

TAURANGA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 6 – February/March 2005

Edited by Ursula Macfarlane email ursa.minor@clear.net.nz



Tauranga Library Display window for two weeks in February housed our own Society's information. We had the help of Ursula's craft room clients from Avalon Training Centre who made the planets, stars and the 3-D craters . It was great fun to set up, and thank you also to Marie Jeffries for her input and display skills.

Dr. Frank Bateson – RASNZ Conference – December 2004



Dr Frank Bateson chats with Dr Albert Jones.

As you may remember, RASNZ hosted a conference to celebrate Dr. Frank Bateson's 80 year contribution to Astronomy. The event was held here in Tauranga, in December 2004, and was well represented by our own Society members.

Many world renowned speakers attended, amongst them New Zealand's Dr. Albert Jones speaking about the way data storage, retrieval and communication have changed over the years since joining the variable star section ;

Brian Warner from South Africa speaking on cataclysmic variable stars; and Elizabeth Waagen from the American Association of variable star observers, talking about the relationship between the American and New Zealand sections and how Frank had contributed to this successful decades-long collaboration.

Many of the talks given were of the speakers' experiences working with Frank, and of the contribution he gave to astronomy with his own passion for variable stars. A number of the speakers, namely John Toone of the British Astronomical Society and Karen Pollard, RASNZ vice-president, spoke at length on the inspiration Frank gave them to go into the field of variable star astronomy themselves, and how their research has been shaped as such.

Various presentations were given, amongst them the plaque from Tauranga Society for display at Mt. John; a framed copy of Frank's first reported observational data to the British Astronomical Association; and the Carter Medal for Astronomy from John Field of the Wellington Astronomical Society.

The conference was held at the Windermere campus of the polytechnic, the breaks were sumptuously catered for, and the evening dinner a memorable occasion.



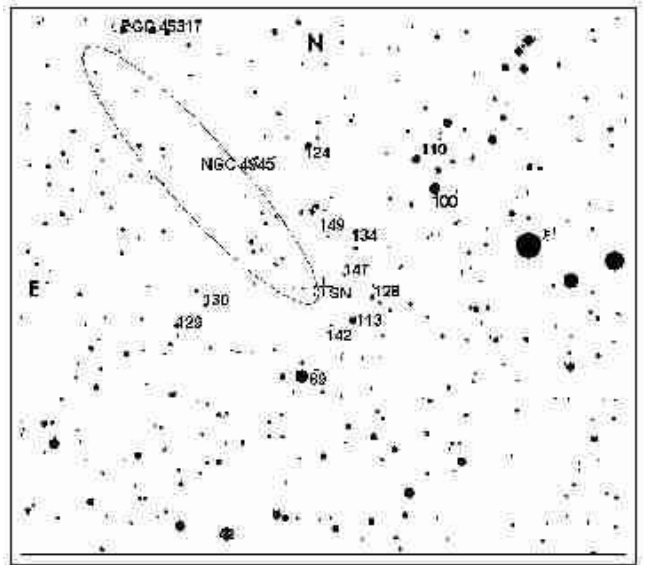
Mt. John observatory – the Tauranga Society plaque will be displayed here

Supernova Report

The following note from IAUC 8482. Mati Morel (who does charts for variable star observers) notes that NGC 4945 in Centaurus is only six times more distant than M31. Hence the SN could reach magnitude 10.

Definitely one for telescope viewing.

C. Jacques and E. Pimentel, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, report their discovery of an apparent supernova (mag 12.8) on unfiltered CCD images taken on Feb. 8.22 and 10.23 UT with a 0.30-m Schmidt-Cassegrain reflector in the course of the CEAMIG/REA Supernovae Search.



The new object is located at

R.A. = 13h04m44s.06, Decl. = -49°33'59".8 (equinox 2000.0), which is 407" west and 351" south of the centre of NGC 4945, but which also lies in a rather rich area of foreground Milky Way stars in Centaurus.

An important visitor to Australasia

John Dobson, born in China, educated in California, spent three decades as a monk, and three decades gazing at stars on sidewalks. John is referred to as the "Pied Piper of Astronomy," the "Star Monk," and the "MacGuyver of Astronomy." A tour has been arranged by the San Francisco group, for John to visit clubs and Societies in Australia and New Zealand. We are extremely fortunate that John will be coming to Tauranga as a guest of the owner of Cassimir Lodge at Pyes Pa. The Tauranga Society members will be able to meet up with him, and this is likely to take place on the weekend of April 16th/17th this year.

John is also the creator of the "Dobsonian" telescope mount, and the co-founder of the Sidewalk Astronomers Organization. His scientific musings are very thought provoking and, like Einstein's Relativity, require us to re-examine many of our long-held views. His theories in physics and cosmology boldly break new ground and significantly challenge the scientific orthodoxy.

The Sidewalk Astronomers are a non-profit organization dedicated to public service in astronomy. Since 1968, Sidewalk Astronomers' primary purpose has been to fill the need for public astronomical observation. They entertain the public with large, portable telescopes on the sidewalks of cities and started out life in Los Angeles and San Francisco .

The website is www.sidewalk.astronomers.com

Here's something interesting.....

There's a project in Alaska called the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) that's studying the upper atmosphere, and they're recently claiming to have induced some speckled lights in an aurora by aiming radio pulses at the ionosphere.

The project website is at <http://www.harp.alaska.edu/> , and there's an article with some more direct information and images at http://www.livescience.com/technology/050202_light_show.html

There was apparently also a write-up in the Feb 2nd issue of Nature. The article seems to speculate that it might one day be used for things like lighting cities or space advertising.

Further Society Information

Upcoming Public Meetings of Tauranga Astronomical Society.....

23rd March 2005

27th April 2005

Committee meetings;

2nd March 2005

6th April 2005

with an extra meeting in the middle due to workload !

TROG.....Tauranga Roaming Observers Group

This is a phone/email list which you can put your name down for if you are interested in 'spur of the moment' observing. This has normally been down at Fergusson Park in Matua, Tauranga, but other sites are being checked out constantly. Contact Ursula or Jim if you are interested in joining the observing group.

2005 Yearbook and Almanac

These will be available from Gunther – speak to him at the next public meeting. The almanac is an extremely professional and beautiful publication and is produced to promote New Zealand astrophotography. It includes contributors from Invercargill to Gisborne and many points in between.

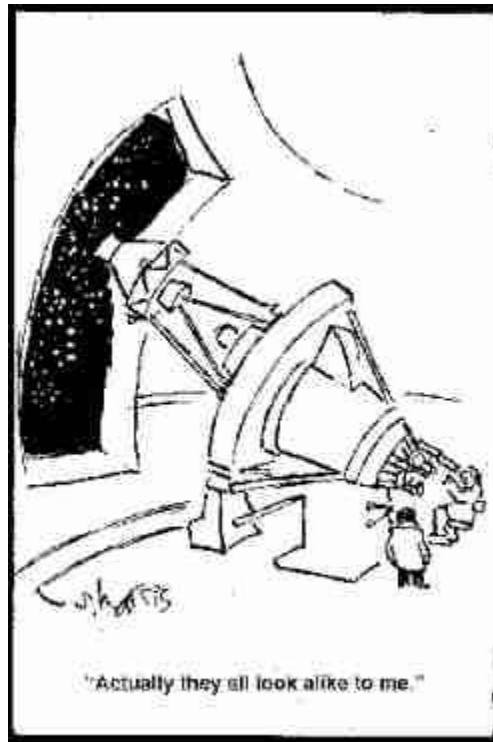
The Yearbook is full of useful astronomical information and will keep you going all year !

Committee news

- the AGM is looming on the horizon, so anyone interested in contributing their invaluable input into our Society would be welcome to put their names forward for a committee position
- A new projector has been purchased with our grant money, and this will be utilised for school and group teaching. Anyone interested in donating time and enthusiasm to this project will also be welcome.

NOTE: Public Meeting Visitors;

Casual visitors to public meeting nights will be able to come along free of charge for two public meetings or viewing nights, thereafter a charge of \$5 per meeting or viewing night if the person does not pay the annual subscription.



Contributions to the newsletter most welcome !

email Ursula on ursa.minor@clear.net.nz