



## **ORWELL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY (IPSWICH)**

Registered Charity No 271313

[www.oasi.org.uk](http://www.oasi.org.uk)



2005 2<sup>nd</sup> April, Sir Patrick Moore receives an OASI Transit of Venus Commemorative plate from OASI Chairman, Ken Goward. A small token of appreciation from our society for Sir Patrick's lifetime of service to the astronomical community.

*See inside*

# **SOCIETY NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY**

**Roy Gooding**

## **1 Next Committee Meeting Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2005**

The next committee meeting will be held on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 20:00 at the observatory. This is an open meeting and any one who is interested is invited to attend.

## **2 Events for 2005**

| <b>Meeting</b>   | <b>Venue</b>  | <b>Date</b>                         |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Society Excursion  | A return visit to the National Space Centre in Leicester<br><b>See note below</b> | Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> May        |
| Astronomy Workshops  | Wednesday 04 May 2005 Paul Whiting Debris of The Solar System                     | Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> May       |
| BAA Exhibition Meeting   | The Cavendish Laboratory<br>Madingley Road Cambridge                              | Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup> June      |
| Society Barbecue   | At Mike and Sue's garden at Newbourne<br>More details to follow                   | Saturday 16 <sup>th</sup> July      |
| FAS Convention   | Institute of Astronomy<br>Cambridge   | Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> October    |
| Norwich Astronomical Society<br>60th Anniversary<br>Astronomy Conference | In Norwich<br><b>More information below</b>                                       | Saturday 8th October                |
| Christmas Meal   | Venue to be fixed   | Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> December |

## **2 Society Equipment Inventory**

I would like to compile an inventory of society member's astronomical equipment. If you would like to participate please supply me with a list of what observational equipment you have. This inventory list with the relevant names will remain with in the society. Though the total numbers of each class of instrument maybe added to the Society Web site.

## **3 Welcome to New Members**

No members have joined in the last month

#### **4 Norwich Astronomical Society's 60th Anniversary Astronomy Conference**

Date Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October

Venue John Innes Centre Norwich

Admission £15 per person which includes refreshments

Buffet lunch £5.50 extra

Opening times 09:30 to 16:30

##### **Programme**

Dr. Robin Catchpole "From the Solar System to the edge of the Universe"

Dr. David Whitehouse "Astronomy in the Media"

Prof. Paul Murdin "The Reality of Black Holes"

Final lecturer TBC

Trade Stands will be present.

There will be space for displays from other societies

Members who would like to go to this event please contact Roy Gooding, and I will order tickets

#### **5 Summer Excursion 2005 to the National Space Centre in Leicester Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May**

There are still several seats available. If you would like to come please contact  
Roy Gooding

Home tel. XXXXXXXXXX

- The pickup place will be the coach lay-by in Crown Street
- The leaving time will be 8:00, arriving at the Space Centre at about 11:00
- I would recommend that a packed lunch is brought along. The café at the Space Centre offers refreshments and food at typical monopoly prices.
- The coach will be stopping at one of the Service Stations on the way out, and on the return journey home. We will be leaving the Space Centre about 17:30
- I will leave it to the individual to purchase tickets once we are there.

Costs: A 53 seat coach is £460 for the day

Entrance costs are Adult £9.95 Child £7.95

# Night Sky (May)

All times GMT

## Sun

The sun will be rising approximately between 04:30 to 03:40  
The sun will be setting approximately between 19:30 to 20:10

## Moon

| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter | New Moon        | 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter | Full Moon        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>         | 8 <sup>th</sup> | 16 <sup>th</sup>        | 23 <sup>th</sup> | 30 <sup>th</sup>        |

**Mercury** Mercury is in the morning sky this month. It is too close to the Sun to be seen.

**Venus** Venus will be low down in the north west this month. Magnitude -3.9

**Mars** Mars is visible in the morning sky this month. It will be rising before 01:00 by the end of the month. Magnitude +0.3

**Jupiter** Jupiter is presently in Virgo. It will be setting by about 02:00 by the end of the month. Magnitude -2.2

**Saturn** Saturn remains observable during the first part of the night. Setting at about 23:00 by the end of the month. Magnitude -0.2

**Uranus** Uranus will be rising at about 01:00 at the end of the month. Magnitude 5.7

**Neptune** Neptune will be rising at about 00:00 at the end of the month. Magnitude 7.8

## Meteor Showers

| Shower            | Limits   | Maximum                                       | ZHR |
|-------------------|--|---|-----|
| $\eta$ Aquarids   | April 24 <sup>th</sup> to May 20 <sup>th</sup> | May 4 <sup>th</sup>                           | 40  |
| $\alpha$ Scorpids | April 20 <sup>th</sup> to May 19 <sup>th</sup> | April 27 <sup>th</sup> & May 12 <sup>th</sup> | 5   |

Meteor source is the BAA Handbook

## AN ASTRONOMICAL SHRINE

By Kenneth J Goward FRAS

On the first weekend of April, along with two friends from the Society for the History of Astronomy I was privileged to stay at Farthings, the home of Sir Patrick Moore down at Selsey, West Sussex. Having grown up watching Patrick on the Sky at Night and having seen his study and his telescopes so many times on the TV - if you will forgive my resorting to hyperbolae - it was a truly awesome experience to see it 'in the flesh' and Sir Patrick was the most generous and welcoming host.

Sir Patrick was DELIGHTED (to say the least!) when I presented him with one of the OASI Transit of Venus Commemorative Plates, along with a personal copy of Dr James Appleton's superb ToV report. The plate now occupies pride of place in his hallway and the report sits on his extensive bookshelves.



Farthings viewed from the front garden, which contains the 12½" Reflector in a run off shed and an 8½" Reflector in a glass-topped hexagonal dome, various meteorological instruments are dotted about the lawn. Note the - *to die for* - astronomer's weather vane on the main chimneystack, depicting an astronomer looking through a refractor at a distant star!

Sir Patrick is "rather immobile these days" (his words!) and was kind enough to allow my colleagues and I free reign to look around and photograph his four observatories. A short tour for you:





The 12½" Altazimuth mounted Reflector is housed in a run off shed, which splits in half. This instrument remains Sir Patrick's favourite and was used by him for most of the lunar mapping work he undertook in the 1950s/60s. The instrument will be removed from Farthings in the next few weeks and will have a new home with one of Sir Patrick's friends in the Canary Islands.



The 8½" Reflector on a heavy German Equatorial mount, which is sited in a rotating glass-topped dome in the front garden. We were unable to enter the dome as the locks were somewhat corroded due to a lack of use in recent

times. A couple of years ago the dome was lifted off the base during a freak Tornado, which struck Selsey late one evening, the dome was quickly repaired afterwards.



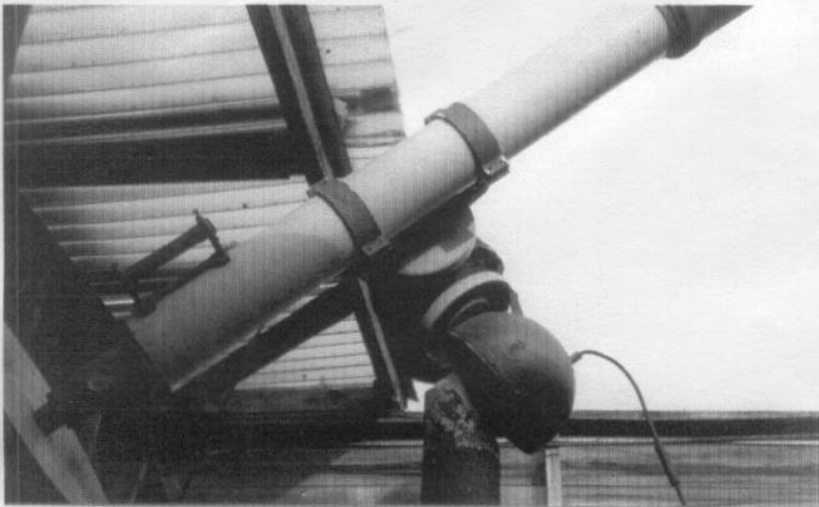
Walking through from the front garden area to the back and separated by a substantial hedgerow are two further observatories. The first is a large oil drum-like arrangement, housing Sir Patrick's main instrument – a 15" fork mounted Reflector. Galvoptics of Basildon coincidentally resilvered the mirror, recently – at the same time as the OASI MMT 19" mirror was there for silvering. The 15" featured in the April edition of the Sky at Night programme and was giving excellent views of Saturn and Comet Machholz. Some local amateur astronomers, whom Patrick allows to use his instruments, also recently refitted the observatory dome with new shutters.



Posing at the eyepiece of the 15"!

Unfortunately, cloudy skies prevented us from actually obtaining a view through this excellent instrument.

The second observatory at the back houses a 5" Refractor, equatorially mounted on a tall pillar. The observatory roof retracts via an ingenious cog and bike chain system.



The 5" Refractor – apologies for the obvious limitations of the ‘happy snaps’ camera used to obtain this image – I have taken a whole roll of slide images on my ‘good’ camera (certainly better images of this telescope) and hope to show OASI members those when next we have a member’s talks evening... Aside from the observatory telescopes, Sir Patrick – as you may expect – also has a number of other instruments dotted about his home, including his delightful 3" brass Refractor, which he purchased in boyhood.



Scenes familiar to all regular viewers of Sky at Night – Sir Patrick’s study. Pictured with Sir Patrick and I (left image) is Gilbert Satterthwaite FRAS,



who has a claim to fame, associated with Ipswich. He was the observer who made the last official observation in 1954 using Sir George Airy's Transit Circle at Greenwich – an instrument built largely by Ransomes. Gilbert is now Chairman of the Society for the History of Astronomy and is the Hon Curator of the Transit Circle at Greenwich to this day.

All in all a wonderful weekend with memories to treasure, Farthings really is a shrine to Amateur Astronomy. Sir Patrick, despite his advancing age (82 now) remains a powerful and inspiring figure – I'll never forget sitting in that study chatting away with him until the small hours of the morning about all matters astronomical – and much more besides.

Perhaps it would be best to close this discourse with two iconic images, the first of which shows his much-loved Xylophones and the latter his centenarian Woodstock typewriter on his desk, along with his monocle. Remember – that typewriter in Sir Patrick's hands has produced the text of more than 80 books and an unfathomable number of papers!!



*Magical!*

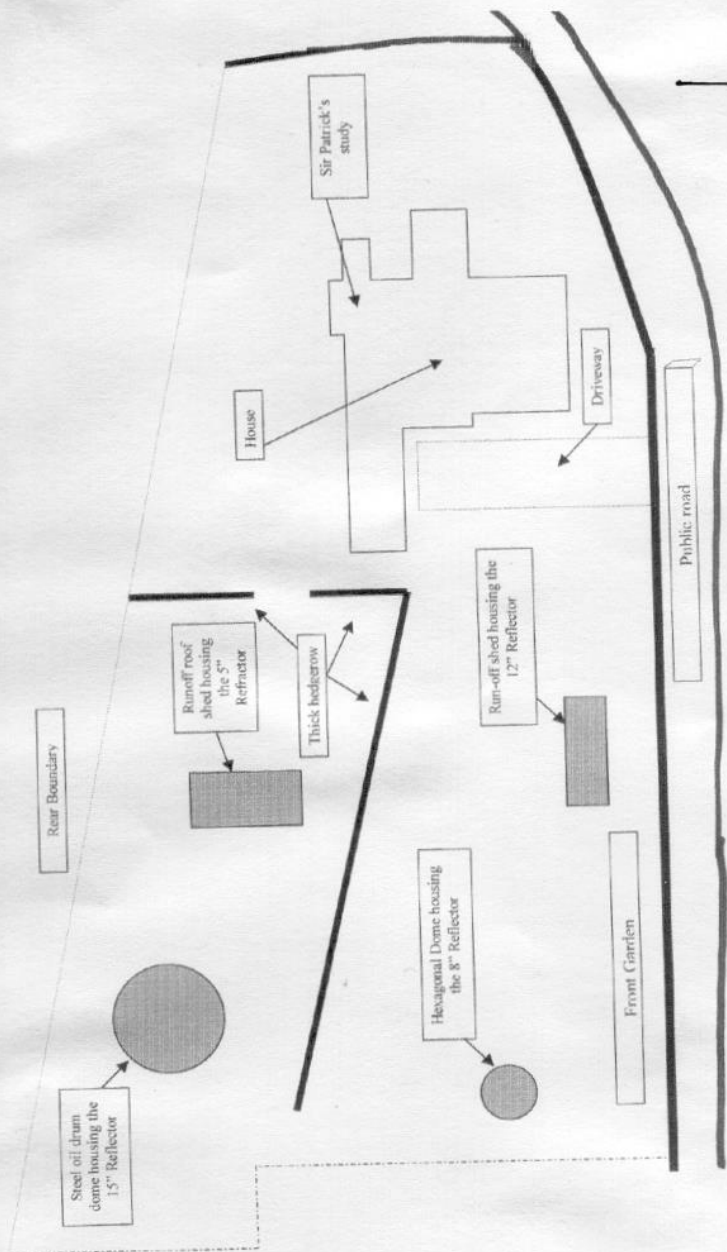


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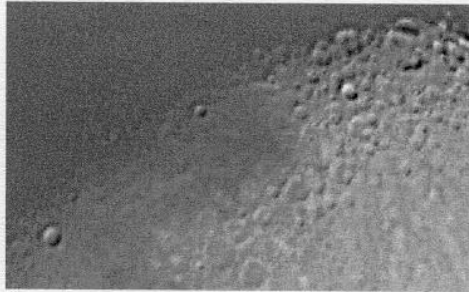
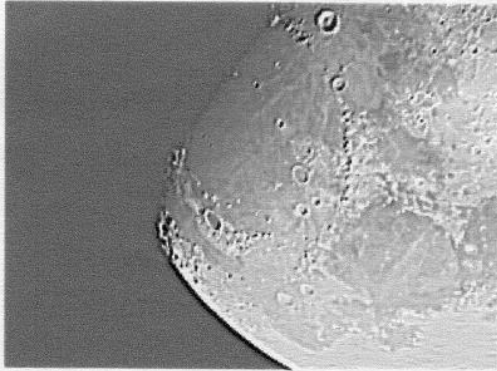
*Upon my departure from Farthings Sir Patrick impressed upon me most emphatically to express to all members of OASI not only his gratitude for the ToV plate and report, but also to pass on his sincere best wishes and greetings to you all – he fondly remembers visiting Orwell Park in the 1970s on a BAA Lunar Section meeting and is very much aware of OASI's activity today.*

# Farthings, Sir Patrick Moore's home at Selsey, Sussex.

(Not to scale)



## Test Webcam Images



These two images of the moon were obtained on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April, using a Philips Webcam. They were processed with Registax

Telescope was a 120mm F5 refractor

Roy Gooding

# Library Catalogue Complete!

Members visiting the observatory on Wednesdays will have seen a lone figure hunched over a laptop in front of the bookcases in the John Isaac Plummer Library for about the last year. That was me, your Librarian, entering the title, author, category, publication date, keywords, and a few descriptive notes, for every item in the library, into a database. Finally I am pleased and relieved to announce that the catalogue is complete! We have over 300 items, including a few CD-ROMS, videotapes and DVDs, but of course mostly books. Works range from elderly volumes in which the nature of the 'canals' on Mars are seriously discussed, up to modern ones on electronic imaging. Examples are:

- A Treatise on Astronomy by Sir John Herschel (1851)
- A unique personal scrapbook of engineering papers published by Wilfrid Airy, including the design for Orwell Park Observatory (various dates - late 1800s)
- Introduction to Astronomy by John Isaac Plummer (1876)
- The theory of relativity by Albert Einstein (1921)
- The expanding universe by Sir Arthur Eddington (1944)
- Observing the Caldwell objects by D. Ratledge (2000)
- Choosing and using a Schmidt-Cassegrain Telescope by Rod Mollise (2001)
- How to observe the sun safely by Lee MacDonald (2003)
- Observing and measuring visual double stars by Bob Argyle (2004)
- Jeremiah Horrocks by Paul Marston (2004)
- The Isaac Newton group of telescopes by Nik Szymanek (DVD – 2004)

Note – the first three are for loan only by special agreement with the Librarian due to their special value. Other library items may be borrowed simply by entering the item details and your name and signature into the library loan book – a shiny blue A4 sized notebook in the right hand library cupboard. Please keep loan periods down to a few weeks/months so that others get a chance to read the book!

The catalogue in the form of an Excel spreadsheet will shortly be published on the OASI web site, so that you can seek out items of interest before visiting the library to borrow them. I'll also put a printed version of the catalogue (15 pages) in the library. Please let me know of any errors or improvements to the catalogue so that I can keep it up to date. The books are stacked on the shelves (and indexed in the catalogue) under the following subject headings:

- Moon
- Radio astronomy and atmospheric phenomena
- Older books (Approx pre-1960)
- History, and Astronomers
- Telescopes and optics
- Space flight
- Stars and our Sun
- Yearbooks
- Younger readers
- Oversize books
- Comets & Asteroids
- Reference

- Solar System
- Observing
- Astrophotography
- Orbits and Mathematics
- Cosmology
- CD ROM
- DVD
- VHS tape

The categories are arranged in the above order from top left to bottom right on the library shelves, but I've not yet been able to find any satisfactory clip-on shelf labels so the shelves themselves are not yet labelled.

James Appleton who has been scanning in all the previous editions of the OASI newsletters for the web site came across a library listing from 1974. The total library stock at the time was only 29 books, so look how it has grown! Interestingly, only 10 of those 29 are still in the library, which leads me on to my next point. If anyone thinks they have any OASI library books still at home on extended or indefinite loan, I declare an amnesty – return any such books and I'll simply add them to my catalogue without giving you a hard time.

In addition, if anyone has any good astronomy books you'd like to donate to the library I'd be very happy to receive them. For any returned or donated books, either give them to me or a committee member on a Wednesday evening, or leave them on the table in the Belvedere room with a note to me (to ensure I add them to the catalogue before they go on the shelves). Particular ones I'd like are ones to complete our set of the 'Yearbook of Astronomy' (Patrick Moore) series where we have years 1963,64,73,74,78-96, 99 and 2000, but it would be nice to fill in the gaps as the books contain many interesting articles.

As always, if anyone has suggestions for new books of interest to the society, preferably ones where you know it is a good book, then please let me know. We continue to subscribe to most of the main astronomy monthly periodicals, and will now be adding the new BBC Sky at Night magazine to these (first edition out in May). Periodicals can be borrowed once they are 4 months old on the same basis as books – make sure you sign them out.

Enjoy your library. I've read some good books from it on historical figures such as Charles Babbage, others on more recent events such as eclipses and transits, and also String Theory. Finally, my thanks again to the members who put in many hours reconstructing the Library room itself, which is now something the society can be proud of.

Mike Whybray. OASI Librarian.



## Observing Proposal by Bill Barton

At the end of June 2005 the planets Mercury and Venus will be close together in the evening sky. As the month goes on they will move closer together until on the evening of the 27th they will be only 0.07 degrees apart. This is something like one tenth of the diameter of the moon to give an idea just how close together they will be. This means that they will easily be visible in the same telescopic field of view.

Mercury will be moving away from the Sun and is at its greatest elongation on the 9th of July at 26 degrees east of the Sun. Venus, too, will be moving away from the Sun, but its greatest elongation will not occur until the 3rd of November when it will be 47 degrees east of the Sun.

The 27th of June 2005 is a Monday. I therefore propose that the Orwell Park observatory be open for this event to be seen by members between 18:00 and when the objects become unobservable on each clear evening between Wednesday 22nd and Wednesday 29th.

A telephone conference will be held at 17:00 each evening to decide whether to go to the observatory or not and members are advised to ring Bill on [REDACTED] see if the observatory is open.

Potential observers can either just come and witness the event or bring cameras (photographic, digital or video) to record it.

In order to have the observatory open two telescope operators need to be present, therefore I am seeking volunteers amongst those trained to use it for the seven day period mentioned above.

## OCCULTATIONS DURING MAY

The 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.

| <b>D<br/>R</b> | <b>Date &amp; Time<br/>(UT)</b> | <b>Lunar<br/>Phase</b> | <b>Sun<br/>Alt (°)</b> | <b>Star<br/>Alt (°)</b> | <b>Star</b> | <b>Mag</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| D              | 10 May 21:31                    | 0.06+                  | -14                    | 7                       | ZC 780      | 6.8        |
| D              | 12 May 20:53                    | 0.19+                  | -10                    | 27                      | ZC 1067     | 7.2        |
| D              | 18 May 00:47                    | 0.66+                  | -17                    | 12                      | Hip 54604   | 7.5        |

James Appleton

## OASI COMMITTEE CONTACTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

|                          |  |   |  |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| Kenneth J<br>Goward FRAS | <b>Chairman</b>  | ☎ | Press Publicity with the<br>Secretary.<br>Open Weekend.  |
| Roy Gooding              | <b>Secretary</b>   | ☎ | <b>Main point of Society<br/>Contact.</b><br>Press Publicity with the<br>Chairman. Observatory<br>Decoration.<br>Visits by potential new<br>members. |
| Garry Coleman            | <b>Treasurer</b>   | ☎ | Finance.<br>Supervision of Grant<br>Applications.  |
| James<br>Appleton        | Committee  | ☎ | Committee Meeting<br>Minutes.<br>Web site.   |
| Martin Cook              | Committee  | ☎ | Membership.<br>Tomline Refractor<br>Maintenance.   |
| Neil Morley              | Committee  | ☎ | Equipment Curator.   |
| Ted Sampson              | Committee  | ☎ | Workshops.<br>Tomline Refractor<br>tutoring.   |
| Eric Sims                | Committee  | ☎ | Newsletter   |
| Mike Whybray             | Committee  | ☎ | Librarian.   |
| Paul Whiting<br>FRAS     | Committee  | ☎ | Visits by outside<br>groups.   |
| Bill Barton<br>FRAS      | Committee  | ☎ | Safety & Security  |
| Peter Richards           | Working<br>under<br>Committee<br>direction but<br>not Co-opted |   | Lecture Meetings.  |

**Seats are still available for our coach  
trip to the National Space Centre at  
Leicester on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May.  
If you wish to come along with us to  
this fascinating venue,  
please contact Roy Gooding  
**URGENTLY!!****

## DIARY FOR MAY

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>WEDNESDAY</b>  | <b><u>OBSERVATORY CLUB NIGHTS</u></b><br>4 <sup>th</sup> 11 <sup>th</sup> 18 <sup>th</sup> 25 <sup>th</sup><br>☎ Martin Cook [REDACTED]  |
| <b>WEDNESDAY</b><br>4 <sup>th</sup><br><b>Science<br/>Classroom</b> | <b><u>ASTRONOMY WORKSHOP</u></b><br>From 7.45pm<br>'Debris of the Solar System'<br>Presented by Paul Whiting FRAS<br>☎ Ted Sampson [REDACTED]  |
| <b>SATURDAY</b><br>7 <sup>th</sup>                                  | <b><u>COACH OUTING</u></b><br><b><u>NATIONAL SPACE CENTRE, LEICESTER</u></b><br>Coach pickup points:<br>7.45am (sharp) Lay-by on Heath Road (southbound<br>carriageway) directly opposite the entrance to<br>Ipswich Hospital<br>8am (sharp) - Crown Pools lay-by<br><b>SEATS STILL AVAILABLE</b><br>☎ Roy Gooding [REDACTED]  |
| <b>SATURDAY</b><br>14 <sup>th</sup>                                 | <b><u>OBSERVATORY VISIT BY OUTSIDE<br/>GROUP</u></b><br><b>The Flamsteed Astronomical Society,<br/>Greenwich</b><br>From midday at the Shepherd & Dog for lunch.<br>2pm at the Observatory for a brief tour & slide show<br>presentation - visit to Playford village afterwards.<br><b>OPEN TO ALL OASI MEMBERS WHO MAY WISH TO<br/>ACCOMPANY US</b><br>☎ Ken Goward FRAS [REDACTED] |

### SOCIETY PRIMARY CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN Kenneth J Goward FRAS ☎ [REDACTED] (daytime & evenings)  
SECRETARY Roy Gooding ☎ [REDACTED] (daytime) [REDACTED] (evenings)  
E-MAIL QUERIES [ipswich@ast.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ipswich@ast.cam.ac.uk)

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

#### Society Trustees

Roy Adams David Brown David Payne  
Hon President  
Professor Allan Chapman D.Phil MA FRAS

NB. The Small Telescopes observing nights (STONs) will resume in the autumn.