

A S T R O N O M I C A L S O C I E T Y
O F F R A N K S T O N

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER, 1982

Meeting, November 24th

The Society's November meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 24th in Room B.1.37 at the Chisholm Institute, McMahon's Rd., Frankston.

The meeting will take the form of the Annual General Meeting for 1982 and an election of officers for the year 1983 will be conducted.

As it is particularly important to elect the best possible team of office bearers to carry forward the Society's objectives and activities into 1983, all members are urged to make a real effort to attend this meeting, consider whom they want to hold the various positions, and to ask themselves whether they may be able to assist personally in the running of the Society for the next 12 months.

Following on from the formalities of the A.G.M., it is planned to hold an "Items of Interest" night when members will give brief talks on astronomical activities in which they are currently involved, such as observatory construction, telescope making, and so on. Speakers will include Clive Nicholls and Arthur Higginson.

A.S.F. Display, Frankston Public Library

A display in the Frankston Library, featuring both historical themes and modern activities in Astronomy, is planned to operate from Monday, 22nd November for a period of three weeks. This display should provide good publicity for the Society and the proposed Matthew Flinders Observatory at Baxter Park.

As a good many hours of supervision of the Society

stand will be necessary, a number of volunteers will be required to man the display and members are asked to consider what help they may be able to provide over this three week period.

Social Night at Frankston R.S.L.

The date for the Social Night has now been changed from the 19th to 26th November (Friday) and it is planned to hold the night as a dinner, followed by dancing to the musical group in attendance. Bar service will be available and further particulars will be available at the November 24th meeting, or from Steve Malone, Ph. 789-6239.

Baxter Park BBQ and Star Party, December 11th

Following the successful BBQ held at the Baxter Park Observatory site in December, 1981, a further BBQ, followed by an observing night using portable telescopes, will be held on the evening of December 11th (not December 4th as printed in the October Newsletter), weather permitting. BYO food, drinks, BBQs, tables, chairs, telescopes, etc. Friends and families very welcome. The Observatory site is situated on the timbered slope to the rear, or north, of the sports ovals and is reached by entering Baxter Park from Sages Rd. after turning off Moorooduc Rd. and following an eastward route along the track leading to the rear of the ovals. If in doubt check with a Committee member or previous visitor. (See also sketch map on opposite page).

Fund Raising Stall and Raffle

A date for the Central Park Kiosk sale has been set for Monday, 20th December. Items for this sale should be brought to the November meeting to be held in store, or delivered to Steve Malone.

A raffle of a Christmas hamper is planned to be drawn on the day of the Stall sale and members' help is requested in the sale of tickets for this raffle.

spiral arm of which our own star, the Sun, is one member. Numerous hot, bright, young stars, together with many nebulous areas, are to be seen in this direction, but the background of faint stars which form the great star clouds of Sagittarius is here replaced by a fainter scattering of stars, out towards the rim of the galaxy, some 20,000 light years distant.

At this season of the year the Milky Way's two smaller satellite galaxies, the Large and Small Clouds of Magellan, are to be seen high above the southern horizon and here we can view, with the naked eye, two star systems so far distant that the light by which we now see them started its journey some 150,000 years in the past, in the time of Old Stone Age Man on Earth. Conspicuous in the Large Magellanic Cloud is a bright knot of light, which through the telescope is seen to be a twisted mass of nebulous material, known as the Tarantula Nebula, and so called from a fancied resemblance to the legs of a tarantula spider.

It has been calculated that if the Tarantula Nebula were, instead of being at 150,000 light years distance, at the 1500 light years distance of the Great Orion Nebula, then the brightness provided by it in our skies would be about equal to that of a Full Moon shining all the time!

The evening sky at the end of 1982 continues to show a lack of bright planets; while Mars sinks closer to the Sun in the west after sunset, Venus and Mercury hover on the edge of evening twilight. However, in the morning sky, Saturn is coming into better view and should be well placed in the early months of 1983.

Amongst the minor planets, or asteroids, 4 Vesta is moving from Capricornus into Aquarius and at magnitude 8 can be located readily with binoculars, a chart for its identification being on p.496 of "Sky & Telescope" for May 1982. Vesta, numbered 4 in order

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A talk on the observation of variable stars, and on searching for supernovae in other galaxies, was presented by Bruce Tregaskis at the October meeting. Bruce outlined the different types of variable stars and methods of observing their changing brightnesses, and made reference to recent observations of a nova, or exploding star in Sagittarius, which has been observed by himself and Ken Bryant on a number of occasions.

The observation of variable stars provides the amateur observer with the opportunity to contribute to real astronomical research and members who may be interested in starting off in this field can contact Bruce or Ken Bryant for further information.

It is hoped that the presently dismantled Observatory for the B. J. Smith telescope may be re-erected in the not too distant future either at an alternative site in the grounds of the Chisholm Institute, or possibly at the Baxter Park site for the proposed Matthew Flinders Observatory. The Baxter Park site would be away from the light pollution problems of the Institute and could act as a useful pilot project for the operation of a larger Observatory. Steve Malone will be investigating the possibility of such a re-siting of the Society Observatory building.

Sky Notes

The evening skies of November and December present to the observer the spectacle of the bright summer constellations of Orion, Taurus, Canis Major and Carina rising in the east, whilst on the opposite side of the sky the galactic centre constellations of Scorpius and Sagittarius are disappearing into the evening twilight.

Looking towards Orion in the east we see into the plane of our Milky Way galaxy, but in a direction opposite from the central regions, and into the Orion

of its discovery, is the brightest of all the multitude of minor planets and at certain times is just within the limit of naked eye visibility, the only asteroid to be so.

A periodic comet, Comet P/D'Arrest 1851 II, is currently passing through the western sky on its first return since 1976 and has been observed recently by Bruce Tregaskis and Ken Bryant. This very diffuse comet, discovered by Frenchman D'Arrest in 1851, has been observed over 13 appearances and was bright enough in 1976 to be just glimpsed with the naked eye. However, it is less favourably placed at this "apparition", or appearance, and a recent magnitude prediction from "Comet News Service", Cincinnati, Ohio, indicates that our visitor is once more passing below visibility in small telescopes.

The Moon

New Moon	Nov. 16	Dec. 15
First Quarter	Nov. 24	Dec. 24
Full Moon	Dec. 1	Dec. 30
Last Quarter	Dec. 8	Jan. 6