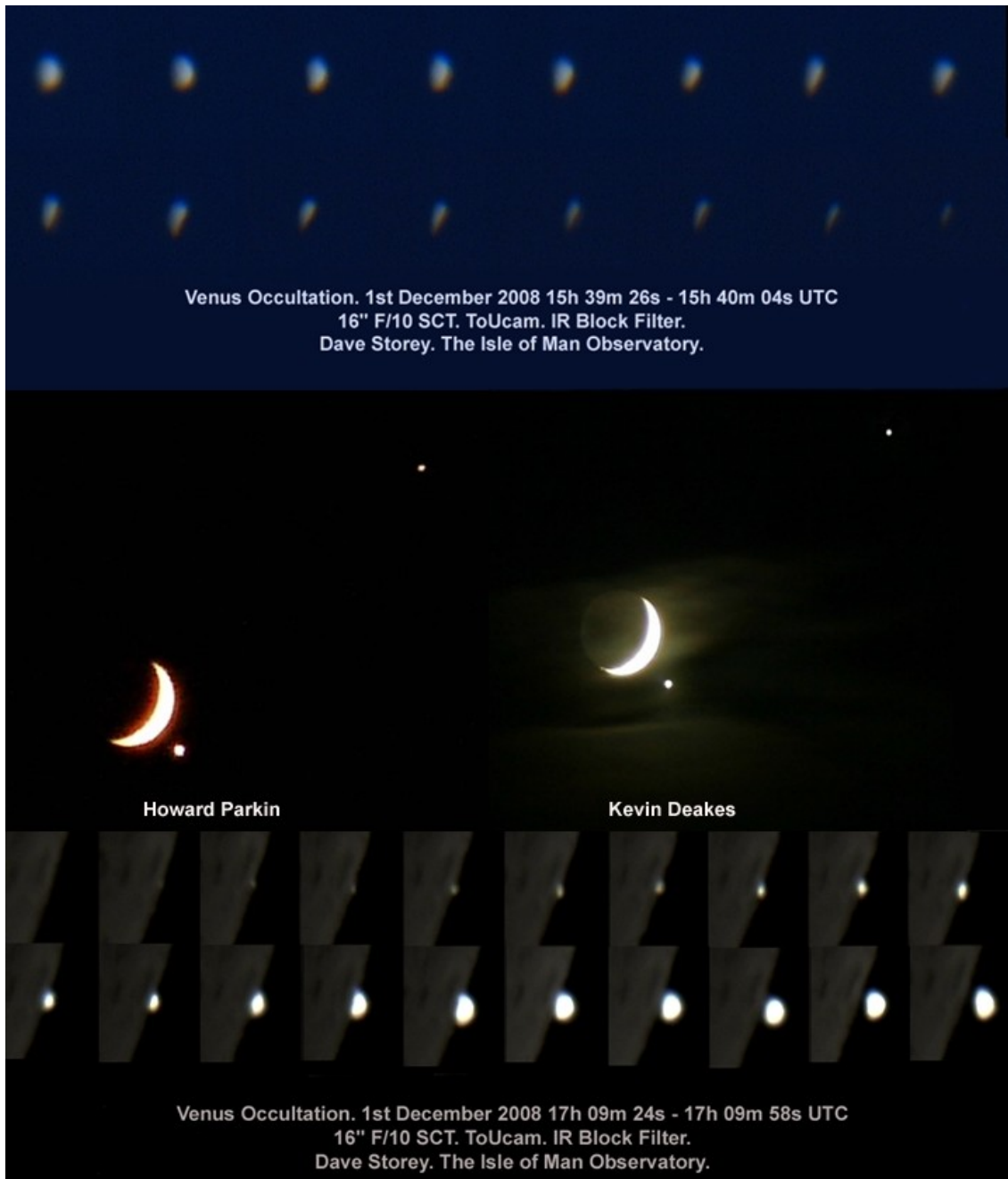




Newsletter January – March 2009

Volume 5 Issue 1



Chairman's Notes

There cannot be many people, not just astronomers, who have failed to see the brilliant object in our night skies recently just after sunset. This is of course the planet Venus that really is spectacular. Over the New Year it really put on a great show for us all, and I was particularly pleased to be able to us find Venus and Jupiter to spot Mercury. I hope you got to see them too, if not we have to wait until April for Mercury in the evening sky and Jupiter will not be visible in the evening until much later in 2009. Venus will continue to dominate the evening sky right through until March; it will be at its brightest on Feb 19th just after Valentines Day! I have lost track of how many times I have explained just what it is in our skies, but hey what the heck it's great that people notice. That said I think the spectacular conjunction and occultation of Venus at the beginning of December was outstanding and congratulations to all who managed to image the event. I have never professed to be an astro photographer, but I was delighted to have been able to capture the event with my little Olympus Mu pocket digital camera. (See front cover) Don't think that you need lots of fancy equipment to take astro photos, it does help, but as my efforts show, it can be easily done, all it needs is a clear sky and a bit of patience and experimentation. The clear sky tends to be the biggest problem from our too often cloud shrouded Island.

As 2009 dawns it is of course a very special year for astronomy, the International Year of astronomy (IYA). (Visit www.astronomy2009.org) The IOMAS are looking at putting on a number of special events to commemorate the year which has been designated the IYA to mark the first telescopic views of the heavens by Galileo back in 1609. The year also sees the 40th anniversary of the first lunar landing on 21st July 1969 as well as our own 20th anniversary in May. More of that later.

The international aspects of the IYA are numerous and I received a call from Manx Radio asking me about the IOMAS plans to commemorate the year. Whilst details have yet to be confirmed we will hopefully be taking part in the UK's Spring and autumn [MoonWatch](#) events at the end of March and October possibly at public sidewalk astronomy evenings at various locations throughout the Island. Another suggestion is to hold a similar event at Tynwald Hill, (you can't get much more Manx than that) Other ideas include a Perseid watch, a public lecture and even a solar observing session. (Are there any members interested in opening up there private observatories to the public? A suggestion akin to "Secret Gardens" in the form of "Secret Observatories" is a possible event. Please let the committee know if you're willing to do this. Ed). We are looking for lots of ideas so if you have any suggestion's please let me or any committee members know.

The other very special event of 2009 is our own 20th anniversary and we are holding a special anniversary dinner at the Creg-ny-baa on Saturday 16th May to mark this event. As most of you know the Creg is our spiritual home and it is great to be able to go back there for the anniversary dinner. Angela Bridson is in charge of the arrangements so if you are interested in attending do let her know ASAP as numbers may have to be limited. I can tell you that we hope to have a special guest speaker from the adjacent Isle on the evening.

2009 will also hopefully see our first member in orbit; Nicole Stott is scheduled to for a shuttle launch up to the ISS for an extended stay in July and we will all be watching this with great interest. We will of course be updating you all as and when information becomes available. Last month Chris Stott invited us all to the Manx Museum in December to a showing of the film "Orphans of Apollo" and it was a fascination and quite moving film. Chris rang me following the event to thank us all for attending, and it shows the level of commitment and interest there is on the IOM about astronomy and Space. Chris commented that they hope to hold other such similar events in the future, watch this space!

Finally a plea to all you all, one of the most satisfying parts of the monthly meetings is the members observations section and in recent months we have been getting quite a few great images. Please let me have any images at least the day before the meeting and I will try and make sure they are included. Remember that the point is it is an observation we include, so it can be an oral record with details of an observation, or it can be a place of astronomical interest you have visited. The more the merrier so please keep them coming.

In the meantime as always keep your eyes to the sky and your feet on the ground.

All the best to you all for 2009, a special year for astronomers everywhere, but for the IOMAS in particular.

Howard

Dublin Out of London Weekend September 2008 by Gary Kewin

I travelled to Dublin and stayed at the Mercer Court Hotel which was okay. The President of the B.A.A., Roger Pickard was staying in the same place. I spent the rest of Thursday having a look around Dublin City. Friday morning September 5th we boarded the coach at Dawson Street to take us to the Montrose Hotel which was situated on outskirts of Dublin. This is where some of the B. A. A. members were staying. Glyn & Christine, Nick James, Tom Boles & his wife, Nick Hewitt, John Mason to name but a few of them. All them asked how the observatory and the society were doing. "Very well" I told them.

I also told them that next year we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary.

We then had a long drive to Birr Castle. We were given a guided tour around the place and the history of the third Earl of Rosse and how he came to build the Telescope, in the middle of Ireland with a local workforce who had not done anything this scale before. We were given unique access to the telescope.

It rained all day and most of us were soaked through. After spending the afternoon at Birr in the café the veg. soup was quite hot to warm us up. After this we then traveled back to Montrose Hotel, where we were to depart for our next trip to the Dunsink Observatory which was along a very narrow road which stopped 5 meters past the entrance to Dunsink Observatory. Keiran, our coach driver, turned it around by reversing through the gates with only inches to spare on either side. We gave him a round applause for this.

We were lectured about what is done at the observatory and the outreach astronomy program to kids who have had a tough start in life. This has turned their lives around with some getting their parents involved as well and buying them telescopes. After the talks, we had chocolate cake and a buffet. After night had fallen, we were taken to the observatory. Inside they have an 8 inch Grubb refractor telescope. I walked back to the main conference facility and when I got back inside, I said to them they the site very good, the only drawback being the light pollution. They were amazed that nobody had ever brought this to their attention before.

The main event was at Bellfield campus across the road from where the Montrose Hotel was situated

On Saturday, Roger Pickard, the BAA President, welcomed us. Then there were talks by Dr. Niall Smith (Blackrock Observatory, Cork) entitled "A 21st Century Observatory in a 16th Century Castle.

Deirdre Kelleghan (IAS) talked about the Irish Astronomical Society and their outreach work.

After lunch, Dr. John Mason (BAA) gave his total solar eclipse report. This was followed by Dr. Stewart Moore (BAA) who talked about Galaxies, their discovery and observation. Nick Hewitt (BAA) followed with more on Galaxies in action. Dr Mohsen Shadmehri (Dublin City University) talked about star formation near the Galaxy center. Professor Tom Ray (Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies) talked on Hubble's successor.

On Saturday evening we went to Montrose Hotel for an evening meal with the guest speaker Leo Enwright who told us some very amusing stories about the little people and space travel.

On Sunday morning we had a very early start getting up at 6 am. to get a coach that took us to Newgrange which is older than the pyramids and Stonehenge, dating back 5000 years. During the summer and winter solstice is the only time when sunlight reaches the very back of the Newgrange Chamber. Going inside, we went down the narrow passage when the sun light shines down into the chamber. All of the stones were beautifully inscribed with circles and swirls. The front was covered in flint with a set of wooden steps on the right. It has a circumference of 200 ft. After going back by coach we decided to go our separate ways I wanted to go to Guinness factory for tour. At 2 pm I met up again with most of the party where we had a few free drinks of Guinness in a glass tower that overlooks the city.

Children from Chernobyl's Visit to the Observatory on the 1st August 2008 by Graham Godon.



The afternoon started with the four of us, Angela, Olwyn and Mark, and Graham preparing the observatory for the arrival of the visiting group. The children arrived with their two interpreters and members of the Friends of Chernobyl Children, which included Joan and Norman Rivers, just as the finishing touches were being carried out.

After a warm welcome from Mark, he proceeded to tell the children about various topics of astronomy which included the events that allow people to see an eclipse and the safety precautions that need to be observed. He also spoke about the methods of viewing eclipses safely and what could be seen. Graham then showed a couple of photographs that he had managed to capture that morning during the partial eclipse to give examples of what can be seen.

We then proceeded outside to take advantage of a clear spell in the weather so that there could be a practical demonstration of safely looking at the Sun using a pin-hole projection tube.

We then stopped for a break where the children were served fruit juices by Angela and Graham, the adults having a welcome cup of tea. Chocolate biscuits and fresh fruit were laid out for the children; the fruit was a great success. They then had a chance to look at and interact with the number of displays and items that had been set up around the room. One of the favourites was the plasma ball at the back of the room, which received such attention that I thought it might crack under all those little hands.

After the break we took the children upstairs where Mark was explained how to use the telescope. Before that Olwyn gave the children a practical demonstration of throwing her voice by using the inside of the dome to good effect. From the look on some of the children's faces it had the desired effect. Returning to the telescope, Mark then explained how it works and how we use it. There then followed a demonstration as it was pointed to a distant cottage up in the hills, and the children took it in turn to view this through the telescope. We then returned to the main room where the children had another short session having a look at the displays around the room before being called out side to the busses.

So ended a very enjoyable time. The children were very well behaved and by the number of calls by their interpreters to leave did not want to go.

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.

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

22nd January Committee Meeting

5th February Monthly Meeting. Member’s Short Papers.

19th February Committee Meeting

5th March Monthly Meeting “Supernovae” by Richard Shafto

19th March Committee Meeting

2nd April Monthly Meeting “First Light at Smeale” by Glyn Marsh

The Manx Night Sky. January - March 2009

All times are Universal Time (UT).

Moon

New	1 st Qtr.	Full	3 rd Qtr.
26 th Jan. 07.55hrs	4 th Jan. 11.56hrs	11 th Jan. 03.27hrs	18 th Jan. 02.46hrs
25 th Feb. 01.35hrs	2 nd Feb. 23.13hrs	9 th Feb. 14.49hrs	16 th Feb. 21.37hrs
26 th Mar. 16.06hrs	4 th Mar. 07.46hrs	11 th Mar. 02.38hrs	18 th Mar. 17.47hrs

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

Date	Time (h.m:s)	Star	SAO#	Magnitude	PA	Type of Event	Notes
7 Jan	16.58:08	ZC541	76155	3.9	041	DD	Pleiades, Maia
7 Jan	17.35:29	ZC552	76199	2.8	123	DD	Pleiades, Alcyone
14 Jan	22.29:35	ZC1611	118668	5.5	007	RD	65 Leonis. Double Star
4 Feb	02.15:53	ZC537	76131	3.7	101	DD	Pleiades, Electra
4 Feb	02.16:57	ZC536	76126	5.5	063	DD	Pleiades. Celaeno
6 Feb	04.04:45	ZC900	77775	4.8	101	DD	139 Tauri
6 Feb	19.24:20	ZC1030A	78682	3.0	107	DD	epsilon Geminorum
7 Feb	03.49:16	ZC1070	78999	5.2	073	DD	omega Geminorum
13 Feb	05.13:06	ZC1800	138845	5.5	351	RD	21 Virginis
17 Feb	05.24:54	ZC2276	183931	5.6	265	RD	4 Scopii
3 Mar	22.49:18	ZC647A	76573	5.4	069	DD	chi Tauri

Times are UT as seen from IoMAS Observatory. Start to observe these events about 15 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 is briefly visible in the first few weeks of the New Year and can be found low down in the western sky after sunset. The planet Jupiter is close to Mercury at this time also and can be used as a guide to help you find this illusive planet. It passes through inferior conjunction on 20th January and moves into the morning sky. It will be poorly placed for observing in February and goes through superior conjunction 31st March when it will reappear in the evening sky.

Venus is a spectacular object in the evening sky during the first quarter of 2009, shining at a brilliant -4.5 magnitude. Through a telescope, the crescent phase of Venus will be seen as it moves towards the Sun.

Mars is poorly placed for observation as it is on the far side of the sun.

Jupiter starts the year low down in the west after sunset. It moves to the far side of the sun on 24th January and will move into the morning sky. It will become visible in the morning sky during the last weeks of March.

Saturn is in the constellation Leo for the first three months of the year, shining at magnitude +1.0 to +0.6. The planet's ring system is angled very shallow as viewed from the earth and through a telescope; the globe of Saturn will be seen with a very narrow needle like spike through it. Well worth seeing.

The bright moon Titan can be seen west of Saturn on 11th 12th 13th 27th 28th 29th January 12th 13th 14th 27th 28th February, 1st 2nd 15th 16th 17th 31st March and east of the planet on 3rd 4th 5th 19th 20th 21st January, 4th 5th 6th 20th 21st 22nd February, 8th 9th 10th 24th 25th 26th March.

Meteors:

Quadrantids are active between 1st to 6th with maximum due on 3rd at 12h. The ZHR (Zenithal Hourly Rate) is 100. These meteors can be bright, with blue and yellow colours. Some do leave persistent trains. The origin of the meteor material is believed to originate from a now inactive comet known as [2003EH1](#) which has an orbital period of 5.53 years. The Radiant is at 15h28° +50° and is found north of the constellation Boötes. The name Quadrantids originates from the constellation Quadrans Muralis that is no longer recognised by the International Astronomical Union.

Contact:

Newsletter Editor: Dave Storey 38 Hailwood Avenue, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM2 7DG
dave.storey@iomastronomy.org Tel 617084 or 495283

IOMAS COMMITTEE

Chairman: Howard Parkin ☎ 625755 e-mail howard@iomastronomy.org

Vice Chairman: Gary Kewin (KEY) ☎ 622241 e-mail gary@iomastronomy.org

Secretary: James Martin (KEY) ☎ 842954 e-mail james@iomastronomy.org

Treasurer: Gary Corlett (KEY) ☎ 611737 e-mail garyc@iomastronomy.org

Membership Secretary: Dave Storey (KEY) ☎ 617084 or 495283 e-mail dave.storey@iomastronomy.org

Committee Member: Angela Bridson e-mail angela@iomastronomy.org

Committee Member: Kevin Deakes kevin.deakes@iomastronomy.org

Committee Member: Graham Gordon. graham.gordon@iomastronomy.org

Committee Member: Mark Henthorne ☎ 491414 mark.henthorne@iomastronomy.org

Committee Member: John McDermott john.mcdermott@iomastronomy.org

Co-Opted Committee Member: Colin Hill e-mail colin@iomastronomy.org

Co-Opted Committee Member: Glyn Marsh e-mail glyn.marsh@iomastronomy.org

DOME PHONE
464926

www.iomastronomy.org

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.