

# 2002



**NEXT MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015**  
**THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY**  
**VOLUME 43 : ISSUE 2-3 : December-January 2014-5**  
**[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)**

# SOCIETY NEWS

## MEETING VENUE

**Music Block, Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14 5RJ.**

The day for meetings is usually the third Thursday of each month. The exceptions are August, when we do not hold a meeting, and this now currently applies to the July and December meetings, though that may alter in the future?

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

For more on this, and general meeting information, also check the website:  
[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk). Latest update October 2014

**A Facebook page has been set up.  
It is under Astronomical Society of Haringey in Groups**



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

New or updated information is in *italics*

## OBSERVING EVENINGS

Regarding any changes to Observing Evening meetings, a continuing message to let Jim or Alister know your mobile phone number, and if not already on the list, your email; emailing to [observing@ashastro.co.uk](mailto:observing@ashastro.co.uk) reaches both of them. The Facebook page will also be used.

### 2015

January 15<sup>th</sup> : Observing Evening at the Barnet Site. See next page for maps, and even more details are on the website - [www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk) .

February 19<sup>th</sup> :

March 19<sup>th</sup> :

April 16<sup>th</sup> :

May 21<sup>st</sup> :

June 18<sup>th</sup> :

### **COVER:**

First image from the surface of a comet! Rosetta's lander Philae is safely on the surface of Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, on November 12<sup>th</sup> 2014. In this image of the surface, one of the lander's three feet can be seen in the foreground. The lower image is a mock-up of the Lander on the surface, which shows where the feet are!

*Photo: ESA/Rosetta/Philae/CIVA*

# SOCIETY NEWS

## MEETING ROOM

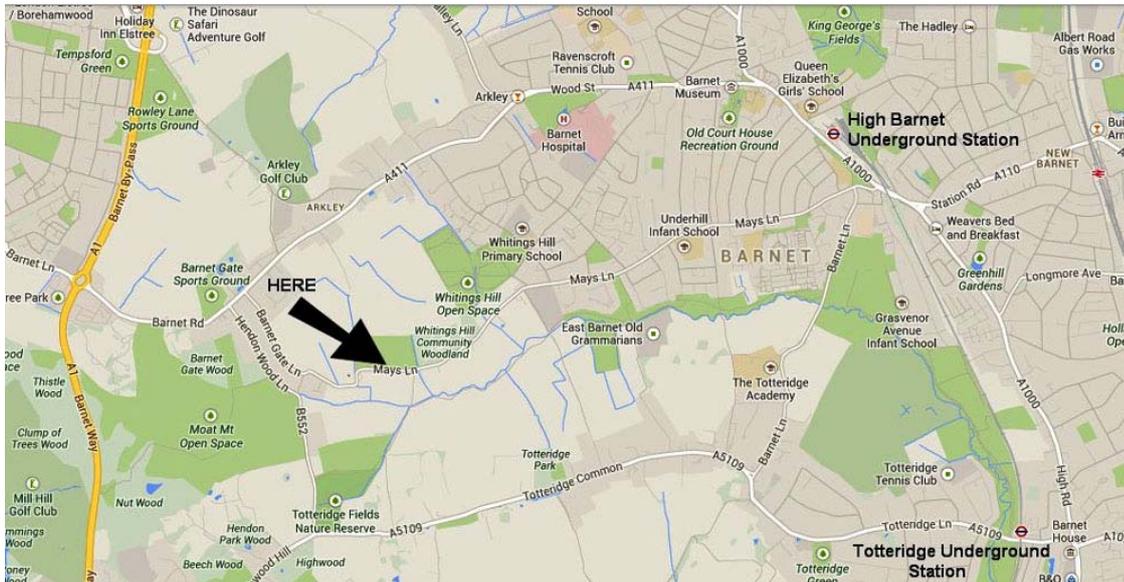


We currently meet on the first floor of the Main Music Block. This is the two-storey building, next to our original room, the original Music Room. This is marked with the X in the photo on left, (and although it is demolished, the site is currently being redeveloped with a new structure). The route in red is shown from the main gate of the School. We hope a first floor will be suitable for all, as there isn't a lift. If anyone feels they will have difficulty, please let the Chairman know.

Contact details on back page.

### MEETING PREVIEW : 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 Observing Evening

A lot to potentially see in the night sky, so let's hope for clear skies! The meeting will be at what is now our usually observing field in Barnet. See ASH Website for full details, but for those without Internet access, the map.



Address : Old Elizabethans Memorial Playing Fields, Gypsy Corner, Mays Lane  
(Barnet Gate Lane end), Barnet, EN5 2AG



Black arrow, above, shows the general position along Mays Lane; yellow arrow, left, shows the entrance. Any queries, please contact the Chairman or Membership Secretary (details back page), or email <observing@ashastro.co.uk>

## MEETING REVIEW : 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014 Michael Franks : "Is There Lava on Mars?"

This was certainly a well-attended evening and a very entertaining talk. Michael launched into a description of his treks around Iceland and his fascination of the seemingly extraterrestrial landscapes he encountered. Having a keen interest in geology, it did not take him long to note similarities in features on other planets – most notably Mars. As the only planet to have long-term orbiters and landers, we have a wealth of visual information to play with. Aspects of the Icelandic scenery suggested similarities to features seen on Mars.



Flows of material and pillars of rock formation hint at volcanic activity, but how far back all this may have occurred remains a mystery. Needless to say, there is divided opinion as to whether some of the 'flows' on Mars are volcanic or water. If it was water, maybe there was life there - as is suggested in the pictures.

*Jim Webb*

# CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



The other day, I was randomly reading an article by one of our regular speakers, Dr Stuart Clark, which got me thinking – why do we go into Space? There's been a lot of it about since 1957! The roots must be in our quest for exploration of any kind. Throughout history, Man has explored beyond the boundaries of his habitat or perception; "What lies over that mountain?" Going into the unknown takes a special kind of faith - or 'madness' – an almost unconscious knowing of what is there, but must be physically experienced despite apparent dangers. Visionaries are people that show the ability to feel beyond their physical limitations and see destinations 'ordinary' mortals dare not express.

The sea is a remarkable place to explore because, due to the curvature of the Earth, one cannot see much further than a few dozen miles. Ancient peoples sailed into the Pacific Ocean to find islands in the middle of nowhere, thousands of miles from their comfortable land-based home; "We are going to go to a place we cannot see!" This takes courage and conviction beyond imagination. Once seamanship had been mastered, exploration became simpler but by no means less dangerous – the sea still claims many lives a year, only recently off the coast of Scotland. Motives subsequently change when pure exploration has run its course and the unknown places become known and catalogued. Lack of raw materials or a desire for things which your own limited domain does not produce, often become exploration motives. On top of that we can add financial motivations.

The exploration of places that we can see but cannot reach becomes the new challenge. Space is that place – we can see it but getting there is another matter. The first step, though apparently politically motivated, was also a desire by Soviet engineer, Sergei Korolev to show that it was possible to put an object into orbit around Earth. This, fuelled by the Cold War of the time, led to the Space Race with political, military and visionary aspirations. Our late Patron, Sir Arthur C. Clarke, envisioned global communications back in 1945. This became an embryonic reality with the launch of Telstar 1 in 1962. A year earlier, President John F. Kennedy had shown both political and visionary prowess in tasking the US to place a, "Man on the Moon before the end of the decade". This challenge was monumental in that humans would leave the relative comfort of Earth and venture into a visible but simultaneously 'unknown' unknown. This took years of trials, information gathering, technological advances and human sacrifice to achieve, but it was done.

This was a political triumph that spawned a new era of pure exploration led by visionaries from the scientific community. Part of this new exploration was the thirst for knowledge; "We can see it but we can't get close to it". Sending people to the planets is still a major task, so sending robotic cameras is a much easier option – there is no moral dilemma in a machine 'dying' in space. The results have been, despite a lot of failures, spectacular, such as Rosetta and Philae as shown on the cover, but, despite all this image and data collecting, we still want to go there and experience the Solar System first hand.

The commercial aspect has inevitably played a major part in near-Earth ventures – global communications being the most prominent. So, despite the 'Superpower' aspect of initial space exploration, other countries have chosen to go into space, including India and China. Some aspects may appear trivial but there is a national kudos involved in these. Whatever the motivations are, however, there is a development of many skills involved in these ventures. The same can be said for a recently proposed scheme of Africa2Moon. This is a 'crowd-funded' project for African nations to send satellites to the Moon. The current notion of Africa as an impoverished continent, riddled with disease and strife is a major stumbling block that needs to be re-assessed. The notion that this will be a massive 'funding black-hole' must be balanced by the technological development of the population's skills and ultimate self reliance on their own abilities. We can only wish them but the very best on this project.

See you observing

*Jim*

## REVIEW

# The Puzzle of an Enigma...

A review of the film 'The Imitation Game' - the Life and Times of Alan Turing - by Michael Franks

This is a good, but frustrating film. It focuses on three periods in the life of Alan Turing; his school days; the crucial code breaking work at Bletchley and the events leading to his conviction for an act of gross indecency and its aftermath leading to Turing's untimely death.

The film is very good in creating a sense of period and the great danger this country was in from Nazi Germany. The shots of the German submarine wolf packs attacking and sinking ships is haunting and terrifying.

The film does not shy away from Alan Turing's homosexuality and the effects it had on his life. The film does try to give an idea of the complicity of the task Alan Turing took on to break the German Navy Engima Code and whilst it doesn't go into the details of exactly how it was done, it does give a flavour of the progress. However I was frustrated by several scenes in the film which were untrue and give a false impression.

I can accept that, to ensure the story flows smoothly, facts can be simplified and two characters being merged into one to create an effective drama. Thus the combining of Alan Turing's friends at school, Christopher Morecom, who he was very fond of, and Victor Beutell who practised coding messages with Alan, into one character is acceptable. However to have stories introduced in the film which are untrue seems wrong and unnecessary. Two particular story threads I have in mind are:

The invention that statistical analysis was applied by Alan Turing to determine whether the information obtained by breaking the German naval code could be used without the risk of revealing to the Germans that the code has been broken. The film also suggests that Bletchley allowed convoys to be sunk, rather than alert the Germans. This appears to be completely false.

Whilst it is true that the information obtained from the decoding was tightly controlled by the Secret Service under the Ultra System, convoys were routinely diverted to avoid the submarine wolf packs, to the extent that on several



occasions the Germans held enquiries as to what was going wrong. They always concluded that the intelligence was obtained from spies or traitors, not that the Enigma code had been broken. The Germans did in 1941 however introduce a more sophisticated version of the Enigma machine with four encoding rotors, rather than three, which Bletchley was unable to read for many months whilst sinking of allied ships increased to unsustainable levels and The Battle of the Atlantic was nearly lost.

Second, the invention that Alan Turing had discovered that John Caincross, who was working as a linguist at Bletchley, was a Russian spy but was then blackmailed by Caincross into silence by threatening to reveal that Turing was homosexual. This would seem most unlikely because Alan Turing worked in a different area of Bletchley Park with no contact with John Caincross and anyway Alan Turing did not make any great secret that he was gay. Caincross had informed Joan Clarke, a co-worker at Bletchley to whom Turing was briefly engaged, that Alan was a homosexual. This disclosure did not, in Turing's words, "Faze Joan", but the engagement was called off primarily because Turing did not want to proceed with the marriage.

The film also distorts the events which lead to Alan Turing's arrest and conviction for acts of gross indecency. The version in the film shows Alan Turing being burgled and the police then discovering in the course of their investigations, that Turing was having a relationship with a young man leading to prosecution. The truth is Alan Turing was burgled but the young man, with whom he was having the relationship, informed Turing that he had been burgled by a friend of his. Turing reported this in writing to the police, with full details of the homosexual relationship, and was then arrested and prosecuted by the police on the basis of what Turing himself had written.

The film supports the idea that Alan Turing committed suicide some two years after his conviction because he was not able to carry on with code breaking work as he had lost his security clearance. However Turing was still carrying on with significant mathematical work and did not seem depressed. Alan's mother was convinced that his death was actually an accident and there is the possibility that there is a far more sinister



explanation for Turing's untimely demise. Whatever is the truth, perhaps it is fitting with Alan Turing's love of puzzles and ciphers, that his death is an enigma.

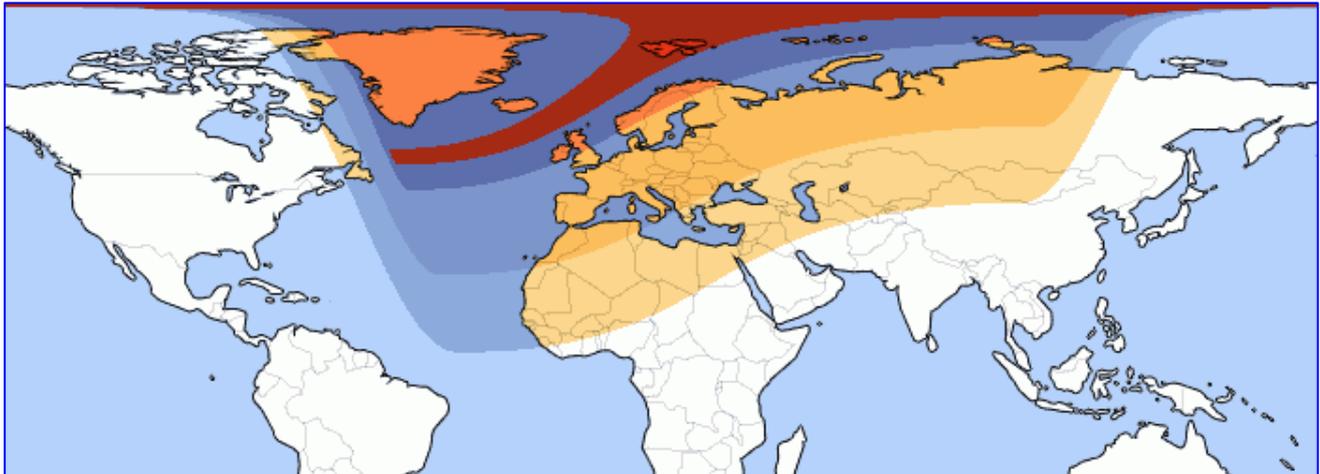
To conclude I think that the film is worth seeing as it presents an interesting, if not always accurate, portrait of one of this country's greatest minds - Alan Turing.

Images : left, an Enigma machine at Bletchley Park, Above, Benedict Cumberbatch as Alan Turing

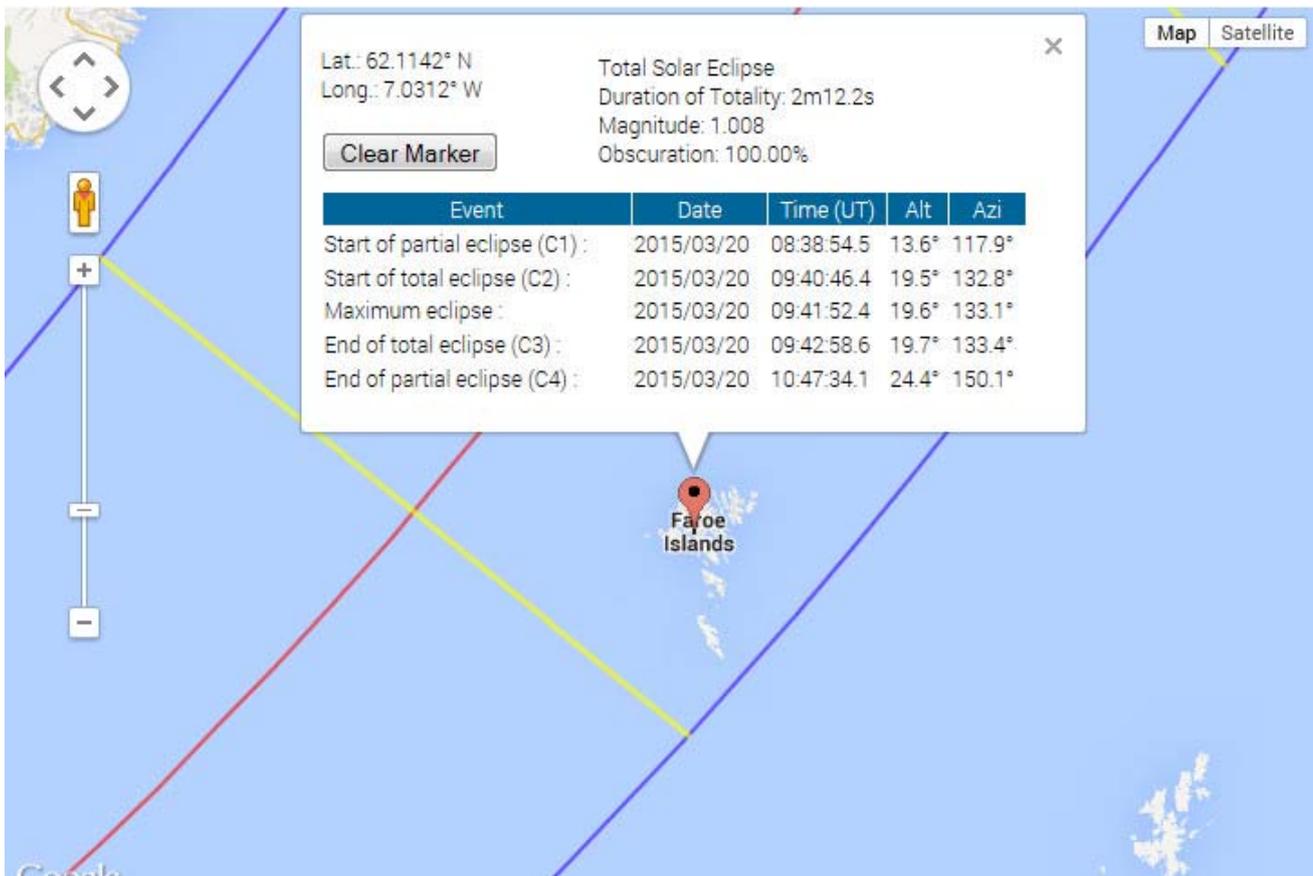


## UP-AND-COMING NEWS

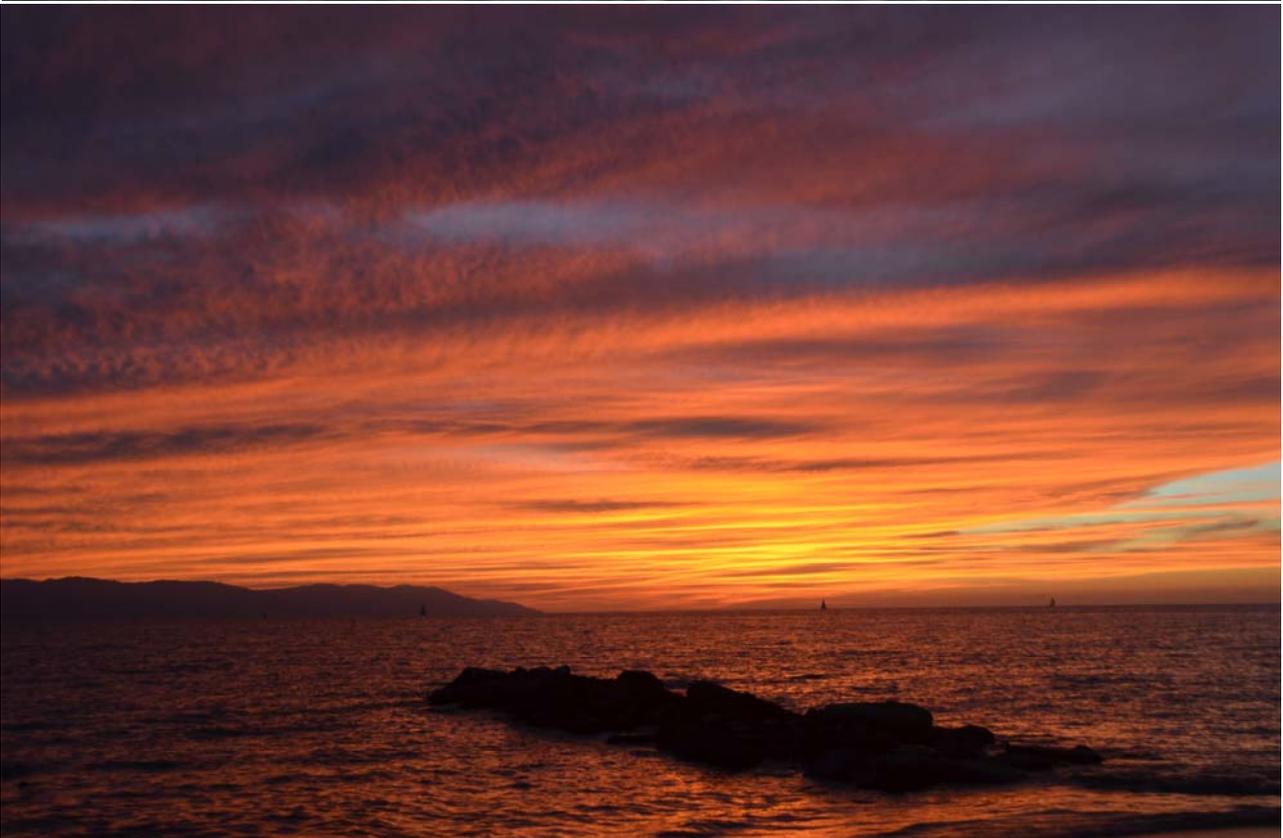
There is a Total Solar Eclipse on 20<sup>th</sup> March. The path of totality however only runs over a few areas of land, the nearest to the British Isles being the Faroe Islands. Britain and Ireland will have a partial eclipse with the closer one goes north, the more percentage you will get - but even the far north of Scotland will only get 99% and 99% is not 100%. Image, right, from the 2006 eclipse.



Red above shows totality, so you can see that Iceland and Scotland could be the next best options! Below the position of the Faroe Islands. Red is the centre line, but within the blue, you still get totality



And while on 'the Sun', what's the difference between these two sunset images? Answer; 'clouds'! The top shows the Sun having just set, but with no clouds in the sky, (OK a few on the horizon, but that's it). The lower image however - loads of clouds and hence a far more spectacular view! Taken in Puerto Vallarta in Mexico, in November (just went there for the clear skies...). If you view Dean Milano's YouTube page, you can see the video I shot on the same camera (Nikon D7000). [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rY4ndvmpcRQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rY4ndvmpcRQ) *Mat Irvine*



# THE NIGHT SKY

## THE PLANETS

### January-February 2015

**MERCURY** : In the evening skies in January, setting around an hour after the Sun, magnitude -0.7. It has been close to Venus for the first half of January, making the far brighter planet a pointer. There was a conjunction on 10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> January with the separation being less than 1 degree. (½ degree equals the diameter of the full Moon.) A very thin crescent Moon will be close on 21<sup>st</sup> January, but Mercury will have faded to +2.8, so far more difficult to spot. At inferior conjunction on 30<sup>th</sup> January. Moon also close on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

**VENUS** : Low in the southwest evening skies. At -3.8 magnitude. A thin crescent Moon close by over the nights of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Close to Neptune on 1<sup>st</sup> February.

**MARS** : Low in the southwest after sunset. Magnitude -1.1 in Capricornus. Close to Neptune on 19<sup>th</sup> January.

**JUPITER** : Very bright, at magnitude -2.4 in the northwest in Leo. Moon close on 4<sup>th</sup> February. Jupiter also has a series of multiple satellite shadow transits in January. These occur on 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

**SATURN** : In the morning skies at magnitude +0.6, but not well placed for viewing. Moon close on 16<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> February

**URANUS** : In Pisces, magnitude +5.9. Moon close on 25<sup>th</sup>. An occultation can be seen from South Europe and North Africa.

**NEPTUNE** : In Aquarius, magnitude around +8. Mars close on 19<sup>th</sup> January. Moon close on 23<sup>rd</sup> January.

## METEORS

Next major shower are the Lyrids in April



## COMETS

Comet Lovejoy has taken over as the main one to spot at the current time.

It is below Orion, moving west, and upwards, visibility just within naked eye, (+6) with good seeing.

## THE MOON



New 22<sup>nd</sup> December  
New 20<sup>th</sup>

First 28<sup>th</sup>  
First 27<sup>th</sup>

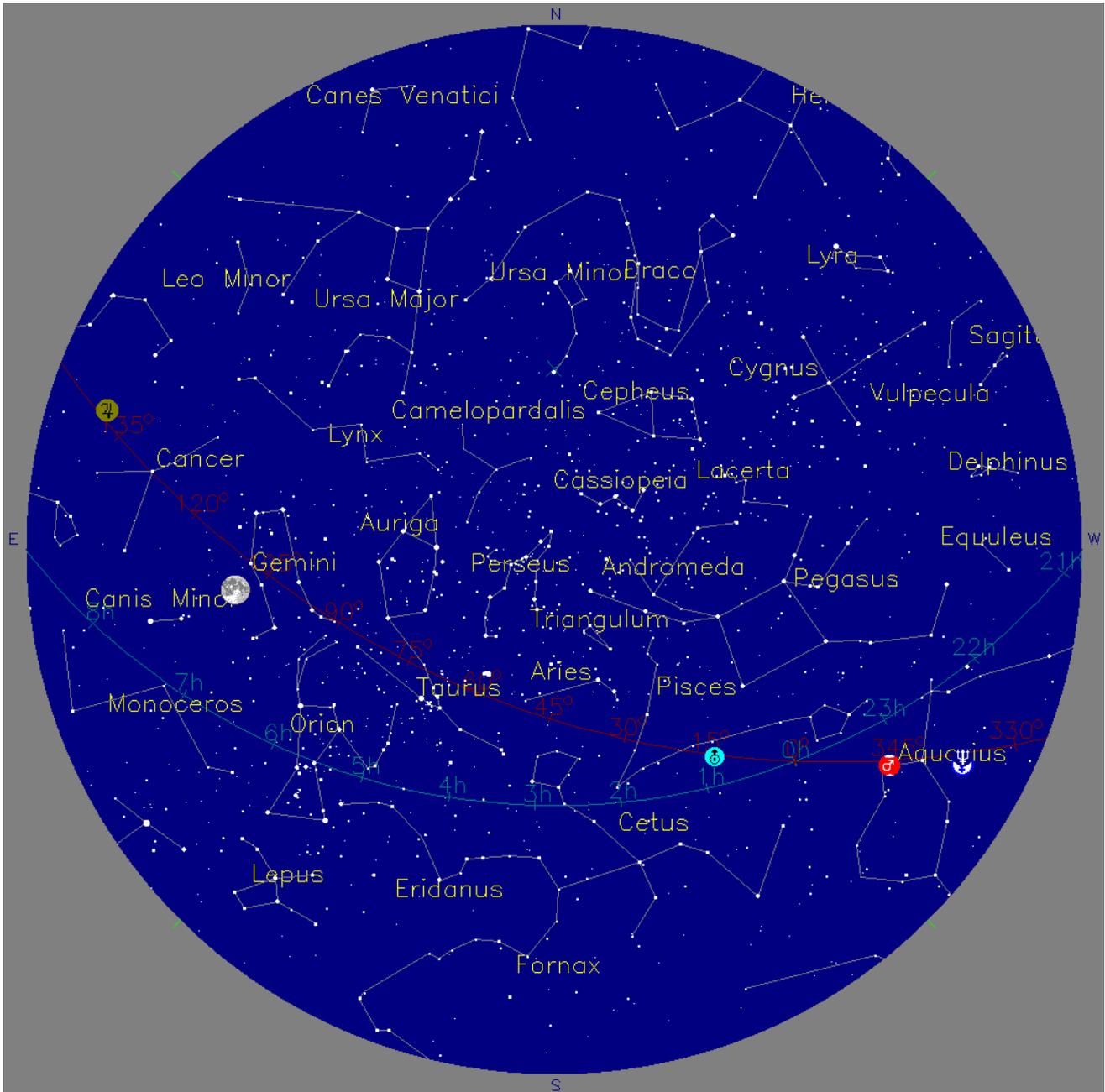
Full 5<sup>th</sup> January  
Full 3<sup>rd</sup> February

Last 13<sup>th</sup>  
Last 12<sup>th</sup>

New 20<sup>th</sup>  
New 18<sup>th</sup>

# THE NIGHT SKY : MAP

1<sup>st</sup> February 2015 : 18.00hrs GMT/ UTC



## 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>



# Astronomical Society of Haringey

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