

ORBIT

The Official Publication of the Hamilton Centre

RASC Hamilton Centre

May 2004

Volume 37, Issue 5

Message from the President

April showers bring May observing (or something like that). We have at least two naked eye comets to observe this spring. Comet Bradfield is fading fast in the morning sky so get out and see it while you can. Comet Neat should be much better and put on a good show in the evening sky. It will pass by the behive cluster on the 14th/15th and should be easy to spot in binoc's. All we need is the weather to co-operate.

Sidewalk astronomy is on Friday the 28th at Spencer Smith Park in Burlington. We set up about 8:30pm at the very west end of the park on the boardwalk closest to the hospital. Please come out and help (even if you don't have a scope). We often get great turnouts (both from club members and the public). The other dates this summer are Friday June 25th, Friday July 23, Friday August 27th, and Friday September 24th. So mark your calendars and come out

and help support the Hamilton Centre and our public observing.

The new telescope should be ready by the end of the summer (first half of September). This is an exciting time for the club and there are lots of decisions to be made regarding its use.

Please come out to the meetings and share your thoughts with us. Remember its your club!

Thanks,
Steve Barnes



Webcam image of Comet NEAT by Gary Colwell

Hercules Reveals M13 in our May Skies

By Grant Maguire

May sees the return of every amateur astronomers favourite Globular cluster M13. Believed to be approximately 14 billion years old, the M13 Globular Cluster in the constellation Hercules is approximately 140 light years across, and 23,400 light years away from the Earth. It contains between 300,000 and half a million stars and can just be made out with the

naked eye under dark-sky conditions. Edmond Halley first recorded the 'Great globular cluster in Hercules' in 1714, but is more widely known by its Messier-13 designation M13. It is one of the most prominent and best-known globulars of the Northern celestial hemisphere. In early May, M13 can be found in the

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Event Calendar

- Meet May 6, June 3
- Banquet May 8
- Board Meets May 13
- Sidewalk Astronomy
May 28, June 25
- Telescope Use Com-
mittee June 24, Obser-
vatory
- Meeting July 8, Paletta
Lakefront Park between
Walkers & Appleby
- Observatory BBQ July
10

Board Shorts—Minutes in Brief!

The following “Board Shorts” are abbreviated versions of the board minutes of recent meetings, submitted by Roger Hill, Recorder.

January— Thursday, January 8th, 2004, at the Observatory. Present were President Steve Barnes, First Vice President Les Nagy, Webmaster Scott Barrie, Recorder Roger Hill, Treasurer John Williamson, National Representative Ken Lemke, Orbit Editor Grant Maguire, and Maintenance Director Rob Bodnar. Absent (with apologies) were Observing Director Gary Colwell, Past President Mark Kaye, Secretary Colin Haig and Director Tina Coppelino. Kevin Hobbs attended as a guest.

The resignation of Tina Coppelino from the Board of Directors was regretfully accepted. With his Membership and Publicity hat on, Ken Lemke said he will pursue having a Saturn Night in the parking lot of “Chapters” in Ancaster. Les reported that a Logitech QuickCam 4000 web cam has been purchased, and that another had been procured through Colin Haig. The NEC LT240K multimedia projector has been ordered. There is a two to three week delivery time for this item.

There is nothing new to report on the Tree issue.

A motion was made, and carried, that the new AlarmForce security system be installed no more than 2 months prior to the expected installation date of the new telescope.

Regarding the Trillium Foundation purchase Procurement, a committee was appointed to get the data pulled together for package pricing on three Ritchey-Chretien telescopes. This committee was to report back in a week. The committee was composed of Roger Hill, Grant Maguire, Scott Barrie and Kevin Hobbs.

Due to the complexity of trying to determine all the combinations and permutations available amongst the telescope vendors a special meeting of the Board was deemed necessary. Due to

the very cold temperatures in the Observatory, two people offered warm meeting facilities. The Board took up the offer of Steve Barnes to use the premises of Sky Optics, due to the superior facilities to research astronomical equipment.

January Special Meeting— Board report for the Special Board Meeting on Thursday, January 15th, 2004 at 4031 Fairview Street Unit 216B, Burlington, Ontario.

Present were President Steve Barnes, First Vice President Les Nagy, Webmaster Scott Barrie, Recorder Roger Hill, Treasurer John Williamson, National Representative Ken Lemke, Orbit Editor Grant Maguire, Maintenance Director Rob Bodnar, Past President Mark Kaye, and Secretary Colin Haig. Observing Director Gary Colwell was absent with apologies, and Kevin Hobbs was present, as a guest.

Steve Barnes declared a conflict of interest and withdrew from official proceedings. First Vice President Les Nagy chaired the remainder of the meeting

Kevin Hobbs took the floor and gave a quick précis of the three companies that supply Ritchey-Chretien telescopes. RCOS of Flagstaff, Arizona, Parallax Instruments of Youngsville, NC and Optical Guidance Systems (OGS) of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. After some discussion, RCOS and OGS were short-listed. After almost two hours of discussion, the Board directed the Telescope Acquisition Committee to obtain a written quotes from RCOS and OGS. The quote was to be forwarded via email to all the Board members and members of the Acquisitions committee. The Board further directed the committee to get at least three quotes from reputable dealers for the Santa Barbara Instruments Group ST-11 mega-pixel CCD camera with integrated dichroic RGB filters.

Annual Banquet

The Holiday Inn of Oakville hosted the May 8th Banquet. Many members and guests including spouses and friends arrived by 7pm, when a sumptuous meal was served once the festivities were underway. Visitors from the London Centre and other distant places came to join us at this event.

Over forty people were in attendance, and several made contributions to putting this years event together. Donations of space-related books or astronomy items and gift certificates were made by a number of individuals and companies, including Colin Haig, Ken Lemke (CFS), Kendrick Astro Systems, Khan Scope, Sky Optics, and others. Many thanks to all of those supporters!

Highlights of the evening included a review of astrophotos by



Friends, Family enjoy Festivities
Front: The Lemkes, Heather Neproszel, Rear: Jedickes from London Centre, friends

Annual Banquet (continued)

club members, set to music and motion by Scott Barrie, Steve Barnes, and included contributed photos by Bob Botts, Colin Haig, Gary Colwell, Kevin Hobbs, and many others. (The editor apologizes if you were not mentioned—it was a pretty extensive list—thanks!). Our guest speaker was the renowned Ivan Semeniuk, astronomy educator and broadcaster for the Discovery Channel. Ivan’s talk, entitled Seven Worlds in Seven Days took us through a unique walk through our solar system, and how it tied in to the present day calendar.

Ivan showed us how the generation of people in the 1960s through to the present are in the golden age of space ex-



Ivan Semeniuk
Guest Speaker

ploration, where we have gone to more worlds, and learned more about them than at any other time in civilization’s history.. After concluding the evening, we enjoyed conversation, and Ivan graciously was photographed with many members.

A great evening was had by all, especially draw prize winners.

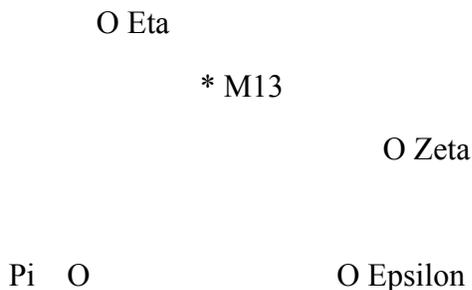
Our treasurer John Williamson has indicated that the event was not a financial burden, and Grant Maguire and his team let us know that the Oakville Holiday Inn were happy to have us back. Planning for next year will start in the fall, and we will be looking at the cost

of the event and how we can get even more attendance.

Hercules Reveals M13 in our May Skies (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

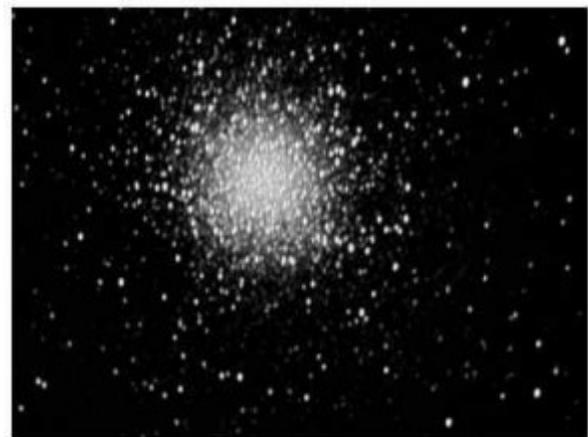
constellation Hercules, which will be rising from the east. At 11:00 pm., M13 will be approximately 45 degrees from the horizon. Using two bright guide stars, M13 is approximately 2/3 the distance between Arcturus and Vega.



This predominant group of 4 stars in Hercules is called the Keystone and M13 is found between the stars Eta and Zeta as indi-

cated by the arrow.

The image below was taken by Hamilton Centre member Bob Botts. The image is similar to what you would see in a 6 inch telescope under dark skies.



M13 NGC6205

Hercules

Hamilton Centre in the News

Hamilton’s CHML 900 radio invited President Steve to chat with them about Astronomy Day, and he represented us very well. The broadcast happened on April 23, 2004 during the 2pm afternoon programming.

CHTV and the Hamilton Spectator also made announcements about Astronomy Day, and Bruce McCurdy, National RASC

Astronomy Day coordinator sent out notices about all of the various centres and their activities.

Grant Maguire also ended up speaking with CKPC radio in Brantford, talking about our new scope, light pollution, and helping the general public to learn about and enjoy astronomy.

Board Shorts—February

February— The Board Meeting on Thursday, February 12th, 2004 was held at the L. V. Powis Observatory, Flamborough, Ontario. Present were President Steve Barnes, First Vice President Les Nagy, Webmaster Scott Barrie, Recorder Roger Hill, Treasurer John Williamson, Past President Mark Kaye, National Representative Ken Lemke, and Orbit Editor Grant Maguire. Absent (with apologies) were Observing Director Gary Colwell, Maintenance Director Rob Bodnar and Secretary Colin Haig. Walter Ness attended, as a guest.

National Representative Ken Lemke reported that there will be a National council meeting on Saturday, March 6th. As councilor responsible for membership and Publicity, Ken noted that The Chapters store in Ancaster has given their approval to use their parking lot for observing sessions. They want 4 weeks notice for each and every event. Wednesday nights are not good for them, and March 26th was agreed upon.

Two new folks were accepted as full members. Treasurer Williamson reported that we made \$28 from the raffle at the February General meeting. First Vice President Les reported that the video projector, an NEC LT240K multimedia projector has arrived. President Steve Barnes

informed the Board that Alan Whitman will be our speaker for the March General Meeting. A motion was made, and carried to re-imburse Alan Whitman up to \$75 in travel expenses.

The Hamilton Centre Annual Banquet will be held on Saturday May 8th. A motion was made, and carried, that this years banquet will be held at the Oakville Holiday Inn Express, with the price being 47.50 a ticket.

Regarding the Trillium Foundation equipment Procurement, Steve Barnes declared a conflict of interest and Les Nagy took the chair. A motion was made, and carried unanimously that the Centre purchase a 16-inch Ritchey-Chretien telescope from Optical Guidance Systems with a Software Bisque Paramount. Discussion of the purchase of an SBIG camera was tabled. When discussion ended on this matter, Steve Barnes was no longer in a conflict of interest position and reclaimed the chair. There were a couple of other matters relating to the Trillium Foundation grant. The first was that Treasurer John Williamson was asked to investigate whether we can invest the remaining Trillium funds. The second was that a portion of the May general meeting be used to deal with policies around the use of the New

Telescope.

A number of comments have been made by several members that there seems to be a lot of expertise in a number of areas within the Centre, but with only one meeting a month does not allow much of this expertise to be shared. As a result, it was moved that a second monthly meeting be held at the Observatory to be called "Members Night." These nights are to held sometime during the 3rd week of the month. Tuesday, March 23rd was decided for the first one, with Roger Hill volunteering to do one on webcam astronomy.

The dome needs some work and should be motorized. We should also look into re-doing the shutter, perhaps having it slide to the side.

A motion that the key holder fee be increased to \$24 a year, and allowing prorating was made and carried. Another motion made and carried was that the keys be changed in time for the next general meeting in March. Further, we will put a new keyholder agreement in place prior to this.

A motion was made, that the Hamilton Centre get its own domain name. Moved by Les Nagy and seconded by Roger Hill. The motion was defeated. Meeting was adjourned.

Member Survey

The survey results are in ! The survey that was handed out at the April meeting and mailed out as well has been collected, and we are starting to analyzed the results.

The survey was designed to get some good, open feedback on your centre's operations..

Responses

We received a total of 27 survey responses, representing about a 25% response rate, which exceeds expectations. It would be great if we could get 100%

participation for future questionnaires like this one, but the result was much better than the anticipated 10% response. Preliminary survey results yielded a few interesting points., and there were some good written-in suggestions.

Orbit

First off, an overwhelming 86% prefer to receive Orbit via download (56%) or email attachment (30%), with only 7% requesting it by mail, and 7% pickup at the meeting.

Beginners Observing Group

Contact Ken Lemke by e-mail at [cfs \(at\) worldchat.com](mailto:cfs@worldchat.com) (day time) or [klemke \(at\) worldchat.com](mailto:klemke@worldchat.com) (night time or week-ends). You can also talk to Gary Colwell at [gicolwell \(at\) rogers.com](mailto:gicolwell@rogers.com)

Member Survey (Continued)

Regarding Orbit's content, 48% of you said you wanted to see more observing articles, with 4% strongly agreeing, 9% disagreeing, and 39% neutral. Another surprise was 52% wanted to see more equipment articles, and most people neutral on book reviews.

A couple of the questions had general tendencies. For example, more board activities info was indicated, with 8% disagreeing, 44% neutral, 36% in favour, and 12% strongly agreeing. I think you will see that in this issue of Orbit, we have tried to address some of that desire for more communication.

if they would be willing to help. Another request (40%) was for more info on the happenings at general meetings.

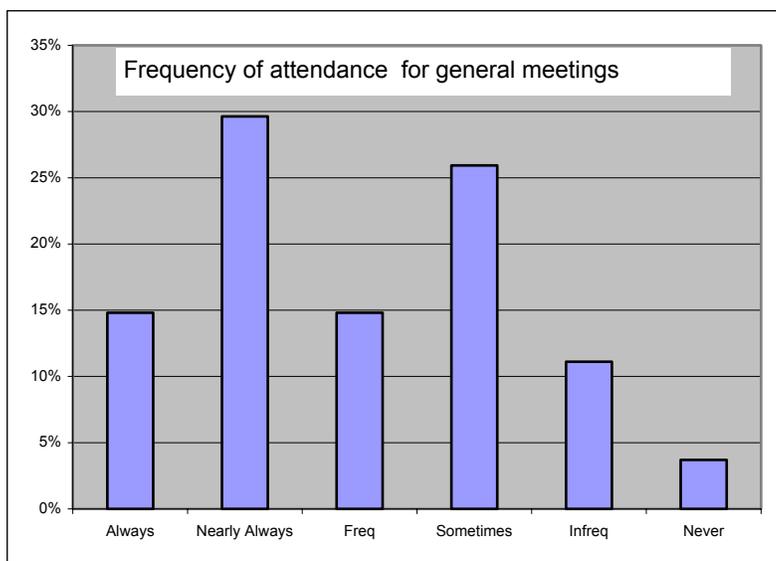
Meetings & Facility

The Steam Museum facility is often a point of discussion at board meetings, and 67% of you said it was convenient, and that it was reasonable value. Most felt it a reasonable facility for the price. Interestingly, there was a mixed reaction to the question on meeting attendance. (See the chart to the left on this page). The start time for the meeting was split 2/3 for our current 8pm, and 1/3 for a 7:30pm start., for a 2 hours duration. The group was precisely divided on having summer meetings, and so the board is arranging 2 special summer meetings.. We had one suggestion of an alternate venue, which we will investigate. Many people commented on the overwhelming heat in the winter, and there were a few comments about the close quarters.

Observatory

Frequent users were 14%, followed by 29% Sometimes, 21% infrequent, and

The editor was pleased to see most folks (68%) like the design of Orbit, and 10 respondents (40%) would like to contribute. Count on me asking for your input!!! Disappointingly, 60% were neutral when asked



Keeping in Touch

President	Steve Barnes	Sbarnes (at) worldchat.com
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We're on the Web!
www.rasc.ca/hamilton

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Astronomy and Allied Sciences



Member Survey (cont)

36% never (10 people). There seems to be a general problem with locking up (46%), using the facilities, and knowing the equipment (36%). Rob Bodner is already starting a User Guide to help in those areas.

The library is used infrequently, and many indicated that it needs to be updated.

Ideas

A number of ideas were jotted down, ranging from topics for meetings (as shown in the chart to the right), and many free form comments, including requests for a Suggestion Box, a Tim Horton's Kiosk at the Observatory, dark skies, and running water..

Summary

There is a lot more in the survey, and your board will be incorporating the ideas into upcoming activity. Thank you so much for your participation, it helps the club improve, and gets the board in tune with your thoughts.

