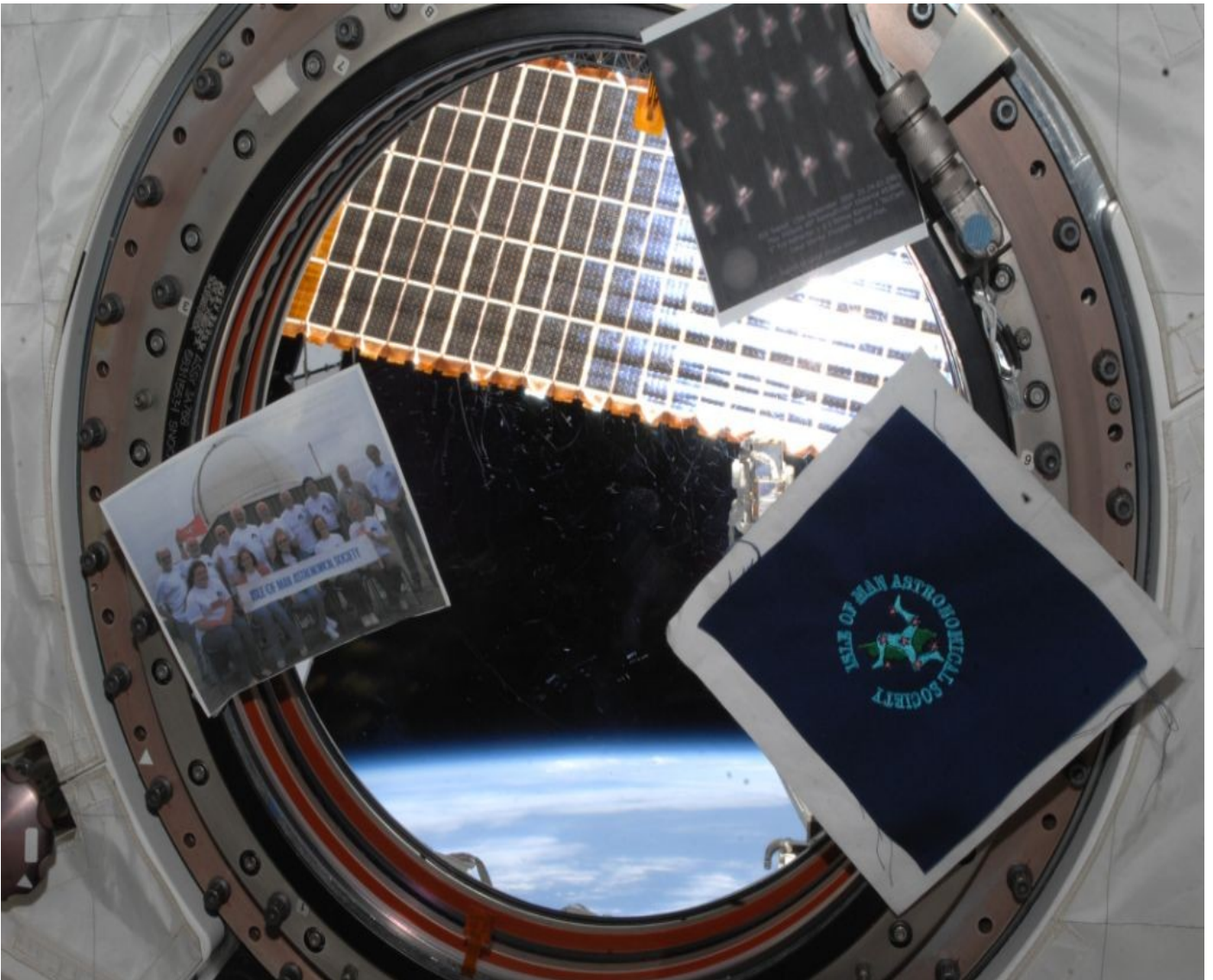




Newsletter January - April 2010

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Picture Credit: NASA / Nicole Stott

Chairman's Notes

2009 a memorable 20th year at the IOMAS

Back in the 1960's I watched TV in awe at the photos and news stories about the Gemini and Apollo missions and really took it to heart about the Capcom being the only guy, (later gal) to be permitted to speak with the astronauts in orbit. Never for one minute did I believe in my wildest dreams that one day I would one be the guy talking to an astronaut, well last October It happened, as you all know by now we had a fantastic live link to Nicole Stott in orbit and for over 50 minutes I was in my own mind the actual Capcom to Nicole in the ISS.

What most people don't realise is just how it came about. Chris Stott rang me in July and asked whether we could arrange a link up from the Museum and initially it was not going to happen, but following the generosity of Manx National Heritage and Manx Telecom we were able to make it happen and the rest as they say is history. I can honestly say that in my experience over the years, the putting the dome on the observatory in 2000, the eclipse in March 2006 and the live link last October are the most memorable moments I have had in the world of astronomy. A huge thank you needs to be passed on to Chris and Nicole for letting this happen and especially to Nicole who was a fantastic host on the ISS and a real pleasure to speak with.

The actual picture on the front of this newsletter has a story all of its own. The location is self explanatory but the three items in the image are all special. The photo of us all in the window came about by chance after Nicole asked us if anyone at the IOMAS would like to contribute to her chosen charity with the purchase of a "Nicole's Ground support crew" T shirt. A number of us of us purchased them and on receipt Nicole asked us to send her a photo of us wearing them at the IOMASO, we never thought that a few weeks late we would have a picture of us actually in orbit, when I received the picture from Nicole direct from the ISS (How cool is that!) I was staggered, proud and excited all at once. Nicole also asked if we could image the ISS from the IOM and Dave's effort is the photo at the top. Finally at the AGM in 2008 when Chris was our guest speaker I presented him with our logo and asked that he gave it to Nicole to take up with her to the ISS. I think that this image certainly was worthy winner IOMAS photo of the logo competition, but how are we going to follow that!

All in all we had a great 20th anniversary year and I need to say a formal thank you to all the members of the Society who made 2009 probably one of the most memorable for many reasons. We had a few IYA events mainly thanks to Dave & Mark, but for me the IOMAS highlight was our anniversary dinner held last May at our first ever home, the Creg Ny Baa. The dinner was great and the speaker, Nick James of the BAA gave a us a great talk. We then had the live link and the presence in orbit of our own member Nicole who sent us down some fantastic images from the ISS some of which are as we speak now being sent across to various magazines where I hope they will appear in the not too distant future. As well as the live link we also had the opportunity to meet some astro/cosmonauts at the Almaz capsule event at King Williams and Angela got to meet her own special hero! We finished the year with the spectacle of a partial Lunar eclipse on New Years eve. I think we really ought to pat ourselves on the back for a great anniversary year and look forward to many more.

I was delighted last year to accept an invitation to talk at the Northern Ireland Amateur astronomical Society on SETI, and I had a great time over there, but it did make me realise how lucky and privileged we are to have not just a great facility at the IOMASO, but also to have such a great number of enthusiastic members. We have over 100 members and our meetings are always very well attended and thank you all for your contributions to what. We managed to meet up with Colin Hill at a recent Committee meeting and we really do owe Colin a big thanks for the observatory and his contribution to making the IOMAS, I believe, one of the best astronomical societies in the British Isles

Finally an appeal, we are being inundated with request for talks at the observatory and I for one do not want to turn anyone down, but we are struggling to arrange them all, currently Dave, James and myself are the speakers but we could do with a few more who would be prepared to be a host for a visit. I am happy to provide a talk on PowerPoint that can be used, but if you can help please let any member of the Committee know.

In the meantime let us all hope that the current clear spell of weather continues (who cares about the cold!) and here's to clear skies throughout 2010

All the very best to you all for 2010

Howard

The Leeds Astromeeet 2009 By Gary Kewin.



This year my trip to the Leeds Astromeeet was going to be a very special trip as they were celebrating their 150th anniversary of the Leeds Astronomical Society. Quite a few of the members where dressed up in Victorian or Edwardian costume. Melvyn Taylor was a dressed as William Trant who was a Navvy.

The speakers they had where par excellence as usual. Opening the event was Prof Alan Watson from Leeds. The talk was called the “The Birth of Cosmic Ray Astronomy on the Argentine Pampas”. Next was Prof Monica Grady from the Open University / Natural History Museum who gave a talk entitled “Astronomy by Microscope”. After lunch, Prof. Mike Edmunds of Cardiff University, talked about the Antikythera Mechanism which is shown below. They think it was for working out when Olympic games where to be held or lunar or solar eclipses. Prof. Jocelyn Bell-Burnell of Oxford University gave “The Fred Hoyle Memorial Lecture”

called “In Pursuit of Pulsar”. Very interesting it was as well being very informative. The last talk of the day was Dr Alan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford University speaking on “James Glaisher-The Victorian Astronomer, Meteorologist and Aeronaut”.



Prof. Jocelyn Bell-Burnell and Gary Kewin



The Antikythera Machine

Developments in Amateur Astronomy. Past Present and Future by Gary Kewin



I was in London Underground looking for the next station when a voice came from behind and said “That’s not right”. It was Melvyn Taylor and Ray Emery and his wife. It was good to see a friend and we walked to the venue where a special meeting in honor of Sir Patrick Moore to celebrate his 75 years as member of the B.A.A.

The Event was in Royal Institution Lecture Theatre named after Faraday. This was also where the Christmas lectures are held. It really was an amazing place to be in. As I entered the place there were a number of people milling about and then I saw Sir Patrick Moore. I went up to him and said to him “I bring greetings from the Isle of Man Astronomical Society and congratulation on reaching 75 years as a member of the

B .A. A. He said “Very good to see you and glad you came”.

John Mason said to all in the room, “Put your hands up if this man here influenced you in taking up astronomy and 450 put their hands in the air. Patrick was given standing ovation. The applause went on for between 10-15 minutes.

The first talk was by Sir Patrick Moore & Dr Peter Cattermole. The talk was called “Craters of the Moon from Pre-Apollo to Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter”, featuring the latest lunar images from LRO.

The second talk was by Martin Mobberley which was called “Splitting the arc second: 21st century planetary imaging”

The third talk was called “Applications of Digital SLRS in Astronomy” by Tony Morris.

Next Dr Richard Miles gave a talk called “New Opportunities for Observing Asteroid and Comets”.

The next talk was called “Searching for Low Amplitude Variable Stars and Transiting Exoplanets” by Stan Waterman and Richard Stratford.

Dr Nick Hewitt gave a talk called “Imaging the Deep Sky, Past, Present and Future”.

Dr David Boyd’s talk was called “High Precision CCD Photometry and Pro-Am Collaboration in Variable Star Research”.

Karen Holland talked about “x cam”, the leading edge imaging sensor technologies for the amateur astronomer today and tomorrow.

Robin Leadbeater’s talk was on “Spectroscopy, Dawn of a New Era”.

Nick James gave a talk on “Remote and Robotic Observing : The New Armchair Astronomers”.

The last talk was by Prof. Andy Lawrence and called the “Virtual Observatory and Data Mining “. I had left by this time and was walking down the road when Dr Alan Chapman crossed the road and said hello to me he shook me by the hand and said “Very nice to see you again”. I said “I have been to the Sir Patrick Moore event. “That’s where I am going” said Alan. I wished him all the best he did likewise and we parted company. What an amazing day it had been.

Society Logo at the Villa Marina.



Gary Kewin had arranged for the Society Logo to be planted as a flower display in the Villa Marina garden's during the Summer. A wonderful idea for celebrating our 20th Anniversary Year.

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.

- 7th January Monthly Meeting "Part Two" by John McDermott and the Night Sky 2010 by Howard Parkin
- 21st Committee Meeting
- 4th February Monthly Meeting. "Galaxies" by Richard Shafto
- 18th February Committee Meeting.
- 4th March Monthly Meeting. "One Universe or Many?" by Robert Farrington
- 18th March Committee Meeting.
- 1st April Monthly Meeting "Short Papers Evening."
- 15th April Committee Meeting.

The Manx Night Sky. January-April 2010

Note: All times are Universal Time. Add 1 hour to get local time from 28th March when BST begins.

Moon

New	1 st Qtr.	Full	3 rd Qtr.
15 th Jan. 07.11hrs	23 rd Jan. 10.53hrs	30 th Jan. 06.18hrs	7 th Jan. 10.39hrs
14 th Feb. 02.51hrs	22 nd Feb. 00.42hrs	28 th Feb. 16.38hrs	5 th Feb. 23.48hrs
15 th Mar. 21.01hrs	23 rd Mar. 11.00hrs	30 th Mar. 02.25hrs	7 th Mar. 15.42hrs
14 th Apr. 12.29hrs	21 st Apr. 18.20hrs	28 th Apr. 12.18hrs	6 th Apr. 09.37hrs

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 April. It passes superior conjunction (far side of the Sun) on March 14th. It will move into the evening sky and will reach greatest eastern elongation on the 8th April, 19° east of the Sun. Look to the west after sunset to spot this illusive planet. Venus will be close by between the 3rd and 8th April.

Venus is an evening star at the start of 2010, having passed through superior conjunction on the January 11th. It will become visible, low down in the western sky after sunset from mid February.

Mars is at opposition on the 29th January, in the constellation Cancer. This means that Mars will be visible all night around this date. This opposition is not the best with regards to the size of the Martian disc as seen through a telescope. It will only reach a diameter of 14.1" at its closest as opposed to over 25" back in 2003.

Jupiter is visible low down in the western sky after sunset at the beginning of the year. It will get more difficult to see as the months pass and be lost in the twilight by the end of February. It reaches conjunction with the Sun on the 28th February. After this date, it moves into the morning sky and will become visible by the end of March.

Saturn is an evening object, in the constellation Virgo. It reaches opposition on 22nd March and will be visible all night. The rings are presented at a narrow angle of around 4° to 2°.

Meteors:

Virginids are slow moving meteors that can be seen during March and April with two radiants in the sky. One of the radiants is active from 7th to 18th April. There is a maximum peak of 5 meteors per hour on the 12th April.

Lyrids are visible during the period 19th - 25th with a maximum due on 22nd at 16hrs. 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 5th, when 40 meteors per hours can be seen in ideal conditions.

Alpha-Scorpiids is a weak shower that is active between 20th April through 19th May. There are two maximum dates on 28th April and 13th May when 5 meteors per hour can be seen in ideal conditions.

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.