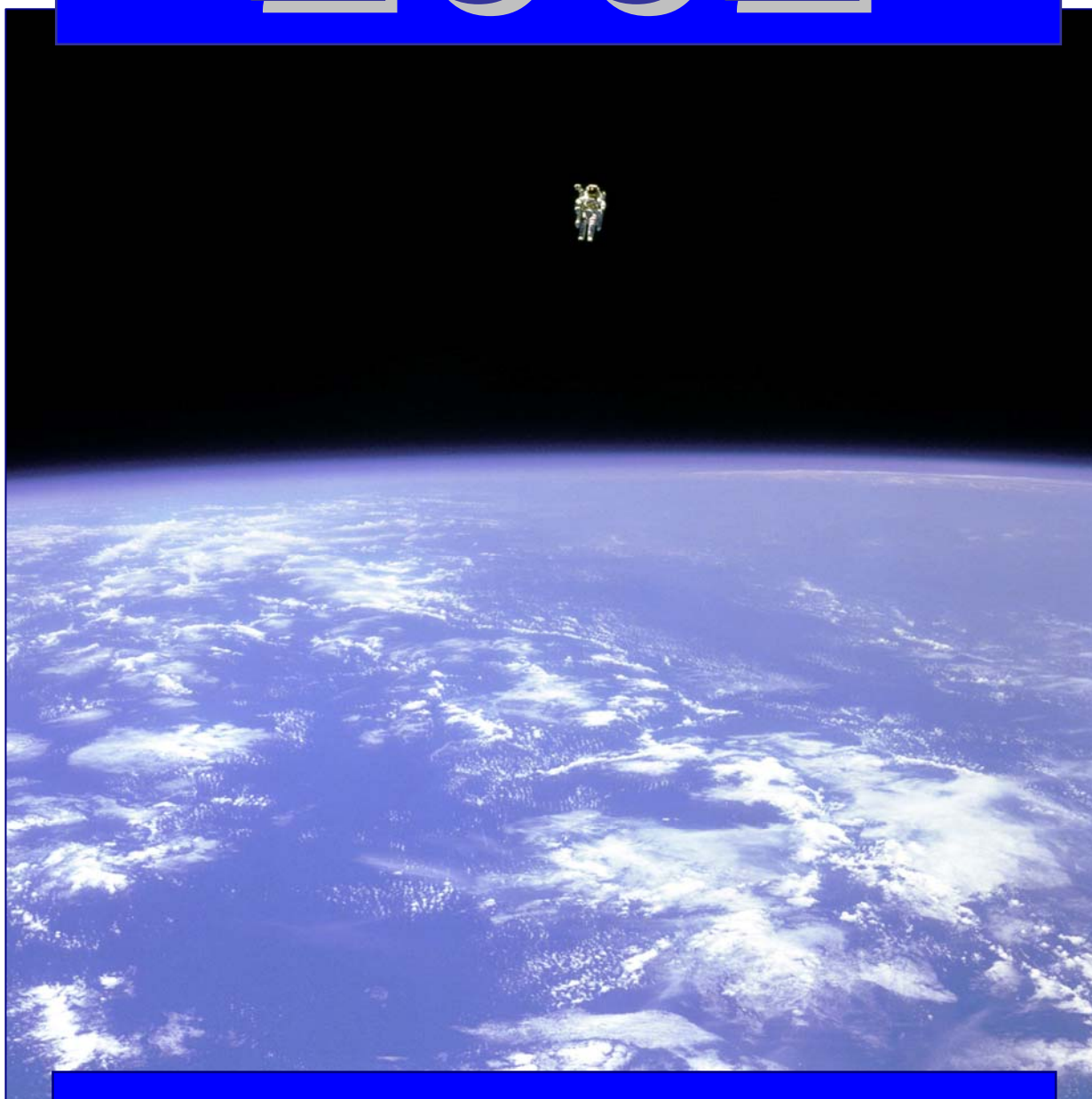


# 2002



**NEXT MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012**  
**THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY**  
**VOLUME 40 : ISSUE 3 : JANUARY 2012**

# SOCIETY NEWS

## MEETING VENUE :

Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14 5RJ.

The day for all 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 – and there have been a few over the last year or so – it is always advisable to double-check the dates below.

**NOTE - as below - the Meeting information is also on the *NEW* website:  
[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)**

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

## 2012

January 19<sup>th</sup> : Roger O'Brien "Quaoar and Other Thingies!"

February 16<sup>th</sup>

March 15<sup>th</sup>

April 19<sup>th</sup>

May 17<sup>th</sup>

June 21<sup>st</sup>

July 19<sup>th</sup>

Apologies the rest of the year has still not been confirmed, but this is hoped to be rectified by the February issue.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Currently we have TWO ASH websites running, in some form or another. The original is still under [www.ashastro.org](http://www.ashastro.org) (*not* .org.uk), but this is not being updated. The new version is under [www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk). Note three of the links - to Meetings, Magazine and About are now active. The Magazine link now has some back issues there - these will be added to when time allows!

We may decide to move back to the URL, .org.uk, (which is still available), or may stay with .co.uk. However whichever is decided, what you put into your web browser, will 'point' to whatever is correct. However the original direct ASH emails are not working, so will not get through. For the moment use the ones for Jim, Charles or myself, as listed on the back page. Eventually we hope to re-establish the ones with the <ashastro> in the name.

: Ed

**COVER** : NASA's Astronomical Photo of the Day is a website well worth visiting - you never quite know what will on show. <http://apod.nasa.gov>

This is the image that greeted us on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, and shows Bruce McCandless further out from a Space Shuttle than anyone had ever been before. Taken in 1984 during Shuttle Mission 41-B, with McCandless flying the MMU - Manned Manoeuvring Unit - for the very first time

*Image NASA*

## SOCIETY NEWS



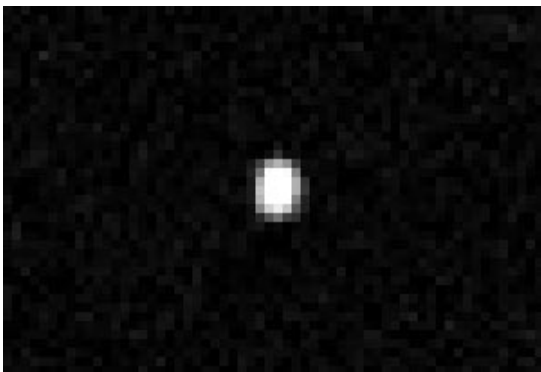
We meet in what was the Music Room at Ashmole School. (And previous to that, it was the Curriculum Support Building - still noted as such in the map.) This is the low building, (centre of the photo- right), just past the Performing Arts Centre and opposite the main entrance to the technology block. (PS - we are not sure what its current role is?)



### **MEETING PREVIEW :** **January 19<sup>th</sup> Roger O'Brien : "Quaoar and Other Thingies"**

One of our regular speakers, and of course past Editor of this very tome, Roger O'Brien will take the floor for the first meeting of the New Year.

In one of his usual intriguing talks, Roger will take the subject of one of the new names, mostly unpronounceable, that have arisen in the astronomical world within the past few years.



Quaoar is one of the increasingly found trans-Neptunian objects (TNO) in the Kuiper Belt that have been called *Cubewonos* (after the first such one found - QB1 - with an 'o' added!), or now more usually referred to as *Classical Kuiper Belt Objects*; 'classical' in that they have what is generally accepted as 'classical' orbits around the Sun, ie much like the first eight planets, but not Pluto where the orbit is highly eccentric, and tilted to the elliptic. This arguably makes Quaoar a more 'usual' object for the Solar System than Pluto, but it is only one of a growing number of these TNOs so far discovered, and there are likely to be many more. So Roger will be examining Quaoar and others of these 'Thingies' at the meeting and hopefully will tell us exactly how to pronounce "Quaoar".



*IMAGES - above left - the best view we have of Quaoar, taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. Yes it doesn't exactly show very much detail, so - left - have an artist impression of Quaoar and its moon, Weywot, instead.*

*Mat Irvine*

## MEETING REVIEW : December 8<sup>th</sup> : Christmas Party and Guiz VII

The Christmas Party returned to its more usual date of the second Thursday in December, instead of the unavoidable move to a 'New Year Party' you had in January 2011. Unfortunately the December meet wasn't that much better attended, which is odd as usually at least the lure of food and drink brings more members along. But those that did attend I trust had a good time.

I ran the, now usual, Guiz, with the, now usual, five sections. The final section is the tables of models to identify, and previous to that you had four sets of images concentrating on astronomy; astronautics & space research; science fiction and an 'a.n.other' mix of subjects that was intended to reflect the fact that the Society has a wide range of interests!

I try and vary the type of composition year-to-year, so this time, 'astronomy' featured nebulae, imaged mostly by the HST; 'space' featured space sites in general; SF was slightly different in that I put a selection of 'fantasy' (for want of a better term) 'Star Cars'- vehicles that have featured in films and TV - that are on display at the Volo Motor Museum in northern Illinois. Finally in the picture section, 'Section Four' was a general mix of anything else that took the fancy. This - sub-titled 'Only Connect' (after the brain-expanding BBC-4 programme) - ranged from The Eden Project to lenticular clouds, and taking in Legoland on the way! For the models, you got 10 items that crossed the bounds of factual space and science fiction.

Jim Webb and Jerry Sweet came top of all this, with Simon Lang and Marty Bertschinger, only just behind in second place. So they got a prize each, as I had four copies of a cutaway Millennium Falcon book - appropriate as it was one of the models in section five.

*Simon ponders on the models in Section Five.*



*There was another potential 'Only Connect' situation here as the Nike Ajax missile - back far left on the table, used to be stationed at the site - left - in Addison, Illinois, that was a question in Section Two!*

*Mat Irvine*

# CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



Continuing on the theme of words, it's fascinating how many everyday 'scientific' or 'technical' words and phrases actually have their origins in science fiction! The phrase '**blast off**' was coined by the highly influential E.E. 'Doc' Smith in his 1937 story *Galactic Patrol*, when one character asks of another, "*How long do you figure it'll be before it's safe for us to blast off?*" Smith also appears to have coined '**deep space**', to refer to a region of empty space between stars or that is remote from the home world, back in 1934. Science now tends to use the term to refer to the region of space outside of the Earth's atmosphere. Still with Smith, the '**pressure suit**' is another innovation from his fertile mind. This maintains a stable environment around its occupant - useful in both space exploration and high-altitude flights. It is interesting to note that his pressure suits were lined with fur, an innovation which has not been taken on board by NASA. He also appears to have influenced the use of military terms like '**stealth technology**', '**SDI**' and '**AWACS**'.

Continuing on the space theme, the first known use of '**zero-gravity**' is from the comics' artist Jack Binder in 1938, though was actually referring to the gravity-less state of the centre of the Earth's core. On a similar vein, our own Arthur C. Clarke gave us '**zero-g**' in his 1952 novel *Islands in the Sky*. Farther out in our Solar System we have the large planets, Jupiter, Saturn, etc – referred to as the '**gas giants**'. The first known use of this term is from the story *Solar Plexus* by James Blish. Unusually, the term was first seen in the reprint of the story, eleven years after it had been first published in 1941. Whether this is because Blish coined up the term in the intervening years, read it somewhere else or whether it was in the original manuscript and got edited out, is not known. To get to these gas giants we could use that favourite propulsion system, the '**ion drive**', which creates thrust by pushing out charged particles in the opposite direction to that of our travel. The earliest mention of this is in *The Equalizer* (in 'Astounding Science Fiction', 1947), by Jack Williamson. From the beginning of the 1970s, interest was renewed in this technology and numerous SF (and real) spacecraft have used it ever since. Staying with Williamson, he also coined up '**genetic engineering**' in his novel *Dragon's Island* in 1951. The profession of '**genetic engineer**' took a few more years to be named, this time by Poul Anderson in *Call Me Joe* (1957).

Moving onto technology we come to '**robotics**'. Isaac Asimov is famous for (among many other things) inventing the three **Laws of Robotics**, first used in his science fiction story, *Liar!*, in 1941. (Published the same year as Williamson's *Dragon's Island*.) The way to upset a robot is, of course with a '**computer virus**'. Dave Gerrold (writer of the famous 'Classic' Star Trek episode - *the Trouble with Tribbles*) seems to have been the first to make a verbal analogy between the biological virus and the, generally malicious, self-replicating computer program, in his 1972 story *When Harlie Was One*. As a follow on, there is the '**worm**', (not to be confused with that big sand-diving thing in *Dune*), another type of self-replicating computer program. This was named by John Brunner in his 1975 novel *Shockwave Rider*.

This is just a small compendium of terms derived from SF which have entered the mainstream of our language. So the next time you hear a 'cool' sounding technical term, it's always worth asking, "*Where did that come from?*"

I can't make the January meeting, so see you in February *Jim*

# SKY VIEWS



There have been a number of particularly interesting 'sky views' over the last month and a half. Most spectacular was the Lunar eclipse of 11<sup>th</sup> December. Only the very far north of these Isles would have got the event in anything like its entirety and the further you moved south, the later was Moon-rise, so less of the Moon was eclipsed. When it did appear at my latitude, the initial rising was hidden by the usually back of low lying stratus, but when this finally cleared, the result, (top), was fairly spectacular.



Boxing Day should have seen a close conjunction of Venus and a very new crescent Moon. Well it presumably did, but it was very cloudy this day and the following, so it wasn't until the 28<sup>th</sup> that I managed to get this image, (above). Of course by then the Moon and planet were well separated. Now to hope that the similar conjunction this month, also on the 26<sup>th</sup>, will be clear!

*Mat*

## \*\*\* Stargazing Live \*\*\*

This issue of the magazine should arrive just in time for the second Stargazing Live, which is taking place over the three days, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> of January.

Based at Jodrell Bank and hosted by Brian Cox and Dara O'Briain, it will take a similar format to the first event last year, with input from astronomical societies around the country.



*Above: Dara O'Briain and Brian Cox in the control room for the Mk IA Lovell radio telescope at Jodrell Bank during the first Stargazing Live in January 2011. Part of the giant Mk IA dish can be seen in the background.*

Simon Lang has been co-ordinating some of the events that will be happening in the north London area. Go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/thingstodo/> and follow the Stargazing Live link. Once there, type London NW3 (or just 'London') into the search box. The

Hampstead Observatory events are listed.



A pity the ASH can't directly take part, but a lack of somewhere suitable to observe, doesn't exactly help, so if you do want to be part of it, well Hampstead is a good place to start!

*Your Editor supplied some display models, (this did not include the lamps!), for January 2011's Stargazing Live, as the new exhibition areas at Jodrell Bank were still being built*

# The Night Sky : January - February 2012

## THE PLANETS

**MERCURY** : Was still visible at the beginning of January in the morning skies, but very close to the horizon. Reaches superior conjunction on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

**VENUS** : In the evening skies, very prominent in the west in Aquarius. Very bright at -4.0 magnitude. From around 8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> January Venus will be close to Neptune. At the closest, 13<sup>th</sup>, the planets will be one degree apart, (which is two Moon widths). The crescent Moon close on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

**MARS** : In Virgo, at magnitude 0.2. Rising around 22.30 at the beginning of January and getting earlier as the month progresses. Moon close on 14<sup>th</sup> January and 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**JUPITER** : At magnitude -2.4, although reducing slightly during the month as the planet is receding from Earth. It is the most conspicuous planet for most of the night - once Venus has set that is. Rising in the early evening in the south east, it is visible throughout the night and frankly you would be hard pressed to mistake it for anything else. Moon is close 30<sup>th</sup> January. *Photo shows the conjunction with the Moon of 2<sup>nd</sup> January*



**SATURN** : Now in the morning skies in Virgo, magnitude 0.7, near the bright star Spica. The rings are opening up, with the angle increasing by a degree or so. Moon close on 16<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> February

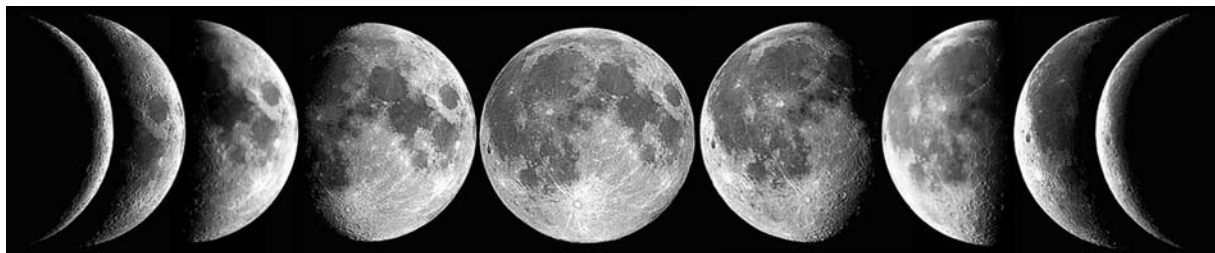
**URANUS** : In Pisces, around magnitude 6. Moon close on 28<sup>th</sup> January, and Venus close on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

**NEPTUNE** : In Aquarius, around magnitude 7.8. The Moon is close on 25<sup>th</sup> January. Venus is close from 8<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> January. See VENUS.

## METEORS

The Quadrantids peaked on 4<sup>th</sup> January, the radiant being from around the area of the 'handle' of The Plough. There is a possibility of some 'strays' by the time you read this, though unlikely.

## THE MOON



NEW 24<sup>th</sup>  
NEW 23<sup>rd</sup>

FIRST 1<sup>st</sup> January  
FIRST 31<sup>st</sup> December

FULL 9<sup>th</sup>  
FULL 7<sup>th</sup> February

LAST 16<sup>th</sup>  
LAST 14<sup>th</sup>









NEW 23<sup>rd</sup>  
NEW 21<sup>st</sup>



# THE NIGHT SKY : January - February 2012

As of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012, 18:00:00 GMT/UT



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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### NEXT MEETING

THURSDAY 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012

THE ORIGINAL SOCIETY'S WEB SITE IS : [www.ashastro.org](http://www.ashastro.org)

THE NEW ONE - UNDER BETA TEST : [www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)

However use the emails as above for the present time