

- Sarton, G. 1947 *Isis*, **37**, 67—71, Query No. 111.
- Schove, D. J. 1947 The Sunspot Cycle before 1750. *Terr. Mag.*, **52**, 233—237.
- 1948a Sunspots and Aurorae (500—250 B.C.). *Journ. Brit. Astr. Assn.*, London, **58**, 1948, 178—190 and 202—204.
- 1948b Sunspot Epochs A.D. 188—1610. *Popular Astronomy*, Northfield, Minn., U.S.A., **56**, 1948, 247—252.
- 1950 Tree Rings and Summer Temperatures A.D. 1501—1930. *Scott. Geog. Mag.*, Edinburgh, **66**, 1950, 37—42.
- Vercelli, F.* 1949 Periodicità dendrologische e cicli solari. *Annali di Geofisica Roma*, **2**, 1949, 477—485.
- Vyssotsky, A. N.* 1949 Astronomical Records in the Russian Chronicles from 1000—1600 A.D. *Medd. fran Lunds Astro. Observatorium*. Ser. 2. Nr. 126, Historical Papers Nr. 22, Lund.
- Zeuner, R. E. 1950 Dating the Past (2nd ed.), London.

COMMUNICATIONS TO THE ASSOCIATION

An Astronomical Experiment

The encouragement of a popular interest in astronomy is one of the objects of the B.A.A., and undoubtedly in this era of electronics, radar and radio astronomy, giant telescopes, etc., this work is of increasing importance. As examples, quite recently I have had a university graduate engaged in educational administration admit that he did not know the difference between astronomy and astrology, and I have had a solicitor, M.A., enquire the reason for the phases of the Moon!

For every B.A.A. member there are probably 20 people who are attracted to astronomy but who would be frightened away from the stars forever if confronted even with an average *Journal*. An astronomical society is operating here in Ipswich, however, whose main intention is to bring astronomy to those whose interest lies on the fringe of the science but who have lacked previously the opportunity or encouragement to delve further.

In its short life the Society has achieved much in this part of East Anglia where previously astronomical activity had rested solely with a few first magnitude stars of the Association, past and present. The future of the Society is unknown, but it may well be that in other parts of the country similar societies can be cultivated on what is apparently similar barren ground, and a note on the activities and methods of the Society may therefore be of interest.

In January, 1949, the local natural history society formed an astronomical section at the instigation of Mr. R. L. T. Clarkson, F.R.A.S., a member of the Association. It was soon apparent, however, that astronomy was too far removed from natural history to be of much interest to the original members of that society, but there was a sudden influx of new members who joined purely to take advantage of the meetings of the astronomical section. In January, 1950, with the agreement of the parent society, the erstwhile section became the Ipswich and District Astronomical Society, now affiliated to the Association, and elected Mr. Clarkson as their first President.

The Society now has a membership of 66, the youngest member being 8, and

the oldest 80; of this number only five are B.A.A. members. Indoor meetings are held monthly throughout the autumn and winter, and although prominent Association members such as Messrs. Collinson, Prentice, and Ovenden have kindly undertaken to lecture this session, most speakers are found from within the Society. Reports of meetings are sent to local newspapers and the publication of these reports has brought new members.

Regular star parties are held to give the great majority of members who are without telescopes the opportunity of seeing for themselves, and these sessions are held at the observatory of one of the B.A.A. members and at Orwell Park Nacton, some five miles from Ipswich, where the use has been granted of a 10-inch Merz refractor of somewhat ancient vintage. This latter instrument is not optically perfect, but its size, combined with the location on a high tower overlooking the River Orwell, makes it a popular rendezvous. A 3-inch refractor and a 4-inch Gregorian, both presented to the Society, are loaned to members for periods of six weeks at a time, and there is a constant waiting list for these instruments.

Parties of members have visited Greenwich and Cambridge University Observatories, but unfortunately there are not sufficient observatories for this form of activity to be carried further.

The constructional side has not been neglected, and good 7-inch and 6-inch reflectors are now in operation, both having been constructed by members who previously had no knowledge of either optics or astronomy, and there are further mirrors under construction. A library has been started, and *Sky and Telescope* circulates to those members who wish for it; it is probable that the Association's publications will circulate in a similar manner.

The cost of the above is an annual subscription of 5/-, plus some hard work and patience on the part of a few keen members.

As stated earlier, the future of the Society cannot be forecast, but it has in its ranks material for the production of future keen B.A.A. observers, given encouragement. The Society will, however, have served its purpose if it enables some of its members to "see the Spirit of the Night" as did W. F. Denning, or, in the words of Harlow Shapley, to look into the heavens with a humble heart.—D. J. FULCHER.

A Reply to Mr. H. L. Kelly's Note on "A Polar Fork Mounting"

Mr. Kelly's note on my use of concrete and steel is quite correct, if the construction was intended to be reinforced concrete. But it was not so made. The concrete was added to the steel construction after it had been completed, in order to give greater rigidity, and the steel bars were introduced to hold the concrete in place and prevent any tendency to fall off the mounting.—W. L. SHEPHERD.