

ORWELL ASTRONOMICAL

SOCIETY IPSWICH

Charity No 271313

FEBRUARY 2004



Society News

1 Next Committee Meeting Saturday 6th March 2004

The next committee meeting will be held on Saturday 6th March at 19:30 in a classroom in the court yard. This is an open meeting and any one who is interested is invited to attend

2 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 27 th Sunday 28 th March
5 th Astronomy Workshop	Pete Richards Astronomy - Some Basic Concepts	Wednesday 3 rd March
BAA Winchester Weekend	King Alfred's College Winchester	April 2 nd to 4 th
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
Society Excursion	Venue?	May
The Web society Annual Meeting	Institute of Astronomy Cambridge	June 19 th from 10:30
BAA Exhibition Meeting	The Cavendish Laboratory Cambridge	June 26 th 11:00 to 18:00
FAS Convention	Institute of Astronomy Cambridge	Saturday 2 nd October

3 Proposed Open Weekend Date for 2004

The optimum date for the Open Weekend next year is Saturday and Sunday March 27th and 28th. The moon will be at first quarter in the 28th. Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn will be visible during the evening

A poster has been included with this Newsletter. Please display it some where.

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 Membership Subscription for 2004

Subscriptions for 2004 are due from 1st of January. If you have already paid please ignore this request.

The rates for 2004 are:

Junior & Concessionary	£12.00
Adult	£16.00
Family	£18.00

A renewal form is included with the January newsletter. Return this form with your 2004 subscription, so that the society membership records can kept up to date.

Please make cheques & P.O.'s payable to the: -

ORWELL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY (IPSWICH)

Please return all subscriptions **with the renewal form** to

Martin Cook

Ipswich
IP4 5PZ

Sun

The sun will be rising approximately between 07:30 to 06:50
The sun will be setting approximately between 16:50 to 17:30

Moon

Full Moon	3 rd Quarter	New Moon	1 st Quarter
6 th	13 th	20 th	28 th

Mercury Mercury will not be observable this month

Venus Venus will be very prominent this month the western sky after sunset. It will be setting at about 22:00 at the end of the month. Magnitude -4.0

Mars Mars will be setting at about 00:00 this month. Magnitude 1.0 Mars

Jupiter Jupiter will be rising at about 18:00 by the end of the month. Magnitude -2.5

Saturn Saturn will visible all night. It will not set until about 04:00 at the end of the month. Saturn will be at magnitude -0.1.

Uranus Uranus is in conjunction with the sun this month, and will not be visible.

Neptune Neptune is in conjunction with the sun this month, and will not be visible

Meteor Showers

There are no prominent meteor showers visible this month

OCCULTATIONS DURING FEBRUARY

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.

D / R	Date & Time (UT)	Lunar Phase	Sun Alt (°)	Star Alt (°)	Star	Mag
D	01 Feb 03:16	0.75+	-39	7	Hip 21863	7.2
D	02 Feb 04:18	0.83+	-30	7	ZC 842	6.5
D	14 Feb 05:43	0.42-	-14	14	V929 Sco	5.9
D	24 Feb 18:00	0.19+	-6	37	omicron Psc	4.3
R	18:52		-14	30		
D	25 Feb 22:15	0.29+	-41	11	ZC 391	7.1

James Appleton

WINDS OF CHANGE

Extracts from the Chairman's Report to the 2004 Annual General Meeting

'When I was elected into office at the last AGM, I must confess to a feeling of deep pride, which, over the course of the following week, turned to deep horror at the thought that one no longer had the option of whinging from the side when putting the OASI world to rights. That horror edged on despair when, for a while, it looked as though I could very well be the Chairman in whose time of office the Observatory was lost to us.

2003 was the year our Licence was due for renewal. That renewal not only coincided with a change at the OASI Chair, but also of the school's Business Director and the dawn of a radical rethink of all school policies by the Governors. Change is the order of the day - as in just about all walks of life - and OASI is not immune from change. Yes, the world is gradually being swamped in red tape, but not - *all* - that tape is pointless. We, OASI, are acutely aware of our responsibilities in running and maintaining the observatory. We are all acutely aware that a school where young children actually live has a special concern for the safety of its pupils in these days of worry about potential praying by Paedophiles and I doubt if any member will be surprised at those concerns, however distasteful the subject is to us.

The school administration is undergoing root and branch reform. The building fabric is causing concern and moves are afoot to tackle issues of deterioration and restoration, not least at the observatory. Obviously financing is a key issue and the cost implications are huge. The school is looking to raise funds from every aspect of its operation and from all its assets, ideas like promoting business leadership development seminars at weekends to 4 X 4 driving in the fields are all in the melting pot for exploration. Maybe even weekend/holiday visits from corporate groups to the observatory, volunteer - '*staffed*' - by OASI and with a split in funds generated. Who knows?

Security is to be entirely revamped and, by September, the main gates will be permanently locked to restrict access to the school pupils from outside. The implications for us hardly need to be spelt out. Because of all of this, **OUR LICENCE TO OPERATE AND RUN THE OBSERVATORY IS CURRENTLY ON HOLD**, pending agreement on a new one. The new licence will be radically different, with new rules on access et al. Very likely we shall - from September - have to park in a separate car park on the river side of the Gymnasium and our access route through to the observatory will consequently change. Every effort will be made within the new arrangements to keep outside groups - like us - separate from the children. This is no reflection upon our members, merely a reflection of the times in which we live.

We recently had a very positive meeting with the new Business Manager and further meetings are in the pipeline with him and with the Governors over the course of - quite likely - the next 18 months or more. We will also shortly be meeting with the school's surveyor regarding specific repairs around the observatory tower, the feasibility of providing a handrail for the spiral stairs and a future major overhaul of the dome itself. We have been given a categorical assurance that **THE SCHOOL WANTS OASI TO REMAIN IN PLACE AND RUNNING THE OBSERVATORY**, indeed, they see no other way forward for Astronomy at Orwell Park. To that end, the enthusiastic support of the Headmaster, Andrew Auster, has been of seminal importance. Things will change here and maybe, even sadly, things will never be quite the same. However, much of what is proposed has potential significant benefit for us and I am personally confident that the society will weather whatever storms may be in our path. **UNTIL THE NEW LICENCE ISSUES ARE RESOLVED THE SCHOOL IS HAPPY FOR US TO CARRY ON AS USUAL AND HAVE CONFIRMED THAT NORMAL INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS REMAIN IN PLACE.** If the school makes any fundamentally important new proposals, which we feel would adversely affect our remaining at Orwell Park, then we shall call for an EGM, but I have absolutely no current reason to believe it will come to that. We will approach all these issues in partnership with the school and OASI members will be kept fully in the picture.

Whatever we are doing, I believe we must be getting something right and our swelled membership level and various upbeat remarks about the society in publications like Popular Astronomy are the best possible performance indicators allowing me to say that. All is not right though and, specifically; we had no summer outing last year. Perhaps the 2002 outing to Oxford burnt our fingers to some extent financially and made us timid. It would be nice to shake off that timidity and sort out a trip to some suitable venue - ALL suggestions for a 2004 summer trip would be welcomed?

We are planning two talks in May from Peter Hingley, the Librarian of the Royal Astronomical Society. On Friday evening May 14th he'll lecture us at Fonnereau Road on the forthcoming Transit of Venus. The following morning he comes to the observatory where he will formally open our library and dedicate the room in the name of Col Tomline's paid astronomer, John Isaac Plummer. After which, he will give a talk on the treasures and rarities of the RAS Library collection. That neatly gives us a date to work towards for the final completion of the library refurbishment project after three years of hard work.

DIARY FOR 2004 FEBRUARY

There was no Open Weekend last year, mainly due to the availability of the planets, but this year we will host an Open Weekend in the spring (March 27th & 28th), which I hope you will support. For this year we shall make the telescopes available in the observatory tower and will not have an exhibition area in the classrooms. Roy Gooding, however, hopes to have some instruments available on the field. In May we observed a Mercury Transit event and a very successful, enjoyable morning was spent by a number of our members, and school pupils, at the Tomline Refractor. In many ways it was a training session for this year's much looked forward to Transit of Venus on June 8th and we expect to make similar observing arrangements. It is a sobering thought that the rarity of a Venus Transit means that no one alive in the world today has ever witnessed one!

Our constitution states that the primary objective of the society is 'To promote and advance public education and interest in the science of astronomy...' Aside from our whole range of activities, we achieve our objective in four very clear ways; firstly by our Open Weekend events. The other three tools at our disposal are, I believe, our most successful spheres of operation, viz education (training), our web site and visiting groups. The workshops are one of our most marketable assets when recruiting new members into our fold. Potential new members who, very often, have been attracted by our superb web site, at which James Appleton has built up a colossal store of information and data, surely one of the most informative sites of any UK amateur astronomy group. The workshops, geared up not just for the beginner, but for anyone at whatever their stage of experience have been consistently well supported and we seem never to be short of volunteer speakers or of suggestions for topics. Some members have progressed upstairs and have been formally trained as observers/operators on the Tomline Refractor. We owe our gratitude to a small and dedicated team of volunteer trainers and testers who give freely of their time to help others progress in the hobby. Trained operators become another valuable asset to us and are the lifeblood to our endeavour to host group visits to the observatory. In 2003 18 outside groups, in excess of 300 people, were shown the wonders of our science in this way'.

The meeting passed a resolution to expand the OASI Committee from six to eight members (plus three officers) and we are pleased to welcome Monica Lustig, Neil Morley and Paul Whiting onto the Committee. After discussion there was a consensus view that the 2005 AGM should have a different format, insofar as it will be on a Saturday afternoon at a suitable community or village hall around Ipswich and will feature a guest speaker and a buffet. Obviously there is much work to be done and members will be kept fully in the picture regarding arrangements for this and other events. If any member has a concern regarding the licence or anything else, please voice that concern with any of our Committee members or with me – we greatly value your feedback and your opinions?
Time to get on with it...!

Kenneth J Goward FRAS
2004 Chairman

OBSERVATORY CLUB NIGHTS

Wednesday 4th 11th 18th 25th

☎ Martin Cook

ASTRONOMY WORKSHOP

Wednesday 4th, commencing 7.30PM

Constellation Closeup – Gemini – by James Appleton

☎ Ted Sampson

SMALL TELESCOPES OBSERVING NIGHTS

(Observatory balconies)

Monday 2nd Orion and Auriga

Monday 16th Gemini Observing Project

☎ Paddy O'Sullivan

OBSERVATORY VISITS BY OUTSIDE GROUPS

Thursday 5th 7pm 14th Ipswich Cub Scouts (1)

Thursday 12th 7pm 1st Martlesham Beaver Scouts

Thursday 26th 7pm 14th Ipswich Cub Scouts (2)

☎ Paul Whiting

SOCIETY PRIMARY CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN Kenneth J Goward FRAS ☎ (daytime & evenings)
SECRETARY Roy Gooding ☎ (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

See inside (Winds of Change) for important news
regarding our occupancy at Orwell Park Observatory