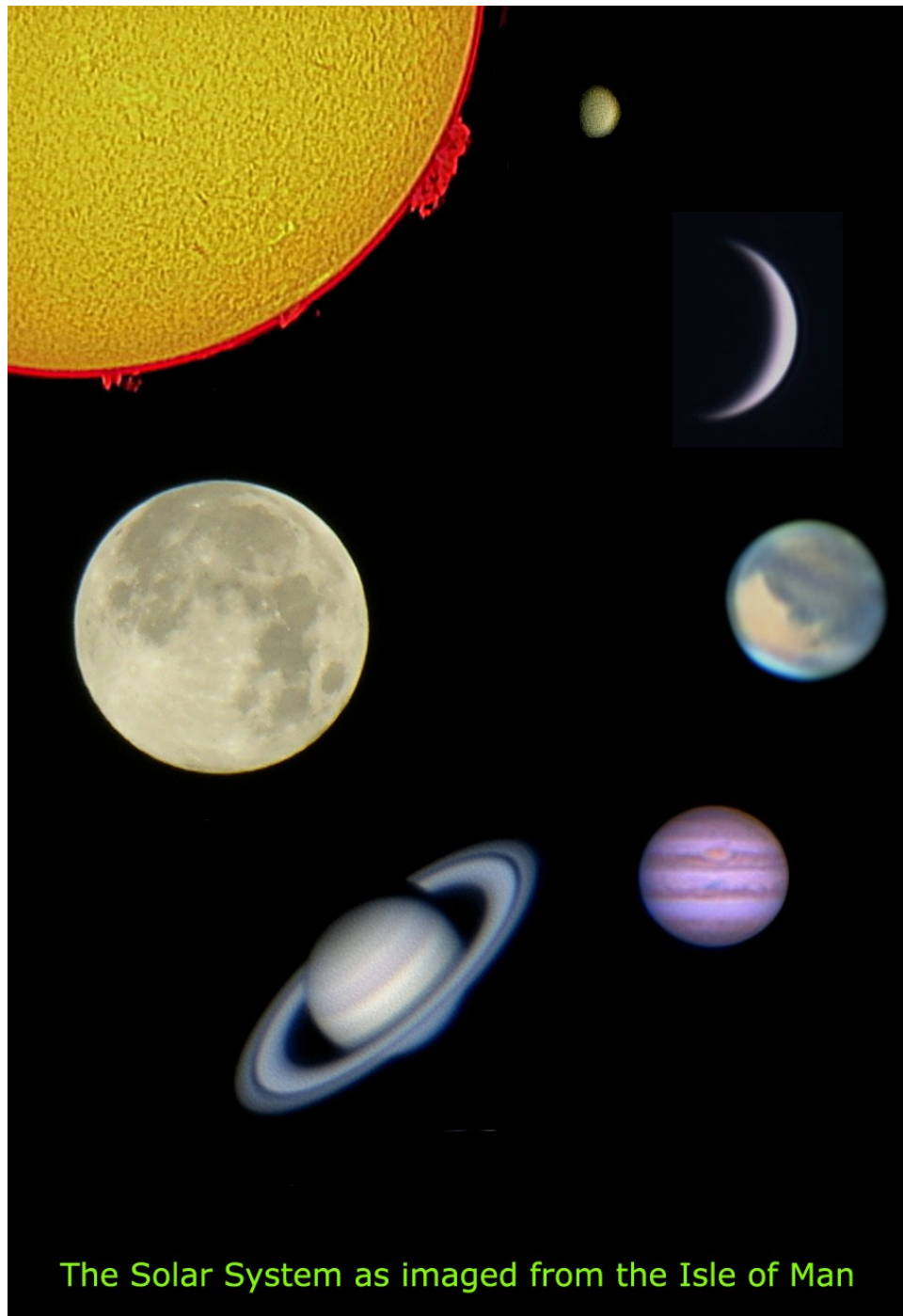




Newsletter October-December 2008

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The Solar System as imaged from the Isle of Man

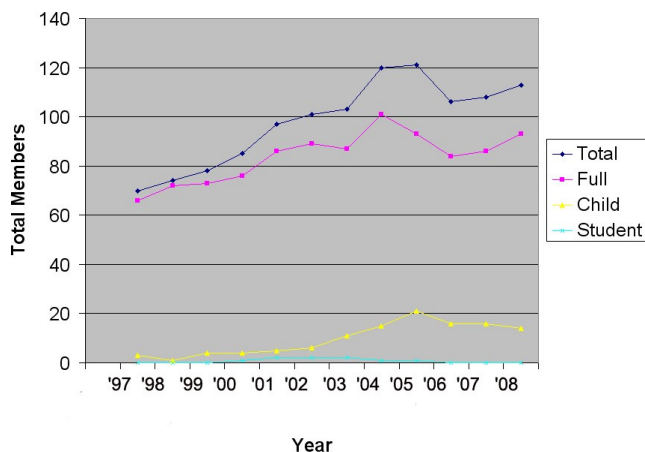
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Isle of Man Astronomical Society - Annual General Meeting
Chairman's report – 2nd October 2008

Members of the IOM Astronomical Society, ladies & Gentleman, On behalf of the IOMAS I would like to welcome you all here this evening. In particular I would like to give a warm welcome to one of our overseas members, Chris Stott, Chief Executive of ManSat who has travelled all the way from a hurricane ravaged Houston, Texas in the USA. We are all looking forward to your talk later on.

This is now my fourth report to you since I took over from Mike Kelly in September 2004 and during this time we have continued to develop as a Society with a steady flow of new members. We continue to have many talks, meeting and visits at the observatory and a great deal of interest in the subject from the public and the media. We now have well over a 100 members and with an average attendance at our meetings of around 50, the future for Manx astronomy is looking very promising, and as I said last year I am proud to be Chairman of one of the Islands leading Societies.

IoMAS Membership 1997-2008



This chart which membership secretary, Dave Storey put together shows the membership over the last few years. As you can see we enjoyed a real surge in members following the BAA conference here in 2004, but we are still showing a very healthy position and hopefully we will continue to flourish. Thank you Dave for putting this together.

Throughout the last 12 months we have had a full programme of talks and meeting and we are delighted to have welcomed a number of both off and on Island visitors to the observatory. Without exception all of the talks have gone very well indeed with a great deal of expertise, confidence and humour. At this point I need to apologise for my own absence for a number of meetings, and my having to arrive late, due to my attending a training course on Thursdays which affected my ability to get to the meetings. You may be pleased to know that I have now completed my course and so will I now be able to attend on a far

more regular basis. The year started with an excellent talk at last years AGM by Glynn Marsh, and I am absolutely delighted to welcome Glynn back again tonight, not just as a member but now a Manx resident. One of the first things we did when Glynn came over was to co-opt him onto the committee, and we are all looking forward to Glyn's contributions to the IOMAS over the forthcoming years

In October, to commemorate exactly 50 years on the day, since the dawn of the space age we had a short papers evening and had an excellent talks from Roy Allen, a poem from Gary Kewin, a audio tape from myself and a short film from Mark Henthorne, Quite a night of nostalgia. In November Mark also gave us a fascinating talk on "Making sense of Scale" which provided us with the analogy that Voyager has just got to the Braaid! I gave a talk on the Copernican revolution in December and stepped up again in February with a talk on Mars when Dave was called away. In between in January, Graham Gordon related the tale of their trip to see the shuttle launch the previous November. March saw our popular workshop night and special thanks must go to all of the Committee plus Alan Buck and Paul Milligan for their excellent contributions.

The equally popular short papers meeting saw some excellent talks by Gary Kewin, Amy Gordon, Rob Farrington and Glynn Marsh with subjects as diverse as the colours of the universe and the twin paradox. The Gordon family made it a hat trick of speakers in the year with Johnathan's great presentation on the Kuiper belt objects in May.

Alan Buck gave us an update on Solar observing in June, and James also updated us on the flora and fauna of the IOMASO in July, with a great photo of fox footprints! (well we are in Foxdale!) In August our treasurer Gary Corlett skived off on holiday so Glynn Marsh stepped in to give us a talk on the "Secret life of comets & asteroids" and finally in September Kevin Deakes spoke to us about the modern ability to create models of "Virtual worlds"

Overall we had some great speakers and on behalf of the Society I would like to thank each and every one of you for what is quite a nerve wracking occasion with such a knowledgable audience. All in all we managed to do 8 out of the 12 meetings as advertised in programme so a great effort by all concerned.

Last year I had to cut down on the number of talks I could do for visiting groups and I am delighted that Dave and James managed to do quite a few and between us all we managed to raise a further £300 for club funds. None of these talks could not have been done without the valuable help from a number of members notably Gary Corlett our treasurer for helping me during most of these visits. I also must thank Mark, Gary Kewin and Shirley who were able to assist Dave and James for the talks and

visits they did. We also had a visit by the Friends of Chernobyl's children and I understand the youngsters thoroughly enjoyed their visit, special thanks to Mark, Olwyn, Graham and Angela for their efforts

All of the events that took place last year and this have of course been the culmination of a great deal of hard work from your committee and it is great to work with such a great bunch of enthusiasts who have one principle goal, to encourage everyone to look at the splendours of our Manx Skies. Thank you all most sincerely.

I am also particularly delighted to be able to personally thank our speaker this evening for helping us out earlier this year when we had a problem with the hand controller of the telescope. Chris very kindly offered to help us out by getting a replacement for us in the USA and sending it to us, I was delighted to accept the controller from Ian Jarrit, ManSats treasurer a few months ago, however, not only did Chris get it for us but he did so out of his own pocket as his and Nicole's contribution to the Society. Thank you on behalf of us all.

Speaking of Nicole I must at this point wish her and you every success with the her forthcoming mission to the ISS, what a fantastic opportunity and we all look forward to learning more about it maybe later to night or possibly at a future meeting

We will once again have a full programme of speakers for you in the forthcoming year with subjects as varied as Supernovae, Robotic observatories and meteorites but we are always looking for new topics and speakers! Our short papers meeting this season will be in February so any talks or ideas please let me or any committee member know. In the meantime the new programme is ready and all paid up members can take one home with them tonight, please see Gary or Graham after the AGM with your dosh!

Next year will be a particularly exciting one as it is our 20th anniversary year. As a consequence we will be arranging a number of events throughout the year, undoubtedly one of the highlights of the year will be our anniversary dinner, which we hope to hold at the Creg ny baa hotel, our first ever meeting place, close to our anniversary date in May. Also next year the IAU have designated 2009 as the International Year of astronomy. I understand this is also due to something to do with the 400th year of the telescope, but I think its really for our 20th!

I cannot let tonight go by without mentioning a fantastic achievement by one of our members which we only learnt about recently. Paul Milligan has been taking some fantastic images in recent times and I am delighted to advise that this image has been selected by the Finnish postal authority for inclusion in one of their new 2009 Europa stamps. Paul, this is a great achievement, well done from all of us. IT follows on from Dave having his photo of Saturn used last year as a BAA image of the week, Astronomy is certainly looking up in the Isle of Man.

To run the Society we have a very hard working and dedicated committee and whilst it is not appropriate to single them all out individually as, all of their efforts are greatly appreciated, It would also be remiss of me to not thank many other members for their help and enthusiasm over the years, from making the tea on club nights helping with talks or just by generally supporting us in what we do, to all of you thank you. But I must in particular thank Dave Storey for his continued efforts in putting together the quarterly newsletter for over 4 years now, it's a great addition to our Society and thanks for all the efforts. I know Dave would love to receive more features for it so please if you have anything for Dave let him know. I would also like to thank James for his efforts with the additional informal meeting on club nights in the Winter, again it's a great addition to what we do as a Society

Members of the Isle of Man Astronomical Society, Ladies & Gentlemen. I am proud to have had the opportunity to have served as your chairman for the last four years and I have thoroughly enjoyed them. Thank you for your support and kind attention and here's to clear skies and good seeing throughout the forthcoming observing season and beyond

Thank you.

Howard L.G.Parkin
Chairman,
Isle of Man Astronomical Society

2nd October 2008

Meetings

Listed below are the planned meetings at the observatory. The meetings in *italics* are for groups outside of the IoMAS, but any member is allowed to attend these meetings where you may help with the visit, or just use the telescopes. Note these meetings may change at short notice. Contact the host of the meeting to confirm. Also, see the IoMAS website as this has a page that is continuously updated.

2nd October. AGM Followed by Guest Speaker Chris Stott on “Why Space and the Isle of Man”

9th October. *MEA Sports and Social Visit. Hosted by Dave Storey and James Martin.*

16th October. Committee Meeting

6th November Monthly Meeting. “Charles Butterworth. Part 2” by Gary Kewin

11th November. *St German’s Mothers Union Visit. Hosted by Dave Storey.*

12th November. *IoM Caravan Club Visit.*

20th November Committee Meeting

4th December Monthly Meeting. “Meteorites” by Gary Corlett

Mid December. IoMAS Christmas Dinner. Date and Venue to be Confirmed

18th December. Committee Meeting

8th January 2009. Monthly Meeting. “The Manx Sky in 2009” by Howard Parkin and “I Hope It’s Clear” by John McDermott.

Note the first Thursday in January 2009 is New Years Day, so the usual meeting date has been delayed to the 8th.

The Manx Night Sky. October - December 2008

All times are Universal Time (UT). IoM time is BST up to 02.00 on 26 October, so don’t forget to add 1 hour to the times quoted to get IoM time. After this date, IoM time is the same as UT.

Moon

New	1 st Qtr.	Full	3 rd Qtr.
28 th Oct. 23.14hrs	7 th Oct. 09.04hrs	14 th Oct. 20.02hrs	21 st Oct. 11.55hrs
27 th Nov. 16.55hrs	6 th Nov. 04.03hrs	13 th Nov. 06.17hrs	19 th Nov. 21.31hrs
27 th Dec. 12.22hrs	5 th Dec. 21.26hrs	12 th Dec. 16.37hrs	19 th Dec. 10.29hrs

Lunar Occultation’s: (Stars brighter than magnitude +6.0)

Date	Time (h.m:s)	Star	SAO#	Magnitude	PA	Type of Event	Notes
8 Oct	19.46:24	ZC2961	189114	5.9	061	DD	4 Capricorni
17 Oct	23.45:11	ZC647A	76573	5.4	256	RD	Chi Tauri
21 Oct	02.21:39	ZC1161	79607	5.9	310	RD	
22 Oct	05.56:54	ZC1310	98087	3.9	283	RD	Delta Cancrri
6 Nov	18.34:47 to 18.35:03	Neptune		7.9	121	DD	
16 Nov	22.09:59	ZC1092	79162	5.8	301	RD	48 Geminorum
19 Nov	01.01:41	ZC1310	98456	5.3	266	RD	Pi2 Cancrri
1 Dec	15.39:26 to 15.40:04	Venus		-4.1	063	DD	Daytime. Moon Altitude 11 degrees
1 Dec	17.09:24 to 17.09:58	Venus		-4.1	249	RB	Moon Altitude 5 degrees
6 Dec	21.51:02	ZC3494	128336	4.5	352	DD	Lambda Piscium
13 Dec	22.08:42	ZC1030A	78682	2.9	278	RD	Epsilon Geminorum
14 Dec	06.27:17	ZC1070	78999	5.2	293	RD	Omega Geminorum

Times are UT as seen from IoMAS Observatory. Start to observe these events about 5 minutes before the above times to allow for differences in your latitude and longitude. This will give you time to locate the star that is about to be occulted.

ZC = Zodiacal Catalogue. Type of Event DD = disappearance at dark limb, RD = Reappearance at dark limb. RB = Reappearance on bright limb. PA = Position Angle around limb of the Moon, where 0 degrees is north, 90 degrees is east, 180 degrees is south and 270 degrees is west.

Planetary Highlights

Mercury reaches greatest western elongation of 18 degrees on the 22nd October and will be well placed for observing from the northern hemisphere. It shines at magnitude -0.5 on this date and should be easily picked up with a pair of binoculars. Once you have located the planet, it should be easily seen with the naked eye in a brightening dawn sky.

Venus is an evening star that shines at a very bright -4.1 to -4.3 during the last three months of 2008. It starts off low in the west after sunset during October but will become better placed, higher in the sky as the months progress. On December 1st, it is in conjunction with Jupiter, passing 2 degrees south of fainter

Jupiter. On the same day, Venus will also be occulted by the Moon and a good view will be seen through a telescope.

Mars is poorly placed for observing during the last quarter of 2008, due to being on the far side of the sun.

Jupiter resides low down in the south western sky in Sagittarius, shining at -2.1. Due to its low altitude, the planet will not be best placed for telescopic observations.

Saturn is found in Leo in the morning sky. It rises around 2am at the beginning of October and by the end of December it will be rising at about 22.30 hrs. The planet shines much dimmer compared to previous years as the ring plane is getting narrower as view from earth. They are tilted at -3.5 at the start of October and close to a narrower -0.8 by the end of the year. The magnitude of the planet will be 1.0.

The bright moon Titan can be seen west of Saturn on 7th 8th 9th Oct, 8th 9th 10th Nov. and 10th 11th 12th Dec. and east of the planet on 15th 16th 17th Oct, 16th 17th 18th Nov, and 2nd 3rd 4th 18th 19th 20th Dec.

Meteors:

Orionids are active between 16 – 27 October with a maximum of 25 per hour due on the 20th. There may be some fast moving meteors with persistent trains seen but the Moon will spoil the view this year.

Taurids are active from Oct. 20th to Nov. 30th. Maximum occurs on the 3rd November with a rate of 10 per hour in ideal conditions. Some of these meteors can be slow moving and bright.

Leonids may be seen between 15 – 20 November. 20 meteors per hour in ideal conditions can be expected on the 17th. The predicted time of maximum activity is 12hrs on the day, so by nightfall here in the IoM, activity will have dropped.

Geminids are at maximum of 100 per hour on the night of 13th December at 18hrs. These meteors can be seen between 7 – 16 Dec. and there may be some slow and bright events. Again note that the maximum is in ideal conditions and you would expect to see much less the 100 meteors per hour on maximum night.

Email Addresses

Please can you remember to advise James Martin and Dave Storey of any changes of email addresses. We do send out astronomy related emails now and then and we do receive fail message delivery notices. If you suspect we have your email wrong, then send to James and Dave's email as detailed below.

Observatory Work

A number of members have been doing TLC work in and around the observatory, when the weather co operated. The dome has been cleaned and now shines bright when the sun's out. The rust that has been attacking the base of the external walls has been tackled and we await a dry day to do some paint restoration. A spring clean with the building has been done with some eviction of spiders etc. We have also had the lane hedges trimmed and should be good for a few years. The window in the main club room still needs removing and refitting in an effort to stop it leaking but the weather hasn't obliged as yet. Re grease of the dome rail has been done. Thanks to Glyn Marsh, John McDermott, Graham Gordon and Dave Storey for this work and Gary Kewin for arranging the hedge trimming.

James Martin has also been looking after the care of the two fields and has kindly cut, bailed and removed the bails from the fields. Some repairs to the field boundary have also been carried out. The leaking generator roof has also been repaired with additional roof panelling and the recent breakdown of the generator needed a visit to the repair shop. This is a time consuming task and the committee along with the membership would like to give thanks to James for this important work. As a result of the generator breakdown, the committee have decided a standby generator be available for future use and this has now been purchased. The main generator is now back with us after repairs and service.



Sky Watcher "Skymax 127 " Maksutov-Cassegrain
Donated by Jonathan Latham, June 2008

Telescope Donation

We recently received a donation of a telescope from Jonathan Latham who has had to put astronomy on the burner for a while. The telescope is a SkyMax 127 Maksutov-Cassegrain and is available to loan to fully paid up members. Please ask Dave Storey about loaning this telescope.

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Please ring the Dome Phone on any clear night. There should be a committee member there if you're lucky. If you don't get an answer, please try any of the above committee members that have (KEY) next to their name to see if they plan to do some observing. They should be able to try to get the observatory open for you. If you know in advance what you plan to observe, again, ring the above committee members to arrange an observing session.

This newsletter has been very kindly sponsored by "The Office Equipment Centre" Douglas, Isle of Man.