

Federation of Astronomical Societies

Editor: Michael Bryce



Newsletter

No 147: December 2025

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The Newsletter for Members of FAS Affiliated Astronomical Societies

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This Image: M33 in Triangulum. Taken on 23 September 2025 at 03:05 UT. 25cm f6.3 Newtonian; SkyWatcher EQ350 Pro, ASI533MC with Antlia TriBand filter, Guide:- William Optics 61mmGuideStar with ASI 178MM camera. AsAir Pro guiding and image acquisition, Pegasus V3 hardware control. 128 x 60s exposures, (+flats; darks and bias) processed in APP and PS (with StarXterminator and Noise Xterminator RcAstro)

*Bob Stuart, Rhayader, Powys
Mid Wales Astronomical Society*

President

Clare Lauwerys

president@fedastro.org.uk

Treasurer

Pat McEvoy
77 Binstead Road
Portsmouth
PO2 7PJ

treasurer@fedastro.org.uk
07729 696832

Secretary

John Stapleton

secretary@fedastro.org.uk

Editor

Michael Bryce
Carolian AS & Bromsgrove AS
49 Cortland Way
Stourport-on-Severn
Worcestershire
DY13 8NZ

newsletter@fedastro.org.uk
07821 896304

President's Spot:

Clare Lauwerys



Regular readers (hello again) will be aware of how sometime my President's Spots weave from topic to topic in what seems like a haphazard way and yet somehow join up by the time I get to the end. Whether this edition does the same, I really don't know yet. I just sit down and write, normally because our newsletter editor has reminded me that I need to do so.

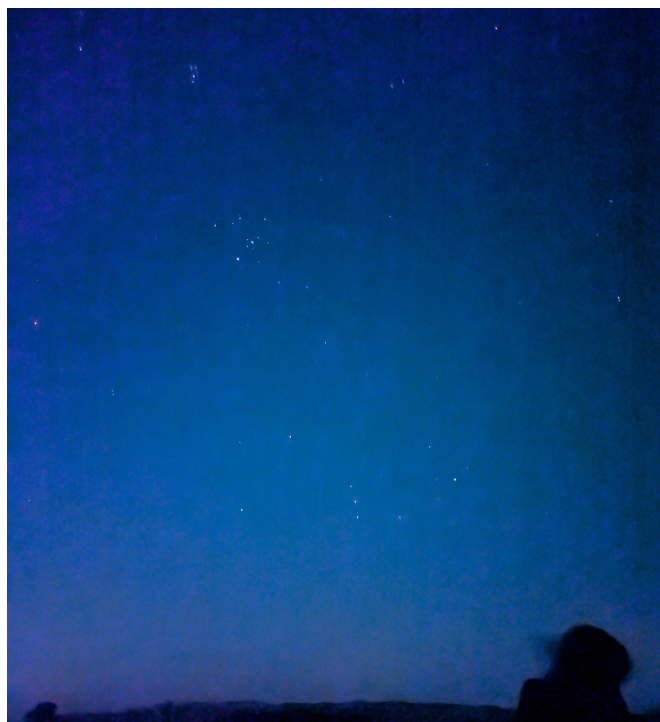
I'll begin by welcoming the newest members of the FAS. We've had a number groups join us since I last wrote. Some are brand new members and others are returners. It has meant the broker for the FAS PLI policy has needed to update the insurance documents a lot – I think the record was four times in three weeks – but neither he nor I are complaining. It's really great that new societies are starting up as there were a few that closed due to falling numbers as a result of many factors. In some cases, there was no-one willing to take on the responsibility of running a group, which I think is a such a great shame.

Whether you're a new or an existing group, please make sure to forward this newsletter to your members; it's not just for societies' committees! You never know but your members might find something in one of the FAS newsletters that prompts them to do something new or to get more involved with your group and help it flourish.

Speaking of people who really get involved leads me nicely to the winner of the inaugural Graham Bryant Memorial Award. If you were at the AGM you will have heard me announce that the winner is Allan McCarthy from Bristol Astronomical Society. Allan has been a member of Bristol AS for 20 years and been their Outreach Coordinator for 15 years. Stephen Price, who nominated him, wrote in the summary "He has great enthusiasm and passion for leading astronomical outreach in the Bristol area. This has resulted in many young people growing their interest in astronomy, joining the Society, and some choosing to pursue a professional career in astronomy." You can find out more about Allan's incredible contributions to astronomy on page 3.

Well those last three paragraphs had a nice link but we're going to take a bit of a leap now!

If you are part of your club's outreach team, when's the last time you went to a stargazing event just as a participant? It has been a while for me but on a recent holiday I did just that. It was very strange for several reasons. One being the obvious of not having to do all the organisational things I normally do. Secondly, it was not having to put on multiple layers to stay warm - it was still 28°C as we sat under the desert sky on beanbags. And of course, everything was in the "wrong position" which made me remember what it's like for a complete beginner coming along to stargazing event.



The Constellations of Orion and Taurus as seen from Dubai, UAE.



And Finally: I present the astronomy themed cocktail I had at one of beach club's I visited. It was called "Voyage Lunaire" and consisted of gin, lemon sorbet, pineapple and almond soda. I have no idea of the proportions so that might lead to some exciting experiments over the Christmas period. If you have a favourite astronomy themed cocktail, do let me know so I can produce the FAS Cocktail book. Well we have to have something to do when it's cloudy!

Help Required

If you have a lot of back issues of the FAS newsletter, would you have a look to see if you have any of the following which are missing from the archives.

- 108
- 58
- 43
- 20

If you do, please send me copy to go on the website.

Clare



Graham Bryant Memorial Award

Winner 2025

Allan McCarthy

Allan McCarthy has been a member of Bristol AS for 20 years and been their Outreach Coordinator for 15 years. He has great enthusiasm and passion for leading astronomical outreach in the Bristol area. This has resulted in many young people growing their interest in astronomy, joining the Society, and some choosing to pursue a professional career in astronomy.

Allan leads in organising and managing outreach activities for the Society with local schools, colleges, Scouts and Guides groups, universities and local societies. He has identified popular locations and events to maximise public attendance and interest in astronomy. These events have included solar observing and star gazing, and have resulted in much local interest in astronomy with many people wishing to get involved and start their astronomy 'journey'.

Allan often personally leads our outreach activities and has shown particular dedication with his time and attention in helping younger students in local schools. He gives astronomy related talks, leads observing sessions with Society telescopes and has developed interactive astronomical 'games' to help their understanding. During a recent outreach visit to a school in Somerset, which had many classes, Allan spent the entire academic day leading the astronomy activities with individual classes.

Over the last year, Allan has also developed links with the Astronomy and Astrophysics department at the University of Bristol and facilitated visits from undergraduate Physics students to our observatory in Failand. This has helped students learn about the practical aspects of observing, which has complemented their academic astronomical studies.

As part of his outreach work, Allan has personally developed a number of innovative pieces of equipment to make astronomy fun for younger persons and teach them important lessons about the solar system and observing. These have included: the 'Place the Planets' game, a solar observing box, binocular observing mirrors for star gazing, and a spectroscope for Fraunhofer lines.

In addition, Allan has led on developing, planning, implementing and delivering interactive talks for our Young Persons Astronomy Course (YPAC) for children aged around 8 to 12, who attend the course with their parents or guardians. The course has been very popular and are conducted every autumn over a two-month period, including putting their astronomy lessons into practice at our observatory.

As an astronomical society, we have received numerous messages from the public appreciating the extent and quality of Allan's astronomy outreach work, together with his passion for astronomy and effective communication with people of all ages.



Image Above: Graham G. Bryant, FRAS, 1957-2022

Amateur astronomer, FAS Vice-President, Hampshire Astronomical Group President, a highly-respected and genuine good egg and retired nurse, Graham George Bryant will be fondly remembered by all who knew him.

Dr Paul A Daniels, 2022

Photo reproduced by kind permission of
[Steve Hughes Photography](https://www.stevehughesphotography.co.uk/)

Image Right:
Allan leading solar
observing outreach



Image Left: Using
Allan's spectroscope
for observing the
Fraunhofer lines

Article and Images: Bristol Astronomical Society
<https://bristolastrosoc.org.uk>



Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society

Talks available through Zoom for visitors

Astronomy in Flatland - Speaker: Colin Steele

Hybrid Meeting (Zoom) Thursday 11 December from 7:30pm to 10:00pm GMT

"In 1885, Edwin Abbott published a book called 'Flatland' which was about a two-dimensional world. The 'hero' was Mr A Square and other inhabitants included triangles, hexagons etc. Other authors have produced different variations on a two-dimensional universe. Such universes can be extended to include astronomy and this talk considers what astronomy would be like in a 2-dimensional universe. One significant change is that gravity is not inverse-square but is instead simply inversely proportional to distance. The shapes of orbits are different as a result. This talk will consider many aspects of astronomy in a 2-dimensional universe including orbits, seasons, eclipses, meteors, aurora etc. The talk will conclude by considering universes with alternative numbers of dimensions, 4-dimensional, 1-dimensional and 0-dimensional. It can be concluded that, other than the 3-dimensional universe, the two-dimensional is most interesting."

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/cc/msas-zoom-talks-814679>

The Space Elevator: From Science Fiction to Engineering Speaker: Larry Bartoszek

Hybrid Meeting (Zoom) Thursday 15 January from 7:30pm to 10:00pm GMT

A space elevator is a proposed transportation system that uses a long, strong cable or tether extending from Earth's surface into space, reaching a point beyond geostationary orbit. The elevator's counterweight at the top keeps the tether taut, allowing vehicles or climbers to travel along the cable to and from space without the need for rockets. This concept aims to reduce the cost and energy required to launch objects into space, facilitating easier access for satellites, cargo, and even humans. While still theoretical and facing significant engineering challenges, a space elevator could revolutionise space travel and exploration.

Larry Bartoszek has a dual degree in Mechanical Engineering and Physics from the University of Illinois and is an Illinois Licensed Professional Engineer. He is a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the Chicago Society for Space Studies, the National Space Society, and is Vice President of the International Space Elevator Consortium. He is also a Space Ambassador for the NSS. Larry Bartoszek owns Bartoszek Engineering, a consulting firm which specialises in mechanical designs for the nuclear and high energy physics research community world-wide. His website is www.bartoszekeng.com

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/cc/msas-zoom-talks-814679>

The Pleiades Experience: Cross-cultural Connections in Polynesia, Mesoamerica, and the Andes Speaker Isabel Hawkins

Hybrid Meeting (Zoom) Thursday 29 January from 7:30pm to 10:00pm GMT

The Sun, Moon, planets, and stars have accompanied sky watchers over millennia. The Pleiades star cluster, observable from every continent except Antarctica, is tied to Indigenous worldviews, astronomy, calendaring, traditional weaving, weather prediction, and agriculture. For the original peoples of Polynesia, Mesoamerica, and the Andes, the Pleiades cluster continues to be a source of knowledge, both culturally and scientifically. Due to native language loss and globalization, the knowledge is eroding at a fast pace. I will describe results of a Fulbright U.S. Global Scholar collaborative research project conducted in ancestral lands with Indigenous elders, young adults, and academics, as well as with other knowledge holders in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Guatemala, and Peru.

Results are being shared locally for the benefit of the host communities and future generations.

Isabel Hawkins, Ph.D., is Astronomer & Senior Scientist at the Exploratorium museum of art, science, and human perception in San Francisco, CA. As a Fulbright US Global Scholar in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Guatemala, and Peru (2018-2022), she conducted cross-cultural research on traditional knowledge of the Pleiades star cluster in collaboration with Indigenous knowledge holders. She is a bilingual and bicultural science educator with a doctorate in astrophysics from UCLA. Her passion is to facilitate authentic participation of pluricultural communities, particularly Indigenous and Latinx, in STEM in ways that make visible and animate The Cultural Roots of STEM.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/cc/msas-zoom-talks-814679>

Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society

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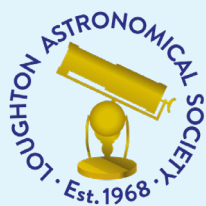
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Loughton Astronomical Society Outreach Event



Members of the LAS were recently invited to attend Parkside School in Chingford to introduce their year 5 pupils to a talk on astronomy. Our format for outreach is a tour of the solar system introducing the scale distances of the planets from the Sun, out to the Kuiper Belt and Oort Cloud. We always finish with some hands-on experiments and solar viewing if clear, with a fall-back to looking at different types of telescopes if cloudy.

The LAS were recently gifted a Dwarf3 imaging telescope by DwarfLabs in recognition of their extensive outreach programme, a valuable addition showing how astronomy is changing in a modern world.

Loughton Astronomical Society

Loughton Astronomical Society Programme of lectures and public observing

04 December 2025

Speaker: Richard Deighton
Apollo 8

12 December 2025

AstroKyds Junior Section
AstroKyds is the Junior section of the LAS.
18:30pm at St Mary's Church Hall

08 January 2026

Speakers: Malcolm Zack and Jonathan Daniels
Winter Skies - A view of what can be seen in the night sky with binoculars and telescopes

09 January

AstroKyds Junior Section
AstroKyds is the Junior section of the LAS.
18:30pm at St Mary's Church Hall

15 January

LAS Members leading Public Observing
Join LAS looking at the night sky through telescopes and binoculars. Scope doctor: bring your own scope to get the best out of it.
Alternative programme if cloudy.

18 January

LAS Members leading family Public Observing
18:30 - 20:30

Join LAS members in this weekend event looking at the night sky through binoculars and telescopes. Scope Doctor: bring your scope to get the best out of it.
Alternative programme if cloudy.

22 January

Speaker: Professor Colin Steele
Astronomy in Flatland
Speaker website:

<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/persons/colin.steele>

29 January

Speaker: Richard Mays
Imaging Nebulae

LAS meetings are held on a Thursday in the Scout Hall, Theydon Bois, Epping. CM16 7JY starting at 20:00

Society website:

<https://las-astro.org.uk/index.html>



A Star (Party) is born!

Owen Gwynne Mid Cheshire Astro Group

It's always good to get away for a weekend (or longer) for a Star Party, and each has its own features; whether meeting in a village hall, a farmer's barn or a series of gazebos in a field, they offer a space under dark skies, where amateurs in their tents and campervans can come together to share their love of astronomy, usually with added value from guest speakers – often professional or academic astronomers who can give us updates on latest research in the field.

My own first was at Trefach in Pembrokeshire in 2005 – with the family in a very soggy tent. As I recall, we arrived to a sprinkling of stars on the Friday evening, went in for the official welcome, and came out to rain that lasted the rest of the weekend. After a gap of a few years while children went off to college, we had a run of 5 years attending the Peak Star Party near Buxton, from 2010 to 2024, and more recently we've been regular attenders of either the Spring or Autumn AstroCamp near Crickhowell in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. It has to be said, that given the UK's weather, there is always the risk of rain and cloud; but despite that, I've only been to two Star Parties that were completely rained out.

Sadly, the first two of those Star Parties no longer run, but as the old makes way for the new it's a pleasure to report from the

second iteration of the Cerne Abbas Star Party. Held below the famous Cerne Abbas Giant in Dorset, an almost unique feature of this Star Party is that it meets in the Tap Room of the Cerne Abbas Brewery – offering a range that includes their own local brews. Catering is provided by a local smokehouse and grill. But of course, campers can self-cater.

For the 2025 Cerne Abbas event, the first night was the highlight as far as observation goes, with an (admittedly unexpected) almost perfect evening of clear skies until midnight, and a second clearing between 1 and 3am for the most enthusiastic. We were blessed to have great views of Comet A6 Lemmon – low to the horizon but easily visible in binoculars.

The rest of the weekend was notable for the rain, but the talks and quiz were good, and of course the company was the best part.

Many thanks to the organiser Kevin Quinn, and it's a pleasure to report that any proceeds from the event are distributed to local charities.

Owen Gwynn

Mid Cheshire Astro Group

<https://www.midcheshireastro.co.uk>



Image Left: Cerne Abbas Star Party Venue Location. The Tap Room of the Cerne Abbas Brewery.

Image Right: Comet Lemmon



Image Left: Host and organiser Kevin Quinn, introducing speaker Geoff Kirby





The Society for the History of Astronomy 2024 -2025 Annual General Meeting & Autumn Conference

Saturday 8 November 2025, Birmingham & Midland Institute
Report by Gerard Gilligan: SHA Publicity Officer



Image Left: Delegates, members and guests at the 2024-25 SHA AGM Conference Annual General Meeting 2024-25

Image Credit: Mike Frost

Once again, within the walls of the historic Birmingham & Midland Institute, members and guests of the Society for the History of Astronomy assembled for their 2024-25 annual general meeting (AGM). Once the essential administration and yearly business of the society was completed, the SHA's autumn conference followed, comprising this year of some outstanding presentations given by leading historians and curators of astronomical history.

Annual General Meeting 2024-25

The whole day was presided over by the society chair, Ms Carolyn Kennett, who was assisted by the society General Secretary, Mike Leggett. Carolyn welcomed everyone, and began proceedings by opening the AGM, with acceptance of last year's minutes, then gave an overview of the society events, meetings, publications and administration for the past 12 months. Geoff King, the society treasurer, gave a short update on the financial standing of the society. He reported that as a non-profit organization the society has, happily, made that a small surplus, despite continued increased costs for running and staging events during the year. It was reported that the increase in society membership subscriptions agreed last year was the largest contributor to the improved results. Paying membership remained steady, at 247 even with an increase in membership fees. The accounts and officer's reports for the year were then voted on and accepted by those

members present. The election of SHA Council officers for 2025-26 followed, and then the presentation of awards for 2025.

The Peter Hingley Award was presented to Geoff King who, after ten years of outstanding service is stepping down from the SHA treasurer post where he has made a significant contribution to the financial management of the society, and its administration during some changing times, i.e. the Covid-19 pandemic. Geoff remains a member of Council as assistant treasurer, to the newly elected treasurer for 2025-26 Bill Barton.



Image Above: Geoff King is presented with the Peter Hingley award by SHA Chair Ms Carolyn Kennett

Image Credit: Mike Frost

The Roger Jones Award was presented to Bill Barton who continues to make extensive and numerous contributions to the SHA survey, both with individuals and associated observatories. The Madeline Cox Award for best contribution to The SHA Bulletin was awarded to Alan Gall for his excellent, informative, thorough and well-crafted article on British Solar Physicist, Thomas Royds (1884 – 1955), Unfortunately, neither Alan Gall nor the Bulletin Editor Kevin Walsh could attend the meeting.



Image Above: Kevin Johnson, SHA Survey Co-Ordinator presents The Roger Jones award to Bill Barton)

Image Credit: Mike Frost



Image Above: The guest speakers for the SHA 2025 AGM Conference. From L to R: Dr Mike Leggett, Jacqueline Mitton, SHA Chair Ms Carolyn Kennett, Dr Sian Prosser and Louise Devoy.

Image Credit: Mike Frost

Carolyn Kennett concluded the main part of the AGM by reading out to the meeting a special email message from the Society's honorary President Dr Allan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford. Dr Chapman apologised for his absence from the meeting and conference, due to mobility issues, but he expressed how immensely proud he is to part of such an active and well-respected organisation.

Finally, Mike Frost, the SHA meeting secretary, gave a short presentation regarding the proposed June 2026 SHA Summer picnic visit to Birr Castle in central Ireland, the home of the "Leviathan of Parsonstown". This was the largest telescope in the world for much of the nineteenth century. Other astronomical trips are planned as part of a Friday-to-Monday long weekend, to the neolithic sites of Newgrange and Knowth in the Boyne Valley, north of Dublin. A possible trip to Dublin's Dunsink Observatory is also being investigated for the Monday. A more detailed prospectus/brochure is to be made available to members once details, and additional costs are known and finalised. Members must make their own arrangements to travel to and from the city of Dublin, which will be the base for the duration of the visit.

Following a short break for refreshments, the day continued with the Conference, and the first speaker for the day was introduced by Carolyn Kennett.

Dr Sian Prosser manages the library and archives of the Royal Astronomical Society, making them accessible to researchers, working with colleagues to use them in outreach and education activities, and



Image Right: Dr Sian Prosser

Image Credit: Planetary Society

promoting the history of astronomy and of the people who created and used the RAS collections. After a PhD on medieval manuscripts, she qualified as a librarian and has completed the Certificate in Astronomy at UCL. She is treasurer of the Historic Libraries Forum. Image: Planetary Society.

Her presentation was entitled: "Charting the heavens in type: the oldest astronomical printed books in the RAS Library"

During the earliest decades of European print culture, how was astronomical knowledge embodied in printed books? The presentation focused on the first astronomical texts to be published in print in the fifteenth century. These books are known as 'incunables', a term derived from the Latin for swaddling clothes, which alludes to the cradle of the European printing press particularly in German and Italy. Examples were shown from those held in the RAS library, the works of Regiomontanus, plus those of John of Holywood or Johannes de Sacrobosco,

(c1195 – c1256) a medieval author whose writing on the figure of the skies, *Sphaera Mundi* (The Sphere of the World) was widely disseminated as a textbook in European universities in multiple editions over four centuries, making it one of the most popular astronomical books of all time.

The RAS library holds over 50 books produced before the year 1501, and some as early as 1485, like *Sphaera Mundi*. It indicates the cross-cultural transmission of astronomical thought via Arabic scholars and reveals how astronomy and cosmology was disseminated and taught in medieval Europe. Sian delivered a highly illustrated talk, which clearly showed that despite

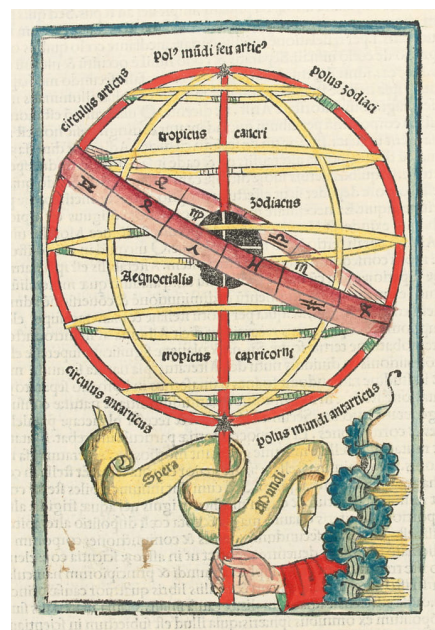


Image Above: A Page from "*Sphaera Mundi*".

Image Credit: With thanks to Wellcome Images and Science Library

the level of printing technology for books and manuscripts of the period, these texts illuminate a moment in time in the human thirst for astronomical knowledge and education. On conclusion, Dr Prosser was able to answer a wide range of questions from the audience, who expressed much appreciation for an informative and insightful presentation on just some of the items within the world-class RAS library. <https://ras.ac.uk/library/treasures-of-the-ras/2400-treasures-of-the-ras-the-sphere-by-john-of-holywood>

There followed the meeting lunch break, during which the delegates and guests enjoyed a welcome pre-booked buffet lunch and additional refreshments. With

much appreciation to the staff of the venue café for time and trouble of preparation. Members also took the opportunity to visit the second-hand and surplus books sales desk, and the SHA library opened for the day for the return of and borrowing of books until the Spring 2026 Conference.

Following the lunch break, Carolyn Kennett welcome delegates back to their seats, and introduced our second speaker for the day.

Dr Jacqueline Mitton has been interested in the history of women in astronomy since she was a student at Somerville College Oxford – named in honour of ‘the Queen of Science’ Mary Somerville. Jacqueline then moved to Cambridge to study for her PhD, where she was asked to give a presentation on women in astronomy at Cecilia Payne Gaposchkin’s college, Newnham. Since then, she has given countless talks on the topic. In 2021 she published a biography of Vera Rubin, written in collaboration with her husband Simon. She is currently working on a publication which will cover the life of Margaret Burbidge.

The title of her Presentation: “The Extraordinary Astronomical Life of Elizabeth Williamson”

Jacqueline outlined the little-known story of how an upper-class English woman, who was denied formal education because she was a girl, achieved her ambition to study astronomy and Greek. She did this with the encouragement of her great-aunt, the renowned composer and women’s suffrage campaigner Dame Ethyl Smyth (1858 – 1944). Elizabeth Williamson went on to play an important role in the foundation of the University of London Observatory at Mill Hill, and to teach astronomy to students



Image Above: Jacqueline Mitton

at University College, notably Margaret Burbidge. Elizabeth also produced the first translation from Greek into English of Ptolemy’s *Almagest*. The detailed and well-researched presentation concluded with questions and discussion, and the delegates showed their appreciation, looking forward to Jacqueline’s publication on Margaret Burbidge.

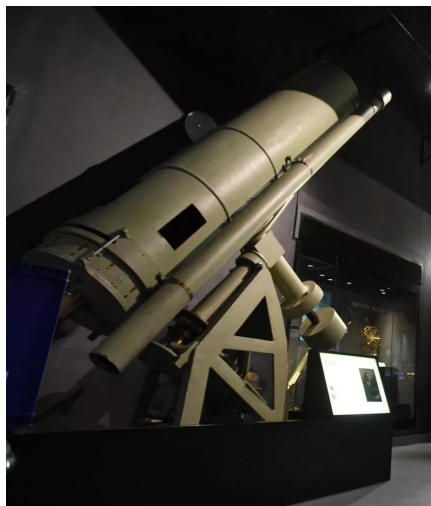


Image Above: The Wilson 24 inch Telescope now in Liverpool World Museum.

Image Credit: The World Museum Liverpool

The third speaker for the Autumn conference was the SHA’s very own general secretary, Dr Mike Leggett. Mike has a long history of presenting astronomy talks which stems from being a founder member of the South Lincolnshire Astronomical and Geophysical Society in 1976. Since then, he has given talks to the British Interplanetary Society, the University of Aberdeen evening classes, the Society for the History of Astronomy and many other astronomical societies up and down the UK. He continues to be an integral part of the SHA and its council. He is currently county Co-ordinator for Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Rutland in the SHA survey of astronomical history of the UK.

The Title of his Presentation: “Astronomy and Exploration”

This talk began with an introduction to astronomy and navigation. There was coverage of early methods and instruments for celestial navigation and the presentation continued with some historical examples related to the history of astronomy, including Pytheas, Magellan, and the well-known voyages of Christopher Columbus.

Mike covered the foundation of the Royal Observatory Greenwich, and related subjects, including the Nautical Almanac, the longitude problem and the development of the sextant and marine chronometer. The presentation then focused on British astronomers and explorers associated with the observations of the twinned transits of Venus in 1761 and 1769, including Charles Mason, Jeremiah Dixon, Capt. James Cook,



Image Above: Capt. James Cooke (1728 – 1779)

Image Credit: Science Library

Charles Green, and William Wales. Mike also drew the audience’s attention to the naming of craft that have taken humans into space and around the Moon, after ships that took humans to the other side of the World over two hundred years ago. Once again Mike delivered a detailed, well-researched presentation, supported by a richly illustrated talk, with many images taken by Mike himself. Image: Science Library. Capt. James Cook (1728 – 1779)



Image Above: Mike Leggett

There followed another break for afternoon tea, coffee and light refreshments, before our main speaker and presentation of the day was introduced by the SHA chair Carolyn Kennett.

Dr Louise Devoy has worked at Greenwich for over a decade and is passionate about uncovering the hidden histories and people

photographs, a paper hole punch, and even a fork for catching spiders.

Louise was able to answer several questions from delegates after a presentation in which we travelled through 350 years of astronomical history in 45 minutes. Louise reported that the copies of her new book that she had brought with her to the meeting had sold out but it was

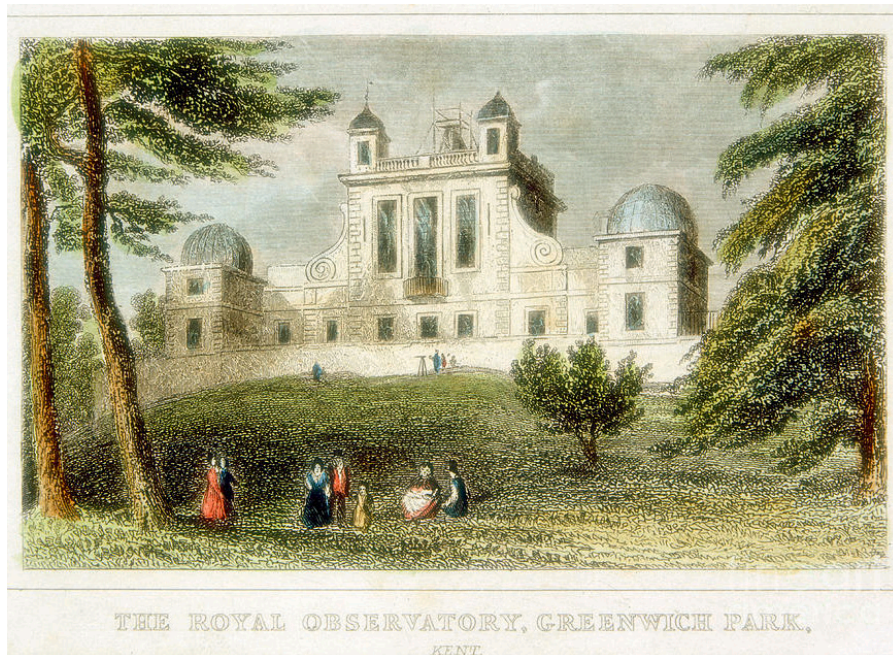


Image Above: © 1965 Look & Learn Magazine – The Royal Greenwich Observatory

stories of the site. She has a background in Astrophysics and has since specialised in the history of astronomy, working in venues such as the National Space Centre, Science Museum, British Museum and the Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum.

The Title of the Main Conference Presentation: “Observatory Objects (Commemorating 350 years of the Greenwich Observatory)”

2025 marks the 350th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, and this was the perfect opportunity to reflect on three-and-a-half centuries of astronomy, navigation and timekeeping at this world-famous site. During this well-illustrated presentation, Louise showed some of the highlights from her new book (available to purchase during the meeting), which provides a chronological overview of the observatory through a curated selection of telescopes, clocks, paintings, books, textiles,

available online to purchase from all good bookshops, in time for Christmas and beyond.

Sadly, another memorable SHA Autumn Conference was brought to an end by Chair Carolyn Kennett. She thanked Mike Frost for arranging and planning an excellent meeting; all the day’s speakers for outstanding talks; members of SHA council for helping with administration of the meeting; James and Richard for the Books sales, and lastly all the staff from the BMI for arranging the rooms, a fantastic buffet and refreshments. Until November 2026, safe journey to all.

Text and Images: *With thanks to Speakers, Mike Frost and Gerard Gilligan.*

Other sources for Images: *Wikipedia Images, Science Library and Google Images.*

The Society for the History of Astronomy
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<https://societyforthehistoryofastronomy.com>

EUROPEAN ASTROFEST

European Astrofest 2026

Listen to top speakers spanning the fields of professional and amateur astronomy from across the globe, gathered in the expansive auditorium of the Kensington Conference and Events Centre.

Kensington Conference and Events Centre, The Town Hall,
Hornton Street, London, W8 7NX

Friday 6th February 2026
9am – 6pm

Saturday 7th February 2026
9am – 6pm

Speakers Confirmed:

Lindy Elkins-Tanton
University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Jessica Dempsey
ASTRON

Professor Garry E Hunt OBE, DSc., FRAS

Space and Climate Scientist, Voyager Mission 1972-, Business Leader

Dr Steph Yardley
STFC Ernest Rutherford and Vice-Chancellor’s Fellow at Northumbria University

More details at

<https://europeanastrofest.com>

Public Outreach Evening – 15th Nov 2025

Peterborough Astronomical Society in partnership with Sacrewell Farm



Image Above: Visitors enjoying Eric's talk



Image Above: Chairman Andy overseeing events!

On a recent rainy Saturday evening, Sacrewell Farm (www.sacrewell.org.uk) and the Peterborough Astronomical Society (www.peterborough-as.co.uk) joined forces for a public outreach event that swapped stargazing for a lively and engaging indoor experience. Though the weather kept telescopes safely indoors, the curiosity and enthusiasm of attendees flourished inside.

Despite the rain, guests were treated to a wide array of fascinating static displays. Society members exhibited stunning astrophotography, showcasing images of the Solar System, deep sky objects, and cosmic phenomena captured by local enthusiasts. Informative posters and materials covered everything from planetary science and cosmology to the mysteries of the universe, offering accessible explanations for all levels of interest. Younger visitors were especially drawn to the “Constellation Station” that involved using marshmallows to model Orion, Ursa Major and other well-known patterns – and eating some of the materials naturally!

Among the standout displays were tributes to the remarkable achievements of women astronomers throughout history. These exhibits celebrated their significant contributions to the field, inspiring attendees and reminding everyone of the diversity and progress within astronomical science. In addition, PAS shared stories and visuals from their recent visits to renowned astronomy destinations, giving visitors a glimpse into the society’s adventures and the wider world of astronomy.

A real highlight for visitors was the PAS resident Astrophysicist, Amalie, who is a PhD student at the

University of Sheffield. She helped guests with her interactive demonstration showing how we discover exoplanets by looking at how they affect the light coming from distant stars when they transit. One of the younger guests described it as better than school!

The PAS team presented a fascinating variety of equipment, ranging from advanced astro-imaging setups—such as the ZWO FF107 Apochromat Refractor with an AM5 harmonic mount and ASI2600MC astro-camera—to several medium and large reflectors, and smartscopes including multiple Seestar units and a Unistellar. These demonstrations allowed hands-on exploration and sparked many conversations among both seasoned stargazers and newcomers.

With outdoor observing off the table, two engaging talks led by PAS members took centre stage. Phil Adams presented “We Are All Made of Star Stuff,” exploring the cosmic origins of life and matter. Eric Siecker followed with “Eyes on the Universe: Webb, Hubble and Beyond,” delving into the transformative work of space telescopes and the future of astronomical exploration.

The event drew attendees with varying degrees of astronomical knowledge—from those well-versed in the subject to enthusiastic beginners. PAS members thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the crowd, answering questions and discussing everything from telescope types to the wonders of the universe. Many visitors lingered by the displays, engaging with the information and sharing their own experiences. The hope is that several left feeling inspired, eager to learn more and return for future events.



Image Above: The PAS “hard core” astro-imagers! L-R Steve, James and David

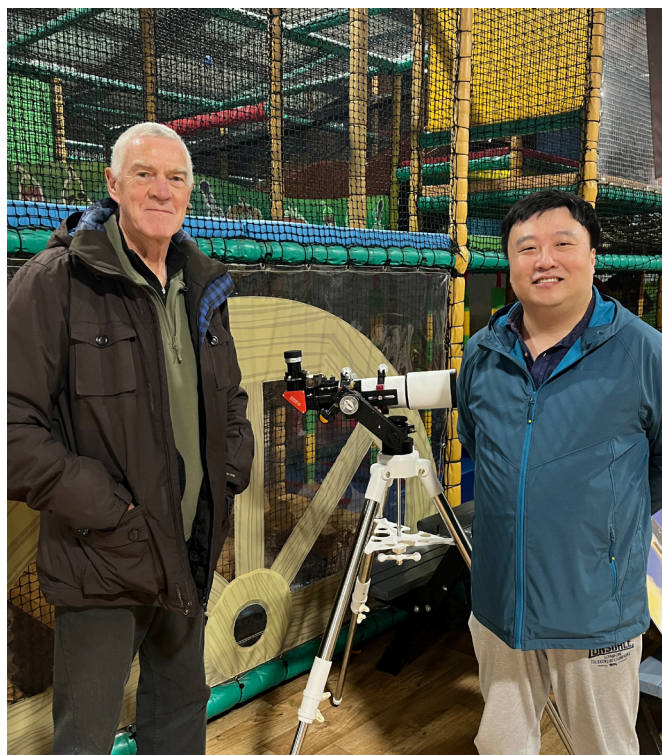


Image Above: Richard and Ming all set for plenty of questions about the Altair 70 refractor and Seestar S50 smartscope

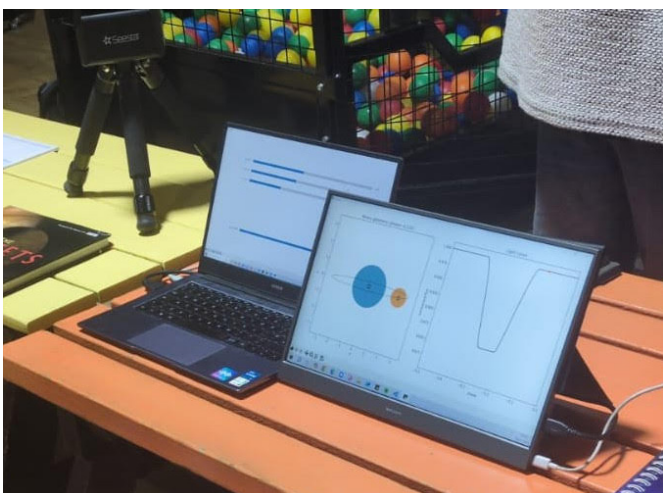


Image Above: Amelie’s Exoplanet Demo Setup



Image Above: Two younger visitors get to grips with the “Constellation Station”!

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Guests appreciated the richness of the displays, the welcoming atmosphere, and the illuminating talks. The evening’s success shone through in the lively discussions and the genuine excitement of discovery.

In partnership with Sacrewell Farm, the Peterborough Astronomical Society turned a rainy evening into a memorable celebration of astronomy. Through hands-on equipment demos, educational displays, and inspiring talks, the event highlighted the society’s dedication to sharing the wonders of the cosmos—rain or shine—and strengthened the community’s connection to the night sky.

Peterborough Astronomical Society
<https://www.peterborough-as.co.uk>

Reader's Images

Andromeda Galaxy + Cygnus Loop - Ian Taylor



Image Above: The Andromeda Galaxy. Taken from Hoole, Chester. (probably Bortle 7 zone) in late September 2025 With wide-field imaging rig (an FRA 300 f/5 refractor, and a ZWO 071 MC Pro camera). I used an RST-135 harmonic mount, and autofocusing and autoguiding was managed by an ASI AIR Pro. The combination of telescope and camera gives a field of view of approximately 4.5° by 3°. Astro Pixel Processor to stack the images and for image processing. 30 second images and just used a UV/IR filter. Total imaging time was only about 2 hours.

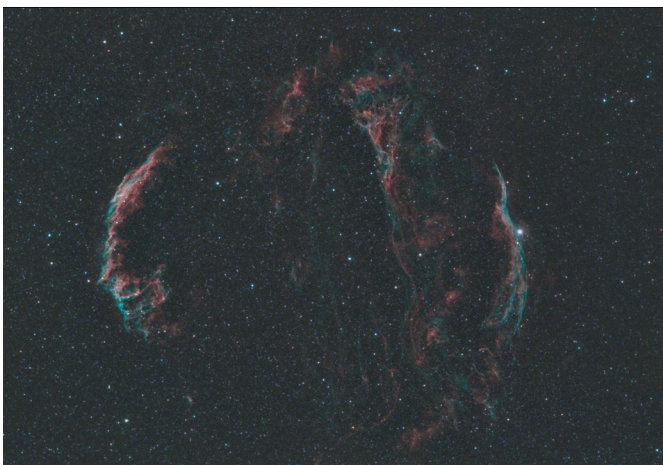


Image Above: The Cygnus Loop, I used an Optolong L-Enhance filter and an exposure time of 180 seconds. Total imaging time was 4 hours.

NGC1499 California Nebula - Nick Williams



Image Above: This is a 2x2 mosaic taken with my StellaMira 90EDT & ZWO 533MC camera, on 8 November 2025. I used the Optolong L-Extreme dual narrowband filter to combat light from the 88% waning moon. Taken from Chingford NE London.

Nick Williams
Loughton Astronomical Society
<https://las-astro.org.uk>

Ian Taylor
Chester Astronomical Society
<https://www.chesterastronomicalsociety.co.uk>

Bob Stuart



Image Above: Taken from Rhayader, Powys. 24 September 2025 at 00:54 UT. Stephans Quintet (NGC7317 +) interacting group (apart from NGC 7320, blue galaxy at a mere 40Mly away) at a distance of 300Mly in the constellation of Pegasus. 25cm f6.3 Newtonian; SkyWatcher EQ350 Pro, ASI533MC with Antlia TriBand filter. Guide:- William Optics 61mmGuideStar with ASI 178MM camera AsAir Pro guiding and image acquisition, Pegasus V3 hardware control. 67 x 60s exposures, (+flats; darks and bias) processed in APP and PS (with StarXterminator and Noise Xterminator RcAstro).

Bob Stuart



Image Above: Taken from Rhayader, Powys. 24 September 2025 at 00:57 UTNGC 7479 Seyfert type 2 galaxy 118Mly mag 10.85 in Pegasus. Imaging equipment and processing as above image.

Bob Stuart

Bob Bowen



Image Above: Taken from my back garden at our home in Newtown, Powis at 16:30hrs BST 23/09/2025. Canon 7D Mk2 DSLR body, SkyWatcher ST80, scope, Teleplus 2x multiplier, Unbranded solar filter, Mounted on basic Slik camera tripod. 1/800 sec, f10, 800mm focal length.

Bob Bowen

Mid Wales Astronomical Society

Mid-Kent Astronomical Society



Forthcoming Meetings

All regular meetings are open to members and visitors, held on the second and last Friday of each month, except August and at Christmas, when there are no meetings. Unless otherwise stated, meetings normally open at 7:40pm for an 8pm start, finishing around 10pm.

9 January 2026

Jordan Iga - An Introduction to Galactic Dynamics

30 January

Greg Smye-Rumsby - Mapping Worlds

13 February

Robert Massey - The Moon: art, science and culture

27 February

Doug Edworthy - So you wanna buy a telescope?

Regular Meetings take place at:
Bredhurst Village Hall, Hurstwood Road,
Bredhurst, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3JZ

Full details at our website:

<https://www.midkentastro.org.uk>



Hertford Astronomy Group

Programme 2025 / 2026

<i>Date</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Sat, September 6	* Special Event	Publicity Display, Welwyn Garden City
September 10	Roger O'Brien	Messier the Comet Hunter
October 8	Samantha Rolfe	The UH Bayfordbury Observatory
November 12	Garry Hunt	A Lifetime in Space
Sat, November 29	* Special Event	Introduction to Astronomy Hosted by Wheathampstead U3A
December 10	Greg Smye-Rumsby	The History of Longitude at Greenwich
January 14	Marina Galand	Aurorae Around the Solar System
February 11	Simon Foster	Our Living Sun
March 11	Jerry Stone	Nell, Esther & Aunt Effie: The centenary of liquid-fuelled rockets
April 8	Sheridan Williams	Fascinating Astronomical Facts
May 13	Lewis Dartnell	How the Earth Shaped Human History
	Plus - Annual General Meeting	
June 10	Louise Devoy	Royal Observatory, Greenwich: A history through objects
Sat, June 27	* Special Event	Welwyn Festival Fun Day
Sat, July 11	* Special Event	Wheathampstead Village Day
Wed, August 12	* Special Event	Public Solar Eclipse Watch

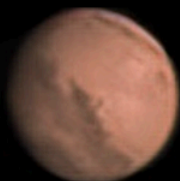
Special Public Events will take place during the year.

These will include public observing events, and advice and assistance regarding telescopes.

See the website in due course for details

All events are subject to amendment.

www.hertsastro.org.uk



Images : Steve Heliczer



Stratford-Upon-Avon Astronomical Society

The Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society meets every first and third Tuesday at 8pm (doors open at 7.30pm) at Alderminster Village Hall. Everyone is welcome, especially beginners and those wanting to learn more. Usually, the first Tuesday is a club night, but in December the club night is on the third Tuesday, which is on 16th December and is our Christmas get together. On the first Tuesday 2nd December the speaker will be Professor Clive Ruggles, from Leicester University, with a talk called "Stonehenge – sighting the sun". Please note that the speakers usually start quite promptly at 8pm.

Club nights offer more information on what to look out for each month. If it is clear we do some observing just outside the Village Hall, so please join us. There is no charge initially to come along and find out more, but if you do want to become a member then the fee is just £15 a year and it's free if you are in full time education. For more details go to the website <http://www.astro.org.uk> or contact the Chair, John Waller john.waller@astro.org.uk or on 07703 192188.

Happy Observing!

<http://astro.org.uk/main/index.php>



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