



An Amateur Astronomer's Life: Seven Decades Of Enthusiasm For The Heavens

By Mr Geoffrey James Kirby

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Geoff Kirby's passion for astronomy started in 1943 when, as a small child living in bomb shattered London, he watched Nazi 'Doodlebug' missiles flying to deliver death and destruction against the backdrop of the night sky in blacked out London. The following seven decades of enthusiasm for the heavens have been captured in this book of six hundred generously illustrated pages. He shares with aspiring, as well as experienced observers of the universe, advice on choosing binoculars and telescopes as well as observing the Moon, Sun, planets, stars and artificial satellites. Geoff has built several telescopes, observatories and camera guiding systems. The emphasis has always been on producing well-performing equipment at low cost using mainly second-hand materials. This has enabled him to study the heavens with substantial equipment on a low budget. He describes his astronomically-themed travels around observatories in the USA and the Canary Islands. This included observing through the huge 660 mm aperture refractor in Washington DC with which the moons of Mars were discovered by Asaph Hall in 1877. Over forty astronomically themed projects are described which can be pursued either individually or by groups of astronomy club members. Many of these projects require nothing more than the unaided eye or binoculars and are suitable for inspiring both children and adults into looking up and enjoying the heavens. The dark hemisphere of Britain's most famous amateur astronomer, Sir Patrick Moore is illuminated. Racist, misogynist, hater of Germans and fantasist about a 'dead' fiancée as well as some of his wartime exploits, Patrick also had a generous hemisphere which left him in old age with insufficient savings to pay for his care until Brian May stepped in. In the last chapters of this entertaining and inspiring book Geoff describes his investigations of astrology and UFOs. There are 450 easy to follow references to guide readers towards other sources of information and inspiration.

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