



Commander Henry Hatfield

From Dr Jeremy Shears

I was sad to learn of the recent death of Commander Henry Hatfield (obituary: February *Journal*), whom I knew for many years. When I was a schoolboy living in Sevenoaks in the 1970s, he was one of the people who helped me to develop my interest in astronomy, and I have many fond memories of him.

To commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, Sevenoaks School decided to build an observatory. We had already been given a 14-inch Calver mirror and one of the physics masters, Dr Garrood, designed the observatory which a bunch of us helped to build (see photograph – the author is the figure on the left). Cmdr Hatfield, who lived nearby, volunteered to design the telescope and to supervise our group of schoolboys in its construction.

As he himself noted,¹ ‘the requirements were that the mounting should cost nothing, be firm and easy to use, and also schoolboy proof!’ He designed what he termed the ‘Sevenoaks’ mounting, which was a modified English type based on plywood and two car axles. He also built the electric drives and slow motions. In the process, we learnt about Foucault testing of mirrors, silvering of optics and casting lead counterweights.

The telescope was a terrific success both visually and, under Cmdr Hatfield’s tutelage, photographically. We had wonderful views of all the main classes of objects and seldom have I seen better views of Jupiter and Saturn. One of his typical expressions, which used to amuse us, was that he ‘could



drive a coach and horses through the Cassini division’.

Cmdr Hatfield was a regular speaker at the school and he also hosted many visits at his home, Lynch House, to view the Sun with his ‘spectrohelio-grapho-scope’ as he called it, to record solar radio emissions with his array of radio telescopes and, at dusk, to observe the Moon through the reflector in his ‘Beehive’ observatory. These were much bigger draws to me on a cold Saturday afternoon in winter than being out on the rugger field or doing a cross country run in Knole Park!

Jeremy Shears

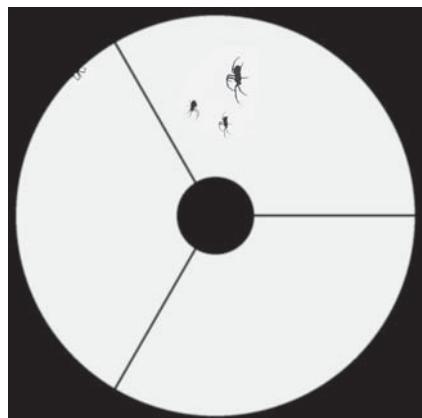
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1 J. Brit. Astron. Assoc., 92, 272 (1982)

Five spiders in a Newtonian

From the Director of the Instruments & Imaging Section

On recently turning my 10-inch With-Browning reflector to the Moon, I discovered that several arachnidae had again taken up residence in the tube. The accompanying photograph, showing them silhouetted



against moonlight, is a composite of several taken with a Canon digital camera. The smallest spider was about 4 feet distant from the largest, and it was not possible to focus on all of them at once. In addition to the three suspended in their webs, another is lurking on the inner surface of the tube at top left.

Such harmless occupancy is improbable in an enclosed SCT, and it is doubtful whether anyone observing with a remotely operated instrument would even notice.

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