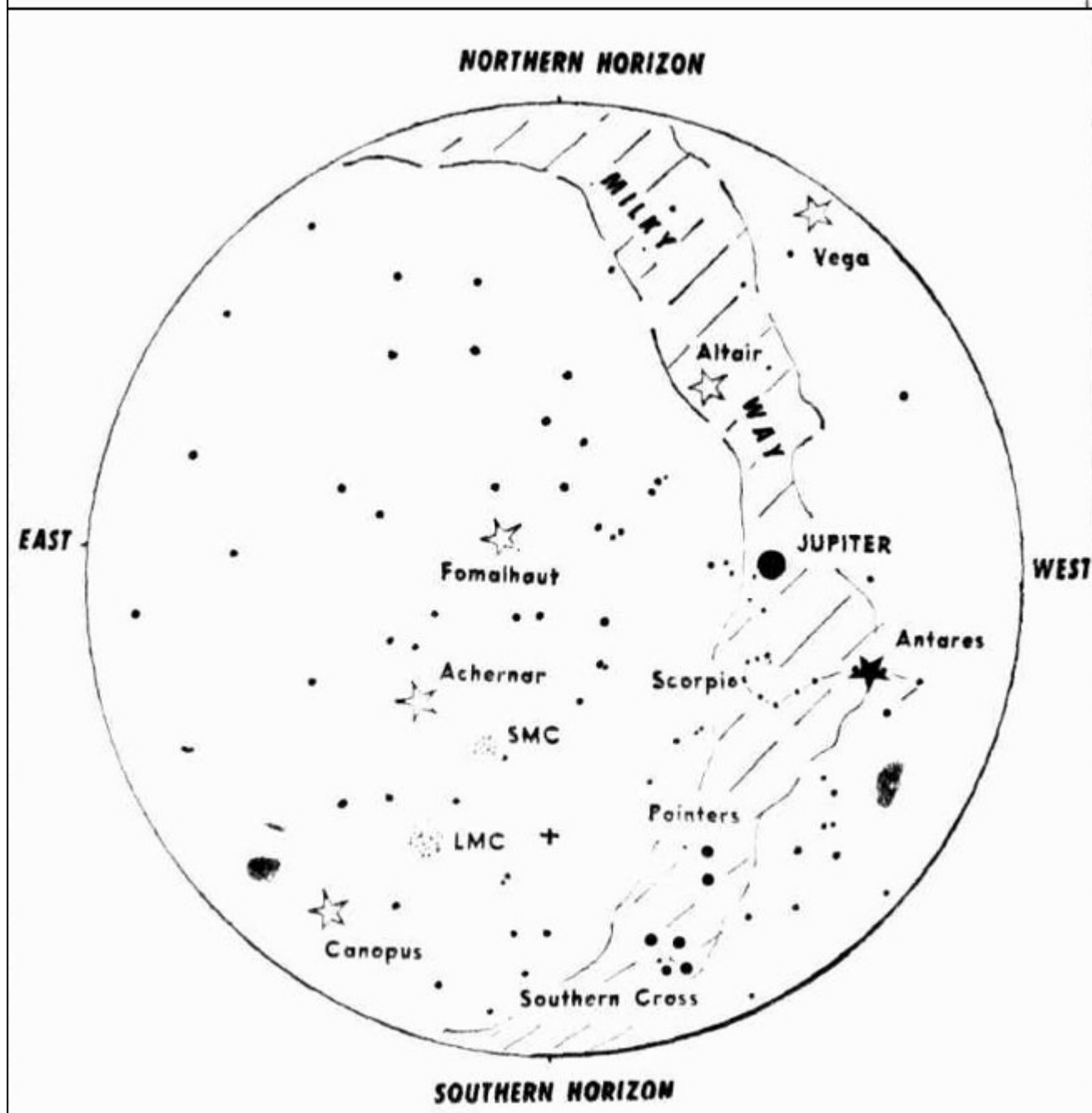


# The October sky



**T**HE map for this month shows the sky as seen at about 8.30pm on October 15.

8.30pm on October 15. A line of bright stars wavers across the sky, from Canopus in the

from Canopus in the south to Vega in the north.

This time last year the planet Mars was between Fomulhaut and Altair, but now it is below the horizon in the west, too near the Sun for observation. Jupiter, however, is easily spotted, midway between Antares and Altair, though by the end of the year it, too, will be disappearing in the west.

Mercury is too near the Sun to be observed this month, but two other planets, not shown on the map, are to be seen by night-owls or early risers. Of these, the most conspicuous is Venus, a brilliant morning star slightly north of east, well-situated to produce its annual crop of unidentified-flying - object sightings.

Few people seem to know that at its brightest, Venus can easily be seen in the daytime sky, and keen observers, knowing its approximate position, can quickly spot it as a bright white speck in the blue sky.

Saturn, the ringed planet, rises before midnight in the constellation Taurus. The unique rings, composed of billions of separate solid fragments in orbit about the planet, have a constantly changing aspect. Their

changing aspect. Their plane is so thin — only a few kilometres—that when they are edge-on to Earth

they become invisible. This last happened in 1966, but at present the rings are at nearly their widest opening, making this an excellent year to view Saturn.

In the south, the Magellanic Clouds and the Southern Cross and its Pointers continue their slow circling around the  $\chi$  which marks the South Celestial Pole, the invisible points around which all the stars seem to rotate.

The map shows the sky correctly when held above the head with the points of the rim racing the appropriate points on the horizon.