

Letters

Milan Štefánik and the rotation period of Venus: a centenary for 2007

From Dr Richard McKim

I note with regret that some of the ‘hooked’ or accented Czech characters used in my historical note did not survive their passage onto the printed page of the February *Journal* (117(1), 7–8 (2007)). Disregarding the main text, corrected versions of the relevant references are given here. I will happily email a copy of the correct text to anyone requiring it.

The reference to *J. Roy. Astron. Soc. Canada* could not be checked at the time of writing due to the removal of the RAS Library from Burlington House. Upon checking recently, I found it to be an editorial that mentions the 1907 discovery, the year of publication being 1908, not 1907. I have not yet discovered the primary source, but take this opportunity to add an excellent internet source for many pictures and details of Štefánik’s life:

R. Rajchl, Dr. M. Štefánik jako hvězdář, *Ríše Hvězd*, 10, 85 (1929).

R. Rajchl, M. R. Štefánik na observatořích montblancských, *Ríše Hvězd*, 13, 77 (1932).

Karel Čapek, *President Masaryk Tells His Story*, Allen & Unwin, 1934.

Hubert Slouka (ed.), *Astronomie v Československu od dob Nejstarších do Dneška*, Osvěta, Prague, 1952.

P. Najser, J. Soumar, & J. Helebrant, *Praha Astronomická*, Kartografie Praha, a.s., 1996.

Emil Karol Kautský, *Kauza Štefánik - Legendy, fakty a otázky okolo vzniku Česko - Slovenskej republiky*, Matica Slovenská, Martin, 2004.

<http://www.tfsimon.com/stefanik-note.htm>

Richard McKim

Cherry Tree Cottage, 16 Upper Main St., Upper Benefield, PE8 5AN [RMckim5374@aol.com]

The non-emerging cosmos, and the ‘false aurora’

From Mr J. C. Vetterlein

When I was a comparatively young and aspiring mathematician/physicist on the threshold of knowing everything about what we called the universe, I was quite happy to talk of *time* and the emerging cosmos (*cf.* Chris Lintott, *JBAA* 117(1) p. 40, ‘Cosmology: into the unknown’).

Now, in my early seventies, I am far less confident; I can’t even bring myself to think of a universe, let alone universes. In the all and everything there is no all and every-

thing: there is no beginning, there is no end, there is only what is happening.

On ‘false aurora’ (R. J. Livesey, *JBAA* 117(1) p. 38), I have experienced a similar effect of a ‘southern aurora’ caused by the flare from the Flotta oil terminal in Scapa Flow some fifteen miles away. It was Ron himself who gave me an explanation for the phenomenon.

John C. Vetterlein

Springfield, Rousay, Orkney, Scotland KW17 2PR. [springast@supanet.com]

The Messier star clusters of Auriga

From Mr Ron Livesey

I was intrigued by Stewart Moore’s article in the 2007 February *Journal* (page 47) on the Auriga Messier star clusters. I have looked at them over many years as relaxation from programmed winter observing. The Perseus double cluster is also examined frequently, but in this case the comparison field for the variable star S Per is used as a check on sky clarity and sharpness.

I have a copy of *The Cambridge Deep Sky Album*, by Jack Newton & Philip Teece, published by CUP in 1983. It was natural to compare Cliff Meredith’s photographs of M36, M37 and M38 with those in the *Deep Sky Album*. By coincidence the two sets of pic-

tures are at virtually the same scale. It was a simple matter to set them up as stereo pairs.

At the distance and time between observations, one would not expect to get a three-dimensional view of the clusters. On the other hand it might be worthwhile for someone to make blink comparisons of pairs of photographs of suitable quality taken some years apart, to look for brightness changes and possibly variability in some of the component stars. I am sure the professionals have done such work, but why shouldn’t a skilled amateur have a go?

R. J. Livesey

Block 1, Flat 2, East Parkside, Edinburgh, EH16 5XJ

Orbital dynamics at the MACE meeting

From the Director of the Asteroids & Remote Planets Section

I regret that there was an error in my report of the Meeting on Asteroids and Comets in Europe (MACE 2006) printed in the December *Journal* (*JBAA* 116(6), p.341).

The final sentence in the section headed ‘Orbital dynamics’ reads as follows: ‘In a second lecture this presenter [A. Vitagliano] demonstrated how *Solex* could be used to help determine the mass of an asteroid (15 Eunomia) by measuring the change in its orbital elements following a close approach to a more massive object (50278).’

This should read: ‘In a second lecture this presenter demonstrated how *Solex* could be used to help determine the mass of a large asteroid (15 Eunomia) by measuring the change in the orbital elements of a small asteroid (50278) following its close approach to the former.’ My thanks to Jean Meeus for pointing out this error.

Roger Dymock

67 Haslar Crescent, Waterlooville, Hants. PO7 6DD [roger.dymock@ntlworld.com]

Erratum

Index to Volume 116 (2006)

We regret that the following item was omitted from the Author Index in the above:

Farquharson J.

– The Revd. William Ludlam (ltr.), 208

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