

Stardust

A Monthly Newsletter of the
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Edmonton, Centre

NOVEMBER, 1966

CABLE'S YEAR ENDS CUMMING'S BEGINS

The Edmonton Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society held its annual Dinner meeting on October 13th at the 700 Wing R.C.A.F. Association building on Kingsway.

Thanks to the efforts of member Dr. Dennis Hanlan who arranged the use of a banquet room at the 700 Wing for us, over forty five members, wives, and friends of the Centre were able to enjoy some excellent cuisine, smorgasbord style, and a stimulating social evening.



Of course a smorgasbord always presents some traffic problems, and inevitably some people are finished dinner while others are still piling their plates. But undoubtedly this is the most economical manner of feeding a large group.

President W.J.P. Cable called the meeting to order over desert and coffee, and asked retiring secretary, Mr. Angus Smith, to read the minutes. This done, the president asked that the reading of all annual reports be postponed until the November meeting.

Members then moved into an adjacent social room to hear the nominating committee's report and the guest speaker.

Professor E.S. Keeping, charter member of the Centre and its Honorary president, represented the other committee members, Mr. Dave A. Rodger and Mr. Angus Smith, and announced the names of those proposed to fill the executive council for 1966-67. The slate of officers was then approved unanimously by the membership. (What else did you expect ?) That slate is printed on the next page.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE EDMONTON CENTRE FOR 1966-67

Honorary President	E.S. Keeping	439-4281
President	George Cumming	433-0943
Vice president	Robert Allin	488-7680
Secretary	George Williams	488-3151
Treasurer	Geri Archibald	477-3058
Educational Activities	Gary Shearman	not available
Assistant	Gary Finlay	488-0360
Librarian	Doug Crosby	433-7933
Observations	Fred Tauber	469-2278
Stardust Editor	Dave A. Rodger	455-0119
Assistant Editor	Walter Franiel	454-3817
Social Convenor	Marg Smith	434-2144
Member at Large	Angus Smith	434-2144

Before concluding his remarks, Professor Keeping noted that the Nominating Committee has recommended that the position of Member-at -Large be amplified by making it that person's responsibility to look after the needs of all new members. This would alleviate much of the confusion and anxiety that is often felt by people attending Centre meetings for the first time.

President Cable then turned the meeting over to the new president, George Cumming. Dr. Cumming then turned to Mr. Rodger, asking him to introduce the guest speaker, Eric Pinnington.

In his brief introductory remarks, Mr. Rodger told the members that Dr. Pinnington is a spectroscopist with the University Physics Department. Dr. Pinnington recently joined the department from the Max Planck Institute Physics and Astrophysics.

In his talk, Dr. Pinnington discussed Astronomical Spectroscopy and showed the excellent film, "Charting the Universe with Optical and Radio Telescopes".

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm, to everyone's amazement !

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

The Edmonton Centre wants some of your inflationary dollars ! To continue to enjoy all the benefits of R.A.S.C. membership, bring \$ 7.50 (Adult) or \$3.00 (Student) to the November meeting. Naturally, everyone will wish to pay an additional dollar to keep STARDUST going. All fees should be paid to Mrs. Geri Archibald. If you don't know Geri, find Angus Smith. He is the Council member responsible for new members of the Centre.

EDITORIAL

Most of us have seen, at one time or another, objects or phenomena in the sky that we are unable to explain or identify. Later, we have usually found out that the object in question was a satellite, a fireball, a weather balloon, a peculiar cloud, or even a mirage. Or perhaps we never received a satisfactory answer.



FLYING SAUCER SEEN RECENTLY IN CORONATION PARK !

There are many people who believe that these inexplicable instances prove that we are being visited or observed by creatures from another world. Have you ever stopped to consider how overwhelmingly unlikely it is that such could be the case ?

In the first place, it doesn't seem likely that any of the other planets in our solar system is suitable for the evolution of advanced forms of life. That would mean that if we are being visited, the visitors must be coming from other stellar systems. Consider, then, the almost unbelievable distances that exist between the stars, and the hundreds of years it would take to travel between them. Then add to the formula, the vast billions of stars that exist and the chances of anyone accidentally stumbling across other inhabited planets are dimmed even further. Then throw in the long shot chance that even if there is life on other planets, it is at a stage of development similar to ours and interested in communicating with us. The case against finding or communicating with other civilizations is quite conclusive.

By now you should be thoroughly convinced that the weight of evidence is overwhelmingly against finding life. If you're still NOT convinced, then here are a few facts and propositions to bolster YOUR point of view. Firstly, Life is probably very common throughout the UNIVERSE. The time has passed forever when Man could throw out his chest and boast that he was the Center of the Universe. We certainly are not alone !

And secondly, here on this tiny, insignificant planet Earth, there have been too many sightings by too many people...many of them highly trained observers and astronomers..... for all such sightings to consist of unusual atmospheric or metallic phenomena.

Someday, one of the Flying Saucers or whatever they are, is going to realize that swamps and fields are not the best places to learn about the people and events on this planet. Then we'll know for sure !

NEXT MONTH : COULD THE N.A.S.A BUDGET BE SPENT BETTER IN OTHER FIELDS ?

THE BIG MOVE

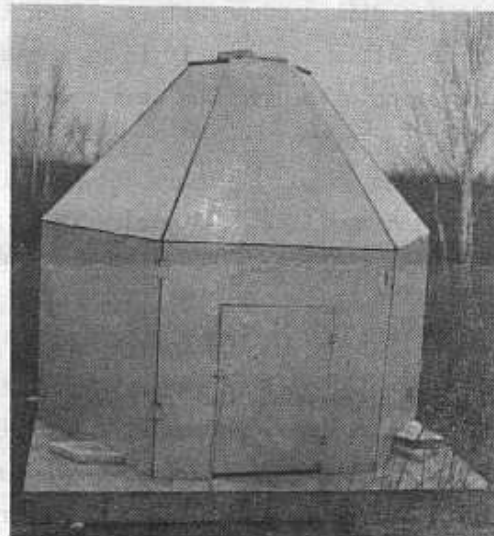
For years, people have been talking about setting up an Observatory on the University of Alberta's property near Devon, about twenty miles southwest of Edmonton. In 1965, a small observing site was established near Big Lake, but this was never very popular. For much of the year, mud and snow made the road impassable, and the lights of the city often created problems.

Under the direction of Robert Allin, R.A.S.C. vice president, the ultimate move to Devon was slated for the Morning of Sunday, October 23rd. Alas, when the day arrived, and with it the Hi-boy truck to effect the move, some of the R.A.S.C. people were STILL talking...this time in their sleep! A few well-placed phone calls corrected the situation and, by mid-morning, close to twenty eager members were at Big Lake to help life the two buildings onto the truck.

The fifteen mile journey was uneventful, except for the occasional stop to make sure the load could pass beneath telephone and electric wires strung across the highway! By 12:30 in the afternoon, the shelter and observatory had been placed into position, and a new observang site was born.



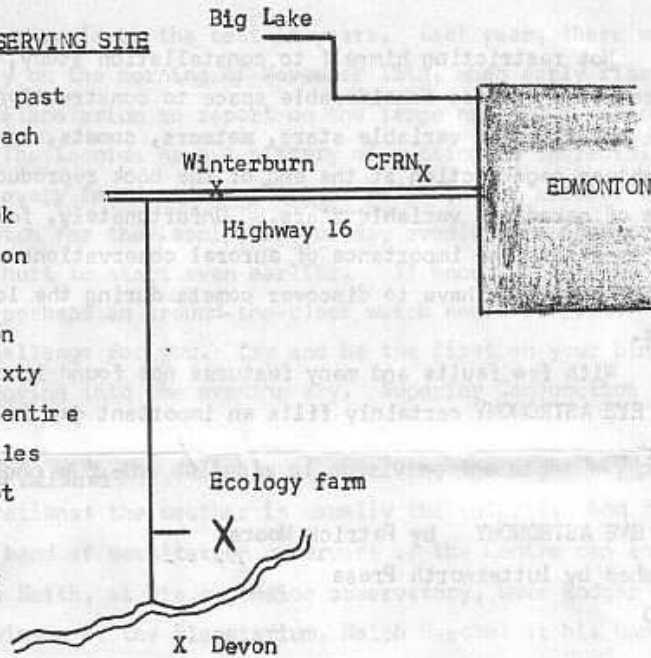
SHELTER AT OBSERVING SITE.
(Volkswagen car, courtesy
Studebaker of Canada)



THE HEXAGON..NEW LOOK IN MODERN
OBSERVATORIES.

HOW TO FIND THE NEW OBSERVING SITE

Drive west on Highway 16 past CFRN AND Winterburn until you reach the Devon turnoff. Drive south for about twelve miles, then look for some bright red fence posts on your right. The road into the new site is directly opposite, on the left. Drive in for about sixty yards and THERE YOU ARE ! The entire trip is almost exactly twenty miles from the Planetarium. And except for the sixty yards in from the highway, it's all blacktop. The drive in is on sand, so weather will never be a problem !

BOOK REVIEW

NAKED EYE ASTRONOMY by Patrick Moore

Once more, the prolific pen of Patrick Moore, the Astronomer Royal of amateur star-gazing, has produced a work that is destined to become the last word in its field. The book, NAKED EYE ASTRONOMY, most successfully compliments the wealth of new books on "high powered" astronomical subjects such as cosmology, radio astronomy, and satellite decay. Moore, with his light style of writing and unusually complete background in amateur astronomy, is fully able to convince the novice that naked eye astronomy can be just as exciting as telescopic astronomy.

Unlike some of his predecessors, Patrick Moore does not deluge the reader with the ancient mythologies. Instead, he gives many interesting but little-known anecdotes from the annals of astronomy. One such story concerns how Uranus had actually been seen and charted on many occasions before Herschel first trained his telescope and identified the remotest naked eye planet.

The procession of the stars is shown each month, for latitude 50°n , using white stars on a black sky-drop. To make constellation identification even easier, some excellent line diagrams of star-groups are sprinkled throughout the book.

Continued.....

Not restricting himself to constellation study, Moore, again unlike his predecessors, devotes considerable space to constructive naked-eye astronomy, such as the observing of variable stars, meteors, comets, and sunspots. In fact, an eighteen page section at the end of the book reproduces some excellent star-charts of naked eye variable stars. Unfortunately, for Canadian amateurs, he fails to stress the importance of auroral observations and the opportunity northern residents have to discover comets during the long twilight of the summer months.

With few faults and many features not found in other books on the subject, NAKED EYE ASTRONOMY certainly fills an important gap in the amateur astronomer's library.

Franklin C. Loehde

NAKED EYE ASTRONOMY by Patrick Moore
published by Lutterworth Press
\$ 6.50

AUTUMN OBSERVING

For planet enthusiasts, November brings good news !

Saturn is well-placed throughout the month, its rings delicately on edge.

Note how faint Saturn is this year, compared to other years. The absence of its rings as a reflective factor reduces its magnitude considerably.

For the last few months, there's been an unofficial pool on exactly when the rings would be invisible. Of course, there could never be a winner because it all depends on the size of telescope, the power of the eye-piece, and the sky conditions. We kept a close eye on Saturn with the Planetarium's ten inch F/6 reflector, as did Bill Cable with his 6 inch F/8, and Angus Smith with his 12 1/2 inch F/7.4. Neither Mr. Cable nor Mr. Smith stayed with Saturn during the crucial week, so the only report we can give is our experience at the Planetarium. The rings were definitely still visible at 6:30pm on the evening of Wednesday, October 26th. But the next evening, as Robert Allin conducted VIEW NIGHT at the Planetarium, the rings were gone !

Jupiter is fairly well up in the northeast before midnight, but wont be in the convenient part of the evening until the new year.

Leonid meteor shower could be the best in years. Last year, there was a period early on the morning of November 15th, when early risers phoned the Planetarium to report on the large number of meteors they had seen. The Leonids have a history of putting on incredible spectacles every few decades. Perhaps we're in for another in 1966. Start to watch for the Leonids on Tuesday evening the 15th, although it wouldnt hurt to start even earlier. If enough observers are interested perhaps an around-the-clock watch could be kept.

Venus Here's a challenge for you. Try and be the first on your block to see Venus moving into the evening sky. Superior Conjunction comes on the 8th.

Occultations : Along with the delights of observing the night sky often come frustrations: the weather is usually the culprit. And this, our sturdy band of occultation observers of the Centre can confirm.

Angus Smith, at his southside observatory, Dave Rodger and Bruce Baldwinson at the Planetarium, Ralph Haeckel at his home, and National Chairman Franklin Loehde in his front yard, all teamed up on two evenings during October in an attempt to time the precise moment when a star disappeared behind the moon's disc. The first night was sufficiently cloudy to preclude any possibility of seeing the event. But the second night...October 24th....was clear at sunset, and the occultation was scheduled for an hour and a half later.

%%!!\$### ! During the very minute when the occultation was to have occurred the star faded from view.....not because of the moon, but because of an extensive band of thick cloud which snuck in from the northwest. Thirty seconds of additional clear weather would have been enough...but no luck.

Undaunted, they will try again on November 17th, and will welcome new observing members to the group. Call your occultation chairman, Mr. Loehde, at 429-1887 for further details.

NOVA !!!

Congratulations to President George Cumming and his wife, Eva, on the arrival of Ann Patricia early last week. Ann weighed nearly eight pounds at birth. Needless to say, her older brothers, Steven and Paul, are thrilled ! The Edmonton Centre extends its very best wishes to the newest member of the Cumming family.

NOVEMBER MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Edmonton Centre will be held at the Queen Elizabeth Planetarium on Thursday, November 10th at 8:15 PM. The guest speaker will be the vice-president, Mr. Allin, who will talk about Quasars and their implications in modern astronomy.

Annual reports are also due!

A FINAL REMINDER

PAY YOUR DUES NOW.....AVOID THE RUSH !

STARDUST IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY EXCEPT DURING THE SUMMER
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