

2002



NEXT MEETING
THURSDAY, 21st February 2013
THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY
VOLUME 41 : ISSUE 4 : February 2013
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SOCIETY NEWS

MEETING VENUE :

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

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

**For more on this, and general meeting information, also check the website:
www.ashastro.co.uk
Latest update February 2013**

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

New or updated information is in *italics*

2013

February 21st *Jim Webb: “Close Encounters of the Endeavour Kind”*

March 21st

April 18th : *Roy Goldsmith : “The Discovery of Neptune”*

May 16th

June 20th

July 18th

August : summer break

September 19th

October 17th : AGM

November 21st

December 12th : Christmas Do – *possibly...*

COVER :

The four remaining Space Shuttle Orbiters have now all been relocated to where they will go on permanent display. Your Editor showed Enterprise on the deck of the USS Intrepid, the *Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum*, in New York City, in 2002 Vol 41, Issue 1, November 2012. [Also available on the ASH website]

Endeavour – pictured on the cover - has gone to the California Science Centre in Los Angeles, a city recently visited by your Chairman, and which is the subject of the talk this month.

Discovery replaced Enterprise at the Udvar-Hazy Center, the outpost of the main Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, while Atlantis remains at the Kennedy Space Center. Hopefully reports on the last two sometime in the future.

SOCIETY NEWS



We meet in the Drama Room at Ashmole School, (previously the Curriculum Support Building - still noted as such in the map). This is the low building, (right), just past the Performing Arts Centre.



MEETING PREVIEW : 21st February

Jim Webb : "Close Encounters of the Endeavour Kind"

Our Chairman Jim has just returned from the west coast of the USA, and while there managed to visit the California Science Center in Los Angeles. This venue has recently taken possession of the Space Shuttle Orbiter, Endeavour. This talk is about Jim's meeting with 'Endeavour', up close and personal. A mix of photos; personal impressions and conversations with people actually involved in the project.

MEETING REVIEWS : January 17th and 13th February:

Jim Webb : "Observing Evenings"

This turned out to be a very interesting and impromptu meeting. I brought along the ASH 8" Celestron telescope in the hope that there might be clear skies. Not surprisingly it was cloudy so the meeting evolved into a telescope master class. Much was said about the history and evolution of telescopes over the years. Then we got onto the nitty-gritty of how to use modern 'go-to' telescopes. This proved to be very fruitful and everyone who was there learned new things about the various bits of equipment by pooling the collective experience of usage and knowledge of the characteristics of the variety of scopes that are currently in use. The other upside of all this was that the general feeling was that there should be more practical observing sessions for the Society. As a result it was decided to have an extra (observing) meeting on Wednesday 13th February – a week before the normal meeting.

February Observing Meeting.

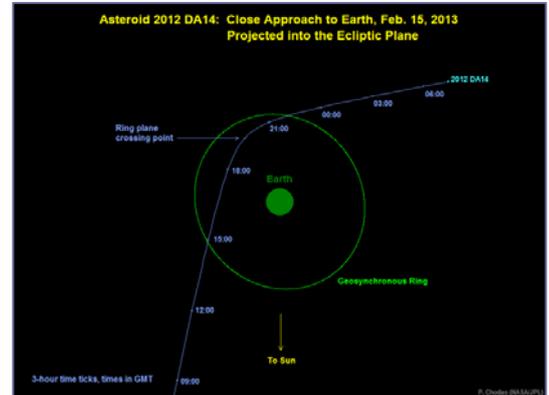
This meeting was planned for 7:30pm with the proviso that if the skies were cloudy, we would retire for a virtual observing session at our 'local' Waggon pub. Well, 5 of us turned up and, surprise surprise, it was cloudy so off to the Waggon we went. We hadn't anticipated Manchester United playing Real Madrid so the Waggon was full of noisy football fans – not conducive for virtual observing. Alister suggested a pub along Chase Side – The New Crown. This proved to be perfect with a good selection of well priced real ales, food and quiet seats. This venue may possibly become a new 'regular'. Conversation and observing on Jim's laptop continued until well gone 10pm. A good evening was had by all. The general consensus is that the 'week before' observing sessions may very well become a standard feature.

Jim Webb

Sky Views

A strange astronomical coincidence occurred recently – and all evidence seems to point towards that it *was* just a coincidence.

The imminent arrival of Asteroid 2012 DA14 into the Earth's vicinity was known about and its path accurately plotted. This was indeed a very close NEO (Near Earth Object), passing closer than the orbit of the Moon, and closer than the geosynchronous orbit, where the majority of communication satellites are placed.



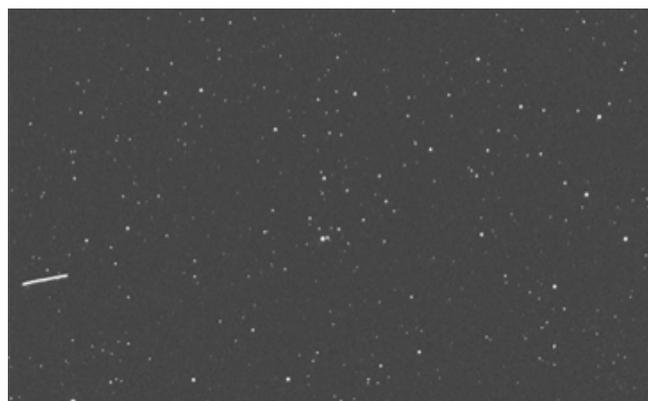
This event was due on 15th February, from around 18.00 to 21.00 GMT/UTC, but earlier that same day, 03.20 GMT/UTC, Russia was subjected to a meteorite hit that injured an estimated 1,200 people. It does though appear to be a total coincidence as the meteorite has a totally different trajectory to Asteroid 2012 DA14.

Russia is not unused to such hits as the previous most famous, or infamous, event was in 1908 in the Tunguska region when what is thought to have been a small meteorite or maybe the head of comet exploded over the area. Due to the much earlier time period, and the fact the region was very sparsely populated anyway, no human casualties were reported, though it is reported reindeer were killed and up to 80 million trees flattened over an area of 32ml/ 52km in diameter. That explosion was likened to 50 megatons of TNT, or a small nuclear detonation.



The present explosion probably came from an object that started about 55 feet/ 17 metres in diameter, 10,000 tonnes in weight which generated an explosion equivalent to 500 megatons. It is reckoned to have been about 1/3rd the size of Asteroid 2012 DA14.

Later that day Asteroid 2012 AD12 did indeed pass across the skies, the time-exposure image of it here taken from the Siding Springs Observatory, Australia



CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



That's my annual 'pilgrimage' to the USA over and done with. I actually went to Los Angeles, first, to attend the NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) show in Anaheim, just south of LA. Never seen so many posers in one place ever! It was, however, great to see some very excellent musicians of all sorts of disciplines playing their hearts out to very appreciative audiences. Nonetheless, it still felt very unreal – especially with Disney World just ½ mile up the road! The real highlight of the trip, however, was the Science Center in LA – this coming meeting's talk will be all about it. But back at the NAMM show, I was surrounded by millions (OK so I exaggerate a bit at times!) of guitars and counted a total of seven left handed ones, of which only two were basses! Given the fact that a significant proportion of guitar player are left-handed, I was surprised by the number of non-answers and excuses I got from the vendors – it was enough to make one feel like a forgotten species! That got me thinking about parity.

Being a left-hander, I tend to be more aware of the right-handed bias in the products that one sees. A classic example is scissors with moulded handles – using these left-handed leaves gouges in the fingers! Matchboxes are designed for ease of right hand use - think about how you strike a match! Power tools often have right-handed grip moulds and have thumb controls on the right hand side. In the good old days of bows and arrows, the bows were simple and ambidextrous – modern 'high tech' bows have right-hand mouldings which make it impossible for a left-hander to use. Same with semi-automatic weapons – the spent cartridge ejects to the right. The list can go on, but enough of the gripes – what has this all got to do with the price of fish - or is it horsemeat these days?

Everything in nature has a bias. The planets in our Solar System rotate in one direction only (admittedly, of necessity, circular motion can only be one directional) – it would be an interesting situation (and a mathematically interesting problem) if half the planets went one way and the other half went the other! Every amino-acid used for proteins in the Earth's biosphere is (conventionally) left-handed. Subatomic particles have a spin in one direction only. More remarkably, from observation, it appears that the whole Universe is made of 'positive' matter with no indication of there being any noticeable of anti-matter anywhere. Again the list can go on, but the importance of it all is that even if scientifically there is no explanation for this behaviour, for whatever reason, everything around us has a bias.

In practical terms, this is a very good thing. Having a convention introduces a level of stability in what could potentially be a very chaotic situation. Imagine a galaxy of antimatter encountering a matter galaxy – the result would be quite spectacular explosions of annihilation and no more galaxies. The stability which this bias brings allows the possibility of all the wonders around us to actually exist long enough to create the galaxies, planets and ultimately the forms, such as ourselves, that can be able to appreciate the beauty of it all. 'Oh Well' (Fleetwood Mac?), time for me to stop complaining about there not being enough left-handed guitars out there and appreciate there is no such thing as anti-sound and just enjoy the music – soft or loud.

See you at the Meeting.

Jim

THE NIGHT SKY : PLANETS

February – March 2013

MERCURY : Reached superior conjunction on 18th. Remains in the evening skies just after Sunset, magnitude -1.1, but will drop to 1.5 as we go into March, until inferior conjunction on 4th.

VENUS : For practical purposes lost from view and is at superior conjunction (ie directly ‘behind’ the Sun) on 30th March. The planet doesn’t become visible again until the end of May in the evening skies.

MARS : Still faint in the west after sunset, but will be lost in the glare of the setting Sun by the end of the month.

JUPITER : Remains very prominent in the evening skies, brilliant around magnitude -2.6. The Moon very close on 18th February and 18th March

SATURN : Now rising around midnight, magnitude around 0.5. The rings are open at the moment, around 19 degrees, making a worthwhile visit from even the smallest telescope. The Moon is close by on 3rd March.

URANUS : Moon close on 17th January and 13th February.

NEPTUNE : In conjunction with the Sun 21st February. Moon close by 10th March

COMETS

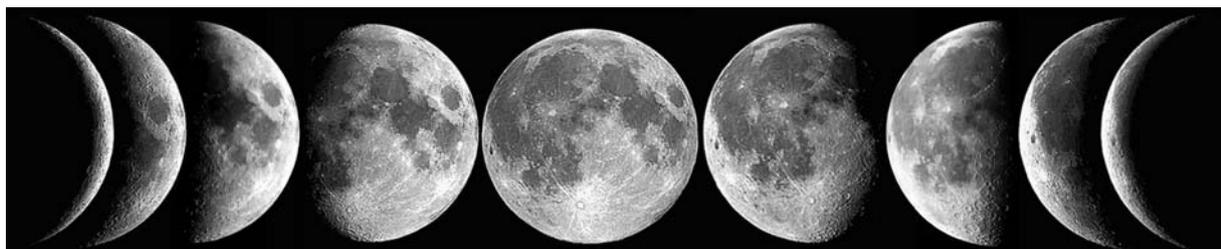
It appears comets are becoming like buses – wait years for a one and two come along at once – well at least in the same year, ie 2013. Comet ISON (initially C/2011 L4 and also know as Comet Nevski-Novichonok after its human discoverers) is still being predicted as, “...one of the brightest comets ever...” (Potentially!) Due to encounter the Sun in November, current estimates are predicting it could be magnitude -16, which is brighter than a full Moon!



Meanwhile there is another comet due earlier, Comet Pan-STARRS (C/2011 L4 or Comet Wainscoat) due to be visible in early March. Its brightest is reckoned to be March 10th, when it will move into the evening skies and could/ should be visible close by the setting Sun. But still don’t hold your breath– comets are notoriously unreliable... Comet specialist David Levy compares them to cats – “Both have tails and both do exactly what they want!”

Image: Comet Hale-Bopp – the last ‘Great Comet’, photographed by your Editor in 1997

THE MOON

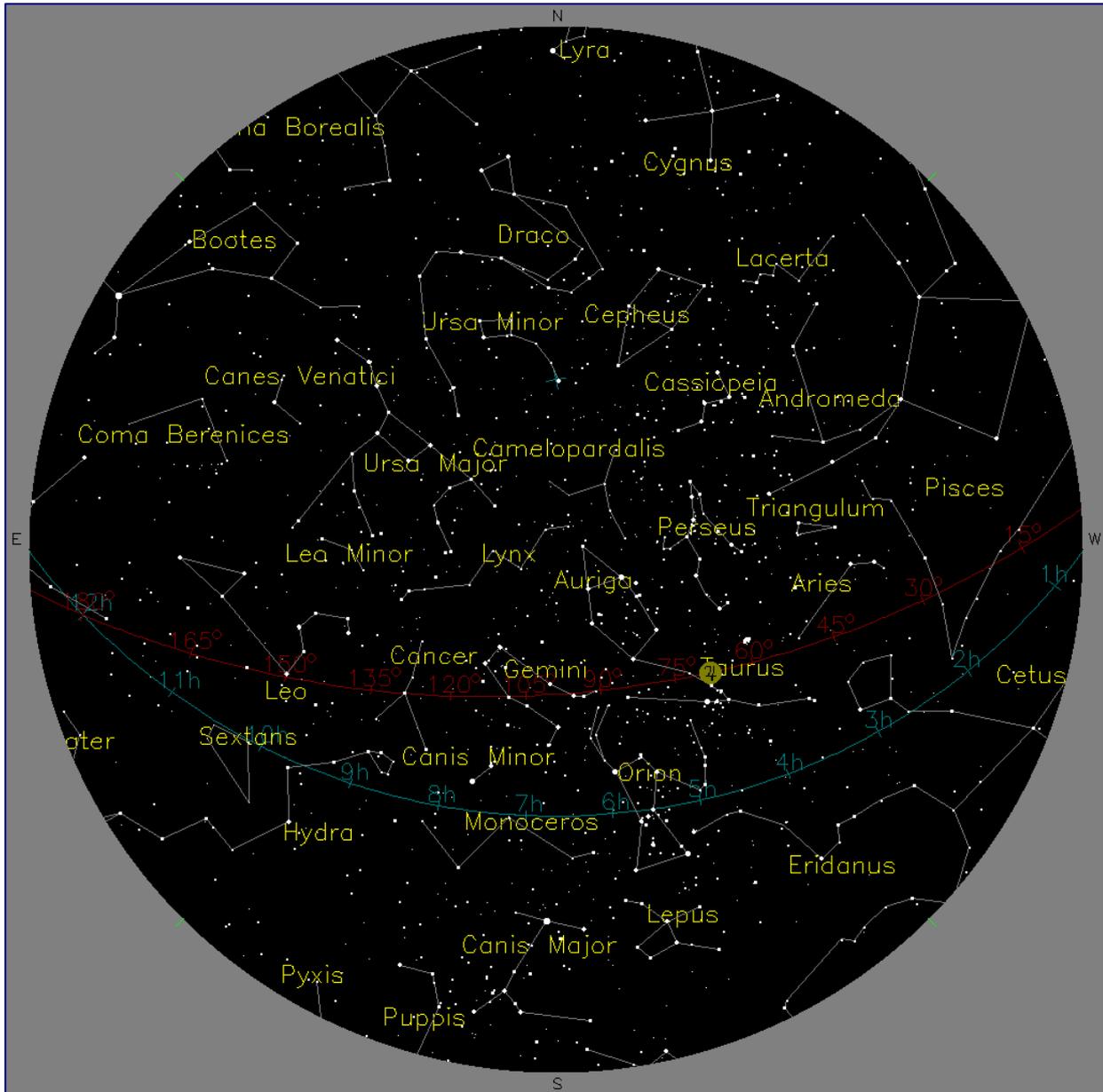


New 10th February First Quarter 17th Full 25th Last Quarter 4th March New 11th

THE NIGHT SKY : MAP

1st March 2013 20:00:00 GMT/ UTC

Not a very good time for planetary watchers this month, with only Jupiter being prominent, though Saturn rises later



KEY	
 MERCURY	 SATURN
 VENUS	 URANUS
 MARS	 NEPTUNE
 JUPITER	 PLUTO



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