

UNIVERSE

Journal of the Astrocomical Society of NSW U^{nco}

April 1st, 2000 Vol 2 No 1

THE 8th SOUTH PACIFIC STAR PARTY WILDLY SUCCESSFUL AGAIN!

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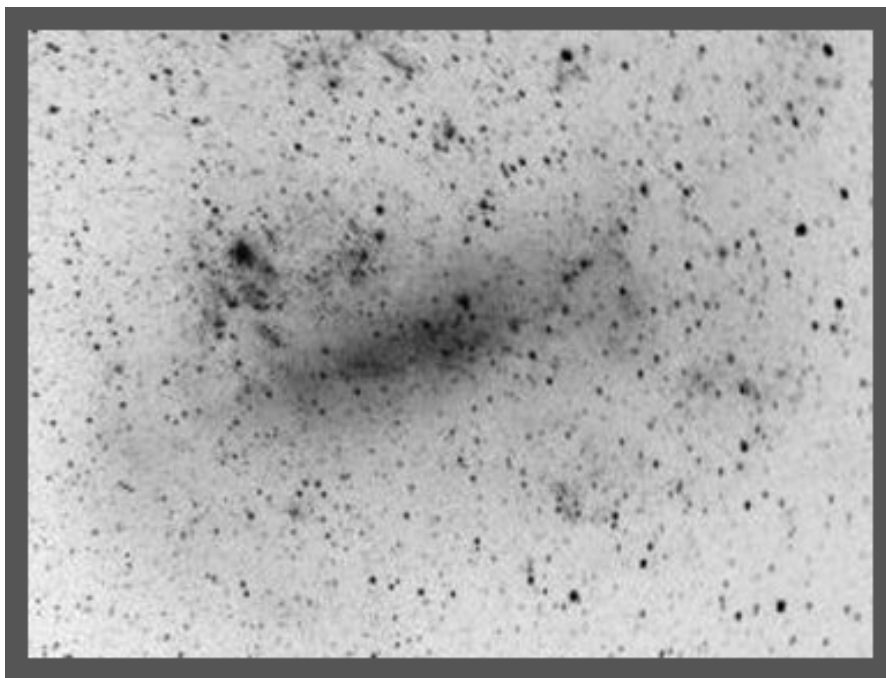
SOCIETY DIARY

DISCLAIMER

Once again, the South Pacific Star Party held over the weekend of March 31 – April 3, 2000, was a wild success attracting almost 400 amateur and professional astronomers from around the world and several aliens from undisclosed planets of origin.

There were almost 300 telescopes ranging in size from 5mm refractors up to 125" focal length Dobsonian-style telescopes and everything in between.

The image below is of the Large Magellanic Cloud, the Southern Hemisphere's greatest object by far, taken using a standard 50mm lens without the use of a flash.



This year's theme was Epoch 2000.0, covering significant amateur and professional events in astronomy since 1950, and professional astronomy in the early years of the new millennium.

Dobsonian Telescopes are one of the greatest amateur happenings of the late 20th Century, while the move by amateurs to large apertures – up to 30" and above is also noteworthy.

The last 50 years of professional astronomy is the most dynamic period in its history, while the next generation Hubble, and giant earth-bound telescopes promise a dramatic new era.

BREAKTHROUGH FOR COMET SEEKERS

Dunedoo's most famous son, Comet Hunter Extraordinaire Emmanuel Snodgrass, has reported a major finding. When testing his newly mounted binocular Telrads at his usual observing location in the Car Park of the Commercial Hotel, Dunedoo, Emmanuel happened to glance through his favourite apochromat guidescope while it was pointed towards the LMC, and discovered countless comet-like objects, fainter than mag 3.

He concluded that wide-field refractors could well be useful in searching for comets below the threshold range of Telrads - a useful pursuit when 1st and 2nd mag comets are in short supply.

In his excitement, he quickly scanned both the LMC and SMC, and proposes to search the Carina region during next New Moon. He has so far identified 447 suspect comets in the LMC alone, and has transmitted positional data to Comet sleuth Greg Burnt for confirmation. When asked to comment on Emmanuel's feat, Greg in obvious admiration, admitted he was lost for words.

To bring order to his search, Emmanuel has been inspired by his idol, Charles Messier, and is preparing a Snodgrass Catalogue of the LMC and SMC. The brightest LMC object, catalogued as S1, is described as resembling a blue-ringed octopus eating an amoeba.

A Snodgrass Marathon is proposed for the Year 2000 Dunedoo combined Beerfest and cultural exposition to be held in the beer garden of the Commercial Hotel on Easter Sunday. First prize is an autographed copy of the Lesser Catalogue of Way Beyond the NGC, by Steve Mensinbin.

THE GREATER CATALOG OF LESSER MURRELL OBJECTS

Do you want to see objects Beyond the NGC? Or maybe you'd like to out-Hubble Hubble? Hypersensitise your imagination! Your dreams are our reward.

Now available on CD-ROM, the Greater Catalogue of Lesser Murrell Objects on 67 CD's, including such tips as advice to your Medical Practitioner on how to surgically enlarge your exit pupil for maximum observing efficiency.

Send a signed, blank cheque to: *Bokglob Gröseblurter, Private Bag 9999, GPO Ilford NSW 2850.*



Catalog in Preparation

FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY IN SEARCH OF DARK MATTER

Since the release of the 1999 Alternate Universe, there have been important developments in the use of flash photography in Astronomy.

Baron Beavis von Buttköpf has constructed a 1-metre Lepht-Schmidt camera at his Schloß Ratzhärz Observatory, and with this, took the photo *below* of the Moon during last year's total eclipse, aided by four tons of Magnesium powder, spread approximately 10cm deep in the 50-metre wide Music Bowl in the Castle's Courtyard, which was ignited by using an Army surplus flame-thrower.

Inspired by this success, the Baron, an expert flasher since his days in primary school, decided to use flash photography in his search for dark matter in the Milky Way, and using the combined effects of street lights in the major European cities, bush-fires in the Black Forest (now considerably blacker), and three-thousand tons of Magnesium powder in the Olympic Stadium in Munich, he has successfully managed to photograph the rear, or posterior end of the Horsehead Nebula *shown below* showing a formation of bok globules being expelled from the nebula by the combined effect of many solar winds.

The Baron has unsuccessfully attempted to photograph black holes which were

thought to be in association with certain extended objects, but he has concluded that the light from the flash has not been able to return back past the event horizon of the black holes.



Computer model from a flash photograph suggesting that the horsehead nebula is actually a Moodehead nebula

Flash Photography of Radio Waves: The Baron has reasoned that if light and radio waves are different wavelengths of the same electromagnetic spectrum, it was just a matter of finding a radio-sensitive emulsion for photographic plates, and the appropriate flash material.

In a related development, these Posterior Nebula Bok Globules explain a matter that had been puzzling self-confessed Solar Expert Lorraine Mensunsky. Lorraine has been monitoring a variable star in Orion, reported to have brightened from time to time by an order of 3 magnitudes, and the influx of Hydrogen and Methane ejected from the Posterior Nebula neatly accounts for this.

LEONID TRIP TO KULGERA ROADHOUSE

After almost being abandoned due to lack of funding, the University of New South Wales' expedition to Kulgera to investigate last years strange sighting (*see Alternate Universe, 1999*) went ahead, aided by the voluntary services of ASNSW Member Dipso Maniak, and New Zealand amateur Ivor Merino.

Ivor fortunately was in Sydney to buy a new sheepskin observing jacket as his last one was seized by an over-zealous New Zealand Customs Officer due to its supposed pornographic nature).

Dipso and Ivor paid their own expenses, but the University did provide transportation in the form of its Engineering Faculty's prototype solar-powered motor bike.

Dipso cleverly modified the bike for the trip by his skilful use of CCD technology, by modifying the small towed trailer load of solar cells so that a modest amount of power could be generated by using Starlight and Moonlight, the Moon being a few days either side of first quarter during their trip, allowing for night travel.

They made Kulgera in two days, with an overnight rest stop in the top cabin in the town of Oororoo (spelt backwards: Oororoo).

To economise on drinks at Kulgera, they filled 3 jerry-

cans with a rough-red during their passage through the Barossa Valley.

The cans travelled under the Solar/Stellar/Lunar panels on the trailer, along with Ivor's 6" rich-field fast-slewing Meteor Seeker, built around the main frame of a highly-g geared mountain bike.

Dipso is noted for his sketches of meteor trails, made immediately after he has expertly tracked them with his 6" f/4 and 35mm Panoptic combination. He is aided by his photographic memory and artistic imagination, being the only person to have ever glimpsed a Murrell object in a 6" (or anything else!).

More controversial (!) were Dipso's drawings of several of the brighter Fireballs - notably 1999/DM12, 17 and 25. These were observed with the 6" Meteor Seeker and 9mm Nagler on 18th November 1999. Several spots and streaks were noted on all these objects.

Dipso's drawings were made possible only be the impressive team work he and Ivor developed between them. While Dipso was observing with the 6", Ivor was centring the nucleus of the fireballs in the cross-wires of the 60mm co-axially mounted guide scope, and by a combination of foot and hand pedals, rapidly slewing the scopes in two dimensions with the modified mountain-bike/equatorial-mount, fitted with 2 sets of elaborate gear-trains.

In a commendable display of self-discipline, both observers restricted their alcohol intake to no more than 3 litres of wine per day, and spent many daylight hours tracking fast-flying birds as practice for the serious evenings' observing.

BE A TIGER AFTER DARK: NIGHT VISION FOR ENTHUSIASTS

A few simple steps will maximise your enjoyment by giving you the best night-vision of all members in your club:

- Wear welder's goggles 24 hours a day for a week prior to your observing session
- Use radio only for news or entertainment
- Eat 2 raw carrots twice a day
- Give up Smoking, Tea, Coffee, Alcohol and Chocolate
- After dark, do not observe objects brighter than 3rd magnitude, or use instruments bigger than 8" unless you clean the coating off your mirror
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat so you don't accidentally look up and see Jupiter, Venus, Sirius, the Galactic Centre, or the Magellanic Clouds
- Place a cloth over your head when at the eyepiece
- Observe for no more than 15 minutes per night to avoid photon fatigue of the eyes
- If your red torch is bright enough to read charts by, it is too bright. Order a re-issue of the Skalnate-Pléso Atlas, which comes in

colour-coded braille, for dedicated observers

- Take the batteries out of your Telrad

Follow these simple guidelines, and you will be the talk of your club!

THE END OF THE ICE-AGE: GLOBAL WARMING

The Earth is currently enjoying an interglacial period, having slowly emerged from the ice age over a period of around 30,000 years. Recently, Dr John Watson of the Department of Elementary Science, the Holmes Building in the University of Sydney, demonstrated how this came about through a combination of factors.

The Astronomical trigger for this was the position of the Oort Cloud - millions of icy comets in orbit past the orbit of Pluto.

Flash photographs taken by Baron Beavis von Buttköpf in his search for dark matter had revealed reflections off many of these comets, and when studied by computer analysis at the University of Burgerweltdt, revealed that the comet stream was in a highly elliptical orbit and commenced moving further away from the Earth some 30,000 years ago.

Thus, the chill factor from these comets started to be significantly reduced, so far as Earth was concerned.

Important factors on Earth contributed strongly. Heavy burning off of rainforests in Asia and South America, together with burning off of the formerly predominant conifers on the Australian continent increases emissions of greenhouse gases, trapping solar heat.

Perhaps the greatest influence stemmed from that unknown genius who by selective breeding turned rangy and fast running MIOCENE and tertiary wild cattle into slow, contented domestic cattle.

The latter, outgas to a considerable extent, and even today, farting cattle emit a greater quantity of greenhouse gases than all human industrial and motoring activity combined.

The University is concerned that well-meaning but unscientific attempts to stop greenhouse gas emissions may trigger off a new ice age, and suspects this may be evidence for the theory that much of the conservation movement may well be a front for certain oil, gas and energy companies for whom a new ice age would reap a financial bonanza by expanding the demand for home heating.

The University agriculture faculty is currently testing the outgassing propensity of various breeds of cattle, while the Department of Organic Chemistry is exploring the gas-producing properties of different proprietary cattle feed and natural grasses.

It is considered that careful management of the right mix of cattle and feed, scientifically managed, can keep the Earths global temperature in stasis without recourse to politically correct if meaningless, conservationist stunts.

For fine tuning, the University considers that Government subsidised onions for fast-food outlets can be used to meet short-term problems - drought etc.

ASNSW RADIO TELESCOPE PICKS UP NEWS

Sensational news was received from the ASNSW Radio Telescope crew at Wiruna following another severe thunderstorm. Multiple lightning strikes along the extended farm-fence/grid (*see 1999 Alternate Universe*), together with an enhanced modulation unit and a new home-made low noise converter, gave first access to an inter-galactic news broadcast which was virtually instantaneously transmitted across the known universe.

By the ingenious usage of the "Slingshot Method", the broadcast beam passes in close proximity with 69 major black holes and is then amplified using gravitational lensing via a parabolic "dish" of galaxies in the Local Group. In fact a reversal of the "space-time continuum" in respect of some star systems resulted in the news being received on a number of planets before it was even

sent. This has resulted in an interstellar ban on gambling in interplanetary events. The broadcast was compressed into what has hitherto been regarded as "Gamma-ray Bursters".

One of the items of interest to us concerned the release (on parole) of the notorious Bokglob Gröseblurter, who has had his cerebral cortex extensively reconstructed.

Bokglob has apparently been assigned to "Operation SILE" (Search for Intelligent Life on Earth). This is a very labour intensive operation, with over 15 million American citizens alone, already having been abducted and given IQ tests, so far without success.

Bokglob has been given the toughest assignment - working with blondes, due in part to his great experience in handling them.

This Millennia's Miss Universe was reported to be Ms Rigel 14, whose shapely tentacles, 18 bright blue eyes and iridescent scales nudged Miss Achernar 3 into second place.

Buck Gordon won the Proxima Centauri to Canopus off tractor-beam Rally, after Dr Who was disqualified for allegedly finishing 2 minutes before the race actually started.

Local Weather Forecast

The Great Red Spot on Jupiter is abating to a mild depression, while the ice-age currently being experienced

by Mars is forecast to end by (Earth) Year 2001.

Automatic sensors on Phobos have already triggered the awakening from Suspended Animation/Hibernation of 67,342,103 Martians.

Solar Winds light to variable, increasing to gale-force at next solar maxima.

Eta Carina is due to go Supernova by (Earth) year 2106, and nearby residents (within 3,000 light years) are advised to install their radiation shields.

Earth, and the inner Solar System could experience severe hail in the form of ice comets due to associated perturbations in the Oort Cloud.

Full Moon - mostly fine and sunny.

The news was followed by "*The Science Show*" - an intergalactic program for educational purposes. This episode dealt with communications, and gave detailed instructions on how to communicate with intergalactic headquarters, for the cost of a local call. Based on the steps set out in the show, ASNSW radio buffs have attempted to send a messenger via proxy, and we are still awaiting the outcome.

A volunteer was scanned at 9 different wavelengths simultaneously, the results analysed by the detailed program sent by the Science Show, and combined into a high-frequency powerful



Hologram being transmitted from behind a neutrino-resistant safety shield

transmission from which a heliograph of our representative would be re-constituted by the data sent through hyperspace. We are still awaiting news from “the other side”.

The holograph has the complete memory banks of our “Astral Traveller”.

Every precaution was taken during the transmission, which was monitored by our project director from beneath a neutrino-resistant sheet of plastic for greater security.

In an exciting development, planetary and Solar System expert Greg Burnt has sought “observing time” on the Wiruna Radio Telescope, for his project on the origins of life. Mr Burnt has been conducting experiments using a modified microwave oven from which he had removed the air using a specially designed bicycle pump. Using deep frozen pizzas, he tried various frequencies of

microwave radiation in the simulated “vacuum of space” to determine whether potential organic compounds could have been created on planets suitably fried by the background radiation from the galaxy.

His findings will be tested using the ASNSW Radio Telescope, targeting Methane, Carbon Monoxide and Hydrogen clouds in Eta Carina. He had produced similar gases from the microwaved pizzas, and has noted that the rotation of clouds of interstellar gas in Eta Carina closely resembles the rotation of turntables in microwave ovens.

He concluded from his preliminary experiments, that Jupiter is “well done”, Venus and Mercury a little “overdone”, and Pluto, Neptune and Uranus were still on “defrost”. He is closely examining Saturn, and considers that the answer to life is still 42.

ASTEROID IMPACT THEORY CONFIRMED

The theory that an asteroid impact had created a “nuclear winter” leading to the demise of the dinosaurs, has been confirmed by a recent discovery at the Coober Pedy opal fields.

When drilling a new gallery North of his mine some 15 metres underground, opal miner Harry Janos uncovered a fossilised space craft in strata at the Jurassic / Pre-Cambrian boundary.

Coated with a fine layer of vacuum-deposited Iridium, the craft was ovoid in shape, and some 20 metres in length.

Hermetically sealed by the Iridium layer, the interior contained instrumentation and equipment which is still undergoing analysis at nearby Woomera with the assistance of students from the Oodnadatta campus of the University of Adelaide.

The crew of two were apparently freeze-dried and have been perfectly preserved in a dehydrated semi-fossilised state. Carbon dated at approximately 67,322,401 years old (plus or minus 26½ years), they were human sized bipedal intelligent dinosaurs.

It has been possible to begin deciphering the ships records, stored on super-compressed (artificial diamond) carbon discs in a binary code which is currently being read by a computer in tandem with



Fossilised Spacecraft at Coober Pedy

certain parts of a CD player. The creatures reveal themselves as a highly ethical race, who have genetically re-engineered themselves to become both vegetarians and hermaphrodites, thus, in a spirit of give and take, eliminating any sexual discrimination and avoiding the biological imperative of females devouring the partners after mating. The official name for their race is broadly translated as "Philosoraptures".

Lovers of art and beauty, they had been obliged at short notice to emphasise science and build a small fleet of space craft to try to head off the impact of a 6km wide asteroid on a collision course with Earth. Unfortunately, the explosion used by the Philosoraptures, of a type still to be determined, merely broke off substantial fragments of the asteroid, one of which detonated on the Moon, causing the crater known to us as Copernicus, while the larger parts were mostly re-directed to the Earth's northern hemisphere.

One small part, about 200m across in diameter, detonated in what is now Lake Eyre in South Australia, burying the space craft and its occupants under deep layers of ejecta.

More information on Jurassic civilisation will be published in future issues of Alternate Universe following on it being deciphered from the space craft's memory banks and black box.

LINE DANCING SPIDERS

In a related development, Dr. Peter Lapin, reader in Arachnophobia at Bathurst TAFE, has made a major breakthrough in being the first human to establish communication with spiders.

Dr. Lapin had received details of the binary code in which the Coober Pedy space crafts' data was recorded shortly before conducting field experiments with the newly discovered Arachnis Pittoiletis species.

Dr. Lapin had noted that whenever Andrew Moral was playing loud music on the western observing field at Wiruna, the spiders stopped whatever they were doing, and broke into what appeared to be line dancing.

He soon realised though, that they were leaving in the dust, footprints in a series of dots and dashes amounting to the same binary code discovered in the space craft at Coober Pedy, translation of which revealed that these arachnids had been selectively bred by the Philosoraptures to assist in insect control.

The insects of most concern were the Paleomega Ticks, whose bites injected an enzyme resulting in sterility in most species of Dinosaurs, and of itself, and threatened extinction of the genus even before the intervention of the asteroids.

The spiders were moderately telepathic, enabling co-operation in tapping out elaborate messages, and for several million years had been unsuccessfully attempting communication with Kangaroos, being bipeds of around Philosorapture size and posture. They avoided Emus though, being spider eaters.

Messages could be sent to the spiders in the form of musical scales, which were produced by Scott Muesli, Curator of Spiders from the Australian Museum, by varying the pitch of his chainsaw in the eastern observing field at Wiruna.

The spiders have already been promised two rabbits per week, in return for keeping the under side of the pit toilet seats clear of Red-Back spiders, who traditionally sought out such places to protect themselves from asteroid impacts, in a demonstration of long lasting ancestral memory.

The ancestors of this small group had survived the nuclear winter following on the asteroid impact, by feeding on a Brontosaurus preserved in permafrost for 122 years.

To keep them happy, they have been told that the new re-enforced concrete slabs over the quadraphonic neutrino detector, are actually asteroid shelters constructed for their benefit - which, in a sense, is literally true, if only as a second usage.

Dr. Lapin is continuing a dialogue drawing on the spiders traditional history to try to cross-relate events as recorded by them to Geological and Anthropological history. One interesting discovery, was their story about the first Australians, some 60,000 years ago, had actually invented the telescope. This knowledge was lost when Australia slipped from being a green and well-watered land, to a desert in which survival was desperate and marginal. The didgeridoo, they reported, was a lens-less memory of the original instrument, amongst a society which had lost touch

with its original technology - the didgeridoo thus being used to amplify sound rather than light.



The Line-Dancing Spiders' Lead Dancer posing for a photograph

The Curator of Spiders, Mr Muesli, has been fine tuning his chainsaw in anticipation of further discoveries.

STAR PARTY RECIPES

For the adventurous:

"Snake Kebab"

For the adventurous: Firstly, use of road-killed snakes rather than fresh snakes is advised, as:

- a) All snakes in NSW are protected by Law - you draw a \$5,000 fine for fiddling with them, and,
- b) Of the world's 10 deadliest snakes, Australia has 12, and most of those you encounter are dangerous and are well equipped to protect themselves

If your road-killed snake is not too far gone, a bit of dexterous use of your trusty Swiss-Army knife can extract the backbone from horizontal chunks of meat, leaving them just right to place on your spit skewer, with alternating gum leaves, and either red or black bull-ants - colour doesn't matter, it's the presentation that is important.

Barbecue well, to kill any endemic parasites, noxious bacterium, organic venom-producing compounds etc...

When suitably charred, let stand until cool enough, and until you are hungry enough - this may take some time. Try to avoid chomping on the fangs.

"Yabby Wiruna"

First, check the colour of the Dam at Wiruna. If powder green, or, if the Yabbies have two heads or three claws, the dam may be going through one of its noxious stages, so fishing for yabbies is not generally advised at this time.

If however, it is putrid brown, then it has returned to its normal pristine state, and you may possibly survive eating any yabbies you catch. An old net or stocking with some rotting meat usually attracts them in.

Boil for about 20 minutes, and let them stand on a plate until some innocent passer-by is foolish enough to try one. Wait for one hour - if he is still standing, then it may be considered safe to try one yourself.

"Bush Damper"

Add 3 cups of flour to a handful of any grass seeds you can find on the observing fields, and a cupful of beetles to make the damper crisp and crunchy and to add a little protein. Slowly pour 2 cups of water from the Wiruna dam into the mixture, to make a stiff dough.

Bake in a tin or sealed pot over the embers of a fire for approximately 2 hours. If you are not asthmatic, or pollen-allergenic, you may be able to thrive on this. If you are reactive, cheer up - you may achieve fame in the medical journal of Australia.

THE ASTRONOMY OF SHAKESPEARE

The Bard is noted for his firm grip of history plays such as Julius Caesar, MacBeth, Henry V etc, while not historically accurate in every respect, are broadly faithful to the history of the events they portray - he drew heavily on Hollinshead's Chronicles, and very clearly he was an educated man.

What has not been so widely recognised, is his knowledge of contemporary astronomy. There are many examples in his plays of astronomical references which show both knowledge and great foresight in this regard.

For example, from Romeo & Juliet: "*How sweet the Moonlight sits upon this bank*" - The words are certainly spoken at night, either First Quarter to Full Moon to have been bright enough to notice, however he does not say Which Bank - certainly not the Commonwealth or Rothschilds as the period is too early.

However, the 16th Century Verona bank was opened in 1522 by Branch Manager, *Pedro the Fiscal Man* who

had been forced to flee his native Spain by a fishing boat after eloping with the bride of the rich winemaker, *Miguel, the Full Bodied*.

"*Out Damn Spot*" - these words, spoken by Lady MacBeth have long been attributed by Freudians and similar fruitcakes, to compulsive, neurotic attempts by the guilt stricken woman attempting to wash away imaginary blood after the murder of King Duncan. An alternative theory was advanced at the symposium during the formal dinner.

Following on the 1962 Oxford/Cambridge Booze Race, Jock McStrapp, professor of Medieval History, referred to Scottish chronicles which refer to McHagg, eldest of the three witches, and her Highland Terrier, named Spot. This hapless dog had mistaken Lady MacBeth's sturdy legs for trees from Burnham wood, and one day in chapel during matins had lifted his leg in benediction and had blessed her ankle with a stream of warm, if unholy water.

Ever after, she had persecuted the poor animal and Jock considered that these words could have been directed at it, and explained the curse put on the MacBeths by the witches.

However, the astronomy connection had long been overlooked. McStrapp admitted the words could equally apply to the great daylight sunspot of 1557.

This was seen by many citizens of Glasgow on that celebrated day when the Sun broke through the clouds and was actually seen in Scotland, frightening small children who had not seen the Sun previously. Visible to the naked eye when filtered through bottles of malt Whiskey, this Sunspot caused widespread alarm and was blamed for many evils, including the failure of the Haggis crop and King Duncan's double hernia during caber tossing. It even frightened many devout Scots off Whiskey for nearly a month.

It is now certain that Shakespeare intended Lady MacBeth to be referring to this evil omen. "*No Comets are seen when beggars die...*" - from Julius Caesar, contrasts the death of Caesar being associated with Comet Halley's apparition that year.

Could Shakespeare be suggesting that the death rate amongst beggars fell to zero when comets were seen? Could there be another meaning? Did Roman Comet hunters not search for Comets during some mourning period for beggars? - Not likely, as Comet Halley was observed, although possibly by people who did not mourn Caesar's demise. Professor Aldenté Pasta, of Bologna University in Italy, suggests that Shakespeare is referring to a Roman charitable custom. It seems that a permanent open season was declared under the rule of Sulla (*known as "Sulla the Culler"*), allowing

beggars to be culled so as to reduce demand on State supplied grain, but that under his successor, Marius, the open season was suspended during the advent of any naked eye Comets (a clear majority of the Comets observed in Roman times) as an act of grace - thus, and more accurately, no beggars were culled when Comets were seen. Clearly Shakespeare displays a profound knowledge of Roman history.

“Our faults lay not in our stars, but in ourselves” - Shakespeare put astrology in its proper place, and in this regard, was well ahead of Johannes Kepler, who had shamelessly pilfered Tycho Brahe’s positional records for use with the astrological forecasts he sold to gullible customers.

Hamlet: *“Last night of all, when yond same star that’s westward from the pole had made his course to illumine hat part of heaven where now it burns”* - Scholars have long considered that means Bernardo is referring to a star west of the pole star. The hour has struck twelve and it is cold, so winter is assumed.

However, recent research suggests Bernardo could be referring to the Polish origin of Marcellus Sikorsky, the relevant star could depend on just where Marcellus was standing in Act 1 Scene 1. However, recent studies published by the Historical Faculty of Stolichnaya, suggest that the reference

could be to the flagpole built by Marcellus’ father who migrated from Warsaw to Elsinore twenty years previously and had crafted the flagpole for Elsinore Castle on commission by Hamlet’s father.

The question would be determined by just where the players were standing in relation to the flagpole.

Clearly it would have been a bright star to have drawn attention, as one hell of a lot of stars would have been visible west of any of the three poles. If the first reference to the pole star is correct, perhaps Sirius, Procyon or Betelgeuse, if one the others - any damn star.

Romeo and Juliet: Juliet - *“It is some meteor that the Sun exhales”* - This statement puts Juliet one up on the men of science who, until the 19th Century, held that meteoric rocks were spat out by volcanoes. Exhaled - Shakespeare clearly anticipates the Solar wind and recognises that meteors were extra-terrestrial in origin.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE NORTH GALACTIC POLE

Recent observations of the region surrounding the North Galactic Pole (NGP) have revealed a wide range of interesting extra-galactic stellar and non-stellar objects (NSO’s), which have baffled astronomers and scientists around the world.

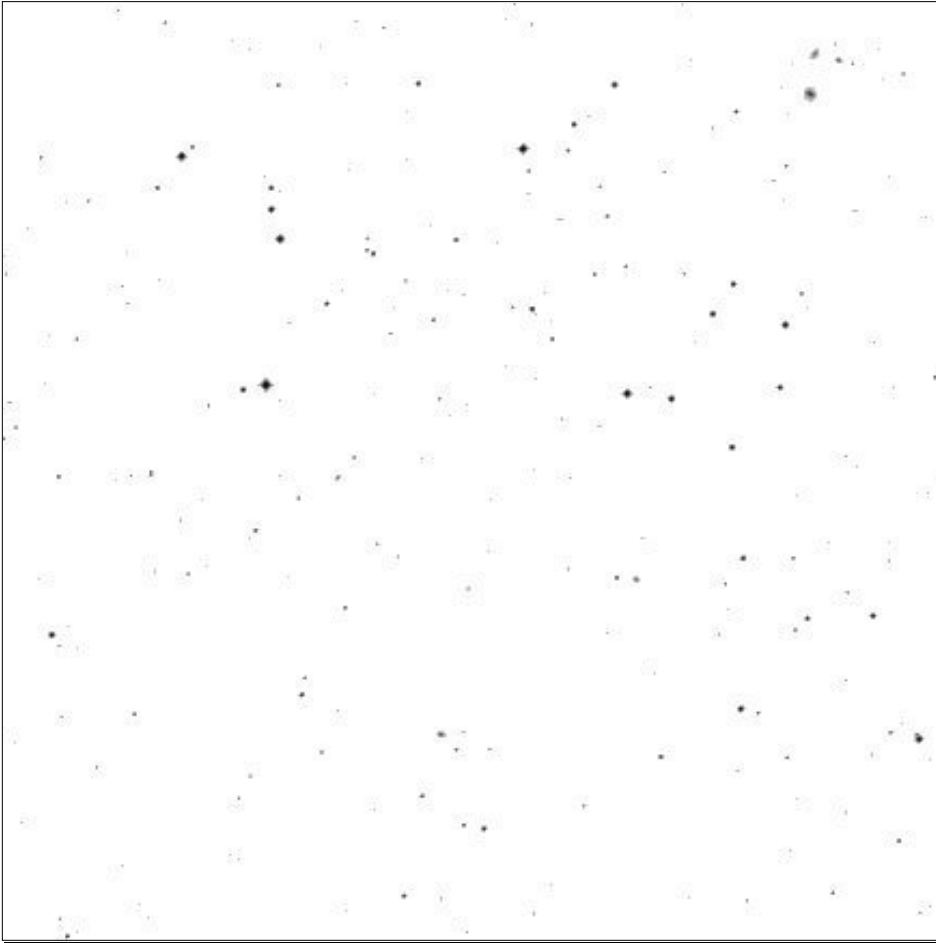
The observations have been made primarily by ASNSW member, Andrew Murrell, using the effects of extreme gravitational lensing over the northern horizon of Wiruna’s western observing field combined with a touch of averted imagination, using his 20” Dobsonian telescope.

Upon sculling several large glasses of Gin & Tonic to aid his averted imagination, Andrew has stumbled across several dozen objects which, to-date, defy description.

The recently released catalog of these strange objects, known as the Greater Catalog of Lesser Murrell Objects, is listed in order of date of discovery, rather than in order of co-ordinates.

Each entry in the catalog will soon have a detailed description of each object, including size, magnitude and colour, providing of course, that Andrew can find another observer who can actually see these objects to confirm the descriptions.

To date, all Andrews observing colleagues, including his elusive US competitor, Barbara Willseeit, who regularly observes from directly beneath the NGP, have been unable to confirm any of these observations, mainly due to the fact that the observing conditions (being extreme gravitational lensing, intensified averted imagination and the effect of a large quantity of Gin & Tonic has on the exit pupil of the eye) have been impossible



*The Beautiful North Galactic Pole
(Image courtesy DSS)*

to reproduce in any form whatsoever, despite repeated attempts by colleagues also observing from the western observing field at Wiruna.

Sceptics have suggested that perhaps the objects Andrew has catalogued, are possibly objects which are similar to Pulsars, but that the beam of light expelled from the object is polarised in such a way that the beam crosses the Earth's path precisely over Andrew's observing pad, and is perhaps only several microns in width. Other theories include the possibilities that Andrew's eyes may possibly be receptive to certain wavelengths which the human eye is not normally capable of detecting, or that what Andrew is seeing, is something which is not even

a part of the electromagnetic spectrum as we know it.

One matter that has been confirmed by both southern and northern amateurs is the amazing similarity of the SGP to the NGP, which suggests that one may be the gravitationally lensed image of the other. The question puzzling scientists and sceptics, is which one is the original, and which one is the lensed image?

STAR GATE DISCOVERED AT WIRUNA

Recent archaeological diggings at the site of the strange Stone Circles at Wiruna (*see 1999 Alternate Universe*), have uncovered what is believed to be a genuine Star Gate.

The object was discovered by a team of archaeologists lead by principal research scientist, Professor Louda Hawschidt of the Oxford Street University, Abstract Sciences Department.

The large round object resembles the original Star Gate, but does not appear to have any power supply other than a small solar-panel located on the upper northern side of the gate's ring.

It is believed that the Star Gate, if it is genuine, was initially powered using the attached Solar panel, but it has been suggested that the maximum output of power from the panel would only be sufficient during a Solar maximum, occurring once every 11 years on average, and at a precise 8½ minutes after a sizeable Solar flare was ejected from the corona of the Sun during a massive Solar wind storm.



*The Stargate discovered during an
archaeological dig at Wiruna*

Hieroglyphics on the front side of the gate are currently being deciphered by an expert linguist and historian but to date, we have only been able to recover just over a dozen co-ordinates reflecting the specific locations of a few significant planetary systems within the Milky Way galaxy including 2 planets within the

Vega System, and three from further afield around insignificant stars, previously thought to have been uninhabited.



Hieroglyphics like this are currently being deciphered by experts

With the next Solar maximum due ..., scientists are hoping for an immense Solar wind storm, accompanied by the necessary ejection of Solar flares to allow enough Solar flux to power up the Star Gate, and allow scientists to establish the worm hole directly from Wiruna to Cheyenne Mountain, which would mean amateurs at Wiruna would have a northern observing field, and Andrew Murrell may yet get to the Texas Star Party by road.

ASNSW member, Steve Mensunsky may be interested in unconfirmed rumours of a Star gate being discovered atop Mount Rainier, in Washington State, USA.

PRODUCT REVIEW

By Richmond Windsor - HAA

The Trashmeadtron 115mm f/10 Deep Sky computer controlled telescope, available at all the better stalls of

Parklea Markets, has become a minor sensation overnight. Handcrafted in Botswana by Southern Africa's most distinguished optical house.

Containing flawless soda ash glass, seasoned cellulose fibre tubing and recycled AK47 cartridge cases, this telescope has entered the computer age.

The four-element, semi-fraunhofer/apochromat mates flawlessly with the full range of ten simplified Huygens eyepieces, the 2mm version giving a dramatic 2,300 times magnification, with a field wide enough to show the whole of Callisto, while the mega wide-field 40mm at 28 times magnification, fully displays half of Mare Crisium.

The specifications of the Computer drive are still a trade secret, assisted by the fact that the operating manual is written in medieval Swahili, but pointing the Trashmeadtron in the general direction of any star using the 5 x 5 finder, will result in a star (maybe not the one in the finder) making its way into the field of view of the eyepiece, providing the eyepiece doesn't fall out of the focuser during this process.

Want to see colour in the Orion Nebula, 47 Tucanae, Sirius, The Moon? The Trashmeadtron will astound you with its wide range of colours, which no other telescope comes close to displaying, especially with

the shorter focal length eyepieces.

With a RRP of only \$995.99, and a street price of \$10, these scopes are selling fast. Unconditionally guaranteed for the life of any good alkaline battery, get yours today!


APRIL'S HORRORSCOPES


By Dr. Con Huckstar


♈ Aries – Your sign is really humming this month! By April 7th, the Moon, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn are all parked in your turf so refuse all invitations to wars, discard your rings for a month, and become a temporary monarchist. If institutionalised, seek day release at times other than Full-Moon.


♉ Taurus – Your quite time is disturbed by Mars moving in late in the month. If you are in the Army Reserve, pack your bags for East Timor. If you are an armchair warrior only, pack someone else's bag for East Timor and go home, feeling you have done your bit.


♊ Gemini – You belong to the third constellation of the ancient zodiac and have two well-matched 1st magnitude stars. Pluto was discovered here in 1930 and you have a great meteor shower next December. Buy yourself a hard-hat for Xmas and wear it while looking for extra-Plutonian planets

 Cancer – Cancers have to make do with the attentions of Minor Planet 7 Iris, the Goddess of the rainbow and patron saint of optometrists. If you ever wanted to see colour in a Murrell object, or for that matter see a Murrell object, this could be your month.


 Leo – The King of Beasts, and contains heaps of double-stars. Walk tall like a true Leo and share yourself around generously amongst your many admirers before twinning yourself with the stalemate of your choice.


 Virgo – Your sign has her virtue invaded by Minor Planets 20 Massala, 51 Memausa and 44 Nysa which are in opposition this month. Virgoes of sober habits may be invited to wild parties by strange people. Take a chaperone, or better still, don't go and send the chaperone, preferably an All Blacks Forward, in your place.

 Libra – Librans are well-balanced individuals worthy of their constellation. Parked between Virgo and Scorpio, they need to be to maintain that equilibrium. This may be an exciting millennium for you particularly if you were almost a Virgo yourself.


 Scorpio – Minor Planet Hygea is close to Antares – 0.4° North on April 2nd. Cleanliness is next to Godliness, so all Scorpions are advised to shower twice daily,


particularly if you are into mud wrestling or heavy nose-bleeds.

 Sagittarius – Always copping it from the rear end of the Scorpion, you have learned to be on your guard at all times. Don't sit on tree stumps or toilet seats without checking for wildlife or you may get it in the end.

 Capricorn – I hope you Capricorns fancy Uranus and Neptune, because you are stuck with the bastards until early 2002!

With the first ruler of the Universe and the God of the Sea butting into your lifestyle, you may have an interesting couple of years. However, don't push your luck by trying to swim the Bass Strait or make a late bid for Olympic selection – the Gods aren't that generous.

 Aquarius – Aquarians have Venus for company early in the month, so, with the Goddess of love on side, splash on the after-shave – extra if you are male – and be charming, debonair and irresistible. Anyone who does not run screaming at first sight is a prospect. Go for it!

 Pisces – The twelfth and most senior constellation contains the fast moving star Wolf-28.

Take the hint and make yourself a moving target so you don't hang around long enough in the one spot to be shot at successfully.

STRANGE GRAVITATIONAL EFFECTS ON OBSERVING FIELD

A research team under Dr David Clawless-Emu, of the School Of Thoughts, has recently uncovered a curious phenomenon which may have an extra-terrestrial cause.

Using eight hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) units and averaging the readings, they determined that, on New Moon weekends at Wiruna, the eastern, or lower observing field actually becomes higher than the western observing field. On the one hand, this could be the result of statistical error, particularly as civilian GPS units are restricted by a form of encryption known as Selective Availability, making the units notoriously unreliable on altitude readings, due to security measures taken by the US Military, operators of the GPS satellite system.

Readings taken using a single GPS unit a week prior to the SPSP showed that Wiruna had an altitude of 80 metres below sea level, whilst barometric altimeter readings taken on two successive New Moon weekends showed that the western, or upper observing field was actually 5 – 10 metres higher than the alleged highest spot on the eastern or lower observing field. Dr Clawless-Emu had theorised that at New Moon, the combined gravitational effects of the Sun and Moon pulling in tandem may have affected the flexible eastern, or lower observing field more

strongly so that it expanded upwards to a greater extent than the rocky hillside of the western, or upper observing field.

To put the matter at rest, and as he wishes to observe as close to the stars as possible, Dr Clawless-Emu is constructing a 5.2 metre earth and stone mound on which to mount his telescope, at a suitable spot on the eastern, or lower observing field – subject to committee approval of course. Observing in a tree, he established, was prone to too much vibration from the wind and the indistinguishable deep primal growls which often emanate from the carport on New Moon weekends.

LIGHT BULBS ACTUALLY DARK SUCKERS

By Dr Mary-Jane Greenwood, PhD(BS), - CRISO Plant Industry (Horticulture)

For years, it has been believed that electric bulbs emit light, but recent information has proved otherwise. Electric bulbs don't emit light, they suck dark. Thus, we call these bulbs Dark Suckers. The Dark Sucker Theory and the existence of dark suckers prove that dark has mass and is heavier than light.

First, the basis of the Dark Sucker Theory is that electric bulbs suck dark. For example, take the Dark Sucker in the room you are in. There is much less dark right next to it than there is elsewhere. The larger the Dark Sucker, the greater its

capacity to suck dark. Dark Suckers in the parking lot have a much greater capacity to suck dark than the ones in this room.

As with all things, Dark Suckers don't last forever. Once they are full of dark, they can no longer suck. This is proven by the fact that after a certain period of use, they will suddenly stop sucking dark, and in some cases, they will appear to flicker a little prior to ceasing to suck. This is due to the bulb trying to suck extra dark in pulses to fill up the final reserves of darkness within them.

A candle is a primitive Dark Sucker. A new candle has a white wick. You can see that after the first use, the wick turns black, representing all the dark that has been sucked into it. If you put a pencil next to the wick of an operating candle, it will turn black. This is because it got in the way of the dark flowing into the candle.

One of the disadvantages of these primitive Dark Suckers is their limited range. There are also portable Dark Suckers. In these, the bulbs can't handle all the dark by themselves and they must be aided by a Dark Storage Unit. When the Dark Storage is full, it must be either emptied or replaced before the portable Dark Sucker can operate again.

Dark has mass. When dark goes into a Dark Sucker, friction from the mass generates heat. Thus, it is not wise to touch an operating

Dark Sucker. Candles present a special problem as the mass must travel into a solid wick instead of through clear glass. This generates a great amount of heat and therefore it is not wise to touch an operating candle.

Also, dark is heavier than light. If you were to swim just below the surface of a lake, you would see a lot of light. If you were to slowly swim deeper and deeper, you would notice it getting darker and darker. When you get really deep, you would be in total darkness. This is because the heavier dark sinks to the bottom of the lake and the lighter light floats at the top. This is why it is called light.

Finally, we must prove that dark is faster than light. If you were to stand in a lit room in front of a closed, dark closet, and slowly open the closet door, you would see the light slowly enter the closet. But since dark is so much faster than light, you would not be able to see the dark leave the closet.

Next time you see an electric light bulb, remember that it is a dark sucker.

JOINT EFFORT TO SEND PROBE TO ALPHA CENTAURI

By Harry Janos, President Opal Fields Astronomy Club

Our club is pleased to announce that a consortium comprising the combined Opal fields Astronomical Societies, and the Woomera Historical Society is planning a civilian probe to Alpha Centauri. Such a venture

would normally be impossible for amateur groups, having regard to current technology, however, by chance, it now seems possible.

Last year, I was visiting my family home in Hungary, and decided to return to Australia via the Trans-Siberian Railway. With the opening up of Russia, I was able to visit en-route rocket launching facilities on the Kamchatka Peninsula, and found that, not having been paid for seven months, Soviet rocket scientists were holding a garage sale.

I was able to purchase, for a few thousand Rubles and 500 Benson & Hedges cigarettes, a solid-fuel rocket booster, and have it transported to Australia as deck cargo on an oil tanker. It was carried from Port Augusta to Coober Pedy, roof-racked on a road train.

The feature which attracted me to it, was the fact that it was 5mm narrower than a test shaft recently bored to a depth of 120 metres near Marla Roadhouse. The local Bauxite miners have donated 1220 tons of Ammonium Nitrate to the project, which will fill the bottom of the shaft. The booster will sit in the shaft on top of the Ammonium Nitrate mixture, which will be fired using incremental amounts of double-filtered Diesel, thus giving something nearer to controlled thrust, rather than an explosion. The upper stage is a refurbished exhibit from the outdoor museum display at Woomera. Once

free of the Earth's atmosphere, the upper stage will deploy a sail of aluminised (enhanced) polymer thin but strong (combination Glad Wrap / Alfoil), amounting to 3.1 square kilometres to catch the "Galactic Wind", a highly energetic cosmic ray event, traced back to M87 in the Virgo cluster.

The sails will be "tacked" by computer control, and thus the probe will be steered at a constant acceleration towards Alpha Centauri A, and then slingshot back around to return to Earth. On the return trip, the sail will act as a drogue, to slow the probe in exact proportion to it's acceleration, so that as it approaches the Earth's atmosphere it will become a parachute of great size, and slowing the craft in the very thinnest of upper atmosphere.

Instrumentation is still being designed, and though initial plans are for the probe to be un-manned, some miners from Andamooka believe they may be able to get a well-known tax inspector to volunteer to pilot the craft on its estimated ten year trip.

THE EFFECTS OF SUNSPOTS ON WIRUNA

Renewed interest in Solar Observing following articles on the work of Lorraine Mensunsky has demonstrated a possible relationship between Sunspot maxima and the number of pot holes in the dirt road leading into Wiruna.

While the exact cause has not yet been established, possible neutrino impacts are under suspicion. The phenomena is sufficiently consistent that road repairs can be scheduled in advance to co-incide with anticipated solar activity.



Sunspot Observations At Wiruna

COMMITTEE

President:	Tony Buckety	8874-2070
Vice President:	Les Ara	8558-8523
Vice President:	Joe Crauchi	8636-3878
Treasurer:	Max Gardenia	8337-3371
Secretary:	Adrian Sawn	8558-8523
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Deep-Sky:	Andrew Moral	8344-7754
Solar System:	Greg Burnt	8638-5266
Telescope Making	Don Whitelight	8642-1574
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Solar Observing:	Lorraine Mensunsky	8953-1245
Double Stars:	Richard Jaywalker	8871-3019
Public Officer:	Les Ara	8558-8523

HOW TO GET TO MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the ATNF Headquarters building, located in the CSIRO Department of Radiophysics complex on the corner of Pembroke Road and Vimiera Roads, Marsfield. If arriving by car, turn right in the main gate, then immediately right past the main office entrance, proceeding about 50 metres to a small car park area. Adjacent to this is the "West Door", which is our entrance.

All meetings start at 8pm sharp. The doors will be opened at 7.45, 7.55 and 8.10pm. If you arrive after 8.10pm, knock loudly on the door to attract the attention of the attendant, who works in the adjacent office. There may be a short delay before answering. Please note that you will be shot on site and used as guinea pigs in secretive Government experiments if you fail to comply with these strict guidelines as set out here.

ALTERNATE EDITOR

Lachlan MacDonald

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SOCIETY DIARY

March 31st	– New Moon	Millennium South Pacific Star Party
April 3rd		Wiruna, Ilford NSW
April 14th	Full Moon	Field Exercise in astral travel. Disembodied members are asked to congregate 1km above Bowen Mountain at 8pm sharp
April 23rd	Last Quarter	Snodgrass Marathon – Comercial Hotel, Dunedoo NSW
April 28th	Last Quarter Moon	Crago Observatory, Bowen Mountain – Special search for those astral travellers who have not yet found their way back home.
May 4th	New Moon	New Moon Observing Weekend at Wiruna, Ilford NSW

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This journal contains material which may be offensive to some readers. If you are offended by such content, do NOT read any further and go directly to Jail, do not pass go and do not collect \$200. Note: No animals (other than those already dead) were killed in the production of this publication. Some however, were extensively and seriously injured, maimed and experimented upon, using some of the harshest of chemicals known to mankind.

All photographs are of persons of arguably reasonably sound mind, and all being above the age of 21 years. All characters portrayed in this publication are fictional in many ways, especially within their own minds, and are not intended to portray true characters in any form whatsoever.

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