

ORWELL ASTRONOMICAL

SOCIETY IPSWICH

Charity No 271313

DECEMBER 1999



Society News

1 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 15th January. The stating time is at 20:00 in the room at the rear of the School's library. If you are not sure where this is please meet on the club room and wait for someone to show you the location. All members are welcome to attend this meeting.

Events for 1999

Event	Details	Date
Christmas Meal	This event has now been fully subscribed	8 th December

Night Sky

All times GMT

Sun

The sun will be rising approximately between 07:50 to 08:10
The sun will be setting approximately between 15:50 to 16:00

Moon

New Moon	1 st Quarter	Full Moon	3 rd Quarter
7 th	16 th	22 nd	29 th

Mercury

Mercury will be at greatest western elongation on the 3rd, at 20°. It will be visible low down in the morning sky before sunrise during the first week of the month.

Venus

Venus remains visible in the morning sky. It will be rising about 04:00 in mid month. Magnitude, -4.0

Mars

Mars will be again be setting at about 20:00 through out the month. Magnitude 1.0

Jupiter

Jupiter will be well placed for observing to past midnight. It will be setting at about 02:50 in mid month. Magnitude -2.7

Saturn

Saturn will also be well placed for observing until the early hours of the morning. It will be setting a t about 04:15 in mid month. Magnitude 0.0

PART ONE

Uranus Uranus will be setting at about 20:00 in mid month. Magnitude 5.9

Neptune Neptune will be setting at about 19:00 in mid month. Magnitude 7.8

Meteor Showers

Shower	Maximum	Limits	ZHR
Geminids	December 14	December 7 th to December 16 th	100
Ursids	December 23 rd	December 17 th to December 25 th	10

Meteor source is the BAA Handbook

Roy Gooding

Astronomy Workshop

Due to the distraction of the festive season, the next workshop will take place on Wednesday January 12th at 7.30, and the next small telescopes night on the Monday after which will be Monday January 17th from 7.30.

Your Library Needs Your Unwanted Large Bookcase!

Regular readers of the OASI Newsletter will appreciate the growth of the library in recent years. I have purchased many new astronomy books, videos and atlases, and although I have also weeded out the older unpopular items, the net result has been a considerable growth in the library's stock. The net result has been that the library bookcase is now bursting at the seams!

I need a new, larger bookcase for the OASI library. Can anyone help? If you have a bookcase that is surplus to your requirements and fits the following specification, please get in touch:

- At least 1m wide by 1.5m high (3ft by 5 ft).
- Four or more shelves.
- Glass fronted doors (to permit easy browsing of the books).
- Dustproof.
- Strongly built.

If any members have any unwanted furniture that fits the above specification, please contact me on Ips [redacted].

James Appleton

Over the past 127 or so years of the existence of our 10" Refractor at Orwell Park, many keen observers have made use of its optics. Not least among them was one Edward Howard Collinson FRAS. A born and bred Ipswich man, Edward saw his personal 'first light' on 15th November 1903 and, by the age of 10, a fledgling interest in astronomy began to grow towards what would become his lifetime passion. Indeed, his carefully kept astronomical notebooks date back to 1914, when he made full use of small refractors at his Quaker school (Ackworth), to which he had been despatched with his brothers Hugh & Norman. In June 1918 and just three days after its discovery by a Dutch astronomer, he recorded observations of Nova V603 Aquilae (by which time it had brightened from an initial magnitude 5.8 to a spectacular -1.1), going on to record its colour and apparent magnitude for a period of months.

Edward's first 'mention in despatches', as it were, was at the 1921 BAA Exhibition Meeting, (He'd been elected a member the previous year) when his notebooks were on show, along with some from fellow pupils at Bootham School in Yorkshire at which establishment he was progressing in his senior education.

Upon leaving school, Edward served Articles in a local legal practice, qualifying as a solicitor in 1927. He rose to become the Senior Partner in the Ipswich & Felixstowe Law practice currently known as Blocks Solicitors. He also served with distinction on various local legal administrative panels & charities.

During the 1920's Edward acquired a 3" refractor which he used, mounted on a cast iron pier, in the back garden of his home at 64 Westerfield Road. He also dabbled in photography, (long exposure wide angle star fields) utilising a gramophone motor to provide RA drive to his mount.

Around this time he became interested in meteor photography, but his efforts were frustrated by his working commitments. They say necessity is the mother of invention and Edward devised an ingenious automatic camera, again driven by a gramophone motor, which changed film plates hourly and allowed him a decent night's sleep! His move into meteor observation brought him into contact with the two leading BAA meteor observers of the day, J.P.M. Prentice, a fellow Solicitor from Stowmarket and G.E.D. Alcock, a schoolteacher from Peterborough. Edward concentrated on photographic recording of meteors right up through the 1930s. Prentice & Alcock were very much visual observers and readers may appreciate a short digression here to highlight George Alcock's dedication to his observing. He



The BAA Presidential portrait of Edward Howard Collinson FRAS (1903 - 1990)

utilised a redundant railway sleeper, leant against his garden fence, to lay upon and keep watch. His notion being that nobody could possibly fall asleep on such an uncomfortable arrangement! Many was the time, too, when his clothing froze him against the sleeper!! No wonder Edward stuck with the automatic camera..

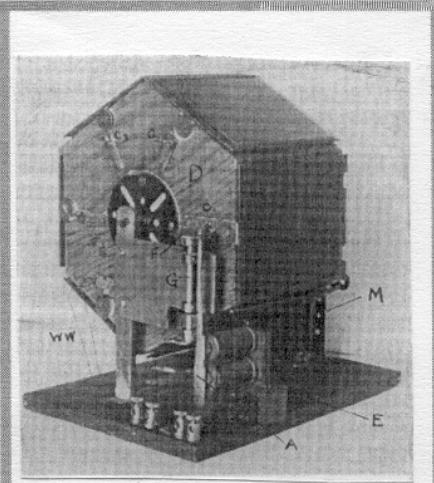
Collinson also did much in the post WWII era to develop photographic meteor observing equipment using the excellent reconnaissance lenses, which became plentiful through military surplus.

Apart from observing a transit of Mercury in 1924, he didn't pay much attention to other celestial subjects until his great passion, the planet Mars, was aroused that same year when he visited a friend in Brighton and used his 10" reflector to view the planet at opposition (the closest of the 20th century). Using that instrument he produced several drawings which he submitted to the Mars Section of the BAA, the first of a great many over the years.

Also in vogue at this time was what would seem to post Apollo era astronomers as the totally crackpot idea of 'lunar vegetation', suggested by Prof W.H.Pickering.

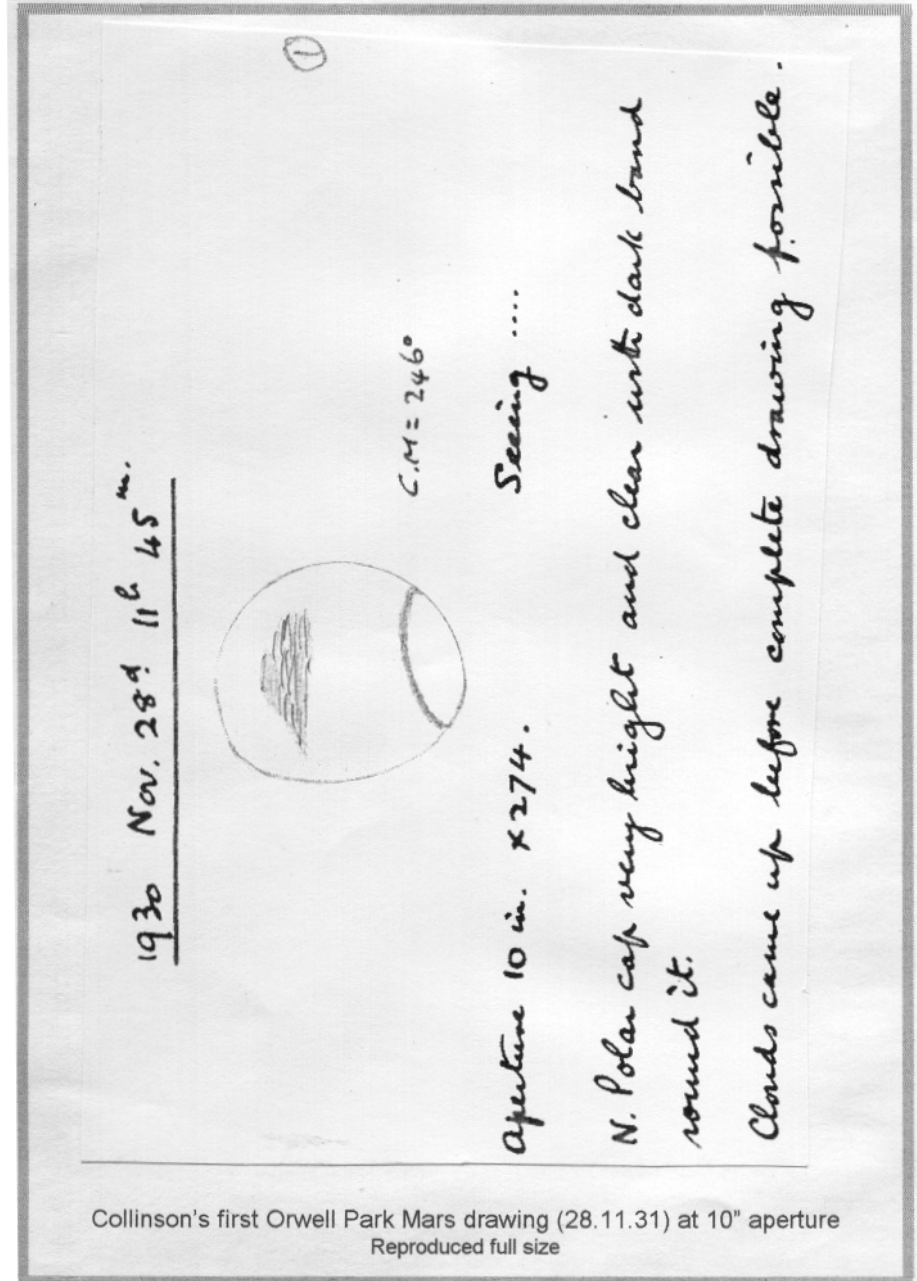
It wasn't so back in the 1920's and was given some credence. Collinson's interest was aroused by this intriguing notion and he made a series of drawings, published in the BAA journal, of dark patches observed inside the crater Eratosthenes. To put things in context, perhaps, we can learn the lessons of history and linger with the sobering thought that at least some modern day ideas of the cosmos may seem laughable many years from now.

In 1930, Collinson obtained permission from the Pretzman family to use 'our' 10" refractor at **Orwell Park**. Over a five year period he made regular (drawing) observations of the planets Mars and Jupiter, along with photographic observations of the moon. Some of Collinson's Mars drawings were published in the BAA Journal, whilst the Jupiter pictures appeared in the Jupiter Section Memoirs. Once familiar with the Orwell Instrument, Collinson normally preferred to stop down the aperture to 8". The first drawing overleaf (reproduced from his beautifully kept logs) was the first Mars drawing made by him (full aperture) 28.11.30 during the 1930/31 opposition. He wasn't able to complete this drawing because of clouding. The second illustration was made 06.01.31 with the 8" aperture stop in place. *As an aside at this millennium moment - one wonders if, to mark its significance perhaps, we (the society & school) should consider giving our historic telescope a name, rather than always referring to it as the 10" or*



Collinson's Automatic Meteor Camera
NB This is the instrument described in
Pete Richards excellent Leonid Article
in the November newsletter.

whatever?? That thought should exercise the good folk of our overcast
Wednesday evenings talking shop!!!




Collinson's first Orwell Park Mars drawing (28.11.31) at 10" aperture
Reproduced full size

Collinson considered that his time at Orwell Park saw the best of his planetary work and he would always fondly recall his time there. Many years afterwards (December 1972) he wrote;

'I was given leave to use the telescope in 1930 and I continued to do so until 1935 when I acquired my own 10 inch reflector. In 1930 the telescope was in fair condition, all the controls and the driving clock were in working order but the dome had housed quantities of bees which had to be swept up and disposed of! The dome was apt to stick and I well remember perilous attempts to free the rails from ice by climbing out of the shutter onto the roof. The view, often in moonlight, was however delightful!'


January 6th 1931.

①
1.




8" x 27x
Cm 225°
10' 0-30

②
2.



8" x 27x
Cm 230°
10' 30-50

③
3.



8" x 27x
Cm 240°
11' 30-45

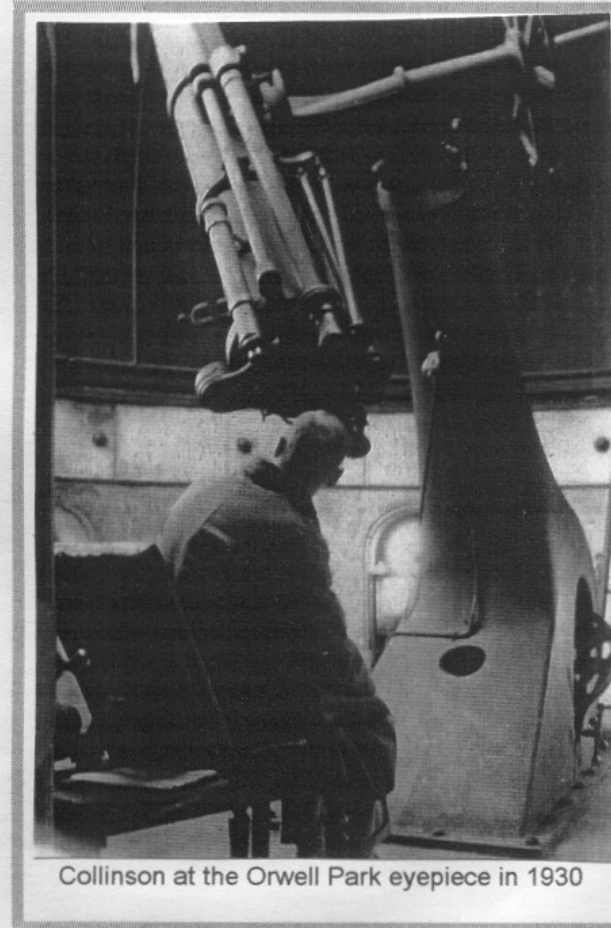
Seeing = 14.

Seeing was poor at first but gradually improved so that the last drawing was made in very fair conditions.

Markings above around polar cap appear grey. North-Nep. band dark, clear elsewhere. Nebulae hours seen quite sharply in one or two good moments between 10'30" or 10'50". See drawing 2. White after following 3 ends of Syntex layer in 3.

This set of drawings (06.01.31) was made with the aperture stooped down to 8"
Reduced in size for reproduction purposes

Those of you who visit the observatory may have noticed the much revamped display of its historical aspects. Amongst the many pictures are two of particular interest, the first being a line drawing of the Orwell Park telescope which was made by Collinson's brother, Hugh, in February 1931. Look closely at it and the gas illumination mantles are clearly shown on the declination circle. You will also find a photograph of the telescope & equatorial room, taken by Edward sometime between 1930 and 1935. Certainly, little has changed in the mean time and one may just discern the sheen of the brass telescope tube which was painted over for ease of maintenance sometime around the late 1960s to early 1970s.



Collinson at the Orwell Park eyepiece in 1930

By now, Edward was regularly corresponding with many of the leading amateur and professional astronomers of the day. He had written a number of papers for the BAA and, perhaps unsurprisingly, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1935.

An indicator of the general regard in which he was held is contained in a letter from H Spencer Jones, the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich, to the Orwell Park estate office in 1936 when they had contacted him to ascertain how or where the Orwell Park telescope could be sold or otherwise passed on. Commenting upon the quality of the instrument, the Astronomer Royal wrote, 'I believe that Mr E.H. Collinson has used this telescope on occasions and, if so, you may with advantage ask him for his opinion of this instrument'.

Collinson had ended his regular use of the instrument the year before the above correspondence was exchanged, when he obtained the long term loan of a 10" reflector from the BAA (by With-Browning on a massive German equatorial mount). That instrument remained with him until he eventually had to give up regular observing in the late 1980's and pictures, plus the concluding part of this narrative will appear in the next issue..

Ken Goward

SEASONAL INSPIRATION

On Saturday 6th November, OASI members William Barton, S J Robinson and I made the long journey up to a very sunny Leeds to attend the annual Leeds Astromeeet which, this year, marked the 140th anniversary of that club's foundation. (Well, StJohn lives half way up there anyway - but it still counts!) A journey, one may say, that was worth every minute because, aside from the chance to browse the trade stands and partake of beer brewed from Pennine water at lunchtime, there was an impressive line-up of expert speakers to deliver talks on subjects ranging from detecting extra galactic particles to the professional career of Sir George Biddell Airy.

The principle draw, perhaps, was the chance to hear that doyen of astronomy historians, Dr Allan Chapman, speak for ninety minutes on Airy. Indeed, having discovered that certain individuals had made the journey all the way up from Suffolk, he wasted no time in praising their effort and pointing out to our 'northern cousins' that Suffolk was the adopted home of Airy. Incidentally, yours truly has been in some small way assisting the Ipswich Evening Star Newspaper with a major feature on Airy and his Ipswich/Millennium connections which will have been published by the time this newsletter drops on members doormats - or shortly afterwards.

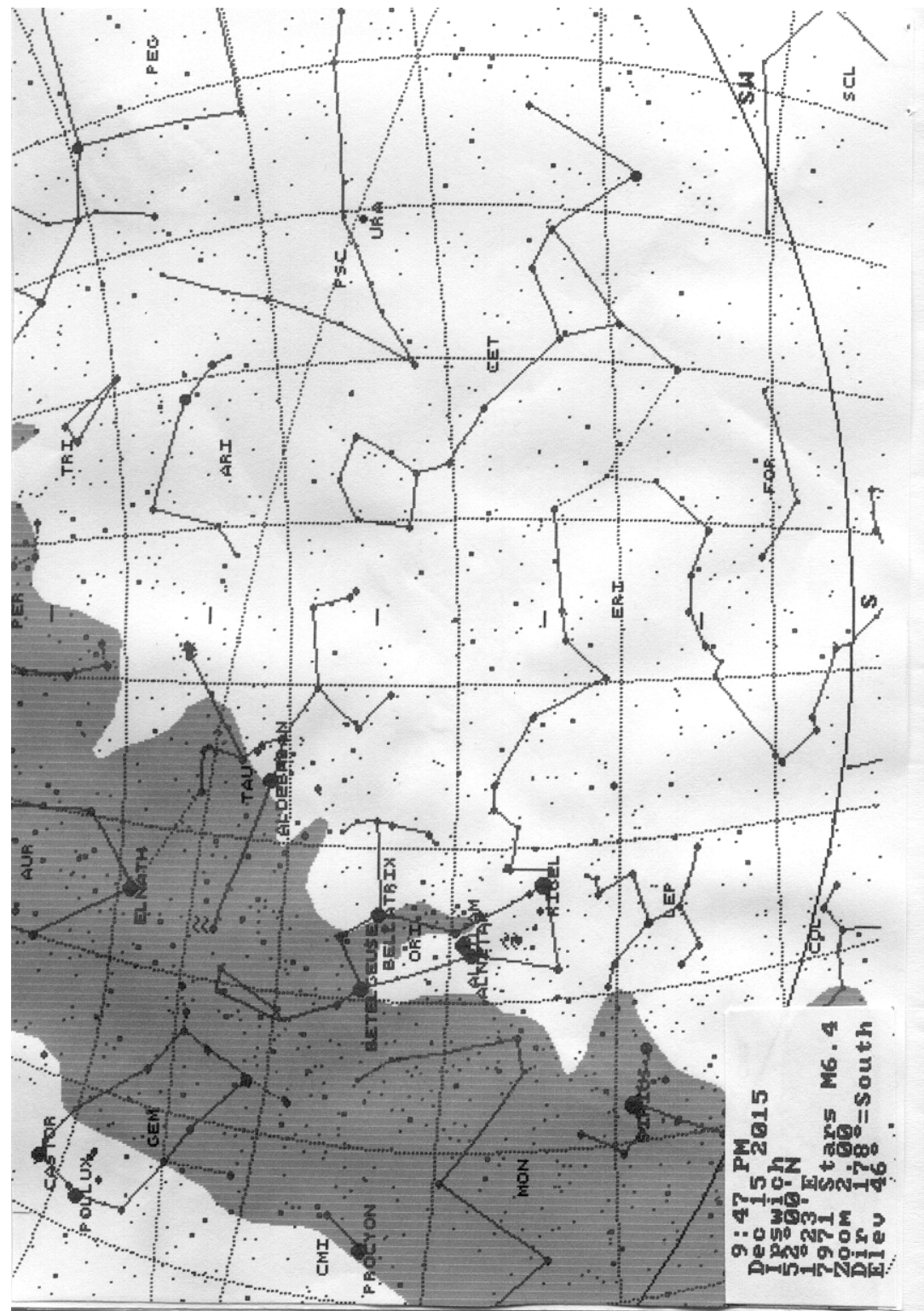
Christmas came a little early for Leeds Astronomical Society members this year, in the guise of an impressive looking brand new 14 inch Reflector of a remarkably similar design to our 'Millennium Telescope'. Their members have spent some time building it in order to mark their 140 years and they decided to name this new instrument the 'William Trant Telescope' in honour of their founder. Dr Chapman took great pleasure in dedicating the telescope, which stood next to the society's first instrument - a tripod mounted brass tube 3inch refractor which bears the name 'The John Herschel Telescope' - its age being contemporary with their foundation. He then went on to discuss that foundation and, it seems, William Trant was a 17 year old lad who wrote 'off the cuff' to Herschel and asked if he would like to become President of a Leeds based astronomy club he hoped to set up. In this day and age, one supposes, that would be a little like writing off to the likes of Stephen Hawkin! Anyway, Herschel accepted and the rest is history - in 1859 Leeds AS became the first known amateur astronomical society, slightly before the Liverpool AS was established and, obviously, somewhat in front of OASI!! Oh, and Trant? - he eventually emigrated to Canada and made his fortune, but not in astronomy - *which would have been another first..*

It was certainly inspiring to see such a project at completion and, by way of conjecture, if we can successfully produce our own new large telescope after just 32 years of existence - we'll probably be rivalling the HST after 140 years!!!

Yes, Leeds is a long way up north - but we'll certainly be returning next year and, hopefully, more OASI members may like to come along to see how our fellow enthusiasts operate and receive a warm northern welcome up in 'Cloth Hat & Whippet land'..

Happy Christmas

Ken Goward



OCCULTATIONS DURING DECEMBER 1999

The table lists stellar occultation disappearance events which occur during the month under favourable circumstances. The data relates to Orwell Park Observatory, but will be similar at nearby locations.

D or R	Date & Time (UT)	Lunar Phase	Sun Alt (d)	Star Alt (d)	Min Dist (rad)	Star	Mag
R	13 Dec 16:55	.27+	-10	21	.30S	delta Cap	2.8
D	14 Dec 18:53	.37+	-28	22	.61S	ZC 3327	6.8
D	15 Dec 21:38	.48+	-52	14	.89S	Hip 116388	7.4
D	15 Dec 21:47	.48+	-53	13	.34S	ZC 3478	6.4
D	16 Dec 19:06	.58+	-30	34	.07S	ZC 44	7.4
D	17 Dec 21:58	.69+	-54	31	.54S	Hip 6000	7.3
D	19 Dec 18:14	.87+	-22	36	.50S	ZC 444	5.9
D	19 Dec 21:24	.88+	-50	50	.16N	AQ Ari	7.1
D	19 Dec 23:43	.88+	-61	40	.46S	ZC 462	6.0
D	21 Dec 20:30	.99+	-42	45	.66N	104 Tau	4.9

James Appleton

1999 COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN
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 WORK PARTY ORGANISER
 TREASURER
 MECHANICS
 NEWSLETTER CO-ORDINATOR
 BEGINNERS MEETING CO-ORD
 DARK SKIES & VISIT CO-ORD
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D Payne
 R Gooding
 M Harlow
 M Cook
 E Sims
 T Sampson
 G Coleman
 J Walsh
 J Appleton

Home Phone Work Phone

CO-OPTED MEMBER
 LECTURE CO-ORDINATOR

P Richards

JOURNAL ARTICLES TO

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CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

R Gooding OASI Secretary
 Ipswich Suffolk IP1 6AE

MEMBERSHIP

M. Cook Ipswich IP4 5PZ

Observing Programme For December

Dates	Observing Director	Activities
Mondays from 7.30pm	T Sampson	General Observation
Tuesdays from 7.30pm	G Coleman	Group Visits
Wednesdays from 8.00pm	M Cook D Payne	Nebular & Faint Objects
Thursdays from 7.30pm	G Coleman	Group Visits
Fridays from 7.30pm		Double Stars

All members are welcome on any night, but on nights other than Wednesday please check with the appropriate director that the observatory will be open.

Special Events

1. Committee Meeting

The next committee meeting is going to be held on Saturday 27th November in the club room at the observatory at 7.30pm. All members are welcome to attend.

2. Christmas Meal

Melton Wilford Bridge December 8th.

3. Workshop

Wednesday January 12th 7.30pm Telescope making - an introduction; Neither difficult nor expensive!

4. Lecture Meeting

Nick Hewitt B.A.A. President "Deep Sky Exotica" at the Friends Meeting House Fonnereau Road, on Friday 11th February 2000 at 8.00pm. Admission free.

Society Contact Details

	Home Phone	Work Phone
Chairman	D Payne	
Secretary	R Gooding	

Contact details for the full committee are on the inside back page.

e-mail queries: ipswich@ast.cam.ac.uk
 WWW address: http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~ipswich/