

THE
NOTTINGHAM ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN.

No. 26.

SEPTEMBER, 1948.

COMMENT.

Whilst we must regret the passing of summer, poor as it has been, the longer nights do bring compensation to the astronomer - for with the arrival of September we start our open air sessions once more. Let us hope that the Thursday evenings at West Bridgford prove to be clear and not too cold during the winter, and perhaps we may be lucky for we have certainly experienced all too much cloud and rain during the summer.

This is the last Bulletin for the present session and apart from Mr. Lane Hall's Night Sky, and several articles by the same author, no other member has contributed to our little paper. This is certainly to be regretted for we should like to print your views, and to give the Society the benefit of your knowledge, so with the new season about to commence do please let us hear from you.

THE NIGHT SKY FOR OCTOBER, 1948.

The Julian Date for October 0 is 243 2825. For other dates add the date.

THE SUN. The daylight is now shorter than the darkness and observers home at mid-day can help with whole disk sketches or counts of spots and groups.

Rotation No. 1271 began on 12th September, and Rotation No. 1272 begins on 9th October.

THE MOON. Moonlight interference before midnight occurs in the middle third of the month; full moon on the 18th.

There is a penumbral eclipse of the moon on the night of the 17th October. No part of the moon will be in dark shadow (the usual meaning of an "eclipse") but from 14h. 10m. GMT to 15h. 00m. the sun as seen from any part of the moon would be partially eclipsed and some sunlight thereby lost. If the air is clear a "dimming" of the full moon will be noticeable, with the moon quite high in the sky.

Two occultations of brighter stars may be seen. On 14th October Psi 3 Aquarii (mag. 5.2) disappears at 9h 45m GMT, and on 20th October 32 Tauri (mag. 5.8) reappears at 12h. 11m. For stars of moderate brightness only dark limb details are given. Bright limb disappearances can easily be provided for anyone able to observe them.

THE PLANETS Venus, gibbous and rather small, is very prominent in the morning sky, and may be seen now that dawn is later. The combination of longer nights and "summer time" throughout the month makes things easier for the pre-dawn observer.

Saturn with the rings much narrower, can be seen very near Venus, the nearest approach being on the 8th when they are 1 (two moons' diameter) apart. Saturn then draws away to the right.

Jupiter disappears into the evening twilight.

Uranus is again well placed, and remains so for the winter season.

VARIABLE STARS. Convenient minima of Algol are on the 2nd (10h GMT) 5th (7h GMT), 22nd (12h GMT) and 25th (9h GMT). Charts can be made available.

Mira Ceti will be an easy naked eye object, and may be identified from Norton's Atlas. It is rather low in Nottingham except near the meridian.

THE MESSIER NEBULAE.

It has long been known that there are objects in the sky as immovable as the fixed stars, and yet unlike them as they do not focus to a point. They show a "shape" which may be rounded, oblong or irregular, sometimes brighter in the middle and usually with indeterminate edges, and in the earlier days of the telescope were collectively known as "nebulae". Modern instruments have distinguished that some can be resolved into a cloud of distant stars with quite modest power provided the definition is good, others are resolved with difficulty in very large telescopes, others again are known to consist of stars at almost fantastic distances (the spiral nebulae), and there are some irresolvable because they consist of

The Messier Nebulae. contd.

masses of glowing gas. In the latter part of the eighteenth century Messier, Mechain, and others were putting the hunting of comets on a modern basis, and experience showed that these brighter nebulae were easily mistaken for comets and were great time wasters. Messier undertook the considerable task of recording their positions so that they might readily be known to comet searchers, and his catalogue embracing 103 of them was the first of its kind, and was published in 1781. Many thousands of nebulae and clusters have since been recorded, photographed, or catalogued, but the Messier nebulae have preserved their identity without being absorbed in the greater collections.

They still have the great merit that all were discovered with very small optical power, and they form a varied and interesting group for the users of small instruments, from binoculars to telescopes of about three inches aperture. They present comparatively simple problems of identification from an atlas, and it would be very fitting if this "Bulletin" could contain from time to time, some descriptive notes of them as seen in very small instruments. They are scattered all round the sky and some are always on view, though they are much thicker in some areas than others. They are always known by the symbol M followed by the number in the catalogue such as M1, M11, M13, M31, to quote four of the best known, and the great majority will be found in Norton's Atlas. I can, if desired, provide positions for about a hundred of them.

A.W.L.H.

NOTES, NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS.Annual General Meeting.

On Thursday, 7th October, 1948, the Society holds its Annual General Meeting at the Mechanics' Institution, Trinity Square, Nottm.. The meeting will commence at 7.30 p.m., and enclosed with this Bulletin is the Agenda for same. Every member is earnestly requested to make every effort to attend. There will be a short committee meeting at 7 p.m. and committee members are asked to arrive by that time.

Open-Air Meeting.

The first open-air meeting will take place on the fourth Thursday in September, i.e. 23rd September at 7.30 p.m., but should weather conditions be too poor for observation one hour before the meeting is due to take place it will be postponed until the following Thursday, 30th September, at the same time. These days are for September only, and have been chosen owing to the double factor of a full moon on the 18th, plus the lingering of twilight still very noticeable during the first part of this month.

Trent Boulevard Schools may be reached by taking a No.12 'bus from South Parade (Council House Square), and alighting at Lady Bay Road, which is the second 'bus stop past the Canal Bridge. The fare is 2½d, and the following are the 'bus times:-

From South Parade:	From Lady Bay Road:
6.27	8.51 and every 15 mins.
6.42	
6.57	
7.12 & every 15 mins.	

TALK.

We would like to express our appreciation of the talk given by Mr. Northrop on The Construction of the Telescope. His talk was very clear and most interesting to all present, and we hope that following this and his obvious enthusiasm for the subject, other members will soon be following in his footsteps.

ADDRESSES.

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