



COFFS HARBOUR ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED

MINUTES AND NOTICE OF MEETING

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT BOAMBEE HALL, MONDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2013 AT 7:00pm.

PRESENT: 10 members and 2 visitors.

MEETING OPENED: 7:03 pm with President, Win Howard in the chair.

APOLOGIES: Roy Derrett, Frank Kennedy

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: adopted as circulated by e-mail.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES: Nil

CORRESPONDENCE:

IN:

1. From our bank – statement to 31/12/12.
2. E-mail from Jacque Connolly regarding her visit to Peter Black.

OUT: Nil

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- 1) The meeting welcomed the attendance of Peter Black, who has been unable to attend meetings for some time due to poor health. Peter not only returned to the meeting but brought two considerable donations for the society:
 - a) A small and very portable telescope that can be borrowed each month by a member. This also included a book to record who has the scope each month. Peter indicated that he thought this would be a good way for members to get hands-on experience with a telescope.
 - b) A cash donation of \$250.
- 2) A vote of thanks to Peter for these kind donations was carried unanimously.

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS:

- 1) From Terry Gill:
 - a) Terry's e-mail account has recently been compromised which resulted in many people in the society receiving an e-mail, purporting to be from him, which contained a suspicious link. Hopefully no-one clicked on it and Terry has taken what measures he can to reduce the chance of this happening again.
 - b) On 8 January 2013 Terry observed comet C/2012 LINEAR in Taurus at midnight. It was easily located due to the GOTO facility on his telescope and the co-ordinates provided in Australian Sky and Telescope magazine.
 - c) Tomorrow (5 February) at 05:17:33 hours there will be an Iridium flare which will be magnitude -8.4 at Terry's house. This is right at the maximum seen from Iridium flares and the centre of the flare is right over Terry's house. This information provided by Heavens-above website. Detailed directions to where to view the flare was included and, again the benefits of using the heavens-above site were referred to.
- 2) From Win Howard:
 - a) There was a mini-cyclone near his house recently. One of the outcomes from this was that a lot of trees were broken. Two other outcomes were that Win's garden is a mess and that his view of the sky has improved due to the tree damage.
 - b) Win observed comet PANSTARRS this morning and found it disappointing as it did not live up to its forecast. Hopefully it may develop in the coming weeks.

Following the two reports above the term "magnitude", which came up in both reports was basically explained. Anyone wanting further information on this topic may start at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnitude_\(astronomy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnitude_(astronomy)) , which covers the topic well.

REPORTS FROM THE PRESIDENT: (this material is collected from the internet each month and presented in an edited form).

1. On the early morning of 16 February a 50m diameter asteroid will fly past earth at about 30000km. This is well within the GPS and geostationary satellites. (Unfortunately this event proved to be taking place behind cloud and rain for observers from Coffs Harbour).
2. Further about Comet C/2011 L4 PANSTARRS mentioned in Win's report above. The best views from the southern hemisphere will be in February as the comet passes through 5 constellations from Sagittarius to Piscis Austrinus. It will require an early morning rise to see but COULD be as bright as zero magnitude. Again <http://www.heavens-above.com/> is an excellent site to get detailed information and directions. For those unfamiliar with this site select **from database** in the second line of **CONFIGURATION**, country **Australia**, search string **Coffs Harbour** and you will get results meaningful for here.
3. NGC 6872 in Pavo has been identified as the largest spiral galaxy found so far.
4. Tree rings in an ancient Japanese cedar tree indicate a large increase in the radioactive carbon-14 and beryllium-10 isotopes around the years 774 or 775AD. This is now thought to have come from a gamma ray burst about 3000-12000 light years away.

5. Further on comets: Comet ISON is heading towards the sun and observations of it suggest that it may be the “comet of the century”. It is expected to be nearest the sun in November so it will be watched with interest over coming months to see if it develops or fizzes.
6. Recent research from Australian astronomers indicates that the size of the black hole at the centre of a galaxy may not be proportional to the size of the galaxy as previously thought. More detail at <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/sci-tech/supermassive-theory-vanishes-into-its-own-black-hole-20130117-2cw72.html> .
7. Results from the Kepler telescope indicate that the number of earth-size planets in the Milky Way number about seventeen billion. More detail and how they arrive at this figure at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-20942440> .
8. One of the main objectives of the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP) launched in 2001 was to arrive at a more accurate age of the universe. Its final report is in on this topic and its best estimate is 13.77 billion years.
9. Our nearest sun-like star is called Tau Ceti. It is only 12 light years away. We now know that it has at least five planets orbiting it and one of them is in the zone where liquid water can exist. For those wanting to research this further the planet is called HD 10700e.
10. Most people interested in astronomy have heard the name Rob McNaught. He is well known for discovering the magnificent comet of 2007 that had his name. He has discovered 75 comets and reading his list of discoveries is quite fascinating. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_H._McNaught covers it well. His job includes looking through images to find potential earth hitting asteroids and comets. He is the only one doing this in the southern hemisphere. Funding for this survey is expected to end shortly. We all hope that an alternative source of funds is found so someone keeps looking for potential problems of this type.
11. Australian National University researchers have found a new way to stabilize the image of stars in telescopes (adaptive optics). Apparently this is clearly superior to previous methods. A basic treatment is provided at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/aussie-scientists-take-twinkle-from-stars/story-fn3dxiwe-1226535277144> .
12. Sir Patrick Moore, the famous British astronomer who presented the BBC TV show, *The Sky at Night* has died. He was well known by millions of people who tuned in to the show or read the associated magazine over the last 50 years. Quite a lot of detail about him can be found in the article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Moore .

CLOSURE AND FUTURE MEETING TIMES:

The next monthly meeting will be Monday 4 March 2013, again at Boambee Hall at 7:00pm, all members and interested persons are encouraged to attend.

VIEWING

Yet again the sky was fully clouded and there was rain falling. This was less of a problem than usual because we had the Society's new telescope to play with. Peter got it out of the box and put it together, giving some training in how it is used. We had no heavenly bodies (in the sky) to observe so we trained the scope on a power point at the other end of the hall and all looked at it to see how clear the scope was. The different eyepieces were tested showing the different magnifications available.

There was a reference to what had just happened as a, "power point presentation". Sorry but the pun was irresistible.

Meeting closed at 8:47pm.

Terry GILL
Secretary