



E.W. Maunder and the 'Maunder Minimum'

From Dr Wilfried Schröder

I note with interest Anthony Kinder's paper in the February *Journal*.¹ For readers some additional information may be useful concerning the so-called Maunder Minimum. This was a time-span between 1645–1715 in which reduced solar and auroral activity has been noted or suggested. The American astronomer John A. Eddy called this time the 'Maunder Minimum' after Edward Walter Maunder.

However, this time-span was already well known from books on natural sciences (in German: *Naturlehre*) of the 17th and 18th centuries. Furthermore, the German astronomer F. W. Spörer described this period in detail in a paper of the 19th century (1887) and in the papers of the Academy of Halle.² Maunder's name was only associated with it by Eddy.

The time-span of 1645–1715 is a most interesting period of solar and auroral activity [see for more details Schröder, (1984, 2000) and Legrand *et al.* (1992)].

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Interferometry

From Sheridan Williams and Alan Cooper

Over the last year we have been making observations with a simple 4-slit mask over a 40cm telescope with a Starlight Xpress SXV-H9 camera, and trying to find the optimum way of using the results to identify double stars. They are nearly all short (0.03 sec) exposures to combat seeing, for subsequent combination. We have encountered various difficulties and would very much like to talk to others who have done or are doing similar work. Since it is a rather specialised field we thought this letter might be the best way of making contact.

We should perhaps add in case it becomes relevant that we already have a paper in preparation; any future collaborative results would in that sense constitute separate work.

Sheridan Williams & Alan Cooper

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- 1 A. J. Kinder, 'Edward Walter Maunder FRAS (1851-1928), his life and times', *J. Brit. Astron. Assoc.*, **118**(2), 21, 2008
- 2 F. W. G. Spörer, *Vierteljahresschrift der Astron. Gesellschaft*, **22**, 1887; and *Contributions of the Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher, Leopoldnia, Halle*, 1887.
- 3 J. P. Legrand, M. LeGoff, C. Mazaudier & W. Schröder, 'Solar and auroral activities during the seventeenth century', *Acta Geod. Geophys. Mond. Hung.*, **27**, 251, 1992
- 4 W. Schröder, *Das Phänomen des Polarlichts* (The Aurora in Times), Bremen 2000 (Science Edition); & Darmstadt (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), 1984.

Erratum: Anthony J. Kinder

Would readers please note that A. J. Kinder's e-mail address was incorrectly given at the end of the paper referenced above, and also in the Council Directory on page 62 of the February issue. It should read anthony.kinder@lineone.net

The sky during totality

From Mr P.W. Parish

I refer to Sheridan Williams' article in the 2007 October *Journal* and R. F. Tindall's letter in the 2008 February issue.

I have seen M44 (Praesepe, the Beehive) with the naked eye from dark skies in the UK but to me it is never that obvious. I was also fortunate enough to see the 2006 March 29 total eclipse from Turkey. Judging from this eclipse I would have to agree with Mr Tindall that M44 or anything similar would be prohibitively difficult to see during totality.

During the 2006 March total eclipse I saw Venus and Mercury with the naked eye but no stars. Venus was very bright but Mercury was also clearly visible to me and others midway between the Sun and Venus.

During totality my friend saw both planets with unaided vision from Libya in 2006 March and Turkey in 1999 August.

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M44, the Beehive Cluster. © Wil Milan

Sketched vs CCD camera images

From Mr D. M. Harley

I wonder if any other amateur astronomers feel, like me, that it is unfortunate that published pictures of the deep sky in specialist magazines are today dominated by CCD camera imaging with little or no room for sketched pictures? I appreciate that cameras have their place in astronomy and that times and technology move on, but there is still a significant role for sketched images recorded by visual observers; this dispenses with the need for expensive equipment, enabling everyone to have an opportunity to contribute.

Visual astronomy is also important because it trains the eye in the observing of deep sky objects. So... put away your camera, put on some warm clothes and have pencil, paper and red torch at the ready to sketch – it is well worth the time and dedication!

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