



What Happened to the Newsletter?

What can I say other than a big *SOOORRY* for not getting out any newsletter editions over the past months?

I have a range of excuses lined up but you don't want to hear them so let's focus instead on what's to come in the weeks ahead and the content of this edition of the Newsletter.

Firstly there is our normal list of what's on, we also need to say a big 'Well Done' to Neil Booker for his continued efforts to send in contributions. So come on the rest of you – follow Neil's example and let me have any news, pictures you have taken, gadgets you have made, or good ways you have worked out of doing things. One of the big benefits of a club like ours is the inherent networking that can go on by way of sharing our own knowledge and skills.

This newsletter is just one way, our meetings and the web site are others.

Your contribution, however small will help us all to get that little bit more from our membership

Alwyn Howes - Editor

Society Meetings and Events

All meetings detailed below will be held at St George's Church Hall, George Street, Dumfries. The hall will be available from 7:00 p.m. If you would like directions to the hall or have any enquiries about any event get in touch with one of the contacts at the end of this newsletter.

Tuesday, 17 January 2006

Klaus Schiller will give us an update on *The Outer Solar System*

Tuesday, 14 February 2006

Our President, Mark Toner, will be the speaker at this meeting. Watch the web site for confirmation of the exact topic.

Tuesday, 14 March 2006

Dr Alec Mackinnon (University of Glasgow) will be the speaker. Topic still to be confirmed.

Tuesday, 18 April 2006

Alwyn Howes will give us an update on his new observatory, discussing the issues surrounding remote control of a telescope and hopefully some first images...

Tuesday, 9 May 2006

Annual General Meeting.

Try This Web Site



We can thank Jeff for bringing our attention to this web site during a talk he gave a while back. The address is www.planetary.org and contains a mass of material both data and pictures covering many aspects of astronomy. This site can be used as a reference for your own interests or you can become a 'member' and contribute to its future. To quote from the site...

"Why Join?"

Planetary Society Members in 125 countries asked themselves the same question.

You'll be part of Earth's largest and most effective non-governmental space action group."

Stardust Comet Treasure Retrieved



The Stardust return capsule landed in pre-dawn darkness and windy conditions on the salt flats of the Utah range 15 January at 3:10 a.m. local time, two minutes early and intact.

It was the conclusion of a 7-year, 4.63 billion kilometre (2.88 billion mile) round-trip journey to comet Wild 2 which took Stardust around the Sun three times, beyond Mars and the asteroid belt, as far out as half-way to Jupiter, and back in time 4.5 billion years to gather its precious treasure from the comet's nucleus.





Did You Know?

The committee were all re-elected at the last AGM?

The club has its own telescope? Yep, it's a six inch Newtonian and is currently looked after by Neil. Have a word with him if you don't have your own telescope and would like a demonstration...

The club needs some fresh ideas for upcoming vacant lecture spots – what would like to learn about or take part in?

Also coming up

The moon seems the place to be...

23 January

Jupiter 5 deg north of moon

27 January

Saturn at opposition

28 January

Venus 12 deg north of moon

31 January

Uranus 1.7 deg north of moon

5 February

Mars 2 deg south of moon

11 February

Saturn 4 deg south of moon

17 February

Venus greatest illuminated extent...!

20 February

Jupiter 5 deg north of moon

15 March

Penumbral lunar eclipse

19 March

Jupiter 5 deg north of moon

29 March

Total solar eclipse (partial from the UK)

22 April

Lyrids maximum

4 May

Jupiter at opposition

Send Us Your Images

Well done to Neil Booker for the following image taken to show the apparent **colour change of the rising moon**.

Not only has he given us the picture, but read up on his adventurous night out in order to be able to produce this very original image. (see later)

(Ed.)



First light for Alwyn's observatory – set up at Castle Douglas

Do we mean what we say?

What we say:

"I live in a moderately light polluted area."

What we mean:

I'm about ready to go on a rampage and shoot out the entire street and flood lights within 10 miles.

What we say:

"If you dress properly, cold weather observing is no problem."

What we mean:

I haven't lost any fingers or toes to frostbite yet.

What we say:

"Yes, it takes a few minutes to get set up, but the views through this big daddy dob are unbelievable."

What we mean:

This behemoth has finally worn me down. Want to buy it?

What we say:

"I can't quite make out the spiral arms in that galaxy."

What we mean:

Where's the galaxy? My night vision died ten years ago

Borrowed from the Kingston RASC Astro Notes newsletter



Neil's Night Out

One night at the end of the day I was trying to set the alarm at work so that I could leave the place to go home. The alarm wouldn't set so the duty manager and I had to hunt down the problem, which luckily didn't take too long. Driving home I wondered why that had happened.

Then I had my answer. I saw the Moon low on the horizon and, just as the setting Sun looks red due to the greater amount of atmosphere it has shine through, so the Moon was a very, deep & dark red. I thought that, as it rose higher it would become whiter, and should make an interesting photograph. I could use the technique, where you hold open the shutter with a cable release and take the lens cap off and on quickly. Then repeating the procedure until the Moon is out of the field of view. If the alarm hadn't played up I never have had the idea.

So I hurried home as fast as the speed limit would allow and, once home ran indoors and said "Hi mum, throw it (my supper) under the grill, I'll get it later." I put some film in the camera while cursing myself for not doing it the other day, grabbed the tripod and ran out of the house. As there were trees between the Moon and me I had to go back up the single-track lane to a clear spot. Even though it was after 11pm I knew that if I took the car someone would want to get past. So I ran there (my knees were sore for a week after that) and as 'Sod's law' would have no one came at all.

I hurriedly set up the camera, opened the shutter, took the lens cap off and put it back quickly, waited 5 minutes to take the next exposure and cocked it up so that I had to start all over again. All the time the Moon was getting higher and whiter which meant losing the wide change in colour. While I was taking these first shots I was aware that I was standing on something which I hadn't noticed in my haste to set up. Out with the torch to have a closer look.... AAAARGH DIRTY DOG OWNERS.

Anyway, after the five minutes time for the next exposure, steps up to the camera and squelch! I'd just been reminded that I was supposed to watch my step. In the field next to the lane where I'd set up were three horses that came over to see what I was up to. They stood there in front of the camera with me trying to shoo them away as the seconds quickly ticked away to the next exposure. Luckily the one in the way stepped back and long ways across so that I could get the shot of over it's back between it's bu..., err rump and shoulders. Then one was determined to sniff the camera, which would have nudged it, and I would've lost the moment. It was a persistent beggar and I didn't want to slap its nose too hard as it was bigger than I was. Fortunately it gave up and the three of them left me to it.

Twiddling my thumbs for five minutes, I mused that it's a nice clear night with only a few clouds, one of which is about to move in front of the Moon so it must be about time for the next exposure. Careful where I step, lens cap off and back on, watch the cloud move from in front of the Moon.

So, what shall I do for the next five minutes? I've not seen a satellite yet. You often see them but I haven't seen one tonight. I know I'll look for one. AHHHGGGG WHAT THE... A bloody bat had appeared in front of my face. Horses and now bats coming to see what I'm up to. What next? Badgers? Deer? Haggis? Maybe that wasn't doggie whasit I was standing on but a previous astrophotographer surprised by a bat. Another cloud, another exposure. A couple more and the Moon should safely be out of the frame so I can pack up and get my supper. (Yes, this assumption did prove to be wrong).

After that night, I had the luck to be able to finish that reel of film. On the Friday I took it to the developers and said, "Could I pick it up tomorrow?" They said, "Yes". So, on Saturday I left for work early so that I could pick up the photos. Guess where I was when I realised that neither of us had remembered that they don't open on Saturdays? Yep, outside the shut shop. After a long weekend looking forward to seeing my masterpiece I bowled round to the shop to pick up my photos. After all that imagine my disappointment when I got this...



...well done Neil -Ed





Time to try out a Web Cam for some imaging...

Go and buy a web cam for less than £30, connect it up to any old PC you can find. Get some free software from the likes of Astrostack.

Take twenty images or a short length of video then use the software to average out the images and you can produce something like the following... these were taken on an eight inch LX10.



For Sale

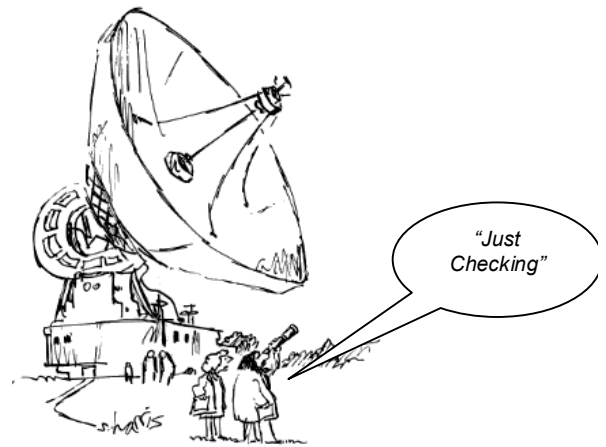
Meade tripod for 8 or 10 inch Schmidt Cassegrain telescope in mint condition as scope permanently mounted £30

Range of photographic equipment including:

- Olympus OM1
- Another Olympus OM1
- An Olympus OM4
- Large range of filters
- Assorted telephoto lenses
- Range of bulb releases
- Mount for fixing a camera to a car glass or metal panel
- Range of other bits and bobs..

Any sensible offers considered before the items are put up on EBay for auction.

Contact – Alwyn Howes 01556 660224



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