appearance.

VARIABLE STARS. Convenient evening minima are on the 20th at 10 hr. GMAT and 23rd at 7h 30m GMAT. The early observations on the latter night should begin as soon as possible in twilight. The main work this month is to re-train the eye, and re-learn the comparison stars.

The field of α Ceti is again visible, and although the star is still faint it should soon be held in binoculars. It is always well within reach of a three inch telescope. A blue print of the field will be supplied to anyone who will observe the star.

COMET 1948g HONDA-BERNASCONI.

the discovery of a new comet, 1948g, was briefly noted, with a few recorded positions in the last Bulletin.

It was discovered by Honda, a Japanese amateur on 2 June when it was about 4th magnitude, faintly visible to the naked eye. It was independently found by Bernasconi in Italy about two days later. The news was then made generally known and it was followed in this country from the 6th, and was photographed the next day. The necessary three spaced positions of sufficient accuracy were soon available for the orbit computers, and the preliminary orbit and ephemeris published.

The comet had actually passed through its nearest point to the sun about a fortnight before discovery, by which time it was already receding from both sun and earth. At its nearest approach to the sun it was only 0.2 units distance, twice the distance of the great comet of last year but still abnormally close. It is usual in such near approaches for the comet to undergo a degree of physical stimulation that causes an increase in brightness out of all proportion to anything that is predictable by the optical laws of reflected light. The collapse in brightness as the comet draws away again is equally rapid.

The comet was about 6th magnitude by mid-June, still a fine object in binoculars, and so far as it may be judged it should remain within reach of binoculars until the moon comes round in July.

In appearance it had the usual round nebulous coma of small diameter with a short tail about as long as the moon's diameter. It may be added in passing that bright nebulae such as M 11 Scuti, M 13 Herculis or M 92 Herculis, all of which are now on view and all marked in Norton's atlas, are very like moderately bright comets in binoculars, and may usefully be swept up by beginners to give them an idea of what such comets look like.

Seven comets already this year is a very good beginning, even if most of the have been objects for large apertures and presenting most interest to the computer.

July	4.0	R.A.	20h.44m	Dec.	+ 47° .3
	8.0		20 16		43 .6
	12.0		19 55		40 .0

A SCHEME FOR SMALL APERTURES ON THE MOON.

The B.A.A. Lunar Section has initiated a scheme for small telescope users to take part on an organised routine watch on parts of the moon.

The essence of the scheme is for groups of observers to keep small parts of the moon under constant observation, under the constantly changing conditions of lighting and libration, to see what can be learned. Work of this kind always holds the promise of real results, and frees the larger instruments for detail work which only larger instruments can perform.

The provisional programme includes work on the features near the moon's edges, most of which are indifferently known in any case, and which are much affected in appearance by the small "wobble" of the moon known as libration, and work in tracing the various ray systems which become visible under a high sun radiating from certain craters to see if any systems can be detected with radiant points on the invisible side of the moon.

By small apertures, telescopes of one and a half to three inches are intended. Such telescopes, firmly mounted, will show plenty of detail on the moon, and there is a great satisfaction to be obtained from knowing intimately a small area of the moon; it is somewhat akin to the knowledge one acquires of the small features of a local landscape as distinct from the general geography of a whole country.

Any observers who would like to take part in the work will be put in touch with the organiser in the B.A.A. lunar section as members of an affiliated society. They can be sure of a welcome.

NEWS, NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Ordinary Meeting. The next ordinary meeting will take place at the Mechanics' Institution, Trinity Square, Nottingham, on Thursday, 5th August, 1948 at 7.30 p.m.

A Committee Meeting will precede the ordinary meeting and members of the Committee should arrive not later than 7.0 p.m.

TELESCOPE OVERHAULING. This work is progressing satisfactorily but we still ask for more volunteers to finish the good work. The two nights decided upon in August are the 19th and 26th, and the time approximately 7.30 p.m. Members armed with tools and members just with their arms can catch a No.12 'bus from South Parade. Departure times are 6.27, 6.42, 6.57, and 7.12 p.m. and every 15 minutes after. Alight at Lady Bay Road. Do not worry about weather you will be under cover for the work.

TALK. Mr.W.Fox is to give us a talk illustrated, we hope, by slides. This will follow Mr.A.J.K.Bennett's "Night Sky".

CONCLUSION. It was gratifying to hear one of our younger members giving a talk at the July meeting. Entitled "Astronomy & Architecture" and given by Mr.B.O.Davies, it was interesting and provocative.

ADDRESSES

Director, Observing Section:
Mr.A.W.Lane Hall,
19, Hartington Road,
Sherwood,
Nottingham.
'Phone 66587

Hon.Secretary:
Mr.C.Halley,
18, Clarendon St.,
Nottingham.
'Phone 2738

Nottingham.
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