



DECEMBER 2003

VollieNews

Newsletter of the POVG-The Perth Observatory Volunteers' Group Inc.

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS AT PERTH OBSERVATORY

AURORA SIGHTINGS IN PERTH

Hi all. Yes I can confirm Dave Emrich's observations, as there have been calls to the Obs this morning about the 3am aurora.

Vic Levis has photos, which he will display at the Monday vollie meetings. Also sightings from Pingelly (Trevor Keates at the Pingelly Obs) and from..... Mount Magnet can you believe - at -28 latitude.

The phenomena was predicted, as follows.....
A coronal mass ejection swept past Earth during the early hours of

Nov. 20th and sparked bright auroras over northern parts of the United States. At the time of this writing (1600 UT or 11:00 a.m. EST) a strong geomagnetic storm is in progress.

The interplanetary magnetic field near Earth has tilted sharply south—a condition which promotes geomagnetic activity. If this condition persists, auroras are possible at low latitudes tonight.

The source of this space weather is sunspot 484—one of the trio of big sunspots that caused intense solar storms last month. Indeed all three

of those active regions are back on the Earth-facing side of the sun, so more solar activity is possible in the days ahead.

Visit Spaceweather.com for more information and pictures of today's auroras.

The aurora was also seen from 170km N of Newman - -22S !!

Astronomy is Looking up !!

Peter Birch

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VOLLIE OF THE MONTH - JEANNE BELL

Jeanne suggested that it would be a good idea if we crank up the Vollie Profiles which was attempted before but never quite got off the ground. However, she has kindly included some of her details and interests. If you'd like to feature in this section please send any information with a photo (jpeg format) of yourself, to me for inclusion in our future newsletters.

Thanks Jeanne, looking forward to the rest of the vollie contributions.
Ed.

NAME: Jeanne BELL
STAR SIGN: Scorpio
DAY JOB: Runs a commercial construction company with her husband

FAMILY:
Husband - Ken, Daughter - Sarah (16), son - Cale (14)

HOBBIES: Cooking, bushwalking, reading, astronomy, fishing, tennis & travel

LIVES IN: Claremont
EMAIL: kjscbell@cygnus.uwa.edu

OBSERVATORY:
Joined as a night tour volunteer in the first intake but her main role now is the collation of vollies' time sheets. Information collected is submitted to CALM once a quarter.

OTHER INTERESTS: Conducts school tours of Bethesda hospital, works for Choice magazine and runs a community service programme for Year 10 boys at Christ Church Grammar School.

NORTHERN VS SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE BIAS RAISES BILKI'S IRE

The northern hemisphere bias to astronomy textbooks has always bugged me. In fact, many of the geospatial reference books that I use are also significantly biased towards the northern hemisphere.

Being the geographically inquisitive fellow that I am, I decided to check the relative populations of the Nth vs. Sth hemispheres to see if that might explain the bias... and it sure does! The total population of the northern hemisphere is around 5 billion, whereas the southern hemisphere can only muster a mere 700 million people. So, there are over 7 times the number of people above the equator than below it. I guess that if one in every 7 astronomy books works for the southern hemisphere, we should consider ourselves fortunate!

The funny thing is, Australia is a real powerhouse of research and ingenuity, especially in the mining/geospatial industry where I work. Many of the world's premier geospatial software packages (including the one that I work for!) originate right here in Perth, and yet others originate in other Australian cities. Plus, much of the modern mining industry's

technology was pioneered right here in Oz. Not bad for a country with only 20 million people!

Southern Hemisphere astronomy has been going for a lot longer than you might think.

Most texts suggest that Classical astronomy (i.e. Northern Hemisphere astronomy) started anywhere between 10,000 and 4,000 BC (depending on who you read), but that the first written texts didn't appear until around 3,000 BC. The constellations as we know them (more or less) were developed around 2,500 BC.

However, Aboriginal Dreamtime legends featuring the night sky were developed around 40,000 years ago. Most of the 'Aboriginal Constellation of the Month' articles that I've been quoting in the Vollie newsletter originated many tens of thousands of years ago. In addition to their Dreamtime legends, the aborigines were also using the appearance of certain stars or constellations in the evening sky to mark calendrical events such as initiations or the coming into season of a particular food. What amazes me is how often the Aboriginal

mythology seems to match the accepted Classical mythology for the same constellation. For example, the constellation we know as Orion was known to some Aborigines as Jarn, who was also a hunter.

I suspect that most early Southern Hemisphere civilisations (like the Polynesians, Maoris, etc.) had also developed similar astronomical folk lore back then, too. Unfortunately for us, the legends were passed down by word of mouth, and so there's little or no written history. It's only been in recent times that some workers have taken the time to learn and document the ancient myths before they're lost to us forever.

Frank Bilki

POVG MEETING - MINUTES

Minutes of Meeting
October 20th 2003-10-29

Meeting Commenced at 7.10

Present. T.Beston. E.Walker.
B.Hollebon. L.Bell.
L.Martin. J.Morris.
D.Emrich. T.Turner. C.Bell.
G.Lowe. J.Biggs. M.Haslam.
T.Smith. T.Dunn.
D.Alderton. P.Birch. F.Bilki.
L.Robinson.

Apologies. B.Harris.
K.Kotze. A.Williams.
A.McNaughton. J.Bell.

Minutes of the Previous
Meeting

Agreed as a true and correct
record by L.Martin seconded
by T.Beston

Treasurer's Report.
No change from the previous
meeting

General Business
TDunn welcomed B.Turner
C.Bell and T.Smith to the
meeting.

F.Bilki reported on contact
with the N.Z Volunteer

Group and and the arrival of
their group newsletters.

G.Lowe went through the
new technique required for
shutting down the 16 inch
Telescope.

There being no further
General Business the meeting
closed at 7.16

2003/2004 TRAINING NIGHTS SCHEDULE

Training is important for our
volunteers, they enjoy it and we
need to support these staff mem-
bers in return for the assistance
they render.

Generally, these training nights
are scheduled for 7pm the Monday
after the week of Last Quarter.

This list is also displayed on the
volunteer noticeboard.

Your cooperation is appreciated.
Jamie Biggs. Govt Astronomer

2003	2004
May 26	Jan 19
Jun 30	Feb 23
Jul 28	Mar 15
Aug 25	Apr 19
Sep 22	May 17
Oct 20	Jun 14
Nov 24	Jul 12
	Aug 9

SKY EVENTS FOR DECEMBER

Meteor Showers.
Phoenicids: Nov 28 to Dec 9;
Geminids: Dec 7 to Dec 17. Best
observations are from mid-night to
dawn, looking eastwards.

Comets.
Comet 22P/Kopff
Comet C/2001 HT 50 (Linear-
Neat)
Comet P/1992 Q1 (Brewington)
COMET NEAT (C/2002 V1)
COMET KUDO-FUJIKAWA
(C/2002 X5)

PHASES OF THE MOON FOR 2003 (WA TIME)

New Moon	First Quarter	Full Moon	Last Quarter
Jan 3 04:23	Jan 10 21:15	Jan 18 18:47	Jan 25 16:33
Feb 11 08:48	Feb 9 19:11	Feb 17 07:51	Feb 24 00:46
Mar 31 00:35	Mar 11 15:15	Mar 18 18:34	Mar 25 09:51
Apr 2 03:18	Apr 10 07:40	Apr 17 03:35	Apr 23 20:18
May 01 20:15	May 09 19:53	May 16 11:36	May 23 08:30
May 31 12:20	Jun 08 04:27	Jun 14 19:16	Jun 21 22:45
Jun 30 02:38	Jul 07 10:32	Jul 14 03:21	Jul 21 15:01
Jul 29 14:53	Aug 05 15:27	Aug 12 12:48	Aug 20 08:48
Aug 28 01:26	Sep 03 20:34	Sep 11 00:36	Sep 19 03:03
Sep 26 11:09	Oct 03 03:09	Oct 10 15:27	Oct 18 20:31
Oct 25 20:50	Nov 01 12:25	Nov 09 09:13	Nov 17 12:15
Nov 24 06:59	Dec 01 01:16	Dec 09 04:37	Dec 17 01:42
Dec 23 17:43	Dec 30 18:03		

<http://www.wa.gov.au/perthobs/hpc5mn03.htm>

Special Events.
The Mid-Summer Solstice
The Mid-Summer Solstice will
occur at 1500 on Monday
December 22. This is when the
Sun 'appears' to stop moving
southward and begins its journey
back towards the Celestial Equator.
At this time, we, in the southern
hemisphere, experience our
LONGEST day and SHORTEST
night. This effect is caused by the
23 degree tilt of the Earth's axis.

PERTH OBSERVATORY VOLUNTEERS GROUP INC.

VOLUNTEER MEMBER LIST

Jeff Alcroft
Dick Alderson
Jeanne Bell
Trevor Beardsmore
Lyll Bell
Frank Bilki
Tony Beston
Ric Boelen
Eve Cowlshaw
Giuseppe Coletti
Peter Crake
Trevor Dunn
David Emrich
Keith Ford
Marcel Fortsch
Mike Freeman
Lynda Frewer
Bevan Harris
Don Hartley
Mark Haslam
Nigel Healy
Bert Hollebon
Karen Koltze
Erin Lalor
Vic Levis
Rob Loney
Andrew MacNaughtan
Len Martin
Jacquie Milner
John Morris
Lloyd Robinson
Sascha Schediwy
Val Semmler
Vera Smith
Bob Taylor
Patricia Turner
Elaine Walker
Sandra Walker
Matt Zengerer

PERTH OBSERVATORY STAFF

Dr Jamie Biggs	Director and Govt Astronomer
Peter Birch	Astronomer
Ralph Martin	Astronomer
Dr Andrew Williams	Astronomer
Rick Tonello	Astronomer Assistant
Greg Lowe	Astronomer Assistant
Janet Bell	Administration Officer
Di Johns	Clerical Officer
Arie Verveer	Technical manager
John Pearce	Mechanical technician
David Tiggerdine	Maintenance Person
Mark Appelhof	Cleaner

POVG VOLUNTEERS

Trevor Dunn	POVG Inc, Chairperson
Karen Koltze	POVG Inc, Vice Chair
Bob Taylor	POVG Inc, Secretary
Bevan Harris	POVG Inc, Treasurer and newsgroup moderator (contact bevan on ngc2070@bigpond.com)

HAVE YOU JOINED THE VOLLIE NEWSGROUP YET?

If you've got any news, information or pix simply post them on the newsgroup for all (newsgroup members only) to enjoy or respond to.

To join simply send your email address to BEVAN HARRIS at:
ngc2070@bigpond.com

To unsubscribe send an email to:
perthobsvollies-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com.au

To modify your subscription, visit the group website at:
<http://au.groups.yahoo.com/mygroups>



POVG
Perth Observatory Volunteers Group

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