

## More small astronomical observatories

by Patrick Moore (Ed.)

Springer-Verlag, 2002 (Patrick Moore's *Practical Astronomy* series). ISBN 1-85233-572-6. Pp viii + 241, £24.00 (pbk).

After a six-year gap Springer has persuaded 18 more amateur astronomers to write about their homebuilt observatories. In reality only 16 are new – two feature in the first book – one is essentially an identical rebuild on a new site and the other describes upgraded instrumentation in an existing observatory. The instrumentation within the various observatories is mainly split between SCTs (mostly Meade LX200s) and Newtonians both within the same 25–40cm aperture range.

The contributors hail from Greece, Canada and Norway (1 each), USA (4) and the remainder from the UK. Some 9 rotating domes are described, one hinge-aside-roof, four run-off-roofs, two removable sheds and two with no observatory at all! Of the latter one is admittedly a solar observatory (projecting sunlight indoors through a home-made H $\alpha$  filter) but the other describes observing from the patio. This seems to be stretching the book's title to the limit but the description of techniques including use of modern digital cameras is valuable.

The writing styles are obviously varied – the humour within chapters by Martin Moberley and Bob Turner is welcomed. A salutary lesson is learnt from one contributor who contacted his local authority regarding planning permission (not normally required if of modest volume and height). However this attracted the attention of the Building Control Officer who, at the final inspection, brought along the Rating Officer who

promptly slapped rates on the observatory as added value to the property!

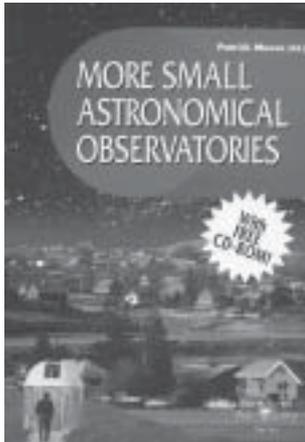
Two observatories caught my eye for technical innovation – a hinge-aside-roof within a garage yards from the North Sea in Norway and Gordon Rogers' rooftop Ash dome adjacent to a thatched roof. The latter obviously works to perfection – see his outstanding web images on the BAA Picture of the Week archive. Aesthetics (rarely applicable to observatory design) are reserved for Bill Arnett's charming cedarwood Japanese pavilion with slide-aside roof, complete with hydraulically raised pier.

There appear to be few typos but those that occur are repetitive within the chapter as if proof reading and editorial control was minimal. Observatories are well illustrated with progress photos (Springer have markedly improved the quality of their monochrome photos of late). A few sketches, supplanting verbose text, would have improved clarity.

As a bonus the book contains a CD-ROM of the first edition (*Small Astronomical Observatories*, ISBN 3-540-19913-6, now out of print) complete with Acrobat Reader software for any PC (Win 3.1 upwards) – a total of 40 observatories and a bargain at the price. This book is essential reading for observatory builders – buy it.

### Maurice Gavin

*Maurice Gavin firmly believes that an observatory greatly improves the quality of observation through convenience and comfort. His Presidential Address in 1996 October was on this topic.*



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