

ASSA SYMPOSIUM 1999

The national Symposium of the ASSA will be held in Cape Town on 29-30 March 1999.

The scientific programme will be organized by Drs Tom Lloyd Evans and Ian Glass of SAAO. Members are encouraged to contribute and to send details of their proposed talks or poster papers to one of the above as soon as possible. Practical arrangements, such as finances, will be organized by Mr Chris de Coning.

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MNASSA SIZE ADJUSTMENT

Subscribers will note a small change to the size of *MNASSA* from this issue. The slight size reduction results in surprising savings that will help to contain costs and delay the evil day when we next have to increase the subscription price.

Many Society members bind *MNASSA* together with the *Astronomical Handbook for Southern Africa* and this too has been similarly reduced in size from the issue for 1999.

(Business Manager)

NEWS NOTES

SALT UPDATE

The Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) Board has set up a SALT Science Working Group (SWG) to advise the Board on the scientific requirements for the telescope and instrumentation. This SWG will have a major input into the instrumentation that is built for SALT as the priorities for instrumentation will depend on the science. Obviously the design of the telescope is pretty much fixed as a southern hemisphere twin of the HET. However, even here there will be opportunity for science driven changes, e.g. increasing angle of tilt from 35° to 37° to access the Small Magellanic Cloud, technique for alignment of primary mirror, design of spherical aberration corrector, improving IR performance, etc.

The SWG will have representatives from each participating country or institution. The provisional SWG membership comprises: David Buckley (SWG Chair), Larry Ramsey (HET Board), Ted Williams (Rutgers University), Richard Griffiths (Carnegie Mellon University), Janusz Kaluzny (Poland), Klaus Fricke (Göttingen University) and Glen Mackie (New Zealand). The South African representative has not been appointed yet.

Each representative has a duty to represent the interests of their country or institution and to report back to their community the decisions of the Board, SWG, and matters of interest and concern.

At the SALT Board meeting in Poland in November 1998, David Buckley was appointed SALT Project Scientist. He will be responsible for organising the SWG and presenting its input to the Board.

FIRST LIGHT WITH A 67-MILLION-PIXEL CAMERA

The newest astronomical instrument at the European Southern Observatory's (ESO) La Silla observatory is a super-camera with no less than sixty-seven million image elements. It represents the outcome of a joint project between the ESO, the Max-Planck-Institut fuer Astronomie (MPI-A) and the Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte (OAC) near Naples (Italy), and was installed at the 2.2-m MPG/ESO telescope in December 1998. Following careful adjustment and testing, it has now produced the first spectacular test images.

With a field size larger than the Full Moon, the new digital Wide Field Imager is able to obtain detailed views of extended celestial objects to very faint magnitudes. It is the first of a new generation of survey facilities at ESO with which a variety of large-scale searches will soon be made over extended regions of the southern sky.

Because of technological limitations, the sizes of detectors most commonly in use in optical astronomical instruments - the "charge-coupled devices (CCD's)" - are currently restricted to about 4000 x 4000 pixels. For the time being, the only possible way towards even larger detector areas is by assembling mosaics of CCD's. ESO, MPI-A and OAC have therefore undertaken a joint project to build a new and large astronomical camera with a mosaic of CCD's. This new Wide Field Imager (WFI) comprises eight CCD's with high sensitivity from the ultraviolet to