



## A proposed BAA Double Star group

From Dr John McCue

Members active in the field of double star observation, or thinking about being so, are invited to help form a double star observing group, and to consider the following draft programme:

- 1 Measurements of separation and position angle for known binaries to monitor their orbits;
- 2 Measurements of separation and position angle for neglected and unconfirmed doubles, as notified in the Washington Double Star Catalogue maintained by the United States Naval Observatory;
- 3 Searches for new binaries: the proposer has been conducting such surveys with remote telescopes in Hawaii and Chile, as part of an educational programme, and found ten candidates which he is in the process of investigating;
- 4 Publication of a regular newsletter containing observations and practical articles.

Also, an annual workshop could be held to discuss the various ways of observing binaries. At the moment the proposer takes CCD images, obtains a WCS solution for each image (using *Astrometrica* and *XEphem*), reads off the RA and Dec. of the components, then converts these to separation and position angle using a home-written Excel spreadsheet. Members will know of many other ways of obtaining visual details of binaries.

- 5 Publication of observational reports for the BAAJ. Measurements and any discoveries would be notified to the USNO.

Members are invited to contact the undersigned, or the BAA office, with expressions of interest, requests for further clarification, or suggestions for programme amendments.

**John McCue**

40 Bradbury Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1LE. [john.mccue@ntlworld.com]. Tel. 01642 892446.

## Astronomical weddings for astronomers

From Mr John Armitage

If the idea of an astronomical wedding appeals to you, I can confirm that this is now possible at Pendrell Hall in S. Staffordshire, home of the Pendrell Hall Observatories, as this is now licensed for the conduct of marriages.

Those who wish an astronomical theme to their marriage can have their wedding

photographs taken in the observatories alongside a wide range of modern and vintage telescopes, including the beautifully restored Calver reflector (BAA Instrument no. 93), which once belonged to Rev. T. E. R. Phillips (1868–1942), a slice of BAA history and subject of a recent paper by R. A. Marriott in the *BAA Journal*.

On the evening of a wedding ceremony a star party for guests is a prospect (weather permitting), and even if weather conditions are not favourable the facilities of the observatories can be demonstrated along with other astronomical treasures held on site. If a church wedding with astronomical connections is preferred to a civil ceremony, then this too is possible as very close to Pendrell Hall is St Peter's Church, which has strong historical astronomical connections.

We have already organised one astronomical wedding and one birthday party at Pendrell Hall, which were a great success, and we hope that these will not be the last.

If this idea appeals to any BAA members who feel inclined to take up the prospect of an astronomical wedding, then please contact the undersigned on 01543 579805, who will be pleased to check out the possibilities further for you.

**John Armitage**

Observatory House, 117 Hednesford Road, Cannock, Staffs. WS11 6LB



The restored 12-inch Calver reflector at Pendrell Hall (BAA Instrument no. 93)

## Sporadic sightings of Saturn's E-ring?

From Mr P.G. Abel

Recently I had the great pleasure of reading a pre-print of a paper by Richard Baum which argues quite persuasively that a ring outside the three main bright rings of Saturn may have been observed on occasion by Earth-based telescopes during the last 100 years or so. I believe this may be the E-ring and further, think I may have a theory which could account for this.

As we know Enceladus feeds the E-ring with icy material. It is reasonable to suppose that this cryovolcanism might at times be very active and hence dump large amounts of water ice into the E-ring, perhaps making it sufficiently bright to be seen from Earth for a time.

If this is the case then perhaps there is a photometric increase in Enceladus itself. It might be worth while looking at photometric estimates of Enceladus during the time periods when this extra ring was observed, to see if Enceladus was any brighter before or during the event.

It would also be interesting to see if one part of the ring was brighter than another. If Enceladus were near this brighter portion at the time of observation, it might suggest a recent water ice deposit in that region.

Since Saturn will be presented edge on next year I strongly urge all Saturn observers to keep a watchful eye in case this elusive ring is seen. If it does make an appearance it should be relatively straightforward to use *Cassini* data to see if indeed Enceladus is at the heart of the matter.

**Paul G. Abel** [Asst. Director, Saturn Section]

Department of Physics & Astronomy, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH. [pga3@leicester.ac.uk]

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