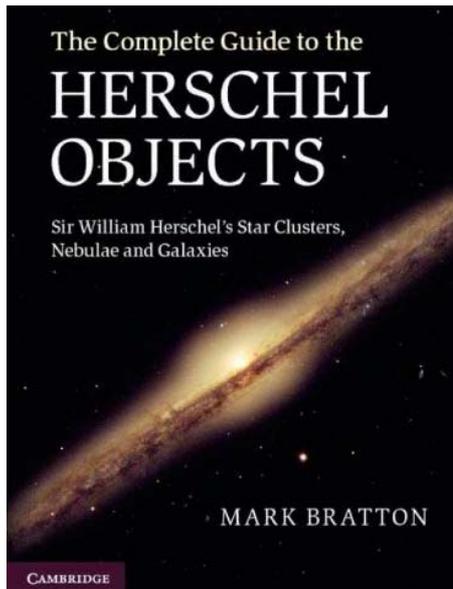




The complete guide to the Herschel Objects: Sir William Herschel's star clusters, nebulae and galaxies

by Mark Bratton

Cambridge University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-521-76892-4. Pp xiii + 584, £45.00 (hbk).



In recent years Deep Sky enthusiasts have seen the publication of many useful guides highlighting and describing the multitude of objects on display to modern visual observers and by extension imagers too. This offering from Cambridge is a most worthy addition to the amateur astronomer's library.

Mark Bratton is a very experienced Canadian amateur who has made a point of observing visually all available entries in the catalogue of some 2,500 objects compiled by the great pioneer of deep sky astronomy, Sir William Herschel. He has done so from a variety of observing sites; predominantly from Quebec and Saskatchewan, but also with brief trips to New Mexico and Chile.

The meat of the book is taken up with information and descriptions of the Herschel objects from his visual perspective, supplemented by images from the Digital Sky Survey (DSS). The Herschel objects are arranged by constellation, and the reader has a good deal of detail of a significant chunk of the New General Catalogue (NGC), compiled by John Dreyer in 1888 but based on the work of the Herschels (William, Caroline and son John).

There are short introductory chapters on the early discoveries of deep sky objects before Herschel set to work, a brief biography of Herschel, his telescope making, and how he began and completed his great surveys aided by his remarkable sister, Caroline. The reader can appreciate the sheer difficulty of these celestial sweeps but also sense the excitement of such pioneering discovery.

Each constellation has the Herschel discoveries within, and there is information on each object's Herschel and modern classifications, position, magnitude, and size. The illustrations are mainly from the DSS supplemented by a few drawings by the author that give a personal touch to the volume. While many of the photographs are not on the same page as the description, this is only a minor inconvenience. Bratton has been very diligent in his research and his experience shows through. As an example, he notes the inaccurate position and labelling of the galaxies NGC 5797 and NGC 5804 in Böotes as plotted in the *Uranometria 2000* first edition.

The ease of spotting interesting looking

quarry for visual scrutiny or imaging is a major plus of the book. While many Herschel discoveries are merely described, there are still so many pictures that most observers will never run out of targets to enjoy. I am sure that this well-produced book will be of immense value to the observer, but it also acts as a fine tribute to the extraordinary Herschel team, the 'Surveyors of the Skies' without equal.

Nick Hewitt

General practitioner Dr Nick Hewitt is a former President of the BAA and a former Director of the Deep Sky Section. He has enjoyed deep sky astronomy for many years.

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