



Volume 15, Issue 2

February 2010

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President's Report:

John Rombi

Welcome fellow amphibians. I feel like I've been living under the sea for the last few weeks. The rain has been a godsend, but unfortunately has led to our observing nights being cancelled. Long range forecasters have predicted a wet March as well.

Does anybody want to buy a telescope?

In January

It was great to catch up with everyone at our first meeting; it is very pleasing to see the enthusiasm shown for the year ahead, especially by the newer members.

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MAS Dates 2010

February 2010

06/02/10	Stargard
13/02/10	The Forest
15/02/10	General Meeting

17/7/10	Stargard
19/7/10	General Meeting

March 2010

13/3/10	Stargard
15/3/10	General Meeting
20/3/10	The Forest

August 2010

07/8/10	The Forest
14/8/10	Stargard
16/8/10	General Meeting

April 2010

10/4/10	Stargard
12/4/10	General Meeting
17/4/10	The Forest

September 2010

04/9/10	Stargard
11/9/10	The Forest
20/9/10	General Meeting

May 2010

08/5/10	Stargard
15/5/10	The Forest
17/5/10	General Meeting

October 2010

02/10/10	Stargard
09/10/10	The Forest
18/10/10	General Meeting
30/10/10	Stargard

June 2010

05/6/10	Stargard
12/6/10	The Forest
21/6/10	General Meeting

November 2010

06/11/10	The Forest
15/11/10	General Meeting

July 2010

10/7/10	The Forest
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December 2010

04/12/10	The Forest
11/12/10	Stargard



President's Report:

John Rombi

The Forest

International House Director Jessica Carroll has approved the dates for the cabin. The student night will be held on Saturday August 21st, I hope as many members will be available for this important event.

Public Nights

After mentioning that our Public Nights would be pared down to two this year, I have agreed that they be adjusted to four.

These nights will be held in March, May, September and November.

With the 10th Anniversary of The Domes being celebrated this year, UWS has asked if we could hold nights to celebrate this milestone.

In keeping with the celebration of the occasion, UWS has offered to MAS our meeting room for 2010, free of charge.

This is a very generous offer, and helps strengthen the bond between us.

Other Matters

There are some surprises in the mix for 2010; I will let you know as soon as I can tie up some loose ends.

Tonight

I would like to welcome Dr David Malin. Until July 2001, he was a photographic scientist-astronomer with the [Anglo-Australian Observatory \(AAO\)](#). He is also Adjunct Professor of Scientific Photography at [RMIT University in Melbourne \(RMIT\)](#), specifically the [Department of Applied Physics](#).

He left the AAO to run his own business, David Malin Images (DMI). Essentially this is the [AAO image collection](#) upgraded, enlarged and outsourced, from a previous life.

David's presentation tonight will be on "Galileo's Legacy".

Until next month,
Clear Skies, John Rombi.

Secretary's Column:

Roger Powell

After three very successful observing nights at Stargard recently, I thought our fortune with the weather had changed. Unfortunately, our lucky streak came to an abrupt halt with the cancellation of the February Stargard.

The Forest has been on a cloudy streak for at least three months, so our organised observing has been very limited lately. Often, such frustration felt by many members would result in some extra backyard sessions but there have been so many cloudy nights since the festive season that even solo excursions with the telescope into the back garden have been very limited. I have managed just two and fortunately one of them was 30th January, when Mars reached opposition.

I guess many members either received one of those pesky Mars hoax e-mails or were contacted by other people who did. If you've forgotten, the e-mails 'informed' us that during 2009 Mars would appear larger to us than the full Moon.

Well, of course it didn't. Mars actually spent most of

2009 on the opposite side of the Solar System and it's angular size remained small. So why am I mentioning it now, when 2009 is over?

Two reasons:

Firstly, to graphically demonstrate just how wrong the impossible e-mail 'prediction' was, when Mars reached opposition on 30th January, I took this image of Mars at closest approach, when it was very near the bright full Moon ([page 3 top](#)).

As big as the Moon? You be the judge. The overexposed Moon is top right and Mars is the tiny red dot near the bottom left hand corner.

When this image was taken, Mars' angular diameter was 14.1 arc-seconds, whilst the Moon was a whopping 142 times bigger than Mars at 33.5 arc-minutes in diameter

The second reason for bringing this up is that with Mars now declining in size, it is heading for another opposition in March 2012. It won't be as big as the Moon then either – but you can bet those chain e-



Secretary's Column:

Roger Powell



Mars and The Moon

Photographer: Roger Powell

mails will start up again in 2011! Chain e-mails are one of my pet hates and this is a very good demonstration that the only way to treat them is never to pass them on.

Mars will remain visible for the next six months. As for the other planets, Venus is beginning to reappear from behind the Sun and will be visible in the early evening sky in March. Mars will be visible all evening during February and March but is now diminishing in size. Saturn will be visible in the late evenings in February but by the end of March it will on view all evening.

On to general administration matters. After three years without change, it has become necessary to make a small increase in membership fees. The adjusted fees for 2010-11 are listed on the website. Despite this increase, I sincerely hope that all members will understand the need for us to keep the Society in strong financial health and that you will all be renewing your membership over the next couple of months.

We have the Number One website for astronomical societies and Chris continues to improve our on-line presence. A few months ago he created a MAS Facebook group. Now he has made it possible for

anyone with an iPhone to access our website. MAS leads the way!

As for *Prime Focus*, there is no truth in the rumour that Geoff is going to remove the lunar image in the banner and replace it with cloud pictures. However, we have decided to send *Prime Focus* to members by e-mail, so that those members who find it difficult to log onto our website on a regular basis will find our Journal in their inbox once a month. Hopefully it will encourage everyone to logon to the website more often, as the content is constantly evolving.

Finally, the matter of observing etiquette has been raised on the Forum and was recently the subject of a PM to all members from John. All members attending observing nights need to be aware of the effect that their torches, camera monitors, computer monitors, car lights and laser pointers etc. have on other members, whether they are visually observing or imaging. The contents of John's PM have now been placed permanently on the website, for all of us to refer to.



DOIN' IT IN THE DARK:

Trevor Rhodes

Well, where to start? We've had two good Stargard Nights since my last communiqué. The first saw 21 scopes on the field. I think I spent more time that night walking up and down counting them than I did looking up at the sky. Scopes ranged from what I think might have been the 'First Scope' with a finder scope attached to the side with an octopus strap or 'occy strap' as I've always known them up to the big rigs like Chris' and Deb's. It was a magnificent site to see them all lined up and being used at the same time.

As anyone who was at the January meeting would know, there was a little extra with which to end our viewing night. The last of us were locking up and following each other out when we got to the last gate and noticed a couple of members parked outside. It seems that some young fellow, not a member by the way, but a local lad passing by, had himself a wee bit more of the creature than his system was comfortable handling. Poor guy must have been tired as he had lay down on the side of the road and nodded off. This might not have been so bad if he had not have laid his head ON the road with his feet off to the side. Luckily Young Skywalker had the foresight to do so on the side road and not Burraborang Rd itself. That outcome would not have ended happily for anyone. A couple of members were trying to call the emergency number, but getting a connection at Stargard is next to impossible. Enter John Rombi with his trusty mobile. It now seems that you have to be 15 metres north of the main gate and 2 metres east of centre with your left leg held high and head cocked to the left to get through.

Anyone who managed to get a picture, please send it to Geoff for inclusion in next month's issue of Prime Focus.

So, there's Young Skywalker passed out and sleeping

like a log with can neatly by his side without a drop spilled. The force is strong with this one. Eventually the Ambo's arrived and attempted to get our young friend to sit up. Have you ever seen those shows where a body in the morgue just sits up quickly? That was what he did. His situation wasn't funny of course, but his actions certainly were.

What were young drinker's first words upon regaining conscientiousness?

Not, where am I? Not, who are you? Not, am I hurt?

"Where's me smokes?"

Ah, isn't it nice to have priorities?

Eventually the Police arrived and Young Skywalker agreed to be taken home. I only hope he was alright and learned a lesson from his ordeal.

IF he remembers it.

I couldn't help but think on the way home that it was much like my own early years, so I don't judge, but think myself lucky to have made it through relatively unscathed.

A few nights later some hardy souls that just couldn't get enough of being out communing with nature, in the dark, with the mosquitoes, ventured forth yet again to Stargard for a second helping. It was a good night with clear skies, wonderful company and I also managed to gather a couple more Messiers and a few extra Dunlops. What more could an amateur astronomer ask for?

See you on the field.

IT IS AMAZING WHO YOU MEET ON THE MOON PART 1

David M Jones

"I don't know if there are men on the moon, but if there are they must be using the earth as their lunatic asylum"

George Bernard Shaw

The Moon has held significance for the human race since prehistoric times; it being the second brightest object in the sky after the Sun. Today, amongst other things, it is a place where we honour those who have achieved and contributed in a variety of ways to the advancement of human knowledge in many fields.

The early years of lunar landmark nomenclature were chaotic; the names of craters changed with each succeeding mapmaker. One lunar mapmaker, M. van Langren, a Belgian mathematician, came up with a scheme that eventually persisted. In 1645, he named the craters

on his lunar map after astronomers. Years Later he himself would likewise be honoured.

The 17th century Polish astronomer Johan Hevelke began the custom of naming lunar mountains after earthly ranges; consequently we now have the lunar Alps, the Apennines, the Carpathians, and the Caucasus.

Craters are the most profuse lunar features. They have always borne human names. The 17th century Italian philosopher Giovanni Riccioli named hundreds of craters. Those in the north were named for the most ancient honourees and those in the south went to the more recent. Thus, Riccioli's lunar map is an historical timeline, read north to south.

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IT IS AMAZING WHO YOU MEET ON THE MOON PART 1

David M Jones

The 100 km crater, Plato, was named for the 4th century B.C. Greek philosopher who championed a system of reality that went beyond human senses. The equally prominent Tycho, in the south, was named for the Dane, Tycho Brahe. The 16th century Danish astronomer's exact measurements of planetary positions enabled Johannes Kepler to establish the laws of planetary movement.

Riccioli's historical system was eventually discarded; however, many of his rules for naming craters persisted. The German lunar mapmakers Johann Schroter, Wilhelm Beer, and Johann Heinrich Madler were accountable for hundreds of the names we now use for lunar craters. These three were also eventually memorialised.



This month's "Blue Moon"

Photographer: DM Jones

The far, hidden side of the moon was photographed by the Apollo spacecraft, the Lunar Orbiters, and most recently the Clementine Mission. Thousands of new craters were revealed, but as there were only a few hundred famous dead astronomers whose names had not yet been used, the IAU (International Astronomical Union) had far too few names. Even early lunar cartographers resorted to using names from other scientific disciplines, including chemistry and biology, physics and phi-

losophy; they also delved into classical Greek and Roman history for yet more names.

Mathematicians have done well on the moon, doubtless because astronomy relies so greatly on their efforts. For instance George Boole, a 19th century Englishman whose Boolean algebra is vital to modern computer scientists, has a crater named after him. Not far from Boole, larger and a little easier to find, is the Babbage crater, named for the 19th century English mathematician and inventor Charles Babbage. Babbage is regarded as the father of the modern computer. (See Babbage's Analytical Engine)

In addition to the physicists Somerville and Curie, there are craters named for Newton, Michael Faraday, and James Watt. The crater named for Charles Darwin, the 19th century English biologist and author of '*The Origin of Species*', is located near the crater named after the French zoologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Lamarck's major achievement was the separation of animal life into the categories of vertebrate and invertebrate.

At the bottom of Mare Fecunditatis lies Colombo, named for Christopher Columbus, and Cook, named for Captain James Cook. In the same lunar sea but closer to the equator lies Hagelhaens, named for Ferdinand Magellan, the seafaring circumnavigator, and Lindbergh, named for Charles Lindbergh, the American aviator who led the way in transatlantic flight.

Earth's polar explorers are suitably remembered at the lunar poles: Amundsen and Scott's 100 km craters are at the lunar South Pole. Roald Amundsen was the Norwegian explorer who won a dramatic race in late 1911 to become the first person to reach the (Earth's) South Pole. The craters Nansen and Byrd are near the lunar North Pole. Fridtjof Nansen was another Norwegian explorer, his ship, the *Fram*, infiltrated farther north than any of its predecessors. The *Fram* was locked in the polar ice in 1895, only a few degrees from the North Pole.

In 1970 the IAU broke its rules and assigned the names of twelve astronauts and cosmonauts to lunar craters; the most famous being Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins, the three Apollo-II astronauts, the first men to walk on the moon.

A few well-known political figures are remembered for their scientific, rather than their political, successes. Caesar is a large, ancient crater near the centre of the moon, named for Julius Caesar, who enhanced our calendar. A younger crater in the northern highlands is named Franklin, after Benjamin Franklin, the American

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IT IS AMAZING WHO YOU MEET ON THE MOON PART 1

David M Jones

statesman whose famous kite experiment helped prove the electrical nature of lightning. Sir Thomas Brisbane, a Scottish politician, soldier, and amateur astronomer, has a crater named in his honour -- *Brisbane*. His crater is situated near the "shore" of Mare Australe.

Many named craters are hard, if not impossible, to spot with a small telescope from Earth, however, hundreds of them can be found. Finding craters that have some particular importance can be an enjoyable and informative activity. With practice, discovering the lunar face can be a pleasure, especially when particular names are tied to memories significant in the history of the human race. (Hodge, 1999)

Over the next twelve months – and maybe longer if I find

the subject as engrossing as I think it might turn out to be - I will look more closely at some of the less well-known 'named craters' bearing the names of those who have achieved remarkable feats and have helped advance human knowledge at an exponential rate.

A majority of the named craters are for those long deceased; most are also male. There are however about 68 craters that carry female names; at least forty of these being female scientists. Currently I have a list of approximately twelve-hundred named craters, and so am spoiled for choice. Our journey around the moon will reveal some not so well-known names, but names, lives, and achievements that nevertheless deserve to be revisited on their silent, distant, ancient memorial world.

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Prime Focus Article Submission

Deadline for article submissions for the next edition of Prime Focus is

Monday 8th March 2010

All Articles can be submitted via email editor@macastro.org.au

Or via snail mail to the MAS Postal address

**PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF EMAIL ADDRESS
FOR SUBMISSIONS!!!**