Federation of Astronomical Societies

Editor: Michael Bryce

Newsletter

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The Newsletter for Members of FAS Affiliated Astronomical Societies



Cover Shot. A different take on the Partial Solar Eclipse by Steve Fox, Farnham AS
Details on page 2

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President's Spot:

Clare Lauwerys

Chasing Eclipses and Cocktail Menus

I've done a fair amount of travelling over the years, and I'm always happy to combine a holiday with a bit of astronomy. So, when the eclipse came around, husband and I decided that Mallorca sounded like a good place to be. I mean, if you going to do something and can big, then big is the only way to go! Also I'm a big fan of a pool and decent cocktail menu (Shout out to my hubby, who is very good at finding great hotels.)

Now, it was a bit risky. If the clouds came in, our opportunities to travel elsewhere were limited, especially as the local government had strongly advised against travelling on the day. But we had booked a hotel with a very clear view to the west, so it was very much a fingers-crossed trip. And if it turned out to be cloudy, there was always the aforementioned cocktail menu to explore!

On the first night of our holiday, the sunset was beautiful. Hurrah.

Night two – not so promising. And by that, I mean sunset obscured by clouds. Boo.

Night three – not as bad as night two, but still not perfection.

Night four – getting better. We decided that if eclipse day was the same, it would be OK: The Partial Phase of

Then came the day in question

We scoured the weather maps and satellite images which is, of course, pretty much second nature to anyone who does any amount of astronomy. And the weather gods were smiling upon us.

This was my first total solar eclipse. I've seen plenty of pictures and videos, but there is something completely different about seeing one with your own eyes.

Even when the Sun was 50% covered, it made very little difference to the light. Without eclipse glasses, you wouldn't necessarily have known what was going on. But with the glasses, well, that was a different matter.



Image Above: *The partial phase of the Total Eclipse.*

And as totality approached, it somehow felt as though it wasn't actually going to happen. The last few seconds, as the final bit of the Sun disappeared, seemed to last for ages.

Then the Moon finally slid into place

There was a small cheer, but mostly people stood in awe and silence for the 90ish seconds it lasted. And then, as the first bit of sunlight appeared again, there was a much bigger cheer.

It really is one of those astronomical events that photographs don't quite do justice to. Having said that, because this was an eclipse at sunset, the photographs are, I think, particularly pretty. The wisps of cloud certainly add to the atmosphere. As we were by the swimming pool with A LOT of people, we decided against setting up our SeeStar. All my photos were taken with my phone, using eclipse glasses as needed. Which did mean putting down my Mojito, but sometimes one must suffer for one's art!

And before you ask, we've already booked for next year.

Cover Shot:

A different take on the 12 August 2026 partial eclipse taken from Butser Hill in the South Downs. Taken with Canon R6 with a solar filter at 1/320 sec, f/10, ISO 100 at 105mm focal length in a timelapse with a shot every 30 secs over about 2.5 hours. Every 5th frame (to get the required spacing) was then composited onto a landscape shot from the hill. I had been planning this shot for a while so I'm happy with the result. Even the couple of clouds (they are real!) came along to the party.

Steve Fox,
Farnham Astronomical Society
https://www.farnham-as.co.uk



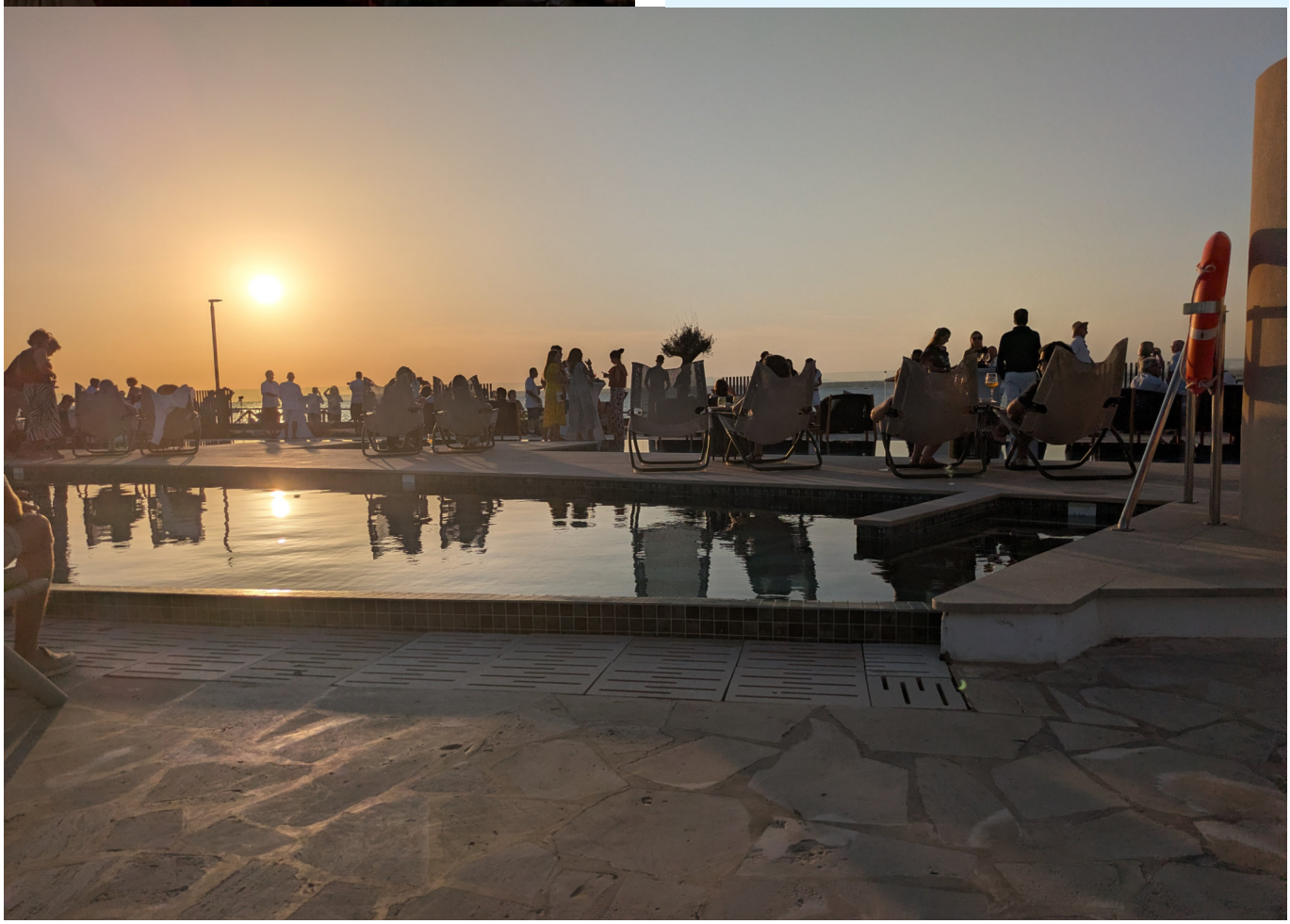
FAS AGM

The FAS AGM will be held later in the autumn. Date TBC but coming soon. Or might have been decided before we go to press. All positions the FAS can be contested each year and we already know we will be in need of a Secretary. The role is much less demanding than being a Society Secretary (I am the secretary for my local soc) so if you have agenda and minute writing skills please consider standing for the position. All our meetings are on Zoom so it doesn't matter where you live. Get in touch if you like to have an informal chat and find out more.

Clear Skies
Clare

Image Left: *Total Eclipse*

Image Below: *same as partial but no glasses*

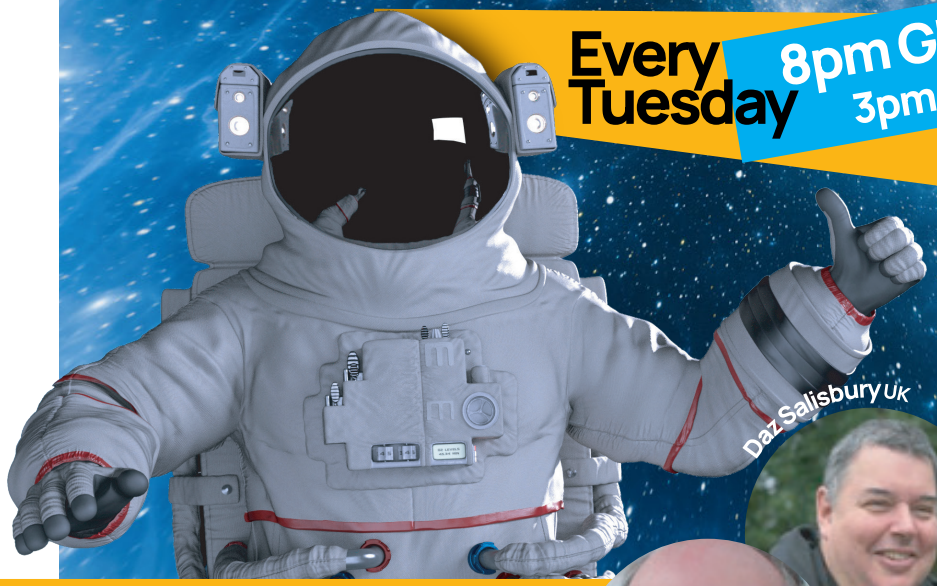


Explore the Universe...

with Space Oddities L!VE

Each week Space Oddities L!VE brings together astronomy educators from the UK, Spain, and the US, for a live discussion covering all aspects of astronomy, astrophysics, cosmology and space exploration.

Every Tuesday 8pm GMT 3pm EST





700+ videos on YouTube

Space Oddities

If it's happening in space, it's happening on Space Oddities

YouTube

SpaceOddities.space



Amateur astrophotographers are invited to share their images capturing the wonder of astronomy for a new photography competition being launched to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (MNRAS).

First published in 1827, the flagship journal of the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) is one of the world's largest and most prestigious astronomy journals.

To honour the significant milestone of its bicentenary next year, the journal is holding a commemorative global photography competition called RAStroPhoto which will be open to entrants from 1 November 2026.

It will showcase images taken by amateur astronomers and citizen scientists that capture the beauty of the cosmos, the night sky, and the science or scientists that help us understand the universe.

RAStroPhoto is open to everyone worldwide – entry is free and all skill levels are welcome. Professional equipment is not required.

The categories are:

Our Solar System
Deep Sky
Our Galaxy
Earth & Space
Observing Astronomers

The closing date for submissions is 15 January 2027

All entries must have been taken within five years of the competition opening date and must not have previously been awarded at any other competition prior to the opening date. AI-generated images are not permitted.

The images will be reviewed by a panel of five judges: Chrysa Avdellidou, David Kaplan, Claudia Maraston, J-P Metsävainio and Mike Peel. They will be judged based on technique, composition, aesthetics and storytelling.

From those entries selected by the judges, the following awards will be given: one overall winner, five category winners and five runners-up.

Each category winner will receive £500, with the overall winner receiving £2,000 worth of equipment from the competition's sponsor, First Light Optics.

The winners will be announced in the summer of 2027.

To sign up to receive news about RAStroPhoto, visit the competition website at www.rastrophoto.ras.ac.uk

Introducing the Campaign for Dark Skies Network

Gareth Jarrett

(with contributions from Dr Wayne Thomas and Howard Lawrence)

As so many members of astronomical societies up and down the country will be painfully aware, the steady erosion of the night sky has been going on for decades and is nothing new. The Royal Greenwich Observatory abandoned London for Herstmonceux decades ago because of it, whilst sales of light pollution filters for telescopes and increasingly long trips to dark sky sites have been a feature of most astronomers lives from when they first got the astronomy bug.

However, despite the best efforts of both individuals and organisations to hold back the tide, if anything it is getting worse. Statistics suggest that the sky is brightening by as much as 10% per year; in developing countries up to 30%. As well as the inevitable impacts as poorer countries become more affluent and seek to light their streets and buildings, and the lighting from new developments within the UK, a more insidious impact has come from the move from Low- and High-Pressure Sodium (LPS and HPS) streetlights to energy efficient LED lighting. Though such lighting originally had such promise in cutting energy consumption, it has had two perverse consequences. Firstly, cheaper, energy efficient light means you can have so much more of it (Jevons paradox). Secondly, the move to a broader spectrum taking in bluer wavelengths (see fig 1) means that light is more impactful – on human circadian rhythms and on wildlife for whom the consequences can be sometimes catastrophic. As for amateur astronomers, the broader spectrum taken up by those lights means some of those older broadband light pollution filters are increasingly redundant as a result and though modern imaging can pull faint objects from the growing glow, they are disappearing from our eyepieces.

Faced with such an onslaught, it is easy to become despondent but there are real, positive things everyone can do to help. One measure is to ensure your own lighting is set up and used appropriately: outside lighting only used where necessary, pointing downwards, and not excessively bright; inside lighting shielded by curtains from the outside. Another measure is to ensure your friends and neighbours are aware and hopefully follow your lead. But a third is to join the Campaign for Dark Skies Network (CfDS Network)!

Launched this spring, this initiative originally started by Val Russell and the BAA's Commission for Dark Skies, and supported by the FAS, aims to demonstrate to government and institutions that people genuinely care about their skies. Membership is free (a rare and precious thing these days) and requires only a simple membership database entry. To sign up, see the QR code (fig 2).

Why join? Firstly, the BAA Commission for Dark Skies needs two key arguments to advocate successfully for national action: a large number of people caring about the night environment, and quality-measured trends in sky glow. To show that many people do care about this issue, the CfDS Network aims to get 50,000 people signed up, both from within the astronomical community and far beyond it. And to show trends in sky glow, the Network is

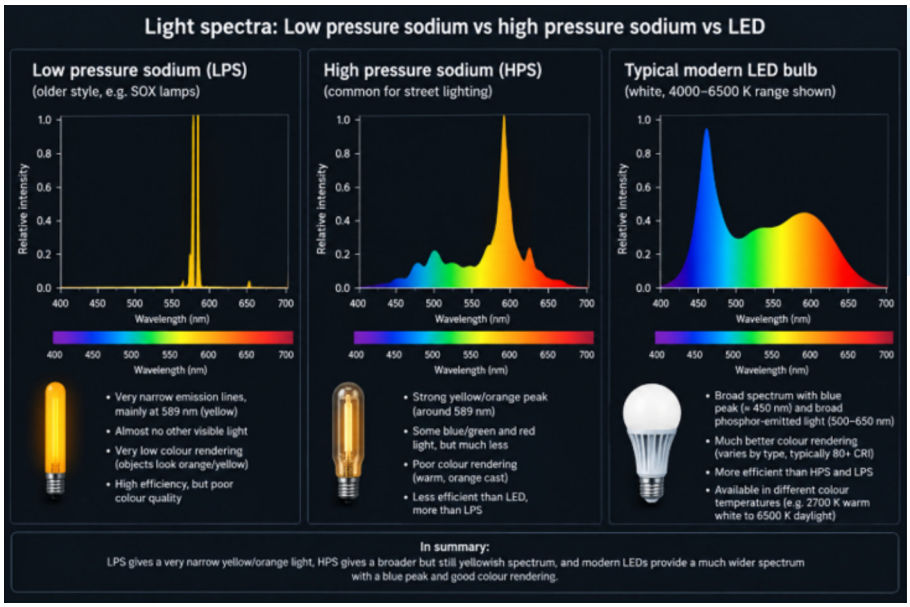


***Image Left**: Fig 1: Image of LPS, HPS and LED spectrums (from ChatGPT)*

***Image Below**: Fig 2: CfDS Network QR code:*



Image Above: *Val Russell of CfDS Network speaking to the BBC at the Hengistbury Head eclipse watch.*

Image: *Stewart Langdown*

developing a new citizen science project to measure sky glow at many locations across the UK using commercially available Sky Quality Meters. This data can be used to show the impact of negative activity like new developments on the edge of town, or the erection of new business signage, but also the effect of positive measures like local initiatives to switch streetlights off after midnight, or to dim excessively bright lighting, or replace older lights with modern, properly shielded fittings. Coupled with historic data that is being harvested from existing groups and initiatives, this will provide a solid data set for use in discussions with local and government, standards bodies and business. As a call out to FAS member societies up and down the country, do you have locations that could house a Sky Quality Meter? And do you have historic sky quality readings (for example from observations made years ago that carefully detailed time, location and sky conditions) that could contribute to this data set? If so, please get in touch.

Outside of that activity, of course, CfDS Network aims to support and facilitate members joining together to tackle local and national issues, be that new local light pollution threats, public outreach to explain what the problem is and how everyone can play their part in reducing it or joining with other organisations globally to raise awareness of the potential impact of planned space mirrors and other satellite constellations.

There's lots to do, but the CfDS Network aims to inject some much-needed hope and fresh energy into discussions around light pollution. Endlessly brightening skies are not inevitable, and as those protesting against water pollution have shown, you can get heard, shape public discourse, and start to make real change in policy. But reversing these trends needs everyone in the astronomical community to play their part. Much of the public are only dimly aware of the issue, if at all. As astronomers, we can't avoid it – so it's incumbent on all of us to stand up and be counted. Please sign up and join the fight today!

Gareth Jarrett
(with contributions from Dr Wayne Thomas and Howard Lawrence)

Image Below: *A Streetlight glaring outside someone's bedroom window.*

Image: *Bob Mizon*



Solar Eclipse Gallery 12 August 2026

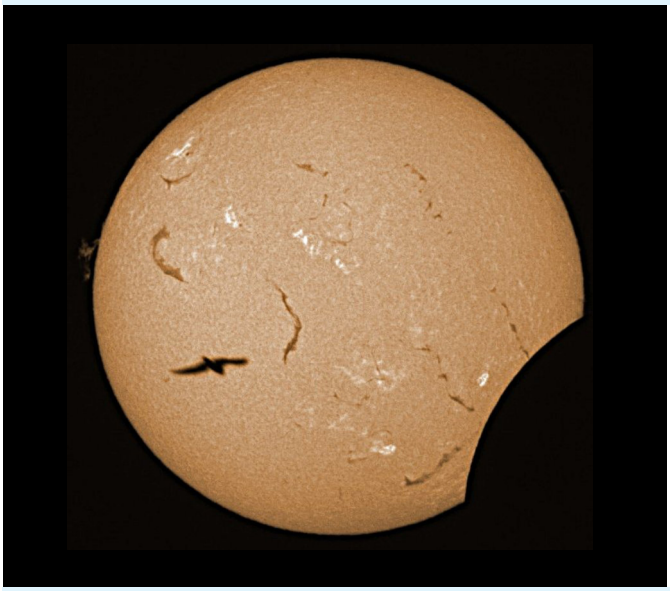
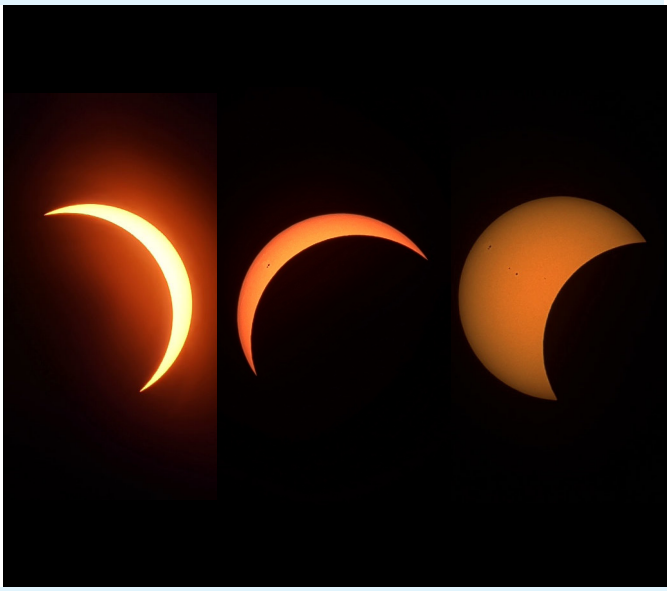


Image Above: Bird on the Sun

This image was taken using an Acuter 40 mm hydrogen alpha solar telescope with ZWO 174 MM black and white camera. I took a video of the eclipse, and the screenshot below is a single frame, near the start of the eclipse, when a bird flew by. I coloured the sun yellow in post-processing.

Photo taken from my back garden, in Chester, UK.

Ian Taylor
Chester Astronomical Society
chesterastronomicalsociety.co.uk



Solar Eclipse from Walsall

Images I took of the recent solar eclipse, hoping to find a place in oct newsletter gallery.

Photos are of 6:45PM 50% eclipsed and 7:07PM max 92% eclipsed and 7:16PM recovering - sun crescent is seen on opposite side now. Taken with Seestar S30 in Wednesbury, Walsall, West Midlands.

Dr A A Shanker
Walsall Astronomical Society
walsallastro.com





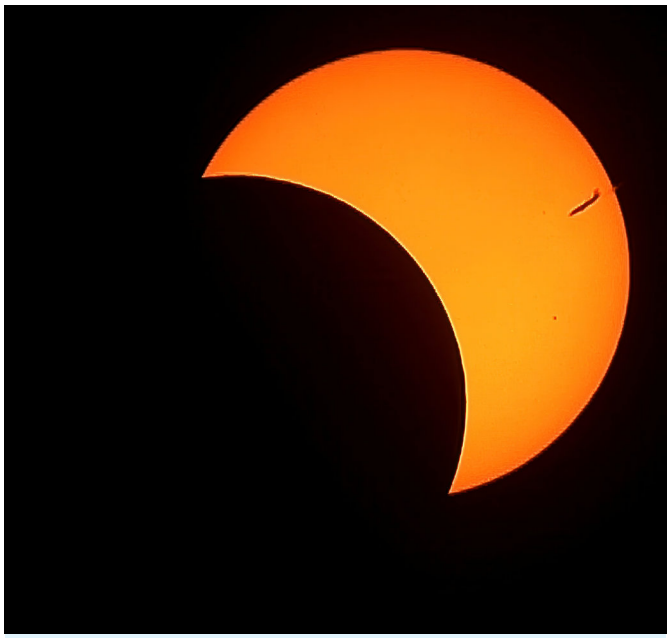




Solar Eclipse from Highdown, nr Worthing

The solar eclipse was great and I went to Highdown west of Worthing. I used a 300 mm lens with a X2 converter ISO 400 with a 1/250th second exposure and a 2 second exposure with a digital Canon SLR camera

Alex Vincent
Worthing Astronomical Society
worthingastronomicalsociety.org
Worthing Astronomers
worthingastronomers.org.uk



Solar Eclipse from Kingswinford

Including an Aircraft silhouetted agains the Sun's disk. Taken with a Seestar S30 pro. Location Kingswinford, Dudley, West Midlands.

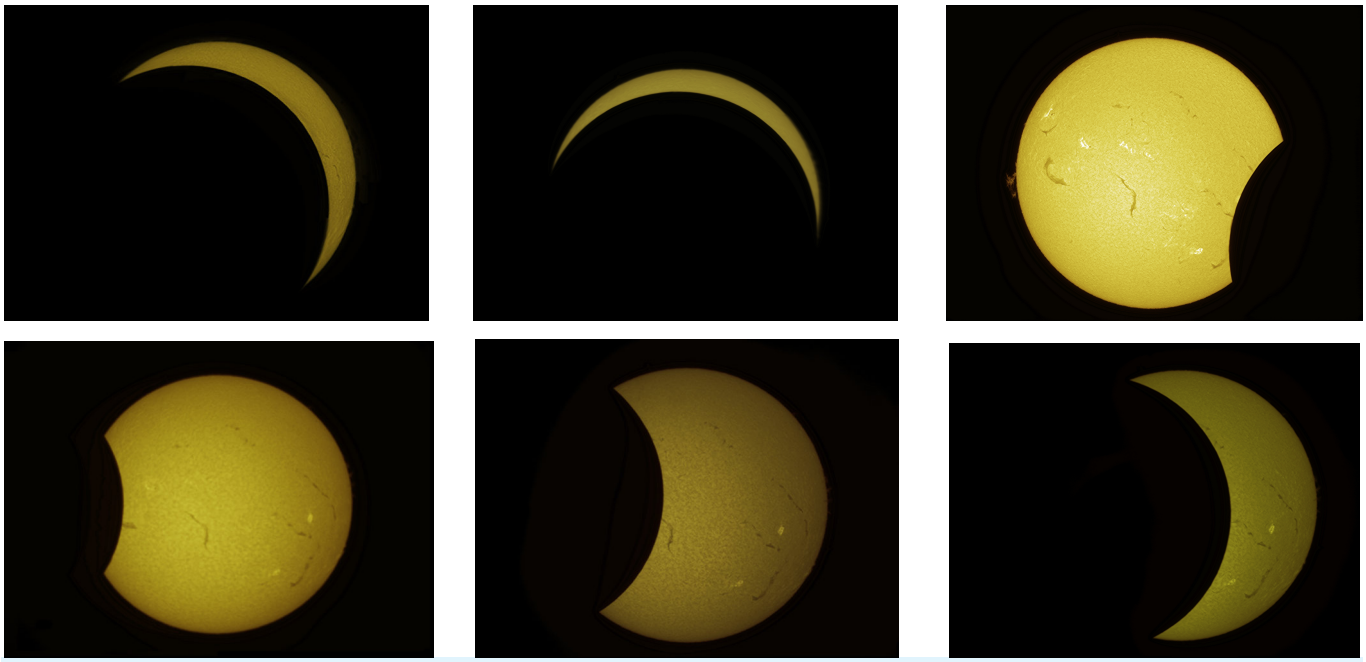
Richard Guest
Carolian Astronomy Society
carolianastro.co.uk



Solar Eclipse from Manchester

Taken at Platt Fields Park, Manchester. Using a lunt 60 Ha scope and Zwoasi 174 mono camera. Artificially coloured using Gimp after.

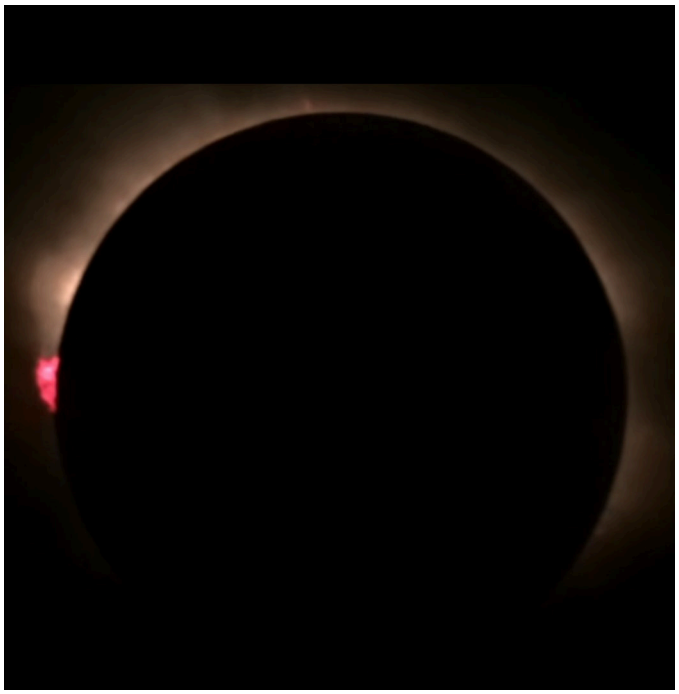
Pierre Grace
West Didsbury Astronomical Society
https://wp2019.wdas2.com/wp2019/

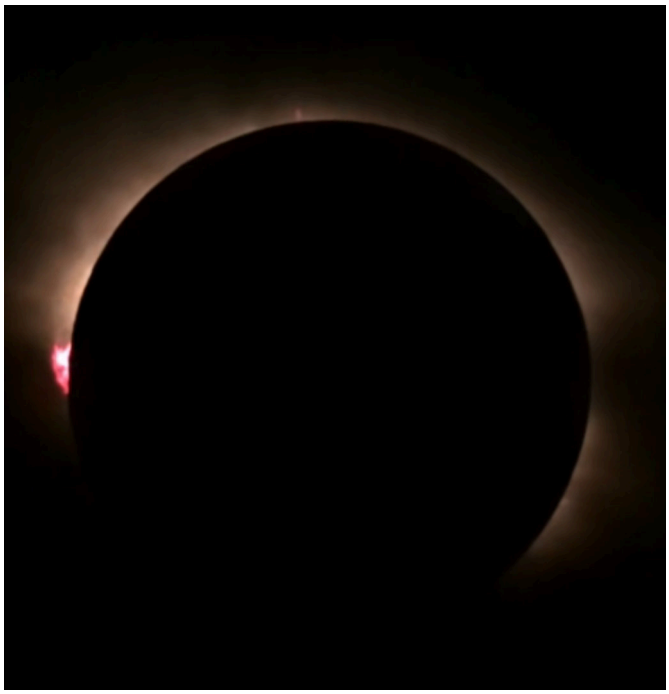


Solar Eclipse from North Essex

images taken at the North Essex Astronomy Society Observatory during the partial Solar Eclipse. We held an observing event for members and invited along current members of our Young Astronomers club to safely watch the eclipse through solar telescopes or with personal solar eclipse glasses we provided. Images taken through a Skywatcher Heliostar 76Ha with a Player One Apollo mini mono camera. Stacked in Autostakkert, processed in IMPGG and Photopad Pro.

Steve Harwood
North Essex Astronomical Society
https://www.northessexastro.co.uk

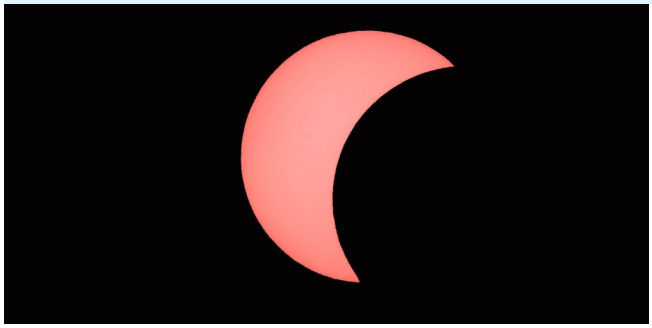


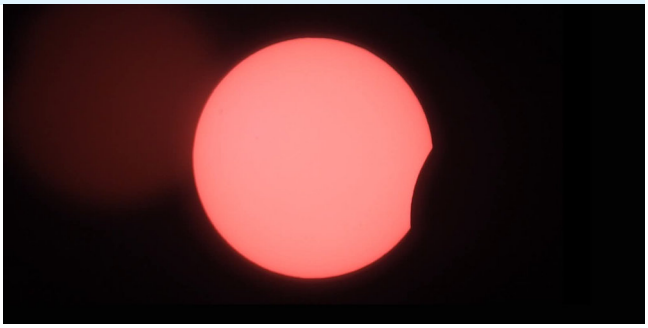


Solar Eclipse from the Atlantic Ocean

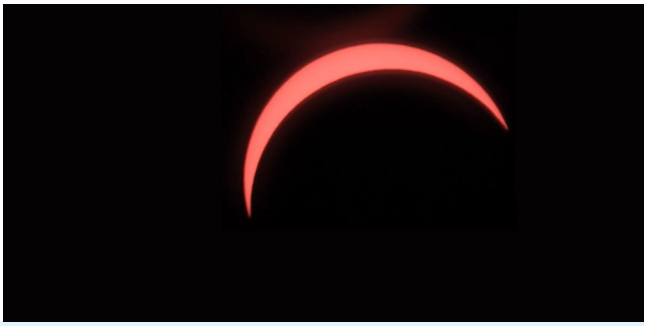
I took a movie with my Dwarf Mini of the Total Solar Eclipse 12 August 2026. From this movie I produced these two photos. I took this on a cruise ship at sea not far out from La Coruna, Spain.

D Rout
North Essex Astronomical Society
https://www.northessexastro.co.uk









Solar Eclipse from Yorkshire

I am member of York Astronomical Society and I was present at the Solar Eclipse event on Wednesday, 12 August 2026 (6 - 8 pm BST) hosted by the society. There were over 200+ people present at the event and it was livestreamed on BBC Look North TV channel from the Beetle Bank Farm (York) where the society's Observatory is located. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckg6py7201jo

The above photos were taken with my Nikon Coolpix P900 camera, fitted with a IR720 filter.

Eng. Qamar Uddin
York Astronomical Society
https://yorkastro.org.uk



Eclipse at Sunset

I am pleased with this image I took as the Sun set after totality as seen from Ariza in Aragon Spain. The image was taken on a Sony A5000, with a 210mm zoom, 1/60s exposure at ISO 640. The lovely thing was that no filter was needed.

Owen Gwynne
Chair: Mid Cheshire Astro Group
www.midcheshireastro.co.uk

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. The first Tuesday is a Club Night; in October Club Night will be on 6th October and on the third Tuesday 20th October the speaker will be Chris Woodhouse who has written several books on astrophotography with a talk called 'Overcoming Light Pollution in Astrophotography'. 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 £20 a year and it's free if you are in full-time education.

For more details please 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!
David Benton

Partial Solar Eclipse at the Norman Lockyer Observatory, Sidmouth, Devon

David Strange

Norman Lockyer Observatory Society Limited

After two solid months of sunshine, skies remained clear and sunny for the 94% partial solar eclipse on 12th August 2026 at the Norman Lockyer Observatory.

We were expecting a large crowd and had 500 pairs of solar eclipse spectacles on hand to our visitors but were in no way expecting the huge crowds who descended upon us.



We had 800 visitors on site to witness this remarkably impressive sight, and many said what a marvellous community event it turned out to be. All visitors had a safety briefing beforehand and then queued up behind an array of H Alpha solar telescopes, white light solar filtered scopes. We also had a projected solar image through the famous 6.25" Cooke refractor that Lockyer used to discover Helium on the Sun. Unfortunately, our carpark soon reached capacity and cars were parking alongside the road either side of the NLO.

BBC Spotlight and ITV Westcountry were also in attendance recording the event. As the eclipse progressed to maximum extent, it was noticeable that the quality of the light was changing and shadows were becoming sharper. There was also a fine solar prominence on view until near maximum eclipse which occurred at 7.10h.

After the eclipse had finished we had the Lockyer, Kensington, McClean Domes open for visitors as well as the Lockyer Technology Centre, showing live radar meteor detections.

Refreshments were provided in the form of the Coffee 165 trailer, before the next event started. David Heatfield (storyteller from Exeter) along with his musicians Kimwei and Lisa began telling the tale about Amano Iwato / The Heavenly Cave, a story about the first solar eclipse at the core of Japanese mythology followed by the tale in Greek mythology of Orpheus, Eurydice, Persephone and Hades.

By now dusk was beginning and as the Summer Triangle of stars appeared David Strange (NLO Chairman) took the audience on a Mindful Astronomy experience by travelling upwards through the Earth's atmosphere, visiting the ISS, the Moon and beyond looking back at the pale blue dot of Earth seen from a distance of 40 AU. Then on to the stars of the Summer Triangle returning to Earth by way of Arcturus. As the sky began to darken our audience then watched out for Perseid meteors on rugs and reclining chairs in the NLO grounds. Our last visitors left at about midnight. All appreciated the many long hours all of our NLO volunteers put in to make the event so successful.



David Strange
Chairman
Norman Lockyer Observatory Society Limited
Email: *dgstrange@btinternet.com*
Website: *normanlockyer.com*
Registered Charity No: 1048807
Company Limited by Guarantee No: 3048646
Registered Office: c/o Easterbrook, Eaton & co., Old Fore Street, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 8LS

A Stunning Eclipse from Abbey Fields

Julia Waller

Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society





On one of the many very hot and sunny days this summer a number of us from Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society met at Abbey Fields in Kenilworth. We were there to witness the partial solar eclipse in the late afternoon to early evening of 12 August 2026. Fortunately, we had planned to arrive early, about 5 pm BST, as it seemed that all and sundry had also had the bright idea of meeting at that place where a clear western horizon would provide a perfect view. For once, the weather was cooperating with clear blue skies and no sign of clouds or rain to hamper the event; as we often joked that you could tell when a meteor shower or lunar eclipse was coming as a blanket cloud was forecast.

We had wondered where to go to view the event as our usual meeting place at Alderminster Village Hall was surrounded by houses and trees. One of our committee members, Teresa Pinheiro, mentioned that she was planning to go to Abbey Fields in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, along with some of her friends, and so we went with that plan.

We found a great spot at the edge of a hill, with a nearby tree providing some shade, to set up a small 110 mm Vixen telescope with a white light solar filter and DSLR camera, as well as the Society's Coronado PST solar telescope. We still had some eclipse glasses left from our Go Stargazing order but it wasn't long before word was out that we were handing them out for free, and we were suddenly met with a mass of people hurriedly heading in our direction. We had soon "sold out" of eclipse glasses but then a long line of people formed to view the Moon steadily covering the Sun. Some people there, including a yoga class, had managed to obtain their eclipse glasses in advance but many had told us they had struggled to find any. Other people had dug out their colanders or used pinhole projection to view the event safely.

As maximum eclipse approached our surroundings still remained very bright (as expected) but there was a definite cooling to the air and a strange greyness to colours. The leaves of the tree produced multiple and overlapping crescent shapes, especially onto those standing in white tops or t-shirts. But soon the Moon moved on and uncovered the Sun, raising the temperature once more in what had been another very hot day. As soon as the Sun was fully out again the crowds began to disperse, perhaps off for their evening meal or enjoy the cooler evening temperatures.

It had been a wonderful afternoon for outreach, being able to ensure that the public viewed the event safely. Many of us were surprised by the number of people turning up, although the phenomenon had been widely broadcast on the TV and social media. In fact, our Chair, John Waller, had been interviewed on the BBC's Coventry and Warwickshire radio early on the morning of the eclipse. He had been joined on the programme by a ranger from Burton Dassett Country Park but I don't think he was expecting the numbers that turned up. We later saw pictures on social media of a gridlock of cars across that site – perhaps they stayed on to watch the Perseid meteors later that night.

Julia Waller
Newsletter Editor
Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society
http://astro.org.uk

PRESS RELEASE:
Wales & West Spacefest 2027 to bring Space, Science and Astronomy to Life at Aerospace Bristol

Saturday 6 March 2027

Everyone is invited to discover the extraordinary world of space at Wales & West Spacefest 2027, taking place at Aerospace Bristol on Saturday 6 March 2027, from 09:30 to 17:00.

Now an annual public exhibition, Wales & West Spacefest brings together space businesses, not-for-profit organisations and amateur astronomical societies to demonstrate how accessible space and astronomy can be—and how an interest in space can develop into a hobby, a passion or a rewarding STEM career.

Following the inaugural event in 2026, which attracted nearly 800 visitors, organisers are aiming to welcome 1,500 people in 2027. The event is particularly designed to appeal to families with children from Key Stages 1 to 3, amateur astronomers and photographers, and anyone fascinated by stargazing, engineering or space exploration.

Held inside the Concorde Hangar at Aerospace Bristol, Spacefest will provide a unique environment in which visitors can explore, experiment and discover. Exhibits will cover everything from the science of astronomy and Britain's space heritage to the engineering and technologies being developed for the future.

For parents and young people, the event offers an exciting opportunity to discover the breadth of STEM careers available through real examples from organisations working in and around the space sector. For leaders of youth organisations, it provides an engaging destination for young people to encounter science and engineering beyond the classroom and see where their curiosity could lead.

Amateur astronomers and photographers will also find plenty to explore, including a wide range of telescopes, from smart telescopes to large reflecting instruments, alongside opportunities to discover how you can listen to the Sun or find planets orbiting other stars.

A programme of talks will run throughout the day in the auditorium. The morning theme will be “Exploring the Solar System”, while the afternoon will ask the enduring question “Is there life out there?” European Space Agency Reserve Astronaut Dr Meganne Christian will attend to meet the astronauts of the future and deliver a talk on future crewed spaceflight to low Earth orbit, the Moon and beyond.

Visitors can also immerse themselves in the Universe through a planetarium, experience space through virtual reality, and attempt to dock a spacecraft with the International Space Station using a realistic simulator.

Spacefest also provides businesses and industry bodies with a valuable platform for public engagement and STEM outreach. Exhibiting offers organisations the chance to showcase their work, raise awareness of their contribution to the space and technology sectors, and inspire potential future employees. Organisations interested in exhibiting can find further information at spacefest.uk/become-an-exhibitor/. The organisations already intending to exhibit are listed at spacefest.uk/exhibitors/.

Visitors will additionally be able to explore the wider Aerospace Bristol museum, including spacecraft models and replicas designed, built and tested at Filton, such as Giotto, which photographed Halley's Comet in 1986, and walk inside the final Concorde aircraft to be built and the last to fly.

Tickets include entry to Spacefest and a year's entry to the Aerospace Bristol Museum.

Wales & West Spacefest 2027 is organised by Bath Astronomers, Bristol Astronomical Society and Cardiff Astronomical Society, in partnership with Aerospace Bristol.

Saturday 6 March 2027 | 09:30–17:00
Concorde Hangar, Aerospace Bristol, Bristol, BS34 5BZ

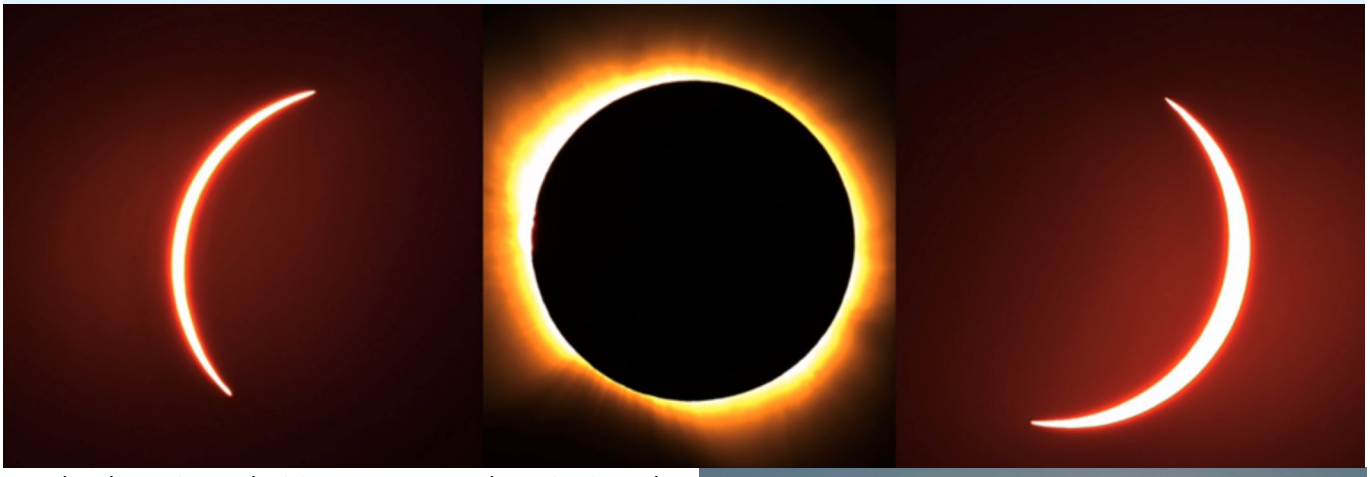
Tickets are available from Aerospace Bristol.

For further information or enquiries, please visit spacefest.uk or email info@spacefest.uk.


VISIT
WALES & WEST
SPACEFEST
ON
★ SATURDAY 6TH MARCH 2027 ★
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A different looking Spanish Sun

By the 'Cosmic Camper,' Steve Southern
Liverpool Astronomical Society



I made a last minute decision to go to Northern Spain and enjoy the totality of the August 12th 2026 Solar Eclipse event.

The location I visited was a tiny village surrounded by several farms and 1,000 metres up on the plain of the ancient region of León, actually about 10 miles out of Leon. No shops, no pubs, no broadband nothing but about 30 houses and a few farms. But amazing 5G mobile connectivity thankfully!

Ready for the journey to Spain





Location

I took the Brittany Ferries sailing from Portsmouth to Bilbao and then drove for 3 hours to the location arriving the day before the eclipse event. Checked out the best location in the village and the photo on the right of this page shows the choice I made which proved to be an excellent decision albeit on the main road into the village!

Astronomy Equipment

I decided to take my solar scope and Seestar. The Solarscope would be for observing only and the Seestar would be a combination of observing in white light via my iPhone, plus I would be taking photographs and video with it. I didn't want to overload the astrogear I brought along. I wanted to take in the whole event and totality only lasted 1 minute 45 seconds. I



didn't want my head in a camera the whole time. The Solar scope was my Lunt Ha LS50 mounted on a Sky Watcher Solar Quest mount and tripod. The Seestar was the ZWO Seestar S50 with a small tripod and white light solar filter.

Eclipse day

We did a trial run of the setup during the afternoon in 33°c heat. The weather was glorious with blue skies and not a cloud anywhere. Both telescopes worked perfectly and tracked the Sun really well. I was ready for the magnificence of the solar eclipse and totality.

Setting Up

Aware that the Sun even at 19:00 CET was still very intense we set up in readiness for the start of the eclipse.

I had some helpers who had offered to assist in the setup. My son, who came over from Barcelona and his friend and friend's family were the helpers. A group of about thirty locals, family and friends turned up and of course I gave them the benefit of my experience to make the event even more exciting for us all! Luckily most of them spoke good English as my Spanish is limited. My son, Chris and his good friend Paolo were also great translators! Eclipse glasses on and 19:30 (CET) arrived with us all ready. From the NASA eclipse interactive map, first contact was 19:32.48. Totality was timed for 20:28.19, Totality was due to end at 20:30.04.

Totality

We watched as the Moon ate away at the Sun. And at totality I shouted out "solar glasses off", it was translated and off came the solar glasses for the short period of totality. I removed the white light filter covering the Seestar lens for the duration of totality. The area went dark, the birds stopped singing, the crickets started making their rhythmic noises. We could also see other things happening during the eclipse. The small crowd did not expect totality to be so dramatic. Everyone was very surprised of the effect totality had on them. After all it is a cosmic event. One thing I had never done before was look at the Sun using my Ha Lunt scope and observe the prominences at totality. It was quite amazing and the prominences seemed incredibly bright. Overall, I am very pleased with my decision to keep things simple and the equipment I brought along performed really well.

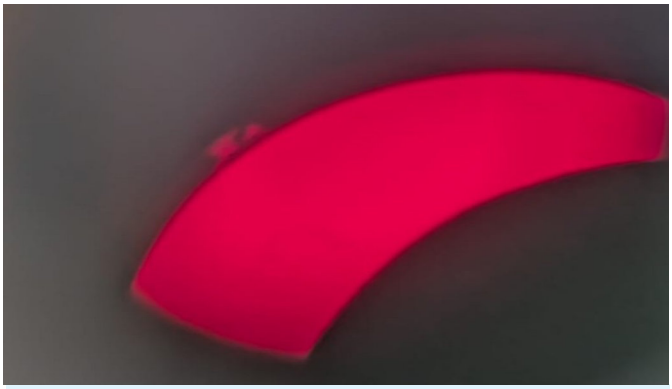
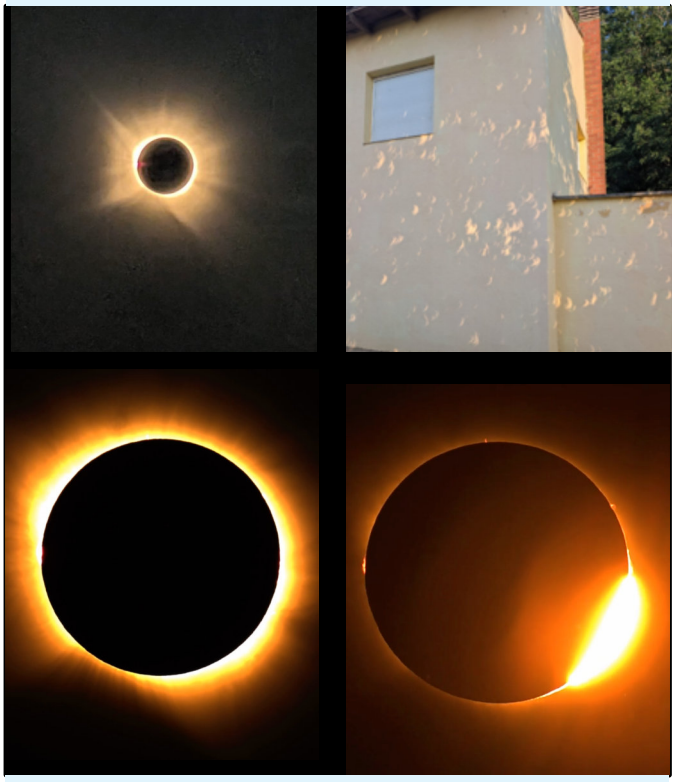


***Image Above**: Large prominences seen through the Lunt Solar scope. Taken with a smart phone at the eyepiece.*



***Images Above:** totality taken with the Seestar and Projection onto the white wall behind us.*

Steve Southern
Liverpool AS
Liverpoolas.org

Life with a Seestar S50

Jack Paget

Birmingham Astronomical Society

For as long as I can remember, I've always wanted to explore and delve into deep-sky astrophotography. I've always had a love for the cosmos; the drive to reach for the stars and planets, and galaxies and deep sky objects was already there, cemented in my mind; but so was the stark reality that traditional Astrophotography rigs, and telescopes demanded steep financial investments and savings; putting hours and hours of time into learning the specialised hardware and rig setups. Growing up 20 years ago, those hurdles made it very difficult to pursue entry for a beginner and enthusiast like myself.

Fast forward to a little under a year ago, that idea shifted entirely when it came across smart telescopes. I was immediately impressed and invested in what the compact automated hardware was capable of from what I saw online, I picked up the ZWO Seestar S50, and realised on my first night of shooting, how radically these rigs lower the bar for entry.

Device Management

The S50 is very quick and easy to set up, you can download the Seestar app directly to your phone or tablet via Bluetooth connection, you need Wi-Fi or data, but you can connect it to the same devices' data hotspot you are using for the smart telescope/app.

Make sure to always update the firmware when new updates pop up on the app and become available! Make sure the Seestar is on a flat surface with a clear, open field of view, ensuring no obstacles like tress or buildings are obstructing the camera, access the scopes device management menu to run the Compass calibration, adjust exposure times, and switching between Alt-Az/EQ mode settings, this should take no more than 5-10 minutes to setup ready, and understanding the type of target you want to capture can you change how you operate the settings.

Targets:

Faint emission nebula targets can often lack the contrast for the scopes autofocus to lock on. Using the SkyAtlas in the Seestar App, this is a map of the sky, from there you can search and slew first to a bright, high-magnitude star (such as Vega, Deneb, or Sirius) and run the auto focus routine there. Once the sharp focus is locked, search for your emission target inside the SkyAtlas and press the GoTo to slew directly to it (this manoeuvres to the nebula without re-triggering the autofocus); and for shooting any nebula, remember to keep the internal light pollution filter engaged (LP ON), to help cut out the local, urban sky glow, and the dual band filter helps bring in the Hydrogen-Alpha colours and details in.

For shooting galaxies, always make sure the LP filter is turned off (LP OFF), as galaxies are broadband targets which emit starlight across the full visible spectrum. Schedule galaxy imaging runs around New Moons for the best results to prevent the lunar glow from washing out faint spiral arms. Keep in mind that shooting in mosaic mode when the moon is out can introduce severe gradient imbalances, background extraction tools (like DBE) on the Seestar's capture settings, can cause an entire stitched panel to blowout into a solid white wall. Strict, sub-exposure rejection thresholds are essential here to drop those corrupted light polluted frames automatically.

Calibration

Following recent firmware updates, many Seestar users are encountering these persistent horizontal calibration compass failures (myself included), with the app frequently throwing up repeated error messages during setup.





To resolve this, I recommend splitting the rotation into smaller increments, doing small segments at a time (below); like calibrating it in quarters (North, East, South West), but essentially split those 4 rotations in half into even smaller rotations; akin to moving steadily around a clock face. Rotating the Seestar slowly and smoothly gives the device time to register directional deviation.



There is also a built-in app network called AstroImg. Which is a built-in community you can get involved with; it allows you to share your images and master stacks, participate in imaging contests, and troubleshoot techniques, share ideas, aswell as networking with other observers.

In Conclusion

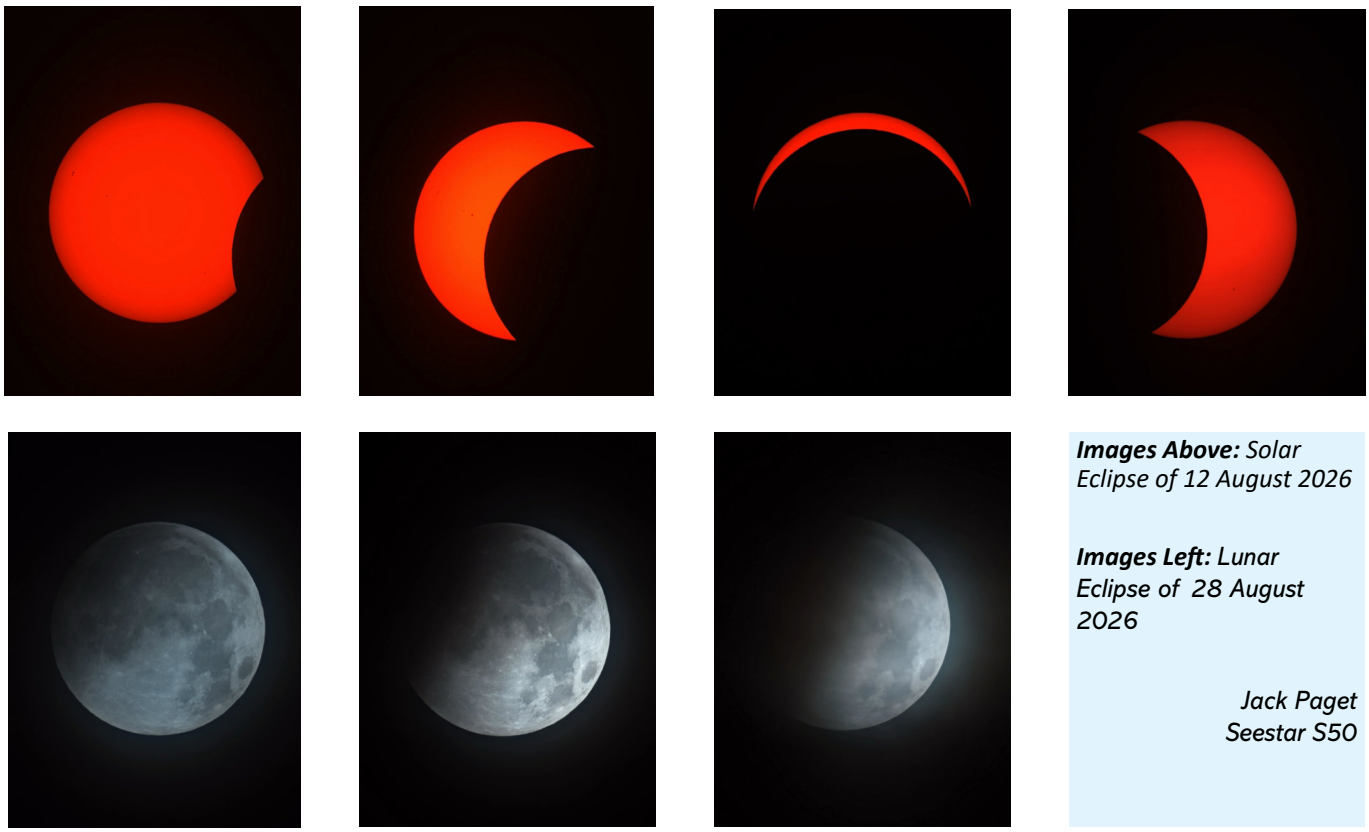
One of the best, primary advantages I've had with a smart telescopes (specifically the Seestar S50), is how convenient and fast you can take advantage with them, and utilise them in such short notice. On 28 August 2026, during the partial lunar eclipse, my mate and I planned this trip 12 hours in advance to drive out of Chelmsley Wood up to Frankly Beeches. Paying the petrol money was a small price to pay for the elevation advantage needed to get above the urban mist and light pollution. Everything was working in our favour perfectly, up until the first rule of astronomy kicked in: heavy cloud cover.

But with that in mind, on a traditional rig that would've took me an hour or two of setting up, polar alignment, and heavy assembly. I was able to deploy the Seestar in 5-10 minutes of arriving and setting up, the Seestars' built-in auto-tracking locked onto the moon through a rift of clouds, and whenever a gap appeared, I snapped frames and managed to capture some of Earth's shadow cutting across the lunar surface, a result that would've been impractical and incredibly challenging with traditional gear under those conditions.

The same benefits paid off on Wednesday, 12th of August 2026, during the solar eclipse. I took my 8 year-old son and the Seestar S50 with me to Kingshurst Field, setting up the scope was hassle free; and we sat together on the field tracking the entire sequence from start to finish. It wasn't just a couple of snapshots, I was able to shoot the whole progression with my son in real time. There was no wrestling with complex gear, or stress over alignment routines. It allowed me to appreciate in that moment, and proved to me how effortlessly smart scopes lowered the barrier to entry for young observer;, my son got to experience and share the same hands on experience with me, what could've been a frustrating technical exercise, allowed me to share a moment with him together.

To be honest, in hindsight I don't think smart telescopes are going to replace traditional rigs, now would I want them too. If you want the best results, details, contrast and resolution, then a fully manual rig is still the gold standard you want to aim for; as well as the real time and effort required to master and understand your rigs. However, smart telescopes like the Seestar S50 offer the gateway access, speed and convenience that traditional gear simply can't match. Being able to set up, calibrate and dial in settings, image, and pack away in a fraction of the time is what makes astronomy vastly more accessible! When you paid that alongside today's post processing tools like Siril, and even more accessible Astro wizard; and the endless tutorials and access we have on the Internet, none of this was possible when I was growing up, the barrier to entry is truly lower than it's ever been; we are in a golden age of astronomy!

Jack Paget
Birmingham Astronomical Society
https://www.birmingham-astronomy.co.uk



Images Above: *Solar Eclipse of 12 August 2026*

Images Left: *Lunar Eclipse of 28 August 2026*

Jack Paget
Seestar S50

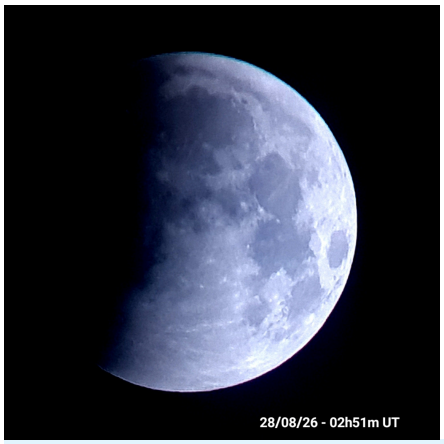
Partial Lunar Eclipse
28 August 2026





Alex Vincent
Taken using a 300 mm lens with a X2 converter ISO 400 with a 1/250th second exposure and a 2 second exposure. It was a digital Canon SLR camera.

Alex Vincent
Worthing Astronomical Society
worthingastronomicalsociety.org
Worthing Astronomers
worthingastronomers.org.uk





Mark Lee
Taken from Withybush, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.

Mark Lee
pembsastronomer.blogspot.com
Preseli Astronomy Group
https://www.preseliastronomygroup.org



Pauline Phillips
Taken in Newbury, West Berkshire.
Canon EOS R10 with 400mm lens.

Pauline Phillips
Newbury Astronomical Society
https://www.newburyastro.org.uk

Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society

Meeting Programme October/ November 2026
Every Thursday 7:30pm, Mexborough Church Hall

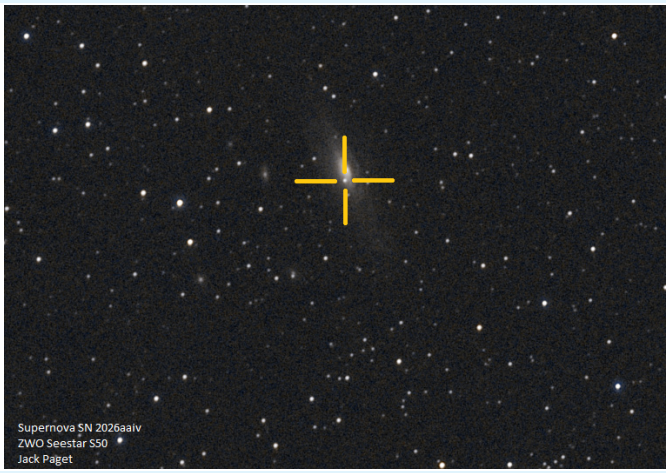
October 1st 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Mike Lancaster: "John Flamsteed"** *Dive into the story of John Flamsteed and discover how he changed the way we see the stars! John Flamsteed (1646–1719) was an English astronomer and the first Astronomer Royal. Dr. Mike Lancaster is a prominent amateur astronomer and popular speaker associated with the Derby and District Astronomical Society.*
October 8th 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Peter Goodhew: "Robotic Telescopes"** *Come geek out with us and see how robotic telescope operated from afar are used to explore the stars! Peter Goodhew has been operating robotic telescopes at remote sites for the past 10 years.*
October 15th 7:30pm (Live only)	**Mick Nicholls: "Processing Solar Images"** *Renowned Solar Astronomer Mick Nicholls reveals some (but not all) of his secrets*
October 22nd 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Tim Pearce: "Kuiper Belts around other stars"** *Dive into the mysteries of distant solar systems and discover what those icy Kuiper Belts are hiding beyond our own backyard. Tim Pearce is a Stephen Hawking Fellow at the University of Warwick. He mainly research 'debris discs', around other stars, which are populations of asteroids and comets like the Asteroid Belt and Kuiper Belt in our Solar System.*
October 29th 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Paul Money: "Atmospheres of the Solar System"** *This talk explores the vast diversity of planetary atmospheres across our planetary nieghbourhood. It highlights how differing compositions, gravitational pulls, and distances from the Sun shape these worlds, Paul Money (FRAS, FBIS) is a highly respected British amateur astronomer and science communicator based in Lincolnshire*
November 5th 7:30pm (Live Only)	**Members Night** *An opportunity for members to share tips, information and make small presentations themselves*
November 12th 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Kris Hudson-Lee: "Winter Skies"** *A Look at what's around in the Yorkshire night sky over the next few months. Kris has been a member of the society, first joining in 1983. He holds degree level qualifications in astrophysics with mechanics.*
November 19th 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Anne Inkenhaag: "Finding metals using gamma-ray burst galaxies"** *Astronomers call everything heavier than hydrogen and helium metals. Various processes in the universe create these metals, and in turn, metals influence almost every process in the universe. In this talk, we will explore how and why gamma-ray burst galaxies specifically are useful to measure how much metals there are. Anne Inkenhaag is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Bath*
November 26th 7:30pm (Live & Zoom)	**Martin Lunn: "The Story of Edward Crossley and Joseph Gledhill"** *The West Yorkshire town of Halifax was dominated by textile mills in the 19th century. Crossley Carpets made carpets which were exported around the world. What is less well known is that Edward Crossley and his employed assistant astronomer Joseph Gledhill had an observatory with the largest reflecting telescope in England. Martin Lunn MBE FRAS is a prominent British public astronomer, curator, and lecturer*

Meeting information at : https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/msas-zoom-talks-814679

Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society
Mexborough Church Hall, 58A Church St, Mexborough S64 0ER
Thursdays from 7:30pm

Readers' Images



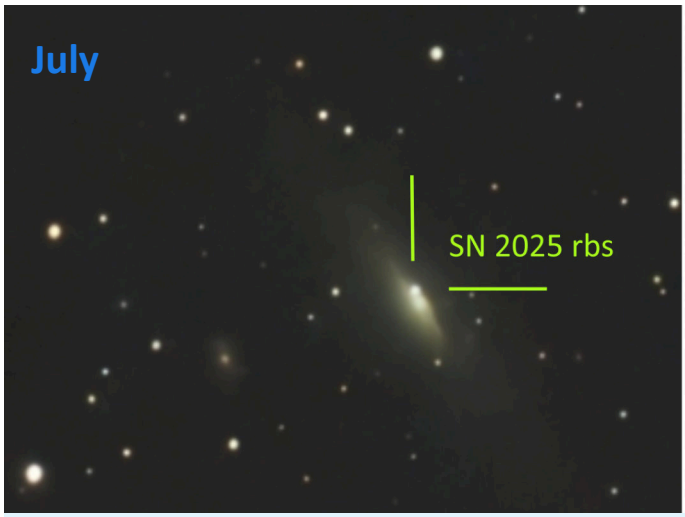


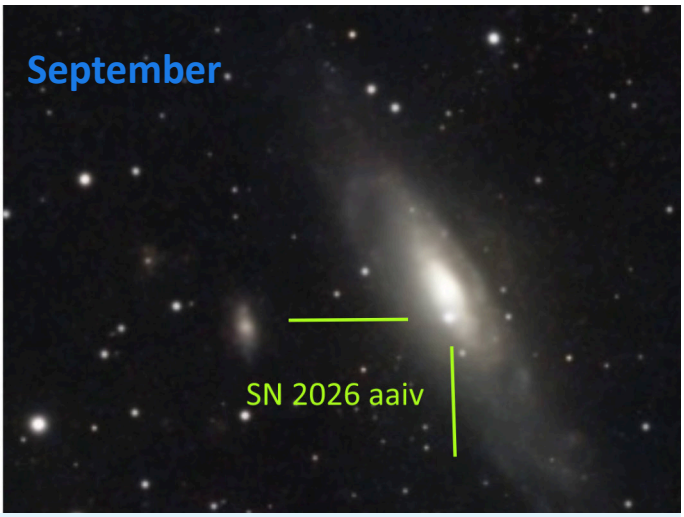
Supernova SN 2026aaiv

NGC 7331, also known as Caldwell 30 (Spiral Galaxy), 40 million light years away, with Supernova SN 2026aaiv (Type Ia supernova) in the constellation Pegasus; captured locally in my back garden (Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham), on a ZWO Seestar S50; post processing was used via Siril and AstroWizard. The Supernova was discovered on Tuesday, 1 September 2026 by the automated ATLAS (Asteroid Terrestrial Last Alert System).

Jack Paget

Birmingham Astronomical Society
https://www.birmingham-astronomy.co.uk





Two Supernoae. One Galaxy

I'm pleased to have imaged the 'new' supernova in NGC7331 (SN 2026aaiv) There was another supernova in the same galaxy last year - though that's an odd thing to say as the two supernovae were at least 8800 light years apart - so it's only observers on 'our' light path that would have seen them separated by 14 months. Here's a collage of the two of them, both imaged with a Seestar S50.

Last year's image had to be about 2 minutes exposure as otherwise the core of the galaxy burned out the SN, this year's image is 10 minutes, which is why so much more detail of the galaxy is visible.

Owen Gwynne
Mid Cheshire Astro Group

Leicester Astronomical Society

The Leicester Astronomical Society (LAS) meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of most months at the National Space Centre (NSC) in Leicester. We are treated to talks/demonstrations by professionals, well-known amateurs and indeed our own members. As well as in-person at the NSC, a Zoom link is usually available for those who are unable to attend for whatever reason. Everyone is welcome at our meetings but non-members are asked to pay £3 on the door.

A very strong side of LAS is our outreach. We provided an assortment of safe solar viewing techniques at the 12 August Eclipse Event at the NSC which 400 people attended plus local TV and press. Very positive feedback was received, and LAS members who assisted went home with a real spring in their steps! Some preferred to arrange their own local neighbourhood events using the eclipse viewers obtained via Go Stargazing. It was certainly a hot evening but fortunately clouds did not interfere!

At the time of writing, other outreach activities are the September UK in Space Festival at the NSC and a Bats, Moths and Stars Evening with Loughborough Bats and Moths groups.

Entries for our Summer Sky Photographic Competition are now welcome and judging by members will take place in late October with FABULOUS prizes! The standard seems to get higher each time (the entries that is, not the prizes!)

Coming up: All start at 7.30pm

October 13:	Dr Julian Onions, Nottingham University: Black Holes - are they really that bad?
October 27:	Photo competition judging and Autumn Night Sky
November 10:	Dr Nahid Chowdury: "Toulouse: From Pink City to Red Planet" ONLINE ONLY
November 24:	Dr Nick Hewitt, Northampton, “The most important astronomical image”

Ann Bonell

Leicester Astronomical Society

https://www.leicesterastronomicalsociety.co.uk

https://www.facebook.com/Leicester.Astronomical.Society

Society for the History of Astronomy

Online Zoom® Webinar

"Measuring the stars and Observing the Less Visible": Australia's Participation in the Astrographic Catalogue and the Carte Du Ciel 1887 ~ 1963.





Dr Toner Stevenson, University of Sydney

Australia's decision to participate in a major international astronomical project to produce an Astrographic (Star) Catalogue and Carte du Ciel (Chart of the Sky) ultimately involved Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth observatories. Participation in this project promised to bring international recognition of Australia's capability in astronomy and access to the latest photographic technology and methods, within a network comprised of leading astronomers and observatories from around the globe.

Dr Toner Stevenson is an honorary affiliate in History at The University of Sydney and a Doctor of Social Sciences. Her career has been mainly in museums including Manager of Sydney Observatory, Head of House Museums for Sydney Living Museums, Manager Exhibitions Co-ordination for the Powerhouse Museum and Project Manager for the Natural History Museum, London. Toner is active in amateur astronomy and citizen science as past President, Sydney City Skywatchers (BAA NSW Branch), and she is a member of the Royal Society of NSW. Her research is in the history of astronomy in Australia.

Wednesday 4th November 2026 at 8pm (GMT)

Zoom link details will be made available to SHA members near to date.

Please contact: - meetings@shastro.org.uk

Images Credit with thanks to © Toner Stevenson. Image shows Mary Allen and Ethel Willcocks of Sydney Observatory. Credit Waterford Powerhouse Collection. Colourised by AI

The Society for the History of Astronomy

Meet NASA Astronaut Doug Hurley

Saturday 7 November 2026: Cranfield University

A Public Event by The Armchair Astronaut



Step inside the world of human spaceflight with veteran NASA astronaut Douglas Hurley, the last astronaut to Pilot the Space Shuttle, and Commander of the historic SpaceX Demo-2 first crewed Dragon mission.

This is a rare opportunity to hear first-hand what it's really like to pilot the Space Shuttle, command a spacecraft and help usher in a new era of human spaceflight. From the final Space Shuttle mission to the return of crewed launches aboard SpaceX Crew Dragon, Doug will share the stories behind some of the most significant moments in modern space exploration.

You'll also have the opportunity to ask your own questions during our live audience Q&A, making this a genuinely interactive and memorable experience.

Our Space Social events bring together people who share a fascination with space; from curious beginners and families to students, educators and industry professionals. Whether you come on your own or with friends or family, you'll be part of a welcoming and passionate community. If you've ever wondered what it takes to pilot a spacecraft, command a mission and witness history from the cockpit, this is your opportunity to hear the story from someone who lived it.

For more information and tickets please visit:

The Armchair Astronaut
https://thearmchairastronaut.co.uk/doug-hurley



145 Years of Astronomy on Merseyside Liverpool Astronomical Society (1881 – 2026)

Special Anniversary Exhibition and Archive Display Opens Liverpool Central Library

Gerard Gilligan

The Liverpool Astronomical Society is one of the oldest in Great Britian, for 145 years it has enabled amateur astronomers to meet, communicate observations, and to discuss the construction and the use of telescopes, while promoting the science of astronomy to the wider public.

To help celebrate this special anniversary, a small but significant free exhibition and display, has now opened and will trace some important stages in the story of the society. In the first 10 years of its formation, the society fundamentally changed how amateur astronomy was organised in this country and the wider world.

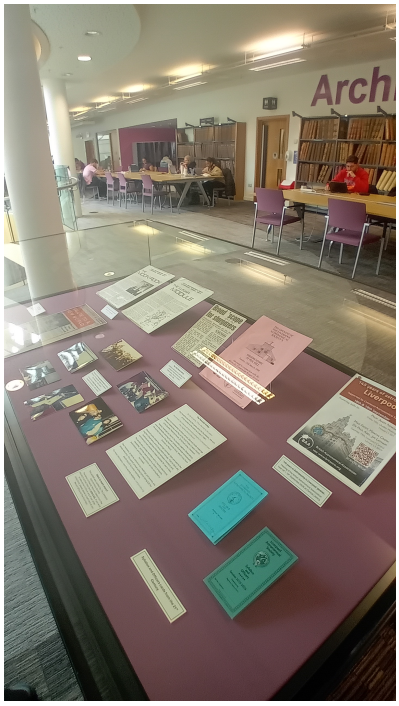
It's early success, and longevity is demonstrated with the display of selected items from the society archives with the kind cooperation of the Liverpool Record Office and Archives.

Special Thanks to Vicki.

Exhibition Now open - until 24 December 2026. Open 9am – 8pm Mon – Fri & 9am – 5pm Sat. Third Floor, Liverpool Central Library, William Brown Street. Liverpool.

Please contact: - historian@liverpoolas.org
Images courtesy of Gerard Gilligan
Liverpoolas.org









Liverpool Astronomical Society Cronton Village Gala

Saturday 5th September 2026

Members of Liverpool Astronomical Society took part in their first outreach event of the new season, which was part of the Cronton Village Gala. Along with many stalls, sport and dance demonstrations, plus many fair rides, the society members were out in force with several olar telescopes.

Morning rain and cloud soon turned to blue skies and warm September sunshine. Under society supervision members of the public viewed safely our nearest star with both Hydrogen-alpha (Hα) telescopes allowed observation of solar features like flares and prominences. White-light solar telescopes or telescopes with full-aperture solar filters let young and old safely view sunspots and the photosphere.

Views of the Waning Crescent Moon in blue skies was also observed. SeeStar™ robotic telescope technology was also demonstrated. The society collection of meteorites was also on display, supplemented with detailed demonstrations of example "space rocks" from the Moon, Mars, and Mercury.

The society stall and telescope views were very busy during the day with main leaflets distributed and information on society Winter meetings, young astronomers' events at the Society's Leighton Observatory at nearby Pex Hill, close to the Village. We thank the Gala organisers and for all the society members who very kindly donated their time to Support our information stall, and outreach demonstrations.

Images: With thanks to Phil Williams, Anne Smith, Gabriel Becerra & Gerard Gilligan.

Text: Gerard Gilligan & Phil Williams.

More information regarding Liverpool Astronomical Society and new session of meetings and events for 2026-27 October – May can be found on their web site: Liverpoolas.org



Images on this page:

Above: Viewing the Sun with Hydrogen-alpha telescope.

Below: Demonstration of meteorite exams to future astronomers and meteor experts.

Left: Supervised viewing of the daytime Moon.





Fordingbridge Astronomers Visit Jodrell Bank

By Mark Hardaker FRAS

Ten members of Fordingbridge Astronomers made the long journey north to Jodrell Bank in Cheshire for a day out and an overnight stay nearby. Club trips like this have become an important part of our offering, and this was our second visit to the threatened facility near Manchester.

Leaving Fordingbridge before dawn had even cracked, we headed into the freezing north, raincoats and umbrellas at the ready. Laughter and quips in the two cars kept us entertained as the miles rolled by, punctuated, of course, by the mandatory comfort and coffee stops.

The magnificent Lovell Telescope suddenly loomed above the trees when we were still about five miles from Jodrell Bank, its glorious white dish apparently hungrily gathering radio signals from the stars. We were all in awe of the engineering required to erect such a vast structure – and to keep it in such remarkably good condition.

The visitor centre is a feast of information for astronomers and anyone interested in the history of the facility. It tells the story of Sir Bernard Lovell, including his wartime experiments with radar, his ambition to build the world's first fully steerable radio telescope and the trials and tribulations involved in actually getting the thing built. At one point, he was almost arrested for wasting government money!

The IMAX-style theatre shows films throughout the day, including the story of Jodrell Bank and, during our visit, a fascinating film about how mankind might eventually get to Mars. Both were thoroughly enjoyed by the group.

Once the rain finally stopped, we walked down towards the Lovell Telescope. Its 76-metre white dish towered above us as it quietly went about its business. The telescope was in operation during our visit, being slewed from one object to another. Watching this enormous structure move so smoothly was impressive and a wonderful demonstration of just how precise the engineering has to be.

There is also a café on site providing food and drink, along with plenty of areas where visitors can sit outside and enjoy a picnic – weather permitting, naturally!

Leaving the observatory at 4.30pm, we headed to the nearby Plough at Eaton, an excellent pub and restaurant that we have used before. It has a first-class restaurant, friendly service and comfortable rooms for those who have made the sensible decision not to drive home after a day of astronomy. It is popular, though, so booking well in advance is advisable.



Returning south the following day, we were left feeling rather sad that the Government is threatening to end funding for this magnificent facility. Jodrell Bank is a unique part of Britain's scientific heritage and something of which the UK should be enormously proud.

We very much hope a solution can be found, with more reliable sources of funding secured, to ensure that Jodrell Bank can continue its vital work and remain a world leader in radio astronomy – preferably without anyone having to be arrested for wasting government money!

Mark Hardaker FRAS
Fordingbridge Astronomers
www.fordingbridgeastro.org.uk