

For the March 2023 meeting we were visited by Hugh Allen from the Wells and Mendip Astronomers who talked on Spectroscopy – Cracking Starlight’s Hidden Code. He looked at the history of how scientists have managed to examine spectra of chemicals, the sun and stars including the lines seen at specific wavelengths. This was followed by a short introduction of the physics of how these lines are created by atoms followed by what we can learn from these various markers.

Hugh showed us a number of the spectra that he’s been able to take with fairly modest equipment. Spectroscopy is one of these fascinating fields within astronomy that is very rarely attempted by amateurs but Hugh showed us some of the work that we could do if we were just brave enough 😊

After tea and cakes (many thanks to Sue for the cakes and to those who volunteered to serve and wash up) Terry ran through the upcoming highlights (see the end of this report). The main one is Mercury which will be going through its best evening apparition of the year just before the next meeting.

Ken showed us a number of images of nebulae that he’s re-processed under the cloudy skies of the last month. Some amazing results there Ken.

Terry showed some “holiday snaps” of his trip to Australia which was primarily to mend the camera and filter-wheel on his telescope in South Australia. While there, though, there was a close conjunction of Jupiter and Venus in the evening sky which he managed to photograph over a number of evenings. It was noteworthy that Jupiter appeared to track top right to bottom left in Australia while it tracked top left to bottom right in the UK.

The Next Meeting will be on Apr 19 and the speaker will be Will Gater on Drawing Inspiration from the Moon.

Upcoming Events

Planets

Venus getting even higher and brighter in the evening sky

Passes Pleiades April 10th

Jupiter moving quite quickly sunwards

Mercury will be very close to Jupiter on March 27th but very low

Mercury becomes more visible early April

Best around April 15th

Mars still prominent in Taurus moving into Gemini

Passes M35 on March 30th

BST

Clocks “spring forward” on the morning of Sunday 26th March

Venus will be setting after midnight from April 16th

Outreach

In discussion with St Margaret’s Tintinhull for autumn visit

Meeting Schedule

May 17 Ask the Panel & Canal Halley Model

June 21 Jo Richardson Dark skies of Exmoor