

DECEMBER 1985

SOCIETY NEWS

1. A.G.M.

The 1986 A.G.M. will be held on Saturday, 11th January at 8.00 p.m. in either the library or hall of Orwell Park School. All members welcome.

2. 1986 Subscriptions

1986 subscriptions are due on 1st January. All money should be sent to David Barnard. Alternatively you may pay at the A.G.M.

NIGHT SKY

Constellations (all times G.M.T.)

The winter constellations of Orion, Taurus and Gemini are well placed for observation.

Sun Rises approx. 08.10

Sets approx. 15.50

Moon



5th



12th



19th



27th

Mercury

Greatest western elongation on the 17th (21°)
Rises 2 hours before sunrise.

Venus

Rises about 1 hour before the sun.

Mars

Rises at about 3.00 in mid month.

Jupiter

Sets at about 9.00 in mid month. Mag. -1.7

Saturn

Rises at about 03.30 in mid month. Mag. 0.7

Uranus

Conjunction on the 10th.

Neptune

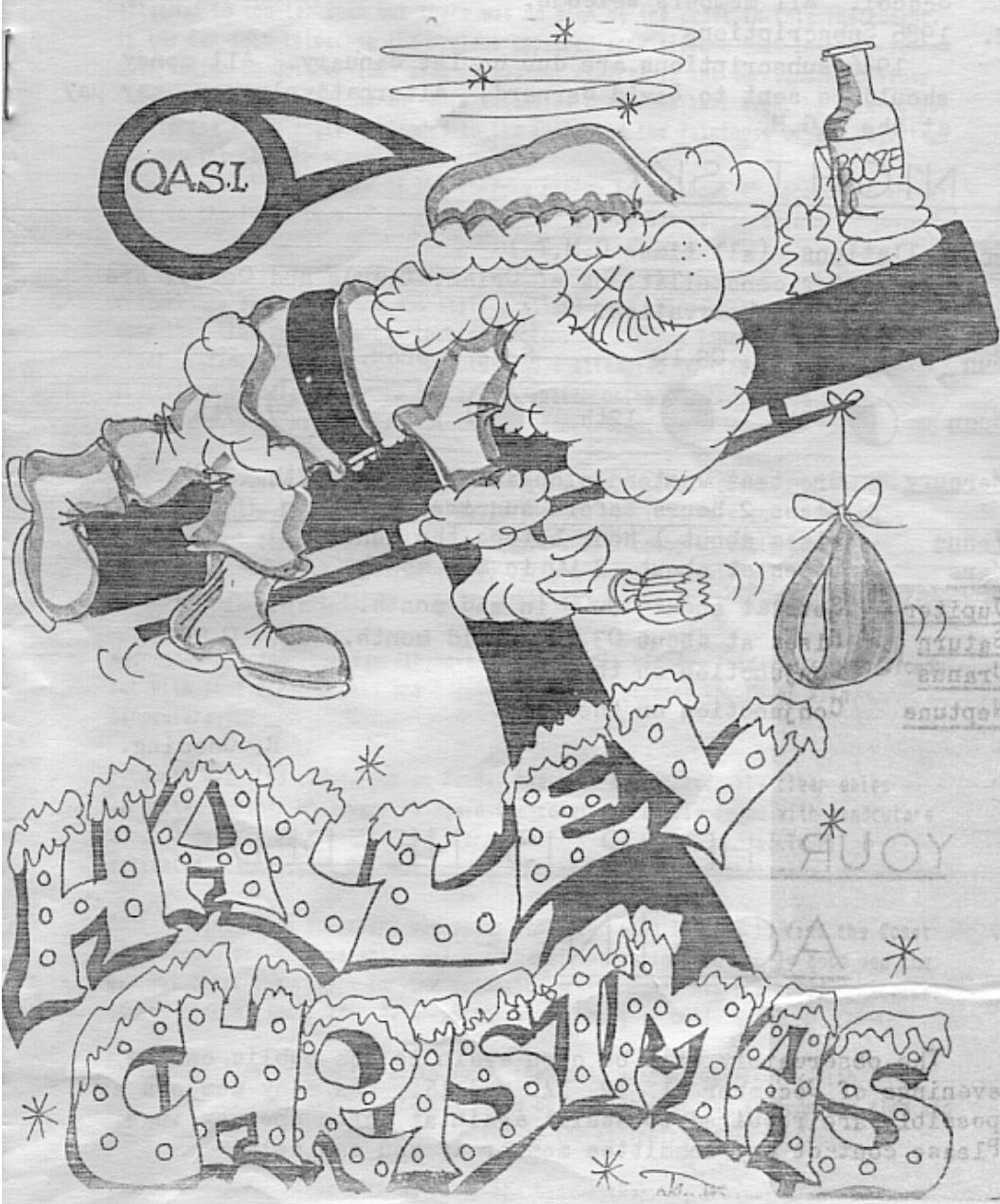
Conjunction on the 25th.

R. Gooding.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

AGAIN

The observatory will be open again to the public on the evenings of December 11 12 14 and 15. As many members as possible are required to assist again at these open evenings. Please contact any committee member if you can help.



My first observation of the comet in November was on Saturday the 2nd. It was four days from full moon but the bright gibbous moon was still causing significant interference and a slight haze did not help matters. However using the Sky and Telescope chart I quickly found the comet with my 10" reflector about 1/4 of a degree to the west of 109 or Eta Tauri. I have a 75mm Maksutov telescope attached to the ten inch but there was no sign of the comet in this instrument. In the ten inch telescope the nucleus appeared more diffuse than in my first observation on October 13th also it was not central in the surrounding diffuse glow but offset to the north. This suggested that some tail might be forming but due to the acute angle subtended to the Earth and the faintness of the object it was not yet clearly visible.

I estimated the diameter of the diffuse region to be about 40 seconds of arc as seen in the ten inch with an Erfle eyepiece giving 80x magnification.

On Sunday November 3rd it was another clear night the moon was less of a disturbance although there was still a slight haze. Finding the Comet was very easy this time using the ten inch reflector. At 11:30pm I was able to see the comet distinctly in the 75mm Maksutov and I attempted to find it with binoculars. At 11:40pm I could just make out a fuzzy patch using averted vision in 10x50 binoculars. This was my first binocular observation.

Monday was cloudy but Tuesday again afforded clear skies (despite it being bonfire night). The moon had now waned and did not interfere and I found the Comet without difficulty in 10x50 binoculars as a roundish misty patch. In binoculars however it appeared fairly uniform brightness without a defined nucleus region. I estimated it to be about 10 minutes of arc across.

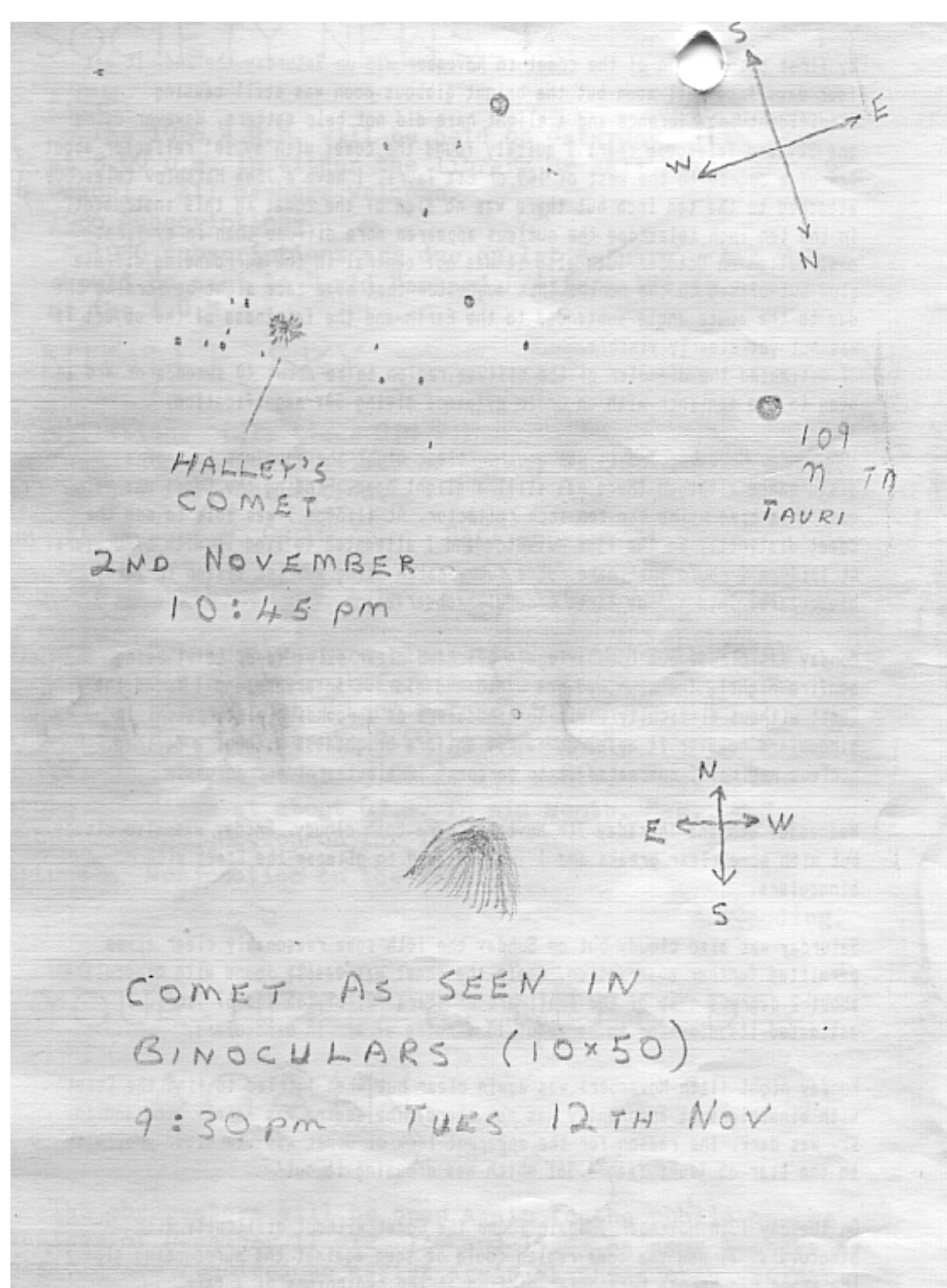
Wednesday 6th and Thursday 7th November were both cloudy. Friday was also cloudy but with some clear breaks and I just managed to glimpse the Comet with binoculars.

Saturday was also cloudy but on Sunday the 10th some reasonably clear skies permitted further observation. Again the comet was easily found with binoculars about 2 degrees east of the small arc of stars 72, 69, 65 and 67 Tauri. I estimated its diameter to be about 13 minutes of arc in binoculars.

Monday night (11th November) was again clear but when I tried to find the Comet with binoculars it apparently was not there! The seeing was fairly good and the sky was dark. The reason for the apparent lack of Comet was its close proximity to the star 65 Tauri (mag 4.36) which was drowning it out!

On Tuesday 12th November I again found the Comet without difficulty with binoculars. By now the coma region could be seen against the surrounding glow and the shape had become triangular hinting at the beginnings of a tail.

Since Wednesday night 13th November the bad weather has prevented any further



OPEN WEEK

Wednesday 13 November was the first evening that the observatory would be open to the public to observe Halley's Comet.

The skies were clear all day which bid well for the evening. Every one had many years experience of either group visits, caravan rallies and open days and weeks, so this evening should present no problems. Little was it realised what a hiatus of activity would ensue from the tranquility of eating tea at 6 p.m.

I arrived at our car park with Martin Cook and David Barnard at 7.30, 30 minutes before the official opening time. The parking area was amass with lost bodies trying hard to find the entrance to the observatory. The dome was already operational, so some visitors had apparently found it without the use of our yet to erected directional signs. We quickly proceeded up to the club room, with the visitors bringing up the rear, to collect the signs. By this time there must have been some fifty visitors either in the club room or the dome. People were arriving all the time and the observatory was still some way from being completely organised. The direction signs were erected around the entrance to the school and the observatory.

By 8.00 p.m. cars were arriving at a rate of one every 10 seconds. Martin and I stationed ourselves at the entrance and began our initiation into the world of car park attendants and night sky guides. Visitors arriving at 8.00 were told there won't be a half hour wait; at 8.30 this had increased to one hour; by 9.00 it reached at least 1½ hours.

The number of visitors stretched our resources to the limit. The school's photo-copier was constantly printing additional copies of our hand-outs to replace our grossly under-estimated original quantities. The number of visitors queuing smashed all previous records. At one time it extended from the club room all the way down the stairs and finally ending outside the classroom in the entrance passage. Some people patiently waited for over 2 hours before glimpsing the Comet through the 10". Fortunately there was a large turn out of members so the number of visitors presented no major difficulties. The total number who visited the observatory was estimated at over 500. The last visitor did not leave until past midnight.

Unfortunately Halley's Comet was only visible for about 20 minutes on the remaining 3 nights (between 10.00 to 10.20 on Friday.) However this did not deter determined visitors; an estimated 150 appeared on Thursday with more on Friday and Saturday.

On Friday evening it was decided to repeat the whole process again in December. The observatory will be opened up to the public again December 11, 12, 14 and 15, so once more a plea is made for as many members as possible to come along and lend a hand.

Needless to say, society funds have never been so healthy. However, this may have to last us for another 76 years!

R. Gooding.

Halley's Comet Open Week

D B Payne

During National Astronomy Week the Orwell Astronomical Society opened its observatory to the public for a once in a life time chance to observe Halley's Comet through the ten inch refractor. In terms of public interest and attendance it was without precedence the most successful event ever held, despite only one night out of the four 'open evenings' being clear. Wednesday 13th November was our first and only clear night. Between 400 and 500 people of all ages, including one old gentleman of 86 who remembered seeing it in May of 1910, queued for up to 2 hours to get a few seconds glimpse of the comet through the ten inch telescope. Each person who did see the comet was issued a certificate signed by a member of the society witnessing the fact. Observing on this night continued until 12:30 am on Thursday morning in freezing conditions.

Thursday evening was cloudy with drizzle however about 150 people turned up for a look at the observatory, telescope and a slide show.

Friday night was supposed to have been clear according to the weather forecast. In the event it was patchy cloud with far more patches than clear spaces. About 300 people turned up that night and a lucky group of about 40 managed to get a glimpse of the comet during the only 30 minute clear spell of the evening.

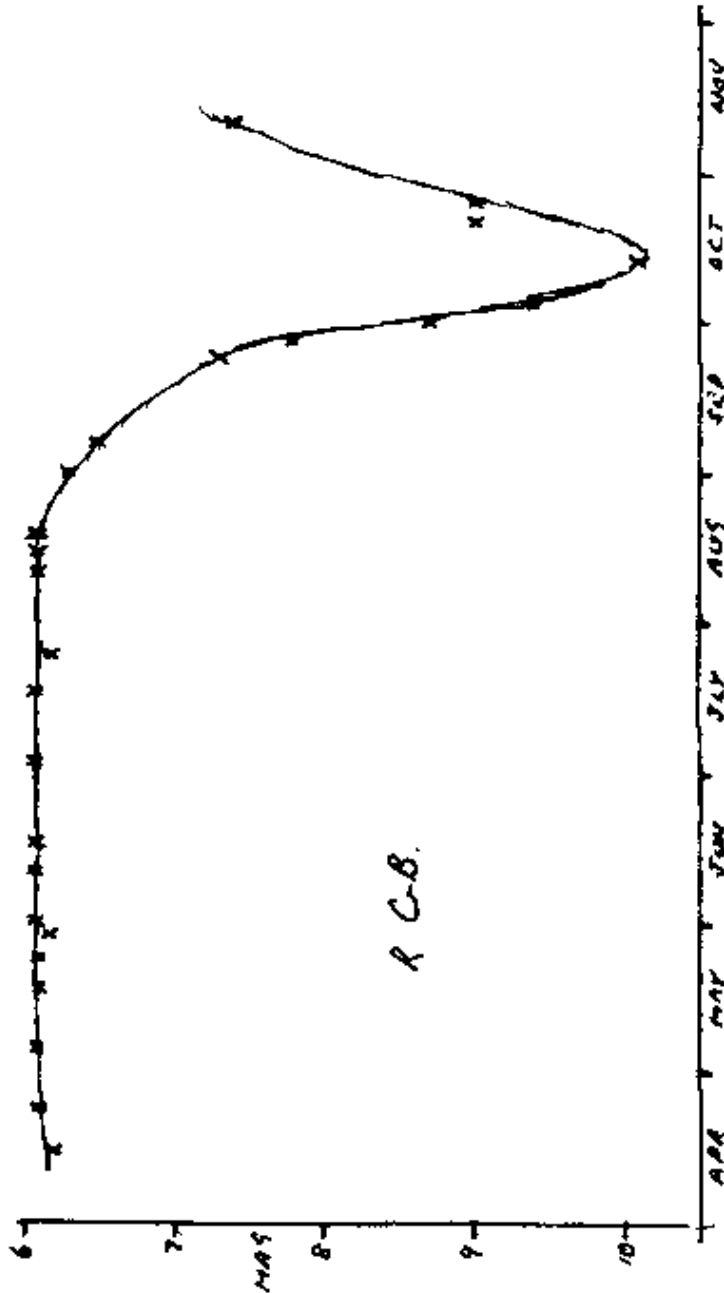
During Saturday the weather continued to deteriorate and by evening it was raining steadily and continued to do so all night. Despite the appalling weather 200 or 30 visitors turned up to the observatory and were given slide shows about the comet and a description of the telescope.

In all about 1000 visitors turned up to the observatory. Because of the bad weather at least half of them did not see the comet. The weather has continued to be poor since that fine Wednesday evening on the 13th and unfortunately only a few observations have been carried out with the ten inch refractor prior to this date. This has led to a dilemma for the society. Do we open the observatory again for the public or do we reserve all future clear nights for members observations? A consensus between the available committee members concluded that we should open the observatory again and to this end the observatory will be open on the following nights in December:

VARIABLE STAR OBSERVATIONS

by Mike Nicholls

This light curve shows R Coronae Borealis during part of this year. This star normally remains at a maximum magnitude of 6.1. However occasionally and unpredictably it fades by up to nine magnitudes where it can remain for a long period before rising, usually more slowly to mag 6.1 again. The curve here shows a slight hiccough from which the star appears to be recovering. However, there is no telling what will happen next.



PROGRAMME FOR DECEMBER

MONDAYS from 8pm
2, 9, 16, 23

DOUBLE STAR & PLANETS SECTION

Mr N Taylor [redacted], Farmlands
Trinley
Mr T Gillan [redacted], Felixstowe

Tel: Fel. [redacted]
Tel: Fel. [redacted]

WEDNESDAYS from 8pm
4, 11, 18

NEBULEA & FAINT OBJECTS SECTION

Mr M Cook, [redacted], Ipswich
Mr D Payne, [redacted],
Wickham Market.

Tel: Ips. [redacted]
Tel: W.Mkt [redacted]

FRIDAYS from 8pm
6, 20

GENERAL OBSERVATION SECTION

Mr R A Lobbett, [redacted],
Felixstowe.
Mr J Hood, [redacted], Ipswich.

Tel: Fel. [redacted]
Tel: Ips. [redacted]

1985 COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN	D Payne	[redacted], Wickham Market, IP13 0SD	Work: [redacted] Home: [redacted]
VICE CHAIRMAN	R Cheesman	[redacted], Corringham, Essex SS17 9BU	Work: [redacted] Extn: [redacted]
SECRETARY	R Gooding	[redacted], Ipswich IP1 6AE	Work: [redacted] Home: [redacted]
TREASURER	M Nicholls	[redacted], Capel St. Mary, Ipswich, IP9 2EX	Work: [redacted] Home: [redacted]
MEMBERSHIP SEC.	D Barnard	[redacted], Ipswich, IP4 5PP	Home: [redacted] Work: [redacted]
P.R.O.	D Barnard	[redacted], Ipswich, IP4 5PP	Home: [redacted] Work: [redacted]
MAINTENANCE	M Cook	[redacted], Ipswich, IP4 5QA	Home: [redacted] Work: [redacted]
FUNCTIONS	E Sims	[redacted], Ipswich, IP1 4HA	Home: [redacted]
LIBRARIAN	E Sims		

Orwell Astronomical Society (Ipswich)

Orwell Park Observatory

Nacton NE Ipswich

HALLEY'S COMET

BY POPULAR DEMAND

2nd OPEN WEEK

11th - 14th DECEMBER

Orwell Park Observatory is open to the public for the observation of HALLEY'S COMET at the following times:-

WEDNESDAY 11th 8.00 - 10.00 p.m.

THURSDAY 12th 8.00 - 10.00 p.m.

FRIDAY 13th 8.00 - 10.00 p.m.

SATURDAY 14th 8.00 - 11.00 p.m.
(Weather permitting, slide show if cloudy)

Depending on conditions and available time, other night sky objects may be observed.

Entrance Donation:

Child 25p
O.A.P. 25p
Adult 50p



Secretary: Mr. R. Gooding
168 Ashcroft Road
Ipswich