

NOVA SEARCH PROGRAMME NOTESCoordinator: G M Hurst.Special Report of Meeting held 1978 June 24.

This meeting, announced via The Astronomer and BAA Circular was held in Earls Barton and attended by 36 keen amateur astronomers. It was believed to be one of the first of its kind to be held on a nationwide scale, on a subject in which the amateur can play a valuable role alongside professional research. The coordinator, in his opening remarks, mentioned that both the IAU and the RGO support this venture and we have arranged good lines of communication in the event of a further discovery.

The Coordinator gave a report of the first two years, indicating that of 52 amateur astronomers who had applied to join during that period, 37 remained active. For such a specialised task, this was very gratifying. Although the primary aim remained to discover novae, secondary aims now included monitoring of unusual variables on photographs, compilation of atlas omission data and a colour photo survey of red objects.

Data lists of past nova discoveries were also being prepared and would be issued via the Circulars of the Nova Search Programme in due course.

The visual section of the patrol had been very active with some members spending in excess of 15 hours per month on search work, and reaching magnitude 9.0 in their zones.

Combining the records of the old TA Photo Patrol, and the two new photo sections of the present programme, some 227 batches of film had been received. Only since 1976 June had these been checked before filing. From the 'specialist photo' shots, master negatives were being obtained on each area and from these photovisual prints in a '10x8' format supplied to members for checking purposes, with limiting magnitudes often 10.0 or better. Work to complete all areas was continuing thanks to efforts from existing members.

Our omission list has now reached a total of 1300 stars and being reviewed each month. Copies of this list were circulated to RGO, Appleton Laboratory (Satellite tracking) and D. Dunham (USA, occultation predictions).

The coordinator then gave a report on discoveries to date. In 1974, under the old TA Photo Patrol, pre-discovery images of Nova Per 1974 had been found near maximum and data published via IAU Circular. 1975 also yielded pre-discovery data, this time on Nova Sct 1975. In 1976 soon after the start of the programme in its present form, pre-discovery colour images of the remarkable object HM Sagittae were found, again the subject of an IAU Circular Report. Then 1977 produced the major visual discovery of Nova Sagittae 1977 (now=HS Sge) by John Hosty in quite difficult circumstances. Photographic checking had also resulted in 25 Mira Variables being 're-discovered' near max and some unusual data on this is being investigated further. We now have a request to report photographic results on BAA stars to them annually.

Following this report, John Hosty described his work on a stereoscope he had acquired. He was building a 'blink device' in the instrument to check photos. Storn Dunlop commented that it might be possible to detect an 'intruder' merely by the stereoscopic effect and this is worthy of further investigation.

After an excellent three course luncheon provided by the Secretary and a visit to Earls Barton Church Tower by some of the more brave members, the afternoon session resumed with Mike Maunder giving an amazing practical demonstration of 'in-cassette' development. With complete disregard for normal shutter settings, exposure times for indoor shots and temperature control of the 'new chemical', photos of members at the meeting were taken and projected onto a screen within half-an-hour! (An article giving more details of this method will be published in next month's TA-Ed).

After tea, Mike Swan gave a talk on his 'Melinex overlay system' for photo checking. The overlay contained black images of stars in the search area and was placed over prints made of the latest shots. Any star remaining 'uncovered' was then investigated further.

Finally Dave Branchett gave a talk on the visual work, still regarded as very important in view of the 'instant' nature of discovery. In a humorous way, which left no doubt that sweeping was not as mundane as some non-members had suggested, Dave related his experiences and technique. In answer to a question, he said that it was not possible to memorise all field stars to the extent of being able to draw maps from memory but nevertheless, it was possible to recognise an intruder which seemed to disturb the normal patterns of star groupings.

Since the meeting, a further six persons have applied for membership and judging by the remarks made since, it would appear that all concerned found it worthwhile and wondered if we may make it an annual event?

PERSONAL COLUMN -25p per line.

Copy to Secretary.

KIRKLEES Observing Team announce MEETING OF KEEN AMATEUR OBSERVERS will be held in Huddersfield at the Friendly and Trades Societies Club (Room 8) Northumberland Street on 1978 Aug 19 from 11.30am to 6.00pm. Programme includes short talks by well known amateurs including: Eclipsing Binaries, Meteor Photography, Occultations and various fields of interest. The meeting is being held primarily to enable keen observers to discuss co-operation in observational astronomy. For programme send 30p and S.A.E. for reply. Refreshments are available. All T.A., B.A.A., H.W.A.V.S.O. subscribers welcomed. This is your opportunity to discuss your ideas openly and meet fellow astronomers. Contact Mr. J.G. Hosty, 'Crosland Moor Observatory', 81, Blackmoorfoot Road, Huddersfield, HD5 4AP. Tel 0484 45964. Photographic material for display welcomed.

FOR SALE: Back Numbers of TA 16, 31/2, and 1967-1976 complete except for nos 150 and 151. Buyer collects or pays postage. OFFERS to Gainsford, Nuneaton 385101.

FOR SALE: The Astronomer in mint condition, complete from May 1973 to May 1978- no reasonable offer refused. Also issues of RAS Monthly Notices, BAA Journal and Handbook over the past few years. D. Griffin, 156, Berwick Avenue, Hayes, Middx.

ATLASES AND CATALOGUES are available from Dr. H. Vehrenberg, Treugesell, Verlag, Schillerstrabe 17, Postfach 140365, 4000 Dusseldorf, W. Germany. Send for extensive catalogue and price list.