

PRIME FOCUS

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PRESIDENT
PHIL AINSWORTH

VICE PRESIDENT
NOEL SHARPE

SECRETARY
DAVID MCBEAN

TREASURER
NOEL SHARPE

EDITOR
BOB BEE

MAS : Postal Address PO Box 17 MINTO 2566 Phone (02) 9605 6174

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi to all you waterlogged astronomy lovers.

I'd like this moment to thank Eric Brown for all the hard work he put into being Treasurer. His dedication and willingness to help and have the books accurate and well organised is a credit to him. Eric has resigned as Treasurer for personal reasons and will be remaining in the club as a fellow astronomer. I'm certain his input will continue in its usual high standard. I'm confident Noel who is now doubling up as Treasurer and VP will be able to take over smoothly. We wish him every success for the rest of the year. I will remain President. However, also until the end of the year I will be accepting the role of Secretary, as Dave is unable to fulfill his obligations due to personal/study commitments.

Unfortunately our Star Party had to be cancelled due to very poor weather. However, the talk by Seth Shostak on was as entertaining, informative and as enjoyable as usual. The Society is purchasing one of his books, which Dave Macey tells me is written in Seth's usual amusing and simple to understand style. By next month, the book will be available for borrowing, I will have a list on the notice board for those who wish to read it. Please also write or tick your name next to any item on the library list and I will bring it along to the next meeting for you to borrow.

Thanks to all the members and their families who attended and helped at the Star Party. Next year we are looking at holding the annual event in March or November, when it is warmer and less likely to rain and be as cold and unpleasant outside.

Tonight we are privileged to have Peter Williams from the Sutherland Astronomical Society. He will be speaking from about 8.30pm about Variable Stars, so in the mean time we will enjoy supper and a short film on space. This evening will be taped, so as much quite should be maintained as possible. Also Seth Shostak's talk was recorded and put into our library for those members who miss these two nights.

COMING EVENTS

1. August Sun. 23rd. -- Open Day at UWS Macarthur-- Star Night to be held that night if weather permits and interest shown by the public on the day. We will have a stall with 1 or 2 scopes showing visible astronomical objects which can be seen during the day. Helpers please let me or Noel know of your availability on the day or night. Hopefully this will make up for the

disappointment of the rained out Star Party two weeks ago.

2. September 19th -- Camp Constellation. This event is a great social occasion and is usually on rain, hail or starlight. A BYO BBQ is always a great fun time, so come early around 4.- 4.30 pm to enjoy the afternoon as well as the night's viewing. Unfortunately, last time we had a slight problem with cigarette butts and rubbish. Please take all rubbish home with you or place it in a garbage bag which will be supplied on the night by yours truly.

Remember rug up on these nights and have plenty of hot drinks as it does get cold down at Wilton.

3. September speaker is yet to be confirmed as is October's. (I may speak). However it is almost guaranteed November will be Jonathan Nally from 'Sky & Space'.

4. December-- First Sunday 6th-- Christmas Pool Party at my place. BBQ - BYO food & drinks. Please let me know if interested by placing your name on the notice board.

If you know anyone who would like to speak at our society or maybe yourself, let us know so we can book them or yourself in for next year. Bob, Peter, Noel, Dick, Pete & Bobbie etc; just to name a few.

NEWS

Macarthur Chronicle has now been kind enough to allow our editor Bob Bee to write a fortnightly article on Astronomy called 'Heavens Above!'. I have read it and it is written for the average person in the street so they can have some idea of what objects can and will be seen (weather permitting) in our night sky. Good one Bob and keep up the good work.

As you may have also read in the local Macarthur papers, The Advertiser had an article on Ragbir Bhathal and the now confirmed observatory for the University. The 16" Meade will not only provide status for our Society and the University, but it is hoped Society members will be able to perform some meaningful astronomical observations. For those who have not seen the article, it will be pinned up on the notice board. Also, the Observatory is proposed to be finished by the end of this year, and for use by March 1999. Many thanks to Ragbir for all his research and hard work which has gone into providing a top quality telescope for the University. I wish to also thank all those in the telescope committee for all their hard work in picking the site for the scope.

Special thanks to Carol Oliver for organising Seth Shostak's talk and promotions, Daniel Ross for promotions and organising the night and Dave and Philip Macey for

getting the food for the multitudes that would have come except for the inclement weather and all those others in the Society too numerous to mention for also helping out on the Star Night. Without your hard work the night despite the weather would not have been as enjoyable or nearly as successful.

Great Balls Of Fire

Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to strike small cities with a single hit. Earth is constantly being bombarded by these extraterrestrial visitors from the cold of space. This month however in the wee hours of 6.13 am, an extremely bright object was seen over our skies and it just so happened to be a meteor which burned up in the atmosphere before hitting us (thank goodness).

An asteroid is predicted to pass incredibly close to Earth on October 27th, 2028 and will be visible from any given location. I can't say I will look forward to the event, as I will be probably in a nursing home for the aged

Phil Ainsworth (President) ■

WHAT'S TO SEE THIS MONTH? (17/8 - 21/9/98)

It's not a good time for the Inner Planets. They will all be rising too close to sunrise for meaningful viewing except for the early rising diehards.

But if you're keen:

- on 19th & 20th August, about 30 min. before sunrise, **Venus** nestles against M44, the Beehive Cluster in Cancer, just above the horizon.

- on 1st September, there will be a nice arrangement of **Mars, Venus and Mercury**, again about ½ hour before sunrise. This time Mars will be snuggled against M44, while Mercury and Venus hug the horizon.

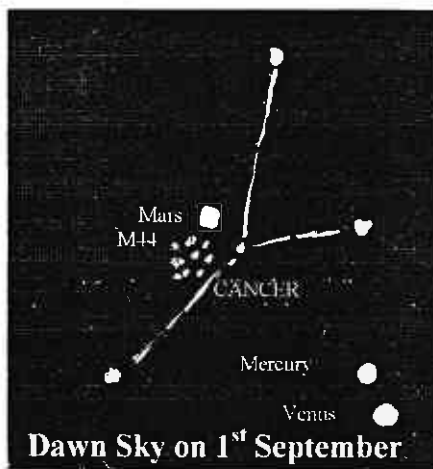
(There appears to be a lot of nestling, snuggling and hugging going on this month. Better check the water.)

However, the two views described won't last long, as the approaching dawn will wash it out. (The proverbial bucket of water?)

The Outer Planets make up for the Inners' poor show.

Jupiter's rising time gets earlier from 17th August (7.50pm) to 21st Sep (5.30pm) so it is effectively viewable all night every night. It reaches opposition on 16th Sep, with a disk of almost 50" and a mag. -2.9. Now's the time to see it close and bright.

Has anyone been watching the 'Dance of the Moons?' If so, they are expected to be all on the same side of Jupiter on 17th, 26th and 27th August, and 7th, 10th, 17th and 21st Sep.



Saturn is rising later, from 10.45pm on 17th August down to 8.30pm on 21st September. So if you start viewing late enough, you'll be able to catch both Jupiter and Saturn. Test your scope out on the Red Spot, the Galilean moons, the Rings, and Saturn's Titan.

Meteor Showers.

I haven't mentioned meteor showers in previous issues. They are an acquired taste. But after the excitement of the '6.13 Express' over Gosford, I'll mention a few (courtesy of Astronomy '98). You never know your luck.

Northern iota-Aquarids (hey - I just report 'em, not name 'em) can be seen in the eastern sky late in the evening, moving at dawn to the western sky. The 'rush hour' reaches a maximum of about 3 meteors/hour on 20th August, but the shower

continues to the end of August.

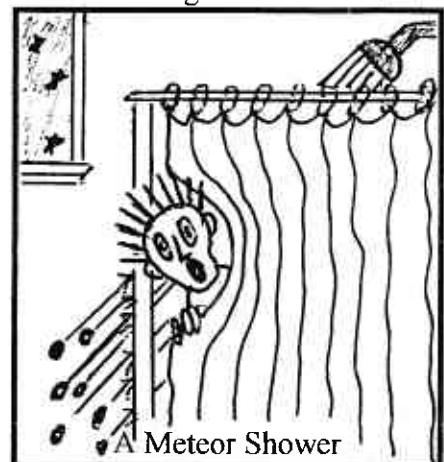
The Piscids (pronounced pie-sids) is an obscure shower, so there are no guarantees of a great show here. However, they also have an expected maximum rate of 3 meteors per hour on 20th September, but the shower is active all through September.

The Constellations

A quick look at your Star Wheel (... what? You don't have one? Ask your fellow society member Terry Story from York Optical - he'll be glad to sell you one) will show you that the following are in an ideal viewing location this month for, say 7.30 - 10pm time slots:

Crux, Scorpius (ah... lovely Antares), Aquila (with Altair of Forbidden Planet fame), Aquarius (with its M2 Glob, and the Saturn & Helix Planetary nebulae), Cetus (with Tau Ceti, the nearest single star most like our Sun) and Tucana (with the SMC and 47 Tucanae Glob.) to name a few.

Good Seeing Bob Bee ■



A RETROSPECTIVE OF PRIME FOCUS ARTICLES FOR 1996-97

In its first two years, Prime Focus contained many articles which are still interesting and relevant. Some members have asked for back issues in order to obtain specific articles. The Committee has agreed that rather than supply whole back issues of Prime Focus (very expensive in paper and time), copies of specific articles may be supplied on request.

The following is a catalogue of articles published over 1996-97. For your information, the author and month/year of issue is provided with each article. For simplicity, the articles have been divided into various categories.

(Legend: RB = Bob Bee; PA = Phil Ainsworth, NS = Noel Sharpe; PD = Peter Druery; DE = Dick Everett; JC = John Casey; SM = Steve Manos; CO = Carol Oliver)

Constellations: (by RB)

Orion (Feb 96); S/Cross (May 96);
Centaurus (Jun 96); Tucana (Sep 96);
Cetus (Nov 96); Taurus (Feb 97);
Cancer (Mar 97); Hydra (Apr 97);
Leo (Apr 97); Scorpius (Jun 97);
Sagittarius (Aug97); Aquarius (Oct97);
Eridanus (Nov 97).

Apollo Missions: (By PA)

An Overview (Mar 97);
Apollo 7 (Apr 97); Apollo 8 (Jun 97);
Apollo 9 (Aug 97); Apollo 10 (Oct97);
Apollo 11 (Nov 97).

Planets:

The Planets (PA) (July 96)
The Martian Frontier (PA) (Aug 96)
Viking (PA) (Sep 96)
Martian Update (PA) (Sep 96)
Jupiter – A Detailed Look (SM)
– Pt 1 (Nov 96); Pt 2 (Feb 97)

Telescopes:

My First Telescope (NS) (Sep 96)
Choosing A Telescope (PD) (Nov 96)
The Learning Curve –1 (NS) (Mar 97)
The Learning Curve –2 (NS) (Apr 97)
Astron. by Video Camera (JC) (Jun97)

Technical Articles:

My, What A Big Telescope You Have (RB)
(May 96);
Oh Be A Fine Girl Kiss Me Now (Spectral Star
Classes) (RB) (Jun96);
A Little Light History (PD)
-Pt 1 (Jul 96); Pt 2 (Aug 96);
Reflections (SM) (Jul 96);
Redshift (SM) (Sep 96);
Comets–What Are They(RB)(May97);
Cosmology Models (JC)
- Pt 1 (Oct 97); Pt 2 (Nov 97)

General & Humorous:

Comet Hyakutake (RB) (Apr 96);
Inaugural Star Night (RB) (Apr 96);
Black Holes (RB) (May 96);
The Eagle Has Landed (NS) (May 96);
A Cast of Thousands (NS) (Jun 96);
Who Murdered The Dinosaurs? (NS)
#1 (Oct96); #2 (Nov96); #3 (Feb97);
SETI (ET Phone Home) (CO)(Nov96);
Some Xmas Observ'ns (RB)(Feb97);
Any Port in a Storm (NS) (Feb 97);
Front Yard Astronomer (PA) (Apr 97);
Shooting The Moon (PD) (Apr 97);
The Lone Stargazer (NS) (Jun 97);
Getting Started (DE)
#1 (Jun 97); #2 (Aug 97); #3 (Nov 97);
The Planets In Motion (JC) (Aug 97);

Editor

