



# Newsletter Autumn 2006

Volume 2 Issue 4



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## Editorial

Another busy year closes with regards to talks being given not only to IoMAS members, but also to visiting groups.



Howard Parkin, ably assisted by Gary Corlett has done most of the talking (no surprise here!) and thanks must go to these two, as it not only promotes astronomy, it brings in extra funds. One of the pleasures of doing talks is getting feedback on astronomy and this was even more expressed by the visit from a group of children from Chernobyl back in August. I showed images of the sky as taken from my home and the observatory and everyone could be seen enjoying the pictures. The picture of Saturn gave an audible "WOW" but in the Russian language. Thanks must go to the two interpreters that conveyed my astronomy talk over to the children. Unfortunately, the sky was overcast, but the children still enjoyed looking towards the mine shaft tower over towards the west

through the observatory telescope. I look forward to their return.

Picture© Peter Callister

## **Chairman's Report (The AGM Address. 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006)**

Distinguished guests, members of the IoM Astronomical Society, Ladies & Gentleman, On behalf of the IoMAS I would like to welcome you all here this evening and in particular I would like to welcome our guest speaker from Jodrell Bank, well known astronomer Ian Morison and Mrs. Morison We are all looking forward to your talk on SETI later on. I am sorry about the Manx weather Ian, Turkey it certainly is not! I would like to extend a warm welcome to Dr's Nicky White and Max Shaw-Champion who arrived today (late on the Steam Packet!) to reinstall a seismometer at the observatory. It's great of you to join us and best of luck with the British Isles Seismic Experiment which you are setting up.

This is my second report to you since I took over from Mike Kelly in September 2004 and in 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 over 120 members and with an average attendance at our meetings of around 50, the future for Manx astronomy is looking very promising, and I am proud to be Chairman of one of the Islands leading Societies.

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.

Whilst it is not appropriate to single them out individually as, all of their efforts are greatly appreciated I must at this stage pay a special tribute to one of our retiring Committee members Ray Osbourne, Ray has been a committee member for 8 years and has decided not to seek re-election. I wanted to therefore take this opportunity to thank Ray most sincerely for all his efforts. His enthusiasm and practical help has been first class and he will be a tough act to follow. Thank you Ray from all of us on the Committee and from all the members

Throughout the year we have had a full programme of talks and meeting and in 2005/6 all of these have been by members. Without exception all of the talks have gone very well indeed with a great deal of expertise, confidence and humour.

The year started with an excellent talk at last years AGM by our own Merlin medal winner Melvyn Taylor with tales from an astronomer which was both informative and amusing. Then in October Mark Henthorne gave us a talk about our website, which really is first class, this was followed by Dave Storey with a talk about the forthcoming opposition of Mars. January saw a talk by John McDermott on celestial navigation. This was followed in February with a review of the life of Einstein by Helmut Kessler and Gary Kewin on Destination Moon in April, We then had our short papers night in May with four excellent short papers Jonathan Gordon on the Life & death of stars, Kevin Deakes on the Solar System, Robert Farrington on a visit to the Sydney Observatory and John McDermott with "Follow the Drinking Gourd" a poem. (and for telling children to wash their hands after being to the toilet! )..... Thank you all for your efforts. June saw a host of memories from the March total solar eclipse by Richard Shafto, Jake Huxley, Dave Storey, Gary Corlett and I, and I think we enjoyed it more than the audience. Alan Buck impressed us all with a review of his work in Solar observing in July and James enthralled us with Celestial lollipops last month.

Finally one of our young members Johnathan Gordon gave us a fascinating look at the inner planets earlier this month. Thank you all for your efforts, it is no easy task to stand up at the front and speak to an audience, but you all did extremely well and I know from comments received how much your efforts are appreciated

In April we also hosted a fascinating talk at St Ninians by Jim Benson of the SpaceDev Corporation. Whilst not well attended it was an opportunity to learn about the commercialisation of space and a taster hopefully for things to come. The commercial aspects of astronautics are really taking off, if you will excuse the pun, and with MannSat a leading player in the field I know we can look forward to many other interesting talks and opportunities on the Island

Last year for the first time I tried to consolidate all of the visits to the Observatory by the various groups and Societies to be on the same day, Thursdays, and this worked very well with a total of 14 groups coming up to see what we do at the observatory from September through to March.

At this point thank most sincerely Gary Corlett our treasurer for his help during these visits. Gary is always willing to come up and make the tea for our visitors. Gary must have by now sat through about dozens of my talks, and I'm fed up with them so how does he feel! .....Thanks Gary your help is appreciated by not just me but also the various groups with whom we have shared our enthusiasm of the night sky.

The most rewarding of these visits however came last October when we invited the lottery trust committee up as a thank you for their past support, and we were overwhelmed when totally unexpectedly they presented us with cheque for £1000.

I have already mentioned our eclipse trip review, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without reference to our trip to the eclipse in Turkey. This had to be the spectacle of a lifetime and I believe we represented the Society well in our Turkish totality shirts, and we even managed to endure the unexpected bonus of a free bar.....My personal thanks go to Dave & Gary (and to tonight's speaker) for making it so memorable in so many ways. I do hope that we can as a Society have the opportunity to visit astronomical sites and other spectaculars in the not too distant future

Talking of eclipses probably one of the most memorable monthly meetings held in the last 12 months was the one held just 3 weeks ago. This was the first time at a monthly meeting we had the opportunity to see an eclipse from the site. I had not really expected the eclipse to be visible as the Moon was rising just 15% eclipsed and as eclipse spotters know partial lunar eclipses can be spectacular or practically invisible. Well, there I was in full flow, talking about the forthcoming sky for October, I reached the slide about the eclipse, mentioned it might be visible, John McDermott just turned round, looked through the window and.....well the meeting was abandoned. It really was memorable, and Dave (ever ready) Storey whipped out his camera and captured the Dome and eclipsed moon on a photo It's just a shame that he didn't clean the dome first! (See Front Cover).

We recently undertook a review of the meeting format and whilst most comments favoured the basic format we have at present a few good ideas emerged, and so from next month onwards we will be having our coffee break after the talk to try and give us more observing and social time. Another request was for more short papers evenings so there will be two in the next year with the December meeting being an opportunity for members to tell us about places they have visited. Another innovation will be in March when we will have a workshop meeting with separate sessions on telescopes, computers and using the 16inch Meade and maybe more. We will once again have a full programme of speakers for you with subjects as varied as Dark Matter, Victorian eclipses, and Ice in the Solar system to name just a few. I look forward to them all in anticipation and I am sure you will give them your full support.

As I have already mentioned Cambridge University have once again asked to place a seismometer on our field again as part of a bigger project called the British Isles Seismic Experiment. We are delighted to be able to assist again and I am pleased to advise that Nick & Max have agreed to talk about the project at our January meeting.

We really have first class facilities that are the envy of many visiting astronomers. But it doesn't stop there, we have now sorted out the proposed link to the clubroom and we hope to use this at the first opportunity, maybe next Thursday (fingers crossed)

Distinguished guests, 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 two years and I have thoroughly enjoyed it. 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

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## **B.A.A out of London meeting in Liverpool by Gary Kewin**

I arrived at John Lennon airport in Liverpool where I was to meet up with Melvyn Taylor. We where both staying in the same hotel in Liverpool city centre at Mount Pleasant.

We decided to see the sites of Liverpool, before meeting up with others members from the Leeds Astronomical Society. At the actual meeting, there was an introduction and welcome by the Liverpool A.S. President and the B.A.A president. After a short introduction it was on to the main event which started with "Dr Helen Smillett" (Actually, this was two people, namely Lyn Smith and Hazel Collett ) walking onto the stage and talk about Superstring Theory. They stood on either side of the stage to bounce ideas and theories off each other. It was very good to have a talk done in this way. Next on was Dr Alan Chapman. As he walked to the stage, he said to me and the Leeds astronomers, "very nice to see the Leeds reprobates and friends here". We all laughed at this as he continued on his way down the stage.

Dr Allan Chapman gave his first talk on Friday evening, which was called "Under a Lancashire Heaven" from way back to the modern day. In this talk, he did make reference to the Isle of Man Astronomical Society. Friday evening finished about 10:30 and everyone returned with Melvyn and I to the Aachen hotel, which was not far from where the event was being staged, to enjoy a few night caps!

We were back at Liverpool University at 9am the next day. The first talk was by Murad Ghorbal on The Scottish Astronomer Royal and the Great Pyramid.

Doug Ellison gave a very descriptive talk using 3D images of what the Martian landscape looks like as viewed from Mars by the rovers "Spirit" in Endurance crater and "Opportunity" in Eribus crater. Then there was a short break before Eric Jones talked about River Bores.

Then we had Dr John Mason on the eclipse of the 2006, which was done through power point using video clips and still photography that had been taken on the day. Following John Mason's talk, we had a live link up with the Faulkes Telescope which was very successful in seeing Comet 73p fragment b and NGC 4038. The last speaker was Dr. Alan Chapman. He talked about Sir Robert Stawall Ball. Not many speakers can stand in front audience without any notes but Alan Chapman can. This concluded the main events.

I really enjoy the weekend, catching up with old friends and making some new ones. I especially enjoyed having the chance to talk to Dr Richard Miles, Nick James, Dr. Nick Hewitt and Dr. Glyn Marsh.

The next day we had a chance to go Pex Hill where the Liverpool Astronomical Society have their observatory, which has a Manx connection to it. A telescope from the island is used by them.



A visit to Much Hoole was also made. In June 1639 Jeremiah Horrocks came to the village; firstly to be a tutor to the Stones children of Carr House and secondly as bible clerk or reader at the Chapel of St Michael's, Much Hoole. Whilst there, he predicted that planet Venus would transit the face of the Sun on 24<sup>th</sup> November. It would not do it again until 8<sup>th</sup> June 2004. (The beginning of a Venus transit would have been visible at Much Hoole towards sunset on 6 Dec 1882. Ed) .There is beautiful stained glass window of the transit of Venus in St. Michael's Church.

Picture Left: From the left there is Pam, Sue, Alex, Harry, then there is Melvyn, the fellow behind Melvyn is David Gavine from Edinburgh Astronomical Society. These are people whose company I was in.

© Gary Kewin

## 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.

- 5<sup>th</sup> October Monthly Meeting. "The Astronomers Royal" by Gary Corlett
- 12<sup>th</sup> October *Visit by Castletown WI. Hosted by Howard Parkin*
- 19<sup>th</sup> October *Visit by Arbory Cubs.*
- 19<sup>th</sup> October Committee Meeting
- 26<sup>th</sup> October *Visit by Cameo Group. Hosted by Howard Parkin*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> November Monthly meeting. "21<sup>st</sup> Century Observing" by Dave Storey
- 9<sup>th</sup> November *Visit by Ballaugh WI. Hosted by Howard Parkin*
- 16<sup>th</sup> November Committee Meeting
- 23<sup>rd</sup> November *Visit by Lions Club. Hosted by Howard Parkin*
- 7<sup>th</sup> December Monthly Meeting. "Places to Visit" 4x small talks by members.
- 13<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Dinner. Venue TBA
- 21<sup>st</sup> December Committee Meeting
- 4<sup>th</sup> January "What lies beneath the IoM" by Cambridge University Team.

## The Manx Night Sky. October - December 2006

All times are Universal Time (UT). Add 1 hour to get local IoM time i.e., British Summer Time (BST).

Note that BST ends on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October at 2 a.m.

### Sun

**(Never look at the Sun directly through any instrument or naked eye for that matter, you will be blinded!)**

Solar activity continues to remain at low activity.

## Moon

New	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr.	Full	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr.
22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct. 05.14hrs	29 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 21.25hrs	7 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 03.13hrs	14 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 00.26hrs
20 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 22.18hrs	28 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 06.29hrs	5 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 12.58hrs	12 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 17.45hrs
20 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 14.01hrs	27 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 14.48hrs	5 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 00.25hrs	12 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 14.32hrs

## Lunar Occultations: ( Stars brighter than magnitude +6.0 )

Date Time (h.m:s) Star SAO# Magnitude PA Type of Event

8 Oct	00.16:31	ZC240	92536	5.5	117	DD	
10 Oct	19.47:28	ZC647A	76573	5.4	237	RD	
3 Nov	19.38:24	ZC146	109627	4.3	078	DD	
9 Nov	23.47:45	ZC1088	79141	5.8	019	RD	
30 Nov	23.00:09	ZC98	109461	5.9	022	DD	
4 Dec	02.48:58	ZC537	76131	3.7	074	DD	Electra/Pleiades
4 Dec	03.00:57	ZC536	76126	5.5	033	DD	Celaeno/Pleiades
4 Dec	03.33:28	ZC545	76172	4.2	126	DD	Merope/ Pleiades
4 Dec	03.34:03	ZC541	76155	3.9	021	DD	Maia/ Pleiades
4 Dec	03.57:45	ZC552	76199	2.8	100	DD	Alcyone/ Pleiades
4 Dec	04.41:14	ZC561	76229	5.0	107	DD	Pleione/ Pleiades
4 Dec	04.45:39	ZC560	76228	3.6	128	DD	Atlas/ Pleiades
6 Dec	03.48:29	ZC885	77625	5.6	282	RD	
9 Dec	01.46:33	ZC1308	80378	4.7	325	RD	
10 Dec	04.20:35	ZC1418	98673	5.7	320	RD	

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.

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** passes through inferior conjunction ( between the Earth and Sun ) on 8<sup>th</sup> November. It actually transits the face of the Sun but is only visible from the other side of the world. It moves into the morning sky and it will be the best time that the planet is seen from the Northern Hemisphere. You should be able to see the planet low in the east just before sunrise between 17 Nov. to Dec 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Venus** is approaching the Sun at the beginning of Oct. and will be lost in the solar glare for most of Oct. and Nov. It re appears into the evening sky in Dec. but being far south of the celestial equator, it won't be until the last week of Dec. when it becomes easily seen from the IoM.

**Mars** is at the far side of the Sun for the remainder of this year, so is not a viable target.

**Jupiter** is past its best for observation as it draws ever closer to the setting Sun. It will be a superior conjunction (Far side of the Sun as seen from the Earth) on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. and then re appears into the morning eastern sky.

**Saturn** starts the last quarter of 2006 in the morning sky in the constellation Leo. Not until late Nov. will it appear to rise before local midnight. The rings continue to present a narrower perspective as compared to last year. They are now only angled 12 degrees in relation to the Earth but still give the "WOW" factor!

**Meteors.** There are five main showers visible this autumn:-

**Orionids** are active between 16-27<sup>th</sup> October with the maximum due on 20<sup>th</sup>. On this night, up to 25 meteors per hour may be seen in ideal conditions. The meteors are fast movers and many leave persistent trains.

**Taurids** peak in activity on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November and can be seen between Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> through Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>. Maximum rate is 10 per hour and this shower produces slow moving and sometimes bright meteors.

**Leonids** are back at their normal activity levels following the storms that occurred in 1999, 2001 and 2002. A possible 20 meteors per hour may be seen on the night of maximum due on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>. These very fast meteors can be seen between the dates of 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**Geminids** have the highest maximum rate of all the annual meteor showers, with up to 100 per hour on the night of Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. There are good chances of bright slow moving meteors being seen between 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Ursids** are visible between 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Dec. with a maximum of 10 per hour on the night of 22<sup>nd</sup>. This meteor shower is under-observed and may be worth watching for unexpected increase in meteor rates.

## Comets:

### 2006M4 SWAN



Date	RA	Declination	Magnitude
11 Oct 2006	13h22m25.65s	+37 39' 18.8"	7.9
16 Oct 2006	14h13m08.46s	+38 42' 02.8"	7.9
21 Oct 2006	15h09m56.74s	+38 02' 59.1"	8.0
26 Oct 2006	16h07m20.53s	+35 27' 08.7"	8.2
31 Oct 2006	16h59m36.25s	+31 16' 26.6"	8.5
5 Nov 2006	17h43m44.68s	+26 18' 05.0"	8.9
10 Nov 2006	18h19m40.99s	+21 17' 07.4"	9.3
15 Nov 2006	18h48m44.88s	+16 41' 08.9"	9.7
20 Nov 2006	19h12m29.98s	+12 41' 05.0"	10.1

Comet SWAN should be visible in the evening sky heading through Canes Venatici, Boötes, Corona Borealis and into Hercules. The comet passes about 3 degrees south of the globular cluster M13 on the 28<sup>th</sup> October.

This comet was imaged from the IoMAS Observatory on 15<sup>th</sup> September and was the first observation in the world of this comet post solar conjunction!

Final Note: The subscriptions to the Society are now due. Normal membership is £25.00. Family membership is £37.50 Junior and student membership remains at £1. I would be grateful if members fill out the membership application forms when renewing their subs. This will allow me to check the records are still correct and up to date. Membership application forms are found on our web site or supplied on request.

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**DOME PHONE**  
**464926**

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 edition of the IoMAS Newsletter is kindly sponsored by Sue and Ken Ackroyd.