# ASTRO-CHAT

Newsletter of the Chatham Kent Astronomy Club

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Deadline for
Jan issue is
Dec 13th.

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10. RENEWAL FORM


Upcoming events

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|---|---|---|
| Nov. | 26th. | Halley special on PBS (ch 56) 9-00pm |
| | 27th. | New Moon |
| Dec. | 2nd. | Combined council and regular meeting, 7-30 at Mikes |
| | 8th. | Mars .01 S of Moon. Possible occultation |
| | 12th. | New Moon |
| | 14th. | Geminid meteors |
| | 21st. | Winter solstice, winter begins at 22.08 UT |
| | 22nd. | Ursid meteors, remnants of Comet Tuttle |
| | 27th. | Full Moon |

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December is the month when most of the world should see Comet Halley for the first time, that is if it ever stops raining. We as amateurs are the most visible and accesible part of the astronomical fraternity so we should make it our duty to keep the public well informed with facts and developments in the tail that is Halley.

And to make sure that YOU keep abreast of what's happening, support your local astronomy club by renewing your membership NOW if you have not already done so.

An interesting article in the November issue of Astronomy about light pollution. This problem affects both professional and amateur alike. In this case though, we have the advantage of being able to easily move to a better location, ever try and move a 200 incher. The effects of pollution were made evident to me when I observed Comet Halley on the evening of the 17th. I was able to observe it with a borrowed pair of 7X35 binoculars under dark country skies. Later on, at home in Chatham, I viewed it through my 7X50's and found that the comet appeared only just as bright, if not slightly fainter, despite the larger aperture. Maybe someone out there could start a campaign to get the city fathers to reduce their wasted lighting.

Our public comet watch on Nov 13th had to be cancelled due to, what else, cloudy conditions. It has now been re-scheduled in a different way. Starting the week of Dec 2nd, the first clear night is the one we will hold it on. A large turnout is expected so we need all the help we can get.

You can contact myself at (354-0601), Mike Flegel (354-9677) or Jim Lucyk (351-6607) Other observing is as follows; Dec 6 or 7th, Dec 13 or 14th. Both weekends are to be held at Bob's.

Since this is the Dec issue and the possibility of the Jan issue not being mailed before Christmas, then the editor and staff of Astro-Chat wish you and yours a very merry Christmas and a happy and starry new year.

As the man says "keep looking up".

## WHAT WAS THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM?

Robert Cattrysse

After seeing the star in the East,according to St.Matthew,the Wise Men journeyed to Jerusalem.The star went before them and stood over where the young child was in Bethlehem.The Star is now a central image of Christmas. But was it a miracle or a myth?Could it have been a real astronomical event?

Astronomer Dr.Richard Stevenson may have found an answer in some star records made for the Emperors of China 2000 years ago. Scholars think that Christ was born sometime between 8 and 4 BC. Stevenson searched for new stars from about IO BC to IO AD because a star seems to be the most obvious interpretation. In the 5BC period there was found to be an unusual entry. The star object was seen in the second month of the second year of the period and says that it's March to April."It says,rather more,it was visible for more than 70 days,"said Stevenson. Since the Chinese scribes mention no movement Stevenson believes the account refers not to a comet,which moves quite quickly across the sky,but to a nova or exploding star.

A rival theory has it that the Magi were astrologers and that the star was a symbolic coming together of planets. Dr.David Hughes programmed a computer to recreate the night sky as it was 2000 years ago. His theory is that the star was a coming together of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces."When anything happens in here,when any planet stopped to move around,the astrologers in those days would ultimately connect to this movement with events that were occurring in Palestine." said Hughes. Jupiter and Saturn move strangely in the night sky due to what's known as planetary retrogression. Just once every 805 years this causes a triple conjunction in Pisces. This happened in 7BC. In astrology Saturn is the planet of the God and Jupiter the New Mesiah. Their coming together indicates that the rule of that land is being transferred from the God to the New Mesiah. The computer showed that the first conjunction occurred on May 29,the second on September 29,and the third on December 4.

There's no astronomical importance for such a celestial lineup but it may have been of great significance to the astrologers in those days. The favourite theory is that the Star of Bethlehem was a supernova.A star may explode with such a force that it outshines all the other stars in the sky. As its furies fade a supernova may become a pulsar,a tiny star emitting immensely powerful radio waves. A pulsar named PSR I9I3 I6B was discovered which seems to fit the specifications of the Star of Bethlehem.

