

orbit

The official
publication of
the Hamilton
Centre of the
Royal
Astronomical
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Roger Hill, one of the centre's most dedicated and long-standing members is profiled by Tina Coppolino in this issue. See page: 6

2001-2002 Hamilton RASC Membership Survey

by: John Grimmett


Now that the new board of the Hamilton Centre is installed, it is time to set some goals for the coming year and beyond. In order to be as responsive as possible to the needs of our valued members, we are going to try a written survey in an attempt to determine what people like about the club and it's facilities, and of course, what they don't like.

We would also welcome any suggestions regarding programs, tutorial content and club projects that people would like to see undertaken.

Included with this issue of ORBIT is a two-page survey form. Please fill it out sincerely and as completely as you can. To promote the blunt honesty that we are seeking, your name and other contact details are considered optional and the form may be submitted anonymously if you wish.

The incentive for participating in this survey beyond the improvement of the club's

See Survey on Page 5.

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Old light/New Light

While the streetlight across the road from the observatory has been an ongoing source of frustration and aggravation, the fixture has recently been changed. The photos above, by Steve Barnes, show the difference between the two fixtures with the new one on the bottom.

While the jury is still out on how effective the new fixture is, and it appears the saga may not yet be over, the club does owe a big debt of thanks to Mike Jefferson for his persistence in getting the city to act on the problem. Thanks Mike.

The Approach of the Club Centenary:

Many members may not be aware that it was in December of 1901 that the Hamilton Centre had it's beginnings as the Hamilton Astronomical Society. While the club did not become affiliated with the RASC until some years later, it still means that we're on the verge of turning a hundred.

We are looking for ways to recognize the event and welcome any and all suggestions. If you have any ideas, be sure to mention them to any board member, or come out to the the board meeting next Thursday and get involved.

Celestial Portrait #2: Roger Hill

Roger Hill was my very first contact with the Hamilton Centre, and no one better exemplifies the spirit, knowledge, enthusiasm and...

humour to found within the centre than Roger does. He has an infectious approach to astronomy that can't help but rub off on anyone that spends any time with him.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that without his grit and dogged determination through the darker times at the centre, that the centre would no longer exist. He's a friend, an inspiration, and the most dedicated connoisseur of suicide wings that I ever met.

In this issue, in Tina Coppolino's second installment in her series "Celestial Portraits", she profiles Roger, one of the centre's longest standing members.

SB

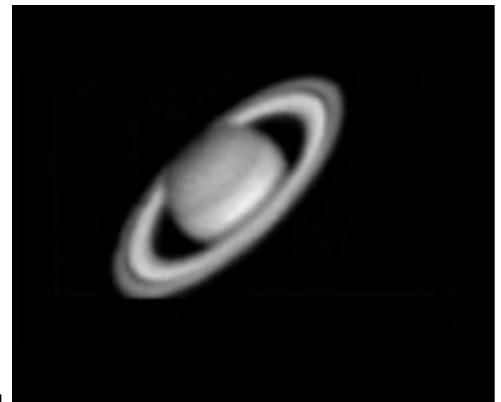


Photo by: Steve Barnes

Board of Directors Contact info.

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November is key month.

If you wish to hold a key for the observatory please see that Tina gets your \$20.00 key fee at the November meeting. If you are unable to make the meeting please contact Tina to make other arrangements.

905-637-9957
tinacoppolino@cogeco.ca

From the Eyepiece

by: Mark Kaye

October was a busy month. I was fortunate enough to spend ten days of it at The Observatory. Of course, of that time, only seven hours turned out clear at night. I made use of that time, but not good use. I was test driving a Finger Lakes Instruments camera, their IMG1300L 1280 by 1024, sixteen micron per bin CCD array.

Depressing is probably the best way to describe it. Our mount is definitely not up to the task of supporting such a heavy and sensitive camera. A one second guiding error in a ten minute exposure means a lousy picture with streaked stars. Dodging clouds, tracking, cold and light frames, computer glitches, broken wires and the like means that I will be sticking to film for the next little while. Still, it was an interesting and educational field trip.

While I was off relaxing, members of the club were hard at work tidying up the club site. Grant Maguire, Scott Barrie, John Grimmett, Mike Jefferson, Tina Coppolino and Victor Grimbale turned out with their shovels and wheel barrows and carted tons of junk from the site to the local land fill. Apparently, we can once again swing a cat in both the Butler and Marsh buildings which should make it easier, for all concerned, to use the facilities.

Some much needed maintenance was also performed. A

hearty thanks from all members to those involved.

Mike Jefferson also knows which buttons to push at City Hall and the glaring street light has been replaced with a full cut off fixture. Kudos to Mike for his sticktoitiveness...

To make up for skipping out on the work party, I got to go to the National Council meeting instead. It was a pretty routine meeting, all in all, with one exception. The issue of fee decoupling, originally a poorly accepted Hamilton centre proposal, generated a lot of talk.

It is funny that a Hamilton Centre idea should now be treated as a sinister plot by National to undermine the local centres. The issue was one of simplicity when proposed. It would mean that local centres would know exactly how much of the yearly dues were earmarked for national and how much the centres would have in their budgets as well as giving National an easy way to adjust fees to cover national costs without having to ask for forty percent extra in each request.

The Finance committee has proposed a new grant structure. Grant applications would have to be submitted a year in advance of the intended year that they are wanted. This way all grants could be dealt with on a yearly basis rather than a one by one basis. A five thousand dollar limit per centre in any five year period is also proposed. Criteria for what qualifies as a grant are also being discussed.

Membership awards have

been abolished in their present form. Items like the five year award are now up to the individual centres. The awards committee is working on the frame work of new recognition of service awards, stay tuned for further developments.

Four major positions of council are up for election this coming May. President, National Secretary and the two Vice President positions need to be filled. If you know someone who should be nominated for one of these positions, Kim Hay needs to have their nomination form by the middle of March in order for that person's name to be on the ballot.

Dave <dlane@ap.stmarys.ca> Lane has web banners that point to the RASC's eStore. If you want to put one on your private web page, please get in touch with Dave. We know that our presence on the web is generating new members and customers by the statistics that are coming in. It is a simple matter for anyone who has already put up their own web page to add the necessary html items to make this work.

Astronomy Day will be 2002-04-20 this coming year and Space day 05-03. Scott Young <Scott_Young@ManitobaMuseum.MB.CA> is the person in charge of Astronomy day at the National level.

I picked up a batch of membership cards from Bonnie Bird (National Executive Secretary) and I now can give one out to anyone who has paid their dues and wants such a card.

See *Eyepiece* on Page 5.

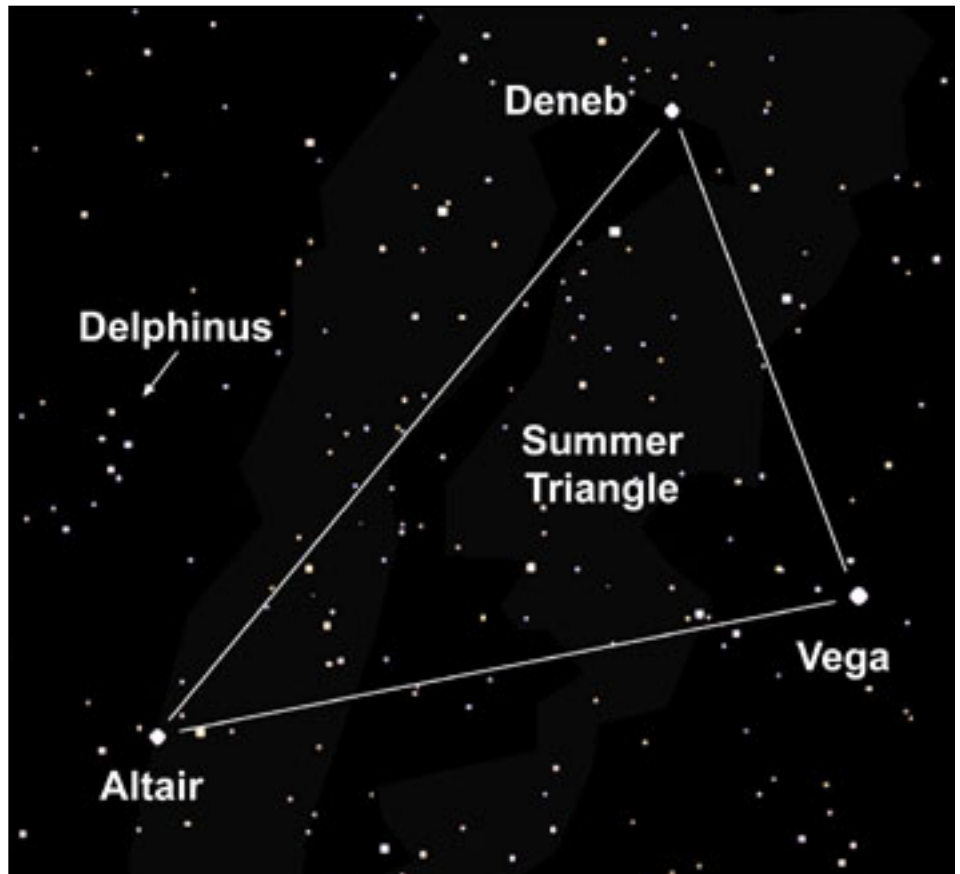
Greek in the Round

by: Ev Rilett

With the new RASC season opening, I've chosen Delphinus, the re-assuring dolphin to help us out. To find Delphinus in the sky, find the Summer Triangle, Vega-Deneb-Altair. Draw an imaginary line from Deneb to Altair, and look just to the left of the Summer Triangle, closer to Altair. There you will see a small diamond shape, with a tail...Delphinus!

The Dolphin is referred to very often in the ancient myths because it formed attachments to man and because it would gather in schools when music would be played on the beach. The quintessential marine symbol, the dolphin appears in very ancient myths as mediator and peacemaker among both gods and men. These qualities were attributed to the dolphin because it almost always appeared after the passage of storms.

This is the story of Arion, son of Poseidon and the nymph Oneaea. He was a famous musician (writing the music of the Dionysian rites) and poet. As a young man, he had a protector, Periander, and with his help, he convinced the king of Corinth to give him a ship with which to travel to Taenarus in Sicily, where he'd been invited to participate in a music competition. He not only won first prize, but his new admirers lavished him with gifts that made him a very wealthy man. So wealthy in fact, that the sailors and captain of the ship decided to kill him for the riches. He



knew his death was certain and so asked to die as a bard (Celtic Minstrel). His wish was granted.

He dressed in a tunic of gold and purple cloth, with jewelry around his arms; a lyre in his left hand and an ivory plectrum in the right, he went to the prow of the ship where he sang his last sweet passionate song to the sea. When he finished his song he threw himself overboard and the ship rapidly sailed away.

His music had been heard beneath the sea and a school of dolphins came to the surface, gathered him up and riding on one was carried back to Corinth. The dolphin ran aground and died, despite all Arion's attempts to push it out into open sea. Delighted with the return of his protege, Periander erected a monu-

ment in honour of the saviour Dolphin. The swiftness of the dolphins had him returned before the sailors, and when they told the King that Arion had stayed in Sicily because he'd enjoyed himself so much, Arion appeared in their presence and the sailors were all crucified in front of the monument.

Ev Rilett

What's in Orbit

by: Ev Rilett

Mercury – is having its best apparition of the year. It will rise in the E 1.5 hrs before the sun. By mid-month it will be lost in the glare.

Venus – Becomes very difficult as the month passes. It rises in the E very low before sunrise.

Mars – will be approximately 25% above the horizon in the S SW at the end of evening twilight. It will set in the late evening. Catch it now. Your last chance.

Jupiter – is in Gemini and is stationary on the 2nd and then begins its retrograde westward motion. It's now rising in the NE in early evening and will be visible for the night. Get your pencils ready. Drawing season is here.

Saturn – is in Taurus, rises in the ENE during evening twilight and is visible for the rest of the night. Do linger on this planet.

note: (this information taken from 'Observer's Handbook 2001')

This is the month of the Leonids. The peak is at 5:00 am on the 18th LMT. This year the prediction is for an extremely high rate. We are not in the proper zone for the height of the shower, but we should have a good show. On Saturday night or rather the wee hours of the morning (weather permitting) bring your hot drinks, warm gear, blankets, lawn chairs, air mattresses, etc. to make yourself comfortable and lie/sit back and enjoy the show. Do come out. If you've never seen a meteor shower, this year's Leonids will be an excellent one to witness, especially if the predictions are correct.

Keep Looking Up

Ev Rilett,
Observing Director

Survey cont'd from Page 1

activities is a prize draw. All completed surveys received through the mail or by Tina Coppolino at or before the December general meeting will be entered in a draw for a copy of Space.com's newest software package **Deep Space Explorer** that has been generously donated by Steve Barnes of Sky Optics in Burlington. The draw will be held at the December 6th meeting and will include all survey forms received up to that date.

Time is short so get those surveys in immediately. Unfortunately, any forms submitted without a name cannot be entered in the draw for obvious reasons.

However, we still welcome the input these submissions will provide.

This club can only be as good as we, the members, make it so put on your thinking caps and come up with those suggestions and comments that will drive the club for the next few years. The intention is to make this survey an annual event so let's have 100% participation to get the process off to a great start.



Photo by: Steve Barnes

Eyepiece cont'd from Page 3.

Back on the local front, we on the board are looking for input on what the membership wants to see happen at the observatory in the coming years. We have overcome the troubled financial times that hit us in the early 1990s and are now in a position to start thinking about what we want to do with our club.

When the observatory was built, it held equipment that was difficult or impossible for the average person to get their hands on. Now the type of telescopes on the site are common place. As a club we are supposed to provide something for the members that each member cannot do by themselves. Without your input, either nothing will be done or the wrong things may be done. Please put on your thinking caps and see what we can come up with.

That pretty much sums it up. I plan to be at The Observatory for the Leonids. This event will be well placed this year, the Moon will be out of the way and the peak happens on a weekend. If that is not a recipe for clouds, I am not sure quite what is. Since I plan to take film based shots this month, hopefully I will have some results to show at the December meeting. Until then,

Clear skies!

MK

Editor's note: The survey included with this issue of Orbit will help the board draft up some proposals for the direction the club should be taking. So, please take the time to fill it out and return it to Tina.

Roger Hill: A Celestial Portrait

by: Tina Coppolino

The first time I heard of Roger he was giving an enthusiastic presentation on Occultations at one of the monthly club meetings. He was urging everyone to come out to the observatory and witness a grazing occultation. And, even though that evening in September was clouded out, Roger still found it to be an exciting event. Why? He was so encouraged to see the number of people that turned out and were hopeful he would organize another event. Roger is clearly a person who loves to share his knowledge and, as you will soon find out, he has a lot of knowledge to share.

Roger Hill first joined the Hamilton Centre in December of 1970. He's let his membership lapse once or twice over the years, but he is proud to say that he has been a member for at least 25 years, and a part of the Centre for over 30 years. He originally found out about the RASC in the back of Patrick Moore's Yearbook of Astronomy. To his disappointment he found out that they held meetings in Toronto. At that time he was a high school student living in Hamilton and it would be difficult for him to attend. He called them up to see if they would hold any meetings in Hamilton or Burlington and was pleasantly surprised to find out that there was a Hamilton Centre, and he's been connected to it ever since.

Roger's love of astronomy was kindled as a young child in the early 1960's when he was living in England. While attending primary school in Liverpool he learned that the Americans were proposing upper atmospheric atomic weapons testing and that got him interested in what was going on in the sky. How could an intensely curious kid not be captivated? Bernard Lovell at Jodrell Bank (just down the road, outside Manchester) was setting the first probes into the Solar System, and manned space flight, by the Americans and the Russians, was capturing the world's imagination. Roger's fondest memories are of his grade 4 teacher who let him read one of Percival Lowell's books, once he had finished his school work. It was Lowell's book that turned an interest in astronomy into a life long passion for it.

Many years later he is still learning and still observing. His self-built backyard obser-

vatory is his favorite observing location but he has visited some dark sky sites as well; places like New Mexico and Arizona. A trip to the northern tip of County Donegal in Ireland, and the south shore of the St. Lawrence in the Gaspé Peninsula have provided some of his fondest memories of dark skies. Someday he would love to travel to Australia or Peru to view the Milky Way as an edge on spiral and see the moon upside down.

Observing activities Roger enjoys include "cruising" the Milky Way with binoculars and his C-8 telescope, and chasing down unusual objects like comets and solar eclipses. The first comet he saw was the beautiful Comet Kahoutek, in 1973. Seeing Comet Halley was an experience to remember, too. Ask him about Hyakutake Night at the observatory sometime (it sounds like a good story....). Realizing how difficult it is to discover a comet now a days, Roger is honest when expressing his envy of

Image of Copernicus created by stacking ten images from a web cam through Roger's C8
photo by: Roger Hill

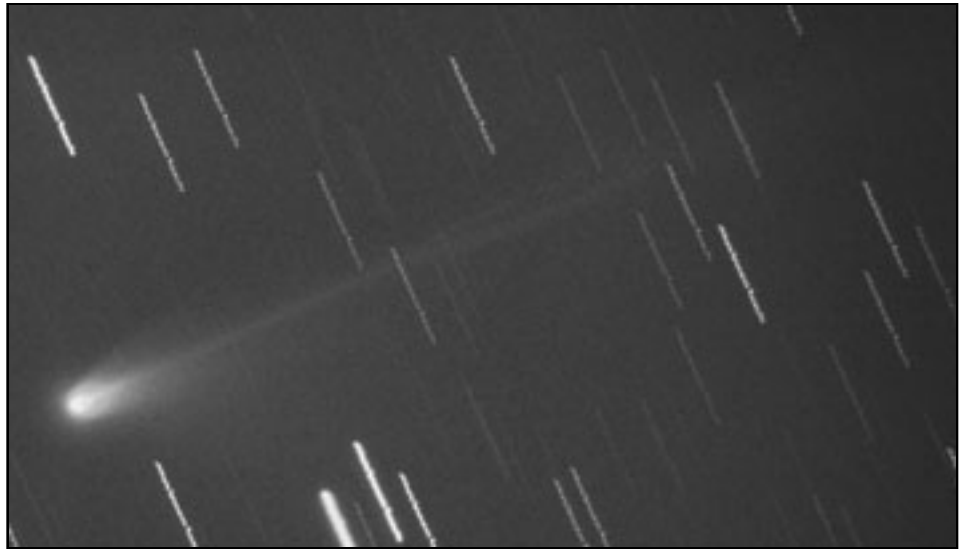


Vance Petriew's recent discovery of "his" comet this past summer.

Roger's experience of the total solar eclipse on June 11, 1991 in Baja California, Mexico with an eyepiece rather than a camera view finder was, as he puts it, "indescribable". He has seen 3 total solar eclipses, one annular, several partial and quite a few lunar eclipses. He also saw a supernova in M51 and will never forget witnessing Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 crashing into Jupiter.

Roger has not only been a member of the Hamilton Centre, but has also been on the Board many times. He was fortunate to have served on the board with historical heavy weights like Ken Chilton, Les Powis, and Peter Ashenhurst. He helped guide the board through the turbulent time, in the early 1990's, which almost took the Hamilton Center out of the RASC. As recorder he not only witnessed what went on, but he recorded the notes that became the official record of what happened. After that he became President for two years and then again stood for a short period after his good friend Richard Petrone had to step down. Roger eventually relinquished the presidency into the very capable hands of Colin Haig.

It is obvious that Roger cares and has contributed much to the Hamilton Centre over the years. The sleepless nights he endured to keep the Centre alive did not go unnoticed. He received a Service Award for his dedication and hard work. His nomination by Colin Haig



The photo of Comet Linear below is a 45 minute exposure on E200. It was guided manually on the comet nucleus with the ST4. Photo by: Mark Kaye

and Mike Jefferson has been appreciated all these years. The announcement in the April 1998 JRASC and accolades from his peers has meant a lot to him, but he maintains that the best award is the survival of the club.

Roger doesn't confine his activities to Hamilton. You can find him hitting the lecture circuit throughout Southern Ontario. He has been a guest speaker at the NYAA, NSEAA, the HAA, Niagara, Kingston and of course the Hamilton Centres. He has also lectured at Starfest, been published in the JRASC and Orbit (many times), and has written an article on Video Astronomy for the Centre web site which was chosen as Astronomical Site of the Week by the Tasmanian Astronomical Society.

When asked - "Who inspired you the most in his hobby of astronomy" - he exclaims without hesitation - "It was Percival Lowell". Lowell is to blame for everything he has

seen and done pertaining to astronomy. He goes on to explain that when most of his friends think about Arizona the things that come to mind are The Wild Wild West, and Cowboys and Indians. But to Roger Arizona means the Lowell Observatory, Mars Hill, Meteor Crater and Pluto. Recently, during a business trip to Phoenix, he was able to get some spare time off to drive three hours to Flagstaff.

There, he managed to find the Observatory, but there wasn't a single sign saying "Mars Hill". He toured the Observatory and checked out the big refractor - 24 inches of Alvin Clarke polished glass. He left the tour and decided just to wander the grounds where he stumbled across the Lowell's mausoleum. He was moved to take his hat off as a gesture of respect and took a moment to reflect on all the good things that have happened in his life.....

Ahhhh.....What a life!!! There is still so much to see, so much to learn.

Coming Events:

November 1, 2001 - General Meeting at 8:00pm at the Steam Museum. John Grimmett - Quick cam Astrophotos.

November 8, 2001 - Board Meeting at 8:00 at the observatory. Come on out and shape the future of the centre.

December 6, 2001 - General Meeting at 8:00pm at the Steam Museum. Michael De Robertis - TBA

December 13, 2001 - Board Meeting at 8:00 at the observatory. Come on out and shape the future of the centre.

January 10, 2002 - General Meeting at 8:00pm at the Steam Museum. **Note the date change.** - Program TBA.

January 17, 2001 - Board Meeting at 8:00 at the observatory. Come on out and shape the future of the centre.

Directions to Observatory:

From Hamilton or Guelph:

- Hwy 6 N of Hamilton,
- Take Concession 7 East eastbound, cross Centre Rd.
- Continue on 7E, past the rail tracks, proceed to near the end.
- Our gate is on the south side on the last lot (south west).

From Mississauga or Milton:

- Britannia Road past Hwy 25, Guelph Line, Cedar Springs to end
- South 1 block on Milborough Town Line to Concession 7 East.
- Right on 7th Concession, then first driveway on left.
- Our gate is on the south side on the last lot (south west)

From Burlington or Oakville:

- Dundas Street (HWY #5) to Cedar Springs Road
- Cedar Springs Road to Britannia Road
- Left (west on Britannia road to Milborough Town Line
- South 1 block on Milborough Town Line to Concession 7 East.
- Right on 7th Concession, then first driveway on left.
- Our gate is on the south side on the last lot (south west)

Hamilton Centre Observatory

43° 23, 26" N 79° 55, 22" W

Telephone 905-689-0266

Club web site - <http://www.rasc.ca/hamilton/>



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