

BULLETIN



OF THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

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Ian Levstein, Editor

We welcome your comments on the *Bulletin*. Email them to the Editor at bulletin@rasc.ca.

A PDF version of the *Bulletin* is available at: <http://www.rasc.ca/im/bulletin/201101.pdf>

A text-only version of the *Bulletin* is available at: <http://www.rasc.ca/im/bulletin/201101.txt>

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Welcome, Jean Wilson, National Office Administrator!

by **Mary Lou Whitehorne**, RASC President

Please join the Executive Committee in welcoming **Jean Wilson** to our National Office staff. Jean is taking on the role of Office Administrator, starting on January 3. She will be working four days per week. Jean will be responsible for all bookkeeping and administration duties, as well as assisting with membership and publications activities for the Society. Jean has more than fifteen years of finance and administrative experience working for Environment Canada, Canada Benefits Plus, and the Driving School Association. We are happy to have Jean join us and we are looking forward to her contributions to the National Office team and to the Society.

With the Stars - by Helen Sawyer Hogg

by **Eric Briggs**, Toronto Centre

There is already a growing archive of RASC publications dealing with issues of interest to members of the Society, but what about information intended for the public? Between 1951 and 1981 **Helen Sawyer Hogg** wrote a weekly astronomy column for the Saturday edition of the *Toronto Star*, usually titled *With the Stars*. The purpose of the feature may only have been to update readers on the most obvious celestial events, but Dr. Hogg's column was an eclectic blend of backyard observing notes and astronomical news stories, with both local and international angles. Now, for possibly the first time a complete index to the feature has been compiled.

Editor's Note: Dr. Hogg's column was not written on behalf of the RASC. The full story and index can be found [here](#). An Excel file of the index can be found [here](#).

Whitehorne on CBC

RASC President, **Mary Lou Whitehorne**, was interviewed by CBC radio's **Anna Maria Tremonti** on the show "The Current" on December 20. The entire segment, titled [Winter Solstice & the Lunar Eclipse](#) runs 21:59 minutes. Mary Lou is introduced at 04:36 minutes and her interview lasts until 19:24 minutes. Click on the [Listen to Part One](#) link to hear the broadcast.

Updated Vision, Mission, and Values Statements

The Society's Vision, Mission, and Values statements have been slightly modified. See [here](#) for details.

Quick Reference Guides Available

by **James Edgar**, RASC National Secretary

Two new Quick Reference Guides have been developed by RASC President **Mary Lou Whitehorne** and placed on the Web for your use. The [first](#) describes how to develop effective outreach programs; the [second](#) is a guide to writing project proposals for consideration by National Council. Read, distribute, and use them.

Vote for the Top Story of 2010

by **Roland Dechesne**, RASC MAP Committee

The study of our Universe continued at a torrid pace in 2010 with newsworthy stories every week. Now that the dust has settled somewhat, we can collectively look back over the year and decide which stories were merely newsworthy and which ones are fundamentally important to us as Canadian astronomers.

The Membership and Promotion Committee of the RASC is interested in your views and we have set up a short list of some of the biggest science announcements of 2010. You can tell us what you think of the stories on this list by voting via email to [me](#). If your favourite 2010 story is not on our short list, feel free to write it in. The deadline for voting is Monday, January 10, 23:59 PST.

Editor's Note: The full story with a list of stories can be found [here](#).

David Turner and the Resurrected Lunenburg Sky of 2000 Years Ago

by **Randall Rosenfeld**, RASC Archivist

How often do you come across a seasonal story involving crime, the resurrection of a National Historic Site, forensic reconstruction and, of course, astronomy? **Jay Ingram's** recently published book [Daily Planet: The Ultimate Book of Everyday Science](#) (Penguin Canada, 2010), has just such a story, with a RASC connection.

St. John's Anglican Church in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia (built 1754-1892), featured a ceiling fresco of differentiated gold stars on a caerulean backdrop above its chancel, which may have been painted around 1900. Such scenes are not as abundant as one might imagine, although the practice goes back to Byzantine architecture, and the aristocratic decorative tastes of medieval Western Europe. It is now hard to say how many of those now lost stellar scenes were meant to be accurate depictions of the night sky. The St. John's ceiling certainly was, although that was not obvious till RASC member and former Journal editor **Prof. David Turner** of St. Mary's University was consulted by the restoration team.

Restoration team? The church was nearly destroyed by arson in 2001, but thanks to the expert advice of David Turner, and the consummate skill of restoration artist **Julie-Jayne Coolen**, the stellar scene was meticulously restored, and the recreated church can be visited today. David found a pattern in the stars, but it wasn't one visible in recent centuries - the ceiling depicts the stars precessed to around the reputed time of Christ's birth, as seen from Lunenburg! Not a trifling feat for the designer in 1900, before the advent of electronic planetarium programmes. A mystery remains however, namely the identity of

the astronomer who planned the original design.

For the book (featuring pictures of the ceiling, and David), see [here](#). For the original documentary, see [here](#).

► Across the RASC

Eclipse from Victoria

Joe Carr, Victoria Centre, writes: I have created a collection for the lunar eclipse on our Victoria Centre's [photo hosting site](#). We staged the public event despite it being officially cancelled. The clouds gave us about 70% cover, but there were enough sucker holes to keep the crowds (and ourselves) happy until about midnight, when things really closed in. At least we saw the first half of the eclipse.

Eclipse from Saskatoon

Tenho Tuomi, Saskatoon Centre, writes: My preliminary picture of the lunar eclipse is [here](#) taken every 15 minutes through the fog as the Moon traveled from right to left across the umbra.

Eclipse from Edmonton

by **Larry Wood**, Edmonton Centre

Edmonton Centre members opened the TWOSE observatory for the Dec 20/21 lunar eclipse. I set up my 12.5" Newt w/Poncet drive on the walkway near the observatory. Temperature was -19° C with a windchill of -29° so not too nice. I had about 200 people view through my scope -- not a break until about 1:30 when the crowd thinned a bit. Very appreciative crowd I might add.

During the few times I took quick peeks at the Moon during last night's eclipse, some of the things I noted were the bright areas that showed when the Moon was fully eclipsed. The one on the right side below centre (inverted view) was Aristarchus and the double one a bit to the left of, and slightly below centre was, I believe, Menelaus (the brighter one of the pair) and Manilius, about 2 arc-min to Menelaus' right.

Then just to the right of centre was Copernicus -- a beautifully rosy-copper tinted crater that was fully illuminated by the high angle of the Sun but very dim due to the Earthen obstruction. That, plus the coppery tint to the Moon as it neared total eclipse and during the early half of totality, made for a very enjoyable time for me. Not one of the most colourful eclipses I have viewed but very nice.

Keppel Henge Analemma

by **Steve Irvine**, Unattached Member



A two-year project to follow the Sun's position in the sky is nearing completion at [Keppel Henge](#). Keppel Henge is large stone circle built by **Steve Irvine** and **Bill Loney** several years ago near Georgian Bay.

The current project involves a 40-cm ceramic disk set atop a 5-m pole. In the centre of the disk is a 10-cm hole, through which the Sun shines, and makes a bright spot on the ground below. Over the course of a year, on each sunny day at 12.22 p.m. EST the location of the spot was marked with a metal rod. This particular time of day was chosen because it's the average solar transit time for Keppel Henge.

During the summer of 2011 the analemma pattern made by the markers will be cast in concrete, with a colour-coded ceramic mosaic pattern to mark the seasons. The planned structure will be somewhat similar to the [analemmatic sundial mosaic](#).

Keppel Henge is visited by over a thousand people each year. It's hoped that this addition to the site will inform and inspire visitors about astronomy.

A Full and Proper Kit

Rick Saunders, London Centre, writes: Thought I'd share [this](#) with everyone. While sitting about waiting for my hip replacement surgery I put pen to paper as it were.

Editor's Note: the file is almost 10 megs... have patience!

► Bulletin Photo of the Month

Solstice Lunar Eclipse

This excellent photo of the total lunar eclipse on December 21 was taken by **Pete Raine**, London Centre. The photo was taken from his backyard at 3:44:22 am EST on the 21st. It's an 8-second exposure at ISO 100 using a Televue 60is and Canon Rebel XS, mounted on a EQ-6 that was set to the lunar tracking rate. Pete's photo was featured in the *London Free Press*.



Here's a detail of the Moon taken from the same photo.



► The Sky this Month

What's New in the Sky

Members are encouraged to check out the [Northern Skies](#) section of the RASC Web site. Thanks to **Gary Boyle** for keeping us all in the know.

► Dates to Remember

- **2011 January** - nothing reported
- **2011 February** - nothing reported
- **2011 March 26** - National Council meeting (NC111), Toronto
- **2011 April** - [Global Astronomy Month](#)
- **2011 July 1-4** - [Stargazing Manitoulin](#), Gordon's Park Dark-Sky Preserve
- **2011 August 5-8** - [Manitoulin Star Party](#), Gordon's Park Dark-Sky Preserve



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