



The amateur astronomer

by Patrick Moore

Springer-Verlag, 2005. ISBN 1-85233-878-4. Pp viii + 293, hbk.

The Amateur Astronomer, first published in 1957, has deservedly gone down in the annals of astronomical history. The book, which is of a general introductory nature, is now in its 12th edition, and has probably served as one of the most influential books for the beginner over the last 50 years. However, this is of course one of the hallmarks of the author, Sir Patrick Moore.

The new edition still contains the popular original layout, so the chapters on Solar System bodies, including the Sun, Moon, nearer and outer planets, comets and meteors, as well as chapters on variable stars and deep sky objects, are retained, along with the comprehensive data given in the appendices. In short, the book has proved so accessible over the years, that there is no reason to fix that which is not broken. The chapters have obviously been updated, and the book now contains data on the telescopes available to today's amateur, such as Schmidt-Cassegrains.

However, there are a number of areas where time has taken its toll on the contents. The book retains discussion on some now obsolete items, such as the pillar and claw mount, 'beloved of dealers and despised by serious amateurs...'. This reviewer has not seen such a mount for sale outside of an antique shop in twenty odd years as an amateur astronomer! Moreover, the map of Mars on page 175 is that prepared personally by Moore in 1963, but the albedo features on Mars have changed slightly since then. Perhaps a

more up to date map, rendered more clearly, would be a greater aid to the modern newcomer. The new photographs are clear and very useful, but there are some older images which could perhaps have

been upgraded; for example, the lunar images on pages 62 and 64–65. Having said this, the images are all of the type the reasonable amateur could obtain, rather than Hubble images, and so should give encouragement and not put the novice off.

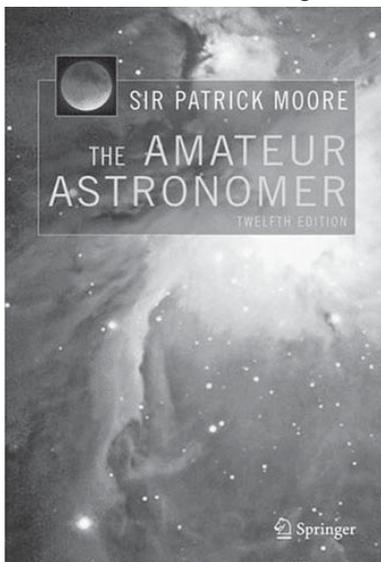
The appendices contain comprehensive star charts with text giving explanation about some of the brighter stars and constellations. These charts, which cover both hemispheres, are

as clear today as they were 50 years ago and are simple and straightforward to use. The appendices *inter alia* also contain lists of the most prominent meteor showers, and the names of the brighter stars.

There is no reason why this updated edition should not continue to hold its own as one of the novice's more useful first reads. Indeed, the book is a comprehensive introduction, which should hopefully engage and stimulate the newcomer's interest in one or more of the areas covered within. The data in the appendices alone are such that the book should also retain its use for the more experienced observer. As a result, the book is recommended most highly.

Martin Morgan–Taylor

Martin Morgan–Taylor was recently appointed by the BAA to the new position of New Members' Coordinator, responsible for helping new members to get the most from their hobby and from the Association. He can be contacted at mart@dm.ac.uk.



This review is copyright © the *Journal* of the British Astronomical Association, www.britastro.org/journal. If you wish to reproduce it, or place it on your own Web page, please contact the Editor: Mrs Hazel McGee, hazelmccgee@compuserve.com