Well … sometime plans do work out! We were able to have an observing session at Norton-sub-Hamdon hall for the first time as the skies stayed clear (enough anyway).

First, though we had our annual "Gadgets and Gizmos" evening where we had a range of astronomical gizmos. Bud related his Covid lockdown project of converting a damaged 16" mirror to a fully functioning telescope. The Damascene moment came when he was on a ladder and realised how stiff it was and that this could be converted into the backbone of a telescope for the mirror. Needless to say, it wasn't quite as simple as that! There was a lot of measurement and fettling required but the resulting images show that the resolution is truly amazing. There's a bit more to be done to squeeze out the last bit of detail but it's quite a piece of equipment already.

Gordon gave a run-down of the Sequence Generator Pro software package. This allows one to set up profiles for equipment and to create sequences of images which can run happily while the astronomer catches up with the latest box-set on the telly. The package also arranges for refocusing when necessary and even turns the whole system off at dawn. As a lazy imager of long standing, I'm all in favour of anything that makes life easier.

Terry showed the Herschel Wedge that was used for the white-light images of the sun shown at the August meeting. This was compared to the solar filters that are also available (or can easily be constructed). Perhaps they can have another outing at the partial solar eclipse on 25th October!

A number of announcements before the break:

Ron Westmass is selling some kit (see another blog post for details)

We have learned of the sudden death of Roy Margetts who was very important in the development of CADAS as he and Claire found Norton-sub-Hamdon hall for our meetings. The thanksgiving service for Roy is at Yeovil Crematorium - 10.00am on the 27th September.

After the tea break we were able to join the three telescopes set up outside the hall. Ken Honour had his imaging rig and was able to get images of the Andromeda galaxy (M31) despite the thin patches of cloud. Peter Adshead had his new Raspberry Pi controlled 8" reflector setup which worked well to get images of M57 (the Ring) and M27 (the Dumbbell). Terry had his visual refractor set up a little way into the field where we were able to get decent views of Saturn and Jupiter, despite both being still quite low in our northern skies. In addition, we had a nearly overhead pass of the ISS which disappeared into eclipse near Cassiopeia.

Despite the inevitable hit and miss nature of observing in the UK, it was a very successful session and we hope to do some more of the same later on in the winter.

Jan Wrightson kindly took some pictures:

Telescopes set up on the hall decking.  Ken's is closest to the camera with Terry's refractor and Peter's reflector hiding behind

A better view of Peter's setup during initial alignment.  You can probably guess which way is North! That long (home-made) dewcap appears to keep everything pretty dew free.