



Newsletter #12

September 2011

Welcome to the twelfth edition of the Atik newsletter. Lots has been happening at Atik, with a new member of staff joining the company, the transfer of our product shipping department to our UK production centre, and developments on several new products including the testing of our new prime focus camera.

With the evenings drawing in, now is the time to think about equipment requirements for the months ahead if you have not done so already. For those who don't already know, the long-anticipated Atik off-axis guider is now in full production and shipping. This has received very positive reviews, confirming that it was worth the wait!

Our Facebook page has been completely renewed and is currently awaiting your "Like"! We'll be publishing pictures, info and tips regularly, so do visit us at <http://www.facebook.com/atikcameras>.



It's also worth mentioning that Atik Cameras now has a YouTube channel: check out <http://www.youtube.com/user/AtikCameras> for tutorials and other videos.

ROGER HOLDEN

Roger joined Atik in June to help design our forthcoming new range of cameras. Roger has 30 years of design experience in electronic circuits and software from small to large projects that have included telephone line powered re-diallers about the size of a matchbox to backbone communications computers used along the Trans-Siberian railway in Russia and across mainland China, each being the size of several wardrobes. Atik provides Roger with some new challenges and a very interesting work environment where he is enjoying contributing his skills to Atik's future products. At home (in Norfolk) Roger enjoys many hobbies including astronomy, industrial archaeology, cooking and countryside pursuits.



PRIME FOCUS IMAGING

VINCE BYGRAVE

As keen followers of Atik may know, we have been developing a hyperstar-friendly camera over the last few months. Last week we fitted the prototype to a hyperstar lens and a C11 OTA. The whole assembly is now heading off to our observatory for testing under a nice dark sky, so look out for the first test images soon! (The final camera will be anodized, before anyone asks 😊) We're quite excited about this one!



A LEGENDARY SENSOR

PEDRO MOTA

A few days ago I was looking at some old pictures and found this "once in a life time" picture. It was back in 2005, more exactly on 3 October, in a village in northern Portugal, and a "small" Moon was about to pass between us and the Sun. That particular type of eclipse is called an annular: not as spectacular as a total eclipse but still a very nice event.



We had prepared quite an expedition to be in the right place at the right time (one of the most important pieces of hardware is that cardboard box surrounding the laptop, for sure) but looking at this picture now in 2011 I see something quite striking: six years ago we were using one amazing CCD sensor that we still use today. If you take a close look at the telescope you will probably be able to identify one of our "old" camera models: in fact it's the once very popular Atik 16HR. What a camera - at that time one of the best and most affordable cameras ever using this amazing sensor for astronomy. Some of you know now that I am talking about the Sony ICX285. Most of us got very surprised when we saw this sensor attached to a 16-bit low noise ADC, and in fact the noise was kept at such a low level that astronomers were tempted not to calibrate the raw images. I remember a friend who used one always saying "I know all my hot pixels by name"!

Returning to those days is a great memory for me. If someone at that time had said to me "you will have three or more generations of cameras using this sensor" I would probably not have believed them. But it is true, there have been three generations now, starting with that famous 16HR - still using USB version 1.1, with a relatively small delta T and with its peculiar shape - which proved to be one of the most reliable

products, able to survive falls even from more than one metre. I'm very proud to say that we still have a considerable number of them working hard, and the only reason we don't have more is because most of our customers decided to upgrade (at a very low cost) to our second generation of camera using the same sensor. This was the just as famous 314L, which has a faster download, since it is based on USB 2, together with a new cooling system and round shape. With such success, and wanting to make state-of-the-art products available to our customers, we decided to go even further in the cooling system. In most telescopes it is now possible to go 30 degrees below ambient temperature, and regulate this temperature in order to have the possibility of using older darks and bias frames to calibrate our finest images, using the third generation of camera to use this legendary sensor: the 314L+ model.

As a user of one of these sensors for a long time now I want to pay tribute to Sony for the CCD. For the final product I must thank the Atik team: as astronomers themselves, their work is dedicated to making the pursuit of astronomical imaging more enjoyable for all. Our thanks, once again, to our customers, without whom none of these products would be possible.

SOUTH WEST ASTRONOMY FAIR

STEVE CHAMBERS

Atik was invited by First Light Optics to join them at this year's South West Astronomy Fair (SWAF) on 6 August. This is an annual event held at the historic Normal Lockyer Observatory on the south coast of Devon in the UK. August is typically a month where holidays are taken and, as it turned out, I was on holiday with my family not too far away, so my wife Tracey and children Fay and Eric came too.

To be honest the SWAF had not really been on our radar in previous years and I turned up with no greater expectation than finding a few dozen astronomers gathered in a tent. Well, I have to say the SWAF rather exceeded this: the local astronomy society put on a very impressive event, with a large area given over to members displaying their imaging equipment and the pictures they had taken, and there were talks and planetarium shows throughout the day. Sadly I didn't get to see these but the family did enjoy Chris Larssons' planetarium presentation "A Guide to the Stars". Further fun for the kids (and adults!) was provided by students from the Institute of Physics who literally turned visitors into rocket scientists. Probably my favourite part was visiting the historic telescopes on the site and talking with the members about them.

I should also mention that we had a lot of interest in the cameras on our stand and also in a selection of the Atik 2010/2011 imaging competition pictures that we had brought with us. All in all it was a top day out. Next year is the observatory's centenary, and the 2012 SWAF will be held on 11 August. My expectations will be higher next year but I rather suspect that they will be exceeded again.

IN CLOSING...

Back in the August edition of The Sky at Night magazine, Matt Beavers from Hereford won the "Hotshots photo of the month" with this excellent narrowband image of the Rosette Nebula which was taken using an Atik 16HR camera and a 72mm Megrez refractor.

Well done Matt: excellent work 🤖



I hope you have enjoyed this edition of the newsletter. If you have any comments, or if you would like to be added to the distribution list, please send me an email.

With best regards from all of us at Atik!

Jonathan (jonathan@atik-cameras.com)