



PRIME FOCUS

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President's Report

August/Sept has been a lot less hectic for astronomical events, coupled with some great skies. This has given me time to go out and do some real observing. Most of the planets are currently visible in the night sky from around early twilight.

I observed Mercury (early Aug.) just above Leo and slightly SW of Venus which was very bright at -3.8 mag. Mars was floating around the top of Spica (early-mid Aug) and just below the Moon. Jupiter was also extremely bright at -2.9 just above the Moon. Saturn, our ringed beauty, was located (Aug 21) just outside the constellation of Pisces and also just above the Moon, but slightly disappointing as it is currently quite small.

We are fast approaching the time when our Society telescope arrives. More will be said in the Journal when it arrives. Hopefully we are looking at 3-4 weeks, so it will be available for all members to look it over hopefully at our next observing night at Cobbity, or at our next meeting at the University.

Thanks to Bob for running the first MAS

workshop--deep-sky meeting. I know a lot of research goes into these talks and is greatly appreciated.

The Journal last month was one of the best. This is mainly due to the input from other Society members and the contributions by our regular writers. Thanks to all of you for keeping our Journal informative and great reading. Keep up the good work!

Great viewing for the Solar eclipse on Sept 2nd at 8am. (Ha ha.) Poor Eric couldn't wait to use his new solar filter, pity the weather was so dismal.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

I have magazines and books to borrow, plus plenty of handouts courtesy of Chris Barnett from the Internet on all topics relating to Astronomy.

COMING EVENTS—

Oct 20th-- Steve Manos on NASA and ASRI. Practical demonstration of a rocket motor (outside building). Also on the same venue is a special guest, Brett McMillan of

The Sutherland Astronomical Society who will be showing a short 15-30 min slide presentation about the 18th Amateur Astronomy Convention in April next year.

Oct 23rd-- (Thursday) 7.30 pm.
Astronomer Dr. Rachel Webster from Melbourne at the University Of Western Sydney, Macarthur.

Nov 8th - Camp Constellation 6 (Date still to be confirmed).

Nov 17th - Astronomer Andrew Reid is talking to us about Galaxies and Radio Astronomy.

Dec 7th - Christmas Picnic. It will be held either at Pembroke Park or a new site yet to be determined. (Possibly Mt. Annan.) Ideas and suggestions welcome.

There will be no meeting in December as it is too close to Christmas. However, we are recommencing in January with maybe a trivia night or short talk by a prominent member of this society. Plus Sutherland Astronomical Society with a 15 minute slide presentation (Yet to be confirmed).

Jan 21-23rd -- International Conference on SETI in the 21st Century. Enroll by Sep 30th for cheaper rates of \$175 (students \$50.00). \$250 after September 30th.

10th April 1998 -- Registration by 31st Jan. 1998 for the 18th National Australian Convention of Amateur astronomers.

Latest News

Mir is up and running: After further catastrophes of oxygen generator failing again, it was repaired. The station is now almost fully operational again.

Mars Pathfinder: After being switched off yet again to recharge its batteries, it is still going strong on Sol 50 or approx. 8 weeks. It continues to be able to rove around and send valuable data to Earth. It is now going on its longest trek and will soon venture over the two hills that can be seen in the distance from Pathfinder.

Global Surveyor: Starts aerobraking into the Martian atmosphere. It's scheduled to start taking pictures in Jan-Feb 98.

Phil Ainsworth (President) ■

Dear Editor,

We have just experienced the ultimate in stargazing luxury !

Not for us freezing in a cold paddock, huddled under a blanket, clutching a mug of coffee in an attempt to keep warm.

No, we lay back under the stars in a private, roofless bathroom and wondered at the Milky Way. Each of these bathrooms has two baths so you even have company and unlimited hot water. In fact, cold water is the problem as the water comes from the Artesian Bore at a temperature of 50 degrees.

Where is this paradise? It was the little opal-mining town of Yowah in Southern Queensland. We must confess that the bathrooms were about the only amenity of the cabin/caravan park, but what do you expect for \$130 per week for two people?

It was certainly a unique experience and we shall certainly return to this friendly little town.

P.S. No, we didn't find any opal. We were too busy socialising to look really hard.

Clarice and Eric Stretch

