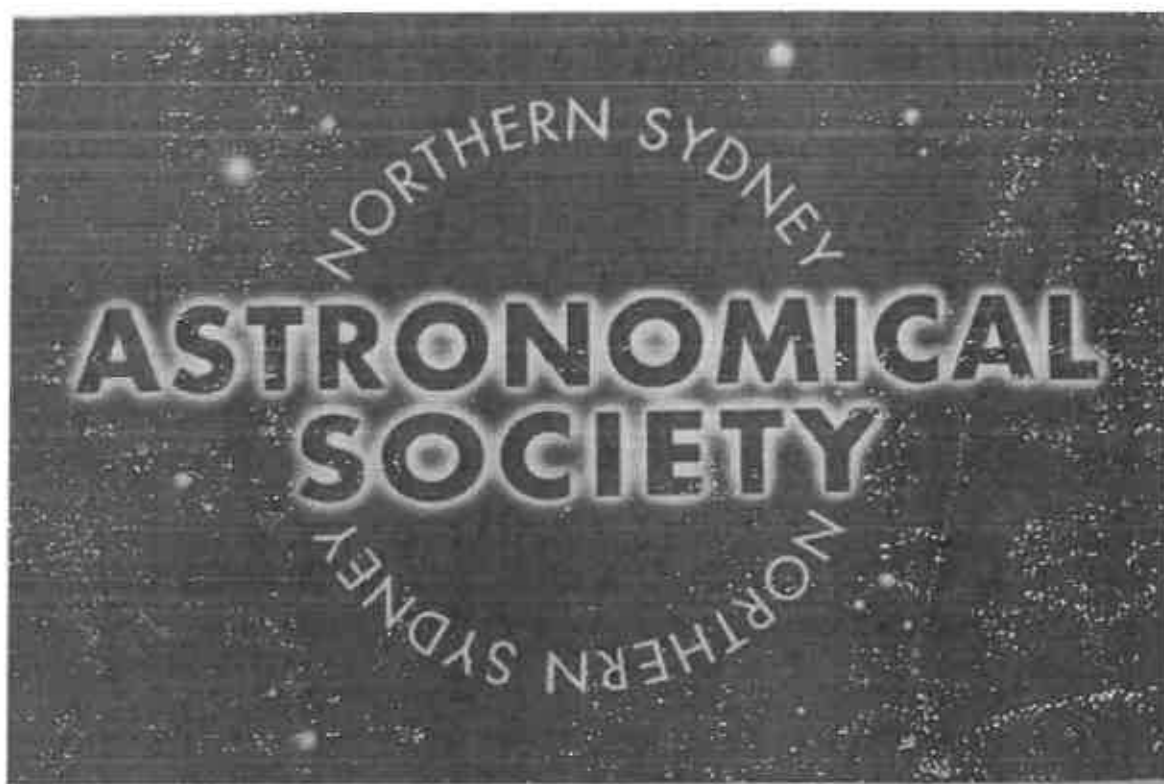


NORTHERN SYDNEY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

**SOME MEMORIES
OF
OUR CLUBS FIRST QUARTER CENTURY**



**Prepared October 2011
by
Deirdre and John Curdie OAM
Foundation Members**

The first 25 years of The Northern Sydney Astronomical Society

Prepared by Foundation Members

Deirdre Curdie and former club president John K Curdie OAM

Abstract:

October 2011 marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the *Northern Sydney Astronomical Society* which was originally known as the *Northern District Society of Amateur Astronomers*. During this period the club has had a membership comprised of so many backgrounds both social and academic. Each one driven to become a member in satisfaction of a personal interest in astronomy be it from a curiosity to learn of an aspect of our universe or to extend their knowledge further into a new aspect of this fascinating science. For whatever the reason our club has had many members who have made big commitments and given of themselves in pursuance of the betterment of our club. This dissertation will touch on some of the highlights and some of the personalities during those years. This paper is in no way a definitive history of the club but rather the recall of memories and experiences of one of the foundation members that has been part of the club from its origins in 1986

From whence we came 25 years ago

Halley's Comet has been part of our history for many generations captivating the imaginations of the populace whenever that 'fiery' visitor makes its appearance in the night skies in its 70+-year cycle. . With the impending arrival of the comet in 1986 in the skies of Australia the popular press carried many stories both fact and fiction. Such was the enthusiasm that struck Sydney town that those with any interest in astronomy and curiosity in the comet enrolled in the various evening community learning centres which were offering classes in Astronomical matters and especially if information of Halley's was included.

Locally there were two such venues in the Ryde Epping area; one at Cumberland High School and the other at the CSIRO Telescope station at Epping. Being a couple so interested Deirdre and John Curdie enrolled for the course at the CSIRO School in Epping for our 6-week course. One of the attendees was Bob Feeney. We related to Bob appreciating his engaging smile and enthusiasm for everything and insatiable appetite to learn all about the many aspects of astronomy that was contained in the curriculum. It was to such a person of like spirit that over the weeks of the course our friendship grew; a close friendship that was to last through all the days of the NDSAA until his passing some years ago.

With such lecturers and high profile astronomers as Dr Graeme White, Bob Duncan, Dr Ray Morris, Doug Milne and David Malin, the attention of those eager attendees was

assured. The material contained in the lectures was structured to such a level to satisfy the wide range of abilities and background of those in the class. The lecturers made the lessons extremely interesting that held their enthusiasm whetting the appetite and curiosity of all attending. It was this fervour, which drove many of the students to seek an ongoing association for this new hobby.

Within that period of lectures, there was arranged a meeting of like groups in a joint viewing of the Super Nova of 1986 using one of the telescopes at Epping CSIRO. As a result of that meeting Bob Feeney met up with his old friend Gordon Stott, who had been involved with the studies at the Carlingford High School. This renewal of that old friendship was to grow. From this meeting grew an idea that any interested attendees of the respective classes, should endeavour to keep meeting to talk of matters astronomical. From such gatherings there evolved the embryonic NDAS. The persons, involved in those original days, as I can recall, were John & Deirdre Curdie, Gordon Stott, Bob Feeney, Spencer Stanley, Graham Crowhurst, and Philip Courland.

With not much of an idea on how such gatherings should work but full of enthusiasm we met on a monthly basis, in Gordon Stott's front room. The meetings involved a lot of talking on some pet subjects of the members, and the participation in extensive suppers. Soon it became apparent that for the group to survive into the future we should formalise the situation; we should have our own club, a constitution, structured meetings and opportunities to learn from leaders in the science. The first committee comprised Bob Feeney as President, John Curdie as vice president, Gordon Stott secretary and the treasurer was Philip Cousland. We thought that we should have a name and after, many ideas, and to encapsulate the area in which we lived and operated, the name was to be Northern District Society of Amateur Astronomers (NDSAS) thus embracing that district of Sydney where we lived and worked.

With the formation we paid our first annual fees, which I think were \$10 each. Our meagre income from subscriptions did not go far and so our small club survived into the future with in kind donations, of time and part time work from its members; perhaps some of the business houses in our district made donations of copying and printing. Gordon Stott's big 6" Newtonian telescope and Spencer Stanley's homemade special design telescope were probably the first telescopes we used for our early observations. I remember Spencer Stanley telescope was a Newtonian design and had no barrel but rather a frame that held the mirror and eyepiece in place. When asked where the tube was, he was quick to point out on a dark night you do not need an enclosing tube around the mirror and eyepiece.

Most of the early meetings were concerned with theoretical discussions and some esoteric debates on matters astronomical and any view of the heavens was by way of Spencers Telescope.

Not long after the club was formed Bob Roeth joined the group. With Bob's mathematical background and teaching experiences together with Gordon Stott and his background of mathematics from his involvement at the CSIRO as a statistician, our discussions at times became much focused on aspects of theoretical astronomy. Often when

the topics included cosmology theories or assumptions by other astronomers we enjoyed such erudite discussions, which could extend into long sessions to be ceased only when supper was served.

Another member to join shortly after the club formed was Dr Alan Vaughan. Alan was worked at the Department of Mathematics and Physics at Macquarie University where he was researching aspects of Radio Astronomy. Alan was invited to attend our club and in the confines of the front room, he gave a few talks on this aspect of astronomy, which was all very new to us who were visual astronomers conversant only with visible light source observations. This invisible radio sky was a strange new field of endeavour.

With our numbers growing, accommodation reached a critical mass and an alternative accommodation would have to be found. With rental of space being out of the question the problem compounded. Alan Vaughan, using his contacts at Macquarie University, was able to arrange some accommodation in a room which was part of the sports centre at Macquarie University overlooking the University Oval. What a change this was to make to us all. With most of us residing in the Ryde, Eastwood, Hornsby area this venue would be a central meeting point for all. Part of the offer included the use of a locker for our small number of books and things. As we had started to accumulate books on astronomy it would be a great boon if we could house our mini library

NDSAA and the Macquarie University.

As the news of our new club spread so our membership numbers grew. Our club was well structured with regular meetings and good attendances numbers and a continual stream of lectures from researchers in many fields of astronomy. We had established regular viewing nights and Gordon Stott enjoyed the regular publication of our journal *Reflections* and authoring some articles. His position as secretary allowed his close involvement with the membership, and other administrative activities.

The club members chose to invest in its own duplicator so that we could be a little more independent without depending on the generosity of some member's commercial affiliations that often undertook foreign orders on behalf of the club. A second hand Xerox machine was sourced which was considered a good deal from friend of friend. The machine was to be housed at Gordon's home. The machine worked for a few months until it developed the death rattles and with costs for it upkeep mounting it was disposed of and we went back to the generosity of member's own or their commercial facilities.

Not long after we took residence at the Sports Pavilion a new member Rev. Warwick Thomas joined our growing number. Warwick was keen amateur astronomer who had his own telescope. By way of his small workshop he fashioned some mechanical and optical adaptations to his telescope, endeavouring to achieve better observational techniques.

The club blossomed and our enthusiasm and confidence grew and soon we resolved that we should invite the public to our club by holding a public astronomy forum. This was to be a good club project that would involve all members in some small way to ensure the

success of the event. The forum started in the late afternoon and there would be a static display of equipment whilst concurrently there would be talks on various topics. The terraced gallery of the grandstand made an impromptu lecture room. After dark we had a few telescopes set-up on the flat of the oval, which would provide the opportunity for the visitors to look into the heavens, complete with a commentary from telescopes owner as they assisted the viewers. With hot food also available we had many visitors who had an interesting evening out with their families. In those days life was uncomplicated, without all the ancillary compliance regulations that would raise many difficulties if such an event were organised today.

Barely had we settled ourselves at the sports pavilion, establishing connections and a position in the amateur astronomers' circuit that the news came through confirming that the construction of the M2 Motorway would commence. As the university Sports ground was on land that would be part of the M2, we were notified that we would soon have to move for the sporting complex would be demolished.

Again we faced our future; paying a rental was not an option we could afford; where to go was the question that focused our discussions for many months.

The club moves to St Ignatius College Hunters Hill

Warwick Thomas at that time was a Chaplain at the Royal North Shore Hospital. Following discussions with one of his contemporaries became aware of the possibility that the St Ignatius College was keen to rebuild the historic astronomical observatory and associated facilities on the college grounds. This historic telescope had been a vital part of the science of astronomy in Sydney for many years and had also established its prominence as a world seismic recording station. To that end the College would entertain an enquiry regarding the involvement of our club

Working on this introduction, Warwick's negotiations resulted in an offer that would provide for the club the use the grand stand on the oval as a meeting place with storage for our now growing library. The college, keen to rebuild parts of the telescope, as a prelude to the recommissioning of this historic telescope and existing observatory buildings standing at the edge of the oval was keen to be able to tap into our joint expertise and enthusiasm. As well as the physical work on the telescope, there were also a collection of books on astronomy as well as rare historical records of early observations, all of which were stored in the adjacent library building, would also be a project for enthusiasts to sort through.

As part of the decision process, surrounding this offer from the college, there was much discussion on how we would respond to relocating to an area that was further away from where we thought was centre of our origins.

Prior to making a decision, interested club members visited the college to inspect the facilities. The membership concurred that we should take up the offer, which was too good to pass over. Thus we moved to our new residence. Many of the current membership will have

fond memories of those years when we met in the headmaster's grandstand overlooking the oval at Riverview College.

The club prospered and the number at our monthly meetings increased. We ventured into further open days and with an active social life involving club barbeques, club viewing of astronomical phenomena public open days and Christmas functions we grew to be a progressive and stable club.

The dome roof did not operate, the optics was in bad repair and the records were in some disarray. Members rose to the challenge involved with the restoration of the historic telescope and sorting and storing many items and astronomical records in the library. Those involved had an opportunity to learn and study aspects of the history of the telescope and its important place in the life of early Sydney as well as being a contributor to the world science of Astronomy and seismology which spanned over 100 years. Whilst the College would fund the costs, the success of the exercise depended on the many collective skills within the club.

Bob Feeney, a foundation member, with his tele-cinematic background and knowledge of camera optics would arrange speakers concerned with the design of lenses as well as aspects of optics and image capture. With Bob and Warwick's enthusiasm for improvisation to optics and collection of objects de- astronomy we had some good nights of 'show and tell'. At these times we appreciated another world of improvisation and adaptation coupled with ingenious workshop skills.

With Ron Washington, a keen amateur astronomer and Geoff Welch now members of the club there was often lively debate on some aspect of observation techniques, recent discoveries or on an aspect of cosmology. With Warwick, Ron, Gordon, Bob Roeth, and Bob Feeney and Geoff Welsh at the meetings, attendees were often treated to a lesson on astronomy as each expanded his view of a topic or his experiences.

The range of subjects handled at a monthly meeting was usually accompanied by interesting questions to the speaker and often the night meeting would extend far beyond its nominated conclusion time.

At one stage a trivia night was held. The members would divide into 4 groups and from a list of questions compiled by the organiser, so the groups endeavoured to answer. We used a computer aided system, devised by Ron Washington, which would identify which would indicate the group that pressed their buzzer first, thus eliminating the judges decision on such critical matters.

Macquarie University Astronomy Foundation and open days

Under Alan Vaughan's initiative the club activities became more involved in his university's growing involvement in astronomical studies. As a support to the growth in

research programs of the Mathematics and Physics Department, The Macquarie University Vice Chancellors office resolved to support the setting up of an Astronomy Foundation.

That foundation would comprise a membership of persons, association or corporation who had an interest or involvement in Astronomy. For an annual fee for various grades of membership, the foundation would provide resource and education for the community as well as research for academic and post graduate degrees.

Naturally with the close relationship between our club and Dr Alan Vaughan, our Club was one of the initial member groups taking up a membership of the Foundation. That foundation which was to be administered by an executive and a management committee sought the nominations from members and members association. Our club nominated Gordon Stott for a position on that committee and which was accepted thus ensuring good communications with the University.

With his acceptance of Gordon Stott to the committee of the Foundation as our club representative, the communication between the club and the Foundation improved. With such a closer working relationship our club grew a little more in stature, assuring its place in the community of amateur astronomer societies.

The Macquarie University Foundation for Astronomy

As contained within its constitution, it was the ambition of the Foundation that it should be actively involved in the world of astronomy and to be a good communication link with the residents of Sydney. (Refer annex 1 Foundation Rules.) Such involvement with the community was the establishment of a weekend school of astronomy, which was held on the long weekend over Queens Birthday in June each year. Alan Vaughan and his staff from Macquarie School University arranged some 4 or 5 lecturers who spoke on their corner of astronomy to classes, which comprised attendees from the Sydney Region who had responded to invitations to astronomical societies as well as by public notice.

*L to R Ron Washington Deirdre Curdie
Geoff Welsh, enjoy a lunch at an
Astronomy Foundation Symposium*



The weekend schools became very popular and all attending learnt from the experts at a pace that suited the amateur, being just short of a lecture designed for undergraduates of those particular sciences. With good comradery between attendees with well catered lunches and refreshments, the weekend schools were good fun; this annual event was a date on ones calendar of forth coming functions that was not to be missed.

In pursuance of its goal to involve the community in matters of astronomy, the Foundation ran 2 astronomy nights in the grounds of the University. This was a community involvement concept of the Foundations program of bringing the love of astronomy to the families of Sydney.

On these occasions for a small admission fee, families could drive into the University grounds in the late afternoon and make their way down to the auditorium where there were many stalls selling items of interest and providing free information about Astronomy Associations around Sydney and forthcoming events on particular subjects and catered for by the local scout groups who provided the a variety of barbequed delicacies. ,

Part of the evening was an entertaining public lecture from a high profile academic who gave a talk, which was particularly structured for all the age groups that would be in attendance. Our Club, with its close working relationship with the foundation, became the first club to participate in this program. The club had its stall, where we displayed some of the photographs of our club and the events at which they had participated as well as encouraging new members.



Lunch on the steps of the school at a a Queens Birthday weekend Foundation



A meal at sundown at Macquarie Uni prior to arrival of visitors L To B Judy & Graham Davie, Gordon Stott and John Curdie

The evening also included the opportunity for those attending to view various stars or planets by using the telescopes that our club had set up in an adjacent car park. The membership of our club were invited to set up their telescopes in the afternoon and later in the night visitors could view different astronomical features .Our club was the first club to be invited to be so involved in this project sponsored by the Macquarie University. The evening became a great social outing for the club.

Following the setting up of our telescopes, as the dusk descended, and we waited till the darkness fell and visitors would come to view through our telescopes, we would gather to join in an evening meal together. With table and chairs, set up amongst our telescopes, we would share wins, and the various dishes that each one brought along. This event grew each year and again we as club members showed a close connection between astronomy and gastronomy.

With each year more astronomy societies participated in the open nights. There was much petty inter society jealousies about which group had the best turnout. These events, the talks and displays awoke the interest of many visitors in becoming members of our Society.

As the School of Mathematics, Physics, Computing and Electronics grew it become more focused on astronomical matters, so the support of the Vice Chancellors Office was sought to expand the foundation to be a properly founded charity and structured within the University administration and to have the personal support from the University Vice Chancellor.

So the Foundation for Astronomy was established in 1988 by Dr. Alan Vaughan as a response to a need to promote knowledge of astronomy in the community, to enable various parts of the astronomical community to interact, and to encourage teaching and research in astronomy at Macquarie University. Its aims also include the raising of funds for further development of the Macquarie University Observatory and the construction of the much-desired Planetarium



A quick evening meal before the night's events commence

L To R Warwick Thomas and Bob Feeney

One of its goals was to construct an observatory with an attached planetarium in the grounds of the University adjacent to Culloden Road end of the University property.

As there was no planetarium in Sydney there was an opportunity that such an investment would be a wonderful teaching aid for school pupils from metropolitan schools. Such an

educational program would allow school classes to visit this complex where they could have hands on experiences with astronomical observations and be able to access the educational facilities of the planetarium. The items with such a program had big price tags. The funding of such a program was going to be a big hill to climb

The fund raising side of the Foundation for Astronomy with support from the University commenced its operations in a very professional manner by the appointment of an accounting firm that would oversee and conduct the fundraising. The foundation sought expressions of interest from its members to enter into a training course on aspects of approaching the public and especially corporations seeking support for this project. There was a program instigated that would see the use of extensive advertising programs through the media and would include TV commercial as well as a DVD from the Vice Chancellors office in support of the foundation.



Surrounding the University in the Macquarie Park office development were sited many large corporation offices some

Club members set up in driveway of Graham and Judy Davies home to view the transit of Mercury across the sun.

of which were the headquarters of many worldwide names and trademarks. The training the volunteers received by the Foundation would equip them in the skills to approach the right persons within that organisation, hopefully to make a presentation to the board of management of a company. My wife Deirdre and I, along with some other club members who volunteered were selected for special training in the skills associated with fund raising and later to form a team that would undertake the approaches to industry.

It was an unfortunate turn of events but at the time of the launch of this program Australia and particularly Sydney was in the midst of a credit squeeze. Some industries were in a down turn and many others were cutting back their expenses. From the outset the financial constraints on commerce was tight. Whilst there was some success and some corporations were prepared to support in kind to provide pieces of equipment as the project was built, the funding could not promise that the objectives could be sustained; so the program had to be halted. The program was put on hold to a later time when there was a better economic outlook

The Club's 10th Anniversary

Club members, in 1986 as our 10th anniversary dawned; really felt a sense of achievement. We had been together for a whole decade and still operating well. Now with a membership of some 76 and in addition to our normal monthly general meetings, there had been instigated additional specialised classes for new members as well as astronomy theory and telescope making with lens grinding.

So we felt it was time to celebrate with a big party. With many alternatives discussed it was resolved that it would be held at the Curdie's home in Beecroft which had a large covered area in case the weather was unkind..



4 PRESIDENTS OF THE CLUB L to R Warwick Thomas, John Curdie, Bob Feeney and Gordon Stott

The accompanying photo of that occasion captures in one picture 4 president of the club

I had been a vice president of the club, having been elected to that position since its inception. From this position I had had the opportunity to work with Presidents Bob Feeney and Warwick Thomas as a member of their executive where I often filled in for them when they had other

commitments that clashed with the needs of the club. This involvement afforded me a close appreciation of the growth of the club

so when I was elected president in 1987, I was able to continue the forward thinking that had driven the club over those years. It was my belief that the club was formed so that its members could meet, to socialise, to learn from experts and to communicate amongst themselves in pursuit of their hobby. They were not very interested in a formal and highly structured meeting that could monopolise the few hours of our monthly meeting. It was my approach as president that the monthly general meeting would have a minimum of business and a maximum of astronomy matters

and personal interaction. The executive who met the week prior to the general meeting would handle correspondence and financial matters and seek the agreement at the general meeting to the executive action and to report to the meeting on any significant items that may require a decision by the membership. This worked well especially by pre circulating the minutes of the previous meeting thus eliminating the extensive time in the formal reading of the minutes, thus allowed greater discussions during lectures and socialising.



Name Change and Club Emblem.

During my time as president of the club, 1987-1990 my executive was comprised Vice President Tony Wyatt, Secretary Bruce Retaillick, Treasurer Alan Giles whilst the committee included Dennis Bennet, David Frew, David Hoffman, Jacqui Macdermid, Ken Petersen, Bob Roeth, Gordon Stott and Ron Washington.

Whilst I was in the chair, one of the matters of business we had to address after we took up residence at our new venue at St Ignatius College was to restructure ourselves. It was felt that our current name *Northern Districts Astronomical Society* did not really relate to our spatial position within Sydney or the State. With many alternatives put to the meeting it was resolved that the better name would be *Northern Sydney Astronomical Society*. Consequently it followed that the club constitution and its registration details at the Department of Fair Trading would have to be amended. Whilst we were in the business of redefining ourselves it was agreed that we should have an emblem that could be used on our letterheads and publicity material, a masthead by which others would recognise our club. So with many options discussed I took advice from a commercial artist, who combined the several ideas already discussed and developed the design that we have currently. With the concurrence of the meeting the design was approved and this has been our badge of honour since.



T Shirt with Cap with our new club logo

To further implement our new image I put to the meeting that we should develop a club dress and this concept was supported by the members. We were very fortunate that within our ranks was an active member in Annette Beansaude who in her day work had a company that fashioned advertising banners and garment embroidering. Annette was able to supply T Shirts and caps with our new logo along with a large banner, which carried the new club name and Logo. Members took up these shirts and caps and at our

various club functions or astronomy viewing nights we all looked very smart with our uniform, of T shirt and cap and with our club banner on display.

It was about this time that the Internet and the World Wide Web was first impacting upon the wider community. From my experiences on the application of the Internet whilst in the employ of the Sydney University, I could see that this was the way of the future and the internet would become a major communicator. To this end I set up, on behalf of our club, a



A club Bar B Que

web page which was to communicate with our members and also to tell the world at large who we are and that we are a club of some significance. I also hoped that all our members would take up the Internet thus simplifying our communications. At that time, when the internet was so new, the take up of the net by the community was slow and not many members were connected to the web. Because of the small number that had availed themselves of this new communicator and given the additional time that servicing the web page was taking, it was resolved to abandon this venture. I was pleased to witness that a few years later, the club again embraced to current technology and my dream was eventually realised as the community awoke to the benefits of the electronic media. Our club had a web page and was communicating to the world and to a majority of the membership by the use of email.

The current web page that has been accomplished under President Bob Fuller's time is a wonderful effort. The professional production of the web page brings great credit to our club and with e-mail almost the standard communication; the membership of the club is taking full advantage of the world of today.

The members of our club have always enjoyed the opportunity to have a meal together. Right from the early days we held at least one club dinner at a local restaurant or hotel at least once a year; more often if we could find a good excuse. With our new accommodation at the St Ignatius College very suited to outdoor catering, I was very pleased to encourage the establishment of our Club Luncheon on the lawns outside our clubhouse. With a marquee and table and chairs and with the barbeque organised by some of the men and

the drinks distribution by the others, whilst the ladies organised the many salad dishes that were supplied, we enjoyed many an old style Aussie Barbeque.

SOLIS

One of the members that was for a time the coordinator of club viewing, Ken Petersen, was always expressing his annoyance at how the un ordered way street lights, public lighting and advertising illumination spoilt the night vision during observation nights. Ken became proactive in this matter and he and few friends organised themselves into a group which later was formalised as the SOLIS group which stands for the *Sydney Outdoor Lighting Improvement Society Inc.* Members of our club were encouraged to join with this group to pressure planning decision makers of announced developments and also policy makers within councils. They argued that with a little care in the layout or shape and orientation of outdoor lighting it was possible to design a light source that projected downwards and not scattering light vertically into the night. The design would still provide the necessary illumination and also prevent scattering of light thus limiting light pollution that is the bane of city-based astronomers. This group gathered some momentum has been able to provide assistance to many local councils of Sydney. The group has succeeded in the development of a standard, which can be applied to all new lighting programs. The group is now based in Sydney Observatory and has its own web page. Our club should be proud of the contribution that SOLIS has made to astronomy, an ongoing programme that originated within the membership of the NDSAA.

GEOFF WELSH AWARD.

One of our club members Geoff Welsh was a later arrival to the membership of our club. He brought with him a wealth of knowledge of amateur astronomy, which had been his hobby for many years. With his background, as a graduate of Sydney University and for many years a professor in Engineering at University of NSW he researched his subject, which made those talks he gave to a General Meeting well appreciated. It was some years later that the members were aware



that Geoff had already written and published a **The Late Geoff Welsh** text on astronomy entitled '*Humankind and the Cosmos*'. He was much loved by his fellow club members who appreciated his reputation in matters of astronomy. Geoff was an energetic member and really enjoyed his time in the club and actively participated in the monthly general meetings.

Following the death of Geoff Welsh when his estate was being settled the club was given an endowment of some monies on the condition that the interest from that investment would fund a prize to a club member on a presentation on a subject in astronomy and as approved by the Prize committee of the club. Such a gift shows the respect that Geoff had for the club and its ideals to the amateur astronomer.

Personalities of our club who have visited our club



Rev Bob Evans

Over the years club members have been privileged to have many speakers address our gatherings. Speakers that have ranged from professional astronomers, world renowned researchers and persons who worked in optical industries and IT companies associated with an aspect of astronomy.

One such person was Rev Robert Evans who in addresses to our club outlined his experiences and involvement in astronomy. His favourite telescope was an old 41 cm reflector for his galaxy scans, but whilst he had no formal qualifications in the sciences associated with astronomy, he was blessed with a photographic memory and came to recognise changes in patterns in the stars. This led him to be able to spot a supernova by a quick scan of the heavens through his trusty telescope. .

As he scanned a constellation, he was able recognise a different pattern which became apparent from a previous inspection. Such a change may be a supernova. In his address to our club he had at that stage a tally of 31 supernovas to his credit. This tally was to rise to 42 some year later. His remarkable ability was recognised across the astronomical world. In recognition of his contribution he was made a member of the International Astronomical Union and the Astronomical Society of Australia as well as an honorary member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. In 1998 was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his contributions to science. As he lived at Coonabarabran his visits to our club were irregular but by way of Warwick Thomas we had good communications with his activities.

It was by way of the friendship of President Rev Warwick Thomas that Rev Bob Evans became associated with our club and With Bob Evans' retirement to the Blue Mountains communications were a little easier.

LINDEN OBSERVATORY

Following his retirement, Bob Evans became involved in the Observatory at Linden as a trustee of the estate of Ken Beames who was a great name as a telescope maker and was one of Australia's foremost optics manufacturers for most of the 20th Century Following his death the NSW Government added Mr Beames, property, the Linden Observatory to the State Heritage Register. As a result of this action Bob Evans became involved as an administrator of the Beames Estate.

In the early days of the management if the property at Linden Telescope, because of the connection with Bob Evans by way of Warwick Thomas, our club became involved in the activities to restore the site and the telescope housing. One of the first involvements of our club was the financial support for the electric power account for the property. Soon it was followed by working parties of our members camping overnight on site at Linden, who tidied up the grounds, entrance area and established concrete bases for portable telescopes that amateur astronomers could use when camping on the estate.

After about a year of our club's involvement, the Astronomy Club of Western Sydney expressed their opinion that the property at Linden was within their area and that their membership should be the responsible group. The membership of our club was polarised on the issue and as a consequence of lack of support by our clubs membership at that time, it was determined that it was senseless to respond; so through lack of enthusiasm by our members, its ongoing involvement in that project ceased.

REFLECTIONS:

From the outset of our fledgling club we decided that we should publish a news magazine, which would be used to keep all members informed of our activities and future astronomical programs. The name Reflections was selected from a number of suggestions. As I recall the name was selected because it is from the reflection off the mirror of Newtonian Telescope that we can view the stars.

As with so many of these good intentions the ongoing production was always a big challenge each month. The editor, Gordon Stott, for many years, in order to fill the capacity of the edition sometimes republished some material from other astronomical magazines. In the early days the duplication of the magazines was done using the wax stencil process. A protracted method which required patience as you typed onto a wax stencil and any error required a repair of the wax stencil with a solvent and then retypes over the error. Following the completion of the stencil the production was again tedious as you hand wound the drum on which the stencil had been attached, and then left an ink image on the paper. Fortunately the technology advance quickly and the photo static duplicator quickly displaced the Fordigraph Ink Stencil system.

To day the "Reflections" is well done and with the look of a professional production does the club proud with its presentation and content.

CONCLUSION

Our club now in its 26th year has had a long and proud chronicle of involvement in the world of the amateur astronomy. The recounting of events and personalities in these few pages covers many of the interesting episodes and involvement of our club. The enthusiasm of our club members and their voluntary efforts is reflected in the reputation that our club enjoys. . This dissertation does not profess to be exhaustive in all details, sufficient to say that our club has shown initiative and leadership in facets of the hobby and dedicated amateur astronomy as well as enjoying a close working relationship with academia and those that study the revelations of the cosmos.

This history is not the full and detailed but rather the recalling of memories of two foundation members that have seen the club evolve from a group of keen amateurs not knowing how far or how long the enthusiasm would last to a vibrant club that is continuing the good works.

In the last 25 years the success of the club has been the result of many volunteers working and contributing their time and talents. It is unfortunate that time and space has not allowed me to identify all who have contributed; for the list would be long. Perhaps this could be a task for another edition of the narrative of our club. There are many members who have contributed and perhaps another edition of our history will identify in all detail the work by so many over the last quarter of a century

I have been privileged to be able to render this account of the last 25 years. There are many more items of interest that should be recorded and this could be one of the clubs next challenges.

Till our next astronomical occasion, keep the vision.

John K Curdie OAM ,(past president of the NDSAA and NSAS)
