

10th May 1967.

Proceeding of the first National Convention of  
Amateur Astronomers held at Canberra in the  
Australian National University Union Building  
Easter 1967.

The convention opened on Friday night the 24th March 1967 at 6 o'clock at the Australian National University Building and by 8 o'clock about 50 members were present. After registration and an unofficial get-together the assembly retired into the Lecture Hall to hear a very interesting address by Mr. R. Sangster on an automatic grinding and polishing machine, a recently found meteorite and bonded lenses.

After question time and further discussion a film was shown and the meeting then was adjourned, until the next day.

Saturday morning the 25th by 9 o'clock the full assembly of delegates met in the courtyard of the University Union Building for a press photo, taken by Mr. Sangster.

Mr. F. Napier was then asked to open the convention officially and introduce the first speaker.

Mr. Norm Webb of Port Macquarie Astronomers Society presented a paper by Mr. York on relativity. It was a very interesting talk and it was a pity that it had to be curtailed due to time limitation.

Mr. P. Elwell of Pacific Astronomical Society then told of his clubs activities in the field of school education. The programs, which include talks, slides and telescopes, have proved very beneficial and it was interesting to hear of the progress made in this field.

Then the writer talked on the subject of future conventions and the problems which arise with organising and financing such a project.

After teabreak the delegates went to the projection room downstairs to hear a talk by Mr. G. Fielding of Bundaberg, illustrated by slides, on the construction of their 19 ft. observatory. Everyone was most impressed with the fine results they have achieved.

Mr. Archer of Illawarra then delivered the fifth paper on the speed of light and gave an interesting demonstration of the theory with an apparatus built by the club.

The last paper by Mr. Keith Cook of James Cook Astronomers Club was read in his absence by Mr. K. Selby. Mr. Cook outlined his plans for a national journal of Australian Astronomers which received good attention.

In the meantime the official delegates of all the clubs assembled in a separate room to discuss the problem of future conventions. It was decided unanimously that conventions were a worthwhile undertaking and that they should therefore be continued. Three clubs volunteered to be hosts to the next conventions in:

1968 at Port Macquarie	Port Macquarie Astr. Association.
1970 at Ballarat	Ballarat Astronomical Society
1972 at Adelaide	Astr. Society of South Australia

The next point on the agenda was the acceptance of a constitution to serve as a basis for all future conventions. Experience has shown that unless conventions are properly organised and financed they will become a liability to the organising club and this would mark the end. These principles, or rules of the game, should assist the organising club during the preparations and they can be developed further as more conventions are held. After much (often hot) debate a set of principles put forward by the James Cook Astronomers Club was accepted and they will be sent to all amateur astronomers clubs for reference.

After lunch, which was organised by the members individually, we went to Mt. Stromlo to hear a very interesting address, with slides by Dr. Mattewson on the activities of Mt. Stromlo and the important developments in radio astronomy. After this the staff showed us the 26" Yale Columbia telescope, but this part of the visit was disappointing from an amateur astronomers' point of view since we were taken in with all the tourists.

At this point we should reveal that despite repeated efforts, which included a visit to Canberra, numerous phone calls and a personal interview with Professor Eggen in Sydney, we were unable to secure a night visit to Mt. Stromlo. It was only through the co-operation of Dr. Rodgers that the afternoon lecture could be arranged.

On Saturday night we were given a most interesting talk and film by Mr. Don Gray, deputy station master of Tidbinbilla deep space instrument facility, on the functions of the station when it tracks probes like Mariner 2V to Mars, Surveyor to the moon, and other space, shots.

At the following sherry party in his honour, everybody enjoyed the wonderful savouries and excellent wine, served by the always helpful and efficient staff of the Australian National University Union.

Sunday morning at 9 o'clock the caravan assembled in Queanbeyan for the trip to the Hills Cross. The mile long silvery structure presented an imposing sight as it glittered in the moonlight on the dry down plain. Mr. Binani, the Station manager, showed us around and explained all the gadgetry to the inquiring minds. The radio observatory was not yet fully operational, but it was hoped to get it working in the near future.

We left after almost two hours for Tidbinbilla. After a picnic at the Cotter Dam and a pleasant trip through the heavily timbered countryside under ideal weather conditions, we reached the station at 2.30. Fortunately this was the only time in all the years when a 24 hour vigil is maintained, that there was a slack period. Thus we had ample opportunity to see the overwhelming array of electronic equipment which fills every part of the well designed buildings. The hospitality of the staff knew no bounds. We were all over the place and were allowed to see everything. He even operated the big 35' dish for us. Thanks to their efforts they made this visit a memorable event for all of us.

The dinner on Sunday night proved a fitting finale for the convention. The neatly arranged tables presented a festive sight and everybody was in a happy mood. After coffee (a liquor licence could not be obtained for Sunday) we were able to announce to our great satisfaction that the convention broken even at \$268,28, so that no further contributions were needed.

Delegates of the various clubs then expressed their thanks to the organising committee and after further informal discussions the convention was officially closed at 10.30 p.m.

### Conclusion

We may safely say that the convention was a success and that this was due to the pleasant manner and co-operation of every member who attended. It furthermore has achieved the main objectives:

- (a) exchange of information among members;
- (b) determining the times and place of three successive conventions;
- (c) in accepting a set of principles to serve as "Rules of the game" for future conventions;
- (d) in widening our horizons and promoting the cause of amateur astronomy.

From the organising point of view we would like to make following comments.

- (1) It would be helpful if clubs could send in their donations as early as possible after the organising club has sent a budget statement of expected costs. In our case contributions and donations were received 8 months after we sent the first letter and 3 months before the function, so that all preparations had to be made in a hurry.
- (2) We frequently found that delegates who were to keep the members of their clubs posted on the developments of the convention had omitted to do so. There were instances where frustrated members tried to contact the organising committee direct because they had not seen one of the five circulars that were sent to each club.
- (3) Although this is left to the discretion of every club, we feel that the organising committee, which is duly appointed by and responsible to the host club, should at least be made up of the following people:
  - (a) a chairman who shall preside at the meetings of the committee;
  - (b) a secretary-treasurer to keep records of funds and handle the correspondence;
  - (c) a program-convenor who shall be responsible for organising the program, contact lecturers, etc.
  - (d) a secretary to type and duplicate all letters.

Most of the burden of this convention was borne by John McGregor, myself and last but not least my wife Tineke, who handled all the correspondence and kept check of the accounts. This was strenuous at times and other club members then came to the rescue.

- (4) It would be an advantage if people who want to present papers and films would submit to the organising committee several months in advance the contents and exact duration of their presentation. This will enable the program-convenor to compile an interesting set of lectures. If possible copies of the talks could be distributed to the clubs beforehand so that they have ample time to prepare questions.

- (5) We estimate the total amount of work involved at about 600 manhours - this includes everything - writing letters - contacting people, etc. This is equivalent to having 4 people work Saturday morning for one year.
- (6) Lastly we think that Easter may after all be the time when most people have least commitments.

We would like to end this report by thanking all the members once more and the Australian National University Union staff for their efforts in helping to make this convention a success.

for The Organising committee

(sgd) L.G. Kligen.