



### Hubble: imaging space and time

by **David DeVorkin & Robert W. Smith**

**National Geographic Books, 2008. ISBN 978-1426-20322-0. Pp 224 (large format), £30.00 (hbk).**

This is not simply a book of glorious images taken by the most famous telescope of all time. It is much more than that. Although there may be less than fifty full pages of text they are beautifully and concisely written. Furthermore, there are detailed captions giving more information about many of the images presented.

Although the book is intended for the lay reader a little knowledge of astronomy will help with appreciating some of the text and also in interpreting some of the images. However, members of this Association should have no trouble in this respect.

The authors have both previously written books about the HST and so are well qualified to write this volume. David DeVorkin is the Curator of the History of Astronomy and the Space Sciences at the National Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian Institu-

tion and Robert Smith is Professor of History of the Science, Technology and Society Program at the University of Alberta.

Following a foreword and an introduction there are just six chapters. The introduction lists a number of acronyms used throughout the book which is most useful, although I would have preferred it to be at the rear along with the index. I found chapter 4 to be one of the most informative as the authors go into some detail on just how scientists go about obtaining observing time with the great telescope. They follow the case of Dr Nicholas Scoville into probing star formation in the spiral arms of galaxies. They explain why his team had to convince the Hubble 'Proposal Review Panel' that their proposal was better than most, as only a tiny fraction of the proposals submitted are successful. Once the data has been obtained, they explain how it is necessary to use techniques such as false colour imaging to help them understand it. Finally, it is necessary to have your findings published in a reputable journal or two so that the scientific community can be advised of your results.

Although not all the images are from Hubble – some are from ground based tel-



escopes or even other space telescopes – the vast majority are from the HST. Typographical errors were exceedingly rare and I didn't note any factual errors.

I'm sure all of us will have our favourite image (or images!) but one of mine was that of the supernova remnant Cas A on pages 94/95 – a truly amazing image. A wonderful book well worth studying by everyone.

**Roger Pickard**

*Roger is currently President of the Association and also Director of the Variable Star Section.*

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