



# Newsletter April – June 2009

Volume 5 Issue 2



The Great Orion Nebula by Paul Milligan

## Editorial

At the time of writing, Howard Parkin is away on holiday enjoying views of the southern sky. He sent me a member's observation via text... "Membrs obs, sthn cross & alpha cent bout 15 degs sth, canopus, carina, leo o/hd sky is b\*\* fantastic"

I put this through my PC's spell checker and it appears he's having a great time observing the wonderful stars we don't get to see from Manx shores. I hope he brings some pictures back for us.



The International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA 2009) is well in motion and the Society has done two events already. Both have been at the Cat With No Tail public house on Governor's Hill. This was arranged by Mark Henthorne and we must thank the landlady Karen Atkinson for use of the back garden area for setting up our telescopes. On the nights that were clear of rain and snow, we had a fair number of people looking through various telescopes and binoculars. Venus, the Moon and Saturn were the main targets on view. Following the events, it was noted that we had rather a large crowd at the following

meetings at the observatory and I'm sure we have gained a few new members. The committee are currently planning further events around the island for the coming autumn and winter. We also plan to open the observatory to the public during the day in September but we will be asking for volunteers to help man this event. If you would like to offer your support, please see a committee member.

## Chairman's Notes

Who would have thought that over 400 years ago, when Galileo looked at the heavens for the first time through a telescope, just how much the subject of Astronomy would change? We often think of the heavens as unchanging and often say that something is as old as the heavens and stars themselves. Do we really understand what we mean, if we consider the origins of the universe we cannot comprehend the huge distances, times and quantities that we are discussing, Galileo certainly has a lot to answer for! There can be no comparison to the astonishment that people express when they first look through a telescope for the first time, The Wow factor is probably one of the best kicks that an astronomer can get and I for one never tire of it. I understand that this "Wow" moment has been redesignated a "Galileo moment" well it certainly is a moment worthy of note. It was of course Galileo whose actions back in 1609 that has lead to 2009 being designated the International Year of Astronomy. I am delighted that members of the IOMAS have already started the year with two very successful Star parties at the Cat with no Tail in Douglas. We have learned over the years the problems of the Manx weather so we took the decision to spread the "Cat" evenings over a number of nights and managed to get one really clear night in each week. As a consequence over 100 members of the public took the opportunity to look at the skies and through the various telescopes, so we certainly have started taking astronomy to the people which is one of the IYA aims

We have great plans for the rest of 2009 and details of the various events are published in this newsletter. The next major event is our anniversary dinner which is being held at our original meeting venue, the Creg ny baa hotel on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May. We are delighted that Nick James the papers secretary of the BAA has agreed to be our guest at the dinner, Nick is no stranger to the Isle of Man having visited back in 2004 as part of the BAA out of town meeting. We are all looking forward to his visit and I am sure he will have one or two interesting tails to regale us with.

We are going to have a series of open afternoon and evenings at the observatory in September and I am delighted to advise that we will be ascending the Island mountain Snaefell on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August and holding a summit star party as part of the IYA celebrations. (This is under review and may not go ahead...Ed)

August sees the launch of the STS 128 shuttle mission to the ISS with our own member Nicole Stott who will be staying at the ISS for a 4 month stint. Hopefully we will be able to share some aspect of her stay with us in what will be literally out of this world experience. Once again we are very grateful to Chris, Nicole's husband for managing to sort out the handcontroller for the telescope.

Over the last few months we have been quite fortunate to get quite a few clear skies, and at our April meeting we actually had a real treat a clear sky on a club night! We had one group in the dome, and two groups outside. A real treat for everyone.

Returning to my initial comments I really believe that astronomy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be the best time ever, OK we have light pollution, but with the Hubble, Spitzer, Chandra and other space telescopes, the views we are getting of the heavens are outstanding. But as with every science for every question answered there is a million others asked, I don't think we will ever fully understand the heavens but by golly we will never stop looking, questioning and being fascinated by the wonders of the Manx Night skies

Howard Parkin.

### **Telescope Donation**



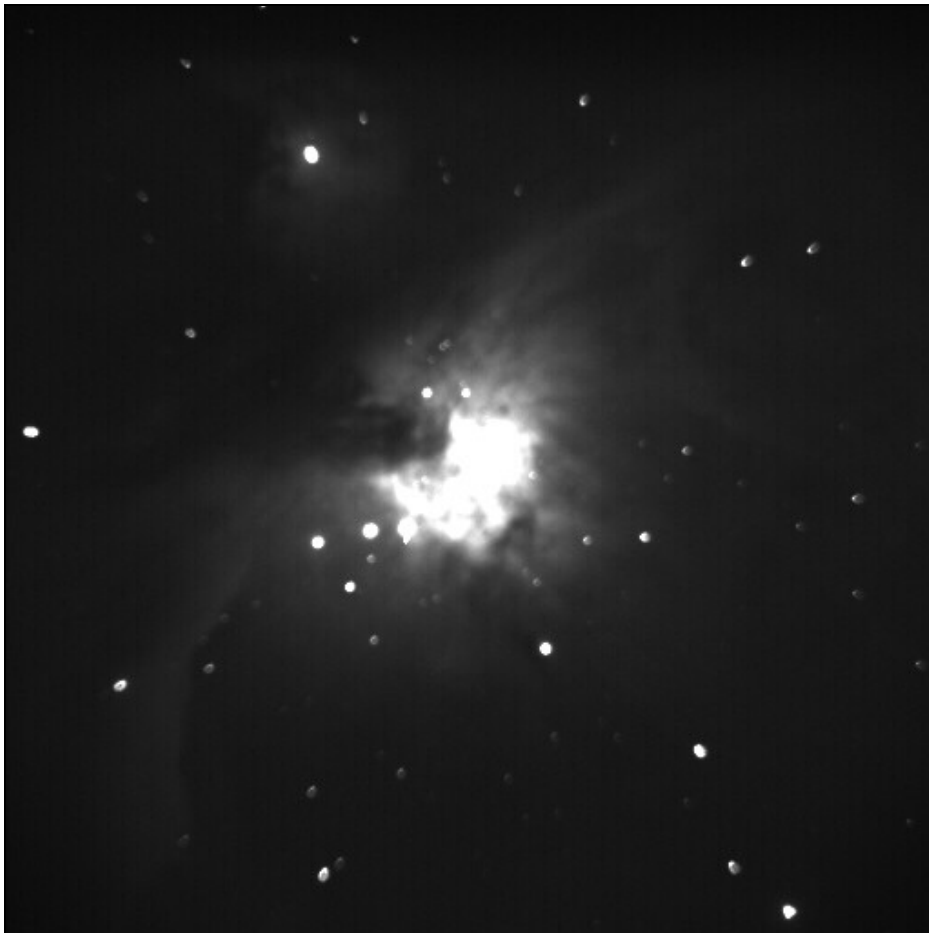
**The Society recently acquired a new addition to its inventory, namely a 4 inch Vixen Refracting telescope. This telescope will be kept at the observatory so as members can use it when we have a clear night at one of our regular meetings.**

**The telescope was very kindly donated by one of our past members Peter Eburn.**

## **Members Observation.**

### **M42 by Gary Kewin.**

Gary has had some beginner's success in using the CCD camera on the clubs 16" telescope. He was able to image the Great Orion Nebula and use the software to bring out the details.



## **Earth Quake Monitoring**

If you have an interest in planet Earth as well as looking above, then you may wish to know that there is a company on the Island where you can get information on recent earthquakes and you can even do it yourself by obtaining your own seismometer. See the following website: -

**<http://www.rockwave.co.uk/>**

## **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner at the Greg-ny-Bar.**

Places will be limited at the dinner on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, so please book (and pay) early. A menu and form has been sent to non email members. All members who have email should also have received a form. If not, contact Angela Bridson. The guest speaker will be Nick James who is a very active member of The British Astronomical Association and is currently the BAA's Papers Secretary. All forms and monies to be sent to Angela Bridson A.S.A.P.

We will also be holding a raffle after the dinner and we would like to invite guests to bring prize donations. Gary Kewin has offered a meteorite as one of the prizes.

## Orchid Field

Please all remember to keep off the grassed areas on the field leading up to the observatory from now until the end of July. This is to comply with DAFF agreement that the Society has accepted. This includes deviating off the track and parking. We appreciate that the road is rather bumpy and do strongly advise you drive across on the track very slowly! This will help in not making the situation worse with regards to making the bumps larger and also save your cars suspension!

## 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.

2<sup>nd</sup> April Monthly Meeting. "First Light at Smeale" by Glyn Marsh  
23<sup>rd</sup> April Committee Meeting  
7<sup>th</sup> May Monthly Meeting. Workshop Evening  
16<sup>th</sup> May. IoMAS 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner at the Creg-ny-Baa  
21<sup>st</sup> May Committee Meeting  
11<sup>th</sup> June Monthly Meeting "Navigation through Astronomy" by Graham Gordon  
25<sup>th</sup> June Committee Meeting  
2<sup>nd</sup> July Monthly Meeting "Apollo 40 Years On" by Rob Farrington

## The Manx Night Sky. April - June 2009

**Note: All times are Universal Time. Add 1 hour to get local time.**

### Moon

New	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr.	Full	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr.
25 <sup>th</sup> Apr. 03.23hrs	2 <sup>nd</sup> Apr. 14.34hrs	9 <sup>th</sup> Apr. 14.56hrs	17 <sup>th</sup> Apr. 13.36hrs
24 <sup>th</sup> May. 12.11hrs	1 <sup>st</sup> May. 20.44hrs	9 <sup>th</sup> May. 04.01hrs	17 <sup>th</sup> May. 07.26hrs
22 <sup>nd</sup> Jun. 16.06hrs	31 <sup>st</sup> May. 03.22hrs	7 <sup>th</sup> Jun. 18.12hrs	15 <sup>th</sup> Jun. 22.15hrs
	29 <sup>th</sup> Jun. 11.28hrs		

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

Date	Time (h.m:s)	Star	SAO#	Magnitude	PA	Type of Event	Notes
13 Apr	01.14:57	ZC2298	184068	5.0	347	RD	Moon Low
26 Apr	21.31:46	ZC545	76172	4.2	044	DD	Pleiades, Merope. Moon Low
1 May	22.19:29	ZC1337	98250	5.7	114	DD	omicron 2 Cancr
1 May	22.44:02	ZC1336	98247	5.2	185	DD	omicron 1 Cancr
10 June	01.12:42	ZC2771	187599	5.6	306	RD	
16 June	01.49:06	ZC3494	128336	4.5	242	RD	lambda Piscium

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 best seen during the second half of April, when it will be seen in the west after sunset. It passes inferior conjunction (near side of the Sun) on May 18<sup>th</sup> and moves into the morning sky but will be poorly placed for viewing from the IoM.

**Venus** is a morning object shining at a bright -4.2 to -4.4. Through a telescope, the crescent phase will be seen to get larger and reach half phase on June 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Mars** is a morning object but will be poorly placed for most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2009. It will become better placed for viewing towards the end of June when it will be seen in the constellation Aries. On the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> June, the crescent Moon will be seen 8 degrees above brilliant Venus and Mars will be 2 degrees to the upper left of Venus. Between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, Venus will pass below the planet Mars.

**Jupiter** is in the morning skies, low down in the bright twilight sky. It will be better placed for observing in June when it will be found shining at magnitude -2.6 in Capricornus.

**Saturn** is an evening object in the constellation Leo. It shines at a modest +0.6 to +1.0. The rings are still visible as seen through a telescope but will be narrow as viewed from the Earth as they are presented at an angle of only -3.6 to -4.0 degrees.

### Meteors:

**Virginids** are slow moving meteors that can be seen during March and April with two radiant in the sky. One of the radiant is active from 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April. There is a maximum peak of 5 meteors per hour on the 10<sup>th</sup> April.

**Lyrids** are visible during the period 19<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> with a maximum due on 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10hrs. In ideal conditions, 10 meteors per hour are expected to be seen.

**Eta-Aquarids** are active during the last week of April with a maximum peak on May 4<sup>th</sup>, when 40 meteors per hours can be seen in ideal conditions.

**Alpha-Scorpiids** is a weak shower that is active between 20<sup>th</sup> April through 19<sup>th</sup> May. There are two maximum dates on 27<sup>th</sup> April and 12<sup>th</sup> May when 5 meteors per hour can be seen in ideal conditions.

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**DOME PHONE**  
**464926**

[www.iomastronomy.org](http://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.