

# 2002



**FRED CLARKE  
1921 – 2013**

**NEXT MEETING  
THURSDAY, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013  
THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY  
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[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)**

# SOCIETY NEWS

## MEETING VENUE

**Sixth Form Centre, Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14 5RJ.**

The day for meetings is usually the third Thursday of each month. The exceptions are August, when currently we do not hold a meeting, and December, when the Christmas Meet has always traditionally been held during the second week.

However, in case of changes, it is always advisable to double-check the dates below.

**Note we have a change of meeting room. The old Music Room building has gone the way of our original meeting place at the School, and has been demolished. We will now be meeting in the Sixth Form Centre, which is a similar building, but to the right, not left, of the car park. However it is closer to the playing field, so conveniently for any viewing sessions.**

**There are also on-going discussions as to whether we hold more regular ‘observing evenings’, likely in the week before the main meeting.**

For more on this, and general meeting information, also check the website:  
[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk). Latest update May 2013

**Doors open - 7.30pm : Main speaker - 8.00pm : Finish - 10.00pm sharp!**

New or updated information is in *italics*

## 2013

**May 16<sup>th</sup> : Mat Irvine : “The Life and Times of a Perfect Gentleman”  
A look back at our Founder and President, Fred Clarke**



June 20<sup>th</sup>

July 18<sup>th</sup>

August : summer break

September 19<sup>th</sup>

October 17<sup>th</sup> : AGM

November 21<sup>st</sup>

December 12<sup>th</sup> : Christmas Do – *possibly...*

### COVER :

Fred Clarke in the gardens at Dene Court in Bishop’s Lydeard in Somerset. For many years Fred had grand plans to turn the building into the Arthur C. Clarke Centre, and he did a great deal of work to enable this end. Unfortunately it was one of the few plans Fred had that didn’t come to pass.

*Photo – Mat Irvine*



## **FRED CLARKE**

**1921– 2013**

Very sadly we have to announce the death of our founder and President, Fred Clarke, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013. As many will know Fred was the brother of Arthur C. Clarke, but he was much more besides.

Long-time resident in Wood Green, he lived at 88 Nightingale Road, just down the hill from Alexandra Palace. It was an address to anyone, with even a passing interest in science fiction, far more famous than even the Prime Minister's, as it was the address for when Arthur was in the country. Ostensible Fred ran Arthur's businesses in the UK, under the Rocket Publishing Company, (that occasionally got confused with Elton John's Rocket Record company), though by trade he was actually a central heating engineer. Personally I can't say I ever saw him near a heating system, but he did write the Bible of that industry, Small Bore Central Heating, which is still used.

Fred also had a wide interest in many other things, from the Lifeboats, to restoring the Alexandra Palace's organ, to the Burma Star organisation, Fred was mainly in that country during WWII, and meetings with the Rotary Club, of which Fred was a long-time member. If there was some charity or organisation that Fred could do something for, Fred would do it. And it is how the ASH came about.

In 1971 I was a very new member of the BBC Visual Effects Department, and based at Alexandra Palace. One day I received a phone call with the message "There's a Mr Fred Clarke in reception. He wants to talk to whoever built the space models on display". That was me, but being very junior, I took my boss, Gerry Abouaf with me, and Gerry, being the boss, did most of the talking. This 'Mr Clarke' explained he was organising a 'Space Age Exhibition' in the local Art Centre, and could he borrow the models.



I observed them, rather in the manner of a spectator at a tennis match, my head swivelling from side to side, one to the other, with realisation dawning. We were in Wood Green, home to 88 Nightingale Road; this is a 'Mr Clarke' and he was organising a 'Space Age Exhibition'. The penny dropped -

"Heavens!" I said to Gerry, "This is Arthur C. Clarke's brother – give him anything he wants....!"

So the models went to the Space Age Exhibition, as did I with several more, and during the proceedings a friend of Fred's, one Patrick Moore, gave a talk, well actually *four* talks to various school groups. Afterwards Patrick said to Fred that there seemed so much enthusiasm for space and astronomy in the area, you ought to form an astronomical society. So Fred did and the rest, as is so often said, is history.

Fred eventually left the London area and returned to Somerset where he was born. He settled in a sprawling and slightly run-down mansion called Dene Court, in the village of Bishop's Lydeard, just outside Taunton. Fred and Arthur were actually born in Minehead, thirty miles away on the coast, but the family soon moved to Ballifants Farm, near Taunton, where the younger siblings, Mary and Michael were born. Most of them eventually moved away, though Michael remained running the farm, continued by his children.

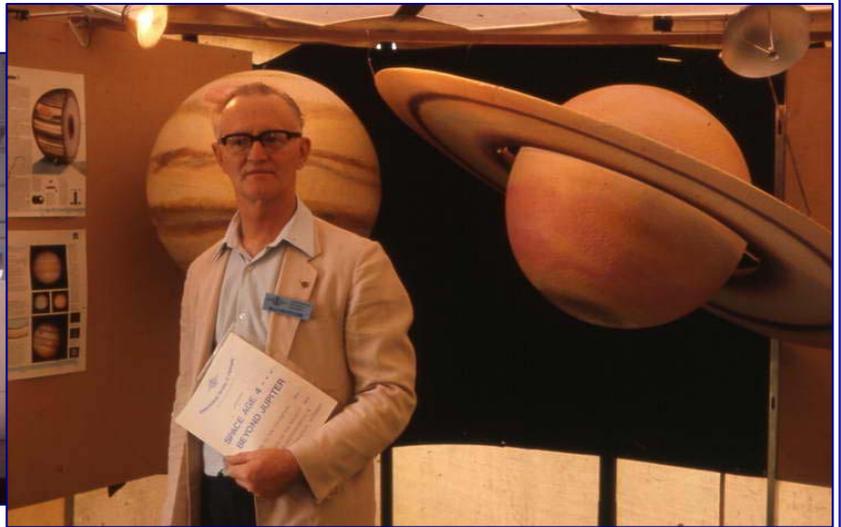
Fred continued writing books, perhaps ironically the only volumes actually published by the Rocket Publishing Company, on such as the early days in Somerset; his time in Burma; plus reminiscences of Alexandra Palace and Rotary. But all proceeds invariably went to some charity or cause, I don't think Fred himself ever made a penny out of these.

Fred was the epitome of a gentleman – he always found the good in people, and would help out absolutely anyone. He will be sorely missed and the Society's sincere condolences go to his immediate family, his daughters, Angie, Judith and Dianne.

Mat Irvine  
Founder member and Vice-Chair, ASH

**MEETING PREVIEW : 18<sup>th</sup> April**  
**Mat Irvine : “The Life and Times of a Perfect Gentleman”**  
**A look back at our Founder and President, Fred Clarke.**

This meeting will be devoted to Fred and his work with the Society. It also means it becomes a history of the Society as – in the early days especially – Fred was so much a part of it. If anyone who knew Fred and who wants to say something – please let Mat know.



**Just a few photos from the early days of the ASH.**

Above Fred with the centrepiece of the first Space Age Exhibition, (aka Space Age 1), a 1:10 scale Europa launcher. Above right, Fred at Space Age 4; Right, with a telescope borrowed from Fullerscopes, (as it still was at the time) for Space Age 1. Immediately below, Fred at the SF Show he organised after Space Age 1. Bottom left at Space Age 2, far left, with Arthur C. Clarke next to him, and then David Hardy. Bottom right, the Open University models borrowed for Space Age 1



## SOCIETY NEWS

### MEETING ROOM –CHANGE



The meeting room at the school has changed due to the Music Room being demolished!

We are now meeting in the Sixth Form Centre, (see left). The building has two rooms, and we are meeting in the one to the right as you enter.

### MEETING REVIEW : 18<sup>th</sup> April Jerry Stone : "The Way to the Stars"

Jerry gave the Society his talk that he had developed for the British Interplanetary Society's 'From Imagination To Reality' event, held last year. (The event devised by him and your Editor!)

But how far have we got on our "Way to the Stars"? Unfortunately not very... Star Trek's USS Enterprise may be able to zoom across the Galaxy at warp speeds, but we have to rely on more established methods of propulsion – mostly chemical in the form of rocket fuel. Plus the vast majority of spacecraft that have been sent off from Earth are nowhere near leaving the Solar System, let alone venturing the vast interstellar distances. In fact there is only a sum total of four – two Pioneers and the two Voyager probes. One of the two Pioneers could reach the star system of Aldeberan, but it will take 2 million years to do the journey. The Voyagers are slightly faster, but Voyager 2 would still take 76,000 years to reach our closest neighbour – Alpha Centauri. Even light – travelling, well, at the speed of light, takes 4.3 years. Newer propulsion ideas could speed things up slightly? If the NERVA nuclear engine had been further developed, it could have travelled faster, while the Orion Nuclear Pulse Engine, could possible have made the Alpha Centauri run in a mere 1,330 years. Plasma engines are even more efficient – they could do it in 230 years – but all still currently longer than a human life-span. Maybe the answer is space arks, carrying generations of travellers? Maybe the problem with Star Travel is not the travelling itself – rather the time it takes? So could we be using suspended animation, as depicted in 2001 – A Space Odyssey to find our Way to the Stars? But then we all know what happened to them...



*Mat Irvine*

# CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



On the move again – Greece via Warsaw. I sneaked Greece in to get a second dose of Easter before heading off for Munich. This year was a bit of a surprise for me because over the past few years Orthodox and Western Easter have been about a week apart or on the same day. This year it was five weeks apart! This needed some research - how is Easter actually determined?

Easter weekend varies from year to year. Easter was originally determined in 325AD as the first Sunday after the full Moon following the March equinox. This equinox was determined to be on 21<sup>st</sup> March so the date of Easter can vary from March 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>. However, Orthodox Christianity bases its calculations on the Julian calendar, where March 21<sup>st</sup> currently corresponds to April 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Gregorian calendar, therefore its Easter varies from April 4<sup>th</sup> to May 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Julian calendar has 365 days divided into 12 months with a leap day added to February every four years. The Julian year is, on average, 365.25 days long. Even though Greek astronomers had known that the tropical year is a few minutes shorter than 365.25 days, the calendar did not compensate for this difference. So, the Julian calendar year gained around three days every four centuries in comparison to the equinox times and seasons. This discrepancy was corrected in 1582 by the introduction of the Gregorian calendar. This has the same months and lengths as the Julian calendar, but introduced leap days. Every year that is divisible by four is a leap year, except for years that are also divisible by 100. However those years that are divisible by 400 as well, are still

leap years. Consequently 1900 was not a leap year but 2000 was. The last day of the Julian calendar was Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1582. This was followed by the first day of the Gregorian calendar, Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1582 (a sort of 'leap fortnight!'). Currently the Julian calendar is 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar.



While in Warsaw I found Copernicus featured in many places including statues; a Science Centre and a square named after him. It transpires that he was born in Poland (something I hadn't known). Besides being an astronomer, he was a physician; a classics scholar; a translator; a governor; a diplomat and an economist who laid out a quantity theory of money – a major concept in economics still used today. (Hopefully we can't blame him for the euro!) Quite a character, hence all the tributes.

See you in June.

*Jim*

# THE NIGHT SKY : PLANETS

## May - June 2013

### PLANETARY CONJUNCTION :

Mercury, Venus and Jupiter form an interesting conjunction this month, with Jupiter moving towards the horizon, with Mercury and Venus, both having recently emerged from superior conjunction (behind the Sun), rising. The best views are from around 24<sup>th</sup> May onwards, after Sunset. Venus is magnitude -3.8; Jupiter around -2.0 and even Mercury is -1.4. On 26<sup>th</sup>, from around 21.00hrs (BST), they will form a tight equilateral triangle, **SEE SKY MAP**. On 27<sup>th</sup> Mercury is 1 degree (two Moon widths) north of Jupiter; on 28<sup>th</sup> Venus is 2 degrees north of Jupiter; while by 31<sup>st</sup> they will be in straight line. On 10<sup>th</sup> June, Venus and Mercury are a degree apart, with the two-day old Moon to the south.

**MERCURY** : At superior conjunction on 11<sup>th</sup> May, moving into the evening skies by 19<sup>th</sup>, joining Jupiter and Venus. The Moon is 6 degrees to the south on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**VENUS** : Emerges from superior conjunction mid-May, to join Mercury and Jupiter as part of the triple planet conjunction. The Moon is 5 degrees to the south on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**EARTH** : Summer Solstice 21<sup>st</sup> June

**MARS** : Was at superior conjunction on 18<sup>th</sup> April. Re-appears in the morning skies in a few months.

**JUPITER** : In the evening skies, and part of the triple planet conjunction, with Mercury and Venus. The two-day old crescent Moon is close on 12<sup>th</sup> May.

**SATURN** : Well placed for viewing this month, as it was at opposition on 28<sup>th</sup> April, so visible all night. The rings are open at the moment, around 19 degrees, making a worthwhile visit from even the smallest telescope. The Moon is to the south on 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

**URANUS** : Moon to the north on 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

**NEPTUNE** : Moon to the north on 31<sup>st</sup> May.

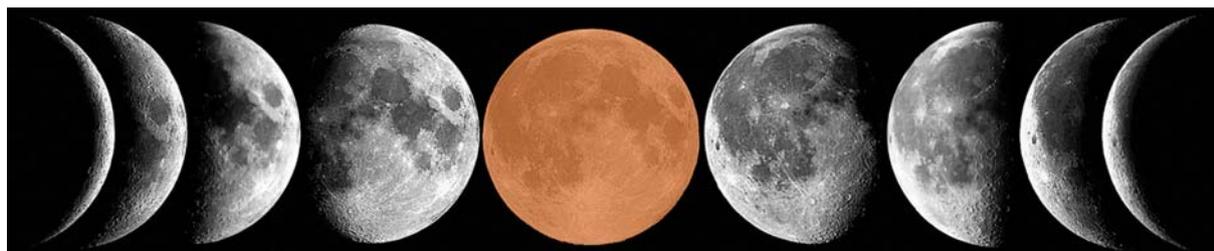
## COMETS

There is still a slight chance to spot PanSTARRS which is now passing from Cassiopeia and heading towards Polaris. But the magnitude is dropping rapidly, it is now less than +7 so optical devices will be needed to spot it. The best indicator could be on 31<sup>st</sup> May when the Comet will be five degrees (10 Moon widths) below and to the right of Polaris the Pole Star.

## THE SUN

Annular Solar Eclipse on 10<sup>th</sup> May, visible over Australia and the Pacific Ocean.

## THE MOON



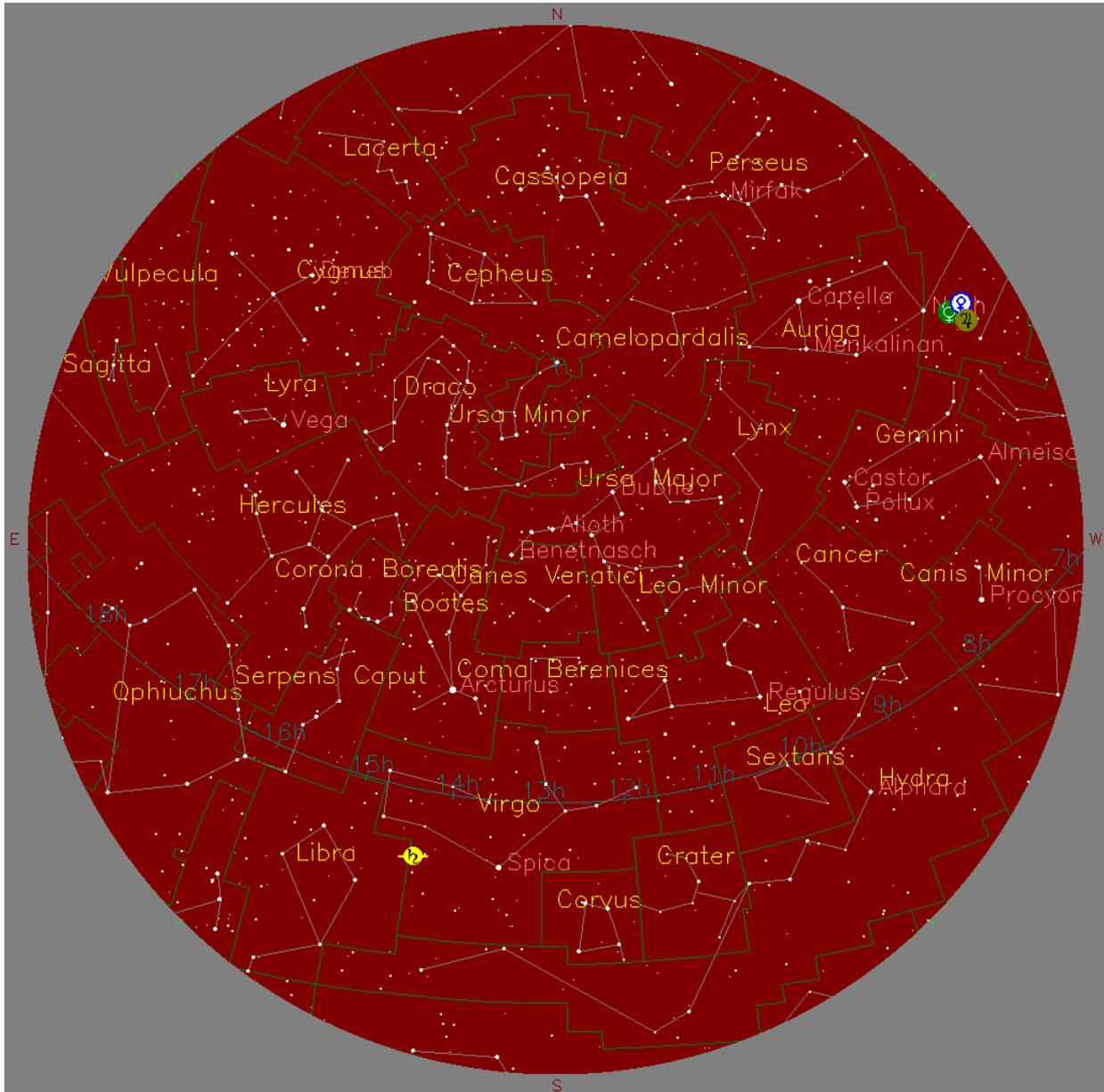
New 10<sup>th</sup> May      First Quarter 18<sup>th</sup>      Full 25<sup>th</sup>      Last Quarter 31<sup>st</sup>      New 8<sup>th</sup> June

The Moon will rise in partial eclipse on 25<sup>th</sup> May. As a partial, you may not see any differences from usual – maybe a slight darkening. Unfortunately not quite as depicted in the above image!

# THE NIGHT SKY : MAP

26<sup>th</sup> May 2013 22.30 BST [21:30 GMT/ UTC]

The map is timed for the closest of the conjunctions between Venus, Jupiter and Mercury.



KEY	
 <b>MERCURY</b>	 <b>SATURN</b>
 <b>VENUS</b>	 <b>URANUS</b>
 <b>MARS</b>	 <b>NEPTUNE</b>
 <b>JUPITER</b>	 <b>PLUTO</b>



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