

Edited by Robert Shanks



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 1st edition of the revitalised newsletter of the Blackburn Leisure Astronomical Society. The one stop shop for news, future projects, events, visits, lectures and general communications. Feedback is invited from the membership on the subject matter printed within this newsletter and future editions. For publication within this newsletter, please send your stories and suggestions for regular features and general rants to the editor via email to the address below. The deadline for submission is the 3rd Monday of each month, to allow print in time for the regular BLAS meeting on the 4th Monday of each month. Remember that your newsletter is only as good as your contributions !

Telescope News

After faults developed on the main telescope tracking mechanism in 2016, the 14 inch MEADE telescope has largely been out of action. Two separate component failures within the motor control electronics have now been repaired using the skills of the membership. After a successful software re-load, the telescope is now back in operation and tracking as demanded. Astro photography of deep sky objects photographed by the membership have confirmed the operation and reliability in the last few months. This telescope was purchased from a National lottery grant in 2005 and apart from previous issues with the electronics and hand control, it remains optically in very good condition. The recovery of the scope has allowed the society time to re-plan sufficient future funds to acquire a new mount for the telescope. Using modern electronics employing newer motor control techniques, an upgrade to a more modern mount should see the main scopes continued use into the next decade. The purchase of a new mount will be reviewed in 2019.

In other telescope news, a new EQ6 Hand Controller has been purchased to drive the 80mm telescope in dome 2. The hand controller developed a fault last month resulting in control loss. Please remember that hand controllers bear the brunt of our operation and are also subject to the rigors of a damp environment which they are not generally designed for. Please remember to store them in the main room cupboards after use and report any issues with them so they can be stripped and cleaned at the first signs of becoming un-responsive. Pushing harder on the keys can result in damaged circuit boards.

New Equipment

A new acquisition has been made with the aid of a grant from the Atkinson foundation and takes us into a new realm of video astronomy. Although webcam video has been taken from the telescope eyepiece in the past and post processed into single stacked image; the new viewing system comprises of a special eyepiece camera capable of stacking several still images in real time. The live feed video from the camera can then be sent to the projectors or TV in the main room. This will enhance demonstrations by allowing colour images to be produced from objects which can't normally be seen through the telescope with the naked eye. Initial trials of the new system have produced some great images to date as illustrated by a picture of the ring nebula below which is a photograph of the live view image that was fed to the TV in the main room.



For publication in this newsletter and general feedback, please contact Bob@5150time.co.uk.
www.broughastronomy.co.uk *Providing a window on the Universe for all !*

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Facilities & Events

After an extensive, grant-funded 3 year refurbishment program, that has transformed our facility to include more space, amenities, projectors and a 2nd telescope dome, the council has now officially signed off all building works to the facility including the electrics. This now means that BLAS is now open for public outreach once again and welcomes local groups and societies. For viewing evenings and lectures to interested groups, please contact either:-

George King - GJking@live.co.uk
07413 222129

Brian Davies - blas@bdavies.co.uk
07932 418501

Forthcoming Visit

A visit to the National Space Centre in Leicestershire has been organised for Wednesday 8th August. The cost is currently envisaged to be £26 to cover a coach and the entrance fees. Interested members should speak to Helen Marshall. A £10 deposit secures your place.

HERAS

The new season of astronomy lectures organised by the Hull & East Riding Astronomical Society is due to start again on 10th Sept. The first lecture is entitled "George Ellery Hale and the Golden Age of USA Astronomy" and will be given by Rod Hine MA (Cantab) MIEE MBCS. Details of further lectures can be obtained from Helen Marshall and will be published on www.heras.org.uk in due course. The lecture venue is the Hull and East Riding Sports Club, Chanterlands Avenue North, Hull HU5 4ED.

Future Projects

Now that the new build program is complete, and following on from the observing door modification in 2009 which has proved the opening can give the required cut off and viewing angles, It is hoped that work can begin on a new much lighter and easier to operate viewing door. Longer term plans for dome 1 include an internal refurbishment with improved access.

Recent Exhibition

The Petuaria Library in Brough recently hosted an art and photographic display in which astronomical photographs were entered by the membership. A big thank you to Martin Scott, Alan Frame & George King who displayed their works. Your efforts contributed to promoting BLAS awareness to local people. Members who would like to contribute their works in future displays should speak to George King.



General

The monthly raffle has been an invaluable source of extra revenue for the society. Please continue to bring your donations for the raffle along to the regular meetings. Every £1 spent on a raffle ticket goes toward new equipment to further the aims of the society.