

ORWELL ASTRONOMICAL

SOCIETY IPSWICH

Charity No 271313

DECEMBER 2003

ONE OF OUR SENIOR MEMBERS
IS JUST LEAVING!



*K. Chisham
DEC. 03
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Society News

1 Annual General Meeting Saturday 17th January 2004

The next meeting will be the AGM, to be held Saturday 17th January 2004, from 20:00. The venue will be in one of the classrooms in the School's Court Yard, below the observatory tower. All members are invited to attend

2 Events for 2003

Meeting	Venue	Date
3 rd Astronomy Workshop	St John Robinson Cosmology - Some Thoughts	Wednesday 3 rd December
Christmas Meal	Red Lion Martlesham	17 th December at 20:00

Events For 2004

Meeting	Venue	Date
AGM	A classroom in the School's Court Yard	Saturday 17 th January From 20:00
4 th Astronomy Workshop	James Appleton Constellation Close up: Gemini	Wednesday 4 th February
Open Weekend	Orwell Park Observatory	Saturday & Sunday, 28 th & 29 th March
5 th Astronomy Workshop	Pete Richards Astronomy - Some Basic Concepts	Wednesday 3 rd March
6 th Astronomy Workshop	Bill Barton Rainbows and Other Natural Wonders	Wednesday 7 th April
7 th Astronomy Workshop	Paul Whiting The Radio Universe - A Look At Radio Astronomy	Wednesday 5 th May

Christmas Meal

The annual Christmas Meal will be on Wednesday 17th December, at the Red Lion Martlesham. The meal will start at 20:00

3 Proposed Open Weekend Date for 2004

The optimum date for the Open Weekend next year is Saturday and Sunday March 28th and 29th. The moon will be at first quarter in the 28th. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn will be visible during the evening

Object	Approx. Rise Time	Transit Time	Approx. Setting Time
Sun	06:00	12:16	18:35
Moon	07:50	16:30	00:15
Mercury	06:15	13:20	20:30
Venus	07:00	15:00	23:20
Mars	07:40	16:00	00:15
Jupiter	15:55	22:45	05:40
Saturn	10:00	18:20	02:50

4 Year Three of the Library Rebuild

The Observatory will not be closed during the Autumn

But

Its that time of year again when the observatory refurbishment commences. Work will restart on completing the new society Library. When you attend Wednesday evenings any helping hand would be appreciated.

Help is requested to man (or woman) the power tools, hammers, and paint brushes.



Once the walls have been finished the new library cabinets will assembled

I will be resuming the observatory painting in May, Probably starting with the walls of the room at the base of the stair well.

Members who attend will be encouraged to lend a hand. If you intend to come along to the observatory during summer period please come in old clothes Volunteers are needed for the following jobs

Observatory Maintenance Jobs for 2003

Location	Jobs	Names	Progress	Completed
Computer room	New eyepiece cupboard	Neil Morley	Ongoing	
	Stain floor	Neil Morley		Yes
	Mount either a new or the old heater on the wall			

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Transit room	Paint door panels	Pete Richards Kathryn Gerry		Yes
	Wash walls	Monica Lustig		Yes
	Drill ventilation holes in stairs	Gerry Pilling		Yes
	Rebuild telescope pillar			
Observatory	Construct new RA drive control			
	Grease shutter	Martin Cook		Yes
	Replace shutter rope	Martin Cook		Yes
	Repair gutter			
	Paint door frame at the top of the stairs			
	Ladder modification	Garry Coleman Gerry Pilling		Yes
	Build set of mobile stairs for telescope	Martin Cook		
Belvedere	Paint all balcony doors. Use white Ranch paint			
	East balcony Paint balcony door, inside and outside.	Mike Whybray	Started	
	South east balcony Paint balcony door, inside and outside.			
	South balcony Paint balcony door, inside and outside Door needs repairing.	Garry Coleman	Started	
	South west balcony Paint balcony door, inside and outside.			
	West balcony Paint balcony door, inside and outside.			
	Complete painting the stone work			
Library	Complete the library reconstruction	Martin Cook Ken Goward & et al		Yes Yes Yes Yes
	Wall battens Damp proof sheet Plaster board Artex coat Paint walls			
	Install new electric circuit in lift shaft	Martin Cook Dave Payne James Appleton		Yes
Bottom room	Varnish door	Roy Gooding		
	Stabilise room walls and paint	Roy Gooding	Ongoing	
Entrance	Install door bell	Eric Sims Roy Gooding		Yes
Entrance	Fix entrance signs to walls	Roy Gooding Eric Sims	Collected	Yes

If you wish to help by adopting a balcony door please contact either Martin Cook or Roy Gooding.

5 New Fire Drill Meeting Place

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The new meeting place when the School's fire alarm is heard, is in front of the sports pavilion on the Schools playing field

The playing field is accessed by the double doors at the base of the observatory tower.

The School's fire control meeting place is also on the playing field

Night Sky (December)

All times GMT

Sun

The sun will be rising approximately between 07:40 and 08:05
The sun will be setting approximately between 15:52 and 15:54

Moon

Full Moon	3 rd Quarter	New Moon	1 st Quarter
8 th	16 th	23 rd	30 th

Mercury Mercury is in the evening sky, and will be greatest eastern elongation on the 9th it will be setting less than an hour after the sun and will be difficult to see. Mercury will be at inferior conjunction on the 27th.

Venus Venus will be well placed for observations the is month . By the 25th it will be Magnitude -4.0

Mars Mars remains observable this month. As its distance from Earth increases its brightness fades to magnitude -0.1. It moves from Aquarius into Pisces this month

Jupiter Jupiter will be rising at about 22:00 by mid month. Magnitude -2.2.

Saturn Saturn will rising be at opposition on the 31st. It will be at magnitude -0.4.

Uranus Uranus will be setting at about 20:00 at the end of the month. Magnitude 5.8

Neptune Neptune will be setting at about 19:00 at the end of the month. Magnitude 7.9

Meteor Showers

Shower	Maximum	Limits	ZHR
Geminids	December 14 th	December 7 th - 16 th	100
Ursids	December 22 nd	December 17 th - 25 th	10

Meteor source is the BAA Handbook

OCCULTATIONS DURING DECEMBER

The following table lists stellar occultations which occur during the month under favourable circumstances. The data relates to Orwell Park Observatory, but will be similar at nearby locations.

D / R	Date & Time (UT)	Lunar Phase	Sun Alt (°)	Star Alt (°)	Star	Mag
D	02 Dec 17:58	0.70+	-19	32	Hip 1684	6.9
D	02 Dec 20:42	0.71+	-44	34	ZC 49	6.1
D	03 Dec 19:24	0.79+	-32	40	ZC 157	7.3
D	08 Dec 05:39	1.00+	-19	14	69 Tau,upsilon Tau	4.3
D	18 Dec 04:50	0.34-	-27	27	44 Vir,k Vir	5.8
R	06:00		-17	32		
D	29 Dec 21:37	0.44+	-51	15	ZC 20	6.7

James Appleton

John Isaac Plummer - the later years

Paul Whiting

Filled with curiosity as to what our "resident astronomer" John Isaac Plummer got up to after he left the employment of Colonel George Tomline, I spent a very enjoyable day in the library of the Royal Astronomical Society trying to find out what became of him.



The following are the results of my research.

A name-reference search found that Plummer was mentioned 4 times in published papers on astronomical matters, and of course a reference to his school textbook

"Introduction to Astronomy for the use of Science Classes", a copy of which OASI has in its library.

An author search in the RAS library highlighted the above school text and interestingly, a tract on "The Origin of Typhoons".

Piecing together the details from all the above, we now have an idea of what Plummer was up to from 1898 - 1910. Note that there were two other Plummers contemporary to John Isaac (related?), both of whom were Fellows of the RAS, whereas our man wasn't, as far as I can tell.

We knew Plummer went east to Asia, where he ended up at the Hong Kong Observatory. The Observatory today is the main meteorological centre for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, with minimal links to astronomy these days.

The four name references to Plummer indicated that he worked for a man named William Doberck, who was Head of the HK Observatory during this time.

1. "On the Magnitudes of 919 Fixed Stars determined from Sequences observed by Sir John Herschel during the years 1835 to 1838", William Doberck, published 1900

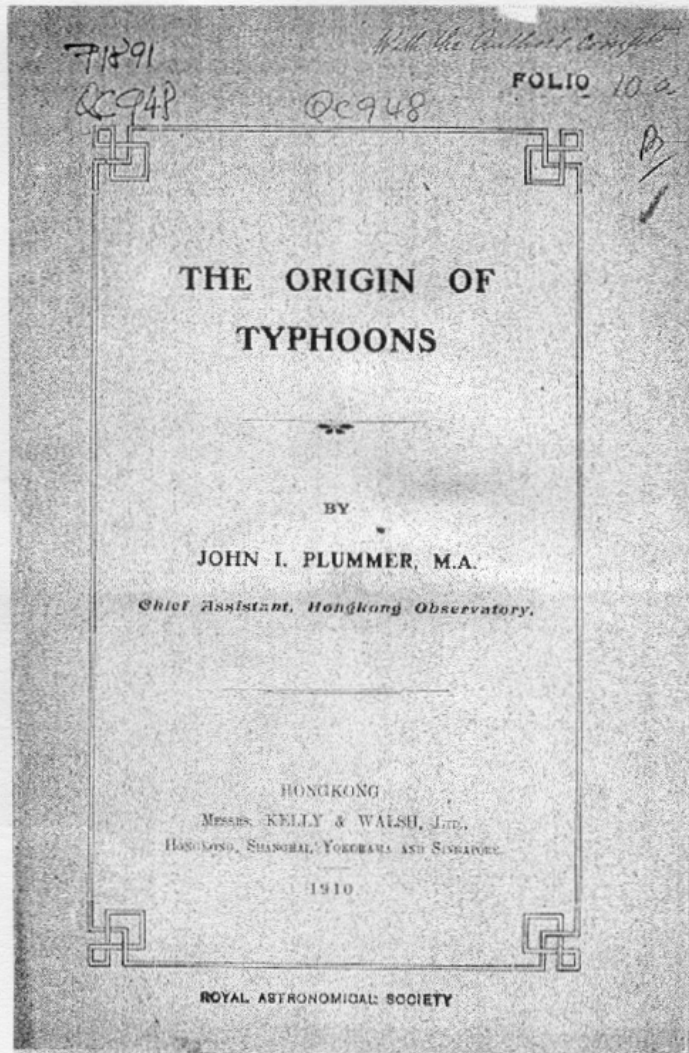
contains the following passage:

"My thanks are due to MR J.I. Plummer, and to Mr F.G. Figg for their willingness with which they have assisted me in carrying out this investigation. The former gentleman has devoted much time to calculations in connection with this work."

This work on identifying and cataloguing this list of stars took place between 1898 and 1900.

2. "Observations made at the Hong Kong Observatory in the year 1901", William Doberck, published 1902.

Contains a report of the stellar transit observations made by Plummer and Figg during 1901 - a total of 3349 observations.



3. "Catalogue of Right Ascensions of 2120 Southern Stars for the epoch 1900 from observations made at the Hong Kong Observatory during the years 1898 - 1904", William Doberck, published 1905.

Contains the following paragraph:

"Mr J.I. Plummer took about 7000 transits. I took about 9000. Mr Plummer attended to the chronograph, and the reductions from apparent to mean places, and reduction to 1900.0. During the first six months I reduced the observations. Next year they were reduced under my supervision. During the remainder of the time Mr Plummer reduced them. The calculations were not done in duplicate, but Mr Plummer's skill is well known and the smallness of the probable errors prove that the work was accurately done. I attended to the construction of the catalogue and the determination of proper motions."

4. "On the Orbits of ξ scorpii, ξ 2173, ξ 3121 & μ herculis", William Doberck, published 1907.

Contains further references to Plummer's transit calculations.

So it looks as though Plummer spent the years between 1898 and 1906-7 making transit observations and making the necessary calculations to produce what became known as the Hong Kong Star Catalogue (epoch 1900.0).

From his 1910 publication on the Origin of Typhoons, we can see that he is now the Chief Assistant at the HK Observatory. We also note that his apparent move from astronomy to meteorology could explain his disappearance from the astronomical scene at this time.

I'm sure none of this information is new to our historians, but I had an enjoyable few hours researching it out.

Leyton - A Model for the Orwell Park Observatory?

By Kenneth J Goward FRAS

Mention Leyton in east London and one's mind is immediately taken to a vision of concrete jungle dissected by busy road and railway links boring into the very heart of London and airborne pollution one can almost taste. A vision of so-called progress light years divided from the pastoral beauty of the East Anglian landscape. Now, take yourself back 160 years to a Leyton that was a quiet, tranquil Essex village set on the very edge of Epping Forest and bounded to the northwest by the wild Hackney Marshes - an ideal location for a country home and for a monied gentleman to indulge his passion for astronomy¹.

That Leyton was the home of Joseph Gurney Barclay FRAS (1816 – 1898) and if the surname rings a bell then, yes, one can begin to see where the wherewithal to fund his passion came from – this is one of the Barclay's of banking fame and Joseph was for many years the head of that institution. The Barclay family, including Joseph were Quakers.

Some time around 1854 Barclay became interested in astronomy and in the autumn he set up an observatory at his home, Knotts Green. The observatory boasted a 7.5" Equatorially mounted Cooke Refractor and a Troughton & Simms Transit instrument. In 1855 Barclay noted a letter in the Times Newspaper from John Russell Hind (1823 – 1895) who was the paid observer/superintendent at George Bishop's (1785 – 1861) observatory at South Villa, Regents Park in London (later removed to a site in Twickenham). Hind's letter stated that he strongly suspected the existence of a star in close proximity to Procyon (Alpha Canis Minoris). Barclay immediately began observing Procyon using the 7.5" and soon after reported to the RAS thus 'on 10th January, 1856 I discovered a small star within the blaze of the light of the larger one, and which I roughly estimated at from 3 to 4 seconds of time by the sound of the clock preceding Procyon in R.A., and but little removed to the north in December'.² Barclay was one of a number of observers looking for a companion to Procyon and confirmation came in 1896 of the existence of a 13th Magnitude companion star (now thought to be a Uranus sized White Dwarf) from John Schaeberle, using the 36" Refractor at Lick³.

In 1860 Barclay exchanged the 7.5" for a 10" refractor from Cookes and soon realised that such a large instrument (for its day) should be utilised by a more skilled observer and employed Hermann Romberg (a protégé of Encke), who was to stay at Leyton until some time after 1863, going on to the Berlin Observatory to fill the vacancy caused by Encke's retirement. His routine observations included Double Stars, Minor Planets and Comets.

Although I have yet to find any illustrations of Barclay's observatory, we are fortunate that he described it in some detail;

'My Observatory is erected in the midst of the pleasure-grounds which surround my residence at Leyton, in Essex, about six miles N.E. from the City of London; its position being 51° 34' 34" N. latitude and 0h 0m 0.87 W. longitude, and about ninety feet above the level of the sea. The building consists of a quadrangular room, sixteen feet square, surmounted by a wooden dome, covered with copper and lined with American cloth, (Hessian?) which I found prevented the internal condensation of vapour; it revolves on gun-metal wheels connected by a ring (in mechanical phraseology a "live-ring")

The shutter, which covers an aperture of two feet, is opened by means of a cord passed through a hole to the interior, and runs on two iron rods fixed as tangents to the dome, by which arrangement it can be opened and shut with the greatest ease and rapidity, the dome being moved by a lever fixed to the wall, and working against iron pins screwed into the rim of the dome. Light falls into this room through four windows in the horizontal angles projecting beyond the circular base of the dome

The Refractor stands on a massive pier of brickwork, being 15ft 6in square at the base, 6ft 6in high, and set back in six ramps, on which is placed a circular slab of stone; the foundations being concrete, four feet thick, and drained below on solid gravel, the whole being covered with asphalt

On the west side is a second room, 12ft 6in square, which contains the Transit-Circle, the roof being flat, so as not to impede the view from the dome.

The Telescope is a powerful and handsome instrument, made by T. Cooke & Sons of York, with an object-glass having a clear aperture of 10 inches and a focal length of 12 feet. It is mounted equatorially in the German fashion. The strong cast-iron pillar on which it is supported is in two parts. The lower part is 3 feet in height, with a diameter at the base of 3 feet 3 inches, and at the top 1 foot 6 inches; the upper part is 4 feet in height, the diameter at the top is 1 foot 1 inch. The two parts are bolted together with flanges and eight screw bolts and nuts. At this place there is a limited motion in azimuth, by which the Telescope is put truly into the meridian. The polar axis is 4 feet 2 inches long; the pressure on the upper bearing is relieved by two friction-wheels on the lower pivot is also relieved by two friction-wheels. At the lower end of the polar axis is carried the hour-circle, 13 inches in diameter, with two sets of divisions and verniers, graduated to 1m of time, and read off to 2s. The declination-axis, 3 feet 2 inches in length, carries at one end the Telescope, at the other the counterpoise and the declination-circle, of 24 inches in diameter, which is graduated to 10' of space, and reads by the two verniers to 10" of arc.

The Clock is driven by a heavy weight descending under the floor of the Observatory, and regulated by a double conical pendulum. The motion is communicated to the Telescope by a brass rod and wheels, and tangent-screw working into a strong ratched driving-wheel at the upper end of the polar axis.

The Instrument is provided with eye-pieces, magnifying from 50 to 1600 times. The view of the horizon is almost uninterrupted.

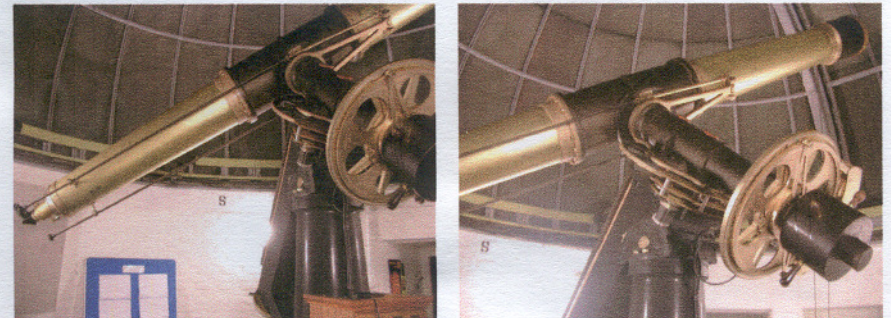
The Telescope is furnished with a finder of 3 feet focal length and 3 inches aperture, which shows to the ninth magnitude'.⁴

The Transit Instrument was of 4" aperture and of 4' focal length and served with a Simmons Sidereal clock.⁵

In 1865 Barclay secured (head hunted!) the services of Charles George Talmage (1840 – 1886) as his Observer. Talmage's career had begun in 1856 at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. In 1860 he was appointed assistant to J R Hind at the previously mentioned Observatory of Mr Bishop in Regents Park. However, Talmage seems to have been dogged by ill health and was compelled to take a four-year sojourn to the warmer climate in southern France and stayed at Nice, where he undertook Double Star work and devoted himself to a re-examination of prominent Victorian amateur Astronomer, Admiral Smyth's 'Cycle of Celestial Objects', better known as the Bedford Catalogue. When his health recovered, Talmage returned to Mr Bishop's Observatory, by then situated at Twickenham. He was to remain in Barclay's employ for the remainder of his life and became a much-respected member of the local community, remembered for his 'genial and kind disposition'.⁶

Talmage regularly reported his work at Leyton via the monthly notices of the RAS and Barclay was eventually to publish the results of Double Star work undertaken at his observatory in four volumes of 'The Leyton Observations'. Much in common with the kind of work later undertaken at Orwell Park, routine observations included Occultations, Comets, Eclipses, a Transit of Mercury in 1868, and the Satellites of Jupiter and Saturn. Metrological observations were also part of Talmage's routine. In December 1870, Barclay released Talmage to travel on a Government Expedition to observe a Total Solar Eclipse from Gibraltar. Talmage's specific task was to obtain angular measurements of Saturn during totality. However (and where have we all heard this before...) totality was completely clouded out. In 1882 Barclay again released Talmage on government service to take charge of the observing station in Barbados for the Transit of Venus expedition. His luck was better on this occasion and an excellent observation of all contacts was made. This was the expedition for which Colonel Tomline released J I Plummer from Orwell Park, to take charge of the observing station at Bermuda where, again, all contacts were successfully observed.⁷

Sadly, Talmage's frailty of health eventually got the better of him early in 1886 and his death heralded an end to observational work at Leyton. The 10" Cooke Refractor was donated by Barclay to the Radcliffe Observatory in Oxford and in the 1930s when that observatory removed to a new site in South Africa, the instrument passed to Marlborough College, Wiltshire. Regular readers of Astronomy Now magazine may recall an article in February of this year, which details the restoration of the telescope back to full working order, sited in a smart looking dome on the College playing fields. The old adage that it's a small world certainly has a resonance here; a descendant of the Barclay family, Charles Barclay FRAS, (Gt Gt Grandson of Barclay's uncle) is the Head of Physics at the College and has charge of the Observatory!



Barclay's 10" Cooke Refractor, now restored and the main telescope at the Blackett Observatory, Marlborough College. *Photographs courtesy of Mr C E Barclay.*

The title words of this article are 'Leyton - A model for the **Orwell Park Observatory**' and, apart from the similarities of endeavour to which I have already alluded, one may rightly ask how I come to this assertion? Well, it is not unreasonable to assume that Talmage, working within the close-knit team at Greenwich would have known or at least be acquainted with the Airy family in residence - including Orwell Park's designing engineer, Wilfrid. After Plummer's appointment as Observer at Orwell Park it is also not unreasonable to proffer that he and Talmage would have known each other through their reports and visits to the RAS and, obviously, they were part of the British expedition to the West Indies to observe the 1882 Transit of Venus. Excellent circumstantial evidence of a Leyton input into Orwell Park comes from the report of the latter Observatory's Architect - John MacVicar Anderson - to the Royal Institute of British Architects in November 1874⁸. Anderson read a paper to the Institute, which outlined the peculiar design aspects at Orwell Park and highlighted the close co-operation between Architect and Engineer.

Wilfrid Airy, as the engineer in question, was also at that meeting – and so was Talmage, who had been invited along to speak of the Observatory to which he had charge and to make comparisons between the two buildings, particularly the dome. He made comparisons with the methods of moving the Leyton and Orwell Park domes and stated that he preferred the Leyton method (wall mounted lever system), but Talmage was obviously generally impressed with the work done by Anderson and Airy and I quote his closing remarks, *‘The arrangement of Mr. Airy, with regard to the wheels is, I consider, very admirable. The dome to which I refer (Leyton) moves upon a live ring; the wheels get clogged, and then it is necessary to take down the boarding and revolve the dome round several times, before we can get the wheels to come under the operator’s hand. Mr. Airy’s arrangement, with regard to the instruments, is one of considerable beauty and utility, for it will often happen, and it is by no means an extraordinary occurrence, that when you are observing circum-polar stars, you may not think for the moment on which side your telescope is, and it will soon jamb, and you have to go right away round to get into position again. I think the arrangements of Mr. Airy are, for all purposes, most admirable’*.⁹ He was obviously impressed with Wilfrid’s design of the Telescope mounting at Orwell Park - the practice of the period was to use a vertical standard but Airy (as we well know) adopted an innovative bent column design which allowed for increased accuracy of the polar axis, a large hour circle and eliminated the common problem of telescopes fouling the column when tracking circum-polar stars. Moreover, my principal assertion is that - at least for the dome and shutter – aspects of the design of Barclay’s Observatory were factored into Wilfrid Airy’s thinking for Orwell Park. A further piece of evidence for that is contained within Barclay’s 1876 annual report of the work of the Observatory to the RAS where he wrote ‘Several gentlemen who are building observatories have visited Leyton for the purpose of inspecting the dome, the arrangements of which continue to give perfect satisfaction’.¹⁰ My contention is that at least one of those gentlemen was Wilfrid Airy.

A little facetious, perhaps, but if nothing else it certainly shows the fortune available to Tomline compared to Barclay, insofar as the head of Barclay’s bank could only afford to line his dome with a Hessian like material, where Tomline’s resources allowed for top quality Mahogany!

It has to be said that by no means is my research into Leyton and its probable links to Orwell Park complete and even ultimately being proved wrong would at least refine our knowledge of both establishments! History is a subject open to continual revision. I am in touch with Charles Barclay and as already said, we certainly haven’t given up on eventually running to ground images of the main characters involved or, indeed, of the Observatory itself.

Should any OASI member fancy the journey, I hope to be able to visit the Marlborough School Observatory some time in 2004...?

KJG

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- ¹ Sobering thought – with all the current enthusiasm to concrete over the south and east – what will Orwell Park look like 160 years from now? !
 - ² Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society 1863, Page 196.
 - ³ Sir Patrick Moore ‘Brilliant Stars’ Page 88.
 - ⁴ Joseph Barclay, introduction to ‘The Leyton Observations, Vol II’
 - ⁵ MNRAS 1862 Page 94. Description by Romberg.
 - ⁶ Obituary of Talmage. MNRAS 1887 Page 142,3.
 - ⁷ MNRAS 1883, Page 211.
 - ⁸ Brought to light by Roy Gooding’s previous research.
 - ⁹ RIBA Paper read by J MacVicar Anderson, 16th November 1874.
 - ¹⁰ MNRAS 1876 Page 171.

Summary of Committee Meeting Held 2003 October 18

Present: Ken Goward, Martin Cook, Eric Sims, Paddy O'Sullivan, Roy Gooding, Nikki Gillard, Pete Richards, Mike Whybray, Ted Sampson, Martin Cook, James Appleton

Apologies: Garry Coleman, Paul Whiting

Chairman's Report – Ken Goward

Ken is organising a meeting with Orwell Park School to discuss a range of issues including renewal of the licence and several matters relating to maintenance.

At the 2004 AGM, Ken intends to propose a modification to the OASI constitution to add two additional posts to the committee. The increased size of committee is intended to reflect the increased membership of OASI in recent years.

Paddy O'Sullivan will resign from the committee at the 2004 AGM (but remains keen to assist with running the Society).

All members of OASI are encouraged to stand for election to committee posts at the 2004 AGM. No previous experience is necessary. Contact any current committee member for further information.

Secretary's Report – Roy Gooding

The committee thanked Roy for all his hard work to organise the recent very successful OASI convention.

Roy has received many enquiries including some from members of the public wishing to visit Orwell Park Observatory to see the close opposition of Mars, an enquiry from BBC Suffolk, an enquiry from Suffolk Magazine (writing an article about OASI) and an enquiry from Thurrock Astronomical Society for a visit to Orwell Park Observatory (booked for Wed 12 November).

Roy has also ordered a free evaluation copy of Redshift 5 (planetarium program).

Treasurer's Report – Garry Coleman

Garry was not present at the meeting but provided a report in advance. Finances are currently very healthy - the current balance of funds is £2011. There are sufficient funds to cover the major projects currently in hand: library refurbishment, lift shaft refurbishment and completion of the Millennium Telescope.

Membership – Martin Cook

OASI currently has 118 members including 8 honoraries.

Membership fees have been unchanged for two years. The committee agreed an increase for next year by £1 across the board to: junior £12, adult £16 and family £18.

Training - Ted Sampson

The 2003-04 series of Astronomy Workshops is now under way.

Paddy O'Sullivan and Gerry Pilling run the Small Telescopes Observing Evenings which will be held on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month through the Winter season to May. Some Small Telescopes Observing Evenings will be linked to Astronomy Workshops.

Ted Sampson proposed a training regime for operators of the Tomline Refractor. Training sessions will be held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month, 7:30 – 8:15pm plus other Wednesday early evenings as necessary. Following a vote the committee agreed to accept the proposed regime. Any member of OASI wishing to receive training to operate the Tomline Refractor should contact any committee member.

Newsletter – Eric Sims

Ken will produce a new, clearer back page for the Newsletter each month to give members of OASI details of scheduled events.

Web Site – James Appleton

The Web site now contains many recently-submitted observing reports plus most material of interest from Newsletters back to December 1983. Material from earlier years will be added as time permits (thanks to Roy Gooding for the loan of Newsletters from issue one in December 1972 through to late 1983).

James will investigate benefits and costs of moving the Web site to a commercial hosting service (e.g. Lycos). This would permit a more “glitzy” presentation than is possible with the current free service provided by the IoA at Cambridge.

James will provide a copy of the current Web site on CD-ROM to any member of OASI who wants it. A copy of the Web site on CD-ROM has been lodged in the OASI library.

Fresh material from any member of OASI for the Web site is most welcome.

The web site is accessible at: <http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~ipswich/index.html>

Equipment & Maintenance – P O'Sullivan, M Cook & R Gooding

The committee agreed to rebuild the RA drive for the Tomline Refractor once the current major reconstruction projects (library, lift shaft and Millennium Telescope) are complete.

Library refurbishment continues apace, with good progress having been made recently. New electric circuits have been installed covering the library, Belvedere, Dome and map room.

Security & Safety – Paddy O'Sullivan, Mike Whybray

Paddy has ordered additional safety equipment (hard hats, safety goggles, overalls, etc).

James Appleton has updated the *Information for Members* booklet and fire safety notices to clarify the fire evacuation arrangements.

A member of OASI had written to Ken pointing out that the spiral staircase is a potential safety hazard. The committee discussed safety measures at length and agreed the following measures:

- Write to the member of OASI who raised the safety concern with details of the committee's deliberations.
- Produce safety notices for the spiral staircase.
- Put a safety notice on the Web site.
- Put a safety notice in the next Newsletter.
- Raise safety concerns during the forthcoming meeting with Orwell Park School.
- Consider how to ensure that doors leading onto the staircase remain closed when not in use.
- Investigate costs and practicality of fitting a safety handrail to the staircase.

Library – Mike Whybray

Mike had purchased J I Plummer's book *Introduction to Astronomy* for the library. The committee agreed to purchase G B Airy's book *Popular Astronomy*. The book contains six lectures given by Airy in Ipswich by way of thanks to the staff at Ransomes for their work on the great Altazimuth instrument.

Visits – Paul Whiting

Paul was not present but meeting but provided a report in advance. A full set of visits has been organised for the winter season. All members of OASI are encouraged to help with hosting visits – please contact any committee member to volunteer your services!

Lectures – Pete Richards

The next lecture series will be held February – March 2004, with two or three visiting speakers. Peter will announce the programme at the AGM.

Observing Strategy

Ken is meeting with Peter Hingley (RAS Librarian) to investigate J I Plummer's work on the transit of Venus on 06 December 1882. This will hopefully build into a major project, including observing aspects, related to the forthcoming transit of Venus on 08 June 2004.

Dark Skies

The Science and Technology Committee of the House of Commons sent Ken a copy of their report on light pollution. It will be stored in the library. Ken will produce a summary for the Newsletter.

OASI Events

Xmas meal: Red Lion, Martlesham, 17 December 2003 starting at 8:00pm.

AGM: Saturday 17 January 2004, in Orwell Park School starting at 8:00pm.

Open Weekend: Saturday – Sunday, 27 – 28 March 2004. First quarter Moon plus Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and perhaps two comets should be visible (weather permitting). Ken will be ask all members of OASI to contribute displays! There will be no moonrock this time.

Any Other Business

None

Date of Next Meeting

AGM on Saturday 17 January 2004, starting at 8:00pm.

Full minutes of committee meetings are posted on the noticeboard in Orwell Park Observatory. Please contact any member of the committee if you require any further information about the above committee meeting or any other aspect of the running of OASI.

James Appleton
28 October 2003

IT'S – THAT – TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

From your Chairman

Christmas is almost upon us and so, too, our Annual General Meeting. It hardly seems possible that almost a whole year has passed since taking office and that is surely a worrying portent for old age!

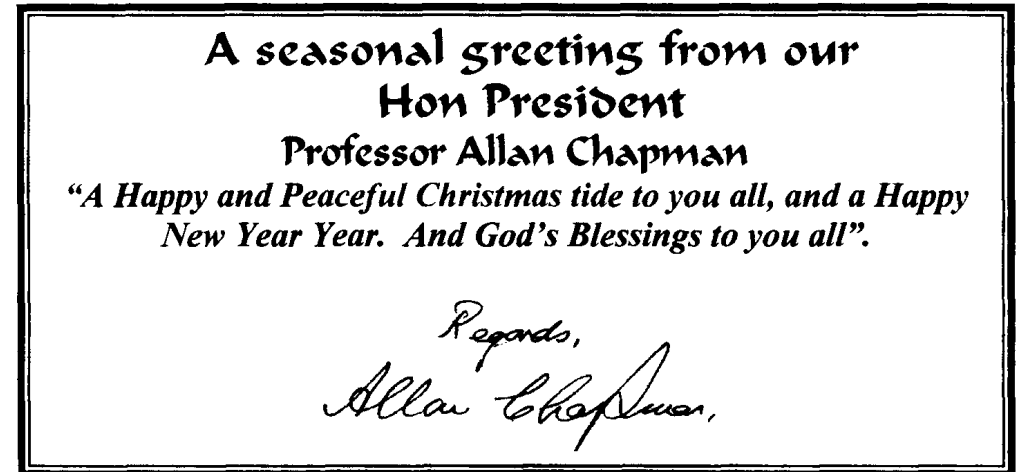
The AGM is YOUR chance to influence the direction in which our society is going. It's YOUR chance to stand up and be counted. **You are free to stand for election to our Committee and for any of the officer's posts**, including mine! For many years now the Constitution of our society has made provision for three officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) plus six other Committee members. For the last few years we have been running with around and now quite in excess of 100 members and my intention is to table a Constitutional Proposal for an increase in the Committee posts by two places. This will allow a better ratio of members to 'management' and will give the Committee enhanced flexibility. Please don't think I am trying to create an empire – far from it. The two extra posts are 'de-facto' already there and occupied by co-opted members. Members who do a great job, but perversely have no Committee vote when it comes to the crunch and decisions have to be made. I am aware of at least one serving Committee member who does not wish to stand for office in 2004. Add to that the newly created posts (assuming my proposal is accepted by the AGM) and even a mathematically handicapped moron like me can work out that there are opportunities begging for anyone who has a notion to get more involved in the running of OASI.

I have no intention of recapping all that has – and all that has not – taken place within our sphere of activity over the past year, you'll have to come along to the AGM to hear me witter on about that! What I will say is that it has been a steep personal learning curve and a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Much has been achieved and a great deal more remains to be done. OASI, I think, is becoming more forward looking and it seems to me that there is a certain freshness of thought and endeavour in the air – long may that continue to be the case. To a man (and it's a shame there is currently no female representation on the committee...) your 2003 Committee has served you diligently and well. I am sure that whomever you elect for 2004 will continue in that vein and you have my FIRM pledge to do so if I am lucky enough to be elected again.

Thank you all for a wonderful year and **may all members and their families have a joyous Christmas and a Very Happy New Year.**

Now, as our American cousins so delicately put it, let's go break a leg in 2004...!

Kenneth J Goward FRAS



DIARY FOR 2003 DECEMBER

	Home Phone	Work Phone
2003 COMMITTEE		
CHAIRMAN & PUBLICITY SECRETARY & WORK PARTY ORGANISER	K Goward	
TREASURER	R Gooding G Coleman	
MECHANICS & MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER CO-ORDINATOR	M Cook	
ASTRONOMY WORKSHOP	E Sims	
WEB SITE & MEETING MINUTES	T Sampson	
EQUIPMENT CURATOR	J Appleton	
LIBRARIAN	P O'Sullivan M Whybray	
CO-OPTED MEMBERS		
LECTURE CO-ORDINATOR	P Richards	
VISITS BY OUTSIDE GROUPS	Paul Whiting	
JOURNAL ARTICLES TO CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS	E Sims R Gooding	Ipswich Suffolk IP1 4HA OASI Secretary
MEMBERSHIP	M. Cook	Ipswich Suffolk IP1 6AE Ipswich IP4 5PZ

OBSERVATORY CLUB NIGHTS

Wednesday 3rd & 10th

N.B Closed on 17th 24th & 31st

ASTRONOMY WORKSHOP

(Science Classroom)

Wednesday 3rd 7.45 – 9.00 pm

'Cosmology – Some Thoughts'

Presenter - St John Robinson

CHRISTMAS MEAL

Wednesday 17th 8.00 pm

Red Lion, Martlesham

SMALL TELESCOPES OBSERVING NIGHTS

(Observatory balconies)

Monday 1st & 22nd 8.00 – 10.00 pm

OBSERVATORY VISIT BY OUTSIDE GROUP

Thursday 4th 8.00 pm Ardleigh Church Group.

SOCIETY PRIMARY CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN Kenneth J Goward FRAS ☎ [REDACTED]
(daytime & evenings)

SECRETARY Roy Gooding ☎ [REDACTED]
(daytime)
(evenings)

E-MAIL QUERIES ipswich@ast.cam.ac.uk

WEB SITE www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~ipswich

Contact details for the full Committee may be found on the inside back page

Registered Charity No 271313

Society Trustees

Roy Adams David Brown David Payne

Hon President

Professor Allan Chapman D.Phil MA FRAS

**The Officers and Committee members of the society
wish all fellow members a
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**