

MONTHLY NOTES
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ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Cape of Good Hope

NEWS FROM ASSA

New Members

The following new members were elected at the Council Meeting held on 26th August, 1991:

Mr F.W. Campbell, 12 Banier St, Southfield 7800
Mr A.K. Cumming, Herby Arnot House, PO Box 118, Graaff-Reinet 6280
Mr S.N. De Villiers, 61 Dick Burton Rd, Plumstead 7800
Mr G.J.A. Dumont, 12 Brompton Rd, Kensington B, Randburg 2194
Mr S.W.J. Greeff, 48 Gainsborough St, De La Haye, Bellville 7530
Mr A. Greyvensteyn, PO Box 79403, Senderwood 2145
Mr G.W.M. Haines, PO Box 121, Plumstead 7800
Mr R.W. Jones, 10 Erica Ave, Fish Hoek 7975
Mr S.J. Kleyn, Dunbar, Thistle St, Newlands 7700
Mr J.P. Marais, 14 Rosendal St, Paarl 7646
Mr D. McElvain, PO Box 1786, Mossel Bay 6500
Ms A.E. Rogers, 9 Baronie Ave, Mountain Green Village, Lakeside 7951
Mr D.R. Schiller, PO Box 12497, Benoryn 1504
Mr A. Schultz, PO Box 540, Port Elizabeth 6000
Mr I.D. Stalker-Millar, PO Box 5196, Delmenville, Germiston 1403
Mr G. Stirling, c/o B.P.C., PO Bos 48, Gaborones, Botswana
Mr C.W.F. Theys, 4015 Vansfield Flats, Loftheim Str, Empangeni 3880
Mr C.J. Volschenk, 6 Dirkwood Dr, Ashton Manor, Kempton Park 1619

NEWS NOTES

Death of Prof Chris Engelbrecht

Prof Chris Engelbrecht, one of South Africa's most eminent physicists and Dean of the Faculty of Science at Stellenbosch, has died at the age of 55 after a long illness. He was the author of a large number of publications in theoretical physics and he attended many conferences, delivering papers at most of them. In 1978 he was awarded the Havenga prize for physics by the Academie vir Wetenskap en Kuns.

Prof Engelbrecht was a good friend of astronomy in South Africa and was a member of the Advisory Committee of the South African Astronomical Observatory, in which he took a keen interest, from its foundation in 1971. He encouraged the pursuit of theoretical astrophysics in the South African physics community.

He was also a founder member of Stellenbosch's Discussion Group '85 which was actively involved in promoting political change in South Africa.

Prof Engelbrecht is survived by his wife and four children.

SAAO Directorship

The Foundation for Research Development, which succeeded the CSIR as the umbrella body of the SAAO, HartRAO and the National Accelerator Centre (NAC), has announced the formation of a search committee to aid in the selection of a new director for the first named. It will consist of Prof Brian Warner, University of Cape Town, Dr Russell Cannon, Director of the Anglo-Australian Observatory and Prof Friedel Sellschop, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research of the University of the Witwatersrand.

21st General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union



South Africa was well represented at the 21st General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union which took place from 22 July to 1 August in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The delegates were E. Baart (Rhodes), L.A. Balona (SAAO), D. Buckley (SAAO), A.P. Fairall (UCT), M.W. Feast (SAAO), I.S. Glass (SAAO), G. Nicolson (HartRAO) and B. Woermann (Rhodes).

About 1300 astronomers in total attended. It was the first time the General Assembly took place in a Latin-American country. There were a great many problems in the organising of the meeting due to the high inflation rate experienced in Argentina over the last few years, but fortunately the currency was stable for the period of the assembly itself. The meetings took place in the Centro-Cultural and Teatro San Martin, located in the central part of Buenos Aires, the core of a conurbation of around 11 million inhabitants. At lunch and dinner time the participants could disappear into the hundreds of restaurants in the neighbourhood without creating any overload!

The opening ceremony was addressed by R. Méndez and F.R. Colomb (of the Local and National Organising Committees), by E. Bajaja (President of the Argentinian Astronomical Association) and by various government officials. The main speech was made by the President of Argentina, Carlos Menem, who was welcomed by the President of the IAU, Y. Kozai of Japan. In the evening, a fine reception was given in the ballroom of a local hotel.

There were many specialized meetings going on at the same time, so that it was impossible for any one person to attend all of them, even sometimes those within one particular speciality. On three evenings there were popular presentations designed to be of universal appeal. The most unusual and interesting of these was given by Sjur Refsdal and Jean Surdej on 'Gravitational Lensing', the effect by which intervening galaxies can create one or more images of distant quasi-stellar sources, a theoretical prediction which has been verified observationally in the last few years. Another was a lecture by H. Arp in which he reiterated his unorthodox viewpoint that the redshift-distance relationship was all wrong. This was the subject of much discussion