



Stardust

Monthly Newsletter
of

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
OF CANADA

Edmonton Centre

April 1965

MEETING NOTICE :

The regular monthly meeting of the Edmonton Centre, Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will be held at 8:15 pm, Thursday April 8th, in the QUEEN ELIZABETH PLANETARIUM.

The guest speaker on that occasion will be Dr. Gordon Hodgson of the Research Council of Alberta, whose topic will be "The Apparent Downfall of Extraterrestrial Life". In the recent past, much of Dr. Hodgson's research has concerned the investigation of apparent elementary life forms in meteorites. Specimens used in his programme included the Bruderheim and Peace River meteorites. His topic is most timely in the light of two very possible meteorite landings in the past few days in northern Alberta and south central British Columbia. (See page two.)

Professor Keeping will deliver the OBSERVER'S HANDBOOK talk, and a preview of the May 30th total solar eclipse across the South Pacific Ocean will be presented.

The executive and council of the Edmonton Centre, R.A.S.C. announce that the second annual observers' essay contest, open to junior members of the Centre in good standing, will be held in the near future. The winning essay is to be read at the June meeting of the Society. Details of the contest will be announced at the meeting, Thursday evening. The winner of last year's event was Thomas Beattie.

Dr. H.W. Taylor, president of the Edmonton Centre, R.A.S.C., has been elected to membership in the American Astronomical Society, (A.A.S.). A nuclear research physicist at the University of Alberta, Dr. Taylor's chief astronomical interest lies in stellar energy production. His knowledge in this field has been helpful to many members of the Centre who have heard him speak on related topics on past occasions. Dr. C.S. Beals of Ottawa is president of the A.A.S., the first Canadian to hold that office.

Dr. Taylor has just returned to Edmonton after a brief tour of R.C.A.F. Station Cold Lake, northeast of Edmonton, where he had an opportunity to inspect the Baker-Nunn satellite tracking cameras.



Harry Taylor

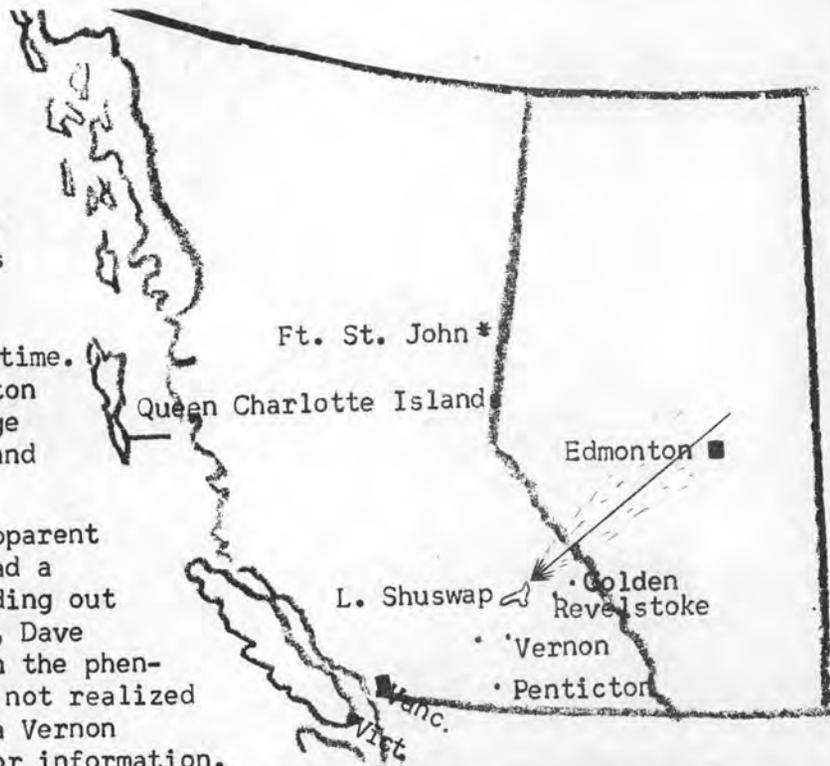
Fireball Observed

At 10:46 pm, M.S.T., Wednesday March 31st, a spectacular fireball descended toward the southwest over Edmonton, lighting up an area of more than 350,000 square miles and startling thousands of people, who, in every imaginable situation, happened to be looking at the right place and at the right time. Within minutes of its appearance over Edmonton reports from excited citizens began to deluge the planetarium, police and radio stations and the meteorological office.

Although descriptions varied, it was apparent the fireball was very large, slow moving, had a short tail, and turned orange-red before fading out near the southwest horizon. After midnight, Dave Rodger and Ian McLennan collected reports on the phenomenon at the planetarium; however, it was not realized how extensively it had been observed until a Vernon telephone operator called the planetarium for information. The fireball had been seen there in the northeast - and was accompanied in the Okanagan area by an explosive sound indicating a probable landing there. Within two hours, reports were coming in from as far northwest as the Queen Charlotte Islands, southwest from Seattle, southeast from Missoula (and later, Saskatoon) and northeast from Redwater. A telephone survey by Rodger and McLennan around 2:00 am revealed that houses were shaken and windows rattled and even broken in the Golden - Revelstoke region.

On Thursday morning, we spoke with Dr. K.O. Wright at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, Victoria, who had received a report that a classified American satellite 1964 48 (a) was due to re-enter near the time of the fireball phenomenon. Eldon Rogers of the Edmonton Centre later estimated that 48 (a) should theoretically have passed over Edmonton at 10:51 pm from the northeast to the southwest. It appeared reasonable to assume the object had, in fact, been the death-plunge of the satellite. On Friday, however, the NORAD space tracking station at Colorado Springs announced the fireball had tentatively been identified as one or more meteors - possibly a shower. There was confusion because of the abnormally large area of sightings, and (as yet) unconfirmed reports of a N.W.- S.E. object.

In a special report to the planetarium from NORAD Saturday afternoon, it was determined that 48 (a) was due to re-enter March 31st near the coast of Antarctica. This was based on more up-to-date orbital data than that which Mr. Rogers was using in his calculations. It would appear almost certain now that the fireball was a meteoric body which landed in mountainous terrain in B.C. On Sunday evening, April 4th, Dr. J.A. Galt of the Dominion Astrophysical Radio Observatory reported to the planetarium that a likely landing site was Lake Shuswap. (see map). He, along with Drs. R.E. Folinsbee (U of A), L.A. Bayrock, (Research Council of Alberta) and Julian Kiniski (Meteorological Office, Edmonton) at the time of this writing are in the area in the hope of locating one or more fragments.



R.E. Folinsbee



L.A. Bayrock



Orion



Gary Finley



Dave Rodger

The remarkable photograph (left, not above) is one of the first examples of serious work undertaken by the Centre's observing group at the new observing shelter northwest of Edmonton. (Feb. issue, page 3.) The region of the sky depicted is, of course, Orion, taken with a five minute time exposure, ASA 1,200. At the base of Orion's sword, the famous Orion Nebula can be seen.

In other observing activities, Dave Rodger (above, right) is compiling a series of maps on graph paper of selected regions of the sky in preparation for a continuous "patrol" of those areas. As a reference, he uses the Atlas Eclipticalis, and has chosen the region between 13:30h and 15:00h and 30° N - 0°. Arcturus is the only prominent star in the area and there are several variable stars and globular clusters in the region. It is easy to observe over a large part of the year.

We are pleased to note that a comprehensive review of observations made in Saskatoon last summer by Mr. Rodger and his colleagues there on noctilucent clouds has appeared in the April issue of SKY AND TELESCOPE. Mr. Rodger is anxious to establish an observing programme on the cloud phenomena among observers of the Edmonton Centre in the coming months.

It is now official: The June meeting of the Edmonton Centre will be held one week EARLY - Thursday, June 3rd so that we may hear a talk on noctilucent clouds by Mr. Benson Fogle of the University of Alaska. It promises to be an interesting evening.

UNPAID ADVERTISEMENT: Robert Allin and Bruce Bohannon each have a telescope for sale. Mr. Allin's scope is a three inch UNITRON equatorial refractor with 28 mm, 25 mm, 16 mm Barlow and Unihex lenses, filters and camera adapter. \$250.00. Cheap. Mr. Bohannon's scope is a six inch f 8 equatorial reflector, optics by E & W, and several eyepieces. \$145.00. Cheaper. Contact either gentleman, or the planetarium.

OBSERVERS! Remember the Essay Contest.

Among the thousands of people who observed the brilliant fireball March 31st, the names of three members have come to our attention: Edgar Stong, Dave Zilm and Robbie Drinnan. Robbie deserves a special vote of thanks for his efforts in collecting reports on the fireball from citizens of the Wetaskiwin area where he lives.

* We are pleased to note that Mr. S.F. Page, a faithful member of the Centre over many years is recovering very nicely from a heart attack a few weeks ago. Mrs. Page reports he is resting comfortably at home, and taking the opportunity to catch up on some reading.

A letter expressing the good wishes of members of the Centre has been sent to Mr. Page following a meeting of the Centre's council April 4th.



S. Frank Page

* Members of the Edmonton Centre are pleased with the success of the first lecture in Edmonton under the auspices of the Royal Canadian Institute, which was held March 22nd with more than 200 in attendance. The lecture was given by Sir Charles Seymour Wright, a scientist whose explorations of the Antarctic have spanned more than half a century. The occasion of this lecture brought the president of the R.C.I., Professor Helen S. Hogg of the David Dunlap Observatory, Toronto, to Edmonton. Dr. Hogg has written her appreciation to members of the Edmonton Centre for their hospitality and for their part in the organization of the lecture meeting. The Centre presented Dr. Hogg and Lady Wright with corsages on the occasion of the inaugural Edmonton meeting.

* The National Council of the R.A.S.C. has endorsed a proposal to participate in the formation of a proposed Canadian Planetarium Association. The first general meeting of the group will be held in Toronto Thursday May 20th, the day before opening sessions of the 1965 General Assembly. The meeting will be held in the National headquarters of the Society.

* From our Australian correspondent . . .

As reported in our last issue, Ron McLennan has established contact with the Astronomical Society of Queensland in Brisbane. On Friday, April 9th, he addresses the group on three topics: The Edmonton Planetarium, the Edmonton Centre, R.A.S.C., and the total solar eclipse of July 20, 1963. He will be showing the Centre's film DAY OF THE BLACK SUN depicting the eclipse activities at Fort Providence, North West Territories. He, and Arthur Page of the A.S.Q. have made several photographs of the southern sky at the Page Observatory near Brisbane.

ASTROQUEST, the Journal of the A.S.Q. will feature a story on the 150" proposed Canadian telescope.

* AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Edmonton Centre Council has decided to establish a separate bank account into which donations toward the actual construction of the proposed Edmonton observatory will be placed in trust. In the past, the single account has caused a problem in determining what funds are available for the routine operation of the Centre. It is hoped an easy-to-remember account number can be arranged for publicity purposes. Details at the meeting, Thursday night.



Photo taken by Ron McLennan on a visit to the Blue Mountains near Sydney with Dennis Mulvaney, the architect who designed the Edmonton Planetarium.

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!

- Jane Taylor
1783 - 1827

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Editor, Ian C. McLennan
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3. Page Four

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